Killing Of Three Dalit Youths And Other Atrocities Against Their Families in Sagar District (MP)

Despite Media and Political Spotlight: How Much Justice



A fact-finding report

by

concerned citizens of Madhya Pradesh

July 2024

About the Report

In August 2023, there were widespread media reports of the lynching of an 18-year-old Dalit youth named Nitin Ahirwar by members of the village elite in Sagar district, Madhya Pradesh. His mother, who tried to save him, was also beaten and stripped and their home was looted and smashed. Subsequently, there were reports of his sister Anjana's continuous efforts for justice. Suddenly, at the end of May 2024, there were news reports that Nitin's uncle, Rajendra Ahirwar, had also been murdered, and that Anjana, who was accompanying his body, had died after "falling" from the hearse. Shocked by the persistent violence and the suspicious death of a brave young woman like Anjana, many concerned citizens discussed the matter and formed a small team to conduct a detailed citizens' investigation of this case. In order to understand these events, this team interacted with the victims' families, police and administrative officials, journalists, lawyers and several others, examined relevant documents and old media reports, to prepare this report.

The team members were Advocate Mohan Dixit, Rohit (Independent Journalist), Advocate Aditya Rawat, Neelu (Eka Collective), Sadaf Khan (Independent Journalist), Madhuri (PUCL-People's Union for Civil Liberties), Anjali (ALIFA - All India Feminist Alliance- NAPM), and Nitin (Jagrit Adivasi Dalit Sangathan).

Brief Description of Events

In January 2019, a 15-year-old Dalit girl Anjana Ahirwar was molested and beaten by members of the village elite, locally called "lambardars" in Baraudiya Naunagir village of Sagar district. Anjana filed a complaint and got an FIR registered against this. Reportedly, the village "lambardars" then repeatedly threatened and pressured the family to compromise.

On August 24, 2023, the accused in this case, along with other "lambardars" and several of their their associates brutally beat Anjana's younger brother, Nitin alias Lalu Ahirwar, in the village market with kicks, rods and lathis in a brutal attack that lasted for over half an hour to an hour. A few hours later, 18-year-old Nitin succumbed to his injuries in the hospital. His mother, Badi Bahu Ahirwar, who tried to save her son during the assault, was also severely beaten, her saree was stripped off and her right hand was broken. Anjana was also slapped.

Just nine months after Nitin's murder, his uncle, Rajendra Ahirwar, was also murdered. Rajendra, a witness in Nitin's murder, was attacked with lathis and axes. Critically injured, he was referred from the local Khurai hospital to Sagar district hospital and then to a Bhopal hospital, but he died on the way to Bhopal. Immediately after Rajendra's death, Anjana, gave a statement to the media that her uncle's death was due to strict action not being taken in the matter of Nitin's lynching. While accompanying Rajendra's body home, Anjana Ahirwar died in a highly suspicious manner. According to the police who were also accompanying the body, she died "due to a fall from the hearse". This assertion is highly suspect and raises several questions.

Within a year, three members of this Dalit family, who were raising their voice against the influential village elite, died. The family holds the administration responsible for these murders. There are allegations of political protection to the accused and bias in action by the police.

About Baraudiya Naunagir

Baraudiya Naunagir is a village in Khurai tehsil of Sagar district in the Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh. Sagar is one of the most populous districts in Madhya Pradesh. It is also an important centre of political power in the state; three prominent BJP leaders and former ministers, Shri Gopal Bhargava, Shri Bhupendra Singh, and Shri Govind Singh Rajput hail from this district. Baraudiya Naunagir is about 150 km from the capital Bhopal on the Rahatgarh-Bina Road. The population of Baraudiya Naunagir is about 3500, of which Scheduled Castes are 23.11% and Scheduled Tribes are 11.14%. Most people here depend on farming and daily wage labour. People from many communities live here, including Ahirwar, Kori, Patel, Adivasi, Muslim and Thakur.

We were told that the village Thakurs are hereditary "lambardars" or village elites. Villagers depend on them for governmental matters and resolving various village level issues, and they have a major role in all affairs of the village. Although they have only 20-25 houses in the village, they reportedly own over 1000 bighas of land. We were also told that after paying a small amount as "rent", the Thakurs control most of the land of marginal farmers, most villagers work as labourers, and are often pressured into working for the Thakurs even though the wages they offer are lower than what workers receive elsewhere.

The victims' family also primarily depends on labour. Anjana's father, Raghuvir Ahirwar, worked as a guard in a factory in Indore but is now back in the village after Nitin's murder. Their four children: Rohit (age 26), Vishnu (age 24), Anjana (age 20) and Nitin (age 18) of whom only Rohit and Vishnu now survive. 20-year-old Anjana Ahirwar was a second-year undergraduate student in a college in Sagar. The other affected family is that of the deceased Rajendra Ahirwar (age 26), who was their "uncle" in village kinship terms. Rajendra's family, also primarily dependent on wage labour, includes his father, mother, grandmother, one brother, and two sisters.

Assault on Vishnu, Anjana's Complaint against Harassment

On January 26, 2019, Anjana was beaten and molested by Azad Thakur, Pushpendra Thakur, Chotu Raikwar, and Vishal Thakur, the "lambardars" of the Thakur family of the village. Based on Anjana's complaint, FIR no. 27/2019 was registered against them, only with great difficulty on 26.01.2019. According to Anjana's family, sections related to beating and intimidation (IPC 294, 323, 506, 34) and the Atrocities Act (Section 3(1)(r)(s) and 3 (2)(va)) were applied in the FIR, but sections related to child sexual abuse were not applied despite the complaint of molestation by a 15 year old.

A few days before Anjana's complaint, the accused in her complaint had slapped Anjana's elder brother, Vishnu Ahirwar and made him touch their feet. We were shown a video of the incident showing the accused slapping Vishnu and making him touch their feet. According to the family, after this incident the police came home, took Vishnu to the police station and filed a false case against him at the behest of the Thakurs.

The family also reported increased hostility from the Thakurs after Anjana's FIR. According to them, the fact that a family of poor Dalit labourers like theirs had managed to file a case against them irked them. The family was repeatedly threatened to withdraw According to Nitin's family, on 23/08/2023, the police took Vishnu and Rajendra to the police station, claiming that 'it was for their safety as their lives were in danger'. The very next day, Nitin was murdered.

Nitin (Lalu) Ahirwar's mother, Badi Bahu Ahirwar, recalled - On the evening of 24/08/2023, Nitin had gone to the market. It had gotten quite late, so I went to check on him. I heard loud screaming and saw lambardars and their men beating Lalu near Golu Soni's shop. She somehow rescued Nitin from the mob and brought him to Vinod Kori's shop. But the assailants soon surrounded them, dragged him onto the road and started beating him brutally. This continued for almost an hour. It was after Lalu was dragged onto the road that Ankit Singh arrived at the scene. According to Badi Bahu Ahirwar, it was Komal Singh Thakur, Vikram Thakur, Azad Thakur, Ankit Singh Thakur, Vijay Thakur, Golu Soni, Lalu Khan, Anees, Wahid, and their men who beat Lalu to death.

Babi Bahu Ahirwar tried very hard to protect Lalu, but in trying to do so her right hand was broken, and the other was also injured while trying to save him. The assailants also removed her saree. Anjana, who came later, was also slapped. The police eventually arrived at the spot, by which time Lalu had already lost consciousness. It was then that a policeman helped Badi Bahu cover herself with a towel as her hand was broken. The police took Lalu to the hospital, where he died shortly after.

On the same day, Vikram Thakur, Azad Thakur, Komal Thakur and their men had barged into Nitin Ahirwar's home and vandalized it. They destroyed everything in the house, not even sparing a single bowl. They destroyed important documents of the family, killed their pet parrot and broke the horse's leg, which ultimately led to the horse's death. Badi Bahu had kept her jewellery and 8-9 thousand rupees in cash saved for their eldest son's wedding, but all of it was looted.

An FIR was filed against Nitin's murder, but the police left several facts that Anjana had complained against: Badi Bahu being disrobed, even though it was in Anjana's complaint and was subsequently mentioned in media reports as well. The matter of the horse and parrot was also not added, and the full extent of damage to their home was also not included.

Based on Anjana's complaint, a case was registered at Khurai Rural Police Station at 2.09 am on 25/08/2023 against Vikram Thakur, Vijay Thakur, Azad Thakur, Komal Thakur, Lalu Khan, Islam Khan, Golu Soni, Nafees Khan, Wahid Khan and 3-4 other accused under IPC sections 307, 323, 458, 427, 294, 147, 148, 149 and Atrocities Act sections 3(1)(d), (e), 3(1)(va) and 3 (2)(v). Section 302 was added much later.

Notably, according to the Registration of Death report, Nitin died at 12:16 at night, but in the FIR registered at 2:09 am, only section 307 IPC was added instead of section 302 (IPC).

According to Nitin Ahirwar's post-mortem report, the cause of Nitin's death was "multiple injuries sustained over body". Nitin had 29 serious injuries on his head and body.

Remarkably, after Nitin was referred from Khurai hospital at 9:50 pm, it took close to 2.5 hours to reach Sagar, 52 kilometres away, by which time Nitin had already died.

Events following Nitin's Murder

The day after Nitin's murder, Anjana submitted a complaint to the Collector and Superintendent of Police, to add the name of Ankit Singh Thakur in the FIR, as he was one of the main perpetrators. The complaint also asked the police to secure the CCTV footage near the spot where Nitin was murdered. In the complaint Anjana also expresses fear for her safety and that of her family.

Subsequently, Anjana also submitted several complaints to the Superintendent of Police and Inspector General of Police (Sagar) on 08/09/2023, 29/09/2023, 21/10/2023, and 26/02/24, about Ankit Singh Thakur's name not being added and accusing the investigation officer of protecting the accused. She also complained of threats being made against her family by the relatives of the accused, who were pressuring them to reach a "compromise". However, no cognizance was taken and no action was taken on these complaints.

We were shown a video of about 20 minutes, of the beginning of the assault on Nitin as captured by a nearby CCTV camera. Nitin was first attacked in front of Golu Soni's shop, after which his mother arrives and somehow takes him away from the attackers, and sits him down in front of Vinod Photocopy's shop. But they are soon surrounded and are attacked again. According to the family, Vikram Thakur, Golu Soni, Komal Thakur, Lalu, Anees, and about 10-12 others who attacked Nitin are visible in the footage. In addition to the arrested persons, Mukati, Israel Bena, Bablu Bena were also identified to us in the video, but no action has been taken against them. Komal Thakur is also seen threatening and abusing Nitin's mother. More people join in and they all drag Nitin to the road and start brutally assaulting him with rods and lathis. According to Nitin's mother Badi Bahu Ahirwar, this video only captures the beginning of the attack, and after this, more people came and attacked Nitin, including Ankit Thakur and other accused even after the video ends.

This CCTV footage is not part of the chargesheet in Nitin's murder case. In Anjana's application dated 25/08/2023, a demand was made to secure the CCTV footage. The chargesheet filed by the police states that the DVR of the CCTV in front of Vinod Kori's shop was destroyed by the crowd after the incident. The family received the CCTV footage, from a camera that appears to be from across the road from Vinod Kori's shop 3-4 months after the incident. The family says they gave the video to the police, but the police had already submitted the chargesheet by then and refused to take cognizance of the video.

Among the accused, Anees Khan, Azad Thakur, Sushil alias Golu Soni, Vikram Thakur, Arbaz, Faheem Khan, Abhishek Raikwar, Islam Bena were arrested on 27/08/2023, Mubarak Khan, Nafees Khan, Wahid Khan were arrested a month later on 23/09/2023, and the chief village 'lambardar' Komal Thakur along with Vijay Thakur was arrested only when the chargesheet was presented on 26/09/2023. The bail applications of the accused were rejected by the District Court. The bail applications of Vijay Singh, Komal Thakur, Sushil Soni, Islam Khan, Nafees Khan, Abhishek Raikwar, and Wahid Khan were also rejected by the High Court when Anjana opposed their bail in accordance with Section 15 (A)(3) of the Prevention of Atrocities Act. However, an accused Vijay Singh, was granted bail by the Supreme Court on 08/05/2024 on the grounds of his old age (77 years). Anjana's family could not oppose the bail as they received the notice of bail hearing after it had already taken place in the Supreme Court.

According to her family, around three months after Nitin's murder, former minister, former MP and senior BJP leader, Shri Bhupendra Singh summoned them to tell them to stop pursuing this case any further, and to tell the media that they were getting complete support from the the minister and were satisfied with the administrations' actions. Anjana was even handed a typed copy of the statement to be made by her before the media, however Anjana refused to give such a statement. A few months later, another attempt was made on behalf of Shri Bhupendra Singh to engineer a "compromise" but Anjana and her family refused.

Rajendra's Murder

26-year-old Rajendra Ahirwar was a key witness in Nitin's murder case. He was attacked with lathis and axes at the house of Pappu Rajak, and had to be taken to Khurai Community Health Center, then to Sagar District Hospital, and then was referred to Bhopal. He died on the way to Bhopal. Anjana Ahirwar was with him since he was brought to Khurai.

After Rajendra's post-mortem in Sagar, Anjana gave this statement to the media:

"Rajendra chacha 302 ke gawah hain jinka abhi murder hua hai. Us case mein Lalu Khan aur Golu Khan, jo andar hain, unke papa Israel Khan inko dhamka rahe the ki tum un logon ke paksh mein gawahi nahi doge, hamare paksh mein gawahi doge, tumne unke paksh mein gawahi di to hum tumhen jaan se maar ke phenk denge. Raat kareeb 8.45 ko maine chacha ko call kiya to us samay shor sharabe ki awaaz aa rahi thi. Chacha bole ki Anju ye log humen maar rahe hain, unhone kuch naam bataye aur bola ki ladai ho gayi hai. Phir un logon ne chacha ka mobile poori tarah tod diya. Maine phir apne chacha Mohan Ahirwar ko phone kiya, unke ladke Vikas Ahirwar aur Machla ye donon wahan gaye to unhone bola ki haan wahan par ye log Rajendra chacha ke saath marpeet kar rahe hain - Israel Khan, Ashiq Qureshi, Tantu Qureshi, Faheem Khan aur Bablu Khan. Uske baad humne police ko soochna di.

Humne dhamki ki report di thi, police ne FIR to likh li, pata nahi kya karyawahi ki... Ashiq Qureshi bole ki tumne hamari report ki hai, tumhen jaan se maar denge tumhari gheench kaat kar phenk denge... Phir unhone wahi kar diya...

Mere bhai ke murder ke aaropiyon ke makan tode jaate, un par achchi karyawahi ho jaati to aaj yeh naubat nahi aati aur Rajendra chacha aaj zinda hote, hamare saath hote."

Roughly translates to:

"Uncle Rajendra was a witness in the 302-murder case. Israel Khan, whose sons Golu and Lalu Khan, who are in jail, threatened him (Rajendra) to turn hostile and testify in their favour in Nitin's murder case, and threatened to kill him if he did not do so Around 8:45 at night, I phoned my uncle, and heard a lot of commotion at the other end. Uncle said, 'Anju, these people are beating me,' he mentioned some names and said that a fight has broken out. Then they broke his mobile. I then called my uncle Mohan Ahirwar, his son Vikas Ahirwar and Machla, and they went to where Rajendra chacha was...they said that - Israel Khan, Ashiq Qureshi, Tantu Qureshi, Faheem Khan and Bablu Khan were attacking Rajendra chacha. After that we informed the police.

We had reported threats against us, the police had registered an FIR, I don't know what action they took...Ashiq Qureshi said that we will kill you, we will chop you to pieces, we will slit your throat to pieces for reporting against us, and that is what they did...

If the government had demolished the houses of the accused in my brother's murder, if proper action had been taken against them..Uncle Rajendra would have been alive today, he would still be with us..."

Amir Sohail, who was present at the scene reported that they heard screams from Pappu Rajak's house. When he and his brother Faizal went inside, they saw Pappu Rajak, Akshay Rajak, Israel Khan, Ashiq Qureshi, Tantu Qureshi, Arif Qureshi, Faheem Khan and Bablu Khan along with 4-5 other people attacking Rajendra with axes, sticks and hammers. Pappu Rajak's two daughters also threw stones at them.

Rajendra was first taken to Khurai hospital, from where he was referred to Sagar. From Sagar, he was referred to Bhopal for treatment, but he died on the way near Vidisha. Family members repeatedly told us that there was a lot of delay in referring Rajendra to Bhopal. They had taken him to Sagar around 9 o'clock, but despite the critical condition he was in, he was referred to Bhopal only after around 2-3 o'clock at night. The family suspects that the delay was intentional and that he was deliberately denied proper treatment in Sagar.

Rajendra had deep lacerations on his head, besides lacerations on his chest and arms. There were many other injuries as well. The post-mortem report states the cause of Rajendra's death as "multiple injuries sustained to the body and its complications". Based on the *Dehati Nalsi* report of 8:45 pm on 25.05.25, FIR No. 197/24 was registered on 9:03 am on 26.05.24 under sections 307, 147, 148, 149 (IPC) and sections 3(2)(v), 3(2)(va) of the Prevention of Atrocities Act. Pertinently, section 302 was not added even though Rajendra's had already died by then. Israel Khan, Ashiq Qureshi, Tantu Qureshi, Faheem Khan and Bablu Khan have been arrested in this case. Rajendra's family has complained about the involvement of 11 other individuals, but the police have not arrested them, claiming that the investigation in the case is still ongoing.

Rajendra's family said that Rajendra was not afraid of the Thakurs, which irritated them. They believe that the Thakurs had him killed.

Rajendra's father Ramsevak says - "On the day of Nitin's murder, Komal Thakur, Vikram Thakur, Azad Thakur, Vishal Thakur and their associates came to our house looking for Rajendra. When they didn't find Rajendra at home, they beat me up and smashed everything in the house. They threatened us to leave the village if we wanted to stay alive. My leg was injured in the attack and I couldn't walk properly for two months. But out of fear, I was not able to complain about this anywhere. I thought that if I complained, they would only cause more harm to my family." Everyone in the family claimed that if Rajendra had been at home at the time of the attack, he would have been murdered that day itself.

Rajendra's grandmother recounted an incident a few days before his murder - "The Thakurs were farming our land on rent for a few years. This year they had sown the field without paying us anything. When I went to Govind Singh Thakur to ask for the money he owed me, he abused me and sent me away. A few days later, I went to Govind Singh again with Rajendra, and he abused us again. But on Rajendra's insistence, he threw the money at us and said, 'take your money and see what happens to you. You have testified against the Thakurs...You better change your testimony, otherwise you won't survive."

The family also reported that the accused in Nitin's murder were continuously pressuring Rajendra to compromise, even while they were in jail.

Pappu Rajak, at whose house Rajendra was attacked, has filed a counter-FIR in the matter of the attack on Rajendra. According to the FIR, Rajendra, Amir, and Faizal came to Pappu Rajak's house and started beating him to demand a compromise in some previous incident. Pappu Rajak

received injuries in his hand and on his head, and was later admitted for treatment in Hamidia Hospital, Bhopal. In this case, FIR No. 198/24 was registered at 5:42pm on 26.05.24, the day after the incident and several hours after Rajendra and Anjana's death. The *Dehati Nalsi* report was also only made at 7:30 AM on the morning after the alleged incident. We were told that Pappu Rajak works for the lambardars and is close to them. An FIR under sections 307, 458, 294, 34 of the IPC has been registered against Rajendra, Amir and Faizal. Amir and Faizal have been arrested.

Anjana's Death under extremely suspicious circumstances

After Rajendra's post-mortem in Sagar, Anjana was bringing Rajendra's body back to the village accompanied by the police. It was then that she died under extremely suspicious circumstances on Khurai bypass road. The police claim that Anjana died due to "either falling or jumping" out of the vehicle but that the matter is "still under investigation".

Rajendra's parents were also in the vehicle, along with one policeman and a driver. According to Rajendra's parents there was a police vehicle in front, and possibly one behind as well. They say that the police had given them some water to drink, after which they fell asleep. They were woken up by the police to see Anjana lying about 20-30 feet away on the road. When the police brought Anjana back to the vehicle, she was already unconscious. Another police vehicle arrived on the scene, and Anjana along with Rajendra's mother was sent in the vehicle to Sagar. It is pertinent to note that Rajendra's mother cannot hear or speak.

The police are calling this an accident, and a case of Unnatural Death has been registered at Khurai City Police Station. However, Anjana's family believes that her death was not an accident but murder. Rajendra's family also believes that it was the Thakurs who had Anjana killed.

Those who knew Anjana say that it is impossible to believe that she would jump from the vehicle of her own accord. The claim of her "accidentally falling out" of a closed vehicle is also unbelievable and highly improbable.

Anjana's post-mortem reveals Anjana suffered a head injury due to a skull fracture as well injuries on her hands and knees. According to the post mortem report, the cause of Anjana's death was "head injury and its complications".

Curiously, about 10 days before the incident, the police security provided to the family after Nitin's murder, had been removed. The CCTV cameras in front of Anjana's home had also not been functional for a few days. When questioned about this fact, the Collector claimed the security was removed since no incident had taken place for several months, while the CCTV was not functioning due to "some technical malfunction".

We were told that the investigation into Anjana's death was being conducted by Ms. Shashi Vishwakarma, Khurai (city) Police Station's Thana In-charge. She refused to provide any information on the investigation, claiming that it was still ongoing. She even refused to provide general information like the location of the incident. SDOP, Shri Sachin Parte had claimed the investigation would be completed by around July 10th, but at the time of writing, and almost 2 months after the incident, the investigation remains "ongoing".

Discussions with District officials and role of the Administration

District Collector of Sagar, Shri Deepak Arya, believed the root of these incidents to be societal, stating that "this Dalit family had feelings of anger and rebellion against exploitation of the elites,

and were wanting to escape their pressure and influence. However, they were manipulated to commit crimes by a faction opposed to the village elites (lambardars) who had their own ulterior motives."

Superintendent of Police, Mr. Abhishek Tiwari had been on leave for several days during our visits, and was unavailable for comment.

We met Additional Superintendent of Police Mr. Sanjeev Uikey, who is supervising the investigation into the entire matter and SDOP Khurai Mr. Sachin Parte, who is the Investigating Officer in the murders of Nitin and Rajendra.

When asked about the murders, both officials were eager to present the victims as criminals and rationalise the acts of the accused. Both officers stated that Vishnu, Rajendra, and Nitin were habitual offenders and had multiple criminal cases against them. However, they refused to provide any details of these cases.

They claimed that a feud existed between the families of Shabbir Khan and Komal Thakur of the village. Rajendra, Vishnu, and Nitin were embroiled in crimes due to their proximity with Shabbir Khan's sons. The SDOP stated that Shabbir Khan's group used these Dalit youths to file false cases of caste atrocities against the Thakurs, but when we asked for information about these alleged false cases, he fell silent. According to ASP Mr. Uikey, Nitin was killed because he attacked Vikram Thakur first.

The SDOP admitted that Pappu Rajak, at whose house Rajendra was murdered, has not been arrested even after a month. Regarding the omission of 11 attackers' names from the FIR of Rajendra's murder filed by his family, he claimed that the investigation about these individuals was ongoing. When asked if statements from eyewitnesses Amir Sohail and Faizal have been taken in Rajendra's murder case, he did not provide a clear answer. Both Amir and Faizal are currently in jail, having been arrested on Pappu Rajak's complaint.

Despite not being named in Pappu Rajak's complaint or media statements, two other individuals, Machla Kori and Imran Khan, have also been arrested. Machla Kori is an eyewitness in the case. We were told that Imran Khan, a resident of Rahatgarh, was not even present at the scene, but was possibly arrested because he was helping the Ahirwar family in to continue their pursuit for justice in Nitin's murder case. Though we cannot confirm the truth of this claim, these two arrests raise suspicions on the objectivity of the police in the matter.

As 13 people had been arrested for Nitin's murder, when we met police officials, we expected them to be objective and sensitive. However, we were shocked to see the police show clear prejudice against the victims; when asked for information about the murder cases, instead of providing details, they indirectly tried to justify these murders by calling Nitin, Rajendra, and Vishnu "habitual offenders".

Nitin was only 18 years old when he was murdered. While refusing to provide us with any detailed information about criminal cases against Nitin, police officers stated 7 FIRs were filed against him between 2021 and 2023. The fact that so many cases were registered against a minor from a rural Dalit family of daily wage labourers raises many questions, and also strengthens his family's allegation that their children were being implicated in false cases because of Anjana's complaint against the Thakurs. Nitin and Anjana's mother, Badibahu Ahirwar, also showed written

complaints to the SP and DIG (Sagar) on 31.03.21 and on 09.04.21 stating that Nitin, who had come home from Indore for Holi, was picked up by Khurai police and kept and beaten at the police station for many days. No investigation was done on these complaints, even though they were serious complaints of custodial torture of a Dalit minor.

On 03.05.24, around three weeks before Anjana's death, her brother Vishnu was externed (Zila Badar) from Sagar and 8 adjoining districts for a period of 6 months, on the grounds of his being a "habitual offender", creating "an atmosphere of fear and terror among the general public" and "affecting public safety, peace, and public order". We examined the criminal cases on the basis of which the order was passed, and found that there are no cases that could justify the externment on these grounds. All 6 cases mentioned are still at the trial stage, in one a compromise has been effected. 3 cases are ordinary disputes. In one case, the complainant is Vikram Singh Thakur, who is a key accused both in the assault on Anjana and the lynching of Nitin, and whose animosity to the family is well established. This case is also pending. One case is of theft but is also pending. The externment of Vishnu based on such cases raises suspicion of administrative prejudice, especially when the police repeatedly try to emphasize "criminal record" of Nitin and Rajendra and Vishnu, when asked about the atrocities against them and their families.

Nitin, Anjana, and Vishnu's mother, Badi Bahu Ahirwar, said that after Anjana's death, when family members met Additional Superintendent of Police Mr. Uikey, he threatened that even Vishnu could be killed. He ordered the police personnel present there to snatch Vishnu's phone. The police said they would return the phone the next day, but then refused to do so. No seizure memo was provided and the procedure for seizure of electronic articles mandated by law was not followed. After repeatedly asking for the phone without success, his mother filed a complaint to the SP. Important evidence related to Nitin and Anjana's case are on Vishnu's phone, but now they do not know what will happen to that evidence.

Later, on June 29, we learned from media reports that on June 5, the ASP had "confiscated" Vishnu's phone for making a video when he went to submit an application with the family. According to the police, based on photos of illegal weapons, videos, and WhatsApp chats on the phone, a case was registered against Vishnu on June 27 under Section 25(1)(a) of the Arms Act. That an FIR has been filed 22 days after the phone was seized without a proper seizure memo raises suspicion about the intent of the police; the possibility of tampering with the electronic device cannot be ruled out. Moreover, evidence found on a phone "seized" in such an illegal manner would not have a legal validity. It appears that this whole exercise is merely an attempt to pressurise the affected family from pursuing justice and creating public prejudice against them.

Collector Deepak Arya informed us that after Nitin's murder, the victim's family was given a total assistance of Rs. 21,46,724, under various heads, including the Chief Minister's Discretionary Fund, Red Cross Society, and compensation under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

Political Intervention

Political parties have made different statements about this entire series of events from time to time, we are sharing some details here, which are based on media reports:

After Nitin's murder, former Chief Minister and Congress leader Mr. Digvijay Singh met the family and said - If the police had taken action in time, Nitin's murder would not have happened. He

asked the officials why the main accused's name was not registered in the FIR, why is BJP Youth Front's Ankit Thakur's not being named as an accused, is the government administration trying to protect him?

On the other hand, Khurai MLA and former minister Shri Bhupendra Singh gave a statement to the media that this was not an Atrocity but merely the fallout of a long-standing dispute between the two parties. The fight happened because of the dispute, due to mutual disagreement... The truth will come out after investigation... Congress is trying to divide society; Congress is trying to use the incident to make political capital.

After the death of Anjana and Rajendra, former Chief Minister Shri Digvijay Singh and State Congress President Shri Jitu Patwari reached to meet the family and arranged for the family to talk to Shri Rahul Gandhi over the phone. After meeting with the family and participating in Anjana's funeral Shri Digvijay Singh said, "There were three witnesses to Lalu's [Nitin's] murder - Rajendra, Anjana, and his mother. When they didn't buckle under pressure, Rajendra was murdered and Anjana died." He alleged that "A few days ago, Anjana had complained to the police about pressure being put on her to change her statement, but the police did not act on the complaint."

He claimed that Anjana had initially said that Ankit Thakur was involved in the incident, but he was not arrested because of his local influence and political connections.

Shri Jitu Patwari said that murders are happening one after another, and now a daughter has died under suspicious circumstances. He said that if the government does not agree, they will approach the court for a CBI investigation.

After Anjana's death, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav also reached the village with Shri Bhupendra Singh. Expressing sorrow over the incident, he said that the cause of the matter is merely a village dispute. Upon learning about such incidents happening repeatedly in the village, he directed the police administration to open a police outpost, to ensure that such incidents do not happen again.

Meanwhile, Khurai's BJP MLA and former minister Mr. Bhupendra Singh blamed the victim's family for Anjana's death, accusing them of criminal tendencies, he said, "Anjana Ahirwar's deceased relative had a criminal background... According to police records, the deceased Rajendra Ahirwar terrorised the village. Rajendra Ahirwar was involved in criminal activities at the behest of Imran Khan." He said, "Congress politicizes deaths. The mastermind of the Baraudiya Naunagir case is Imran Khan. Imran was the one who made the deceased's family commit all these crimes. Imran has cases like 302 registered against him. People here are troubled by his terror. Imran has used the deceased's family." He said that the entire CDR of this case should be extracted. "Those who have instigated that girl should be charged". He said that... "85-year-old people are in jail. Will they commit such a crime? Ankit wasn't even there at that time. The police have been impartial in the case." (It may be noted that the oldest accused, 77 year old Vijay Singh is now out on bail)

Important words by ex-Urban Housing and Development Minister, Shri Bhupendra Singh, on why the homes of the accused in Nitin's murder were not demolished

Since the past few years, Madhya Pradesh has seen a number of instances where homes of the accused have been demolished in a form of "bulldozer justice". In this context, a viral video clip of ex-minister Shri Bhupendra Singh, taken during his meeting with Anjana and her family is worth mentioning separately.

On Anjana's demand that the government demolish the houses of the accused in Nitin's murder, he says -

"Makan girane ka aadhaar kya hai? Aise to roj jhagde hote hain, roj murder hote hain..kaun se kanoon mei likha hai ki makaan girayaa jaye? Makaan, jo mafia hote hain..beta, koi is tarah kii ghatna hoti hai ya rape jaisa koi maamla hota hai - tab apan..koi matlab sangeen apraadh hota hai - tab apan makaan giraate hai. Kanoon to makaan gira nahin sakte. Abhi wo High Court ne rok laga di thi. Abhi, pata hoga Haryana ki ghatna mei makaan gira rahi thi sarkaar to high court ne rok laga dii thi. Bina aap kaise gira sakte hain? Maan lo ek makaan mei 10 log rehte hain. Ek apradhi hai to 9 ne kya galti ki hai? Makan toh 10 ka hai na? Aur apradhi ek hai..to 9 ne kya apradh kiya hai? Kanoonan to makaan gira nahin saktein! Kanoonan tabhi gira sakte hain jab atikraman ho, tab to bilkul kisi ka bhi gira sakte hain..vo to kabhi bhi gira sakte hain, kisi ka bhi gira saktein hain!"

This roughly translates to:

"What is the basis for demolishing houses? Fights, disputes and murders happen every day..which law allows us to demolish houses? In case of a crime like rape, or if it is the house of some mafia, meaning if a heinous crime has been committed, only then we demolish houses. Legally we cannot demolish houses. Now the High Court has put a stay on it as well. You may know that in Haryana the High Court stayed the demolition of a house...Consider that 10 people live in a house. If one of them is an accused, then what is the crime of the other nine? The house belongs to the 10 does it not? Legally we cannot demolish houses. We can only do so when it is an encroachment..yes then we can demolish anyone's home, any time we want!"

Conclusions

- 1. Bundelkhand, is known for its history of deep feudalism and to this day, the dominance of the "lambardars" persists. The Thakur family of Baraudia Naunagir have been the village "lambardars" for generations and they own most of the land in the village. They dominate the village, control the panchayat and play a role in all major village affairs. No one dares go against them. The defiance and rebellion of these Dalit youths against feudal oppression and exploitation by the Thakurs were undoubtedly seen as an affront and challenge to their authority. The violence was in reaction to this defiance.
- 2. It was in these circumstances that lambardar youth tried to humiliate Vishnu in the marketplace, by slapping him and making him touch their feet, and assaulted and molested 15-year-old Anjana. Anjana got an FIR registered only with great difficulty, and the excluded the complaint of sexual violence and did not apply the relevant sections Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act. According to Anjana's family, despite the accused getting bail easily, the lambardars considered it an insult to their dominance and began harassing them.
- 3. It was these circumstances that led to the murder of 18-year-old Nitin in the village market, the assault on his mother and Anjana who went to save him and the smashing and looting of their home and that of Rajendra Ahirwar. Tension increased after the arrest of the accused lambardars and their associates. Anjana kept complaining about the lack of action in this case, about police not adding the name of local BJP leader Ankit Singh, and about the coercion from the accused to agree to a "settlement". But the police and administration kept ignoring these complaints.
- 4. The lynching of 18-year-old Nitin for over an hour in the middle of the market by lambardars and their men, the fact that no one except his mother and sister even attempted to save them, the assault on his mother in which her hand was broken and her sari stripped off followed by the assault on Anjana, the smashing and looting of their homes, and the glaring tardiness of the police in arrival all of this

- was possible only because the victims were a Dalit family of labourers and the assailants were historically dominant elites.
- 5. While the police displayed commendably proactive in arresting 13 people, including lambardars for Nitin's murder, some questions remain: Why was BJP leader Ankit Singh Thakur not made an accused despite Anjana complaining, in writing, about his involvement immediately after the murder? Why was the stripping of Badi Bahu Ahirwar not mentioned in the FIR despite the complaint to this effect and the police themselves helping her cover herself? Why was no action taken on Anjana's repeated complaints about threats and pressure for "compromise"? Why was the CCTV footage not taken into account? Nitin's death took place at 12:16 am, while the FIR was registered two hours after yet, why were the charges of murder (Section 302, IPC) not added in the FIR? We received no satisfactory answers to these questions.
- 6. Rajendra Ahirwar was Nitin and Anjana's uncle and a witness in Nitin's murder. The lambardars were not directly involved in Rajendra Ahirwar's murder, but the assailants were associated with them. Reportedly, Rajendra had been working for a family who were opposed to the Thakurs. On the day of Nitin's murder itself, a mob led by the lambardars had entered Rajendra's home looking for him, and when they did not find him at home, they had attacked his father Ramsevak Ahirwar and trashed their home and their belongings. Immediately after Rajendra's death, Anjana told the media that Rajendra was being constantly threatened to turn hostile as a witness in Nitin's murder case or else he would be killed. Rajendra's family are also convinced that the Lambardars had him killed. Many of Rajendra's attackers have not yet been arrested, despite the family submitting a list of their names to the police. The police claim this is because they are "still investigating" these people, a sense of discretion normally never seen. Even Pappu Rajak, in whose house Rajendra was attacked, has neither been arrested nor has his name been added in the FIR.

Rajendra had serious injuries from sharp weapons (reportedly an axe) all over his head and body. Yet, it appears his treatment was inordinately delayed. At 9 PM, Rajendra was taken to Sagar hospital in a very critical condition, but it took more than 5 hours for him to be referred to Bhopal. Rajendra was sent to Bhopal only after around 2 AM, but died on the way. The family suspects that there was a deliberate delay in treatment.

7. Anjana's death, mere hours after Rajendra's murder, while she was being accompanied by the police, is a highly suspicious one. Almost two months later, the police are tight lipped, offer no explanation claiming that the "investigation is ongoing". Claims of Anjana "falling" or "jumping" from the hearse transporting Rajendra's body are completely unbelievable.

The circumstances of Anjana's death point towards a conspiracy. Anjana was educated and was central to the family's struggle for justice especially in the murders of Nitin and Rajendra. She was the one who communicated with the administration and politicians on behalf of her family. At the age of 15, she had managed to get an FIR registered against the village lambardars and further still, refused to "compromise" even when faced with threats from the lambardars. Anjana was the complainant and a key witness in Nitin's murder case. She was also the main witness in her uncle's murder case, as he had named his attackers to her over the phone. Anjana was constantly pressured to compromise and change her testimony, and she made several written complaints about the same. Anjana also objected to the bail application of the accused in Nitin's murder case in the High Court, which led to their bail being rejected. Anjana was preparing to file a similar objection in the Supreme Court as well.

After Nitin's murder, Anjana had expressed fear for her safety and that of her family, to the administration and repeatedly complained of threats. The police had provided a guard for the family's security and installed a CCTV camera in front of the house. However, just 10 days before Anjana's death, the police security was

withdrawn and the CCTV cameras were non functional. The family says that Anjana was killed by the Thakurs as part of a conspiracy. While Rajendra's parents, who were also in the same van, are fearful and say they "saw nothing" they are also insistent that the Thakurs had her killed. This case requires a detailed and impartial investigation, one that the local police is neither equipped for, nor can be trusted to undertake with any objectivity.

8. The village lambardars are reportedly close to Khurai MLA and former cabinet minister, veteran BJP leader Mr. Bhupendra Singh, and politically connected to him. The three main accused in Nitin's murder are BJP workers. Since Nitin's brutal murder, Mr. Bhupendra Singh has been quick to reduce this atrocity which has claimed three young lives to 'a mere dispute between two parties'. By claiming the matter to be "orchestrated" by Congress, and by a person with a criminal record (from the faction opposed to the Thakurs) he has sought to trivialize and downplay the seriousness of this atrocity. Regrettably, the police and administration echo his words - thus, as things stand, chances of the Ahirwar family getting justice seem very slim.

It is possible that in an attempt to defy the suffocating dominance of the lambardar Thakurs, these Dalit youths may have accepted support from some persons opposed to the lambardars who had their own ulterior motives. Nevertheless, attempts by the police and the administration to justify and rationalize these atrocities on this basis is absolutely reprehensible.

It is possible that due to the support received from the opposing faction, tensions may have escalated further, and these Dalit youths may have been implicated in the criminal charges against members of this faction. It is not possible for us to reach any conclusion about the merits of the charges against Rajendra, Vishnu, and Nitin. However, it is highly possible that these may be false cases, especially when we clearly see the bias and prejudice of the police as they try to equate atrocities and murder to petty criminal offences.

Police's competence and objectivity both suspect: Anjana's death and in fact, all the matter require CBI investigation

The tragic events of Baraudiya Naunagir prove that the socio-political structures that have enabled historical inequality and exploitation are very much alive today. The strange circumstances of Anjana's death/murder make it abundantly clear that the matter requires careful and thorough investigation, one that local police do not appear capable of undertaking. It is also clear that political pressures and administrative bias will not allow proper investigation or action in these matters. In such a situation, neither is the police equipped to handle these case - nor can they be trusted to objectively do so.

For these reasons we very strongly urge that Anjana's death as well as all the other matters described above be thoroughly investigated by the CBI and that there be transparency in the proceedings

Madhya Pradesh Government must take responsible for the safety of the victim families

The Collector must be made responsible for ensuring the safety of the families of Nitin-Anjana and Rajendra Ahirwar. Despite Nitin's murder receiving a lot of attention in both the media and from all political parties, Rajendra was murdered and Anjana died. Now, even the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Dr. Mohan Yadav has met the family and is cognisant of the situation - yet justice remains a far cry for the families. If the families of Rajendra and Nitin and Anjana face any more violence or persecution, it is the Government of Madhya Pradesh that will be solely responsible.

ANNEXURES

1. Table 1 - A timeline of events from 2019-2024

Timeline			
Date	Incident		
23.01.2019	Assault on Vishnu in the market		
26.01.2019	Harassment and assault on Anjana		
31.03.2021	Complaint about Nitin being forcibly detained at the police station in a false case and beaten for 5 days		
09.04.2021	Complaint about Raghuveer and Nitin being forcibly detained at the police station in a false case, and Nitin being beaten for 5 days		
24.08.2023	 Nitin was beaten to death at night. His mother's arm was broken and her sari was removed when trying to save him. Anjana was also assaulted. Lambardars and their associates vandalized Nitin's house. Lambardars and their associates broke into Rajendra's house with intent to kill him, assaulted father Ramsevak Ahirwar and vandalized the house. 		
25.08.2023	 FIR filed on Nitin's murder Anjana applied to Collector, SP to add Ankit Singh and others' names in Nitin's murder case 		
08.09.2023	Anjana complained again about not adding Ankit Singh's name to the complaint, giving him protection and chance to influence evidence, and not taking her statement under section 164 into consideration.		
29.09.2023	Anjana complained to the IG about Ankit Singh's name not being added to the complaint		
21.10.2023	Anjana complained to SP about SDOP Khurai not conducting impartial investigation and of Collector's assurances not being fulfilled		
27.10.2023	FIR by Pappu Rajak against Vishnu and Rajendra		
25.02.2024	Komal Singh Thakur, Ankit Thakur's family threatened Anjana at her home		
26.02.2024	Anjana complained to SP about threats from Komal Singh Thakur, Ankit Thakur's family to pressure for compromise		
03.05.2024	Order by Collector Sagar, externing Vishnu (Jila Badar) issued		
25.05.2024	Rajendra was attacked, taken from Khurai to Sagar, then sent to Bhopal but died near Vidisha en route. After his death, Anjana's media statement details pressure for compromise, threats made to Rajendra and some attackers' names he mentioned to her on a phone call just before his death.		

26.05.2024	 FIR filed in Rajendra's murder case, followed by FIR against Rajendra by Pappu Rajak Anjana died after "falling" from vehicle near Khurai while Rajendra's body was being taken back after post-mortem
18.06.2024	Ramsevak Ahirwar submits an application to SP, naming 11 more accused who were involved in Rajendra's murder
02.07.2024 and 05.07.2024	 Application for FIR and impartial investigation into Anjana's suspected murder Complaint to Additional SP about police seizing Vishnu's phone without proper documentation during meeting Application for inquest report and post-mortem report copy of Anjana's death

Table 2 – Summary of Key Documents and Events:

Date	Related Officer or Department	Details
26.01.2019	FIR 0027/2019 filed at Khurai Police Station at 6:18 PM	15-year-old Anjana Ahirwar complained against village lambardars for harassment and assault Sections 294, 323, 506 of IPC and SC/ST Act applied, but POCSO
		Act sections not included despite acknowledging harassment
31.03.2021	Complaint to SP Sagar by Badi Bahu Ahirwar, w/o Raghuvir Ahirwar	Alleged unlawful detention of Nitin at police station, assault, and threats to prevent complaint
09.04.2021	Complaint to IG and SP Sagar by mother and elder daughter-in-law	Similar allegations of Nitin's unlawful detention and assault in custody
26.05.2021	Application by Raghuvir Ahirwar to SP Sagar under 132/21	Vishnu's father complained to the Superintendent of Police, Sagar, against Vishnu being falsely implicated in false cases because of Anjana's FIR against the village lambardars. He states that at the time of the incident, Vishnu was in Bhopal, yet his name was added to the case.
25.08.2023	FIR 0329/2023 filed at 2:09 AM at Khurai Rural Police Station by Anjana Ahirwar	Complaint filed by Anjana regarding the murder of her brother Nitin Ahirwar. The FIR includes the names of Vikram Thakur, Vijay Thakur, Azad Thakur, Komal Thakur, Lalu Khan, Islam Khan, Golu Soni, Nafis Khan, Wahid Khan, and 3-4 other people.
08.09.2023	Anjana's complaint to Collector and SP Sagar	Anjana filed a complaint about Nitin's murder and demanded the arrest of Ankit Singh Thakur, Vikram Singh Thakur, Komal Singh Thakur, Azad Singh Thakur, and others. Anjana also complained about the assault on her mother and her mother being stripped. The application also included a request to

		secure CCTV recordings.
29.09.2023	Anjana's complaint to SP Sagar	Anjana complained about adding Ankit Singh, son of Rajkumar Thakur, as the main accused. She complained that by not adding Ankit Singh's name, he was being given an opportunity to influence the evidence, and this was causing a threat to her family's life.
21.10.2023	Anjana's application to IG Sagar	Complaint about the lack of action on the demand to add names to the FIR as per the complaint dated 08.09.23. The letter also complained about the incomplete treatment of the mother, unfulfilled assurances from the Collector, and pressure from the accused's relatives to reach a compromise.
27.10.2023	Anjana's application to SP Sagar	A complaint was filed against the SDOP Khurai, investigating officer in Nitin's murder, accusing him of protecting the accused on 08/09/23. However, the investigation of the complaint about the SDOP was assigned to the SDOP Khurai himself.
26.02.2024	FIR 0454/2023 filed at 8:44 PM at Khurai Rural Police Station	Pappu Rajak accused Vishnu and Rajendra Ahirwar of assault and verbal abuse
03.05.2024	Anjana's application to SP	A complaint was filed regarding threats to implicate Vishnu in false cases of harassment, assault, and other fabricated charges for not agreeing to a compromise in Nitin's murder case. According to the complaint, the family members of the accused lambardars were continuously pressuring for a compromise.
26.05.2024	Externment order against Vishnu Ahirwar (Jila Badar)	Externment proceedings began on 23.02.2024 based on the report of the Superintendent of Police. On 03/05/2024, the Collector issued an order for a 6-month externment from the districts of Sagar, Damoh, Chhatarpur, Raisen, Narsinghpur, Ashok Nagar, and Tikamgarh.
26.05.2024	FIR 197/2024 filed at 9:03 AM by Ramsevak Ahirwar	An FIR was registered based on the complaint of Ramsevak Ahirwar regarding the murder of Rajendra Ahirwar. The name of Pappu Rajak, at whose house Rajendra was murdered, was not included in the FIR.
18.06.2024	FIR 198/2024 filed at 5:42 PM by Pappu Rajak	An FIR has been filed alleging assault by Pappu Ahirwar against Faizal Qureshi, along with Rajendra Ahirwar and Amir Sohel, to obtain the withdrawal of an old case.

2. Photos



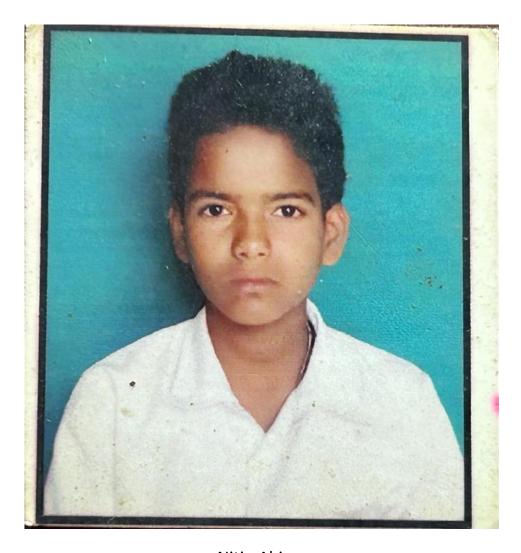


he was made to bow to their feet in the same video





Anjana Ahirwar, 20 years old at time of death.



Nitin Ahirwar



Still from the CCTV footage of Nitin being attacked by village lambardars – the Thakurs and their men



Scenes after the attack in Nitin and Anjana's home



Old photo of Anjana with her mother, following the murder of Nitin





Nitin's mother, Badi Bahu was injured while trying to protect her son – she suffered injuries on both arms, while her right arm was broken'Lambardars' slapping Vishnu –



The main accused behind Nitin's murder – Komal Singh Thakur, Vikram Thakur and Azaad Thakur.



The day of Nitin's murder, Rajendra Ahirwar's home was also attacked. His family believes that if he were present at home at the time, he would have been killed as well.

Below – Rajendra Ahirwar, 26 year old at time of death





Rajendra Ahirwar's home

- 3. Links to news reports
- Anjana can be seen demanding justice from the Collector. She threatened that she
 would be forced to self-immolate in front of Shri Bhupendra Singh's home if the
 administration failed to act. Contains statements from Nitin's mother just after his
 murder- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=okl3qGQ0sZQ
- Visuals of damage to the Ahirwar home the day of Nitin's murder -https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gqGntz8BFYQ
- Statement by Shri Bhupendra Singh, blaming Congress for the deaths in Baraudiya
 Naunagir https://www.abplive.com/states/madhya-pradesh/sagar-bhupendra-singh-attacks-congress-in-barodia-nonagir-dalit-murder-case-ann-2701804
- Statement by Shri Bhupendra Singh on "Bulldozer Justice" –
 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yo MBxvKx4w &
 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kSQHZhKW2Es
- Statement by CM Dr. Mohan Yadav https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07aR0JdCzal
- Madhya Pradesh: Sagar Dalit Youth Beaten to Death | NDTV इंडिया
 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87E9buyT29k
- The last statement made by Anjana before her suspicious death/murder https://www.instagram.com/reel/C7dUenavjdR/?igsh=MXFoYnI5YXk1dndtYw==
- Family raises demand for CBI enquiry, talks to Rahul Gandhi on phone: <a href="https://mpcg.ndtv.in/madhya-pradesh-news/will-there-be-a-cbi-inquiry-into-the-suspicious-death-of-a-dalit-girl-congress-raised-the-demand-rahul-gandhi-spoke-to-the-family-5766335/amp/1#amp_tf=From%20%251%24s&aoh=17205278322167
- A detailed report by Dainik Bhaskar with relevant visuals-https://www.bhaskar.com/local/mp/news/inside-story-of-dalit-massacre-in-sagar-131762030.html
- Report by BBC India: https://www.bbc.com/hindi/articles/crg3845plv7o