



Original Article

# Solapur's Three-Day Independence and Martial Law of 1930: A Socio-Historical Reinterpretation of Local Resistance in the Indian Freedom Movement

Dr. Prabhakar Nagnath Kolekar<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Kishor Nagnath Jogdand<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor, Department of AIHC & A Punyashlok Ahilyadevi Holkar Solapur University, Solapur

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Vasundhara Kala Mahavidhyalaya Solapur

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**Correspondence Address:**

Dr. Prabhakar Nagnath Kolekar  
Associate Professor, Department of  
AIHC & A Punyashlok Ahilyadevi  
Holkar Solapur University, Solapur  
Email: [prabhakarkolekar@gmail.com](mailto:prabhakarkolekar@gmail.com)



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## Abstract

The current research paper discusses the historic incident of the three-day local independence of Solapur and the Martial Law in 1930 as an important local manifestation of the Indian Civil Disobedience Movement. Solapur holds a special status in the Indian freedom movement since the city experienced stiff opposition in the form of popular action following the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi in May 1930. The reaction at Solapur was not restricted to political leadership or official Congress workers, but that of textile workers, traders, youth, students, volunteers and ordinary citizens. They shut down mills and markets, held processions, public displays of nationalist symbols and tried to keep civic order through the efforts of local volunteers. This momentary claim of power of people is remembered as the three days independence of Solapur. The British colonial government retaliated by brutally suppressing and imposing Martial Law. The hanging of Jagannath Shinde, Mallappa Dhanshetty, Kisan Sarada and Kurban Hussain transformed Solapur into a strong symbol of martyrdom of the Indian freedom movement. This paper believes that the events of 1930 cannot be explained solely by disorder, violence or administrative crisis. They should be examined as a people-focused, society-based and locally based manifestation of anti-colonialism. It follows a socio-historical and alternative historiographical approach relying on Solapur-focused historical literature, Martial Law narratives, newspaper reports and local memory. It draws the conclusion that the experience of Solapur in 1930 is a unique case when the national concept of swaraj, satyagraha and civil disobedience were turned into local action, civic assertion and mass resistance. **Keywords:** Solapur, three day independence, Martial Law, Civil Disobedience Movement, four martyrs, local history, social history, freedom movement.

**Keywords:** Solapur, Three-Day Independence, Martial Law 1930, Civil Disobedience Movement, Indian Freedom Movement, Local Resistance, Social History, Anti-Colonialism, Four Martyrs of Solapur, Nationalism, Working-Class Movement, Satyagraha, Swaraj, Local Historiography, Mass Mobilization

## Introduction

The Indian freedom movement was not simply a national political struggle against British colonialism but also an extensive social movement which had its roots in local societies. Although the all-India story of the struggle of freedom puts emphasis on national leaders, Congress movements, constitutional developments and mass agitations of large numbers, the real strength of the movement was the people in towns, villages, mills, markets, schools and households. Of particular importance is the case of Solapur. Solapur was not just a district which answered the national calls; it grew its own powerful variant of local action in the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930. The outstanding event in the freedom struggle of Solapur was the three days independence of May 1930. The anger of the people was high in the city after the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi. Textile mills and markets were shut down, processions were formed, meetings of the people were held, the national flag was used as a main emblem, local volunteers were trying to keep order in the city. This was considered by the British administration as a big threat to colonial rule and they declared Martial Law.

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The Solapur trial and execution of Jagannath Shinde, Mallappa Dhanshetty, Kisan Sarada and Kurban Hussain earned the city of Solapur a name in the annals of the Indian freedom movement. The present paper studies this episode from a socio-historical perspective. It argues that the Solapur uprising of 1930 should not be studied only as an administrative disturbance or a violent local reaction. It must be understood as a mass political expression shaped by local society. The uploaded thesis draft clearly presents Solapur's freedom movement as a people-oriented historical process involving workers, women, youth, students, peasants, traders, local leaders, journalists, volunteers and neglected participants.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objectives of this paper are:

1. To examine the background of Solapur's participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930.
2. To analyse the causes and nature of the three-day independence of Solapur.
3. To study the imposition of Martial Law and the British response to local resistance.
4. To understand the role of workers, youth, traders and common people in the 1930 events.
5. To reinterpret the four martyrs of Solapur within the wider social base of the movement.
6. To explain the historical significance of Solapur's 1930 movement in the Indian freedom struggle.

### **Research Methodology**

The article uses historical, analytical and socio-historical approach. The work is grounded in secondary literature, local historical literature and research theses, as well as, the broader conceptual understanding of social history. Relevant materials like the work of Paralkar on Sholapur Under Martial Law, that of Jangam on the freedom movement in the Solapur district, Ranawans on the history of Solapur, Andurkar on Martial Law and the four martyrs, and Lokhandes research on the Solapur newspapers are valuable in the reconstruction of the events of 1930.

Another approach to historiography taken in the paper is also alternative. It does not accept the colonial records as part of neutral descriptions but rather interprets them critically. The British documents tended to state that protesters were rioters, law-breakers or criminals. But in terms of nationalism and socio-historical perspective, such acts were a form of popular resentment, anti-colonial awareness and the aspiration to be self-determined. Thus, the paper does not limit itself to the official events but also to the place of workers, ordinary people and local memory.

### **Historical Background of Solapur's Political Awakening**

The good response of Solapur in 1930 did not come out of the blue. It was the outcome of a protracted awakening of politics. Solapur emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as a significant urban centre within the Bombay Presidency. Its position bridged Maharashtra and Karnataka and southern India. Its railroads connected it to Bombay, Pune, Marathwada and the south. These links contributed to the movement of human beings, merchandise, newspapers, political literature and nationalistic ideas. Solapur is another textile centre developed. The large population of working-class and its mills made it known as Girangaon and Kamgarnagari.

The conditions of shared labour prevailed over textile workers and eventually, they grew to have a collective identity. Labour consciousness was created by long hours of work, low wages, insecurity and factory discipline. This labour consciousness was later to combine with the nationalist consciousness. There was also an active public sphere in the city. A culture of public discussion was established through early organisations like Solapur Sarvajanic Sabha, Solapur Union Club and Solapur Parliament. Political awareness was spread with the help of newspapers like Kalpataru, Anandvrutta, Solapur Samachar, Gaznfar and Karmayogi. By 1930, when Gandhi organized the mass movements, Solapur had already formed a society that could react to the nationalist appeals.

### **Civil Disobedience Movement and Solapur**

The Civil Disobedience Movement began with Gandhi's Salt March in 1930. Although Solapur was not a coastal region, the spirit of Salt Satyagraha reached the city. Local activists adapted the idea of civil disobedience to local conditions. Symbolic salt preparation, auction of salt packets, flag satyagraha, public meetings and hartals became local forms of participation.

The national flag became one of the most powerful symbols of the movement in Solapur. The hoisting of the flag on Solapur Municipality gave the movement a civic and symbolic dimension. The municipality was not merely an administrative building; it became a public space of nationalist assertion. The flag represented swaraj, public dignity and anti-colonial courage. The British administration feared such symbols because they united people emotionally and politically.

### **Gandhi's Arrest and Public Reaction in Solapur**

The 5 May 1930 arrest of Mahatma Gandhi aroused a lot of anger in India. The reaction was particularly acute at Solapur. The city reacted to it with hartals, mass meetings, mobilisation of workers and processions. Mill-gates were shut, markets were closed, and the common people out in the streets. This reaction indicates that the nationalistic awareness had already penetrated the greater social depth of the city. Of particular importance was the involvement of textile workers. The workers put down their work and this interfered with the economic life of the city. The movement ceased to be restricted to speeches and political resolutions. It manifested itself in the industrial life, in the market life and in the spaces. Hartals were also encouraged by traders and youth and volunteers assisted in arranging processions and activities of the people. This outpouring testifies that Solapur was not a passive nationalist. The public did not just show sympathy towards Gandhi. They turned his arrest into local opposition. In this respect Solapur emerged as one of the strongest examples of localised Civil Disobedience.

### **Three-Day Independence of Solapur**

The three-day independence of Solapur is the most remarkable event in the city's freedom movement. During this short period, British authority temporarily weakened and local volunteers attempted to maintain order in the city. This was not formal independence in a constitutional sense, but it was a powerful symbolic assertion of people's authority.

The significance of this event lies in the practical attempt to experience swaraj. The people of Solapur did not understand swaraj only as a distant political ideal. Through public discipline, volunteer activity and control of civic spaces, they tried to give local form to self-rule. This makes the event unique in the history of local freedom movements.

The three-day independence also shows the connection between nationalism and civic responsibility. Volunteers attempted to regulate public life, protect order and maintain discipline. Therefore, the event should not be dismissed as disorder. It was an attempt by local society to imagine and practise self-rule.

### **Imposition of Martial Law**

The British rule considered the resistance of Solapur as a major threat. The case of Martial Law was introduced to regain colonial power. Arrests, trials and punishments ensued by military control. The fact that they used the Martial Law indicates that the British government felt that the situation in Solapur was unusual. Martial Law was a social experience, it was not merely an administrative measure. It impacted on workers, families, traders, women, youth and ordinary citizens. It caused fear and suffering and it also reinforced the recollection of resistance. The control over the public spaces ensued, nationalistic symbols were suppressed, and individuals were suppressed harshly. It was particularly important that the national flag was forbidden. It demonstrates that the British state realized the emotional strength of symbols. The flag had turned into an emblem of unity of people. Through its repression, the colonial state tried to undermine the morale of nationalism. Nevertheless, repression made Solapur stronger in the minds of the people.

### **The Four Martyrs of Solapur**

The hanging of Jagannath Shinde, Mallappa Dhanshetty, Kisan Sarada and Kurban Hussain turned out to be the icon of the Solapur freedom movement. They are known as the four martyrs of Solapur. Their martyrdom earned the city an everlasting identity within the national movement. Jagannath Shinde is the embodiment of the courage of the young people and ordinary people. Mallappa Dhanshetty symbolizes house-hold leadership and people dedication. Kisan Sarada is an indication of the involvement of the common people in anti-colonial movement. Kurban Hussain is a symbol of nationalist communication and Hindu-Muslim unity, since he was also a journalist.

The martyrdom of Kurban Hussain and Hindu martyrs is a historical importance. It illustrates the uncompromising nature of the nationalism of Solapur. The movement of freedom established inter-religious unity and developed a civic identity. Nevertheless, the four martyrs are not to be studied separately. Their martyrdom had meaning since they were supported by a great movement of people. It was employees, merchants, students, women, volunteers and common people who made the ambiance of opposition where martyrdom was used as a symbol of civic strength.

### **Role of Workers and Common People**

Without the role of workers, the 1930 events are not comprehensible. The workers in Solapur who were textile workers provided the mass strength to the movement. Their involvement in hartals and protests made the Civil Disobedience Movement a working-class and city-wide movement. Workers related freedom to dignity, rights and opposition to exploitation. Their involvement indicates that nationalism in Solapur possessed a socio-economic aspect. It was both the political fight against foreign occupation, and it was also related to the life of working people.

Ordinary citizens also had a key role to play. They participated in processions, meetings, shop closures, flag carrying, message dissemination, sheltering and repression acceptance. Their involvement shows that the movement was social based. The history of Solapur that talks only of leaders and martyrs cannot give the full picture of the strength of the uprising.

### **Shankar Shivdare and Neglected Sacrifices**

The names of minor players in the 1930 movement in Solapur need to be added to the history of the movement. He was death shot as he bore the tricolour, and his martyrdom is representative of the spirit of youth and common men. But his work has not had such attention as the four martyrs have. This shows the constraints of traditional historical memory. Others are recalled due to recording of their cases into official record, trial or national commemoration. Some are in the memory of the mouth, family history and local tales.

These forgotten sacrifices should be reclaimed in a socio-historical approach. Also worthy of mention are the anonymous protesters, injured individuals, volunteers, workers and women protesters. Their input played a crucial role in keeping the movement alive. Solapur history has to be thus expanded out of martyr-centred history to people-centred history.

### **Historical Significance of Solapur's 1930 Movement**

There are multiple layers of significance to the 1930 events in Solapur. To start with, they demonstrate the local strength of the Civil Disobedience Movement. The national ideas were not meaningless since they were turned into action by the local people. Second, the three-day independence demonstrated that individuals were able not only to dream of self-rule but also to seek to practise it. Third, the Martial Law was used to demonstrate the seriousness with which the British treated the resistance in Solapur.

Fourth, the martyrdom of the four martyrs left a long term memory among the people of the martyrdom of sacrificial martyrs. The significance of the industrial society in the city in the movement of freedom is also presented through the episode. Workers of Solapur were not mere spectators. They were participants. Their role relates labour history to nationalist history. The

occurrence also indicates the significance of symbols. The national flag, mass rallies, hartal and urban areas turned out to be effective forms of resistance. The war was not only waged using arms or official politics, but symbolic and civic efforts.

### **Conclusion**

The three days of independence of Solapur and the Martial Law of 1930 hold a special place in the history of the freedom movement in India. It was not just a local unrest or a governmental crisis. It was a strong articulation of an anti-colonial consciousness based on local society. Gandhi was arrested, but the activists of Solapur turned this event into a mass action. Mill closure, hartals on the part of traders, youth processions, attempts at order keeping by volunteers, and entry into the world of the ordinary citizen, were all part of the workers shutting down mills, traders joining hartals, youth processions, volunteers trying to keep the order and ordinary citizens entering the life of the people.

Solapur was of national significance by the imposition of Martial Law and the four martyrs were executed. The entire significance of the event, however, could be arrived at only when it is contextualized within the broader social foundation of the movement. The four martyrs were an example of a greater struggle of the people. Other participants in this history were Shankar Shivdare, unknown protesters, workers, women, students and volunteers. As such, the 1930 movement in Solapur needs to be viewed in terms of social history and alternative historiography. It was a movement of the people, a mobilisation of the working classes, a civic claim to swaraj and a strength of regional input into the Indian freedom struggle.

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### **Conflicts of interest**

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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