

CHAPTER VI
DISTRICT SHOLAPUR

North Sholapur

The State of Mysore for the first time laid claim to the taluka of North Sholapur, in its statement presented to the Commission on 31st March, 1967. It said that there was only one Sholapur Taluka with 123 villages at the beginning of the British administration and that about 20 years ago when the question of linguistic provinces was being seriously considered, the taluka was divided into two unequal parts. North Sholapur was comprised of 44 villages while South Sholapur was comprised of 80 villages. The headquarters of both these were in the city of Sholapur. The division was effected in order to include all the Kannada-speaking areas in South Sholapur and the Marathi-speaking villages together with the city in North Sholapur. It was alleged that this was deliberately done so that when the linguistic States were formed, it would be easy to allocate South Sholapur to Karnatak and retain Sholapur city as a part of the Marathi portion of North Sholapur Taluka.

6.2. According to the case of the Government of Mysore, there should not be breaking up of a taluka under any circumstances. It was proposed that the Sholapur Taluka prior to division be taken as one unit, the recent partition which was purposefully made to defeat the possible claims of Kannada people to that taluka be ignored and all the 123 villages be transferred to the State of Mysore.

6.3. The State of Maharashtra in its reply stated that the statement made regarding the division of Sholapur taluka into Sholapur North and Sholapur South is factually incorrect. The division of Sholapur taluka into North Sholapur and South Sholapur took place in 1944, 23 years ago and not recently, and that North Sholapur was never Kannada in character.

6.4. The memoranda and the evidence received by the Commission about this taluka have been summarised in Annexure VII, Volume II, dealing with Sholapur city. North Sholapur taluka as appears from the Census slips is predominantly Maharashtrian. The Kannada speakers' percentage except in one village does not go beyond 36. In the rest of the villages it is insignificant. The sum total is that in 44 villages Kannada speakers comprise 6.5 per cent of the total population.

6.5. Shri Nambiar arguing the case for the State of Mysore after stating the grounds given in the memorandum of the State had eventually to concede that he could not seriously press the case of inclusion of North Sholapur taluka into Karnatak. I have, therefore, no hesitation in disallowing the claim of the State of Mysore for the taluka of North Sholapur.

SHOLAPUR CITY

6.6. The two Mysorean members on the Four-Man Boundary Committee in their report submitted to the State Government in 1962 said as follows :

“Sholapur city has no Marathi-speaking majority. Their percentage is hardly 38.8 while that of the people speaking other language is 43.8. The major portion of such people are Telugu-speaking who have come to Sholapur for service in the mills. If the principle of kinship of language is applied, relied upon by Maharashtra elsewhere, here Telugu will have greater affinity with Kannada than with Marathi as both the former languages come from the same family of languages, viz., Dravidian. If people speaking these two languages are added together they will form a clear majority in Sholapur city. In this state of affairs it appears possible that Sholapur city may as well be linked to South Sholapur as to the North Sholapur Taluk.”

6.7. It is clear from the above statement that these two members did not positively at that stage lay any claim to the city of Sholapur for its inclusion in Mysore. They conjectured that if Telugu speakers joined the Kannada speakers then it may be possible to claim the city for the State of Mysore.

6.8. In the statement presented to this Commission by the State of Mysore it was contended that formerly Sholapur was called Sonnalige or Sonnalapur, a name found in Kannada literary works and that the name Sonnalige is associated with the name of their great saint Sonnalige Siddharameshwar that Sholapur during the 19th century was unmistakably accepted to be a part of Karnatak (*vide* 1884 Gazette). Dr. Khare, the Director, Bharatha Itihasa Samshodhaka Mandal, Poona, who had made a special study of 2,000 documents from the Kannada family of Deshmukh of Sholapur had expressed the opinion that all this territory was Kannada at one time.

6.9. The memorandum added that the judicial administration of Sholapur was connected with the Kannada area of Bijapur district. Reference was also made to the existence of Kannada inscriptions in Sholapur and in the villages roundabout the town. It was contended that the cotton mills in Sholapur depended upon the cotton grown in the Districts of Bijapur, Belgaum, Dharwar, Raichur and Gulbarga and that the cotton industry will have much better prospect of growth and development if Sholapur was transferred to Mysore State. For foodgrains and milk supply also, Sholapur city depends mainly on the Kannada areas surrounding it and on the Districts of Bijapur and Gulbarga.

6.10. The city has since a century trade relations with Karnatak..

6.11. Reliance was placed on “The History of Sholapur City” by Rao Sahib V. N. Jakkal. Therein it was mentioned that till very recently 85 per cent of Sholapur population was speaking Kannada

language, and that the accounts were kept in Kannada by the merchants of Sholapur. It is astonishing how such an absolute Kannada city has changed its linguistic composition to such a great extent. There has been a superimposition of the Marathi language on the substrata of Kannada whose sphere of activity has receded to the realms of domestic talk.

6.12. Besides the historical background which shows that Sholapur was formerly a Kannada area, there are existing to this day several cultural and social links of Sholapur city with the Kannada areas. The most ancient temple in the city of Sholapur is the Siddeswara temple. In "The History of Sholapur City" by V. N. Jakkal, it is styled as 'Grama-Daivata' or the principal deity of the city. The temple is dedicated to Sonnalige Siddarameshwara, a saint who was contemporary of Basava in the 12th century. He had built a big lake for the use of the people of the town and in the midst of that lake this temple had been constructed. Siddharameshwara also built 17 other temples in the town and maintained charitable food distributing centres. Sholapur has come to be known as 'Dakshina Varanasi' and 'Abhinava Shrishaila'. In the "Centenary Volume of Sholapur Municipality" it is mentioned that one of the most important works of utility done by Siddeshwara is the Siddheswar Tank dug and built by him with the help of his numerous Shishyas.

6.13. People of all castes and communities happen to be devotees of this Siddheshwara temple. Every year a fair is held in honour of this deity and lakhs of devotees, particularly from the Kannada areas, assemble. This provides an annual meeting ground and establishes a regular link between the people of Karnatak and those of Sholapur.

6.14. Sholapur is also noted as a place of many other saints and sadhus. The Math of one sadhu is in Kasaba area of Sholapur. There is a Chariot which is drawn twice a year when there is a huge gathering coming mainly from the Kannada areas.

6.15. In Sholapur, the Lingayats have all along been a predominant trading community. In the rural area they are a predominant agricultural class.

6.16. Like every other city, the city of Sholapur is a cosmopolitan one. Despite its being linked up with a large portion of Marathi area as the headquarters of that district and in spite of its official influence, and the Marathi officers' dominance, Marathi has not made serious inroads on the linguistic complexion of the city. According to the 1951 Census the population of Sholapur city was 2,76,510 of which 1,07,253 were Marathi-speaking and 35,643 Kannada-speaking. The percentage of the former comes to 38.8 while that of the latter to nearly 13. This leaves 48 per cent of the population, which consists mostly of Telugu-speaking and Urdu-speaking people. The Urdu-speaking people who are mostly Muslims are conversant with Kannada and they are in favour of transfer of the city to Mysore State. Similarly, the Telugu-speaking people are also conversant with Kannada and are pro-Karnatak, and it can

be safely said that the linguistic gravity of the town is in favour of Karnatak.

6.17. In the Municipality there have been all along several Kannada representatives ever since its inception in 1852. Many of the Presidents of the Municipality since then have been Kannada people. Even in the present Municipal Corporation of Sholapur, out of the 59 members who are elected, 27 are Kannada-speaking and 12 are Marathi-speaking. The remaining 20 members speak other languages. All this goes to show the continued predominance of Kannada in the city of Sholapur.

6.18. The State of Maharashtra contested this claim. It was contended that no evidence had been adduced to support the contention that Telugu-speaking and Urdu-speaking people were in favour of transfer of Sholapur city to Mysore State. Census figures do not show the preponderance of Kannada-speaking people at any period of time. On the contrary it appears that there has been a preponderance of Marathi-speaking people in the city since 1881, if not earlier.

6.19. Out of the 40 Presidents of the Municipality since its life of 115 years, only 9 were Lingayats, and the total period of their regime was 12 years. Among the 59 existing Corporators of the Sholapur Municipal Corporation, only 8 are Lingayats and most of the remaining are those whose mother tongue is Marathi or who have adopted Marathi for all day-to-day activities outside their home. The Government of Mysore have not thus made out any case for transferring the city of Sholapur to Mysore.

6.20. It may be added that the people of Sholapur have expressed their desire to remain in Maharashtra. The Sholapur Municipality passed a resolution by a majority of 52 to 2 (two remaining neutral) on 14th August, 1954 for retention of the city in Maharashtra. Another resolution was passed on 19th April, 1961. The latest resolution passed unanimously on 4th May, 1967, stated that the Mysore Government's claim to Sholapur city is wrong and irrational and is not supported by any fact.

6.21. A large number of representations have been received regarding the city of Sholapur. These are given in Appendix VII, Volume II.

6.22. Shri Nambiar while arguing the case for the State of Mysore drew the attention of the Commission to all the matters mentioned in the memorandum.

6.23. After considering the material placed before me, I have no hesitation in disallowing the claim of the State of Mysore for inclusion of the city of Sholapur in that State. The percentage of Kannada-speaking people in the city has never gone beyond 12.8 or 12.9 of the total population. It was contended that the Urdu and the Telugu speakers were pro-Kannada and wanted merger of the city in Mysore. During my sittings in Sholapur not a single Telugu-

speaking person came forward to support this claim. On the other hand, their reaction was adverse to this demand. So far as Urdu-speaking people were concerned, a few Muslims supported the claim but the larger number of them were against it. The linguistic complexion of the city is cosmopolitan. It has no Kannada complexion. On the other hand, the Marathi speakers form a substantial population of the city. According to my charter I cannot ignore the linguistic considerations and cannot hand over the city from one State to another merely on the basis of historical background or according to the number of temples, etc., therein. When Shri Nambiar was asked by me whether he could produce any of the Telugu speakers to support the claim of the State of Mysore, he was unable to do so. The claim, therefore, to the city is disallowed. The impression I got from the large number of persons I interviewed was that public opinion was opposed to the claim made by the State of Mysore. Those who supported the claim did not produce any impression on me.

