

South Asian People's Assembly – PSAARC

19th July 2008 – Colombo

Parallel Workshop Theme – Caste Discrimination and Social Exclusion

This workshop was organized by **ADRM- Asia Dalit Rights Movement** – an umbrella body of the Dalit Platforms from Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The following Dalit Leaders addressed in the workshop under the **moderation of Mr. Vincent Manoharan, from NCDHR, India.**

Mr. Zakir Hussain – BDERM, Bangladesh

Ms. Bernard Fatima – TNWM, India

Mr. Nicholas – DMK, India

Mr. Kadirvel – Dalit Theologian & Activist – India

Ms. Roma – NFFWFP, India

Mr. Anjan Latsoo – Dalit and Consumer Activist, Malaysia

Ms. Durga Sob – FEDO, Nepal

Mr. Tirtha – DNF, Nepal

Mr. Dolat Ram – PDSN, Pakistan

Prof. Tudor De Silva – University of Peradeniya , Kandy

Mr. Sivaprakasam – HDO, Sri Lanka

Main issues raised by the Speakers:

- Caste system still dominates in all these 6 countries as “ Work and Decent based discrimination” dehumanizing 260 million Dalits in various forms of untouchability practices and atrocities.
- The Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of Dalits have been denied on the basis of caste and Dalits struggle to mingle with the mainstream life in par with others
- Dalits are predominantly Landless Agricultural labourers, Plantation workers, forced to remain in illiteracy and bonded labourism, besides forced to undertake the filthy jobs like manual scavenging, sweeping, garbage removing, sewage cleaning, drum beating during funeral and guarding cremation grounds.
- They are totally segregated, humiliated and harassed and denied of their access to temple, water resources, public path, village restaurants and common burial grounds. Dalit women are forced for Jogini – Devadasi system, a ritual prostitution a stigma on the entire dalit community.
- Discrimination is rampant in Public, Private and Corporate Sector Establishments including educational and health institutions.
- The assertion of Dalits for their basic needs and rights is seen as an act of disobedience or revolt and the dominant caste unleash all sorts of atrocities and mass violence which includes, killings, maiming of limbs, rape, naked parading of dalit women, social and economic boycott.
- The impunity being enjoyed by Non Dalits for not being punished for the crimes that they inflict on Dalits and also the Duty bearers who willfully neglect to enforce the available legislations and measures to protect dalits, is all time high.

- Dalits and especially Dalit women are denied of all their basic rights and needs which includes prevention of exercising their constitutional rights even when they are elected for the local governance. Dalit women are subjugated to all forms of humiliations and sexual abuses when they raise their voice for their rights and share in all socio economic and political spheres. Dalit women and their issues do not get adequate space in the dalit movements and women movements.
- The Neo-Liberalism, further depends and intensifies the socio economic issues of dalits depriving their access to land, labour, trade union rights, livelihood, share in natural resources and in profit, education, housing and health facilities, owing to the principles of liberalization, privatization and globalization.
- Dalits remain in poverty and hunger besides facing all forms of caste based discrimination in all these 6 countries.
- Dalits believe that Casteism, Neo-liberalism, Religious fundamentalism and Patriarchy are the four major oppressive, divisive and discriminatory forces to be challenged to ensure equality, dignity, justice and peace for all communities. And also affirm that social democracy is a pre requisite for the economic and political democracy.

Demands for OFFICIAL SAARC:

- To recognize the prevalence of Caste as the “Work and Decent based discrimination” that denies human dignity, socio, economic, political equality and justice to 260 million Dalits of all SAARC countries.
- To declare 2008-2018 as the Dalits Rights Decade with enactment of Constitutional safeguards, legislations, affirmative action policies and programs to end untouchability practices and to protect Dalits from all forms of oppressions and deprivations.
- To stop the Militarisation and Nuclearisation process which affects Dalits predominantly as the major chunk of the Budgetary provisions earmarked for this defence process, deprives dalit’s access to socio economic welfare and advancement.
- To end Neo-liberalistic principles and advancement that denies the right of dalits for land, livelihood, natural resources, access to education, water, housing and health facilities besides intensifying displacement and migration and forced to live as minorities and refugees in their own countries.
- To enact legislation for ensuring reservation in Public, Private and Corporate Sector for dalits to get access to all public, private and corporate sector establishments.
- Ensure Social democracy as a prerequisite to economic and political democracy for the enjoyment of all freedom, liberty, equality and justice.

Demand for PSAARC

- To recognize the issue of Caste and Caste based discrimination as the major impediment for the promotion of any People’s Collective or Rainbow Collaboration and the urgency to address this issue first to bring all oppressed and marginalized people under a single umbrella to address the issue of militarization, nuclearisation, hunger, poverty, unemployment and all other forms of oppressions and deprivations to ensure justice, peace and democracy to all in this region. --- **J. Vincent Manoharan - ADRM**