Too poor to file a case: Surjit's father

Contributed by Correspondent

Sunday, 06 July 2008

The death of a Dalit schoolboy in Himachal Pradesh has angered Dalits. He was beaten by his teacher and the kin of an upper class girl to whom he wrote verses. The case is not progressing as his parents are too poor and backward to put up a fight.

The death of a 16-year-old Dalit school boy in Himachal Pradesh has shocked the people of Una district. The Dalit people are up in arms against the incident and the way the situation is being handled both by the police and the people of higher castes.

Surjit, a [10th grade] student died after he was beaten up by an upper caste teacher in Nangal Kalan government high school of Una district, Himachal Pradesh for writing a verse in appreciation of an upper caste girl.

The political heat has also started simmering over the case and the issue has now taken a political overtone. Local Congressman said he would ensure justice to the family. The school headmaster expressed his ignorance about the incident saying he was out of school on that day.

The village [leader] alleged that the boy was beaten up by his school teacher in the high school in public. Classmates of the deceased reported when the teacher came to know about Surjit’s love poem, he caned him till he almost dropped dead. One student said Surjit had died after being beaten up by his teacher. His crime was that he had allegedly written a love letter in verse to a school girl belonging to an upper caste.

The accused teacher is on leave and inaccessible. The ordeal of the deceased did not end at the school alone, as he was again beaten up by the family members of the girl. The deceased was later found semi-conscious and taken to the hospital but succumbed to his injuries. The post-mortem report is awaited to establish what caused the boy’s death. The police have not revealed any motive behind his unnatural death.

Local politicians have sought an inquiry into the incident as the police appear to be siding with the upper caste family and the teacher.

After the cremation of Surjit, a strange silence prevails in the village and some villagers say the accused teacher is now trying to compromise with Surjit’s family members. Pressure has been made by giving a hefty amount to his parents. Local Dalits maintain that it is a serious issue and must be investigated.

However, others say the Dalits are unnecessarily raking up this issue. According to villagers, the deal was settled for ($4,814.64.] The poor parents have been compensated for the death of their child.

The government leader pressed Surjit’s father not to sign the deal. However, poverty and pressure from influential people seemed to have weighed heavy on the mind of the poor. She also revealed that the accused teacher came before the government and admitted his mistake. I feel bad about it. “Being a part of the government, I have no option but to bow before the decision of others,” she added.

The father of the deceased, a laborer, said he was a poor person and did not have resources to fight the case in the court. “How can I think of filing a case? I have no money.” His mother was inconsolable. She blamed the school teacher for the death of her son. However, she was keeping quiet on the issue after a deal was struck between the family and the teacher.

On the other hand, the superintendent of police, when asked why no case had been registered in this regard, said: The police were still investigating the case. He said since the police had received no complaint, a report was not registered. However, the police were investigating the case under Section 174 of the criminal procedure code. The superintendent of police said he had not yet seen the copy of post-mortem report.

However, the doctors said though there were blunt injury marks on the body, they concluded that none of them were fatal. The cause of death could only be ascertained after the chemical examination of viscera. The local congressman, was upset over the incident and wanted the matter probed.

(Source: merrinews.com dated 06 July 2008)