

CHAPTER THREE

GROWTH OF LEFTIST MOVEMENT IN SATARA DISTRICT IN THE 20TH CENTURY

A Leftist movement aims at realising the rightful claims of the downtrodden masses in the structure of society, by radically transforming its social, economic and political systems. It is a movement to establish social justice, denial of which has created barriers and handicaps in the path of the masses in their endeavour for better material and cultural life. In an unjust society, majority of the masses are denied the fundamental right to self-realisation or to the flowering of personality. This is inequitous as far as individuals are concerned; it is harmful to society inasmuch as it denies itself the benefits that would accrue from healthy development of so many individuals. Social structures, and economic relations based on private property or adverse terms of trade for toiling sections of society create barriers and deny opportunities of development to the weaker sections of society.¹

Saints and philanthropists of earlier days had pleaded for humane behaviour towards the weaker sections. But individual charity cannot serve as the basis of social order. In a generous mood, the privileged few may condescendingly throw a few crumbs towards the unfortunate multitudes but it cannot bring about a change in the social structure which is necessary if the weaker sections are to get adequate opportunities. Equal right of every individual to adequate opportunity for fullest self-development must be recognised and this recognition must permeate all the systems and functioning of society. Social barriers based on birth should be removed and nobody should be in a position to

exploit the other only because the former has private property. While the latter has none. Transformation of social and economic systems in this direction is an arduous task.²

Maharashtra, a State of Indian union, emerged in its present form in 1960. It consists of four divisions viz., Bombay Poona, Aurangabad and Nagpur. Due to different historical background, the three regions, namely Western Maharashtra (consisting of the revenue divisions of Bombay and Poona), Marathwada (i.e., Aurangabad Division) and Vidarbha (i.e., Nagpur Division) have developed distinct characteristics. Having been part of the old Bombay Presidency the Western Maharashtra had the benefit of early industrialisation, spread of modern education and long tradition of political movement compared to other two regions.

Socially, however, there is not much variation in these three regions. Bombay, the metropolitan centre, is obviously more cosmopolitan; but the rest of the Western Maharashtra has the same social structure as is obtained in Vidarbha and Marathwada. Caste composition of the three regions varies only marginally. Scheduled caste population seems to have been more concentrated in Marathwada and some districts of Western Maharashtra, their percentage being 9.95 and 8.46 respectively. It may, however, be noted that many of those belonging to Mahar caste (Major scheduled caste in Maharashtra) had adopted Buddhism in 1956 and so they are no longer counted as belonging to Scheduled Caste. But if these

neoBuddhists are bracketed with the rest of the S.C. population, their density would appear more in Bombay city and Vidarbha. According to 1961 census, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe components in three regions were as follows:

Table.1³

	% of Scheduled Caste population to total population	% of Scheduled Caste tribe population to total population
Bombay Division	2.75	12.35
Poona Division	8.46	2.10
Aurangabad Division	9.95	1.60
Nagpur Division	3.75	3.50
Maharashtra State	5.50	6.00

Scheduled tribes are concentrated in the hilly tracts of Thana, Nasik, Dhulia and Jalgaon districts of Western Maharashtra, while equal concentration is visible in Chandrapur, Bhandara, Yeotmal and Amraoti districts of Vidarbha.

On the whole, it may be said that about 15% of Maharashtra's population is traditionally placed at the lowest ladder and so socially handicapped. Persons belonging to other castes who are placed between the high castes of Brahmin and Maratha at the top and Scheduled castes and tribes at the bottom are also suffering from low status in social hierarchy. The Brahmin caste is a small minority (one guess is about 5%). Traditionally it is the holiest

and highest placed group claiming privileges in all walks of life. Immediately before the advent of the British Rule, political power in Maharashtra was effectively welded by the Peshwas, i.e., Brahmins. They enjoyed high positions in the state services, and even in village life, they were socially and economically at the top. Many of them were landlords and some had flourishing business of money-lending. In the early days of British Raj, many of them took to modern education and flocked the ranks of imperial services as well as the newly rising liberal professions. Thus the dominance of Brhmin caste was felt in every walk of life in the 19th century.

Maratha is the biggest single caste group. Traditionally it is placed next to Brahmins. Some of them had shared political power at the centre as well as in the village; but the average Maratha was engaged in agriculture. Bereft of education, he was handicapped in many ways and shared the plight of other lowly castes. The low caste men were mainly traditional artisans and handicraftsmen, who were named as Bara Balutedars and Alutedars. They were socially handicapped and economically dependent upon the peasantry. Scheduled caste people were treated as untouchables. They were to serve the community at large and receive a few crumbs daily for their existence.

This was the composition of Hindu community which accounted for about 85% of the population of the state. Muslims, who are about 10% are the largest single religious minority. Politically

they had been in an advantageous position. But many of the social customs and particularly the caste system of Hindus, have been assimilated by the Muslims who face similar if not worse, social problems.⁴

In Satara District particular, according to 1941 census, i.e., excluding Phaltan, Oundh and Sangli States, the population of Scheduled castes, other Hindus, Muslims and Scheduled Tribes were as follows:

Table-2⁵

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
Scheduled castes	86,093	89,216
Other Hindus	5,33,098	5,43,632
Muslims	25,168	24,422
Scheduled Tribes	509	505
Total	<u>13,02,643</u>	

In this Table only the broad division is shown. Among Hindus, 40,835 were Brahmins and 7,16,973 were Marathas. Marathas constitute more than 55% of the total population. This single caste, though socially next to Brahmins, was educationally backward. They were small land-owners, very proud of their ancestral land. But the land was not much productive for want of irrigated water supply. Naturally, the crop was dependent on the rain. Cash crops were rare. Some, who had their own water supply, usually from well, had some cash crops.

The economic landscape of urban and rural areas is basically different. In rural areas, which constitute 71% of Maharashtra, there is a rich land owner at the top with traders and money-lenders as the next powerful class. These two together account for about 5% of the rural population. Next in the hierarchy is middle sized peasant proprietor who is self-employed and comparatively an independent class. It accounts for about 30%. Next 10% consist of artisans and handicraftsmen. The remaining 55% are the small peasants and landless labourers who have to toil on the land of the rich landlords. There is a direct conflict of interests between these two groups while the middle peasants are confronted with the problems perpetuated by the state, the money-lender and the wholesale trader. Scheduled Caste people are generally landless.

Though the caste division was similar to those of general Maharashtra, economic conditions are slightly different in Satara District. Nineteenth century Satara district geographically was consisted of today's Satara and Sangli districts excluding four important Princely states, i.e., Phaltan, Oundh, Sangli and Miraj. Phaltan and Oundh and some talukas of Sangli state were merged in Satara district in 1947. A separate district was made out of Sangli and Miraj states. These two districts were named North Satara and South Satara respectively. After some period these districts were re-named as Satara and Sangli districts.

In Satara district major portion of the rural population

was of small landholders. Big landlords were negligible. The common peasant was toiler at the same time the owner. His land was small in size. He could not afford to engage labourers on a big scale. His family members used to work on land. Of course, in season, he had to engage some labour but that was on a small scale. In rural area there was a small class of landless people. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of 20th century these landless people were either attracted towards newly established industries, mainly Bombay, or to military. The Scheduled caste people were generally landless but some among them had a small land and in a way such were small peasants. Artisans were also small landholders. In the villages there was a small class i.e., of Brahmins, who were Kulkarnis (revenue accountant) or money lenders and some Gujaratis who were traders and also money-lenders. This class was very small in number but had economic power in hand. This is the picture that gradually emerged during the last century and a half.

The urban sector, inclusive of modern large-scale industry, trade and transport was almost non-existent at the beginning of the 19th century. The nucleus was formed by the middle of the century and its growth recorded rapid progress in later days, particularly after World War I. Geographically, the spread out of industrial development may be indicated as follows. There is a heavy concentration of manufacturing industries as also of transport complex in and around Bombay. In the Konkan, but for the small patch of Khopoli, there are no industries. Nagpur is

next in the line. There are textile, handloom engineering, printing and bidi industries located there. Solapur is an old industrial centre, while Poona and Nasik were upcoming. Sugar industry is concentrated in Kolhapur, Sangli, Satara, Solapur, Poona and Nagpur districts, while Kolhapur-Ichalkaranji complex is proud of its engineering and powerloom industries. Marathwada is still thirsting for industries; there is only one textile mill at Nanded and another at Aurangabad. A few ginning and pressing factories are sprinkled over the five districts.

In Satara district industrialisation started only in 20th century with the establishment of Kirloskar Engineering Works in 1910, in modern sense of the term. After independence with the development of irrigation and electric supply from Koyana Project increased the growth of cash crops, mainly sugarcane. Sugarcane gave momentum to the growth of sugar industry in other districts of western Maharashtra, i.e., Kolhapur, Sangli, Solapur, Poona and Nagar.

During the last 150 years a number of individual organisations contributed to the growth of the leftist movement. Their efforts may be classified in four broad categories, namely, a) Social revolutionaries, b) Protagonists of peasantry, c) Trade Unions, and d) Political parties.⁶

The development of leftist movement may also be divided into three broad periods of history, namely:

- 1) Fall of Peshwas to breakout of World War I: 1818 to 1914,
- 2) World War I to Independence: 1914 to 1947,
- 3) Post-independence period: 1947 to 1960.

Lokhitwadi arrived at the conclusion that the dominance of the priestly class and Brahminic culture in general was responsible for the social as well as material degeneration of society. The newly educated class, that was slowly emerging, responded favourably to this theme which was further debated and persued by social reformers like M.G. Ranade and G.G. Agarkar. But since majority of these reformers from Balshastri Jambhekar to Agarkar belonged to upper caste, their efforts at effecting social reforms were restricted to that small crust of society which was socially privileged and occupationally belonging to middle class. Even their efforts were geographically restricted to the cities like Poona and Bombay. They could not reach the lower classes even in urban area, leave aside the rural peasants and the untouchables.

This need was fulfilled by Mahatma Jyotiba Phoolley. He declared open revolt against the hierarchical structure of society and the priestly dominance. In his anxiety to drive home his point, he criticised the role of the Brahmins in general. Specially noteworthy is his attack on the various ways by which the Brahmins were exploiting the lowly castes. As priest as high official, as liberal professional, as landlord and as money-lender, the Brahmin was, Phoolley held, exploiting the

farmer and the menial servant, both socially and economically. He exhorted the lowly castes to rise against the tyrannical structure founded in the name of Chaturvarnya. He advocated adoption of new, more ethical and humane religion which he tried to found by the name "Sarvajanic Satya Dharma".

Not restricting himself to vocal protests, he started schools for the untouchable and later for women. His activities inspired new vision and confidence amongst all the lowly castes who were the victims of age-old Brahminical dominance. To channelise all these activities, Phooley formed Satya Shodhak Samaj in 1873. He tried to muster cooperation of many individuals and groups for spreading education and initiating new customs to replace Brahmin-dominated old ones. This was an effort at institutionalising social reform activities.

Satya Shodhak Samaj assumed significant importance in later days. Shahu Chhatrapati played an important role in spreading this movement. In the first two decades of the 20th century Kolhapur and after 1920 Satara district were the important centres of Satya Shodhak Samaj.

In Satara district Satya Shodhak Movement became more active after 1920 i.e., after World War. Before war the common man of the district was indifferent to the activities around him. Again three states, namely, Sangli, Miraj and Oundh which were included in Satara district after independence were Brahmin ruled states. Naturally, the movement could not take roots

in the early phase. But after war the newly educated persons from Kolhapur state, under the guidance of Shahu Maharaj took the lead. These leaders were either Jains or Marathas. Under their leadership the Satya Shodhak movement flourished in Satara district.

On the economic front, peasant problems were forcefully projected during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The British had changed the land revenue system basically. For the first time, the principle of state ownership of all the lands got translated into administrative practice. The assessment used to be revised after thirty years and at every revision it was increased by 20 to 77%. Payment was to be in cash. This caused great handicap to the peasantry whose ranks were swelling due to the closure of handicrafts which could not stand competition of the British-made and imperially protected goods. The administration became more tight and recoveries more ruthless. Again, Indian agriculture, which was of subsistence-type for so long came to be entered into the complex of international markets. This naturally caused friction.⁷

While the peasant was being circumscribed by new administrative and commercial practices, the famines became more frequent and intense. The peasantry is proverbially submissive much more so in India. The peasant could not dare to speak out his difficulties before the alien ruler. But the conditions were too acute. The discontent brewing so long brushed out in the form of the Deccan riots. The British took note of the gravity of the situation

and appointed a Famine Commission in 1880. Mahatma Phoolay submitted a memorandum on behalf of the peasants in 1882. In the following year he published a book, "Cultivators' Whiplash" in which he discussed the farmers' problem in detail. He advocated a number of ameliorative measures. He also exhorted the cultivators to change their antiquated methods and take to new techniques.

Ranade also wrote in the Sarvajanic Sabha journal that except in the case of Vasudeo Balwant, the motive of the rioters was economic and not political as believed by officials. Ranade made a penetrating analysis of the riots. He argued that the ultimate responsibility for them lay with the Government, who by levying excessively high land revenue did not leave any choice to the cultivator but to borrow from the hard hearted money-lender, which resulted in the riots and attacks on money-lenders.

The Government was forced to take some ameliorative steps. The Acts were passed in 1883 and 1884, enabling the Government to advance taccavi loans to the cultivators. Irrigation works also received greater attention. But on the whole the performance of the Government was quite unsatisfactory. So, the leaders of the newly formed Indian National Congress had to devote their energy for venting the grievances of the peasants. Dadabhai Naoroji in particular rendered sterling service to the peasants' cause. He campaigned in England as well as in India, to pressurise the Government to lessen the burden put on the peasants' weak shoulders and to take positive measures to strengthen them.

Lokmanya Tilak also joined hands with him and blasted the government for its misdeeds and inaction during the famine of 1898-1900. All these efforts generated public pressure which forced Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy to appoint Inspector General of Agriculture in 1901. In the Warhad areas of C.P. and Berar, agriculture and substitution of foodcrops by cash crops was aggravating the problem of food supply; so, some local leaders came forward to present these problems to the government and to the public, but it was largely left to the Indian National Congress to act as an advocate of the peasant. The government, in the early days of the twentieth century, took a few more steps. In 1904 a cooperation law was passed which was replaced in 1912 by a better act. Extension of irrigation was also attended to. But the main problem viz., heavy assessment and exploitation by the money-lenders, remained unsolved. Problem of prices of agricultural produce, particularly of cotton, assumed serious proportion. But no systematic efforts were made to organise the peasant to press for his demands.⁸

In 1885 newly educated persons from all over India formed Indian National Congress at Bombay. At the beginning, under the influence of the moderates the organisation engaged itself in submitting petitions to the Government, making demands like more seats in the Indian Civil Service for Indians, more elected seats in the Legislative Council, etc., but the demands were hardly met. The resultant discontent was marshalled by Lokmanya Tilak for militant programmes directed against the British rule. In his

anxiety to forge widest possible united front of all the classes against the British rule. Tilak extended support to the demands of Khots, indigenous industrialists and businessmen. Nevertheless the Congress continued to serve as watchdog of the working classes and toiling peasants.⁹

The peasants and workers generally looked to the Congress as their friend and guide. That is why, when Tilak was sentenced for transportation in 1908, the workers of Bombay spontaneously went on one-day strike, which was the first political strike in Maharashtra, or for that matter in India.

The Congress of those times was hardly an organisation. It used to meet once a year and pass resolution. Delegates from various centres used to attend. Marathwada remained outside the sphere of influence of the Congress during this period, while Vidarbha threw up a number of nationalist leaders like Dadasaheb Khaparde and Veer Vamanrao Joshi. Bombay and Poona, however, continued to be the hot-beds of political activity. Congress politics varied decisively from Bombay to Poona.

High taxation and frequent famines reduced farmers to growing indebtedness in Satara district also. The money lenders exploited the peasants. There is a reference to the District Association submitting an application signed by hundreds of people concerned, on 18th December 1868, against a certain land legislation. This was followed by another association established

on 26th June 1870 at a meeting held in Public Library at Satara. Amongst the leaders of those days, one finds a reference to Ganesh Vasudeo Joshi alias Sarvajanic Kaka.¹⁰

There were three branches of the Sarvajanic Sabha in Satara district, i.e., at Satara, Wai and Karad by 1871. The Sabha at Satara was founded on May 28, 1871, by Ganesh Narayan Kolhatkar and Krishna Sakharam Mahajani. Shri Nanasaheb Vaidya established it at Wai. Shri Gundacharya Ghaisashi established at Karad on 13th August, 1871. As the Sabha had supported the rights of old Indian princes, Pant Pratinidhi of Aundh and Pant Sachiv of Bhore took keen interest in the deliberation of the Sabha. The Wai unit of Sarvajanic Sabha worked most diligently.¹¹

The Sarvajanic Sabha at Satara did well in representing the grievances of the people of the district to the Government. In the year 1872 a protest was raised in the district against the increase in Salt Tax. In the same year the workers in the district collected a Khandesh relief fund to which Karad branch of Sarvajanic Sabha alone contributed Rs. 100. The Sabha arranged for the lectures by Sadashiv Raoji Govande and Sarvajanic Kaka in 1874.¹² The most spectacular achievement of the Sarvajanic Sabha in Satara district was the establishment of arbitration courts at Satara in 1876 and at Wai in 1877.¹³

In the year 1883-84, Shri Raghunath Pandurang alias Dadasaheb Karandikar at Satara, Nanasaheb Vaidya at Wai and

R.V. alias Bhausaneb Bhagwat of Karad devoted themselves to propogating advantageous aspects of the provisions of Farmers' Debt Relief Act for accruing benefits for the farmers.¹⁴

In the year 1886, Satara Sarvajanik Sabha submitted its representation to the Finance Committee in which it diverted the attention of Government to such items in which expenses could be scrapped.

A contemporary Marathi newspaper 'Shubhsuchak' reported on 4th October, 1891, that the multitudes of farmers from Karad and Patan were seen gathering around Collector's residence to regain the grazing fields. This would show how the farmers and peasants of Karad and Patan had become conscious of the problems facing them and the Sabha was the main instrument of this consciousness. Sarvajanik Sabha was thus responsible for creation of general consciousness among the farmers. And its activities represented the early stage of awakening in Satara district. The Sabha, in its next stage which began in 1889, commenced the work of propogating the Congress activity. With the emergence of Indian National Congress the activity of the Sabha slowly relegated to the background as it failed to catch the growing imagination of the people. Ultimately, Government of Bombay Presidency withdrew its recognition to Sarvajanik Sabha on 1885 and people then naturally changed from Sabha to Congress.

Farmers were the backbone of Satara district as the bulk of

the population was of farmers. The Congress leaders of the district were careful in paying attention to the problems of the peasantry. Shri Dadasaheb Karandikar the veteran leader to make peasants conscious of their problems, was creating effects on peasantry in its awakening.

During the regime of Viceroy Curzon the conditions were problematic.¹⁵ In 1901, there was a bill proposed to increase the rate of land revenue. Shri Dattopant Supanekar, a pleader from Karad sent a memorandum signed by the representatives of the farmers to the Government and opposed the ensuing land Revenue Bill. Shri Balaji Damodar Hasabnis of Wategaon boldly appeared before the Famine Commission of 21st January, 1901 and represented the case for famine hit people in the district.¹⁶

The representations of farmers signed by about 30-35 men were submitted to the Government from the villages named Sangav (Taluka Walwa), Dudhgaon and Limb. These representations were obviously the reactions to the coming Land Revenue Bill. Shri Bhagwanrao Deshmukh of Shirala and Vasudeorao Thatte of Satara critically studied every provision of the Act and represented the popular feeling in their memorandum. Bombay Government defying all opposition passed the proposed land revenue bill. The public workers of Karad and Wai, in a public meeting held in Ghate Theatre on 5th September 1901 expressed their discontent.

In 1905-6 the Act increasing the land revenue by 75% was

made applicable to Poona, Satara and Sholapur and Nagpur districts. The Act placed the farmers in a difficult situation.

Shri Dadasaheb Karandikar organised peasants as a part of Swadeshi movement in the year 1904. Various farmers' conferences were organised. One was organised on 11th November 1906 at Jawali and it was attended by 800 farmers. The next, presided over by Shri Dattatraya Kashinath Mahabaleshwarkar, was held on 13th October 1907, at Mhasave. The third conference was held on 5th April, 1908 at Kasabe Kudal and was presided over by Karandikar himself. Shri Narayan Gangadhar Deshpande was the volunteer of Peasant Organisation in Jawali Taluka. The aim of these farmers' conferences was to create among the farmers the awareness of their own problems and also generate in them a sense of national awakening. These activities of creating peasant awareness took many dimensions. An exhibition of agriculture products was organised in Karad. It was kept open for ten days. During the course of the exhibition lectures were also arranged for the benefit of farmers. On 11th August 1906, Shri Dandekar and Shri Shinde of agriculture department spoke on growing cotton. Next day Dadasaheb Karandikar delivered an advisory speech to the farmers.

In 1912 Agriculture Commission stayed at Satara for 6 days and recorded the evidences of men like Ganapatrao Phansalkar who stressed that the Government should take proper care to ameliorate the conditions of farmers.¹⁷

These were, thus, the efforts made during the early phase of national awakening in Satara to create awareness among the peasants. The movement of the peasant awakening in Satara district was not antithetical to Congress but was with a view to helping Congress in its activities in the district to make its programme broad-based.¹⁸ Another feature of this movement was the leaders of the movement were all Brahmins.

The development of co-operative sector in Satara district especially from the beginning of the 20th century had a favourable effect upon the future course of political activity. As early as 1885-86 Sir Calvin the great economist, had warned against the serious economic conditions of the people. None but Shri Vithal Laxman Kavathekar of Wai, who was a schoolmate of Lokmanya Tilak, understood the meaning of Sir Calvin's warning and suggested the cooperative economy as the only way out. In 1904 Cooperative Credit Societies Act was passed and the Act gave a legal sanction to the cooperative activities. During the next 50 years after the Act more than 50% villages of Bombay Presidency came to have cooperative institutions covering 30% of the total population of the State into the cooperative activities.¹⁹ With the growth of cooperative movement the importance and influence of the money lenders was considerably diminished in Satara district. There is a stray reference which indicates that a social reformer (Satyashodhak) Shri Keshavrao Vichare, then living at Satara Road, attempted to bring about progressive developments in the cooperative bank of Satara district.²⁰

1914-1947

The second period is marked by momentous events like the two World Wars, the Depression of 1930, formation of Communist Party in 1923, formation of Congress Socialist Party in 1934 and the dawn of Indian Independence accompanied by the partition of the country.

During this period, social regeneration activities and power-politics were intertwined. Some leaders of Satya Shodhak Movement, as also of the Congress, supported war efforts and actively propagated for recruitment etc. The former, in return, received official appreciation and a few favours. The British immediately after war, declared constitutional reforms based on Montford Report. The Government of India Act of 1919 conferred some autonomous powers on Provincial Governments. Component of elected representatives was increased in the Central Legislative Assembly and was provided in sizable measure in the newly formed provincial councils.

Allocation of seats in the Bombay Legislative Council was as shown in the table-3 given on the next page.²¹

Franchise to elect rural seats was conferred on peasants paying annual land revenue between Rs. 10 and Rs. 50 and those paying more were termed as landholders who enjoyed the privilege of separate constituency.

Table.3Allocation of seats in the Bombay Legislative Council

		<u>Total</u>
Non-Mohammedan Urban Seats	11	
.. .. Rural ..	35	46
Mohammedan Urban Seats	5	
.. .. Rural ..	22	27
European Seats		2
Landholders' Seats		3
University		1

Commerce and Industry Seats

Bombay Chamber of Commerce	2	
Karachi Chamber of Commerce	1	
Bombay Traders' Association	1	
Bombay Millowners' Association	1	
Ahmedabad Millowners' Association	1	
Indian Merchants' Chamber	1	
Cotton Trade	1	8

Representatives appointed by nomination

Anglo-Indians	1	
Indian Christians	1	
Depressed Classes	1	
Labour	1	
Others	1	6

Official Seats

Ex-officio	4	
Nominated	14	
		<u>18</u>
	Total :	111

(Bombay Landholders were also given two seats in the Central Legislative Assembly)

The Indian National Congress expressed dissatisfaction over these because in its opinion they fell far too short of the democratic aspirations of the people. Under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, it launched a nation-wide movement in 1920.

The Maharashtra, the rural gentry who came to be associated with the Satya Shodhak movement, took a different view. They preferred to utilise opportunities offered by the Act of 1919, plus the expanding field of activities of the District Local Boards. Getting engrossed in election politics they neglected other activities of the movement, viz., educational and reformist. Inside the legislative Council, they formed the Non-Brahmin Party and generally sided with the imperial rulers. Slowly they lost contact and following even amongst the Maratha peasantry, many of whom, led by Keshavrao Jedhe, turned to the Congress.

Satara district was not exception to this in at least political matter. The Satya Shodhak leaders in Satara district also took opportunity to take part in the field of District Local Board. With a large proportion of Maratha i.e., 56%, important contacts with businessmen like D.B. Cooper and involved with a tenants' rebellion non-Brahmin party attained significant majority in the district. But fortunately they did not lose the touch with educational or reformist activities; and the credit of this goes to Shri ^UBh_Xrao Patil. He himself was a staunch Satya Shodhak. He took part in programmes of Satya Shodhak Samaj, gave speeches. Like other Satya Shodhak leaders he never neglected others'

points of view. His Rayat Shikshan Sanstha was a model educational institution for downtroddens. He never differentiated between the boys on caste, religion or economic status.

Satara District became famous for two things in Satya Shodhak movement. One was Satyashodhaki Tamashas and other was peasant rebellion. These two need discussion precisely.

Satya Shodhak Tamashas: With the penetration of Satyashodhak thinking into the solidly peasant-based areas of Satara district there came an innovation in the form of communications that was to have great impact throughout Maharashtra. Samajists used poetry, religious style kirtans, and singing performances to spread their message and to overcome the communication barriers felt by upper-class Non-Brahmins. But Satara gave a new form to this propaganda by introducing Tamashas, a popular folk drama. The pioneer of the first real Satyashodhak Tamashas was one Maratha peasant, Ramchandra Ghadge of Kale, a large agricultural village in Satara. Ghadge was described as a very poor man with some education upto fourth standard. Ghadge began his troupe around 1915; by 1925 there were twenty-nine identifiable tamashas in Western Maharashtra, out of which twelve were from Satara district.

The tamasha of Jotirao Phalke of Satara Road, whose songs were written by the poet Tukaram Bhosale and inspired by Keshavrao Vichare, seems to have represented a particularly pure form of Satyashodhak ideology. They mocked almost all the sacred religious

books and traditional stories of the origins of gods and castes, and attacked vigorously popular religious traditions, such as the Pandharpur cult and the fast growing cult of Satyanarayan Puja. Other tamashas, however, could represent a more compromising approach. Generally speaking, the tamashas praised modern science and education, mocked the sacred books and religious traditions in their songs, dialogues and plays in the 'iconoclastic Satyashodhak fashion, they cited sacred Hindu texts to show their contradictions. And in general tamashas played a prominent role in forming and spreading a popular Maharashtrian culture of religious reform and revolt against caste. Finally, in Satara district itself, where the tamasha movement was the strongest, it became involved in economic revolt as well.²²

Satara Rebellion

In many ways Satara is a quintessential Maharashtrian district. Historically it was a centre of Shivaji's own kingdom. Geographically it stands between Poona district, the centre of Chitpavan Brahman power, and the State of Kolhapur, centre of aristocratic Maratha power. Socially, it had the highest percentage of Maratha Kunbis in the Deccan (56% according to 1931 census) a representative proportion of Brahmins, untouchables and allied castes, but no tribal population. It was in many ways a typical peasant district and had almost no landlessness but a very high percentage of fragmented small holdings. Politically it has been a pace-setter for Maharashtra. If today Maharashtra

appears to be a Congress Party stronghold, it is in Satara that the power of the Congress seems most secure and it is from this district that the most powerful politicians in the state have come. Y.B. Chavan, who has risen above regional politics and once counted the number two man in the country, Vasantrao Patil, now the Chief Minister of Maharashtra and another former Chief Minister, Babasaheb Bhosale and many other State Ministers belong to this District. If in 1942 the Indian masses responded to Gandhi's call for the British to "Quit India" with an uprising that went far beyond Gandhian non-violence, it was in Satara that this resulted in a 'Parallel Government' underground movement that swept much of the district out of British control. Finally, it was Satara district that became, in 1920, a stronghold of the non-Brahmin party and the Satyashodhak Samaj.²³

In regard to the agricultural developments, Satara was on the whole typical of other Deccan districts; it was going through the same underlying changes that generated a high proportion of poor peasants by 1931. It had no significant canal irrigated areas, but by the 1920s some agricultural progress was occurring with the sale of iron ploughs by Kirloskar and Cooper Engineering Works, especially in the Southern talukas. Among its distinguishing features was the fact that it had a higher proportion of immigrants going to Bombay for work than almost any other Deccan district as mentioned in the previous chapter, which may have aided peasants in maintaining at least some of their small

landholdings.

There was significantly high proportion of non-cultivating landlords (i.e., of land cultivated by tenants) particularly in the plains areas of the district. The Satara Gazetteer of 1880s had described in detail many of the larger villages and towns of the district showing that especially in the south there were significant groups of money-lenders and traders including Brahmins and Marwari-Gujar money-lenders. Brahmins in this district were characterized as having a propensity to invest in land, and it was similarly said that the bulk of the unskilled labour of the district is done by the poor Kunbis, Dhangars, Vadars, Ramoshis, and Mahars. Since there was little significant challenge to Brahmin's money-lending power before 1920, and since it was almost universally held that non-Brahmin landlords cultivated their own lands (i.e., possibly with the help of hired help but not through tenants), there seems no reason not to conclude that a very high proportion of the land and of the best land, had passed to outsiders who were mainly Brahmins or Marwari or Gujar money-lenders. Formerly prosperous peasants were increasingly joining low caste Mahars, Mangs and Ramoshis as field labourers or tenants on land they once owned. Some technological progress in agriculture and a slightly improved labour demand around 1920 would strengthen their situation somewhat but only add to the tensions as they sought to recoup a little of their losses.

The branches of Satyashodhak movement sprang up in Satara district after 1918. Their propoganda created an awareness among the peasants.

Brahmin newspapers criticised the movement as an attack on Dharma, and Brahmans in Satara district.²⁴ While upper-class non-Brahmin leaders tended to ignore it. What actually happened was that it provoked a revolt of tenants against Brahmans and Marwaris and also landlords.

The process of rebellion in the southern talukas began with the arrival of Satyashodhak ideology via the tamashas which ferociously mocked traditioned religious customs and Brahmin claims to superiority. Religious attacks were evidently part of all the events that followed; peasants not only refused to call Brahmans for their own religious ceremonies, but also interrupted the Brahmans' own ceremonies, violated temples, broke idols and polluted wells; according to Brahmin witnesses, they indulged in obscenities not only about the gods but regarding Brahmin women as well.²⁵

But the major thrust was economic. The District Collector, E.E. Moysey referred to violence involving Mangs, Ramoshis and other village huligans aimed at extorting food and money, and stated:

"I am far from denying that crimes have been committed against Brahmans, but experience gained in the enquiries shows that acts of violence have been committed against them

not as Brahmins but as unpopular landlords or money-lenders, and that Brahmins in a village against whom no grievance has been felt, have generally been allowed to live in peace ... A movement is now developing not to pay more than half the gross produce as rent instead of the 2/3 or 3/4 as has been the custom hitherto. Most of the non-cultivating landlords being Brahmins, they believe that the movement and the consequent boycott of their lands is directed against them as a class".²⁶

Thus, boycotts of land by tenants, as well as by the service castes were attempted very early. But this evidently proved difficult to organize, given unity and firmness on the part of the landlords and the constant pressure of population on the land which allowed them to bring in outsiders as labourers, something they frequently reported doing. Brahmin witnesses claimed that tenants were loyal, and that if they boycotted it was only due to instigation and harassment by other villagers. One, however, pointed out a deeper fact, though his tenants had resolved to boycott, as the sowing time the tenants came and tilled the land. They had understood that we would file suits against them and the Satyasamajists would not come to help them.²⁷ The statement reflected a general Brahmin confidence in their backing by the courts.

Unable to mount a unified rent strike, rebels turned to other methods long characteristic of oppressed Indian peasantry. They harvested the landlords' crops forcibly for themselves; looted and burned houses; engaged in beatings; in five cases it was

simply said that Brahmins were chased away from the village. Further, three Brahmins who had been members of Municipalities, taluka boards and cooperatives reported that they had resigned due to harassment.²⁸ Clearly, the rebellion was taking a complex form and represented the surfacing of a general power struggle, primarily over tenants' rights and lands but also against Brahmin religious dominance and connected with struggles within cooperatives and in the district local boards. Thus, isolated instances of tenant rebellion after the main outburst in 1919-21 plus efforts of non-Brahmins to interfere with Brahmin-dominated religious festivals, were all part of this power struggle.

In connection with the general power struggle, the peasants of Satara were for the first time able to get at least a degree of higher-level support. Brahmins had the advantage of a legal system that gave them full rights against their tenants and one that was further heavily staffed with Brahmin magistrates and clerks. Against this non-Brahmins could appeal to relatively friendly British administrators, such as Moysey and Baskerville. Satara, furthermore, had evidently the only Maratha Deputy Collector in the presidency in Duduskar, who had been involved in Maratha educational organizations and was accused of favouring the Satyashodhak in allowing Tamasha performances to be held.²⁹

But as far as the tenants' rebellion itself was concerned the elite provided some ideological impetus and administrative facilitation, but no real leadership. The primary organization of

the tenants' efforts as boycotts, etc., was local, involving village people and to some extent the tamasha leaders themselves. There were, however, two Satyashodhak leaders of importance who were named as providing real organization of rebellion. One of these urging peasant boycott and himself leading anti-religious efforts was Keshavrao Vichare, a Maratha Station Master at Satara Road. He propogated a particularly radical form of Satyashodhak ideology which developed into an open atheism and an opposition to all forms of idolworship. In 1921 he gave up his service and became active in organizing night schools and Satyashodhak branches throughout the district, with an extensive network of friends he was perhaps its most influencial local leader and eventually became a member of the District Local Board and Chairman of its School Board. He later made efforts to organize not simply cooperatives but collective farms. He along with some other core Satyashodhak workers, remained aloof from the national movement after 1930.³⁰

Ananda Swami, an organizer of one of the tamashas, involved in the rebellion, was the other important Satyashodhak leader and in many ways is one of the most mysterious and intriguing figures in the entire non-Brahmin movement. He was poor peasant from Ahmednagar district and was similar to other figures in India around this period who emerged as social radicals within the Sadhu tradition. He is reported to have engaged in decoity for both nationalist causes and economic rebellion. This activity evidently embarrassed many non-Brahmin leaders who tended to

claim that he was not really a Satyashodhak Samajist, or that there were 'two Anandswamis'. After his involvement with the Satara tenants' rebellion, he moved to Buldhana district in Vidarbha. He is described as a charismatic figure with a reputation of supernatural escape from the police and an uneducated but clever man. Like Javalkar, Anandswami was one of the Satyashodhak leaders who combined cultural radicalism with organization for economic and nationalist revolution, but in the context of conservative consolidation after 1930, he was more or less forgotten.³¹

After looking to the facts of various aspects of the Satara rebellion, Dr. Gail Omvedt came to the interesting conclusions. She says, the Satara rebellion compares favourably in terms of villages affected both with the Deccan riots of 1875 and with Gandhi's 1928 Bardoli campaign. Yet the Deccan riots, though not directed against the Government, were seen as sufficiently threatening to invoke a full-scale investigatory commission and a revision in agricultural policy leading to the Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act, they remain one of the most famous nineteenth century Indian peasant uprisings. And the Bardoli campaign was both defined as dangerous by the Government and as a model to imitate by Congress leaders everywhere. In the case of the Satara rebellion, however, the Government had enough other worries and evidently felt secure enough with a modest alliance with the non-Brahmin elite to minimize the situation. And the Brahmin elite

which still controlled the newspapers as well as the Congress Party, utterly refused to recognize the rebellion as any thing but 'atrocities' committed against religion.

By and large, the non-Brahmin elite acquiesced in ignoring the economic implications of the rebellion. At an unofficial level it provided some inspiration, but the non-Brahmin party as a whole was too tied to upper-class rural interests to take a rebellion involving tenants and labourers as a model to imitate; for some time afterwards party meetings and Satyashodhak conferences contended themselves with insisting that their movement was not violent.

The rebellion also illustrates the interaction of cultural and economic factors in revolt. Cultural interest of anti-Brahminism helped provide some upper-class support that made it possible for lower classes to rebel in Satara. But the significance of cultural rebellion goes beyond this. While the motive of the uprising was at base economic, the special role of cultural tradition has to be taken into account. The power of an elite is based on religious sanctions and long-accepted prestige i.e., cultural hegemony as well as economic and political power. Poor peasants required a sense of right on their side and an ideology that rejected this status. The peasant society of Satara was being disrupted by externally caused capitalistic forces, but because those who benefitted first were the tradition^{al} elite the fight against them required a revolt against tradition as well. And it was this ideology of revolt that the leaders of the

Satyashodhak movement provided.

Finally, the Satara rebellion provides an illustration of the split between cultural, economic and national revolutionary forces in India. Most of the elite non-Brahmin spokesmen of the cultural revolt ignored the economic rebellion their own movement had stimulated, largely because of their own economic interests. Similarly, nationalist leaders, still drawn largely from Brahmin and merchant castes, supported land movements directed against the Government, like no-tax campaigns, but consistently drew the line at movements against Indian landlords, i.e., no-rent campaigns, the result for the national movement itself, was a frequent dampening of campaigns and reluctance to really draw in the masses. Finally the Indian Communists^S of the 1920s aspiring leaders of an economic revolution, had emerged from the ranks of young, militant Brahmin nationalists in Maharashtra, with the result that the analysis they applied to the non-Brahmin movement appeared to derive from Sadashivpeth rather than Moscow. As their first Bombay newspaper put it:

The non-Brahmin movement is a big humbug ...
The spirit of the movement is absolutely narrow.
Its mainstay is communal hatred. There is no
economic basis in the movement.³²

The refusal to admit any economic base was significant. Had the communists analyzed the non-Brahmin movement as a peasant-based movement³³ they would have been forced to deal with it more

seriously than they did. It was clear that of Marxist-Leninist ideology the peasantry was seen as a 'democratic' ally of the working classes in a period of anti-feudal revolution, a more consistent ally than the vacillating bourgeoisie. Maharashtrian communists condemned the nationalist leadership, but they placed themselves within the nationalist tradition with their admiration of leaders such as Tilak, while they found no similar significance in the peasant based tradition of cultural economic revolt. They themselves, in this early period, were in no position to become leaders of peasants, but they failed to develop relationship with those who were. One result was that not until fifteen years later did Maharashtrian Communists even begin to develop a rural base. They were victims of the colonial situation in the beginning as much as rebels against it.

However, inadequately understood it may have been, the results of the Satara rebellion were nonetheless significant. Politically it played a role in developing non-Brahmin unity within the district. After the rebellion Brahmins throughout the district instituted a series of 'Chapter Cases' and non-Brahmin lawyers like Achrekar, R.C. Rane and Bhaskarrao Jadhav moved around the district to fight them. There were a similarly large number of suits evidently over tenant rights.³⁴ Thus, while some non-Brahmin political power had helped to facilitate the rebellion, non-Brahmin political leaders in turn benefitted from it. Further, the strength of the movement was later correlated with the 1942 nationalist rebellion, which was the strongest in those southern

talukas of Satara which had led in rebellion and in the Satyashodhak movement of the 1920s and which had as its leaders people like Nana Patil who were involved in Satyashodhak reform propaganda in the 1920s. Economically, it appears to have had some effect in pushing Brahmin and Marwari landlords off the land. The rebellion left the tenants in a stronger position vis-a-vis the landlords, able to claim for themselves one-half instead of one-third or one-fourth of the crops at harvest. Many sources, however, do report a tendency for Brahmins to leave the villages.

What must be noted is that while such movements as the Satara rebellion could succeed in driving some landlords out of the villages or in slightly bettering the position of tenants, they could not affect the general economic processes that were producing the problems of land concentration and population pressure on the land. Without a general revolution or full control of political power, the Satyashodhak movement could not change the general rural class structure; it could only have some effect on who occupied positions within it. Hence, however strong the movement was at the lower levels, these general political and economic conditions meant that it could only result in the general strengthening of the position of the non-Brahmin elite itself.

In 1920s many Brahmin-non-Brahmin clashes occurred in taluka and district local boards, district school boards and to some extent in municipalities. The elections to state legislature held in 1923 and 1926 were very enthusiastically responded to by

the people. In 1923 Shri R.G. alias Bhausahab Soman, Bhaskarrao Jadhav, and D.B. Cooper were elected from Satara District. In 1926 Bhaskarrao Jadhav, R.R. Kale and Deshpande of Karad were elected from the district.³⁵ These elections were a good political education to the rural masses. It was also an important contribution to the development of political consciousness among the rural masses. Soon it became clear that barring a few exceptions, the Council members identified with rural landlords and richer peasantry in opposition to the rural poor. Perhaps it is this narrow local power-politics that disillusioned the Bahujan Samaj gradually. As a consequence, the Bahujan Samaj began slowly to lean towards the new trends of national politics under Mahatma Gandhi. By movements and by electioneering the non-Brahmin elite had received a good political training which had made them confident of competing successfully the Brahmins at least on local levels in Congress organisation.

Politics of Peasant Conferences

In 1927, Government framed the 'Small Holding Bill' and in the same year proposed to increase land revenue by other measure. The peasants were likely to turn into workers and to fall into the clutches of the capitalists due to small holding bill. A strong movement of anti Small Holding Bill swept the entire Maharashtra. In Satara district also peasant organisations began to come up on a large scale.

In November 1927, a committee of non-Brahmin leaders of

Satara was set up. By January, 1928, several village meetings followed by taluka peasant conferences at Walwa, Karad, Wai and Koregaon of the Satara district were held. The district peasant conference presided over by the political leader N.E. Navale of Nagar was held at Satara. Shri Deshpande of Karad, the M.L.A. toured protesting the small Holding Bill. The Brahmins also convened separate meetings at Satara. But by and large the anti-Small Holding Bill movement, which was led by the leaders like Jedhe, Javalkar, Keshavrao Vichare, Bhaurao Patil, Shankarrao Bogar, Rambhau Ghatge and Sambhaji Patil remained a non-Brahmin affair.³⁶ Later Bombay Provincial Shetkari Sangh (Peasants League) with advocate Raghunathrao Rane of Satara as its President was founded. This organisation determined to oppose the Government who, it was alleged, with the help of Shetjis and Bhatjis, was exploiting and dominating Bahujan Samaj.³⁷ A peasant conference of Satara taluka attended by 350 farmers was held under the leadership of R.G. Soman at Satara in March 1929.³⁸ Marked changes that occurred in the peasant movements by the close of the 1920s were that the peasants stopped seeking for government allies as they did in 1920-21. They were now determined to fight against the official policy of the British Government which was likely to give rise to rich peasant class and agrarian capitalism. The change, therefore, led the non-Brahmin militant leaders like Keshavrao Jedhe, Dinakarrao Javalkar, Nana Patil etc. to nationalist fold. The peasant population was now mobilized towards nationalist politics by these young militant leaders of Bahujan

Samaj.³⁹

We must note that it is the economic conditions and the decline of the leadership of the old guard in Satara district congress that attracted peasantry of the district towards the nationalist activities of Indian National Congress. The economic conditions of the Indian masses deteriorated fast during the years of world wide economic depression. The daily routine life of the people became costly beyond their imagination and they began blaming the British Government for the hardship they had to undergo. Thus, the economic factor, conditioned the change in the mood of the people and prepared them to fight against the British Govt. Around 1930 the influence of the old leaders of Satara district Congress had considerably diminished. This sounded a death knell of the Brahmin leadership in the congress of Satara district. The way was paved for the new leaders to take the place of old leaders in the congress of Satara district. The young militant leaders of Bahujan Samaj mobilized the peasantry towards congress.⁴⁰

In the district Scheduled Caste people were 1,75,309 in number, out of which 1,08,838 were Mahars according to 1941 census. Total population of the district was 13,02,643 i.e., the Scheduled Caste people in the district were 11.9 per cent. They could not muster the strength before the vast masses of caste Hindus. Ambedkar's movement could not make much headway in Satara district in earlier period. But at the same time Dr. Ambedkar had connection with Bhaurao Patil who worked on his own way to abolish

untouchability.

Gandhi's insistence on the eradication of untouchability was not shared by the Congress organisation as such. As things would have it the Depressed Classes, who could serve as a vital force remained aloof from the freedom movement launched by the Congress.

In this regard, they stood in the same position as the non-Brahmin current. And if the later leaders of the Satya Shodhak movement had remained true to the preachings of Mahatma Phule, these two sections, at least, could have joined hands and forged a formidable force dedicated to social revolution. But as noted earlier, the Satya Shodhak leaders of 1920s and 1930s had turned their backs on the task of social revolution. At times, the Satya Shodhaks and the Ambedkarites cooperated with each other. But when it came to doing away with old customs or institutions, the non-Brahmins vehemently opposed progressive measures. Ambedkar's attempt at getting Mahar Watan abolition Bill passed in the Council is a case in point. In the village economy and administration, Mahar families were supposed to be at the beck and call of landholders and get a few crumbs daily for their subsistence. This was a veiled form of Slavery. Dr. Ambedkar started a vigorous campaign against it and received the all-out support from the Mahars of Maharashtra. But when he introduced the Bill in the Council in 1928, the non-Brahmin party sided with the Government in opposing it. If Mahar Watan was abolished, the cultivators and particularly the rich among them would lose so

much free supply of manual services. The depressed classes remained isolated in their efforts at social emancipation.

Dr. Ambedkar's outlook was broadly rationalistic. But the behaviour of the caste Hindus made him look to other religions for social emancipation. In economic matters he had realised the basic conflicts between the haves and the have-nots. But because of political considerations he advised his followers to keep away from the trade unions run by the leftists. He vehemently opposed the textile workers' strike of 1928 on the ground that the union had not done anything to remove the bar on untouchables against working in weaving sections.

POLITICS OF BACKWARD COMMUNITY IN SATARA DISTRICT

There was comparatively little awakening among the backward classes in Satara district. The backward castes other than Mahars with their little political consciousness, supported the politics of the congress. However, the participation of these backward communities in the freedom movement was meagre and even negligible. Yet their sympathies were with the congress. Y.B. Chavan said: "It must be stated with regret that the freedom-movement failed to influence the Mahar community in the district." This community was under the profound influence of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Dr. Ambedkar addressed huge public meetings in the district.⁴¹

Shri Ramchandra Manohar Malawade, B.A., LL.B. of Vaduj, then

a promising young leader from Mahar community, began participating in Gandhian nationalist movement. As he is the product of Rayat Shikshan Sanstha, Satara, he owed his nationalist orientation to Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil, the admirer of Gandhiji.⁴²

On 17th September, 1932, when Gandhiji was seriously thinking of opposing British Premier's Communal Award, district Harijan Seva Sangh in its meeting presided over by Shri Acharekar demanded joint electorates with reserved seats. This meeting was addressed by Bhaurao Patil, Baburao Bhide and P.K. Shivdas.⁴³

On 2nd May 1932, a conference of backward class leaders met at Satara. In this conference Shri P.N. Rajbhoj, in his speech, described 'Munje-Raja Pact' (which was a measure seeking to break the deadlock between Gandhiji and Dr. Ambedkar) and argued as how joint electorates were beneficial to the backward communities. He also criticised Dr. Ambedkar's policy.⁴⁴

In the elections of 1937 for the Bombay State Legislature Shri R.M. Nalawade, the Congress candidate was defeated by Shri Mahadeo Khanderao Sawant, the Ambedkarite candidate.⁴⁵ This clearly reveals Dr. Ambedkar's influence in Satara district. The Mahar community in the district held aloof from the movement throughout.⁴⁶

On the agrarian front, conditions had changed but little since the 1900 famine. The war boosted prices of agricultural produce also, but the boom did not last long. The peasant

continued to suffer under the burden of heavy assessment, indebtedness and adverse terms of trade. The Government of India appointed a Royal Commission on Agriculture in 1927. On the occasion of the Commission's visit to Vidarbha areas, R.S. Ruikar a veteran labour leader, and R.S. Phule of Nagpur organised a number of peasant conferences in Vardha and Amraoti districts. Peasants organised demonstrations against the exploitation and atrocities committed by the malguzars of Varhad area. Recurring cotton crisis also found expression in periodicals and deliberations of the legislative council. But there was no organisation wedded to the cause of the peasants.

The great depression of 1930 administered a deathblow to Indian peasantry. Prices fell by about 50%. According to one estimate, the agricultural produce of Western Maharashtra which fetched Rs. 120.52 crores in 1928-29 could get only Rs. 60.52 crores in 1933-34. Cotton track was worst hit; but paddy growing Kolaba and Thana were not spared. Adding fuel to fire, the Government undertook revision of assessment and increased it substantially. This provoked intense agitation of various places. The Congress workers at the local level took initiative in channelizing this discontent. Systematic campaign was also conducted for abolition of Khoti system in the Konkan area.

At this juncture, socialist elements in the Congress took lead and urged the Maharashtra Provincial Congress Committee to move in the matter. Accordingly, a Peasant Enquiry Committee was

appointed on 14th July 1935 with the following persons as members: Achut Patwardhan (Ahmednagar), R.K. Khadilkar (Poona), Mahanlal Dantwala (Dhulia), V.P. Limaye (Poona), K.M. Jedhe (Poona), and N.V. Gadgil (Poona). Shri N.G. Goray and Shri P.K. Sawant were also associated with the work of the committee. Patwardhan, Dantwala and Goray belonged to the Congress Socialist Party that was formed in 1934.

The committee studied the problem of the various strata of the peasantry in great detail and visited a number of places to get to know the views of the peasants. It submitted its report in 1936.

The committee arrived at the conclusion that the three biggest drains on the cultivator's income are interest charges, rent and land revenue. According to its calculations about 25% of the cultivator's produce was taken away as interest. It recommended constitution of Debt Redemption Boards and other regulatory measures. It also pointed out that the taccavi loans advanced by the Government could hardly meet one per cent of the credit requirements of agriculture. The committee's recommendation on Land Tenures and Land Revenue were radical and broke new ground. As a programme of action, it recommended the establishment of Peasant Unions at the lowest i.e., Taluka level.⁴⁷

The Leftist imprint on the committee's report is too apparent. It concentrated its attention on the problems of

tenants, and small peasants and did not hesitate to make radical recommendation like graded tax on rich cultivators and abolition of Khoti system. The committee sounded a note of warning that the activities of peasant unions should not be politically loaded. They should direct their activities against the rich classes as well as the state.

The committee's report was not welcome to all in the Congress, but it seems to have imparted a sense of direction to its activist element. On the occasion of the Faizpur session of the Congress, a Kisan Morcha of about 10,000 was organised by socialist workers like Sane Guruji, S.M. Joshi and others and communist workers like V.D. Chitale. Following the footsteps of the provincial committee, the district Congress committees of Ratnagiri, Kolaba and Thana appointed similar enquiry committees to focus attention of the public and the State on the problems of the peasants. In particular, agitation against revised assessment and indebtedness spread like wild fire in the districts of Nagar, Nasik and Khandesh besides the Konkan area. Clash between the radicals and the centrists in the Congress was imminent. Immediately after the assumption of office by the Congress Ministry in 1937, leaders of rich peasantry organised meetings demanding that no action be taken on the issue of protection to the tenants. The Congress, however, was committed to that programme in its election manifesto. S.M. Joshi who was the Secretary of Poona District Congress committee, took a lead in organising a tenants' march

to Bombay to present a memorandum to B.G. Kher, the Chief Minister.

Due to pressure generated by these activities, the Congress Ministry passed the Tenancy Law and the Agricultural Debtors Relief Act. Revision of assessment also was tempered to some extent. With the outbreak of World War II in 1939, implementation of these Acts was shelved, as the Congress Ministry resigned as a protest against the Voiceroy's unilateral declaration that India joined hands with England in the War against Germany.

In Vidarbha, the communists had started branches of Kisan Sabha at a few centres, but could not make much headway. Landless labourers Association was established at Amraoti, but with similar results. In Marathwada, anti-levy campaign was started in 1940 which spread in a few adjoining districts, notably Solapur. It was more of an anti-government movement rather than one for realising any demands of the peasants. Stray efforts were being made to organise tenants and labourers against the atrocities of Jagirdars and the demand for abolition of Jagirdari was also being crystallised. On the whole, however, responsibility for venting the grievances of peasants devolved on the political movement in the absence of noteworthy peasant organisations. In Satara district a communist worker Shri V.D. Chitale also started to organise peasants and tenants. In 1938-39 when Shri Balasaheb Desai was the President of Satara District Local Board, the Board increased Local Fund. On the revenue of 1 Rupee Board increased 20 Paise as education tax, named Local Fund. Communist party organised

demonstration against this fund. This was a burden on small peasants. After some time the Board had taken back its order.⁴⁸

In 1940, under the leadership of Communist workers, demonstrations were organised at Dervan in Patan Taluka near Chaphal. Peasants refused to give revenue on the question of money lending. They wanted to abolish the system of money lending.⁴⁹ But this attempt was on a very small basis, which could not take big form. In 1943, in village Guthalwadi near Shirwal, peasants organised demonstration against Gujarati money-lenders. V.D. Chitale was working in it. Bhai Sarjerao Phalke and fourteen peasants were arrested but peasants continued their struggle.⁵⁰ Within a period from 1942 to 1944, 200 Police-Patils gave resignations of their posts as a mark of opposition to the Fragmentation and Land Consolidation Act. These were minor agitations in the peasants during this period in which communist workers mainly took part. But no body could organize the peasants successfully and effectively.

POLITICAL SITUATION

During this period, a number of leftist political parties came to be formed. Indian National Congress was more a movement than a political organisation. In its endeavour to muster cooperation of all sections of society, the Congress had to adopt broad approach on social and economic issues. As has been observed, however, on a number of issues it sided with weaker sections. But

it could not adopt an ideology of fundamental change in social and economic structure. As it started gathering strength and came to assume offices in 1937, the vested interests, particularly the landlords, industrialists and businessmen turned to it and extended help to it in various ways. The radical slant came to be lessened as the days of independence were approaching.

COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA

Inspired by the successful Russian revolution of 1917, some youths came together in 1923 to form the Communist Party of India. Marxism, as interpreted by Lenin, was its creed. That ideology holds industrial proletariat as the vanguard of Communist revolution. So, the C.P.I. workers plunged into trade union activities with a view to "make the unions instruments of struggle". Since its inception, it received guidance and instructions from the Communist International. The fifth Congress of that organisation held in 1924 had given the following directions: "The Indian Communist party must bring the trade union movement under its influence. It must reorganise it on a class basis and purge it of all alien elements".⁵¹ But the strength of communism in India was in the beginning, as it is, even at the present day (i.e., 1954) mainly intellectual.⁵² Once M.N. Roy advised the C.P.I.: "Every Communist must be an active Trade Union Worker and will endeavour to liberate the labour movement from harmful influence of the nationalist politicians like Lala Lajpatrai, Motilal Nehru etc. The advanced sections of the

workers should be helped to assume the leadership of the unions and the A.I.T.U.C. as against humanitarian intellectuals like N.M. Joshi, Jhabwala etc."⁵³

The Bolshevik leaders turned their eyes very early to India, as far back as 1918. In 1919, the third International decided to support nationalist movements in the East as they tend to upset the existing authority while not opposing revolutionary aspirations.⁵⁴ To achieve this purpose, Moscow developed and perfected channels of contact with India. Emissaries from abroad used to visit India to give advice. Organisationally, Mr. M.N. Roy was perhaps the first link between the Communist International and nascent Indian communism which was throughout the greater part of twenties still at the level of ideas.

The ideology of the C.P.I. made it look down upon the nationalist movements as a parochial urge creating hindrance in internationalism. Though many of its workers were participating in various activities of the congress, their attitude was to utilise it as united front out of which more and more workers were to be roped in for the party work. They took too militant a line during 1920s. Alarmed by these postures of 'Bolshevism' which had become almost a nightmare for the British in their homelands, they arrested communist leaders in 1929 and declared the party illegal. The leaders were prosecuted on the charge of treason. The case is known as Meerut Conspiracy case. Leaders like S.A. Dange and S.S. Mirajkar were sentenced long imprisonments. The

youngsters worshipped these leaders as great heroes and the influence of C.P.I. spread rapidly even though it was working underground. In Maharashtra, they built up strong bases in industrial centres like Bombay, Nagpur and Sholapur. In due course, the party was allowed to function openly. Slowly C.P.I. gained strong foothold in trade union movement as we have seen previously.

On the outbreak of second World War, the C.P.I. condemned it as an imperialist war and announced its intention to oppose war efforts. The Government again put its leaders behind the bars. But when in 1941 Germany attacked Soviet Russia and the latter became ally of Britain and America, the C.P.I. changed its stand and decided to help the efforts since it now became 'People's War'. The Government freed the communist leaders and extended assistance to it to carry on war propaganda. The Congress, and the nationalist forces in general, had however, taken a different stand. Their sympathies were obviously with the allies who were pitted against Fascist and Nazi forces; but they wanted a declaration from the British that India would be given Independence on the conclusion of War. Since the latter had declined to commit in this matter, the Congress launched a campaign against the War in 1940 and later on plunged the country into the great stir of Quit India movement. The Communists opposed it and incurred public wrath. On the eve of independence, the party was generally disliked by the people, but its bases in working class remained unhampered.

CONGRESS SOCIALIST PARTY

During the 1930s there emerged another leftist group. The youths of those days were not content with the limited goal of national freedom and wanted to throw their lot with the toiling masses. But they were repelled by the hyper-internationalism of the C.P.I. as also its blind adherence to Marxist orthodoxy and its flavour for unscrupulous means. So, while in jail during the course of Civil Disobedience movement, they formed Congress Socialist Party in 1934 at Nasik Central Prison. The party believed that the nationalist movement was a welcome step towards socialism. It also felt that in a country which is predominantly agrarian, the socialist revolution requires harnessing the peasant power along with that of the industrial proletariat. They looked to Gandhi, not as a stooge of the reactionary forces, but as a great friend of the socialist movement.

When out of jail, the C.S.P. leaders also engaged themselves in trade union activity among the transport workers and newly emerging section of Sugar workers. Some of them also devoted their energies towards mobilising the peasantry. For a while they had joined hands with the Communists on trade union front but when the infiltration activities of the latter were discovered, the C.S.P. severed its relations with the C.P.I. The Moscow Trials of 1937 had provoked strong dislike for the Communists' methods of functioning. The C.P.I.'s stand on war after 1941 further widened the gulf. The C.S.P. leaders plunged into the Quit India Movement

and organised an underground network to run it. Achyutrao Patwardhan, S.M. Joshi and other Maharashtrian leaders along with Jayaprakash Narayan, Ram Manohar Lohia and Aruna Asaf Ali, were hailed as great nationalist heroes. Still they continued their association with the Congress though a separate identity was carved out for C.S.P.

INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY

Dr. Ambedkar had also made attempts at forming a political party wedded to the principle of social and economic equality. In 1936, i.e., on the eve of council elections, Ambedkar founded Independent Labour Party. He had mustered cooperation of a few caste-Hindus like Surba Tipnis, Pradhan, Keluskar etc. in running the new party. But it could not present a well-defined rationale of its existence as a progressive party separate from the Communist or the Socialist Party. Nor was there any programme of action outside the precincts of legislative council. Consequently it could make no headway.

On the outbreak of War, Ambedkar extended support to the Government. He was nominated to the Viceroy's Executive Council. With a view to deriving constitutional benefits for the Scheduled Castes, Dr. Ambedkar founded Scheduled Castes Federation in 1940. The Scheduled Castes looked to it as their party and flocked its ranks,⁵⁵

M.N. Roy

With context to Satara district the personality of M.N. Roy is very important, because Royist group gathered considerable strength in the district. It was in 1920 that M.N. Roy made his first appearance in Russia. Round about 1921-22 Roy began to publish from various places in Europe the English periodicals, first entitled Vanguard and later "The Masses of India". These journals undoubtedly gave inspiration for a English Weekly entitled 'Socialist' published in Bombay by S.A. Dange in 1923. It was when the first of Roy's followers began to arrive in India, the organised communism came to India. Roy recalls that among his pupils in Moscow was the Indo-Chinese communist Ho Chi Minh.⁵⁶ After his removal from the Executive Committee of the Communist International as a result of a quarrel with Stalin and his subsequent expulsion from membership of the International in 1929, Roy evidently made up his mind to create a party of his own, but not independent of the Communist International. Roy evidently hoped that his party would, in due course, be accepted by the International as the officially recognised one. M.N. Roy's arrival in India did not please Moscow and emissaries like H.G. Lynd, Amir Haider Khan etc. were sent to counteract his influence.⁵⁷ Roy came in India in about 1931-32. Young people had a great attraction for Roy's personality. In India that time Communist Party was illegal. But Roy openly moved throughout India and gave speeches in important cities. "On Congress there is no pressure from the capitalists, it has already gone in the hands of middle.

class. So, there is no necessity to work outside the Congress and to form a separate Communist Party."⁵⁸ This was the opinion of Roy, which was convenient for many nationalist leaders. They wanted to struggle for national freedom but at the same time had inclination towards communism. But communist party had taken a stand which was in the opposition of National Congress in freedom movement. Naturally, these leaders accepted the Royist stand. Royist group gained considerable strength in Maharashtra.

LEFTISTS IN SATARA

In Satara district Shri Nath Ghanekar by his intellectual conviction, became convert to socialism. On the Ganesh festival day in 1935 Nath Ghanekar along with his companions like Shri Halbe and Damuanna Ekbote became member of Congress Socialist Party. He was the President of Satara District Congress Committee from 1935 to 1938. He began leaning towards communism from 1939 and became the member of Communist Party in 1944.⁵⁹ He was succeeded to the office of District Congress President by Shri Atmaram Patil who soon turned a Royist and remained in office till 1939. Congress was thus dominated in the district at least upto 1939 by the leftists. There was a radical front, in the district congress of socialists, Royists and Radicals. For example, Shri Raghuanna Limaye of Masur was a socialist and Shri R.K. Patil alias Karbhari Chandru Patil of Kameri was a radicalist. There was a group of Royist workers in the district, prominent among whom were Atmaram Patil, Lakshmanshastri Joshi, H.R. Mahajani,

Y.B. Chavan etc.⁶⁰ After the commencement of the World War II in 1939 and the declaration of India's involvement in it, the leftists insisted upon taking immediate steps by the Congress towards attainment of freedom. The leftist workers with their bent towards peasants and the labouring masses were causing a new awakening among them in 1930s.

Shri V.D. Chitale, the communist worker had started propagating leftist ideas in Kale and Indoli areas of Karad taluka from 1938. In 1939, at Karad, V.D. Chitale organized an eight day study camp to acquaint workers with scientific concepts of communism. Shri S.A. Dange, a well-known communist leader organized study camps at Satara and Karad. These leftist activities inevitably influenced the political workers in their activity. The leftist workers adopted the stance of opposition to the imperialist war in which England was involved and courted imprisonment. Nath Ghanekar, Rajabhau Bhawe, Ramaji Patil, Vishnu Pandurang Kulkarni, Narwkar etc. suffered imprisonment in this way.⁶¹ This happened even before the Congress took its decision to start a kind of Satyagraha at Ramgarh in 1940.

The Royist group of Satara district, consisting of eminent men like Y.B. Chavan, Atmaram Patil, H.R. Mahajani, Bhaiyyashastri Vatve, Lakshmanshastri Joshi etc. wielded considerable influence on the masses especially during the years from 1936 to 1939. The powerful personality of M.N. Roy and his thoughts, since Faizpur Congress had irresistible attraction for youths. His ideas

regarding people's committees and people's committees making organs in direct democracy impressed men. Men like Chavan began to argue, "Will this jail-going bring independence?" During the years 1938-41 the Royist attempted to arouse the peasants politically and to inspire political ambitions among them. For this purpose they organised peasant conferences at Kale, Masur, Rethare, Kasegaon etc. Around 1940 almost all the Royists except Y.B. Chavan left the Congress.⁶²

From the occasional remarks of the police it seems that Shri Kasegaonkar Vaidya and Baburao Charankar were under the influence of Achutrao Patwardhan, the Socialist leader.⁶³

The leftist workers caused political awakening among the people on economic issues and created anti-British feelings even before the actual agitation of 1942. Some of these workers played significant roles in Quit India movement in Satara district.

QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT 1942

1942 was the important year in Indian freedom movement. Gandhi gave the call for British to 'Quit India' and the movement stirred the whole nation. Satara district played a peculiar role in this movement.

British Government was conscious about the awakening in the district. So, as a precautionary measure they arrested important leaders of the district including Soman, Shankarrao Sathe, G.D.

Tapase, G.S. Altekar, Acharya Javadekar, Nath Ghanekar and R.V. Limaye. A protest meeting of 2000 people was immediately organised. At Kirloskarwadi, Hartal (strike) was observed on 10th August, 1942. A Prabhat-Feri (morning procession) of 200 people was taken out and a meeting was organised on the same day. Later the factory was locked up for a month and a half in protest of British Government.

The District Congress Committee decided to organize morchas on tehsil office. Accordingly, on 24th August a morcha of 3,000 people went on Karad tehsil office. Shri Balkrishna Patil of Udale was the leader of this morcha. Under the leadership of Shri Vithoba Tukaram Ghadge alias Buva Mhavashikar of Mhavashi, one morcha went on Patan tehsil. On 3rd September, a huge morcha of 5,000 people went on Tasgaon tehsil. Krishnarao Kurhade of Palus, Nana Patil and Govindrao Khot who was a leader of workers in Kirloskarwadi, were the important leaders.

But a very unfortunate incident happened at Vaduj. Parshuram Ghadge on 9th September led the morcha of 700 people on Vaduj tehsil in Khatav taluka. Its other leaders were Bandopant Lomate, Gaurihar Sinhasane, Bapu Kachare, Manikchand Doshi, Parshuram Ghadge, R.M. Nalavade, Babasaheb Bhosale etc. Police fired on this morcha in which nine persons were killed and 35 persons were wounded. This unfortunate incident is known in Satara freedom history as 'Jalinwala Bag of Vaduj'.

On 10th September, the 2,000 people of Islampur led a morcha

on tehsil office. The leaders were Pandu Master alias Pandurang Govind Patil of Yede Nipani, Vasantrao Patil, Y.B. Chavan, Nivratti Patil of Kurlap, K.D. Patil and Chandroji Patil of Kameri. Police fired on this morcha, in which two men from Kirloskar factory, named Umashankar Pandya, an Engineer and Vishnu Barbatte died. These two incidents of Vaduj and Islampur were turning points in 1942 movement in Satara district. People and the local leaders realised that the peaceful means were not effective. They resorted to militant activities.

Satara's Prati Sarkar or parallel Government was a unique experiment in India. The local leaders under the leadership of Nana Patil started a Prati Sarkar or Parallel Government. Kundal was the capital of this Government. This group carried out sabotage activities like looting the railways or government treasuries. They gave protection to the poor people, at the same time landlords and money-lenders were very much afraid of them.

Apart from the political activities discussed above, the Prati Sarkar also worked for prohibition, removal of untouchability, spread of literacy, preaching the importance of self-reliance and propagated for land reforms and for simple marriages involving smaller expenses.

After the closure of war, British Government concentrated its energies in Satara district to suppress the underground movements completely. For this purpose European troops were brought to South

Satara. After the elections to provincial assembly, congress ministry was sworn in office in April 1946. The new congress government cancelled the warrants of arrests, withdrew the various cases and cancelled the pending trials. The underground leaders like Nana Patil, Kisan Veer, Pandu Master, Barade Master, Kasegaonkar Vaidya, appeared for the first time at Koregaon on 5th May 1946. Nana Patil, whom people rightly called Krantiveer, appeared publicly after 44 months. This put an end to the underground movements in Satara district.⁶⁴

In Satara district the leaders could carry on the underground movement for 4 years and could form the parallel government here, largely due to the total cooperation rendered by the masses. In the elections of 1946 to the provincial legislative assembly, Shri Y.B. Chavan, P.P. Gokhale, Vyankatrao Pawar, G.D. Tapase, K.D. Patil, Gaurihar Sinhasane, Babasaheb Shinde and D.K. alias Buvasaheb Gosavi were elected on Congress tickets.

The year 1946 was marked by the huge demonstrations of primary teachers in Maharashtra in general and Satara district in particular. The 1942 movement made tremendous awakening among the different classes of the society, primary teachers were one of them. Primary teacher in Satara district was a peasant basically. He had very insufficient salary. He did not have any guarantee for security of his services and had no other facilities. When the coming of independence was in sight, they organised themselves under the leadership of Acharya Donde. In this demonstration Satara

and Nagar districts were on top. On district level Rangrao Shigaonkar, V.D. Chitale, and Bhaurao Patil organised the demonstrations.

With Dadasaheb Donde, Bhai Raul (Solapur), Sayyad Noor (Gujarat), V.D. Gokhale, Keshavrao Gokhale (Belgaum), Rangrao Diwekar, Acharya Shankarrao Bhise and so many others worked for organisation and propaganda. In November, 1945 at Karad the Primary Teachers' Conference was held. Almost fifteen thousand primary teachers were present for the conference. The decision was taken that from 1st March 1946, the fortyfive thousand primary teachers will go on strike.

The leaders carried on propaganda for two months. With V.D. Chitale, Pandu Master, Hindurao Patil and Nivrutti Kaka, the three stalwarts of famous Prati Sarkar worked for this campaign. 10th February 1946 was declared a Teachers' Day. On that day, every teacher will remain absent in the school. In every village there will be a meeting and procession. This was the decision taken by organisation. In Poona huge meeting was organised, in which important leaders like Acharya Dadasaheb Donde, Mayor Baburao Jagtap, Bhai V.D. Chitale and Anna Koshti gave speeches.

Meanwhile the campaign for 1946 election started. Every political party declared support for teachers' strike. Teachers were pressurised from Congress to do propaganda for the congress candidates. But teachers remained firm. Under the banner of

Bombay State Primary Teachers' Organisation (Mumbai Rajya Prathamik Shikshak Sangh) all teachers from Marathi, Gujarati and Kanari speaking areas joined the strike. On 1st March 1946 all teachers from Ahmedabad to Hubli went on strike. Fortyfive thousand (96 per cent) teachers were on strike. The strike continued for fiftyfour days.

On 27th March huge processions were organised on state level. Teachers demonstrated against Collector offices on district level and Mamlatdar offices on taluka level. In Bombay, under the leadership of V.D. Chitale and Sayyad Noor the procession of five thousand teachers was organised. There were bitter clashes between teachers and police, but Government took a back step and the demonstrations ended peacefully.

On 1st April, new Congress Ministry came to power. Balasaheb Kher was its Premier. Government gave promise that it will give due considerations to teachers' demands. Bhaurao Patil had good relations with Kher. Then Acharya Bhise, Rangrao Diwakar, Keshavrao Gokhale, P.V. Gadgil were all congressmen. They were of the opinion that the strike should end. Donde, Chitale, Phalke, Shankarrao Patil, Annasaheb Koshti, Mhaske, Solani, Kumbhar, Shinde, Mali, Hirve and many others were against the end of the strike. At last Bhaurao Patil worked as a mediator. Everybody had respect for him. So, the strike ended on 24th April. Government agreed on every demand of Primary teachers. But in these negotiations Kher insulted Bhaurao Patil, which was a great shock to him. Their

amicable relations suffered a loss for ever.⁶⁵

Satara district was the vanguard of the Primary School Teachers' movement. One Shri Mahadeo Dattatraya Wagh, the Headmaster of Primary School, Padali, met V.D. Chitale and discussed with him the poor condition of the primary school teachers. M.D. Wagh toured the district. In August 1943 at Karad he organised teachers' conference, Keshavrao Vichare presided over the meeting. All small teachers' organisations were merged in the District Sangh. Keshavrao Vichare was elected as President, Chitale as Vice-President and D.S. Shende Guruji as Acting President. On 20th May 1945, for the first time the district Primary Teachers' Sangh put forward their demand for dearness allowance to Satara District Local Board. The Board agreed to increase Rs. six as Dearness Allowance.

Meanwhile Bombay State Primary Teachers' Sangh organised their first conference at Poona on 20th May 1945. Chitale took very active part in it. In October 1945, Acharya Donde travelled through all Satara district. We have already seen that Second Conference of State Organisation was held in Karad. After the struggle the Government declared Rs. 25 to 75 scale grade for primary teachers. Next Conference was held at Nagar in October 1946. But after that old rivalries in teachers' organisation again started. But in the next conference at Satara on 26th January 1947 Chitale managed reconciliation in them. Shankar Sitaram Patil and M.D. Wagh were again elected as office

bearers.⁶⁶

1947-1960

The war ended in 1945. Congress leaders were released from jail that year and negotiations for transfer of power were initiated in right earnest. In 1946, elections were held to the Central Legislative Assembly and provincial Council. Congress had swept the polls in Bombay, C.P. and Berar as also in seven other provinces. The British invited the majority party to form the ministries. Kher as the Congress Premier, once again formed a Cabinet in Bombay without consulting the non-Brahmin leaders like Jedhe. The feeling persisted that the Bahujan Samaj did not get an effective share in power. A sense of discontent was publicly articulated by Jedhe and his supporters like More. The relation between organisational wing and the cabinet became strained especially after Jedhe took over as the President of Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee in May 1946.⁶⁷ The C.S.P., as a group within the Congress, was invited to join the ministry; but it declined on the ground that the negotiations were not likely to lead to transfer of power and that another nationwide agitation was necessary to win independence.⁶⁸

At the centre, however, Jawaharlal Nehru invited various non-Congress forces like the Muslim League, the Sikhs, Shyama Prasad Mukherji and Dr. Ambedkar to make the government broad-based. But though Dr. Ambedkar joined Nehru's ministry, the

Scheduled Caste Federation continued to remain an independent party to fight for the cause of the depressed classes in India. The Communist were naturally excluded from the government.⁶⁹

The dissatisfied Congressmen met at Poona on 11th September, 1946 and resolved to form a ginger group called Congress Shetkari Kamkari Sangh. In a meeting held at Bhausahab Raut's residence in Bombay on 11th January 1947, Shri Y.B. Chavan opposed the idea of forming a ginger group within the Congress with a separate constitution and a separate programme. Among those who urged the formation of such a group were some Brahmins like R.K. Khadilkar and P.K. Atre. After an interval of 7 months during which strenuous efforts were made to mobilise support for the ginger group, Raut and Shankarrao More convened a meeting at Alandi near Poona on 2 and 3 August, 1947. It was decided by the 23 participants (Raut, More, Jadhav, P.K. Sawant, D.S. Kadu, E.B. Nimbalkar, G.D. Lad, Krishnarao Dhulap, R.K. Khadilkar, Datta Deshmukh, V.N. Patil, Baburao Jedhe and others) to form the Congress Shetkari Kamkari Sangh and its constitution was approved on 12 September, 1947.⁷⁰

With the advent of independence, leftist parties redoubled their efforts to sharpen their image, first by quitting the congress and then by intensifying various struggles. The Communists for all practical purposes, were out of the Congress. The C.S.P. quit the parent body in 1948 and formed a new party called Socialist Party of India. Another significant group to

desert the Congress was a large Maratha group which has been mentioned above as ginger group. The aftermath of the tragic assassination of Gandhiji added to the hostility between the ginger group and the ruling group within the M.P.C.C. and the Bombay Cabinet. Thus, Jedhe, More, Raut, Tulshidas Jadhav, Nana Patil, Madhavrao Bagal, Datta Deshmukh, R.K. Khadilkar left the Congress to form a new party called the Shetkari Kamgar Paksha or the Peasants and Workers' Party (PWP) on 13th June, 1948. The Socialist courted this group for a while but in vain. However, other Maratha leaders like Bhausaheb Hirey, Y.B. Chavan, Babasaheb Shinde, Babasaheb Ghorpade, S.R. Rane, Shamrao Patil remained in the Congress retaining a large following for the party in the countryside. P.W.P. adopted an ideological document of a Marxist variety known as the Dabhadī thesis in 1950.

If any opposition party ever had a reasonably good chance to be an alternative to the Congress in Maharashtra, it was the P.W.P. Several of its leaders belonged to the Bahun Samaj and many of them not only belonged to the economically poor sections of the society but also had their roots primarily in the rural areas. This was in complete contrast to the leaders of the other leftist parties like the Socialists and the Communists who were primarily middle-class politicians belonging to the Brahmin and such other advanced castes and had their roots in the urban areas. However, the very reasons that made many of the founders of the P.W.P. secede from the Congress had a serious implication. Once the complexion of the M.P.C.C. was changed in such a way as to

give those who claimed to be or were identified as the representatives of the bulk of the population, it was bound to take away the wind out of the P.W.P.'s sail.⁷¹

It was personal ambition or frustration rather than a genuine concern for the plight of the downtrodden that made at least some of its prominent leaders leave the Congress. It was not a matter of surprise, therefore, that when power was within their reach, they jumped at it. After being in the wilderness for some time, these Prodigal Sons returned to the Congress describing it to be a truly socialist and progressive party. Depending upon their nuisance-value they were duly rewarded with ministerial positions or seats in the legislature. Jedhe left out of sheer disgust with the continuous bickerings and dissensions within the party and particularly its high handed management by More. Tulsi Das Jadhav was exhausted by the nerve-racking task of opposing the ruling party and sought peace by embracing it. There were others like Nana Patil and Datta Deshmukh who left it because the party, according to them, ceased to be a progressive force and had degenerated into a coterie of scheming persons. Thus, for a variety of reasons, many of the founders of the P.W.P. deserted it in the first decade after its formation. Very few of them like Bhausaheb Raut continued to lead it against all odds.⁷² Nana Patil joined the Communist Party of India (C.P.I.) and Datta Deshmukh joined the Lal Nishan Group, the successor to the Navjivan Sanghatana. Navjiwan Sanghatana, a group of dissident Communists, was led by S.K. Limaye and

Yeshwant Chavan (not to be confused with Y.B. Chavan, popularly known as Yeshwantrao Chavan).

In 1952 General Elections, the first to be held under the adult franchise, conferred by the new constitution, the Congress swept the polls leaving the Socialist Party and P.W.P. in total disarray and desolation. The socialist party was proved to be mainly a middle class party with a few proletarian strongholds. The P.W.P. was still more frustrated. It realised that the rural electorate preferred the Congress, which had become the ruling party now, thereby indicating that the caste appeal of the P.W.P. was not much powerful.

The Scheduled Caste Federation had entered into electoral agreements with the S.P.I. at a number of places including Bombay and Bhandara and with P.W.P. in Sholapur district. But it was also badly defeated including its leader, Dr. Ambedkar. Ambedkar realised that to be effective in the democratic politics of post-independence days, the Scheduled Castes would have to give up isolationist stance and enter into wider alignment. Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia tried to persuade him to join hands with S.P.I. but Ambedkar declined. He decided to form the Republican Party of India which came to be formally christened that way only after his death. It was the desire of Ambedkar that poor sections belonging to other castes should join R.P.I., but the politically conscious elements from those sections were already aligned with one leftist party or the other. The R.P.I. continued to be a

scheduled castes' party.⁷³

On the social front, Dr. Ambedkar tried hard to break the caste barriers and win equal status for the scheduled castes. He utilised the great opportunity of drafting the constitution of independent India. Untouchability was done away with by the constitution and laws were passed to punish those who observed that vile practice. The constitution contained a preamble and a chapter on Directive Principles of State Policy which expressed pious wishes to accord equal status to the ex-untouchables. Many welfare measures were devised for their benefit and reservations were made for them in the recruitment to government services. But, with all this, there was little change visible in the actual practice of caste Hindus. This put Ambedkar in a quandry. Finally he came to the conclusion that adoption of Buddhism was the only way to wash away the social stigma attached to the scheduled castes. In 1956, at Nagpur, he led thousands of his followers to adopting Buddhism.

This was a great step. It provoked loud protests from the leaders of orthodoxy. Saner elements observed that this was a warning to the caste Hindus and that instead of cursing Ambedkar they should reform their frame of mind as also their practice.

Ambedkar's step of conversion received overwhelming response from the Mahar Caste but little from other Scheduled Castes. The Mahars all over Maharashtra took to the new religion thereby giving up Hindu rites and also the age-old occupations like

pulling away and flying dead cattle. Their refusal to pull away dead cattle and to run on errands at the instance of the peasantry created tensions in village life. The step of conversion brought about improvements in the living habits and social affairs of the Mahars. But it did not help them in winning equal status.⁷⁴

After independence there were too many changes in Satara district politics. Before independence communist party was strong in the district. They had powerful unions like Satara Road and Sakharwadi in the district. Another strong group in Satara district was the leaders of Prati Sarkar. After independence most of the leaders of Prati Sarkar entered Congress, in which Maratha leaders of the peasants were great in numbers. Naturally, the strength of the district Congress increased.

But after some time, especially after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi there was a strong feeling of hatred against Brahmins. In the villages people put fire to Brahmins' houses and property. As it is from the days of Prati Sarkar and the Satya Shodhak movement Brahmins started to migrate to the cities. The assassination of Gandhi made this migration speedy. Socialist party could not take its roots in the district. Because its leadership was originally from middle class and in most of the cases of Brahmins. This was the important cause that socialists could not do much in the district.

After the split in Congress most of the leaders of Prati

Sarkar or 1942 movement either entered Communist Party or Peasants' and Workers' Party. Only Y.B. Chavan remained in the Congress. After the split of P.W.P. some of them entered Lal Nishan Party of C.P.I. Important leaders of the Communist party in the district were Nana Patil, Nath Ghanekar, Shekh Kaka, Rajaram Patil, Ramji Patil etc. In P.W.P. important leaders were Keshavrao Powar, N.D. Patil and others. While V.N. Patil entered Lal Nishan Party, and was elected M.L.A. in 1952. Almost all the members of Royist group entered Congress in which important were Y.B. Chavan, H.R. Mahajani, Laxmanshastri Joshi, Atmaram Patil etc. This was the broad division of the political leaders in the district.

SAMYUKTA MAHARASHTRA MOVEMENT

Political and social life of Maharashtra came to be stirred from the bottom by the Samyukta Maharashtra movement of 1956-60. The Congress had accepted the principle of reorganisation of states on linguistic basis even prior to independence. On assuming power, the party tried to shelve the issue but had to yield to pressure generated by agitations in a number of States. In British rule Marathi speaking people were spread out in Bombay Presidency, Central province, Berar, Goa and Princely state of Hyderabad. After independence central government appointed a States Reorganisation Commission in 1953. The Commission recommended bilingual state of Maharashtra and Gujarat with Vidarbha as separate state and a special status for Bombay city. The people of Maharashtra took this as an insult and

spontaneous demonstrations were staged.

The battle for Bombay had four distinct phases. During the first phase, under the leadership of the SMP, the supporters of Samyukta Maharashtra tried to bargain with their opponents by giving certain guarantees and by agreeing to provide safeguards to protect their legitimate interests. The second phase was marked by a complete breakdown in the bargaining process and the eclipse of the SMP followed by an unprecedented eruption of violence in the absence of effective leadership to channelise the people's discontent. The riots in Bombay and their aftermath forced the Congress high command to relent and during the third phase it came round to accept the second-best solution of the bigger bilingual Bombay State which it had rejected earlier. The last phase was marked by the challenge of the opposition parties which posed an increasingly serious threat to Congress rule in Bombay and which could be overcome only by conceding the demand of the Marathi-speaking people.⁷⁵

On 16th January, 1956, Nehru declared in his radio-broadcast that the Union Government would take over the administration of Bombay city and there would be two separate states of Maharashtra and Gujarat. This declaration gave the movement militant form. Riots broke out in Bombay. Till the end of January Government arrested all the prominent leaders of opposition. On 23rd January C.D. Deshmukh, the only Maharashtrian member in Central cabinet gave the resignation of his

portfolio, protesting against the arrests of the leftist leaders, workers and students who went on strike which was spontaneous rather than planned. It was Nehru's announcement from the All India Radio followed by the police firing at Thakurdwar at night that let loose the fury of the people. During the period from 16 January to 22 January 1956, 76 persons died in police firing. The view was that Chief Minister Morarji Desai was responsible for the excessive force used by the Police.⁷⁶ But Prof. Y.D. Phadke came to the conclusion that "To set the record straight, it must be said in fairness to Morarji Desai that he alone was not responsible for the decisions regarding firing. Nehru had given him a green signal. According to Morarji Desai, when he consulted Nehru the latter advised him to call the army and use the tanks if necessary to end the riots in Bombay. The army was alerted but Morarji did not call it for help and preferred to rely on his police-force supported by the police from other States."⁷⁷

Shri S.M. Joshi called a meeting of all opposition parties at Pune on 6th February 1956. On the day historically famous Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti was formed. One or two persons from each party formed central committee. S.M. Joshi, the famous socialist, was elected general secretary of the SMS. On 10th February, 1956, Shankarrao Deo abolished the old Samyukta Maharashtra Parishad.⁷⁸

The third phase in the battle for Bombay began with the

formation of the SMS, an alliance of the opposition parties and ended with the formation of a bigger bilingual Bombay State on 1st November 1956. During this period of about 9 months, the bulk of the population in Western Maharashtra disgusted with the vacillations of the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress leaders turned towards the SMS for the achievement of Samyukta Maharashtra including Bombay. While the SMS channelised their anger by organising Satyagraha and other peaceful forms of agitation, occasionally there was an outburst of mass-violence against the provocative tactics adopted by the opponents of Samyukta Maharashtra. This period also witnessed the mediatory efforts by the Sarvodaya leaders, Vinoba Bhave and Jayprakash Narayan as well as the discreet canvassing by Pant for a bigger bilingual Bombay state which was described as a national solution to the Bombay problem as it was sponsored by M.P.s belonging to various parties in the Parliament. During this phase in the battle for Bombay, the intra-party struggle for power between the two factions, in the MPCC reached its climax and resulted in a resounding victory for Chavan, supported by Morarji and Kannamwar against Hiray backed by Deo, Swami Ramanand Tirtha and P.K. Deshmukh.⁷⁹

In this period when Samiti arranged Satyagraha, Satara district also took its share. Upto 15th May 1956 in Satara district 1305 persons sought imprisonment.⁸⁰ The leaders were V.N. Patil, Yashwantrao Mohite, Anandrao Chavan etc. Nana Patil was in prison. On 29th July, 1956 Samiti organised a peaceful

demonstration before Parliament house. Satyagrahis went from Maharashtra in which Satara district also had its share.

In August Government declared bilingual State of Maharashtra and Gujarat with Bombay as its capital. To oppose this bilingual State Samiti called for a conference on 1st October. Huge rally was organised at Shivaji Park, Bombay, in which the leaders of Satara district mentioned above, took part. V.N. Patil put the motion before the conference, the demand to release the leaders from Samyukta Maharashtra and Maha Gujarat who were detained from 16th January.⁸¹

Then came the election in 1957. In Karad constituency of Satara district Chavan was elected. Many Congress leaders from Western Maharashtra were defeated by Samiti's candidates. The Ministers like Naik Nimbalkar, Tapase, Sathe and Mustafa Faki and veteran leaders like P.K. Sawant and Kunte were defeated in Assembly seats, while in Lok Sabha constituencies Union Ministers like Pataskar and Jagannathrao Bhosale and leaders like N.V. Gadgil were defeated by Samiti's candidates.

From Samiti's side its every important leader including S.M. Joshi, N.G. Goray, Dange, Datta Deshmukh, Atre, Nana Patil, V.N. Patil, Dandvate, etc. were elected. In Western Maharashtra excluding Bombay, the Congress won only 33 Assembly Seats while the Samiti seized 102 seats. In Bombay city the BPCC fared much better by winning 13 out of 24 seats. The remaining 11 were captured by the Samiti. The victory of the Samiti was impressive

not only in terms of the seats gained but also in terms of the total number of votes polled by it against the Congress. The Samiti received about 37 lakhs of votes while the Congress secured a little more than 28 lakhs of votes. Out of the 22 Lok Sabha seats from Western Maharashtra excluding Bombay city, the Samiti seized 20 seats. Jedhe was one of the two successful Congress candidates against whom the Samiti did not set up its candidate in view of his opposition to the bigger bilingual state. In Bombay, out of the 4 Lok Sabha seats, the Congress won 2 i.e., S.K. Patil and Krishna Menon and 2 by the Samiti i.e., Dange and M.G. Mane. Though the Congress was routed in Western Maharashtra it did extremely well, as expected, in Marathwada, Maha Vidarbha, Kutch, Saurashtra and to a lesser extent in Gujarat. Because of that Chavan managed to retain his position as the Chief Minister.⁸²

After their debacle in Western Maharashtra, the least that the MPCC leaders could do was to face the unpalatable fact that the Marathi-speaking people were not at all in favour of the bigger bilingual state. But strangely enough, they refused to respect the verdict of the voters and found consolation in the fact that the Congress continued to be in power in the state as a whole despite these reverses. Demonstrations were staged by the Samiti before Nehru when he visited Pratapgad in 1959.

After Pratapgad, Samiti organised demonstrations in Delhi on 19th December 1958, on border issue. Three thousand people

from Maharashtra went for the morcha.⁸³ Meanwhile the differences between constituent parties were increasing on various issues. In the early days of the 1959 there was difference of opinion on the issue of whether the struggle should continue on the question of bilingual state or on border issue.⁸⁴ On 18th January 1959 Samiti took decision to serve the struggle in border areas, non-cooperation and Kar-bandi would be the weapons for this Satyagraha,⁸⁵ in which Satara district provided several leaders and volunteers. On 1st May 1960 Government declared Samyukta Maharashtra, with Bombay as its capital.

In due course the Samiti became politically a spent force as it has outlived its purpose. Its decline was inevitable once the CHC decided to create a separate state of Maharashtra. None can deny the powerful impact the Samiti had on the decision-makers in the Congress. It channelised the anger of the masses and after initial difficulties, effectively organized the Satyagraha campaign and various other demonstrations to give an outlet to the feelings of the people. It did succeed in keeping the whole issue of Samyukta Maharashtra alive and thus forced the CHC to take note of the deep feelings of the people in Maharashtra.⁸⁶ For a while it appeared that the leftist forces in Maharashtra had been strengthened to the extent of overcoming caste-prejudices. But it proved to be a short-lived illusion. There was no agreement amongst the constituent parties about social and economic policies and old rivalries did not die. Every party

strove to extricate the maximum possible political benefit and the ensuing scramble could not hold the unity.⁸⁷ Ultimately the PSP withdrew from the Samiti within a fortnight after the formation of Samyukta Maharashtra. Many members of the Kissan Majdoor Party rushed to join the Congress. But the other constituent parties of the Samiti preferred to remain in Samiti in which the CPI enjoyed a commanding position. The Samiti lingered on for a few years but after the formation of Maharashtra it never posed a serious threat to the Congress.⁸⁸

Inside the Congress, however, Yeshwantrao Chavan played his cards shrewdly. He persuaded the Central leadership to grant the demand of unilingual state of Maharashtra with Bombay as its capital. When it was officially conceded in 1960, many Maratha leaders were lured away from the Samiti and its constituent parties. In 1962, the Panchayati Raj was brought into being in the State. With the decentralization due to the introduction of Panchayati Raj, leaders of the Maratha caste felt that they no longer have to struggle for rights against the hierarchy, rather they themselves were the masters of the situation. The cooperative network, that was being expanded as a part of the agricultural development programme, provided additional opportunities for them to exercise power and enjoy prestige. The multitude of peasantry, not conscious of the class interests, followed these leaders in the hope that they would exercise the newly won power for bettering the lot of their caste-fellows. The disillusionment set in only at the end of the decade.

The Republican Party of India after 1960, also fell a prey to the virus of splits. There were at least three groups leading separate existence and claiming to be legitimate followers of Dr. Ambedkar. The biggest section among them, led by the late Dadasaheb Galakwad, after conducting a nationwide Satyagraha movement in 1964, started aligning with the Congress on the plea that their lot could not be improved without aligning with the ruling party. Thus, instead of joining hands with the working masses belonging to the other castes, the scheduled caste leaders again chose to seek favours from the Government.⁸⁹

There is a welcome effort at rejuvenating the Satyashodhak Movement, but unless a process of introspection is switched on amongst the Maratha youth and of decasting is initiated, the movement towards social equality will continue to remain weak.⁹⁰

On the agrarian front, a wide range of activities have been initiated since Independence. In the erstwhile Bombay State, the old tenancy act was replaced by a new one in 1948 and in 1955 it was substantially amended with a view to making cultivating tenants owners of land which they had taken on lease. Prices of agricultural produce had increased but to a lesser extent than those of manufactured products. So, the burden of land revenue was not felt to be unbearably heavy. All intermediaries, including the Khoti system in Konkan, Malguzari in Vidarbha and Jahagirdari in Marathwada, were abolished as also various hereditary watans. For bringing about a balanced and rapid economic development of the

country, an era of planning was ushered in. Agricultural development was naturally placed high on the agenda. National Extension Service and Community Development Projects were launched to help the farmers increase their productivity by adopting modern technique. For tackling the age-old problem of indebtedness, a Rural Craft Survey Committee was appointed. It submitted its report in 1954. Its recommendation to expand cooperative network to substitute village money-lender was accepted and vigorously acted upon. Benefited by the advantage of an early start, Maharashtra State made rapid strides. Cooperation was also extended to processing activities and a large number of co-operative sugar factories came into existence which have been doing booming business.

All this presents a lofty picture. It is claimed by the authorities that Maharashtra has brought about a green revolution. But this is only an appearance. It is a hard fact of life that all these measures have conferred benefits on a small crust of rich farmers. Credit and other facilities have been monopolised by this section. Tenancy and ceiling laws are radical on paper, their actual implementation has not helped the vast number of tenant-cultivators or landless labourers. All this could happen because there are no strong organisations of small peasants and landless labourers. The story of the earlier period has been repeated in this period also.

True, there have been occasional agitations to focus

peasants' problems. Demands for guaranteeing fair prices to the agriculturists, or for cutting down the red tape from the machinery engaged in supplying impetus to the cultivators have been made forcefully. The Socialist Party, the P.W.P., C.P.I. and Lal Nishan Party had organised impressive demonstrations at one time or the other. Demand for abolition of land revenue was also forcefully made, but to no effect. A few issues have been successfully fought for. For example, small land-holders who had leased lands to the sugar factories during the 1930s and which were subsequently transferred to the State Agricultural Corporation got back their lands on conducting a decisive struggle. The government has also agreed in principle to allot a plot of land, that would be irrigated by the Project, to the farmers whose lands have been submerged in the respective project, the project-affected farmers had given a tough fight for that. Committees consisting of representatives of different parties and a few prominent persons concerned with the issue came to be formed. But no permanent organisation was evolved out of them.

As noted earlier, leftist parties do champion the cause of the peasantry. But they cannot attend to day-to-day problems of the farmers and supervise the bureaucratic machinery charged with the implementation of the land reform programmes. Secondly, since the parties have to cater for the votes of all sections, they do not dare to displease the rich farmers. This places a

severe limitation, they concentrate attention on the problems in which the government is an adversary. Running peasant organisations on class basis could not be seriously attempted by these parties.

During the 19th and early part of 20th century, peasantry was being referred to as one single group. The government had accorded recognition to industrial labour and allocated legislative seats to it in 1919 which were increased in 1935. As compared with seats allocated to the commerce and industries interests, it was a very miserly allocation for the labour. Nevertheless the very fact that labour was given a separate representation helped the public at large to recognise that class. The peasantry also got legislative representation, but it was a blanket term clubbing all sections - rich farmers, small peasants, tenants and labourers - together. So, the problems of the small peasants and agricultural labourers did not receive serious consideration in the public debate.

It is only after the advent of independence that agricultural labourers received attention as separate class. At some places, struggles were launched for getting their wages increased and even a few strikes were organised (e.g., in Bassein Taluka of Thana district, later in some parts of Nagar district etc.). Demonstration to get more wages on famine relief works was effectively organised during 1953-54 and 1971 famines; that helped in getting wage increases for agricultural work in normal

days also. In the sixties, agricultural labourers in the irrigated track organised themselves for periodical wage increases. Slowly the demand that landless labourers be given land to cultivate gathered momentum. The Socialist Party in its agitation of 1964 had emphasised this. Later on, the RPI launched a nationwide struggle for five demands, one of which was redistribution of land. Since capitalist trends increased in agriculture during that decade and concentration of land in a few hands assumed alarming proportions, the issue of redistribution of land by lowering the ceiling on holdings was pressed by CPI and the Socialist Party and a land liberation movement was launched in 1970. It mobilised the landless labourers all over Maharashtra.

The CPI had formed Agricultural Labourers Association at Amraoti which conducted a few agitations for increase in wages and redistribution of land. But it could not strike roots amongst the agricultural labourers as a class. Similar is the experience of the Socialist Party which had formed the Shetkari Shetmazoor Panchayat in 1969. It made a fine start in Jalgaon and Nasik districts, but could not expand its field of activity.

SATARA DISTRICT

Cooperative movement was deep rooted in Satara district from old days. After independence it started flourishing on a large scale. The age-old problem of indebtedness was solved on

a considerable scale. But again the benefit of the cooperative network was gained by small crust of peasant society, those who are big land-holders or those who have political power in their hands. But at the same time the number of cooperative sugar factories are increasing in the district and with that some of the peasants also getting benefits of it.

After independence when Tenancy and Ceiling Act was passed the leaders in the district supported it. On this issue Lal Nishan party organised one Conference in village Shirambe in Karad Taluka in 1952, where S.K. Limaye and V.N. Patil were present. The conference passed a resolution in which it said "We would not allow anybody to come in our land and we would not go in other's land. In Tenancy Act some of the tenants were losing their small piece of land but at the same time law was giving them promise that they would receive another land. This was the answer for the situation. At the same time Satara Road workers went on a strike. That struggle and the peasants movement were linked with each other. The workers and peasants were supporting each other.⁹¹

In the district Shetkari Kamgar Party had good following. By this party also peasants conferences were organised in the district. In 1949 peasant conference was organised at Warunjee, where famous PWP leader Tulshidas Jadhav, V.N. Patil (then he was in PWP) and Madhavrao Bagal were present. Again in 1951, another conference was organised, at Shirwade, where Datta Deshmukh, V.N. Patil, Shankarrao More, Keshavrao Jedhe and Nana Patil were

present. Both the conferences passed a resolution demanding fair prices for agricultural product.⁹²

We have already seen that the peasants under Sakharwadi Sugar Factory fought for their leased lands. Some of them had given their land on eighteen year lease. Their contract was ending after 1948. Under the leadership of communist leaders like K.B. Nalavade they took the possession of their lands when the crop of sugarcane was standing in the fields. Peasants ploughed the farms and destroyed the crop. Factory with the help of Government filed suits against the peasants. Advocate Vasantrao Bagal argued from the side of peasants in the Court. At last company took back the cases and peasants got compensation.⁹³

The struggle was not ended. Though some peasants got their land back almost ten thousand acres of land remained in the hands of the company. Company was giving very meagre rent on this land. So, peasants asked the land back. Both parties tried for compromise. But agreeable solution did not come forward. Communist Party's Kisan Sabha helped the peasants in this struggle. They arranged a campaign for propaganda of the struggle for one and a half years. The area coming on the disputed land was scattered in seventeen villages. In 1955 the struggle started and went on for nine months. Communist party supplied seven hundred volunteers from all over the district. Company planted sugarcane, peasants used to pluck that. Eight hundred people including children and women were arrested. The leaders were Nana Patil, Shantaram

Gurav, Tushar Pawar, Shekh Kaka, K.B. Nalawade, Bajirao Kadam, Dongare etc. In one stage the male members of the village Tadwal were arrested. But two volunteers worked to fulfill the necessities of the village. Even at the time of the demonstrations with every ten peasants there was one party worker to accompany them. Police arrested so many people. They put restrictions on Bajirao Kadam, Nalawade and Dongare on their entry in the troubled area. After nine months company agreed to pay more rent. So, many peasants made contracts with company. Meanwhile Bombay Government passed Ceiling Act. With that the lands which were not rented were owned by Government. Those who rented the land were benefited. Still all land was not taken back by peasants. Three thousand acres of land had remained in the possession of Government. To this struggle other peasants whose lands were not rented, helped very much.⁹⁴

Meanwhile another peasants' problem came forward in Phaltan state. After independence the state was merged with Indian territory. The ruler Naik Nimbalkar had fifteen thousand acres of land in Phaltan Taluka, which was in the possession of the tenants who were tilling it. These tenants were giving revenue tax on this land to ruler Naik Nimbalkar. After the merger of the state, Bombay Government gave an order to protect the rights of Naik Nimbalkar. With this order peasants should give twenty rupees per acre to Naik Nimbalkar and then they would own the land. Peasants' demand was that they were toiling on the land generations together, so they should get the land without any

compensation. Kisan Sabha organised so many conferences of the peasants in the taluka and put forward the demand of the peasants. At last Government agreed to their demands. They were ready to pay revenue to the Government.⁹⁵

After independence these few movements were organised in Satara district by leftist parties. But after the starting of Samyukta Maharashtra movement everybody's attention was concentrated on that problem, nobody gave sufficient attention to agrarian problem upto 1960.

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