

# Tsunduru Dalit massacre: a blood-soaked chapter in modern history

GUNTUR:

## Dalit associations say justice eludes victims

On this day, twenty two years ago, the remote village of Tsunduru in Tenali revenue division was witness to a brutal massacre of Dalits in a carnage unleashed by socially-dominant communities.

On Tuesday, families residing in the village converged at 'Raktha Sketharam', the place where the bodies of Dalits were buried, and offered their homage to the departed souls. A meeting was held in which Dalit Bahujan Front convener Korivi Vinaya Kumar and others spoke.

But years after the incident, Dalit associations say justice is still eluding them. An appeal seeking life imprisonment to 35 persons who were convicted and awarded simple imprisonment by Special Court Judge Anis in the year 2007 is still pending in the High Court. The special court awarded life imprisonment to 21 persons. The State government had not appointed a successor to special public prosecutor B. Chandrasekhar, who died in January this year.

Jaladi Wilson, convener of Tsunduru Dalit Victims' Association, told *The Hindu* they had requested the government to appoint Bojja Tarakam as Special Public Prosecutor to present the case. Back on August 6, 1991, the savage attack on Dalits left eight persons dead but had many more wounded. In a planned attack, the Dalits fleeing for safety were lynched, their bodies pierced into pieces, stuffed into gunny bags and thrown in the Tungabhadra drain. One more youth, Anil Kumar, was killed in police firing in the village. The gory incident galvanised the Dalits into launching a nationwide crusade seeking social justice and emancipation of Dalits.

Dalits in towns and villages poured on the streets protesting the massacre. The State government doled out welfare schemes in a bid to contain the anger but was forced to act firmly against the perpetrators of the most heinous attack on Dalits in India's modern history. Police filed charge-sheets against 219 people belonging to Tsunduru and neighbouring villages.

Under pressure from Dalit associations, the State government established a special court under the provisions of SC & ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act in Tsunduru to try the accused. On a tense day on August 1, 2007, special court judge Anis convicted 56 accused, out of which 21 were awarded life imprisonment and 35 simple imprisonments. It let off 115 others citing lack of evidence.



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