



MARSHAL LAW & FOUR MARTYRS IN SOLAPUR

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Abstract:

Sholapur City is the headquarters of Sholapur District in Maharashtra State. It is situated in lat 17o40'18" N and long 75o56'38" E. The Political History of Sholapur till 1818 in nothing but the history of its fort. After 1818 Sholapur was included in the Poona Collectorate. Sholapur was situated on the great commercial routes of the Middle Ages connecting Maharashtra, Karnataka and Hyderabad. 1 Sholapur was a sort of an interstate area where men of peaceful pursuits have flocked and followed their occupations little influenced by political events.

KEY WORDS:

Marshal Law, Political History, Poona Collectorate.

INTRODUCTION

Right up to 1920 the educated class of Sholapur usually adopted a middle of the road policy and followed it without fear or favour some inclining more towards Gokhale than towards Tilak. Mallappa Warad, Rao Bahadur Sathe, Rao Bahadur Mule, Dr. Kirloskar and Rambhau Sane a Pleader of Barsi were some of the leaders of political thinking towards the moderates. After 1920 Gandhiji came on the scene and the Political atmosphere of the whole country with Sholapur of course as its part became surcharged with the Gandhian Spirit.² But it was not till Gandhi initiated his salt satyagraha movement in 1930 that Sholapur came to be permanently marked on the political map of India. When the British Government in India enhanced the land revenue and salt tax, the Congress got a good cause for resisting the Government. The Congress Working Committee vested Mahatma Gandhi with full power to launch Civil Disobedience Movement at a time and place of his choice. Gandhiji rightly decided that he would first defy the salt laws. On 12th March 1930 Gandhiji set out on a march which had no parallel in the history of mankind. Though the Government of Bombay was eager to arrest Gandhiji. Lord Irwin advised the Government of Bombay not to do it. On 6th April 1930 Gandhiji collected salt from the sea and appealed to the people of India to celebrate the week from 6th April to 13th April 1930 as the national week and follow the programme of the Civil disobedience Movement during the week. The people responded enthusiastically to his call. On 4th May 1930 while Gandhiji was still asleep in his hut he was arrested at 0.45 a.m. to forestall Hartal on 5th May 1930. Gandhiji arrest was followed by spontaneous demonstrations through the country.

On 6th May 1930 there was Hartal in Sholapur city on account of Gandhi's arrest. On 7th May there were disturbances arising out of attempts made by certain persons to induce the men of two of the mills in Sholapur which were open that day to stop work. The police who went to the place to maintain order were stoned. On the same day crowd attacked some of the toddy shops in the city and attempted to burn their contents. They were dispersed by the police. On the morning of the following day the 8th of May the police received information that 200 men had gone out with oxes and ropes to cut down and burn toddy trees on the Ekruk road. The District Magistrate and the District Superintendent of Police with a party of armed constables, proceeded to the scene. They found some toddy barrels burning. Nine men were arrested

and were being taken in the police lorries towards the city when they were stopped by a large crowd estimated at about 5000. The police were attacked and being threatened with envelopment had to open fire. The magistrate and the police party extricated themselves with difficulty. Thereupon the crowd now reinforced marched on the Manglwar Peth Police Station where a small force of unarmed police was stationed. They broke into the police station, dragged out a Head Constable Dada Jafar and constable Chand Allaudin and beat them to death. The former was killed on the spot and his body; partially burnt. The latter was mortally injured and died immediately after admission to hospital.⁴

After the inhuman and unnecessary firing all the policemen and the officials left the city. Shri. Ramkrishna Jagu the leader of the Congress provided volunteers to watch the city on the 8th 9th and 10th of May, 1930.⁵

This Sholapur achieved Freedom before 17 years, 2 months and 25 days in India.

Shri. Mallappa Dhanshetti, Shri. Kisan Sarda, Shri. Jagannath Shinde and Shri. Kurban Hussain were tried before the Additional Session Judge Sholapur with the aid of three assessors. All the assessors were unanimous in finding the accused guilty of rioting armed with deadly weapons, whilst one assessor also found accused Shri. Mallappa Dhanshetti guilty of murder. The Additional Session Judge sentenced all the four accused to death for murder.

On appeal to the High Court the case was heard by the Chief Justice and Madgavkar J. The former upheld the Trial Court's finding whilst the later concurred as regards accused Mallappa Dhanshetti but was prepared to allow the appeal of the other three. The case was accordingly referred to third Judge who agreeing with the Chief Justice and Additional Judge confirmed the convictions and sentences of death and dismissed the appeals. All the four accused then applied to the Privy Council for leave to appeal but the Privy Council rejected their applications.⁶

MARTIAL LAW IN SHOLAPUR :

On 9th May 1930 the collector Mr. H.F. Knight established a peace committee and appointed some special magistrates. But it did not function properly and try to establish peace. The atmosphere in the city was charged with fear and suspicious. An important officials like the collector and the D.S.P. had proceeded on leave, the civil administration in the city had virtually collapsed. Sholapur city was actually brought under Martial Law administration from 12th May 1930. On 15th May the Viceroy issued a special ordinance and Sholapur was brought under Martial Law. Martial Law was withdrawn on 30th June 1930 at midnight.

FOUR MARTYRS OF SHOLAPUR :

Shri. Maalappa Dhanshetti, Shri. Kisan Sarda, Shri. Jagannath Shinde and Shri. Kurban Hussain are known to be great martyrs of Sholapur in Freedom Movement of India. Of the four martyrs of Sholapur only Dhanshetti, Shinde and Kurban Hussain were active political leaders and social workers. ⁸ Sarda was a rich merchant of Sholapur.

1.Mallappa Dhanshetti :

Mallappa Dhanshetti was born in 1898. He was working as a munim or clerk in the firm of Pandharkar. Known as the leader of Hindus he had taken active part in Hindu-Muslim riots of 1925, 1927. He was interested in participation in the religious festivals of the Hindus and the 'Kathi procession'. He was first arrested under the charge of murder during Hindu-Muslim riots in 1927 but was discharged in the Court of Law. Muslim leader Imam Saheb was very jealous of Dhanshetti as he was Prominent Hindu Leader. Imam Saheb having nursed a feeling of ill-will against Dhanshetti for year together was waiting for a suitable opportunity which he got in Martial Law situation.

On 8th May 1930 there was a terrible riot near Rupa Bhavani. The people were cutting toddy trees. When the police tried to obstruct them, the people started throwing stones at the police. Mallappa played a prominent part in the incidents that took place on 8th May 1930 in the vicinity of the temple or Rupa Bhavani. Hostility of Imam Saheb may explain how Mallappa came to be implicated in the case of rioting and murder of policemen of the Mangalwarpeth Police Chowky.

2.Shri Kisan Sarda :

Sarda was born in 1893. He belong to the Marwari community. He was a rich Merchant of Sholapur. He was proud of Hindu religion. On 13th May he was first arrested under Martial Law

regulations and was sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs. Five Thousand. Later on he was held guilty of murdering the policemen and was hanged on 12th January 1931 in Yervada Jail.

3. Shri Jagannath Shinde :

Shinde was born in 1906. He was known as the leader of youth and workers of Sholapur. Dr. Antrolikar and Shri. Shinde had established a "Youth League" in Sholapur. Shri. Shinde was the Secretary of the "Youth League". Shri Shinde was a very powerful orator and sincere worker. He used to explain current politics in simple effective language. He was implicated in the police murder along with Sarda and Hussain and was hanged on 12th Jan. 1931. He was first arrested on 13th May under Martial Law regulation and sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs. Two Thousand. He told that as there was Martial Law he could not produce his witnesses before the Court. But the Court did not accept this statement.

FOUR MARTYRS OF SHOLAPUR

Jagannath Shinde

Kurban Hussain

Kisan Sarda

Mallappa Dhanshetti

4. Shri. Kurban Hussain :

Hussain born in 1910. He was regarded as the faithful followers of Dr. Antrolikar. Hussain was also secretary of "Youth League." He was fearless and powerful orator. He strongly advocated Hindu-Muslim unity. He was the editor of a weekly called 'Ghazanfar meaning lion'. He was first arrested on 14th 1930 under Martial Law regulations. He was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment and a fine Rs. Two Thousand was imposed on him. After his arrest all the issues of 'Ghazanfar', were taken to his native place and burnt out of fear. He was 21 years old when he was hanged.⁹

All these martyrs never apologized to the Government in order to free themselves and save their lives. The execution of the Sholapur patriots produced serious and widespread reaction in the country. Huge processions were organized in different parts of the land. Complete Hartal was observed on 12th Jan. 1931 in many cities including Sholapur. The houses of many leaders were raided. The citizens of Sholapur had to suffer the loss of property worth Rs. 13 crores. Sholapur had to face an irreparable loss with the death of these martyrs. Dhanshetti and Sarda also confronted the ineluctable moment of their death in an ultimately triumphant spirit of patriotism, sacrifice and courage. It is a measure not only of the glory of the local history of Sholapur but also of the quality of our Freedom Struggle that none of the Martyrs tried to save himself by becoming an approver. They made their choice in favour of the national cause.

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