

UGC SPONSORED MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT

“History Of Jungle Satyagraha In Western Maharashtra During Civil Disobedience Movement-1930”

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Executive Summery

The Indian National Movement is perhaps the biggest mass movement in modern world. It was a movement in which hundreds of thousands of people regardless to class, cast, creed, sex ideology and religion were gathered together in political action. Civil Disobedience Movement was an important landmark in the history of freedom movement in India. Indian freedom movement, which was confined in the upper class in the society and the urban centers till the end of Tilak era, began to gradually assume the character of mass moment in Gandhi era. The basic contradiction in the Indian society was between the elite on one hand and subaltern on other hand. The outstanding features of this movement were based upon political, social and economic perspective of its leaders. Civil disobedience moment was the first political movement to reach the rural parts and different sections of the society. Especially this movement makes political awareness in peasants and scheduled Tribes in the form of jungle Satyagraha. This movement popularized democratic ideas and institutions in the country.

Mahatma Gandhi emerged as a prominent lealer of Indian National movement. In 1920 after the death of Lokmanya Tilak. Mahatma Gandhi introduces the principle of ‘Satyagraha’ and ‘Non-violence’ which, he was earlier adopted in South Africa to protest against colonial regime. In the cause of time these two weapons proved very effective to become mass movement. Mahatma Gandhi showed the way of Satyagraha to the common people to join the national

movement. This way was less dangerous but more effective. Hence the people from all sections joined this Satyagraha movement. Even the illiterate people adopted this Satyagraha principle to participate in the national movement.

Mahatma Gandhi launched three great agitations for winning the National freedom of our country. Civil disobedience movement (1930-34) was quite powerful and effective in the country in general and Maharashtra in particular. As far as Maharashtra was concerned, it should be noted that the background of civil disobedience movement was prepared during the decade preceding the movement. In 1920, Mahatma Gandhi's popularity increased. Though the Kesari group, which consisted of orthodox followers of Tilak, opposed Gandhi's leadership. His novel technique of Satyagraha and non-violence struggle became popular. Gandhi's ideology of Satyagraha gradually produced powerful impact upon the people in Maharashtra. People of Maharashtra were in course of time disillusioned with the narrow council policies of the Swaraj Party and the non-Brahmin Party. Consequently the masses in Maharashtra were largely attracted towards the congress activities under the inspiring leadership of Gandhi. During the decade between 1920-1930 congress had brought about wide awakening among different sections of the society such as peasants, workers, youths, students and women. All those sections were systematically organized and profoundly influenced by Mahatma Gandhi's thought and leadership.

Gandhi was able to successfully change the nature of leadership of the congress. Because he could mobilize a wide range of following among diverse groups both in urban and rural areas. He started non-cooperation movement in 1920 and gave a programme which consisted of surrender of titles, boycott of schools and colleges, boycott of legislative council elections and foreign goods etc. He appealed people to accept these programmes and advised them to use Khadi and

swadesi. He also devoted energies for Hindu – Muslim unity, education of women and eradication of untouchability. He brought women and peasants in national movement and that's why Indian masses were attracted largely towards the congress. He taught the people the technique of S Satyagraha which was less dangerous and more effective due to which men, women and children's participated in this movement. Consequently Gandhiji secured good response for his non cooperative movement. This Satyagraha was based upon the principle of truth and non-violence (Ahinsa)

Gandhiji suddenly stopped the no co-operation movement due to the Chauri-chaura violence. Sudden suspension of non-co-operation movement frustrated many congress leaders and it leads some congressmen to explore other methods and constitutional struggle. After the suspension of Non-co-operation movement many events look place. The Swarajists politics, Non-Brahmin moment, birth of communist party, Hindustani sevarenl, Youth Leagues, Women's conferences, agitation against Simon commission, celebrations of independence day etc. events gave the people of Maharashtra necessary training to take part in coming struggle i.e. civil disobedience movement.

The British government refuses to accept Neharu report. Thus a serious political deadlock was created. There was great influence of the leftist thought within the congress. Gandhiji in order to counter the growing influence of Bolshevism in Indian had to launch another struggle. In its annual session held at Lahor in December 1929 congress passed the resolution of complete independence under the president ship of Jawaharlal Nehru. 26 January was declared as the 'Independence Day'. On 26 January 1930 'Independence Day' programmers performed hoisting National Flag all over the country. On 14th February 1930 the congress working committee met at Sabarmati and vested Gandhi with full powers

to launch the civil disobedience movement. Before taking the final and irrevocable step Gandhiji tried his level best for peaceful settlement and to stall the forthcoming movement. But the government did not respond favorably. On 27 Feb. 1930 Gandhiji annealed the plan of campaign and declared that he would first defy the salt law. And finally on 12th March 1930 'Victory or Death' with this as motto Gandhiji with his seventy eight chosen followers started the famous Dandi March for his salt Satyagraha.

After 1866 British government imposed many restrictions on forest as the British govt. realized the importance of forest well as they realized that jungle (forest) is one of the important sources for their income. Forest was divided into Reserve forest (big and important) and minor forest.⁴

The British government passed forest Act and imposed many restrictions on forest. British government prohibited cutting wood, grass and prohibited grazing the cattle in forest. Government prohibited cutting trees even from the own land of the farmers. The forest guards objected to bringing fuel and other forest goods. These petty officials of the forest administration harassed the people in several ways. Restrictions were also imposed upon the forest tribes.

The Maharashtra peasantry was irritated due to the tyrannical administration of the forest department. Forestry to them was as much as importance as land revenue issue. Because agriculture and forestry had close relations. The grievances regarding forest were an important issue which evolved all sections of peasantry of western Maharashtra, notably Ahamadnagar, Nasik, Pune, Satara and Thane districts. As boundary line of useful forestry was not fixed, the government declared that area as the forest area where there was a cover of a tree and reserved forest regulations were applied to it. The Villages were harassed because all illegal

exaction e.g. for trespass of restricted area. The cattle pound fee at higher rate than the prescribed rates were charged. It naturally became difficult for the peasants to graze his cattle in grazing area which were near his farm. Cutting of wood was prohibited. The peasantry suffered from forest department's bureaucratic approach as guards, foresters and rangers trebled them. Peasantry was ready to retaliate the tyrannical administration of forest department by launching Satyagraha movement.¹⁰

Rural folk had many grievances against the forest regulations. They were not allowed to graze the cattle's and cutting of grass for their cattle. Besides this, there was a harassment of peasantry by forest authorities. Hence the congressman realized the discontent among the peasantry and easily persuaded them to launch satyagraha to violate the forest regulations at several places in western Maharashtra.¹¹

The grievances of villages against the forest regulations were genuine. The major demands of the villagers were:

- 1) The cattle grazing fee should be reduced from 4 nanas to 2 nanas
- 2) Use of fire – arms to protect the crop from wild animals should be allowed.
- 3) In the auction of reserved forest lands some concession should be given to agriculturist.
- 4) The rayats should be allowed free use of dry leaves, wood etc.
- 5) Right to grow teak trees on malaki land be recognised¹²

In the last quarter of 19th century the alien government in India attempted to monopolize forest wealth by tightening its grip over forest for more revenue and other purpose. During the early days of Gandhi era instance forest satyagraha which on many occasions turned violent took place in Cuddapa, Godavari and

Vishaka pattanam district of present Andhra state. In 1930 forest satyagraha were brought about on large scale in the hilly regions of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Central province, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar as well as parts of Andhra. These popular actions called forest upheavals has closed relationships with the nationalist movement.

There were other demands too. The following minimum demands were put forward to the government at the time of forest satyagraha campaign. :

- 1) Forest department should be placed under the control of Divan appointed by people.
- 2) The senior officer of the forest department should be an Indian.
- 3) All forest bureaucracy should be Indian
- 4) Hereditary rights of the forest protection and development should not be violated or customary right should not be trespassed
- 5) Gayran (cow- grazing yards) and gavthan (village's site) should be recognized as the common property of the villages and it should not be merged in forest areas and it is already merged it should.
- 6) Without the written permission of the land owner cultivated or no cultivated land near the forest area should not be acquired and merged in to forest.
- 7) Those land owners who are ready to manage their land by consent in to forest, should get proper compensation as per the quality of land.
- 8) Boundaries of the forest should be fixed by laying out iron wire permanently etc.¹³

The rural peasant's masses began to pass under the grooving influence of nationalist politics and consequently got attracted towards the freedom struggle

under the Gandhijis leadership. Some leaders of Non – Brahmin masses such as Maharshi V. R. Shinde, keshavrao Jedhe, Bhaurao Patil, Dinkarao Jawalkar etc. mobilize the peasant masses in rural Maharashtra in the main stream of national life during the days of civil Disobedience movement. On account of peasants participation in the struggle there occurred a series of jungle satyagraha in the state. Vidharbha, Khandesh, Satara, Raigad, Thana, Ahamadnagar, Nasik, Pune district were in the forefront of the forest satyagraha campaigning in Maharashtra. Thousands of peasants and congress volunteers participated in the forest satyagraha. Workers women's, students, tribal people were also active in this satyagraha.

As salt manufacturing become impracticable because of monsoon rains in Maharashtra, Maharashtra Civil Disobedience Movement committee turned their attention towards Forest Satyagraha and violation of forest law. In a meeting of 9th May 1930, Maharashtra Civil Disobedience committee discussed the program of Jungle satyagraha. The strategy of jungle Satyagraha has been worked out by Shankarao Deo and Maharashtra Congress War Council. Mass meetings were held in various parts of Maharashtra, urging people to cut down trees and grass, to graze cattle in reserve forest to refuse auction of grazing land, not to pay grazing fee, and not to help government servants. The spirit of lawlessness was preached far and wide and everything has done to create in the minds of villagers that forest law could be broken with impunity. The major events of jungle Satyagraha occurred in Ahamadnagar, Nasik, Satara, Pune and Kolaba district in western Maharashtra.

By the begging of June 1930, Sangamner, Ahamadhang district, become the center of civil disobedience activities in Maharashtra. Camp was opened in sangamner on 22 May 1930 by Maharashtra war council. The field of operation was mountainous. There were no easy communications. Sub-camps were opened

all over sangamner and Akola taluka to carry out the control plans. The movement spread like wild fire in Maharashtra.

Forest Satyagraha campaign of Maharashtra started in Sangamner and Akola taluka (tahasil) on 22nd July 1930. Batches of Satyagraha arrived at Sangamner from different places. Satyagraha committees were formed and masses were given pledge to follow strictly the path of Non-violence. The Satyagraha leader's created awakening in the minds of the peasant and on 22nd July 1930, the day of 'Ashadhi Ekadashi' forest Satyagraha was launched simultaneously at twenty/ twenty two places in sangamner and Akola taluka. On the day more than one lac of people participated in this satyagraha.¹ Flame of jungle Satyagraha reached kopergaon and Rahuri talukas too. In violation of forest laws, large number of peasants took part in Satyagraha and cut grass in the prohibited areas in large quantity. Big public meetings were held at Sangvi, Kotul and Rajur which were attended by the peasants from different villages. The peasants declared in these meetings that they would adhere to the principles of Satyagraha even at the cost of their lives and would never retrace their steps till the victory was won. The two peasant's leaders exclaimed with great emotion that all the peasants of their villages were united to wage a non-violent war against their common enemy. The satyagrahis of Rajur fasted in protest against the insult of the national flag by the police.² Intention of the forest Satyagraha of 22 July 1930 at above places was to graze cattle and collect grass without paying grazing fee.

The forest Satyagraha at Sangamner and Akola taluka in Ahamadnagar district received considerable support from local people and particularly from villages like Putlya hill, Pempuri, Chandrapur, shamsherpur etc. At Shamsherpur in Akola taluka. Cows were garlanded and they were taken to the forest to graze. Large number of people was present to witness the moment. Grass was also cut

and carried it away by the people who were presented it as a trophy. At Pengiri S.S. Navare made speech and asked people to break the Forest Law. S.S. Navare was arrested on 23rd July 1930 on his return to Sangamner and was convicted. Bombay leaders like Lalji Pendase and Atmaram Raoji Bhat arrived from Bombay via Nasik to Ahamadnagar on 23rd July 1930. Lalaji Pendase delivered an anti-government speech that night at Ahamadnagar. People decided to boycott the police officers at Ghargaon in Sangamner – taluka and Kotul in Akola taluka.

National week was observed in Ahamadnagar from 26th July 1930. Social boycott on government servants was started in Ahamadnagar and Kopargaon. Processions were taken out including men and women. Vinayak Balwant Chowker, pleader of Ahamadnagar urged people to enroll as congress members.³

On the day of Gokul Asthami i.e. on 17th August 1930 general of grazing of cattle in reserved forest was advocated. Manohar Jairam Bhalerao, a retired talathi of Kotul took leading role in this forest movement. Police officers and government servants were socially boy cotted in Ghargaon, Sangamner, Kotul and Kopargaon talukas. An important aspect of this Satyagraha was that many talathis and police Patils tendered their resignation in protest against the repressive measures taken by police authorities which put the prestige of the government at the lowest ebb.⁴ Police Patil of kavate Budruk, Sangamner taluka also sent his resignation. Punitive action was taken against volunteers and others in Sangamner and Akola taluka for forest Satyagraha and instigations to forest offences. Cattles were impounded in many places. At some places cattle's were released by paying charges.

The forest agitation and refuse of paying taxes were widely spread in the kolis and Thakurs of the Dangs. There was very difficult to collect the grazing fee to government officials though armed police were present. Agitation was most

active in Sangamner and Akola taluka. When the sub-Inspector went to Shamshepur to assist in collection of taxes, grazing fee, he found a defiant crowd around 5000. The crowd were armed with axes, scythes etc. so the police party had to retire from the place. As per the report of the District Superintendent of police regarding the incidents in Akola taluka 100 armed police try to find out the centers of the incident. Jungle Satyagraha incidents were continued at sangamner, but police unable to find the exact location of the satyagraha.⁵ Collection of grazing fee received a setback. Grass obtained at the jungle at Ashvi was sold for Rs 12-7-3. The amount was sent to congress committee Ahamadnagar. The Bari villagers near Sangamner were boycotted by their neighbors' for not taking part in the movement. Food grains were collected at Sangamner for the sibir.

On September 4th 1930 a meeting of 500 kolis and Thakurs were held at Harishchandragd to decided not to pay grazing fees. They have also decided not to trouble the police or forest officers.⁶ From September 1930 onwards there was less interest in Akola and Sangamner taluka in forest Satyagraha because of repressive policy of police.

Forest Satyagraha were held at many places in Nasik district too. The role of scheduled tribes in jungle Satyagraha in Nasik district especially in Baglan and Kalvan taluka is noteworthy and one of the biggest Satyagraha in which thousands of peasants including women were participated. The participation of scheduled tribes like kokani koli in national struggle through jungle Satyagraha was the unique feature of the Civil Disobedience Movement. Jungle Satyagraha gave them the opportunity to participate in the stream of national movement.

In Nasik district civil Disobedience agitation was quite powerful in many places. Meetings were held to congratulate Gandhiji for his arrest in May 1930.

Resolutions were passed in these meetings congratulating Gandhi on his arrest and declaring they would vigorously continue the movement. Huge audiences were gathered for these meetings at Nasik, Yeola, Malegaon etc. places. Picketing of liquor shops and foreign cloth shops was usually a daily programme in the district. Hoisting of National flag was performed in many places. So the ground was prepared by the above early agitations for the forest satyagraha. Meetings were held in connection with forest Satyagraha at Nasik, Yeola and Sangamner. On 28 May 1930 a party of volunteers passed through Sinner en route to Sangamner to join the forest Act disobedience movement which was inaugurated at Nandur en route. Five of the party were from Nasik and six from Jaikheda, Satana taluka.⁷ Sitaram Shastri of Nasik has attended many meetings at various places to direct the people's attention to the forest Act and to the breaking of sections of the Act. He visited Igatpuri, Ghoti, Dindori, Vinchur and Nandgaon. Many volunteers from Yeola & Satana taluka preceded to Sangamner for forest satyagraha. From 12th June 1930 to 20th June 1930. Meetings were held at Nasik, Sinner, Yeola, Manmad, Kalwan, Lohaner, Satana, Tiwan, Mulher, Malwan etc. Places in connection with forest Satyagraha. Hundreds of people attended these meetings. The issue discussed in these meetings was the next movement of breaking of forest laws in the north of the district, especially in Satana taluka. During this week the volunteers who have collected at Nampur in Satana taluka toured in batches in Satana, Malegaon & Kalwan taluka inciting the people to take part in the forest Satyagraha and advising the village officers to resign. These volunteers had the experience of salt Satyagraha at many places. The people especially in Satana, Kalwan, Niphad and north – western part of Malegaon taluka were very interested in this movement. They were advocates to boycott the police and foreign goods.

Forest satyagraha has started in Chopoda, Chalisgaon, Raver, Yawal and Jalgaon. In the first week of August forest satyagraha was occurred in Bhiwad jungle in Baglan taluka in Nasik district where 125 people from Pimpalner area have gone there. Rajaram Deshpande of Pimpalner had brought some grass which was taken in Procession.¹⁵

In khandesh mass satyagraha took place at shahada, Nandurbar, Sakri, Sindhkhed and other places. About 500 people were sentenced to different terms of imprisonment. About 50,000 people participated

A mass forest satyagraha was undertaken at shahada (Dhule) in August 1930. Patidars or Gujars were prominent in 15 to 10 thousand peasants who attended. About 3 to 4 thousand women participated. At Dangura 3 to 4 thousand people participated. On 17th August the forestsatyagraha was inaugurated in Sakri taluka in the presence of 25,000 Satyagrahis. This was followed by a series of jungle Satyagraha at Laling and Jayantnagar. Bhusaval had already earned a name of as the center of nationalist agitation under Annasaheb Dastane,. The Bhusawal Bomb case will find a venerable place in the history of freedom struggle in Maharashtra. Satyagraha was also observed at Raver, Yawal, Chalisgaon and Pachora Taluka of Jalgaon district.

In the month of June 1930 Mahadev Dattu Sant and Manohar Dinkar Sant of Ambegaon petha went to Borghat village and advocate against grazing fee. On June 10, 1930 Ragunath Anant Ganthe and Bhika Nana Kaduskar of Chincholi village came to Ambegaon Petha, held a meeting there and advocated the non-payment of grazing fee and non- bidding for forest grass Auction.²¹

There were numerous instances of deviances of forest law in Ambegaon Petha. The common feature of agitation was destruction of trees and damage of

teak and sandal wood trees, grazing of cattle in reserved forest land etc. These Occurrences took place at village of Gangapur on 6 July 1930 where 1,000 teak trees, at Simbe budruk 8,500 plants and on 8th July 1930 at Ghoda 500 teak trees were damaged. The people withheld the payment of grazing fee in Nandori, Shenoli, Sakri, Pimpalgaon villages. N.R. Gunjal, B. Chandra Chuda and Surve were the leaders of Dhonda forest Satyagraha. Vinaykarao Surve spoke on forest grievances and said that it was only the British government that had imposed forest law, liquor and toll tax on the people. They had brought ruin to cultivators. Babasaheb Chandra Chndu asked the people to come Pune and present a memo to Governor. Further, he said that the government had made a crore out of the forest products, but it did not spend a rupee on the people. On the other hand, it paid big salaries to the forest officials.

There were extensive peasants awakening in the district during the days of anti – small holding Bill movement in 1928. The peasant conferences turned the peasant masses and their leaders in to national politics. By January 1928 in Satara district several village meetings followed by Taluka peasant's conferences at walwa, Karad, Wai and Karegaon were held. District peasant's Conference was also organized at Satara and it was presided over by a political leader Shri N.E. Nawale of Ahamadnagar. The anti – small holding Bill movement with leaders like Kashavrao Jedhe, Dinkarrao Jawalkar, Keshavrao Vichare, Bhaurao Patil, Shankarrao Bogar, Rambhau Ghatage and Sambhaji Patil taking lead in Satara meeting, remained a non- Brahmin affair. Later on, Bombay Provincial Peasant League (Setakari Sangh) with Advocate Raghunathrao Rane of Satara as its president was founded to oppose the British Government Rule. In 1928 Bombay provincial peasant's conference was held at Poona. Maharshi V.R. Shinde presided over it and in his presidential speech he attached the peasants cause with Gandhijis

Nationalist Politics. So from 1920 due to activities of Non- Brahmin movement peasant's class in Satara District become politically alert. Shahu Chhatrapati Son of Chhatrapati Sambhaji made Satara the capital of Maratha Raj and from this time Marathas found a dominant class in this district and it was also in the fore front of our freedom movement. Political consciousness and awareness created by the non – Brahmin Party during 1920 led the young, Militant, Non – Brahmin leaders like Jedhe, Jawalkar, Nana Patil, Keshavrao Vichare, Bhaurao Patil etc. to nationalist politics and they mobilized the peasants masses to Nationalist Movement.

A Series of Jungle Satyagraha occurred in Satara district during the Civil Disobedience Movement campaign. Jungle Satyagraha took place at Kameri, Retharedharan, Peth, Kavathe in Walwa Taluka, Tambave, Kale, Lohare, Belmachi in Karad taluka, Shirala, Prachitgad, Bilashi in Shirala Petha, Mayani, Vita in Khanapur Taluka, Masur in Karad Taluka and Islampur in Walwa Taluka etc places.

Breach of forest law was propagated in rural areas of the district. Several batches of young volunteers moved about in rural areas giving anti government speeches. The meetings were held in many villages in which the breach of the forest laws and nonpayment of grazing fees was openly advocated. These speeches captured the minds of the agriculturist who took active part in the movement.

In the month of July 1930 hundreds of meetings were held in the district. Batches of volunteers return or rereleased from Shiroda Salt Camp were moving in batches from villages to village carrying on propaganda of breach of forest law and advised the Government servants especially, the police to resign and join the movement. Students are also pressed to leave schools and colleges.¹ Old agitators appear to train students to take their place. Social boycott on government servants

especially on police was also waged at some places. Two anti – civil disobedience campaign meetings were held. One at khed Budruk near Lonand in Koregaon taluka and another at Tasgaon by local Talathi and police Patils and requested Government to reinstate Vatandar Kulkarnis in the place of Talathi.² Large number of students and people and merchants roused their banners by hoisting black flags during Governors visit to satara and Karad On 12th July 1930. Prosecutions were instituted against the most militant of these speakers and volunteers.

The movement grew in Karad, Koregaon, Walwa, Patan talukas and Shirala Mahal. In the speech of volunteers, the problem of breach of forest laws, spread of khaddar, boycott of foreign cloth and annual action sale of grass in Reserved areas was advocated, Boycott of Government servants, foreign goods were propagated.

In the second week of August 1930 more than 70 meetings were held in different parts of the district. As a result of increase propaganda, the movement gained ground among the illiterate masses, particularly among the peasants. There were four cases of open defiance of forest law. In two cases the villagers forcibly freed their cattle which were kept in bounds, while in remaining two cases people cut down grass and fuel from the reserved forest area.³ In the week ending of August 23, 1930 there were cases of open defiance of forest law too. In one village the villagers allowed their cattle to graze in the reserved forest area while in another the forest guard was assaulted when he was taking the cattle owned by the peasants to lock in the government custody.

Forest Satyagraha took place at Rethare – dharan under the leadership of Bapusaheb Deshmukh in Walwa Taluka. To defy the forest law by cutting grass in reserved forest they have made silver sickle. People from surrounding villages i.e. from Peth, Walwa, Islampur, Shirala gathered at Rethare – dharan. They went in

procession to the reserve forest. Cut the grass with silver sickle and defy the forest law. They shouted that Jungle ka Kayada tod diya.

In the month of August 1930 forest guard was beaten in Satara district and in another case a Ranger had the barrel of his gun taken from him. In Karad Range at Tambave village people attacked the party of two range forest officer with some guards, while the party was raiding Tambave village forest. The forest range party could not defend themselves. Some women from Tambave snatched the barrel of the Rangers gun, an axe from guard and two lathis from the constables.⁴

The strongest, aggressive and violent forest Satyagraha which attracted attention of the public as well as government machinery occurred at Bilashi in Satara district. Bilashi is a small village in the hilly region of Shirala Petha near Islampur. But because of its radical and aggressive type of forest Satyagraha its fame spread all over the state, country and out of country. Times of India described the Bilashi forest Satyagraha episode as 'The Daccan Peasants Armed Revolt in Bilashi.'⁵

Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930 launched by Gandhiji spread like a wild fire all over India and from the second week of July 1930. The people in many villages began to observe Satyagraha on their own. Bilashi, a village in Shirala Mahal near Islampur in Satara district was a case in point. Bilashi carried out forest Satyagraha in protest against the unjust grazing fees.

It was decided to start a Satyagraha camp on 15th July 1930. The preparation was made as per directives of Maharashtra civil Disobedience Mandal regarding forest Satyagraha in Bilashi area. Volunteers like Laxmanrao Hasbanis of Shirala, Dattapant Kulkarni of Bhilawadi, Vishnu Patil of Kurlap and Bapusaheb Deshmukh of Malewadi come to Bilashi and along with local workers and volunteers they decided to end British rule by launching the forest Satyagraha. The

Villages in surrounding area had boycotted the grazing fields and the auction sales of Grass from reserve forest. The government officials including police were subjected to social boycott. Forest Satyagraha started on 18th July 1930 under the guidance of local congress workers, Shri M.V. Kulkarni alias Boburao Charankar, Bapusaheb Deshmukh, Ganpatrao Patil, etc. On that day P.B. Lohar brought two axes to cut Teake wood. People marched with axes and sickles to the forest of Kusaiwadi (Aswaldara) north of Bilashi. People cut teak wood rod of 34 feet from the reserved forest and brought it to Bilashi. The teak pole was fixed in the ground in front of Rameshwar Mahadeo Temple and hoisted a tricolor national flag on it.⁶ At the time it was unlawful and extremely difficult to cut even on small piece of wood from reserve forest. But the people of Bilashi showed bravery and challenged the British rulers.

On 20th August 1930, people from Rethare – dharan, Charan, Bilashi and other villages of Walwa taluka participated in the forest satyagraha. More than 50,000 people took part in the forest Satyagraha. From 28 August 1930 a series of Jungle Satyagraha were brought about in Satara district at the instance of Maharashtra Civil Disobedience committee. This time under the guidance of Shri Baba Lele a peaceful Jungle Satyagraha was performed at Bilashi.¹¹ When the information of all this events known to district office Satara, Mr. Aminuddin, District collector of Satara and D.S.P. Mr. O. Garman along with 2-3 hundred armed police come to Islampur. The police party went to Rethare – Dharan, Peth, Nerle and Boargaon where collector ordered lathi charge on innocent volunteers. He recovered from these villagers an amount of compensation for the damage done to the forest during forest Satyagraha on 1st of September 1930. Police blocked Islampur and took away the national flag and the pole was erected in front of collector's tent with the Union Jack. Then on the next day, police party proceeded to Shirala and reached

Bilashi on 5th September 1930 in the morning. On that day about 600 to 700 police encircled the temple where the tricolor flag was unfurled and started indiscriminately beating the men and women were protecting the flag. The attack appeared to the people something like the invasion of Nadirshah. The women's, who were protecting the flag, were beaten, and only when they become unconscious the police could touch the flag. The police broke the teak wood pole and dishonored the national flag. When the police force was returning, somebody provoked the police by throwing stones at them. Consequently police fired two rounds which killed two innocent boys named Sitaram Bhau Chambhar and Khondi Santu Kumbhar from poor families of Mangrul. Besides it, more than 20 men were severely injured and hundreds of them received lathi blows. Thirty nine people including volunteers were arrested.¹²

The British Government was forced to enter in to negotiations with Indian leaders as a result of which an all – India federation, full of responsible government and provincial autonomy were accepted as the goal to be achieved in no distant future⁷

Till the end of Tilak era freedom movement in Maharashtra had middle class character. Peasant masses held themselves aloof from Gandhian agitation even in the initial phase. So the Gandhiji's Non – co – operation movement had achieved only limited success in Maharashtra. Non Brahmin Party exercised Considerable in influence upon rural peasant masses for quite some time. Especially in western Maharashtra there was in influence of Shahu Chhatrapati's ideology and thoughts. In western Maharashtra peasants belongs majority in Maratha cast. This loby was some aloof from the Nationalist politics. However, situation gradually changed in 1920's. During this period people especially rural masses in Maharashtra were influenced by by Gandhian ideology which was spread by leaders like Shankarrao

Jawadekar in Maharashtra. They attracted towards the Gandhiji's ideology and simple but novel technique of struggle that is Satyagraha. Gandhiji has showed the path of non – violence and Satyagraha, which was less dangerous but more effective to achieve Swaraj. So the common masses become fearless. Maharshi V. R. Shinde, Keshavrao Jedhe, Dinkarrao Jawalkar etc. mobilized the peasant masses in rural Maharashtra and led them to the main stream of National Movement.

Due to peasant participation in Jungle Satyagraha campaign, civil Disobedience movement was successful in different parts of the state. Since the days of Civil Disobedience movement nature of leadership of freedom Movement in Maharashtra has also began to change. Jungle Satyagraha and participation of rural peasant's masses in it develop some leadership among themselves. New pattern of leadership emerged in Maharashtra and the new leadership subsequently exercised powerful influence on the public life.

Birth of new Maharashtra had taken place after the civil Disobedience Movement of 1930. Past politics in Maharashtra had been changed and lower middleclass (Bahujan Samaj) has awakened. New thoughts and ideologies had emerged in Maharashtra.

One more thing was proved after this movement that Maharashtra totally passed under congress influence. Those who did not participate in this movement become weak.

Thus, though civil Disobedience Movement could not completely achieved in its objectives it marked a critically important stage in the progress of the anti-imperialist struggle and Jungle Satyagraha played an important role in it.

