

ANDHRA PRADESH CIVIL LIBERTIES COMMITTEE

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DEATHS IN Police CUSTODY

TEKKALI (SRIKAKULAM ZILLA)

A young coolie, by name Bellana Bangaru Raju(25), died in Tekkali on 1st December. Though his death did not take place in the Police Station, it is the Police who are responsible for his death.

A theft took place in Tekkali on 19th November. It was not known who the thief was. As per their habit, Police started bringing all the "old KDs" to the Police Station. One such old KD was Bellana Bangaru Raju. He was never convicted in the past, but his name was included in the list of rowdy-sheeters because of his hand in "riots". But, it seems, the SP asked them to remove his name as he thought it was not necessary. In spite of this the Tekkali Police did not remove it.

Police took him to the Police Station on 20th November. After "interrogating" him they let him go at 11 o'clock in the night. His mother Pydamma says that her healthy son returned as a "sick man". He was taken on 21,22,23 again. He was "interrogated" for a few hours and let off.

Gradually his health started deteriorating. The swelling on his chest was not coming down. He used to complain about pains all over his body. He could not eat his normal meal. In the end he was not able to drink even "tea". After trying several medicines, and not finding any results, his mother Pydamma took him to a doctor called Nayudu. He took X-rays. He told that his condition was not at all good and therefore, he should undergo treatment for 7, 10 days. That same day evening at 7.30 PM Bangaru Raju died. His mother buried his deadbody.

Later she met the local press correspondents and told the whole story. She said that her son's health went astray only after he returned

from the Police Station and that he was alright before that. Because of her talk the Circle Inspector, after obtaining the Collector's permission, got the body exhumed on 4th and got the inquest done. MRO says that there are no injuries on the body and the death of Bangaru Raju occurred due to an illness of the lungs like bronchitis. Mother says that he did not have any ill health before that. Therefore, does four times of 'interrogation' in the Police station lead to bronchitis, and lead to death in a week? Or does the real cause of death lies in the 'interrogation' itself?

The noteworthy point is that, keeping aside the issue of Judicial enquiry, the Collector of Srikakulam has not conducted even Magisterial enquiry, so far.

VALLUR(CUDDAPAH ZILLA)

This story must be told in some detail. Because, behind the death of Balaveera Reddy, on 3rd December, in Kurnool General Hospital, there is lot more than the brutal hand of the Valloor SI Subba Rayudu.

Everyone knows the mutual killings perpetrated by the landlord factions with the help of deadly weapons, in the zillas of Cuddappah and Kurnool. Manufacturing country bombs and country rifles is a 'heavy' industry there. The MLAs, MPs, Zilla Parishad Chairmen, Block Presidents and other gentlemen are the presiding officers for this industry and to the killings that depend and follow from it. One among these, 'Jammalamadugu' Siva Reddy, even got a state cabinet rank ministership recently.

There is no difference between one party and another for these activities. Chiefly, all the important fighters are the bigmen of Telugu Desam and Congress Parties. In spite of this, recently, Telugu Desam

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Government decided to put a stop to these activities. It may be because of the fact that the majority of these people belong to the Congress. Or else, may be it is due to the fear that the people will start despising them if it is not stopped at least at this stage.

Whatever may be the reason, the Police of Cuddappah and Kurnool are involved in 'recovering the deadly weapons', for the last one year. For this purpose, a special Police force is set up, combining both the districts. An official of the rank of a SP is heading it. At present, it is heard that, an official by name S.P.Meena, is the chief. His name may sound familiar to you. You might have heard that this gentleman, when he was serving as the SP of Guntur, was beaten up by the present Home Minister Dr.Kodela Siva Prasada Rao. He was granted 'pardon' in that case, but they both, one as a special SP, and the other as a Home Minister, are conducting raids on other goondas to recover arms.

It need not be told that they are messing it up, like all other works. Police get the news that a 'certain' person is in possession of arms. If that 'certain' person happens to be a big shot nothing is done. Otherwise, that person is arrested and beaten up to surrender weapons. If the person wails that he is not having any, he is asked to get them from somewhere, or he is asked to cough up bribes. This way, there are lots of people who surrendered weapons in their possession, people who did not have weapons but bought them to surrender, people who paid the bribes and escaped the demand.

Now, let us come to the present story. Kamalapuram is a village on the road from Cuddappah to Tadipatri. There is a Police Station in that village. The SI of that village got the news that a farmer, by name Pasala Veeranna, belonging to Venkatapuram, was in possession of arms. He caught Veeranna, beat him up and asked him to surrender rifles, when one or two were given up. While he was making trips to the court, in connection with this case, he fell in the hands of the Special Police. When they beat him up and demanded rifles he gave one to

them. With that his treasure of rifles was finished. But, the Kamalapuram SI caught him up, once again, and asked for one more rifle. When he denied having any more, he was asked to get it from somewhere. Having done this much, he was let go on the surety of a contractor by name Srinivasulu Reddy.

Now, Veeranna started hunting for a gun. Finally, he found that, if he went to a certain place near Vallore on a certain day and time a gun would be available for rupees 800. He asked Balaveera Reddy, a mistry working with the contractor Srinivasulu Reddy to accompany him to that place. Balaveera Reddy has a TVS two-wheeler.

On 29th November, evening, Veeranna and Balaveera Reddy started from Kamalapuram to the appointed place on the TVS vehicle. They bought the gun. They were returning towards Kamalapuram around 10.30 in the night. They were holding the gun quite openly since the SI himself asked for it. On their way, near the outside of the cinema tent at Vallore, the Vallore SI Subbarayudu and his men saw these people. These people also got panicked and stopped their vehicle. Veeranna got down, threw the gun away and took to heels. Balaveera Reddy stood there only. When Police questioned him, he told them that they were taking it on the demand of Kamalapuram SI. Without heeding to what he was saying Police beat him up brutally. Veeranna, who was watching it from a distance, ran through the side road, got into a lorry and reached Kamalapuram. There he met another six people of his village. All of them slept at the same place.

Vallore Police took Balaveera Reddy to Kamalapuram around 1.00 o'clock in the night. They woke up Veeranna and the other six. By that time itself Balaveera Reddy lost half of his consciousness. He was unable to talk. Police took him, along with all these people, to Vallore.

The next day, Srinivasulu Reddy went to the Police Station. When he and Veeranna forced them, the Vallore Police took Balaveera Reddy to Cuddappah hospital. There he was given Oxygen for 3 days. Even then he

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did not regain consciousness. On 3rd December he was taken to the Karnool General Hospital in an ambulance. He died there on that night. Throughout this period he never regained consciousness. He did not talk to anyone. But his body itself is a telltale. There are marks of shoe heels on his chest, and on the back near the neck. The side of his neck had reddened and blood coagulation was visible. Both hands and legs were swollen. Testicles were swollen. One toe of his left leg was ruptured. When he was taken to the Cuddappah hospital, he vomitted blood.

It is clear that Vallore SI tortured Balaveera Reddy brutally with the hope of making him bring some more guns. Not only did they beat him up but they killed him by crushing him under their shoes.

This is the way the hunt for guns is going on. But the real culprits are safe as MLAs in the Assembly, as Ministers in the cabinet, as Zilla Parishad Chairmen, as the various leaders who have taken birth to liberate Rayalaseema from the famine etc., - in short as gentlemen.

GUDUR (KARNOL ZILLA)

Some people loose their lives in lock-ups either because they committed a wrong or they were suspected to have committed a wrong. But, Moola John did not commit any crime. He lost his life when he went to give 'saddulu' (tiffin/meal) to his relations in lock-up.

Gudur mandal centre is on the road connecting Kurnool and Emmiganoor. John is a resident of Gudur. His profession is mainly that of a peasant coolie. He and his wife Janaki and their 4 children used to get on with the coolie earned by the couple. John has a good name that he works hard and that he has no laziness in him. Apart from doing coolie, John used to run another small business. Every Friday there takes place a week-end bazaar in Gudur. Peasants from distant places flock to Gudur to buy cattle. But after buying the cattle, instead of taking them along with themselves, the peasants entrust them to the care of John. He keeps them for a night and

takes them to the buyer, the next day.

On 11th December, a Friday, there was a week-end bazaar, as usual. John was minding his business. Then, around 4.30 in the evening, John came to know that two of his relatives were arrested by the Gudur Police, when they were abusing each other. One of them was his sister's (Devamma) husband Pustakala Bazaar, another one was his step-brother Gokari. John took Devamma and went to the Police Station. He took the permission of the Head-constable to meet those two. After talking to them, he went home saying he would get food for them. He got some rotis prepared by Janaki, and around 8.30, in the night, went to the Police Station accompanied by his daughter Meenakshi. There Sub-Inspector B. Venkataratnam was present. He informed him and, after giving food to the two people in the lock-up, came out. He thought of collecting the vessels once they finish eating. Police did not like him standing there. They asked him to go away. He did not move. He refused to go till he collected the vessels. Police got angrier, naturally.

There are two stories about what happened later. One story is by the Police. According to this story, John was fully drunk. Alcohol entered his blood. When the Head-constable yelled at him to go away, he started moving out and while on his way out, he fell down under a Neem tree in front of the MRO office, on the same premises, and died.

A little analysis is needed to understand the second story. Actually, John does not have the drinking habit very much. Moreover, it was a week-end bazaar day and since he had some business on that day, there is no scope for his getting drunk that day. (When the SI was asked as to how he knew that John was a drunkard, he says: "All these fellows are drunkards, you see".) Not only that. If he was drunk so much as to loose his life, he could not have talked to the locked-up people and from there he could not have gone home, get the food cooked for them etc. Moreover, on both of his visits to the station, he went to the lock-up with the permission of the Police officials only. If he was

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drunk so much, why did the Police not get suspicious then itself?

Besides, John did not eat anything other than a roti since that morning. With a hungry stomach he did day-long work in the week-end bazaar. In the same condition he took food to the people in the lock-up.

Now, his 7 years-old daughter Meenakshi would tell us as to what happened in the Police Station. Police became very angry when he did not move when they asked him to move out. They hit him, strongly, on his head, twice, with a strong stick. They used their hands also on him. He tried to run away, fell down and died. Meenakshi cried: "my father is dead". Police shut her mouth, forcibly, and pushed her out by her neck. But, by that time some people, who were coming out after seeing the movie in the adjacent Shafee theatre, heard her cries and came inside. Police hurled abuses at them and laid their hands on whomever they could.

This is what happened. When asked whether cases would be filed on those who raided the Police Station as a protest against John loosing his life, the SI Venkataratnam asks in reply: "why not, definitely".

SULTAN BAZAR (HYDERABAD)

The readers of Swachcha will remember that last year, on 23rd March, a hotel worker by name "Chandrudu" committed suicide by jumping from the top of Ashoka hotel. At that time he was in the custody of Salfabad Police. They will also remember the Fact Finding Committee report that the Police, in the process of "interrogating" him about some theft in the hotel, killed him and threw the dead body out and cooked-up a story that "he committed suicide by jumping down".

The Sultan Bazar Police have announced that a hotel worker called Kasibabu, working in Mayura hotel, also committed suicide in the same manner, on 23rd January this year. The story told by the combination of the Police and the hotel management is as follows. A marwadi businessman of Nizamabad booked two rooms in hotel Mayura from January 18 to January 20.

They are the rooms on the fourth (last) floor bearing numbers 401, 404. That businessman vacated the rooms on 20th. After reaching Nizamabad, he found that Rs.7900/- of his money was missing. He came back on 22 and gave a complaint in Sultan bazar Police Station. In his complaint he expressed his suspicion on the hotel workers. Police went to Mayura hotel on the afternoon of 22nd. They took away 4 workers who were on duty on 20th. Then it was 2 o'clock in the afternoon. When these people were taken to the Police Station and were questioned there, the first 3 denied having any knowledge about it. But Kasibabu, the last to be questioned, told them that he himself committed the theft, and that he had already spent 100 rupees and the remaining 7800/- were still with him and that he would show where they were kept, if they took him to the hotel. Police were misled by his behaviour and took him to the hotel without handcuffing him. They were examining room no.401. Meanwhile, Kasibabu ran up onto the terrace and jumped from that height to death. It was 4.30 in the evening by then.

Now let us go to the house of Kasibabu in Netaji Nagar in Erragadda. His mother, two younger sisters, elder sisters and neighbours were present. Elder sisters came to Hyderabad on hearing his death. Mother and younger sisters depend on him. By the looks itself one can say that their's was a "well to do family once". They were so particular about their family name that none of the neighbours knows that Kasibabu was working as "boy" in a hotel. He was ashamed of letting it be known. Now coming to Kasibabu's personality, he has been working in different hotels for the last 8 years. Though he worked more in Mayura hotel, he worked in Dwaraka hotel and Jaya International also. Last year when he was working in Dwaraka hotel, the management of Mayura hotel itself went searching for him saying that they needed honest workers. They asked him to rejoin their hotel. (He worked there previously, and resigned over a dispute about his wages.) Never there was any complaint about his honesty. (When the hotel management was asked about this, unable to say "true" they reply "until one is caught everyone is

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a gentleman, you see".) Not only that, on finding Rs.1500/- forgotten by someone, on 1st January it seems Kasibabu remarked to his people "new year has started very well". But he returned the money, it seems. Lastly, the person who stole Rs.7900/- and told the Police that he spent Rs.100/- from it, took Rs.5/- from his mother for his expenses that very day morning. One cannot say that he hid the money somewhere in the hotel itself, because according to the hotel management itself nothing could be found in the hotel itself.

That means, it is doubtful whether Kasibabu stole anything at all. The succeeding events can be understood easily if one assumes that he did not rather than that he did. If he really stole the money, it is surprising that he owned it up so immediately. It is also very surprising that he committed suicide before the recovery of the stolen money and before any clues showing his involvement surfaced. If we assume that he did not commit the theft, the matter becomes easy to understand. Even though he was not in the wrong, since he was the "boy" who was on duty on 20th afternoon, the suspicion of the Police must have turned onto him. They must have threatened in the little while he was in the Police Station. They must have beaten him up once or twice, also. He might not have owned up any thing. Thinking that a search in the hotel would yield something, they took him to the hotel. They must have threatened him and beat him up saying "come on tell us where you have hidden it". After that they must have said "come let us go to your house and search there". The person who was ashamed of telling his neighbours that he was working as a "boy" in a hotel, unable to imagine what was going to happen, must have gone to the terrace and must have jumped down from there.

Otherwise, as the Congress(I) MLA Janardhan Reddy had alleged, unable to recover the stolen money, the Police must have killed him with vengeful beating. And then they must have taken the corpse on to the terrace and must have thrown it down from there. There is nothing impossible in this. But the post-mortem report is contrary to this. The chances of the dead

body hitting the ground in a standing position are very less if it is dropped down from such a height after death (or in a seriously injured condition). It should hit the ground in a flat position. In that case the breaking of ribs, fracture of skull, along with injuries all over the body with severe bleeding must occur. But, not only the doctor but also the mother and relations say that there is no drop of blood on the body. Mainly, according to his mother, there is no trace of injuries either on the face or on the skull. No bones were broken and clothes did not get crumpled.

And, therefore, what the post-mortem, according to doctor Rajagopal Reddy of the Forensic Department of the Osmania Medical College, says is that Kasibabu touched the ground with his feet alone. His ankles got damaged seriously. The impact of hitting the ground broke his back-bone at 3 places. That is the way Kasibabu died. He wrote the same in the post-mortem report. If we take this report to be correct, we have to conclude that Kasibabu committed suicide, unable to bear the shameful of the wrong case against him (not due to the shameful of the wrong he committed) and due to the shameful of the fact that he was taken home, by the Police, with hand cuffs, to search his home.

Now if one asks whether there is no fault of the Police in this, keeping the law aside, morally their's is the sole responsibility. If they investigate crime without injuring the pride, personal dignity and self-respect of the accused, then there is no necessity for such things to take place. Keeping that aside, it is illegal to allege someone of committing theft and then ask him to show the place where the stolen goods is hidden. According to the Supreme Court's interpretation of Article 20(3) in the Nandini Sathpadi it is against the Constitution. It violates the Fundamental Right of the accused. In spite of this, in theft cases Police is always applying this 'method of investigation'.

NEIGHBOURHOOD POLLUTION (Krishna Zilla)

There is a news item in the daily press saying that the villagers of Punadipadu, near Kankipadu, are going to fast demanding stoppage to the pollution caused by the Boppana Oils Ltd near Punadipadu. It seems that the acid-mixed water from the Oil Mill, when it flowed into the irrigation canal, it was damaging the crop, and that some cattle died as a result of drinking that water, and that the dust emanating from the chimneys of the mill was covering all the village and, as a result, was becoming a health hazard and that the people resorted to the protest fast, when, inspite of reporting the matter to the political leaders and the mill management there was no action preventing it. This was the news.

In order to find out, for themselves, the problems faced by the villagers a committee from the APCLC branch of Krishna Zilla went to Punadipadu, on Tuesday, and met the villagers and the General Manager of the mill. All those whom the committee enquired told that the pollution caused by the mill had become problematic for them. There was none who spoke differently. They told that after drinking the irrigation canal water, polluted by the water from the mill, the cattle, belonging to Goddalla Pottaiah, Goddalla Nageshu, Goddalla Venkateshu, Pangi Veraraghavulu, died. They told that the pigs belonging to Katta Lakshmudu also died. But, apart from the fact that there was no facility, nearby, to dissect the dead bodies of the cattle to find out the truth and they were not willing to incur any expenditure on the cattle since it was already lost to them. Their doubts about the water pollution were confirmed when the fish in the canal died and the two big Tamarind trees in the canal became leafless, completely.

They explained that they were getting ailments of the eye when the dust from the mill fell in their eyes and the difficulty of using the vessels covered by the same dust. In some houses it could be seen that the dust from the ventilators was falling on the articles inside. There was dust

all over the plants also. They reported that, the mill was not working at that time but, when the mill worked there is too much of dust covering everything and that, sometimes, it is also accompanied by unbearable stink. They showed Gnanaiah, a youth, whose eyes were affected by the dust. They showed the legs of Sagam Tirupathaiah which were full of boils developed due to his getting into the polluted water. They said that a person who bought space on the canal bank with the intention of starting a bottling unit, had withdrawn when he came to know about the position.

They submitted memoranda, explaining their difficulties with the mill, to the Collector, Chief Minister, and other officials. They brought the matter to the notice of the Agriculture Minister Sri Vasantha Nageswara Rao when he attended a 'Praja Sadassu' (People's Assembly) there recently. Once the Sub-Collector visited the place and saw the dust cover as well as the fish which died because of the pollution. He met the management of the mill and went off. When the agricultural officers also confirmed that crop was being damaged because of the water in the irrigation canal getting polluted, a bund was created stopping the polluted water entering the canal water. The mill management tried to break it, but it did not succeed.

The reason given by the mill General Manager is quite opposite. Accepting that the dust was a result of the functioning of the mill, he brushed aside the facts of the death of the cattle and the damage to the crops as mere allegations. When asked why such allegations must be made just for nothing, he gave a totally, unbelievable and ridiculous reason that it was because of the 'dismissal of a youth who was sleeping while on duty'. He said, very definitely, that in the beginning they did not know the problems of extracting oil from the husk but, that, now they had 'controlled' the pollution completely, that they were purifying the water and, that they put a complete stop to the dust. He said that nobody complained about it except that longtime back some people complained

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and when they were given assurance of action no one complained, again, about it. After informing him that the people were still complaining he was asked as to when they had controlled the pollution completely, he said it was just the day before. But none from that place is ready to believe that. They said that the day before there was dust as usual. They said that some temporary arrangements were being made when it was known that some 'pollution control' people or some other officials were going to visit the place. After that time situation is as usual.

The villagers demand that coal must be used in place of husk, (which would be less dangerous) and that the water from the mill should not be let into the irrigation canal. When they have permission to use coal or husk why do they not use coal, when they know that using ~~husk~~ is more dangerous? This is what they are asking. If the pollution is going to be as it is, they say, that either they all have to die or will have to leave Punadipadu. *