

**Man made disaster in Dalit colonies of Dharmapuri District**

**VIOLENCE AGAINST DALITS IN INDIA**

**Introduction:**

Inter caste marriage in India is legally acceptable if the bride complete 18 age and the bridegroom complete 21 age. But such inter caste marriage is socially unacceptable. The parents and in laws will not hesitate to kill the newly wedded bride and bridegroom. In many cases they were separated by force and rearrange an arranged marriage in a ceremonial way. Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) a strong caste based (Vanniyar Gounder) political party in North Tamil Nadu has strongly condemned the inter caste marriage of their caste boys / girls with dalit girls / boys. If any such things happened, the party District Secretary and their strongmen interfere and separate them, and if they faile to separate, and then sponsor the planned disaster among the dalits.

**Elavarasan and Divya inter caste love marriage**

Elavarasan age 23, Son of Mr. Elango from Natham colony(Dalit Village), a dalit boy fell in love with Divya, age 21, a nursing student, daughter of Mr. Nagaraj Gounder from Chellankottai, just 100 metres away from dalit colony. Since all their initiation failed for the organized, arranged marriage with the blessings of their parents, they married themselves on Oct. 14, 2012 and obtained police protection. With police protection, they are living in a place not known by the others. Divya's parents accepted this marriage and instructed them to live somewhere and not to come to his house for any purpose because of the pressure of the society. So, they became the out laws.

**Village elders meeting and the suicide of bride's father**

Immediately Chellankottai village elders, panchayat President and other members of Vanniyar Gounder community ask the dalit Mr. Elango to send Divya to Mr. Nagaraj, and ignore their marriage. The Dalit parents and other dalits in the dalit community refused to accept their offer. In such situation PMK party members abused Divya's father Mr. Nagaraj and insulted him and insisted him to commit suicide. In such shameful situation, Mr. Nagaraj committed suicide on 7<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2012.

**Disaster**

The dead body of Mr. Nagaraj Gounder was brought to the dalit colony and kept it before the bridegroom's house. At this juncture, the PMK members and the local Vanniyar Gounder

caste community joined together and set fire, put the petrol bomb and thrown the creosote bottles to the dalit houses. 272 houses were burnt. Two ration shops were run by the Vanniyar caste community. Six barrels of Kerosine from the ration shop were used for this planned disaster.

### **Magnitude of the loss**

This manmade disaster was occurred on 7<sup>th</sup> November afternoon. The dalit men and women were away for their farm based coolie work. They used come around by 5 p.m. Some old people and children were available. They threatened them to leave the house. They all left. run out from their Villages,

- 272 Dalit houses were completely burnt (Natham colony 175 houses, Anna Nagar colony 40 houses and 57 houses in Kondam patti).
- Jewels, money and the valuables were stolen.
- The belongings in the houses like television, fridge, vessels, furniture, mats, cloths, ration cards, certificates, documents (Land, property and investments) livelihood sources, petty shops etc., were completely fired.
- 50 motor bikes, 1 mini lorry, cycles, furniture shop, marriage pandal, equipments hiring shop, T.V. service centre, cable unit etc., were completely damaged.
- The Children loosed their Cloths, Uniforms, School Bags, School Books, Note Books, Pen pencil etc.

### **Dysfunctioning of Government machineries**

- None of the Government officials, including police force did not come to the spot from 4.30 p.m. to 10 p.m. in spite of repeated telephone calls, SMS messages and e-mails sent to different departments.
- Road was intentionally blocked by cutting the road side trees and putting them across the road.
- Armed reserve force 7<sup>th</sup> battalion was stationed at 22 km from the disaster site. Instruction was not given to them by their higher officer to control the disaster situation and provide protection.
- The fire service not even arrived to the Fired village until the whole village is Fired.
- Mr. Ashra Kark, I.P.S., Superintendent of Police for Dharmapuri District was a way to Koodankulam(nuclear Pant Issue) on deputation. All the measures were taken after his arrival.

### **Police case Registration and burial of the body**

- Police put cases on more than 500 unidentifiable persons.
- Specifically, police identified 218 accused
- Out of 218 accused persons, F.I.R. was registered for 128 persons.
- Out of 128 accused registered, 115 people were arrested on both sides.
- Dead body of suicide non-dalit Nagaraj was kept at Dharmapuri Government Hospital for 5 days.
- Most of the arrested persons are mostly not the real accused. In this context the male adults escaped from the villages and staying with their political powerful people..
- Dead body was brought to the village and buried on 11.11.2012.

### **Court Order and relief measures**

Dalit went to the Chennai High Court for immediate intervention of Government and a proper investigation through CBI(Central Beroue of Investigation since the Local Police failed in their duties. As a result of this, following measures were taken.

- Madras High Court instructed DGP (Director General of Police) of Tamil Nadu to conduct an enquiry and send the report to the High Court within 3 weeks.
- Adi Dravidar State Welfare Officer and Secretary visited the spot and studied the situation.
- Additional Director General of Police Mr. Rajendran, I.P.S., and Deputy Inspector General of Police, Mr. Sanjaykumar, I.P.S., visited the spot and studied the situation.
- Four I.P.S., Officers at the rank of Superintendent of Police and 500 police people were deployed to prevent further disaster on both sides.
- One set uniform dress, books and note books were given to the school going children by the Government.
- Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu announced Rs.50 thousands from the Chief Minister's relief fund for the dalit families.
- Neighbouring Dalit villagers are Collecting rice, vegetables in their villages and supplying the required food materials to the affected dalits.
- Affected dalits are all at the Comon temporary shed made by the Government.
- Visit of National child welfare commission's representative and conducted a study on how the school going children are affected and what extent the children can be helped. This report will be sent to District Collector, State Government officials, Central Government officials, High Court Judge and to the District level Police officer.

- Additional Director General of Police of Tamil Nadu Government responsible for the law and order visited the place and made a needs assessment study.

### **R.L. Rosario and his team visit**

With Dalit Rights Forum members, Dalit movement leaders and dalit Advocates visited the spot on 8<sup>th</sup> November and 10<sup>th</sup> November for facts finding, met the affected dalits and expressed their condolence and solidarity with them and the Local DRF (Dalit Right Federation) members are continuing their visit and solidarity support services to the affected People.

### **What is needed?**

- Immediate relief measures like dresses, blankets, bed sheets, mats, cooking vessels and provisions for at least one month.
- Providing employment opportunities for the dalits.
- Enforcement of law and providing safely measures for dalits.
- Arrest the real culprits and registered the case under the Prevention of Atrocities Act 1989 with Rue 1995.
- Movement builders, NGOs, Advocates Human rights activities together should meet at Chennai to discuss the State level alternative strategies to prevent and control similar disasters in other places.
- POPE has taken up the vide on the disaster. This should be shown at different places through Dalit NGOs, movement builders and human rights activities and collect Dalit community relief fund.
- Give a detailed report to the media, which includes print media and other mass media..
- Enquiry committee has to be constituted by the Government under the Chairmanship of High Court Judge to find out the persons responsible for the disaster and should be punished under the law.
- Impartial C.B.I. enquiry is needed. Tamil Nadu police force is a caste based police force.
- Compensation amount should be calculated based on the correct calculation of economic loss.

*(R.L. ROSARIO)*  
Director – POPE