

15<sup>th</sup> November 2014



# Durbar Bulletin -44

## Bijoya Sammilani 2014



Durbar Durgotsav always has been a talk of the town as it constantly hit the age old ethnology of the middle class Bengali “Babus”, what makes a sex worker an ostracized member of the society. Followed by a huge success of Durbar organized first Durgotsav in 2013 in Sonagachi Durbar took an effort to organize once again in Sonagachi in addition to Bisnupur red light district in this year, where Maa Durga is worshipped to propagate the message of Equal right and Dignity for all Occupations. As

a follow up activity Durbar organized Bijoya Sammilani 2014 on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2014 at Subham Hall, in Masjid Bari Street, Kolkata.

Prominent personalities from all walks of life attended the Sammilani. Among many important personalities who participated Bijoya Sammilani are Dr. Kalyani Chattopadhyay, Amitava Mitra, Amitava Chowdhury (Social Activist), Satyendranath Dutta (Councillor of Boubazar), Rabin Chatterjee (official from Kolkata Municipal Corporation), Parimal Biswas (Ex Councillor), Debashish Banerjee (official, Doordarshan), Dr Shyamashib Ghosh, Asoke Dutta and Samiran Dalal (State Bank of India) , Dr Kalyan Kumar Bhattacharya (Consumer Affairs Department of West Bengal), Ranen Chakrobarty, and other. Dr D.N. Chatterjee, President of Durbar Puja Committee initiated the ceremony with his speech, followed by other dignitaries. Amitava Chowdhury praised such an ambition and moxie of the sex workers in his speech, at the same time he insisted that Sex workers should use Rights to Information act to push their agenda including celebration of Durga Puja in all other red light districts. He also shared that he considered organising Durga Puja is a fundamental right of every citizen of India including sex workers. Dr. Smarajit Jana, the chief advisor of durbar in his deliberation assured all participants implement such idea of using RTI to establish rights of sex worker as citizen of the country.

Followed by the cultural team Komol Gandhar presented a dance drama which was enjoyed by all the participants attended the Bijoya Sammilani of Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee.

### Amra Padatik Football League started with flying colours

To support the talent of youngsters of Sex Workers Amra Padatik, like previous years, organised 5<sup>th</sup> Padatik Football League, in association with the Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee, the largest collective of sex Workers in Bengal.

This  
state

intra-  
league



commenced from 9<sup>th</sup> November 2014 at Prachya Bharti Domjur Stadium at Domjur, Howrah and will conclude November 22<sup>nd</sup> at Company Bagan at Beadon Street, Kolkata.

Sixteen teams from different districts have participated in the event. "The competition is intended to ensure the rights of participation in playing football by the children of sex workers of different parts of West Bengal," said Ratan Dolui, secretary, Amra Padatik, an organization for children of Sex Workers.

Every year the league is organised with an aim to building self esteem and team spirit, among the children of marginalized communities e.g. children of sex workers, street children and children living in slums etc. Sports appear to be the best activity to remove barriers between class, caste and occupation. Children of the marginalized communities, on a broader spectrum, through engaging themselves in mainstream sports regain their self esteem and share a sense of equity among all the children of the society that a football helps improvement of physical, social and psychological quality of life of these children and their family.

The league was inaugurated with a grandiose investiture in the presence of prominent personalities representing various walks of life, which comprised of local Block development officers and Panchayet members, local school teachers, social activists, veteran football players and coach of Bengal Football Team. The folk also included members of local clubs and associations and shared their support and solidarity.

**Sex Workers and their children hit the street with slogan “Sex Work is a decent Work”**



Welcoming the viewpoint of the chairperson of NCW to legalise sex work DMSC suggested Government to develop a background paper with an objective to enact a sex workers' friendly labour legislation. DMSC initiated a campaign throughout the state of West Bengal proceeded by rally on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2014. The Rally commenced from Sonagachi red light district and ended at College Square. The colourful procession draws attention from the pedestrians and others who were travelling by cars stop for a while to collect leaflet distributed by the members of the Amra Padatik.

Dr (Mrs) Atasi Chatterjee, Member of the Press Foundation and wife of Shri Adhir Choudhury along with Sadhan Pathak, Ex-Councillor were among the few distinguished policy makers who also participated in the procession. They expressed their support and solidarity towards legalising sex work.

In their constant slogans, gestures and posters, gathering of 300 sex workers raised their demand to include representatives of sex workers in drawing the framework of labour legislation for sex work, keeping in view the existing labour laws developed in the country for other unorganised labour sector.

Along with other sex workers in India Durbar also believes that decriminalization of sex work will distinguish between sex work and trafficking. It would protect sex workers from getting exploited and physically abused by police, goons and their supporters. Moreover it would ensure respect and dignity to sex workers' community and at the same length if sex work is legalized then commercial trafficking can be dealt with stringently. Durbar whole heartedly believes that implementation of appropriate labour legislation would ensure sex workers rights. As sex workers right are women rights also. This would empower women in work and her rights to self determination. This would help betterment of life of sex workers including their families. These are 4 million sex workers and their children residing in India.

The procession could succeed in drawing attention of a large number of Press and Media like ANI, ND TV, DD, CTVN+, and ONKAR who broadcasted the procession in their evening programme. Major news papers like the Deccan Chronicle and Sanhati had also covered the news.



After the rally reached College Square, Mr. Mrinal Kanti Dutta a member of Amra Padatik delivered a short speech highlighting various issues justifying why the sex work should be decriminalised. There were also other speakers like Ms. Sefali Roy and Ms Purnima Chatterjee, Executive Board member of DMSC who also supported the demand based on their experiences.

Focusing health issues in the absence of regulation, speakers explained how sex workers are forced to serve clients in unhygienic and unhealthy condition and without condoms, which led to the spread of HIV and other STDs.

**Editor:** Smarajit Jana

**Bulletin team:** Mousumi Chowdhury (Dam) and Madhusree Das

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