

TN Academicians appeal to the public on the eve of Elections 2019

- *Vote for Constitutional Values, Diversity and Inclusive Society*
 - *Prevent Suicidal Increase of Economic Inequality*
- *Vote for creating a Healthy, Rational and Scientific Tamil Nadu and India*

Dear Friends,

In a few weeks from now, we would elect the 17th Lok Sabha. This is an important duty **that would determine our country's future** and that of the “**Idea of India**”.

We, as academics, work or have worked in institutions of research and learning. These institutions of learning and research are the places where different schools of thought have to contend, with freedom and without fear. In contrast, a climate of fear has been created in institutions of higher education that discourages questioning and critical thinking.

- *From the systematic attacks on independent academic functioning in highly regarded universities like JNU to what has been described as the institutional murder of Rohith Vemula at the Central University of Hyderabad, central universities are being obstructed when discharging their academic duties. From unacceptable threats to criminal physical assault, a range of coercive measures have been unleashed by the elements seeking to destroy pluralism, secularism and diversity which are so central to the idea of India. Atrocities against religious minorities, dalits and women in the name of upholding “nationalism” have been witnessed in other universities too, including in Delhi, Rajasthan, Chandigarh, Jadavpur, Allahabad, the BHU and the AMU and many other places*

These atrocities, deplorable as they were, are known to have happened under instigation and support of the ruling party at the centre and its ministers. The elements executing these atrocities have unfortunately been protected and encouraged by the ruling dispensation.

While these above events are visible, a surreptitious attempt is going on to change the character of our institutions, in various ways: by appointments of heads of institutions, by curbing funds, by ensuring promotion of obscurantist ideas, etc.

- *The NCERT has taken up the task to promote the RSS's pet projects to introduce in the text book, topics of dubious provenance and has recently removed chapters that include accounts about peasants and farmers and class and caste relations and struggles. In the area of higher education, the appointment of a person known for his links to the RSS, as the Vice Chancellor of the prestigious Jawaharlal University is a prime example of the ruling government's assault on higher education. It is to be noted that 93% of the JNU faculty had protested against this Vice-Chancellor's undemocratic methods.*

The system of higher education is being greatly weakened by the promotion of obscurantism, irrationality and aggressive communalism by the ruling dispensation.

- *Equally important, the regime's policies involve the most aggressive privatization, centralization and corporatization of education, as seen in their New Education Policy and the HECI Bill, both of which have met widespread public protest. These lay bare the plans to place academic bodies at the mercy of the government.*
- *An appointee of the NDA government, Chairman of the Indian Council of Social Science Research targets eminent intellectuals critical of the wrong doings of the regime just as the finance minister the other day accused more than a hundred distinguished economists seeking greater credibility and transparency of government statistical bodies of being "fake" economists.*

Senior researchers as well as doctoral scholars get little funding for quality research. This is true not just in social sciences but also in natural and physical sciences.

- *The government makes tall claims of India being made a Superpower but does not spend even 0.6% of the GDP on Science and Technology.*

Beyond the world of academia, the regime's economic policies have caused massive destruction of livelihoods in the informal sector which accounts for more than 90% of our workforce and more than 40% of our national output.

- *The draconian act of demonetization and the ham handed introduction of GST have caused havoc. They have led not only to a decline in the rate of growth of GDP, but a massive growth in unemployment by destroying the employment-intensive informal sector. Unemployment is soaring, as revealed both by the most recent government survey report (the release of which has been blocked by the government) and the private agency the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE).*

More than a hundred people died in the aftermath of demonetization while not a penny of black money was recovered. Across rural India, the agrarian crisis has worsened, with a steep fall in prices of agricultural produce even while farmers in hundreds of thousands have marched across the nation seeking justice and an end to policies that compel farmers to commit suicide.

- *In the past five years the ruling dispensation has subverted the constitution and various democratic institution rights from Supreme Court to RBI. Even the election commission has not spared. The ruling party has used the colonial law on sedition to surprise voices of dissent.*

While the situation is grim, it is not without hope. The struggles of the farmers, the massive protests of various sections of employees and workers, both in the states and at the all India level, of women, of dalits and the scheduled tribes, of religious minorities under murderous attack from goons patronized by the ruling dispensation – all these give us hope in the resilience of the Indian people. But we cannot be complacent.

We, the socially concerned academics, whose education has been made possible by the taxes that our working people pay when they buy any good or service, owe it to them and to ourselves to

ensure that India remains secular and democratic and its higher educational system gets strengthened in its pursuit of science and critical inquiry. We cannot allow people who express dissent or question the system to be termed anti-nationals.

- *The first step in this process is to ensure that the coming elections result in a regime that stands by the Constitution of India. The Indian constitution, the product of our freedom struggle, proclaims in the preamble, India to be a Secular, Sovereign, Socialist, Democratic Republic.*

The rise of organized regressive forces in the last several years - committed to destroying the Constitutional values - has to be challenged and stopped forthwith without any reservation.

List of signatories

1. Dr.M. Anandakrishnan, Former Vice-Chancellor Anna University, Chennai, Former Chairman IIT Kanpur.
2. Justice Hari Paranthaman, Former Judge of Madras High Court, Chennai.
3. Mr. M.G. Devasahayam, I.A.S (Retd),
4. Dr. S. S.Rajagopalan, Educationist, Chennai.
5. Dr.V. Vasanthi Devi, Former Vice-Chancellor, MS University.
6. Dr.M. Rajendran, Former Vice-Chancellor Tamil University.
7. Dr.K.A. Manikumar, Ex. Vice-Chancellor, Swami Vivekanda University, M.P.
8. Mr. R. Poornalingam, I.A.S (Retd),
9. Mr. P.Vijayashankar, Editor, Frontline.
10. Dr.S. Sathikh, Former Vice-Chancellor University of Madras.
11. Dr. Ponnaivaiko, Former Vice-Chancellor, Bharathidasan University.
12. Dr. S.Theodore Baskaran, Writer.
13. Mr. P.B. Prince Gajendra Babu, Educationist, General Secretary, SPCSS.
14. Dr.K. Nagaraj, Professor (Retd) MIDS, Chennai .
15. Dr. R. Ramanujam, Professor, Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Chennai.
16. Dr. Enakshi Bhattacharya, Professor, IIT Madras, Chennai.
17. Dr, Ayan Mudhopadhyay, Associate Professor, IIT Madras, Chennai.
18. Dr. Suresh Govindharajan, Professor IIT Madras, Chennai.
19. Dr.K. Jothi Sivagnanam, Professor, Dept of Economics, University of Madras.
20. Dr. Sridhar, Economist, Frontline.
21. Dr. Y. Srinivasa Rao, Professor, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappali.
22. Dr.V.B. Athreya, Economist, Professor (Retd) Bharathidasan University.
23. Dr.R. Kaleeswaran, Professor, Dept of Art and Literary, Loyola college, Chennai.
24. Dr. V.Jeevanandam, Environmental Activist cum Medical Doctor.
25. Dr. C.S. Rex Sargunam, Medical Doctor and President, Tamil Nadu Health Development Association.
26. Dr.Era. Natarasan , Science Writer and Educationist.
27. Mr.Su.Ki. Jayakaran , Geologist and Writer.
28. Dr.S. Janakarajan, Professor (Retd), MIDS.
29. Dr.T. Chandraguru, Professor (Retd) and Former Syndicate Member, MKU
30. Dr.S. Kochadai, Professor and writer.
31. Dr.G.C.Manoharan, Librarian (Retd), Mannar Thirumalai Nayakar. college, Madurai
32. Prof.S. Mohana, Professor (Retd), Palani Aandavar Arts college, Palani.
33. Dr. R. Murali, Professor (Retd) and Former Principal Madura College, Madurai.

34. Dr.V. Natarjan, Scientist (Retd), IGCAR, Kalpakkam .
35. Prof. S. Ramasubramanian, Writer, Professor (Retd), Government Arts College, Tiruvannamalai.
36. Dr.K. Ramakrishnan, Professor (Retd), Bharathiar University
37. Dr.Mu Ramaswamy, Dramatist, Professor (Retd), Tamil University.
38. Dr. R. Rukmani, Scientist (Retd), MSSRF, Chennai.
39. Dr. A. Sankarasubramanian, Professor (Retd), Government Arts College, Salem.
40. Dr. S. Sankaralingam, State Vice President, PUCL.
41. Dr.V. Sridhar, Scientist (Retd), IGCAR, Kalpakkam.
42. Dr.Mu. Thirumavalavan, Former Principal Government Arts College, Viyasarpadi, Chennai.
43. Dr.R. Usha, Professor (Retd), Madurai Kamaraj University.
44. Prof. P. Vijayakumar (Retd), Saraswathi Narayan College, Madurai
45. Prof. Prabha Kalvi Mani, Makkal Kalvi Eyakkam.
46. Prof.A. Marx, Writer, Chennai
47. Dr.R. Chandra, Professor (Retd), UD College, Thiruchy.
48. Prof. K. Raju, Editor, Pudhiya Aasiriyam.
49. Dr. V. Ponraj, Former Principal, MTT Hindu College, Tirunelveli.
50. Dr. A.James Willams, Professor (Retd) and Former All India President, AIFUCTO.
51. Dr. I.P. Kanagasundaram, Former Principal, District Institute of Education and Training.
52. Dr. P. Rathnasabhpathi, Retired Professor of Tamil, Chennai
53. Dr. P.Murugaiyan, Principal (Retd), Sivanthai College of Education, Chennai.
54. Dr. S. Jayshankar, Principal (Retd), Sri Vasavi College, Erode.
55. Dr. S.Hema, Professor (Retd), Holycross College, Trichy.
56. Dr. V.Murugan, Professor (Retd), Vivekanandha College, Chennai.

Appeal Move Initiated By:

57. Dr. S. Krishnaswamy, Senior Professor (Retd), Madurai Kamaraj University.
58. Prof.P. Rajamanickam (Retd), Saraswathi Narayan College, Madurai and General Secretary AIPSN
59. Dr. N. Mani, Professor and Head, Dept of Economics, Erode Arts college, Erode.
60. Dr.T.R. Govindarajan, Professor (Retd), Institute of Mathematical Sciences Chennai.