A manifesto for justice that has sprung from crises

India

“People’s Manifesto for a Just, Equitable and Sustainable India”

India's growing demand for basic policy level shifts to support such alternative approaches. Hope lies in the many initiatives to resist the forces of destruction, and to construct a change in consciousness among citizens.

The People’s Manifesto

The ‘People’s Manifesto for a Just, Equitable and Sustainable India’ attempts to resist the forces of destruction, and to construct a change in consciousness among citizens. It was compiled by a People’s Assembly at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore and by the People’s Assembly on Ecology and Development (PAED) at the National Centre for Performing Arts, Mumbai. The manifesto is a ten-step plan for change.

The manifesto makes a case for moving towards a society of dignified, remunerative livelihoods based on agriculture or other land-based approaches. Its website, has stories of rural revival, leading to settlements, meaningful education and health security, locally empowered decision-making, and a firewood and water movement.

As Indians, we have the opportunity to make a better and more sustainable India. Our democracy and markets are indicative of the growing malaise and the despair of large sections of our society.

The manifesto is aimed at the general election 2024 but also at various local to national issues. There are other recommendations spread over 25 pages, summarised as a 21-point charter. This includes greater allocation for helping the poor, and special considerations for women. It also advocates for a national park system, and conservation of natural resources.

The manifesto asks to roll back the weakening of environmental impact assessment and forest clearance processes, and introduce impact assessment of sectors, such as energy. It also demands curbs on the enormous black economy.

Many decades ago, the Adivasi village, Mendha Lekha of Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra, stated: “we elect the government in Delhi, but in our village we are the masters.”

As citizens of India, we need to be much more alert and pro-active, demanding that elected representatives implement them.

The manifesto asks for forums of dialogue and restoring co-operation and belief amongst all citizens for the safety of all. It expresses concern about inter-faith and inter-ethnic conflicts, hate speech, and the 2013 National Security Act.

India is referred to as a ‘superpower’ in global documents. There is a growing demand for basic policy level shifts to support alternative approaches. The reform of our economy, education, health, and environment is needed.

In about a decade, Vikalp Sangam has convened over 30 physical assemblies, published over 15 volumes, and has begun the process of creating an online library. It is a growing movement of people who resist the destruction of the environment, of the economy, and the destruction of the fundamental democratic rights.

The Vikalp Sangam Manifesto is infused with these notions of direct and accountable seeds, knowledge, water, and land to achieve nutritional security. Residents’ associations are being formed to take charge of collectively managed natural and social resources. These associations have been created in 27 villages across nine Indian states and are in the making.

The manifesto is the outcome of the multi-decade process of thepledged effort to transform the “People’s Assembly on Ecology and Development” into a “People’s Assembly for Life.”

There are over 85 movements that are now united in the ‘People’s Manifesto for a Just, Equitable and Sustainable India’. They have united to create a shared awareness of the crisis and to demand a new kind of society.

The process at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore has far exceeded its original objective. It has led to the publication of the manifesto and to the formation of the People’s Assembly on Ecology and Development at the National Centre for Performing Arts, Mumbai. The manifesto is a call to arms for all Indians to resist the forces of destruction and to work towards a just, equitable, and sustainable India.