

Attacks on African Students in India – A Critical Review

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Abstract— Students from various African countries, residing in Noida, UP. The locals of Greater Noida, UP lashed out at 'Nigerians' on 27th March, 2017. It all started with a protest against Greater Noida police releasing five Nigeria-born students because of lack of evidence. They were accused of causing the death of 16-year-old Manish Khari, who allegedly died of drug overdose in a private hospital on Sunday. With the result at least three African students were admitted to different hospitals for treatment. The natural aftermath of these attacks, a group of African students in the city has only one question to ask, "Isn't India the country in whose independence, non-violence played a crucial role? Have Indians completely forgotten Mahatma Gandhi's values?" While the attacks on African Students jolted the African community living in Delhi-NCR once again, the African students ask us that though they may have learnt to live with our prejudices, will India ever accept them beyond their colour? Days after attacks on African students in Greater Noida, a group of Indian and African students came together for a friendly football match on Friday at Sharda University. "There is a lack of cultural awareness, cultural mingling, cultural assimilation and a lack of understanding of other cultures. That's why we need more initiatives like this. This was the first initiative in which we tried getting them (Indian and international students) closer. We will be organizing more such programmes in the future." The chancellor of Sharda University, PK Gupta, said, "Racism is still prevalent in India, so we need to organize more such programmes to bridge the gap between the Indians and the Africans".

Keywords— African Students, Noida, Nigerians, Greater Noida, Racism, African community, sharda University.

I. INTRODUCTION

Students from various African countries, residing in Noida, UP. The locals of Greater Noida, UP lashed out at 'Nigerians' on 27th March, 2017. It all started with a protest against Greater Noida police releasing five Nigeria-born students because of lack of evidence. They were accused of causing the death of 16-year-old Manish Khari, who allegedly died of drug overdose in a private hospital on Sunday. The protesters later handed over a memorandum to the district magistrate. However, the protest soon turned violent, with a few men in the mob attacking three Nigerians at three different places in Noida. With the result at least three African students were admitted to different hospitals for treatment. The natural aftermath of these attacks, a group of African students in the city has only one question to ask, "Isn't India the country in whose independence, non-violence played a crucial role? Have Indians completely forgotten Mahatma Gandhi's values?" Africans in the city are often tagged as "drug peddlers", "habshis", and even "cannibals" by the Indian community. Be it in their classrooms, on the roads or while commuting, they are subject to discrimination.

While the attacks on African Students jolted the African community living in Delhi-NCR once again, the African students ask us that though they may have learnt to live with our prejudices, will India ever accept them beyond their colour? The nation, which got its independence without resorting to violence, and thinks that plants and animals also have a right to live - how can they treat a section of people like this?"

Days after attacks on African students in Greater Noida, a group of Indian and African students came together for a friendly football match on Friday at Sharda University. The 90-minute match was played between two teams, Chancellor's 11 and Embassy 11, which had the same composition - four students from Africa, one each from Nepal, Bhutan, Vietnam and Afghanistan, and three from India. Though there were some naysayers in the audience, there was no negativity on the field, with Indian and African students collaborating to play together in both teams. "It is great that such a match was organized to promote brotherhood between Africans and Indians. "There is a lack of cultural awareness, cultural mingling, cultural assimilation and a lack of understanding of other cultures. That's why we need more initiatives like this. This was the first initiative in which we tried getting them (Indian and international students) closer. We will be organizing more such programmes in the future." The chancellor of Sharda University, PK Gupta, said, "Racism is still prevalent in India, so we need to organize more such programmes to bridge the gap between the Indians and the Africans."

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

(1) *Shikha Salaria (2017)*: The brewing 'clash of cultures' in Greater Noida came to a head on Monday, when locals lashed out at 'Nigerians', mostly students from various African countries, residing in the area, with three African youths assaulted by Monday evening. Late on Monday, external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj tweeted, "I have asked for a report from Government of Uttar Pradesh about the reported attack on African students in Noida." At the time of going to press, Section 144 Cr PC had been clamped on Pari Chowk area. It all started with a protest against Greater Noida police releasing five Nigeria-born students because of lack of evidence. They were accused of causing the death of 16-year-old Manish Khari, who allegedly died of drug overdose in a private hospital on Sunday.

Khari, a student of Class XII of a private school, lived with his parents in the NSG Society in Sector Pi II. He went missing on Friday evening, and was found in an intoxicated

state in the society the next morning. He was rushed to a private hospital, where he died during treatment. The family suspected Nigerian students of having provided the drugs on which Khari overdosed. Around 500 residents and RWAs of Greater Noida societies, marched to the SSP office around 12 noon on Saturday and complained about 'police inaction'. Devendra Tiger, president of Golden Federation, one of the organisations leading the protest, claimed Khari had been lured by 'Nigerians' and introduced to drugs. Following this, police registered an FIR for abduction and murder against five Nigerian students - Usman, Amir, Kabir, Abdul and Sayeed - based on the complaint of the Khari family. They were released on Sunday for lack of evidence, while a group of foreign students gathered outside Kasma police station and held a protest.

"The boy's younger brother saw him being picked up by the Nigerians. The SSP has sought four days to resolve the matter," said Tiger. The protesters later handed over a memorandum to the district magistrate. However, the protest soon turned violent, with a few men in the mob attacking three Nigerians passing by Pari Chowk.

At least two Nigerians, who were crossing the area in a Honda City, were injured. One had to be admitted to hospital. Later, a youth was beaten up inside Ansal Plaza premises, said an eyewitness. He had to be admitted in Kailash Hospital, Greater Noida. Another Nigerian was later beaten up at Pari Chowk. He too had to be admitted to the same hospital. A Nigerian was beaten up near Jagat Farm and was admitted to Yatharth Hospital. Police said they have arrested five people

(2) *Riya Sharma (2017)* Looking at the famous Gyarah Murti sculpture in Delhi, which depicts Mahatma Gandhi's iconic Dandi March, a group of African students in the city has only one question to ask, "Isn't India the country in whose independence, non-violence played a crucial role? Have Indians completely forgotten Mahatma Gandhi's values?" Africans in the city are often tagged as "drug peddlers", "habshis", and even "cannibals" by the Indian community. Be it in their classrooms, on the roads or while commuting, they are subject to discrimination. After a teenager in Greater Noida died of a suspected drug overdose last week, African students living in that area were accused of supplying drugs to the student. Following the teenager's death, the nearby residents not only attacked African students living in that area, but also attacked a group of them at Noida's Ansal Plaza. While this jolted the African community living in Delhi-NCR once again, the African students ask us that though they may have learnt to live with our prejudices, will India ever accept them beyond their colour?

'Mahatma Gandhi will not be happy to see this' "People like Martin Luther King Jr considered Gandhi their role model. Many global leaders, including the Dalai Lama, consider him the pioneer of the non-violent struggle. Wherever he is today, he will not be happy to see this. The nation, which got its independence without resorting to violence, and thinks that plants and animals also have a right to live - how can they treat a section of people like this?" questions Dennis Aggrey from Nigeria, a student of network security at Stratford University in Delhi. Blan Chard Bata from the Democratic

Republic of the Congo and a BBA student from Mahatma Gandhi University, adds, "We are living in a paradox. A country which gained its independence through non-violence is treating a race of people in this way. Nelson Mandela was Gandhi's disciple, and he wasn't an animal, then how come you compare us with animals?"

Another Nigerian national, Presidoe Okuguni, who is also a student at Stratford University, and is the public relations officer at the Association of South African students in India (AASI), calls the recent attacks a shameful act. "Indians all over the world keep talking about racism and discrimination, but back home, they are doing the same thing. For me, it is hypocritical. When a little boy sees me on a street, he starts running, as if he is running for his life. It makes me think, 'Does he think that I am going to kill him or eat him up?' I don't blame the kid, I blame the people who have told him all of this. It is time India wakes up to the reality," says Okuguni. *'People can judge us by their own perceptions and not by others' assumptions'*

'We have good and bad people everywhere. If people want to judge us, they should be able to do that according to their own perception and not by the assumptions made by others. The need of the hour is to learn to live in peace. I don't see Indians asking questions, and clearing their perceptions about us. We will be happy to clear doubts they have," says Rotrigue Kazanba from the Congo, a student of Information Technology at Stratford University. Another student and Nigerian national, Michael Kemya, adds, "Indians need to accept that there are other people in this world as well. They are not the only ones living in this world because when they see us walking on the streets - they think 'what's this?'. Not even, 'who is this?'. They look at us as 'something' which is not a human being.

(3) *Priyanka Narula(2017)*: Days after attacks on African students in Greater Noida, a group of Indian and African students came together for a friendly football match on Friday at Sharda University. The 90-minute match was played between two teams, Chancellor's 11 and Embassy 11, which had the same composition - four students from Africa, one each from Nepal, Bhutan, Vietnam and Afghanistan, and three from India. Though there were some naysayers in the audience, there was no negativity on the field, with Indian and African students collaborating to play together in both teams. The lush green football ground and light drizzle made for a pleasant experience for the spectators. While waiting for the match to kick off, some of the more pessimistic ones were heard whispering, "Aaj toh pakka ladai hogi bhai!" However, the spirit of the participating Indian and African students was far more positive, and could not be dampened by such naysayers. Nabeel Abbas, who played for Embassy 11 and is the captain of the university's football team, said, "It is great that such a match was organized to promote brotherhood between Africans and Indians. Some local residents also gathered at the gate when they learnt of this match. I told my African friends to let me know if they faced any problems.

The match was organised by NP Singh, the district magistrate of Gautam Budh Nagar, in association with Sharda University. Among the attendees were Thakur Dharendra

Singh, the newly appointed BJP MLA from Jewar, Manish Sharma, SHO Knowledge Park, Rajesh Kumar Singh, SDM (Dadri), Sharda University staff and several diplomats and embassy staffers. Okolie Chidera, an MBA student from Nigeria, entertained the audience with a humorous presentation of his Indian experience. Showing off his Hindi, he said, "When I joined the university, one of the students said, 'Namaste, mera naam Rohit hai, aap se mil kar khushi hui.'" DM Singh said, "There is a lack of cultural awareness, cultural mingling, cultural assimilation and a lack of understanding of other cultures. That's why we need more initiatives like this. This was the first initiative in which we tried getting them (Indian and international students) closer. We will be organizing more such programmes in the future."

The chancellor of Sharda University, PK Gupta, said, "Racism is still prevalent in India, so we need to organize more such programmes to bridge the gap between the Indians and the Africans." After a bit of mimicry and dance, the match kicked off with the DM and the embassy representatives shaking hands and wishing the players good luck. Ashok Dariyani, director of the international division, Sharda University, said, "We should have more such events to promote healthy communication between Indians and the international community. Africa is the future, it's the land of opportunities. We should promote a healthy cultural exchange between India and Africa."

III. FINDINGS

- Locals of Greater Noida, UP lashed out at 'Nigerians', mostly students from various African countries, residing in the area, with three African youths assaulted by Monday evening. It all started with a protest against Greater Noida police releasing five Nigeria-born students because of lack of evidence. They were accused of causing the death of 16-year-old Manish Khari, who allegedly died of drug overdose in a private hospital on Sunday.
- The protesters later handed over a memorandum to the district magistrate. However, the protest soon turned violent, with a few men in the mob attacking three Nigerians passing by Pari Chowk. At least two Nigerians, who were crossing the area in a Honda City, were injured. One had to be admitted to hospital. Later, a youth was beaten up inside Ansal Plaza premises, said an eyewitness. He had to be admitted in Kailash Hospital, Greater Noida. Another Nigerian was later beaten up at Pari Chowk. He too had to be admitted to the same hospital. A Nigerian was beaten up near Jagat Farm and was admitted to Yatharth Hospital.
- A group of African students in the city has only one question to ask, "Isn't India the country in whose independence, non-violence played a crucial role? Have Indians completely forgotten Mahatma Gandhi's values?" Africans in the city are often tagged as "drug peddlers", "habshis", and even "cannibals" by the Indian community. Be it in their classrooms, on the roads or while commuting, they are subject to discrimination.
- While the attacks on African Students jolted the African community living in Delhi-NCR once again, the African students ask us that though they may have learnt to live with our prejudices, will India ever accept them beyond their colour? The nation, which got its independence without resorting to violence, and thinks that plants and animals also have a right to live - how can they treat a section of people like this?"
- Another student and Nigerian national, Michael Kemya, adds, "Indians need to accept that there are other people in this world as well. They are not the only ones living in this world because when they see us walking on the streets - they think 'what's this?'. Not even, 'who is this?'. They look at us as 'something' which is not a human being.
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- The match was organised by NP Singh, the district magistrate of Gautam Budh Nagar, in association with Sharda University. Among the attendees were Thakur Dharendra Singh, the newly appointed BJP MLA from Jewar, Manish Sharma, SHO Knowledge Park, Rajesh Kumar Singh, SDM (Dadri), Sharda University staff and several diplomats and embassy staffers. DM Singh said, "There is a lack of cultural awareness, cultural mingling, cultural assimilation and a lack of understanding of other cultures. That's why we need more initiatives like this. This was the first initiative in which we tried getting them (Indian and international students) closer. We will be organizing more such programmes in the future."
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representatives shaking hands and wishing the players good luck.

IV. CONCLUSION

- As Under Graduation and Post Graduation education is cheaper in India compared to African Nations, Students from various African countries, residing in India. Noida is one of the hubs for these African Students. On 27th March, 2017, the locals of Greater Noida, UP lashed out at 'Nigerians'. It all started with a protest against Greater Noida police releasing five Nigeria-born students because of lack of evidence. They were accused of causing the death of 16-year-old Manish Khari, who allegedly died of drug overdose in a private hospital on Sunday.
- Commenting on these attacks on African Students, someone has rightly commented that we Indians usually criticize the racial attacks happening in various parts of the world on Indian Students and citizens. We take up the matter with the respective Embassies, the matter is raised even in the India parliament accusing the Central Government for not doing anything against them. On the news channels, special panel discussions are organized and everyone leaves no stone unturned to condemn the attacks in the strongest words possible. But what we are doing back home when the same treatment is meted out to the foreign nationals on the flimsy pretext of drug peddling. It is a fact that there have been a few incidents where Africans have been found involved into drug peddling. But there are the laws and relevant Acts to book such miscreants. We cannot hold the whole African community responsible for it and take the law in our hands to punish them.
- Because of the hyper-active nature of social media today, whatever happens at a place does not remain confined to that place. It takes just a few minutes of hours to spread the news across the world. Hence, the retaliation by the

African nationals against the Indian residing abroad is the natural outcome. In fact the attacks on African Students jolted the whole African community, especially those living in Delhi-NCR. All African envoys came together and termed these attacks as racist. They even criticize the Government at the Centre and the state for not doing anything to protect the Africans from such racial attacks.

- One of the main reasons behind this negative attitude towards African is a lack of cultural awareness, cultural mingling, cultural assimilation and a lack of understanding of other cultures. There is a need to organize cultural programs or frequent get together to bring them (Indian and international students) closer. Local Indian students should be encouraged to mingle with them, try to understand their culture and keep apprising them about the Indian culture, society and the way of living. There are a huge number of local Indian students come to metro cities for higher studies and live in the rented accommodation. Why cannot the locals share a room with African students or at least live in the same building or locality so that they are usually seen roaming around with the locals. A foot ball match organized by Sharda University for Indian and African students was a good effort in this direction. There is a need to organize more such programs to bridge the gap between the Indians and the Africans.

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