

Long March Bulletin for Anti Discrimination law



Parittran, Lakshampur, Suvashini, Tala, Satkhira, Bangladesh
E-mail: Parittran@Yahoo.com, Mobile: +088 01720-587100,
Website: www.dalitbangladesh.wordpress.com
www.parittran.org



পরিত্রাণ
PARITTRAN

A Human Rights and Development Organization for the Dalit by the Dalit.

Chief of Advisory board:

Bodru Mohammad Khallekuzzaman,

Published by:

Milan Das, Executive Director, Parittran.

Editor:

Bikash Das,

Editor associate:

Asafur Rahaman Kajol.

Contributors:

Uzzal Das,

Shanti Mondal

Bhabotosh Mondal

Tareq Sarker

Santosh Das

Gratitude by:

Ashok Das

General Secretary

Bangladesh Dalit Parishad (BDP)



MESSAGE

In Bangladesh Humans Rights not only are distended but also are denied for historical and cultural reasons to Dalit communities. All these disruptions in Bangladesh are directly or indirectly linked to violence. Unfortunately, violence is a common feature of Bangladeshi society. In it the worst sufferers are the outcaste dalits community people.

In Bangladesh about 10 million dalits belong to various dalits groups. Dalits have always been and still are subjected to intense socio-economic discrimination. They face discrimination in their access to basic services such as health, education, housing, government safety net programs, govt. and non govt. services and other services.

Dalits are subject to rule by fundamentalism and Brahmanism. They have discriminated generally from local government justice, social justice, Arbitrations process, access denied from public places, restricted to access in social functions and decision making process due to their racial identifications.

As a result, there have some exemplary changes that Bangladesh Govt. are trying to include dalits issue in development plan and national budget for uplift of dalits people. Through the endeavors and strong movement of Dalit led organizations and platform there have created quota for dalit students in public university, Govt. taken special socio-economic development policy for dalit, sweeper, gipsy and transgender communities in Bangladesh. Anti discrimination is the first demand to eliminate discrimination from the society. Everyone has well known that learning, knowledge and experience sharing is most important things to make more fruitful of any social movement. As a part of regional and international collaboration we thanking to all of activists and organizations whose are contributed to establish right of dalit in Bangladesh.

We want to express my thanks and gratitude to all of global dalit movement and right based organization. We hope that the relationship will build up between Bangladesh Dalit Organization and south Asian dalit organizations. It is all for the time being.

Thanking with-

Milan Das

Executive Director

Parittran



www.dalitvoicebd.org



Profile of Dalits in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. More than 145 million people live in an area of 114,000 sq km which is predominated by rivers, hills (CHT), *Char's* (land mass), *Haor's* (large water-bodies) and *Barind* (terrace land). The economic growth rate of Bangladesh is roughly 5.6 - 6.0 with per capita income of \$ 520. Rich poor disparity is very high. More than 40% of the people are poor and 20% are extreme poor. Among these poor population, a huge number face physical, social and political exclusion, due to their birth in a particular caste, religion and profession. These people have limited access to public resources, their literacy and health status is below national average, employment options are few plus many among them face the negative impacts of climate change in the form of recurrent natural disasters.

Caste and analogous systems of social hierarchy operate across the world, particularly in Asia and Africa, subjecting millions to inhuman treatment on the basis of being born into a certain caste. Though the communities themselves may be indistinguishable in appearance from others, unlike with race or ethnicity, socio-economic disparities are glaring, as are the peculiar forms of discrimination practiced against them. Although these people play a significant role in the country's economical, environmental and social development, the Dalit community is one of the most economically marginalized and socially excluded groups in Bangladesh.

A baseline survey, 'Religious Ethnic Minority Groups of South west Bangladesh, conducted by Reza Shamsur Rahman (published in 1993) revealed that there are at least 20 such minority dalits groups in Khulna and Satkhira districts. These groups are the *Bajondars*, the *Beharas*, the *Bhagobenees*, the *Bunos*, the *Dias*, the *Dhupas*, the *Hazams*, the *Jeles*, the *Kaiputras* (or *Kaoras*), the *Namasudras*, the *Nikaris*, the *Pandra Kshatrias*, the *Parois*, the *Patnis*, the *Rajbangshirs*, the *Rishis*, the *Fosua*, the *Shahjee*, the *Shikaris*, the *Tele* and others.

Among them the *Rishis* and the *Namasudras* constitute the major part of their total population. The caste system has literally *out-casted* these small groups of people.

The *Muchi* or, less derogatorily, *Rishi* usually live at the edge of villages. Since they are still considered unclean, they live separately from other 'clean' groups in their own village. They might live next to either Hindu or Muslim neighbourhoods, but they are only allowed to live in the most undesirable areas, which nobody else covets. However, small groups have migrated to towns in an attempt to find better livelihoods. Access to drinking water is also restricted if not denied to *Rishi* communities in some areas. *Rishis* are not allowed to take food on the same plate used to serve "higher" caste people in many local restaurants.

Education for the *Rishis* is a difficult and sometime painful experience. Their children are not welcomed into neighbourhoods or schools as they are considered polluted and polluting. Shame, guilt and trauma are the way of living for many young learners of the *Rishi* community. Their elders are illiterate and thus not aware of the importance of education. To many, education is a luxury. Girls are particularly the worst victims of illiteracy. Female dropout rate from primary school is relatively higher among *Rishi* people.

The economic situation of most *Rishi* families is vulnerable. Their job opportunities are limited. They hardly possess any land. Their occupational skills, except for few trades, are poor. They are not often hired as agricultural labours because often they are not apt to the task. Earth cutting, loading and unloading goods, pulling rickshaws or *vans*, shoe polishing, making bamboo and cane furniture etc. are the main activities of the *Rishi*. Employment opportunities for *Rishi* communities are gradually shrinking due to commercial production of commodities that were previously produced by *Rishi* people. Even some services offered by *Rishi* people in the near past are now taken over by non-*Rishi* people by investing more capital and introducing modern machineries and equipments. As a whole the *Rishi* communities have failed to adapt with the changing economic scenario, becoming poorer.

A recent study, "THE RISHI COMMUNITY OF SATKHIRA" conducted by Caritas Development Institute depicts the same picture as mentioned in the above paragraphs, detailed with facts and figures.

In the sample of 1990 *Rishi* households selected from 87 villages of 33 unions of Ashasuni, Kaligonj and Kalaroa thanas of Satkhira district, it was found that agriculture contributed to 3.75% of the *Rishi* total annual income while other non-agricultural activities contributed to 96.24% of their total annual income. Seasonal unemployment mostly for 2-3 months in the rainy season was another of the finding. The asset base of the *Rishi* people came out to be very limited. Fifty percent of the respondents had some savings but mostly below Tk. 500. Most of the sampled households received loans from NGO groups and local moneylenders within the range of Tk. 500 and 5,000 and mainly for purchasing bamboo and cane and sustaining thus household expenditure.

The literacy rate was found to be of only 30% (male 36.31%, female 23.15%), that is, half the national literacy rate. Development interventions by both GOs and NGOs were found to be extremely inadequate, except for some credit programmes by some NGOs. Last but not least, the *Rishi* people were deprived of social and legal rights. They had no social participation and were not given access to social functions by the majority community. Early marriages and dowry were prevalent in the *Rishi* community. Local influential men, Hindu or Muslim, dominated the *Rishi* people. Sometimes they grabbed their lands and/or threatened to evict them. These were some of the findings.

There are bring changes in dalits people at Bangladesh throughout the dalit movement and development activities for them. Bangladesh Dalit Parishad is national Platform for dalit campaign whose are implementing initiatives for social, political, economical and religious inclusion. Parittran as Non govt. organization developed for the dalits and by the dalits and executing development activities for bring positive change of livelihood for dalits. Some main Political Parties also considered the dalits issue in their election manifesto and the present government are trying to include dalit issue in national budget and development plan which have create dream for dalits community that one day they will get equal rights according to complement of some provisions of Bangladesh constitution. But it is indeed need to build relationship among dalits rights organization in south Asia region so that dalits peoples in south Asia can join with together its movement.

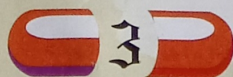
We believe that we shall overcome some day and dalits in the world will enjoy equal dignity.

Bikash Kumar Das.

(Human rights defenders)

Coordinator

Parittran & Bangladesh Dalit Parishad (BDP)



Dalit Movement for Anti Discrimination law

Parittran and Bangladesh Dalit Parishad mobilized to dalit peoples with demand of anti discrimination law since 1998 through observing international day for the elimination of racial discrimination at Noapara under Satkhira District. Thereafter this demand has been came first need to address dalit right in Bangladesh and prepared 10 point demand as campaign tools. Parittran and Bangladesh Dalit Parishad mobilizing on the issue of anti discrimination law through human right, dignity day and international for the elimination of racial discrimination day, mass gathering, signature campaign, advocacy and national level workshop seminar, mobilization the parliamentarians, round table discussion, supplementary documents published by prothom alo (renowned daily newspaper in Bangladesh) etc. Then thereafter civil society organization in Bangladesh also taken their priority issue and assisted to prime dalit led organization for growing up the issue at national level. They also helped to create space at national policy agenda. CSOs along with Parittran and Bangladesh Dalit Parishad had done consultation meeting with law and human right commission to identification of possibility of anti discrimination law, scope of this law in Bangladesh and submitted a draft law to those commissions. Law and HR commission also edited finally and submitted it ministry of law and justice division.

The round table discussion

Dalits Call for the Quick Enactment of the Anti Discrimination Law

On July the 16, the Bangladesh Dalit Parishad supported by Parittran, organised a seminar in the premises of Prothom Alo, the Bangla daily with the widest circulation in Bangladesh, to demand the quick enactment of the anti discrimination law to be soon discussed in the Bangladeshi parliament. The round table discussion was attended among others by the chariman of the National Human Rights Commission Dr. Mizanur Rahaman and by Dr. M. Sha Alom, member of the parliamentary Law Commission. Everybody sustained the necessity to enact such a law to protect Dalits and their citizenships' rights. However some of the participants, among whom Sahin Anom, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, remarked the necessity for a law to protect not only dalits but also all sorts of minorities. While the proposal could not but find the support of Dalits, it was however vented that an excessive extension of the proposed law



to cover all sorts of discrimination would run the risk of being watered down, becoming eventually useless not only to Dalits but to anybody. The Bangladesh Dalit Parishad demanded a strong provision against the discrimination of Dalits while stressing that such discrimination is born out of caste distinctions. The enactment of such a law would make Bangladeshi dalits feel that they are fully citizens of the country. In this perspective the proposal of Sonjib Drong (the general secretary of the Bangladesh Adibashi Forum) to mention the history of dalits in the law's preamble was highly appreciated by the dalit leadership present at the discussion.

LONG MARCH FOR ANTI DISCRIMINATION LAW (ADL).

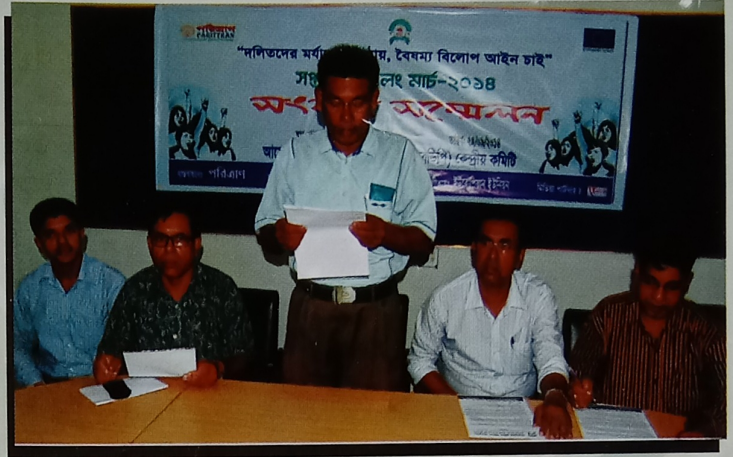
Parittran as a human rights and development organization committed to recognition, establishment and protection on the human rights of dalits and working since 1993. In order to establishment of dalit rights Parittran has reached 54 districts in Bangladesh by united dalit peoples in national platform named Bangladesh Dalit Parishad (BDP). It has 7 divisional and 54 district committee including 1 central committee and 21 members existed in each committee including human right defenders group. In several time, this platform has continued their actions to meet local demand of dalit and protesting strongly all sorts of human right violation incident in Bangladesh. Parittran and Bangladesh Dalit parishad jointly doing Advocacy, Policy advocacy and interventions to sensitize of local and national level different stakeholders.

Through the movement of dalit peoples this issue exploring at national level as well. We also congratulate to Bangladesh govt. for address dalit in development plan. But due to lack of adequate option in policy, law regard dalit's right and political, educational and economical exploitation dalits in Bangladesh suffers worst. In the aim to establish human rights of dalit Bangladesh Dalit Parishad and Parittran implemented long march. (from 24 to 30 September 2014) for establishment of proposed anti discrimination law.

Series of activities also performed like Rally, Human Chain, Procession, street mass gathering, drama, press conference, community letter campaign, human chain, Memorandum submission, Proposed law submission to local Parliamentarians, TV talk show and National Dalit convention etc.

Media Mobilization; 24 September 2014

Long March for ADL inaugurated through press conference on 24 September 2014 at 6 districts, other 5 divisions together. Media is another most important stakeholders to make vibrant the social movement. Press conference hold at district level in name of Kustia, Magura, Jhenaidah, Satkhira, Khulna, Bagerhat along with Rajsahi, Shylet, Borishal, Rangpur divisions has executed to immediate presentation the ADL bill in cabinet division and its implementation. Several electric and print media personals were present there and highlighted in local and national daily newspaper and electric media regarding the objective of long march. 10 points demand to establish dalit right also urged through the press conference. Dalit leader's urged immediate enact and implementation of anti discrimination law. There were 308 numbers of media workers and dalit leaders participated including 40 female and 268 male.



District level Mass Mobilization, Rally, Human Chain and Signature Campaign ; 25 September 2014

Peoples in 10 district of Khulna Division in Bangladesh mobilized through rally, human chain and memorandum submitted to Local Member of Parliaments. There were 2572 (Female-1111, Male-1161) dalit's participated and demanded to raise voice in favor of proposed anti discrimination law through 10 rally, human chain on 25 September at 10 districts under Khulna Divisions. Those mobilizations also held at Khulna, Bagerhat, Satkhira, Jessore, Narail, Magura, Chuadanga, Meherpur, Kustia and Jhenaidah districts. So many media personal, civil society members were participated there to make solidarity with ADL. During mass mobilization signature campaign also arranged and more than twenty thousand peoples put signature over there.



Sharing meeting with Local Parliamentarians

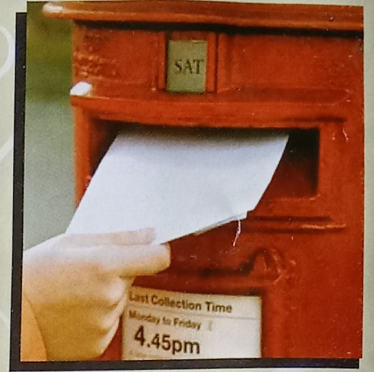
In order to make sensitized towards ADL to promote dalit right of local parliamentarians Dalit peoples submitted memorandum through executing sharing meeting. This parliamentarians group is expected to indirectly influence all the parliamentarians through their interventions in parliament, parliamentary committees. So, they can be influenced to enactment of proposed anti discrimination law (ADL)-2014. The sharing meeting was held on 8 September at khulna, 13 September at Meherpur and Jhenaidah, 19 September at Narail, 25 September at Chuadanga, 27 September at Satkhira, 28 September at Jessore, Bagerhat and Magura.

Dalit peoples handover the Proposed anti discrimination law and shared the necessity of ADL with those policy influential's and strongly urged to take affirmative action's in favor of ADL. Parliamentarians expressed commitment that they will raise their hands in favor of ADL and will take necessary actions. They also told that constitutions, policies and laws never excluded any community as defined their caste. There were 10 sharing meeting was held and 35 Parliamentarians received the proposed anti discrimination law.



Community letter has sent to Honorable Prime Minister of GoB

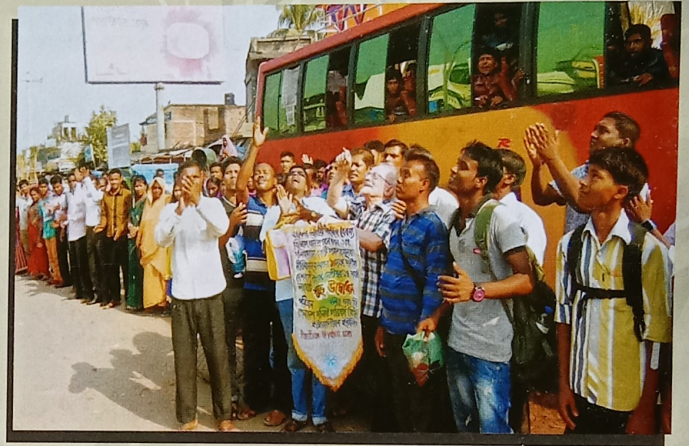
There were six thousands of dalit peoples throughout the country sent letter to honorable Prime Minister of peoples republic in Bangladesh government for take immediate action to enactment of proposed ADL.



Processions, street mass gathering and Interactive Drama to peoples mobilization towards ADL; 29 September 2014

Opening the Processions of Long march; 8.30 am, Chuknagar, Dumuria, Khulna. 29/09/2014.

Dalit leaders from southern part of Bangladesh started journey through procession from Satkhira to Dhaka on 29 September 2014, decorated with banner, festun, placard, leaflet and a caraban van on occasion of long march for ADL. It was opened by Fr. Germano Das (xaverian missionary) at Chuknagar, Iland under Dumuria upazila and khulna District. Total 500 dalit men and women with 10 bus joined in the journey. Fr. Germano Das told during opening of the processions that this is first time that dalit's people are going to create space in history that caste based discrimination should be eliminated right now. To establish dalit dignity this long march will be supportive for influence to policy makers. Anti discrimination law is most essential to address dalits dignity, promote rights of dalit and excluded community in Bangladesh. During commencement of processions more than 500 men & women were participated. Then the long march team started the journey to reach in Dhaka where arranging national dalit convention.



Processions, Rally, Human Chain and street gathering at Jessore, Magura and Savar ; 29/09/2014

On 29 September 2014, 8.00 pm journey of long march team arrived at Jessore district central point named Daratan mor on 10.00 pm and executed a rally, human chain. Uday Das, President of Bangladesh Dalit Pariashad (BDP), Bikash Das, Coordinator of Bangladesh Dalit Parishad, (BDP), Shankar Das and Ashim Das along with local civil society raised demand to take immediate actions for anti discrimination law. On 12.00 pm Same rally, human chain and street gathering executed at zero point of Magura district city (Vainar mor) and in Savar city on 5.00 pm. They urged the government for fulfil 10 points demand in particular of ADL.

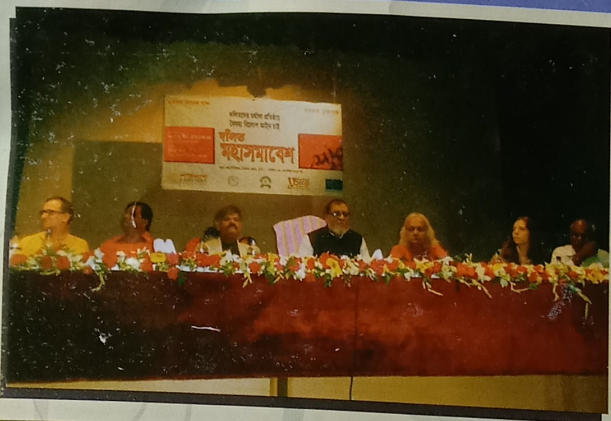


National Level Human Chain; 30 September 2014. on 10.00 am:

Long march team gathered a human chain at National press club, Dhaka on 30 September, 10 to 11.00 am. Dalit leaders from shylet, Borishal, Rangpur, Dhaka, Rajshahi, Chittagong joined in the human chain with long march. Milan Robi das from Shylet, Jibon Das from Borishal, Ashim Das from Jessore, Sudhansu Das from Khulna, Kalidas from Bagerhat spoke in the human chain. Uzzal Das, Organizing secretary of BDP, Ashok Das, General Secretary of BDP and Bikash Das, Coordinator of BDP spoke there also. Parittran Theatre team performed folk song, drama demonstration on caste based discrimination on street in front of national press club, Dhaka.



National Dalit Convention: 30 September 2014, BMA Auditorium, Dhaka, Bangladesh.



In the aim to sensitization the policy makers and influence the policy influential's groups for establish proposed ADL National Dalit convention held in concluding part of Long march 2014 on 30 September 2014, 11.00pm.

Honorable minister of liberation war AKM Mozammel

Haque was the chief guest in national dalit convention and he also committed to raise hand strongly in favor of ADL while it will place in Cabinet.

He put solidarity with the demands of dalits. He again said, Bangladesh govt. have to place the anti discrimination law after liberation. It is considered in constitution under section 27, 28, 29 but have no specific law. I salute this movement and the dalits people whose are contributing a lot to growing up in production, economic growth. In my country never remains any kind discrimination and exclusion. Govt. of Bangladesh are very much aware regarding this issue. Hopefully Ministry of law and justice will submit the law very soon and I will give most emphasis to enact the ADL.



Dr. Mijanur Rahman, Honorable Chairman of National human right commission

stated that; Human right and law commission are being very much sensitized towards ADL and they submitted proposed ADL to ministry in law of GoB. My commission has important responsibility to implementation of ADL. According to the roles and responsibility which described in proposed Law NHRC never mercy any discriminators even accused persons if belong in govt. officials.



Fr. Sergio Targa, Development worker and xaverian missionary told



in convention that, ADL is the spiritual demand. It is the question of human dignity. Traditionally dalit's are suspected, oppressed and dominant caste. Untouchability practice in society is serious violation of human rights. Every man have equal rights. So, on the declaration UNDRH, liberation war we have to respect each other. We believe that dalit peoples in Bangladesh will enjoy their right and equal dignity.

Mr. Monoranjon Ghosal, Freedom Fighter

We were firm committed to bring independent through liberation war. We have a dream to establish equal society where all peoples enjoy their right. We have got a constitution of Bangladesh and it never excluded the peoples. We are bengali. We speak in Bengala. It is our proud. But some cases we found that which community ruled by so called influential's and discriminated often as their caste based identification. Caste system is never accepted by progressive society. Discrimination is barrier to develop of dalits.

Bangladesh advancing chronologically.



Uday Das, President of Bangladesh Dalit Parishad (BDP)



was chaired of the convention. Mr. Rajkumar Das, President of Dhaka Mahanagar Dalit Parishad, Basonti Rani Das, Dalit women leader, Bikash Das, Uzzal Das, Ashok Das also spoke in the convention. They on behalf of long march passed the proposed ADL.

Result:

1. Strengthened Dalit Movement
2. Peoples in general sensitized towards dalits
3. Parliamentarians are very much sensitized on ADL.
4. Media focused and highlighted the movement
5. Peoples in Bangladesh got messages regarding dalit by TV talk show in renowned TV channel Ekattor (71).
6. More than 40,000 peoples signed in signature campaign banner
7. 8000 letter has been sent to Prime minister
8. Bangladesh Dalit Parishad are more strength.
9. Dalit united and firmly committed to explore dalits in national development issue.

Learning: As a first time experienced by organizing long march we learned that Dalit peoples have highly demand regarding establishment of their human rights and greater unity among dalits has been build up. Some cases we found that dalit leaders self arranged media mobilization, social mobilization in their end on occasion of long March. It is expected that Dalit's in Bangladesh will enjoy their rights if ADL enacted immediately and implement effectively.

Thoughts of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar

1- Be Educated, Be Organised and Be Agitated

2-The Untouchables should revolt because they are slaves and slavery is inhuman. There is no racial difference that marks them off from caste Hindus. if Hindu religious scripture ordains the practice of untouchability those scriptures should be rejected.

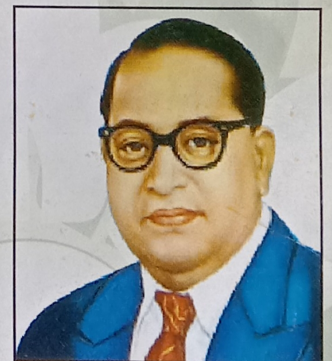
3- Lost rights are never regained by begging, and by appeals to the conscience of the usurpers, but by relentless struggle. Goats are used for sacrificial offering and not lions.

4-Education and politics are the chief means to equality : education so that the Untouchables will be able to participate in society on an equal plane : political agitation and participation so that Untouchables can secure their rights and redress their economic and social grievances by law and political policy

5-Only by acknowledging their slavery, by admitting their inferior position could Untouchables unify and press for change..

Only by Governmental acknowledgment of their deprivation as a class and the correction of that injustice by special treatment on a caste basis could equality eventually be reached.

DR. Baba Shaheb Ambedk



JAI BHIM, JAY DALIT