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**Civil Society Forum’s Manifesto**

**for**

**Lok Sabha Elections – May 2014**

**Secretariat:**

 

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**CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM’S MANIFESTO FOR LOKSABHA ELECTIONS 2014**

**INTERFACE WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND RELEASE of MANIFESTO**

**Date: 15th March’ 2014, Venue: SCM House, Mission Road, Bangalore 560 027**

The Civil Society Forum, Bangalore which is a year old network with representation of 18 NGOs/ CBOs had taken a special interest to consolidate & highlight the issues of the marginalized communities in the context of the declared Lok Sabha elections. The Forum had deliberated several meetings with the stakeholders and had drawn a people’s Manifesto. In this context an Interface meeting with the National & regional level political parties was arranged with CIVIC organization taking the lead to organize the event.

The meeting was started off by Ms.Kathyayini, Executive trustee of CIVIC organization. Expressing the objective of the meeting she said that the working style of all political parties was not satisfactory in meeting the needs of the common people. All these years we were bearing it but now we cannot tolerate and look forward for a change. Hope that all the political parties will positively respond to it. We the 18 organizations collectively worked and has made the Manifesto which includes development of all sections like women, Dalits, tribals to name a few. This has not come in any of the political party manifestos. Now we have given our manifesto to all parties to include it in theirs.

She invited the speakers Mr.Ramakrishna of BJP, Ms.Nina Nayak of AAP, Mr.Nagaraj from CPI, Mr.Devadas from CPI(M). She informed audience that the rest of the speakers are on the way to the meeting. She invited Mrs.Nina Nayak to speak first as she was in hurry to leave for her party president was in town for a public meeting.

Ms.Ninanayak, who is basically from development sector said that she had come in new avatar. In my thirty years of experience with the people have realized that the voice of the poor are never heard by any party. All work is controlled by the Centre. It directs the DC and the Block level officers to carry out the work as per their instructions. The central government is not interested to utilize the budget. Every year 60,000 children are dying due to Malnourishment. By the time we speak for half an hour in this program 47 children would have died of severe malnourishment. We are not finding the solution for it though solutions are important. She said there is rampant corruption in the country and it is high time we need change. Our Aam Admi party stands for corruption free India, power to people, empowerment and security of women. She expressed that Politicians should directly work with people and get people’s voice heard. And hence she justified her stand for contesting and representing the political party. She asked the audience to respond. One of the audience appreciated her activism, educational qualification and work in the development sector and promised to back up her in the work. Another person from the audience said all these years development meant development of infrastructure like roads, bridge, etc. and nobody had taken up social issues and expressed that AAP to take up such issues and to be people friendly.

Mr.Nagaraj of CPI drew her attention to the Manifesto presented by Civil society which look forward for government to take up all wok but the AAP President in a recent meeting at Delhi had expressed the view to privatize everything. Ms.Nayak responded that all work cannot be done alone by Government or private parties. Private party means it is people. Once the budget and the output is allocated it does not make difference who implements it but maximum output and outcome are the needed. She concluded by saying that she will take up the Civil society manifesto points with her party members.

Later Mr.Suresh, of APSA thanked Ms.Nayak for promising to include the points of Manifesto. He briefed that the Civil Society represented Dalits, women, CBOs, etc. No political party has implemented the voice of the people. He felt that the Civil society Forum’s responsibility should not end with preparation of Manifesto and sharing. There is dire need to make a follow up of the same with political parties.

Mr. Manohar, Human Rights Activist, read out the Civil society Forum’s Manifesto for the benefit of the audience understanding. Fr.Dr.Ambrose Pinto, Principal of St. Aloysius Degree college joined to preside the meeting. Mr.Raju Gowda of Cong-I also joined the meeting.

The next speaker Mr.Manoj Rai of PRIA from New Delhi, was invited to speak on the Urban issues. He mentioned that PRIA works in the urban area of 14 districts in India and some parts in foreign countries. He presented the current urban scenario by quoting some of the surveys carried out. As per the latest census survey findings 31.2% of the population are urban and its contribution to the GDP in the last two years is 1/3 (Planning Commission). And out of that the urban poor contributed 7.56%. Urban area elects 201 MPs. In the next 20 years urban area generates 70% of jobs & will pay 85% of the tax revenue. But in spite of this urban is poorly represented in the planning commission. Urban local governance and urban planning is grossly neglected. Due to the multiple authorities offices presence in the big cities common man will not know which office he has to visit to meet his common needs.

He shared about the Citizens Forum evolved in Delhi which consisted of Informal Urban Poor workers and associations and had evolved citizens demands. It mainly consisted Devolve Functions, Funds, Functionaries to ULBs as per XII th Schedule, Citizens demands included to create exclusive position for Member – Urban in Planning Commission of India, that at least 8% of city’s resources must be spent on well being of urban poor pockets, Single identity to all poor to access common services, consider Roti (livelihood), Kapada(dignity of advancement in Life and Makn ( Housing) as rights of urban poor and to evolve “Slum” policies through citizens to participation and its timely implementation.

Mr.Raju Gowda of Cong- I, the next speaker was invited by Chair person asking him to respond to the Manifesto prepared by Civil Society Forum. Speaker expressed his happiness to be part of the program. He shared that his party is already working for the Marginalized communities. After we brought the Land Acquisition Bill Industries are becoming stand still………

Replying to the Electoral reforms issue he expressed that he is personally trying to push for Electoral reforms. And on the issue of corruption he questioned the audience even for simple campaign one needs money. Even if a post card has to be sent to 25 lakh voters calculate the cost. We let people who have money to contest in the election and as a result the quality goes down. Even the technical concepts of website/face book or email are good. But to maintain that we need a technically sound team and for that we need lakhs of Ruppees.

He maintained that allowing FDI is good as the higher economic group need different and the lower economic group a different market. So both are necessary he said.

He maintained that their party’s concern for the poor by quoting the recent RTE & 25% reservation for the economically poor .

To a question about privatizing water , he responded that the party is not doing anything but the private companies are showing interest to get involved.

He requested the organizer to send the soft copy so that he could send it to his party Manifesto team in Delhi.

The Chairperson then invited Mr.Ramkrishna of BJP to speak. Mr.Ramakrishna expressed that his party had a group of 42 persons to collect the opinions of people after the last Assembly elections. Their party had received more than a lakh responses. He said that he had also come from background of Voluntary services.

He expressed that corruption is a national issue and it is everywhere and that BJP will do away with it. It does not help just including it in the Manifesto but how we address it is important, need to prepare a strategy to check/control it and not just talking about it. The Fourth Estate which is called people’s pillar is also corrupted, he said.

He said that BJP had always opposed the FDI and encouraged the traditional systems. He reacted that people call BJP as communal but people are not opposing the divide and rule policy of the Britishers’ which is being followed even to this day. He was of the opinion that the present legislations are sufficient enough. Only proper Management and implementation are required to improve the Governance. He favoured people consultation before introducing any public program.

He suggested to have this kind of dialogue not just before elections but should be held once in every 3 or 6 months. People should keep questioning. He suggested to call both ruling and the opposition parties and to question on the areas they have deviated on.

 He shared that the BJP is preparing 2030 Vision which is expected to guide their party. He said he will share the Manifesto with his party.

To a question that BJP does not take all sections of society with it, for e.g. there are 20% minorities in Karnataka and out of 28 seats how many minorities are represented? Mr.Ramakrishna said that BJP is making special efforts to involve all sections of the society in the party. But BJP has been projected wrongly by media and others. There are different perceptions. There are a lot of people coming to BJP from different sections of the society. There are many Muslims who have contributed to the party. How do we address the inequality and how we empower the cross sections of the society is important which is a long processes. There will be more empowered people contesting in future.

The Chair person of the meeting welcomed JDS speaker by saying that it is known as the party of the farmers,

Mr. ..…Babu of Janatha Dal , said that he had spoken to the Forum in earlier occasion & now. He said that his party welcomes this manifesto. He said he in the Manifesto committee of his party.

He raised three major points in his talk. He questioned the necessity of the Manifesto as many of the parties promises many things which will be forgotten once it comes to power . He quoted the case of Tamilnadu political parties. A PIL was filed in the Supreme Court (SC) because the political parties did not implement what it had promised in the Manifesto when it came to power. And in relation to this case SC has given directions to the Election Commission to caution the parties to review implications of the promises before publishing it. He said that BJP in Karnataka had promised to give Rice at the rate of Rs.Two and had promised Rs.1000/- stipend to the unemployed youth. But has it been done? Even our party has not met all the promises. Political parties should be committed to the promises it makes and implement at least 50 % of its promises.

He admitted that the Janatha Dal is not powerful at the central level & said it is a regional party. He called that as we accept the Constitution of the country there is need to accept the regional party today. There is no single party in the country which can be called as National Party for all parties do not have representation in all states, for e.g. BJP has no representation in 12 states. As per the Election Commission there are 6 national level parties. He said that anu Ruling party sitting at the Central level will never treat all the states on par. What is given to Andhra will not be given to Karnataka or what is given to Maharstra will not be given to West Bengal. He quoted the injustice done to Karnataka in the distribution of Cauvery & Krishna river water.

Hence he suggested to the Civil Society Forum though it had covered the issues related to the middle and the marginalized communities it has not paid attention to take up the local problems. He promised to include some of the points in the Manifesto. However he felt that without local issues the Manifesto will not be complete.

In relation to Minorities, he said that SOCHAR (??) report has been discussed and passed in the parliament. But when it comes to the implementation political opinions begins. Political parties should be committed to implement it for the suggestions have been evolved after making a study of their socio-economic status.

He agrees with doing away with corruption and claimed that when the Janatha Party was in power it had implemented the Lok Ayuktha, but it need to be strengthened now. He also claimed that the Women reservation Bill was introduced when Mr.Deve Gowda was Prime Minister but it is still not passed. He suggested along with reservation it is necessary to give political education to women. He concluded by saying that they will include the points mentioned on the Child labour issues.

One of the audience questioned that why the Land Ceiling Act was repealed during Deve Gowda’s period. Mr.Babu said it was to give land to Industries with the expectation for employment generation. But there was a limit for it. But the subsequent governments are misusing it and need to be reviewed now. And he endorsed the view.

Another person from the audience responded saying that his argument for regional parties is valid. He shared that one of the study made by a organization called Daksha had come out with a survey on the performance of MPs based on their attendance and the number of times they raised questions. And questioned how the persons with poor performance are given tickets again. Mr.Babu said the points were not agreeable. He said that all NGO are not sincere and were perfect in their views. Some NGOs try to take out the criminal records of the candidates. A person may have case for a violating traffic signal and hence a FIR will be placed. Instead of studying the depth of the case people take only the number and question. He endorsed the view on attendance but regarding questions, he said the quality of the question and contribution matters than the number of times.

Then Mr.Nagaraj of CPI was invited to speak. He began by saying that none of the speakers so far fully responded to the manifesto prepared by CSO Forum for they had not read it completely. He called the audience to compare the Manifestos of political parties once it is released. He commented that the political parties began work on Manifesto just three months prior to elections and they will not implement even 10% of what they had promised.

He said his party would accept the Civil Society Manifesto by 99.5%. He felt that as if the forum had adopted the CPI Manifesto. The Forum has suggested to give up the privatization and liberalization policies. He agreed & quoted the examples of some Latin American countries had already raised against this particularly in Venezeula.

He said that Secularism is needed but it has not come out in the manifesto prominently. For the present election main fight is on the secularism.

Commenting on the corruption he said that CPI and the Left wings of CPI has been in the non-corruption movement for the last 50-60 years. He claimed that they have been contesting without corruption all these years. He said people’s control over the power is important than just people’s participation.

He appreciated the Manifesto by saying it is radical in its stand but need to be more radical. He felt without the Urban Governance and Urban Land reforms issues of Homelessness or housing problems cannot be tackled. It is the same with Rural land reforms too. Without these two any other reform will be just superficial and does not address the problem. He appreciated the stand on Neo liberalization and FDI, etc. but suggested to include speculation of Food security. He commented on the Central Government stand on its tie up with 75 countries and Networks for free trade for the outcome of this is unimaginable. He felt that many people may be deprived of food.

Commenting on corruption he said we should not just question the corruption at the low level but need to question it at the highest level too. One should question the Reliance, Tatas who bribe political parties. If the corruption is set right at that level automatically the corruption at lower level also will be addressed.

He said that the present power structure is such that 80% at the centre,10% at the state and 5% at the local governance level. Decentralization should be such that it reaches people. Your manifesto should claim for that.

One of the audience commented that the Communist parties speak only before the election. For this he responded that the problem is with the Media. Whatever party does media will never relay it or print it. But carry anti-publicity most of the time. So we cannot tell people about ourselves. We need to go to the people at the Micro level. Though ours is a small party we have taken major issues like linguistic based area, land reforms, etc. Though we were never in power but we take it as movement to create awareness. He supported the Proportional representation system. Until this is introduced we keep getting candidates who are against the people’s welfare.

The last speaker of the meeting Mr.Devadoss of CPI –M was invited to speak. He began by saying that their party will be there as long as the exploitation is there in the society and agreed to all the points shared in the Manifesto. Corruption is so rampant and looks as if we have accepted it. Recalling Cong- I speaker’s claim that without black money one cannot win the election presents the level of corruption the country has reached. Moral ethics has become the glory of the past.

He supported the proportional representation (instead of the first-past-the-post system) so that every person’s vote gets counted and various interest groups and marginalised sections get their due representation. The manifesto is more important when the election is party based ratio. He described the country’s loan as Non-performing Asset and the country had 1,94,000 crores as on 31-3-2013.And every year another 50-60,000 is getting added to it. He shared the view of Mr.Nagaraj on the media’s role in not covering the activities of their party too. Blamed the media for not giving publicity of their programs.

Later one of the Organizer Mr.Suresh thanked all the participants for reading and responding to the Manifesto. He said that all the speakers had expressed social concerns.

The Chairperson Dr.Ambrose Pinto congradulated the CIVIC organization for bringing all the parties together and personally thanked all the political parties’ representatives for attending the meeting. He endorsed the suggestion made by Mr.Ramakrishna for continued dialogue and called the forum to think of it and continue it. Politicians are accountable to people but many of them are not keen on their manifesto, he said. He agreed that the decentralization is important. Though the country had Federalism political parties are not giving importance to it and to the Regional issues. And called the parties to strengthen Federalism. He said that all the parties had agreed for electoral reforms and called it is high time to review it. He called the audience to agitate until the political parties hear to us.

Mr.Lingappa of APD while giving vote of thanks appreciated the efforts of Ms.Kathyayini for her efforts in the last one month in bringing people together and organizing rthe event. He concluded by thanking all the persons on dais and the audience for making the event possible.