

JHARKHAND

Will Anna Get Justice?

Gladson Dungdung

On March 14, 2011, more than a thousand domestic workers, especially women along with their children, gathered near Albert Ekka Chauck, Ranchi, the capital city of Jharkhand, in demand of justice for Anna, a domestic worker who had died in a suspicious case. They started shouting slogans and began their march towards the office of Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Ranchi. They were shouting slogan "Anna Ko Nyay Do" (Give justice to Anna). They reached to collector's office at 3 O'clock in the afternoon. The police locked the entrance gate of the office. They were stopped at the gate. K K Sone, a well known IAS officer who is in the charge of Deputy Commissioner of Ranchi, seeing the crowd rush towards his office, he ran away after assigning the job to the Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) for controlling, convincing and sending the crowd back. The women were sent back with the promise of hearing their plea.

Of course, this is a regular practice in this country, the so-called largest democracy of the world. The legislative, the executive and the judiciary—all of them become, deaf and dumb whenever the marginalized people of this country demand for justice. When people approach the officers, they run away and also protect the culprits. When people ask for an appointment to the Governors they simply deny and when people approach the Chief Ministers, they do not have time for hearing. Where should people go to plea for justice? However, all of them spare ample of time for the corporate delegates, contractors and bigwigs. Can anybody tell where these women should go and plea for justice in the corporate Indian State?

Anna was a domestic worker, who had been working in the house of Jharkhand High Court Lawyer Vikram Sinha in Ranchi for last five years. She died on March 5, 2011 and since then Vikram Sinha has been attempting to convert this case as a result of an accident and the police and administration providing him the required support. According to the lawyer, Anna's feet slipped and fell down from the balcony of his 3rd floor house while she was collecting the dry clothes at 7:30 PM. However, the fact is, there was no rope hung in the balcony which means they used to dry their wet clothes on the railing, which is 3 feet high. In that case no one can fall down unless one crosses the railing. In this case, there is no chance of crossing the railing. It should be also noted that at 7:30 PM, it gets very dark in Ranchi—therefore hardly anyone dries or collects the clothes in the balcony at this time. Of course, this is a crucial time to convert a suspicious death case into an accident.

According to Vikram Sinha, after hearing the sound of something falling, he came out to balcony and looked down. After seeing the maid in the ground, he went down and saw Anna writhing, throbbing and bleeding - therefore he immediately took her to the hospital. However, the night guard Sujan Mahto, who was present in the spot, has a completely different version. According to him, after falling down from balcony, there was no movement in Anna's body and she didn't even utter a single voice, which clearly means she had already died in the house and her dead body was thrown down with clear intention to convert this case into an accident. After getting instruction from lawyer, the guard washed the spot with water, which clearly means the lawyer destroyed the evidence. Why did he ask to wash the spot when he has nothing to do with the ground, since he lives in the 3rd floor?

At the beginning, lawyer Vikram Sinha had said that Anna comes from Oraon Adivasi community and her father's name was stated as "Etwā Oraon", resident of Rania in Khunti

district. When the police failed to trace the address, the second story was put forth that Anna was from Munda community and her father's name was told as "Etwa Horo", resident of Goilkera in West Singhbhum district. Finally, on 16 March, 2011, the Ranchi police brought Etwa Kandulna, resident of Jamang Kasambar of Sonua block in West Singhbhum district of Jharkhand, after identifying him as the father of Anna and the dead body was handed over to him, which was lying in the RIMS for last 12 days. Ironically, Anna's father does not want justice for her daughter but he merely wants the unpaid wage of Anna to be paid to him. He does not even want compensation from the government. Have police made him a fake father?

Anna's perhaps fake father Etwa Kandulna has given statements in favour of the lawyer in presence of the police saying, "Lawyer is a gentle man and he has not killed his daughter; therefore he'll not file a case against him". Interesting, he knows about the lawyer whom he has never met. The questions that come into one's mind are, is it possible for a father to be reluctant in demand of justice for his daughter, whom he has lost? Can a father protect the killer of his daughter? And does Anna's mother have the same views on Anna's case? Nothing has been said about her mother so far. Indeed, the police has influenced, manipulated and manufactured the consent in favour of the lawyer Vikram Sinha, who comes from an influential family background as his father A N Sinha is a retired judge.

Also, the lawyer Vikram Sinha made false statements one after another but still he is a gentle man for the police and administration. According to him, Anna's elder sister Rammi was working at his home but after her marriage, the lawyer deployed her sister in the job. In fact, if it was true, the lawyer should have very good relationship with the family members of Anna. However, the fact is he does not even have address of Anna. At the same time, he also accepted that a middle man Manoj had brought Anna for him. In fact, Anna was employed by lawyer when she was merely 13 year-old at the monthly wage of Rs 500. According to Anna's father she was only paid Rs 5000 once in last five years and she had never gone to her home during this period. This is a clear case of a child trafficking. Anna was bought by the lawyer through the middle man and put in the job as child and bonded labourer.

According to the Senior Superintendent of Police, Pravin Kumar no evidence was found regarding the exploitation of Anna. Ironically, the police also provided protection to the family of lawyer. On the other hand, political leaders Karuna Jha, Asrita Kujur and Usha Xalxo were arrested for demanding justice for Anna.

Another interesting point to be noted is, there are numbers of organizations like ATSEC (Action against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children), bagging huge money in the name of protection and welfare of the domestic workers, are just mum on the matter. What does it mean? However, few organizations like National Domestic Workers' Welfare Trust, Jharkhand Domestic Workers Union, Adivasi Domestic Workers Association, Jharkhand Indigenous People's Forum and All India Progressive Women Association protested in the streets in demand of justice though it was denied.

Of course, justice has almost been denied to Anna. However, this case has proved that when the bigwig commits even the heinous crime like murder is also not a crime for them. But when the marginalized people demand for justice, it is a crime in the corporate Indian democratic setup. This is a crucial case of denial of justice to the marginalized of this country and protection to the criminals of elite class, who enjoy impunity every way. Perhaps, the question that will remain unanswered is whether Anna will get justice? And how many Annas will be assaulted, raped and murdered by the elite criminals, who run the Indian corporate democratic country? □□□

[courtesy : www.sanhati.com]