



Tribal struggle at Chankapur (Dist. Nashik): A Gandhian Ideological forest Satyagraha to the way of violence in 1930

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Abstract

In the 1930s, British rule in India turned very rapidly against Indians. Gandhi's non-cooperation movement ended in 1922. The British government took some acts against the Indians, one of which was the passing of the British Forest Act in 1927. This law caused outrage in the tribal community. Tribal society has protected its natural rights since ancient times. Trees, flowers, birds and animals are their economy. Sumeet Sarkar says, 'Our survey so far of the structure of colonial political and economic hegemony has shown the roots of many conflicts between imperialism and the bulk of the Indian people as well as between various groups or classes in Indian society.' Civil disobedience became the most widespread and militant form.

According to the All India Congress Committee, there were peaceful but serious violations of forest department laws at many places. 1,00,000 villagers broke the law in Sangamner in Ahmednagar district. 70,000 villagers broke the law in Bhilwad in Nashik district. Forest laws were violated at 32 places in Satara district. On 20 October 1930, the Koli tribals of Chankapur (Nashik district) heard that 'British rule had replaced Gandhi, and armed with spears, swords and other weapons, assassins started shouting Congress slogans. They refused to disperse and started pelting stones in response to police firing. More people died in the conflict.' At the same time, in November 1930, a Bombay fortnightly report described the miserable condition of the village Patidars. There is no battle like Chankapur in the role of those encamped within the boundaries of Baroda. It has less violence. The protestors there are visibly disappointed.

Keywords: Location of Chankapur, civil disobedience movement, path of study, nature of struggle, Chankapur incident, economic reasons, non-violence < violence

Introduction

When the Civil Disobedience Movement started in 1930, the tribal people followed the Congress and their Satyagraha. This year Indians fought for independence under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The Indian National Congress, demanding complete independence, declared 26 January as 'Purna Swaraj Day' [1]. The Indian National Congress called for civil disobedience like Salt Satyagraha [2] (Dandi March), Forest (Jungle) Satyagraha, etc. Gandhiji declared- 'British rule in India has led to the moral, material, cultural and spiritual destruction of this great country. I consider this rule cursed. I have come out of this ruined system of governance [3].' All communities in India were under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi. Many Satyagraha were carried out under the Civil Disobedience Movement of Mahatma Gandhi like Jungle Satyagraha in Vidarbha, Bilashi Satyagraha in Satara and other similar Satyagraha in Nashik and Raigarh [4].

The more purely Gandhian forms of movement in the

villages were based on relatively prosperous farmers. The ruthless British policy of confiscation had begun to weaken their power. Also signs of a 'second wave' were visible. Which was taking the uncontrolled and dangerous form of non-payment of revenue or tribal rebellion. (Sarkar, 2016:316) Tribal communities in Nashik district were against the forest laws. They destroyed the practice of cattle grazing. They follow their natural rights to protect the wealth in the forest. The main topic of my research paper is the incident of Chankapur conflict between the tribals and the British. This conflict, started by tribal communities like Koli, Kokna and Bhil [5], led to violent activities. Sangamner and Akola taluka (tehsil) in Ahmednagar district, Bilashi in Satara district, Saswad in Pune district, Umargaon in Thane district, Chirner in Colaba district and Khandesh in Maharashtra. Tribal community people of Baghlan and Kalwan taluka in Nashik district participated in the Jungle Satyagraha. (Phadke, 1993:69-72).

A small village named Chankapur in Kalvan taluka is

surrounded by tribal community. He decided to do Satyagraha in Chankapur. The nearest tribal people of Peth, Surgana and Dindori taluka of Dang district joined this Satyagraha. According to Census 2011 information the place code or village code of Chankapur village is 549867. Chankapur village is located in Kalwan tehsil of Nashik district in Maharashtra, India. It is located 18 km away from sub-district headquarters Kalwan and 56 km away from Nashik district headquarters. As per 2009 data, Chankapur village also has a gram panchayat. The total geographical area of the village is 433.3 hectares. The total population of Chankapur is 2,015. There are about 308 houses in Chankapur village. The nearest city to Chankapur is Nashik [6]. Civil disobedience was organized against the repressive laws. With the support of Congress, Gandhiji started the movement for reduction of land revenue, abolition of salt tax, reduction in military expenditure and imposition of duty on foreign cloth etc. But the British government did not agree with this.

He thought that these were 'populist' schemes to win over different sections of the society. Salt Satyagraha and on the other hand, Jungle Satyagraha (breaking of forest rules, cutting of trees) began, as well as tax-free campaigns. The tax imposed was very high. Which ranged from 22% to 60%. Bardoli Satyagraha started under the leadership of Vallabhbai Patel. Gave him the title of 'Sardar' or 'General'. The government has to bow to public resistance. Karnataka was at the forefront of Salt Satyagraha, Jungle Satyagraha and the campaign of not paying taxes. Bombay Presidency (Gujarat and four districts of Karnataka were part of it). Was a leader in Uttar Pradesh Presidency and Madras Presidency movements [7].

Materials and Methods

In 1930, the tribal people of Nashik district gathered and started Jungle (Forest) Satyagraha in the months of July, August and September. The first Satyagraha took place in Bhilwad in Nashik district and then in Patawa. Bhil and Kokana people were involved in this conflict. The reason for the conflict was related to Forest Act, Cattle Gauge-Ling Tax etc. (Deshmukh, 2006:92) after 1866, the British government imposed many restrictions on forests, they were divided into reserves i.e. major and minor forests. (Phadke, 1993:69) Tribal people should desist from their role of refusing to rear cattle, gauge-ling tax, not giving any help to government employees, destroying Forest Act, participating in Satyagraha, building co-operative movement and ending British rule. (Gaikwad, 2017:180) The problem started in Kalvan taluka in Chankapur due to the following reasons-

- (i) Double grazing fees were collected from farmers.
- (ii) The idea of Gandhi Raj existed in Kalwan Taluka for a long time. (Home Department, 1930)

Baghlan in Nashik district was mainly affected by tribal people in Chankapur. This Jungle Satyagraha took place under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi. He gave local leadership to this struggle. He chose Jungle Satyagraha because he would do Jungle Satyagraha where salt is not available. The Baghlan Satyagraha was called 'Bardoli in Maharashtra'. (Ketkar, 2003:222) Those who could not participate in the Salt Satyagraha due to lack of sea coast, devoted themselves completely to the Forest Satyagraha. (Belvatkar, 103) Apart from this, Chankapur Satyagraha

was also notable in history. Sumit Sarkar was the first historian to note the early Chankapur Satyagraha. He wrote, this type of conflict should be studied on the path of 'history from below', which Scholars like E.P. Thomson [8], made efforts to emerge. Sumit Sarkar, in his book, 'Popular Movements and Middle Leadership', writes - "The history of the following people working on local and regional development, including various popular groups around the world - including tribals, farmers, artisans, workers, protests Performance and the middle class are involved." (Thorwat, 2010:89)

The struggle of the tribals against the British also gives way to the subaltern studies framework. The subaltern provides a new orientation. Within which it may be possible to unite many different styles, interests and modes of thought, the rejection of academic elitism. (Bagade, 2007:303) The primary source of this incident is established in the records of the Home Department. R.G. Gordon, Esquire, I.C.S. The District Magistrate, Nashik sent a letter to the Commissioner, Central Division, Poona on 21 October 1930. The forest and hill people are surrounded by three "J's", which were the hallmark of their economic life. First – *Jamin* (land), second – *Janwar* (cattle) and third – *Jangal* (forest), these are essential for their livelihood and development. (Belvatkar, 103)

Rajendra Gaikwad has mentioned the Chankapur incident in his article as a subaltern angle. He wrote, on 19 October 1930, 10 to 12 thousand tribal people (Kokna, Bhil, Koli) came to gather under the leadership of some tribal leaders [9] with traditional weapons near the pond at Chankapur in Kalwan tehsil. (bow-bows, hand-axes, wooden sticks and arrows) and to arm them (the tribal people) against the British police (with rifles) besieging the Chankapur mountain, the British officer contacted the chiefs (Patils) of the tribal towns. He advised the violent protesters not to fight against the British government. (Gaikwad,2017:180) On Saturday, on the way to Abhona, a large village two miles from Chankapur, the police were told that they would stand no chance against thousands of people armed with spears, bows and arrows [10].

Results and Discussion

The struggle of the tribal community against the British government was not with political influence but with nationalism. People had to protect their natural rights. The Bombay Fortnightly Report of November 1930 described Kheda Patidars camping in extreme misery across the Baroda border. "There is no hint of violence in his attitude, he did not adopt violence *et al.* He looked disappointed. Still he was non-violent. Around the same time Chankapur (Nashik district) on 20 October, was full of stories of the Koli tribal's struggle. He believed that, now the British Raj has been replaced by the Gandhi Raj..." [11] This struggle was more violent than any other struggle like that of farmers and labourers. In this incident the duration of the struggle was one and a half days and 100 tribal people were on the stage. The second aspect of defining the struggle of the tribals was the approach of nationalism. Govind Gare, Bhowmik Deshmukh, Ramesh Padwal and Ramesh Bhoje are writers from Maharashtra who noted this Chankapur conflict as a national struggle.

According to the Record, the local newspapers and British

papers were the first to come to the fore, to show what a false statement was and what was the true fact of Chankapur.¹² This fact is presented in a different way by the local newspapers and the British Record. Among them, when did the District Magistrate go to Chankapur and what was the strength of the police? The local newspaper gives the date as 11th October 1930, and they had 125 police. In contrast the British record, 19 October It is written that the date was 1930 and there were 86 policemen. Collector's order to fire blank cartridge or no blank cartridge was fired. Different information is available in this also. Regarding police action (i) Firing without orders of Collector (ii) On 13th October they came to Kanashi and beat people and looted the village. This information is written by local newspapers. Contrary to the British record, (i) there was no firing *et al.* (ii) When they came on 20th October, no looting or fighting was done.

Local newspapers write that, (i) 40 to 45 people were killed (ii) 60 to 70 people were injured. In contrast to the British record, 02 people were killed, 04 people were injured. Gives this information. The local newspaper writes about the absence of the collector and the night firing took place. British records show that no firing was done during the night. Local newspapers write about bodies floating in the Chankapur tank, but this is complete nonsense, British records show. People were kept away for 15 days, this

information is given by local newspapers, British records write that the next morning 300 to 400 men from 20 villages came and paid their grazing fees.

Forest Satyagraha among the Kolis of the Western Ghats and the Gonds of the Central Province had long crossed Gandhian boundaries. They started cutting trees. They repeatedly attacked police posts and large-scale farmers across the country were protesting against the arrest of their leaders and confiscation of their property. They would gather the neighboring villagers by blowing conch shells. And they would surround the police teams and attack them. The pressure for non-payment of taxes increased. The struggle for Chankapur happened in a similar manner. The list of martyr memorials here is as follows. In which Raje Ramrao Deshmukh, Raje Bhagwantrao Deshmukh, Zipru Jagtap, Bhavdu Bhusara, Arjun Bhoje, Bhusas Bhavdu, Bhau Naik, Yessa Nathu, Dhondu Movji, Dhondi Birbal, Fakira Patel, Mavoji Dharma, Trimbak Patel, Soya N Athu, Gunga Eka, Raoji Ramji, Mahadu Kakadya, Dharma Yashwant, Dhondu Kalu, Nathu Bovaji, Guru Patel, Roop Patel, Govind Vithu, Devji Ramji, Bhiva Lakhya, Shiv Pandu, Santu Pandu, Arjun Mokhuya, Hari Chandu, Lahana Dhodi, Bhau Devji, Pandiya Devji and Ramji Hariya^[13]. in which only four names appear in this conflict. All other names appear in the struggle of 1857^[14].

Table 1: According of record to come out Suppression of Truth, first-the local vernacular News Papers and British letters, to show that False Statement and True fact.

Facts	News Papers	British Record
The Collector went to Chankapur Strength of Police	11 th Oct. 1930 125	19 th Oct. 1930 86
Collector order of fired	to blank Cartridges	No blank Cartridges were fired.
Action of Police	(i) Fire without Collector order, (ii) 13 th Oct. they came to Kanashi and beat the people and looted hole village	(i) No firing <i>et al.</i> (ii) 20 th Oct. they came, no looting or beating was done.
(i) Killed People (ii) Wounded People	40 to 45 60 to 70	02 04
Night firing	Absence of Collector	No firing was done at night.
Dead bodies	Floating about in Chankapur Tank	Is entirely absurd.
People kept away in place	15 days	On next morning, 300 to 400 men come from 20 villages and paid their grazing fees.

Conclusion

Keeping in mind the fact of Chankapur incident, regional and government sources stand to protect their ideology. In the end my conclusion is as follows-

1. 'History from below', ideas of isolation regarding Indian nationalism theory. This study is based not only on political viewpoint but also on economic and sociologically class, caste factors. The lower group of the society (peasants) and their beginning of agitation was a very important reason for the decreasing price of commodities (agriculture). The tribal group had started their agitation because of cattle grazing charges and forest acts destroying their primary needs.
2. The term 'tribe' is used to distinguish socially organized people from 'caste' and should not convey a sense of complete separation from the mainstream of Indian life. The Kolis of the Western Ghats and the Gonds of the Central Province and their Jungle Satyagraha were different from Gandhian ideas.
3. Govind Gare, Bhowmik Deshmukh, Ramesh Padwal

and Ramesh Bhoje have interpreted the Jungle Satyagraha struggle as a method of nationalism. Phadke Y.D. Said only about Baglan Satyagraha, he did not write about Chankapur struggle. My conclusion is that this struggle is based on the 'path of Gandhian ideas' but was on the path of violent activities.

Reference

1. <https://www.google.co.in#congress+nashikdistrict>
2. Chandra B. Modern India, NCERT, Delhi; c1996. p. 247. The movement rapidly violation of salt laws and over the country was soon followed by defiance of forest laws in Maharashtra, Karnataka and the central Provinces and refusal rural Chaukidari tax in eastern India.
3. Ibid.
4. <https://www.google.co.in#jungal+satyagraha>
5. The tribal community (Koli, Kokana and Bhils) area of Baglan and Chankapur in Nashik District, they has follow the order of Mahatma Gandhi, 'where no Salt,

- their start Jungal Satyagraha'; Kumar Ketkar, (1985) *Katha Swatantryachi*, Balbharti, Pune, pp. 222.
6. <https://www.google.co.in/#chankapur> Chankapur Dam Project was completed in 1911 at a cost of Rs. 17,69,596 under the British Rule. A dam is constructed across the Girna near Chankapur village in Kalvan taluka. About 23 miles below the Chankapur dam is a pick-up weir at Thengonde village in Baglan taluka. Two canals, *i.e.*, the Girna right bank and the Girna left bank, take off from this weir. At present, the dam has a storage capacity of 1,056 m.c.ft. The Girna left bank canal is 18.25 miles long. It takes off from the Thengonde weir. It has an irrigable area of 23,000 acres all of which falls in Malegaon taluka.
 7. Sarkar S. *Modern India 1885-1947*, Macmillan, Delhi; c1983. p. 43. <https://www.google.co.in/#jungal+satyagraha>
 8. A 'history from Bellow', in which the tribal rebellion of Birsa Munda might find mention before the quarrels of Moderates and Extremists.
 9. Gaikwad Rajendra, Chankapur (Tal. Kalvan, Dist. Nashik) Yethil 1930 chya Ladhyacha Abhyasachya Sandarbhat 'Vanchitancha Itihas' Ya Vicharpravahatun Itihaslekhan- drushtya Ek Charcha, (Marathi) Include in, 'Shodhparv', Vol- IV, Nashik; c2017. The name of five Leaders- Piyaji Sayaji Gavit (Devalgaon), Kalu Soma Kunvar (Palasdar), Dawal Bagul (Desgaon), Sakharam Thakre (Chinchpada), and Damu Waghmare (Amdara) they are to punish of prison. and the name of three Leaders- Dadasaheb Gadre, Mahant Sitaramshastri and Tarktirth Laxmanshastri Joshi led by Baglan Satyagraha. Fadke. 1993;70:180-181.
 10. Home Department, Special - 750 (14) K / 1930, Independence and Civil Disobedient Movement, S 57 to 63.
 11. Sarkar S, *Adhunik Bharat 1885-1947*, (Hindi) Rajkamal, Delhi, (Home Political 18/11-18/12/1930) Among the Kolis of Western Ghats and the Gonds of Central Provinces, Forest Satyagraha had long passed beyond Gandhian Controls, with repeated violent attacks on police pickets and large-scale and indiscriminate cutting-down of trees. 2016. p. 316-317.
 12. Home Department, Cited in Special - 750 - S 97.
 13. List of Hutatma Smarak in Chankapur. The information of dais men to mentioned in Hutatma Smarak is not correct- the name Raje Bhagvantrav Deshmukh, was dies in Struggle in 1857, he was leader of tribal people hanged in Peth at that time. Arjun Bhoje was dies in 4th Jan. 1955. (Letter of Rights, Ozer- Kalvan Taluka)
 14. Ketkar K. *Katha Swatantryachi*, Balbharti, In this book only four names are mentioned in the Chankapur struggle that name is Zipru Jagtap, Bhavadu Bhusara, Arjun Bhoje, Bhusas Bhavadu; c985.