



सूचना एवं रोजगार का अधिकार अभियान SUCHNA EVUM ROZGAR KA ADHIKAR ABHIYAN

एस-9, पहली मंजिल, राजश्रीअपार्टमेंट, ज्योतिनगर विस्तार, जयपुर 302005 फोन/फैक्स : 0141-2740019
S-9, FF, Rajshree Apartment, Jyoti Nagar Extension, Jaipur 302005 Phone/Fax : 0141-2740019
Email contact : srabhiyan@gmail.com, rtiraj@gmail.com



Invitation

Mazdoor Haq Satyagraha

The *Suchna Evum Rozgar ka Adhikar Abhiyan* (S. R. Abhiyan) begins a *Mazdoor Haq Satyagraha* from the **2nd of October, 2010** near the **Statue Circle in Jaipur Rajasthan**.

The S. R. Abhiyan organized a *Mazdoor Haq Yatra*, in which there were 5 groups - one each in Ajmer, Jodhpur, Kota, Rajsamand and Udaipur. The *yatras* started on the 15th of September, 2010 and will be converging near the Statue Circle in Jaipur on October 2nd. The response to these *yatras* has been overwhelming. Workers and farmers across the state have endorsed the critical need to establish dignity and justice for themselves. These discussions have built up a discourse enriched by people's analysis of crucial issues under assault and debate, such as the control and right to access resources of the state and the consequent question of equitable sharing. This has strengthened the Abhiyan's resolve to establish non-negotiable entitlements for basic life and livelihood. The people who have attended the *yatra* meetings in street corners of small towns and villages have supported these *yatras* with contributions of food, shelter, fuel and money, so that each *yatra* has been self-sufficient.





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The significance of the *Satyagraha* beginning on 2nd October is manifold. The *Satyagraha* raises issues of the “last person” so critical a focus of *Gandhiji*’s life and work. It is also an ironical comment on a government wanting to deny permission to a non-violent “*satyagraha*” beginning on Gandhi Jayanti to draw attention to the basic entitlements of ordinary people and the ethics of governance! We say this because there have been attempts by some individuals in the government to refuse us permission to use the place for the *Satyagraha*.

The first issue will, therefore, be the right for the marginalised and the unheard to have and access platforms of dissent and non-violent protest. By merely prefixing MG to the NREGA the government has not “improved” upon legal entitlements of workers since the real entitlements for labour are being steadily undermined.

The central government has de-linked minimum wages from wages under the MGNREGA. In addition the “wage rate” has been frozen for almost two years. Even the so called “wage rate” is systematically violated with people being paid as little as one rupee a day, and an average payment of Rs. 75 per day being paid in Rajasthan making even the Rs. 100 a day a charade. The S. R. Abhiyan is unwilling to let any employer (much less the government) undermine the sanctity of minimum wages for any worker in the state and country.

The other broad concern is the manifest corruption which derails and denies access to entitlements and benefits. In this broad area are the rights that lie with the newly acquired RTI regime; and the ensuing entitlements within the MGNREGA for transparency and accountability. This is a general empowerment under RTI to citizens to access and use information to monitor governance. Of specific concern is the exercise of social audit, a mandate entitled in the MGNREGA. Innumerable problems have been created both at the level of amendments to the schedule of the Act in the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, and in the organised reaction of those who are being monitored for mismanagement and fraud at the village and *panchayat* levels. This is a reflection too of the feudal and repressive nature not only of the social structure, but of governance itself.

The *satyagraha* will also be a platform which will raise issues of dignity and basic entitlements for the primary producers in the country - the *mazdoors*, who are also very often *kisans*; the sanctity of democratic space, peaceful protest and the accountability of democratic structures to the people of the country. **We hope you can join us from Gandhi Jayanti onwards at this important *Satyagraha*.**

This *Satyagraha* will continue indefinitely until at least two of the above demands are addressed: a direct and clear commitment from the government to implement social audits and an increase in minimum wages for workers under MGNREGA. On different days of the indefinite *Satyagraha* we have planned activities of different duration. On the first day, 99



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workers who got paid Re.1/day for 11 days work in Tonk district intend to come and donate their earnings to the CM's Relief Fund towards the payment of government employees' daily allowance (D.A.). One the first day we will also announce and begin to setup:

- a **Mazdoori Jan Aayog** [People's Commission on Wages] to discuss the sanctity of minimum wages and to fix wages for workers.
- a **Chote Kisan Jan Aayog** to take up issues of farmers, including land, subsidies, seeds, fertilizers, insurance, credit and minimum support prices [M.S.P.].
- a **Panchayati Raj Sashaktikaran Sammelan** for real the strengthening of the Panchayati Raj Institutions [P.R.I.s].
- **Public Hearings on MGNREGA** to look into the status of implementations of the ten entitlements under MGNREGA
- a **People's Commission on the Implementation of the RTI Act** and a charter for transparent governance through proper implementation of Section 4 of the Act, which is about proactive disclosure.
- the demand for setting up of an **Accountability Commission** to decide tasks and measure work that government 'servants' do. This happens for MGNREGA workers, so why not have accountability and penalty for government servants as well?
- discussions on issues related to **Food Security**. This will be done in partnership with the Right to Food Campaign and the themes in the discourse will include the right to minimum nutritional entitlements and issues of food productivity, procurement, storage & distribution.
- last but not least, sessions on the theme of '**Save Democracy**'. There have been systematic attempts to muzzle peaceful protest. This is done by cultivating a mind set in those who administer to convert all protest into a law and order issue, thereby defusing and sometimes destroying the rule of law. Refusing us permission to peacefully protest is just an example. Distinction between peaceful demonstrations and violent protest must be made, and space must be provided for the former if democracy is to function effectively.

The mandate and message we carry with us from the people we met during the *yatras* is unambiguous: Take our message to Jaipur and we will come there to join the *Satyagraha*. Not only have daily wage labourers promised to come, they have even offered to support us in cash and through other means.



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We are making an appeal to all supporters of these issues to give time, spread the word, join the campaign and to donate at least one day's wages (more is of course welcome) to support what may turn out to be a long and decisive struggle for dignity and justice. Please let us know as soon as possible if and when you would like to come so that we can plan the logistics. Contact details are given below. Media persons are advised to contact the control room. This is not to restrict the numbers who might want to come, but to facilitate planning. We would be strengthened by your support and participation. We look forward to seeing you at the *Satyagraha*.

Aruna Roy, Bhanwar Meghwanshi, Hariom Soni, Moti Lal, Richa Odichya, Nikhil Dey, Shankar Singh, Ram Karan and R D Vyas, Naveen Narayan, Renuka Pamecha, Rawata Ram.

(On behalf of the Rozgar Evum Suchna ke Adhikar ka Abhiyan, Rajasthan)

Contact details

Suchna evum Rozgar ka Adhikar Abhiyan (S R Abhiyan)

Address: 20, Narain Nagar, Badgaon, District Udaipur, Rajasthan

Fax: +91 294 2451391

Email: srabhiyan@gmail.com

RTI Manch

Address: Plot number S-9, Rajshree Apartments, Jyoti Nagar Extension, Behind Amroodo ka Baag, Jaipur – 300205

Landline: +91 141 2740019

Mobile: +91 9252489519

Email: rtiraj@gmail.com

Control Room

Address: Samagra Sewa Sangh, Gokul Basti, Durgapura, Jaipur, Rajasthan - 302018

Landlines: +91 141 2552878, 2385254

For regular updates about the *Mazdoor Haq Satyagraha* visit srabhiyan.wordpress.com. Sign up on the website to keep receiving regular email alerts.