

## Service Is the Highest Duty: The Life and Legacy of Ajitarao Kharade

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The soil of Sangli district carries a distinct fragrance of struggle, self-respect, and achievement. Born on **9 January 1984** in **Dhalgaon village of Kavathe Mahankal taluka**, **Ajitarao Anandarao Kharade's** life journey stands as a living testament to how determination can create a world out of nothing.

He lost his father at the tender age of two. His father, Anand Kharade, who worked at the Mumbai docks, passed away prematurely, casting a shadow of grief over his childhood. In this darkness, a guiding light emerged in the form of his grandfather—**late Gnyanu Vithoba Desai**, a freedom fighter. More than just support, his grandfather instilled in Ajitarao the values of self-respect, patriotism, and resilience that would shape his entire life.

### A Journey Forged Through Education and Determination

Ajitarao completed his primary and secondary education in Dhalgaon, securing first rank in his Class 10 examinations and showcasing his academic excellence early on. While pursuing higher education at **P.V.P. College, Kavathe Mahankal**, he worked at a medical store to overcome financial hardships. Hard work, honesty, and unwavering faith in his dreams became the guiding principles of his journey.

### Joining the Indian Army: A Chapter of Valor

Inspired by his grandfather's legacy as a freedom fighter, Ajitarao nurtured a deep desire to serve the nation. In 2002, he was selected in his very first attempt during the recruitment process held in Kolhapur and joined the **Indian Army**. After rigorous training in Ahmednagar, he rendered **16 years of dedicated service**, rising to the rank of **Major**.

### Service with Sensitivity and Leadership

During his military career, Ajitarao upheld not only discipline and duty but also compassion. Through the **ECHS (Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme)**, he played a significant role in addressing healthcare issues faced by veterans. Known as an officer who ensured justice for needy soldiers while strictly adhering to regulations, he earned widespread respect and trust.

### A Lifelong Commitment to Social Service

Even after taking voluntary retirement in **February 2018**, Ajitarao's mission of service did not pause. With the aim of generating employment in rural areas, he founded '**Swaraj Collection**', a large-scale textile enterprise. Today, the venture has expanded into a **20,000-square-foot showroom**, providing livelihoods to more than **50 families**.

In addition, he has contributed extensively through **Swaraj Urban Nidhi**, **Swaraj Urban Cooperative Credit Society**, and various **organizations for serving and retired soldiers**, strengthening social welfare, financial inclusion, and

veteran support systems.

### **The Face of People-Centric Leadership**

From resolving banking challenges and addressing injustices in the cooperative sector to relief work during the COVID-19 pandemic, women empowerment initiatives, free dance classes, teacher felicitation programs, and blood donation camps—Ajitarao Kharade's social work is truly multidimensional. Through '**Swaraj Marathi News**', he has also created a bold and independent platform for journalism.

### **An Inspiring Persona**

A former soldier, entrepreneur, social worker, cooperative leader, and journalist, **Ajitarao Kharade** has grown beyond being an individual—he has become a movement. Though the uniform has changed, his guiding principle remains unchanged: "**Service is the highest duty.**"

This beacon of hope rising from the soil of Dhalgaon today stands as a source of inspiration for thousands of young people across Maharashtra.

### **Selected for Maharashtra's Prestigious Awards**

Recognizing his dedication and achievements, he has been selected for the prestigious "**Maharashtra Business Icon 2025 / Maharashtra Style Icon 2025 / Maharashtra Fashion Icon 2025**" awards.

This honour is being presented by **Reseal.in and India Fashion Icon Magazine**, celebrating Maharashtra's emerging entrepreneurs and artists.

The selection marks a proud moment not only for him, but also for the entire region.

### **Presence of Renowned Film Personalities**

The grand award ceremony will be graced by celebrated film personalities:

- **Ms. Varsha Usgaonkar (Bollywood Actress)**
- **Ms. Sonalee Kulkarni (Indian Actress)**
- **Ms. Prarthana Behere (Indian Actress)**

### **Event Hosted Under Expert Leadership**

The event is organized under the leadership of **Mr. Sudhir Kumar Pathade**, Founder & CEO of Reseal.in (Sure Me Multipurpose Pvt. Ltd.), who continues to provide a national platform for Maharashtra's rising entrepreneurs, designers, and creative talent.

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