CHAPTER-9

Peasants, State and Violence: Suppression of Movement

1.1 State’s Reluctance and Intensification of Protest

This Chapter aims to understand the peasant movement at its intensified state leading to confrontation between peasants and state. Minister for Major and Medium irrigation K.N. Subbe Gowda assured the members of ‘Federation of Hassan District Irrigation Committees’ (FHDIC) of solving the problems of peasants of Bagur-Navile. Following were the important assurances given by minister to the members in a meeting attended by bureaucrats from major irrigation ministry in Bangalore.

a. Once technical committee approved, third lift irrigation scheme at Kallesomanahalli would be implemented at the cost of eight crores.

b. Meeting with farmers would be convened under the chairmanship of Chief Minister to decide over the demand of awarding monetary compensation of Rs 25 crores.

c. Government agreed to direct Department of Irrigation to give Rs 1.5 crore to Karnataka Electricity Board (KEB) to install ‘Electricity Supply Unit’ in Bagur (Janatha Maadhyaama, 26th March, 1998)

But AIKS having sensed the reluctance on the part of state to implement the monetary compensation as recommended by Department of Horticulture had decided to pursue the issue more vigorously. Muzaffar Assadi aptly observed that the struggle of peasants of Bagur-Navile was a victory of civil society:

"The ongoing peasant struggle revolves around the technical report which was submitted by an expert group constituted by the state, after a prolonged struggle by the peasants in Bagur-Navile area. This report is important for three main reasons: One, it acknowledged the after effects of the tunnel on the agrarian economy of Bagur-Navile and the surrounding 24 villages: two, it signifies the victory of civil society (represented by the peasantry) over the state as it was one of the long standing demands of the peasantry. Third, the technical report became the
rallying point for the organizing the peasantry in this area and, in the process, the recommendations of the technical report formed or became the main demands of the peasantry." (Assadi, Muzaffar 1998:3298, italics are added)

An angry AIKS had protested the state's delay in implementing the demands of peasants by two ways of protests.

a. AIKS locked the office of Superintending Engineer (SE), Hemavathi Left Bank canal. It expressed that 2500 families and 2.35 lakh coconut trees have been affected and many wells have been dried in the surrounding areas of tunnel. Government has not implemented the lift irrigation schemes to remedy the plight of farmers. They locked the office by 12 pm on 26th March 1998. (Janatha Maadhyaama 27th March, 1998). SE arriving in the spot assured the agitating peasants that he would take immediate remedial actions.

b. Afterwards peasants moved to office of KEB and picketed the office. Peasants urged to supply 18 hours of power supply and establish Power supplying and regulating unit at Bagur. Engineer assured peasants of necessary action.

Peasants warned that if their demands are not met, AIKS threatened to launch hunger strike in front of the office of Tahashildar (Janatha Maadhyaama, op.cit).

As state's intervention in solving the peasant problems started appearing grim, peasants warned the government that if their demands of providing lift irrigation and monetary compensation are not implemented, they would block canal water flowing to Tumkur from 18th April 1998 by closing the door of jackwell at Vaddarahally. AIKS decided to give up the protest planned in front of the office of the SE, Hemavathi Left bank canal (Janatha Maadhyaama 9th April, 1998).
1.2 Blockade of Tunnel: Intensification of Movement and Confrontation with State

After the submission of report by Department of Horticulture and irrigation, peasants listed their demands and sent to government. Gopal, general secretary of AIKS and principal leader of the movement shared:

"When we got report of horticultural department it became a weapon in our hands. It was a victory of our contentions. Report showed that government had done a mistake. While constructing a project it should have thought what would all be repercussions of tunnel. Government should have taken sufficient precautionary measures to mitigate the consequences. It was our firm stand that "because of state's mistake people have been suffering, state should remedy the situation by providing compensation and lift irrigation. Had state provided lift irrigation facility when tunnel was inaugurated itself, problems would not have erupted at all and the problem of depletion of ground water would not have arisen. Based on these issues we listed our demands and we sent memorandums again to DC and CM. We urged government to implement the remedial measures as committee appointed by it has recommended" (From In-depth Interview)

Government's apathy towards peasants even after the report and its decision to release water to canal for Tumkur irked agitating peasants. Peasants began fasting under the tunnel at its entrance. Launch of indefinite satyagraha denotes movement entered into intensified phase after exploring other methods and paths of solving the problem chiefly through petition, dharna, picketing, Jathas', Paadayatras'. Janatha Maadhyama, a district level Daily Newspaper carried a report:

"Peasants who are fed up following the different paths of struggle such as Rasto Roko, Picketing Deputy Commissioner's Office, Office of Hemavathi Irrigation Planning, protest in front of Chief Minister's official residence have last resorted to this path."(Janatha Maadhyama, 1998, 15th April, italics are added).
The local daily further observed in its report:

“People of Bagur-Navile area launched fast under the 40 feet of tunnel as their final weapon after their repeated attempts of securing remedies for their burning problem turned futile” (Janatha Maadhya Ma, op.cit, italics are added).

Dr. Siddana Gouda, state convenor, Raajya Bandaaya Saahitya Sanghatane, inaugurated the satyagaraha under the leadership of AIKS. Peasants built ‘pandal’ by filling mud and stones into the tunnel of 100 feet width and 40 feet depth. Government declared that it would release water to canal on April 15th. But government was forced to postpone flowing water to canal due to indefinite satyagaraha launched by peasants.

Peasants severely warned government that they would plunge their cattles and domestic animals into the tunnel. Peasants who had been undergoing relentless famine due to construction of tunnel decided to continue the indefinite satyagraha. (Janatha Maadhyma, op.cit).

Soon the issue of Bagur-Navile peasants reached the ongoing session, of Legislative Assembly and Council. When opposition leaders voiced their concern and urged the government to reveal its stand, Minister for Major and Medium Irrigation K.N. Subbe Gowda on 20/04/1998 assured in assembly that government was thinking to release Rs 26 crores to peasants affected by water tunnel (Janatha Maadhyma, 21st 1998).

Meanwhile, protest beneath the tunnel intensified as days elapsed. On April 21st evening people from Dyavenahally, near Bagur, carried ‘Torch Light Parade’ covering 4kms distance to site of protest i.e. near Vaddarahally jackwell. Every day, people from each affected village, joined the site of protest by conducting torch light parade. Peasant leaders reacted to assurances made by minister for major and medium irrigation Subbe Gowda. They termed it as a play and peasants were fed up with such assurances (Janatha Maadhyma 21st April).
Again the Bagur-Navile issue was raised in assembly session. Minister for Major and Medium Irrigation said that immediately a decision would be made in relation to implementing monetary compensation of Rs. 26 crores after consulting Chief Minister. He requested peasants to give up the agitation (Janatha Maadhya 22nd April, 1998). He said:

“I am realized about the gravity and magnitude of the problem. Peasants should not make a haste decision in this issue” (Janatha Maadhya, op.cit)

But peasants intensified the agitation. Movement started attracting public attention and sympathy. Public opinion was being moulded in favour of agitating peasants. One reader in letter to editor section expressed:

“People who in the beginning submitted many written representations resorted at last to the path of agitation. By locking the office of chief engineer of Hemavathi Reservoir, they were able to draw the attention of bureaucrats and this helped in lift irrigation schemes proposals being sent to government... Government instead of spending crores of rupees on unproductive schemes should pay attention to on issues of Bagur-Navile and spending 50 crores of rupees for revitalizing the life of peasants affected by tunnel is not at all expensive” (Janatha Maadhya, op.cit)

Editorial in Janatha Maadhya regretted that though major large dam projects irrigated vast tract of barren land into fertile and green and economically strengthened the families of such regions, but people who had sacrificed their prosperous life by offering fertile land for such developmental projects are now in pathetic condition. The daily admitted that 10 km lengthy tunnel with 180-200 feet depth has caused water of tanks and ponds of surrounding villages within the distance of half kilometre to seep into tunnel. As a consequence though the region received rainfall, water could not be retained. Government has spent crores of rupees for Hemavathi project. People affected by victims having explored all ways of finding solutions to the issue through picketing, Rasto roko, protest have now inevitably switched over to intensifying movement by launching protest under the tunnel. Government without giving the technical pretexts should solve the issue and should not test
the patience of peasants (Janatha Maadhyama, 23rd April, Janatha Maadhyama). It also chided the two dominant political leaders Vishakantaiah and Some Gowda for having become blind to the problem though wielding power in politics (Ibid).

1.3 Human Chain of Peasants: Movement Aggravated

Peasants decided to intensify further the movement against the government for having not responded to the *water blockade* of agitating peasants beneath the tunnel since 23 days. Peasants severely intensified the movement by deciding to hold human chain on 11th May, 1998 from 12:30 PM to 2:30 PM. Human chain, peasants planned, was unique in the sense that it was of 12 kms in length. Gopal, Secretary, *All India Kisan Sabha* issued a press statement that around 15-20 thousand peasants were likely to participate in this event (Janatha Maadhyama, 8th May, 1998).

Peasants on 15th May from morning 10:30 am to night 9 pm made human chain from Honnenahally, where tunnel would begin, to Navile, where tunnel ends. Peasants all along the 13 kms distance by holding hands raised the demands of compensation to crops and permanent irrigation facility to lands affected by tunnel. Local Daily reported:

"Youth protesting under the aegis of AIKS and AITUC holding red flags all along the way was attractive. Women carried their kids of 5-6 months along with them indicated the extent to which how problem has created seriousness in the minds of people" (Janatha Maadhyama, 12th May, 1998)
1.4 Roots of Violence: Mock Funeral Procession of Chief Minister and Threaten of Exploding the Tunnel

Though the entire organizational structure and leadership emphasized and adopted the path of non-violence while confronting with the state, people instinct of going violent started lurking when movement was intensified. Peasants carried out the event of funeral procession of chief minister S.M. Patel along with human chain. They carried out the procession in the villages in between Bagur-Navile and finally lit the fire to mock body of chief minister in Navile. General Secretary, AITUC, Sumanth Rao while participating in the protest said that it was not difficult for government to solve the problem. Peasants have been angered due to an attitude of neglect of government and peasants were ready to do anything. This prodded peasants who were gathered to burst their anger. An 80 year aged peasant Range Gowda from Bhaktharahally and others threatened

'We know how to wreck a damage which government cannot compensate even if it spends more than hundred crores of rupees. We decided not to loose our patience so far. But we cannot wait now onwards. When we know how to construct a tunnel, we also know how to destroy it. We will explode it in few seconds, if government further delays...' (Janatha Maadhyama, op.cit)

Janatha Maadhyama, a local Kannada daily newspaper in its editorial, criticized the government for neglecting the problem and cautioned about the break of violence by peasants. It questioned 'oh government do not you have eye?

It noted the faults in project planning, execution, risk assessment and lethargic attitude of bureaucracy and politics:

"This is very much a humanitarian problem of people. Lives of People of ten to fifteen villages have been devastated due to Tunnel work in the name of development. During 1979 itself some people cautioned the harmful consequences of tunnel. But this has not reached the thick skinned bureaucrats and politicians. As a result, lives of people have deluged away in the water"
canal itself. Had government initiated action then itself, problems would not have arisen. It is not a simple matter that ground water is being seeped from both sides of the tunnel with a distance of half to a kilometre. State of unable to live in this region makes clear the depth of problem" (Janatha Maadhyama, 13th May, 1998)

Federation for District irrigation committees convened a meeting on May 19th at 12 pm to discuss the issue of supporting the struggle of peasants and it extended the support to the peasant’s struggle.

1.5 Construction of Huts on Tunnel

Peasants who had been carrying out Satyagraha inside the canal started dumping mud to canal at the entrance of tunnel and started raising the elevation of heap of mud as the days passed on. Elevation of mud to flat structure and construction of houses marked the peak of peasant’s protest movement. Peasants named the cluster of houses on erected heap mud as Sangaramanagara (place of struggle). 10-20 tractors started dumping mud to canal which was 30 feet in height. Around one thousand peasants involved in constructing mud barricade across the canal. G. Puttaswamy Gowda, congress leader extended his support to peasants. Gopal, state secretary of AIKS said that they would ignore the government warning and would continue their struggle until peasants’ demands were met (Janatha Maadhyama, 19th May, 1998).

Meanwhile minister for Major and medium irrigation K.N. Subbe Gowda had warned in legislative assembly session of legal action against adamant peasants if they did not withdraw their protest through out the beneath tunnel. AIKS hit back at government and condemned the warning statement of minister. Gopal declared in press report government should take steps towards resolving the problems of peasants by awarding compensation, lift irrigation schemes. If government tries to suppress the movement of peasants, it would lead to dire consequences. Peasants would not budge to government’s threatening and if
government tried to instigate the peasants, it would lead to bloodshed. Government should give up its dictatorial attitude and by resolving the problems of peasants amicably it should protect the democratic values. Government would fall down if it forgets that the people of Karnataka were with this struggle. Gopal requested all political parties, progressive peasants, trade unions and students’ organizations to completely support the peaceful peasants movement. (Janatha Maadhyama, 19th May, 1998)

Minister’s warning had not deprived people from their proclivities and path to mend the state and to make it realize the mistakes in the name of development. Around 1000 Peasants keenly involved in constructing huts where they could relentlessly pursue their satygaraha. Congress Party leader and former Minsiter Sanna Swamy Gowda expressed his support by visiting the spot (Ibid)

1.6 Government’s Failed Negotiation with Peasants: Path of Confrontation

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Sukesh Singh on behalf of government met agitating peasants in Sangramanagara to persuade them to withdraw their protest. This was the second time DC held talks with peasants. He assured peasants that except monetary compensation, all other demands would be met immediately. Peasants being clear on their stand firmly rejected the offer of government by declaring that they would not give up the protest till government awarded the monetary compensation to peasants. Dejected by the failure of even second round of talks with peasants said that he would not come back once again to hold talks with peasants and he would bring the developments into the notice of government (Janatha Maadhyama, 20th May, 1998). Local Daily apprehended an increased possibility of confrontation between peasants and state after the failure of talks with peasants (Ibid).

Meanwhile peasants hardened their protest by mobilizing aged women to the scene of Sangramanagara. They were brought in bullock cart. This had boosted the morale of agitating peasants. Sangramanagara was filled with full of
peasants from villages of Bagur-Navile region chanting revolutionary songs and satyagaraha. Meanwhile Loka Janashakthi, a political party supported the issue and urged government to immediately address the issue.

Sanna Swamy Gowda wrote a letter to Chief Minister S. M. Patil urging not to see the peasants’ problem from political angle. He claimed when he was the minister for Irrigation he released the grant of Rs 5 and Rs 6 cores for tow lift irrigation schemes. But subsequent Janatha Dal government had not made honest efforts to implement the lift irrigation projects. ‘It is condemnable government has not begun implementing the project even when peasants started movement and was ready to shed his blood for the sake of peasants’ demands.’ He condemned the attitude of Minsters and MLAs who had not met peasants so far and urged the urged chief minister to resolve all the issues to implement the monetary compensation of 26 crores and lift irrigation schemes immediately (Janatha Maadhyama, 22th May, 1998). AIKS and its political forum CPI severely criticized the apathy of District-in-charge minister, local MLA and other leaders while intensifying the movement. This led to sharp exchange of words in local dailies between student wing of Janatha Dal and AITUC of CPI (Janatha Maadhyama, 23rd May, 1998).

But Bharatha Jnana Vijnana Committee, an NGO for promoting scientific temperament and awareness, viewed the problem with different angle. Samiti urged government before implementing projects, it should first consult peasants who will be affected. It considered ground water depletion and consequent peasants’ plight as a part of our wide structural problems. It drew the attention of such similar events with different contexts and causes such as tanks and ponds getting dried, intense scarcity for drinking water and indiscriminate use of pesticides all point out at lack of vision and perspective on part of administration. It cited the instance of success of water conservation and management in states like Rajasthan. It urged government to take war footsteps in conserving ground water and viewed that administration should transform such steps into movement and create awareness among peasants. It
asked, If water conservation and management was possible in dry states like Rajasthan why the same cannot be implemented in regions like Hassan district which receives good amount of average rainfall. If government fails to consult people before implementing projects, several episodes of conflict like Bagur-Navile would occur. It condemned the attitude of government which instead of resolving the problems of peasants was speaking the language of force to quell the movement (Janatha Maadhyama, 24th May, 1998).

1.7 Forty Days of Protest, Fasting and Blockade of Tunnel: Trilogy of three Protest Events

Peasants decided after forty days of protest to further intensify the movement owing to cold apathy even after forty days of intensified non-violent struggle against government characterized by Protest, fasting and blockade of tunnel. In order to draw more support from people, peasants formulated interrelated set of three events: a. Bicycle Jaatha, Telegram campaign and Channarayapattna Bundh (Closure of Channarayapattna town for a day). Peasants decided to give call for bundh on 8th June 1998 followed by bicycle Jaatha and telegram campaign. Gopal said that movement would not budge to whatsoever the pressure exerted by government and blockade of tunnel would continue (Janatha Maadhyama, 27th May, 1998).

Navile Sannappa, a Lawyer and District secretary of BJP put logical argument that since government had not acquired the land required for tunnel in legal way, it cannot take action against peasants if they attempt to close the tunnel or they try to dig tube wells beside tunnel; they, therefore, had every right to close the tunnel. Government had not given compensation to those peasants on the basis of false premises that tunnel runs beneath their lands. Though the peasants’ action of closing the blocking the tunnel for their demands is welcome and just, those who had taken the leadership should have consulted all political parties and sought suggestions and advices. He declared that lawyers association supports the peasant movement. He alleged that
government was conspiring to put peasants behind bars: if government dared to take such action, lawyers association was prepared to fight for the issues of peasants (Janatha Maadhyama, 1st June, 1998)

Meanwhile as the movement started becoming more intensified, district administration deployed police force near canopy of protest raised by peasants. Anand, leader of Loka Shakhty, a political party which is non-existent now, condemned the government’s move to deploy police forces and create mini police station near the site of protest. Government instead of using police force against dacoits, black economy and anti societal forces is directing it against peasants. He criticized the government for turning blind eye to the problems peasants (Janatha Maadhyama, 1st June, 1998).

As a preliminary preparation to ‘Channarayapatna Bundh’, peasants carried out huge procession in Channarayapatna town. More than thousand and five hundred people participated in this procession. Suryanath while addressing the peasants gathered criticized the former Prime Minister Rame Gowda who pressed throughout India for providing water and electricity to peasants had forgotten to provide irrigation to peasants of his own constituency. He warned police forces if they attempt to dislodge the protesting peasants from tunnel on the directions of Minister for Major and medium irrigation. Ramachandra, leader of AITUC of Hemavathi Cooperative Sugar Factory announced that eight hundred workers would participate in the protest on the eve of bundh on 8th June (Janatha Maadhyama, 7th June, 1998).

Channarayapatna Bundh call given by AIKS on 8th June was completely successful. Bundh call was given to mark severe protest against government for its attitude of indifference towards peasants even after protesting by blocking the tunnel water from flowing to Tumkur and Mandya. Shops remained closed since 8 am; schools and colleges were declared a holiday; government offices and banks remained closed. Auto Rickshaws could not be found on road. KSRTC Buses plying between Bangalore and Mangalore via National Highway
48 through Channarayapattna were diverted to other roads. Buses from Channarayapattna depot did not even come outside. AIKS shouted anti-government slogans throughout the town and requested people to extend their cooperation. Peasants in several thousands in number carried out *paadayaathra* from Vaddarahally Jackwell, place of protest of peasants, to Bus stand in town and blocked the Bangalore-Mangalore National Highway for more than half an hour at Navodaya circle. After which peasants gathered at Taluk office premises; Gopal, Shivalinge Gowda, Anand shivappa addressed the peasants and submitted memorandum to Assistant Commissioner Rajanna. AIKS, AITUC and CPI led the protest. Bundh was successful and did not lead to any violence. Tight police security was arranged by district administration. Deputy Commissioner, Superintendent of Police and Additional Superintendent of Police were in person supervised the situation (Janatha Maadhyama, 9th June, 1998).

9.4 Resignation of Grampanchayat Members

Seven members had decided to resign from their membership owing to irresponsible statements made by Minister for Major and medium irrigation and lack of concern, attitude of indifference and apathy from their (Janatha Dal) government. D. N. Chandrasekhar, one of the members, said they had decided to support peasant movement led by AIKS (Janatha Maadhyama, 12th June, 1998).

1.8 Minister’s Rejection of Compensation Claim: Antagonism Intensified

We have already observed that Horticulture and Geology department arrived at diametrically contradictory views in their report. Conspicuous is the submission of reports at different times. Horticulture department submitted the report with recommendations for further actions on 05-02-1998. Whereas an expert committee of Geology department submitted its report on 05.05.1998 and rejected the argument of consequences of tunnel on water table and coconut trees. We noted that once the Horticulture department submitted its
report which endorsed the claims of movement, pressure on government increased and movement gained further momentum. Report of Geology department became timely help to counter the claims of movement and defend itself from critics. Minister for Major and Medium irrigation Mr. Subbe Gowda using the report rejected the demand of compensation by movement (Janatha Maadhyama, 14th June, 1998). He stated that government was ready to accept demands such as Leaders of the movement decided, as a counter strategy to rejection of compensation government leaders prepared a design, to further intensify mobilization and protest. Design comprised mobilization of people in forty two villages, claimed to be affected by tunnel, from 14th June to 21st June during night. It aimed at mobilizing five thousand people from forty two villages from 5 pm to 6am; one member from each family through Jaatha by cultural troupes (IPTA). It also included plan to carry forward mobilization to the people from 360 villages of taluk by creating awareness among them about their problems and later on to entire district (Janatha Maadhyama, 16th June, 1998). Leaders of the movement severely criticized Rame Gowda, minister Ramanna and other political leaders from the district for their apathy and silence towards the problem. Leaders of the movement asserted that protest would continue until demands are met and warned government that if it is going to suppress the movement through police, peasants were fully prepared to retreat the same.

1.9 Minister's Call for clearing the Blockade of Tunnel and Leaders' Flout: Tit for Tat

Since water had to be supplied from 20th of July to districts of Tumkur and Mandya minister Subbe Gowda asked peasants to give up their agitation and clear the blockade. He warned that government could not tolerate the people flouting the law. But peasants categorically refuted the minister's call and this was a blunt response to outright rejection of peasants' demand of monetary compensation
2.0 Rift between Irrigation Department and Peasants: Construction of Huts on Canal

Assistant Engineer of Shravanabelagola sub-unit of Hemavathi project (Irrigation department) lodged complaint at Channarayapattna police station against two hundred agitating peasants for having constructed hut on canal at the entrance of tunnel. He complained that construction of huts would obstruct the movement of vehicles on bridge of canal. This infuriated the peasant mass. They burnt the effigy of bureaucrat and constructed forty huts on canal bridge as retaliation. Peasants warned that if the concerned officer did not apologize within 2nd of July 1998, they would further construct huts inside the canal. Officers of irrigation department again complained at police station against two hundred peasants for having constructed forty huts (Janatha Maadhyama, 30th June, 1998).

2.2 Towards Hundredth Day of Movement: Indefinite Hunger Strike from Women:

We noted that peasants blocked the movement of Hemavathi water to Tumkur and Mandya districts by erecting heap of mud and huts on canal. As the movement neared the completion of hundredth day, it acquired a new dimension. Women from Bagur-Navile region decided to undertake hunger strike (Upavaasa Satyagraha). Peasants in a meeting under the presidency of peasant leader Narasimhamurthy decided to severely intensify the movement. Following were the key events planned to sharpen the movement.
### Table 9.1

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Type of Event</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Organizations Involved</th>
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<tr>
<td>11&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; July 1998</td>
<td>Closure of forty Anganvaadis</td>
<td>Bagur-Navile region</td>
<td>AIKS</td>
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<tr>
<td>11&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; July 1998</td>
<td>Closure of all schools and colleges in Bagur-Navile region</td>
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<tr>
<td>13&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; July, 1998</td>
<td>a. Closure of Schools, Colleges and Government Offices</td>
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<td>AIKS</td>
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<td>b. Rasta Roko (Blocking the Road) at Bagur.</td>
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<td>14&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; July 1998</td>
<td>Hunger strike in front of Tahsildhar office by more than thousand people including five hundred women.</td>
<td>Channarayapatna Town</td>
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<td>16&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; July 1998</td>
<td>Hunger strike by five hundred activists of ABVP</td>
<td>Channarayapatna</td>
<td>ABVP</td>
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<td>17&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; July 1998</td>
<td>Hunger strike from old aged women</td>
<td>Channarayapatna</td>
<td>AIKS</td>
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<tr>
<td>18&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; July 1998</td>
<td>Hunger strike from more than thousand activists Red Wing of AIKS</td>
<td>Channarayapatna</td>
<td>Red Wing of AIKS</td>
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<tr>
<td>19&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; July 1998</td>
<td>Indefinite hunger strike from women</td>
<td>Sangramanagara (place where peasants constructed huts on bridge of tunnel)</td>
<td>AIKS</td>
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Meanwhile, State Irrigation Advisory Committee took a decision to urge government to immediately solve the Bagur-Navile issue which had acquired seriousness and thereby, take steps to provide water to Tumkur. MLAs from Hassan and Tumkur districts criticized that government had complicated the
entire issue by showing arrogance and apathy in solving the problem. Therefore, the issue had become complicated. Owing to blockade of tunnel by peasants in Bagur-Navile, peasants of Tumkur districts were deprived from water for agriculture. MLAs condemned the threatening of minister Subbe Gowda of suppressing the movement by law (Janatha Maadhyama, 11th July, 1998).

2.3 Bicycle Jaatha of Peasants from Gandasi:

Peasants from neighbouring Gandasi assembly constituency carried out Jaatha from Gandasi to Vaddarahally jack well under the leadership of MLA B. Shivaram to express the support to peasants' movement. Peasants gathered in several thousand inaugurated Jaatha by bursting crackers. Peasants shouted slogans against government and district Janatha Dal leaders throughout Jaatha in motor bike, car and trucks; Jaatha covered forty kilometres way to place of protest via Channarayapatna. Shivaram addressed the agitating peasants and expressed support. He ridiculed former prime minister for having not visited peasants of his own constituency nonetheless; he often visited marriage and other rituals of his supporters in district; district in charge minister was criticized for his lack of matured decisions and particularly Minister for major and medium irrigation and charged him for mindless and irresponsible statements. He warned that movement against government would be severed if government did not solve the problem and stressed the unity of peasants of district.

2.4 Government’s Acceptance of Non-Monetary Benefits and Rejection of Monetary Compensation: Law of action warned

Government at last accepted that tunnel had affected coconut trees of Bagur-Navile region by agreeing to implement non-monetary benefits such as ‘expediting lift irrigation projects, installing power sub-distribution centre, ‘below poverty line cards to people of affected villages, drinking water facility to all villages and constitution of committee comprising officers of agriculture.
and irrigation department for villages affected by tunnel. But it firmly rejected the demand of monetary compensation for affected coconut trees and crop loss as recommended by department of horticulture. Minister Subbe Gowda asked peasant leaders to make clear their decision within 12 pm 14th of July.

He directly threatened of using physical force to quell the movement if the offers of government were not accepted. This clearly brought front state proving its entity by resorting to its monopolized use of physical violence against its citizens. Peasant leaders decided to convene a meeting at Vaddaralahally Jackwell by 10 am on 14th July of 1998 to discuss the condition cropped up due to the decision of minister.

2.5 Peasants rejection of warning and Deployment of Police forces: Direct Confrontation Apprehended

Peasant leaders did not budge an inch to warning of physical force by government. Rather warning from government made peasant leaders to severely intensify the agitation by launching 'Upavaasa Satyagraha' ('Hunger Strike'). This paved the way for tussle between government and peasants and movement reached the state of conflict. Since government did not agree to implement the monetary compensation as recommended by one of the expert committees and demanded by peasants, dialogue between peasants and government ceased. Peasant leaders, therefore, who returned from Bangalore on night itself, began 'Upavaasa Satyagraha'. Gopal, Secretary, AIKS, began 'Upavaasa Satyagraha' by 12 pm as a response to state's threat and women peasants also decided to launch 'Upavaasa Satyagraha'. This sent clear warning signs to government and infuriated the situation. Meanwhile Hemavathi water was released from reservoir to Tumkur district and water could not cross tunnel as peasants had already erected a huge blockade of heap of mud and huts on it. This made peasants of Tumkur district anxious for water for monsoon crops. This aspect had an all possibilities of becoming a pretext for
government to use force on movement to suppress the peasant struggle. Fear of direct confrontation between state and peasants was apprehended.

Government started deploying police forces to use force on peasants to vacate from the site of protest and remove the blockade. It instructed police forces of all nineteen police stations across the district to be prepared for task-147 police constables, 64 head constables, 26 Assistant Sub-Inspectors, 9 circle Inspectors and 15 women police constables. A local daily reported that armed police forces already left for Channarayapatna.

2.6 Road Blockade at Kunigal: Counter Pressure from Tumkur Peasants on Government

With the delay in receiving Hemavathi water to Tumkur due to blockade of water in Bagur-Navile region, peasants of Tumkur at Kunigal blocked the National Highway 48 on July 14th under the leadership of Y. K. Ramaiah, president of Tumkur district Hemavathi water user’s association president which connects Hassan and Mangalore to Bangalore. Their main slogan was ‘till water is released, we do not give way’. Blockade of highway posed severe problems for movement of vehicles towards Hassan and had wider repercussions on life and requirements of people of Hassan and Dakshina Kannada districts in general and an adequate pretext for government to pounce upon movement (Janatha Maadhyama, 15th July, 1998). But on July 15th Y. K. Ramaiah withdrew the road blockade on account of movement not solved by government (Janatha Maadhyama, 16th July, 1998).

2.7 A Peek at Sangramanagara

Centre of attraction to the peasant movement of Bagur-Navile region was ‘Sangramanagara’. Sangramanagara was a place of Satyagraha of peasants. We have noted that peasants blocked the tunnel at its entrance when government showed reluctance to implement recommendations of expert committee from horticulture department despite pleas from peasants several times. When
government decided to release water to Tumkur without addressing the problems, peasants decided to launch Satyagraha beneath the tunnel. As government's disregard continued towards peasants protest, peasants began erecting mud wall and increased its height phase by phase at the beginning of tunnel over the days.

Finally peasants from forty villages constructed forty huts. Place of protest turned into a village. People from each village were asked to send a member per family every day and during night for patrolling. Two or three huts became like shops selling tea, coffee, cigarettes, buns and beetles. Each hut was named after their villages. Peasants in front of their huts were cooking food in big vessels.

Peasants and leaders carried out Satyagraha in big hut. Folk songs enshrouded the entire hut invoked a sense of spirit, courageousness, sacrifice and struggle, produced situation where peasants appeared like warriors prepared to confront the mighty force of state. Participation of aged women and children with spirit was the cynosure of attraction. Several political leaders and office bearers of different associations visited the Sangramanagara and expressed their support. Sangramanagara literally resembled Jurgen Habermass concept of 'Public Sphere' - major decision of movement in relation to its course and direction, type of events were made in the hut after subjecting the decision to wider discussion by all peasants and consensus reached. In fact this was a special feature of the movement that decisions were made as per the consensus arrived at between peasants and as a consequence there was much solidarity in mobilization, protest events and goals of the movement. Peasant leaders maintained transparency in matters ranging from every day decisions, approach to financial aspects such as fund mobilization and utilization. Sangramanagara became a space for peasants to discuss, share, evaluate and decide their course of action.
This drew attention at the state and even national level. Several political leaders from ruling and opposing parties visited the Sangramanagara had-a discussion with peasants and understood the problem. Even several leaders who went to convince peasants to give up the protest returned back by expressing empathy with the issues and supporting the movement.

2.8 Movement at Critical State: Direct Confrontation Becoming Closer

Peasants' movement reached a decisive state: talks between peasant leaders and government committee headed by minister for major and medium irrigation failed and minister warned of legal action against peasants (using force); peasant leaders without budging intensified the movement by launching hunger strike from next day itself. Local Daily Newspaper Janatha Maadhyama reported “condition of peasant movement of Bagur-Navile exploding at any time is created” (Janatha Maadhyama 16th July 1998). Peasants along with women from forty villages from Bagur-Navile region began joined Sangramanagara batch by batch. Schools and colleges were closed in the entire region. When water released from Hemavathi reservoir reached the Sangramanagara (Vaddarahally Jackwell) and deployment of armed police forces heightened peasants anger and curiosity. Peasants expressed:

“We simply tied our arms by listening to (peasant) leaders' words. We will wait today also. We will teach government a proper lesson from tomorrow onwards. Our stand will be do or die” (Ibid).

The whole Sangrama was enshrouded by red flags, shirts and ribbons. Sangaramanagara was flooded by youths with wooden rods coming from villages. They were all set to confront water and police forces. Meanwhile district administration which wanted to thwart violence appealed to peasants not to indulge in violence. Deputy Commissioner clarified “we do not take any hasten action. All options were kept open. Violence of any sort should not take place”
Gopal took a firm decision while he was in hunger strike:

"We will continue Upanaasa satyagraha even in jail if we are arrested. Government and minister for major and medium irrigation will be directly responsible for any sort of undesirable consequences" (Ibid, italics are added)

"Impudent attitude of irrigation minister on peasants who have engrossed in movement since three months will bring bad name to Janatha Dal Government".

Gopal recalled chief ministers' assurance 10-15 days "he has understood the peasants’ problem involved in movement. I will take an appropriate decision". But meeting convened under the presidency of irrigation minister had failed to address all the problems of peasants. Therefore a fax was sent to chief minister to intervene. He made it clear that there was no question of changing the site of protest and peasants were ready to sacrifice their life if Sangramanagara was washed away in canal. The whole project, according to him was against the lives of peasants.

Meanwhile Suryapal Tyagi, Inspector General of Police, Southern Zone, who headed the massive police forces deployed to displace the agitating peasants from the site, said that their priority was to protect the peasants’ lives if mud wall was broken due to inundation of water or if they try to commit suicide. This gave rise to ample suspicions about the pretexts government was waiting for. 12 reserve police platoons from Shimoga, each platoon from Kodagu Mysore and Mandya districts, 5 district reserve police from Hassan. All these units comprised a police base of 200 constables, 100 head constables, 20 Assistant sub-inspectors, 30 sub-inspectors and 20 Police Inspectors.

Janatha Maadhyama in its editorial categorically ridiculed government disposed to use force:
"Probably Janatha Dal leaders might have realized they do not get power for next term. They would have not been under such state of irresponsibility had it been otherwise. They seemed to be under illusion that movement could be suppressed by using police force. Congress lost power in 1980 when it suppressed peasants' movement at Naragunda-Navalgunda. Bagur-Navile movement will make Janatha Dal government meet the same fate. If they (Janatha Dal leaders) dig their own tomb without sensibility, what will others do?" (Editorial, Janatha Maadhyama 19th July, 1998).

'Federation of Hassan District Irrigation Committees' (FHDIC) urged government not to use force on peasants movement which is struggling for justifiable demands in a peace way. It urged chief minister to intervene for solving the problem. It seriously warned if government uses force on peasants it would reap severe consequences. FHDIC convened all political parties meet to express support and to formulate future strategies at district level on July 16th at 11.30 am, Tourist Bungalow in Hassan. Office bearers have requested all who have peasant pro interests were requested to attend the meeting.

10.6 Rejection of Monetary Compensation: Failed Talk between Chief Minister and Peasants Representatives:

Deputy Commissioner arranged vehicles for peasants to participate in negotiation called by Chief Minister. S.H. Patil Chief Minister (CM) S. H. Patil firmly rejected the claim of monetary compensation for crop loss due to tunjel on the grounds of non-existence of such laws or norms. Besides if monetary compensation is awarded for peasants of Bagur-Navile, government had to provide monetary compensation to such similar projects already executed in the past. This will create enormous burden on government. CM in negotiation had compared the inability of government as 'mother without milk'. CM's comparison invited a sudden fitting response from peasant leader Suryanath 'Does it mean killing child just because mother does not have milk to give?' chief minister expressed that government would provide compensation in the form of Bonds in lieu of cash compensation. Peasant leaders confessed:
In our last meeting with chief minister J.H. Patel, we agreed at last to accept government relief measures except monetary benefit. But when we assembled after lunch, CM office postponed all of sudden the meeting giving absence of finance minister as reason. But we were told that Some Gowda asked Patel to stop making any decisions as election was declared. Election was taken as a pretext. We demanded the compensation; we never asked it in terms of money. But it was government itself through committees offered monetary compensation.

With this last and final official talks between government and peasants came to grinding halt. Twenty five peasant representatives swiftly left for Bangalore on call by CM. CM assured that all demands of the peasants if this region would be met except monetary benefit for crop loss. But peasant’s representatives adhered to their demand and talk between peasants and government failed. CM requested peasants to uphold peace. Besides, meeting was attended by chief secretary of government, Local MLA, Sannaiah Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha president, Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police, Hassan. Media strongly criticized the attitude of government in dodging from the responsibility of providing monetary compensation. An editorial of popular local daily observed:

"Chief Minister has agreed in a negotiation with peasants the phenomenon of loss due to construction of tunnel. It is an essential duty of government to compensate the loss when its own tunnel project has destroyed the right of lives of peasants. If existing laws do not permit to award monetary compensation to loss incurred from tunnel, government shall change such laws. It is not a difficult task for a government really concerned with people. People have reached a tragic state asking whether there is a popular government" (Janatha Maadhyama 19th July, 1998)

Meanwhile, Sangramanagara was, as observed by local Kannada Daily, turned into a site of attraction pulling crowd especially women and children and political leaders (of communist party and opposition parties of the state) across the state (Janatha Maadhyama, 17th July 1998). Local MLA had not visited agitating peasants except for a time three months back. This angered the
peasants and exacerbated their emotions. Peasants were baffled by the apathy of MLA and were waiting to explode emotions. They expressed their doubt he might have resorted to bizarre silence as he belonged to ruling party. Least they expected was he could have visited and studied the problem and expressed his opinion. Opposition party was also not radically different from the ruling party as their response to the peasant's movement was anomaly in nature rather than a focussed one.

Movement echoed its ripples throughout the district and different parts of the state. Hassan Bundh was observed on 17th July in Hassan by opposition parties. Former ministers and MLAs participated in it. Congress, BJP, Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha and others associations of the town in Sakleshpur carried out a protest to express support for peasants of Bagur-Navile. They burnt the effigy of Chief Minister S.H. Patil for not addressing the problems of peasants. Congress, BJP, BSP, Lokashakthi (now not in existence) Raitha Sangha decided at Hassan to conduct hunger strike in front continuously and to observe Bundh in each taluk headquarter every day (Janatha Maadhya, 18th July 1998).

Lawyers boycotted the district court proceedings at Hassan on 17th July. An open meeting was planned at Chnnarayapatna on 18th July afternoon to express support for agitating peasants. Chief Minister in special interview to Doordarshan requested peasants of both Hassan and Tumkur districts to maintain peace. Water had to flow to Tumkur through tunnel. Drinking water problem had been acute in Tumkur. Government had tolerated the inconvenience caused as peasants were involved. He said he had held talks with representatives of peasants. Peasants at Kunigal (Tumkur district) again started road blockade and severed it. In fact this time peasants from Tumkur blocked roads in interior parts of district such as Turuvekere, Gubbi and Mallasandra. All Peasant leaders in interview alleged that political leaders from Janatha Dal were chiefly responsible for antagonism developed between peasants of Hassan and Tumkur. They said that it was a conspiracy and counter strategy adopted by government to weaken the movement.
Irresponsible suggestions from Prakash MLA of Hassan constituency to peasants to grow fruit trees as a solution instead of understanding the problem properly exasperated the peasants. Peasants confessed that they believed that Some Gowda and MLA Putte Gowda were their people. But present situation seemed to have become as per their desire. They were of unambiguous opinion that had Some Gowda shown willingness; problem would have been solved in few minutes. For them why Some Gowda was ignoring their problem was a million dollar question.

2.9 Movement and Civil Society: Middle Class and Media

There is a close relationship between movement and people. Issues, ideology, methods, demands of the movement have considerable influence on civil society. Support of civil society, particularly, middle class will play a decisive role in resonating the impact of movement across the different circles of society and to draw out sympathy. One of the outlets through which middle class niches and articulates interests is media. Media played an important role in popularizing the peasants' movement of Bagur-Navile. In fact media created a space for mobilizing the opinion of people in support of the movement. News, articles, editorials, readers' letters provided wide dissemination and continuity to movement. Though media did not share the ideology of movement in total, its intention was to support, enable and transform the feeble progressive voices concerned with issues of people into a strong force. Janatha Maadhyama, Janamithra local Kannada dailies in Hassan district and Prajavani, Kannada Prabha (Kannada dailies), Sudha (Kannada Weekly) Deccan Herald (English Daily) shared the concerns of the movement and in fact provided wider horizons and contours for movement necessary for mobilization of people and opinion at local, state and at national level.
3.1 Chief Minister's Plea to Agitating Peasants

Situation was turning to be critical due to intense protest being sustained by peasants in Bagur-Navile, who blocked the canal near the entry point of tunnel, which flows to Tumkur, was marching towards hundredth day on the one hand and peasants in Tumkur district in retaliation to actions of peasants of Bagur-Navile blocked the National Highway 48 which connects port city Mangalore, Hassan and Chickamagalore to Bangalore. This has created tension and anxiety in government as it was taking the form of conflict between two districts. This created ripples and anxiety in government.

But peasant leaders give different version. It was a manipulation by Janatha Dal government to weaken the movement by exerting counter pressure from peasants of Tumkur district and divert the focus of larger masses who had sympathy for the peasant movement. Chief Minister made an appeal to peasants of Bagur-Navile to vacate the blockade over Tumkur branch canal in order to make water available for irrigation and drinking purpose to Tumkur district. He requested peasants of both the districts to maintain peace through press statements and interview given to Doordarshan channel. Hemavathy water has to reach Tumkur through tunnel. He said the problem of drinking water had become an acute in Tumkur district. He warned that government has tolerated the people's agitation and act of blocking canal as they were peasants. He clarified that he had held meetings with peasants of Bagur-Navile and assured that his government would implement all developmental measures at the earliest and he had instructed officers in this regard. He requested peasants of Bagur-Navile to give up the protest as they were well known for compassion, generosity and affection and join hands with government in implementing the remedial measures.
3.2 Removal of Blockade: Apprehension of Direct Conflict and Illumination of Reason

We noted above stalemate existed between peasants and state on issue of providing monetary compensation. Government made it clear to agitating peasants that it was ready to implement the demands of peasants except the demand of monetary compensation. But peasants clung to their stand that they were not ready to accept the partial fulfillment of their demands. It was the stand of peasants that demand of monetary compensation was based on recommendation by a committee appointed by government itself. Their demand was, therefore, based on recommendations of government appointed committees. Whereas state claimed that rules did not permit to grant compensation on account of deleterious consequences of the tunnel. If compensation was given government would itself create a precedent and would be obliged to give monetary compensation to number of similar cases.

Sympathy from media and middle class went on increasing. All political parties extended their support except Jantha dal. Bagur-Navile movement was successful in drawing the attention of national leaders and National media both print and electronic. Gurudas Gupta, then Member of Parliament visited Sangramanagara and assured that he would raise the matter in lokasabha.

It was 96th day of intense protest and satyagraha. Gopal had been under fasting since six days. People in Sangramanagara came to know through radio and television that government was deploying the police and para military forces in increasing numbers. It would use force at any point of time to vacate the protesting peasants and remove the blockade. Every day a batch of fifty-sixty women were doing fast along with Gopal. Gopal said 'We knew that police forces were being mobilized we were not ready to vacate the situation out of fear. Police vehicles started marching towards Sangramanagara. On one side we were doing satyagraha and on the other side Deputy commissioner (DC), Superintendent of Police (SP) and all major bureaucrats were present and
watching us'. Two days before police in disguise visited Sangramanagara and approached people there for knowing the future plan. They arrived there, according to Gopal, collected information for intelligence.

Enormous pressure was being built over government to vacate the peasants of Bagur-Navile from Sangramanagara as monsoon was about to reach second half and Hemavathy water had to flow to Tumkur district and Nagamangala and Mandya of Mandya district.

Peasants also started gathering in Sangramanagara in increasing numbers. They were in several thousands. But number of paramilitary force and police were more than 2800 in number. Though it was not matching with numbers of peasants, police and paramilitary forces were equipped with modern weapons such as AK 47. Peasants, whereas, were unarmed. But people were not tensed when forces were marching towards Sangramanagara. They were prepared to retreat the force. They kept ready chill powder, stones and sticks as weapons. This created anxious situation. Gopal said:

Government asked to remove the blockade that is to vacate Sangaramanagar on or before 19th July, 1998 or it would be compelled to vacate by using force. Peasants just brushed aside government’s warning and movement further gathered momentum. DC and Circle Inspector on 19th July, 1998 asked peasant leaders to take a last chance that is to seek Some Gowda’s advice and leave the area of protest peacefully. They clarified that it would be binding on peasant leaders or else they would use force to vacate from Sangramanagara. Ananthasubba Rao, secretary, AITUC went along with two leaders to police station to speak to Some Gowda over who was in Jaipur of Rajasthan.

Angered Some Gowda heaped a scorn on Ananthasubba Raon over phone. Conversation lasted for half an hour. Some Gowda was simmering on communist leaders, who though that communists were embarrassing him by creating a logjam by taking an issue of his district to humiliate him. As per leaders’ account he told Ananthasubba Rao to leave situation and questioned
him over need of building peasant movement. He accused communists of planning to humiliate him in his own district by instigating people. Somive Gowda offered that a separate comprehensive study would be conducted by Hyderabad geologists and report would be submitted within three months and government would implement the recommendations of the committee. But Ananthasubba Rao did not agree with Some Gowda’s proposal and also declined to stop the movement (Gopal, from In-depth Interview). The final outlet for negotiation between peasants and state was also ruled out and state using force to quell the peasants became more imminent.

Gopal said police were predetermined for violent confrontation with peasants. We perceived that they were equipped with destructive weapons. We were fighting for the people issue that is saving their lives and we decided not to confront with them.” Sense of wisdom illuminated among leaders of the movement, particularly Gopal. Leaders shared with researchers that as the entire movement was based on non violence that they were fighting with state for interests of the peasants that was saving their livelihood and it could not be a justified act in any sense to push peasants’ lives into bullets of state’s force.

DC and SP asked peasant leaders to peacefully vacate the situation and to facilitate in removing the blockade. Gopal asked DC and SPs who were approaching the Sangramanagara not to enter the premises. He told them that leaders would consult the peasants before they make a decision. DC and SP agreed.

Leaders held discussion with the people of all Grama samitis in adjacent coconut farm. leaders decided not to confront with armed police and paramilitary forces keeping innocent peasants and women in view. Leaders decided that all women in their respective villages should continue their hunger strike in front of temple of their village deities.
Gopal addressed peasants who gathered in large number:

"as you know that we have posed a great confidence in non violence and it is our strong intention that entire movement should be peaceful, we are, therefore, voluntarily resorting to 'jail bharo' in order to prevent violent confrontation with government. those who are interested in jail bharo can accompany me."

Suryanath expressed:

We imagined the probable consequences, bloodshed and loss of lives if we confront the police. Therefore, we decided to peacefully withdraw from the Sangramanagar in the interests of innocent farmers, as continuing the struggle there itself implies massacring innocent people and decided to continue the satygaraha in our respective villages.

Leaders decided to voluntarily do 'Jai Barrow' and invited voluntary arrest as an extended phase of the movement. This did not mean that peasants were not equipped to confront police, said a leader. Gopal said, 'aim of our struggle was against state and not against police. people would teach state a proper lesson which had come to attack people who were protesting peacefully. Though 'Neeru Bundh Chalavali' (water blockade/denial movement) might have temporarily ended. We continue hunger strike in jail and and people belonging to 40 villages adjacent to tunnel would continue hunger strike, rasta roko, kala jaatha1 preventing government officers from entering their respective villages and closure of schools and colleges. Leaders decided to leave Suryanath, one of the core leaders who was instrumental in forming the movement, in Bagur-Navile itself for sustaining the tempo of the movement. Police arrested more than 100 people including key leaders of the movement and were sent to jails of K.R. Nagar, Mysore and Bellary. Huge blockade erected across the left bank canal at Vaddarahally jackwell was removed by using JCBs (Janatha Madhyam, 21st, July, 1998)

Ramanna, Minster in charge of district said that removing blockade was inevitable for releasing water to Tumkur. Government was convinced about depleterious consequences of tunnel on peasants crops. But he undersored the
problems associated with monetary compensation and said government was contemplating to compensate in alternative ways and assured that all lifr irrigations schemes would be completed within five months.

11. Death of Shankaraachar as a precipitator in the Break of Violence

Shankaraachar from Vaddarahally who participated actively in protest since 96 days in Sangramanagara was aghasted by the evacuation of Sangramanagara by police. Peasants from each village constructed a hut and they were named after their village. In fact, Sangramanagara appeared like ashrama or a village itself occupied by peasants. Peasants used to cook and sleep at their villages and was buzzing with peasants in protest, visitors from media, politicians, social workers. As per the accounts of leaders and wife of Shankaraachar, he was shocked to see the destruction of Sangramanagara by setting fire to huts constructed by peasants.

Susheelamma, wife of Shankaraachar remembers, ‘he actively participated in protest in Sangramanagara. On that day i.e. 20th July 1998, he came back to home complaining faintness and became unconscious very soon’. Shankaraachar was taken to hospital immediately at Chnnarayapattna. Doctors suggested to take to Bellur cross, 40 kilometers away from Chnnarayapattna. Doctors at Bellur cross also suggested to take him to NIMHANS, Bangalore. But Doctors at NIMHANS declared brought dead. Shankaraachar passed away while reaching Bangalore. Body was brought back to Vaddarahally.

Suryanath, Rangaswany and Ramachandra, AITUC leader of Hemavathi Sugar Factory convinced Susheelamma that it was disrespect to departed soul to conduct funeral without taking the body in procession. They along with peasants decided to carry the body under procession till Gollarahosahally. This proved costly for peasants as it provided one of the two pretexts for which police were waiting. Suryanath said
"I decided to take out procession in Vaddarahally, Gollarahosahally and Bagur to protest against the atrocities of police. We wanted to convey the outer world about the oppression of police and state" (From Group Discussion).

When procession was being carried out police chased Suryanath, his wife and niece Asha from Gollarahosahally to Vaddarahally and beat them heavily. He accused Some Gowda as master mind behind the violence. He again stressed the instructions given to police by Some Gowda as ‘do not leave the people they just go unprotested, no one from the region should not launch movement again’. When we asked him how could he so confidently make allegatin and questioned him wheher he had any credible evidences to quote. He said he possessed information from police circle itself.

He angrily questions:

‘When government systematically and inhumanly suppressed the people movement Do not you think it mistake if we did not protest when a poor farmer died out of the way government oppressed the movement?’ (From Group Discussion).

3.3 Break of Violence: Inevitable or Sponsored?

But Gopal thinks that carrying of Shankarachars body in procession was a hasty decision. It was, in fact, a mistake, he said. He wanted entire movement to be alive and that was why we were consistent in non-violence and peace as our methods. He said:

“We carried very peacefully satyagaraha for 96 days. When riots took place I was not there. That is why during 96 days, I did not go out of the place as I knew some forces would be waiting to mislead the movement and to provoke people” (from Indepth interview).

According to Sanne Gowda, one of the key leaders of the movement, made meaningful interospection. Gopla had deliberatley left Suryanath in Bagur-Navile region for sustaining the movement as Suryanatah was an instrumental in building the movement along with Gopal. But people did not understand the significance of the words of Gopal. They attacked Hassan-Bangalore bus which used to go through Nuggehally. Few miscreants burnt the bus, KSRTC then itself cancelled the service and even today the service has not resumed in that route. Another incident was attacking Police jeep. When police inspector Nataraj who was in patrolling and inspection was
moving near Honnenahally, women attacked the jeep and the target obviously was Nataraj. Men and women working in agricultural fields having seen the police chased him. But police were somehow was successful in sending message through Nuggehally station. People burnt the police jeep in Bagur. As a response police attacked people of villages in Bagur-Navile region.

Sanne Gowda feels, since the incident of burning the jeep had happened in Bagur, police would have limited their operation to Bagur itself, but procession of dead body of Shankarachar by Suryanath, Rangaswamy from KSRTC and Ramachandra of Hemavathy Sugar Factory had infuriated the situation. Suryanath who was known for his belligerent, aggressive and confrontational attitude had not given up his idea. Manjunath was deliberately left out for managing the protest, which Gopal wanted to continue peacefully in villages. Suryanath managed to bring Auto rikshaw and mike. When police saw them carrying procession of dead body they were enraged and thought this would be another attempt to break the order. Police asked them to put down the dead body and mercilessly beat them up. They did not spare even women who were pregnant, children and elder persons. They chased them. 90 year old lady was beaten up. Manjunath was mercilessly beaten up and his hand was fractured. From there itself, he was taken to Bellary Jail. Rangaswamy and Ramachandra were beaten up but they managed to escape. This incident made police force who was in very large numbers entered into villages and beat people cruelly and brutally.

Second pretext under which police used violence was the violent conflict between peasants and police in Bagur and Chowdenhally. Peasants decided, after they vacated the Sangramanagara, to hold hunger strike, road roko in their respective villages. As per the paper reports, around 500 people gathered in Bagur at 9:30 am were doing *rasto* roko and blocked obstructed the movement of bus of Karnataka Road Transportation and other government vehicles. People were infuriated as soon as message of death of Shankaraachar spread in Bagur and ‘merciless beating’2 of Suryanath (Janatha Madhyam, 21st, July, 1998 and From Group Discussion).

Police having heard about rasto roko arrived at Bagur by 11 am and asked agitators to unblock the road. This led to verbal duel between peasants and
police which culminated in lathi charge. In retaliation to this, peasants pelted stones at police. Police sub inspector arrived at the spot at the same time. People started hurling stone at jeep and driver was hurt. Unabated by even lathi charge people set jeep (KA 13 G. 244) into fire.

As soon as incident in Bagur spread to neighboring Chowdenahally, people who detained KSRTC bus bearing number KA-13 F-502 , since morning , set it into fire. This gave police a strong excuse to attack people.

Second reason, for violence, from police is quite a controversial as peasant leaders refute their handedness in setting fire to police jeep and bus. According to them it was an act of response of helpless unarmed people who responded to unexpected attack from police. Peasant leaders forcefully expressed:

"Violent path was not our aim, we could have used the same when thousands of police surrounded and vacated us in Sangramanagara. It was government's conspiracy to smother the voices of people." (From group Discussion)

Some peasant leaders said that setting jeep and bus ablaze was a deliberate manipulation pursued by police to attack people. It was government's conspiracy to smother the voices of people (from in-depth interview). Following is the gist of report carried by local daily newspaper, Janatha Madhyama.

‘Within 15 minutes after bus and jeep were set ablaze, police force in several hundreds flooded the situation and literally waged a war on Bagur, Chowdenahally and Honnenahally. Having sensed the arrival of police, males in all three villages deserted their houses and most of them hided in their coconut farms, sugar cane fields and some fled to their relatives' homes, quite distant from their villages. Even some women fled from their villages. Old aged, children and young persons who were not able to flee shut doors and stayed inside the home. along with their husbands and stayed for a week or more than that in their fields. They were served food from their villages. But these things did not come into the notice of infuriated policemen who broke the
doors of houses by their boots and boulders. They desperately searched inside the houses and dragged the old aged persons and young women outside their homes. Police threatened to do 'Golibar.' Police damaged doors of more than 25 houses. Police threw out from house telephone, television and mixer grinder belonging to a person called Shivanna. Cycle shop and petty shops were damaged. Some merchants were not able to close their shops while fleeing. More than twenty houses were damaged in Honnenahally. Police had broken completely the doors of Shankaralinge Gowda, taluk secretary of AIKS, Channarayapattana. They also damaged the houses of Somashekar, a teacher, Range Gowda and Thimme Gowda from Honnenahally. Women and children traumatized by cruelty of police are deeply worried about future (Janatha Madhyam, 21st, July, 1998 and From Group Discussion).

Journalists, who went to Bagur for reporting were beaten up and some were severely injured. Nanjund Maim, photographer for Janatha Madhyama newspaper, was injured. Nagesh, reporter for Janatha Maadhyama, was thrashed brutally and was arrested (Ibid).

First, though plausible reasons could be advanced for heaping violence on people for burning the police jeep and KSRTC bus, it did not warrant invading and ransacking houses and shops. Also thrashing or beating people of entire village without reason and consideration for aged people and women points at chances of ostensible reason police forces used while quelling people and possible chance of some other real things as a motivation

Second, carrying Shankarachar dead body in procession obviously shows the part of imaturity in decision making of Suryanath and others. But the way they were punished for their acts again points out towards lurking and lingering factor i.e., the existence of planned or engineered mind in using violence.
3.4 Perpetuation of Police Violence and oppression

We just try to examine whether the emergence of violence in Bagur region whether it was inevitable or sponsored. The answer we try to obtain lie in between two but tilting towards the latter. Police violence continued even on 22nd July 1998 in villages of Bagur-Navile region, particularly in Kamanayakanahally, Gollarahosahally and vaddarahally. News papers reported that peasants had deserted their villages out of fear. Women, whereas, were afraid to come out of their homes. Hush had dominated the village. Silence lurking was compared to that of graveyard (Janatha Maadhyama, 22nd July).

Dr. Sannappa, former MLA from Shravanabelagola constituency accused that Bheemaiah, sub-inspector, crime section, Channarayapatna, was mainly responsible for the outbreak of violence. He accused that sub-inspector who came with a battalion of Karnataka State Reserve Police (KSRP) indiscriminately started beating people while doing rasta roko. As such many innocents were thrashed which aggravated the situation (Janatha Maadhyama, 26nd July).

People staging Rasta Roko in Kamanayakanahally were thrashed heavily by police force. Police force entered into village and battered them whimsically. In Gollarahosahally, people irrespective of age and sex were subject to oppression. Sakamma, lady from Gollarahosahally underwent traumatic experience from people. Police even did not allow people to take her to hospital for injuries. Savithramma and Lakshmamma, aged persons, were also beaten up. Usha and Latha were tortured and abused verbally (Ibid). Respondents shared with pain that police beat their young daughters by lifting skirts and abused vulgarly. They expressed with tears that police even asked them to send their daughters for a night. This just reflects the nature and extent of violence a decade back. Later police entered into Navile, Kallesomanahally. A local daily reported that police did not spare anyone aged above 12 years.
Local journalists did not visit the villages under the fear that police would beat them and remained inactive. Telephone and bus services were disconnected and people were isolated from external contacts (Ibid). Meanwhile, another bus was burnt near Navile. Police jeep driver and a constable were wounded and admitted to hospital. Police arrested 41 people in connection with yesterday’s violence in Bagur on Tuesday (on 20/07/1998). It was reported that DC and SP had stayed at Chnnarayapattna (Ibid).

Peasants who fled from villages were requesting whomsoever seeming to be influential for a protection on eve of police arrest of peasants without an inquiry. Bagur region received good rainfall, they were anxious to begin sowing on their fields.

3.5 KRRS Leader Assaulted: Personal Involvement of DC and SP in Violence?

It is a strong contention of peasant leaders of the movement that Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police had personally involved in violence. It is one of the factors that peasants use consistently to stress the high involvement of top bureaucrats in violence. Information peasant leader revealed is shocking, though the veracity of the claim deserve to be verified further, which we shall do next.

"Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police brought KSRTC bus and gave impression as if KSRTC bus was running on route and they were in disguise. They made people board the bus pretending it as if bus was going on route trip. But inside the bus, police were wearing women’s night dress. Whosever has boarded bus was crushed to hell and were mercilessly beaten. Bus moved through out the Bagur-Navile region and crushed hundreds of people. Even people who have not involved in movement were mercilessly beaten up. Police cruelly assaulted Kodihally Chandrasekhar, Rajya Raitha Sangha’s district president. (From Focussed Group Discussion, Italics are added)"

As reported in district level daily Janatha Maadhyama. Following is the gist of the report. Kodihally Chandrashekar, President, (Hassan) district, Karnataka
Rajya Raitha Sangha (Karnataka State Farmer Association), visited the village of Bagur-Navile along with a journalist in a bike from Arasikere. After visiting Bagur, Vaddarahally and Dyavenahally he went to Gollarahosahally. Women shared with Chandrashekar that they were beaten and verbally abused. When he passed to next village, police who came in jeep and lorry obstructed them and thrashed Chandru and his associate. They uttered: 'are you such a big level leader to give bundh call?' (Janatha Maadhyaama, 22nd, July 1998). They threatened him to return back to his village. When he was passing near Navile, a KSRTC bus, occupied by young police men in disguise came from opposite direction. They alighted from bus and beat Chandrashekar. Chandrashekar and journalist was taken into bus. Inside the bus DC and SP were present and expressed surprise: 'why did you come here'? Bus stopped at police station, Chnnarayapattna. They were taken to police station where police sub-inspector kicked him and again Chandrashekar was thrashed. Later he was called to Tourist Bungalow (TB) where SP advised him to return back to his place. Chandrashekar condemned the Hassan district being turned into police state (Janatha Maadhyaama, ibid).

Janatha Maadhyaama, daily newspaper, approached Kodihally Chandrashekar and latter confirmed what had happened on 22nd July, 1998. Surprising thing paper uncovered was though DC instructed Circle Inspector, Vijayakumar, to send Chandrashekar to his place, he was sent to police station. Later he was taken to circle inspector’s office and was verbally abused. Besides Chandrashekar was battered by circle inspector till his anger subsided and went out of the station. When he was taken to TB Tourist Bungalow, Circle Inspector was with DC and SP. They regretted

'Alas..It should not have happened, please forgive us."

They tried to order for food and to send him to hospital. But Chandrashekar refused their offer and requested them to handover his bike. He left to
Arasikere after bike was given to him. Newspaper sought explanations for three questions:

a. Why was Chandrashekar taken to police station despite instructions from DC?

b. Why did not DC and SP condemn thrashing of Chandrashekar by inspector, though he was with them in TB?

c. Or did they, DC and SP, instruct inspector to take Chandrashekar to police station? (Janatha Maadhyama, 24th July, 1998)

11.4 Violence, State and Responses from Civil Society

Oppression of peasants from police invited sharp and wide reactions from local, state and national level. Concern manifested on the eve of state’s act of pressurizing peasants to stop their peaceful protest by threatening the use of force and oppression of peasants, women, and aged created tremors and sent shock waves to civil society and politics. We shall briefly review the reactions from different organizations to persons.

a. Condemnation from HDFISC

Hassan District Federation for Irrigation Struggle Committee condemned the way police force behaved inhumanly and their hooliganism. It also regretted about incidents that took place while doing rasta roko. It directly accused that police were directly responsible for creating undue fear in villages affected by tunnel. Peasants of Bagur-Navile exhibited an excellent discipline by following non-violent method. Police should have taken this into consideration while dealing with peasants, then undesirable activities not would have taken place.

It expressed candid opinion:

"Janatha Dal as a party came into existence with the background of JP (Jayaparakash Narayan) movement has shown disregard and mobilizing huge numbers of police in front of peasants is a social tragedy"(Janatha Maadhyama, 21st July, 1997)

It accused government of treading the wrong path, though the options to solve peasants' problems through non-violent and justifiable way were possible. It
urged government to accept the responsibility for the death of Shankaraachar and to release peasants arrested without registering cases. Also it advised peasants with concern not to follow the path of violence. Federation also condemned the oppression of journalists.

b. Call for Belur Bundh
HDFISC and other progressive associations gave a call for Belur bundh in cooperation with all political parties on July 22nd.

c. Condemnation from District Journalists Association
District Journalist Association condemned the atrocities on Nagesh, reporter of Janamithra, district level daily newspaper and photographer Nanjunda Maim. It took a resolution which condemned the torture meted out of both of them who were retained in police station till 2 am. It urged authorities to suspend the sub inspector Nataraj and police Inspector Vijayakumar and cautioned district administration that it will be accountable, if any journalist undergoes humiliation and torture.

d. Arasikere Bundh
Bundh call given by Congress, Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KSSR), Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP), and Dalita Sangarsha Samithi (DSS) became successful as Arasikere town observed total bundh. Shops remained closed since morning to evening. Protestors burnt the effigy of chief Minister. Basvaraj from BJP, Kodihally Chandrashekar from KRRS, T.V. Shivananada from HDFISC and others condemned the police oppression in Bagur-Navile and urged to implement irrigation project soon to Arasikere. Later they submitted memorandum to Tahishaldar.

e. Silence procession by Journalists
Journalists of Hassan district urged chief minister to conduct a Judicial enquiry against atrocities on journalists by police. They carried out silent procession by wearing a black tap on their wrist. They first staged dharna
in front of SP office and later they did the same by assembling in front of DC office. J.K. Sathya, president, association for working journalists, said that it was the duty of journalist to write the truth-what it is. Tolerating atrocities and operation implies the acceptance of system. He questioned if there is no freedom to launch people centric movement and freedom to write, why should we be here? He clarified that doing a silent procession is not a coward way of protest, rather there is an element of pious power in it. Journalist unanimously took a decision to conduct jaatha from Chnnarayapattna to Bagur (Janatha Maadhyama, 25th July, 1998)

f. **Condemnation of Police cruelty**

HDFISC condemned the police attack on Kodihally Chandrashekar. It is a testimony to cruelty and prejudice of police. It urged district administration to apologize as police attack on Chandrashekar indirectly in presence of DC and SP. It urged to dismiss police inspector Vijaya Kumar and two sub-inspectors Nataraj and Jagadessh and to conduct judicial inquiry on police atrocities on peasants on 20th July.

g. **Taluk Brahmins association, Youth Association, seers from Shravanabelagola and Kolar, Civilians forum, Karnataka Sangha, Private Doctors Association** condemned the police attack on peasants and journalists. Lawyers boycotted the court session.

h. **Torch Light Parade at Hassan**

Hassan District Rajkumar’s Fan’s association conducted a torch light parade condemning the police violence on peasants and journalists. They shouted slogans against hooligan acts of police in the heart of city and reached DC office to give memorandum. They urged DC to punish officers responsible for violence. DC assured them that efforts were being put to bring normalcy in the situation and KSRTC bus service would resume from tomorrow.
i. **Journalists' Procession in Bagur**

Journalists from all taluks of Hassan district gathered at Tourist Bungalow of Chnnarayapattna began their procession at 11am. But police tried to restrict them by giving reason that 144 section was ordered. But journalists including R.P. Venkateshmurthy and others clarified that they were holding this jaatha as police were not allowing journalists of Chnnarayapattna to function independently and without fear. He said 'Therefore, in order to urge to protect journalists’ liberty and to create courage in people of Bagur-Navile we were holding this jaatha'. They reached Bagur by 2 pm and visited all streets of Bagur and created courage in all people-youth, women and aged-and requested them to maintain peace. They gave call to fled peasants to return back to their villages.

j. **Protest by CPI**

Communist Party of India expressed support to peasants of Bagur-Navile. They marched in procession and submitted memorandum to DC, wherein it urged to initiate investigation by COD and to release arrested peasants.

k. **Visit of Nanjundaswamy, president KRRS: Demand for Removal of DC and SP**

Prof. Nanjundaswamy gave a call to peasants to continue their struggle till their demands were met. He urged chief minister to remove DC Rakesh Singh and SP Vajeer Anmed from service for having oppressed peasants and women. If a judicial inquiry was conducted they would be dismissed from service as they were unfit to continue in public service. He said that police oppression in the region was worst than even that of colonial period. He asked Some Gowda to introspect who thought that he was the king of Hassan. He advised peasants to keep alive the movement by methods such as hoisting flag on atop of their houses, write slogans on walls. He said that meeting would be convened of all progressive associations to extend the Bagur-Navile peasant movement through out the state. He advised the peasants not to attend the court on
account of cases clamped on them by police and in turn should write to Judges that they were helpless to meet expenditure. K.S Puttaniah said he would fight in assembly session to form a committee to investigate the entire episode (Jantha madhyama, 3rd Aug.1998)

l. Congress protested at Holenarasipura against police violence in Bagur-Navile area and condemned the incidents.

m. Police intimidation and cancellation of KRRS Jaatha
KRRS plan to conduct a jaatha to console peasants oppressed by police on 3rd August was put off due to threatening of police department. Police on 2nd August evening itself warned peasants of Bagur not to participate in jaatha as section 144 was in existence through mike in vehicles. Scared peasants left the village on evening of 2nd August itself.

Police obstructed the movement of peasants from different parts of the district. Peasants from Belur were warned not to start towards Bagur. Peasants from Sakleshpur were detained at Baragur hand post (outskirts of Chnnarayapattna) and sent them back. District police clamped huge police security force in Bagur and Chnnarayapattna and SP stayed at Chnnarayapattna. Despite police warnings 100 peasants participated in symbolic jaatha in Bagur village under the leadership of Prof. Nanjundaswamy.

n. BJP protested against the police violence on peasants of Bagur-Navile in a procession

o. HDFISC Indefinite Strike
HDFISC had begun indefinite strike till the demands of peasants of Bagur-Navile were met in front of DC office. It urged to removal of section 144 in Chnnarayapattna and Bagur. It demanded to remove all cases imposed on peasants
DC’s Acceptance of Police Excess

Deputy Commissioner accepted the episode of police excess as the pressure from civil society started building. He personally visited Bagur and surrounding villages and inspected the loss to properties and atrocities on people. Compensation would be given from government to damaged properties. He said that he still could not understand what triggered people to burn buses and jeep. He apologized to journalists personally or on behalf of district administration if they are pained from me or from district administration.

3.7 Attempts to restore Normalcy

Meanwhile, KSRP troops were decided to withdraw on 22nd July 1998 from Bagur-Navile region. DC has ordered to facilitate the creation of peace atmosphere in Bagur-Navile villages. Having conducted meeting with officers from several departments, he ordered for resumption of KSRTC bus service from 23rd July 1998, asked Doctors and allied staff and to veterinary doctors visit villages. He ordered officers to open Nyayabele Angadi (open public distribution shops) to distribute essential commodities to people. SP assured that innocents need not worry and requested people to uphold peace. He requested that accused in relation to setting fire to buses and jeeps to surrender to police and cooperate in maintaining peace!! (Janatha Maadhya, 23rd July, 1998).

But journalists team which visited villages of Bagur region reported that situation has slightly improved. On the eve of violence, buses stopped plying, schools and colleges, shops were shut down. Water distribution was disconnected and entire region was marked by unusual hush. But as per the team findings, it requires several days to establish normalcy.
3.8 Violence and Politicization of Movement

According to Kesari Harvoo, award winning filmmaker, who studied problem of Bagur-Navile for an NGO said that ever since the movement started intensifying, centrist parties, in opposition, always tried to manipulate the movement to humiliate the party in power and to use movement as an instrumental to gain power. He sees that Congress party was the major beneficiary of this act. Political parties and some persons either tried to use movement or to meet their interests (From In depth interview).

But as we proceed in the analysis of data, we come to know that till peasants dislodged from Sangramanagara and break of violence, it was not possible for political parties to infiltrate into movement. When leaders courted voluntary arrest and violence broken in their absence, it gave sufficient room for political parties to invade the space. We observe, as the days elapsed in post violence phase, AIKS gradually started loosening its decisive and exclusive hold on movement as AIKS leadership in mired in its inevitability of expansion of movement across wider horizon and dearth of innovative techniques at the moment.

But a note of caution has to be exercised here. Whatever the power calculations leders of centrist parties had, they tried honestly to get bail for all leaders and were successful also. We do not deny the working of instrumental intentions of party leaders, but some were very honest in their concern to protect the arrested peasant leaders. Leaders such as Maruvanahally Rame Gowda, Mahdevaswamy Gowda, former MP, and other Congress leaders.

Peasants, women and aged underwent painful experience due to police action, peasant leaders absence on the one hand and their new dependence on political leaders for having been given bail to come out of jail gave on the other hand lent sufficient space to political parties to come into fore on the grounds of larger public interest. Following events we shall examine here amply illustrate this. We shall examine here few instances which amply illustrate the political
parties', particularly Congress, attempt to use movement to meet their interests.

B. Shivaram, congress MLA from Gandasi constituency, has criticized the government as Nincompoop. He criticized carelessness attitude of the government which let peasants do hunger strike for nearly hundred days. They (Congress) would not have let them sit for strike even for three days. He questioned 'are we cowherds to let Gopal do politics in Hassan district? He lamented peasants are suffering today for having trusted him. We, congress, and BJP leaders, have extended support to their (AIKS) struggle. He reproached Gopal and others for having not consulted us, even for the sake of courtesy, before withdrawing the 'water blockade movement'. 'If they themselves do everything under red flag, why should we have supported struggle?' He questioned the rationality of decision made to withdraw movement after speaking to Some Gowda. He wanted to know what went in conversation with Some Gowda, if AIKS could stop the movement after speaking to him over telephone. 'What was the need to talk to Some Gowda?' he questioned. He said he would raise the matter in assembly and struggle to get compensation. He accused that Some Gowda and his son Ramanna were directly responsible for police atrocities. DC and SP they themselves could not act on their own. He said that violence was well planned and a conspiracy to create phobia in the minds of people in the absence of leaders and thereby, to break the support of people to movement.

He urged to conduct peace meetings and to bring back peasants who fled from their villages to facilitate the sowing activities in the back drop of monsoon.

Top brass leaders from political parties started visiting the Bagur-Navile villages. Shri. Veerappa Moily, former Chief Minister of Karnataka, visited Bagur, Gollarahosahally, Vaddarahally, Chowdenahally, Dyavenahally, Obalapura and Honnenahally and met victims of police excess. After collecting information from people in person addressed press meet in TB, Channarayapattna. He said he had not seen in his thirty years of political experience this sort of glut police atrocities. He said he would complain to
Human Rights Commission and Women Commission. He observed that those who inflicted trauma on innocents were unfit to continue in police department and remarked Bagur episode as a black spot on Karnataka police. He urged to suspend DC and SP for having let police beat women, aged, children and not sparing a pregnant woman. He regretted that these incidents occurred in constituency of Some Gowda who always boasts of himself as son of soil. He warned government to take immediate action (Janatha Maadhyama, Aug. 12th 1998)

Gurudas Gupta, top brass leader and Rajyasabha member from CPI visited the affected villages. He drew into attention the acts of police not sparing 80 year aged lady, looting of Rupees 25000 cash of a peasant in Gollarahosahally, looting arrack shop and not providing treatment to wounded people shows district administration had functioned even worst than British Raj. He declared that he would take issue to Human rights commission. He said:

"It is shame that such incidents occurred when 50 years of independence being celebrated'. Silence of Some Gowda who is representing this constituency, about the issue is inviting suspicion. I would write a letter to him" (Janatha Maadhyama, Aug. 12th, 1998, italics are added)

Leader of opposition in Karnataka assembly, Mallikarjun Kharge and H. K. Patil visited the villages. He declared, if government did not implement the justifiable demands of peasants, Congress would launch movement through out the state. Vishakantaiah ridiculed imposition of case on innocent peasants under Indian penal code 307. He saw behind this act a role of Ramanna, district in charge minister. He questioned:

"Whom have these peasants gone to murder people? What is the necessity of clamping 'attempt to murder' on peasants? Police from Holenarasipur have been called to suppress people".

(Janatha Maadhyama, Aug. 18th 1998, italics are added)

Congress party staged a dharna in Channarayapattana supporting peasants' movement. Troop of leaders of Lokashakthi, a political party established by
Ramakrishna Hegde, visited Bagur-Navile area. They stated 'we do no think that there is democracy in Hassan district. System existing here is dictatorship and feudalism' (Janatha Maadhyama, Sep. 1st, 1998).

Above, responses from political parties and their top brass leaders show the impact of Bagur-Navile movement spreading across the state and knocked the doors of CPI at centre on the one hand and on the other hand, we need to carefully understand the events where in attempts to hijack the movement mobilized and formed by AIKS, a leftist organization, are ingrained. As more and more leaders started using Bagur-Navile issue as a platform to harp on Some Gowda and his family, a suspicion started lurking among media and in the minds of progressive organizations about the politicization of movement.

'Post water blockade phase' in Bagur-Navile peasant movement raised several issues and doubt ranging from political interests to leadership. Janatha Maadhyama, leading daily in Hassan district carried a special article analyzing the trajectory of the movement with a question 'is movement missing its path? It provides subtle and intricate details on lacunas of movement which deserves examination here. It critically scanned several aspects of the movement creating jitters in the leadership when it was planning to keep alive the movement. It mainly focuses on 'self-absorption among leadership', possible different political motivation among leaders, errors in leadership qualities and decisions-lack of vision and focus, lacuna in decisions made during removal of blockade of mud from canal, Immature decision in relation to Shankaraachar death, self interests of political parties (Janatha Maadhyama, sep. 3rd, 1998)

It expressed dissatisfaction about self absorption about leadership, which was another factor for the impasse, besides the apathy on part of government. It also sensed some exterior purpose of leadership for attaining other than the goals of movement. Though the analysis was of appreciation for movement since 1997 and particularly 95 days of disciplined nonviolent movement. It distinguished two phases in 95 days satyagraha which blocked the canal.
a. till 50 days, movement did not allow any political leaders away;
b. after 50 days of satyagraha, leadership accepted the support from political parties

It criticized the leadership which failed in managing the situation at final phase. It chided leadership for lacking vision and imagination which was amply evident when huge police under IGP and SP with DC surrounded peasants at Sangramanagara. Analysis quoted that leaders' offer of voluntary arrest led to criticisms Leadership experienced retreat and a sort of defeat was implied. On pragmatic side, as article observed, any movement has to achieve its goals through composite dialogue. Any movement has to show prudence and wisdom to, when it reaches peak, achieve its goals. No movement can achieve all the goals and it has to prioritize its goals. It lamented that when government was ready to implement all the measures except monetary compensation, leadership should have accepted the offer and focused exclusively on implementation of lift irrigation schemes as people of Bagur-Navile get genuine compensation when lift irrigation schemes were implemented. Using this had leadership exerted stiff pressure on Chief minister and Minister for Irrigation to provide permission or clearance, release of money to complete the project within stipulated time, chances of government bowing down to demands would have been very high. But leadership's obstinacy and stubbornness for monetary compensation of 25.61 crores was surprising. It expressed an astonishment about the stand of leaders that problem would be solved by monetary compensation in the light of cases where compensation provided to affected in the form of cash ultimately made people parasites. It questioned the wisdom of leaders.

It subjected the decisions of leadership to critical scanner during the confrontation between peasants and police force. Though the two round of talks were failed, leadership should have at least created a pressure by raking again demands minus monetary compensation, which government agreed, when government sent police force to evacuate peasants from
Sangramanagara. Thereby, it could have ended water blockade struggle respectfully. Decisions of top level leaders of the movement along with second level and tertiary level leaders at village level, numbering 152 persons, to court voluntary arrest left the leadership to masses. There was a discipline and non violence due to coherent leadership; its deficiency was fully manifested in the eruption of violence, miscreants had upper hand in the absence of leaders which police would quite naturally expect such things in all movements. Leaders made movement ceased to exist and it is not simple and easy to build movement again from vacuum. It also warned

leaders 'you cannot make people wait on streets always as any movement has to meet its logical end. People are also involved in their day to day botheration. It took ninety days to intensify the situation. After loosing that voltage, doing dharna again is to create from vacuum (Janatha Maadhyama, op.cit)

The way political parties and its leaders acted by visiting affected villages after violence show that they were more interested in doing politics than solving problems. It questioned the leaders of political parties who delayed in visiting villages immediately after violence. It compared this act with

"Going to last funeral rites without attending the funeral" (Janatha Maadhyama, op.cit)

11.6 Rejoinder from AIKS

M.C. Dongre, spokesperson from CPI, on behalf of AIKS4 defended that movement was on right track and ‘it is Janatha Dal government taking the wrong path’. AIKS acknowledged the concerns behind expression and had taken into consideration all issues raised. Let us examine the content of the defense. According to AIKS, Janatha Dal government had gone astray four crucial times:

a. When people of Tumkur under the leadership of Y.K. Ramaiah demanding immediate release of Hemavathy water, government was frightened and conspired to oppress peasant movement in Bagur-Navile. It took the wrong
way for a second time. Earlier it was frightened when committee appointed by itself recommended for award of compensation of Rupees 25.61 crores to peasants and government countered the peasant claims by twisting the report from geologists’ committee.

b. Though, AIKS leaders courted self arrest to uphold peace. Government did not understand the concern and in their (leaders) absence used force to beat the backbone of movement. What has happened was history. Government keeping a pretext suppressed people. This is second time government taking the wrong way, according to AIKS.

c. Third wrong path, according to AIKS, Government said that wherever in future tunnels were constructed, government would lift and collect the depleting ground water and would pump into lands beside canal. AIKS questioned: What does it mean? Does it mean that such work was not done till in Bagur-Navile. Who will be held responsible for plight of people of Bagur-Navile since 1979 then? Why it is branding peasants struggle as Congress led or communist led, instead of solving the problems.

d. Chief Minister had ordered Krishna Bhagya Jala Nigama to release 15 crores to reconstruction of Somanatha temple at Koodalasangama. But government did have an iota of concern to humans who were being affected since 1979. This is the fourth wrong path, according to AIKS

e. Fifth wrong path, according to AIKS, is about compensation. If monetary compensation was awarded to peasants, then government had to pay the same wherever tunnels were constructed. AIKS shot back ‘we urge government to come with facts and figures. Coconut or any farms were not there in all the locations of tunnel. It was a duty of state to provide compensation to people to wherever their lands and water are affected.

AIKS argued that just because in other cases, if monetary compensation was not properly used did not mean it as unfeasible. AIKS reacted to Janatha
Maadhyama stand of opposing monetary compensation as tragic. It said, 'Bagur-Navile movement is the first organized and disciplined peasants' movement in the history of Hassan district. AIKS continued its argument that this peasant movement had unveiled the true character of bourgeoisie's parties, ruling class and police. Movement was, hence, on right track. (Janatha Maadhyama, Sep.11th 1998).

3.9 AIKS Leader Stabbed

Gopal was stabbed by two people while on his way to Gollarahosahally from Bangalore along with Sundaresh from CPI. Gopal said that they took an auto to Gollarahosahally. They had to alight at Vaddarahally itself as auto driver said petrol was emptied. After speaking to people of Vaddarahally for a while, they left for Gollarahosahally. While going on the bund of canal, two were standing with their bike. They pounced upon him. One was retreated by Sundaresh, while another stabbed Gopal. But he was able to stab only Gopal's right arm.

Gopal recollected his experience: on that day police clamped 144 section in Channarayapattana, but they (AIKS) declared that they would violate it. As a part of this plan, when Gopal was going to Gollarahosahally to organize people for the event. As they were walking on bridge built across the canal near Gollarahosahally, two people attacked me.

Of two, one was police I am very clear about it and I do not know about identity of another person. They attacked me fatally. Immediately Sundaresh alerted me 'Gopal, take out the revolver from your bag'. Then, suddenly they left the scene. It affected my hands and lower abdomen and still I have problems in movement of my hand" (From In depth Interview)

This incident led to tremours in state and pressure on district administartion increased. This invited condemnation from different quarters. Though the information was passed to DC office at an early morning, police department was reluctant to visit the spot and register the case and were denying the incidence till 11am on september 9th 1998. Again this invited sharp reaction
from press and civil society. Janatha Maadhyama, wrote an editorial describing the event as height of wickedness. Additional Superintendent of Police, Revanna was appointed to inquire into the incidence. SP, meanwhile passed comment after the constitution of committee that police department could have killed him had they desired. He accused Gopal as an agent and is alleged to have collected lakhs of rupees in the name of movement. This again led to sharp reactions from press and associations. HDFISC president Kodihally Chandrashekar reacted sharply to such comment of SP:

*If he says police would have killed Gopal at any point of time, does it mean that he has given him life?* (Janatha Maadhayama, Sep. 11th 1998, italics are added)

P. Kodandaramaiah, retired IPS officer and police commissioner for Bangalore city and former Member of Parliament visited the affected villages and said ‘I had also worked as police officer for 32 years. I gave orders for lathi charge and golibar and I also experienced consequences of them. But I have never seen this type of brutality in my life’. He said police have invaded even houses, where in its male members were not there and thrashed women. He suspected the support of important political leader for police to commit cruelty to this extent. He opined that state government has to bow its head for having thrashed 17 year old girl and retained for 13 days. ‘Even women and children involved in murder case could be released by officer within a station under Code of Criminal Procedure. State should government should bow down its head for this purposive action’ (Janatha Maadhyaman, Oct. 23rd, 1998).

4.1 Channarayapattna Bundh by Congress

Congress party gave call to bundh of Channarayapattna on September 1st 1998 for urging government to solve the problems. It was a mixed response and bundh was partially succesfull. Congress activists under the leadership of Dr. Sannappa, former MLA, carried a procession through important roads and submitted memorandum to Tahashildar (Janatha Maadhayama, Sep. 1st and 2nd, 1998).
4.2 End of HDFISC's Indefinite Satyagraha

HDFISC which launched strike for demanding government to implement demands of Tunnel victims' (peasants of Bagur-Navile) and to initiate judicial inquiry to probe the police excess ended its 25 days strike on September 11. Jodihally shandrashekar and T. Shivananda said that they began this dharna to support the movement which government tried to suppress and as a part of extending the struggle to district level. District level strike would be withdrawn after delivering Struggle Lamp' to state level leaders. It decided to carry struggle lamp to Channarayapattana.

4.3 Sangraama Jyothi Jaatha

From 20th-24th October, as we have noted above struggle lamp was sent to Bagur from Hassan by HDIFSC. Peasants carried out Sangraama Jyothi Jaatha to all villages affected by tunnel to awaken people.

4.4 Bagur to Bangalore Jaatha: A Key Event in Post Water Blockade Struggle

Peasants Jaatha to Bangalore by walk was a significant event in post water barrier movement phase and exhibition of solidarity. Different progressive organizations which assembled in TB of Hassan. They decided to intensify the movement. Meeting condemned the apathy shown by state. It requested all associations and political parties, including ruling party, to participate in the Jaatha and not to do politics. R.P. Venkatesh Murthy, editor of Janatha Maadhyama and peasant leader cautioned government that if jaatha was not seriously considered, Hunger strike at Bangalore would be inevitable. On 25th of October, Jaatha was inaugurated by Mahadevaswamy Gowda former minister for irrigation, at 2:30 pm.

Peasants had a goal to reach Bangalore on 2nd November; to give memorandum explaining the plight of peasants and to urge to take action against police excess. But inauguration of Jaatha underwent some hiccups. G.N. Nagaraj, State Secretary, CPI went on criticizing severely Congress and Janatha
Dal for their mistakes committed when they were in power. He advised peasants

"Politicians are sucking the blood of peasants, peasants should not trust any politicians and fight under the red flag" (Janatha Maadhyama, October 26th 1998)

This drew severe flak from Congress leader who shared the dias and Ha. Ra. Nagaraj, president, District Rajakumar Fans Association. Peasant leaders planned to address 100 meetings and to plant trees at each place where meeting takes place. Following was the schedule of peasants’ Jaatha to Bangalore.

Table 9.2 Schedule of Bagur-Navile Peasants Jaatha to Bangalore

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Destination and Halting Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>25/10/2011</td>
<td>Nuggehally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>26/10/2011</td>
<td>Hirisave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>27/10/2011</td>
<td>Bellur Cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>28/10/2011</td>
<td>Yediyur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>29/10/2011</td>
<td>Kunigal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>30/10/2011</td>
<td>Solur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>31/10/2011</td>
<td>Nelamangala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>01/10/2011</td>
<td>Yeshavanthapur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>02/10/2011</td>
<td>Rajabhavan, Bangalore</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Peasants received warmth welcome in all the villages they went through (Janatha Maadhyama, Oct.25th 1998). In fact the entire jaatha was a refreshing experience for peasants and leaders who were ruffled in police cruelty. One respondent shared his experience:

Through out the journey... we were served fruits, food. People helped in several ways. At one place, lunch was delayed: when we enquired ‘who was the person?’ We were told that he was a Janatha Dal local leader. We thought this was the reason, as we were fighting protesting against their government. But much to our surprise when we left the village, he hired a vehicle and brought food to us and asked ‘why are you going’? (From In depth Interview)
Another also has his experience to share:

"One petty shopper gave banana to all of us and when I told him I did not have money, he said oh! King, take… you have been doing Paadayaathra from far place and I will get Punya by helping you" (From In depth Interview)

Y.K. Ramaiah provided food to peasants. Johnson and Johnson factory workers near Kunigal also invited peasants to have food. But when peasants replied ‘we had our food just’. ‘Then have juice they’, said. As we proceeded, Dr. N.B. Nanjappa was passing through the way and having seen Jaatha, he came out of his car. He donated one thousand rupees as fund and addressed peasants that he would meet in Bangalore.

Some unpleasant things also happened. People in Kunigal attacked peasants and there was a bickering. Peasants did Rasta Roko. When peasants came to know that people in Solur might attack them, they passed behind the Solur aryd and stayed in a hill. Ha.Ra. Nagaraj, Journalist Tagadooru Shivanand, Kodihally Chandrasekhar accompanied peasants and were with them all the way. A peasant shared:

He (Ha. Ra. Nagaraj) brought lot of fruits and we never ate that much of fruits hitherto in our life (From in depth interview)

Peasants shared that using his network of relations, in Bangalore, Nagaraj spread the message and appealed to many people about the cause and concern of people of Bagur-Navile region. He mobilized money and lent financial help. Peasants remembered with gratitude:

"He even brought ‘Kaddle puri to us like elder one bringing to children’.

According to peasants Nagaraj protected Gopal by keeping him in Sanctum sanctorum of temple and also protected them throughout the journey. Manju, a peasant youth from Maruvanahally, patrolled for our security.
Peasants had little bit hiccups in Nelamangala. People at Nelamangala were bit angry with peasants, as per the accounts of respondents, for the reason that peasants had prevented water from flowing to their place. A peasant recollects:

*We were 300 people when we started jaatha, but when we reached Bangalore we were nearly 2000 people.* (From in depth interview).

Many of them joined peasants in Bangalore on the day they reached Bangalore. But peasants were not allowed to go beyond ‘Kumara Park’ and were questioned by police as *why should have you come here?* Peasants and peasant leaders’ ambition to meet governor and apprise him of their plight remained unfulfilled.

Ananthasubba Rao came and urged “our people have come here from distant place by walking for 8 days... please at least accept their representation”. Then he was allowed to submit our representations. Coming out, he told peasants “government would send officers to affected area once again’, but no one turned here. While coming back peasants were left with fund of 4000 rupees. t peasants decided not to use. They judged that it might be of use in future. They returned back on their own expenses.

It is in this way, jaatha failed to create pressure on government. But the organization, solidarity they expressed had all consequences which fully manifested in 1999 assembly elections which we shall sum up in concluding chapter.
4.5 Incomplete Dialogue with Government

Government convened meeting with leaders of opposition and Bagur Navile peasant leaders. Opposition leaders, irrespective of political parties vehemently condemned the oppression of peasants by police. They all unanimously demanded the implementation of remedial measures to solve peasants' problems, they also urged government to take strict action against police and bureaucrats. Home minister Rafik Beg said that he realized the police atrocities and assured the leaders that he would initiate action against guilty officers and he would think on the lines of withdrawing cases against peasants. But leaders decided that in the absence of chief minister, it would be difficult to take all decisions. Hence government decided to call another meeting in presence of chief minister to take appropriate decisions (Janatha Maadhyaama, Nov 16th 1998).

But peasant leaders said that chief minister wanted to implement remedial measures. But a top leader of Janatha Dal prevented Chief Minister from taking any decision on account of declaration of election to assembly

Fig 9.1 How far Protest Movement Helped You in solving your problems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fully</th>
<th>Partially</th>
<th>Did not help at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially</td>
<td>Fully</td>
<td>Did not help at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully</td>
<td>Partially</td>
<td>Did not help at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially</td>
<td>Fully</td>
<td>Did not help at all</td>
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<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did not help at all</td>
<td>Fully</td>
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<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Utility of Movement
4.6 Violence, Human Rights Commission and Distressed

We examined the break of violence in movement where in we tried to explain the reasons for the emergence of violence in the context of peasants and police justifying their actions. We briefly quoted the persons who underwent violence. Here we shall first analyze the cases of all victims, who were inflicted by violence, as carried in report of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC, here onwards) and later examine the experiences of few victims we interviewed. Police excess in Bagur-Navile area, in fact, attracted strong attention from civil society and opposition political parties.

Mahdevaswamy Gowda was instrumental in taking the entire issue to NHRC. Apart from his efforts, following persons also took the matter to the court of NHRC.

1. Shri. D.M. Chandrashekar, retired chief justice of Karnataka
2. Shri. H. K. Patil, Leader of the opposition , Karnataka Legislative council
3. Shri D. Simharaj
4. Shri. M. Gopal, General Secreatry, AIKS
5. Ms Hemalatha Mahishi, Advocate
6. Shri. Kodandaramaiah, ex-MP
7. Shri. M. Veerappa Moily, Former CM, Karnataka

Detailed report by commission is attached in appendices. Human rights commission highlighted the role of police atrocities on innocent people. It held two officers-Sub inspector and circle inspector responsible for police excess and recommended to debar them from public service for two years. It also recommended to examine the main contention of peasants by forming a committee that comprises of representatives from department of agriculture, horticulture, geology and irrigation.
Figure 9.2 shows the magnitude of violence on people by police. Most of the people were physically hurt and their property was damaged. Significant number of women were abused and beaten (32).

**Fig 9.2 Police Excess on People**

![Graph showing police repercussions on people](image)

4.7 Summing Up: Cessation of Movement

Peasant mobilization of Bagur-Navile drew our attention from several aspects. It was a leftist mobilization of peasants in stronghold of centrist parties. Though the problem of peasants was created and neglected by centrist parties, AIKS raked up the issue, channelized dormant discontent and deprivation into social movement. We can undoubtedly say that Bagur-Navile was the first disciplined, organized social movement against the state. Though the movement was a huge success in converting dissent, deprivation into action, mobilization, organization, method and techniques adopted, it could not achieve the goals it constructed due to several aspects. Decision to vacate from Sangraamanagara, voluntary arrest to police was a fatal mistake as it left the peasants unguided and uncertain. Though leaders could come out of jail on bail within a week, it was sufficient for state break the movement.
But several factors. We noted that political parties were trying to use the movement for their electoral gains. Though Bagur-Navile movement was a peasant mobilization by leftist organization. Most of the second level leaders had an allegiance to Congress party. Though they joined AIKS and involved in movement with open mind, they did not want movement to be a part of electoral politics. When Suryanath tried to contest assembly election from CPI party. Most of the leaders revolted against this decision. They wanted AIKS not to be part of electoral politics. They wanted it to function as independent organization in the interest of movement. Though Suryanath, later on the pressure of leaders within movement and also from Vishalantaiah, withdrew his nomination file, it had created cracks, which coupled with major mistake peasant leaders made in courting self arrest, police atrocities weakened the movement.

But Bagur-Navile movement had potential impact on assembly elections in 1999 in Karnataka. It worked as a major anti-incumbency factor through out the district. Especially, police violence on peasants, women, aged and children damaged the prospects of Janatha Dal. As a consequence, in 1999 assembly and lokasabha elections, Janatha Dal was wiped out all over the district.

Congress party won the election and formed the government. Though Congress in Hassan district won in the elections on assurances given to peasants that it would implement all measures to solve the problems. It forgot to solve the problems; even to implement lift irrigation schemes, let alone implementation of monetary measures.

This made peasants lose motivation if any they had; as police atrocities created in them a permanent fear. Even today if they are asked “why should not you relaunch the movement?” Firm and ironical reply would be “do you want us to be beaten again by police”. Whereas, leaders developed dissension on the grounds of their allegiance to centrist parties, need of building movement out of vacuum, which was lost when they surrendered to police and left leadership to
people. Leaders intentions to contest elections and most conspicuous was after Vishakantaiah won the elections and became minister from congress party. He started distancing himself from peasant leaders. Whenever they went to meet him, they were scolded and sent back or advised to come out of Gopal's leadership. Whenever Gopal met him, as Gopal himself and other leaders confirmed, he was either humiliated or not even recognized. All these aspects created a state of vacuum in peasants. Gopal had to return back to Kolar on other assignments from AIKS.
4.8 Case Study -I

_Sannamma – Victim of Police Excess_

Sannamma, a resident of Bagur village was one of the victims of police excess that occurred on the eve of people’s outrage against government, against police and other public properties. Following is her awful experiences shared in an interview given to researcher. We have quoted her own words to make sense of the situation

"On that day i.e. a day before police violence occurred, my elder son was not feeling well and had an illness -migraine, not being cured. He was admitted in _Nagesh Private Nursing Home_ for seven days and illness could not be cured. Doctor admitted that he could not cure illness and asked us to take patient to Bangalore. My younger son was working in Bangalore, who had come to Bagur for few days on holiday. I informed him about the situation and he advised me to return back to Bagur and ‘we shall go to Bangalore by early morning’. There was a govt. bus service to Bangalore via Bagur in early morning. Had he come to Bangalore directly, I would have also gone to Bangalore from Channarayapattna itself. I came back to Bagur at 10 pm with my ailing son in bus. My unmarried daughter was in home. It was Monday. I had bath and offered pooja to God. A doctor was residing beside my home and I was only providing food to him every day. He often used to visit my house for checking up my son. He few days back itself advised me ‘here it is not possible to cure your son’s illness and better you take him to Bangalore’. I told him that I would do that. My younger son came to Bagur in the wee hours – early morning 3 am by auto.

But people carried out protest on that day we wanted to go to Bangalore. They stopped Bus and blocked the way. I could not go and even to Channarayapattna also. Then without any choice, I returned back to home. I told doctor and expressed my helplessness to doctor. He arranged for glucose-drips to my son and also injected the necessary medicine through drips itself. I
with an intention of preparing 'Ragi Ganji' [Ragi soup] started processing Ragi. I was sitting in the same place I am sitting now. It was around 9 or 10 am in morning. Doctor entered into my home and informed me "Amma, severe violence and pandemonium is going there; police are beating people mercilessly'. Then doctor was conversing with my neighbor people in shop in front of my home. I was tensed as my younger son decided to go Bangalore despite the way was blocked by protesters. He told me to come to Bangalore by tomorrow early morning and he would be waiting there to receive me. I went till well located beside road to see my son with anxiety as I was told police were mercilessly beating people and making them helter-skelter. By that time though severe chaotic situation was being formed, police inspectors and other police officers who had come form Hassan had stopped bus and made my son board that bus. But bus as soon as it reached kere kodi [a border/end of large tank where water overflows out of Tank to join other tanks], bus was stopped by protester. They made all passengers alight from the bus and set bus ablaze. All passengers escaped from the scene and ran towards Nuggehally. My son telephoned me by night 8pm to inform that he reached. I told him 'we will come once situation gets calm and even if it takes 2 days, we will wait, as doctor is with us'. 'Wherever you see there are police'. SI told me roughly to go back to home. I came back to home and involved in my work that is cleaning Ragi.... ‘All of sudden police started beating back door continuously and violently. But among them one police told me ‘Amma close the door’. But I questioned him ‘why should I close the door? I have dying son? Why should I? I asked police. Again he told me again ‘close your door’. More than 50 police broke back door and trampled into my home. Having entered our home, they chased my daughter. By holding her hand, they uttered

"Le Mundera neevella jackwell tava pada helake barirarlva Mundera”

Neenu santé maladalli halisina twaale takottavalle munde”
[Abusing and alleging Sannamma and her daughter for participating in Satyagraha in Vaddarahally Jackwell and falsely alleging Sannamma was selling jackfruits and gave them to police]

I was calling them for every time as sir. But I replied back to them ‘see... I don’t know anything, I have just sent my son to Bangalore through bus and have son who is sleeping here with illness. I have not offered you jack fruit also”. Then another started that I had a hotel. I told them ‘I do not own any hotel, why do you unnecessarily make allegations”? Police men were heavily drunken by the time they intruded into my home. They looted a bar in Bagur and drank heavily. They were not at all in a mood to listen what I say. But my actions became aggressive when one of the police men asked

“ Nin Magalanna Kalisthiyene Munde”? [Send your daughter with me?]

I replied to him with rash “Lo nan magane ningyaaru akka tangiryaru, appa ammandiru yaaru ilvenla? Yellig kalsanla? Karkandogla nan magne? Innodu sala ille ninthakandu ade matalidire, nin halludirsibittini kanla magne.(Do not you have sisters, mother and father? Where should I send her? If you utter the same words, I would break your tooth)

He then suddenly raised his lathi to hit me? I told him ‘you would bear the consequences if you hit me a single thrash’. ‘Have you been given a training of this sort?’. ‘Do not you have sisters?’ ‘I have kept ailing and dying son. Then by looking at my son, said “Is he dying? And by holding his collar he held him up. I had already spent around 50 thousand for my child’s health, though he was not cured, do not think you that I would get angry? I also held his collar and started pulling him in order to protect my child. As a result my son’s clothe was torn asunder. Then all of sudden another police man hit my hand with Lathi severely. Though I showed them all documents such as X-rays, medicine, doctor’s prescriptions of my son to convince them about the truth and my humble request that I had not participated in any such Satyagraha, strike went in vein. When I tried to protect my child from police men who
raised lathi, I received lathi blow on my hand, pain was severe. See I have
dying child and young daughter, things won’t be good, do not do. Then Police
Inspector y name Machaiah came to the scene by uttering very vulgar words
“Hidkoli ee mundeya” [Hold this bloody lady?] I replied back to him ‘Lo
naanu nin Hendthi alla kanla’[ I am not your wife to be held], ‘ I will see how
many you will come. ‘You destroyed my mixer grinder, damaged doors and
windows and our new TVS motor vehicle’. They alleged that I had hided
people in my house. I told them in beginning humbly. ‘I do not have hided
people here, we are only four members, my husband has gone to our field, and
my son is sleeping here with illness, my daughter and myself’. Take me
anywhere to prove your contention, but do not disturb my son and daughter.
They were not in a position to understand my words. But they destroyed my
Yeni mettilu [Ladder used inside home to go to upper portion of house]. I also
replied back to them very harshly when they were not in a position to heed.
Lathi was broken into two pieces when Machaiah then thrashed my hand by his
lathi. Then I suddenly pulled his collar and uttered ‘even my husband has not
beaten me up, how dare are you to beat me?’ Then another police man
thrashed into my backside [bennu] and it inflicted a severe pain in me even
though I was repeatedly telling them not to harm my daughter and ailing son.
But one policeman who seemed good appealed to Machaiah and others ‘
whether she has come for selling groundnuts or has she participated in
satyagraha by singing songs does not matter. She has been honestly denying
allegations and also she is showing all relevant documents, better we go’. He
took them away. But after few minutes, police gain came with a person called
Mahadeva who was operating floor machine. Police had asked him to show
them the house of Ningamma who offered police coffee and jackfruits. But
Mahadeva was tortured by police thrashes. Having not been able to bear the
pain of thrashes by police, he showed the home of Sannamma, instead of
Ningamma. Infact he could not hear the name of Ningamma uttered by police.
Police came to my house and arrested me. I requested them so helplessly. I told
them ‘I have not participated in protest, I am having sick child and daughter, I
won’t come. Even I have touched and held his foot’. ‘I have to take my son to Bangalore, what I have done? Though I frequently requested them, things went in vain. I have not had my breakfast, I had only coffee on that day. Finally they took me to police station. In police station, apart from me there were two ladies. One was a girl called Sudha from Gollarahosahally and Thimamma. I was mistaken as Ningamma, who offered coffee and jackfruits to police. She weaves the flowers in field beside temple.

They were not really police; they were rowdies in the dress of police. They always uttered bad and vulgar words wherever they entered into any house. They gave me food in police station, but refused to take. In mid night that is 12 am, they took me to Bus meant for carrying us to Bellary Jail. There were arrested people who exceeded more than two buses. They arrested whosoever police found on paths going to village. Before people were taken to bus, two police men hit their knees from both sides severely. One police man uttered ‘even these ladies also deserved the same treatment’. I replied back very strongly “let me see come, come, hit me, what mistake have we committed?” Meanwhile a lady police of my age told them not to manhandle women. Later they asked to sit in bus, we refused. Quiet later, they took us three in a jeep to Hassan jail. It was 3am early morning. While going to Hassan, they stopped near a night hotel and one of the police men repeatedly requested me to drink coffee, by saying “Iam also like your son, we won’t give you any trouble” I clearly refused to have as it. I said, “I won’t drink coffee, not even cup of water, though you pester me, first tell me what mistake I have done?” “I was cleaning Ragi, why did you bring me here? What mistake have I done?” When we reached district jail center in Hassan, Jail superintendent scolded and admonished police men for having brought women in wee hours. He asked them “if people have participated in protest movement, doest it mean that all people have participated in it?” “This lady is shouting before reaching the jail premises that I have not done anything, don’t send me anywhere. She is screaming a lot since Channarayapatna; won’t you feel ashamed to bring her here?” Jail
superintendent without any paths sent us to a prison consisted of 30 other ladies. It was 3 am. At 5 am they sent coffee for us, I once again refused and urged them to tell me what mistake I have done? In morning Jail superintendent sent us tiffen, but I refused again to have it. Jail superintendent was very much kind and requested me to have it. He seemed elder to me and like fatherly person and I was told he was on the verge of retirement. He came and asked me the details and I narrated the entire story to him. He consoled me “all you are bothered is about your child’s health, I will arrange for treatment of your child, now please take tiffen”, he told. I again made my stand very much clear whatever you request me, sir please first tell me what was the mistake I did. I sent my son in bus in front of sub-inspector [respondent is weeping recollecting her sad and phobic memories]. I did not wash even my face for three days in jail. My son came to know that I was arrested and sent to jail by police through newspaper. Also photo of we three women appeared in newspaper. He immediately came back to native and though he came to Hassan three days continuously along with advocate and friend was not able to find me. They visited Mysore Jail and Bellary jail. Finally he contacted a strong advocate by providing him heavy amount, detected that I was in Hassan jail. He also bribed police of Channarayapattna to know my whereabouts. He entered into jail premises and I did not go. Then Jail superintendent came to me and requested me “please, go and see your child has come”. When my son saw me, he started weeping screamingly by tightly holding me [respondent is becoming deeply emotional... she pauses and says “that is why I won’t say anything about this”] Jail superintendent and others consoled him by saying “your mother has not made any murder or any crime, she has been brought here without any reason, please console yourself, I learnt it from your mother and others, we will release her don’t worry, you go now”. Then my son [his name is Satish] contacted lawyer, Murali, from Bagur. He created in him confidence and told not to worry. My son has arranged 25 thousand rupees within ten days to release me as early as possible. He has preserved that money for the treatment of his brother. He had given me to bring when I had to got to
Bangalore. Luckily the money was not lost when police attacked our house. I belief since it was hard earned money, we did not loose it. But how could they release me alone? I languished in prison for 10 days. After 10 days, H.C. Shrikantaiah and Maruvanahally Range Gowda released us by furnishing bail. Non one came who were behind this violence. Deve Gowda’s son was chiefly responsible for this violence, they organized and sponsored this. After releasing us, H.C. Shrikantaiah and Maruvanahally Range Gowda went to Bellary and released 60-70 people who were jailed. Later all of us were produced in court. For 2 years we were made to appear and approach in court hearings and we incurred expenses on our own pocket. After two years due to Shrikantaiah’s efforts cases on us were removed. No leader from Janatha Dal would have come had we decayed in jail.

Many people including persons from Human rights commission approached me. Police looted shops and house in Bagur. They had drunken alcohol and ate meat in deserted houses. They destroyed my table costing more than three thousand, color TV, Radio,mixer grinder, doors, books motor bike, which recently purchased. Police threw our motor bike outside and remained there outside. When rain started, I was told, one police constable kept inside the home. They threw huge stones one by one on bike like thugs and as a result it was heavily damaged. Though we work as labourers, we acquired these by our hard earned money. Imagine what would be the price of color TV then?

My two children were frightened and did not go outside the home. Doctor in my absence every day provided tiffen and food to y children and he has owed back to me.

I along with my children went to my elder daughter’s home in Hassan and locked my house in Bagur. I stayed for a month in Hassan. Later I decided to come to Bagur as it won’t be good. Jail superintendent cautioned our children to take care of me. “Your mother is under extreme guilt of being beaten by police without any mistakes, she is in deep agony and pain. You have to take
care of her and watch her continuously or else she would commit suicide". Our children took promise, by touching my hands, from me that I won’t do any such things in their absence and also they told me if I do such things, they would also commit suicide and come with her. My son Satish infact did not go to Bangalore for two years and stayed with me.

I am fed up with persons who came to know these, as they came with different intentions and some of them were from press. It is an embarrassing to come in TV and on next day others asking me ‘you have come in TV..!! How shall I take it granted that only genuine aspects are covered? Police emptied my home. I feel very much sad in telling all these... But Jail superintendent really took care of us very well. They did not give me a single problem. They provided hot water for bath and drinking, special care they provided by good food. I was told Human rights commission would provide compensation, but the compensation they provided was meager, 10000 rupees, it won’t match even to the extent of petrol expenditure my son spent for getting me released. What is the use of compensation?

I feel severe ill while I was in Jail and police took me to hospital through their jeep. But when I saw other patients getting injection, I told police “I do not need any injection or medicine; just send me to my home”. But jail superintendent arranged a doctor who for one month regularly visisted me when I stayed in my daughter’s home in Hassan. Later my elder daughter stayed with me in Bagur for one month. Now we have got our two daughters married, one son is in Bangalore and another is with me. Inspector general Muniswamy has enquired about my conditions in person. Even I have not seen where is Jackwell, a place where people and leaders of the movement carried out 90 days Satyagraha, I am innocent. I have husband and child, both of their health was not good, even under such difficult conditions, I underwent harassment by police. Iam getting aged, when I wash many clothes, I will get severe pain in my hand. That is due to police thrashes. But Machaiah who thrashed me so inhumanly has reaped the consequences: even before coming
out of prison from Hassan, machaiah's son absconded from home; he went out of the home without having food like how I was taken out of home when I did not have even breakfast. I have decided not to share this horrific experiences with anyone though I lost nearly 1.5 lakhs worth assets, as I won't fetch anything...I have talked all these as you have told me that you are not either journalist or TV journalist”

Narration of her experience show the extent of phobia created in the innocent minds
End Notes

1 Kala Jaatha refers to create, intensifying or sustaining awareness through songs, stree plays and maim.

2 We just used adverb 'mercilessly' as used by leaders. In fact, all respondents and even National Human Rights Commission underscore the brutality of force.

3 Golibar is a method used by police to quell and control the frenzy mob by shooting at people without target.

4 AIKS is a peasant wing of CPI, which we have already quoted in main text of this chapter.