

Fact finding report on the targeted attacks in Aurangabad

Bhima Koregaon Shaurya Din Prerna Abhiyan, Maharashtra formed a fact-finding committee to enquire into the events and reasons behind the Aurangabad 'riots'. On 19th and 20th May, the committee went to Aurangabad and met with the victims, eyewitnesses, local people, police, administration, political leaders and social activists. Based on those meetings, the fact-finding committee observed the following things:

1. Riots started on 11 May 2018, Friday at midnight, But several people in Moti-Karanja, Shahganj, Nawabpura, Rajabazar and Gulmandi revealed that preparations for the riot had been underway since almost a month. The fact that Petrol, Kerosene, Stones, Catapult etc. that were used during the riots were collected and stored on the terrace of the multistoried buildings, is also evidence to its pre-planned nature.

As many as 21 Hindu and Muslim shopkeepers of Shahganj Vyapari Sangh had filed a complaint with the City police chowk on 7th may against Lachhu Pahelwan and his hooligan collaborators for beating, threatening and trying to instigate the communal riot. They had also demanded security from Lachu Pahelwan and his hooligan collaborators. Even after their complain, no stop was put to the activities of Lachu Pahelwan and his hooligan collaborators.

Therefore on 8th and 9th May, the shopkeepers met with S.P Kodekar and P.O. Kadam to demand justice from the harassment of Lachhu pehelwan and even submitted written memorandum regarding the same. Many people witnessed that on 11th May the same S.P Kodekar and P.O. Kadam walking along with Lachu Pahelwan from the site of violence. The people indicated this also as an evidence to the pre-planned nature of the violence.

2. Electricity in Moti-Karanja had been cut off from night 10 p.m. that day and also the electricity in other places went off in many places during the riot. Many transformers were destroyed. CCTV cameras were shut down earlier to save the rioters. All these again clearly points out that the rioters were prepared well in advance.

3. At the site of violence, people witnessed some armed political leaders walking along with the police. All those leaders were Shiv Sena's leaders. Local member of parliament, Chandrakant Khaire is visible in many video clips. MP Chandrakant Khaire openly admitted to journalists that due to Shiv Sena corporator Rajendra Janjal, his son and ex.MLA Pradeep Jaiswal's son were rescued from the place of the incident. It is a clear admission to the fact that many Sena leader's sons also participated in the attack. Hence both Police and local Shiv Sena leaders colluded in this attack is openly visible.

4. It is being propogated that the immediate trigger for the riot was the removal of illegal water connections. But people in that area said that illegal water connections was not reason behind the violence. There are more than 35,000 illegal water connections between Kranti chowk to Shahganj area and in whole city near about 1 lakh 20 thousand illegal water connections are there. On 9th may, the Municipal Corporation did not start their action either from Kranti chowk or Shahganj but started removing illegal water connections randomly in Moti-Karanja Chowk. They removed only four illegal water connection and all of them were muslims. Farid Iqbal and his colleague, a resident of that area (Moti Karanja) had long before

itself submitted a memorandum to the Municipal Corporation regarding the removal of illegal water connections. It is quite clear that the violence had nothing to do with the issue of removal of illegal water connections.

5. Another reason given for the trigger to the riot is the mango buying incident, there is no substance in this claim either. There was an altercation between a mango seller and his customer. That conflict was resolved and both of them had even embraced each other. But soon nephew of Lacchu Pahelwan came with 8-10 people and started beating that mango seller. People gathered there to save mango seller and they forced Lacchu Pahelwan's nephew to leave that place. After that Lacchu Pahelwan came and publicly threatened to burn down shops and on 11 May he acted upon his threat and those shops were burnt down.

6. Shiv Sena holds the Mayor post in the Municipal Corporation. Lacchu Pahelwan's daughter is an independent corporator but Lacchu Pahelwan controls the actual power. A month back, he joined Shiv Sena and he demanded removal of encroachment and hawkers from Shahganj and Meena Bazar area. On 9th May, Municipal Corporation sent an anti-encroachment force. Anti-encroachment force removed the encroachments in the Shahganj Chowk (mostly muslim shops) but when they started removing encroachments of Sindhi shops they received a call from BJP district president Kishanchand Tanwani. And those shop owners told that Anti-encroachment drive had been stopped due to Tanwani's phone call. It is clear that Municipal Corporation also functioned with evident bias.

7. Every time during the Ramzan period a market called the Meena bazar is held in Shahganj area. 12 years back Bhaji market was its place. But for redevelopment Bhaji market was demolished and all shopkeepers came on the road. They started putting their shops on roads. Two years back, Municipal corporation allocated Aamkhas ground for Meena Bazar but no arrangements were made in the following years. So all shopkeepers again started opening their shops around Shahgunj road. Recently Shiv Sena demanded the removal of Meena Bazar. All the vendors went to high court. High court ordered that these vendors should not be removed as their right to life cannot be snatched from them. Therefore on the 11th of May Lachu Pahelwan intentionally burnt down the shops of those vendors.

8. Whole site of violence is a muslim majority area. Lacchu was trying to establish his dominance in that area. He used to collect ransom money from this area. He used to beat up people if they refused to pay the money. Whole area was afraid of Lacchu. Lacchu was miffed because, on 8th May in Mango buying issue, people forced his nephew to leave the area. Hawkers and riot victims told that, On 11 May, Only those shops were burnt who were not supporting Lacchu's demand of removal of hawkers.

It is important to note that when the shops were being burnt on 11th May, Hindu shops and houses located in the muslim majority area were not burnt or plundered. It also indicates that people just resisted attacks, it was not a riot where attacks happened from both the sides. Shopkeepers of Shahaganj, Nawabpura, and Moti Karanja also said same thing.

Attacker burnt down, a hundred year old building located at Shahganj-Rajabazar chowk. It was attacked because the owner of that building was a Muslim. In that building one Hindu family

was residing and there were three other shops. All of them were tenants. None of the government representatives visited or helped them. Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) extended financial support to only Hindu tenants. BJP has not offered an help to Muslim tenants.

9. Exhibition of extreme Muslim-Hate by the Police: Extreme hatred towards Muslims was clearly visible in the Haris Qadri's case. Haris left home in search of his younger brother on Friday midnight. Around 2:30 family members came to know that he is injured. They brought him back. Haris was still alive so they took him to the hospital. He was injured because of the bullet. But soon he died in the hospital. On next day around morning around 11 O'clock, SRP jawans broke down the doors of Haris's house. They went to the terrace of three floor building and beat Haris's uncle. Their Hindu neighbor asked the SRP Jawans not to trouble Haris's family and they also told that Haris was seriously injured. But SRP Jawan beat even women of Haris's family. SRP Jawan conducted combing operation only in the Muslim houses. Combing operation was conducted in the Nawabpura, Baijipura, Kiradpura, Ramanspura, Chelipura, Gincy, Roshangate etc. Muslim majority area. Even now combing operation is going on. Till now, neither the Collector, Police administration, Home Minister, or Chief minister have visited this area.

10. A number of Muslims have been seriously injured in the police firing. They are under treatment in various hospitals. No one from state, police and administration visited them. Police did not even noted their injuries and registered FIRs. It is evident that police are not recording this information because they wanted to portray lessened intensity of the violence and safegaurd themselves against any actions for misuse of power.

11. During this riot, only one community faced the police bullets. Combing operation is also targeted against the Muslims. The number of injured is more in the same community. Even the number of arrest is higher among Muslims. Compared to Muslims, the number of arrests or injured among the Hindus are very less. This also then raises a question on whether this is a riot or a planned attack ?

12. On 11 May, people chased Lacchu Pahelwan's gang after they started fighting. so the Lacchu's people gathered near Hanuman temple of Gandhi Nagar and started throwing stones towards Moti Karanja Chowk. Muslim community also gathered at Moti Karanja Chowk to oppose stone pelters march which was trying to enter in the Muslim area. Some attackers took an oppportunity of that chaos and from the different route, and they entered the Muslim majority area such as Shahaganj, Raja Bazar etc. This was a method employed for the attack.

13. MP Khaire said that his commitment is to save only Hindu community. This is an anti-constitutional statement by an elected member of the parliament. Insecurity among Hindus was systematically constructed with spreading of false propaganda such as Muslim population is increasing, Muslims are snatching away the opportunities of the Hindus etc. Shiv Sena wants to polarise the Hindu community by creating anti-muslim sentiment among the Hindus.

14. During the violence, Shiv Sena leaders were walking with Police. Police conducted combing operation in the house of the boy who died in police firing. All those events expose the nature of government. The institution of the state is much bigger than the handful of thugs and local leaders. The state could have controlled those attacks with short time span but the

government wanted those attacks to happen. Hence at the place of the riot, police and Shiv Sena leaders were all found together.

Conclusions:

Based on various evidences, videos, newspaper reports and committee's interactions with victims, eyewitness, local people, police administration, political leaders and social activists, the fact-finding committee has reached following conclusions :

1. This is not a riot but pre-planned attack on one community and police, local administration and political leaders participated in this attack.
2. Former IAS Harsh Mander says that any riot which continues for more than four hours is a state-sponsored riot. In Aurangabad the attack continued from night 10 to morning 7. This attack would not have been possible and continued for so long period without state participation.
3. This attack was entirely a political attack. Shiv Sena MP Chandrakant Khaire directly participated in that attack. It is an attempt to construct fear and hatred of another religion and consolidate vote of a community by polarising people on religious grounds.
4. Riot hit area people were against bullying and ransom etc.of the Lacchu. Shiv Sena 's thug Lacchu Pahelwan with the help of police attacked both Muslims and all those who were against Lacchu. The intention of attack is to teach a lesson to the opponent and to create terror among Muslims.

Demands:

- 1.Mastermind of attack, Chandrakant Khaire should be arrested immediately.
2. Police officers who fired bullet should be arrested immediately.
3. The Government of Maharashtra not only failed in maintaining peace and security but also allowed four riots (attacks) to happen in the last five months. And in every place police took a biased stand with the Hindutva rioters. Hence action should be taken against Home minister of Maharashtra, Devendra Fadnavis as he should be made responsible for those riots.
4. Action should be taken against municipal corporation officers for their suspicious functioning.
5. Immediately combing operations should be stopped and all innocent people should be release immediately.
6. Rs.50 lakh compensation should be given to two families who lost their family members in this attack, Rs.5 lakh assistance should be given to people who were injured in police firing and other injured should be given 2 lakh rupees assistance. Adequate compensation should be given to the people who lost their property in this attack.
7. The whole incident should be inquired though sitting judge of the High court.

Members of the fact-finding committee:

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2. Vira Sathidar
3. Ravi Gaikwad
4. Gautam Kamble
5. Pramod Mandade
6. Sudhir Dhavle
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9. Yusuf Khan
10. Pratik Nandgaonkar
11. Divesh Kumar

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