

Simmering Social Impunity

**A Report on incidents of
Rajput intolerance to
Dalit assertion in
Saharanpur**



**July 2017
People's Union for Democratic Rights**



I. PREFACE

On 5th May 2017, an incident of attack on Dalits by the Rajputs occurred in the village Shabbirpur, located near Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh. During the attack a youth from the Rajput community died, 13 Dalits were grievously injured, more than 40 Dalit houses were burnt, some of their shops looted and burnt. The incident was widely reported in the media as an incident of caste violence between the Rajputs and the Dalits, where 25 houses of Dalits were set on fire.

A PUDR team conducted a fact finding into the incident on 9th May 2017. The team met members of the Rajput and the Dalit communities from the village, the village Patwari (accountant) Nathi Ram, police officials and PAC personnel posted at the village and police officials at Badgaon police station (PS), local politicians including the ex - MLA of Deoband from Samajwadi Party, Maviya Ali (Shabbirpur is part of the Deoband constituency) and some journalists. While the Dalit basti of the village wore a deserted look with few women and old men around, the Rajput basti appeared physically unaffected.

Given below is our report about the incident, the circumstances under which it happened, its consequences and the role of the administration. The report is based on our findings and material from secondary sources.

II. BACKGROUND

Decoding 'sabka sath sabka vikas'

The Shabbirpur incident needs to be placed in context of the changing political dynamics in relation to caste politics in UP with BJP taking over power in March 2017 and Yogi Aditya Nath being sworn in as the new Chief Minister.

Rajputs constitute 8 percent of the total population of UP. Though numerically not very large, they have enjoyed socio-economic dominance. The Rajputs (Thakurs) and the Brahmins together constitute the upper caste core vote bank in UP which is about 16 percent of the total electorate. Despite being numerically less, the two castes have together held more than 25 percent of seats in the state assembly in each election. The Thakurs are the second-most affluent community in UP after Jats who are confined to only western Uttar Pradesh. The land held by the Thakurs in UP is almost double in proportion to the total number of Rajput households in the state. The Thakurs have particularly wielded political influence during elections because of their capacity to fund elections and provide muscle power.

In the overall demography of Uttar Pradesh, Saharanpur is slightly at variance. According to the 2011 census, Saharanpur district has about 41 percent Muslim population and the Dalits constitute roughly 26 percent of the population, leaving the Hindu upper caste as numerical minority in the district. Despite the massive sweep in the state in the assembly elections, in Saharanpur district, out of the seven district seats, BJP won only four losing out to Congress on two seats and to SP on one seat. This is however, a leap for BJP which in the last assembly polls in 2012 had secured only one out of the seven seats. In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, Saharanpur constituency was won by BJP after a gap of 15 years. Against this background, the increasing political dominance and the appointment of the new Rajput Chief Minister, has translated into the upper castes resorting to aggravated caste jingoism. The incidents of recent social tensions and clashes in Saharanpur are symptomatic of the same.

The election rhetoric of 'sabka sath sabka vikas' is severely jeopardized in relation to the ground realities of caste politics. The politics of appeasing the Dalits for consolidating Hindu votes falls flat in the face of the internal divides fostered by caste where the political authorities and the administration exhibit bias in favour of the upper castes. In case of Saharanpur, the empowered upper caste Hindu groups in the last two months have engaged in consecutive communal and caste xenophobic events often resulting in violence, where the administration has either colluded or has been pressurized to not take action against the community. This is unfolding as incidents of caste and communal tensions are witnessed one after the other in the areas.

The first incident of this kind after the election was witnessed in SadakDudhli village in Saharanpur on 20th April. The municipal elections were due in Saharanpur for the month of May. Saharanpur was declared a municipal corporation around ten years back and the elections for the same were going to be held for the first time. The voters of the Saharanpur Nagar and Saharanpur (rural) formed the total electorate for the civic elections. On both these seats BJP has lost to Samajwadi Party in Saharanpur Nagar and to Congress in Saharanpur (rural) in the 2017 assembly polls. Winning the municipal election hence was all the more crucial. The locals believe that in a bid to consolidate Hindu votes by bringing in the Dalits within the fold,

the BJP sought to organize AmbedkarShobhaYatra on 20th April on the occasion of AmbedkarJayanti which incidentally falls on 14th April. The BJP MP from Saharanpur, RaghavLakhanpal was at the helm of the incident. According to local Dalit activists, the Dalits of the village were not in favour of taking out the ShobhaYatra in the Muslim dominated communally sensitive Dudhli village with about 80 percent of Muslims and marginal Dalits. They had already celebrated AmbedkarJayanti on 14th April in which no skirmish between any groups had occurred. A letter written by the AmbedkarSewaSamiti signed by Dalit residents of Dudhli village, to various administrative officials read, that after celebrating the Jayanti on 14th April, they had no plans to organize any other event. The Dalits had warned that if the ShobhaYatra was taken out it must be with administrative permission. The BJP however, went ahead with the procession without permission. As the procession passed through the Muslim areas of the village, it was attacked with stones and had to be stopped. Following this the Hindutva brigade got agitated and attacked SSP Luv Kumar's house, set many shops on fire, indulged in looting at a number of places and injured about a dozen people.

On 9th May, another targeted attack was made against the Dalits in Rashidghar village in Shamli, a few kilometres from Shabbirpur. The upper caste people of the village, which the police referred to as 'unidentified miscreants', desecrated the Ambedkar statue placed by the Dalits in the village. After hundreds of Dalits protested, the police registered an FIR against unnamed people. The investigation has not yielded any results. On 19th May again, in Mirzapur village of Saharanpur, the statue of Ambedkar was damaged. A group of Thakurs invaded the Ravidas temple in the village and desecrated the statue there. After the Dalit villagers protested, the police registered an FIR. The May 19th incident took place after eyebrows had been raised in the media and by political opposition on the lackadaisical approach of the administration in relation to the Shabbirpur violence. The administration hence acted swiftly in this case and arrested four Thakurs for instigating violence and stationed paramilitary forces in the village.

In this background, Shabbirpur incident of May 5th serves as a microcosm to understand the socio-political and administrative unfolding of such forms of caste aggression under the new Hindutva political establishment in Uttar Pradesh.

III. INCIDENT AND AFTERMATH

a) Village

Shabbirpur is small village in district Saharanpur, Tehsil Rampur Maniharan, Uttar Pradesh. It falls under the jurisdiction of the Badgaon PS. It is located at a distance of 25 kilometers from Saharanpur city, with Maheshpur and Shimlana as two neighbouring villages. According to the patwari (government appointed village accountant at sub-divisional level), the current population is around 3600 with Rajputs being the single largest community, followed by Chamars, though the numerical difference between the Thakurs (the Rajput community) and the Dalits is not much, each comprising about 30% of the total population. The rest of the people belong to Nai, Teli, Kashyap, Brahman, Yogi, Dome, Bhat, Badhai, Balmiki and Muslim communities.

The primary economic activity is agriculture and the main crops are sugarcane, wheat and rice, irrigation is through government tube wells. A large number of households own land, though the majority of big land-holdings are owned by the Thakurs; most Dalits have small to medium land-holdings. Some Dalits work as landless labourers in the sugarcane fields of the Thakurs. They earn Rs. 200 per day as wages and 30 Kgs of wheat per bigha out of the normal produce of 2.5 quintals. The Thakurs also own wheat flour mills in which many Dalit women work as daily wage earners. Brick manufacturing at small scale is also carried out. Around 5-7 Dalits are in government jobs, one girl is in Delhi police.

As per the data from the Patwari, total area of the village is 804 hectares, Dalits own 0.973 hectares, about 0.3890 hectare is the Muslim graveyard land, pasture land is about 1.505 hectares, and government bagh are 30-35 bighas.

In the Vidhan Sabha election BJP got maximum votes, second number was that of BSP and third was SP and Congress combine. Presently Shiv Kumar, a Dalit is the Pradhan of the village, who got elected last year defeating his Rajput rival by 30 votes. Before last year it was a reserved constituency and another Dalit, Naresh Kumar was the Pradhan then. The village has separate bastis for the upper and the lower castes. The Dalit basti is at one end of the village bordering Maheshpur. When travelling from the side of Maheshpur, one encounters the Dalit houses and a Ravidas temple right at the beginning of Shabbirpur.

Apparently Shiv Kumar managed to win the election because Rajput votes got divided between too many Rajputs in the fray. Shiv Kumar's election has not gone down well amongst the Rajputs. There is a lot of resentment against this Pradhan, who is both economically and politically strong with his family owning about 80 Bighas of land and a brick kiln and having connections in Bahujan Samaj Party.

b) The Incident

The incident occurred in the morning of 5th May, as the Rajputs organised a celebration ostensibly on the occasion of the Jayanti of Maharana Pratap, a Rajput warrior. The celebration had been organized in the Shimlana village where the Rajputs had gathered in large numbers from nearby villages and from as far as Haryana. It is claimed that a Minister from the Yogi cabinet Suresh Rana and BJP MLA from Haryana Shyam Singh Rana were also present there. A procession had been taken out to commemorate the Jayanti through the Shabbirpur village by the Thakurs which passed through the Dalit basti on its way to Shimlana. The procession did not have police permission. Violence erupted in the course of the procession.

It appears that the Dalits of Shabbirpur village were aware of Rajputs gathering in large numbers and suspecting trouble, the village Pradhan had, a night before, informed the police and the administration. The procession started and marched through the Rajput basti to the Dalit basti and it stopped in front of the Ravi Das temple. They apparently started hurling abuses at the Dalits and their deity, Saint Ravidas and played loud music. The Pradhan called the Station Officer (SO) again and the police arrived. The police had some conversation with the Rajputs and made them stop the music. Few Dalits also claimed that when the scuffle started with abuses, some stones were hurled by the Rajputs at the Dalits, who also threw stones back at them. A stone hit the police jeep which angered the SO. The police left after that and the music had been stopped.

In a few minutes the police came back and thousands of people on bikes and other vehicles

followed the police. There was a crowd of around 5000 people in the age group of 18 – 30, without any leader. The crowd gathered in a field right behind the Dalit houses. They wore saffron turbans and reportedly carried swords, guns and petrol in bottles and sloganeered 'Jai Shree Ram', 'Maharana Pratap ki Jai'.

According to the Dalits, a young man called Sumit Rajput, entered the Ravidas temple, peed near the statue and attacked it with a sword which broke the fingers of the Ravidas statue and threw it down. The PUDR team did see the desecrated temple, with damaged statue and its broken glass case. The damage to the statue could have been the result of it being thrown on the floor or being attacked by a sword. A huge torn photograph of Ravidas was lying close by. There was a clear attempt to offend and instigate the Dalits.

It is worth mentioning that the boy who died in the clash was from RasoolpurTonk village, which is a village located around 25-30 km from Shabbirpur, close to that of the present BJP MLA, Brijesh Singh. As per the Dalits, this boy fell on the ground and became unconscious while coming out of the temple. He was shifted to the hospital, where he was declared brought dead. How exactly Sumit died is not clear, but his death sparked a rumour that a Rajput boy had been killed by Dalits. Rajputs maintain that the boy was hit by a stone or a brick. Later, when the post mortem report came out, it cited the cause of death as asphyxiation. As per news reports an explanation for this is that the sacks of grain stored in the temple must have caught fire and the smoke would have caused his death.

With the rumour, however, the crowd gathered at Shabbirpur became more violent and started pelting stones, hurling bricks at the Dalits, resorted to arson, chased and attacked Dalits with naked swords. More than 40 Dalit houses were attacked, looted and set on fire, their house hold goods, vehicles (cycle, bikes), cattle were burnt and in some cases also forcibly taken away. Some of the shops were looted and burnt. Two Dalit families run autos, their autos were severely damaged. Four motorcycles of guests of a family, gathered for a wedding were burnt. PUDR team witnessed burnt dilapidated houses, broken and burnt vehicles, destroyed and looted shops, burnt godowns and some sacks of grains, etc. Some shops owned by Dalits were also burnt in the neighbouring Maheshpur village.

Fire brigade and ambulance were stopped at Maheshpur and not allowed to reach the village. The mayhem continued for 4 to 5 hours and it occurred in presence of the police. According to local journalists, while all this was happening, media persons were stopped from entering the village.

Around 1 pm, more police force reached the village together with the higher police and administrative officers like the CO, DSP, and the SDM etc. They finally controlled the crowd and marched the Rajputs out of the village. Thirteen Dalits including the Pradhan and his son, were seriously injured and had to be shifted to Saharanpur hospital.

The source of tension according to the Dalits: A discussion with the Dalits revealed that the village did not have a history of caste tensions. Though caste discrimination existed in latent ways, no clash of this kind had ever occurred. They had always celebrated Ambedkar and Ravidas Jayanti, but there had been tensions ever since the Ravidas temple was formed. Things began to worsen of late with the election of the Dalit sarpanch last year on an unreserved seat. Dalits feel that this defeat and loss of power and status, had sowed the seed of trouble. They also reported that this was the first time that Rana Pratap Jayanti was being celebrated. The phenomenon is clearly taking shape with Adityanath becoming the CM.

On 14th April 2017, Dalits wanted to celebrate Ambedkar Jayanti by placing a statue of Ambedkar inside the Ravidas temple. Before the statue could be placed, few Rajputs complained to the police and the police intervened and objected to the placing of the statue inside the temple without administrative permission. The Dalits conceded and the statue was not placed even though the statue was to be placed inside their own temple. This attempt of placing their political idol in the village, which obviously was seen as an act of political assertion by the Dalits aggravated the Rajputs' anger, who were already stressed after being defeated by a Dalit in the sarpanch election. Dalits felt that the 5th May incident had been planned as a vengeance by Rajputs to show the Dalits 'their place'.

Dalits claimed that most Rajput families from the village participated in the procession and attack and moreover they had invited their associates and acquaintances from other villages for this purpose. For instance, the Pradhan of Maheshpur village, member of zilapanchayat Nakli Singh were also there amongst the attackers.

Dalits also allege to have heard the police telling the Rajputs that they have one-one and half hours to do whatever they want. Dalits accept that they also hurled bricks and stones to defend themselves. They also claim that there were very few men around because most of them had gone for work. Following the Shabbirpur incident, the Dalits claimed that most Dalit families fled fearing another attack by the upper caste and the inability of the administration in protecting them. They said they have not been going for work in the fields of the Rajputs and at their flour mills. They were thus absolutely uncertain about the future.

The version of the Rajput community: Rajputs of the village were largely reluctant to talk to the PUDR team. They said that they did not know what exactly happened that day as all of them were out in the fields. They insisted that they were neither aware of the Rana Pratap Jayanti being organised, nor were they invited for the same. People from other villages had come and they also provoked the Rajputs from Shabbirpur to join the attack, but according to the families here, none joined. On probing, however, few opened up and said that some young boys from the village, hardly 7-8, were also part of the procession, but none engaged in violence and they were there only to participate in the celebration.

Members from the extended family of Sumit claimed that he had come to take his paternal aunt for some medical treatment and not for participating in the Jayanti celebration. They suspected that as the violence broke out, someone hit him with a stone, died and he never reached home.

In conversations with the Rajput families, it was apparent that though they were consciously distancing themselves from the May 5th incident, but the caste divide between the two communities was an underlined source of trouble. Rajputs alleged that the Dalits started the stone pelting. They even came up with an absurd accusation that the Dalits torched their own houses. They believed that the real bone of contention was the Pradhan. They said 'usi ne ladai karwai', that he favoured the Dalits. They gave street lights being put up in Dalit basti as an example of this. They also claimed that the Pradhan won as he distributed sweaters etc. a day before the elections. They also corroborated that the Dalits have stopped working for them, and they are therefore forced to get workers from outside.

Administration's version: The village patwari, Nathi Ram is also a Dalit. He was present in the village during the 5th May incident. He gave a detailed account of the sequence of event to the PUDR team. He talked about the desecration of the Ravidas temple and statue, arson,

looting, stone pelting and violent attack with swords on Dalits by the Rajputs, about the prior information given to the administration by the Pradhan and the stone pelting by Dalits in self-defence. However, being a government employee, he made guarded statements about the role of the administration. He said the police had hardly any number with 3-4 officials and hence could not do anything. They did fire in the air, but it had no impact. They had no option but to be a mute spectator or else the crowd could have attacked them as well.

The Senior Sub-inspector, at the Badgaon PS and other policemen present there were quite categorical in saying that violence was resorted to by the Rajputs but the Dalits both initiated and caused it. The Sub-inspector said the Dalits started pelting stones and even hit the police vehicle. The Rajputs, according to the police retaliated later. The police version was in line with that of the Rajputs of the village.

The administration had a common ground to explain the situation - an angry mob went out of control and the police force was inadequate to deal with it and they would have been lynched themselves had they intervened. The 'helplessness' of the police cited was far too disturbing.

We were told that nine FIRs were filed into the incident from both the sides and 17 people – 9 Rajputs and 8 Dalits were arrested. The police however refused to give the names of the arrested Rajputs. Dalits in the village said that none of the Rajputs were arrested and the SP ex MLA, Maviya Ali also claimed that all the arrested Rajputs were freed the same day as there was a strong protest led by the BJP MLA Brajesh Singh for their release. Media reports however suggest that even Rajputs are in custody.

c) Aftermath

As mentioned earlier 13 Dalits were seriously injured in the attack on 5th May. They were all admitted to the Saharanpur hospital and one of them, son of the Pradhan was subsequently referred to and shifted to Dehradun on account of the seriousness of his injuries.

Nine FIRs have been registered in the case so far. The first three FIRs registered on the first day were all registered on the complaints of the Rajputs under common charges of S 144, 148, 149, 307, 504, 506 IPC. In these three FIRs together 24 Dalits have been named including the Pradhan, along with over 200 unknowns. The fourth FIR was registered by a journalist Ashok Kundil against the Pradhan and other Dalits on similar charges. The police did not reveal the names of those who have been named except for the Pradhan.

The fifth FIR was registered by a Dalit against the Rajputs in which 40 Rajputs have been named along with 200 others unnamed. The charges are under S. 147, 148, 149, 395, 295, 354, 436, 323 IPC along with the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.

The sixth FIR was registered by the police against members of both communities on charges under S 147, 148, 149, 307, 356, 332, 427, 435 IPC. The police officials at Badgaon PS refused to give names of the accused in this FIR.

Last three FIRs were registered by the Dalits against the Rajputs under similar sections as that of the fifth FIR. In these three FIRs- 20 Rajputs in the seventh, 12 in the eighth, and 33 in the ninth and the last FIR have been named by the Dalit complainants along with over 100 others. As mentioned earlier 17 people had been arrested by 9th may, more arrests were made later. On 4th June, the village head Shiv Kumar and three other dalits were arrested for

violent incidents of 5th May.

A compensation of Rs. 15 lakhs was paid to the family of the deceased youth on 13th May. But no compensation till now has been given to the Dalits for the injuries suffered by them or for the huge damage to their properties. The compensation amounts between 35 thousand to 50 thousand was being deliberated upon for Dalit families. A member of the administration on condition of anonymity told us that the amount has been kept meagerly low as most administrative and police official belong to the upper castes who are resisting any form of relief to the Dalits of Shabbirpur.

On 9th May Bheem Army EktaManch, a Saharanpur based organisation of Dalit youth called for a mahapanchayat in SantRavidasChhatrawas in Saharanpur town. This panchayat was called to demand adequate compensation for the Dalit families affected by the violence on 5th May and action against the Rajputs responsible for it. All organisations working for the rights of Dalits were invited. Thousands of protestors gathered for the panchayat. The administration tried to prevent the panchayat by imposing Section 144 IPC. The organisers, who claim to have informed the District Magistrate about the meeting in advance, shifted the venue to Gandhi Park. However as soon as the meeting began, the police started lathi charge on the peaceful assembly. Thereafter the protestors got agitated and resorted to arson. A police post at Ramnagar and few vehicles were burnt. Around 31 Dalits were promptly arrested for these incidents.

There has been a crackdown on the Bheem Army since that day. Five of its activists were arrested on 20th May on charges of instigating communal violence and under various sections of the IT Act. Three others including its head Chandrashekhar have been booked apparently for holding a protest against the administration and trying to create an atmosphere of violence by instigating people. On 6th June, police obtained a court order to delete five facebook pages of the Bheem Army and on 8th June Chandrashekhar was arrested from Dalhousie.

IV. DALIT ASSERTION, CASTE DOMINATION AND COLLUSIVE ADMINISTRATION

a) The Caste Divide:

The attack on the Dalits of Shabbirpur is yet another example of the aggressive intolerance of the upper castes towards the political assertion and upward mobility of Dalits. The Rajputs of the village are economically more powerful than the Dalits, owing to the big land holdings. Though many Dalits work as agriculture labourers, some are doing fairly well with some amount of cultivable land. The Dalits of the village seemed aware of their rights and also a bit organised. A Ravidas temple, celebration of Ravidas and Ambedkar Jayanti every year and above all a Dalit getting elected as a Pradhan on an unreserved seat are all indicative of consolidation of political power, which obviously is not acceptable to the Rajputs. Another cause of their resentment is the economic status and political clout of the Pradhan, whose family apparently owns some land and a brick kiln and who has some connections in the BSP.

The design of the attack is to ruin the Dalits economically and pull them back to where they

would have started long back. The Rajputs of the village have successfully achieved their goal. The extent of losses that the Dalits have suffered and the state's denial to compensate the same will break them economically.

Another cause of resentment amongst the upper caste, here the Rajputs, is the presence of Bheem Army. This is an organisation, that came into existence some two years back, is organising Dalits to fight for their rights, and has over 40,000 members in seven states. The organisation has a substantial presence in Saharanpur. Though empowerment of Dalits through education is their main agenda, they have also played a role in protecting Dalits from caste atrocities. This must therefore be providing some strength to the Dalits and hence would be an eye sore for Rajputs. An attack of this kind is an attempt to strike terror in the minds of Dalits and shake their will to assert.

The administration also seems to have joined hands with the Rajputs and the state government to weaken the Dalit mobilisation, defame the Bheem Army and cracking down on its activists is also part of the agenda. The SSP Subhash Chandra Dubey recently branded the organisation and its activists as Naxalites, who unlike Ambedkar believe only in violence.

b) Role of the administration

The 5th May incident in Shabbirpur is not that of a clash between the two castes namely the Rajputs and Dalits as is projected by the administration and some sections of the media. It was rather an organised attack on Dalits by a mob of thousands of Rajputs with the active support of the administration.

The administration has acted in a partisan manner from the beginning itself. When the Dalits wanted to place a statue that too inside their own temple, the police intervened and objected. When Rajputs celebrated Jayanti without any police permission, no intervention was made until violence broke out.

If we look at the sequence of the events on 5th May, it is noticeable that the police had pacified the crowd and made it leave the village. The question then arises as to what was the need for the SO to come to the village again? It is strange that thousands of people followed the police, but they failed to notice them.

The administration's plea that the police could not control the mob because their number was small compared to that of the mob is simply absurd because 1) the Pradhan of the village had contacted the administration and expressed his apprehension about some untoward incident in wake of the Maharana Pratap Jayanti celebration planned by Rajputs a night before, but this prior information did not result in any deployment of police force at the village, 2) it is impossible that the police and the local administration were not aware of thousands of people gathering for the celebration just about 25 kilometers from the district headquarters, 3) Shabbirpur is not a remote village, given its proximity to the district headquarters, it was not difficult to get an additional police force, if it is the shortage of police force that made them so helpless. The fact is that the attack continued for at least 2-3 hrs and the police could not reach to prevent it. The lack of policemen is only an alibi, being used to cover its role in siding with the Rajputs because there are reports that the police had reached the village from three nearby police stations. Actually the police was there but did not act. No lathi charge, no tear gas shelling was resorted to, rather the Rajputs were given a free hand to unleash terror among Dalits with naked swords.

The administration also needs to explain as to why there wasn't an attempt to stop the procession, even though there was no permission taken for the same. Why weren't the Rajputs arrested for unlawful assembly when they started gathering initially?

The partisan and anti-Dalit attitude of the police is so clearly apparent in their eagerness to claim that the stone pelting was started by the Dalits. They need to explain as to why would a few hundred Dalits start hurling stones to a crowd of over 5000 adversarial community in the presence of police? Why did the police prevent the media from entering the village? What was there to hide?

Anti-Dalit bias of the administration is also visible from the fact that even though compensation has been given to the family of the deceased Rajput boy, there is no announcement for the payment of compensation or even the assessment of losses. The FIRs have been registered in which over 700 people (there must be common names, please check the number) are unnamed and we fear this would be used later to implicate the Dalits given the biases with which the administration has operated. Government is now using the incidents of 9th May to distract attention and for denying redressal and justice to the Dalits affected by this horrible attack.

Repeated attack: Incident of 5th May is not an isolated incident. As mentioned earlier there have been similar instances of attack on the Dalits and Muslims in the area in recent past. And with the upper caste Hindus having decided to extract maximum gains from the BJP coming to power it seems, the caste atrocities to be going to continue.

On 23rd May 2017 the BahujanSamaj Party chief, Mayawati was visiting the Shabbirpur village. According to some newspaper reports, before her visit, the Rajputs had in the morning hurled some stones at Dalit houses. It is also alleged that some Rajput houses were torched by Dalits in Shabbirpur. After Mayawati visited the Dalit families and left, a Rajput procession attacked the Dalits of Shabbirpur again with swords. Some of the reports claim the casualties to be as high as 3 but this has not been verified. The official figure of number of people died stands at one. A compensation of Rs 15 lakh has been announced for family of this dalit boy, who was beaten to death and Rs. 50,000 each for injured. Thereafter on 25th May, the SSP, SC Dubey and DM, NP Singh were suspended and the DIG, NP Aggarwal and DC, JK Shahi were transferred for having failed to control the eruption of violence. Also 24 people from Thakur community were arrested. However, eight of them were released by court on 15th June, on the recommendation of the SIT constituted to investigate the incidents of violence between 5th May to 23rd May.

The repeated attack on the Dalits has to be understood against the background of two particular developments in the past. Firstly, after the 5th May incident, no strict action has been taken against the Rajputs for the violence they caused. The administration's inaction only empowered them to take further steps. Secondly, in the aftermath of the Shabbirpur incident, the Dalit protest and resistance has seen unprecedented rise which has reached the national capital Delhi. In Delhi's JantarMantar a protest led by Bheem Army on 21st May mobilised over 10000 supporters who condemned the caste violence in Saharanpur. The attacks by the Rajputs on Dalits on 23rd followed. After the arrest of Chandrashekhar, her mother, Kamlesh took over as the head of Bheem Army and a protest was organized once again on 28th June at JantarMantar against the arrest. Thousands participated in the protest.



V. CONCLUSION

The casteist attacks on Dalits by members of the upper castes are on rise. The phenomenon cannot be explained independent of the Hindutva regime taking over power in the state and the new Rajput Chief Minister. While it also becomes evident that BJP is using Dalit icons like Ambedkar for political gimmicks by trying to organize Ambedkar rallies etc. but the assertion of the upper castes to subdue the Dalits is paramount. The newly started phenomenon of celebration of Maharana Pratap Jayanti is not much more than symbolism. As the Dalit assertion and political mobilization gain ascendancy, the resistance to it by the upper castes also intensifies. It is crucial to acknowledge that this reaction and counter-reaction of assertion and resistance is not new in Saharanpur or Uttar Pradesh. What is new, however, is the boosted confidence of the upper castes and the Rajputs, in particular, after the UP assembly election. Last year in Gadkauli village of Saharnpur, some Dalits had erected a board on their own property declaring 'the great Chamaar Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar Village Gadkauli'. The Thakurs of the village expectedly resisted this proclamation and complained to the administration. This was followed by the blackening of the board. The Dalits, however, refused to completely bow down and involved the Bheem Army in the matter. This was followed by a Dalit protest against the local administration, stones were pelted and some Dalits were also lathi charged by the police. The protest, however, managed to secure a compromise, the police withdrew and 'The Great Chamaars' board was re-erected.

The timeliness of this incident is crucial to point out how things have changed with the UP elections and the kind of aggression being practiced by the upper caste Hindutva brigade and the amount of legal impunity and administrative support they are enjoying. With the increasing support from political establishment caste and communal violence is expected to rise. Sporadic attempts by the members of the administration to resist the caste and communal chauvinism of this brigade have been met with severity. For instance, during the Dudhli procession when the SSP Luv Kumar tried to interrupt it and in its aftermath named the BJP MP Lakhanpal Sharma in the FIR for instigating violence, he was not only attacked by Hindutva mob but also officially transferred.

With the Bheem army being able to successfully mobilize the Dalit population of the area and also being able to communicate with the anti-Hindutva and other progressive anti-caste forces, its suppression has almost become a political necessity for the administration.

It appears that targeted caste attacks are characterising the prevailing political climate of Uttar Pradesh rendering the Dalits even more insecure and vulnerable. In the most pronounced condemnation of the existing order, over 280 Dalit families in Saharanpur have abandoned Hinduism and converted to Buddhism in last few days in the aftermath of these attacks.

PUDR DEMANDS



- 1) Action should be taken against the Rajputs responsible for the violent incidents as per the law, without any caste biases.
- 2) Adequate compensation should be immediately given to those injured in the violence of 5th May in Shabbirpur village.
- 3) Losses incurred by the Dalits of Shabbirpur, Maheshpur and other villages affected by the violent incidents of 5th and 23rd May should be properly estimated and compensated immediately as per the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.
- 4) Enquiry should be initiated to against police and administrative officials for negligence and inaction.

Recent PUDR Reports

- Life's Not Good: Work Conditions and Unionisation at LG Electronics in Greater Noida (2016)
- Life and Death at AIIMS: A Report on Construction Accidents and the Course of Justice (2016)
- CDRO Campaign for Release of Political Prisoners (CDRO, 2016)
- Harvesting Death: Massacres in Bihar and the Question of Justice (2016)
- Rishipal's Death: The Cost of Friendship in Anti-Dalit Haryana (2016)
- State of Siege: Report on Encounters and Cases of Sexual Violence in Bijapur and Sukma Districts of Chhattisgarh (CDRO and WSS, 2016)
- Dead Wrong: Why was Dhananjay Chatterjee Hanged? (2015)
- The Murder of Yakub Abdul Hassan Shaikh: A conspiracy of silence between Toyota Shinrai management and the police department (Joint Report with CPDR, BBA and JKM, 2015)
- TAILOR-MADE LIVES: Accidents and Discontent among the Garment Industry Workers in UdyogVihar, Haryana (2015)
- BANNED AND DAMNED: SIMI's Saga with UAPA Tribunals (2015)
- War and the Lightness of Being Adivasi: Security camps and villages in Bijapur, Chhattisgarh (2015)
- Sexual Assault on Four Girls in Haryana in the Context of Dalit Rights to Common Land (Joint report with AFDR and WSS, 2014)
- Crimes of Habit: A Report on Custodial Torture in Vijay Vihar Police Station (2014)
- In the name of Science and Public Health: Concerns about the Safety of Pentavalent Vaccine (2014)
- Fake Encounters in Odisha: How the State Picks, Arrests and Kills Its 'Maoists' (CDRO, 2013)
- DRIVING FORCE: Labour Struggles and Violation of Rights in Maruti Suzuki India Limited (2013)
- LIVING IN THE SHADOW OF TERROR: People's Lives and Security Operations in Jharkhand (CDRO, 2013)
- DAMS, DEVELOPMENT AND THE NORTH EAST: A Report on the Peoples' Resistance to Mega Dams in the Brahmaputra and Barak Valley (CDRO, 2013)
- A Death Most Foul: The Unnatural Death of Naim Ahmad in Tihar Jail (2013)

For copies of these reports write to pudrdelhi@gmail.com

Published by People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR)

For Copies: Write to pudrdelhi@gmail.com

Printed at Progressive Printers, A21 Jhilmil Industrial Area, G T Road, Shahdra, Delhi: 1100095

Website: www.pudr.org

Suggested Contribution: Rs. 10/-

