

CPI(M) Appeal



**Ensure Equal Rights
For Women**

17th Lok Sabha 2019

CPI(M) Appeal to Women

Dear Sisters,

The election dates for the Lok Sabha have been announced. Soon you will vote and decide the future of India. Women have a particularly high stake in these elections. This is because five years of Modi Government have seen an increased assault on the hard won rights of women in all spheres. Equally, the BJP-RSS which never ever accepted the Constitution of India and wanted the Manu Smriti to form the basis of citizenship, has been trying to impose manuwadi politics in social life which has a very negative impact on women equality. The BJP and RSS are openly against any social reform as seen in their highly aggressive opposition to the entry of women into Sabarimala temple after the Supreme Court lifted the ban.

Here are some of the BJP promises made to women:

Key Promises of BJP Manifesto, 2014

- 33 Percent Reservation For Women in Parliament
- National Campaign for Saving the Girl Child: Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao
- Enhance Remuneration of Anganwadi Workers
- Improve Working Conditions for Women
- Utilise Unused Fund for Women's Safety, especially for Rape Victims
- Acid Attack Welfare Fund
- Special Programmes for Girls below Poverty Line

Legal Measures for Women

Let us take a look at the record of this Government in bringing new laws in favour of women.

In Parliament and outside, CPI(M) has strongly advocated passage of the Women's Reservation Bill and strengthening of other laws for women's rights.

BJP leaders busy saving rape accused from Kathua to Unnao!

Rapes have increased from **33,707** to **38,947**

Crimes against Women have gone from **52.2** to **55.2** per lakh population

Conviction Rates have dipped from **21.3%** to **18.7%**

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In spite of having a majority, BJP Government did not even list the 33 percent Reservation Bill in Parliament for discussion, leave alone getting it passed under the pretext of “building consensus”. But it pushed through several laws to help corporates, even though there was no consensus in the Parliament. RSS had earlier opposed the Bill saying it would disrupt family life by bringing women into public life. This was the biggest betrayal of women as today, instead of 33 per cent, less than 10 per cent women are elected in Parliament and State Assemblies taken together.

India has the shameful record of most honour crimes against young couples who choose their partners beyond caste or religious barriers. Even though the Supreme Court and several High Courts hearing cases from affected young couples have advised Governments to bring in a legislation outlawing all crimes in the name of honour, the Modi Government has refused to do so. On the contrary it has supported khap panchayats, it has supported violence against couples including inter religious marriages in the name of ‘love jihad’.

Nearly 8000 women were burnt to death in 2016 for dowry. In the same year 3.34 lakh crimes against women were registered, majority of them related to domestic violence. At present there is only one criminal law provision - Sec 498A IPC - which actually addresses the issue of domestic violence. But the BJP Government wants to dilute it and argued against it in court on the grounds of misuse. The effort to dilute this secular law for women exposes the hypocrisy of this Government.

When the Supreme Court outlawed talaq-e-bidat, that is, instant and arbitrary triple talaq, the CPI(M) supported the judgement against this wholly unjust practice. However the CPI(M) has strongly opposed the Ordinance brought by the Modi Government, after the Bill lapsed. This Ordinance offers no protection to the wife and children. It criminalises a civil wrong doing with the intention of arresting Muslim men. Men who abandon their wives in other communities are liable to action under civil laws. Why should only Muslim men who abandon their wives be arrested? This is not to help Muslim women but to target Muslim men on the basis of a communal agenda. The CPI(M) voted against this Bill.

The Modi Government has not moved to set up fast track courts for addressing crimes against women and children. The conviction rate is dismal. The CPI(M) has been demanding setting up of a machinery to ensure certainty of conviction of those guilty. But instead Modi Government

Can the interests of Women be bartered like this?

Law Minister, Ravishankar Prasad asked the opposition to support the Triple Talaq Bill and a law against Nikaah Halal, if it wanted the BJP to get the bill on 33 percent reservation for women in Parliament.

passed a law for death penalty against child rapists. When criminals are not being arrested, the death penalty will ensure that the child will be killed. This will not prevent crime.

Modi Government has refused to bring a law against marital rape and has argued against it in court. This shows its utter insensitivity to women’s issues.

Women’s Safety and Security

The Hindutva Perspective on Women

UP Chief Minister Adityanath Says: “Considering the importance and honour of women...our scriptures have always spoken about giving her protection....As energy can go waste and cause damage if left free and uncontrolled, women power also does not require freedom, but protection.....”

With the central government and ruling party promoting such an anti-woman perspective there is a huge conservative backlash against women, who are blamed by BJP leaders for the crimes against them pointing to their dress, their behaviour and so on. This shameful defense of the criminals by top leaders has encouraged crimes against women.

Violence against women has grown along with targeting of women and children from minorities, dalits and adivasi communities. At least 4 women are raped in India every hour, on an average. The number of sexual crimes against children had gone up by 82 per cent in 2016. Since then the Government has stopped publishing statistics to hide their failure in Beti Bachao.

The Verma Committee set up after the barbaric Nirbhaya case in Delhi had made certain important recommendations to set up the basic infrastructure

to prevent crimes against women and also to ensure quick punishment of those who are guilty. A Nirbhaya fund had been set up for the purpose.

Shamefully, Modi Government has utilised less than 30 per cent of the fund. In many States, the Government has permitted the misuse of the funds for buildings etc. But the centres to help women survivors have not been set up.

The Verma Committee had also suggested fair and fast judicial processes. Very few cases are fast tracked and that too only after public pressure. According to Government statistics, 81 per cent of those accused in sexual assault cases are not punished. What happened in Kathua? Here when an eight-year old child was raped by known BJP supporters, it was the BJP and Sangh Parivar groups which demonstrated in favour of the accused. In Unnao when a BJP MLA was accused of serial gang rape of a minor, the UP Government and BJP leaders tried to protect him.

What about the economic status of women under Modi Government?

The budget allocation for gender specific programmes has remained static at about 0.62 percent of the GDP and 13.2 percent of the entire budgetary expenditure.

According to a CMIE report, women's unemployment was the highest in 45 years. In 2018, 1.1 crore jobs were lost, out of which 88 lakh were women's jobs. Worst of all, MNREGA, the one law for promotion of wage work, has been greatly weakened by the Modi Government which has refused to give adequate funds for its implementation, leaving a huge backlog in wages. In some states, the wages of the MNREGA workers is being directly taken by the banks for payment of the crop loans!

Social Protection and Rights of Women Workers

What the MODI Government Claims to Have Done:

- Increased the Honorarium of Anganwadi and Asha Workers by 50 percent.
- Started a Pension Scheme for Women Workers to get Rs3000 after the age of 60 years.
- Extended the Maternity Benefit Scheme

This is another Jumla of the Modi Government because:

There has been no expansion of the MGNREGA programme and the lack of budget means there is effective contraction of the programme.

The honorarium of scheme workers in anganwadi was to be raised by Rs.1500 for workers and Rs.700 for helpers from last Diwali. But till date not a single paisa has been increased. In any case it is much less than the minimum wage that is required for a decent life.

The recently announced pension scheme is too little too late, as women will have to put in hard earned money now and get a paltry amount at the end of their working life. The benefits will go to insurance companies.

The food security law states that all pregnant women should get a maternity benefit of Rs.6000 but the Modi Government has cut it to Rs.5000 and that too only for the first child. The Modi government had allocated only Rs 2400 crore for this in 2018-19 but spent only half of this. In 2019-20 it has allocated Rs.2500 crore which will cover only 19 percent of the 2.6 crore live childbirths per year in India.

Food Security and Ujjwala Scheme

Killer Aadhar

Of the 42 hunger deaths in 2017, 25 occurred because the person did not have Aadhar card. 14 of these known deaths are of adivasi girl children in Jharkhand.

Ujjwala Yojana

The Finance Minister claimed in his interim budget speech that 6 crore free connections have been provided to women, thus reducing their drudgery and improving their health.

The truth behind the NDA policies:

Aadhar and biometric links to ration have been used as instruments to deprive poor families of their right to food. Over 2.95 crore ration cards have been cancelled, in the name of fake cards but without any physical verification resulting in mass denial of food security to genuine card holders. Modi Government proudly claims to have saved thousands of crores at the expense of the poor and hungry.

The food subsidy has been stagnant in real terms and continues to be less than 2 percent of the total budget.

1. The quantity of grains available to a family has reduced from 35 kg per household to 5 kg per person.
2. The budget for nutrition specific schemes like ICDS and Midday Meals may have increased in nominal terms but this is not enough for universal coverage.
3. There is no free cylinder under the Ujjwala Yojana. The woman gets a free connection but takes a loan from the Company to buy the cylinder. This means that the subsidy that was to be given to the woman is now going to the oil company: the cost of her gas cylinder has gone up from Rs 505 per cylinder to Rs 800- 950 per cylinder. Ujjwala gas beneficiaries are now denied subsidised kerosene as they are now holders of gas cylinders!
4. Though the LPG connections have grown by 16.3 percent between 2016 and 2017, the growth in the sale of cylinders is just 9.8 percent. Two thirds of the families are not able to refill their cylinders because of the huge hike in prices, turning the Ujjwala Yojana into a flop show.

Jobs, Jan Dhan and Mudra

What the Modi Government Promised:

1. Bank account for every woman under the JAN DHAN scheme.
2. Over 75 percent of MUDRA loans are cheap credit to women for creating employment.

These claims are only half-truths and do not reveal the real situation of women because:

1. Though 60 percent of the accounts are held by women, about 2/3rds of them are inactive or defunct accounts.
2. Though initially, women held 76 percent of the MUDRA loan accounts but this proportion has rapidly declined to 68 percent. Further the average loan in a MUDRA account is about Rs 47,000 which is not enough to start any business or employ wage labour.

3. Because of lack of loans, women have become dependent on private finance companies, often paying interest rates of 16 to 32 percent. Thus the only people who benefit by cheap loans are finance companies.
4. The gender gap in borrowings has increased from 2.8 percent in 2015 to 3.3 percent in 2017. Thus there is no easy credit for women.
5. Women's self help groups have been starved of funds by the Modi Government whereas banks have given huge loans to corporates. Compare this with the policy of the CPI (M)-led government in Kerala where the Kudumbashree project for 3 lakh self help groups has received Rs.1000 crore in a single year for their development apart from subsidised bank loans..

Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao

Modi Speak:

“I can say with pride that with Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao campaign, there has been a rise in the number of girls (male-female ratio) in Haryana, Rajasthan and many other states”.

But the facts are:

1. The child sex ratio in 17 out of 21 states has declined.
2. According to a report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee 90 percent of the funds in Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao scheme are unutilised. The expenses on advertisements have been huge.
3. The implementation of Beti Bachao also requires a strong political commitment to punish the guilty in the medical fraternity who continue to perform sex selective abortions on women pregnant with a girl child. In these years of Modi Government, there have been constant attempts to dilute the law against sex determination tests. There have been hardly any arrests of those guilty during this period.

The Attack on Secularism Affects Women Directly

The BJP-RSS has declared that they intend to remove the word secularism from the Constitution. Women know that secularism and secular principles ensure that in the name of religion or tradition, women cannot be discriminated against as is the case in theocratic countries and that here in

India, women get their rights to equality from Article 14 of the Constitution not from any religious text.

Communal mobilisations such as those promoted by Sangh Parivar organisations cause destruction and havoc, creating an environment of fear and insecurity in which women are the worst affected. At the same time such forces also encourage fundamentalists of all communities including among minority communities, leading to further violence. Women face the worst situation of violence and are targets of brutality during periods of communal tension.

In the first four years of the BJP regime, there have been 3000 reported cases of communal attacks on minorities. The numbers of cow related lynching have increased by four fold under the Modi government. 88 percent of those killed are Muslims. The female headed families are now mostly destitute.

The vicious campaign of 'Love Jihad' by RSS supported organisations has targeted women and affected their freedom to choose their partners as mentioned earlier.

The shameful statements of BJP leaders that Hindu women should produce more children to ensure a Hindu Rashtra shows that the BJP-RSS see women only as child producing machines in their utterly communal blueprint for India. Their statements, practice, ideology and politics are against women's autonomy, equal rights and independence. They do not consider women's rights to be human rights!

For all these reasons, it is essential in the interests of women that this BJP-RSS Government led by Narendra Modi should be defeated. Parliament requires a strong presence of the Left and the CPI(M) to ensure that the rights of women are defended and advanced.

Defeat the BJP and the RSS to Save India!

Strengthen the Left and the CPI(M)!

Ensure a Secular Government at the Centre!

Increasing Violence Against Women

Women have been subjected to increased violence. The year 2016 reported a big increase in crimes against women – four rapes on an average every hour. Since then the Government has stopped publishing statistics by the National Crime Records Bureau in this regard.

The overall *dehumanization* of our society reflected in growing atrocities against women, particularly the girl child, with gruesome incidents of gangrape and murders of young girls.

(from the CPI(M) Election Manifesto,
17th Lok Sabha 2019)

Vote CPI(M)



Defeat the BJP alliance

**Increase the Strength of the
CPI(M) and the Left**

For an Alternative Secular Government

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