

# BANDHUA MUKTI MORCHA

Bonded Labour Liberation Front

SLAVERY – A continuing human tragedy.



बन्धुआ मुक्ति मोर्चा



*Health Centre at Banskhedhi, Shivpuri, (M.P.) run by Bandhua Mukti Morcha*

Slavery in its various forms has existed in India for centuries. Bonded labour system is a contemporary form of slavery and includes Bonded Child labour. Both arise out of socio-economic and historical reasons.

Child labour is mostly found in the unorganized sector. Children in the age group of 5 -15 are made to work in agriculture and industrial units producing matches, locks, carpets, handlooms, stone quarries, brick kiln, tanneries etc. Millions of children are born poor, with a debt burden hanging on them on account of the loans their parents had taken and failed to repay. They are doomed never to attend school, play or dream like a normal child, being forced to work up to 16 hours a day to repay the debt of their parents. They are sold off like commodities.

**Bandhua Mukti Morcha (Bonded Labour Liberation Front)** was founded in 1981 by Swami Agnivesh, a highly evolved being, who threw away the glamour and comforts of a coveted Ministerial position in the government and started an unrelenting war against the bonded labour system in India. In fact BMM was the first organization to crusade against the scourge of bonded labour system. It was a



*Bonded labourers rescued from Sambhal , Uttar Pradesh*

historic PIL filed by BMM on the plight of stone quarry workers in Haryana, Chief Justice P.N. Bhagwati of the Supreme Court of India delivered his epoch-making, landmark judgement in 1983 declaring that all labourers who are denied minimum wages are to be presumed as bonded labourers. The chronic cases of Bonded Labour were termed Exiles from Civilisation. According to this, estimated number of potential bonded labourers in India would be near 450 million. Add to this another 50 million bonded child labourers. This is notwithstanding the Constitutional guarantees against its practice, prohibitive laws and international conventions on the subject.

Since its inception, BMM has secured release of over 1,77,238 bonded labourers of which 26,479 are children. A large number of them have been rehabilitated. Though the highest court of the land has ruled that the State Government cannot be permitted to abdicate its obligation to identify, release and rehabilitate the bonded labourers, lack of political will as well as administrative apathy of successive governments have made the crusade of BMM far



*Bonded Labourers rescued from Kathua, Jammu & Kashmir*

more difficult. Seeking interventions of the court through various petitions, BMM has been able to activate government machinery in the States of Haryana, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh and ensure that as many as 7000 houses were constructed and allotted to the labourers released from bondage.

### **Non Formal School:-**

The Saharia tribes are concentrated in the states of Madhya Pradesh (Mostly in the Shivpuri, Guna and Vidisha districts) originally forest dwellers they have been forced to move out of their original profession and livelihood due to increasing depletion of forest resources. Continuous drought and lack of other resources to fall back upon has made them even more vulnerable. They are mostly landless and do not have any



*Maharshi Dayanand School Guna, Madhya Pradesh*

profitable skills or training. Bandhua Mukti Morcha runs a non-formal school at Guna district in Madhya Pradesh. It was started in the year of 2003. BMM'S commitment to provide education and health care to the poor and needy in slum areas and tribal belts.

### **Vocational Training Centre:-**

**Bandhua Mukti Morcha running Sewing Training Centre at Garhi , New Delhi :** This is a certificate course to empower released bonded labourers and poorest of the poor women. The objective is providing the girls with cutting and stitching skills. After completion the women are able to work from home taking in work from the community or seek employment in one of the many factories around Delhi.



*Maharshi Dayanand Vocational Training Centre, Garhi, New Delhi*

### **Future Activities: -**

BMM has decided to work according to following points.

1. Scholarship for talented poor students and released child labourers.
2. To help poor and released Bonded Labourers for marriage expenses of their daughters.
3. To run schools in the areas where labourers are working particularly in Brick Kiln areas, stone quarries etc.
4. To expand health centre running at Banskheri, Shivpuri (MP).
5. To start Vocational Training Centre for released Bonded Labourers at Banskheri, Shivpuri (MP).

6. To run Awareness movement against alcoholism and all kinds of drugs and intoxication.



*The Delhi High Court Bar Association conferred the esteemed Fight 4 Justice Award to Bandhua Mukti Morcha on 4 October 2024 at the India Habitat Centre, Delhi.*



*Ration Distribution by Bandhua Mukti Morcha during Covid-19 at Delhi NCR*

## **FEMALE FOETICIDE**

Female foeticide means killing a girl child in her mother's womb itself. It is a way of interfering with the will of God and laws of creation. And shockingly, more than anybody else, the educated elite are the worst culprits in this respect. The result is there for everybody to see. Female population is drastically falling. This could inevitably invite national

disasters, says Swami Agnivesh. According to him, the most effective way of putting an end to this heinous practice is for the expectant mother herself to take a firm stand and say NO to any pre-n

## WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

We are a patriarchal society. Everything is, and works, in terms of 'he' (man). It is so deeply ingrained in our psyche that we ascribe our male-preference even to God. The Almighty has to be a "He". What is even more surprising is that even the all-compassionate has to be a "He"?

How are we going to empower women if the girl child is killed in the mother's womb itself? The situation is so terrifying that in our country we have to start women's empowerment



right from the mother's womb! The issue with its heavy social over shadow is too daunting. So, having a profound Constitution or passing more legislations alone will not help much. Woman has to be treated as an equal partner in life. Provide her proper education and recognize her property rights. From childhood a change has to happen in her upbringing style, says Swami Agnivesh.

Bandhua Mukti Morcha togetherwith Arya Samaj, supported by various Universities and other Organizations in India and abroad organized the 5th International Conference on Dowry & Bride burning in New Delhi in January 2001.

## **SATI PREVENTION ACT 1987.**

The recurring incidence of Sati immolation in Rajasthan would not have shown a receding trend but for the promulgation of Sati Prevention Act in 1987 by the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the long struggle Swami Agnivesh carried out against this dastardly crime against women, paving the way for its enactment. In order to mount pressure on the government to act, a marathon march was



Swami Agnivesh with 100 fellow sanyasis marching on foot from Delhi to Deorala denouncing Sati practice

organized from Delhi to Deorala, when a young widow of 17 years was forced on to the funeral pyre of her husband in a village called Deorala in Rajasthan in 1987. Many religious fundamentalists who thrived on the practice of Sati landed up in jail after the law came into force.

## **TEMPLE ENTRY FOR DALITS**

Dalits were not being allowed to enter the temples in Rajasthan. All labourers belonged to lower Dalit caste and it was their blood and sweat on which the temples were built. After reciting some mantras and installing a deity, these poor labourers were not being allowed to enter the temple. Swami Agnivesh fought against this age old practice and got the temples freed for everybody's entry.

## SELF HELP GROUPS

Banskhedi is a small village in the Shivpuri District of Madhya Pradesh inhabited by extremely poor Saharia tribes, whose conditions were worse than that of the bonded labourers. BMM has organized women folk in Saharia community into 5 Self Help Groups (SHGs). In all there are 100 such SHGs working in the State of Haryana, Delhi and Madhya Pradesh.



*Bonded labourers rescued from Rajouri, J&K*



*Bonded labourers rescued from Aurangabad, Bihar*



*Swami Agnivesh addressing Press Conference*



*Swami Agnivesh ji's Founder Bandhua Mukti Morcha demands National Minimum Wage at Jantar Mantar Delhi*



*Bonded labourers rescued from Gopalganj, Bihar*



*Swami Aryavesh chairperson Bandhua Mukti Morcha  
dialogue with labourers at Pali Crusher Zone, Faridabad (Haryana)*



*Children celebrating 'Anti Child Labour Day' with  
Prof. Sheotaj Singh, Former General Secretary, BMM.*

## APPEAL

BMM is undertaking a great humanitarian task of fighting against Modern Day Slavery, of ensuring the protection of human rights, women's empowerment, abolition of female foeticide, corruption and many other social evils. We believe that all the social disparities existing in the world are human-made and can be corrected by human interventions. Those who have enough, have a greater responsibility to use the resources judiciously so that a better world order can prevail.

Our own financial resources are very limited to carry on with the ongoing work and we need your support. On an average we incur an expenditure of Rs. 5000/- per person for his /her identification, release, legal aid and follow up work for getting the rehabilitation package. We in BMM will make sure that the money donated by you is dutifully spent for the specified purpose. Your valuable contributions may please be sent to:

**Bandhua Mukti Morcha** (Account Holder)

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## Swami Aryavesh

Chairperson

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