

Kali file

Report

Kali Bachao Andolan

Date 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 2003

On the morning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> April, the entire Dandeli town was tense. There was suspense in the air and people remained indoors waiting to hear about the clash between activists of Kali Bachao Andolan and those vested interest group called Kali Hatao' Andolan supported by the paper Mill. The presence of police in town and an array of police near the paper factory indicated the tense situation.

As planned we arrived near Halmaddi Bridge, adjacent near Paper factory at 10 AM. We were eight activists, who put out the banner of KALI BACHO ANDOLAN near the bridge. We waited till 10.30 to see if local people would come. Gurudatt, a local youth came alone. He was the only person from Dandeli town!

10.30AM

The representative of the Labour union of Paper Mill met ~~me~~ <sup>us</sup> requesting that the protest be called off. He said that we can sit with Management and sort out the issue. He said that everybody in Dandeli feared that due to this protest the paper Mill will be closed and thousand of people will be unemployed. I pointed out the letter sent to the Management that we are not for closing the paper Mill, but we want them to treat the effluent and to save Kali. But the union representatives was in aggressive mood and they were not willing to listen to our argument.

11 AM.

The PRO of the Paper Mill came to the spot and said that everything can be sorted out if we discuss the matters with the Management. We insisted that the highest officer, the Executive Director Mr. Chandak should come and meet us and should accompany to the villages affected by pollution. The PRO said that he is busy and can not come to the village.

11.30 AM.

We told the PRO that if the Executive Director is not willing to come, then there is no need for any representative from Paper Mill to accompany us. Despite this blunt statement they came along with us. The Assistant Commissioner of Karwar ( Mr.Dhumale) and Tehshildar of Haliyal ( Mr.G.S.Bhat) accompanied us.

First we stopped near the nalah where the affluent was flowing. I asked the PRO and other technical staff of paper mill " You say this water is treated and it potable?" the PRO said, " yes it is treated before discharging into the river. It is portable and the only problem is its colour and smell, which can not be removed".

I told ' That fine, is it potable?'

PRO " Yes, it portable"

One of the activist brought a bucket of treated water in front of officials. Pandurang Hegde asked the PRO from paper factory "You said that it is treated and potable. Will you kindly drink a glass of this treated water?" The official refused to drink the water. I said " if you say it is potable , then drink it. If you do not drink how can you tell people downstream to drink this water?".

The official was silent and it revealed the hollow statement of the official who asserted that the effluent is treated.

Visit to Halmaddi village

We visited the farm of Pandurang Patil, a local farmer. He showed how the paper is growing in his fields due to the irrigated water from the nearby stream in which effluent is discharged by Paper Mill.

He said "The crops are affected due to this water, our cattle is also suffering." He also told that the paper mill supplies drinking water to the village. The accompanied Paper Mill officials threatened him "Why do you take this water for irrigation. Why don't you take it from other source?"

we showed the AC, Tehshildar how the Chikku crop is affected by polluted water.

Due to the intimidation, the farmer was compelled to say that he is not against the Paper Mill.

12AM

We visited Kariampally village, 5 Kms from Dandeli. We visited fields of Sahadev Gundopkar. Due to polluted water of Kali, the cattle, buffaloes were affected by strange diseases. He showed many cattle, which looked diseased, and waiting for death. He said "I have lost 25 cattle in one year. The cow yielding 25 liters of milk do not give even one liter now?"

Gundupkar, a chemist and an ex-employee of West Coast Paper Mill said "I can definitely say that the river water is polluted. The cattle drink this water and are dying. Hundreds of Buffaloes belonging to Gouli tribe have died. But they are very innocent people. They do not link the death to the polluted river water".

Even Gundupkar was afraid of WCP. He said "We accept that WCP is essential as it gives employment to people. But it should treat the affluent."

There was scuffle between the local villagers and many anti social elements who reached the fields in Kariyampally village.

They raised the slogans against us and said that we have come to close down the Paper Factory. They threatened physical injury. Fortunately, the police staff prevented the violence.

The Tehsildar visited the fields affect by the polluted water of the river.

After visiting these two villages, the AC was shown the ash dumps along the road by WCP. These ash dump is from the coal based power plant of WCP.

12.30 AM

AS memorandum was given to the district administration with following demands

- To stop the pollution into Kali river.
- To compensate the farmer affected by pollution.
- To allow joint inspection of water samples and treatment plant
- To take action against Paper Factory for pollution of the river.

After submission of the memorandum the AC said that he shall convey this to DC and appropriate action will be taken by the authorities. He said that if WCPM is keen on

resolving the issue with mutual discussion , the Executive Director, Chandak can come to the PWD IB till 1.30 PM.

We waited in the IB till 1.30 PM. As the WCPM authorities did not come for discussion we left the place.

Comments:

1. Why we had to launch movement ?When local Dandeli people are not with us?

The WCPM created fear among the local people in Dandeli and surrounding villages. They sent Goondas to the villages and threatened them not to join the protest. As the villagers are weak, timid, they were afraid of coming in support of the protest. The WCP also created fear in Dandeli that due to the protest the Paper Mill will be closed, which is the life line of Dandeli. In order to support this, they said that Plywood factory and Ferro Alloys is closed down in Dandeli due to environmentalists. So, the next is Paper Mill, if closed will leave 30,000 people jobless.( It employees only 6000).

Due to the intense rumor mongering and using money and political power the WCP succeeded in creating terror among local people.

2. Kali Hatao Andolan

The local BJP+ Coggress unit threatened to launch Kali Hatao' Andolan against us. We wanted to sea how these political parties would face us. They wanted to remove Kali river ? The river which is lifeline of thousands of people is under threat not only from industrial pollution, but also from politicians!

On the day of protest they never dared to come to fare us. This shows their cowardnes .

3. Withdrawal of KBA.

The WCP influenced Jog who called off the strike. He as well as WCP created a situation to show that there is no problem and everything is normal. They succeed in buying Jog. The WCPM also highlighted this aspect and published that the protest is called off. So, there was a real challenge as who will protest against WCP.

According this challenge, we organised the protest inspite of meager attendance. If we had withdrawal, it would have been victory for vested interest, especially the politicians, Goondas and WCP. In order to challenge these strong vested interest we decided that even with limited numbers we had to launch the struggle of KBA.

4. The way WCP behaved, it showed that they were scared and frightened. This is because they are wrong on moral and ethical grounds. They know that they are polluting Kali and that they are trying to win people, officials by money and muscle power.

This kind of terror is not going to win. The truth will come out. In order to bring out the truth we had no other option but to launch the protest.

Pandurang Hegde

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Dandeli May 28, 2003

Report:

On 28<sup>th</sup> May 2003 we visited villages affected by pollution on the right bank of Kali river. The villages are Sakhsali and Harnoda. There are 21 Gowli families in Harnoda and 20 families in Sakhsali. Both these villages do not have the basic facility of road and drinking water. The villagers said that they face severe water problem in both the villages. The borewell water is not potable. There is one open well in Sakhshali.

The meeting was held with the villagers. They said that the deepening of the open well in Sakhshali will solve the water problem. They also feel that a new open well should be dug in Harnoda. They demand a water supply system for both the villages.

Ramesh Mirashi and Vasudev Mirashi from Sakhshali accompanied us to W.C.P.

We visited Kariyampally and discussed the issues to be addressed with WCP. The consensus was on following issues:

1. To provide drinking water to affected villages.
2. To provide basic health services in the affected villages.
3. To request peoples participation in pollution control/ monitoring.

Discussion with Chandak:

Chandak explained the process of Paper making in detail and that they have rebuilt the factory with modern machines and increased capacity. He said the pollution problem is only due to the use of conventional raw material (wood) which needs chemicals in the processing. Now they are importing pulp, which needs little processing.

He gave the details of EPT ( Effluent Treatment Plant)and how they are treating the affluent. Recently Tata Consultancy Services have given report on how to control pollution. The only problem, he said is that of removal of color/odor. This is difficult and Chandak claimed that no technology for this.

I pointed out that if they are treating the water, how come villages are being adversely affected?

Chandak said that it is due to the decreased water release from the Dam. If rains start, the water will dilute and the pollution problem will be over.

We told him to address the following problems:

1. To provide clean drinking water to people/ livestock in affected villages.
2. To provide health services in the villages.
3. To provide compensation to farmers affected by pollution (death of cattle/buffallo).
4. To involve transparent pollution control measures, in collaboration with local villages/ people from Dandeli are involved in checking pollution control measures.

Chandak asked us to submit the proposal for drinking water/ other facilities. We agreed to carry forward the discussion in future.

Participants:

1. Pandurang Hegde
2. Gundupkar
3. Ananth Kubetkar.
4. Jayachandra
5. Rajesh Naik.
6. Ramesh Mirashi
7. Vasudev Mirashi.
8. B.G.Hegde. GERAL

Pandurang Hegde