

Statement (India): Defeat the BJP, rely on the strength of workers, poor peasants, and all the oppressed social , ethnic, regional groups of people

Saturday 27 April 2024, by [Radical Socialist \(India\)](#) (Date first published: 26 April 2024).

The 2019 Indian general election is currently being held in seven phases from 19 April to 1 June 2024 to constitute the 18th Lok Sabha. [1] The votes will be counted on 4 June. Radical Socialist made this statement on 26 April 2024.

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The BJP is a fascist party. Or, even by any amount of minute analysis, a fascist type party. But exactly what does that mean and why does that matter? To understand that we should begin by simply noting major changes in the political, economic and social spheres that have already happened, and remember that Narendra Modi as part of his election campaigns has warned that what we have seen in the last ten years is only the appetizer.

So how does that appetizer look? In the political sphere, we have seen the steady destruction of democracy. There is a lazy pseudo-Marxist assertion that all bourgeois democracy is a sham, and therefore it does not matter. There is the opposite position, which says, distorting Lenin, that to fight fascism one must vote for “democratic” bourgeois parties.

Contrary to what Engels or Lenin had thought, bourgeois democracy proved more durable and tenacious. On one hand, the very existence, however briefly, of workers’ democracy made the ruling classes take bourgeois liberal democracy as a form seriously, even as they strove to dilute its content more and more. From ‘rule of the people’ as was its original Greek meaning, democracy was reduced to the act of voting, and that too in as undemocratic a way as the ruling classes could manage. Thus the First Past the Post [FPTP] system in many countries, the large-scale role of money power, restrictions on who can vote, and other kinds of measures. On the other hand, the masses wanted to sustain and strengthen it from below. But the European historical experience of fascist Germany and Italy, of extreme right Bonapartist regimes in Spain, Portugal, Hungary, and elsewhere as well as colonialism and then the hegemony of bourgeois/petty bourgeois forces after independence imbued large parts of the working classes everywhere with more parliamentary

illusions than before. Periodic parliamentary elections became the key factor in ideologically masking the reality of the rule of capital.

The Political Trajectory Under the Modi Regime:

However, in the last one decade we have seen in India further degeneration. The parliamentary system has been made increasingly defunct. Debates have been curtailed. The resort to Select committees to examine draft laws is much less. The function of parliament has been to rubber stamp the diktats of the Prime Minister and the handful of policy makers around him. In order to ensure this, opposition MPs have been silenced by the Speaker in the Lok Sabha and by the Vice President who presides over the Rajya Sabha.

The Election Commission is behaving like an accomplice of the ruling party. In the 2019 elections, the EC used the Pulwama “surgical strike” as its supposed exhortation to voters to go out and vote, when it was clear that Pulwama was an electoral campaign theme of the BJP. Likewise, the EC has repeatedly refused permission to opposition candidates when in similar cases ruling party candidates were given a go-ahead. The EC has destroyed VVPAT slips despite the law stipulating they have to be kept for a year.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED), Income Tax Department, to say nothing of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), have been turned into pure and simple hounds of the ruling party. Amol Kirtikar of the Shiv Sena (UBT) was declared to be the candidate for his party from Mumbai North West. Within hours an old case was revived and he was summoned by the ED. On the other hand, between 2014 and 2024, at least 25 politicians who faced corruption charges crossed over to the BJP. Among them ten are from the Congress, four each from the Nationalist Congress Party and Shiv Sena, three from the TMC, two from Telugu Desam, and one each from the SP and the YSR Congress. Another investigation showed that 95% of corruption cases by the ED after 2014 targeted opposition politicians. Two Chief Ministers, Hemant Soren and Arvind Kejriwal, are in jail at the moment. The Income Tax department has been used to freeze the accounts of the Congress party. The CPI (M) and the CPI have been handed Income Tax notices which might lead to the same consequences. The CBI has been used to arrest and frame charges against oppositionists, as well as against civil society activists. In several cases, after years of unlawful arrests, people have been finally let out, while a greater number, including activists like Umar Khalid remain in jail. Four years after the 2020 Delhi riots, chargesheets are yet to be filed in 47% of the non-fatal cases. Even in 37% of cases involving deaths, charge sheets are to be filed. This crackdown began soon after the BJP came to power in 2014. In the notorious Bhima Koregaon case, trumped up charges led to arrests of nine activists, academics and human rights lawyers. This rose to 16 by 2020, and Stan Swamy, a very senior person, died while incarcerated. National Crime Bureau Record shows that in 2016 there were 35 cases registered under UAPA, rising to 93 in 2019.

Courts have also been heavily tilted over the period. Prasant Bhushan, Swara Bhaskar, and Kunal Kamra were among the more well-known persons who found criminal contempt cases filed against them.

In October 2020, following the rape and murder of a Dalit woman in UP, there were protests. Chandrashekhar Azad, leader of the Azad Samaj Party, and 400 others were arrested for protesting, charged not only with violating Sec. 144, but also accused of rioting and violating the Epidemic Diseases Act.

The biggest political shifts, along with these gross violations of democratic rights, have been the total centralisation of power under the Central Government. Funds for provinces ruled by opposition

parties have not been released. Governors have been intervening like opposition politicians or central government agents.

The commitment to secular India has been totally trampled. The Supreme Court accepted that the destruction of the Babri Masjid was unlawful but did nothing beyond that, while accepting the legitimacy of building the Ram Temple. Ranjan Gogoi, then Chief Justice and a member of the bench that passed the verdict on building the temple, later became a BJP member of the Rajya Sabha. This route has been followed by other judges, including for the 2024 elections by former Calcutta High Court judge Abhijit Ganguly.

The Ram Temple construction was a political act of immense significance, since the government committed itself to supporting the building of the temple.

The passing of the Citizenship Amendment Act 2019 has been a gross communal act. By distinguishing between people of different religions who can or cannot get Citizenship it targets Muslims in the first place, but also others. Ultimately the CAA, and the National register of Citizens, enables the state to target almost anyone it chooses, by demanding that it is up to them to prove they are real citizens. Moreover, this creates a formal category of “illegal immigrants”.

Finally, the Electoral Bonds scheme showed how political power was used to garner money for the ruling party. This was one case which the government finally lost in the Supreme Court. It was recently declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. In compliance with a directive from the Supreme Court, the Election Commission of India (ECI) recently uploaded data on electoral bonds on its official website. The State Bank of India (SBI) supplied the information, which includes details about these electoral bonds. According to The Wire, on 18 March 2024, out of the total bonds sold worth about Rs. 16,518 crores, the BJP received Rs. 8,251.8 crores, or just under half. The Congress came second with 1,952 crores, and the Trinamool Congress, essentially a one province party, coming third with 1,705 crores. It is also significant that a number of quid pro quo payments have been noted. Thirty Pharma and healthcare companies bought around 900 crores worth of bonds. To cite one example, Hetero Pharma purchased the electoral bonds in April 2022, and July and October 2023 after IT raids that allegedly detected Rs 550 crore unaccounted income linked to the firm. Hetero Pharma is known for manufacturing active pharmaceutical ingredients (API), along with drugs for cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and diabetes, among others. Significantly, the government during the pandemic pushed for indigenous manufacturing of APIs, giving financial support to companies who manufacture it through its production-linked incentive scheme.

Of 26 companies that bought the bonds and have faced action by investigative agencies, 16 donated to political parties through bonds only after they came under the radar of these agencies. Further, the donations of another six companies surged after these agencies started cracking down on them. A survey revealed that 37.34% of the bonds purchased by these parties went to the BJP. Other state ruling parties like the TMC got 18.29%, DMK 11.35%, BJD 4.48% and BRS 8.59%. The Congress, which rules in three states, got 11.97%.

The Economic Field:

The public boast is, the Indian economy is set to grow fast, that it is the fifth largest in the world, etc. But who benefits? Between 2014-15 and 2022-23, the income inequality, already huge, became even more pronounced. A research paper by Thomas Piketty and Nitin Bharti said: “By 2022-23, top one per cent income and wealth shares (22.6 per cent and 40.1 per cent) are at their highest historical levels and India’s top one per cent income share is among the very highest in the world, higher than even South Africa, Brazil, and the US.” The 10,000 wealthiest individuals among all

Indian adults own an average of Rs.22.6 billion in wealth—16,763 times the country's average—while the top 1 per cent possess an average of Rs.54 million in wealth.

Against this we have to set the mass of the people of the country. An average Indian spent ₹3,773 per month in rural India and ₹6,459 in urban India in 2022-23. The average monthly food spending of an average rural and urban Indian was ₹1,750 and ₹2,530, respectively. At 2011-12 prices, the average monthly spending by rural and urban Indians has increased from ₹1,430 and ₹2,630 respectively in 2011-12 to ₹2,008 and ₹3,510 in 2022-23. Even the top 5% of rural and urban Indians spend ₹10,501 and ₹20,824 on average in a month.

Nor is this disparity simply some inexorable law of economics. This is tied to choice, to specific actions and policies. This brief discussion would turn into a book if we were to explain the details of each scam. So, we will merely highlight a few.

The demonetization was a gimmick aimed at blocking the funds of opposition parties shortly before the UP elections. It hurt ordinary people, not any black money holder. At the same time, the BJP manipulated purchases. Days before Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the demonetisation policy, the BJP bought land worth crores of rupees. The party, in power at the Centre, bought several land parcels in Bihar up to the first week of November. And on 8 November Modi announced the ban on Rs 500 and Rs 1000.

The Rafale Scam. A deal was signed by the Modi govt to purchase 36 Rafale jets at a rate much higher than what was negotiated by the UPA government. Modi government has refused to make public the price of the aircraft, saying a secrecy clause exists between India and France. However, this secrecy clause only binds India from revealing the technical specifications and operational capabilities of the aircraft, and not the price. French manufacturer Dassault has already released the total price of 36 aircraft, which is about ₹60,000 crore. This makes the per aircraft price to be ₹1,660 crore, as against ₹526, as negotiated by the UPA. The UPA's price included transfer of technology (ToT), and the state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) was to make 108 aircraft. Under the new deal, there is no ToT, and HAL, which has a good record in defence production, was superseded by Reliance Aerospace owned by Anil Ambani.

Scams concerning Adani - there are of course plenty of these. 4,305 acres of land was allotted to the Adani Group by the Gujarat government at throwaway prices for the Mundra Port and SEZ development. The land was allotted in Kutch at prices ranging from Re 1 to Rs 32 per sq metre. Adani was also awarded five airports in part of the privatization drive, another scam contested among others by the Kerala government.

There have been, beyond specific large scale wealth transfer cases, a massive change in how the regime deals with the mass of Indians. Ever since the beginnings of globalization, Indian big capital and its hired economists, management specialists and media persons have been saying that labour laws must change, that industry must get greater flexibility, that big capital must get full access to agriculture. The Congress had tried all of these but had been only very partially or fractionally successful. This was where the BJP, in the second Modi government, made the decisive push. It passed the new labour code, which smashed much of working class organisational rights. It passed the three Farm Acts that sought to increase the power of big capital over farmers. It is to be recognised that despite massive production of wheat, rice, fruits, vegetables, meat and milk, In 2021, India ranked 101 out of 116 countries in the Global Hunger Index. Pushing the farmers directly into the hands of capitalist agribusiness would have further intensified that situation. These laws, like many others, were introduced without consultation and bypassing due parliamentary procedures. That they were halted, was entirely due to massive protests by farmers, primarily from the Punjab, but supported by farmers from Haryana, western Uttar Pradesh, as well as

elsewhere. The Indian government's November 2021 decision to withdraw the three farm laws did not mark the end of the farmers' movement. The SKM and its allies continue to mobilise around a range of demands including, most prominently, the passage of a national law guaranteeing MSPs for agricultural products and a full waiver of existing debts of farmers and agricultural workers. However, negotiations with the government on these demands have shown little progress and it remains unclear whether farmers' unions and allied organisations will come together again for large scale protests. Yet, that was the one major movement that defeated the Modi government. In other domains, including on the CAA, it has faced big challenges but has proceeded forward. This is also evidence that it is not simply by mouthing calls for religious amity, but by focusing on issues where common interests have to bring together people across religion and caste, that the hegemonic discourse can be challenged.

The Congress government, which had initiated the drive to privatization and the driving down of wages and incomes, had however faced constraints. This led to the UPA-I starting MNREGA. The Modi government has steadily cut down on MNREGA as well. It has used MNREGA funds also as political instruments against opposition ruled state governments.

Modi came to power offering 20 million jobs. Government statements and pronouncements, to say nothing of BJP claims, exude confidence on that count. However, the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy indicates unemployment rates to be much higher than the government numbers. The share of self-employed people in the workforce rose from 49.5% in 2013-14, to 57.3% in 2022-23. The share of salaried workers declined from 23.1% to 20.9%. Jobs in the manufacturing sector halved between 2016 and 2021. The ESIC saw a 7.5% decline in formal job creation in November 2023. Data gaps, data fudging, are important factors that do not permit proper assessment.

The Distinct Fascist Agenda:

Fascism/fascist-like politics differs fundamentally from other right wing politics. Bourgeois parliamentary right-wing parties seek power, their leaders seek personal gains, they have links with the ruling class, and they will serve the needs of the ruling class as far as they can. Fascism and currents similar to it, not merely Mussolini and Hitler, but a range of others, have shown a distinct agenda from birth. In the case of the RSS, this was and is the promotion of aggressive Brahminical Hindu nationalism. This has a wide range of goals, which were previously kept partially concealed but are now entirely open. Fascist type nationalism desires a total homogenization of the nation under a rigid hierarchy. In the Indian context, this means the demonization of Muslims. The Gujarat pattern shows what Muslims can expect in a fully Hindutva India. They will get increasingly less opportunity in education, in better paid jobs. They will be living under constraints imposed by the Hindutva forces. They will face periodic violence. Inevitably, groups within them will try to resist, whereupon the full force of counter-terrorism mechanism will be applied, regardless of whether it was violent or peaceful resistance, whether it was "terrorist" in any sense, etc. Violence ON Muslims will be normalized and disregarded, as we have seen with the killing of Pehlu Khan.

The RSS agenda is not, however, restricted to violence on Muslims. One cannot be a Hindu without accepting the Varna/Jati system. There is therefore a contradiction between some of their electoral propaganda, where compulsions of electoral nature result in speaking softly to Dalits and Adivasis, and the long term goal, which is one of re-asserting Brahminical (forward caste) hegemony. The Hathras rape and murder, and how it was hushed up by the UP government, is one extreme and brutal example of that.

Violence, organised from below, and targeting Dalits, Adivasis, secular activists (Gauri Lankesh,

Maleshappa Kalburgi, Narendra Dabholkar, Govind Pansare), along with the use of state power to arrest, keep in prison, file false cases against larger numbers, is a curtain raiser to what will happen if a full-fledged Hindutva regime is imposed.

In matters of ideology, the Hindutva agenda calls for a homogenized nation-state. This involves the tightening of Hindi imposition. This also involves a massive rewriting of history. Much of this is now in the realm of state policy, with the NCERT throwing out the old books, the UGC dictating what is to be taught and what is to be excluded. As Irfan Habib as explained, the low-key reference to Ashoka and the exclusion of Akbar is a blatant distortion of India's real history.

Along with this the fascist agenda also tries to dovetail with the capitalist agenda. The destruction of state funded secular, low cost education is proceeding apace from primary level to the University level. The critical thinking in Humanities, Social Sciences and Sciences means opening the doors ever more widely to privatized education., with technical education and management taking first place.

Finally, there has been an aggressive take over of media. And independent attempts at creating alternative media and platforms on social media are under regular attack.

How and Why?

The shift to neoliberal capitalist globalization was not accidental. The state-led economic growth model had been necessary in the early decades of independent India, because private capital did not have adequate resources. But as the power of private capital grew, it wanted to re-insert India in the world capitalist economy. Globalisation was that attempt. It meant doing away with legally limited working hours, it meant scrapping all social security, and it meant reducing to the minimum state expenditure on public welfare. The process was starting when Indira Gandhi became Prime Minister for the last time, and it was given a boost by Rajiv Gandhi. However, it was from the P. V. Narasimha Rao government that India started full tilt for opening up the economy. What the Congress and the United Front governments could not do, however, was to abandon fully her vote banks. As a result, the thrust to globalisation, competing with bigger powers to enable Indian capitalism to grow faster, was repeatedly pulled back or slowed down. This was what led Indian capitalism to finally turn to the BJP, with the RSS standing behind it. As we have shown, the Sangh has delivered the economic goods to big capital. In order to get that, though, they have been compelled to accept the Sangh agenda. It is possible to note the turn from when at Vibrant Gujarat programmes, the capitalists like Ambani raised the call for a Modi government. Indian capitalism has accepted that it may have to give up bourgeois democracy. Which means it will have less opportunity to move different parties on the political chess board, promote one when another proves less popular. But in exchange it is getting the benefits of silencing workers, forcing peasants to the defensive despite their heroic battles of 2020-21, super-exploiting Adivasis, overturning the forest laws, smashing all environment protection measures for fast and short-term profits.

This means that fighting fascism is not just a matter of cobbling together an electoral alliance that might get more votes than the BJP/NDA. From the point of view of workers and peasants, it means campaigning for a definite programme that must include the following elements that simultaneously challenge the Hindutva ideological hegemony and articulate the class goals of the workers, peasants, and the social goals of key sectors of the oppressed, so that a counter-hegemonic discourse starts being formulated.

Will the official opposition fight such a programme? It is obvious that they will not. The Congress has been the initiator of many of the developments that were brought to fulfilment by the BJP under

Modi. To keep bourgeois hegemony, the ruling class projects a distorted image – ranging from claims that its goals are identical with the goals of all the common people, also deploying the ideas of bourgeois economics to convince working people, for example, that although capitalist policy is in the ultimate interests of the capitalist class, they too gain some of the benefits via trickle-down effects. Would the Congress and the parties in the INDIA alliance turn away from all that? The experience of history shows that when out of power, within the framework of parliamentarism, such parties can make huge promises. It needs to be remembered that in 1936, as Congress President, Jawaharlal Nehru thundered that he believed in socialism, which, he explained, he used in the “scientific” sense. In other words, Nehru promised to fight for class struggle socialism. Then the next year the Congress won elections in several provinces. It proceeded to offer very mild reforms and to make compromises even with Permanent Settlement landlords.

We will be told, by bourgeois liberals and their leftish hangers on, that the principal contradiction is between fascism and all anti-fascists, so the campaign must focus on calling for No Vote to BJP, leaving it to the wisdom of the voter so that they elect the best candidate. Such an approach has nothing in common with Marxism. The “wisdom of the voter” had led them to vote for the BJP in 18 seats in 2019 in West Bengal, for example. Moreover, such false humility does not benefit working class struggles. A revolutionary working class party cannot tail end after bourgeois liberals. Even during the fight against semi-feudal Tsarist autocracy, the left wing of Russian Social Democracy (Lenin and the Bolsheviks, Trotsky, Luxemburg and the SDKPiL) put forward this perspective against the right wing (Plekhanov, Martynov and other Mensheviks).

But Dimitrov?

All those are seemingly outdated because Dimitrov at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International called for an anti-fascist United Front, which would also encompass the ‘democratic’ bourgeois parties. This is not the place to enter into long theoretical and historical discussions. Our brief response would focus on a few issues. First, the copybook case was the Spanish Revolution. The Dimitrov style United Front meant the liberals had to be kept happy. So when workers led by Anarchists and the POUM rose up in Catalonia and took away the factories they were forced to disarm and the factories were given back to the bourgeoisie, and many of the leaders were arrested, even killed. Morocco was not given its freedom. As a result, Franco defeated the Republicans and put in the most long lasting fascist type dictatorship.

Second, a fight against fascism in collaboration with bourgeois liberals, many of them quite right wing, would mean dropping even basic democratic demands. One need only think about the AFSPA, the UAPA, or the destruction of the Public Distribution System.

West Bengal and the TMC Case:

One of the most intriguing issues in the formation of this so called opposition bloc is its totally unstable character. Supposedly, both the CPI (M) led left front and the TMC are in the INDIA bloc, along with the Congress and a range of other parties. But in Kerala, the Left and the Congress are the principal opponents. In West Bengal, the one state where the TMC has a real solid presence, the TMC has rejected any alliance, seat sharing, call it what you will, with even the Congress, to say nothing of the Left.

But there is clearly a tacit campaign by a substantial section of the far left in favour of the TMC. The steps of the argument go approximately the following:

- The BJP is fascist
- A third term for Modi would spell the end of India as we know
- So the task is to vote for whoever can win, against the BJP
- Yes, we would support the INDIA bloc, but West Bengal is not the only place where the bloc has not been able to put up common candidates. Look at Kerala
- We are calling for people to vote wisely and defeat the BJP, choosing the candidate most likely to win.

This time, in 2024, there is a slight coyness because the crimes of the TMC are better known. But ultimately, not calling categorically for votes for left candidates is a backdoor route to calling for votes for the TMC, since on paper at least, given the results of the 2019 Parliamentary elections and the 2021 Assembly elections, the TMC is better poised to defeat the BJP than the left is.

Why do we reject the TMC? One accusation whenever we oppose the TMC has been, we are a bhadralok left and that is why we hate the “subaltern” TMC. Are we to believe that Mamata Bandyopadhyay is not a savarna? Nor is Radical Socialist a Bengali savarna organisation, but one involving comrades from various parts of India and with a mixed social composition.

More serious is the political analysis. Two dimensions come together here. For many on the far left, the theory of social fascism is still alive. So they fail to distinguish between right-wing bourgeois parties like the TMC, and formerly Stalinist, now increasingly social democratic parties like the CPI (M).

What is the TMC? In its inception, at a time when the BJP was weak in West Bengal, it received much help from the RSS. In 1999, the NDA won ten seats from West Bengal, of which 8 were won by the TMC, and 2 by the BJP. With TMC assistance, the BJP received over 11% votes. Since we will be reminded that the CPI (M) had made a bloc with the BJP to prop up V. P. Singh’s government, we should clarify that at that time, Trotskyists had been the only political force that saw the BJP-RSS as fascists and opposed any alliance or adjustment with them, in even a tacit manner. But the sustained relationship between the TMC and the BJP goes way beyond that. In 2002, even after the pogroms, Mamata Bandyopadhyay shared a platform with Mohan Bhagwat and others. In the last Parliament, several bills could be passed in the Rajya Sabha because of the “timely” withdrawal of the TMC MPs from that House. Among these we should list the CAA. Thus, while Ms. Bandyopadhyay assures Muslims in West Bengal that she will fight to protect them her party MPs facilitate the passing of the CAA.

The news about the Electoral Bonds also throws light on the BJP and TMC story. Some reports suggest the TMC received the second highest amount of funds from the Bond scam, others suggest it was in the third position. Given that the BJP and the Congress are the only two actually all India parties, the massive difference between what the BJP got and what the Congress got shows why the bonds were floated, and why there was a tooth and nail fight to protect the data from public scrutiny. The fact that the TMC, a one province party, got such a huge amount is not just a matter of talking about corruption, but pointing to the nexus between the big donors, the BJP and the TMC.

The TMC has also been systematically anti working class, and anti communist. If a number of far left groups have continued to be kind to the TMC, that is because, like those CPI (M) supporters of earlier times who out of a hatred of the TMC moved to vote the BJP in 2019, these parties and groups have such a hatred of the CPI (M) that they believe the anti-communism of the TMC will spare them. Meanwhile the TMC has hit trade unions hard, has opposed every all-India general

strike called by the Central Trade Unions, etc. In a competitive Hindu communalism stance, it has given holiday for Ram Navami in West Bengal, a province where Ram has never been a deity and where 19th and 20th century culture from Madhusudan Dutt to Sukumar Ray and Leela Majumdar have inverted the narrative.

The TMC has also played along with the BJPs privatization drive in education. Funds for state universities have dried up. Teacher selections have been held up. The Universities are sinking under overwork by numerically few faculty, lack of research funding. Undergraduate colleges have had the four year course imposed on them. Yet new full time posts have not been sanctioned, and many old posts remain vacant.

As for school education, the stench is huge. As a result of a long drawn out court case, it is now evident that something like over 6000 posts have been given to undeserving candidates. The SSC and the government are accomplices in this, and they are covering the tracks by refusing to produce proper documentation (OMR sheets etc). If indeed 1100 super-numerical posts were created to put in favoured candidates, not only the Education Ministry but also the Finance Ministry is implicated. That the Court verdict is a poor one, where applicants who had required qualifications are also for the moment removed from their jobs, is true. But it does not exculpate the TMC regime. And it had now contributed to the already disastrous scene of school level education in West Bengal

Finally, the TMC has shown that it is as willing to use force against political opponents as is the BJP. It is restricted only by the fact that as a provincial government its government has less power.

Voting for the TMC therefore cannot be a good option to voting for the BJP. We are aware that many honest citizens will take that path, but we warn them to look at the past records first.

Our short election programme

We are unable to put up candidates, and we do not have any perspective of revolutionaries forming governments in a coalition with bourgeois forces, so the programme we put up is of course not a full agenda for a government but a set of basic demands that look at political, economic and social demands of the workers, peasants, Dalits, Adivasis, and in all cases women from all such categories, as well as people of other sexualities and gender choices. We believe these to be key elements that have emerged due to mass movements, and represent the basic starting agenda for a working people's alternative.

- Scrapping the discriminatory CAA-NRC-NPR
- Scrapping the AFSPA, UAPA and other laws that allow arbitrary arrests and provide protection to "law enforcement agencies" when they commit crimes
- Scrapping the concept of Sedition
- For a Proportional Representation system and state funding of elections
- Restoration of the status of Jammu and Kashmir to the situation when the J&K Constituent Assembly was dissolved in 1957 as a preliminary to a democratic resolution
- For an anti-discriminatory amendment to the Constitution prohibiting discrimination based on religion, caste, gender, sexual orientation and disability
- Scrapping the Labour Code

- Full trade union rights for all sectors
- Minimum wages based on the 15th ILC recommendations, pegged at Rs 26,000 monthly for 2024
- MSP for farmers based on the recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission and negotiations with farmer unions and organisations
- Extension of MNREGA to 300 days of work for all rural unemployed. Making MNREGA wages the same as at least the minimum wages.
- State funded public health security for all
- Restoration of full rationing for all
- Increased funding for state aided education for all
- Extension of social security including retirement benefits to the unorganised sector through taxes on the wealthy
- Paid maternity leave and childcare facilities for women in all workplaces.
- Improved public transportation for all
- Strict implementation of the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act and the Manual Scavengers Act
- Gender Justice not uniformity as the primary goal in reform of personal laws
- Full rights for the transgender community
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- For equality of all languages in Schedule VIII of the Constitution
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- For special measures to protect marginalised languages and cultures

Who to Vote

Who not to vote comes first. No vote to the Fascist BJP and its allies, open and covert.

Who to vote? We call for a vote to the left, to independent civil society candidates, to Dalit, Adivasi, regional minority voices when not in alignment with BJP. We do not call for NOTA. But we warn all working people, all oppressed masses, that all calls to vote anyone but BJP tends to set up for a repeat of the tragedies of the past. The argument we get is, if BJP/NDA loses we get a breathing space. But the longer term struggle to permanently defeat the forces of Hindutva requires struggle much more on the extra-electoral fronts of various kinds. Here the reconstruction of a much more internally democratic and non-sectarian Left that has shed Stalinism and Maoism is necessary. This Left must also develop stronger fraternal relations with various progressive social movements and groups. The slightest reliance on bourgeois liberals weakens the independent struggles of the masses.

Footnotes

[1] For an explanation of the voting system see Al Jazeera, 16 March 2024, [“Just how big is India’s 2024 election? Find out in seven numbers”](#).