

And finally Easter Morn Dawns for Padma - after 42 days!!

24th of the Month and it was high time that SHE did something for Padma. That was the hope in our hearts when we set out for Kakinada for the Child Welfare Committee that would hear the case of Padma's safe care and protection. And SHE who sang the first revolutionary song of the New Testament did not disappoint us. At the end of the day we had in our hands the order of the CWC directing the state to send Padma for safe care and protection away from her parents.

You read the earlier posting "Will Easter Morn Ever Dawn For Padma?" And may be you were wondering what happened to her.

As you read this mail Padma will have had her Easter Dawn. Just now (23.00 hrs 25th April) she has reached the safety of a caring institution away from the clutches of those who plotted nothing beyond saving her aggressor. When the alleged rapist was arrested a few days, it did not fill us with joy. But today we feel that our long drawn out struggle was not in vain. Padma is safe in a caring home. She will be able to live out her childhood and grow into a woman and in the process get healed of her emotional and psychological trauma and hurt, learn some gainful skills that will sustain her as she lives out her womanhood.

24th was significant. I said in my heart as we set out for the child welfare committee hearing that it was high time that SHE acted. And sure she did. The child was committed to safe care and protection by the CWC around 15.00 hrs. The escort police came and was about to take Padma away when the ASI sent at the behest of the DSP to make the father and the girl to refuse to go to the caring institution started misleading the Addl. SP saying that the father of the girl was threatening to commit suicide and the girl herself was refusing to go. The scene then shifted to the Addl. SP's office. I requested the Addl. SP to send off the ASI as he was the one instigating the father and the girl to behave the way they were doing. The ASI was promptly asked to leave for his Police Station 70 kilometers away. The Addl. SP spent time with us trying to work out a solution to the father's threat of committing suicide. He suggested that he would speak to the caste leaders at the district level and get an undertaking from them that they will not make any adverse issue of sending the child to safe care even if the parents act stupid.

I thought it better not to wait for the ASP to get the undertaking but work on it on my own. By 22.00 hrs on 24th I had the district leaders speak to the ASP and tell him that he could go ahead and send the girl to safe care and there would be no problem from their side what ever games the girl's family plays.

Around 12.00 hrs (25th) along with the caste leaders I met the SP and ASP. ASP told me that early morning around 7 to 8 relatives made a round of his office and that of the SP and Collector clamouring that the CWC order should not be honoured as they would like to keep the girl with them. He told me that now that the caste leaders too feel taking the girl away from such negligent parents is in the best interest of the girl he and the SP have taken a firm decision to send girl to safe care and protection. In the end not being able to carry out the order of the CWC the previous day was indeed a blessing in disguise. Today we were able to have a very useful interaction with the

SP (he is new, the previous SP was transferred three days after the earlier incident with him). He not only appreciated our work but also requested us continue the kind of work that we are doing and also address the issue of domestic violence!!

There is so much more to be done before the dusk falls!!!!

Thomas Pallithanam