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Row over 'untouchable' Indian dog

Police in India are investigating claims that a Dalit woman has been ordered to pay compensation to the high-caste owners of a dog she fed.

The woman says the village council wants her to pay a fine of 15,000 rupees (\$330) for feeding the dog, which the owners have now kicked out.

They are reported to have said the dog is "untouchable", but deny being motivated by caste considerations.

Although widespread, discrimination against Dalits is an offence in India.

Dalits, who make up nearly 20% of the Indian population, say little has changed despite the government enacting various laws banning caste-based discrimination.

'He got very angry'

The incident took place in Malikpur village in Morena district in central Madhya Pradesh state.

"I made some roti [Indian bread] and took it to my husband who works in a farm. After I had fed him, we had some leftovers which I gave to the dog," the Dalit woman, Sunita Jatav, said.

She said the owner of the dog, Amrutlal Kirari, saw her feeding him.

"He got very angry and said 'You've fed my dog, it has become an untouchable now'."

Mrs Jatav said Mr Kirari left the dog, a black mongrel called Sheru, tied to a pole outside her house.

On Monday, the village council met and decided that Sheru had been defiled and hence Mr Kirari should be paid 15,000 rupees as compensation, Mrs Jatav alleged.

On Tuesday, she approached the district collector of Morena who ordered an inquiry into the incident.

Senior police officer in the area, Baldev Singh, told the BBC that he was investigating the matter.

He said Mr Kirari had alleged that after eating the bread, Sheru fell ill.

Mr Kirari said he abandoned the dog at Mrs Jatav's house so she could look after it and nurse it back to health, Mr Singh added.

Dalits - formerly untouchables - are considered at the bottom of the Hindu caste system.

Any discrimination against them is an offence and punishable by law.

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INDIA

Dog cast(e) away after dalit touch

Suchandana Gupta, TNN, Sep 24, 2010, 03.47am IST

BHOPAL: A dog's life couldn't get worse. A mongrel brought up in an upper caste home in [Morena](#) was kicked out after the Rajput family members discovered that their Sheru had eaten a roti from a [dalit](#) woman and was now an "untouchable". Next, Sheru was tied to a pole in the village's dalit locality. His controversial case is now pending with the district collector, the state police and the [Scheduled Caste Atrocities](#) police station in Morena district of north MP.

The black cur, of no particular pedigree, was accustomed to the creature comforts in the home of its influential Rajput owners in Manikpur village in Morena. Its master, identified by the police as Rampal Singh, is a rich farmer with local political connections.

A week ago Sunita Jatav, a dalit woman, was serving lunch to her farm labourer husband. "There was a 'roti' left over from lunch. I saw the dog roaming and fed it the last bread," Sunita said. "But when Rampal Singh saw me feeding the dog and he grew furious. He yelled: 'Cobbler woman, how dare you feed my dog with your roti?' He rebuked me publicly. I kept quiet thinking the matter would end there. But it got worse," she said.

On Monday, Rampal ex-communicated the dog. A village panchayat was called, which decided that Sheru would now have to live with Sunita and her family because it had become an untouchable. Sunita Jatav was fined Rs 15,000.

An outraged Sunita and her brother Nahar Singh Jatav rushed to [Sumawali](#) police station. They were directed to take the matter to the SC/ST Atrocities police station in Kalyan. "When we went there, the officer asked us why we fed the dog," recalls Nahar. "So we went to the DSP in the SC/ST Atrocities department and submitted a memorandum to him, as also to the district collector. But no one has registered our FIR so far.

DSP SC/ST Atrocities (Morena), Baldev Singh, recalls, "We got a complaint in which it has been alleged that a dog was declared untouchable and a dalit family fined for feeding it. We are investigating the allegation," said the officer.

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Dog's day: Caste out after roti bite

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT



Sheroo, the dog

, **Bhopal, Sept. 22:** For Sheroo, it's been a dog's life.

The pet dog has been labelled an outcast(e) by his rich master and abandoned because he tucked into a roti offered by a Dalit woman.

Amrit Lal Dhakar aka Mitta, a caste-conscious landlord in Madhya Pradesh's Morena district, now wants Sunita to take care of the dog and pay him Rs 15,000 in damages. He has approached district collector M.K. Aggarwal for "justice" and adequate "compensation".

Sunita has, in turn, gone to police seeking action against Mitta under the provisions for atrocities against weaker sections. Last night, Mitta drove her and her husband out of their Manikpur village home.

The bizarre fight has infuriated Aggarwal, who said that in his two years as collector, he had never come across such a case. "At one level, it is a sad commentary that deep-rooted casteism is prompting people to indulge in such unbecoming conduct," he said.

About a fortnight ago, Sunita was carrying food for her husband Chandan Jatav, an agricultural labourer, in the fields when she saw the dog. Sensing it was hungry, she fished out a roti from her bag and fed him.

Just then, Mitta emerged from nowhere. Finding Sheroo eating something, he asked Sunita what her caste was and allegedly badmouthed her for "polluting" his pet.

A few days later, he landed up at Sunita's home and told her to look after the dog "forever". He also apparently demanded Rs 15,000 in compensation and left Sheroo behind despite Sunita saying her husband didn't earn enough for them to keep a pet.

A week after that, Sunita was summoned to a public hearing by the district collector. As she narrated the sequence of events, she broke down saying Mitta was pressuring her to pay Rs 15,000 in lieu of the dog.

Aggarwal then asked the police to register a case against Mitta under the provisions for atrocities against Dalits and issue him a notice. Mitta has refused comment.

