

Statement : Bangalore : 19th October 2019

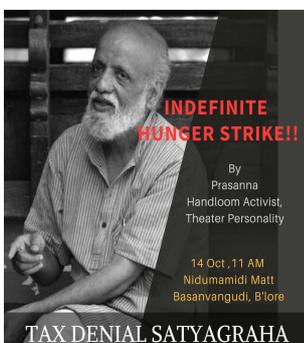
The Sathyagraha demanding 0% GST on hand made sector is a movement to realise a promise made in the Indian Constitution

Shri. Prasanna breaks his indefinite hunger strike on assurance of Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah that the State will support Sathyagraha's demands in GST Council

With the assurance of the Chief Minister of Karnataka Shri. Siddaramaiah that the Karnataka Government will support the Sathyagraha's demand that 0% GST is introduced on hand made products, Shri. Prasanna has broken his 6 days indefinite fast today in the presence of various elders and supporters by accepting tender coconut water from Shri. Veerabhadra Chennamalla Swamiji of Nidumaamidi Mata. The Chief Minister in his 19th October letter to Indian Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has said that “imposition of GST on (handmade) products has had an adverse effect on the livelihood of such artisans engaged in producing such products”. He also said that the demands of the Sathyagraha “requires serious & urgent consideration and a positive resolution. This would not only benefit a large segment of our rural population but would also give a boost to rural employment and sustainability. I, therefore, urge you to take this issue on a priority basis in the next GST Council and decide favourably benefiting a large segment of rural artisans. I assure you of the Government of Karnataka's full support in this regard.” (A copy of the letter is attached.)



Noted theatre and social activist Prasanna of Gram Seva Sangh has been on an indefinite fast –since 14th October 2017 demanding “Zero Tax” on handmade products. He took the decision of an indefinite fast as several actions nation-wide as part of the Sathyagraha demanding “zero tax” were not responded to by the GST Council of India.



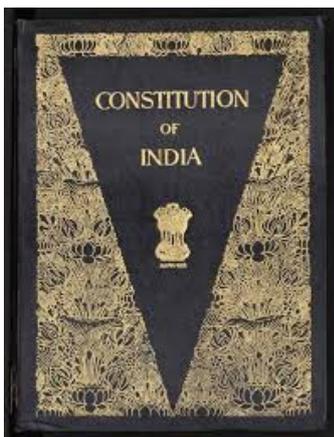
The Sathyagraha has captured the imaginations of millions nation-wide and brought in a new awakening in the consumer. There is a growing collective demand to ensure India's governance keeps the promises made in the Constitution of India and the Freedom Movement that there is active and willing support to sustain crafts people and such others who depend on their hands and skills in building the nation.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar spoke extensively about the need for positive discrimination favouring handcrafting artisans and communities who are essentially rural, fisherfolk, pastoral, artisanal, tribal and such other natural resource dependent communities. This was also in acknowledgment of the State's role in correcting

a major historical wrong committed against craftspeople who had been violently suppressed during British regime.

Gandhiji promoted the Charaka as the praxis of producing one's own essentials as the most profound act of sovereign existence, and that without damaging the Earth or causing injustices to others in one's life. The idea was to build a just economic system that was both ecologically sustainable and ethical. As a part of this movement for fundamental reform, the State was called upon to enable and empower communities who provided us with our daily needs with a wide range of hand made products, and which were produced without damaging the earth. Positive discrimination favouring handmade products by not taxing them would be the most fundamental support the State can extend to provide these highly marginalised communities with a chance to secure a dignified existence, all with their own labour, craft and skill.

In introducing GST on handmade products, the GST Council of India, which is a negotiated process of all States and the Union Government, has comprehensively ignored the critical importance of such positive discrimination favouring the handicraft sector. Instead, handmade products have been heavily taxed, ranging between 5% and 28% (the highest tax bracket). The result of this will be mass impoverishment of the rural and informal sectors that support millions of livelihoods by making handmade products. Further, it will result in hand made products having no chance whatsoever of competing with mass-produced consumer goods, which are supported with a whole range of sops: such as easy credit supply, handsome tax breaks, easy and cheap access to natural resources, infrastructure, and also cheap labour. This discrimination favouring the industrialised class is producing an economy that is highly divisive, where a miniscule percentage are hoarding all profits, while the costs are borne by the rest of us. Besides, the impacts are being passed on to future generations as well. Such an economy is unsustainable.



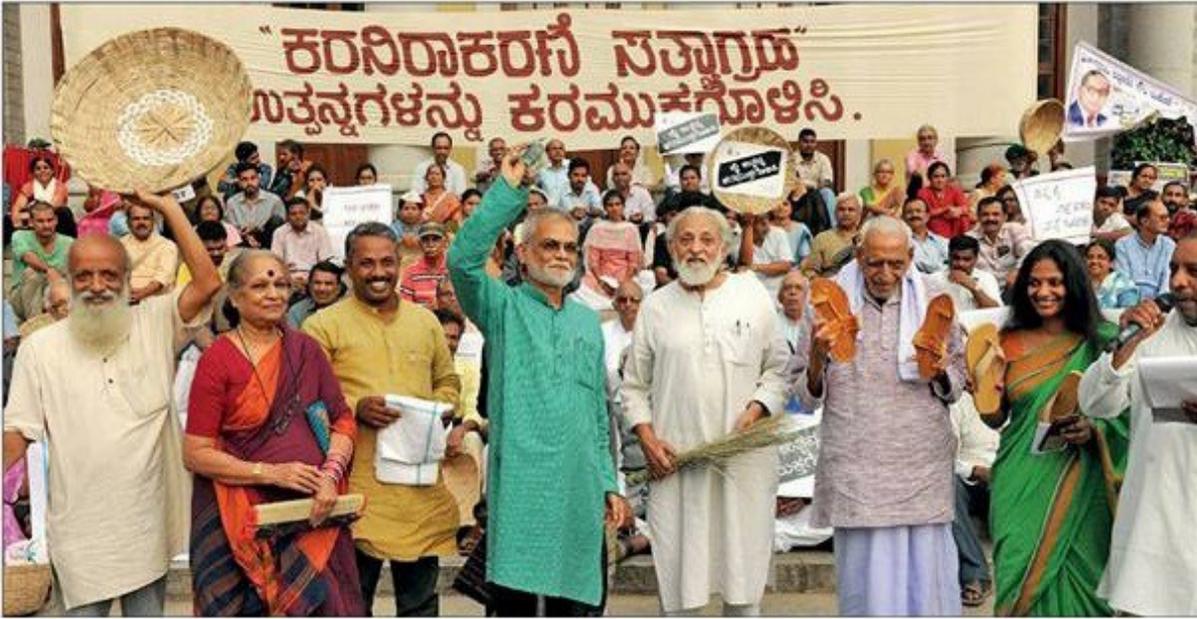
Shri. Prasanna's Sathyagraha is a reminder to the State, and the public at large, that we must now stop hurting the handcrafting sector any further. His indefinite fast is a protest against such deliberate negligence and injustice, a movement in civil disobedience against our own elected Government that has become insensitive to the very people that placed them in power. This is a call to awaken the humanism in those who are now in power, and in all consumers, to ensure a just and ecologically sustainable society is made possible. This is also a call to refuse to pay unjust GST when buying handmade products and demand the GST Council introduces 'zero tax' on all handmade products in keeping with our Constitutional promise, especially that which is enshrined in Article 39:

- “(a) that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means to livelihood;
(b) that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good;
(c) that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment;”

Background of the Satyagraha:

The indefinite fast by Shri Prasanna is an outcome of the Sathyagraha that was formally launched by Grama Seva Sangha at Bangalore Town Hall on 7th September 2017. In full public view, hand made products were sold without conforming to the GST regime, practicing civil disobedience against an unjust tax. Noted film maker and theatre director M. S. Sathyu, veteran freedom fighter and Gandhian H. S. Doreswamy, journalist Dr. Vijayamma, poet Mudnakodu Chinaswamy, singer M.D. Pallavi, Shashidhar Adapa, film actor Kishore, artist S.G. Vasudev and hundreds of others participated.

This civil disobedience movement continued from Hyderabad on 9th September, when activists of Gram Seva Sangh, Rashtriya Chenetha Jana Samakya and Dastkar Andhra were arrested. Undeterred by such police action, the movement spread.



In subsequent weeks, the movement spread across various centres of south India. This gained the support from Sri Panditaradhya Swamiji, Sanehalli Matt at Sirigere (Karnataka). The Sathyagraha was supported in Tumkur and Sira towns by Yatiraju, Ramakrishnappa, Indiramma, Pandit Javahar, Tundoti Narasimaiah, Freedom Fighter Revanna, SIGNA and CMCA Volunteers and other likeminded people in.



On 24th September, a Padyatra was taken from Junajappana Gudde (shrine of pastoral God Junjappa) to Arsikere Kasturba Ashram, a distance of 120 Kms. All along there were several exhaustive meetings with the farmers, artisans, jogappa's, Traditional medicine practitioners, etc.

At Arsikere, Sri. Panditaradhya Swamiji of Sanehalli Matt, Sree Kumar social Activist, Kulkarni, Weavers Union President, Poornima, Shivalinge Gowda MLA and various others joined the

struggle which included blocking the Arsikere-Mysore road as an act of civil disobedience. Activists were arrested, an FIR was filed and then they were released. The movement continued its march.



From Mysore, writer Devanuru Mahadeva, and various others joined the Satyagraha. From Challakere, Doddauarthi Karianna of the Amrit Mahal Kaval Hitarakshana Horata Samithi and All India Kisan Sabha endorsed the struggle.

Meanwhile, hundreds of letters and petitions were sent to various Chief Ministers, Union Finance Minister and the GST Council of India. On 9th October, a Gram Seva Sangh letter addressed to the Shri. Siddaramaiah, Chief Minister of Karnataka,

and endorsed by various luminaries, explaining that “Zero tax on Handmade products would enable village producers to establish themselves in the urban market. It would liberate the poor from the debt trap and help them to lead a honourable material life.” Extending the support to the Sathyagraha, Federation of Indian Handloom Organisations President Smt. Uzamma wrote to the Chief Minister in which she said: “Shri. Arun Jaitely has announced small concessions to handmade products. These concessions are highly inadequate”. She then urged the CM to get a resolution passed in the Karnataka Assembly “asking the GST Council to make all handmade products zero-taxed”.

Endorsing the Sathyagraha, the Rashtriya Chenetha Jana Samakya stated in a letter to Shri. Arun Jaitely, Finance Minister of India that the Sathyagraha is “to protect the fruits of the labor of the rural poor. Their products have been taxed, while the machine products have been made attractive, by the Goods and Services Tax regime, (GST). To put it simply, good things have been made expensive and the bad attractive....By selling the Handmade, without either collecting or paying tax, we are protesting. This is a "Satyagraha". We shall gladly face punishment. But shall resist the unjust Law” imposing GST on handmade products.”



Renowned social scientist Shri. Ashish Nandy has led a panel of interdisciplinary experts from across India, at the request of Gram Seva Sangh, and prepared a detailed report on why 0% GST on hand made products is necessarily a just step. A list of over 200 products that deserve this support has also been provided to the Government and the GST Council. The committee includes noted film maker Shri. Shyam Benegal, handicrafts proponent Smt. Uzamma, social scientist Dr. A. R. Vasavi, Karnataka's former DGP Shri. Ajay Kumar Singh, and others.

Despite all these efforts, neither the Union Finance Minister nor the GST Council has made any

commitment to accept this just demand. As a mark of protest against their silence, Shri. Prasanna launched an indefinite fast.

Overwhelming support for the Sathyagraha during the Indefinite Fast by Shri. Prasanna:

Sri. Veerabhadra Chanamalla Swamiji of Nidumamidi Matt, Bengaluru, blessed and launched the indefinite fast on 14th October as part of the Sathyagraha. He warned that a “great divide exists today in the country, between India and Bharat” and that “India is living at the cost of Bharat”. **Sri. Shivakumara Swamiji** of Tumkur Siddaganga Matt has also extended unconditional support for the satyagraha.



Shri. H. D. Devegowda, former Prime Minister of India, visited Prasanna, endorsed his struggle, and requested him to break the fast saying “everyone's heart and mind has now been opened by this just struggle”. Prof. **M.V. Rajeev Gowda**, Rajyasabha MP and National Spokesperson of Indian National Congress met with Prasanna during the hunger strike, extended his solidarity and promised that he would raise the need for the Congress party to support this just demand with the party's Vice president **Shri. Rahul Gandhi**. He was

then joined by **Shri. Krishna Byregowda**, Karnataka's Agriculture Minister, and both assured that the Government of Karnataka would take a supportive stand on the issue. **Shri. Brijesh Kalappa**, Congress spokesperson and **Shri. Tanveer Ahmed**, Janata Dal (S) spokesperson also joined the fast in support.

These solidarity actions were followed by a tweet from the Chief Minister of Karnataka, **Shri. Siddaramaiah**: “CMO is working with Prasanna to prepare the list of hand made products for advocating zero GST at the Council”.

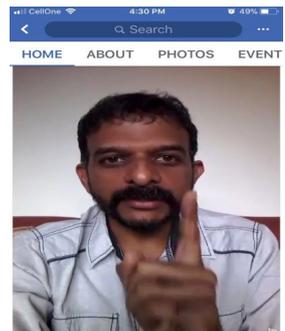


Supporting the Sathyagraha and the Hunger Strike by spending a day with Prasanna, noted film actor **Shri. Prakash Rai** said: ““This is a Satyagraha not only for making rural life sustainable but also for restoring their belief in our governments. In line with this, our duty as producers and consumers is to give an impetus to the development of a healthy society that is environmentally responsible by encouraging the consumption of

handmade products.”

Sri. S. G. Siddaramaiah, Chairman Kannada Development Board called on Prasanna and expressed strong views on the crippling GST on Handmade products of toiling rural people. He added that after Gandhiji's Salt Satyagraha, Shri Prasanna's campaign for the handmade products is a powerful moral stand in public domain.

Shri. T. M. Krishna, renowned musician and author has also supported the Sathyagraha saying: “While the capitalist world is always supported through



huge sops and benefits, those working in the hand-made sector are ignored and relegated to the last pages of any economic initiative. They do not have the financial might to fight such unjust imposition of tax by successive governments. We speak of Swarajya and Swadesh but we are aggressively following a policy that will destroy the lives of those who have for generations lived in its spirit. We need to collectively oppose GST on handmade goods. This has to be STOPPED NOW.”

Farmers leader **Shri. Kadidal Shamanna**, writer **Prof. K Marulla Siddappa**, **Shri. Yogendra Yadav** of Swaraj India, **Smt. K. S. Vimala** of Janvaadi Mahila Sangha, renowned actress **Smt. Mallika Ganesh**, social activist **Shri. S. R. Hiremath**, **Smt. Saroja Chandrashekar** (Wife of Late M Chandrashekar, Karnataka State Minister), and various political leaders, social activists, writers and artists have come forward and joined the the Satyagraha by meeting with Prasanna during his indefinite fast. They have been joined by **Shri Abhay from the Grameena Kulikarmikara Sanghatane (Grakoos), Raichur**, former Central minister and veteran Congress leader **Shri. M.V. Rajashekar**, **Shri. S. G. Siddaramaiah**, Chairman **Kannada Development Board**, sociologist **Dr. Chandan Gowda**, **Shri. H.V. Anantha Subba Rao**, State General Secretary, AITUC, **Shri. Sirimane Nagaraju**, **Shri. G.R.Manjesh**, Secretary (G), Karnataka State Devanga Employees Association, **Shri. Sathi Sundaresh**, Secretary, Communist Party of India, **Smt. Jyothi A.**, State Convener, National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW), **Shri. D. M. Trimurthy**, Karnataka Komu Sauharda Vedhike, writer **Smt. Nemichandra**, Member of the Legislative Council (MLC) **Shri. M.D. Lakshminarayana**, noted theatre personality and film maker **Shri. B. Suresha**, environmental expert **Shri Yellappa Reddy**, writer **Vitappa Gorantli**, MLCs **Shri C. R. Manohar** and **Shri. Ramesh Babu**, **Shri. Doddauarthi Karianna** of All India Kisan Sabha and Amrit Kaval Hitarakshane Horata Samithi and social activists from **Tumkur Shri. Ugama Srinivas**, **Shri. R.V. Puttakamanna**, **Shri. P. Manjunath**, **Shri. Murali** and **Shri. Srinivas** of the All Indian Bank Officers Confederation visited the Sathyagraha



The Sathyagraha has been endorsed by several mass organisations, federations, cooperatives, political movements, etc. They include **Janapada Seva Trust, Karnataka, Komu Sovharda Vedhike, Karnataka Rajya Devanga Naukara Sangha, Lancha Mukta Karnataka, Dalit Student Federation, Karnataka Janashakthi, Karnataka Vidhyarthi Sangatane,**

National Hawkers Federation, National Fishworkers Federation, National Alliance of Peoples Movement, Grameena Cooli Karmikara sangatane, Samudaya, Janata Dal (U), Janata Dal (S), Samajvaadi Party, Communist Party of India, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Congress (I), Rashtriya Swabhimani Andolan, Karnataka Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi, Karnataka Jyana vijyana samiti, SUCI, Sampoorna Kranti, Corruption-free Karnataka, Gandhi Bhavan, Jana Vadhi Mahila Sangha, All India Trade Union Congress, National Federation of Indian Women, Karnataka Rajya Devanga Naukarara Sangha, All Indian Bank Officers Confederation, Lancha Mukta Karnataka, Praja Science Vedhike, Ekta Parishad, Rashtriya Cheneta Jana Samakya, and several several more.

Video Messages:

Shri. T M Krishna: <https://www.facebook.com/leo.saldanha/posts/10155789080391703>

Shri. H. D. Devegowda: <https://www.facebook.com/prasannaheggodu/videos/1836186633358740/>

Shri. Prasanna: <https://www.facebook.com/prasannaheggodu/posts/1836097176701019> and <https://www.facebook.com/prasannaheggodu/videos/1835795223397881/>

Smt. Pallavi: <https://www.facebook.com/prasannaheggodu/posts/1834838050160265>

Shri. Prakash Rai https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=10155780835589738&id=829804737¬if_id=1508330289402286¬if_t=story_reshare&ref=notif

Short Videos of Satyagraha: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fAsNctzbpqE>, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ApkpbE_jK4E&t=1s and many more

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