

August 85

MURDER, LOOT, ARSON AND RAPE ON HARIJANS
AT KARAMCHEDU, PRAKASAM DISTRICT, ANDHRA PRADESH

The hard working harijans (Chamars) of Karamchedu village in Prakasam district, who live on daily wage and also as tenants who cultivate 2 or 3 acres of land leased out by the landlords today are the targets of landlords and their goons murders, loot, and rape. 5 persons were killed, 19 others seriously wounded are lying in Chirala and Guntur government hospitals struggling between life and death. The survivors fled from the village to save their lives. The kind of carvage committed at Karamchedu on the harijans of that village is an insult to the civilised world.

Sri. Md. Rajab Ali, Deputy leader of the Communist Party in the State Assembly, Vice-President of the A.P. Agricultural Workers' Union, and Sri Anjaneya Sastry, General-Secretary of the State Union after visiting Karamchedu village in a press statement demanded the government that those responsible for the ghastly murders and brutal attack and atrocities should be booked immediately and should be severely punished, protection given to the victims and helped in every way possible, a Judicial enquiry by a High Court Judge should be Ordered, in order that the enquiry is impartial, the high police officers who are the mercenaries of the landlords, and failed in their duty to protect the harijans from the brutal attack should be forth with transferred.

"The full text of their Statement";

'We both, accompanied by the district CPI and agricultural workers' Union leaders, visited Karamchedu village on 21st of July. We have gone through the harijanawada where the Telugu-Desam landlords and their goons inflicted inhuman atrocities on the harijans. We visited every house which was ransacked by those landlord beasts. We visited government hospitals at Chirala and Guntur where the wounded are undergoing treatment, heard their woes and conveyed our sympathy to them. In addition to the 4 harijans who were murdered on the spot on 17th, D. Ramesh, who was admitted in the Guntur hospital with grievous injuries, died on 20th. D. Yesu and B. Veerayya who are under treatment are in an unconscious state and their condition is prevarious. They are struggling for life. All the victims who are being treated in the hospitals have spear and, axe wounds and serious lathi marks all over the bodies. Their sufferings are unceasing. The whereabouts of 8 youth of the harijanawadas is not known. The harijans suspect that some of these youth might have been killed by the landlords and they might have been buried under water in the fields or other places. This suspicion of the harijans has been reinforced by an incident. A dead body is found in the canal nearby. The face was defaced with knife, beyond recognition. People believe that this dead body belongs to one of the victims of harijanawada. The police, without proper enquiry denied that it is from the village. When the people are suspecting, the police should have shown the body to the harijans, and come to the conclusion. But the way police hurriedly disposed of the body strengthened the suspicion of the harijans.

What is the reason for the attack ?

A higher Caste Youth brought a buffalo to the tank, the water which the harijans use for drinking and began cleaning it. The dirty water is flowing into the tank. A woman who was there objected to the cleaning of the buffalo in the fresh water tank. Hot words were exchanged. Tensions ran high. This small incident sparked off the whole carvage and murders. Many statements with details have come in the press about the incident. We don't want to narrate the whole episode. But now this small incident led to such a inhuman, brutal murders ?

The harijans of Karamchedu, not only live on daily wages but also live as tenants every family having 2 or 3 acres of land taken for lease from the landlords. Because of close proximity of this village to Chirala Town, many harijan youth are educated and are in Jobs. Some are engaged in small handicraft and other petty occupations. Some working in I.I.T.D - Company. Because of these social changes, the urge for self respect, and lead a honorable life has grown among the youth.

The landlords in the village earn huge incomes not only through lands but also by various other sources such as business, contracts, etc. Some of them became very rich and minted lakhs.

The harijans traditionally are under the yoke of these landlords and are exploited brutally. The landlords donot like the growing self respect ideas among the harijan youth. If it is not curbed, their domination and exploitation cannot be continued without hinderence.

The landlords were waiting for an opportunity in order to suppress the harijans, especially to done away with 5,6 youth who are the symbol of this new awakening. They were conspiring. They placed their hope on the government along the landlords, these are the close relatives of the Chief Minister. In the name of Chief Minister they are riding rough on the administration in the district. Because of this the landlords dared to resort to this brutal killings in broad day light.

The huge accumulation of illegotten money in their hands, Feudal outlook, upper-caste chauvinism and the confidence and belief they have got about the police and administration, had led them to this ghastly act. Before the attack on the harijans-vada, all the raiders were fully supplied with brandy and other intoxicating drinks.

After examining the circumstances there, studing the socio-economic and political situation of the village we came to this conclusion.

loot and Rape :

Not only the males who were feeling in order to save their lives were murdered and brutally wounded, the females who were in the houses and who were cleaning their clothes in the nearby canal were also made the targets of their attack and speared all over the body. Their sarees were removed from the bodies, heaped untold atrocities on them and some of them were raped by the landlord goondas.

The women folk who were subjected to these humiliations, could not spell out the total story. The goondas didnt stop at that. They destroyed the houses, doors, windows broken, household utensils damaged. They looted cash which was procured to buy agricultural inputs, oxen etc, from the houses. They acted as high way robbers. They looted Rs.1.100/- from the house of T.Anandam who sold the buffaloes and kept the cash in the house. They looted ornaments from the house of T.Sangaian. They looted Rs.12,000 from the house of M.Ankalan, who got the money by selling his bullocks, grain and a piece of land. In many houses they looted ornaments cash and other things. Everything the harijans saved through their sweat and labour had been looted. Among the in-patients in Chirala and Gantur hospitals these are women who are subjected to inhuman atrocities-with unbearable pains through out the body their sufferings cannot be described. T.Kantamma, who was subjected to rape who is in Chirala hospital narrated to us her tale of woes.

Another victim, Sulocnana, 18 years of age, is undergoing treatment at Chirala hospital. She is pregnant. Her husband died of serious injuries in the General hospital, Guntur. That news was not conveyed to her yet. His maternal uncle T. Vasanta Rao lost senses, after hearing his death news, is admitted in the hospital. T. Victoria, with spear and axe and lathi injuries is in a serious condition and is undergoing treatment at Guntur. She was raped.

14 years Mariamma is not yet married. But she was not spared. All these women are depressed because of the inhuman treatment meted out to them, by the landlord goondas. They are physically and mentally very much depressed. The way in which landlords and their henchman hunted not only men but also committing crimes, pouring insults, resorting to rape of innocent women is itself is a beastly and uncivilised act.

VISIT OF C.M.

It was announced that the Chief Minister would visit Karamchedu on 19th to offer condolences to the victims and afterward go to Chirala. But the hundreds of victims who are sheltering at Chirala because of fear, were utterly disappointed when they came to know that the Chief Minister is not visiting Chirala. They wanted to narrate their sorrowful tales to the C.M. He did not even care to see the injured Harijans who are under treatment at the government hospital. Nobody could understand why the programme was changed suddenly. Let it go. What happened even in Karamchedu when he visited that village? Those peoples who are responsible for the crimes and atrocities and murders accompanied the C.M. to the Harijanwada. Seeing those people the few old people who were there could not spell out to the C.M. about their sufferings and narrate the real story. The C.M. went to the house of P. Moshe who was murdered. The wife, son and daughter burst into tears. They wanted to say something about their sufferings but could not do so because of these accused surrounding the C.M. When the C.M. went to other house also, the crowd around him gave slogans so that the voices of the victims are not heard by the C.M. Moshe is 70 years old and is regarded as a gentle man who never interferes in others matters. But he was done to death for no fault of his.

The role of the POLICE ;

A van with police force reached Karamchedu while the attack on Harijans is going on. Some one might have phoned to them. At that time the Harijans are running across the fields to save their lives. They thought that the police have come for their rescue. So they stopped running. But the upper-caste goondas fell upon them and killed some and injured many. But the police did not interfere. They quietly slipped away into the village. Two Harijans youth, who were being chased by the hooligans, asked for protection in the police van, they refused. After wards they were caught by the goondas and subjected to inhuman torture.

It is suspected the names of the accused given in the death declaration by the victims were manipulated. The list of the criminals was handed over to them so that those who are in the F.I.R may escape arrest. Even today the murders are parading in the streets openly without fear of arrest.

A upper-caste kisan M. Radhakan gave shelter to a Harijan named M. Ankanan, who generally works in his fields. The goondas demanded Radhakan to send the Harijan outside. The kisan refused. Then the goondas began destroying the house of the kisan and warned him that his life will not be also safe. At last, fearing the

danger to his life, the harijan was sent out. The crowd bet him into pulp and pierced him with spears all over the body. The above M. Radnaiah, who gave protection to the harijan is also arrested and kept in Jail. The people are really astonished at the arrest of Radnaiah. People think that it is an act of the police to weaken the case.

A police outpost is opened now but for whose protection! For landlords protection because then and now harijans left in the village. Confidence could not be restored among harijans though the police station is opened. The people accuse that the whole police machinery is in the service of the landlords. The D.S.P. Bhaskara Rao and C.I. Sridhara Reddy, who have got intimate dubious connections with the landlords should be transferred immediately, to restore confidence among harijans.

FUND COLLECTION

We have seen that the landlords and their agents were collecting lakhs of rupees in order to nullify the case, in the presence of the police itself "what will this case do to us? The whole government machinery is in our hands. We have got huge amount of money". There are the words being used foul play. The people are watching with utmost interest and are questioning 'Whether the C.M. would do justice to the harijans as promised by him or side with his close relatives and help them escape?

By now politicians of many parties, social workers, humanitarians, and other visited Karamchedu and expressed sympathy and solidarity with the victims and consoled them.

Those who cherish human values, who condemned this ghastly carnage, must take initiative, come forward, stand by the harijans and see that justice is done to them and ~~assured~~ punished. If not the conspiracies of the landlords will be fruitful.

The political parties and democratic forces must act with unity and determination. We assure that the CPI and the agricultural workers Union will play their role effectively.

In addition to the struggles conducted for land and fair wages, we have to fight against the landlords and other vested interest, who are perpetuating atrocities and social oppression, so as to drench these struggles in blood, on harijans, girijans and other weaker sections.

Without the determined and hard struggle against the landlords, and social oppression and atrocities we cannot bring social justice to these section.

P.S. :- The State government ordered a judicial enquiry subsequently with a High Court Judge. That Judge declined to serve on the commission because of public criticism. The congress(i) and on behalf of the CPI Com. Rajeswara demanded that a Supreme Court Judge must be entrusted with the responsibility. The State government ~~conceded~~ conceded this demand.

The Senior Police Officials whose transfer we have demanded have been transferred afterwards.

July 31 1985.

STATEMENT OF C. RAJESWARA RAO,
General Secretary, National Council,
Communist Party of India.

Myself, G. Yellamanda Reddi, President, Bharateeya /Khet Mazdoor Union,
Dasari Nagabhushana Rao, State C.P.I. Leader visited Karamchedu
Village in Prakasan District of Andhra Pradesh., the camp of the
refugees at Cheerala and the hospitals at Cheerala and Guntur to
see the wounded people. The Secretaries of the District Units of
C.P.I., V. Gangadhara Rao, N. Anjaya and a number of Trade Union
and B.K.M.U. Leaders accompanied us.

The scene of Harizanwada at Karamchedu on which the murderous attack
took place is very ghastly. Vandalism is evident. The upper caste
gangs destroyed everything they could lay hands on. Most of the
agricultural workers fled to the nearby Cheerala/^{town} to escape from
their terror. The few people that are left are leaving with their
belongings.

We got the gruesome story of the attack on the 17th August early
morning when we visited the refugee camp at Chirala and the
hospitals.

These unfortunate people were chased by the landlord upper caste
gangs like animals with lathis, spears and axes. Even women were
not spared. In all six persons were killed. Some are reported
missing. The girls that were raped are dazed and do not speak.
The wounds caused by the spears and axes are there on the heads,
hands and legs of those lying in the hospitals.

We asked the kith and kin of those who were killed and wounded and
others whether they would go back to village, if protection is
given. They said they have no confidence to go back and work
in the fields of those who have murdered their sons and husbands.
They wanted rehabilitation at Cheerala itself. We asked them why
they did not take the relief money given by the Government. They
replied that now they are being fed by the relief Committee and they
will take it when they build their houses.

The Karamchedu shameful incidents are one more stark reminder of
the ugly malaise in our country's socio-economic set-up which is
eating into its vitals. This is a challenge to all decent human
beings not to speak of the Left and other Political Parties which
champion the cause of the poor and downtrodden.

Under these circumstances it is surprising and unfortunate that State Chief Minister Sri Ramā Rao should describe the gruesome attack on Harizans as a clash between two sections of people.

In this connection it must be remembered that some of the main culprits are still roaming merrily and one peasant namely Mandava Radhakrishna Murthy (Sree Ramulu) who tried to save a harizan labourer working under him and some others who have nothing to do with the incidents are also arrested. We demand that all culprits should be arrested at once.

We also disapprove of the narrow partisan attitude of Central Home Minister of State Smt. Ram Dulari Sinha who visited Karamchedu. Her attitude had helped the diversion of the issue into a conflict between Congress (I) and Telugu Desam rather than help cause of these unfortunate victims.

We urge upon the State Chief Minister to bring all the culprits to book immediately and create confidence among the victims of the attack.

We are of the opinion that the Judicial enquiry ordered by the State Government under a retired High Court Judge Sri Ramachandra Raju who had a record of being hostile to the cause of the rural poor would not serve the purpose. In this connection it must be remembered that his notorious judgement validating the bogus predated sale deeds of landlords for evading the ceiling laws was quashed by the Supreme Court. Hence we have no option except to support the demand of the victims that a Supreme Court Judge enquire these ghastly incidents and do justice to the victims.

In conclusion we want to emphatically state that the problem of the social oppression on the downtrodden sections is intimately connected with their economic status also. Unless and until the landlordism is abolished and land is given to the poor people, and make them self-confident, it is impossible to completely eradicate untouchability and social oppression, the scourge of our country's socio-economic set-up.

Hence I urge upon the State Government to amend the State Land Ceiling Act in tune with the Supreme Court Judgement and implement the Land Ceiling Law expeditiously. In the same way all the State waste lands under the illegal occupation of landlords or otherwise to be distributed among the landless.

I appeal to all the Parties who champion the cause of rural poor to come forward not only to fight social oppression tooth and nail, but also to mobilise the agricultural labourers and other rural poor to force the State Government for the effective implementation of land reforms.