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# Wake up and find out the real culprits behind communal discord: Air warrior, son of Dadri victim

Dec 27, 2015, 05.03AM IST

Tags: Uttar Pradesh | Sunday ET | Mohammad Akhlaq | Indian Air Force | Dadri lynching | Bisada

*It was on the morning after an unholy night in September that the debate on intolerance gushed onto centre stage and into the veins of the nation's consciousness — not a collective one, though — when a blacksmith from a village called Bisada in Uttar Pradesh was lynched by a mob. Mohammad Akhlaq was killed by neighbours and villagers, following a rumour about him having killed a cow and stored beef at home. Over the next few weeks, the outrage, accusations and counter-charges rented the air, and fingers were pointed at governments (central and state) even as netas dropped in to pay their respects. The sympathy, empathy and support poured in over the next few weeks but would have been of little solace to Akhlaq's 82-year-old mother, wife, daughter and one son (who was also badly beaten up). The other son Sartaj, who had joined the Indian Air Force in 2008 and was posted in Chennai in 2014, barely had the time to shed a tear, as he juggled between his job, the recovery of his severely injured brother and beginning the long battle to get some semblance of justice for his father. In early November, Shuchi Kapoor, a freelance photojournalist, caught up with Akhlaq at the Chennai Railway Station, shortly before he was being transferred to the Delhi Air Force base where his family had been shifted. In this interview, Sartaj Akhlaq talks about the killing, the aftermath, and the unconditional support of the Air Force — the silver lining that reminds us about India's various hues of tolerance. Edited excerpts:*



IN-DEPTH COVERAGE

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**What was your father's occupation?**

My father was a blacksmith, the only blacksmith in the village and had a small shop where he used to repair tools used for farming. We come from a lower-class family, from an unstable economic background.

**Tell us how you ended up with the Indian Air Force.**

During my childhood, we used to sleep on the terrace and I was very fond of watching the planes flying overhead. During the 10th grade, my tuition teacher asked me what I would like to become when I grow up. I was thinking and looking at the sky when a plane flew right at that moment and I said, I want to fly a plane. And I made up my mind I will join the Air Force. After my 12th grade, I sat for the examination and got selected.

**Can you recall the incident and the circumstances in which your father was killed?**

On September 28, I called home around 9:30 pm and everyone sounded fine. I got a call again at 10:30 pm; it was my sister and she was screaming on the phone, extremely scared and uncontrollable. She told me that the neighbours and a group of boys from the village had attacked the house and had dragged our father out.

## SPOTLIGHT

Rajan Nama



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My younger brother was badly injured and half conscious; blood was coming out of his head, nose, ears...he was smeared in blood. My sister was extremely scared. And I was trying to register what had happened and what could have happened to cause this in such a short span of time because I had spoken to them an hour back and everything was fine then. I asked them to call an ambulance and also inform the police immediately. I myself tried to search for helpline numbers online from here. But there was no ambulance available at that time.

**It was mentioned in the media that there was a personal strife with your father that caused the incident.**

It can't be. My father was a rather helpful man and also was skilled with a lot of small jobs; he was an electrician, plumber.

**When you reached and saw your father and brother in that condition, why did you not take any action immediately?**

At that time, my priority was to support my family and take care of them. I was the only male member left unharmed and everyone was and is dependent on me now. Any action against these people could have put my family at further risk. So the first thing was to get them out of there and make arrangements for their safety.

**Do you think your family is safe now?**

I have shifted my family to an Air Force colony (in Delhi) and they are safe there. I have received full support of my seniors and from the Indian Air Force. We are like a family. Even the Chief stood up for me and assured me of complete support and assured me that my family will be safe now. Each and every colleague of mine called me and assured me that they stand by me and will be there for my family. In such times, it means a lot.

**What does your brother do?**

My brother had finished his graduation and was preparing for UPSC exams. He wanted to become an IPS officer. But I don't think it will be possible now.

**How were your family's relations with your neighbours and other people in the village?**

Most of our friends are Hindus. There are hardly any others.

**Why would they do this to your family? What issue did they have with your family?**

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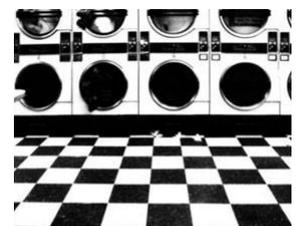
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**P K (Canada)**

30 Dec, 2015 11:29 PM

UP, Bihar & such other states have no law & order. Police & law enforcing machinery is ineffective because of unwanted political interference. British divide & rule policy consolidated by congress govt. post independence has ruined the harmony & peace of our country. Political parties & leaders exploit such situation with the help of media who are unscrupulous & run by political parties for their vested interests. Only the people have to be sane & not emotional in deciding any action and not give chance to politicians to exploit. This one incident has created enough turmoil in the country infuriated by political parties for vote bank politics. What a shameless act.

**Dilkhush (HINDUSTAN)**

29 Dec, 2015 05:11 PM

पानी को कसकर पकड़ोगे तो वो हाथ से छूट जाएगा उसे बहने दो वो अपना रास्ता स्वयं बना लेगा..! कभी-कभी जब परिस्थितियाँ समझ में ना आए तो जो कुछ जीवन में घटित हो रहा है उसे शांत भाव व तटस्थ होकर बस देखना चाहिए समय आने पर जीवन अपना मार्ग स्वयं बना लेगा...!!

**SINGH (Delhi)**

28 Dec, 2015 02:31 PM

ok

**drvni (California)**

27 Dec, 2015 09:16 PM

Sartaj rightly said that we judge the other people not by their religion but by their character. This is the view of many Indians irrespective of their individual faiths.

**Tammanna Naga D Rao (Unknown)**

27 Dec, 2015 05:41 AM

Needs CBI enquiry which prompted that ghastly killing....Victims friends are part of mob that killed him

**rb rb (New Delhi)** replies to Tammanna Naga D Rao

27 Dec, 2015 06:12 PM

Sir, I agree with u for a CBI enquiry into this most despicable murder of an innocent but tell me what will a CBI enquiry achieve except another political slugfest with different state / central govts in power - a waste of tax payer money. I read that UP police has registered / arrested some perpetrators . It should be taken to logical conclusion and guilty punished so that family can have closure . Sartaj has rightly said Indians should avoid " impulsive" actions. Just see the number of " road rage" cases in Delhi . Judiciary has to be quicker with dispensing justice to all in chronological manner so that people do not take law in their own hands.

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