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People's Watch condemns the caste violence in Vedaranyam and demands invoking of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 2018

People's watch demands proper use of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 2018 in the caste violence between the Thevar and Dalit community members at Vedaranyam in Nagapattinam District on 25th August 2019. While it is appreciated that the District Administration managed to prevent escalation of violence by inauguration of a new Ambedkar statue at the same place where the old statue was defaced and destroyed by anti-social elements. It is saddening that once again the District Collector and the District Superintendent of Police, both of whom are responsible for proper implementation of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 2018 together with the Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) and the Inspector General of Police (IG), Central Zone have till date not used the provisions including Sections 3(1)(t), 3(1)(u), 3(1)(v) of the Act that deals with destroying the damaging or defiling any object generally known to be held with high esteem by the members of Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes.

Section 3(1)(t), destroys, damages or defiles any object generally known to be held sacred or in high esteem by members of the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes.

Section 3(1)(u), by words either written or spoken or by signs or by visible representation or otherwise promotes or attempts to promote feelings of enmity, hatred or ill-will against members of the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes;

Section 3(1)(v), by words either written or spoken or by any other means disrespects any late person held in high esteem by members of the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes;

People's watch reminds that the amendment to the Act was carried out in the year 2015 to include new provisions to attract such incidents of caste violence to the level of destroying and disrespecting the statute of a person such as Dr. Ambedkar and it attracts the provisions of the new amended law.

The non-use of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 2018 in the Vedaranyam case is once again a clearly indication of the lack of adequate training to senior officers in the ranks of the Collector, Superintendent of Police, DIG, IG, and Secretary to the Government, all of whom have remain silent in this issue without invoking the relevant

sections of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 2018. Political parties and movements till date including leadership from Dalit parties have only seen to be demanding detention of accused persons under the Goonda's Act rather than using the very stringent provision of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 2018. The Act also provides provisions under Chapter 3 for externment under Section 10 & 11 of the Act.

People's watch therefore demands that sufficient and urgent trainings on the amended provisions of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 2018 are provided to all senior officers at district and state level, so that effective implementation of the Act takes place not only in Vedaranyam but throughout the state of Tamil Nadu.

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