

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **RALLY OF ALL INDIA DALIT MAHILA ADHIKAR MANCH FOR JUSTICE, SECURITY, AND EMPOWERMENT OF THE DALIT WOMEN ON 8TH MARCH 2010, GANDHI MAIDAN, PATNA**

Jai Bheem Friends,

All India Dalit Mahila Adhikar Manch-National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights with Nari Gunjan Patna are celebrating International Women's Day in Gandhi Maidan, Patna on 8th March 2010.

The rally will address the issues Dalit Women's are facing at National level and State level. Over 600 Dalit Women, along with several educationists, lawyers, activists and professionals will march from Gandhi Maidan to R-Block as part of the rally. Even after 62 years of democracy, the issues of the Dalits are not addressed in democratic manner. The constitutional rights and human rights are denied to Dalits in general and Dalit Women in particular. Dalit women suffer discrimination at three levels: on the basis of caste, class and gender.

In Bihar, Dalits constitute 15.7 per cent of the population total populations. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB 2009), the state has seen 7,548 cases of atrocities against Dalits and is ranked fifth in the list of States with high incidences of crime against Dalits. The crime perpetrated on Dalits includes cases of rape, kidnapping & abduction. According to an estimate over 59% of women suffer some form of domestic violence.

As per the estimates of various government agencies, including the National Scheduled Castes Commission (NSSC), the incidence of poverty among Scheduled Caste(SC) in Bihar is as high as 64 per cent. Only 28.5 per cent of the SC population in Bihar is literate compared with the State average of 47 percent. Dalits in Bihar have low indices in other areas of development as well, showing the structural underdevelopment they face. Only 34.5 percent of the Dalit population in Bihar completes primary school, compared to 82.9 percent of members of other Hindu communities. The total percentage of Dalit population to complete matriculations in state is just 11.1 percent.

AIDMAM has recently intervened in PRI issues to strengthen the capacity and inculcate leadership skills amongst Dalit Women elected in Panchayats. However, the lack of political experience and skills has hampered the functioning of these elected dalit members. Their efforts are easily stonewalled and they are tricked into committing financial irregularities. Thus their leadership remains ineffectual and they are sooner or later forced to demit office. We desire to push for amendments of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 to include offences related to interference with Dalits' political participation: that is, any person who is not a SC or ST forcing, intimidating or bribing a member of a SC or ST person should be prosecuted.

The strategy of the "Special Component Plan" was initiated during 1979-80 in order to focus on the social, economic and educational needs of SCs. The SCP is an umbrella strategy to ensure the flow of targeted financial and physical benefits from all general sectors of development for

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the benefit of SCs. The Planning Commission has issued clear guidelines making the SCP funds non-divertible and non-lapsable. But SCP is not accepted as the principle for Plan allocation in the Bihar Budget. Bihar Government needs to allocate 15.7% from the Plan budget. The analysis of Budget documents tells that Dalits of Bihar have not been provided their due in 2008-09 and 2009-10. The allocation under SCP is merely 0.93% in 2008-09 and 1.14% in 2009-10. There are 61 Ministries/Departments in Bihar who have Plan budget but only 6 Ministries/ Departments have allocations under SCP. The amount denied in 2008-09 is Rs. 2325 crores.

To ensure Schedule Caste women rights and entitlements the AIDMAM puts forth the following demands before the Union and States,

- We demand a Special Protective Mechanism for safety and security of Dalit Women elected representatives operating at the Panchayat level
- We want effective implementation of the SCs & STs Act, 1989 and Rules 1995.
- There is an immediate need to monitor implementation of programmes under SC Sub Plan. A Committee meant for this purpose should be set up to monitor ministry's allocation of the Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCCP) is indicated well in advance. Further if any particular Ministry is not able to utilize the earmarked allocation, action should be initiated to transfer the unused funds available to those Ministries/Departments which have implemented the SCCP more effectively.
- We demand that an annual report should be prepared by NHRC on violation of Dalit women rights.
- We urge the Government to establish grain banks for food security in all Dalit and adivasi villages;
- We demand special housing scheme for Dalits all across the country.
- We request for dispensaries and primary health centres in dalit bastis and jhuggi clusters
- We demand at least 2 acres of land should be ensured for each Dalit household.
- We demand strict implementation of the SC/ST (PoA) Act and IPC in order to contribute towards eradicating the culture of violence and impunity
- We request for more expansive, gender-sensitive understanding of gender-based crimes, especially for crimes such as rape
- We demand that legal literacy should be emphasized so that Dalit women know of their legal rights and police obligations

On behalf of AIDMAM, we submit before you all the Charter of Demands which calls for justice, security, and empowerment of the Dalit Women.

***"I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved"***

***B. R. Ambedkar***

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