

NARAYANPATNA

Ordeal of a Tribal Girl

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NARRATION BY A MINOR tribal girl of about 14 years: On the night of 19th April 2011, at 3 am four security personnel kicked and broke open the door of my paternal uncle's (badabapa) home in Taladeka-padu village of Narayanpatna Panchayat under the same block in Koraput district in south Orissa. They entered our home and focused torch light on me and my uncle's daughter and then went to the other room and found my maternal uncle's (mama) son, Ganganna Sirika, sleeping alone.

The security personnel woke us up and began questioning in Hindi. Seeing the men, my uncle's daughter fled the home. But I could not escape and was caught by the security personnel. They caught Ganganna and tied his hands and mouth with clothes lying in the room and blindfolded him. They did the same to me after forcibly stealing my gold earrings and three nose rings. They began asking me for money and when I said I do not have any money, they beat me with a stick and slapped me repeatedly. Then while one man watched the broken entrance door, one held Ganganna in the other room and one held my legs down and the fourth one sexually assaulted me. Then one by one they took turns to rape me while they took turns to hold Ganganna. This whole act continued for about an hour after which they left the house. They were from the security forces because they spoke in Hindi and one among the four was wearing a military uniform.

Before leaving, they threatened me with dire consequences and death if I complained to police or shared anything with anyone else. After they left, Ganganna came and I could realize that he untied my blindfold, mouth gag and my hands with his mouth. He asked me what had happened but I did not tell him anything. He went out to call my parents. My parents were sleeping in the small temporary hut near our agriculture fields. (During the harvesting seasons, tribals build temporary huts near their agriculture fields in order to protect their crops from being eaten by wild animals). For three days I could not step out of my home as I was in a lot of pain. (However, on being asked, she confirmed she had no internal bleeding). As narrated by Ganganna Sirika, (about 12 years) : Four security personnel entered my uncle's home by breaking open the door with kicks. They caught me by the neck and tied my hands and gagged my mouth with a cloth and blindfolded me. Then they began to beat me with a thick stick on my back. They held me very tightly and I could realize they were taking turns to hold me. After about an hour, they left and when everything was quite, I managed to loosen my mouth gag and slip it enough to be able to open my mouth. I went to the other room and found my sister. I untied her hands, her mouth gag and blindfold. I asked her what happened but she did not tell me anything. I went out to their fields and called her parents.

Narrated by girl's maternal uncle Kiya Sirika : Out of fear she did not tell anything of what happened to anyone, not even her parents. But since villagers knew the police had entered their village on the night of 19th April 2011 and we saw that she was not able to get up from her cot or walk we realized she might have been raped because such incidents have been happening in many villages near Taladekapadu. We tried to ask her and even her parents

tried to find out but she would not say anything. Meanwhile Ganganna narrated whatever had happened to him and we were almost certain that the minor tribal girl might have been raped by all four security personnel. I asked many senior men in our village about what should be done and they suggested we meet some lawyer in Koraput and file a case against the security personnel.

I tried to convince the minor tribal girl's parents to file a case and take the matter to the police but they were too afraid of police and the expenses involved in fighting a case. But we had a meeting in our village and decided to go to a lawyer first before going to the police. We have realized that if we do not raise our voice then we will face even more violence and repression (daman was the word he used). This is the third time our village is witnessing brutal assault by the security personnel. On 11th February, at about 1 am at night they had attacked my temporary hut in my field and stole 15 of my chickens and Rs 2500/-. They also attacked Benu Sirika's hut and stole 10 of his chickens and Rs 5000/-. They also beat our wives when they tried to stop the security personnel from beating me. They took us to Narayanpatna Police Station and kept us there till morning. At 10 am they let me go but took Benu to Koraput. He is now in Koraput jail. Before that in February 2011 they had entered our village and beaten members of one family and stolen their gold ornaments. But this is the first time such an incident has happened.

From the three attacks on our village and from attacks that have taken place in other villages like Dumsil, Basnaput, Palaput, Podapadr, etc we have realized that the Shanti Committee members are helping the police in identifying homes of supporters of *Chasi Mulia Adivasi Sangha* (CMAS) and giving information to the police about many of us and also indentifying us. Some tribal people from our village and from nearby villages have become members of the Shanti Committee. It is very sad and makes us angry to think that our own people are spying on us and betraying us. Similar incidents were happening in our nearby villages like Dumsil, Basnaput, Palaput, Podapadar, etc but they kept raising their voice against these attacks by the security forces. Gradually now the forces have stopped attacking these villages. We realize that we must also raise our voice against this violence.

Action taken till now : The minor tribal girl filed a complaint through registered post with AD to Koraput Superintendent of Police as she was afraid to go to Narayanpatna Police Station fearing threat to her life and that of Ganganna and parents. Ganganna has also filed a complaint before Koraput Superintendent of Police by registered post with AD. Copies have been sent to Chairperson of NCPDR, New Delhi, Orissa Human Rights Commission and Orissa State Women's Commission, DIG, South-Western Region and Home Secretary, Government of Orissa. The Superintendent of Police now needs to register a case and file an FIR. Further action would be to go to Orissa High Court with a case if no action is taken.

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