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Caste taunts by teachers drive 66 SC/ST girls run away from Orissa school

Sunil Mohan Patnaik, TNN 9 August 2009, 11:31pm IST

PARALAKHEMUNDI: As many as 66 girls from N Jhalarsingh Kanyashram, a government-run school for SC/ST girls in Gajapati district, ran away from the hostel after three teachers allegedly made casteist taunts to them.

"You all belong to lower castes," the triad would "always keep telling" them.

"They have inflicted unbearable torture and trauma on us. Even over a trifle thing, they make fun and remind us of our so-called low-caste background. It's very very cruel. For long, we put up with the trauma, hoping things will improve someday. But nothing of that sort happened," one of the girls said on condition of anonymity,

"Worse, they imposed a dress code on us and ordered a particular diet. For the past three weeks, Class X students haven't got eggs in meals. It's too much.," she added.

The students walked a distance of about 25 km through Hatigada, Lathar, Libiriguda, Saralapadar, Rubudisingh, Alisingh, Paleri, Paika Antarada and reached Nuagarh to voice their problems before the block development officer (BDO), but in vain. The day being a second Saturday, the BDO's office was closed. The girls then met zilla parishad member Labin Raita and samiti member Dalima Dalbehera.

"They were hungry so we arranged food for them before letting them go to their respective homes," said Labin.

SC/ST welfare director R K Choudhury said, "We are aware of the development and will take necessary steps to get the girls back to school. We also take strong action against those found guilty."

Gajapati Prakash Chandra Das Collector has deputed district welfare officer D Biswanath and BDO Nuagada Prasanna Sarangi to submit a report by Monday.

Earlier, a group of students of Ekalabya Abasika Bidyalaya at Chandragiri and Laxmipur Abasika Bidyalaya near Koinpur in Gajapati district walked out to protest against alleged mismanagement and misbehaviour of teaching staff.

Altogether there are 250 girls studying in the institution. Of them 238 live in the hostel. As many as 19 out of 21 in Class X and 47 out of 56 in Class IX have left for home.

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