

Contribution of Bhil Adivasis of Khandesh in the Revolt of 1857

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Abstract: In fact, the tribals started conflict against the British (Company) government from 1818. The conflict of tribal was armed. When they struggled with the British soldiers, they used the weapons, swords, strips, sling, gaffle, galol etc. On the other hand, the British soldiers used guns. Despite this, tribals left the British soldiers and officials in many places. Tribals had to maintain their existence and Asmita. Considering their power, the British adopted the policy of 'Foda and Zood'. British kept some temptation in front of them to fit some tribals. But it was not very used. Khandesh and handful of traders in Khandesh, however, became victims of British temptation. He was selfishness. Tribals took the news of them. Often tried to loot the treasures of the British. The elderly was also involved in tribal revolution. Similarly, many women participated in this struggle. Some English missionaries came to India. They started preaching Christianity. He was trying to create an environment against the idol of Hinduism. They have a goal of to disrespect to Hindu. This thing was realized for tribal leaders. From it their British opposition struggle was intensified. The country became independent from the effort of many patriots. The tribal contributions are valued in conflicts for independence. The tribals in India were treated as criminals by the British government declared. They were branded as robbers. Tribal heroes were considered a nuisance. On the one hand, while creating such a stigmatized image of the tribals in the society, the secret correspondence has praised their freedom as well as their faith in their heroes. The British have unequivocally acknowledged that the uprising was carried out by the entire tribe, all men and women, young and old, even though the tribal people, led by some tribal leaders, led by Naik, revolted against the British. It has also been mentioned that this uprising of the tribals was a part of the uprising against the British in North India. The British subtly and brutally crushed the tribal uprising. Hundreds of tribal heroes were given guns. Killed. They were shot. Court-martial hanged. Occasionally women were held hostage. All these details should be seen from the root.

Keywords: *Bhil, Khandesh, mobilization, actors, socio-political*

I-INTRODUCTION

The history of tribal in India has not come to light yet. No one has systematically written the history of the tribes in India in totality. The history of the tribal or indigenous communities in India is yet to be published with narratives from the tribal themselves. In this particular paper the attempt is made to write about the social unrest experienced by the Bhil community, the largest indigenous community of Western India in the well-known nationwide unrest of 1857 in India.

The uprising of Bhil in Khandesh seems to have started from 1818.¹ The company government took strict measures to suppress this uprising. These techniques were fully utilized by the British to the Company Government in Khandesh.² However, it is safe to say that the war continued in Khandesh. During the 40 years from 1818 to 1858, there was not a single year when there was complete peace in Khandesh. Imperial peace from the beginning by the British in Khandesh was instituted through the British administrative policies of East India Company rule of Bombay Presidency.³ Some modern historians have considered this unrest as a form of national upheaval. Historians do not want tribals to write their own history. The reason for this is that we are the tribal community we understand our own culture better than other and are in a position to do the judicious interpretation of various aspects which others or outsiders can't understand properly, but if their culture is different, then there is a great need to study them in the context of this diverse Indian culture.

Prior to the Company government, Hindu and Muslim rulers had recognized the tribal right to forest in the forest. Sarah never asked him for the land. The company government deprived him of his livelihood due to greed for forest resources. The tyranny of the contractor hired by the company to collect forest resources in the world posed a new crisis to the forest dwellers. Their detachment from the world is now in crisis, so their eruptions have a new effect.

Image-1: Grinding corn in a Bheel village, 1880s.



Source: St. Nicholas, Brockenhurst, © Copyright Gillian Moy and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence

The Christian missionaries, with the help of the British administration, launched the Christian mission.⁴ Our religion is not safe. This sentiment was echoed by the Khajli missionaries in an attempt to impose religious restrictions on all ordinary farmers, farm laborers and the

¹ Sarjerao Bhamre, *Adivasinche Uthav* (Tribal Revolts) (In Marathi), Pune, Aparant Publishers, 2015, P. 28

² *Ibid.* P. 28

³ Govind Gare, *Satpudyatil Bhill* (Bhils of Satpuda) (In Marathi), Pune, Continental Publishers, 2001, Pp. 101-106

⁴ Govind Gare, *Op.cit.*, Pp. 297-325

vulnerable, insecure tribal community living in the hills. This led to dissatisfaction and created an anti-English atmosphere.

II-THE LEGACY AND CONTRIBUTION OF BHIL IN 1857 WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

Various tribal uprisings from 1818 to 1857

The political, social and economic conditions of Khandesh were very poor in the last decade of 18th century and early 19th century. The rioters had tissue. Before the British came to power, the region of Khandesh was looted and destroyed by Arabs, Pendharis, Holkars and Marathas. The Bhils were responsible for guarding the ghats, while in some areas they received *jagal* (compensation) for land protection. The tribals fought against those who were attacking their rights, but the authorities suppressed the fight against the armed forces and inflicted inhuman atrocities on them, creating a sense of rebellion among them. Later, during the Company rule, the feeling of struggle increased among the tribals of Khandesh. The nature of this conflict was, of course, armed rebellion corresponding to that period. The Bhils in the Khandesh area (of the company government) were skeptical of the new British rule. They did not want to be under British rule.

After the Company government came to power in 1818, its political maneuvers were successful and it was a quick move to strengthen economic interests. The rights of the common people were violated. This freedom-loving tribe challenged the British rule by destroying the traditional forest and land rights of the tribals and destroying their right to live an independent life. The tribal heroes of Khandesh revolted against the inhuman and tyrannical rule of the British. In this, the Bhil revolutionaries came together and organized from 1818-1819 and declared a jungle war against the British in the hills and valleys of Satpuda. Over 50 young heroes took part in it and staged 50-60 small and big uprisings against the British. These include Kanhaiyya, Chilya, Jiva, Ramji Naik, Umed Singh Vasava, Shiba Bhill, Kuversingh, Kazisingh (Khaja Naik), Bhima Naik, Many well-known heroes like Bhagoji Naik, Subhanya, Hirya, Ramji, Kanya, Devchand, Sambhaji, Dasharath, Aranya Naik, Java Vasava, Gumania, Rana fought valiantly with the British and sacrificed their lives in the forefront of the freedom struggle. The history of their accomplishments is long. However, they do not have much place in the history books. Due to their ignorance, they could not read or write and their feelings did not reach the society. Any revolutionary and independent According to British officer Vintage and other officials, the dissatisfaction and fight for rights against the British, which was simmering in the Bhil tribe, was a long-term and demanding justice. Surprisingly, Colonel Blower and members of the company's council later acknowledged the tribe's dissatisfaction and acknowledged that it was a struggle for their rights. The history of Khandesh from 1818 to 1880 was the history of the struggle of the Company (British) government against the Bhils. Not a single year went by that the Bhils did not revolt against the British. It is unfortunate that progressive Maharashtra is not aware of this.

The contribution of tribal heroes in the War of Independence of 1857

The national movement started after the establishment of the Congress in 1885. Such a general history is the understanding of the reader. It is also believed that the uprising of 1857 stirred up national sentiment. It is believed that only some of the leading colonists and soldiers from the north took part in the uprising. The historical texts of the time, which are

widely read, seem to express the same idea. Today, 157 years after the uprising, there has not been much change in the above thinking. The reality is different. The uprising of 1857 seems to have taken place in Satara, Kolhapur and Nargund. However, a large number of Adivasi (primitive) brothers from Dhule, Nandurbar, Jalgaon, Nashik and Nagar had fled the British. Unfortunately, the rise of these heroes does not seem to have received much attention in history. The history of our country revolves around the elite. The existence of ordinary people is not much felt in history. In fact, Atkinson says, the subject of history is man, No person. The individual is subject to history. Man is nowhere to be seen in our history writing. Individuals can be seen everywhere. The history of tribal freedom fighters is long. His achievements in the freedom struggle are great and he has no place in the history books. But his work proved that his patriotism was no less than that of any known revolutionary and freedom fighter. In the contemporary documents of the uprising of 1857, the text and the government intelligence report (CID report) of the British officer of that time, the freedom-loving heroes of Khandesh and the adjoining region (British) shook the unjust power of the company government. Mother India sacrificed her life in this battle to become independent. Cities stand on their own two feet if they get to know the neglected heroes who risked their lives in this freedom struggle. The image of his selfless sacrifice stands before the eye. Life imprisonment, black water punishment, gunshot wounds to the chest, gunshot wounds, Blessed is Narveer, who considers everything in life as salutation to Mother India and hangs on the gallows.⁵

Rise of Bhima Naik

The uprising of 1857 literally began around September 1857. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the uprising in Khandesh was ignited by Khaza Naik (Kazi Singh) and Bhima Naik. The two Bhil brothers under the leadership of Bhima Naik defeated the British government officers Kennedy. Kennedy's detachment was attacked and defeated. Bhima Naik warned the police officers in Khandesh and said in no uncertain terms that it was not right for you to be loyal to the government and come to us otherwise it would have bad consequences. I am giving you this order as per the order of the Emperor of Delhi. Bhima Naik considered himself the representative of the Emperor of Delhi in Khandesh. The government and the police were shocked by Bhima Naik's statement and announced a reward of Rs. At that time, it was an honor for Bhima Naik and the freedom fighters of Khandesh to announce such a sum on a Bhil Naik. His reward shows that Bhima was so intimidated by the British.⁶

The uneducated, uneducated, untrained Bhils did not have any doubt that the trained, educated and advanced armed officers of the British had no doubt. The Royal N-Field cartridges faded in front of these heroes, who specialize in traditional archery. He pushed Bhima Naik so much that the prize money was increased to Rs 2,000.⁷

⁵ *Ibid.* Pp. 297-325

⁶ *Ibid.* Pp. 297-325

⁷ Sarjerao Bhamre (2015), p.123

Image-2: Bhima Naik



Source: Samast Adivasi Bhil Ekta Sangathan⁸

Thrilling Battle of Ambapani (11th April 1858)

The government took steps to suppress the Bhil heroes and to suppress the uprising in Khandesh. Kennedy, Major Evans, Colonel Byrne, ca. Logston, ca. The uprising was unsuccessful, despite the deployment of wealthy military officers, such as Briggs and Colonel Autram. The route from Sendhwa Ghat to Mumbai was very important for trade and army. It was important to keep it safe. The British could not afford to occupy the villas. Also since it is not possible to fight them from the top of the hill, Saburi should calm down the uprising or be armed. The British government was in a dilemma as to how to deal with them. Bhil Sena along with Khajya Naik's accomplice is at Ambapani in Satpuda mountain range. Ambapani is on the border of Mumbai province in the present day Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh border area. Khaja Naik, Bhima Naik, Mewasia, Kanubaba were with his companions on a narrow hilltop. He had his wives with him. March 1858 to May. Evans with 1500 soldiers while Ca. Langston set out to attack Qazisingh with 900 troops. Major Evans arrested Bigha Naik, Ramsingh of Ratanpur and Vista Naik of Veerpur village in Sultanpur county for supplying supplies to Kalubaba and Daulat Singh. Vista Nike sentenced to life in prison. On 11 April 1858, the rebels were captured by the British. The British had armed, trained troops, while Qazisingh and his warriors did not have simple guns. But he was determined to fight. Thus began the war. Major Evans and ca. Logston attacked from the front. At 8 o'clock in the morning, Bhil was surrounded by British troops. The Bhils attacked the hillside with small and large stones, as well as with the help of slingshots and slashes. Damaged British troops. Garrison, a British officer, fought valiantly. Ca. The berth was injured. So take it. Besari was

⁸ Image taken from their facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/SamastaAdivasiBhilEktaSanghathan/> accessed on 30th November, 2020, 12.21 am

severely injured. The British, despite having everything, suffered heavy losses. 16 soldiers were killed. 45 were injured. 7 people went missing. The villas were also badly damaged. 170 were injured. Kazi Singh's son Polad Singh was killed. 65 heroes received. Caught 62 Bhils. Of these, 57 Bhils (drum trials) were killed by military drums. 200 women and children were arrested. Among them were Kazi Singh's wife, Mewasia Naik's sister, Bhima Naik's niece and brother Rawat's wife. 20 Bhilveer were sentenced to black water and sent to Andamans. Tribal heroes used guerrilla poetry to deceive the British. The rocks in the valley were used as weapons. The modern weapons of the British failed before them. The Battle of Ambapani was seen as an inspiring and thrilling struggle in the tribal struggle in Khandesh. Major A.S. Hasselwood and Major Devans informed the government that the tribal army was led by Polad Singh, Kalubaba and Bhima Naik, the sons of Kazi Singh (Khajayanaik). The war began on the morning of April 11th. A fierce battle ensued until 3:30 p.m. Major Hazelwood says Khazya Naik's only son, Polad Singh, was killed.⁹

Participation of Bhil Women... the 'Virangana'-Warrior Women'

The fact that *Bhilla virangana* also supported men in this war with great zeal is inspiring and glorious not only for the people of Khandesh but also for the Indians. Major Hasselwood mentioned in his letter that Khajja Singh's wife, sister, Bhima Naik's nephew, brother Rawal's wife were arrested. The tribals were defeated in the battle of Ambapani, but it is also a matter of pride that there is a tradition of rebellion, struggle and sacrifice for freedom. Swabhimani is the participation of tribal women in it. According to documents, the British government ordered its military officers not to release the Bhil women until the Bhil heroes surrendered, as Bhil women were considered dangerous by the British as well as Bhil men. 460 women and children were arrested and imprisoned in Dhule Jail. The CID report dated June 1, 1858 stated that Bhil men were harassing and harassing their wives as much as men were harassing and harassing them. They take out our secret news and report it to our men. They prepare and serve food to men. From time to time, they fight with slingshots and arrows. So they too should be imprisoned. From this, it is necessary to mention here how much the British government had taken these Bhil Virangans. Bhil Nayak was subjected to inhuman, cruel, brutal atrocities by British authorities on his women in order to surrender. Polad Singh's wife was killed by a drum trial. Khaja Naik and his associates did not fall prey to such terror and atrocities. Without bowing to the power of the British He did not give up. This great son of Mother India should be called a great warrior. A month after the battle of Ambapani, Kalubaba and Daulat Singh crossed the river Narmada and escaped. Kalubaba and his son Tumbarsingh, assistant generals in Central India. Kanik surrendered to Hugh. The uprising in the north was coming to an end but in Khandesh, Khajanaik and Bhima Naik continued their fight. In 1858, the British government granted an unconditional pardon to Khaja Naik but he did not surrender. He continued small and big skirmishes and looting. Revenge of Ambapani's defeat was taken by attacking Nandgaon. In January 1859, he carried out a daring robbery at Chalisgaon. Since Khajja Naik did not surrender to the British, the British decided to kill him by deception or discrimination. In the mean time, Jamadar Rohiddin Naik tried to capture Qazisingh but failed. In 1860, Khaji's bodyguard was stabbed and turned to his side. Khajja Naik was killed by his bodyguard while he was sleeping for money. The British beheaded him and hung him on a neem tree near the English warehouse in Dharangaon for a week. Tribal rebels should be intimidated and terrorized by the British in

⁹ Sarjerao Bhamre (2015), p.123

the second year after the martyrdom of Khaja Naik, Bhagoji Naik was martyred in a clash with the British near Sangamner.¹⁰

Criticism of the entire Bhil tribe as criminals: The British had declared the entire Bhil tribe as criminals. By the way they speak openly. Even though there was no law on actual criminal tribes, they were called robbers in government documents. They should not get any support from the people, not even sympathy, said the British official. . Attempts were made by the people to divide the tribals and create mistrust among them. Attempts were being made to create an image of the tribal people as not being peace-loving but cruel, looting and criminal. The antecedents of criminal law were slowly being created¹¹

Tribals have a unique place in Indian society. The reality of that place has not been acknowledged by the inheritors of Indian culture. It is unfortunate, but even though their culture is different, Indians with this diversity There is a great need to study them in the context of culture. The social struggles that will arise in Bhil are another such reality. This uprising gave an anti-British to Indian look so that one could turn a blind eye to social reality. But it is important to think more consciously and sympathetically about what exactly is happening.

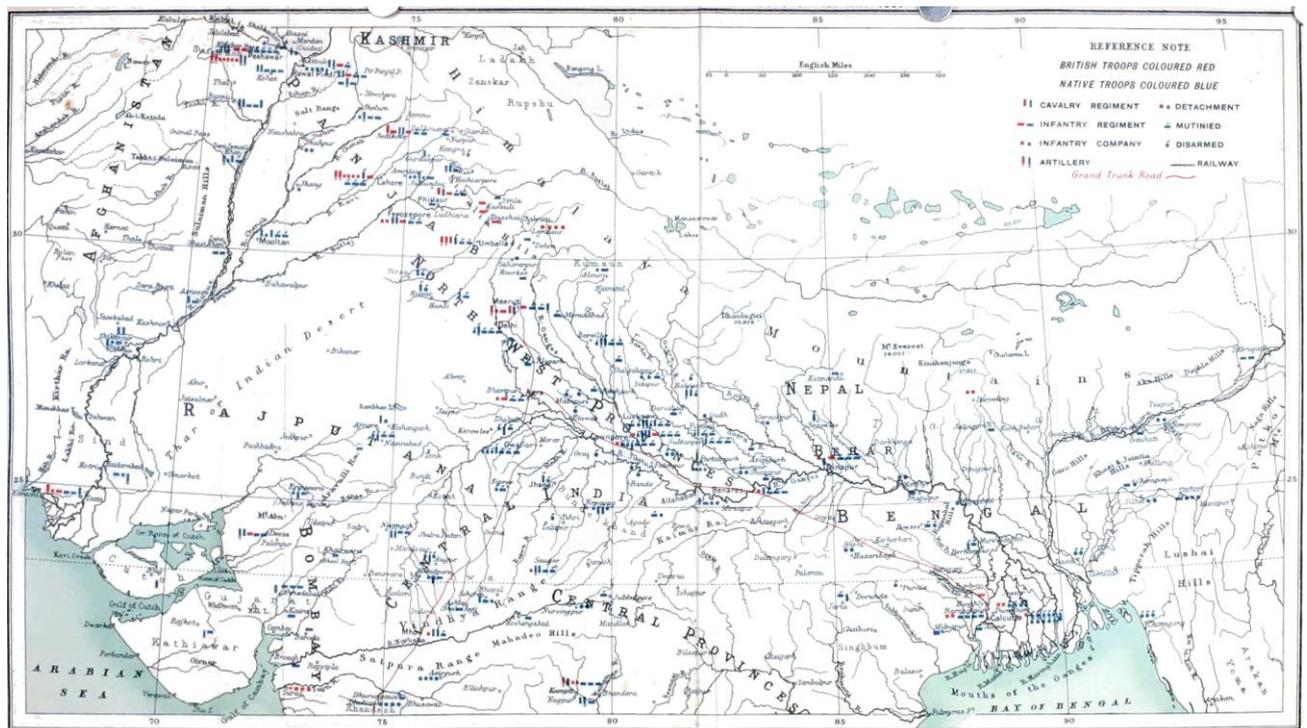
Image-2: Bhil peasant hut



Source: R.V. Russell, The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, 1916

¹⁰ Govind Gare, *Op.cit*, Pp. 297-325

¹¹ Mande Prabhakar, 'Upekshit Parv' (Neglected Festival) In Marathi, Aurangabad, Godavari Publications, 2006, P.154

Map-1: Indian mutiny map showing position of troops on 1 May 1857

Source: Wikipedia

CONCLUSION: Tribal uprising during the War of Independence of 1857

As we have seen earlier, ever since the grip of British rule on India began to tighten, the tribal tribes of Maharashtra, especially the Satpudas, had begun to express their reaction in the form of armed uprisings. From time to time the struggle became a battleground for British soldiers and tribal freedom fighters. He was killed by bullets or bullets. The British, with great wisdom and cunning, took Bhillana into their regiment. With his help, he was able to break the Bhils uprising for some time. But Bhil's anger over the British rule did not subside.¹²

Their mind was agitated, they all were waiting for the right opportunity. In 1857, they got this opportunity. As collective rebel they expressed their displeasure against the British government by arming the soldiers in Maharashtra. At the same time, the tribal villages of Satpuda staged a massive armed uprising against the British and expressed their displeasure with the British government. During the same period, the tribal Bhils of Satpuda staged a huge armed uprising against the British. The tribals of Satpuda and the tribals of Satmalya were dissatisfied with the British rule. As soon as Satpuda, Satmala was burning inside. Although the flames were not visible, the fire of discontent was not extinguished. In 1857, the whole of India was engulfed in flames. There was an outburst of dissatisfaction in their minds. Satpuda and Satmala areas were re-ignited. This time it didn't look like a spark. The fire had taken the form of a fire. Or The tribal heroes of the area were led by Bhagoji Naik and Kajarsingh or Kajisingh Naik. Bhagoji Naik, a brave tribal hero, was living in the hills of Satmalya at that time. He had a good influence on all the villas in Satmala. The tribesmen of Satmalya had weapons. They use these weapons to protect themselves and to fill their stomachs. Bhagoji Naik inspired him to use it against the British as well as against their henchmen. Organized the scattered tribal Bhil soldiers. The same was done by Kajarsingh

¹² Govind Gare, *Op.cit*, Pp. 297-325

Naik, who lived in the valley of Satpuda. Kajarsingh was mighty. He had the same leadership qualities as Bhagoji Naik. This agile and dutiful Kajarsingha had an effect on the entire tribal villas of Satpuda hills. Like Bhagoji Naika, he also organized tribal heroes scattered in the Satpuda mountain range. He said that if their weapons were used to resist the British, they would be able to live a free and independent life as before. Built confidence in their minds. It aroused the anger in the minds of the tribal heroes about the British, ignited the sound of discontent. Inspired to fight for freedom.¹³

Both Bhagoji Naik of Satmala and Kajarsingh Naik of Satpuda formed their respective units. They already had contact with each other. Now they conspired. Decided to make a big uprising against the British. The motivations of both were the same. The goal was one. The British were driven out. Their power was overthrown. Want to regain the freedom you lost. They jointly staged a big uprising. Began to attack the British camps. Their attacks on the British camps began to succeed. The nature of the organized attacks by the tribal villas was so effective that it left a scar on the British. They could not defend their own camps. Now he realized that he could not just resist. The uprising by Bhagoji and Kajarsingh cannot be quelled without taking some aggressive stance. And it was decided to defeat Naik and Kajarsingh Naik. For this, an officer in the army assigned the responsibility to Sir Frank. As ordered by Sir Mynsfield, Sir Frank plotted to defeat Bhagoji and Kajar Singh. Bhagoji Naik and Kajarsingh Naik were ordered to be killed or captured alive by the British. He took a large army and a police force to capture Frank Bhagoji and Kajar Singh. The villages that would be on the way were well harassed by this army. The nature of the fierce battle that took place here was very fierce. From the mountain valley, Bhagoji Naik and Kajarsingh Naik, with the help of their tribal comrades, wreaked havoc on the British army. Inflicted heavy losses on the British army. When the British did not succeed in this struggle, he resorted to deception. The British were defeated in the encounter at Ambapani. British power had to be withdrawn. War by intriguing English officials The lure was to subdue one of the tribal villains, to seduce him, and to capture Bhagoji and Kajar Singh by deception, hoping for a big reward. However, some struggles did not stop. Bhagoji and Kajar Singh were not defeated. The British did not succeed in killing them or capturing them alive. Veer Bhagoji Naik attacked the British camps from Satmalya, while Veer Kajarsingh was the S. . The British had to withdraw. There were signs that British power would be overthrown from Khandesh. But that did not happen. Only one of Kajar Singh's companions was greedy for the prize. Kajar Singh beheaded him while he was asleep.¹⁴

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¹³ Mande Prabhakar, *Op. cit*, P.154

¹⁴ Govind Gare, *Op.cit*, Pp. 297-325