The **2018 Bhima Koregaon violence** refers to violence during an annual celebratory gathering on 1 January 2018 at [Bhima Koregaon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koregaon_Bhima) to mark the 200th anniversary of the [Battle of Bhima Koregaon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Koregaon).[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence#cite_note-auto-1) The violence and stone pelting by anti-social elements on the gathering resulted in death of one person and injury to several others. The annual celebration also called [Elgar Parishad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shaniwarwada_Elgar_Parishad) convention was organised by retired justices B.G Kolte-Patil and [P. B. Sawant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/P._B._Sawant).[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence#cite_note-FL-4) Justice P. B. Sawant claimed that the term "Elgar" meant loud invitation or loud declaration.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence#cite_note-Scroll-5)

Police investigation into the incident led to the arrest of several activists who they alleged had "Maoist links". The police alleged that they funded the Elgar Parishad meeting on December 31, 2017, where inflammatory speeches were made, according to police, leading to the violence.

## Historical Background[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence&action=edit&section=1)]

### Battle of Koregaon[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence&action=edit&section=2)]

The 1818 [Battle of Koregaon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Koregaon) is of importance for Dalits.

The **Battle of Koregaon** (also called the Battle of Koregaon Bhima) was fought on 1 January 1818 between the [British East India Company](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_East_India_Company) and the [Peshwa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peshwa) faction of the [Maratha empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maratha_Confederacy), at [Koregaon Bhima](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koregaon_Bhima).

A 28,000-strong force led by Peshwa [Baji Rao II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baji_Rao_II" \o "Baji Rao II) whilst on their way to attack the company-held [Pune](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pune), were unexpectedly met by an 800-strong Company force that was on its way to reinforce the British troops in Pune. The Peshwa dispatched around 2,000 soldiers to attack the force which sought entrenchment in Koregaon. Led by Captain Francis Staunton, the Company troops defended their position for nearly 12 hours, before the Peshwa's troops ultimately withdrew, fearing the imminent arrival of a larger British force.

The battle was part of the [Third Anglo Maratha war](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third_Anglo-Maratha_War), a series of battles that culminated in the defeat of the Maratha empire and subsequent rule of the British East India Company in nearly all of Western, Central and Southern India.

A victory pillar (*Vijay Sthamb*) was erected in Koregaon by the British, commemorating the dead soldiers. In 1928, [B. R. Ambedkar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B._R._Ambedkar) led the first commemoration ceremony here. Since then, on 1 January every year, Ambedkarite Dalits gather at Bhima Koregaon to celebrate their victory against the upper caste [Peshwa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peshwa) regime of the [Maratha Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maratha_Empire).

### Vadhu Budruk trigger[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence&action=edit&section=3)]

According to legend, Aurangzeb killed and mutilated [Sambhaji](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sambhaji" \o "Sambhaji) Maharaj in 1689. Govind Gaikwad from Mahar community, from [Vadhu Budruk](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vadhu_Budruk" \o "Vadhu Budruk) (a village near Bhima Koregaon) collected the body parts and organised the last rites. The memorial for Sambhaji Maharaj is said to have been constructed by the Dalit Mahars of that village. Soon after the death, Govind Mahar’s tomb was constructed in the village after his death, But Marathas refused to accept the role played by Govind Gaikwad and other Mahars in the last rites of Sambhaji Maharaj. For this reason there were increasingly vocal about it in the days prior to the January violence at Bhima Koregaon in 2018. They had specific objection to a sign at the site that acknowledged the contributions of the Mahars.

## January 2018 events[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence&action=edit&section=4)]

Prior to the commemoration, about 250 Dalit and Bahujan groups got together under the banner of "[Elgar Parishad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shaniwarwada_Elgar_Parishad) and organised a conference at [Shaniwar Wada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shaniwar_Wada" \o "Shaniwar Wada) in [Pune](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pune), the erstwhile seat of the Peshwas. The speakers included two retired judges and [Jignesh Mevani](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jignesh_Mevani), a newly elected member of the [Gujarat Legislative Assembly](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gujarat_Legislative_Assembly).

The equating of Hindutva with the Peshwas is said to have annoyed the Hindu groups.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence#cite_note-News18-6)

On January 1, like every year, [lakhs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lakh) of Dalits poured into Bhima Koregaon. The commemoration has a record of being conducted peacefully and the village’s residents have a history of social harmony. But this year, tensions had begun to build in a neighbouring village over the question of which community had conducted the last rites of Maratha ruler Sambhaji – the [Mahars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahar" \o "Mahar) or the [Marathas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maratha). The [panchayat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panchayati_raj) of Bhima Koregaon issued a notice asking residents to boycott the event by calling for all shops to remain shut that day.[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence#cite_note-auto1-12)

To protest the violence, dalit rights groups staged road blocks and demonstrations across Maharashtra.[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence#cite_note-:1-13) Violence was reported across Pune. A 16-year-old boy was killed during the protest, with the family alleging injuries sustained by police caning.[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence#cite_note-14) A [Maharashtra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maharashtra) [bandh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bandh) was called by [Prakash Ambedkar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prakash_Ambedkar) on 3 January 2018. The aftermath consisted of various protests across [Maharashtra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maharashtra) resulting in 30 policemen being injured and over 300 people being detained. [[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence#cite_note-15) Protests were staged all over Maharashtra. In [Mumbai](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mumbai), [suburban trains](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mumbai_Suburban_Railway) were affected due to which [Dabbawalas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dabbawala" \o "Dabbawala) suspended their services.[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence#cite_note-16)

## Aftermath[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence&action=edit&section=5)]

On 2 January 2018, a FIR was filed against [Sambhaji Bhide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sambhaji_Bhide" \o "Sambhaji Bhide) and [Milind Ekbote](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milind_Ekbote) for instigating violence on Dalits.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence#cite_note-17) In February 2018, the [Supreme Court](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supreme_Court_of_India) criticised the State government and probe agencies for the slow progress in their probe against Milind Ekbote, questioning the agencies’ claims that he was allegedly ‘untraceable’. [Chief minister](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_chief_ministers_of_Maharashtra), [Devendra Fadnavis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devendra_Fadnavis) said in the state assembly that the police had raided all hotels and lodges in [Pune](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pune) and [Kolhapur](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kolhapur) in search of Ekbote, conducted combing operations, detained his followers and examined more than 100 call records but failed to locate him.[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence#cite_note-18) On 14 March 2018, the district rural police of Pune arrested Milind Ekbote. The Supreme Court cancelled his interim bail plea after he did not cooperate with the probe agencies despite five summons for interrogation and refused to hand over his mobile phone.[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence#cite_note-19)[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence#cite_note-20) On 22 April 2018, a nineteen-year-old dalit witness, whose house was burnt in the violence, was found dead in a well. Her family alleged that she was under intense pressure to withdraw her statement.[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence#cite_note-21) Her brother, Jaideep, also a witness, had been arrested by Pune Rural Police on charges of attempt to murder.[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence#cite_note-22)

In 2020, once the case was handed over to the NIA, several arrests were made, along with the release of a 10,000 page chargesheet naming people and connections to the banned terrorist organisation CPI(Maoist). Investigation by the police in the following months resulted in various arrests, such as that of [Rona Wilson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rona_Wilson) (the public relations secretary of the Committee for Release of Political Prisoners (CRPP) in June 2018 under [Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unlawful_Activities_(Prevention)_Act).[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence#cite_note-:2-23) In August 2018 five activists, including [Varavara Rao](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Varavara_Rao" \o "Varavara Rao), [Arun Ferreira](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arun_Ferreira), [Sudha Bharadwaj](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sudha_Bharadwaj) and [Gautam Navlakha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gautam_Navlakha), were picked up in simultaneous raids across the country, the police alleged that the activists had ties to [Maoists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maoists_in_India), apart from links to the Bhima Koregaon incident.[[24]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence#cite_note-24)

On January 22 2020, the newly elected Maharashtra government ordered a probe into the matter, further considering constituting a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to look into the investigation.[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence#cite_note-25) On January 25 2020, the [NIA](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Investigation_Agency), a central agency governed by the [Union Ministry of Home Affairs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Home_Affairs_(India)), took over the case from the Maharashtra government. Maharashtra Home Minister [Anil Deshmukh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anil_Deshmukh), accused the Union Government of not taking the State's consent before taking over the case.[[26]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence#cite_note-26)

In October 2020, the [National Investigation Agency](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Investigation_Agency) released a 10,000 page [chargesheet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chargesheet" \o "Chargesheet) regarding the incident with fresh names, including Stan Swamy, a [Jesuit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesuit) priest[[27]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence#cite_note-27) who the [NIA](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Investigation_Agency) accused of conspiring to bring together Dalit and Muslim forces to take on what he referred to as the “[fascist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fascism) government” at the Centre. The NIA also accused him of being connected to the banned [left-wing terrorist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Left-wing_terrorism) organisation, [CPI (Maoist)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_Party_of_India_(Maoist)).[[28]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Bhima_Koregaon_violence#cite_note-28)