

## Shramik Women – Present Scenario and Future Road Map

Dalit Sthree Sakthi had organized a workshop on the theme ‘Shramik Women – Present Scenario and Future Road Map’ on the eve of International Women’s Day on 8<sup>th</sup> March at Ravindra Bharathi, Hyderabad. The representatives of 10 sub castes of SC & ST women were invited to bring out their perspective. The workshop was presided over by Jhansi Geddam Convener DSS, the other dignitaries on the dais were Mary Madiga from Madiga Mahajana Samithi, Sumathi-Advocate High Court, Santhosi from Hopes, Balakistamma from SC/ST Employees Association, Jayanthi from Koshish, Lalitha from COVA, Rajamani from RPI and Daniel Vijay Prakash Programme Manager DSS.

Representatives of sub castes were Thurupati Jangamma of Budagajangam, Ravula Thirupathamma of Holiyadasari, Konpuram Yamma of Mala, Yerukali Swarupa of Yerukala, Vislavath Ramani of Lambada, Chilkamarri Yamma of Safai, Pamena Kamalamma of Madiga, Begari Jangamma of Begari, Baidla Lakshamma of Baidla and B Sree Devi of Relli.



**Jhansi Geddam** addressed, in her presidential speech, that International Women’s Day is celebrated on the remembrance of a movement in 1910 on behalf of Shramik Women. But today government is celebrating the Women’s Day as a festival by conducting beauty contests, cooking contests and muggula contests (ornamental pattern drawn on the ground at a house entrance). Therefore shramik women should understand the genuine cause of Women’s Day and celebrate it accordingly with the help of our



organizations. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Shramik Women use to spend 16 hrs a day working daily with unequal wages, which was put to an end with the movement. The suffering on that day was fought towards a cause of giving equal wages, minimum working hours and dignity of labour. Even today dalit women face many difficulties in the form of poverty, ill health, prostitution, trafficking, inter & intra community violence. Hence, dalit women need to capacitate themselves to fight against these odds and strive to bring out a change in our family and society.

She had addressed all the organisations and women representatives from different sub castes that, the present scenario of Women’s Day celebration should be changed such that the genuine cause of this festive day should be focused. Women should be guided towards such an intellectuality to come out from their present bounds. All the

organisations, women representatives should plan the schedule of every year's Women's Day towards a meaningful way of celebrating it. Each one of us here needs to discuss and work towards the annihilation of caste.

Detailing about the attitude of various line departments towards the dalit adivasi women, she said that social welfare department never does its share of work towards the downtrodden women. The mere working way of these departments can be identified by examining the number of victims benefited by these departments. Similarly Women & Child Welfare Department is the only department which is having staff from village level to state level, but it has an unspent amount of 950 crores by leaving the women and girl children in the most vulnerable situation. The society exploits the labour of shramik women but their intellectuality is ignored. Since ages they have been doing the same old household works which put them in a stagnant stage without any progress in knowledge. Quoting that knowledge has nothing to do with education, she stated that even IAS officers are being beaten up by their husbands. Women must become aware of their rights and stride towards the development of society which is not only oriented on money but also being aware of our situation and our rights.

**GD Vijay Prakash** said that dalit women need to enlighten themselves about the cause of celebrating the International Women's Day and the way of celebrating it. It has been 65 years since we have become independent from the British rule, but the lives of dalit



and adivasi women are no better even after independence. Governments since independence have introduced many entitlements for shramik women including NREGA which did not suffice the development of dalit and adivasi women. Special Acts such as SC/ST (POA) Act and DV Act have been proposed which could not stop the violence on dalit and adivasi women, who

are still being discriminated in accessing these entitlements and laws. No politician or government cares about the injustice being done to dalit and adivasi women. Women should get educated, become aware and strive for their rights and entitlements to come out of this vulnerable situation.

**Sumathi** pointed out the present situation of the government and the politicians. The chief minister himself is busy protecting his chair and is least bothered about the state. The political scenario is at its worst in the state. She shared her own experience of caste discrimination by a Brahmin girl in the hostel when DSS came to her rescue. The very ill fate of our community is that people of our own community work against us, the caste leaders intervene and force for a compromise.



She said that she had worked hard and with the support of our people have started

practice in High Court as an advocate. Anyone can approach her for any help and she will render service free of cost.

**Thurpati Jangamma** said that she is from Begari community and had expressed grief that no one cares for them and their community. Though their children are educated they could not get any jobs. They have been retaining in this sort of vulnerable condition for a very long time. She also mentioned that the dominant communities are still forcing them to do menial works and exploiting them. Since Dalit Stree Sakthi has given awareness on their rights they are courageous enough to question the discrimination done against their community. They still need to be strengthened and requested Jhansi madam to give all the necessary support, so that they can stand against the discrimination done on their community.



**Ravula Thirupathamma** said that she belongs to Holiyadasari community. Many people don't know about their caste and no one cares for them. DSS team has helped them a lot, imparted knowledge on rights and now they are able to speak courageously.



Her daughter had been gang raped and murdered. With utmost courage and support of DSS she is fighting for justice against all odds. TV9 has given her Naveena award in recognition of her continuous battle for accessing justice. She states that in case of any injustice done we need to fight for justice and move forward with dynamism and show what our

rights are. She requested DSS not to leave them and help them to strengthen on acquiring their rights to fight against all the discriminate forces in the society.

**Santhosi** said that she is a HIV+ (positive) and her network extends all sort of support to HIV+'s. Their whole network is fascinated by the incredible work of DSS and they are very much interested to work together with DSS.



**Baindla Lakshamma** said that she is representing Baindla community. From the time of their fore fathers, they have no respect and recognition in the society and even the government doesn't prioritize them.

**Balakistamma** said that Dalit Stree Sakthi is a power of dalit women. Dalit women and girl children have been facing problems everywhere, even in social welfare hostels and at work places. Every one of us has problems. All we need to do is to



come forward and fight against the injustice being done to us.

**Ramani** said that the Reddy community have attacked their Thanda and until DSS came to us we were under the grip of fear and in a helpless situation. DSS had invited us for today's meeting and gave us an opportunity to talk before every one, which no organisation has done to us before. She says "Today if I am able to speak, it is because of the awareness and courage given to us by DSS. Till now we are being forced for compromise by the Reddy community but from now onwards we will not yield to them. Instead fight for justice with the help of DSS."



**Jayanthi of Koshish** had spoken on a different aspect, apart from the injustice being done to dalit and adivasi women and their rights, there is also a strong need to speak on the health of dalit adivasi women. Every day 200 women are dying with cervical cancer, therefore she requested DSS to work in this aspect also and save the dalit adivasi women.



**Jangamma of Budagajangam** community had said that begging is their livelihood. The Reddy community discriminates them to such an extent that they are not even allowed to collect drinking water. After the intervention of DSS they got awareness and courage and now they are able to question any injustice done on them.

**Lalitha of COVA** had said that they are doing many things for the development of women and DSS is also doing various good activities. Every person should extend a helping hand to another person.



**Rajamani of RPI** said that various organizations are conducting many programmes in clubs and other places such as 'ornamental pattern drawn on the ground in front of the house (muggulapoti) etc. We all should appreciate DSS for organising such a wonderful programme by bringing together the leaders of various sub castes in our own community and giving us a big platform in this state capital to discuss on the present situation and formulating the road map for future. The situation of the dalit women is very horrible in the villages, they are facing both inter and intra community violence, we find a minimum of 50 women with HIV+ in each village, the government has announced many schemes, but they are not accessible to us. Though we approach the concerned officials, no action is taken place. The dalit women are not given space at all in the movements. The time has come for the women to come up in socio, political and



economic aspects. Our thinking should come ahead from ourselves and our family come to our community and our village.

**Mary Madiga** said that on this auspicious day we all should be very happy and proud with the presence of our beloved sisters from every community. Amongst the dominant community leaders, ministers, MLAs and MPs who participated over here, we might not have got any opportunity to speak, but today this podium has become holy because the representatives of our sub castes are here to address us as leaders. We are the factors of production and the women of dominant community don't have as much knowledge as our women have and they don't possess the skills like our women. DSS has organized this meeting by inviting the actual shramik women to discuss our torments. This will be the first shramik women's day in our state and no one else can organize this in the history again. She also said "I feel privileged to be a part of this meeting. We all need to get our girl children educated, get into active politics, capture political power and fight against all forms violence on us. Today DSS brought all of us from various parts of the state to Hyderabad and made us sit in this prestigious hall at Hyderabad and I am sure that one day DSS will take all of us to our state assembly and make us to speak there".



The workshop was ended with a vote of thanks from Bhagya Lakshmi co-ordinator of Ranga Reddy district.

