

seldom put to use to obtain relief in matters of sexual harassment.

As far as legislations on equality of sexes go, India is far ahead of the US. However in the US though equality of the sexes is not a fundamental right, the courts through judicial interpretation have recognised the rights of women not to be subjected to sexual harassment in the workplace. Such an interpretation is possible even with existing Indian laws on the subject. It may be worthwhile for the women's movement and the legal fraternity to think in terms of such wider principles and expand the rights of women to guard against sexual harassment. This is a relatively unexplored area of labour jurisprudence and can be used as a

strategic and effective tool to tackle sexual harassment of women at their workplace. However, expecting the Indian judiciary to take such initiatives may be futile. Not so long ago a senior woman IAS officer complained of sexual harassment by a senior IPS officer in Punjab. She sought to take criminal action against him because no departmental action was taken. The courts however dismissed her case as being too 'trivial' an issue! If this is the plight of a senior IAS officer that of the women in the lower echelons of employment can well be imagined.

In view of this should the legislature step in and include a 'sexual harassment free' clause among the working conditions assured to every individual?

## Road to 'Raktakshetram'

### Report from Chunduru

M Shatrugna

*This is not the first time that dalits have been assaulted in Andhra Pradesh. But the Chunduru massacre stands apart, for, what sparked it off was such an inconsequential incident.*

CHUNDURU is a small village with a population of about 8,000, 12 km from Tenali on the Vijayawada-Madras section of the South Central Railway. The road connecting it from Tenali town is uneven and untarred over a major part. This is a Reddy-Telaga majority village in a Kamma belt with a Reddy population of about 3,500 and a sizeable number of Telagas—it has about 2,000 SCs. Valiveru and Manchala are the adjoining villages where the Reddys dominate in all spheres. The village has a police station, a small hospital with a male doctor and a high school. It has electricity supply and there are quite a few public taps, with bore well water available in the 'maalapalli' or the 'harijanwada'. A 20-ft road separates the upper caste portion of the village from the harijanwada with the statues of Mahatma Gandhi and Ambedkar. With a temple and a church, it has all the trappings of a prosperous coastal Andhra village. Guntur district has a large Christian community with Tenali town having a substantial population of 12,000 Christians.

The village has a typical agrarian structure as found anywhere else in Andhra with the upper castes holding most of the land with the difference that in Chunduru about 550 SC families are tenant cultivators. With the conversion of a number of SCs to Christianity and the attendant benefits of education and primary health care, the church has had a great influence on the economic uplift, however tardy, of

the downtrodden. By the end of 19th century, Harijans who basically were agricultural labourers had started moving up the social and economic ladder with better education and accumulation of small amounts of money to become tenant cultivators. Today a tenant as part of the lease agreement pays in advance per year a sum ranging from Rs 3,000 to Rs 3,500 per acre to the landlord proprietor. A large number of SCs are also agricultural labourers. The literacy rate is also relatively high among the SCs. All these factors appear to have had a bearing on the recent incidents in the village.

On July 4, Govathoti Ravi, an SC undergraduate student went to see the film *Alajadi* (Agitation) at the local 'Srinivasa' theatre. He was holding a 'chair' class ticket. A close relative of the sarpanch, Kurru Srinivasa Reddy had also gone to see the film. As the film began, Srinivasa Reddy suddenly felt somebody's foot touching his back. He turned back and found that the 'culprit' was Ravi. Realising the mistake, Ravi apologised profusely. But enraged at the audacity of a 'maala' occupying a 'chair' class seat and that too in an 'impolite posture' Reddy thrashed Ravi in the theatre and left the scene. Not satisfied with the 'punishment' meted out Ravi's father Govathoti Bhaskar Rao, a teacher, was summoned the next day and given a good thrashing with the demand that the absconding Ravi should be summoned to 'explain' his misbehaviour. After

two days Ravi had arrived from Ongole. The Reddy youth who had kept a vigil at the railway station accosted the terrified Ravi, brought him to the village, gave him another thrashing and left. Fellow Harijans advised Bhaskar Rao to lodge a complaint with the local police station, but he refused to do so as he felt that it was too trifling a matter to pursue further. But having come to know that the Harijans could even think of lodging a police complaint against the leaders, the Reddys decided to teach the 'erring' Harijans a lesson. Part of the 'lesson' was the social boycott of the entire Harijan community. The reprisals included denial of work to Harijans in the fields, importing labour from outside, prohibiting barbers, potters, etc, from selling their services to the Harijans. In short, a social and economic war was declared on the hapless community.

The Harijans were forced to find work at far-off places. But the Reddy community was in no mood to 'tolerate' the 'arrogance' of the dalits. After a lot of discussion and meticulous planning, the upper caste people with the connivance of the local police carried out the gruesome massacre of the Harijans on August 6. Two police officers, C I Saibaba and D S P Rayilayya who were posted with additional police pickets in the village had manipulated the administration in such a way that SI Srinivasa Rao, a conscientious officer was kept away from the scene and they together master-minded the attacks.

According to the villagers around 11 am on August 6, the police under a SI and some constables created panic in the 'maalapalli' by claiming that their lives were in danger from the Reddys and asked the dalits to leave their houses for safety. As all the dalit men in the village fled they found the Reddys and other upper caste people blocking their passage armed with deadly weapons. When they ran towards the railway track, they found another set of 500 upper caste people waiting there armed with spears, swords and other lethal weapons. What followed was a systematic and brutal assault of the Harijans. The fleeing dalit men were caught, maimed and butchered on the spot. While those caught near the railway track were speared and their bodies pushed into gunny bags and thrown into the nearby Tungabhadra canal, others were chased into the fields, caught and hacked to death. The post-mortem reports of the recovered bodies record multiple stab injuries. With hands, legs and head chopped off, the doctors attending the dead had a difficult time identifying the bodies. The holocaust went on till 3 pm. According to eyewitness accounts and Katti Padma Rao, president of the Dalit Mahasabha about 21 men were

missing. By Saturday, August 10, eight dead bodies were recovered from the nearby fields and the Tungabhadra canal. The dead included Jaladi Mattaiah (50), Mandru Ramesh (24), Jaladi Emmanuel (40), Mallela Subba Rao (30), Devarapalli Jaya Rao (25), Jaladi Essack (29), Sankuru Samson (25), Angalakuduri Raja Mohan (17), Ravi Chandra Kumar (29), a doctor working in the Guntur General Hospital, who had observed the post-mortems of the dead from close quarters was so shocked that he committed suicide by hanging himself with a rope on August 9, unable to bear the grief.

Following the Tuesday massacre, the families of the victims and other dalits fled to Tenali, sought asylum in the Salvation Army Church in Tenali at Itanagar, a predominantly Christian area. But the most disgraceful aspect of the whole episode is that till Wednesday evening (August 7), full 24 hours after the massacre the district administration in Guntur was not informed of the incidents. Only on late Thursday did the state government depute a number of ministers and officials to visit the village to express their 'sorrow'. The chief minister visited the village only on August 10 and announced compensations including an ex-gratia of Rs 1 lakh for the family of the deceased, one acre of land and the usual 'long-term' measures like a school, housing, etc, which by now have become a ritual. But the dalits wanted the arrest and prosecution of the criminals as a precondition for the acceptance of any government-sponsored compensation. They also demanded the prosecution of the local police officers who had abetted the crime. Though both the police officers have been placed under suspension and a judicial probe ordered, the full list of the killers is yet to be made public nor have criminal proceedings commenced.

On August 10, all the eight bodies were buried in the centre of the village on government land at the periphery of the upper caste habitation. Named as 'Rakthakshetram' (land of blood) a 21-ft martyr's column is to be raised on the site. Uptil August 20 no serious effort has been made to arrest the culprits. Lack of 'eyewitnesses' appears to have hampered the police investigation.

Meanwhile the Dalit Mahasabha under the leadership of Katti Padma Rao has furnished a list of about 40 who appear to have participated in the Chunduru carnage. The list included M Sambi Reddy, Tippireddy Srinivasulu Reddy, Tippireddy Krishna Reddy, G Brahma Reddy, Gorripati Prasada Reddy, Tippireddy Narayana Reddy, Tippireddy Rami Reddy, China Lakshma Reddy, Gorripati Peda Brahma Reddy, Basana Sitaramaiah, Poorthi Soorayya, Osana Edukondalu,

Peda Venkat Rao, Peda Subba Rao, Vasana Pitchaiah, Vasana Prasad, Vasana Nageshwar Rao, Ambati Narsimha Rao, Ambati Prasad, Ekkurti Poornachander Rao, Annamreddy Srinivas, Kurthi Sivaiah, Vasana Koteswara Rao, Yellamanda, Vasana Venkatesh, Seedipudi Koti Reddy, Chepudi Subbi Reddy, Chepudi Venkata Reddy, Vuyyuri Satyanarayana, Gorripati Punna Reddy, Seedupudi Punna Reddy and his seven sons, Vuyyuri Pedavenkat Reddy, Emani Koti Reddy, Sedipudi Ramachandraiah. All of them belong to the village of Chunduru, Modukuru and Manchala. While the

police claim that many arrests have been made in connection with the August 6 incidents it is not clear whether the police list covers the list given out by the dalit organisations as well.

The Chunduru incident is not the first time that the dalits have been massacred by the upper caste. A major assault on the dalits had taken place in the late 60s in Kanchikacherla during the chief ministership of Kasu Brahmananda Reddy. Then Karamchedu, Padiri Kuppam and Neerukonda followed during the TDP regime. But the Chunduru massacre stands apart in sheer brutality.

## NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADULT EDUCATION (An autonomous institution under Govt. of India)

Invites applications for five posts of Research Associate

**Scale of Pay:** Category A: Rs.1800 (consolidated) per month for first two years and Rs.2100/- (consolidated) per month for the remaining three years.

Category B: Rs.2200-100-2700 for first two years and Rs.2700-100-3200 for remaining three years.

**Job requirement:** The Research Associate will be expected to participate in providing academic and technical resource support in the implementation of adult education programme among others in the area of (a) Human Resource Development; (b) Learning and Curriculum; (c) Media and Communication; (d) Research and Evaluation; (e) Comparative Studies; (f) Foundations of Adult Education; (g) Management and Planning; and (h) Documentation.

### Educational Qualifications:

Category A: Uniformly good academic record with at least 55% marks at Master's level and aptitude/commitment for work in adult education.

Category B: Uniformly good academic record with at least 55% marks at Master's level with Ph.D. degree in adult education or allied subjects or with at least 3 years whole-time work in adult education or allied spheres.

**Age:** Minimum 21 years, and Maximum 30 years.

The recruitment to the post of Research Associate is **tenurable** initially for a period of **two years** extendable for another term for a period not exceeding 3 years.

APPLICATIONS be sent to the REGISTRAR, National Institute of Adult Education, 10-B Indraprastha Estate, New Delhi-110002 latest by **20th September 1991** on plain paper.