



Conference Report: Apr. 2006

IS THERE A NEED FOR WOMENS POLITICAL PARTY?

A State Level Mass Conference on Women Political Awareness organized in Chennai on 17.4.2006.



The increasing atrocity on Dalits, violence against women political vindictiveness of the downtrodden and discriminative attitude towards women and their political representation was discussed in thread-bare in a State Level Conference is on the rise. Speakers of various walks of life have felt that the prevailing political scenario in the State is uncondusive to Women Human Right Defenders to protect and highlight various human rights violations. The development strategy of the government has made mass evictions and human rights violations in the State which cannot be addressed openly. The election manifestos of all the political parties announce only welfare schemes to attract the attention of people and they do not address the core issues of people.

The political parties rely on the women vote bank have least bothered even to conceptually accept the 33% reservation for women in Assemblies and Parliament constituencies. The fact that except the

Communist Party of India (Marxist) no political party has given 33 percent representation for women in their candidature list which shows the lack of political will among the political parties and their lackadaisical attitude towards women's participation in politics.



The Self Help Groups are being exploited and misused for political advantages of the ruling political party and diverted from the

motive of economic empowerment of women. The Government promoted liquor shops have further ruined the lives of women adding misery to women's financial situation and increasing the domestic violence.

During the distribution of flood relief materials to the victims in Chennai the administrative inefficiency have claimed the lives of 42 people. The targeting of women in birth control and re-canalizing of tsunami victims are other issues worrying womanhood.

The Prevention of Atrocities Act should be implemented to find justice to Dalit women. Free distribution of food in the temples under the State scheme attracted criticisms. The conference arrived at some consensus as detailed below:

Women will support the party which would work towards concrete alternatives to counter the issues of landlessness, unemployment and continuing migration of women.



The party which promises equal wages to equal work for women unorganized workers will be supported by women.

The party work towards eliminating female infanticide and female feticide and work towards the development of the rights of girl child will be supported by women.

The election manifestos currently put forth by the political parties are in variably superficial in nature raising to address the basic issues of women. They do not suggest

any alternate paradigm for the real progress of the people.

Different opinions and concepts evolved during the discussion. The important suggestions were;

- Exercise free franchise.
- Choose candidates on their merit irrespective of their political affiliation.
- Support women and Dalit candidates.
- If no meritorious candidate in the contest, support the lesser evil.
- If no satisfaction on any of the contesting candidate then boycott the election.

Finally the question that came up on the floor was "Why not starts a women's political party?" But the basic question remain "is there a need for a women's political party" with that thought provoking question, the conference was concluded.

Two thousand five hundred women from 24 districts of Tamil Nadu participated. The 'Manitham', 'Viduthalai Cultural Team' performed cultural actions with specific focus on the forth coming assembly election in relation to the importance of Women's Political participation.



Media coverage

WOMEN'S MEET DISCUSSES POLITICAL ISSUES

Over 2,500 women from all over Tamil Nadu participated in a meeting on Monday to discuss political issues concerning them in the forthcoming Assembly elections.

At the meeting organized by the Tamil Nadu Women's Forum and the Tamil Nadu Dalit Women's Movement, speakers analyzed the manifestos of different political parties and the work implemented and left undone by the party workers in the past five years.

Speakers exhorted women to think and vote on their own, Burnad Fatima, coordinator of the Tamil Nadu Women's Forum, said.

Referring to areas where the "State Government had worked against women," Ms. Fatima said penury drove over 60 people to commit suicide after the suspension of road workers.

The participants were asked to consider factors like the use of women's self help groups for political purposes and the introduction of mechanization in villages that resulted in loss of employment avenues for women, before casting their vote.

The Forum volunteers said they would vote for a party that implemented total prohibition, supported distribution of land benefiting women and implementation of laws that prevented violence against Dalits.

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WOMEN POLITICAL AWARENESS CONFERENCES REPROACH JAYALALITHA'S GOVERNMENT AN IMPEDIMENT ON DALIT WOMEN PROGRESS

The State Level Women's Political Awareness Conference reproach the present Jayalalitha's government is an impediment on the progress of the Dalit women. The conference which was organized in Chennai on April 17th has pointed out that Jayalalitha government has not supporting the elected Dalit, Dalit women leaders to function freely in local Panchayats (Local Governance). The present AIADMK government is utilizing the self-help groups for its political gains.

Jointly organized by the Tamil Nadu Women's Forum and Tamil Nadu Dalit Women's Movement claimed that Tsunami Relief was not property distributed and the women were neglected. No medical facility to attend to women's need was available in the Tsunami rehabilitation camps. Village women do not get medical support. Even gynecological assistant was denied to women.

The meeting demanded that the party, which promotes Democratic credentials, will be supported. Women were encouraged to exercise their franchise with free will. The women who were attending the conference demanded the political parties to ensure distribution of land to women, employment, and equal wage for equal work. The 82 widows of road workers, who have died of hunger and poverty due to the dismissed from the service by the present government should be given appointment in the government on compassionate grounds. Panjami land is to be distributed to women. The conference proclaimed support to political party, which work towards abolishing two-glass system of untouchability in Tamil Nadu. The individual freedom of speech expression should be respected. During Natural calamities women should be prioritized for relief. To monitor sexual harassment on women, committees are to be formed. Stop female infanticide and foeticide and support the development of Girl children. Women will support the party, which fulfils the above demands. This meeting was presided by Burnad Fatima and speakers like Prof. Saraswathi, Sheelu and Ursula spoke on the occasion.

(Translated from Tamil)

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