

Condemn the Lynching of Zafar

Lynching of Zafar Hussein in Rajasthan on June 16, 2017 is one more instance of brutal, inhuman and cruel acts being committed non-stop in one corner or other of the Country under BJP's rule under one name or other including the so called Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA) and Campaign against Open Defecation.

Here are the related facts: Zafar Hussein, a resident of Bagwasa Kachchi Basti, Mahtab shah colony, Pratapgarh, Rajasthan, an activist of CPI (ML) Liberation and the leader of Rajasthan Nirman Mazdoor Sangathan had been spear-heading the efforts for years to get the basti regularised and to achieve basic sanitation and water facilities for the Basti. Being a Basti of poor people, it lacks toilets-private or community and every day it will be a tortuous but unavoidable exercise for the people of the basti, especially women to find a proper place for defecation. Zafar and his comrades were very much concerned about this problem. More horrible scene for them was, the people seen defecating in the open were being stoned, chased, photographed, shamed and bullied in a most dehumanising way. Moved by this unbearable indignity meted to poor people, Zafar wrote to Pratapgarh Municipality with an appeal to stop all this harassment forthwith and make public and functional toilets available to the people. On June 14, 2017, he led a delegation to the District Collector. They waited for hours but the Collector found no time to meet the delegation. Next day, the people's delegation went to see the Municipal Commissioner. He too refused to accept the Memo-randum. Next morning, the Municipal Commissioner went to Kachchi basti only to incite the people against Zafar. Zafar's young school-going daughter Sabaz remembers him telling his men (RSS)' *Maaro isey, bahut neta banta hai ye* . ' (Thrash him, he thinks he is a big leader) The result was as it can be. Zafar was beaten to death. We can remember that some time back, the BJP govt. had declared that it will free Rajasthan from open defecation practice by the end of 2017. The way Kachchi basti people were treated and the way Zafar's life was put to an end seem to be one of their ways to realise their aim.

This incident was widely condemned. The Rajasthan govt. had set itself on two pronged damage control measures. The Chief Minister has said that it was an 'unfortunate demise'. The govt. managed to produce a post-mortem report to the effect that the death was due to 'cardiac arrest'. The Govt. offered a compensation of 2 lakhs to Zafar's wife. On the other hand, the Municipal Commissioner filed a complaint against Zafar for obstructing the officials from discharging their duties. The people of basti were threatened with more dire actions if they won't change their attitude. But the people stood firm by their demands. Rashida, wife of Zafar rejected the compensation. Zafar's family and the basti people demand: Action against Zafar's killers and the instigators; regularisation of whole Kachchi basti; construction of toilets for all and ban on harassment and humiliation of poor in the name of SBA.

The BJP regime in India made the so called SBA and the campaign against open defecation into a convenient propaganda tool to evade the responsibility of rulers to ensure clean and safe environment, sanitation, hygienic toilet system for the people, siphon off the funds spent in the name of abhiyans like SBA and divert the people's attention from the anti-people policies of the ruling classes. The methods of campaign are not educative and convincing, but are increasingly assuming coercive, humiliating and ugly forms. At several places, the police and govt. personnel were instructed to form vigilante mobs to patrol villages at dawn and dusk to harass and bully the people who defecate in the open. These mobs are asked to whistle, cat-call, clap, photograph/ videograph when they are defecating. These mobs grab the lotas (Mugs) and raise slogans. In one instance in Ujjain (MP) the municipal officials have beaten up one elderly man and forced him to clean his faeces with his own hands. The Deputy Commissioner of Ujjain Municipal Corporation, Sunil Shah has uploaded the video this entire degrading scene in WhatsApp group. Similarly, in October, 2017, in Maharajpur village in Rajnandgaon district, Chhattisgarh Vipu Sahu was dragged out of his home, beaten and stabbed to death by a mob on the plea that he had delayed the construction of toilet in his home. The list is lengthy and the brutalities committed may differ in form and intensity.

Thus the Indian rulers are punishing the masses of poor people for the callous attitude and utter failure of the ruling classes themselves in providing the basic facilities for the people. This is a monumental crime. The methods chosen and the kind of the forces deployed to culturally 'uplift' and impart lessons in cleanliness to the people are fascistic in nature and must be opposed by one and all.
