



## **Vision Swaraj: An Agenda for India**

**(A document to generate democratic dialogue for alternative politics)**

**Swaraj Abhiyan**

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

On Behalf of Swaraj Abhiyan (SA), we hereby present a draft version of the Vision Swaraj: an Agenda for India to generate a democratic dialogue to shape an inclusive politics and vision agenda for India.

Politics of the country—with its deeper contestations—is growingly degenerating. People deserve better politics and governance to lead better lives. Indian political parties operate in vacuum—none of them have a programme-oriented vision or programmatic ideologies. They are driven by election oriented politics in India.

SA believes an inclusive and democratic participation in shaping the Vision for India Agenda, and we invite and encourage all your ideas, opinion, comments and feedback to strengthen further the policy position of each area of the Vision for India Agenda.

We urge you to take initiative to organise public debates, consultation and seminars in your respective areas on issues of concerns and contribute to the process of shaping the Vision document.

We also do invite and appreciate to have various translations in Indian languages of the Vision document to enable the participation of the people across the nation.

In solidarity,

Policy Cell,  
Swaraj Abhiyan

**PS: We do invite your response/suggestions/insights in writing to us:**

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## **A. Swaraj in Democratic Governance: Restoring Power to the People**

In a democracy, ultimate power must reside with the people. The working of democracy, especially in our country, has served to take this power away from the people. Swaraj Abhiyan has come into being in order to restore this power back to the people. That is what we mean by Swaraj or self-rule in the political domain. Swaraj Abhiyan stands for people's control over their destiny, for people's power to decide on matters concerning their well-being and for their right to direct the apparatus of government and hold the rulers accountable.

Sixty seven years after independence, the promise of Swaraj is yet to be redeemed. Democracy has been reduced to a tiresome routine that involves electing the rulers once in five years, while being subject to their indifference and various indignities during this period. Political parties and people's elected representatives are no longer channels for expressing people's voices. They have become election machines with their own vested interests. These machines are designed to gather votes and use them as fodder to convert money into power, and power back into money. It is not just the system has rampant corruption, but the system itself embodies institutionalised corruption. Representative democracy holds out an illusory promise of good governance, but that is no substitute for self-governance.

Swaraj Abhiyan does not believe that the present system of governance can deliver Swaraj to people even if run by honest and efficient functionaries. A corruption-free India is not possible without radical restructuring of our political system. The present system of distant, over-centralised and unaccountable decision-making must give way to a system where power is exercised directly by the people, decision-making is brought closer to the people, and representatives and state functionaries are made accountable to the people. Such a radical restructuring would involve radical devolution of power from the centre to the village/neighbourhood, reducing the scale of government down to smaller states or district, expanding the scope for people's direct participation in policy-making. It would also entail wide-ranging electoral reforms and reforms to make administration, police and judiciary transparent, responsive and accountable.

### **A. 1 Radical Devolution of Power**

In our country the pyramid of power stands on its head; it needs to be inverted by restoring maximum decision-making power to the primary unit, the unit closest to the people. In this respect, Swaraj means that people have complete authority to take all such decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods. The power rests equally with all people, who shall have an opportunity to exercise it with equal dignity and respect, based on the following principles:

- Locus of decision-making must be shifted back to the primary unit (village or urban neighbourhood), as close to the people as possible.
- Any secondary unit (like district or state) or tertiary unit (like the central government) should exercise only those powers that cannot be meaningfully and effectively exercised by a smaller unit.
- As far as possible, all matters should be settled by face-to-face decision-making by the local community without the mediation of representatives.

- Decisions involving aggregation above the level of primary units should involve representatives, who are effectively accountable to the people.
- Mandatory and effective participation of women, numeric minorities and socially marginalised groups is a must at each level of decision-making.

### **Our Policy Position:**

- i. Existing two-tier system (Central and state governments) with a notional third tier to be replaced by six levels of governance each with constitutionally mandated powers: Village/urban neighbourhood, Cluster, Block, District, State and Centre. This would need to be reworked in urban areas to take into account participation in place of residence and place of livelihood, as well as the existence of a large, mobile population.
- ii. Primary Units (Village/ Urban Neighbourhood): Gram Sabha (GS) or Mohalla/Ward Sabha (MS/WS) (People’s Assembly of the primary unit) to have effective decision-making powers including power to raise revenue, settle disputes, sufficient and flexible funds and functionaries accountable to these units.
- iii. Secondary Units (Cluster and Block): Representative governance to begin at the level of Cluster (comprising 10 villages or neighbourhoods) and Block (comprising about 10 Clusters). The boundaries of Cluster and Block to be aligned with eco-regional landscape, panchayati raj boundaries and representation to ensure proportionate presence of women, numeric minorities and socially marginalised groups.
- iv. Ensure that the financial responsibility, like tax collection and expenditures on government programs, executed at a given tier of governance lies with the tier executing and implementing the same.
- v. Some specific policy illustrations that achieve the aforementioned goals are:
  - a. Primary units to receive a substantial portion of their funds in an ‘untied’ manner, so that they have the ability to use them according to their own needs and priorities rather than decisions being taken by the Planning Commission and distant governments.
  - b. Quorum in the Gram Sabha would not be only numerical but based on the presence of adequate members of marginalised groups such as women and Dalits.
  - c. Social Justice Ombudsman (SJO) at the district level to ensure that decisions and proceedings of GS/MS are within the constitutional framework. SJO can be called (or have suo moto powers) to observe or video-record proceedings of GS/MS where there are concerns of social oppression, as well as repeal unconstitutional decisions.

### **Questions to be discussed:**

- I. Should the decision-making in Gram Sabha, etc. be based on a majority vote or should there be a higher threshold to ensure broad based consensus?

- II. Should taxes be collected and utilised by the decentralised primary units, or is it better done in a centralised manner with mandatory (non-discretionary) transfer to the primary and secondary units?
- III. Should GS/MS have law-making powers, as long as they are within the framework of the constitution and do not have an impact on those who live outside the area of the GS/MS?

## **A. 2 Scaling down: District Government and Smaller States**

Radical devolution must be accompanied by reducing the effective scale of representative governance. Currently, most policy decisions concerning people's well-being are taken at the level of State, which are usually very large, populous and therefore, unwieldy. Devolution of power can resolve only part of the problem, as a lot of decisions would need to be taken beyond the secondary level of governance. We propose that scaling down is achieved by the following radical ideas:

- Redesign of the scale of tertiary units of governance.
- Proposing an elected government at the District level that can perform most functions of the States.
- Re-organising the Indian Union into smaller states.

### **Our Policy Position:**

- i. **District Governments:** Districts to have a directly elected government, with a Legislature and a political executive of its own, which is accountable to the people and not to the State or Central Government. Most subjects in the State List to be transferred to a new District List in the Constitution. District government should have constitutionally mandated power for resource generation or share in national tax resources, and to control District cadre of government employees. Colonial institution of the district magistrate/collector should be abolished in favour of Chief Secretary for the District who will assist the elected district government.
- ii. **Smaller States:** Demands for making governments responsive and accountable, need for redressing administrative inefficiencies and popular aspirations have set the stage for a new phase of States Reorganisation. A second States' Reorganisation Commission should look at carving out smaller states in the Indian Union. The principle of linguistic states need not be abandoned, but the formulation of 'One Language, One State' followed outside Hindi speaking states can now give way to a revised formulation of 'One State, One Language'. Thus, each state will have one principal language, but some of the bigger languages could have more than one State in line with popular demands, regional identities and administrative rationale.

### **Questions to be discussed:**

- I. Do we need both smaller states *and* district government or is it okay to retain the existing states if district governments become functional and effective?

### **A. 3 Electoral Reforms**

While our country has achieved a system of free and fair elections in a minimum sense of the term, the mechanism of political representation does not offer meaningful and substantive choices to the citizens, nor does it provide a level playing field for political competition. We need wide-ranging electoral reforms that would deepen democratic upsurge and are compatible with the model of political Swaraj. This would involve:

- Expanding the range of choices available for voters.
- Fine-tuning the existing method of electing representatives.
- Ensuring fair and equal access to information and resources.
- Strengthening mechanism for free and fair conduct of elections.

#### **Our Policy Position:**

- i. Election Commissioners should be appointed by a multi-member constitutional committee rather than the government. The Election Commission to be granted the various powers it has been demanding for its independent functioning including power to frame rules.
- ii. Role of Black Money should be curbed by strong disclosure norms for political parties, rigorous scrutiny of returns, ceiling on individual contributions, merging the party and individual expenditure for purposes of ceiling on expenditure and realistic ceiling on their overall expenditure.
- iii. Political parties to be provided equitable access to information and media space. Distortions of the media such as paid news, conflict of interest, ownership of media by political parties or families, unlimited media advertisement and misuse of public money for advertising the ruling party to be regulated.
- iv. Internal functioning of political parties to be regulated to ensure that they follow basic democratic procedures as per their constitution, follow transparency norms under RTI and get their accounts scrutinised by CAG approved auditors. Laws and rules to facilitate participation by small and new parties.
- v. The existing First-Past-the-Post system should be supplemented with Proportional Representation, to improve the representativeness of the electoral system.
- vi. Provisions of 'Right to Recall' to be introduced at all levels of representation.
- vii. State funding of election by way of a National Election Fund to subsidise electoral and other legitimate political expenses. Each party or candidate that secures over a minimum threshold of votes and follows financial disclosure and transparency norms to be reimbursed at a rate to be determined for every vote polled by them.
- viii. Mandatory and free air time to all political parties on public and private media.

**Questions to be discussed:**

- I. What is the best mechanism (reservation of constituencies, fixed quota of nomination or double member constituencies) for increasing women's representation?
- II. How to redress systematic under-representation of socially disadvantaged religious communities?
- III. What would be the best composition of the multi-member constitutional committee that appoints the Election Commissioners, so as to ensure transparency and honesty?

**A. 4 Direct People's Participation**

Apart from direct participation of people at the level of governance closest to them, Swaraj also entails direct participation in the process of making laws and policies. While laws and policies shall be made on an ongoing basis by elected representatives, there is a need for creating a space for citizens' intervention for ensuring representatives' accountability and responsiveness to the people, by way of:

- Pre-legislative consultations
- Referendums at local and macro-levels of governance
- Provisions that allow citizens to initiate law and policy-making

**Our Policy Position:**

- i. Making of laws, policies and international treaties must be made transparent and follow a mandated procedure that includes prior information and consultation of those affected by these decisions. Key policies / laws / treaties should have mandatory consultation of People's Assemblies of primary units of governance.
- ii. Mandatory referendums on laws and policies that adversely affect life and livelihood of people among the project/policy-affected groups.
- iii. Allows for citizens to vote on the repeal of any law / policy / international treaty approved by the legislature. This can be initiated by a small percentage of the electorate, who may demand a direct vote on a law/policy passed by the legislature. The decision of the referendum would be binding.
- iv. Provision to allow citizens to initiate laws and policies, to be placed before the legislature or to be placed before the people for a direct vote.
- v. Ensure level playing field of information and resources in referendum campaigns.

**Questions to be discussed:**

- I. Should there be mandatory consultation of all People's Assemblies (of primary units) on all laws, policies and treaties?
- II. Should individuals or People's Assemblies vote in referendums?
- III. For each tier of governance, what kind of laws or policies should or shouldn't be put to referendums? Are there cases where laws should not be open for repeal?

**A. 5 Administrative Reforms**

Ordinary citizens encounter the State through government officials; therefore, all the various reforms of direct and representative democracy suggested above would remain ineffective unless the colonial administrative order is overhauled. This would require making the administration:

- Transparent in its functioning
- Autonomous in exercise of their professional duties
- Accountable to the people and their representatives

**Our Policy Position:**

- i. All administrative officers to belong to a District cadre and to be recruited by a District Public Service Commission, The DPSC so proposed will try to recruit maximum people from the local area.
- ii. An independent body, like the Civil Service Commission to decide on matters that affect career, promotion and transfers of all administrative officers, so as to maintain their political neutrality.
- iii. Mechanisms to be evolved to ensure accountability of all government officials and departments to the people's representatives and to the people directly, at the relevant level. Such a mechanism would include people's feedback on the performance of public officials and in extreme cases recall of public officials by the people.
- iv. Citizens' right to hold public hearings for collective grievances with mandatory participation of concerned Government or judicial authorities.

**Questions to be discussed:**

- I. How does one evolve a mechanism for feedback on public officials, from people served by them?
- II. How does one balance the need for vertical accountability within an organisation with horizontal accountability to people's representatives and the people themselves?

## **A. 6 Police Reforms**

Police continues to be a colonial institution fundamentally anti-people in its orientation, an extended arm of the regime and often law unto itself. Principle of Swaraj requires a fundamental orientation to make the police people-friendly. Therefore, police reforms should aim at:

- Greater accountability of the police to the people
- Professionalization and autonomy to prevent political misuse
- De-concentration and separation of the powers within the police
- Better training and humane working conditions for police force

### **Our Policy Position:**

- i. Implementation of the Supreme Court judgement on Police Reforms giving the police greater functional autonomy from the misuse by the political executive.
- ii. Accountability to the People through regular Jan Sunwais (Peoples Hearings) in the local areas and social audits by independent civilian bodies such as Human Rights Commission or Social Justice Ombudsman.
- iii. Separate powers of maintenance of law and order and investigation to two separate wings of the Police. Power of custody should be removed from the police. All custody will be judicial, and any interrogation will be done in judicial custody.
- iv. Empowering the Gram Sabhas to be first port of call for registration and adjudication/ arbitration for smaller crimes.
- v. Improving working conditions of police personnel by humane working hours, improved grievance redressal mechanisms, allowing unions / associations and ongoing up-gradation of training and skills; sensitisation of police towards concerns of women and marginalised sections of society.
- vi. Police responsiveness towards Crimes against Women can be improved by:
  - a. Refusal to register any FIR by police personnel to be made a criminal offence
  - b. At least 33% of police personnel to be women and only women officers to investigate crimes against women.
  - c. Ongoing gender sensitisation of police personnel.
  - d. All public areas of a police station to be video-graphed.

### **Questions to be discussed:**

- I. Should the cadre system be abolished, and a single entry level introduced?

### **A. 7 Judicial Reforms**

The existing judicial system, with its excessive formalism, inordinate delay, unaffordable expenses and rampant corruption has lost connect with people's innate sense of justice and has become as much a source of problem as a solution. That is why an overhaul of the existing judicial system is required to bring effective justice faster and closer to the people, and to make the judiciary more accountable. The reforms need to be based on:

- Simplification of existing provisions of procedural laws.
- Creation of more courts and increasing the number of judges.
- Proper selection procedure and increasing accountability of Judges.

### **Our Policy Position:**

- i. Reforms to secure access to justice by creating two types of courts: Gram Nyayalayas for normal disputes affecting common people; and regular courts for complex civil, criminal and commercial cases; Gram Nyayalayas to follow far less complex procedures, be set up at the block level and shall cover the villages through mobile courts.
- ii. Ensuring speedy justice by increasing number of Judges at all levels in proportion to the prevailing workload before each court, and each court to list only such number of cases on a day which it can reasonably expect to hear.
- iii. Selection of judges by National and State Level Judicial Appointment Commissions; greater accountability of judges.
- iv. Simplification of Criminal Procedure Code, Indian Penal Code and Evidence Acts; courts not to be bound by the evidence act and shall use its judicious mind to evaluate whether any piece of evidence sheds light on a disputed question/fact.
- v. Up to the District level, hearings in the local courts to be in the local language.
- vi. Creation of five regional benches of the Supreme Court across the country.
- vii. Judicial Conduct Commissions to be set up at the state and national levels for entertaining complaints and taking disciplinary action against judges.
- viii. In a normal case investigation to be completed within a period of 6 months, and in one year for complex cases.

### **Questions to be discussed:**

- I. In higher courts should one Indian language (in addition to English) be adopted?
- II. Should there be a Jury system?

## **A. 8 Lokpal and Lokayukta**

Mounting evidence on corruption at all levels of governance shows that over the years, the volume of corruption has multiplied, it has reached some of the highest offices in the country, it is more brazen than before and the existing institutional mechanism to control corruption. Corruption is not simply a problem of governance; corruption is *the* problem that needs to be tackled for any other policy or reform to be effective. That is why setting up a powerful, independent and effective anticorruption agency – Lokpal at the Centre and Lokayuktas in the States – as envisaged by the Jan Lokpal Movement, is the need of the hour.

### **Our Policy Position:**

- i. The Lokpal and Lokayuktas would be multiple member bodies selected by a broad based selection committee which would have members of the judiciary, the CAG, the CEC, the CVC, the Human Rights commissions and nominations from the Government and Opposition parties, with the government not having a majority in the committee.
- ii. The Lokpal and Lokayukta to have authority to enquire into corruption complaints against all public servants of the Centre and States, respectively and government-funded NGOs; also to be the whistle blower protection authority.
- iii. The CBI to be under administrative control of the Lokpal and the State CIDs under the Lokayuktas. They would have their own prosecution departments for prosecuting the charge sheets filed by their investigative agencies. Financial autonomy of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas to be secured by allowing them to make their own budgets, subject to a maximum of percentage of the Government budget.
- iv. The members of the Lokayukta to be accountable to the Supreme Court, which would have the authority to enquire into any complaint against them. Further accountability would be secured by transparent functioning wherein details of investigations are put on a public website, after they were over. Also, the CAG would be required to carry out an annual performance audit of the Lokpal.
- v. Every public authority to put in place a citizen's charter, specifying a time within which specific tasks would be done; violation of this would be punishable by the Lokpal and Lokayuktas.
- vi. In any corruption case resulting in conviction, the loss caused to the public exchequer would be recovered from the personal assets of the public servants and the corporations involved.

### **Questions to be discussed:**

- I. What will be the composition of the committee that appoints the Lokpal?

## **B. Swaraj in Economy-Ecology: Equity with Sustainability**

After more than six decades of self-rule and planned economic development, two-thirds or more of India's population suffer from severe deprivations of one or the other kind: poverty, lack of safe drinking water and sanitation, unemployment or inadequate shelter. This period has witnessed multi-dimensional degradation of our natural environment: decline of natural ecosystems, erosion of wild and agricultural biodiversity, pollution of well over half the available water bodies, degradation of two-thirds of the land and unacceptable rise in levels of air pollution in several cities.

Clearly, something is fundamentally wrong with the way we have managed our economy and ecology. The problem is not merely with the way we have implemented our developmental plans, but with the very model of development that we have pursued so far.

The Swaraj Abhiyan seeks an alternative model of development. We draw our vision of economy and ecology from our deeper values such as decentralised governance, transparency, sustainability, accountability, and equity. It shall provide equitable access to preservation of nature and natural resources while protecting India's ecology and biodiversity. It shall facilitate robust economic growth and holistic well-being by ensuring equitable access to basic needs of life and opportunities for livelihood. It shall create decent employment and livelihood opportunities for young women and men across agricultural, manufacturing, and service sectors. It seeks to afford greater opportunities for lifelong learning and skilling so as to encourage both continued individual and national growth. It shall encourage honest enterprise through lower compliance costs and a corruption-free environment, the provision of efficient and reliable infrastructure and services, and incentivizing productive innovation.

The Swaraj Abhiyan shall reinvigorate the rural economy by supporting a vigorous agricultural sector and rural small-scale industries that widen India's economic base and ensure the long-term food, energy, and ecological security of India. It shall empower its citizen with enhanced capability and the means to earn their livelihood with dignity. In case of those incapacitated and unable to engage in productive employment, a social security net that allows for a dignified existence should be facilitated. It shall favour an efficient, accountable, and transparent government that avoids over-regulation and under-regulation so as to ensure an appropriate and timely implementation of its policies and conducts regular review of its performance.

The Swaraj Abhiyan commits to inclusive, sustainable and equitable development, using an evidence based approach. It is essential to move beyond the binary orthodoxies of 'Left' vs. 'Right', 'State-controlled' vs. 'Free Market' and 'Public Sector' vs. 'Private Sector'. The experience of 20<sup>th</sup> century clearly demonstrates that neither of these orthodoxies can be trusted to benefit the country and its people. The experience of state controlled economies worldwide shows that this model produced neither growth, nor justice; it worked against the very poor in whose name it was created. The experience of 'free market' economies all over the world shows that unregulated markets do not serve the public; they cannot be trusted to create just distribution, they are often captured by powerful interests working against the public and, they often fail. We need to think beyond these orthodoxies and forge new instruments for realising an alternative mode of development.

## **B. 1 Macro-Economic Stability**

Pursuit of the multiple objectives identified above requires us to move beyond the two paths of economic development followed in independent India. The first path followed in the first three decades involved State control, reliance on the public sector, import substitution strategies and insulation from international market. This path helped to lay economic foundations for a young country but failed to deliver growth, self-sufficiency or remove poverty. The second path, that of 'economic reforms', followed in the last 25 years, involved opening the economy to international markets, internal deregulation, disinvestment in the public sector and growing emphasis on the service sector. This path brought aggregate economic growth, but accentuated inequalities and did not lead to greater employment, let alone well-being.

Evolving an alternative to these two paths may not be easy; it would necessitate explorations and experimentations. Swaraj in economic policies would require:

- Guarding national sovereignty in economic decision-making.
- Prioritising aam aadmi (common people) concerns of employment generation, keeping check on inflation and eliminating poverty.
- Balance the need for expansion of economy with ecological sustainability.
- Fostering trade and economic connectivity with the world in this age of globalisation.
- Judicious balance between private initiative, public sector intervention and emphasis on community-based enterprises.

### **Our Policy Position:**

- i. Reorient the economy on home markets instead of external market, encouraging productive sectors rather than speculative economic activities, encourage investment into labour intensive primary and secondary sector and backward regions, incentives for small and cottage sector and to creation of local cooperatives, disincentives for luxury consumption.
- ii. Curbing Black Economy by renegotiating Double Taxation Agreements, closing down Tax havens route, implementation of General Anti-Avoidance Rule (GAAR), regulation and effective monitoring of banking sector, corporate accounting and intra-firm sales, effective implementation of 'Money Laundering Act' to tackle Hawala and money laundering; and a firm 'No' to black money amnesties, in order to increase the resources available to the government; creating an environment for honest business.
- iii. Fiscal Policy: Increasing tax-GDP ratio by moving towards a progressive tax structure by reducing dependence on indirect taxes, expanding the base of direct taxes and carbon taxes. Much of this additional revenue to be passed on to district and local governments through statutory, non-discretionary transfers in the form of general purpose grants. Greater resources to be made available for expenditure on public goods and services, employment generation ecological regeneration and poverty removal by rationalising defence expenditure and phasing out of ineffective and ecologically unsustainable subsidies. Any form of subsidy,

whether direct benefits to the poor or tax-exemptions to the well-off and corporates, need to be well-targeted and reasoned; its benefits should be monitored and demonstrated.

- iv. **Monetary Policy:** It should be framed keeping public interest of paramount importance. Interest rates to be fixed at levels which help shared economic growth and demand in the domestic economy, encourage small savings, and allow fair allocation of credit across the diverse sectors of the economy. This will overcome conservative lending practices in microcredit, banking and financial services prevalent especially in agriculture, small industry, crafts and other traditional livelihoods.
- v. Promote the financialisation of the economy linked to global financial markets so as to ensure direct flow of investment towards the real economy, with effective regulation. There has been an increasing trend in creating speculative financial markets for stocks and commodities which are not linked to a real economy. We shall endeavour to promote investment flow, encourage domestic saving and investment and safeguard small investments against market fluctuation.
- vi. **External Trade:** The large and growing Balance of Payment deficit to be brought down by curbing import of luxury goods and gold that can be produced locally. Import of oil should be reduced by taxation and incentivizing alternative sources of energy. Exports should be promoted by using price and non-price measures like up-gradation of quality of products, fast delivery of consignments and improving post-sale services by providing better incentives and infrastructure for exporters. There needs to be a review of some existing bilateral and multilateral agreements such as TRIPS and TRIMS.

#### **Questions to be discussed:**

- I. What are the best policy response to curb speculative instruments and forward trading?
- II. What are the best ways for restructuring the global financial architecture comprising of the WTO, World Bank and IMF?

## **B. 2 Ecological Sustainability**

While India is endowed with abundant natural resources, today we see multidimensional degradation of our environmental resources. In the process the *aam aadmi/aurat's* access to basic resources for well-being has been severely curtailed and two-thirds or more of India's population suffer from severe deprivations of one kind or another. The GDP growth-at-any-cost policies have rapaciously expropriated common pool resources – water, forests, land and minerals – at an unprecedented rate, concentrating them in a few hands and causing the most adverse impact on rural livelihoods, environment, ecology and governance. We believe that environmental policy should seek to bolster growth and development by promoting public good by applying the principles of ecological sustainability, social justice and inter-generational equity.

There is a need for development based on:

- Equitable and sustainable future for India.

- Empowerment and full life and livelihood security to the *aam aadmi/aurat*.
- Equitable use of available human and natural resources by promoting decentralisation of Power.
- Acknowledge our commitment to tackle global warming and minimise the effects of climate change by renewing our commitment to global treaties and convention.

### **Our policy position:**

- i. Reorientation of macro-economic policy, financial measures and fiscal incentives / disincentives to increase investments in green/sustainable economic development, reduction of negative environmental impacts of developmental activities and enhancement of human security and equity.
  - a. Replace economic growth-related indicators with environmental and social wellbeing indicators.
  - b. All infrastructure development to be made ecologically sustainable and socioeconomically equitable.
  - c. Organisation to setup independent audits and ground level studies of projects that have environmental costs.
  - d. Simplification of environmental regulation, increased use of environmental impact assessment and monitoring of pollution control boards, and the setup of environmental courts.
  - e. Promotion and incentivization of ecologically sustainable and socio-economically equitable production processes and consumption patterns, systematic shift to sustainable technologies and energy self-reliance by the integrated use of multiple renewable sources.
- ii. Establishing a constitutionally mandated Environment (or ‘Sustainable Development’) Commissioner; this should include a mandate to monitor India’s ecological footprint both domestically and abroad and compliance with global treaties on climate change.
- iii. Pollution abatement by according primacy to the precautionary principle and the principle of ‘polluter pays’, with strong legislative/fiscal disincentives for polluting industries/products, and incentives for non-polluting, sustainable industries/products.
- iv. Safeguard the integrity of natural ecosystems, wildlife populations, and biodiversity, through conservation and management initiatives governed by communities and clusters of communities sharing common natural resources.
- v. All natural resources will be considered national wealth, owned by the state to be used for public good with first emphasis on the local community. Local communities should be managers, custodians and shareholders of natural resources (via Gram Sabhas or other landscape level participatory bodies).

- vi. Preparation of long-term national land, mineral and water use policies and plans (see boxes for example), based on decentralised and participatory processes and reform of MoEF, its agencies and the Forest Department to ensure this. Implementation of existing environment and forestry related acts should be tightened. It should be every government's prerogative to conduct effective, planned and large scale afforestation.
- vii. Sale of natural resources to private corporations should be done only through transparent e-auctions.
- viii. Women to be recognised as the managers of grazing lands, forestlands, water and other rural common property resources and their rights to these resources to be legally guaranteed.

#### **National Water Policy**

- ✓ Right to Water to be enshrined in the Constitution as a Fundamental Right.
- ✓ Bring in a Comprehensive Water Framework Law.
- ✓ River basin to be the unit for planning for water, with an integrated perspective on surface and ground water and planning process to be participatory.
- ✓ Priority on developing local and decentralised water resources based on extensive rainwater harvesting, watershed development, soil-water conservation programs, small projects and alternative cropping practices.
- ✓ All hydropower projects above 1 MW capacity and all large dams must be required to have social and environment impact assessment.

### **National Land Use Policy**

- There should be a National Land Use Plan with a Master plan for every city, town, village and district. This national plan can be used to allocate where SEZs should be placed.
- The land acquisition bill should be followed strictly and not be diluted:
  - ✓ Ensure a strict definition of public purpose for which acquisition can take place, to be confined only to line projects such as roads, railways, etc.
  - ✓ Acquisition of land for any other public purpose project (such as educational institutions, hospitals, urbanisation, etc.) requires the consent of the Gram Sabha or Mohalla Sabhas.
  - ✓ No forcible acquisition of land for Private projects or Public Private Partnerships; this should follow market negotiations with safeguards to help the small sellers.
  - ✓ Threshold of consent for acquisition should not be lowered, specifically for private purpose or PPPs.
  - ✓ Land to be returned to farmers, if it remains unused for 5 years after being acquired.
  - ✓ Resettlement and Rehabilitation benefits to be given to those whose livelihood are affected; the mechanism to work out fair compensation of the land and livelihood should be based on a professional regulatory body with representatives of the affected community.

#### **Questions to be discussed:**

- I. What should be the nature and form of the share for the local communities in the natural resources extracted from their area?

### **B. 3 Towards Decentralised and Renewable Energy Policy**

The Swaraj Abhiyan is committed to providing access to basic energy needs to all citizens of the country, while ensuring ecological sustainability. As India's population and economy grows, it has large, ever-growing and unmatched energy requirements. Our vision of India's energy future envisions a carbon-free, nuclear-free economy supported only by clean, replenishable and renewable resources. India's potential for solar, wind and hydroelectric power is unmatched due to its geographical and geological landscape, which must be harnessed to give our decentralised country, the energy it needs.

Energy policy needs to be based on:

- Meet expanding demand for energy to enhance quality of life and economic activities.

- Preventing socially wasteful and inefficient energy use and Demand side management of energy, combined with adoption of energy conservation techniques.
- Phased shift to decentralised and renewable energy.

### **Our Policy Position:**

- i. Major thrust on renewable energy such as solar, wind, tidal, geothermal, animal-based and biomass-based energy as part of a medium and long-term energy strategy.
- ii. Large investment as well as fiscal and legislative incentives, and R&D support for small, decentralised renewable energy systems. Incentives to promote renewable sources of energy, decentralisation of power to the home unit, and relinking to the main grid to incentivize energy positive homes.
- iii. Energy tariffs to include ‘true’ costs such as externalised environmental and social costs and to recognise the difference between survival, dignified-living and luxury consumption. Efficient and transparent pricing mechanisms for electricity based on demand and supply.
- iv. Communities to be given right over their local energy resources, with context-appropriate conversion and extraction technologies.
- v. Access to safe and ecologically sustainable cooking fuel to all rural households; R&D support for improving techniques and efficiency of animal-derived energy and transport for rural areas.
- vi. Hydro-electricity from micro and tiny plants to serve local/regional electricity needs to be encouraged.
- vii. Improve efficiency of existing Thermal Power Plants (TPP) and in the long run, phased shift away from fossil fuels, due to their enormous environmental and social costs.
- viii. Oil and Natural Gas to be regarded as a national resource to be used for public good; no private monopolies.

### **Questions to be discussed:**

- I. Currently, 60-70% of India’s energy needs come from coal and nuclear energy. What are the short and medium run steps that we can feasibly take to reach our goal of a nuclear-free, carbon-free economy?
- II. What are the pros and cons of using nuclear energy, its relationship with nuclear weapons, and its place in India’s energy future?

## **B. 4 Fostering Transport for the Masses**

Greater attention to transport in recent years has led to lopsided priorities, with a focus on speedy and costly transport, which is ecologically unsustainable. One of the key reasons behind India’s crumbling rural economy is poor rural and rural-urban connectivity. More than 80% of the urban

population travel on foot or cycle or at most public transport but the urban infrastructure is more in favour of those travelling in private vehicles. There needs to be a shift in focus, with the Aam Aadmi/aurat and environmental sustainability at the centre, as India attempts to massively expand its transport infrastructure.

The Swaraj Abhiyan would reorient the priorities of transport policy towards the people cantered by:

- Creating public, universal and affordable transport.
- Ensuring ecologically sustainable forms of transport.
- Ensuring speed for a few doesn't come at the cost of ease of movement for the rest.
- People's participation in transport decision-making.

**Our Policy Position:**

- i. Increase the total quantum of roads and highways, with focus on quality and priority on developing rural connectivity.
- ii. Improve inter-village connectivity with clusters of villages duly empowered to maintain the roads. Provide better modes of cheap transport for farmers to transport their produce outside their local neighbourhood.
- iii. Prioritise development and improve administration of the Indian Railways by:
  - a. Supporting rail transportation of freight by investing in rail infrastructure, in preference to roadways since it is much more efficient.
  - b. Ensuring that the planning focus remains on commuters, short distance travellers, passenger trains and improving financial viability of freight operations.
  - c. Promoting faster rail transport with improvement of existing rail infrastructure to eliminate short distance flying to save petroleum and reduce pollution.
  - d. Ensuring efficient administration, prevent cartel formation among railway vendors and increasing transparency in costing and pricing of consumer and freight fares.
- iv. Light surface rail commuting systems and bus rapid transits must be prioritised. Equitable resource allocation for public transportation for smaller cities and towns.
- v. Development of existing waterways and river-ways as alternate means of transportation. In low population density areas like mountains or hilly areas, roads are often very destructive and environmentally damaging. In such areas, more environment friendly connectivity options like simple ropeways should be explored and prioritised.
- vi. Ensure development and maintenance of airports in different parts of the country, with the usage of private resources for new construction.
- vii. Incentives for use and manufacture of public transport and non-motorised vehicles and disincentives for use of private cars, based on their true economic and ecological cost.

Incentives and disincentives to influence consumer behaviour that helps clean the environment and unburden our streets. Incentives should be provided to cycle and bus manufacturers.

- viii. Creation of bicycle lanes, along with the widening of sidewalks. Regularisation of rickshaws and e-rickshaws with bans on non-motorized vehicles to be lifted from several parts of the country.
- ix. Increase the role of Gram Sabhas, Mohalla Sabhas and the area on decision-making related to transport, which are currently imposed top-down by the municipality.

**Questions to be discussed:**

- I. What are the views of the party on the national airlines?
- II. Is the party open to privatising a portion of the Railways or PPP models being incorporated into public transport?

**B. 5 Empowering Village India**

Villages in India are places marked by poor and non-existent infrastructure, lack of quality educational, employment and recreational opportunities, and political disempowerment. Further, it is a scene of a large exodus from rural to urban areas, and this is considered to be an inevitable consequence of modern development. The Swaraj Abhiyan will not let rural India disappear into oblivion due to socio-economic distress and ecological ruin. It will do everything it can to revitalise, regenerate, and sustain rural areas. It is aware that most villages have inequalities, discrimination and exploitation of various kinds, based on caste, gender, class, ethnicity, and other factors, and that these need to be eliminated. The Swaraj Abhiyan seeks to empower village India by radical political decentralisation (discussed in Section A.1) and by revitalising Indian agriculture (discussed in Section B.6). Besides these steps, we shall:

- Ensure the provision of basic needs, goods and services along with a good quality of life.
- Reverse the flow of material and human resource from rural and primary economies to urban and tertiary economies.
- Increase employment opportunities by promoting production by masses as opposed to mass production.

**Our Policy Position:**

- i. Provision of villagers' access to basic needs especially drinking water, drainage, sanitation, quality schooling, functioning primary health centres, connectivity, telecommunication, internet and recreational facilities should be ensured.
- ii. Strengthening of rural communities to be relatively self-reliant. This can be done by:
  - a. promoting rural industrialisation through promoting small-scale manufacturing.

- b. ensuring a dignified livelihood in primary, secondary and tertiary sectors.
  - c. Integrated planning by and with local residents with appropriation on high quality infrastructure, building on local knowledge and skills, and sustaining natural ecosystems.
- iii. Facilitate and support producer collectives and cooperatives with the priority being on localised economies.
  - iv. Authorise and empower the fundamental unit of governance to carry out socio-economic and ecological planning, and ensure that all government expenditure is based on such governance and planning, and oriented towards building self-reliance rather than endless dependence on outside agencies.
  - v. Ensure dignified, green jobs and livelihoods to all; special focus on sustaining or revitalising ecologically sustainable primary sector livelihoods in agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, and forestry; supplemented by decentralised manufacturing units based on local resources, and with service-based jobs in traditional and modern sectors including tourism, IT, and others.

## **B. 6 Uplifting Indian Agriculture**

Indian agriculture is in crisis, farming is no longer a remunerative and dignified occupation; it is assumed that ‘development’ of the economy must lead to marginalisation of agriculture as a source of livelihood, and a sector of the national economy. The Swaraj Abhiyan is determined to challenge this ‘fate’; it believes that agriculture can provide dignified livelihood to a substantial population of those who live in village India, that it can be turned into a vibrant sector of our economy, that it can provide food security to our nation. We believe that there is no other option, for the current model of development has produced ‘jobless growth’ and this urbanisation is unsustainable. Swaraj Abhiyan seeks to counter the growing trend of migration under economic distress through a concerted push in traditional industries, small-scale enterprises, and agricultural sector, with better infrastructure availability, easy access to formal credit, appropriate technological interventions, and support for fair pricing. We wish to reinvent and revitalise agriculture in India by:

- Making agriculture remunerative and a dignified occupation.
- Preserve, encourage and support the traditional and evolving farmer’s knowledge while focussing on high productivity and diversity in production.
- Creating local value-addition and leveraging technology to increase productivity and reducing information asymmetry.

### **Our Policy Position:**

- i. Evolve mechanisms for assured minimum income for farmers and other primary producers.
  - a. A Farmers Income Commission to be established with statutory powers to monitor and safeguard farmers’ incomes as well as inter-sector parity on a periodical basis.

- b. Ensure that the Swaminathan Commission Report is implemented, and that the minimum support price is fixed at least 50% higher than the weighted average cost of production, and is extended to all crops, fruits and vegetables, milk and livestock products as well.
  - c. Whenever market prices fall below the MSP, a price compensation mechanism must be devised and the farmers are paid the difference between the MSP and the market price through direct cash support measure; minimum producer price for milk and other livestock products.
  - d. Crop insurance to be assessed for smaller areas, not be tied to loans. 75% of the premium should be paid by the government, the rest by the farmer.
- ii. Restructuring of land reform, ceiling and redistribution laws so as to protect the rights of both the tillers and the landlords. Land redistribution to poor agricultural households of ceiling surplus and other lands, strict implementation of current or/and suitable land ceiling legislations for both individuals and companies, restricting ownership by absentee landlords and non-agriculturists, and by legislatively mandating that lands should not remain fallow.
  - iii. Agriculture sales and purchases should be made transparent right from ensuring that middlemen don't run away with obscene profits at the cost of the farmer. The farmer should be enabled to sell his produce wherever he can and at whatever price that he can get, while the government provides a good profit over his cost of production, as the fall back option.
  - iv. Restructuring the APMC Act to make the management of *mandis* more transparent and creating favourable conditions for the farmers and offering them the freedom to choose where to sell their produce.
  - v. Evolving long term import-export policies by ensuring food security of the nation through restriction on essential items exports and protecting the rights of farmers from subsidised imports.
  - vi. Moving towards ecologically sustainable agricultural practices by supporting a move towards organic farming through various incentive schemes and phasing out of chemical fertilisers and pesticides. Moratorium on field trials of all GM food and termination of all ongoing trials of transgenic crops, till bio-safety concerns are resolved.
  - vii. Fine tuning subsidies, including fertiliser, diesel and electricity subsidies to increase higher profits to the farmers and lower subsidy burden on the government.
  - viii. Creating infrastructure to make easy availability of institutionalised credit to the farmers so as to reduce their dependence on informal and usurious lending.
  - ix. Improving availability of transport, storage and processing infrastructure for agriculture, livestock products and fisheries.

- x. Creating a holistic and ecological agriculture policy which includes animal husbandry, forestry, commons, horticulture and fisheries and which preserves and supports the traditional knowledge systems, with incentives for pursuing ecological-friendly agriculture.
  - a. Fisheries: Facilitating bottom-up processes for managing marine and inland fisheries by revitalising traditional institutions; preferential access to small-scale fisheries in the Indian maritime zones; improving availability of credit to fish vendors and processors. Phasing out bottom trawling fishing from Indian territorial waters in time-bound manner.
  - b. Livestock: Need to reconnect their link with agriculture; water bodies, forests, grazing lands essential for livestock should be in the Commons, under the management of gram sabhas; local breeds should be encouraged through extending credit facilities.

**Questions to be discussed:**

- I. What should be the mechanism for wage pricing in MNREGA, and its subsequent effect on the agricultural labour market?

**B. 7 Promoting Honest Industry**

Industrial manufacturing has been one of the most neglected areas of the Indian economy, attention to which is essential to generate employment and for stable expansion of the economy.

Industrial policy needs to be based on:

- Incentives to promote ecologically sustainable manufacturing, especially small-scale industry.
- Encouraging honest business and entrepreneurship.
- Providing job security for workers while creating comprehensive but flexible labour reforms.

**Our Policy Position:**

- i. Focus on substantially increasing the manufacturing sector of the economy; industries that are characterised by economies of scale should be allowed to grow, regulated by a range of laws.
- ii. Small scale and micro-industries to be promoted; given support in terms of input subsidies, subsidised credit, marketing facilities, etc.; whatever can be produced by the small-scale sector (where there are no economies of scale) should be produced by them only; support to skill up-gradation and modernisation of traditional crafts and manufacturing.
- iii. Create a business environment where people can do business honestly; remove all legal and administrative obstacles for doing honest business; encourage and facilitate entrepreneurs; credit and other support to be given to cooperatives of workers and common people to start their own firms. Emphasis to be placed on securing loans for small and medium enterprises.

Deductions should be linked to the number of people employed along with the capital investment.

- iv. There should be widespread setup of ITIs (Industrial Training Institutes) and heavy investment in R&D in manufacturing to create a knowledge-based economy.

## **B. 8 Supporting Fair and Flexible Labour Reforms**

India has an increasing workforce with a huge demographic dividend but undergoes a constant reduction in organised labour. There is a need to facilitate and encourage more workers to be brought under the organised workforce, so that some basic protections are extended to a large segment of labourers. The current labour regime works against this shift, and a more flexible one is desired. The current labour policies actually provide perverse incentives to keep a greater workforce in the informal sector. This works to the disadvantage of the industry as well. Thus, a radical overhaul of India's labour policies is required to ensure better industrial productivity and efficiency, and to secure rights for a greater portion of the workforce. There are nearly 50 different labour laws at the central level and various other laws at the state levels. These laws confer different rights to the labour like right to organise and strike, right to job security and rights of the contract workers. However, they have been replaced by de facto flexible labour rules and employers' rights, which are in vogue in enterprises of all kinds. Easy hire and fire, wage flexibility in any direction, multi-skilling jobs and seasonal pattern of adjustment in labour force are pursued. As far as different labour laws of the land are concerned what is observed is their weak enforcement, if not no enforcement, by the state. The Swaraj Abhiyan's labour reform agenda will be defined by:

- Creating a flexible labour regime to facilitate industrial growth and development.
- Protecting labour rights and garnering social security for the vulnerable and marginalised poor labour.

### **Our Policy Position:**

- i. State should act as an employer of last resort while employment generation schemes should be used in productive and asset creating projects.
- ii. Remove multiplicity of laws which create contradictory effects on each other and leads to cumbersome time-consuming legal process, which deter timely resolution in any dispute. The state must ensure strong enforcement of labour laws protecting the rights of the labour in the country.
- iii. Self-employed people should be brought under different social security schemes including pension after attaining the age of 60 years and life insurance.
- iv. Children of informal workers must get free education up to the post-graduate level.
- v. Casual and contract workers should receive the benefits enjoyed by the permanent workers.
- vi. Workers to be given job security, standard wages and other benefits; simplification of labour laws, ensuring job security and enforcement of basic rights for contract labour.

- vii. Incentivize industrialists to put employees on formal employment rolls and punish non-compliance. Ensure equal employee benefits for contract labour, while ensuring enforceable contracts and termination procedures.
- viii. Working hours should be maintained at eight hours a day. Two hours of overtime may be permitted and for that the concerned worker must receive at the double rate of his/her normal hourly wage. Weekly leave must be ensured failing which firms must pay penalty.
- ix. Due recognition to trade unions should be made. And workers' rights to organise and form trade unions should be given top priority; however, they should not hold industry to ransom. In a firm which is about to close or shut down permanently workers should be offered to run it by forming workers' cooperative and in that the trade unions should play important role. For this purpose, a new law should be introduced.

## **B. 9 Sustainable Urbanisation**

India is rapidly urbanising and between 2010 and 2050 India is expected to add 500 million people to its current urban population of 377 million. The current model of large-city-centric urbanisation is based on a parasitic relationship between city and surrounding villages/commons. Large cities are highly energy and capital intensive. Even within urban areas, planning and development caters to the elite sections of the society and deprives the poorer sections of access even to basic services.

While urbanisation is here to stay, there is a need to re-imagine an urbanisation that is:

- Focussed on smaller towns, rather than large metro cities.
- Participatory decision-making processes.
- Ecologically sustainable and socially equitable cities

### **Our Policy Position:**

- i. Focus on smaller cities with investment in fair livelihood opportunities outside of Metros and Class 1 cities; improving infrastructure and better planning; planned small towns along railways corridors; smaller towns with inadequate resource-raising powers to be provided fiscal transfers for their infrastructure.
- ii. Equitable distribution of resources within localities and different sections of the population; strengthening of public infrastructure and facilities (such as transport, education and health).
- iii. Improving living conditions of slums, and resettlement of slum-dwellers as close as possible to their original location.
- iv. Waste reduction through fiscal and legislative tools; household waste segregation, home and neighbourhood composting to be made mandatory.

- v. Sustainable Infrastructure: Affordable public transport; eco-building standards to be incentivised; decentralised water management, local rain water harvesting, recycling of treated sewage.
- vi. Mohalla Sabhas to become active, decision-making bodies; streamlining multiple administrative agencies into a single administration; municipalities to be given greater powers; master planning expertise and apparatus needs to become localised and subject to community interaction.
- vii. Creation of public spaces for people to share and interact in; promoting community media.
- viii. Cities should have a directly elected and empowered mayor. Octroi should not be reintroduced as a revenue source for local bodies.

## **C. Swaraj for Human Development: Enhancing India's Quality of Life**

The Swaraj Abhiyan believes that every citizen should have the means and resources to enhance their potential and productivity. They deserve prosperity of their local community, and a basic minimum quality of life. The aspirations of each community and area need to be fulfilled, but without disrupting the day-to-day life of other areas. Villages should be self-sufficient, and should fulfil basic needs like education, healthcare, jobs, clean environment and good incomes, as a result of which there is no need to migrate from the villages to the cities, causing mass migration, livelihood and family troubles.

His current economic model of development results in the one-dimensional pursuit of growth at the expense of the vast majority of citizens, which in turn requires an excessive dependence on state intervention and subsidies that leave the last person even more powerless. Correcting this state of affairs requires re-orienting 'development' so as to put the well-being of the last person first, and restoring to the people the power and resources needed for dignified life and livelihood.

Putting the well-being of the last person first, requires state action; but it needs not entail an all-powerful, bureaucratic State. The Swaraj Abhiyan stands for a state that withdraws from some arenas while simultaneously intervening more effectively in the rest. The system of excessive controls of private economic enterprise and over-reach of the public sector must be dismantled; at the same time, the state must regulate markets for common good, create conditions for development of capabilities via universal provision of health and education and act as the last resort provider of life and livelihood resources.

### **C. 1 Education for All**

Swaraj Abhiyan believes that there is a need to evolve an education system which is grounded both in constitutional values as well as India's diverse cultures and ways of life. Swaraj Abhiyan is firmly committed towards state provision of equitable access to quality education to every child in the country. In the last few decades, while the demand for education has been increasing, it has also been accompanied by an increased stratification of education. In this backdrop, we affirm our commitment to ensuring the provision of truly equitable access to all sections of society, irrespective of their ability to pay.

Our education policy would be based on the following principles:

- State provision of equitable access to high quality education.
- Community Involvement in school education.
- Context-relevant curriculum and learner-centred pedagogy.
- Integration of work and education

## **Our Policy Position:**

- i. Increasing the budgetary allocation to a minimum of 6% of the GDP. Ensure that every child, rich or poor has access to high quality education that provides for a holistic development of the child. State provision of equitable access to high quality education for all children (beginning with Early Childhood Care) irrespective of their ability to pay.
- ii. Strengthening of public education system recruitment and capacity building of teachers and administrators by ensuring the effective implementation of the Justice Verma Commission on Teacher Education. Adopt a transparent system for teacher recruitment, professional development and career advancement based on clear criteria. Professionalize school administration and incentivize selection by merit.
- iii. Special provisions for girls, first-generation learners, students from poor families and socially disadvantaged communities so as to ensure total enrolment, check dropouts, high quality learning and non-discrimination within schools and access to higher education facilities. Hostel and transport facilities (especially for girls and Persons with Disability – PwD) to ensure better access and higher enrolment.
- iv. Involvement of the local community in the creation of a context-rooted curriculum and management of schools, of a particular neighbourhood, with accountability of school / teachers to a local body like Gram Sabha or Mohalla Sabha.
- v. Education till Class 5 to be based largely on the local context and resources, and instruction to be imparted in child's mother tongue. Efforts should be made that academic resources, knowledge banks and job opportunities are not skewed only in favour of English.
- vi. Focus on learning outcomes and not only on inputs. Standardise learning assessments across states.
- vii. Government must ensure that the pedagogy and content of education conform to the principles enshrined in the Constitution.
- viii. Public policy to focus on the quality of government schools, especially in rural areas to ensure that their amenities and infrastructure are comparable to those of Central School/Navodaya School. Ensure the quality of rural government schools, provision of basic amenities like drinking water and sanitation and recruiting qualified teachers.
- ix. Expansion of vocational training institutions and bringing parity in status with educational streams to check high levels of unemployment. Also, vocational education to be integrated in the school curriculum and development of vocational degrees to be accelerated.
- x. Reorienting higher education to respond to India's context, country's needs and our inherited knowledge, rather than mindless imitation of the knowledge received from the West.
- xi. Greater funds to be committed by the government for public-funded higher education especially on improving the quality of State universities. Improving enrolment and attendance of economically disadvantaged students through fellowships and scholarship-cum-loans

based on the ability-to-pay principle. Effective regulation of private institutions, on fees and quality of education.

## **C. 2 Universal Health Provisions**

India's public health system is in a crisis. We spend about 1% of our GDP on healthcare when more is spent by even sub-Saharan countries on their citizens' health. Currently, our health system responds to disease rather than protecting populations or on preventing the disease from occurring, with less than 7% of India's health budget focuses on prevention of disease. People have lost faith in the healthcare services provided by the state and spend exorbitant out-of-pocket expenditure on questionable private healthcare. The Swaraj Abhiyan reaffirms its focus to provide universal healthcare by:

- Expanding and strengthening of public health systems, while making them accountable.
- Focus on preventing disease, on primary healthcare and on diseases with high mortality rates.
- Drawing upon diversity of medical knowledge systems and practices and supporting alternate medical practitioners.
- Re-aligning the relationship between the pharmaceutical and healthcare industry to maximise public welfare.

### **Our Policy Position:**

- i. Commitment to Universal Healthcare, irrespective of the ability to pay which would imply a substantial increase in budgetary allocations to at least 3% of the GDP, large scale investment in public hospitals and putting in place accountability mechanisms in the public healthcare system. Investing in human resources by ensuring that all vacancies are filled at the Primary Health Centre; creating a cadre of public health managers who strategically manage resources for programmes and address challenges locally.
- ii. Improve accountability of public health systems towards its users by decentralisation of funds, functions and functionaries to the appropriate level of local government, building community capacity to demand better services from health service providers and local bodies (in charge of water and sanitation) and to hold them accountable for preventing outbreaks.
- iii. Creating robust mechanisms of surveillance, screening, early diagnosis and detections, population-wide preventive and curative interventions. Developing standard guidelines and operating principles for health and disease control programme.
- iv. Prioritising primary and preventive healthcare, with special focus on rural and the urban poor. Ensuring access to locally available basic healthcare facilities, of vaccinations, and maternal and child health. Integrating health with nutrition, water and sanitation services, chemicals and fertilisers, and ensuring that acceptable standards of these are delivered to every household.

- v. Improve the accountability of private health providers by making it mandatory for private hospitals to display and observe a charter of patients' rights. Make it mandatory for private hospitals to display rates and charges of various services on offer. Establish patients' grievance redressal bodies at appropriate levels. Evolve and implement regulatory frameworks for private sector involvement in medical education, training, quality of care, accountability to patients and medical care. Ensure that private healthcare subsidised by the government honour their commitment to the *aam aadmi*.
- vi. Prioritise listing and providing easy access to essential and generic drugs. Promotion of rational drug policy. Regulation of pharmaceutical industry to check unfair trade practices and eliminate influence of pharmaceutical giants over the vaccination program.
- vii. Developing a well-trained cadre of frontline grassroots workers. Focusing and empowering village health workers like ASHAs, Anganwadis and ANMs. Creating a new category of rural health practitioners with basic medical training to bridge the deficit of trained medical professionals in India.
- viii. Complementing the use of various systems of medicines – AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy) and local health traditions to have a significant role in public healthcare.
- ix. Overhauling the existing system of regulatory oversight to ensure that it is independent, objective and professional.

#### **Tackling Alcohol and Drug Abuse**

- A. Recognise and effectively tackle the problem of alcohol and drug abuse by:
- ✓ Recognising alcohol and drug abuse as a national menace.
  - ✓ Legal and constitutional change to remove perverse incentives in current system for State governments to promote sale of liquor.
  - ✓ Government bodies such as panchayats (acting through gram sabhas, with special power to women) and municipalities to be given the right to decide if they would like to permit, restrict or completely ban the sale of liquor within the panchayat or municipality. Any new liquor store should have the approval of greater than 50% women voters on the electoral roll in a given community.
  - ✓ Crackdown against drug trafficking.
  - ✓ Support the creation of de-addiction centres from alcohol and drugs to help addicts.
  - ✓ National policy on liquor and drug abuse with special focus on areas like Punjab and the Northeast.

## **D. Swaraj for Women**

Despite the solemn assurance of Right to Equality and Non-discrimination enshrined in the Indian Constitution, women in India continue to be treated as second class citizens by every conceivable index. The impunity and utter inability of the criminal justice system and the state, to provide solutions, security or justice to our girls and women, has created a situation demanding urgent attention. This is further exacerbated by differences and divides in levels of education, religion, caste, class, ethnicity, rural-urban lifestyles and labour relations. Clearly what is required is a carefully crafted set of policies and affirmative action together with continuous efforts to change patriarchal mind-sets and attitudes at all levels.

We envision a world in which women will be acknowledged and treated as equal citizens in their own right; where they will not be governed by male-dominated values which determine their societal and familial roles. The entire policy framework needs to keep the 'aam aurat' at the centre, with policy positions framed around the following principles:

- All women, men and members of any other sex or sexual orientation are born and remain equal in rights and in the eyes of law.
- All sexes enjoy the same freedoms, rights, dignity, respect, security and opportunity to fulfil their potential.
- Recognition, respect and primacy to the human identity and rights of the women as individuals over and above any other identity, role or expectation of them.
- State to uphold women's legal, Constitutional and human rights in every instance that they are challenged or violated.
- All interactions or associations between the state and female citizens to be gender sensitive and inclusionist, rather than exclusionist, to all sexes equally.

### **Our Policy Position:**

- i. Preventing female foeticide and infanticide with elimination of maternal deaths during childbirth and large reduction in neonatal and infant mortality rate.
- ii. Implement the right to education with special provisions to ensure education of girls, especially those from socially disadvantaged groups; gender sensitive curriculum; gender audit mechanisms for entire education system; greater provision of residential facilities for girls.
- iii. Provide affordable and high quality healthcare to women, pre- and post-natal care to mothers, which includes hygiene, sanitation, holistic and adequate nutrition and provision of extra PDS / food supplies. Provide access to high quality healthcare to all women in rural and urban areas.
- iv. Introduce a comprehensive scheme to deliver reliable and effective basic social services, safety and security to women, with a strong focus on the most marginalised and vulnerable

women (including elderly, disabled, widows, orphan girls, women with major health/psychiatric illnesses).

- v. Equality in ‘family laws’ that cover marriage, property and divorce of all religions. Right to live a life without violence; commitment to ensuring women’s safety in public spaces; strict implementation of laws on sexual violence against women, and domestic violence.
- vi. Promote fair treatment and make equal wages mandatory for women in the formal and informal sector.
- vii. All existing Constitutional bodies – such as Commissions for Women, Children, Human Rights, and SC/ST – must be strengthened, made independent and autonomous and self-sufficient for resources, and must have adequate representation of women.
- viii. Active gender sensitisation programs in the private and public sector, including the police, armed forces, administration and judiciary with the constitution of anti-sexual harassment committees based on provisions under The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.
- ix. Promote gender-based reporting, budgeting and accounting at each tier of governance for health, education, employment and other measures of human development.
- x. Recognising that poor rural and urban women are in the “high risk” category of contracting HIV/AIDS from their spouses or non-spouse male “carriers,” and create a targeted programme to check this trend and provide women and their children with better support systems and services to deal with the debilitating/crippling aspects of the disease (e.g. medicines, awareness, access to support networks, employment opportunities).

#### **Empowering the Aam Aurat within the Swaraj Abhiyan**

- i. Right to Political Participation and Equality — The Swaraj Abhiyan will work towards to ensure that 33% to 50% of all political party tickets at the national, state and local level are for women. The SA will also ensure that all committees at national and state levels will have equal/adequate representation of women.
- ii. The SA commits to supporting a law to ensure women’s representation in the Parliament through the most appropriate route.
- iii. A clear inner organisational understanding that all forms of gender discrimination, harassment or a history thereof will mean instant and public disciplinary action against the member.
- iv. Put in place an effective and regular system of Gender Audit within the SA.
- v. Implement Gender Sensitisation training for all levels of personnel and institutions
- vi. Formation of sexual harassment committees at all levels and geographies of organisational functioning.

## **E. Swaraj at the Social Margins: Justice for Harmony**

The Indian constitution visualises fraternity among all Indians by ensuring social and economic justice and equity in status and of opportunities. The constitution thus lays down the basic framework for reconciling social differences with national unity:

- Strict non-discrimination based on caste, gender, religion or any other accident of birth.
- Acknowledgement and naming of historically disadvantaged social communities.
- Providing special opportunities for disadvantaged social groups.
- Recognising and promoting social diversity.

In practice however, the policy of social justice has failed to live up to the constitutional promise. State policies for disadvantaged communities have been reduced to one or two highly visible, tokenist measures, which do not help the community substantially but succeed in generating resentment among the rest of society. Many of these communities have developed a small class of beneficiaries with vested interests to maintain the present system. Political parties have developed a vested interest in keeping these communities vulnerable and dependent on state largesse.

Swaraj Abhiyan is committed to restoring the spirit of the constitution and by instituting a system of social justice that addresses the substantive concerns of these communities, effectively. This would involve identification of disadvantages in a transparent and evidence-based manner, revisiting the definition and boundaries of beneficiary communities, focussing on issues such as education, health and livelihoods and searching for new and efficient mechanisms for implementing social justice. Many of the measures would be specific to each social group or inequality, but some common measures would include:

- Setting up of an Equal Opportunities Commission for objective identification for disadvantaged communities, social audit of state policies and designing new mechanism for affirmative action.
- Social justice policies to acknowledge graded (less and more backward rather than backward vs. non-backward) and cross-cutting inequalities (caste by class by gender) and special provisions to those who suffer from multiple disadvantages (poor Dalit girl).
- Ambit of social justice policies to be expanded beyond higher education and white-collar jobs, to include livelihood opportunities, access to credit and market, infrastructure, health and housing.

### **E. 1 Ending Caste-based Inequalities**

The caste system and its inequalities present a challenge to the vision of a just, democratic and united India, contained in the Indian constitution. Swaraj Abhiyan is therefore committed to dismantling caste-based inequalities, discrimination and caste-based politics. This would require:

- Acknowledging, identifying and combating caste to eliminate its consequences.
- Special opportunities for historically disadvantaged castes.

- Expanding and fine-tuning the existing mechanisms for special opportunities/reservations.

### **Our Policy Position:**

- i. Since dismantling a complex social system requires acknowledging its existence and recording its effects, it is necessary to collect systematic information on the numbers and educational and economic profile of different castes.
- ii. Encouraging inter-caste associations and cooperation through marriage, entrepreneurial ventures, housing and other such formations; special attention to women from disadvantaged castes; special provision in schools for first-generation learners from these communities.
- iii. Economic policies to aim at delinking caste from traditional occupations, to promote livelihood opportunities for all, especially disadvantaged communities; vocational education, access to credit to entrepreneurs and land reforms to give land or tenurial rights to landless communities.
- iv. The existing system of reservations for SC, ST and OBC in government jobs and public education to be retained and fine-tuned while extending its scope; provisions of affirmative action to be extended to the private sector and in domains like housing and health; gradually move towards a system that supplements caste with other inequalities such as class, gender and the urban-rural divide. There is a need to look for mechanisms of affirmative action in addition to reservations.
- v. Effective implementation of laws to end caste-based humiliation, atrocities and violence.
- vi. Effective implementation of SCSP and TSP so as to equalise the historical discrepancies in major development indicators.

#### **Fine-Tuning Reservations**

- ✓ Legal recognition for extremely disadvantaged SC, most vulnerable ST and most backward OBCs in order to provide these subgroups minimum assured benefits.
- ✓ Allow Dalit communities within Muslims and Christians to be recognised as SC.
- ✓ Evolve a multi-dimensional index of disadvantages that takes into consideration caste, as well as gender, rural-urban location and economic and educational background of the family. Such an index could be used for weightage, so as to compute deprivation score for each student or candidate.
- ✓ Children of parents who have availed the benefits of reservation to be placed at the end of their reserved category queue. If a given member of a family has received the benefits of reservation, their children will not benefit from reservation at a job or position of the same level or less. After two generations, reservation for that particular family will not exist anymore.

## **E. 2 Other disadvantaged groups**

Disadvantages and discrimination are not confined to caste and gender. Economic inequality continues to be the principle axis of disadvantage in our society and must remain the focus of our economic policy. Besides, there are other social groups that face systematic deprivation based on the accident of birth. Any attempts to redress these disadvantages must begin by acknowledging that such inequalities do exist, that they are systemic in nature and that their reduction requires a targeted approach that takes into account the specificities of each social group.

The source and nature of disadvantage may vary from group to group, but its consequences are fairly similar: lower literacy, even lower participation in higher education, poor health indicators, marginalisation from lucrative economic opportunities, severe under-representation in public sector employment and political processes, besides stigmatisation and humiliation. Among such social groups, four deserve special mention

### **E.2.1 Persons with Disabilities**

Persons with Disability (PwD) constitute a social group whose disadvantage is obvious to common sense, but invisible to official policy that has so far not even taken the first steps to address their conditions. To this end, the following measures need to be taken:

- i. Expand the current official definition of disability so as to include mental disability and institute a system of regular data collection on the numbers and conditions of PwD.
- ii. All public infrastructures (including buildings, transport and communication) to be made barrier-free.
- iii. Special provisions for PwD in education and employment opportunities. Effective implementation of existing reservations.
- iv. Focus on policies and measures that can prevent disabilities (such as polio, blindness and some cognitive disabilities), public provision of ongoing healthcare support, and subsidies for specific equipments needed for different forms of disability.
- v. Any decision-making body regarding PwD must include a majority of PwD.

### **E.2.2 Nomadic and De-notified Communities**

Nomadic and de-notified communities / tribes (DNTs) are some of the most vulnerable, stigmatised and invisible communities in India. The following policy measures need to be taken:

- i. Constitutional recognition for this category at par with SC and ST, and accurate enumeration and survey of conditions of DNTs; a permanent statutory commission for DNTs and extension of Prevention of Atrocities Act to DNTs.
- ii. Ensuring access to education and healthcare, including mobile schools and dispensaries.

- iii. Training and skill up-gradation for modern livelihood and employment, special availability of credit facilities and support in accessing market.
- iv. Infrastructural support to provide basic amenities to semi-permanent or permanent settlements of DNTs.

### **E.2.3 Adivasi Issues**

Despite constitutional recognition and a host of policies, most Adivasi communities have remained excluded from state-led development and participation in education, organised sector jobs and have remained largely voiceless in the political arena. The following policy measure needs to be taken:

- i. PESA and the Forest Rights Act to be effectively implemented to ensure that there is no land acquisition or extraction from forest areas without permission of Gram Sabhas, and their rights to manage, sustainably use and protect all natural resources are fully protected.
- ii. Larger strategic plan for our mineral resources including coal, iron ore and bauxite, given most of these are located in Adivasi areas; benefits of extraction to be shared with local communities.
- iii. Ensuring access to education and healthcare; special provisions to improve health and nutrition indicators of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (such as Baigas).
- iv. Special provisions for infrastructure development in Schedule V areas.
- v. Training and skill upgradation for modern livelihood and employment, special availability of credit facilities and support in accessing market; effective implementation of reservations.
- vi. Initiate administrative reforms in order to make the Gram Sabhas more effective as envisaged under the PESA.
- vii. Provide greater cultural and economic autonomy to these communities – e.g. to teach in Adivasi languages, have community radio and media in Adivasi languages.
- viii. There needs to be a thorough rethink regarding the method of identifying scheduled tribes, ensuring that affirmative action doesn't keep perpetrating in the hands of a few families or communities, and that there is uniformity in the application of the nomenclature of a scheduled caste or tribe.

### **E.2.4 Disadvantaged Religious Minorities and their Issues**

India has many religions, many of whose constituents have not been able to take advantage of India's growth trajectory of the last 20 years. Among them are Muslims, Dalit Christians and Buddhists. The Swaraj Abhiyan believes that it should act affirmatively to help these communities, provide them with equal opportunity, and enable them to discover their true potential. Muslims are not just the largest religious minority of India, they are also the most discriminated and disadvantaged minority in terms of their educational status, economic condition and their share in public sector jobs and political representation. Therefore, there is a need for a comprehensive policy to redress their

disadvantage, which must go beyond provision of security from communal violence and symbolic attention to identity issues. This must consist of:

- i. Improved infrastructure and provisions of public and commercial services in areas of Muslim concentration to bring it at par with the rest.
- ii. Allow inclusion of Dalit Muslims within SC and ensure inclusion of backward Muslim biradaris, an overwhelming majority of Muslims, within the list of OBCs.
- iii. Provisions to ensure non-discrimination against Muslim students in school admission and student aid programs in higher education; degrees offered by Madarsa Boards to be eligible for admission in college and Universities. Encourage Madarsas to teach the sciences along with their religious teaching.
- iv. Employment and livelihood opportunities: Financial incentives for occupations or industries in which high proportion of Muslims are engaged; financial support for skill up-gradation of small enterprises; better access to credit facilities; action against discrimination by banks.
- v. The Swaraj Abhiyan will encourage the formation of local civil society organisations that will play the role of preventive and curative integration councils.
- vi. Encourage and work for mixed neighbourhoods especially in urban areas and device mechanisms to prevent discrimination in selling/leasing out flats to minorities in general and Muslims in particular.
- vii. Control and management of Waqf properties to be de-bureaucratized and oriented towards benefits to the community.

## **F. Swaraj in Ideas: People's Knowledge and Innovation**

Swaraj in Ideas is the foundation of the politics of swaraj. In the realm of ideas, creativity and culture, swaraj stands for respecting ordinary people as a fountainhead of ideas, as a repository of knowledge, as a source of innovation. In a world dominated by expert knowledge and political ideologies that claim the monopoly of truth, Swaraj trusts that the common person has the knowledge and wisdom to choose feasible, long-term and sustainable alternatives for every possible policy in practice today. In this sense, swaraj in ideas does not deny knowledge outside one's self, outside the locality or the nation or indeed the role for expertise in any field. It merely insists that interests of the *aam aadmi/aurat* be the fulcrum of deciding on relevant knowledge.

Shifting the locus of knowledge to the people has several corollaries:

- Substitute centralisation of any activity or initiative, with the creation, fostering and restoring of local units—with aim to foster respect for genuine representativeness and significance of the local.
- Make policies in a way that strengthens people to be independent, rather than create dependence on the state and its institutions.
- Encourage the use of local knowledge and languages.
- Encourage better respect, funding, marketing and development of our heritage and culture. Constructive efforts to develop infrastructure for tourism is important, along with developing and encouraging more artisans, craftsmen and people from other traditional livelihoods.

### **F. 1 Swaraj in Languages**

Indian freedom movement had a vision that an independent India would have a language policy suitable to its multilingual character. State policy in post-independence India has not lived up this vision. English has become the de facto official language and the language of power, privilege and opportunities; other 'official' languages have pushed out 'dialects' and other smaller languages. Celebration of multilingualism has given way to competing mono-lingualisms of a global language, of a national language or of the mother tongue. Language policy needs to be based on:

- State policy to restore and foster the multilingual character of Indian society.
- Equalise status of and access to all languages.
- Education should make children achieve high levels of proficiency in different languages on the basis of their home languages.

#### **Our Policy Position:**

- i. Language in School: Mother tongue as the medium of education at the primary stage, followed by gradual introduction of the second, third or fourth language on the basis of the first language; these additional languages to English and state official languages.

- ii. Higher education language: Strengthen the capacity and resources for teaching and research in languages other than English.
- iii. Official Language: Reject exclusionary monolingual policy or practice in any form like mandatory use of any one language (either of English, Hindi or any other) in any of the public services; policy documents, grievance redressal and justice delivery systems to be made available in the people's own languages.
- iv. Smaller and endangered languages: Develop an action plan of language maintenance for all the non-scheduled languages of India, especially indigenous and minority languages; create incentives for community-based efforts in revitalisation.
- v. State support for documentation and collation of the knowledge resources hidden in various Indian languages, including all the indigenous and minority languages.

**Question to be discussed:**

- I. How does one ensure employment opportunities (especially outside the public sector) for those proficient in languages other than English?

**F. 2 Swaraj in Science, Technology and Innovation**

The principle of Swaraj must inform our policy on scientific knowledge, technology choices and measures to promote innovation. This does not mean turning our back to modern science and technology, but only to recognise that science and technology is not value-neutral, that its goals and priorities must be set by society. Swaraj in Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) would be based on the following principles:

- Different policy areas to be prioritised as per their value to the people.
- Recognition of knowledge generated by communities, and build institutions to foster it.
- Technology choices to be guided by equity and ecological sustainability.

**Our Policy Position:**

- i. Promotion of excellence in education and research in Science and Technology; excellence to be measured not by global 'state-of-the-art' measures, but by their relevance to our context and the needs of the *aam aadmi/aurat*.
- ii. Active policy support to encourage and support grassroots innovation and spirit of 'jugaad'; tie-up of rural colleges and universities, polytechnics and regional engineering institutions with the cottage/small-scale processing sectors.
- iii. Bringing universal access of worldwide digital knowledge systems available to all citizens, irrespective of their capacity to pay, in all languages of India; active support to bringing Indian knowledge bases in all Indian languages in print and digital media.

- iv. Technology choice to be determined by people's needs, our current priorities, employment generating potential, and ecological sustainability which lend itself to people's control and not just on maximisation of profit.
- v. Intellectual Property Rights to be subjected to wider debates and to provide for recognition of people's knowledge, keeping the essential sharing-of-useful-knowledge open and active.
- vi. Special focus on enhancing the R&D facilities in central and state universities to encourage innovation. Setting up specialised universities across the nation for topics like agriculture and horticulture.

### **F. 3 Swaraj in Media Policy**

The growth of media industry has been impressive, especially over the last two decades since liberalisation, but its excessive focus on maximisation of profits and a lack of credible regulation has led to serious imbalances like “paid news” and the creation of big media oligopolies. While we appreciate the need for a vibrant and independent media, we are concerned that socially and economically disadvantaged sections of people are increasingly being left out of the media dialogue. The main reasons for this include the media's lack of public accountability and overwhelming dependence on advertising. The media industry is not subject to any statutory regulations of disclosure despite its profound influence over daily lives. Regulation of the mass media is of seminal importance today because of the mass media's enduring impact not just on our lifestyles but on our attitudes, ideas, ideologies, views and values. It is the media which shapes our definitions and understanding of the world around us and those who control the media, in effect, control us.

While the Indian media enjoys independence, professionalism and vibrancy necessary in a democracy, there is a need for media to observe equally significant principles:

- Non-coercive public accountability.
- Observance of ethical standards, including declaration of conflicts of interest, consistent with Freedom of Expression.
- Greater voice to the underprivileged and their concerns, not just those of advertisers and consumers.

#### **Our Policy Position:**

- i. Statutory regulation of media industry by creation of a constitutional authority, independent of both the government and corporate media, with jurisdiction over all media: print, radio, television, cinema and the internet, which would ensure freedom from interference from the state and the political authority.
- ii. Curb on ‘paid news’ and ‘private treaties’ where media companies give disproportionate positive coverage to private companies.
- iii. Cross media ownership regulations to ensure a competitive environment by prohibiting big media monopolies; state monopoly of news broadcasting on radio to end.

- iv. Supporting public service media institutions, also convert the state-owned media (or state-supported autonomous institutions like Doordarshan, All India Radio, Lok Sabha Television and Rajya Sabha Television) into true public service institutions with decentralised, professional and autonomous management structures.
- v. Airwaves to be treated as a public good; reclaiming air-waves to give voice to the voiceless in the form of community radio (CR) and other forms of community media, including for current affairs broadcasts. We shall encourage crowd-funded initiatives that seek to give television, internet and radio programming back to the people.
- vi. The tendency of big corporations to control mass media poses a challenge. It is, therefore, necessary to ensure full transparency of ownership of media houses and ensure the declaration of any underlying management control and conflicts of interest.

#### **F. 4 Promoting Fraternity among different religions**

India is founded on the conviction that people belonging to different faiths can co-exist within the same country, without any domination or discrimination. Swaraj Abhiyan believes that secularism is a positive belief and not merely a negation of religious bias, and needs to be based on:

- Constitutional doctrine of a secular state, which keeps a principled distance from all religions.
- Constitutional provisions of religious freedom.
- Constitutional provisions for minorities to pursue their beliefs and practices.
- Celebration of the diversity of religious beliefs and cultural traditions.

#### **Our Policy Position:**

- i. Foster and promote understanding between the communities through dialogue, interaction and cultural exchanges; incentives to private company, educational institutions, housing societies for social and religious diversity.
- ii. Prevent communal violence and make it a sacred commitment of the state; state to ensure justice to all victims of communal riots and set up fast track courts where necessary; legislation to be brought in to provide punishment to those indulging in or instigating communal violence and those officials who fail to perform their duty of controlling communal violence; curb any attempts to create private armies or armed groups especially by communal organisations.
- iii. The State should take active steps to end discrimination in any form – be it by the State or private persons – particularly in recruitment, in renting accommodation or in admission to educational institutions.

- iv. A majority community in one State may be a disadvantaged, minority community in another State and the protection / facilities provided to minority communities should be available to them.
- v. Neither majority beliefs nor minority rights should be used to justify practices which are in violation of the basic rights and values for all men and women enshrined in our constitution.

## **G. Swaraj as Peace: Towards Human Security**

Swaraj pre-supposes security. Any kind of self-rule is impossible in the absence of free, un-coerced exercise of will. For us, Swaraj is not just exercise of national sovereignty *vis-à-vis* external powers; the idea of swaraj requires internal as well as external security. The recognition of Swaraj for everyone, within and outside the country, for our country and for other countries, leads us to the ideal of peace. The idea of security here is not just safety from armed aggression and violence; the security necessary for Swaraj must include human security, security from hunger, indignities or access to necessities of life and livelihood. This perspective on human security shall guide Swaraj Abhiyan's policies in the internal as well as external domains.

The challenge of internal security cannot be seen and addressed merely as a law and order problem. While effectively protecting the citizens from terrorism and pre-mediated violence, the burden of our internal security policy will be on redressing the root causes of citizens' alienation through radical political decentralisation, negotiations with alienated groups, improving the economic well-being of the people and respecting. In the external domain pursuit of swaraj would mean safeguarding national sovereignty and augmenting our capacity for effective and strategic intervention on the one hand, using our global presence to promote equity, justice and peace in the global order.

### **G. 1 Foreign policy**

India's foreign policy needs to move from the doctrine of non-alignment, to the doctrine of swaraj in the global order, from a negative and strategic imperative to a positive and principled pursuit of the needs of the Indian people, as well as our obligation to the *aam aadmi/aurat* across the world and planet Earth. Foreign Policy should be based on the following principles:

- Promote national interest to gain strategic autonomy in the external sphere, while redefining it in the light of the genuine needs of the *aam aadmi/aurat*.
- Enhance state capacity to support peace and oppose war in the neighbourhood and beyond.
- Intensifying our international engagements to work for a multi-polar and ecologically sustainable world.
- Securing a due place for India in the global arena, not as a hard power but as an exemplar.

### **Our Policy Position:**

- i. Global Institutions: Active role in promoting power and legitimacy of truly global institutions like the United Nations and its various agencies (unlike G-20 and IMF), so as to move beyond 'great power exceptionalism'.
- ii. Relationship with Global Powers: sustained and studied engagement with the United States to be supplemented by deep engagement with several other powers and power blocs such as IBSA, BRICS and similar formations; refusal to become secondary partner to sustain American hegemony.

- iii. China: While enhancing the capacity to deter border incursions by China, India not to join anti-China containment ring; focus of Sino-Indian relations to be shifted to greater and more balanced trade and recover Sino-Indian civilizational exchange.
- iv. South Asia: As a major power of the region, India has to take proactive steps to reassure its neighbours, reduce political hostility, promote regional economic integration, and cement historical and ecological unity of the region. Serious efforts must be made to address the socioeconomic and geopolitical issues raised by the large influx of refugees through porous borders.
- v. Pakistan: Zero tolerance on cross-border terrorism, work towards normalisation of relations through non-interrupted dialogue, confidence-building measures, promotion of bilateral trade and easy cross-border movement of people. Efforts must be taken to build confidence and stabilise Pakistan, as a destabilised Pakistan will affect India's future adversely.
- vi. Rest of the World: Vigorous engagement with Asia as a key domain of economic opportunity, engagement with democratic forces in West Asia, non-exploitative relations with Africa, partnership with Latin America.
- vii. Global Environment: Enhance global and regional cooperation on ecological conservation; Advocate global oversight of all global commons through the United Nations, regulating commercial practices of resource use to prevent over-exploitation, preventing dumping of waste, oil, and other destructive elements.
- viii. The Swaraj Abhiyan advocates for the democratisation of the United Nations Security Council and believes that the veto power should be abolished. We also believe the United Nations should become a body that prevents and stops conflict across the world, in contrast to its present nature.

## **G. 2 Internal Security**

India is among the worst sufferers of terrorism and internal security threats anywhere in the world. With factions of foreign trained terrorists, insurgents, left wing extremists, and state-supported vigilante groups operating in many regions, terrorism and internal security are among India's recurring problems. Internal Security should be based on the following principles:

- View internal security in its political perspective and not as law and order problem.
- Break the vicious cycle of violence and counter violence through political solution.
- Evolve democratic ways to cope with insurgency and dissent.
- The armed forces, security and intelligence agencies must work under parliamentary and constitutional oversight.

## **Our Policy Position:**

- i. Address citizens' alienation through political solutions such as genuine devolution of power and inclusive development through participatory governance and bottom up planning; consistent attempts at dialogue and negotiation with insurgents.
- ii. Training and professionalization of the security personnel; sensitisation towards people's concerns and developing compassionate ways of dealing with democratic dissent.
- iii. The intelligence agencies: RAW, IB and NTRO (National Technical Research Organisation, a technical intelligence agency under the National Security Adviser in the Prime Minister's Office) need to have parliamentary oversight in order to ensure financial and operational accountability.
- iv. No use of extra-constitutional methods by the State; disarming and disbanding of state supported vigilante groups; the State must also initiate cases against them for rapes, arson and attacks wherever villagers have filed affidavits in the courts.
- v. Increase accountability of Armed Forces by making the armed forces, security and intelligence agencies to work under strict parliamentary oversight.
- vi. Establish a Declassification Protocol to ensure an accurate multi-dimensional view of history while promoting an honest public debate of modern India's political and military history.

### **Swaraj in the Northeast**

- ✓ Planning with the Northeast, rather than for the Northeast; principles and policies of Swaraj to be extended to the Northeast.
- ✓ Special support for developing infrastructure (like road, transport, communication, electricity and banking) in the Northeast in order to reconnect the lost connectivity of trade and commerce routes.
- ✓ Insurgency to be handled primarily through political negotiations and addressing grievances and aspirations of the people, rather than as a law and order problem.
- ✓ Repeal AFSPA as it has become a symbol of oppression and an instrument of discrimination against the people of the Northeast.
- ✓ Careful monitoring and regulation of immigrants from within India and Bangladesh.
- ✓ Developing infrastructure and the cultural heritage of the Northeast

### **Swaraj in Kashmir**

- ✓ The Swaraj Abhiyan affirms the fact that Kashmir is an integral part of India. We acknowledge that Kashmir is not a property dispute, but a human tragedy.
- ✓ We accept that Article 370 is the starting point of any discussions on Kashmir, and measures must be taken to implement the principles of Swaraj within the country.
- ✓ There needs to be an acknowledgment of the historical pains, griefs and alienation by the Kashmiris.
- ✓ There needs to be a credible and honest enquiry into the misgivings and mistakes of the Army.
- ✓ There should be an honest acceptance of the pain of Kashmiri Pandits, and steps must be taken to reintegrate their place in society with harmony.
- ✓ We believe in regional autonomy of Jammu and Ladakh, and want Kashmir to be made into a demilitarised zone.
- ✓ The AFSPA should be repealed, and the stationing of the Army cannot be without the consent of the people.
- ✓ Finally, there should be a focus on the everyday issues of the people. The VIP culture, feudal dominance and poor development of electricity, roads, ecology and tourism should be tackled and addressed.

### **Naxalite Question**

- ✓ The phenomenon of Naxalism is a consequence of the inability of the Indian state to meet the basic needs of the people, and to remove worst forms of oppression; these issues need to be addressed to effectively deal with Naxalism.
- ✓ Socio-economic development by greater national expenditure on these regions; provision of electricity and drinking water, restoration of alienated lands, reduction in mining activity and land reforms to address issue of landlessness.
- ✓ Multilateral dialogue between the insurgents, human rights groups, people's movements and a cross-section of political parties.
- ✓ Encouraging Members of Parliament and Members of Legislative Assemblies to act proactively in their Naxal-dominated constituencies, to win the hearts and minds of the local populations.
- ✓ Governance and Administrative Reforms by effective political decentralisation, and consider the demand for a separate Adivasi-majority states, with greater cultural and economic autonomy.
- ✓ Use of security forces to counter armed attacks on innocent civilians and officials performing their duties.
- ✓ Call for ceasefire and abandonment of armed struggle.
- ✓ Create a group of interlocutors that will engage in sustained dialogue with all the stakeholders and will also initiate peace talks.
- ✓ Set up a judicial commission to review the cases of all prisoners, especially Adivasis and Dalits, in the affected districts.
- ✓ Hold a National Inquest on the violations of the rights of the tribes in the tribal areas.
- ✓ Operationalize the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA).
- ✓ Major projects harnessing natural resources like forests, minerals, etc. to require local consent. Rehabilitation and compensation issues to be sorted before final project approval. Develop a new benefit sharing model where the royalties from these resources accrue to the local people.
- ✓ Initiate time bound initiatives to improve provision of public services like health, education, electricity, etc. and facilitate easy interface with various public institutions.
- ✓ Invest in improving agriculture productivity of small farmers and also provide support to traditional forms of livelihood.
- ✓ Ensure access to Common Property Resources like forests, grazing land, rivers and rivulets to remain with the people.
- ✓ Conduct annual budget and expenditure review to ensure that adequate funds are allocated and spent on development of tribal areas.
- ✓ Land reforms to address the issue of landlessness and land alienation.
- ✓ The revival and restructuring of the Large Area Multi-Purpose Cooperative Societies (LAMPS) and Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies (PACS), with the specific targets of meeting all credit needs of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and weaker sections, would receive highest priority.

### **G. 3 External Defence**

National Security perspective must extend beyond the narrow confines of territory and take into consideration the people's interest and their needs. External Defence needs to be based on:

- Need for a long-term vision of peace with our neighbours.
- Need for realistic assessment of military challenges, and possible reduction in defence procurement and expenditure.
- Transparency in defence procurements.
- Self-reliance approach in the mid-term to long-term.

#### **Our Policy Position:**

- i. Higher Defence Management: Professionally managed Ministry of Defence (MoD), integration of three services, creation of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), inclusion of Defence Services in national security decision making processes, civilian control of military through elected representatives.
- ii. Military Expenditure, Procurement and Indigenous production: Need to evolve a realistic threat estimation mechanism and thereby attempt to reduce our procurement of arms and other defence equipment gradually over the time; encourage indigenous production; greater transparency in defence procurement.
- iii. Push for a global no-first use nuclear policy and a verifiable Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty to cap global nuclear stockpiles.
- iv. Defence Relationships with Neighbouring Countries: Engage in 'Confidence Building Measures' (CBMs) and Mutually Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) with Pakistan and China; work towards nuclear disarmament and nuclear free zone in our region.
- v. Military Personnel: Lateral induction of defence services personnel to Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF); ongoing training and skill up-gradation; priority to welfare of the soldiering community; no privatisation of security both at sea as well as on land.
- vi. The Defence is the largest owner of land in the country. Encroachment and commercialisation of defence land must be stopped, for the needs of the common people.
- vii. There is a need to frame a comprehensive and safe protocol to ensure India's internet security and secure the privacy of India's citizens. Cyber security governance should be of paramount importance and made an integral part of our external defence strategy.
- viii. Need to form a National Strategic Group which will define national interest for next 50 years through white papers in terms of Food security, Water security, Peace and Justice, Employment, healthcare and education, keeping trade and commerce safe and dynamic.