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## Press Release

### **Jaat ko Prashna selected among the 30 Finalists for World Justice Challenge**

*Jaat ko Prashna*, the television dialog program produced by Samata Foundation, has been selected among the 30 finalists for World Justice Challenge 2021. More than 425 applications were received from 114 different countries worldwide for ‘World Justice Challenge 2021: Advancing the Rule of Law in a Time of Crisis.’ The World Justice Project organizes this annual global competition to identify, recognize and promote the best practices and effective campaigns that protect and promote the rule of law in times of crisis like the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic.

The World Justice Project, established in 2006 as a campaign of the American Bar Association, was transformed in 2009 into a non-profit organization promoting the rule of law. The organization has its offices in Washington D.C., Seattle, Singapore, and Mexico City.

The fact that *Jaat ko Prashna* – a television program created with the aim of fostering dialogue at the family and community levels on the caste system dominated by patriarchy, caste-based discrimination, and the practice of untouchability based on caste – has garnered such praise on the global stage is certainly a matter of pride for the supporters of development, justice, and prosperity in Nepal.

Within the first five months of the COVID-19 lockdown in Nepal, 23 Dalits were killed. The massacre in Rukum-West, the death in police custody of Bijaya Ram Chamar, the rape and murder of Angira Pasi, and the starvation death of Malar Sada are but a few representative events. The chain of violence against Dalits has continued unabated.

Various statistics show that more than 260 million people worldwide continue to suffer caste-based discrimination. There are more than 3 million Dalits in Nepal. The heinous practice of considering Dalits, who have been historically excluded and marginalized, as untouchable still continues. The COVID-19 crisis brought even more starkly into focus the systemic discrimination against Dalits. Whether during the distribution of relief materials or medical treatments, Dalits were subjected to discrimination. The notions and language of isolation and social distancing worked toward further reinforcing the social evils of exclusion and untouchability.

Samata Foundation produced the television program *Jaat ko Prashna* during the very challenging circumstances of the COVID-19 lockdowns. The 12-episode series of *Jaat ko Prashna*, hosted by the popular actor Rajesh Hamal, was broadcast on Kantipur Television. The program has raised complicated and severe questions about the caste system. By involving various political and intellectual personalities, the television dialogue program *Jaat ko Prashna* has compelled the Nepali society to interrogate itself.

*Jaat ko Prashna* has initiated a new debate in the social justice discourse in Nepal. Issues like systemic privileges, reservation of electoral constituencies, and the question of Dalit women's resistance have gained priority in the Nepali discourse. *Jaat ko Prashna* has raised questions regarding inclusive proportional representation, social justice, the judicial mechanism, justice delivery, political participation and representation, the rule of law, and the practice of democratic principles – the answers for which questions are still being sought.

Samata Foundation is not limited to this – complex issues like human rights and justice, gender equality, immigration and labor, climate change, etc., are inextricably intertwined with the caste question. Samata Foundation has been continuously lobbying and working to foster dialogues to create solutions in those sectors, alongside the empowerment of Dalits and development across all seven provinces of Nepal. Samata Foundation expresses its commitment toward engaging in knowledge creation while encouraging the youth's creative and meaningful role in achieving social justice and building an equitable society.

This success of *Jaat ko Prashna* has encouraged us even more. The journey of academic debate for social justice shall continue. We are grateful to everybody who has given us their participation, assistance, and cooperation along this journey.

For additional information:

<https://worldjusticeproject.org/world-justice-challenge-2021/jaat-ko-prashna-question-caste>

Thank you,



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Pradip Pariyar  
Executive Chairperson  
Samata Foundation