

Organised Killings of Dalits

in
Khairlanji Village, Tal. Mohadi, Dist.
Bhandara

A Report Under SC-ST (PoA) Act, 1989

By

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सत्यमेव जयते

Commissioned by

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Contents

1.	Incident Under Investigation	05
2.	Method of Investigation	06
	2.1 Persons Interviewed During Investigation	06
	2.2 Interviews Available in Audio / Video Form	07
	2.3 Documents Compiled During Investigations	08
	2.4 Validation of Investigation Data By Experts	12
3.	Khairlanji Massacre : Sequence of Events	13
	3.1 Khairlanji Village	13
	3.2 Bhotmange Family	14
	3.3 Dispute Over the Agricultural Land	16
	3.4 Events Immediately Preceding the Massacre	17
	3.5 Chronology of Massacre	18
	3.6 Post-Incident Developments	21
	3.7 Social-Political Reactions of Incident	24
4.	Observations	26
5.	Recommendations	31
	Annex – I Interim Report	39

Preface

Atrocities against Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) is an age old phenomenon, which remained institutionalized in the India social system till independence. After independence though various legal-policy mechanisms were created to prevent the exploitation and oppressions of SCs & STs, there has been a resurgence in the trend of atrocities as a reaction to their liberation from untouchability, and their gradual social ascent. The objects of the Scheduled caste and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, capture this reality in very precise words :

'Because of the awareness created amongst the Scheduled Caste and the Scheduled Tribes through spread of education, etc., they are trying to assert their rights and this is not being taken very kindly by the others. When they assert their rights and resist practices of untouchability against them or demand statutory minimum wages and refuse to do any bonded and forced labour, the vested interests try to cow them down and terrorize them. When the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes try to preserve their self respect or honour of their women, they become irritants for the dominant and the mighty.'

Atrocities, therefore, continue to be an organized conspiracy of the society at large. Unfortunately, most investigations into atrocities fail to see this crucial socio-historical dimension, and hence investigations are often carried out on the lines of an ordinary criminal inquiry. This erroneous approach to the investigations of atrocities in turn hampers a long-term preventive strategy to curb atrocities. In fact, inadequate investigations into atrocities is often a part of the same organized conspiracy that breeds more atrocities.

The rapid investigation report at hand attempts to unfold this crucial dimension of organized social conspiracy behind atrocities by taking up the recent incident of organized killing of four Dalits in village Khairlanji, Taluka Mohadi, District

Bhandara by a mob comprising of persons from dominant castes on September 29, 2006.

The investigation was commissioned by me in the capacity of the Nodal Officer, SC/ST (PoA) Act, 1989, to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Research & Training Institute (BARTI) and the Centre for Equity & Social Justice (CESJ), YASHADA. The team comprising of experienced investigators from these institutes made visits to the location of incident and carried out an independent study. I also made a visit to the location to get a first-hand understanding of the situation. However, the observations, inferences and recommendations presented in this report have mostly come from the independent investigators to whom the investigation was commissioned. I have consciously retained the observations / inferences in their original form so as to preserve the independence of investigation.

I find the report quite revealing perhaps because the investigations were carried out by independent persons without a vested interest or prejudice towards the incident. The possibility of an organized conspiracy behind the killing of four Dalits in Khairlanji echoes unmistakably throughout the report even though the investigations were rather rapid, and were constrained by time, resources and a lack of judicial powers to the investigators.

It is therefore necessary that the competent authorities and regular investigation agencies pay a special attention to the possibility of an organized conspiracy behind the incident, and find out how it got originated, and why it went un-noticed till it finally culminated into the loss of dignity and life of four innocent persons from a vulnerable section of the society.

Unless serious attention is paid to this aspect, the implementation of PoA Act would never progress beyond a post-facto crisis management. The further investigations and measures should therefore focus on evolving a permanent mechanism to prevent future atrocities.

An Interim Report on the rapid investigation was prepared and submitted to the State Government on November 10, 2006. The same is enclosed as Annex-I for reference. The observations and recommendations of the Interim Report continue to stand in the face of the Final Report also but all of them have not been repeated in the Final Report for the sake of brevity.

The report at hand has made elaborate recommendations for creating a mechanism of pre-empting and preventing the future atrocities. Some of the measures recommended in the report call for major policy interventions by the State Government. I hope that the report serves to sensitize the reader at large about the issue of atrocities, thereby creating a strong social will to once-and-for-all wipe out this ugly blot on the humanity.

Ratnakar Gaikwad, IAS
Nodal Officer, SC/ST (PoA) Act, 1989
&
Director General, YASHADA

1. Incident Under Investigation

On September 29, 2006 four Dalits from the village Khairlanji, Taluka Mohadi, District Bhandara, viz., Smt. Surekha Bhotmange, Ms. Priyanka Bhotmange, Shri Sudhir Bhotmange and Shri Roshan Bhotmange, were brutally killed by some villagers and their bodies were recovered from a nearby canal. The body of Priyanka was found completely naked. Similarly, the body of Surekha was found with torn petticoat and blouse. This indicates a strong possibility of sexual assaults against these victims. The concerned government machinery including the Executive Magistrates, Police and Health Department has allegedly committed serious neglect and dereliction in their duty towards the prevention as well as post-facto investigation and action regarding the incidence. A preliminary investigation of the matter has been carried out by Shri Ratnakar Gaikwad, IAS, as the Nodal Officer under the Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989. The major observations and findings are as follows.



Bhotmange's Son and Wife

2. Method of Investigation

The rapid investigation presented in this report was commissioned by the Nodal Officer, SC/ST (PoA) Act, 1989, to a team consisting of the following members.

- i) Shri Purushottam Patodekar, Additional Director, YASHADA as Chairman
- ii) Smt. Lata Sonawane, Consultant, YASHADA
- iii) Shri Ravikant Ghodichor, Resarch Officer, CESJ, YASHADA
- iv) Smt. Preeti Karmarkar, Research Officer, R & D Centre, YASHADA
- v) Shri Baban Jogdand, Assistant Publication Officer, YASHADA
- vi) Dr. R. J. Thorat, Medical Officer, Pimpari-Chinchwad Municipal Corp., Pune

Shri R. L. Chavan, Director, BARTI & OIC, CESJ, YASHADA provided overall guidance and leadership to the Committee and its investigation. The composition of the team was decided in such a manner so as to combine the skills of research and documentation with specialized understanding of atrocities, social justice and the social / media movements around them.

The team visited Khairlanji during November 3 to 9 and carried out a detailed investigation through a series of visits to important locations and interviews of important persons concerned with the incident. Similarly, the team compiled several important documents concerning the incident. A list of persons interviewed and documents compiled is as follows.

2.1 Persons Interviewed During Investigation

- i) Shri Bhaiyalal Bhotmange, R/o Khairlanji, Tal. Mohadi, Dist. Bhandara
- ii) Shri Siddharth Gajabhiye, R/o Dhusala, Tal. Mohadi, Dist. Bhandara
- iii) Shri Rajan Gajabhiye, R/o Dhusala, Tal. Mohadi, Dist. Bhandara
- iv) Shri Rashtrapal Narnaware, R/o Warthi, Tal. Dist. Bhandara
- v) Dr. Bante, Officialting Superintendent, Mohadi Rural Hospital, Mohadi
- vi) Dr. Shende, Medical Officer, Mohadi Rural Hospital, Mohadi

- vii) Smt. Amita Khaparde, Dr. Ambedkar Center for Justice and Peace, (ACJP), Nagpur
- viii) Dr. Sushant Meshram, Youth Social Forum, Nagpur
- ix) Shri. Sanjay Jeevane, Social Activist, Nagpur
- x) Smt. Vandana Jeevane, Journalist, Nagpur
- xi) Shri. Prakash Baoudh, (Relative of Shri. Bhotmange), Deekshabhoomi, Nagpur
- xii) Shri. Nagesh Choudhary, Social Activist, Nagpur
- xiii) Mr. Sangeet Rao, Additional Deputy Collector, Bhandara
- xiv) Shri. Wati, Collector (acting), Bhandara
- xv) Mr. Suresh Sagar, Superintendent of Police, Bhandara (Additional Charge)
- xvi) Shri. Udagikar, DYSP (Home), Bhandara
- xvii) Shri. Milind Bansode, Sub-divisional Magistrate, Bhandara
- xviii) Smt. Alaka Shingade, Tehsildar, Mohadi (Additional Charge)
- xix) Mr. Dilip Uke, Sarpanch, Warathi, Bhandara
- xx) Shri. Mukesh Pusam, villager, Khairlanji
- xxi) Shri. Madavi, Mandal Adhikari, Khairlanji
- xxii) Shri. Pawar, Police Inspector, Andhalgoan
- xxiii) Shri. Nepale, Social Activist, Bhandara
- xxiv) Smt. Tanuja Nepale, Social Activist, Bhandara
- xxv) Dr. Rangari, Social Activist
- xxvi) Shri Manoj Bagde, Social Activist
- xxvii) Shri Nandeorao Khotragade, R/o, Nagpur
- xxviii) Shri Dnyanpal Gajbhiye, Devulgaon

2.2 Interviews Available in Audio / Video Form

The team has made an audio / video recording of interviews of the following persons in order to establish the empirical authenticity of the observations presented in this report, so also to support the further investigations by CBI.

- i) Shri Bhaiyalal Bhotmange, Khairlanji
- ii) Shri Siddhart Gajabhiye, Dhusala
- iii) Shri Rajan Gajabhiye, Dhusala
- iv) Smt. Bante, Medical Officer, Mohadi
- v) Shri Shende, Medical Officer, Mohadi

