

Report

LAND, DIGNITY AND FREEDOM

a Padyatra

From Ghughali (Maharajganj) to Chaurichaura (Gorakhpur)

June 1-22nd 2007

ORGANISED BY:

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Introduction

Land, Dignity and Freedom padyatra covered around 140 villages, 7 urban slums in four districts of Maharajganj, Kushingar, Deoria and Gorakhpur districts of Eastern Uttar-Pradesh. It started from Tilakwania village in Ghughali town of Maharajganj district on June 1st, 2007 and culminated at the historic town of Chauri Chaura on June 22nd, 2007 with a total of 370 kilometers. Organised by Uttar-Pradesh Land Alliance and led by Shri Vidya Bhushan Rawat, Director, Social Development Foundation, Delhi, the Padyatra raised the issue of hunger, land, water and sustainable development. Nearly 20 Padyatris including women and girls from the marginalised sections of society walked this distance in scorching heat for full 22 days. It raised the issue of the failure of the previous government to deal with the issue of livelihood of marginalised communities and their continuous marginalisation through hunger, malnutrition, poverty and depression. It also voiced its concern over growing communalisation process as well as spreading of superstition among the poorer sections of society. At many places the marchers spoke to small gatherings, met people, visited affected areas and conducted social audits of schemes like NREGA.

IMPRESSIVE GATHERING AT GHUGHALI

More than Seven hundred villagers assembled at Tilakwania village in Ghughali block of Maharajganj district in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, to see off 20 Padyatris marching belonging to a network of NGOs and social movements termed as the Uttar Pradesh Land Alliance; at the start of a 22 day long Padyatra under the banner of Land, Dignity & Freedom.

Supporting the initiative, the villagers led a rally to Ghughali town about 4km away from the village, Shouting slogans favoring the re-opening of the Ghughali sugar mill, redistribution of land to landless farmers including women and equal rights for men and women. It was heartening to see for the first time such strong slogans being used propounding the ideology of humanism and not for sectarian or narrow religious fundamentalist ends. The villagers raised slogans such as, "*Redistribute the land, neither Ram nor Rahim, we want honour, dignity & Land.*"

It is a well-known fact that the Musahar community is a prime victim of religious exploitation & social oppression. In, what could be termed as a historic occasion the Musahar community of Tilakwania village occupied a very important piece of village land. Though this land is of a negligible quantity yet the mere fact that 25 to 30 Musahar families could occupy this land is highly symbolic in several ways. The average Musahar today lives in a highly degraded condition and that makes him vulnerable to violence and exploitation.

The Padyatris were carrying various banners like “Religion for God, Humanism for Humans”, “*Redistribution of Land is the first condition of Social Justice*”, “*Women’s Right are Human Rights*”, “*Land is our Mother, and we will not compromise for it*”.

At the meeting Mr. Vidya Bhushan Rawat, Director of Social Development Foundation, Delhi, exhorted the unit and fight against oppression & discrimination. He said by remaining silent against injustice we perpetrate it. Raising awareness on the issue of hunger and starvation of the masses is the key problem in the region and the countryside at large in India today. Through it people can be made aware of their fundamental rights and come to realize that not everything is left to destiny, that they are not merely the passive objects of history with no independence of action, that they do have some freedom to change their condition, that when faced with injustice and oppression they will revolt. The state of U.P. is passing through a phase of deep cynicism where people are rapidly losing faith in the prevailing structures of governance and the ability of the state to improve their day-to-day lives.

At places people listen attentively to the speech of Padyatris. They sing songs in Hindi and Bhoj puri to keep up their spirits and encourage the participants. Interestingly, the issues differed from place to place. The Padyatra reached Pakadiyar from Ghughali in the night and started interacting the people in the village.

Areas Covered

The padyatra started at 2 pm from Tilakwania village, Ghughali, Maharaj Ganj district on June 1st, 2007. After demonstrating at the Ghughali Tehsil headquarters for restarting the sugar mill, the Padyatris headed for Pakadiyar village, which was about 10 kilometer from Tilakwania. The Padyatris were covering 15-20 kilometer one day but in certain areas the total walk went up to 30 kilometer a day as we started from early morning. After Pakadiyar, the Padyatra reached Kaptanganj, which is famous for sand mining at the river Chhotigandak. Kaptan Ganj has also have a distillery and sugar mill playing havoc with the lives of the farmers and common man. From Kaptanganj, the Padyatra reached to Ramkola, a very famous town known for farmer’s resistance against oppressive agrarian policies of the government.

The struggle of the sugarcane farmers for their legitimate rights turned violent when the state government put all force to stop them from protesting. Another side of the battle is the thousands of hectare of fertile land have been rendered useless by the chemical waste of these factories. Water has completely been contaminated in these areas with particularly Chhotigandak. Most of the houses do not drink the ground water from the nearby areas, as it is totally undrinkable.

The Padyatra visited many such spots where people’s right had been violated by the sand mafia who are a threat to not only rural poor but also to social harmony. Ram kola is not only wastage of fertile land but also of water. Every year during the rain, the Gandak and Ghaghara erode a large part of fertile land making thousands of people as homeless and workless.

From Ramkola the Padyatra crossed to a village called Deoria Pandey, which is a Brahmin, dominated village and the Dalits here remain marginalized and landless. The land relations here were quite tense. The upper caste communities did not turn to our meeting in the evening while they came in the groups to fight against the Dalits who were complaining about the non-availability of work under the NREGA and other things.

From here on wards, the Padyatra actually proceeded to some of the most difficult terrain in terms of hunger. We crossed river Badi to reach Benuapur and then to Kolhua which is a Mushahar village. From there we crossed many hamlets of Mushahars and Rajbhars communities to reach Bisunpura, which is on the bank of river Badi. We had to cross this river twice. In Bisunpura the Padyatris visited Mushahar bastes and Chamar bastes and conducted social audit of NREGA. Here we found several hunger related cases for which are being registered with NHRC and UP government. It was the 7th day of Padyatra. From this village we moved to Fulwapatti

Which was totally burnt due to fire because of felling of an electric wire. The trees, Jhopadis, shops were turned to ashes. From than 86 families lost everything from their livelihood to house.

We crossed river Khanua and visited Koilaswa where number of Mushahars died. There is no implementation of NREGA here. More than 90% of the total 500 families here have thatched huts. There is no future of this village as it is on the bank of a river, which flooded during the rains. Most of the Mushahars go to Gopalganj for their livelihood and work on the brick kiln. No Indira Awas, schools far away from the village, government doctors looking towards them in utter contempt and mushrooming NGOs, Koilaswa narrates everything.

After walking a fairly long distance we reached Mundera Mishra on June 10th. This was the entry to Deoria. We visited some bastis of Khatik community as well as some landless backward and upper caste people. We visited one family, which lost the male member of hunger and starvation. For long, the man was suffering from tuberculosis in the absence of proper medication and malnutrition. He finally succumbed to the pressure and died leaving a young divorced daughter and his wife.

At the Deoria district headquarters more than 300 participants organized a Padyatra. The Padyatris traveled to the street of Deoria, various slum bustees. Women had come from various villages to participate in the march, which met urban poor and tried to understand their issues. In the evening, local TV network and ETV also interviewed the Padyatris. The condition of the people sitting on Civil Lines particularly the Bansfors is worrisome.

From Deoria, the Padyatra started towards Vindhvalia village, which was about 15 kilometer. The Padyatris were determined in all the difficult circumstances. While in Maharajganj and Kushinagar, there was tremendous heat and dusty winds, where walking every step was painful, in Deoria, we were greeted with rains. It rained heavily but rather than resigning to our fate for train to stop, we continue to walk.

While walking in the rain, we found some children looking for 'something.' It was village Suraura which is a village of Rajbhars and Chauhans. Chauhans here are called Nonias. Both Rajbhars and Chauhans are categorized as Most Backward Classes and in some of the areas their conditions is equally painful as that of Dalits. Unfortunately, the categorization of the communities have divided the village as most of the MBCs should have been part of the broader Dalit movement yet the government and the social organizations kept them out of the process therefore further alienating them.

As mentioned many time, this belt seems to be suffering from hunger though not many of them will agree unless they understand that they can change their destiny. Here in village Saraura these Rajbhar, Chauhan boys were happy looking for rats in the rains. Rain brings cheers for these hungry souls. So the efforts to catch rat for hours and hours. I was shocked and dismayed when I found how the children had this will power to catch the rats and later roast it to eat like a Kabab. It reflects our state of affair.

About 5 kilometer ahead, the Padyatra visited Vindhyaawalia village of Nishad and Kashyaps (fish workers). Not a single house in the village looked prosperous. 90% huts were thatched. Fish workers have lost their livelihood, as the river nearby is flooded with the chemical waste therefore making the river just at gutter of sewage. It is not that they are not committing suicide but the things are very serious in these villages. A large number of youngsters have migrated to far away places like Maharastra, Gujarat and Goa. Many of them showed their palms to us, which have become hard like rock and difficult to fold. It looks as the problem emanating from silicosis. Most of the fishermen do not have anything to eat. Rains bring cheer for them too but that is short-lived. They collect snails from their fields and boil it and cook it. In the absence of any other supplement, most of the children have turned to anemic. Many children were turning blind too in the absence of food.

From Vindhyaawalia we moved to Rudrapur town, which the Tehsil headquarter. Rudrapur is a fairly big town and was the main market of the Kachchar area and Doaba region of Gorakhpur. The Padyatris were singing slogans and march past through the streets of Rudrapur. They were interviewed by several newspapers there. All of us stayed at the Nishad Dharmshala, a dharmshall built by the fisher people. Later the Padyatris marched to a scavenger basti to see the condition of scavenger and interact with them.

Scavenger basti had a dirty look. Most of the youngs were drunk and local wine was being sold openly. Houses were smalls and without any proper construction. Young children were doing the household worker particularly the girls were not only taking care of their families but also cooking the meal.

The worst conditions emerged at Narainpur village on the bank of river Gurrah. From the above the entire river looked very dark because of the pollution. The fishermen living on its bank complained that they are unable to fish anything In the flood of 1998 and 2002, the district administration asked the fishermen to help the local population in the rescue work. The local fishermen put their boats and worked day and night to rescue to civilian population and got nothing till date.

The fishermen who came from out of the district got more money. The other problem in this village was soil erosion by river Gurrah. There is no work for them as the fish catch is very low. So they have become prone to hunger at the moment. This village is on the border to Gorakhpur and from here onwards we moved to famous Kachchar area. Long dusty roads without any trees in the area reflect the nature of this land. The land is infertile as the 1998 flood brought silt and sand and thereby destroying and damaging the entire region, which was very fertile. Today, the farmers have nothing to earn. There is no experiment as they have little money. The only satisfaction that they have is their land, which is occupied by them. Now with the entry of corporate farming in Uttar-Pradesh small and marginal farmers stand to lose. Gorakhpur is an NREGA district and like Maharajganj and Kushinagar there is no monitoring and evaluation of the NREGA and the people on the margins have not received any assistance out of NREGA. People do not know about the scheme.

In the last leg of Padyatra, we visited Sardar Nagar industrial area where Sardar Surjeet Singh Majithia has constructed his huge empire of a distillery and a sugar mill. Going nearby the area, one wonders how people would stay near the area as the stink sinks you. The Sardar Nagar factory is the biggest conspirator and destroyer of the environment, water and land of Eastern Uttar-Pradesh. We went to the source of the sewage water that flows through the fertile land and ultimately merge into river Gurrah and Rapti. Many farmers organizations want to ban these factories.

On the last day, about 700 people participated in the rally, which began from Sardar Nagar. Women came in large number along with men. The slogans they chanted and shouted thrilled the atmosphere. Every body wanted to save their environment. They were asking for social cohesion. They called for equal rights of men and women. Men and women sang songs of revolution and change. We need acceptance of women as farmers. Land should be redistributed. Government must stop harassing farmers. Stop pollution making factories. The 6-kilometer march culminated at a public meeting at the Shaheed Smarak (martyr's memorial). Eminent social activists, local farmer leaders, women activists, Dalit women, Padyatris spoke on the occasion and shared their experiences of the Padyatra. It was also agreed that the activists and organizations would support and participate in all the land related initiatives for the rights of the tribal, Dalits and other marginalized communities. A resolution was passed asking the government to take action for forming of special land courts, land redistribution, effective implementation of the NREGA and anti poverty programmes in these districts.

Major Issues:

The major issues that emerged during the Padyatra were the following

Land redistribution to Dalits and other landless communities remained unfulfilled. The cases of illegal land grab resulted in further exploitation of these communities. Apart from failure of land reform, we found that even people who have legal entitlement of land have not been able to take possession of their land.

Hunger has deeply affected the marginalized communities particularly Mushahars, Bansfors, Nonias, Rajbhars, Chamars, Pasis, Mallahs, Bindhs, Nishads, Swachchkars (sweeper) communities and need immediate relief. Donor agencies, NGOs are not working according to the needs and demands of the communities.

Pollution created by sugar factories and distilleries as mentioned earlier most of the sugar mills and distilleries particularly Sardarnagar (Gorakhpur), Kaptanganj and Ramkola (Kushingar) are not following any anti pollution norms. It has resulted in the wastage of the fertile land and destruction of potable water.

National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme has not been implemented effectively and sincerely in these districts of Maharajganj, Gorakhpur and Kushinagar. During our social audit programmes in many villages, people are not even aware of the scheme and those who know about it do not know much about their rights as how to avail it.

We are also amazed to find how the eligible people have not got any ration cards. The Public Distribution System is in a complete mess and Indira Awas Yojna never reach the real and needy. The Anganwadi centers are being run for showcasing some of the work of the locals but the fact is that they only function properly when some one visit them. Sand Mining in the rivers of Chhotigandak, Ghaghara and Rapti will have greater environmental hazards. River Chhotigandak has really been deepened like a pit. One can only see how the river is fast disappearing. Every year during the rain, it changes its track and create new embankment thus destroying many villages. Governments have failed to recognize this as the sand mafia led by the politicians and their chums are controlling the local rivers.

The issue of fishermen has of utmost importance. As rivers looking like drainage and sand mining further dipping them, fish workers have lost everything they could produce. That has resulted in their migration to cities and towns. There is virtual hunger prevalent in the community.

There is a dire need to work among the marginalized among the marginalize community whose number of lesser in the villages and who have no socio-political representation. It is unfortunate that the social organizations and network too hails from the powerful marginalized communities and have not been able to shed their prejudices. Unless, thoughtful, radical, progressive leadership is developed among the most marginalized communities such as Mushahars, Doms, Bansfors, Nonias, Pasis, Chamars, Rajbhars, Nishads, Mallahas, Swachchakars (Hela, Mehtar, Dom, Rawat etc), it would be difficult for the social action groups to make an impact. We found a complete lack of not only understanding but also sincerity and concern among the so-called social action groups in the region. Before any mass action could begin with people, there is essentially a need for developing community-based organizations with a fair share of women in its decision making body.

Another negative aspect of rural poverty is that while women's are largely affected with it their representation in the decision-making bodies of the governance is the least. No doubt, it is easier for them to handle women who is basically framed in such a way that she listens. It is agonizing that women are considered inferior and not useful. The NGOs, social action groups which work in the name of women too make use of them. It is rare that the leadership be given to the women. Social action and mass programmes are all men's club, those men who are not interested in change. It should be an essential part of the developmental agenda that it not only focus on caste representation but women's participation and representation in decision making bodies without which you can not reach the masses. We would say it is the absence of the civil society of the marginalized that is the reason of failure of anti poverty programmes as most of these programmes comes from the above and without any consultation with the communities regarding their needs and requirements.

Achievements of Padyatra

1. The Padyatra generated a ray of hope among the most marginalized communities for attaining their rights. In the whole process of Padyatra was attempted to develop community leadership among the most marginalized one and we achieved it through the participation of programme and following it up further.
2. Enormous information have been generated and compiled. This information will be shared with the Planning Commission, National Human Rights Commission, Media and State government and action would sought for the benefit of the people.
3. Social Audit has been popularized during the Padyatra and will help activist to conduct the similar exercise elsewhere.
4. Issue of development goes thorough community organization and developing a civil society of the marginalized. We feel that has not been done sincerely and hence the various rural development programme have failed. We wish to make it certain that our stand on community civil society remains clear and unambiguous and we will take it further.
5. Women have always been projected in a show piece way by the organizations in the rural hinterland but fort he first time, we have been able to speak very clearly and with out any prejudice on the issue of women farmers, fundamentalism and communalism. Normally, developmental organizations tend to keep away from these subjects or keep very conspicuous silent on the issue.
6. SDF and UPLA are in the process of Developing Land Literacy Programme to strengthen the grassroots movement of land right and educating the activist to fight for the land rights.
7. Land and livelihood issue must be tackled by having a right-based approach and with spreading of human rights education. During the Padyatra these issues were developed.
8. The issue of sustainable development and its relation with livelihood issues was one of the biggest issue that got highlighted in the Padyatra particularly the

- pollution through the drainage of the factories in the rivers Gurra, Ghaghara, Rapti, Chhotigandak and the prevailing hunger crisis in eastern Uttar-Pradesh need to be taken further.
9. The Padyatra was also able to highlight the issue of prevailing hunger among the most marginalized communities like Mushahars, Rajbhars, Nishads, Chamras, Nonias, Bansfors, Pasis, Vindyas, Lohars, Swachahakars etc. These communities participated in the Padyatra wholeheartedly and saw a vision for them.
 10. Through interaction with communities we were able to highlight the issue of illegal land grabbing, fake entitlement in PDS, Indira Awas and other schemes.
 11. The media saw the importance of the issue and highlighted it. Further, the reports were circulated widely on the Internet. Some of the TV channels like local channels in Gorakhpur, Kushingar and Deoria showed it. Also ETV in its Apna UP programme broadcasted the event. Important Hindi papers like Amar Ujala, Dainik Jagaran, Rastriya Sahara, Aaj, Hindustan, United India published the report. Also in Delhi, a new magazine Just In Print published the issue as a cover story. Channels like CNN-IBN are still have some footage and appreciated it. Because of various ifs and buts with in the news industry 4 stories short listed for broadcast were not reported at the eleventh hour.

Future Strategies

Civil Society should be trained to tackle the issue of human rights violation. A large-scale training programme should be developed to inculcate the right-based approach to fight the cause of the poverty and land rights.

Community based initiatives should be promoted. Efforts should be made to develop community leadership by inviting them to various programmes and organizing exchange visits.

Women leadership needs to be nurtured on a long-term basis. They should be guided regularly and involved in various exchange programmes in the state and outside the state. Bigger campaign based issues some time ignore the local issues. We organize the Padyatra at the local level because we feel that local issues of governance must not be ignored as they ultimately influence the national issues for policy formation. Without the strength of the local movements, there is no future of the national campaigns.

At SDF we are developing Land Literacy Manual and training land rights movement to learn not only the history of land struggle but also understand networking, land administration, land management and local tools that can help them overcome their issues and problems.

It is also important for the civil society not to focus too much on religious-cultural values. In the context of the Dalits, these values would not help, as traditionally they were not entitled to own property.

In all the land rights campaign, issue of women land rights is equally important and should be focused. Women work more on the field and still not considered as farmers. Our civil society initiatives therefore need basic gender sensitivity apart from the issue of dignity and participation of Dalits and tribal.

Chauri Chaura March :

Nearly one thousand people marched on the last day of the Padyatra from Sardarnagar area to Chaurichaura on June 22nd, 2007. Led by the activists of UP Land Alliance and a number of local civil society organizations including Laghu Simant Kisan Morcha, Jan Kalyan Sansthan, Lord Buddha Trust, Dr B.R.Ambedkar Gramodyog Sansthan, Tharu Vikas Sanghatan, Mushahar Vikas Manch etc were leading organization along with Social Development Foundation.

The marchers were carrying placards, banners and singing songs and shouting slogans against the illegal land grabbing, imposition of land laws, equal wages for equal work. Despite humid weather in scorching heat, people came from different parts of the districts and with far away places like Majarajanj, Kushingar, Deoria, Rudrapur in tempos and tractors.

The march started 10 am with women and marginal farmers joining the rally in large number. It was more than six kilometer in terrific heat that every one was shouting slogan not just for their land and dignity but also against the system of oppression and injustice. The issue of land touches the chord of the common man and woman in the region.

The public meeting was organized near the Shaheed Smarak. The speakers maintained the importance of land reform and issue of small and marginal farmers. There were women farmers, wage workers, brick kiln workers, scavengers, fish workers, whose concern, this Padyatra tried to take up. It was heartening to see how the communities are looking for a genuine initiative from the civil society to take up their issue of human rights and human dignity.

One thing was clear that people considered that the human rights issues are being deviated because of the religious domination in the region. The politics of hatred in the name of religion has hampered development particularly that of women and the marginalized. Women are easily targeted in the name of culture and tradition and therefore giving an opportunity to religious rightwing. It is therefore important for all those struggling for land rights must make their position clear vis a vis Dalits, tribals and women. Those believing in an inequitable caste system and patriarchal setup can never

really claim to work for the rights of landless people. A land movement need to be progressive and without any prejudice.

The final meeting gave opportunities to Dalit girls, small farmers, women farmers, and scavenger girls to speak and share their experiences. The meeting culminated with passing a declaration named as Chauri Chaura Declaration at about 4 pm.

CHAURI-CHAURA DECLARATION

Land, Dignity and Freedom foot march which covered around 140 villages, 7 urban slum in four districts of Maharajganj, Kushinagar, Deoria and Gorakhpur district, It started from Tilakwaria village in Ghughali town of Maharajganj district on June 1st, 2007 and culminated at Chauri Chaura on June 22nd, 2007 with a total of 370 kilometers. Organised by Uttar-Pradesh Land Alliance and led by Shri Vidya Bhushan Rawat, Director, Social Development Foundation, Delhi, the Padyatra raised the issue of hunger, land, water and sustainable development. Nearly 20 Padyatris including women and girls from the marginalised sections of society walked this distance in scorching heat for full 22 days. It raised the issue of the failure of the previous government to deal with the issue of livelihood of marginalised communities and their continuous marginalisation through hunger, malnutrition, poverty and depression. It also voiced its concern over growing communalisation process as well as spreading of superstition among the poorer sections of society. At many places the marchers spoke to small gatherings, met people, visited affected areas and conducted social audits of schemes like NREGA.

At the culmination of 22 days padyatra at Chauri Chaura, we demand the following:

1. The government must take special measures to improve the condition of Mushahars, Rajbhars, Banskars, Nonias, Machchuaras, Dom, Swachchakars, Pasis and Chamars. These communities are living in abysmally degrading conditions and need special measures.
2. In the Eastern Uttar-Pradesh the Sand Mafias are controlling the rivers like Chhoti Gandak, Gurra, Rapti and Ghaghara. The mechanized sand mining has resulted in soil erosion by these rivers during monsoon. Thousands of hectares of land have turned infertile. In Brahmapur region Rapti has destroyed Ranapar area. In Kaptanganj and Ramkola towns in Kushinagar district are facing severe soil erosion due to sand mining. We demand immediate halt of mechanized sand mining and ask the government to allow the fish worker to do the same but government should fix up a limit for the same.
3. In many villages of Eastern Uttar-Pradesh powerful local people have illegally grabbed the land given to Dalits and Most backward communities. In many villages, the Dalits are not even allowed passage to move out. Government must ensure that every

person live with dignity at his/her land that every one has a right to access road in his/her house.

4. The Sugar factories and distilleries in Ramkola, Kaptanganj, Deoria, Rudrapur, Sardarnagar are throwing chemical waste in the rivers like Chhoti Gandak, Rapti, Amy and Gurra resulting in heavy pollution in the rivers. The fish workers are facing hunger, as the fish catch is almost nil. Apart from this, the waste has spilled over to a vast agricultural land turning them completely barren and dangerous. The ground water in most of the eastern UP town is contaminated which is a severe threat to public health. We demand immediate action against these factory/mill owners and ask the government to compensate the farmers who have lost their land to these mills. The Pollution Control board should be asked to explain as why they continue to allow such hazards industries to run.

5. In Kushingar and Gorakhpur the condition of National Employment Guarantee Scheme is a matter of grave concern. It has not been implemented accordingly. We found work being done through tractors and people without work despite having the valid card. The scheme seems to have failed because of the connivance between the village Pradhans and block officials. We demand severe action against erring officials to implement the scheme and ask the government to form a monitoring and evaluating committee, which should include civil society representatives.

6. In Poorvanchal, we found lot of discrepancy in the distribution of ration cards. Those who should have been eligible for the cards have not got it while others have got it. We demand strong action the Sarpanches and officials who are involved in nepotism and corruption. We also demand from the government that the reach of the Public Distribution System should be expanded and it must include important edible items, books, and cloths, Masalas etc so that the poor can benefit from this.

7. Hunger and starvation are prevalent in Eastern Uttar-Pradesh. A majority of families do not ration for two times. The children have uncertain future. It is shameful that children from Mushahars, Chauhan, Rajbhar etc are eating rats and fishermen are forced to survive on snails. We demand the government to focus on these communities with special programmes particularly developing schools in the villages with mid day meals and other incentives for school children and their parents.

8. The government must form special Land Courts to settle land disputes and implement the land reform measures strongly and effectively. The government must concentrate on giving communal entitlement. We also demand that women should be given priority in allotment of agricultural land and all new entitlement whether residential or agricultural should have joint entitlement.

Today on the day of culmination of Padyatra we commit ourselves to continue our struggle for Land, Dignity and freedom. We will continue to make government aware of the ground situation while fighting for our rights democratically. We also want to make it clear that this war of independence is not possible with out the support and alliance of

anti caste, anti communal, anti superstition and progressive forces in which the role of women, Dalits, Most backward communities and tribal have an important role to play. We also feel that this for dignity and freedom we have to take inspiration from Baa Saheb Ambedkar, Jyoti Ba Phule, Savitri Bai Phule, and EV Ramaswamy Naicar. They remain our icons and role models in our struggle for the creation of a civil society.

Following organisations signed the resolution

Uttar-Pradesh Land Alliance,
Social Development Foundation, Delhi
Food for Hungry Foundation, Delhi
Dr B.R.Ambedkar Gramodyog Sansthan, Deoria
Swachchakar Kalyan Samiti, Ghazipur
Smt Sonia Gramin Mahila avam Bal Kalyan Samiti, Deoria
Lord Buddha Trust, Kushinagar
Hitkari Sewa Samiti, Deoria
Jan Kalyan Sansthan, Chauri Chaura, Gorakhpur
Palanjivi Samiti, Rudrapur, Deoria
Mushahar Shakti Sanghthan, Deoria
Tharu Development Society, Lakhimpur Khiri
Tal Ratoy Machchua Jan Kalyan Sansthan, Mau
Bharatiya Jan Seva Ashram, Jaunpur
Chitrakoot Sewa Ashram, Chitrakoot
Dalit Mahila Mukti Morcha,
UP Machchua Adhikar Manch, Rudrapur
and number of others

