

THIRD WOMEN'S CONVENTION OF ECZIEA AT CUTTACK ON 9TH FEBRUARY

We are happy to inform that the 3rd Women's Convention of ECZIEA is going to be held at Cuttack on 9th February 2019. Women delegates from across the zone; from the states of Bihar, Odisha and Jharkhand; will gather at Cuttack and have serious discussions on the challenges confronting working women in general and working women in LIC in particular. Com. Geeta Shant, Convener of the Women's Sub Committee of NCZIEF and General Secretary of AIIEA's Bareilly divisional unit has given her kind consent to inaugurate the Convention and guide the proceedings. Comrades of CDIEA Cuttack are in the thick of preparations to host the convention in a befitting manner.

Conventional wisdom has it that women are the most beautiful creation in the earth. A woman plays the role of a mother, sister, wife and friend and instils every life that revolves round her with a heavenly sweetness. And yet, in virtually every country, in almost all spheres of life women have been at the receiving end. Women and girls in a household typically get to have their first taste of inequality in terms of diet, nutrition, access to health and education, and very often in the matter of asserting their reproductive rights.

Violence against women affects all societies. A report by the World Health Organisation says that more than a third of women worldwide are victims of physical or sexual violence. India has no reason to rejoice as the reported cases of crimes against women rose 83 percent between 2007 and 2016. As many as 39 crimes against women were reported every hour in India, up from 21 in 2007, according to Crime in India 2016 report by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). The rate of crime against women – crimes per 100,000 female population – was 55.2 in 2016, up from 41.7 in 2012. The official crime statistics for 2016 shows a woman was raped every 13 minutes; six women were gang-raped every day; a bride was murdered for dowry every 69 minutes; and 19 women were attacked with acid every month. In addition, India has the most child brides in the world - around a third of all girls are married before their 18th birthday. There are 63 million "missing" women in the country due to sex-selective abortion as well as 21 million unwanted girls. Many believe such skewed ratios are contributing to increased crimes against women.

Gender inequality is another big issue which adversely affects human development. Despite overall progress, women continue to be deprived of healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living. Worldwide, the average Human Development Index for women is six percent lower than that of men, due to women's lower income and educational attainment in many

countries. Although there has been commendable progress in the number of girls attending school, there remain big differences between other key aspects of men and women's lives. Modern societies increasingly demand gender equality, which is also a precondition for genuine democracy. India ranks 127 out of 160 countries on the Gender Inequality Index which reflects gender-based inequalities in reproductive health, empowerment (political and educational) and economic activity.

Women's empowerment is key to gender equality. But overall; women's share of parliamentary seats remains low although it varies across regions. In India, despite substantial progress at the policy and legislative levels, women remain significantly less politically, economically and socially empowered than men. According to a 2017 United Nations and Inter-Parliamentary Union report, India ranked 148th globally in terms of representation of women in Parliament.

Women in India are discriminated, exploited not just because they are physically weak but due to flawed perception and patriarchal mindset that emphasises men's dominance in family relegating women as inferior to men. Patriarchal bias is not ingrained in men only but also among women. Women problem is a societal problem. It can be solved when both men and women fight together. Equally important is to fight neo-liberal policy that treats women as instrument of enjoyment, advertisement material and commodity.

However, role of a political party or government cannot be ignored. In order to derive political dividend, the way BJP wooed the male chauvinism, harboured superstition and defied Supreme Court's verdict that lifted the ban on the entry of women (15 years to 50 years) in to Kerala's Sabarimala temple will go down as a darkest spot in Indian history. However, the way more than 35 lakh women stood shoulder-to-shoulder across national highways in Kerala, creating a 620 km-long human wall as part of an initiative to promote gender equality amid row over entry of women in the Sabarimala temple has proved that women can change their fortunes too.

So Comrades, the forthcoming women's convention carries a lot of significance. It will discuss, deliberate various problems confronted by women including working class women. Deliberation will be made also on protection of our industry, wage revision and our responsibility, course of future action. All women comrades of zones are requested to attend the convention and make it a grand success.

With Greetings,

Comradely Yours

Shreekanth Mishra

General Secretary