Attack on the Hindu Community in Baghsitarampur, Comilla
ASK Investigation Report

Date of the Incident 27 April 2014
Place of the Incident Vill: Baghsitarampur, Thana: Homna, District: Comilla
Date of the Fact Finding 30 April 2014
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Background

Baghsitarampur is a remote village which is located in the Homna Thana of Comilla district. It requires a two kilometer walk through a muddy road to reach that village. The village is inhabited by more than 200 families. Among them 42 families belong to Hindu religion. Hindu families are living in a defined area in the village which is known as Hindu para or Das para. Hindu and Muslim families have been living together in this village for almost half a century without any trouble or tension amongst themselves.

Incident

Trouble arose when a few Muslim young people of the village Baghsitarampur alleged that two Hindu youths of Hindu para had slandered the prophet via Facebook post.

Local people and the local Union Parishad Member tried to resolve the tension. People from the two communities decided to sit together and take action against the two Hindu youths if the allegation was true. They asked the Muslim youths to show evidence in favor of their allegations but before they could reach any peaceful solution, Madrasa teachers, their students and followers launched attack on the Hindu community. Their houses and belongings were destroyed and looted.

They vandalized houses of 32 families, damaged their belongings and looted their cash and gold. Among the affected families, 17 families had televisions. Perpetrators broke all the televisions. They also vandalized Sri Sri Radhakrishna Temple. The deities and other belongings of the temple were destroyed. People of the locality left the place to save their lives.

On 30 April 2014, a team from ASK went to the location and interviewed the victims, witnesses, local administration and law enforcing agency.
Findings

- Adil, Al-Amin and Kaiyum – Three Muslim youth of Baghsitarampur came to the Hindu Para around noon of 26 April 2014 and searched Uddov and Srinibash – two Hindu residents of the locality. When they found Uddov, they alleged that Uddov and Srinabash had slandered the prophet in a Facebook post. Uddov rejected such allegations. Srinabsh was in Dhaka, so they did not find him for questioning.
- Local Hindus asked them to show evidence in favor of their allegations and also assured them that, if their allegations were true, local people will take actions against Uddov and Srinibash.
- After hearing that Adil, Al-Amin and Kaiyum left the place. Local Hindus immediately went to the local Union Parishad member Md. Nayem Mullah and informed him about the incident. He told them that he will take action if there is any evidence in favor of their allegations.
- Around 7.30pm of the same day, Adil along with other 10-12 youth arrived at the Hindu Para. They behaved aggressively with the Hindu people and also beat Uddov. UP member Md. Nayem Mullah rushed to the place and asked them to calm down. He asked them to show evidence but they failed to do so. Rather they told him that Nazrul, a resident of Muradpur area, has the evidence.
- Then it was decided that they will sit together to discuss the issue on 17 April after the prayers of Zuhr. By then Srinibash had to return from Dhaka. They demanded that Uddov and Srinibash’s father should be locked in the Temple, otherwise they might run away. But Md. Nayem assured them that nothing such will happen. Hindu people were tensed and horrified but they had confidence in the local members and other seniors.
- On the noon of 27 April, when people from two communities were ready to sit, suddenly they got news that Madrasa teachers, students and their followers had gathered at the Bagherhat Market, 2km away from the village. Nayem Mullah went to the Bagherhat market and saw that fifteen hundred to two thousand people gathered there. Maulana Shah Alam and Maulana Hedayet Ullah were leading their followers and students. He urged the Maulanas not to do anything and informed them that he will ensure justice. But followers of the Maulanas did not listen to him and misbehaved with him.
- Meanwhile, they started their journey to the Hindu Para and attacked the houses of that area. They vandalized houses of 32 families, damaged their belongings and looted their savings and gold. Among the affected families, 17 families had televisions. Perpetrators broke all the televisions. They also vandalized Sri Sri Radhakrishna Temple. The deities and other belongings of the temple were destroyed. People of the locality left the place to save their lives.
- Maulana Shah Alam, teacher of the Rampur Kawmi Madrasa and Maulana Hedayet Ullah, teacher of Baluakandi Women Madrasa led the attack on the Hindus and their students and followers followed them. ASK also came to know from local people and police that perpetrators also came from Muradpur and Titas Upazila.
- Investigation team found out that, Uddov is a college student and known as a gentle boy in his locality. Srinibash Passed SSCand was taking training in Dhaka to prepare to go to Middle East. Adil is studying Honours at Comilla Victoria College. His father is a local leader (Matobbor). Al-Amin is also a college student. Kaiyum was a migrant worker. They are of the same age and they are friends. They are also friends in facebook.
- Some relief has been distributed among the victims from the Government but it is inadequate in proportion to the loss of the affected people.

Witness Statement
Biren Das, a resident of Hindu Para informed the team that they were taking preparations for the marriage of their daughter. The perpetrators looted gold ornaments and taka two lacs which were kept for the marriage. Now the marriage became uncertain.
Role of Law Enforcing Agency

UP member Md. Nayem informed local chairman when he failed to stop the crowd. The Chairman informed the police and police arrived at Bagerhat market without any delay. Police observed hundreds of Kawmi Madrasa students at the market. However the police did not know that Hindu para had been attacked.

Perpetrators left the place when they saw police. Police went to Baghsitarampur and saw that the area had been attacked brutally. Police arrested some perpetrators from different places along with Uddov and Srinibash.

The Officer-in-charge of Homna Thana, Md. Aslam Shikder told the ASK team that, Police had taken statements from Uddov and Srinibash. Uddov said to the police that he knows Nazrul. He took Nazrul’s assistance when he faced problem to use his Facebook account in his mobile. Nazrul knew his password as Nazrul made the account workable at Uddov’s mobile. This incident happened in mid April.

Uddov also informed the police that he never made any offensive comments against the Prophet. But his Muslim friends sometimes made derogatory comments against the Hindu religion. He tried to reply to that but not in a negative way. He believed that if any such post has been found in his facebook, Nazrul is responsible, as he knew the password. He might do that deliberately to create trouble for Uddov.

Police claimed that they detected some unacceptable posts in both Uddov and Srinibash’s facebook accounts.

Police has arrested Nazrul and they will take Nazrul’s statement. The OC said that necessary actions will be taken based on that statement.

Legal Action Taken

Police has filed a case on this incident. Dr. Rampod is the applicant of the case. Case no 15, date: 28 April 2014

Accused - 68 identified and many others unidentified

Police informed that, the two Madrasa teachers who led the attack were not arrested yet but 16 among the identified accused have been arrested.

On the other hand, Police has filed a case against Uddov and Srinibash using section 57 (2) of the Information and Technology Act. Police accused them for using offensive comments against the Prophet.

ASK’s Action

On 17 May 2014, Executive Director of ASK along with other colleagues went to visit the affected people of Homna. She spoke to the affected people, representatives of local administration, renowned people of the area and local representatives. She requested the local administration to take legal action against the perpetrators. Victims were assure that ASK will provide necessary legal support to the victims.