

'AP mayhem with cops' connivance'

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CHUNDUR
(Guntur district, A.P.)
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THE massacre in this village was planned and executed with the connivance of the local police, according to survivors.

The massacre, the worst ever in Andhra Pradesh in recent times, was carried out between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. on Tuesday.

A police party warned residents of an impending attack by the caste Hindus and advised them to flee. The villagers of this village then telephoned upper caste residents of other villages like Motukur and Alapada and allegedly told them that the Chundur Harijans were rushing to attack them after having killed four upper caste villages in Chundur.

So, the Harijans fleeing this vil-

lage were caught in a pincer between the mob chasing them from Chundur and groups waiting for them from Motukur and other villages. The victims were cut down in fields and near rail tracks passing by Chundur Dhamraj, a survivor, managed to reach a rail-

► Probe ordered into
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way station and went to hospital in Guntur.

The sarpanches of Chundur and Motukur are among 20 persons arrested or wanted by the police. When the Guntur superintendent, Mr Raghuvir Prasad Meena, talked to Jakraiah, a survivor, the latter named a man called Satyanarayana and two persons by name of Prasad Reddy and Sami Reddy among the attackers. Sami Reddy is reportedly the sarpanch of Chundur.

Chundur, set in sylvan surroundings amidst recently planted

paddy fields, stands in the Guntur-Prakasan belt which attained notoriety for caste clashes in recent years. There were brutal attacks on Harijans at Karamchedu and Neerukonda in these parts.

The Guntur collector, Mr Nagarjuna, observed that one would have to go very far back in time, as far as one wishes, to trace the genesis of the caste conflict in Chundur. Mr Prakasrao, a resident of the Harijans hamlet, said there had been tension for two decades but that did not come in the way of the Harijans working in the fields of the upper castes.

Mr Nagarjuna wondered why the atrocity was not prevented although a disproportionately large police force was stationed in Chundur with a circle inspector, seven sub-inspectors, 40 constables and 20 armed reserve policemen. Though the general situation in the district was sensitive because of the

farmers' agitation for fertilisers, a large force was specially stationed in Chundur because of the prevailing tension.

And yet this force did not protect the Harijan residents of Chundur.

It is generally believed that the trouble broke out after an altercation in a cinema theatre about a month ago between Ravi, a Harijan student and some local youths. Ravi was attacked later. After that, a committee of 14 Harijans urged his father, a teacher, named Bhaskarrao, to lodge a complaint. When he refused to do so, the committee decided to boycott him.

There was another quarrel some days ago when a Harijan youth allegedly brushed past some young women. After an attack on this youth, the committee of Harijans came into the limelight again. The very idea of the Harijans forming a committee reportedly infuriated upper caste villagers.