



Tamil Nadu Women's Forum Fact Sheet No.2

Movements

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The World Today...

- Whilst monopolies are now processing and bring a lot of benefits to the owners of huge companies, they are also collapsing agriculture and industry. Millions of peasants and workers are losing their livelihoods.
- Monopolies are also deepening poverty, particularly since 1980. Those who live on 2.00 USD or less per day has increased 50%, and now, 2.8 billion/ out of 6.4 billion worldwide.
- 1 billion are hungry everyday, and 2 billion don't have clean water. 750 millions of people have no job or non-decent jobs.
- There are more than 1 billion peoples (1/5 of populations of the whole world) who are struggling to live on less than 1 USD, and 2.8 billion on less than 2 USD per day.
- There have been 191.8 millions of unemployed persons in the world in 2005 whereas 157.3 millions in 1995.
- Half of 2.8 billion employed labour forces earn less than 2 USD per day, and 353 millions of persons, less than 1 USD.
- The richest 18% of peoples earn 84% of the entire income. The amount of income of 50 millions of the riches is equivalent to the one of the poorest 2.7 billion people. The amount of income of 25 millions of US Citizens is equivalent to the one of the poorest 2 billion people. Meanwhile, annual spending on cosmetics in the US counts 8 billion USD and on pet foods in Europe and US

records 17 billion USD. Europeans, annually, use 105 billion USD in alcohol and 59 billion in cigarettes. One B-2 Spirit bomber costs 1 billion USD, and global military spending in 2005 reached 3.1 billion USD per day. 48% of it is spent by the U.S. (WB. Milanovic; 2000)

- For fulfilling basic needs of the people, 6 billion USD would be needed for basic education, 9 billion USD for installation of water and sanitation, 12 billion USD for reproductive health services, and 13 billion USD for basic health care (incl. nutrition) annually.
- 320 millions of people go to bed without food (Tehelka 14, 2006)
- 10,000 are dying everyday.
- Hunger issues are growing; additional 13 millions of people suffering from it comparing 95-97 to 00-02. (FAO)
- Nearly three fourths of the newly joined to "hungry people" out of 200 millions. (Hindustan times- Jan 24. 2006)
- 26% or 260 millions of people live below poverty line.
- Those who live below poverty line area increasing according to Social Development Report; 193 millions in rural area, and 67 millions in urban.

And then. in India...

- One in the three of the world's malnourished children are living in India
- Half of Indian children are under nourished.
- 99% of Adivasi families face chronic hunger.
- High infant mortality rate is the result of under nutrition. The worst affected peoples are STs 85.2% and SCs 83%, according to the recent report of the Council for Social Development, Oxford.
- The numbers of hunger deaths are increasing; hunger killed thousands of lives in various states in India.

Meanwhile, Indian Agriculture has been opened its market for WTO, Multinational Companies, and to Transnational Companies by allowing contract farming. In the name of modernization and development, agricultural lands are taken away from local peoples, and the farmers are displaced as a result. It can be seen some examples already in India, such as Signur, Nandigram in West Bengal. Also in Anandapoor, farmers are asked to work under contract through agents which deal gold chrysanthemum. The flowers are exported for the purpose of colouring chick feed. After few years, the farming was dropped out suddenly.

Cotton farmers in Vidharba committed suicide because they were shocked with under-estimated evaluation for their products in the open market since the imported cotton provides fewer prices than Indian national products. Our Indian farmers are, hence, unable to compete with the imported materials, which are sometimes dumped for the supply in developed countries in certain extent. Such alchemies made our farmers to suffer serious economic losses. Debts which have been pushed by the banks have crushed farmers, and lead them to suicide. Now, farmers are displaced from their own lands and have become landless.

Reservation

The Constitution provides reservation for those who belong to the socio-economically under-privileged castes and tribes. Meanwhile, why do anti-reservation protest movements

Persist today? There is a lobby which led by educated higher class people who manipulates student community to protest against the reservation at the higher level of studies. These protests have been manifested by those peoples with demonstration, protest barricades and so on.

Indigenous communities

The right of indigenous communities over their 'ancestral domain' has been privatized. The trees, the resources of the Adivasis and

Indigenous peoples have been exploited and have been grabbed away from them by the MNCs. Many mines and forest are now controlled by the MNCs and other private owners. The fundamental rights of the local people are denied and exploited in the name of globalization phenomena.

Women

Women are facing multi-dimensions of discrimination. Women are displaced from agricultural lands; and as a result they are led to forced migration or victimization in human trafficking. Due to the conditionalities imposed by IMF or World Bank, the vital services which had been essentially provided through public devices are now privatized. When peoples are failed to access to those services, women's burden can be increasing in each households. The internal and external migration is a misery for women. It affects their families, children, and their own lives. Women are forced to do prostitution to save the family.

This situation increases violence on women at home and workplace. Women, also, earn less than men do. Women's rights are violated actually. 33% reservation for women in public and private place is not achieved yet. Patriarchy is still very strong and we need to uphold inequity with the community.

This is the right time to discuss about people's movements. **Movements** are spontaneous social upheaval by people against injustices. The exploited will not be silenced unless the masses surely raise a cry against exploitation by the perpetrators.

The colonial rule came to an end by strong Indian Bourgeois against the British Colonizers who were ideologically supported by Gandhi. He, the father of the nation, led the **Independence movement**. This independence movement was a spontaneous one with **Collective Action** of Indians to drive the colonizers out of the Country. The Independence was not a genuine independence; as it is said that it was received in the midnight and it is not dawned yet for Indians. The economic political exploitation of colonialism is still continuing in the form of new colonialism which swindles the country's wealth, culture, and the economy more and more indirectly through process of imperialist globalization.

The Gandhian movement for National Independence, which is followed with Ahimsa and non violence, is a negotiating and compromising which supported the interest of the Indian capitalists rather than supporting the struggles of tenants and the issue of caste. Gandhi supported the interest of the landlords and said 'Land is like air, we all should breathe'; and as a result the problem of the tenants remained as it is. Gandhi went on hunger strike till death when Dr. B.R.

Ambedkar struggled for the liberation of Dalits. He demanded constitutional change for double voting system which allows Dalits to elect leaders from their own community which is explained in "Poona Pact". Independence movement did not bring a new- "casteless" society and the social hierarchy remained amongst the communities. Is there a way to bring changes with non-violence and Sathyagraha principles?

The **communities** are divided now. Adding to the division, there is inter-sectionality as well; women, tribal, fisher folks, peasants, students, workers the unorganized. The political parties, both the right and left, mobilized workers and women, and formed their own trade unions and women's wings. How political are they?

The R.S.S. mobilized women against women's movement, supporting 'Sathi Matha' by demonstrating with pots on their heads. Women are misused for religious purposes by fundamentalist and failed to strategize for the liberation of women from patriarchy.

Sarwodaya movement, which follows Gandhi's philosophy, produces khadi materials by hand spinning. The hand spun cloth from khadi and village industries are sold in Khadi Crafts. How many poor Dalits and Tribals wear khadi? Ironically, khadi is worn by Americans nowadays because they can only buy to the price it is sold.

Parameswaramangalam is a beautiful village with agricultural work throughout the year. Villagers have to work continuously after khadi and village industries established the unit. No villagers wanted to sit with spinning wheel where they get only 25 paise for one Sittam. How many sittam one can produce in a day? Agriculture workers prefer working in the field to sitting with a spinning wheel. Although they say 'Small is Beautiful', but only for the poor Dalits and tribals, who are in "small" side of the world, are supposed to be not beautiful.

Chipko Movement- 'Hug the tree movement', women involve into conservation of trees and try to stop the logging contractor cutting off the trees. Through the struggle, they successfully saved the trees which are the source of the lives. They, traditionally, refrain from tree-cutting and collected the forest produce the leaves, trimmed the branches for firewood. Women, as a result, saved the environment as well as their own livelihood. This is what called 'the earth democracy' or 'a living democracy' to recognize rights of all other species. Listening to the earth, the environment movements are raising their voices against the exploitation of nature. Women's movement through mobilization of tribal women in Chipko movement conserved the local resources from the exploiters.

The **anti-dam movement** mobilized the tribals when they were evicted - even

after 'Jal Submerging' was completed. With the raise of the dam height tribals are evicted, and the class nature of judgment given by the Supreme Court has supported the inhumane situation.

The **Narmada Bando Andolan** was strong enough to force World Bank to withdraw its financial support by gheroing (standing around) their office and disturbed their meetings. The rehabilitation is slow and tribal are not given the compensation of 5 acres of land by the order given by Supreme Court. NBA still continues their struggles through various programs bringing tribals into the movement.

The **broad concept of the movements** is building collective strength to promote the interest and to defend the rights of people. Through continuous struggles of the movement, people can achieve to bring change into the oppressive socio-economic and political structures. These oppressive social structures are now emerged in the form of class, caste and patriarchy. The movements are challenging these social structures to find a new social framework where women, Dalits, fisher folks, tribal, workers, and unorganized peoples can control local resources in a decentralized way with justice and equity.

The collective actions of movements are **political actions** which cannot be the party politics. The movements develop through actions such as protest, agitation,

strike, hartal, or gherow. Without these constant and continuous struggles, the movements cannot sustain its power.

The Tamil Nadu Dalit Women's Movement went to attend national conference in **Patna**. A bogie (train car) was booked for 75 women who traveled up to Patna. According to the contract that the team had, the bogie was supposed to be available for the team till they had to return to Chennai. When the group reached Calcutta, women found that the bogie was not attached, in purpose, to the Madras mail-train in Calcutta. Women stopped the train for 3 hrs, and they gheroad. They laid on the rail tracks and protested.

As there was no other way the train had to start with the women's bogie attached to it. There were 800 people, mostly men, around those women. They showed no solidarity but getting angry on women's side for delaying the train for 3 hrs. How strong the actions? How political it is? Women got this achievement through collective action; of all 75 joined hands only for 3 hrs, otherwise they could be forced to wait for 72 hrs in Calcutta due to the bad behavior of Transportation Company. Achievements from movements are telling us that we can gain immeasurable level of freedom by fighting together for the rights.

The peasant movements, particularly the peasant women's movements, in Tamil Nadu stopped blocked the Bulldozers which came to establish big ponds for the formation

of **Aqua Farm**. Such a power did surge up from the poor people, that is, mostly Dalit women in the villages.

In Kolathur village, Dalit women are struggling continuously against the aqua farm which damages their livelihood. Not only children but also adults, women are facing health hazards as well as skin irritation. The company which owns the aqua farm blocks people's access to the common properties like ponds, and put fences around them. The women had to face oppression from police when they went on a 'Road Roko'. The police felt the 'power' of the Dalit women. Rajam was refused passport application to attend to the Asian Tsunami meeting in Aech, Indonesia, because she joined the Road Roko and punched police officers back who beat her up then.

Strong resistance movements are developing to confront caste atrocities and discriminatory untouchable practices. Dalit movements in Maharashtra astonished everyone when Dalits marched crying for justice for Khairlanji killings, in which four family members of Baylal were victimized.

The **Dalit movements** demand equal, that is, at least much higher than current one, status in the society through political actions against the dominant caste. The resistance is built against Brahminical social order which practices Varnashiramam, pure and impure concepts through the Vedhas,

which maintain, preserve, and promote caste system. Caste system is very feudal and slavish. The practice of Untouchability should be abolished through the eradication of the caste system.

Dalit women revolt through collective actions to get back Kalyani to her work as a chef for school meals at Erode when the food cooked by her was not eaten by the other caste children.

Tamil Nadu Dalit Women's Movement organizes conferences every year and through demonstrations, public meetings, hunger strike or other various actions, we try to develop assertive leadership amongst Dalit women. Dalit women, as a result, are encouraged to contest in the last panjayat election. **Shanthi** was elected as the councilor- she thinks that her struggles in the movement and her continuous care for the villagers brought the victory to her in the election. She feels dignified and she could develop her leadership. She is empowered by involving herself by taking up the problem of Dalit women in her district.

Lakshmi, a sex worker, challenged the police by filing a case against an officer to the State Human Rights Commission. The constable was sentenced as guilty and got punishment. Lakshmi, as a woman in prostitution, has participated in all the activities of the movement. She got a lot of courage from the activities, and became able

to say "no" to sexual exploitation by the police or other men. The inclusion of women to the analysis of current problems in their communities is essential for movements to gain enough power to confront with exploitative authorities, and women can build up their leadership and confidence in this process. Women, therefore, should be involved in all programs at all level of sharing roles and responsibilities equally with men. **Alliance of People's Movement**, which is the consolidation of various movements among unorganized sectors, is keeping gender sensitiveness not only in all programs but also in the principles of the movement- the goal, objective, strategies in constitution and the structures.

Also, the society should change their attitude towards women who are positioned in a special form; such as trans-gender, women in prostitution, Mathamma, widows, and women living with HIV/AIDs. Those women are participating equally in all the other movements under APM whilst it is formed another movement on cutting-cross or common issues such as movement against Palaru dam construction, In the villages in or around the Special Economic Zone, there are a lot of dumps for the waste. And people needs to demand for better rural road, construction of bridge, Panjami land, and equal wages. They also support to Bhopal victims and with other campaigns on food sovereignty. Women in special status described above are empowered in this

process of joining, and playing responsible roles in various movements under APM.

Devi and Renuka has successfully nominated for the election of councilors for the Panjayat as people recommended them for the position by seeing their involvement into the Mathamma Liberation Movement. Their nomination for the candidacy, on the other hand, shocked absolutely the whole community. The villagers pressured them to withdraw their nomination by saying as follows;

“How can you Mathamma contest in panchayat election equally like others? If you are not withdrawing nomination we will not allow you in the village.”

With all these threats both of them contested and went through all the hurdles of election process which was the first, but precious, experience for them. The threats were thrown away because they had collective bargaining strength from the leaders of other movements. Same things were happened with the sex workers contested in the election and changing the backlash from the dominant class of the community. Through this path, sex workers got a soul of leadership and pushed their back to the struggle for the political rights which are parts of the fundamental human rights.

APM leaders sued against the **officials** working in the treasury in

Arakkonam for taking Rs.1000/- as bribe from a senior citizen who is a pensioner in order to collect the arrears she owed. After the action taken by the APM leaders 1000/- was return back to the pensioner.

APM supported the leaders of Brick-kiln Movement when they went on strike for a week and raised their **wages** from Rs.150/- to 180/-.

The 17 families of tribal **Irulas people** were allocated a grant of each Rs.9000/- to buy goats. The President of the village took away Rs.5000/- (17x5000=85,000) from each and gave them back only Rs.4000/- within 11 days of time Rs.85,000/- was returned because of continuous pressure from the movements. This action brought huge impact enough to avoid him to be elected again as a President.

Selvi, a blind woman, was raped by four other caste men. She successfully pointed them as the criminals, but this resulted that her hut was burnt by those men. Dalit Women's Movement gheroad the Collector's Office by asking for proper actions for those men and the Collector put the case into the legal procedure.

Women's movement at the National level functions without any particular **structure**. The national co-ordinating committee organizes the National conference. The participants, however, should contribute

some amounts of money to attend to it. The main focus of the conference is to question unequal position of women in the society which was caused by the structural and cultural oppression of patriarchy. The power relation, between individuals, men/women, is also questioned as one of the main issues of the conference. Patriarchy, however, supports and produces caste segregation and classification. These structures, actually, need to be questioned through collective actions in order to bring changes into women's movement at the national level. The PUCL, PUDR, Human Rights groups, Periyar Dravida Kazhagam, and Tamil Desiam organized by Pazha Nedumaran are quite active movements which mobilize people on issues as long as they can agree with the ideologies. Tamil Nadu Women's Forum has taken up various campaign, lobbying and advocacy work on the issues of fundamentalism and communalism. Also the forum put forward actions against GMO, TNCs, MNCs, WTO, and Globalization. The TNWF demanded the government to bring 33% reservation for women and dealt with the issues related to reproductive rights of women.

The workers' movements, which are led by trade unions, are under threat for weakening as people should imposed unstable employment situation by becoming casual labourers due to new economic policies and globalization process. Whilst in India approximately 30 million labourers get together under **trade unions**, we also have

380 million unorganized workers. Movements for unorganized workers are now campaigning for a Social Security Bill 2007. Meanwhile, there is less cooperative atmosphere in the struggle of agricultural workers who are consisted the major part of unorganized masses. The peasant movements, however, are organized to question and bringing changes in state policy on agriculture. Peasants are mobilized for land grabbing which is misused in the name of Land Acquisition Act. The arrangement for the special Economic Zones, which are forced by the government under the name of development, modernization, industrialization, evicts peasants from their lands, and destroys livelihood as it is happening in Singur in West Bengal, Nandigram and in Tamil Nadu.

As soon as the DMK formed the new regime in the **government** they sent a group of ministers to visit West Bengal to learn how land reform was implemented. The election manifesto stated that they would give 2 acre of land and now the DMK government started fulfilling the promises. The lands were given to Singur farmers in the process of Land Reform Act in West Bengal, but those lands are now about to be handed over to TATA Motors Company, which is planning to produce peoples' car in the land, where was used for food production. The cultivable land is about to be converted in to a concrete jungle to produce a car rather than food. Can West Bengal be a good example for Tamil Nadu? Two acres of land is given to the

landless whilst thousands acres of people's land are handed over for Nokia, Hyundai, glass factory and for other foreign enterprises? The peasant movements protested against exploitation of their land for satellite town outside Chennai, and the government was, as a result, pushed to cancel their plan. Tamil Nadu government is, now, planning to hand over 2600 acres of land at the Tidal Park in Vellore district to multinational investors. What will happen to the villagers who are dependent on the local resources of the land if the land is going to be taken away?

Where are the **students** in this situation? What is their opinion on Special Economic Zone? What do they see whilst women are raped? What do they think the situation that Dalits Rights are violated or Tribals are evicted? Will they come out strike only if their university is not a deemed university or against reservation in higher education? Peasants, students, women, Dalits, tribals, fisher folks, all these people's movements should get together to fight for people's rights which are violated. People movements should be linked up with wider struggles against globalization and WTO.

The comprehensive political actions of all movements consolidated as people's movements demonstrated on the streets of Hong Kong against the 6th Ministerial **WTO** meeting in December. The Dalit women with drums protested to support the issue of

peasants, and cried for food sovereignty of all.

National Alliance of People's Movement (**NAPM**), People's Coalition on Food Sovereignty (**PCFS**), Asian Peasant Coalition (**APC**), **CAWI** is formed to take up the issue of food sovereignty which is to bring genuine agrarian land reform, by saying no to the chemical pesticide, refusing TNCs/MNCs, stopping GMO seeds or chemical fertilizers and promoting local healthy food for women, Dalits, tribals, fisher folks. We should control and access to land and water. We should use our own seeds, be credited for all resources related to food production.

The slogans raised against the 6th Ministerial Meeting of WTO was,

"JUNK WTO, SAY NO TO WTO"

The impact of protest by the people's movements at the ministerial meeting made them closing down with Doha development agenda, Trade aid and with Bilateral Trade agreements.

There are more than 200,000 NGOs in India. We can say that there is an **NGOISM**. NGOs play a supportive role to the movement although they are not developing the collective strength of the movement. The NGOs are dictating the movements by saying what they should do. The NGOs are trying to provide services through their own programs such as self-help groups, health programs, or

income generation programs which are apolitical. NGOs are not people's movement. Their activities are not struggle oriented. The NGOs and the People's Movements work very closely each other, but there is a danger for the people's movement to adopt the nature of NGO. People's movements become adjacent to NGO and behave or become like NGOs. Meanwhile, people's movements should not depend on NGOs, or NGOs should not use people's movement for their survival. The Donors driven aspect should not affect the people's movement. The interdependence of NGOs and People's Movement should be questioned because people's movement should be independent as well as the NGOs should not depend on the people's movement. There is a tendency that the donors try to behave like NGOs and conduct local projects by themselves. As what people's movement claimed in WSF, this issue is, nowadays, visible in the society. They actually use the movements and raise funds. They, however, conquer NGOs not people's movements.

“Listen what people say”, “follow what people are doing”.

NGOs should start strengthening the collective power through political education by bringing awareness among women, providing effective information and propaganda materials, which are to be facilitated by themselves. NGOs should build platform for movements to carry out their campaigns. The role of NGOs is to do an effective advocacy work on globalization,

land in special economic zone, employment guarantee act, livelihood, gender discrimination, caste discrimination, and issues around WTO. NGOs should provide special assistance to people's movements in the areas of research, advocacy promotion, education and trainings through supports for seminars, conferences, training programs, publications, media information, and lobbying which is advocating urgent issues of the communities.

What is really happening with **WSF**? How radical the agenda of WSF? What was the outcome of the 46,000 people's gatherings at the WSF in Kenya from Jan 20th to 25th 2007? What are the main objectives of forums? What is the achievement of people's movements? Who promotes and who controls these forums?

How many of us raised our voices when 12 tribal of **Kalinga Nagar**, Orissa, were shot to death whilst they demanded better price for their land which was taken by Aditya Birla Group? What is our response when more than 30 children and young women were killed in **Nidari** in Uttra Pradesh? What is our response when the Dalit family members of **Baylal** were murdered? What action are we going to take when we are evicted from our lands for **Special Economic Zone**? What do we do when women and children are exploited, harassed sexually? How many of us could join **Irome Sharmila** who is on hunger strike for the seven-year

fighting alone against the nation to repeal special armed forces act in the North eastern State?

Our present action satisfies us of our involvement to protect and promote the rights of people and our rights too. **Curtis**, an African American leader that I met in New Orleans on the 3rd February, mentioned as follows;

“Why the students are not marching up to Washington DC and take action against George W. Bush for his action on War on Terrorism as students marched to Washington DC in 1960’s against Vietnam War?”

People’s movement should be strengthened

for collective action in order to challenge the patriarchal structures of the society; “Super” structure which fixed nationally and internationally. In this stage, the United States of America is the top of the terrorists. The people’s movements should confront imperialist globalization which is destroying everything politically and economically. The movements should tackle with the superpowers which intensify the misery of the poor and the marginalized peoples. Social transformation is possible only with building people’s power through political actions. Forming strong international alliances arm in arm for solidarity actions will, surely, put over the imperialist globalization.

ARE YOU READY TO JOIN THE MOVEMENT?

For further inquiry, please contact to the secretariat of Tamil Nadu Women’s Forum

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