

## CECOEDECON

Centre for Community Economics and Development Consultants Society (CECOEDECON) is a non-profit and non-governmental organization, engaged in a variety of development, research and advocacy activities. its mission is to facilitate the processes of empowerment of partner communities - dalits, indigenous people, the landless, small and marginal farmers, deprived women and children - through both direct and indirect interventions, so that they are able to take action independently and effectively to secure their long-term well being.



SWARAJ Bhavan, F-159-160,  
Industrial & Institutional Area Sitapura,  
Jaipur-302022, Rajasthan, INDIA  
Tel.: 91-141-2771488/2771855/3294834-36  
Fax: 91-141-2770330  
email: sharad\_jp1@sancharnet.in  
cecoedecon@indiatimes.com

PAIRVI (Public Advocacy Initiatives for Rights & Values in India) is a non-profit advocacy Support organization, which seeks to facilitate and strengthen social advocacy in North and Central India. Pairvi's goal is to promote peoples agenda by creating a supportive climate for advocacy efforts across the region. PAIRVI believes in facilitating positive social change through non-violent means, informing both the public and those who frame public policy. It is committed to enhance capacity of grassroots organization in human rights practice and advocacy with the objective of strengthening human rights infrastructure.



G-30, First Floor,  
Lajpat Nagar-3, New Delhi-110024  
Ph.: 011-29841266, 65151897  
email: pairvidelhi@rediffmail.com,  
pairvidelhi1@gmail.com  
Website: www.pairvi.org

## Dalits in Election Manifestos in India; Who Cares



April 2009

Published by PAIRVI

On behalf of hundred of millions of struggles for dignity and against atrocity

Along with

- Adivasi Adhikar Manch (*Madhya Pradesh*)
- Alliance for Dalit Raights (*Maharashtra*)
- Ambedkar Mahasabha (*Uttar Pradesh*)
- CECOEDECON (*Rajasthan*)
- Centre for Dalit Human Rights (*Rajasthan*)
- Dalit Adhikar Manch (*Jharkhand*)
- Dalit Dasta Virodhi Andolan (*Punjab*)
- Dalit Kashta Nivaran Samiti (*Haryana*)
- Development Initiative (*Orissa*)
- Institute for Dalit Rights (*Kerala*)
- Jansahas (*Madhya Pradesh*)
- Lok Vikas Sansthan (*Bihar*)
- Mazdoor Kisan Samiti (*Jharkhand*)
- National Conference of Dalit Organizations (*New Delhi*)
- Nidan (*Bihar*)
- PAIRVI (*New Delhi*)
- Prayas Gramin Vikas Samiti (*Uttar Pradesh*)
- Safai Karmachari Andolan (*Punjab*)
- Sahariya Mukti Morcha (*Madhya Pradesh*)
- Uttaranchal Development Institute (*Uttarakhand*)
- VIKALP (*Orissa*)
- VIZTHUGAL (*Tamilnadu*)

surprisingly all the political parties are unanimous in providing reservation in the private sector. One wonders then how and why it was stalled during the current Lok Sabha?

The present document offers a small peep into the thinking of scheme of political parties going into the election and even beyond that. This effort seeks to educate dalit brethren, civil society and everybody concerned and sensitive and caste their ballot based on the call of their conscience. The analysis reaches an inevitable conclusion which asks for more as we deserve more. Give us safety and security and equality of opportunity. Do not give us pre-determination of fate; give us the chance to draw our fate. Do not give us perfunctory promises; give us what belongs to us, a people, a country, and a future.

-----

Come election time and every political party have a host of goodies to offer almost everybody. Before we could go onto the next question that how sincere these parties are in terms of providing what they promise, there is another question that is of extreme relevance, the concern of major political parties with dalits. How important is the issue of social, economic and political integration of dalits. What are their views on urgent issues of personal safety and security of dalits and especially dalit women and children, sizeable majority of them still being under guised tutelage and bondage. How important is the complete abolition of manual scavenging? How prominently the issues of land rights of dalits figure in their commitments. How vocal they are with issues of dalits dying with hunger? How forthright they would be in dealing with making available those rights of equality before law and equality of opportunity that the Constitution of India promises to every citizen including dalits. In the history of electoral politics in India, dalits are supposed to be dumb driven herds which can be lured with show of a perfunctory concern, and some talk here and there on their social and economic revival. Though supposed to be numerically strong, and a possible vote bank which has the potential to swerving political fortunes along with them and turning psephology of all poll pundits topsy turvy, the history witnessed that political parties have failed to be accountable to the promises made by them to the electorate and mainly dalits.

The ruling Indian National congress has a section which talks about “greater impetus to the empowerment of weaker sections of the society. The weaker section has been defined at Sc, ST, OBC, minorities and women. It promises free primary, secondary and university education to boys and girls belonging to dalit and adivasi communities. It also talks about coaching fee for all entrance exams for at least one lakh SC/ST students to be paid by the central government per year. National scholarship for boys and girls belonging to SC/ST is also proposed to be raised. INC also talks about ensuring Special component Plan and Tribal Sub plan to be made proportionate to the percentage in the population. Affirmative action in private sector has been taken from CMP. Besides, Cong Manifesto also seeks to ensure comprehensive social security to those at special risk including members designated as most backward dalit communities.

BJP focuses on tangible “development and empowerment” it would boost opportunities for entrepreneurship and commerce among dalits, OBCs and other deprived sections. It promises to firmly deal with atrocities against dalits, tribals and weaker sections of the society. It also promises special education facilities, water, health, sanitation and hygiene for all families, habitations, and creation of an extremely backward Communities Development bank for promoting skill enhancement through learn and earn schemes.

The manifesto of the CPI has a section on dalits and Adivasis, which promises that the SC and the ST (Reservation in posts and services) Bill 2008 will be replaced by a new Act with provisions of reservations in all educational institutions and in all classes of posts. Affirmative action in private sector is guaranteed to the extent that MNCs not adhering to this would have to lose tax concessions. Reservation for all dalits irrespective of their religion is also promised. It also promises to ensure programmes for social and economic development of dalits which would include their education, health, livelihood, poverty alleviation, housing and other basic amenities by implementing sub plans for Sc St in the planning process.

The manifesto of the CPIM is the most comprehensive in the sense that it does not deal with dalits, ST, Minorities with the same sweeping treatment. It promises to ensure stringent action against untouchability and atrocities against SC. Increasing allocations under special component plan, launching minor irrigation for unirrigated lands of dalits and adivasis, extending reservations to dalit Christians and muslims, reservation in the private sector, filling backlogs of appointments in the reserved categories, scrapping the SC ST (Reservation in Posts and services Bill, etc are other promises that CPIM makes to its electorates. Besides, increasing scholarships, and hostel facilities and curb drop out rate among the SCs have caught its attention in terms of priority with regard to SC ST. Total liberation and rehabilitation of manual scavengers. To the STs it offers filling all vacancies for reserved posts, extending reservation in private sector, protecting land rights and restricting land alienated illegally, implementing forests rights Act (2006) in toto, including other forests dwellers on a more reasonable definition, expanding PDS, drinking water facilities, health centres, schools and hostels in the tribal areas. In addition to this, OBCs are offered 27% reservation in central

educational institutions, and extending them in private education institutions, strengthening National Commission for backward classes and simplifying procedures for issuing OBC certificates.

The NCP offers full flow of funds for the SCP and TSP, prioritization of intensive implementation of poverty alleviation programmes in areas of SC ST concentration. Their habitations to be provided safe drinking water, primary health care, primary education and shelter, and special recruitment drives for STs. An exclusive commission for SC& ST with constitutional status is also promised. Distribution of land to all the landless people among the schedule castes and ST communities to be implemented within a stipulated time frame has also been offered. OBCs have also been offered scholarships, 27% reservation, pre-examination coaching and up gradation of traditional skills.

All the political parties look equally unprepared in their promises to dalits, their promises perfunctory and their intentions doubtful. A majority of them have done it just for the sake of “incorporating something on dalits and SC STs” in their agenda, failing to realize how discerning the dalit community now is. Some of the parties just seem to have yielded to election related advocacy of dalit groups and “picking and choosing” from plethoras of issues provided to them and giving some space to dalit issues in their manifesto. Some of the parties have also promised a ‘magic wand’ by which they would provide “education, sanitation, health, employment, and credit facilities”. They seem to be totally in haste to lure dalits with promises without being able to grasp the reality of implications for providing all the services to all dalits and ST all the services at once. Most of the parties seem to be completely dispossessed of adequate research or even basic facts regarding dalits issues. Some have touched the real issues in terms of offering redistribution of surplus land, and restoring lands having lost through illegal alienation in case of STs. We hope that they are sincere in this and are promising this not as a placebo, but doing this with complete realization of the fact that how critically necessary that is for social reconstruction.

It is surprising to see that all the political parties have addressed the issue of reservations in their manifesto. Presumably, they are compelled to do that as it is looked at as the most effective way of fetching votes. More