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INTRODUCTION

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: I N T R O D U C T I O N :

Solapur is an important centre of Cotton Textile industry ever since the third quarter of 19th century, and the district ranks fourth as regards industrialisation in the state. At present there are eight cotton textile mills and a number of factories manufacturing bed-covers. The 'Jacquard Chhaddars' manufactured at Solapur are very famous not only in Maharashtra but also in the entire Western India. Solapur is often affected by famine hence labour is cheap and water facilities necessary for mills are available, raw cotton is available in larger quantities from Marathwada and Telangana regions. Also Solapur weavers are skilled in their profession. It can be said that due to these reasons the textile industry could hold its ground in Solapur.

It may not be wrong to say that the working class in Solapur is largely poor and illiterate and most of the workers live in the slum area. Though some improvement in their living conditions can be seen. These workers are having organised groups in the form of their unions. These workers have long history of organising and agitating on their problems under the banner of the trade unions. The labourer have organised



themselves in two main unions namely Rashtriya Girani Kamgar Sangh affiliated to INTUC and the Girani Kamagar union supported by the leftist party. Solapur labour does not display the cosmopolitan character like that of the Bombay labour, because it is largely local, a large number of having their native places in nearby villages. The mill workers in Solapur have contributed to national freedom movement.

Solapur is one of the important cities of Maharashtra and is a big and convenient trade centre for the neighbouring Marathwada, Telangana and Karnataka areas and it has subsequently become an industrial centre too. It is a paradox that Solapur which stands fourth in the state as regards the development of industries and population is predominantly agricultural district from the point of view of employment. Agriculture provides a means of livelihood to about 70% of the district population and there is an exodus of unemployed labour from the rural areas to Solapur city. Solapur had a glorious historical background due to imposition of Martial Law in Solapur during civil disobedience movement of 1930. Subsequently, working class, in Solapur played a very important role in Quit India movement, different

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historic strikes, Sanyukta Maharashtra movement and several other important movements.

: PURPOSE OF THE STUDY :

The present study is an attempt to study mill workers trade union movement in Solapur. The mill workers movement in Solapur is very old and even men like Lenin took notice of it. Hence history of the trade union movement in brief is narrated. The main purpose of the study is to take historical review of trade union movement of Solapur mill workers in the light of their contribution to national freedom movement. Secondly the thesis tries to understand the different movements, Strikes and struggles launched by mill workers in Solapur and the role played by the two trade unions in the struggle. The study also attempts to understand the causes of their competition and rivalry between the two unions. Thirdly, the study attempts to understand the political involvement of mill workers in Solapur. The major limitation of the study is that it is introductory by the nature and it does not claim that it is an exhaustive account of the trade union movement in Solapur. Secondly it attempts to link social, political and economic struggles of the workers to certain political issues.

: METHOD OF STUDY :

e/ It is difficult to get the data of Solapur mill workers
movement in the form of secondary books hence the first hand
data was collected in the form of diaries of the trade union
leaders, entries in the registers of different mills
and other material available on the subject, the government
Gazetteer. The interviews of major trade union leaders of
Solapur are taken to understand their view point. The daily
newspaper of Solapur the Sanchar and the Samachar were
o/ consulted and the entries were cross checked. Along with
this the survey of mill worker was taken and the respondents
selected were on the basis of random sample. The information
obtained from the survey through questionnaire is used in
the thesis to fill the gaps in our information. It may be
made clear that the survey covers a small part of the thesis.
Thus all the data available in different forms is utilised
to write historical narration of mill workers movement in
Solapur with reference to it's role in politics of the city .