

Chronology of Events in Sankaralingapuram Police Excesses

17th October 2001:

- ❖ Caste Hindus attack the relative of Mr. Vijayan, the candidate for the Panchayat election in the Sankaralingapuram Panchayat, with deadly weapons while they were on their way to Challisettipatti from Sankaralingapuram.
- ❖ The matter was reported to the DSP of Villathikulam. The intervention of Dalit elders brought the situation under control. The police did not arrest people who were responsible for the assault on Mr. Vijayan's relatives.

18th October 2001:

- ❖ On the day of the Elections polling had to be suspended for some time when the Caste Hindus and Dalits clashed as the caste Hindus did not allow a Dalit to vote in the booth located in their residential area.

Caste Hindu candidate Mr. Balakrishnan won the elections.

15th November 2001:

- ❖ There was a quarrel between a Dalit and a Caste Hindu, in a bus.
- ❖ Caste Hindu lodged a complaint in the Pudur police station and the same was registered by the police in Cr. No. 95/2001 u/s 294(b) and 506 (II) of IPC. The Dalit was called for inquiry to the Pudur police station. As a result of the biased approach of the police officials' Dalit women went to the area of Chettiyar community and demanded justice. There were heated arguments between the two sides following which both sides pelted stones at each other.
- ❖ After some time the Chettiyar community went to the area of Dalits at Challisettipatty with deadly weapons and attacked the Dalits and partially damaged their properties.
- ❖ When the matter was reported to the police they came to the spot and arrested only the Dalits.
- ❖ To protest against the biased actions of the police authorities Dalits plan for a ***Road Roko***

16th November 2001:

- ❖ Around 300-400 Dalits staged a road roko protesting against the biased attitude of the police without prior warning., which started at 7:45 AM at the Sankaralingapuram bus stop.
- ❖ Police lathi charged the demonstrators
- ❖ A constable Mr. Murugan belonging to the SP CID and also a caste Hindu of the Sankaralingapuram village, descended from a passing bus in mufti, joined with the police and attacked the people.
- ❖ Both sides pelted stones at each other.
- ❖ As a result of the clash, according to the police FIR Constable Murugan got injured and later on succumbed to his injuries.
- ❖ The villagers, however, did not know anything about the death of the Constable Mr. Murugan as by the time the clash started they all ran back to their village.
- ❖ **At 10:00 AM** a police battalion went to Sankaralingapuram and attacked people, causing damages to the properties. The relatives of the villagers of Sankaralingapuram living in and around Sankaralingapuram were also attacked and their properties damaged.
- ❖ The villagers ran from the village in a bid to escape from the terror.
- ❖ Later on hundreds of policemen ransacked the properties and looted money, jewels, precious articles, set fire to certificates, ration cards, pattas and other land documents of the Dalits. But four houses of the dalits, the families of which had supported the Naickers during the elections, were only slightly damaged.
- ❖ In all 66 women with their children and 52 men were arrested on different dates.
- ❖ The women were remanded to Trichy Central Jail and the men were remanded to the Palayamkottai Central Jail.

17th November 2001:

- ❖ People's Watch – Tamilnadu got the information that reaches that a police constable Thiru. Murugan died and police had unleashed terror in response.

18th & 19th November 2001:

Requests were made for People's Watch – Tamilnadu to intervene.

20th November 2001:

- ❖ PWTN got confirmed information from two Catholic priests who had visited the village around 8:00 PM with police to see their school on 19th night. They had seen that there were large scale damages to properties and houses whose doors and windows were left open with lights burning. They even saw damaged articles and household items thrown in front of the houses of Dalits.

21st November 2001:

- ❖ A People's Watch – Tamilnadu fact-finding team tried entering the villages of Sankaralingapuram and Challisetipatti. They were also accompanied by Mr. Esakki, a reporter of the Dinamani News Daily from Tuticorin. He too confirmed that the media was not allowed into the village.
- ❖ The whole team was not allowed to enter the village. On the contrary they were treated very rudely and shabbily by policemen in uniform who were without their identification badges.
- ❖ The senior police officials also refused to discuss about the incident with the fact-finding team. The team was told that they could enter the village after two days.

22nd November 2001:

- ❖ Dinamani News Daily published a report about refusal of team by the police to enter in to the two villages and photographs depicting the refusal were also taken by the reporter.
- ❖ This was the first report of a newspaper.
- ❖ People's Watch –Tamilnadu's lodged a complaint to the National Human Rights Commission and State Human Rights Commission regarding police officials denying them to enter the village.

Following the report many political party leaders from the CPI, CPM, human rights activists and NGO leaders, some Catholic priests of the area and media persons etc. tried entering the village but were not allowed to do so. Even to hold rallies / dharnas / public meetings on this issue the human rights activists and political parties were refused permission by the Tuticorin A.S.P. Mr. Arun.

23rd November 2001:

- ❖ The Inspector General of Police (Social Justice and Human Rights) Mr. Balachandran gave a press statement that there was no need for the police officials to prevent anyone from entering the two villages.

24th November 2001:

- ❖ The Catholic Bishop of Tuticorin Diocese Rev. Peter Fernando tried entering the village of Sankaralingapuram along with four other Priests and they were prevented from entering the village and told that they could not enter the village for another four (4) days!!
- ❖ Permission denied to CPM District to enter in to Sankaralingapuram.
- ❖ Complaint was sent to National Human rights Commission, National Commission for the SC/ST and the National Commission for Women by the CPI (M) District Committee Tuticorin

25th November 2001

- ❖ CPM State Secretary N. Sankariah wrote to the Chief Minister of Tamilnadu to give relief to the affected people and also to take action against the erring officials.

26th November 2001:

- ❖ Further complaints were made to the NHRC by Fax and appraising them of the tense situation and also the high handedness of the police officials who were hand in glove with the district officials;

27th November 2001:

- ❖ Telegrams were sent again to Secretary, Adi Dravida, Director, National SC/ST Commission, IG Social Justice and Human Rights and SHRC;
- ❖ Mr. Henri Tiphagne met Mr. Shanmugam, Commissioner and Director Adi Dravida Welfare and Ms Kannagi Packianathan, Director, National SC/ST Commission and brought to his attention the non-granting of permission to the media and human rights defenders and others.

28th November 2001:

- ❖ Seven (7) members of the Dalit community returned to the village
- ❖ Mr. Henri Tiphagne of People's Watch-Tamilnadu continued briefing the NHRC and the Director of the National SC/ST Commission about the continued refusal of the police to allow entry;
- ❖ Mr. Kathir, a human rights monitoring associate of People's Watch – Tamilnadu accompanied by Mr. Jeyaraman tried once again to gain entry into the two villages but was once again stopped;

29th November 2001:

- ❖ Mr. Kathir's attempt to enter the villages was once again unsuccessful inspite of him having personally met Mr. Kumar Jayant, the Collector and Mr. Sumit Charan the SP Tuticorin.
- ❖ These officials also confirmed that the Director National SC/ST Commission had infact spoken to them; the Collector confirmed that there was no statutory ban on the entry of persons into the villages;

30th November 2002:

A team led by Mr. Rajendran MLA of Kovilpatty, CPI, entered Sankaralingapuram.

1st December 2001:

- ❖ For the first time in fifteen (15) days the collector, Mr. Kumar Jayant, visited the area and announced the setting up of a peace committee so that the Dalit families could return to the village.
- ❖ The CPI team under the leadership of Mr. Rajendran which visited the village on 30-11-2001 met the Collector, of Tuticorin, DSP, RDO, and submitted a memorandum.

3rd December 2001:

- ❖ DPI President and Member of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Tirumavalavan MLA entered the village along with his supporters. Mr. Kathir who had gone along with the DPI President, was able to take photographs of the damages done by the officials in the village.

4th December 2001

- ❖ P.Sampath, State Secretariat Member of CPI (M) entered in to the village of Sankaralingapuram forcibly.

6th December 2001:

- ❖ Kalam, a human rights organization in Tirunelveli, organized a protest march in its area, Tirunelvel, as a mark of protest against the excesses and solidarity for the victims.

12th December 2001:

- ❖ A ten member team led by Mr. R. Krishnan, ex MLA and the Convenor of the Human Rights Monitoring Committee in Tirunelveli visited Sankaralingapuram and Challisettipatti. Fr. Antony Raj of DACA, Mr. M. Bharathan, Gopalan, Arumai Raj, M.A. Britto Ganesan and Alex of IDEAS, Madurai were part of the team that entered the villages videographing the damages in the two villages. The team also collected the details on the extensive damages caused.

14th December 2001:

- ❖ A group consisting of social activists, writers and PUCL members headed by Professor Mark visited the village and submitted a report on the situation there.
- ❖ Mr. R. Krishnan of the Human Rights Monitoring Committee in Tirunelveli met Justice Swami Doss, Member State Human Rights Commission and briefed him about the Sankaralingapuram incident.

16th December 2001

- ❖ A planning meeting was held at DACA, Perunkudi, Madurai in which Fr. Antony Raj, Adv. R. Krishnan, Frs. Mark, Densil, Valan, Mr. Bharathan, Mr. Gopalan, and Mr. M.A. Britto participated. A detailed discussion took place as to coordinate the relief work and legal assistance to the victims of Sankaralingapuram.

20th December 2001:

- ❖ Kalam organised a meeting in Tirunelveli and first footages of the video showing the actual damages in the village was showed there. This meeting was attended by leaders of the SC/ST Employees Associations, trade unions, and Left Parties (CPI and CPI (M)) in Tirunelveli.

21st December 2001:

- ❖ A team of Advocates led by Mr. R. Krishnan, after meeting the prisoners at the Palayamkottai Central Prison had a detailed planning meeting as regards the future course of action. The following day the team prepared bail petitions for 64 women and 54 men accused.

23rd December 2002:

- ❖ The team went to Sankaralingapuram and met the relatives of the victims (accused), briefing them about the legal intervention it had made.

28th December 2001:

- ❖ Mr. R.Krishnan of Human Rights Committee, Tirunelveli filed a complaint to the National Commission for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, National Human Rights Commission, the State Human Rights Commission and to the Regional Director, National SC/ST Commission and to Ms. Sivagami, IAS, Secretary Department of the Adi Dravida Welfare.

30th December 2001

- ❖ Three-vehicle load of relief material (20 bags of rice, vessels and clothes) collected by the various SC/ST Associations in Tirunelveli reached Sankaralingapuram. Leaders from the various SC/ST Employees Associations, Trade Unions and the team of Advocates went to Sankaralingapuram to distribute the relief materials.

31st December 2001:

- ❖ DPI president Mr. Tirumavalavan addressed a public meeting at Villathikulam
- ❖ At 8:00 PM Mr. Saathai Packiaraj, the State President of the Tamil Desam entered Sankaralingapuram village for the first time after the incident.
- ❖ Mr. Saathai Packiaraj brought back along with him eight (8) juveniles arrested in Cr.No. 96 / 01 who were released by the High court during its vacation sitting. He also brought back a pregnant woman who delivered a child subsequently three days later.

2nd January 2002:

- ❖ A Joint Coordination Committee was formed at the initiative of KALAM (AREPC). The local units of CPI, CPI (M), a host of other Dalit organizations, NGOs like Kalam, People's Watch - Tamilnadu, and also some priests of the Catholic Diocese are some of the members in this joint effort. The aim of the Committee is to help the villagers by giving them relief, legal and other assistance for their rehabilitation. It was decided that a rally would be organised followed by a Public Meeting in Tuticorin on 10-01-2002, condemning the police excesses in Sankaralingapuram.

- ❖ Mr. Esakkimuthu, District Secretary of the CPI(M) was elected as the Convenor of the Joint Coordination Committee and four member executive committee was formed to follow up the Coordination work at Tuticorin.

3rd January 2002:

A Petition was admitted in the Chennai High Court on, in WP no. 26612 / 2001. This was filed by Mr. Esakkimuthu the District Secretary of the CPI(M) party. In his petition he prayed that –

1. A judicial inquiry be conducted.
2. The victims should be given adequate compensation
3. The erring police officials should be prosecuted
4. All the false cases that have been foisted against the affected people should be withdrawn.

- ❖ DACA Perungudi supplied 10 bags of rice and cooking vessels to the victims of Sankaralingapuram.

7th January 2002

- ❖ Seven (7) of the Eight (8) children arrested are released from the Juvenile home in Palayamkottai.
- ❖ A local meeting was conducted by the Joint Coordination Committee. As permission to hold public meetings and rallies was refused by the police officials, the Committee decided to move to the Court.

8th January 2002:

- ❖ The members of the Joint Coordination Committee once again tried getting permission for the rally to be organized in Tuticorin however they are once again denied permission by the district officials.
- ❖ Mr. S.K. Mahendran, CPM MLA of Perumbur constituency visited Sankaralingapuram.

9th January 2002

- ❖ The members of the Joint Coordination Committee requested the Superintendent of Police, to grant them the permission to conduct a rally for the victims of the police excesses. The permission was not granted.

10th January 2002:

- ❖ Team of advocates from Forum for Just Laws, Chennai, visited the villages of Sankaralingapuram and Challisettipatti to get the affidavits of the persons who had managed to escape from the village at the time of the attack.
- ❖ A group under the leadership of Mr. Bharathan of HERPC KALAM visited Sankaralingapuram to scrutinize the damage done by the police. A team of ten persons from Thatha Erattamalai Srinivasan Peravai under the leadership of Mr. Thamil Iniyanian from Tiruchendur came to Sankaralingapuram with some relief materials (bags of rice and cooking vessels)

18th January 2002:

- ❖ Court gave bail orders for the release of 64 Women along with 15 children (infants).

19th January 2002

- ❖ The members of the Joint Coordination committee met Mr. Chellappan, I.A.S. Member, National Commission for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes at Tuticorin seeking immediate intervention of the Commission on the Sankaralingapuram incident. Mr. Saathai Packiaraj, President of the Makkal Desam was also present when the Committee met the Hon'ble Member.

20th January 2002:

- ❖ The victims of the Sankaralingapuram police excesses along with the members of the Joint Coordination Committee met Mr. Chellappan, I.A.S. Member, National Commission for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes at Tirunelveli.

21st January 2002:

- ❖ The members of the Joint Coordination committee met the Hon'ble Member of the National Commission for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes Mr. Chellappan and also Mrs. Kannagi Packianathan the Director of the State Commission for Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes and briefed them about the incident with a detailed report.

23 January 2002:

- ❖ Despite the bail orders having been passed on 18-01-2002 only on this day sixty-four (64) Women along with infants were released from Trichy central Prison. The released were taken to the office of the People's Watch-Tamilnadu, from where Mr. Saathai Packiaraj Mr. Bharathan along with a team of the Monitoring Associates of PW-TN took them in a bus to Sankaralingapuram.

24th and 25th January 2002

- ❖ Monitoring associates of the PWTN visited the women released from the jail in order to get the statements from them.

26th January 2002

Demonstrators were organised condemning police action in Sankaralingapuram by the CPI (M) in Muthupuram, Kovilpatty, Vilathikulam, Udangudi, Tiruchendur

28th January 2002:

- ❖ Bail order for the release of 43 men was passed by the Sessions Court, Tuticorin.

30th January 2002

- ❖ Public Meeting was organised at Nagalapuram condemning the police action at Sankaralingapuram by CPI(M)

1st February 2002:

- ❖ Forty Three (43) Men were released from the Palayamkottai Central Prison. They were taken by Mr. Bharathan and Fr. Mark along with a team of Advocates (Mr. Ganesh Kumar and Mr. Prabhakaran)

2nd February 2002:

- ❖ Monitoring Associates from the People's Watch – Tamilnadu visited the persons released from the Palayamkottai jail in order to get the statement.

6th February 2002:

- ❖ The Joint Coordination Committee meeting unanimously decided to hold a Public Hearing for the affected victims of Sankaralingapuram

15th February 2002:

- ❖ The Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes Association conducted a meeting in solidarity for the victims of the Sankaralingapuram

16th February 2002:

- ❖ Thyaghi Immanuel Peravai headed by Mr. Chandra Bose met the victims of the village and registered protest against the high handedness of the police

21st February 2002

- ❖ Rally and demonstration organised by All India Democratic Women Association and Democratic Youth Federation of India at Kovilpatty in which hundreds of women participated.

25th February 2002:

- ❖ The CPI District Secretary of the Tuticorin district Mr. Appadurai, filed a Writ Petition in the Chennai High Court in WP No. 5709 / 2002.

1st March 2002:

- ❖ Invitations to the Jury Members sent.

2nd March 2002:

- ❖ Letter from Jury Member Mr. R. Ratnaswami, Retd. Member, State Human Rights Commission, to the SP Tuticorin requesting him to send copies of the legal records pertaining to the case.

6th March 2002:

- ❖ Press meet in Chennai.

8th March 2002:

- ❖ Detailed planning for the Public Meeting at Tuticorin.
- ❖ Summons to all the officials involved in the Sankaralingapuram police excesses.
- ❖ Summons were also sent to Mrs. Kannagi Packianathan, Director State SC/ST Commission, and Ms. Sivagami I.A.S. Secretary Adi Dravida Welfare.

14th March 2002:

- ❖ Press meet at Tuticorin
