

“Defend Women’s Democratic Rights”

International Women’s Day 2018.

As we celebrate International Women’s Day we take stock of our conditions at present and the host of challenges confronting us.

In India we are facing an all out attack on our rights, not only as women and citizens, but most crucially, on the Indian Constitution itself, by the ruling BJP and its mentor - the RSS. Our rights were won with the active participation of women, along with workers, peasants, students, toiling people and other sections in the anti –colonial struggle for freedom, in pre Independence times. The struggles have continued and have intensified, in the past twenty five years, during which period our rights have been eroded by the pursuit of neoliberal policies adopted by successive governments at the centre. During the past few years, this process has been accelerated by the forces of communalism, which seek to impose the Hindutva ideology on us and turn our country into a Hindu Rashtra.

Women are being recast in the traditional roles of wives and mothers, while their economic and social contribution is being suppressed by the right wing forces. The leaders of the RSS and fringe elements are pronouncing fat was on what girls should wear, where they can go, whom they can talk to, whom they can marry, how many children a woman must have etc. RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat said that women should not go out for work but give birth to children and look after house. Elected representatives of BJP are publically giving speeches against the women’s freedom to choose their education livelihood and whom they can marry. Inter religious marriages are termed as “love jihad” and opposed openly. Couples are being murdered and it is justified by right wing political leaders. These are all utilised to advance vote bank politics based on communal and casteist divide.

The fundamentalists in other religions are also reciprocating with similar kind of fat was against the women.

Even as wives and mothers they are denied rights, domestic violence is on the increase and sex selective abortions continue unabated. Violence against women and children has been increasing steeply with scant regard for the right of women to a safe environment at work, in public spaces and in the domestic sphere.

Other bourgeois parties and leaders also have patriarchal views on women’s role in society. In the discussion of violence against women such people often argue that ‘women shall not go out late’, ‘shall not wear such clothes’ etc always putting the blame on the victim.

Women cannot face these attacks, cannot gain equality without economic security. This is the cornerstone of our struggle for progress and emancipation. But it is this very crucial economic security which is under severe attack, by the corporates and their cronies in government, in a crisis ridden capitalist system. In India the changes in labour laws have reversed the gains made through decades of struggle by the working class and the rights of women workers have been curtailed, all in the name of “Ease of doing business”. The Union Budget 2018-19 is another illustration of pandering to the corporates under a veil of populist slogans.

It is equally important to fight the patriarchal ideology. It is very important to fight the ruling ‘hindutva’ forces and expose them to defend our democratic rights as citizens.

All over the world, in many countries, right wing forces and regimes are rearing their ugly heads, but at the same time the resistance to them from the working people is also growing apace. There are anti imperialist struggles taking place in different countries. We stand firmly in solidarity with the struggles of women and people for their democratic rights, the world over.

This past year has witnessed unprecedented, huge struggles of scheme workers, workers and employees, farmers and the peasantry, in our country, of which we have been a part. Some demands have been achieved but there are many more to be won. It is important to assert the equal democratic rights of the women and girls at every field. Resistance at all levels shall be developed against the patriarchy and politics of hatred to defend the unity of the people. It is important to bring to focus, the real issues of the people.

We pledge to continue our efforts to unite the widest sections of women and the working people in our own country for even bigger and wider struggles. We reiterate our commitment to continue our fight until we achieve our goal of emancipation and a society free from exploitation, carrying on the glorious traditions of International Women’s Day.

Long Live International Womens Day!
Long Live Working Class Unity!

Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU)