



The Meeting Point

A Quarterly Newsletter of AREDS

The smallest good deed is better than the grandest good intension

Women's special Issue - 09

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SWATE Campaigns for Total Prohibition of Liquor

Drinking liquor has become almost a habit of most of the men in India and it remains a social evil, particularly in the rural Tamil Nadu. Majority of the rural population survives only on irregular employments or agricultural works. With the meager income, most of the rural families lead a subsistence existence. Usually, men go to work but they spend much of their meager income on liquor and contribute the little to their families.

Perpetuity of this practice of men throws the families in to penury in course of time. Penury forces all the family members – even the children - to go to work just to keep the family running. Thus, the drinking habit of the adults compels the children dropout in the middle of their schooling. Once the children become dropouts, their ignorance grows and consequently, it leads to child trafficking, child abuse and child prostitution.

Further, the youth fall prey to alcoholism and spend their golden time in slumber or they behave violently in their inebriated condition, causing much disturbance to the society. When they become habitual drunkards, they resort to domestic violence or they involve in antisocial activities in order to satisfy their hedonistic pleasure.

Once, the libraries in Tamil Nadu were flooded with youth who had been interested in reading and acquiring knowledge. Today, they have orgies and parties in bars in the government-run liquor shops. A study shows that even the school going children, who are hardly 13 years old, drink. No doubt, the number of children habituated to drinking will increase in the future.

The drunkards live out every moment of their life in accordance with their discretions, whims and fancies but leave their wards and better halves to face the consequences that are always untoward. The continuous drinking practice cause either neurological disorder or death to the consumers and death lays its icy hands on them all of a sudden. Sudden death of the bread winners in families worsens the families' economic condition and safety.

Government-run liquor shops:

The Tamil Nadu government has been running the liquor shops – Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (TASMAC) - for the past two tenures of two different political parties that were empowered to rule the state. TASMAC brings in big revenue to the government and if the government implements total prohibition in the state it will make 35,000 employees jobless at once is the present government's response to the demand for total prohibition.

Really speaking, there is a nefarious network of politicians, government officials, and private agencies are involved behind the production and sale of liquors in the state. The revenue drawn

by the TASMAC not only goes to the treasury of the government but also fills the coffers of these elements. If liquor is banned in the state, it will put an end to their income generation ventures at once. That is the secret behind the reluctance of the government headed by any political party.

People drink occasionally become habitual drunkards and hence a much part of about 45 million families' income goes to liquor shops. The irony here is, the government has been opening newer and newer liquor shops on the one hand and on the other, de-addiction centres are on the rise. Almost, all these de-addiction centres are not genuinely treating the patients and giving counsel to them. Money is their motto and making money is their motive.

As a result, poor people lose their money to the liquor shops first and to the de-addiction centres next. Since the rich and unethical people flourish on the liquor business, the pro-rich government does not care for the adverse impact of liquor on the life of poor people and its consequential brunt.

SWATE for Total Prohibition of Liquor:

So, Society of Women in Action for Total empowerment (SWATE), the AREDS-initiated women's movement joined hands with the People's Movement for Prohibition of Liquor (PMPL) and conducted an arduous campaign in Karur district from the 9th of November till the 3rd of December 2010. The campaign covered 33 villages in the district.



The AREDS Cultural Team performed street theatre and cultural programmes on liquor menace and advocated the people to restrain from drinking. They also collected signatures from the people in all the villages covered for total prohibition. Besides cultural programmes, the SWATE activists spoke about the importance of prohibiting liquor for the betterment of the people and particularly the youth in the meetings organized at main junctions in every villages.



It was very much impressive in some villages where the women, who have undergone the ordeal of living with drunkard husbands, emotionally expressed their personal stories to the people and appealed them to put their signatures in favour of the campaign undertaken by SWATE for total prohibition.

The campaigners also raised a little fund through box collection from the local villagers. Many people voluntarily contributed in support of the campaign. Every coin they contributed was against liquor menace.

SWATE has collected 5 lakh signatures throughout the state and sent them to the notice of the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. In Karur district alone, it has collected 30,000 signatures. Sending of the memorandum backed with the signatures of the citizens of the state was made into a movement by SWATE. It organized a demonstration on the 14th of December 2010 in front of the head post office in Karur. About 300 woman activists took part in the demonstration.

SWATE observes the International Day against Violence on Women

It is common knowledge that women are the ultimate victims of social oppression and economic exploitation and sexual abuse. From the time of its inception, SWATE has been fighting for the rights of women. It even goes to the extent that perpetrators are litigated and prosecuted. It believes in collective action of women for their betterment, both economically and socially.

The news on violence on women, trafficking, dowry killings, and sexual abuse at work places compulsorily deserve a place in newspapers in India nowadays. The religious fanatics and the fundamentalists resort to atrocities on women in the name of religion and god across the nation. During the eruption of communal violence, the hooligans and the anti-social elements target women and sexually assault them – just to intimidate the opponents and subdue them.

On the other hand, even police indulge in custodial raping. Domestic violence on women, sexual harassment at work places, eve teasing, raping and killings are rampant in big cities and the situation makes women live in perpetual fear of violence. Fear complex suppresses the aspirations and ambitions of women and the adolescent girls.

Most of the cases of sexual violence or abuse are not exposed or expressed by the victims to the outer world for fear of social stigma or in fear of dire consequences to be committed by the perpetrators. In case of rape, the parents and the close relatives of the victims do not ever let this news spread out mainly in fear of being stigmatized.

The greatest tragedy that happens in India, even after the lapse of 62 years since Indian independence, is the social exclusion of women in all fields - be it social or political or economical.

So, Society of Women in Action for Total Empowerment (SWATE) observed the International Day against Violence on Women on the 25th of November 2010 by way of organizing a demonstration in front of the Taluk Office in Karur. About 300 women participated in the demonstration. Ms. Christy, the coordinator of SWATE presided over the demonstration and spoke on women's emancipation.

By way of illustrating the subjugated status of women kind, they tied their eyes and mouths and hands with black cloths. The woman activists raised slogans for the effective implementation of Domestic Violence Prevention Act – 2006, close monitoring of child trafficking, immediate retrenchment of teachers involve in sexual abuse of school children on the school premises itself and total prohibition of liquor.

Last but not the least:

We take this opportunity to thank all those partners who have made their annual contribution to the efforts of AREDS-SHARE. Their sincere and generous help is the one that moves our commitment and to reach out. Your timely contribution made out of your personal sacrifices can be sent to the following accounts of AREDS SHARE:

For Belgium Partners

Account N°: 000 - 0000034 - 34 of ENTRAIDE ET FRA TERNITE
32 Rue du Gouvernement Provisoire B 1000 BRUXELLES
avec la mention :pour le projet AREDS Inde 10-499

For Partners in France and the rest of the World

Centre L.-J. Lebret
en France, (uniquement en EURO) sur BNP PARIBAS – Compte 10039291
IBAN FR76 3000 4001 8700 0100 3929 110 – BIC: BNPAFRPPRG

Yours in solidarity,

L. A. Samy

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