

## **Draft Declaration by AIPLCF and All India Student and Youth Organisation against Hindutva Communalism**

### **Let us Organize against Communalism – Unite all Secular, Progressive and Democratic Forces with a Clear-cut Programme of Action for a Peoples' Movement for Enlightenment.**

After dark Middle Ages there was an era of enlightenment, an age of reason in Europe. It was an intellectual and cultural movement that emphasized reason over superstition and science over blind faith. Its main task was to achieve individual liberty and religious tolerance. It questioned the established beliefs and was in favour of reason and scientific proof. It subjected everything to testing and rational analysis.

Today in our country instead of continuing the spirit of age of reason our rulers are taking us again into dark Middle Ages. They are dividing people on the basis of religion, region and caste. They are propagating irrationalism in each and every aspect.

In this background we feel that launching of another renaissance movement is necessary to attack the obscurantist activities of our rulers. A peoples' movement for spreading enlightenment is the need of the hour. A programme of action for such a movement is suggested here.

We have to 'champion the issues against social oppression. Hindutva denies equal rights to women and creates conditions to mount vicious attacks by justifying gender subjugation. As the Hindutva ideology is embedded in the caste system and patriarchy, the struggle against caste and women's oppression will be an important arena in our fight against Hindutva communalism. We have to mobilise dalits, women, tribals and minorities in a big way on the basis of the demand for socio-economic justice as they are the main victims of the RSS Manuvadi Dharma policy. For this, we have to develop organisational work in Adivasi areas and among Dalits to counter the multifarious activities of the RSS outfits. Only through this, we can counter Sangh's strategy of manipulation for co-opting weaker sections into its fold. People and organisations that conduct anti-caste campaigns and promote inter-caste marriages are to be encouraged.

We have to actively counter the offensive attacks of Hindutva groups who mount a vicious campaign of hate and terror and launch fascist attacks particularly on religious minorities. Utmost vigilance must be maintained to resist attempts to communalise public spaces both at the macro and micro-level.

Muslim religious leaders and fundamentalist forces also do not like our secular activities among Muslims. Even when they are inclined to be friendly with us on some occasions like

the recent opposition to NRC/CAA, they always try to keep ordinary Muslims away from us. To overcome this, apart from political interventions and ideological work, the only way to build contacts with the Muslim masses is undertaking extensive social service work and helping individuals and organisations that are doing social reform work in the community.

### **Ideological Battle**

An intense ideological battle is necessary to counter the insidious, all pervading, media driven as well as mouth to ear RSS and its affiliates' communal campaign.

- a) Ideological and political material in popular style must be prepared for use in the campaign to expose the reactionary and divisive nature of Hindutva and other forms of communalism. We have to set up dedicated groups for this purpose. Discussions, public meetings, pamphleteering and similar other forms of campaign activities are to be conducted regularly and extensively. Intervention in social media has become an important arena to fight the communal propaganda of Hindutva forces.
- b) Research centres and trusts run by the progressive sections and mass organisations should be deployed to gather all intellectual and cultural resources for the ideological fight against the communal forces; and intellectuals, historians, scientists and cultural personalities and their organisations should be mobilised to set up joint platforms against communalism.
- c) Initiatives to counter the propaganda of the RSS at pre-school and school level should be taken up with the help of teachers and organisations of social and science movements. Balotsavs should be organised in all towns. Already we have some experiences in this regard is very useful and it is a good way to reach the young minds at the school level.
- d) The RSS through its various frontal bodies is running tens of thousands of schools starting from the pre-school to the higher secondary level. We have to take the initiative to set up schools which are run by educational trusts, registered societies or cooperatives to counter the activities of RSS-run bodies.
- e) Promoting the rational way of studying Indian history should be an important area for fighting Hindutva communal forces. We should be active in history congresses at all India, state and district levels. In every state we should promote amateur historians to confront the RSS which systematically promotes distortion of the local histories to help its communal politics.

### **Science and Rationalist Activities**

We have to 'promote the organisation of popular science movements to combat the growing obscurantism, superstition, irrationality and blind faith by promoting a secular scientific thinking based on rationality. This is necessary to counter the irrational activities of the Hindutva brigades.

Popular science movement should take up activities to combat the pernicious, obscurantist ideas and values spread by the communal forces. Scientists, rationalists, magicians, and their organisations can be mobilised for this purpose. Mobile magic and ventriloquism shows should be organised with the help of teachers and magicians in schools.

Special efforts should be made to promote science, scientific spirit and rationalism among children and youth. Periodic science festivals, amateur magician shows should be organised.

### **Tasks and Programme of Action**

It is crucial to wage a struggle in the domain of culture, for; it is at the centre of communal mobilisation today.

- a) Religious festivals are being used to communalise the masses. We should not leave those occasions to communal forces. We should intervene in such a way as to prevent communalisation of these festivals and to utilise those occasions to expand the secular space. De-communalising cultural practices across faiths and beliefs is one of the important tasks of fighting communal forces. Religious development incorporates two components, faith and culture. Faith is religious and culture is secular. We should appropriate the secular cultural tradition.
- b) We should evolve alternative secular festivals in which all common people can participate. These festivals should be conducted in such a way that they should become venues of social gathering for families and an occasion to enjoy wholesome, healthy and progressive entertainment. For example, May Day, Adivasi Freedom Fighters, Human Rights Day, International Women's Day, Bhagat Singh's martyrdom day etc. may be chosen as occasions of celebrations.
- c) Mass organisations should make social and cultural activities an integral part of their activities at the grass root level. At local level, decentralized secular cultural activities – folk arts, music, literature, environment should be given importance to involve the common masses. Through this, we have to propagate progressive, secular and scientific attitudes among the sections represented by them.
- d) Trade unions and other area based mass organisations and basti and community-based organisations should coordinate and organise cultural activities in residential localities.  
Special attention must be paid to organise cultural events to combat "the spread of pernicious Hindutva casteist and obscurantist values among dalits and Adivasis by highlighting the composite culture of Indian society.
- e) The organisation should promote setting up of broad-based cultural platforms for the protection of progressive and secular values and cultural productions.
- f) We should organise special activities on the anniversaries of all great public personalities like writers, freedom fighters, and scientists etc, involving all the organisations interested in the occasion.
- g) Our study centres/cultural forums should promote regular youth festivals at all levels.
- h) Youth activities like sports, games and arts should be promoted. Youth are to be involved in humanitarian and service activities.
- i) We should build a youth volunteer force to physically retaliate attacks by conservative forces. These volunteers can also be in carrying out **social service and relief activities whenever necessary.**

j) Rural folk artists should be mobilized and regular folk festivals should be organised. Most of these artists come from downtrodden sections. Our mass organisations working in rural areas have to take initiative in this respect. The folk artistic forms can be used to conduct campaigns with secular content.

k) We can organise short films, painting and photography events and exhibitions as festivals by mobilising young, amateur practitioners. Our study centres may act as the organisers.

In the fields of health and education, we should build popular movements. The RSS and the Hindutva communal forces are very active in the education sector. We must take the initiative to intervene in the educational sphere to create and propagate the secular, democratic, syncretic content in education promoting scientific temper.

We have to transform the struggle against communalism into a struggle for secularism. Secularisation of civil society is an important way of fighting communalism. Efforts should be made to build and strengthen secular communities at the local level on the basis of materialistic and secular activities to oppose attempts of homogenisation on the basis of religion by the communal forces. We need neighbourhood communities cutting across caste and religion. For this new platforms and new forms have to be created. Joint platforms are to be built with secular, democratic and progressive forces for a wider mobilisation against communalism. Such platforms, however, **should not be seen as the basis for electoral alliances.**

Unlike the RSS which is funded by corporate capital, we have to find resources for funding our social service and cultural activities from the people at large, and also from well-meaning individuals, institutions and businesses. Class mass organisations also have to come forward to help these activities financially, at least those related to their own sections.