**Defend and expand people’s rights, Rise against corporate raj,**

**Struggle for a genuinely democratic and secular society!**

***Convergence of Movements appeal to join mass protest on 2nd December 2014 at Delhi***

1. **Whose ‘development’, who pays the cost? The current socio-political context**

Today India has entered an unprecedented time, the likes of which our country has never experienced before. The rhetoric of our new rulers, led by Prime Minister Modi, would have us believe that a golden future awaits us; but the emerging darker reality is of a regime that is moving to withdraw even limited rights of working people, in order to promote intensified corporate plunder. Existing social programmes and employment security are under threat, laws are being ‘modi’fied to accelerate corporate takeover of natural resources, and basic rights of workers are coming under attack. Under the name of ‘national security’, democratic rights including the right to dissent are likely to be further constricted; communal hatred and violence are being systematically perpetuated, social divides are being widened, and the social fabric in many places is being ripped apart to further the ‘Hindutva’ agenda. Here are some key features in the current situation that we need to look at:

**Now ‘good times’ for the corporate class, but ‘tough times’ for the working people**

True to their promise, the ***Modi-led government is pulling out all stops to ensure ‘Good times’ (अच्छे दिन) for the corporate class***, since it wants to remove any ‘constraints’ on capital accumulation. Multinationals are being invited to ‘Make in India’, with the intention to make India a hub for labour-intensive manufacturing, rolling out the red carpet and inviting them to exploit our natural resources and cheap labour. ***But tough times lie ahead for ordinary people, with corporate encroachment on lands and shrinking access to forests,*** more speculation and economic instability, and even worse conditions for labour, especially casual, contract and informal sector workers. ***Due to policies of ‘Less Government’ and ‘Fiscal consolidation’, whatever social services and social protection that were available or have been expected for working people are being withdrawn or weakened.*** Major underfunding and downsizing of NREGA, weakening of price control and IPR provisions making essential medicines more unaffordable, limiting the scope and implementation of the Food security act, diminishing likelihood of universal old-age pensions, are all emerging as inevitable consequences of ‘Less Government’ policies for ordinary people. Further privatization of education, health care, water, electricity and other services is part of the game plan to commercialise all spheres of life to expand avenues for capital investment, and we know that such processes would place all such essential services further out of the reach of ordinary people.

It may be noted that two segments of the Indian population have been at the forefront of resistance to neoliberalism in India: people fighting natural resource grabs, and contractual / temporary workers in the newer industries. Both are now being directly attacked through legal changes, the former through modifications in environmental, land acquisition related laws and sabotage of the Forest Rights Act, the latter though dilutions in labour laws. The capture of fiscal resources for corporate subsidy, with large scale ‘taxes foregone’, and offering industry cheap natural resources, including minerals and infrastructure, complete the picture of a ‘golden future’ for the globalised corporate class, who will now get everything they have ever dreamed for.

**Dying agriculture, bitter fruits of integrating with global market, cultivators without a future**

The agrarian crisis is intensifying and is likely to be exacerbated by the eventual full entry of FDI in retail, along with the collapse of input subsidies and public procurement. Farmers, including small and medium cultivators, were already not getting remunerative Minimum Support Prices (MSP); BJP had promised 50% increase as per the Swaminathan commission but these promises are now forgotten. Processes for fixation of MSP remain opaque and limited to certain crops. Now the bitter fruits of integrating India with the global agricultural market are being harvested - the collapse of global food prices is expected to severely hit support prices, and scales of procurement are going to be drastically curtailed. In this situation, it is not surprising that the majority of farmers are reeling under debt, and nearly 3 lakh farmers have committed suicide since 1995. One major consequence of the agrarian crisis is declining rural employment and massive distress migration from many parts of the country. Due to this background, migrant workers, especially Dalits and Adivasis, often work in conditions close to bonded labour, being denied wages and basic living conditions, with women workers often being sexually exploited. Workers still risk these inhuman conditions due to the major destitution they face in their villages.

**Divide by spreading hatred; rule with an iron fist**

There is no way that our rulers can push through such aggressively anti-people policies, without also planning about how to deal with anticipated large scale popular resentment. Hence while the text of the new rulers is ‘India’s development’, the sub-text is of a ‘strong leader’ who would promote a majoritarian social ethos and a ‘muscular state’ within the country, and militarism beyond its borders. The ***manufactured resurgence of the Hindutva brigade is increasingly threatening basic democratic freedoms, since this unholy alliance of reactionary forces is aggressively spreading a brand of politics that has many similarities with fascism.*** The orchestration of large-scale communal violence in Western UP, followed by provoked incidents in Delhi and other parts of the country, give us a glimpse of what lies in store in the coming period. Promoting brutal violence against minorities, especially Muslims, and hatred and demonization of all those who are considered ‘others’ dominates public discussions. Under the shadow of Male-dominated, Brahminical Hindutva, violence against women in various forms and atrocities on Dalits continue unabated; any checking of these assaults is curiously considered irrelevant to promoting much touted ‘national pride’. The appointment of ‘Hard Right’ persons to senior positions in the security establishment clearly indicates that surveillance, repression and violence are only likely to intensify in the coming period.

**Analysing the ‘Trishul’ of the current regime: three-pronged attack on people’s rights, supported by the handle of majoritarianism and constriction of democratic spaces**

Given this unprecedented situation, we need to understand and challenge the core policy framework, which underlies the growing threat to people’s rights on all fronts today. ***The new regime is attempting to complete the unfinished tasks of neoliberalism in India,*** policies that no earlier government managed to push through. While the UPA government was also pursuing a neoliberal economic agenda, this was accompanied by some social programmes (even if these were limited), and there were certain spaces for social movements to raise demands. ***Now the Modi-led government has pressed the accelerator hard on neoliberal economic policies, while putting a brake on social protection measures.***

The aggressive neoliberal policies to push corporate growth are linked with a ***three-pronged attack on social services and social security, worker’s rights, and people’s access to natural resources*** - which are all being seen as ‘constraints’ to unbridled corporate growth. ***Solidly supporting these three prongs is the base of an authoritarian regime*** with growing autocratic trends and personality based centralisation of power, ***combined with aggressive Hindutva***, which is projecting false ‘enemies’ and diverting people’s discontent, while protecting and obscuring the real and deserving targets of potential popular anger.

**Putting people’s issues centre stage, challenging the core policy framework: Time to build a convergence of movements!**

***It is clear that India is entering a time of unprecedented crisis, but this is also a time of significant opportunity for diverse movements to unite their efforts and mobilise people.*** The alliance between globalised crony capitalism, upper-caste centred and patriarchy reinforcing Hindutva, and an increasingly repressive state is becoming openly visible, in a manner never yet seen in this country. In their greed for super-profits, and based on the illusion that they would face no major opposition, these forces are beginning to drive the economy, the polity and the country into a vortex of instability, violence and impoverishment, which they themselves would not know how to resolve. Discontent is inevitable, but this discontent could take India down either of two roads. If people-centred forces fail to provide an alternative, this discontent may be channelised into escalating communal violence and disastrous militaristic adventures. But we need to also keep in mind the breathtaking diversity and vitality of ongoing movements and struggles of ordinary people across India today, which continue to expand despite the adverse policy environment. These movements are the hope for the future of this country. If such social movements and progressive forces can converge and collectively rise to the occasion, then there is major scope for combined mass mobilisation and transformative social action. With the process of ‘Movement convergence’, we can move closer to making this idea a reality.

1. **Key proposals and immediate demands**

Building a comprehensive counter to this situation will need to be based on powerfully promoting people’s rights, expanding democratic freedoms, and defending a genuinely secular vision of society. This would require not just responding in fragmentary manner to specific threats to people’s interests, but building a broad and proactive socio-political challenge to the basic policy framework. This need not be limited to protecting a few past achievements or piecemeal bargaining for some improvements, but would involve ***articulating a vision of the future that is radically different from the vision of its current rulers***. Today ***even to ensure defence of core entitlements and basic democratic spaces, social movements will need to move onto the offence and reshape the national agenda from a people-centred perspective***. Hence we need to powerfully resist all emerging specific attacks on popular entitlements, while demanding a comprehensive spectrum of rights, which are required by all ordinary people of this country to live a decent life. This must be integrated with proposals for expansion, rather than contraction of democratic spaces; moves for deepening of a genuinely secular ethos and plural social fabric for this country, while combating widespread majoritarian hatred and terror; and carrying forward the struggle for social justice towards an egalitarian society that would eliminate hierarchies based on gender, caste, ethnicity, religion, region and all other dimensions in which human beings may have been historically and unjustly differentiated in the past, yet today must become undeniably and substantially equal.

Today ***the struggle for people’s rights while fighting the consequences of neoliberal economic policies, the movement for protecting and expanding democracy, and the movement for defending the secular fabric of society need to start coming together as part of a larger common convergence.*** We are entering a period where the challenge would be no less than ***a battle between two contending ideas of India***. The wheel of History in India can no longer stay in the same place; it will either be wrenched backward, with disastrous consequences for many, or it will need to radically move forward, offering a different future for all.

Hence it is clear that we need to move towards systemic alternatives rather than piecemeal and partial solutions to the growing crisis; the ***entire range of issues that we are dealing with are linked with the model of development***. On one side is a ***model that promotes*** ***maximisation of profits for the corporate sector and business class***, with increasing levels of consumption of certain kind for some sections, with significantly negative ecological impacts. The Bhopal gas disaster is an outstanding example of the completely disastrous impacts of this model - for poor and ordinary people, for workers, and for the environment; the 30th anniversary of this man-made disaster is an occasion for us to re-dedicate ourselves to fundamentally challenging this model. Opposed to this is a ***people-centred model which asserts the fulfilment of basic needs for all, stresses human development in a framework of equity, while ensuring a sustainable relationship with nature***. Today we need to challenge the dominant model and re-define development, including people’s aspirations in this regard, while ***proposing alternatives in each sector and for every dimension of life***.

Given this background, our demands and social proposals are broadly woven around the following key themes:

* **Ensuring rights to social services and social security**
* **Asserting people’s control over natural resources**
* **Defending and expanding the rights of labour**
* **Deepening democracy, defending diversity and secularism, ensuring social equity and justice**
1. **Ensuring rights to social services and social security**

***Broad cross cutting social proposals:***

Today a wide range of *social services* such as food security schemes, public health services and public education, as well as *social security programmes* such as employment guarantee and pension, which are all essential for working people, face an adverse policy environment. This is part of the overall aggressive neoliberal onslaught, and we need to challenge this policy framework while demanding a range of specific entitlements. Our cross-cutting proposals in the social sector include:

* Reverse moves towards ‘fiscal consolidation’ and ***ensure major expansion of funding for all social services and entitlements***. ***The budget for social sector should be doubled in real terms in the coming decade,*** to enable provision of comprehensive social services and security. This can be done by terminating large scale tax exemptions to the corporate sector and business class, and ensuring a progressive taxation regime. It may be noted that today the scale of tax exemptions in India is close to the scale of taxes collected, hence rolling back of tax exemptions for the business class, and increasing taxation on the corporate sector as well as luxury goods and services could make massive resources available for the social sector.
* The entire basket of social services and social security put together should be considered as essential ***‘Social wage’ that is the entitlement of all people in India*** who mostly contribute to, or have contributed to social production, even though the vast majority of these work in the unorganized sector.
* ***End all forms of targeting and move to universal entitlements***. All social protection measures including PDS, MGNREGA and provision of essential medicines must be universalised rather than being targeted on basis of households or districts. Old-age pension must be a universal entitlement rather than a targeted programme.
* ***Eliminate various forms of privatization***, including cash transfers for foodgrains and essential goods, commercial insurance based models for health care, and outsourcing type ‘PPPs’ in education and health sectors.
* ***Instead of privatisation, strengthen public systems while substantially improving the range, quality and responsiveness of these services.*** This would be linked with specific sector-wise policy measures to substantially upgrade and expand these services, such as expansion in the range of items provided through PDS, provision of comprehensive health care rather than limited focus on specific programmes through the public health system, effective systems for medicine procurement linked with provision of adequate free medicines, and upgraded quality of education in public schools.
* ***Democratisation of social services and programmes*** through systems for community accountability (such as social audit and community based monitoring) and people based planning. Drawing upon positive experiences in certain states and sectors, all social services and entitlements must be made systematically accountable to the ordinary people who avail of these, through publicly organized participatory mechanisms. Any modifications in social programmes must be done based on participatory consultation, rather than being based on advice of corporate ‘consultants’ or bureaucratic diktat. This is also an important dimension of ‘expanding democracy’.
* ***Improved working conditions and employment security for frontline staff in the social sector*** (such as Anganwadi workers, ASHAs, ANMs, schoolteachers), along with ensuring their active participation in social accountability and planning processes.
* ***Programme design and regular participatory review processes*** to be organized, to ensure that social services and entitlements are planned and delivered in such a manner that the ***rights of historically deprived sections of people such as women, Dalits, Adivasis and minorities are specifically ensured.***

***Sector wise demands***

* 1. **Employment rights and MGNREGA**

The MGNREGA has served as a lifeline for the rural poor in India, with 1 out of every 3 rural households having worked in the programme over the last 8 years. Although the average employment provided to households in 2013-14 was 45 days, which is only about half of the employment guarantee, this is demonstrative of the huge potential the programme has to provide social support to rural toilers during the lean season. The provision of employment through this law is today the main legally protected social security mechanism for the millions of rural poor in the country. Some far-reaching socio-economic impacts of the programme so far are as follows:

* Around 40% of the total households employed under MGNREGA every year belong to SC and ST households; 82 percent of MGNREGA workers belong to the low and middle income groups with a monthly income below Rs 1,058 per month.
* Participation of women in the programme is substantial and has has grown from 40% in 2006-07 to 54% in 2013-14.
* Two-thirds of works under MGNREGA are related to agriculture, with a focus on land, water and trees. Thus MGNREGA which has strengthened the livelihood resource base of the rural poor, and has also promoted their access to natural resources.
* MGNREGA has led to multiple impacts such as creation of durable assets, improvement in bargaining power of agricultural labourers, generation of much-needed employment during lean season, financial inclusion, institutionalization of transparency and accountability measures in governance, strengthening of PRIs, which have been demonstrated within 8 years of it coming into force.

For millions of workers in rural India, MGNREGA today remains the only safety net, to manage income shocks in the face of massive under and unemployment in rural areas. Current public debate on this programme that impacts the lives of 10 crore workers should not be focussed on the views of urban and political elites, rather workers’ own assessments of the success or deficits related to MGNREGA needs to be central to analysis of the programme.

Keeping this entire background in mind, we demand the following:

1. ***Immediately revoke all moves being made to dilute the MGNREGA***. Specifically the move to change the labour material ratio to 51:49 from the existing ratio of 60:40, as well as the attempt to restrict the act to one-third of all blocks. Eliminate any role for contractors under MGNREGA.

2. ***Ensure there is no scale down in the coverage or the provisions of the MGNREGA*** as mandated through the law; guarantee 100 days of work and timely payment in all areas.

3. ***Budgetary allocations of MGNREGA should be based on generation of demand***, keeping with the spirit of the Act. The budget of MGNREGA should be enhanced in line with the rate of inflation. Quota based rationing to States with discretionary cuts is unacceptable and illegal.

4. Any proposed ***amendments to “strengthen the legislation” must be done through public consultations*** with all relevant stakeholders.

* 1. **Food security**

**a. Public Distribution System (PDS) and Food security act:** We demand expansion of the public distribution system to ensure universal coverage of the entire population by amendment of the central legislation or enactment of state laws.

1. **Universal Coverage:** The NFSA adopts a targeted approach by excluding 25 percent of the rural and 50 percent of the urban population from accessing the PDS as a right, giving scope for large exclusion errors of poor households. We demand universal coverage.
2. **Increase Quantity:** The Act only provides for 5 kgs per person per month which is barely enough for two rotis a day. The ICMR has prescribed at least 14kgs for an adult and 7 kgs for a child under 12. We demand an average of 10 kgs of cereals per person per month.
3. **Pulses and Edible Oil:** The Act provides only for cereals with no entitlements for the nutritional components such as pulses and edible oil required to combat malnutrition. At least a minimum of 2.5 kgs of dal and 900 gms of edible oil per capita per month should be guaranteed.
4. **Cash Transfers:** The NFSA allows for the back door entry of cash transfers instead of food grains by allowing for a food security allowance when food is not available, and by allowing cash transfers as a part of PDS reforms. We oppose the replacement of the PDS with cash transfers.

**b. Agriculture related measures:**Increase investment in agro-ecological, climate-resilient, nutritive and sustainable agriculture and ensure that they prioritise and benefit smallholder farmers, especially women

**i. Minimum Support Price:**Support higher MSP for farmers as legal entitlements

**ii. World Trade Organisation:**Ensure no pressure from the WTO on issues of right to food, full use of flexibilities of TRIPS and resist trade agreements related to Intellectual Property Rights

**iii. No GMOs and Commercial Interests:**Ensure the explicit prohibition of genetically-modified foods, commercial lobbies, conflict of interests and corporate control of agricultural production, procurement, storage and distribution and the promotion of decentralised, local production across food schemes

**c. Measures to prevent starvation:**

**i.  Community Kitchens:** Ensure the creation of highly subsidized community kitchens by local women and collectives especially to serve the homeless, destitute and vulnerable populations in rural panchayats and urban wards. Ensure especially the inclusion of children and persons with disabilities across all food entitlements.

**ii.  Prevent Starvation:** Ensure food security during natural and man-made disasters, caste and communal violence and adoption of the ‘starvation code’ proposed by Supreme Court Commissioners to ensure accountability of state governments to prevent starvation.

**d. Supreme Court Orders:**Ensure fulfillment of all the ‘interim’ Supreme Court orders relevant to the right to food including the provision of all ICDS services to all children under six years and meals for all older children including, in principle, those who are not in school.Related to ***maternity benefits and crèches***, ensure early and full implementation of programme for universal maternity benefits, coupled with crèches to enable breast feeding.

* 1. **Pensions**

How we treat the elderly speaks about the kind of society that we live in. The elderly are 8.2% of the Indian population and the number of single women are estimated to be over 4.5 Crores. Many of them are so poor and helpless that they do not have bank accounts, documents to apply for pensions. They continue to remain a relatively invisible sector of the society. Since they have all contributed to India’s growth during their working lives, they are entitled to an adequate pension from the Government.

Currently, persons above 60 years get a meagre pension of Rs. 200 per month, and those over 80 years get Rs. 500 per month under the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS), however this is only for those Below the Poverty Line. Of the total elderly population, 9.92 crore, only 1.97 crore are beneficiaries of IGNOAPS, which means that only about one in every five person over 60 years old receives old age pension. Under the Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS) a monthly pittance of Rs. 300 is provided to persons with severe or multiple disabilities in the age group of 18-59 years and belonging to BPL families; only 2.8% of the persons with disability in the country have been covered under the scheme. Withdrawal of the neoliberal State from crucial sectors like education, health, special services has adversely affected the disabled, and bulk of them who are poor, continue to be deprived of pension, despite having no means of livelihood.

In comparison, there are several low and middle income countries that have instituted universal or near universal non-contributory old age pension systems, such as Lesotho, with per capita GDP about two-thirds that of India, provides pension about Rs. 2300 per month, and Kenya with per capita GDP about half of India, provides pension over Rs. 1250 per month.

Though employment linked pensions are provided to some persons, these are restricted to the elderly in the organised sector or who are among the rich and upper middle class categories. But groups that are most in need of old age pension are all in the unorganised sector, which include most Dalits, Adivasis, elderly women, socially stigmatised communities such as sex workers, transgender persons, HIV positive people who are among the worst victims of lack of care and support during old age. Between 2000 and 2010, the organised sector added workers at less than 0.3% annually, while the GDP of the country more than doubled in this period, with an annual rate of increase of over 7.5%. The greatest contribution to this growth came from the contributions of the workers employed in the unorganised sector. ***The demand for old age pension is not a demand for charity but a demand for recognition, and for all these people who have contributed to the society and economy, to be given their due***. Unlike the organised sectors, they are often doing arduous manual work in the most difficult physical circumstances and without adequate nutrition and rest. It is a punishment to make them work beyond the age of 55 – beyond this age they deserve much needed economic support and rest. Not everybody can or chooses to access the traditional family and community structures for support, especially those are usually from the stigmatized and vulnerable sections of society, who do not get enough opportunities to earn a decent livelihood or support in the existent social framework***. We firmly believe it is the state’s responsibility to take proper care of its most disempowered members, the elderly and the disabled.***

**Given this entire context, we demand:**

* A Universal and non-contributory Old Age Pension System to be established immediately by the government with a minimum dignified amount of monthly pension not less than 50% of minimum wage or Rs 2000/- per month, whichever is higher.
* The pension should be an individual entitlement for all eligible citizens of India.
* The monthly pension amount be modified every six months and the scale revised every two to three years based on inflation – in the same manner as is done for salaries of government servants.
* Any individual who is 55 years or older should be eligible for the old age pension.
* For women, eligibility age for pensions should be 50 years.
* We demand pensions for all single women, not just widows but those separated, deserted, unmarried and above a predefined age-criterion.
* For highly vulnerable groups (such as the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups, transgender persons, women compelled to become Sex workers, persons with disabilities), the eligibility age for pension should be 45 years.
* No one should be forced to compulsorily retire from work on attaining the age of eligibility for universal old age pension.
* There should be a single window system for Old Age Pensions and a separate ministry for issues of the Elderly.
* The State should consult stakeholders and spell out a fair, open policy for Pensions - increasing, indexing and universalising pension amounts for these constituencies, facilitating opening of bank accounts, procuring documents and pro-active selection/sanction in keeping with the 2014 NSAP guidelines.

**Exclusion Criteria**

In the event of need to prioritise resources, the following categories may be excluded from being eligible for the pension:

* Individuals whose income is higher than the threshold level for payment of income tax
* Individuals who are receiving pension from any other sources that exceeds the pension amount under the Universal Old Age Pension Programme.

APL / BPL criteria should not be used for exclusion. The payment of pension should not be used as a basis to deny any other social security / welfare benefit such as benefits related to the Public Distribution System.

* 1. **Health Care**

We stand for the Right to Health and Health Care, and are opposed to certain incipient anti-people steps by the BJP-led Government in the health sector. The miserly increase on health care in the current budget; choice of the slogan ‘health assurance’, instead of the well-established concept of health care for all; announcements to adopt the ‘insurance model’ to reach the goal of ‘health assurance’ despite massive evidence against the effectiveness of such insurance based models; capitulation before the American pharma lobby during the PM’s visit to US by agreeing to set up a joint "High Level Intellectual Property (IP) Working Group" (which appears as the first step in compromising on health safeguards in India's intellectual property policy) - all these steps display an ominous direction. We oppose the trend of pushing neoliberal policies in the realm of health care, which leads to rampant marketization of health services. To realise the right to health for all requires ensuring a wide range of social determinants of health, along with universalising health care, where a strengthened, accountable, democratized public health system acts as the backbone and leader. In this context, we demand the following:

1. Enact a ***Right to Health Act,*** which ensures universal access to good quality and comprehensive health care including the entire range of primary, secondary and tertiary services.
2. Increase ***Public Expenditure*** ***on Health*** (primarily tax-based) to 3.6% of GDP (this would be annually Rs. 3000 per capita at current rates) in the short term, and 5% of GDP in the medium term, with at least one-third being Central government’s contribution. Since health is a state subject, and state health budgets are much higher compared to central contribution, all states should establish a system to monitor expenditure and implementation of activities supported through the state health budget. Ensure that out of pocket spending on health, which is currently obnoxiously high, is rapidly reduced and becomes less than one-fourth of total health care expenditure.
3. Stop ***privatization of Public Health Services.*** Expand and strengthen the public delivery system to ensure quality and availability of health care appropriate to primary, secondary or tertiary level, entirely free of user fees. Regularize contractual employees and provide ASHAs, ANMs and all levels of public health system staff with adequate skills, salaries, fair placement policy along with decent working conditions.
4. Increase ***public investment in education and training*** of the entire range of health personnel for training in government run colleges. Take stringent mechanisms for regulation of existing private institutions in a transparent manner and place a moratorium on the establishment on new private medical colleges. Overhaul Medical Council of India and the Nursing Council of India along democratic lines to weed out corruption and unethical practices.
5. ***The Government of India should without any delay launch the scheme for free medicines and investigations*** to ensure guaranteed universal access to essential and life-saving drugs and medical investigations to all citizens of India. ***The scope and coverage of this scheme should be no less than the ongoing schemes in Rajasthan*** which currently have 607 medicines and more than 70 medical investigations provided through all levels of health facilities, and not just 50 or 100 medicines (as being considered by the BJP government at national level). Generic prescriptions to be made compulsory in all public health facilities.
6. Bring all commonly used medicines under a cost-based ***price-control*** regime. Ban all irrational medicines and irrational combinations. Promote opening of generic medicine outlets in adequate numbers. Make mandatory use of generic names in prescriptions.
7. Eliminate ***corruption in the Public Health System*** through transparent policies for appointments, promotions, transfers, procurement of goods and services and infrastructure development through a Transparency Act, and institute robust grievance redressal systems, which are adequately financed and managed with some degree of autonomy from the management.
8. ***Generalise*** ***Community based monitoring and planning of public health services*** at all levels to ensure the accountability and responsiveness of public health services. Over time, move towards a democratised, community driven health system, and an understanding of health care that takes into account diverse community needs and perceptions.
9. ***Institute medical pluralism in Public Health facilities*** so that people have a choice to access non-allopathic care. Substantial encouragement must be given to research and documentation, to pave the way for towards integrated health care.
10. Improve the ***national Clinical Establishment Act-2010*** to ensure observance of patient's rights; regulation of the rates of various services; elimination of kickbacks for prescriptions, diagnostics and referrals; and grievance redressal mechanisms for patients. Establish a publicly managed admission system, and regular referral between government hospitals and charitable trust hospitals, to effectively utilise 20% beds for patients from economically weaker sections in trust and private hospitals who have been given lands at highly subsidised rates and tax concessions in purchase of equipment.
11. Various types of ‘PPPs’ which weaken public health services should be eliminated. Instead, where essential to fill gaps in public provisioning, regulated private providers (especially smaller and not-for-profit facilities) should be in-sourced at standardized rates, in such a manner that they serve the larger public health goals.
12. Absorb existing ***publicly funded health insurance schemes*** (RSBY and different state health insurance schemes) into the expanded public health system. Rejuvenate ESIS which is extended to unorganized sector workers while retaining existing entitlements of organized workers and removing salary ceiling.
13. Adopt a policy to ensure that ***vulnerable sections and sections with special needs*** enjoy access to health care at all levels. Vulnerability could be due to social position (e.g. women, dalits), health status (e.g. HIV infection), occupation (e.g. manual scavengers) or any other cause. Guarantee comprehensive, accessible, quality ***health services for all women and transgender persons*** for all their health needs. Recognize gender based violence as a public health issue and ensure access to comprehensive health care for survivors. Take immediate and effective steps to ***eliminate all forms of*** ***caste based discrimination*** in the health care sector and beyond.
14. Review health policy and systems to ensure that these work against the currents of majoritarian fundamentalism and discrimination against minorities.
15. Ensure rights based access to treatment and care of ***persons with mental illness*** through integration of the revised District Mental Health Programme with the National Health Mission.
16. Eliminate the dubious role of ***multi-lateral and bilateral financing agencies*** and corporate consultancy organisations (such as the World Bank, USAID and Gates Foundation, Deloitte and McKinsey etc.) from health policy formulation.
17. Use the public health safeguards in the Indian Patent Act to promote access to medicines, and actively promote indigenous manufacture of most drugs and devices.
18. Strict regulation of approval and conduct of ***clinical trials.*** Ensure that the CDSCO and the ICMR monitor the conduct of clinical trials at the trial sites. Ensure fair, timely compensation for trial participants who suffer from adverse events. Develop a justiciable charter of rights of clinical trial participants.
19. Promote appropriate health research, significantly upgrade and build capacity of department and centres for health research, so that monitoring and evaluation of health programmes can be scientific and representative. Findings of such evaluations should lead to generalisable recommendations, rather than review missions which have poor scientific rigour and limited insights.
20. Systematically plan to deal with both the traditional ***social determinants of health*** like food security and nutrition, sanitation and the newer determinants like environmental pollution, occupational health, road safety, addictive substances like tobacco, alcohol etc. and violence. For example, universalize ICDS to effectively cover under-3 children and generalize decentralized community-owned CMAM (community based management of malnutrition) programmes.

There is need to prepare a master plan to deal with all these determinants and make a quantum jump in the allocation of funds, human-power, institutions needed to implement such a plan. Revive the notion of inter-sectoral action in the spirit of the Alma Ata Declaration of ‘Health for All’ to see how different aspects like education, land redistribution, availability of resources can add to the general well being and health of the people of India.

* 1. **Education**

India’s education system has been facing successive attacks of neo-liberal policies since 1991 at the behest of powerful international bodies and funding institutions. This has led to blatant commodification of education, which has entirely disoriented the very purpose of education, while globalised market forces dictate terms. To make matters worse, the neo-liberal assault has been increasingly accompanied by communalization of education. Now the deprived and oppressed sections of society, constituting the majority of our people, are certain to be excluded even further from genuine education, with only token measures being offered for a tiny minority among them in the name of the so-called ‘inclusive’ policies. The increasing market hegemony over political discourse combined with religious fundamentalism is bound to dismantle India’s rich heritage of plurality, while further damaging and distorting the entire education system. In this situation,

* We oppose the prevailing discriminatory, multi-layered educational system which strikes at the principle of equality in our Constitution, and ***demand a fully state-funded Common education system from ‘KG to PG’,*** including a completely free and compulsory Common school system based on neighbourhood schools upto class XII, so that every child and youth is guaranteed a free and equitable education.
* We demand ***equality, social justice and affirmative action for all disadvantaged sections*** such as Dalits, Adivasis, religious and linguistic minorities and the disabled, with special focus on women in all these sections. This can only be done by universalising a state funded, free and compulsory system for quality education.
* We propose that the education system must be designed and implemented in a manner that would enable building a democratic, secular, egalitarian, enlightened and humane society in consonance with the values enshrined in the Indian constitution.
* We demand ***withdrawal of all policies for privatisation and commercialisation of education,*** including all forms of PPPs that weaken public education, and Foreign Direct Investment in education. The offer made in WTO-GATS to treat higher education as a commodity in the global market must be withdrawn to ensure India’s sovereignty in educational policy making.
* All forms of communalism, casteism and patriarchal prejudices as well as irrational and superstitious content in education must be eliminated, since these lead to discrimination, reinforce existing hierarchies, promote supremacy of certain privileged sections, and subvert our diversity.
* In a multi-lingual context, mother tongue should be developed as a medium of education in all government and private schools, while establishing the primacy of popular languages in all sectors of life.

Overall we stand firmly opposed to the neoliberal agenda in education, which distorts the educational framework and only seeks to produce a subservient, skilled workforce for the globalised corporate sector. Instead we propose to work for a genuinely universal education system that would contribute to ensuring a just, equitable, secular and humane society.

1. **Asserting people’s control over natural resources**

**Cross cutting concerns and proposals: Community control over Natural resources**

1. Our country is gifted with abundant natural resources such as land, water, forests, minerals etc. According to our constitution, the people have the primary right on these resources. The main objective of development should be to fulfill the basic needs of people living in the villages, cities and slums using these resources. Therefore the people of the villages and cities, the democratic units should have the primary right in establishing developmental planning.
2. However, today in the name of development, plans for boosting profits of the corporate sector and increasing consumption of the upper class are being implemented, without considering the opinion of local self-governmental units and communities of ordinary people. This is undemocratic and unconstitutional, and is unacceptable. Any action in the interest of development or public interest should only be performed with the participation and consent of the people living in villages and urban settlements. If any such action is performed without the consent of these people, we will not consider it in the interest of society and will oppose it.
3. Large scale displacement, which is indiscriminately being carried out for development, is socially unacceptable. In the name of developing water sources, irrigation, power, roads (highways, seaports, airports etc.) and mines - farms, forests or other public, common and subsistence resources are being aggressively captured and privatised. Even small villages and slums are being demolished. This is unjust, illegal and also inhuman. The need for electricity is today greatly exaggerated by a nexus of the powerful- large capitalists, politicians, officials and companies. On the basis of these exaggerated figures, schemes are being formulated over harnessing rivers, mountains, fields etc. through large dams, thermal power stations and nuclear power plants in a way that is destructive to human life. All these are symbols of destructiveness under the pretence of progress or development. However, development free from demolition and displacement is both necessary and possible. But this form of development is only possible based on democratic and decentralized decision making, centred on people.
4. Today while the globalised corporate sector seeks to aggressively promote ‘accumulation by dispossession’, the Indian state is increasingly acting as an agent of these exploitative forces, instead of standing in defence of the rights of vast masses of ordinary people, whom it is supposed to serve. Hence through our movements we need to force the state to reorient its policies to protect the masses of working people, rather than serving the globalised corporate sector. This would be accompanied by visualizing and developing people-centred, collective and cooperative forms of managing natural resources, which are equitable and sustainable.
5. Natural resources are the basis for our life and livelihood since generations over the centuries. Today in corporate-led economies, these resources are being consumed at a very fast and unsustainable rate. Such an inequitable and environmentally destructive economic model is unacceptable to the vast majority of people. The natural resources of our country must be conserved, because they are the basis of our livelihood. We make a resolution that we will try our best to conserve them for the coming generations. To do so, we need to put forward a constant struggle against the destruction of these resources using the effective techniques. We are also committed to leading our lives in a manner that would be compatible with a sustainable model of development.
6. **Land rights and displacement**
7. Since independence, various schemes for development have displaced over 10 crore people. Out of these, only 17 % have been rehabilitated by the government. Facilities like alternate livelihood and money should also be made available to the devastated people. Until the process of rehabilitation for the displaced people is not completed, any further displacement must not be given consent, and action on any such steps should be halted.
8. Our country is full of geographical and geo-cultural variations, and every area has its own needs for development, therefore it is important for us to have a democratically planned land usage policy that takes care of all the variations and needs.
9. The transfer of farmlands for developing real estate and large industries should be immediately reviewed and there should be a moratorium on such transfers until comprehensive, participatory review has been completed. Ceiling of land ownership in cities and villages should be applied and landless people, peasants and homeless people should have primary right over lands resources. Illegally acquired land should be recovered from the capitalists, builders and politicians and should be used for genuine public purposes such as public schools and hospitals, or distributed amongst the working people in the area. The common people should have primary right over land, and the secondary right should be of the labour intensive industries i.e. village industries, cooperative industries, small scale industries, with last priority to selected capital intensive industries. Industries based on human resources should be given priority over capital based industries, which often rely on unsustainable consumption of water and power.
10. Current proposals to amend the “Right to Fair Compensation, Resettlement and Rehabilitation and Transparency in Land Acquisition Act, 2013” should be shelved and every attempt should be made to implement the Act in letter and spirit. The time has come to enact a law of decentralized development planning, incorporating principles enshrined in section 243 of the constitution, 1996 PESA act and forest rights act 2006, with primacy in all decision making being given to the Gram sabha. Without proper consultation with people, eviction is inhuman and unconstitutional and against the right to life and livelihood of the people. Use of police force against the people for eviction is totally inhuman and there is no place for such violent measures in the largest democracy in the world.
11. The existing SEZ law will only help the industrialists and the capitalists to acquire land in an unjustified manner, and will not help in providing livelihood to the poor, rather it will only increase the inequality between the rich and the poor. Therefore, the current SEZ law should be abolished.
12. Basic housing rights should be provided to the labourers living in urban slums who help in running the country. Their slums should not be demolished and they should be given housing rights wherever they are settled, and cooperative groups should provide them with settlement rights. While developing cities, the larger part of the land should be reserved for housing. The land and resources held in common (riverside, pasture land or destroyed forestland) should either be used for genuinely common purposes or may be reserved for the landless and homeless people and then distributed among them.
13. Only extremely important, genuinely public purposes should demand donation of land from the public. Public should not donate any resources for corporate or private purposes. Forced land acquisitions should be banned. If any plan for corporate or private benefit, is termed as ‘beneficiary to the public’ then this is unjust and unacceptable to the people of India.
14. Today, the government has the ownership rights of the acquired lands. We believe that only those cultivating the land should have the ownership rights over such lands and the land should be returned to their owner after the completion of the purpose for which it was acquired. Any acquired land that remains unused should be distributed by the government to the displaced families.

**B. Right to Water**

**We oppose** making water as private property, privatisation or commodification of water sector, long distance water transfers, interlinking of rivers, and large dams.

**We support** water as a fundamental human right, water as a common property resource, river basin as a unit of planning, and decentralised and participatory governance of water resources

**Key policy issues and recommendations:**

The rivers and valleys in our country have kept human culture and civilization alive since millennia. Several dams are being built on these rivers in the name of power generation projects which are being opposed by many public organizations. Recently, after the decision of the Supreme Court of India, the government has planned the interlinking of rivers in India. This project will destroy the rivers and river valleys and large numbers of people will be displaced to vacate lakhs of acres of land. The project is being planned without due consideration to the environmental problem caused apart from the economic profit and loss. Such projects are illegal, socially and environmentally unjustifiable and should be immediately halted.

***First priority for use of water must be for drinking and domestic needs*** (excluding luxury domestic needs like washing of cars, personal pools etc), needs of cattle, livelihoods, food security and ecological functions. Allocation of water for other needs should be done only after ensuring (reserving) water for these priority needs.

This means we should move to a regime of a ***mix of sequential and proportional water use prioritisation and allocation***. For example water for basic needs, for livelihoods, food security and ecosystem needs have to be sequential in nature in the sense that only after meeting these needs can water for other uses like power generation, recreation, commercial (surplus generation) uses etc., be made available.

***Equity, sustainability and participation*** must be central to the use and allocation of water. Equity must be ensured along the lines of caste, class, gender, ethnicity and other social divisions. Sustainability must imply preservation and enhancing the eco-system of which water is a part, to ensure its continued existence in a healthy state. Participation means that people will have a meaningful say in the matters that affect them that is access to adequate quality and quantity of water.

***Right to water for basic needs*** must be enshrined in the Constitution as a Fundamental (human) Right. This should include not only right to domestic use and drinking water but also water for livelihoods, though the latter can be introduced in a phased manner. Sanitation should also be a part of this right, or a separate right. Right to water implies right not only to an adequate quantity of water, but also adequate quality.

***Social Structures and water***: While right to water is a laudable goal, its implementation is not possible without addressing the question of structures, gendered identities and discourses/ideologies of power. Women, Dalits and other socially discriminated groups’ work in the context of water and agriculture needs to be taken into account.

***River basin should be the unit for planning for water***. Water allocations must be done (and projects should be planned) based on a River Basin Planning process. Allocations for various users and use must be through fully participatory processes and should follow the priority and principles indicated above.

***Rivers must be kept flowing and environmental flows must be maintained*** to keep rivers alive. Similarly, other water bodies must also be maintained. These include wetlands, floodplains, aquifers, soils, ponds, tanks and other local water systems that are all important parts of water cycle.

***Groundwater and surface water must be treated in an integrated manner***, as a part of the river basin planning process (though we should keep in mind that aquifer boundaries may not overlap with river basin boundaries). Groundwater use must subjected to community based regulation. Groundwater regulatory and governance regimes must also shift to treat groundwater as a common property resource and to ensure its allocation as per the priorities outlined above.

***Agriculture and industry, and therefore water use for these, must be based on the agro-climatic-ecological zones***. In other words, agriculture and industry must be consistent with and shaped according to the agro-climate of the region, including water resources. First priority must be to develop the local water resources based on extensive rainwater harvesting, watershed development etc.

***Urban water policy*** should be such that it gives priority to decentralised and democratic governance, local rain water harvesting and ground water recharge, restoration of local water bodies, recycle and reuse of treated sewage, debarring inappropriate water intensive activities, and charges for water use at higher, punitive rates beyond the minimum water needs. For any city to get access to water from exogenous sources there have to be certain pre-conditions like generation of local water in certain definite proportion. Planning of sanitation and water supply should go hand in hand.

***Water for industries should also be allotted subject to certain pre-conditions*** like generation of local water in certain definite proportion, complete treatment and recycling and additional conditions depending on the nature of the industry in terms of its size, its products, the purpose its serves etc.

All hydropower projects above 1 MW capacity and all large dams must be required to have ***social and environment impact assessment.*** The consent of Gram sabhas must be a pre-requisite for these projects after Public Hearings and consultations.

***Water and environment governance must be gender sensitive***. All important authorities and committees must have 50% representation from women and all important posts should have a woman at the helm at least every alternative tenure. A detailed strategy paper must be developed which outlines the key components of the concerns of gender, caste and other socially disadvantaged groups in the context of water.

There should be a review of all policies, programmes, laws and institutions around water in light of the above principles and policies, leading to a restructuring of water sector towards more sustainable, equitable, efficient and democratic lines.

Re-structuring all existing systems on equitable lines would mean working out water distribution as per livelihood needs of a family rather than the land the family holds. Apart from restructuring earlier systems, all new systems need to be designed on this basis.

Privatisation and marketisation of water has to be stopped immediately. We believe that it is the government’s duty to provide basic facilities to the people, and profiteering private companies cannot effectively fulfil the concerned social objectives. Hence water resources and water provisioning must not be privatized. There should be a complete no to any type of water source/water entitlement privatisation or trading.

Strict control and elimination of pollution is one of the most urgent issues and has to be taken head on. Industrial effluents, municipal sewage and agro-chemical are all responsible and need to be dealt with.

It is imperative to bring in a comprehensive water framework law which would set up overarching common principles and the boundaries for further policy and law making in the different states that would allow them also enough flexibility to bring in the state specific concerns. This would help in addressing the fragmented and often contradictory nature of different polices and laws dealing with different aspects of water both at the centre and at the states. A separate River Policy is required for sustained existence of our rivers and the services that rivers provide.

1. **Forest rights**

In accordance with the Forest Rights Act passed by the parliament in 2006, Adivasi communities and other traditional forest communities should acquire rights and democratic control over the forests and forest resources. These should not be handed over to private companies. We oppose any dilution of the role of the Gram sabha in context of decision making related to forest resources, instead there is need to further strengthen the consent and management provisions in the Forest Rights Act, while fighting for extension of this model to other forms of natural resources.

# *Stop the takeover of forests by vested interests and the sabotage of forest rights:*

We call upon the government to **stop sabotaging the power of the Gram sabha in relation to forest rights and rights to other natural resources**. We demand:

* Respect the power of the Gram sabha to manage, use and protect forests and forest lands.
* Stop undermining the legal authority of the Gram Sabha to determine forests rights by arbitrarily rejecting claims by promoting illegal administrative takeover of the law.
* Reject projects which Gram sabhas have not consented to. Punish officials and companies taking over forest land without Gram sabha consent.
* Respect the power of the Gram sabha to manage forest and non-timber forest produce and obtain full revenue from it for the benefit of the community.
1. **Defending and expanding the rights of labour**

**Accelerated neoliberal model – ongoing plan to erase rights of labour**

In the period since early 1990s, India has witnessed growth without new jobs in the organised sector, and mainly growth of informal employment even in formal sectors. Consequently, the conditions of labour have significantly deteriorated. Under the neoliberal framework, the State has been aggressively withdrawing from labour regulation, and basic democratic spaces including freedom of association have been further limited. The state has been withdrawing from economic activity, while allowing completely capital-oriented market forces to determine labour employment, wages and conditions in the workplace.

With the new BJP-led government in power at the Centre and in several states, the neoliberal agenda is being much more vigorously pushed, flouting all precedents of consultation and transparency by previous governments. A range of changes in labour laws by the Union government are in the pipeline. The state of Rajasthan has already proceeded with modification in four important laws, namely, Industrial Disputes Act, Factories Act, Contract Labour Act and Apprentices Act. Following these amendments, the coverage of industries from the purview of these acts would be massively reduced and these acts would become more or less notional. After the amendments at central level, a similar impact would be seen across the country.

***Some key features of the current situation are as follows:***

1. ***Informalisation of employment: Death blow to formal labour***

Today informal employment relations are being generalised, even in the formal sector in India. More and more employment is on ‘hire and fire’ basis through various tactics like hiring contract and casual labour even for regular long term jobs, sub-contracting of work, “earn and learn” techniques even for skilled workers and so on. While at all-India level the proportion of formal employment continues to be stagnant at around seven percent, the absolute number of informal workers have been rising substantially. This informalisation of labour in formal industries is having its impact even on the organized sector workers, massively reducing their capacity to bargain and fight.

***(b) State withdrawal from Labour affairs – ‘Leave them to mercy of the market’***

Whatever provisions that have existed for protection of labour are now being dismantled. To begin with, implementation of labour laws was extremely weak and there were other ways to avoid such regulation like creation of Special Economic Zones where a host of the labour laws were not applicable. Now the Union Government, as referred to above, would complete the dismantling process by moving to amend the crucial laws like the Industrial Disputes Act, Factories Act and Contract Labour Act. **Labour regulation is no more seen a legitimate state function, it either does not exist, or is limited to an existence on paper.**

***(c) Emergence of new vulnerable sections of labour***

The neoliberal model is creating a huge and growing army of workers in the informal sector due to the deep agrarian crisis, land acquisition and other processes of displacement; simultaneously there is growth of vulnerable employment sectors, precarious employment with often terrible working conditions in sectors like domestic work, transport, large scale construction, mining, retail, garment industry, etc. Millions of workers in these sectors of new employment are largely invisible and unregulated. The overwhelming majority of such workers are migrants, adivasis and dalits, women and children, often with no literacy or nominal education. New forms of debt-bondage may be seen in some of these sectors, and the work involves long hours, hazardous and unsafe working environment, and wages are low and there is no kind of job or social security.

***(d) Closing down spaces to protest and organise***

In the current situation, labour activists are confronted with several barriers to undertake legitimate activities for forming unions. Forming a labour union in several parts of India is difficult as general unions are not allowed to form legally, getting recognition is not easy, and the process is not transparent and time-bound. In order to subvert labour rights, activists are victimised in various ways by the employers, termination being the most important method, and use of force including violence being not infrequent; extreme state repression related to workers agitation in the Maruti-Suzuki factory at Gurgaon, where about 150 workers continue to languish in jail, is a striking example of this situation.

1. ***Major demands regarding rights of labour***

**Protecting and expanding the present rights and social benefits**

* We demand ***no dilution/reversal of labour laws*** including Industrial Disputes Act, Factories Act, Contract Labor Act and Apprentices Act. Instead there is need for effective implementation of policies, programmes and legislations related to workers with accountability and transparency.
* Freedom of association: ***union registration must be at the door step, time bound and mandatory***. ***Strictly ensure time bound resolution of workers disputes***. There should be legal protection of the right to collective bargaining.
* ***National minimum wage*** in tune with the present acceptable minimum standard for a dignified life and with a provision of link with inflation. Clear and transparent criteria of arriving at the wage and regular revisions to ensure increase in real wages to promote equality. To ***guarantee an adequate living wage for all,*** there is need to raise the share of wages compared to profits, as the major components of value produced.
* ***Implementation of the 8 hour work rule*** must be strictly implemented, along with ensuring basic working conditions. An eight hour work campaign should be organized by the government, with active participation of workers organisations.
* Non-payment of the Minimum wage must be made a cognisable offence. Ensure equal wage for equal work in all situations.
* Regularise all contract and honorarium workers, the vast majority of whom are involved in performing work of a regular nature.
* There must be effective provisions to ensure special attention to vulnerable workers.
* Make various social reservations mandatory in the Private sector.
* Recognise and ensure a comprehensive right to livelihood and employment – the basis for ***right to work*** (see next section).

**Workers Health & Safety**

There is need for major strengthening and overhaul of mechanisms to protect the health and safety of workers, especially in the unorganised sector. Employers and managers, including the board of directors and CEO at the top of each organisation, must be held accountable for any failure to protect the employees or the public from harm. There is need for a comprehensive Accident Prevention and Compensation enactment, with focus on practices and processes to minimise the chance of incidents causing injury or death, incentives for injury free performances, and adequate, timely compensation as well as punitive provisions applicable to employers in case of accidents. In parallel, Factories inspectorates need major strengthening, mechanisms to ensure their accountability to workers and trade unions, and revitalisation of workplace inspection and enforcement with workers participation, to ensure that health and safety provisions are actually implemented in the wide variety of workplaces, including those with informal employment. The ESI system needs participatory review and major structural improvements to make it much more effective in providing the entire range of benefits to workers, and it needs to be synergised with developing a system for Universal health care that would cover the entire population including all categories of workers.

**Deepening and widening the social wage basket**

* Guarantee an allowance equalling half the minimum wage to all unemployed workers.
* Ensure Social wage for all people in India, to be considered an entitlement for all those who contribute or have contributed to socially useful production
* Universal social security for old-age and for periods of distress including unemployment, retrenchment, disability, sickness. Social security for all would include old age pensions, health care protection, maternity benefits, social protection in difficult situations, right to housing (all components of Social wage).
* Social security number to each worker to ensure visibility of individual workers.

**Employment policy and a unified, simplified law for basic labour entitlements**

There should be an employment policy in line with the approach and requirements of a broader people-centred development policy. All new development projects, technologies and investments should conform to the employment policy. The policy should specify criteria for universal visibility and registration, social security, minimum standard of work place conditions and facilities, wages, employment conditions etc. Accordingly the concerned labour laws should be updated and made part of a universal unified law for labour protection. The provisions of the law should be simple, transparent, and binding on employers with no exception whatsoever. A robust monitoring system with involvement of trade unions and workers, and responsive grievance/dispute mechanism should be part of the legislation.

1. ***Right to Work***

The demand for Right to work has developed out of experience of diminishing livelihoods and informalisation of work in urban areas. We also recognise the implicit link of this process with the large scale migration from rural to urban areas, which provides the basis for the intensified exploitation of labour. Following are some of the points intrinsic to operationalizing the demand for right to work -

1. The government of India should pass a ***Right to work act*** covering both rural and urban areas. This would build upon the current MGNREGA for rural areas, but would be expanded to cover urban areas and with more comprehensive provisions. As a step in this direction, introduction of a National Urban Employment Guarantee Act may be considered.

2. Everybody must be ***entitled to work for up to 300 days*** in a year as per requirement.

3. Every adult willing to work must get a Labour card that is valid throughout India.

4. The government should focus on the following measures to usher in an era of ***Employment-centred planning:***

* 40 % of every project’s cost should be earmarked for wage payments (in private projects also)
* There should be a ceiling on investment- Rs. 1 Lakh per one person’s employment generated. This would reorient investment towards labour intensive rather than capital intensive projects.
* The prevailing embargo on new recruitment by government agencies, driven by the neoliberal framework, must be revoked. Besides expanding employment, this could significantly improve public services, where shortage of regular staff is today a serious constraint.
* Ensure legal space, identity & credit in case of self-employment. This should be combined with skill upgradation programmes and training centres to impart new skills to workers. The quality of education/ technical education should be enhanced so that educated labour can demand their rights more effectively.
* Labour laws should be applicable across in all the sectors, whether organised or unorganized. Flouting labour laws should be made a cognizable offence.
* Proper surveys and discussions should be conducted before drafting local and state level plans with complete participation from urban local bodies and labour organizations

5. ***Every worker should get a ‘Living Wage’*** as recommended by the 15th Indian Labour Conference and endorsed by the Supreme Court.

6. The ***principal employer, including the state, must ensure all the legal entitlements / services*** to the workers. In case of non- compliance the government will act as principal employer in all cases, whether the worker is involved in wage employment, under or unemployed, or self-employed.

7. For programme implementation and monitoring, the ***Labour department should have a centre acting as a single window*** at every election booth / block level, where anyone who is an adult and willing to work can get registered. Such centres will have the responsibility to do a regular study of employment scenario and socially productive employment opportunities at their level.

8. ***Participatory Councils should be established*** at Central and State Labour ministries that oversee the programs; number of government representatives in these councils should not be more than one-third and labour representatives should not be less than two-thirds. To monitor the programmes, ***Labour Monitoring Committees*** should be formed at the level of every Gram sabha & Mohalla sabha.

9. The ***vacant posts in the labour department should be immediately filled*** by lifting the embargo on government recruitment.

10. ***Suitable and safe working environment should be ensured*** with all necessary facilities like drinking water, sanitation, canteen, health centres, crèches, etc. Crèches should be available at the worksite, and in the event of workers movement across work places, provisions to ensure the continuity of care of the children should be ensured.

1. **Deepening democracy, promoting secularism, ensuring social equity and justice**

To push through its aggressive agenda of corporate-dominated ‘economic growth’, the ruling elite today needs to both suppress and divide all potential sources of opposition. This is being done both at the political level through various agencies of the state, and at the social level by ‘manufacturing consent’ around a majoritarian programme that would stifle dissenting voices. The corporate sector-led economic elite, the powerful repressive forces of the Indian state, and traditional patriarchal and caste elites consolidated under the ‘Hindutva’ banner are today ***converging economic, political and social domination as never before in Indian history***. The aim is to usher in a ‘corporatist’ regime in all senses of the word. The answer on behalf of the majority working people and oppressed populations will have to be given powerfully at multiple levels, yet these responses will also need to move beyond being purely ‘reactive’, and would need to be integrated by proposing a radically different vision of the future.

**Defending democratic spaces, fighting to deepen democracy**

In this context, today an authoritarian political culture and hyper-concentration of political power are emerging as major, growing threats to the basic democratic ethos of India. Various repressive measures and bodies are being readied to deal with existing and possible future dissent. Under the banner of promoting ‘nationalism’, aggressive jingoism and further militarization of the sub-continent appear to be on the cards, with the possibility of military adventurism looming on the horizon. Bringing in ‘Hard Right’ officials at apex security bodies, completely concentrating powers even within the political elite around the ‘supreme leader’, and continuing highly repressive laws like AFSPA is part of this larger game plan. In this context, energetically and vocally defending all existing democratic spaces and demanding repeal of various repressive laws would continue to be an important front of our struggle.

However, we need to stress that instead of constriction of democracy, what we need today is the opposite: massive expansion and deepening of democracy, with political and economic powers being actively transferred to communities and collectives of ordinary people in rural and urban areas. Widespread popular discontent regarding lack of accountability, corruption and ineffectiveness of public services and public bodies is now being channelized into support for a ‘strong leader’ who would ‘set things right’ from the top. It is conceivable that the petty corruption and certain gross inefficiencies at lower levels will be clamped down to some extent, while the ‘legal corruption’ based on connivance between corporates and the state would be massively upscaled. In this situation, demanding much more effective bottom-up, community based accountability systems for all public bodies and services, accompanied by genuine devolution of powers and finances to enable people based planning and control of economic resources, including natural resources, by Gram sabhas and Mohalla sabhas becomes essential. While proposing such systems, it would be essential to ensure that these are developed in such a manner that historically oppressed sections such as women, Dalits, Adivasis, religious and ethnic minorities are actively involved in completely equitable manner in all decentralized, democratic decision making and accountability processes.

**No to Hindutva, yes to a just and genuinely secular future for India**

Complementary and closely linked to the growing authoritarian trends at political level, is active orchestration of Hindutva majoritarianism at social level, which seeks to pose the social ‘other’ (particularly Muslims) as the source of all problems, while deflecting people’s discontent. An elite-driven, homogenized vision of ‘development’ and ‘nation’ will place all those who may not agree with this vision, or may be socially, culturally different, in the category of ‘others’, who are likely to be branded as dangerous, subversive, even terrorists.

Here again, critiquing and energetically opposing the growing communalization of all public spaces – including of state bodies, educational institutions and on the cultural terrain – is a foremost task for all progressive social movements today. Yet this needs to be accompanied by proposing a well-articulated, alternative social vision that could capture the imagination of the majority of ordinary people. We need to reiterate that in modern history, fascism and aggressive majoritarianism have never arisen in isolation; these have been forms of reorganizing hegemony by the elites, in periods of economic and political crisis, offering a particularly repressive option to ‘resolve’ the crisis, which nevertheless managed to generate significant popular support for at least some period in their time. Neoliberalism in its current aggressive version, in the time of global financial crisis and recession in the second decade of the twenty-first century, provides the context for orchestration of Hindutva in India today, and hence the struggle for a genuinely secular society in India will need to be organized and updated keeping this larger scenario in mind.

Hence today as we argue for secularism, we also need to powerfully pose people-centred options to move beyond the current crisis, while entering into a broader dialogue about the future of India. While aggressive Hindutva forces today are moving to capture people’s minds by sowing the venom of hatred and divisiveness, we will need to capture people’s imagination through an alternative vision that builds on myriad positive traditions, yet points to a new future. A genuine vision of secularism will need to be linked with a vision of substantive democracy at the political level, pluralism and egalitarian transformation at the social level, and economic justice at the material level. We will need to draw upon India’s rich and diverse historical traditions of pluralism, challenges to the caste system, and social reform movements that have over the centuries presented a powerful challenge to Brahminical domination, the entity that stands at the base of today’s Hindutva. We will need to take strength from the remarkable ‘natural secularism’ of communities of working people in rural and urban areas, who have generally worked and lived in harmony despite many provocations, unless the social fabric has been deliberately ruptured by externally driven reactionary forces. We will need to create a positive and active vision of secularism that is an important value in itself, but is also part of a larger social project to ensure a democratic and just society, which has significant historical traditions, as well as integral linkages with an alternative vision for the future of India.

**Breaking caste and patriarchal hierarchies, placing social and gender justice squarely on the agenda**

It is clear that growing corporate domination, political authoritarianism and aggressive Hindutva in today’s India are not unfolding in a social vacuum – rather these draw sustenance from, and also reproduce, powerful social hierarchies, especially the caste system and patriarchy which have been ‘modernised’ yet are also perpetuated in modified forms by our social, political and economic elites. These are accompanied by hierarchies based on ethnicity (related to Adivasi communities and ethnic minorities), religion, region and language across various parts of India. Significant forms of discrimination continue to be imposed against sexual minorities, people living with disabilities and other marginalized sections.

While our rulers boast of our ‘glorious traditions’ and also about India becoming a ‘modern’ superpower, widespread and recurrent violence, including rapes and sexual assault, continue to be perpetuated against women in all parts of the country. These are part of the wider spectrum of discrimination and oppression faced by women from womb to tomb. Horrific incidents of atrocities against Dalits, organised by certain powerful caste groups, continue with depressing regularity, as people from oppressed castes continue to face discrimination in education and jobs in various forms, despite some protection due to reservations. A long chain of inhuman incidents including Khairlanji and Budaun remind us that caste and gender oppression in our country are intertwined, and are often expressed in a combined, doubly deadly form.

It is obvious that we cannot consider ourselves to be a civilized society unless such oppressive hierarchies are comprehensively challenged and eliminated. We may also keep in mind that our struggles for economic rights – around social services and social security, control of natural resources and rights of labour – cannot be effectively taken forward without squarely taking the gender and social justice dimensions into account. It need not be repeated that the entire Hindutva agenda is based on an essentially Brahminical and patriarchal framework, hence the struggle against majoritarianism is closely linked with the struggle against caste and gender domination.

Hence an integral and cross-cutting component of the movement convergence process would be challenging gender, caste and social hierarchies, while seeking to transform relationships in the direction of equity even within communities and families, based on empowerment of women, oppressed castes and marginalized social sections. This would be an essential part of shifting the locus of decision making and control from globalised corporates, politically hegemonic forces and social elites, towards equitable collectives of working people.

As we build broad based movements for people’s rights, we must ensure that our vision is comprehensively inclusive and equity-driven, and ensures justice for all without exclusions. **The only relevant majority in India today is of the 99% ordinary people, who need to challenge and overcome rule by the 1% corporate class and political elite.**

1. **Concluding appeal to join emerging**

**‘Movement convergence’**

***While building a broad-based convergence of movements, we will need to work on several fronts simultaneously.*** We need to staunchly oppose weakening of various social programmes, as well as corporate-oriented modification of laws related to people’s access to natural resources and labour rights. Yet we need not remain limited to such defensive tactics on certain specific demands; we need to also understand and challenge the broader policy landscape and pose people-centred alternatives, around which broader and lasting alliances need to be built. ***We have to now try to set the agenda around people’s issues, rather than merely responding to negative actions of the establishment***. Further, we need to defend and expand democratic spaces which are currently under attack, while combating the venom of communal hatred and violence, through developing solidarity actions from grassroots to national levels. Finally, to carry forward all these processes, we need to start developing new forms of collaboration and convergence of campaigns, networks and people’s organisations, which might have diverse backgrounds, and may have been working with different sections of people, or around differing demands. This needs to be done by both building a shared, broad socio-political understanding, and by launching a series of combined actions at different levels.

***The People’s assembly during 30 Nov. – 1 Dec. followed by a mass protest on 2 Dec. 2014, which will be jointly organized by the diversity of campaigns and networks participating in Movement convergence, will be a first important step in this direction.***

***We appeal to all social movements, mass organisations, campaign networks, progressive parties and socially active individuals across India to join and actively contribute to the Movement convergence process. This is an evolving and continuing process, with space for all those who would like to contribute and shape the process. All participant networks and organisations would of course maintain their own identities and programmes, while participating in joint programmes related to this process.***

***We need to confront and roll back the emerging attacks on people’s rights, and also to take our joint struggle forward to challenge the basic policy framework that is leading to deprivation, denial and dispossession of people on all fronts. In this context, we appeal to all networks and organisations that agree with this broad approach, to participate in the 30 Nov – 1 Dec People’s Assembly and the 2 Dec 2014 mass mobilisation.***