

## **‘Samajik Parivarthan Yatra’ (National Yatra for Social Transformation)**

### *For the Total Eradication of Manual Scavenging*

The historical ‘Samajik Parivarthan Yatra’ (Rally for Social Transformation), has been started to consolidate the gains of the movement for total eradication by liberated safai karmacharis who for the first time are bonding with one another began the journey for social change together, to inspire others who are still engaged in manual scavenging to free themselves from the obnoxious practise and regain their sense of dignity, and also to achieve their rightful claims for the rehabilitation package and dignified alternative livelihoods on the one hand; and on the other, to motivate civil society to reject the heinous practice of manual scavenging. The Bus Yatra has been planned to start from five different corners of India, and traverse through 160 districts in 20 states and finally culminate in New Delhi with a large rally. Each route has been named after an eminent person who contributed to social change in a revolutionary manner.

- Srinagar to Delhi Jai Bhim Marg
- Dehradun to Delhi Savitribai marg
- Dibrugarh to delhi Birsa Munda marg
- Khurda to Delhi Jhalkaribai marg
- Kanyakumari to Delhi Periyar Marg

The Samajik Parivartan Yatra was flagged off on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> September, 2010 in New Delhi. The liberated safai karmacharis Saroj, Maya Goutam, Anita, Neetu and Mamata from various states released the route maps and demands to symbolise the beginning of Yatra

The 1<sup>st</sup> leg of the yatra was flagged off on 30<sup>th</sup> Sept, in Kashmir, by Ghulam Rasool from Kulwama Thral of J&K on “**Jai Bheem Marg**”.

The yatra started from Kulgam, Kashmir, and travelled through various districts in the valley, in spite of the political turmoil and curfew in the state. From Anantnag district, a large number of SKA’s J&K team members arrived in Jammu on the evening of 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2010

The “Marg” will make its way through the states of Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and culminate in Delhi.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2010, the team visited several Valmiki colonies in Jammu, where they interacted with safai karmacharis stressing the importance of identifying workers in manual scavenging and existing dry latrines for the eradication of the atrocious practice of manual scavenging. People there

showed immense interest in participating in the survey and promised to come up with the concrete data. The Yatris explained to them the details about existing Manual Scavenging and dry latrines in the valley of Kashmir.

On the morning of 3rd October 2010, enthusiastic youngsters and children grouped together and visited different “bastis” (areas) to motivate people to participate in the rally, and they were successful in gathering a large group of inspired people at the Ambedkar Chowk, in Jammu city, which was colorfully decorated for this occasion. There was festivity and liberation in the air, and the atmosphere was charged with enthusiasm and excitement.

The meeting started with garlanding the statue of Baba Saheb Ambedkar. Jung bahadur, the local pradhan, welcomed the yatris. Mr. Raman Bhalla (Minister of Revenue, Relief, Rehabilitation, J&K), released the route map of the Jai Bhim Marg and the demands of ‘Samajik Parivarthan Yatra’. Ms. Mahjabeen Bhat and Mr. Subhas Desawar (State Convener, Punjab) spoke in detail about the aims and demands of the yatra. The Minister promised to take up with the Chief Minister of J&K, the issue of necessary and effective actions to rehabilitate safai karmacharis. He expressed strong support to the cause and wished success to the yatra. The meeting ended with a skit on the issue by the Haryana cultural team. The Minister flagged off the bus, carrying yatris from the states of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi. Ms. Mahjabeen Bhat, handed over charge to the state convener of Punjab, Subhash Desawar and the bus started towards its next destination, i.e. Damtal, Himachal Pradesh.

On the way, the rallyists came across Mr. Bhagat, who had gone out with his wife. He is the state Manager, J&K SC/ST Finance & Development Corporation. He joined the rally and promised them right away that he would do everything in his power to speed up rehabilitation and Training for them.

### **Rousing welcome for the Yatris in Damtal, Himachal Pradesh**

The Yatra team moved towards Damtal in the state of Himachal Pradesh. When they reached Pathankot, a team of activists from Rastriya Dalit Mahasangh led by Mr. Jayakaran, accorded it a grand and rousing welcome on the Pathankot high way, and accompanied the bus with cars and motor bikes for 12 kms to Damtal. The youth performed daring feats on their motorbikes.

In Damtal, the Yatris addressed a meeting organised by Rastriya Dalit Mahasangh. 300 local people attended the event. Mr. Jayakaran welcomed

the Yatris and the local people who participated in the meeting. Bezwada Wilson spoke about the purpose of the yatra. Local safai karmacharis interacted with SKA core team members. The yatris stayed the night in Dantal and reviewed the program so far.

**Everyone from the community felt this 'Yatra for Social Change' is the first of its kind.**

**The yatra created an atmosphere of liberation and pepped up the fighting spirits of the safai karmacharis for dignified livelihoods.**

Civil society and Govt officials also participated enthusiastically in the rally.