

Women's and Transgender Communities'  
Manifesto released on the occasion of  
early elections to the Telangana  
Assembly in 2018

Demanding Women's Rights,  
Comprehensive Gender sensitive policies  
and Empowerment of All Women

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**Women's and Transgender Communities' Joint Action  
Committee**

## Background

The movement for the Telangana State reflected the democratic spirit and aspirations of all the communities of Telangana society. Along with the known communities of Dalits, Bahujans, Muslims and Women, many other communities and social classes came together to lead the statehood movement resulting in the formation of the Telangana State. Most importantly, this movement brought together the women from rural and urban areas, women from artisan and agricultural labour communities and the poor, middle class and rich women as well as cis and trans women onto a single platform. They hoped that the oppression and dominance that they have been subjected to for generations would end with the formation of this State. In fact, the Indian Constitution provides the necessary democratic and secular framework for the liberty, independence, fraternity that we aspire to. Article 3, 15 (2) and 17 of the fundamental rights chapter not only guarantee civil rights without any discrimination on the basis of caste, region, sex and religion but enjoin the courts to guarantee and protect these rights. It explicitly prohibited untouchability.

But as we all know, these constitutionally guaranteed rights are yet to turn into actual reality. Our rights are ruthlessly suppressed in many instances. Different and new peoples' movements have emerged to demand for the protection of these constitutional rights. Dalit, Adivasi, Muslim and other minority women have won many rights in the last few decades due to these struggles. Important among them are the 73rd and 74th amendments that guaranteed one third seats to women, rights to food and education, acts that protect women from domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment. Women's movements since the 1970s have raised critical and fundamental questions about the State and the constitutionally guaranteed rights of women. They have strengthened the perspective and political vision of women, thereby providing a strong women's perspective for the movement for the Telangana statehood movement. Women played a key role in this movement that cannot be forgotten.

But what is the status of women in the Telangana State that got formed four years ago? The women of the state strongly wanted that the required infrastructure be set in place : the infrastructure for the fulfilment of women's aspirations, goals and constitutional rights. They wanted a strong framework to strengthen the role of women and protect the rights of women in a state that got formed due to a strong democratic movement. They expected that such an infrastructure would definitely be put in place. But we have been heavily disappointed. The government ran for four years without a single woman minister. Not only is the right to protest being denied but draconian acts are being used on protesters.

It is in this social and political context that we, the Dalit, Adivasi, Muslim, Transgender and all other minority women have come together to claim our space and rights in politics and decision making; proclaim our goals and expectations in all fields in a way that the political parties take cognizance of the issues that we raise and incorporate them in their election manifesto.

## **1. Political representation**

- All political parties should ensure that women from all social classes are given at least 33% of the party tickets in this election. Any political party that gets elected and forms a government should ensure that at least 33% of the ministers in the cabinet are women.

## **2. Education: access, quality and orientation**

- Education plays a key role in social change. Education should be such that it can mitigate the social, economic and cultural inequality and discrimination on the basis of region, caste, region and gender. It should be based on the fundamental rights and equality guaranteed by the Indian constitution.
- We should have a 'common school system' in which girls, young women and women can enter and make use of the educational opportunities freely and independently. Both the private and public educational systems should have similar curriculum and pedagogy. At least 10-12% of the annual budget allocation should go to education.
- Educational institutions with state of art educational standards and facilities for Dalit, Adivasi, Muslim and other minority girls should be established at the local level, closer to their homes. Measures should be taken so that girl children who have dropped out of school for various reasons can re-enter and continue their studies without any obstacles in schools. While taking special measures for such drop out children, their re-entry into the mainstream 'common school' system should be facilitated.
- Syllabus should be modified in such a way that the students learn that the Dalit, Adivasi, Muslim and Transgender and other minorities are an integral and inalienable part of the society. An expert committee should be established with social activists and educationists to monitor such changes. Teacher recruitment should be immediately done for every subject. In the school admission form, apart from F/M in the sex category, another column 'transgender/others' should be added. The facilities and standards of the government schools should be improved.
- Toilets should be built and their maintenance should be made part of the regular school administration rather than relegated to the part time workers belonging to certain exploited and oppressed social classes. Enough funds should be provided for their maintenance. In order to inculcate the culture of cleanliness, everybody in the school, from the school principal to each student should be made to clean the toilets. Such a practice should be emulated in all government and private offices without any exceptions.
- Urdu should be declared a second language and given as an optional in all the schools.
- All schools in rural and urban areas should have a playground, irrespective of the the nature of ownership. The schools should ensure that they are accessible equally and at all times to girls as much as to the boys.
- School health checkups should be restarted with immediate effect. Every school should maintain the health record of every child. Effective measures should be taken

so that the teachers, health activists and doctors work with coordination in this programme. Addressing health issues in childhood goes a long way in ensuring that the children grow into healthy adults. This is especially important for girl children. Sanitary napkins of good quality should be made available to all the girl children in the schools and hostels.

- Teachers and school administrators should be sensitized to the changes in the bodies during puberty through continuous gender sensitization workshops.
- Students should have safe transport in all rural and urban areas through safe public transport system.
- Special women's colleges for all kinds of education, regular intermediate and degree, vocational courses, nursing etc. should be established at Mandal level. Teacher training institutions should also be established with adequate staff. Every district headquarter should have a post graduate college that should be integrated with the local university. Hostel facilities should also be provided at the college.
- All Dalit, Minority, Muslim, Adivasi girls who reach the post graduate level should be provided special facilities to learn English and computer literacy. Special care should be taken so that they can complete their education without any interruption and with diligence.
- A women's university should be established with immediate effect. Scholarship disbursement should be made timely and fool proof.
- Institutional measures should be taken to ensure that the women students are not harassed sexually in schools and colleges. Special cells should be established in every school, college and university in line with the 2013 Nirbhaya Act for addressing their issues.
- Measures should be taken to document, research and curate the arts, art forms, languages of the Dalit, Bahujan, Adivasi, Muslim minorities and thereby encourage their development. Museums should be established for and through these efforts. Such museums should be built in collaboration with female and male artists and art researchers.
- Measures should be taken to ensure that the girl students get exposure and training in different art forms for which theatre and fine arts departments should be established in all educational institutions. Special colleges for this purpose should be established at the higher educational level. Adequate and effective safeguards should be established to prevent and address sexual and economic exploitation at these institutions.
- Integrated Child Development Scheme, set up to ensure food security and nutrition to children, should be strengthened and implemented to provide nutritious and healthy food to children. Locally grown produce including vegetables, greens, millets and good quality grain should be used in the preparation of this food. Safe water should be used to cook such food. Every anganwadi centre and school should be provided with a kitchen with adequate facilities and vessels. Under no circumstances should such cooking be centralized or given to private enterprises either in rural or urban areas. Children should be provided only with freshly cooked food.

- Pre-primary educational facilities should be set up in conjunction with government schools. Staff for these facilities should be increased.
- All contract teachers working in the Kasturba Girls Residential Schools should be regularized.
- All measures should be taken to ensure that the drop out rate is zero and all facilities should be taken to improve girls education.

### **3. People's Health and Health Care Facilities**

- 10% of the annual budget should be allocated towards health care. It is a fundamental right. All institutional and systemic measures should be taken to ensure that everyone who needs health care can access it. Public health care should be strengthened. Primary health care facilities should be strengthened. Recognizing that nutritious food, sanitation and public health care are integrally related to each other, immediate and concerted efforts should be made to link these departments with each other for which a nodal system should be established.
- In order to increase the effectiveness of the primary health care centres 60% of the health budget should be dedicated to them.
- A campaign to end discrimination against women with disability and transgender women should be launched at all levels of the health care system. All health care facilities should be made accessible to them. All the required health care that they need should be brought into place with immediate effect. Special training should be provided to the health care providers in addressing the special needs.
- Every hospital should have the necessary care giving facilities for transgender persons without any scope for discrimination. The necessary policy decisions should be taken to improve the expertise of the medical personnel in this field. Necessary intervention and changes should be made in medical education to bring in the required perspective including specialized courses and encouraging research. To improve the understanding of the health care personnel, regular training by transgender persons should be introduced. Financial support and facilities for cosmetic surgery, hormonal treatment, sex change operations and the required counseling should be provided free of cost to the transgender persons by the government.
- Efforts should be made to recognize and provide for the special health care and nutritional needs of children, persons with physical and mental disabilities, deserted and abandoned persons, persons with mental health problems and old people.
- Factors responsible for the falling sex ratio should be recognized and redressed in a concerted manner.
- Effort should be made to bring a qualitative change in the factors that are leading to deaths of women in child birth and deaths of newly born.

### **4. Preventing violence against women**

- Improving the representation of women in each and every field is essential to prevent all kinds of harassment and violence against women. All policy measures

should be taken to facilitate and improve the proportion of women in education, health care, insurance, banking, police, transport, law, medicine, military etc. Employers, government and private have to ensure that women constitute 50% of their workforce. The Telangana government should make a special effort to design such policies with the regional specificity in mind and allocate necessary financial resources.

- Special campaign should be taken up to stop the sexual harassment and assaults on girls and young women in the government schools and hostels by teachers, wardens and other workers.
- Girl children should always be trained in self-defence techniques. Efforts and measures to increase the physical and mental strength of the girl children should be taken up on an immediate basis.
- Syllabus should be framed to sensitize the children and teachers to gender equality.
- All possible measures should be taken to prevent violence and harassment of girls, transgender persons and women.
- Required financial allocations should be done for these measures, campaigns and steps to prevent violence against women and transgender persons.

## **5. Steps to be taken towards protection of women, girls and transgender persons in Telangana**

- Development of public transport network which is available round the clock.
- Special helplines like 108 service should be introduced for girls, women and transgender persons who find themselves in danger.
- Police personnel and medical personnel should be trained to sensitively deal with those who have been subjected to sexual violence and not humiliate them further. Such behavior should be penalized.
- Police, military and para military personnel should be prevented from sexually assaulting women and the relevant service rules should be changed as required immediately.
- The police should be prevented from slapping the activists protesting against sexual assaults with draconian anti-terrorist or anti unlawful activities acts. Such activists should be welcomed as bringing the society in line with law by the government.
- Advocating restrictions and limitations on the free movement of girls and women in the name of 'preventing violence' is a narrow and dangerous view. Anyone advocating such a view, however high position such a person may occupy, should be immediately censured and necessary legal action be taken for provoking anti-social behavior.
- Every registered instance of violence against women should be quickly investigated without partiality. FIRs and chargesheet should be filed in time. The police should take the necessary steps against the accused threatening the survivors of violence, women or transgender persons, and challenge their bail petitions. Trials should take place quickly and not get delayed by years. Fast track courts should be set up as and when necessary.
- Numbers of women prosecutors and judges should be increased substantially.

- All magistrates and judges should be given adequate training to deal sensitively with women and transgender survivors of violence and harassment.
- Notice boards should be put in the court premises about the kind of issues and aspects of sexual assault and harassment that cannot be raised during cross examination.
- Government should provide all the necessary legal, physical and mental care support to women and transgender survivors of assault and violence. If such health care is not available in the government hospitals they should be sent to private health care facilities to be provided with health care. Till they completely recover, the necessary mental health care should be provided for. When the survivors are children, more robust support should be provided for.
- Immediate measures should be taken to address the issues in NRI marriages.
- Government should issue directives to all the media outlets acting against the interests of children and transgender persons and those found violating these directives should be legally proceeded against.
- Anti people draconian laws should be immediately scrapped.
- In order to implement all these measures the government should develop a better redressal system that can take up a multi-pronged approach.

## **6.Regulate alcohol consumption**

- Unregulated alcohol consumption is one of the reasons for violence in the society. Recognizing this, the government should come out of the mindset where it sees liquor as the primary source of its revenue.
- Sale of liquor should be heavily regulated at the village level. The number of liquor shops should be drastically reduced.
- Liquor should be sold only between 10 AM to 5 PM, after which the shops should be closed.
- Regulation should be taken up as part of the social control of crime and violence.
- All the shops violating the strictures passed by the Supreme Court on the sale of liquor on high ways should be closed.
- All the shops in the close vicinity of schools, temples, bus stops, junctions and heavily populated places should be closed.
- De-addiction centres should be established at the mandal level.
- Necessary allocations should be taken for campaigns against addiction to alcohol.

## **7. Agriculture**

- Government should address the crisis in agriculture, which is possible only by recognizing the role of women in agriculture.
- Policies, decisions and measures should be taken to ensure livelihood to women in agriculture and rural areas through out the year.
- Women should be recognised as farmers. Cards recognizing women as farmers should be issued. It should be ensured that women get access to all the schemes and services meant for farmers. Their names should be recorded in the pahani/records.

- Women farmers should be provided with all rights in land, including that of development fund for land.
- Women's agricultural land should not be taken away in the name of 'public purpose'. In case it is taken away, an equally suitable land should be given to those displaced from their land.
- Dalit and Adivasi women who are assigned land should be given special support to undertake and continue farming. Single women and women from farmer suicide families also should be given special support.
- Adivasi women's land rights should be recognized in the Scheduled areas. Women's rights and community rights should be recognized under the Forest Rights Act. They should be issued within a time limit.
- Government should formulate a policy for rain fed areas in order to ensure necessary investment especially for food and millet crops in order to provide social welfare services to women workers in the agricultural sector, under the Informal workers social welfare act 2008, they should be counted and issued cards.
- Women farmer societies and cooperative societies should be set up and strengthened. The members should be trained to sustain the societies in the long term.

## **8. Urban livelihood, migration, domestic workers and homeless people**

- Shelter homes with minimum facilities should be built for all the women who migrate to the city for livelihood without a place to live or without a family.
- Women in the informal sector should be provided with all social security schemes and measures. The Telangana Social Welfare Board should be established immediately. Transgender persons, domestic workers and other women workers from other informal sector should be represented in this Board.
- There are 8 lakh women who are domestic workers across the Telangana State. Women from Adivasi, Dalit and weaker sections are predominantly represented in this sector. A majority of these women are illiterate and extremely poor and therefore unaware of the labour market in the city. Domestic work is unregulated, heavily underpaid, has terrible work conditions, prone to false allegations and trafficking, violence and harassment, does not come under any compulsory social welfare schemes and severely lacks opportunities for upward mobility. A special law needs to be brought in for their protection. Employment security should be increased. In 2011, the Indian government voted for 189 provisions of International Labour Organization's Convention that should be implemented. Minimum wages act should be publicized among these workers. They should be ensured a wage of Rs.10,000 for eight hours of work everyday. Forced labour should be abolished, especially by children.

## **8. Migrant labour to foreign countries**

- Many women are migrating to Gulf countries for livelihood without any security, information and legal protection thereby becoming prey to cheating at the hands of

the brokers and mediators. According to the Ministry of Immigration, there are 60 lakh Indian workers in countries including Gulf. According to one estimate there are around 10 lakh migrant labour from Telangana districts, especially from Karimnagar, Nizamabad, Adilabad and the Old city of Hyderabad. We need more studies of the condition of these families. According to the Immigration Act 1983, illegal traffic in labour needs to be prevented by the government. It should establish a separate ministry for such workers for which 500 crores should be allocated over a period of five years. The Telangana government should immediately conduct a survey to document the details of all the male and female workers who have gone abroad, especially to the gulf countries for work. It is noticed that at least 400 people die every year for various reasons. Some are getting their last rites in those countries and the families receive their deadbodies at the Shamshabad airport sometimes. The relatives face a lot of trouble receiving the dead bodies both from the airlines and the local police stations. A special help-desk should be established for them in the AirCargo. Free ambulance service should be provided to transport the bodies to their villages. An ex-gratia of Rs.6 lakh should be given to each of the families of the dead workers. Special measures should be taken for the health care of these migrant workers. Those seeking to go should be given adequate information, legal support and services so that they do not get into trafficking networks. Telangana government should set up insurance schemes on the lines of the one started by the Kerala government for migrant workers. Support centres also should be established in the district collectorates and revenue division offices. Brokerage system should be completely abolished. Diaspora centres should be established in all the universities in the state.

## **9. Environment, ecology and natural resources**

- Government has the responsibility to ensure that the natural resources, forests, riparian areas remain protected in the context of the development projects that it has and is taking up. It should learn lessons from the destruction in the name of development unleashed in other smaller states and not repeat their mistakes. It should not repeat the error of laying down the red carpet for unscrupulous corporate companies, mining companies, foreign capital and contractors.
- The open cast mining policy has wrecked destruction on peoples' lives, livelihoods and environment especially in the districts of Adilabad, Karimnagar and Khammam. Government should do a comprehensive study of the destructive impact and take up remedial measures.
- Equally destructive mining of hills and mountains for granite, gravel, road and house construction has spread to every nook and corner of Telangana. Geology department has washed its hands off saying that they do not come under its purview. Government should immediately put a stop to this unregulated mining and formulate a policy for the restoration of the eco system. Their protection should be given to the local panchayats.

## **10. Special Act for the protection of couples of inter caste and inter religious marriages**

- A special act should be enacted to protect the young people marrying across caste and religion from the caste, patriarchal and religious violence that they are being subjected to. Attacks on inter caste couples have significantly increased in the Telangana districts making it imperative to enact such a law. Such couples should be protected and those involved in violence against them be acted against firmly.

## **11. Social security for the children, single women, disabled people and transgender persons**

- Many children from different social classes victimized by social inequalities, political murders, domestic violence and government policies are now living without the protection of the family in dangerous conditions and circumstances. The number of such deserted and abandoned children, according to a recent survey, is approximately 30,000 in Hyderabad alone. Government should formulate a policy that ensures free education, food and shelter for such children. They should be provided all the support structures and financial resources to grow into independent adults. Measures should be taken to remove the humiliating and discriminating social behavior towards them.
- Single women are an inevitable outcome of modern society and need to be taken as a category in their own right. Whatever the reason - separated from husband, widowed, unmarried, divorced, not allowed to marry such as jogini or basavi - such women should be recognized as independent entities and issued identity cards, if necessary. Special studies should be launched to understand the wide prevalence of such women in the rural areas of Telangana. The following services should be provided to them, especially those burdened with the sole responsibility of children and older people - they should be given 25 days of minimum wages as monthly pension and provided the benefits under all social welfare policies. When such women are into agricultural work, they should be given 5 acres of land for farming and provided with all the necessary support to continue in agriculture. Temple lands should be registered in the name of joginis and pattas issued to them. They should be brought into the purview of SC/ST Atrocities Act and Prevention of Sexual Harassment in Workplaces Act in the context of the violence inflicted on them in the name of banamati.
- Special care and attention needs to be given to the women with disability for their social security, health, education and housing. They should not be discriminated. They should be provided with pension, depending on the extent of disability. A comprehensive policy should be announced for them immediately. They should be given preference in under all schemes. Structural changes should be taken in buildings housing government offices, cinema halls, super markets, schools etc to facilitate their movement. Roads should be planned in rural and urban areas to make them wheelchair friendly. Special care facilities should be provided for them in all hospitals.

- Transgender persons face acute and brutal discrimination. They are denied education and housing. They are forced to beg and sex work for living. They are constantly under attack from anti-social elements. The transgender women should be recognized as single women and provided all the benefits of social welfare policies. They should be provided educational and employment opportunities. Special toilets should be set up in public places for them. A welfare board should be set up. Special programmes to counter societal discrimination should be made and popularized. Any television programme that insults them should be immediately stopped. Anyone found attacking them mentally and physically should be immediately arrested and legally prosecuted. They should be allowed to contest elections.

## **12. Women in Handloom Industry**

- After agriculture it is the handloom industry in which women are in great number, especially in Telangana. In order to prevent suicides, increase productivity, prevent loss of livelihood, the following measures need to be taken. Looms should be registered in the name of women in all the households where women are the primary workers. If both women and men are work the loom, then women should be made primary members of the cooperative society. Those women who lack looms should be provided with financial support to purchase looms. All welfare schemes, insurance schemes and saving schemes should be done in the name of women. Responsibility of running the government yarn depots being run by the cooperative societies should be given to women's groups in the villages. Those women with health problems should be given all health care facilities.

## **13. Women journalists and their status**

- Even though women can be seen much more in the media these days, it is significant that their numbers have not crossed 10%. The numbers entering the visual media are more compared to the print media. They continue to work without any increase in wages or any promotion. To change this situation, the government has to take the following measures: women's reservation should be implemented in media. Women journalists should be given accreditation. Women should be given 50% of all positions in all press associations such as press academy. 50% budget should also be allocated to women. If both husband and wife are in the media, any house allocation should be done in the name of the wife. Women journalists should be provided employment security. Measures should be taken so that they can continue to work till the age of 58-60, like all the public servants. Government should issue orders to the media houses to provide transport to those journalists who work beyond 9 pm in the night both to attend duties or to reach home. If women journalists are injured in the line of duty they and their families should be given the necessary financial support. Every office should set up an internal complaints committee to prevent and address sexual harassment. Managements should take the necessary measures to ensure that male employees and others do not speak

humiliatingly to the journalists. A special fund should be set up for the welfare of women journalists. Special measures should be taken to protect women journalists working at village, mandal and district level. A separate press club should be set up for them in the middle of the city, as in Delhi. A reference library should also be set up with necessary facilities.

#### **14. Historic women of Telangana**

- Telangana state can boast of scores of historic women who have made the culture, politics and society as it is now. We have Sammakka and Sarakka who challenged the Kakatiyas; Rani Rudramma, the Kakatiya Queen; the queen of Bodh samsthanam Rani Sheelam Janubai; queen of Vanaparti samsthanam, Rani Shankaramma; the pioneering artist Mahlakabai Chanda; Shugra Humayun Mirza (1882-1958); Jilaani Bano (1936); Wajida Tabassum (writer); Sarojini Naidu who proudly proclaimed to be the native of the Hyderabad State (1873-1949) and her daughter who inherited that legacy, Padmaja Naidu (1900-1975); the woman who sparked off the Telangana armed struggle, Chityala Ailamma; Jamalunnisaa Bajee; Razia Begum, Mallu Swarajyam, Prameela Tai; Brijrani Gaur; Jeenat Sajida; Doodala Salamma; Komaram Sombai; the women who led the first phase of the Telangana statehood struggle T.N.Sadalakshmi, Sumitra Devi; Sangam Lakshmibai; Eshwaribai, Masooma begum (president of the AIWC 1962-64); the women who worked to ensure the health care for women such as Durre Shaver, Nilofur, Dr.Prema Sasilamani Naidu (Victoria Zenana hospital), Dr. Mercilin Lima (1899-1984); Dr.Shantabai Kirloskar, Dr.Ratnabai, Dr.Lokabai; prominent artist Chindu Ellamma; Rani Kumudini Devi (MLC and Mayor MCH), Ellapragada Sita Kumari; Vanaja Ayyangar (renowned mathematician) many of whom have been marginalized from our history.
- New studies need to be undertaken to bring out the histories and contributions of these women. A separate academy should be established for this purpose in which Dalit Bahujan Minority women should play a key role.
- The life histories of these women need to be written. They should be introduced into the syllabus at various levels to inspire and motivate the future generation of women and men.
- Hospitals, parks, awards should be named after them. Their statues should be set up in public places.