

CENTRAL COMMITTEE, CPI (M)

*On Rectification Campaign**

1. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has a glorious record in conducting class and mass struggles. The Party has developed through the hard work and sacrifices of tens of thousands of its cadres. To achieve its revolutionary goals, it is necessary for the Party to overcome its political and ideological weaknesses and organisational shortcomings. A Communist Party strengthens itself by constant rectification directed at improving its style of functioning, by correcting its organisational shortcomings and providing a correct political and ideological orientation to its members.

2. What is the necessity for a rectification campaign? In a class divided society the ruling classes control the State and their ideology dominates society. In such a society the Communist Party becomes a continuous target for the penetration of alien ideologies. The ruling classes seek to weaken and disrupt the Party through the dilution of its ideology and character. Hence there is the need for the Communist Party to consistently counter such influences and penetration. Rectification has to be a continuous process and not a one-off effort in order to protect the revolutionary character of the Party. The purpose

* Edited version of the Resolution adopted by the Central Committee, October 23-25, 2009.

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of such a campaign is to remove the wrong trends and shortcomings so that the Party emerges more unified and strengthened.

3. The 19th Party Congress had called for a rectification campaign against wrong trends in the Party. It had directed the Central Committee to update the rectification campaign document of 1996 for this purpose. The election review of the 15th Lok Sabha elections has underlined the need for such a rectification campaign.

4. The Central Committee had adopted a document for the rectification campaign in 1996. This document was the basis for the campaign in the Party which was conducted in 1996-97. When reviewing the experience of the last 12 years, it must be first self-critically noted that we have not been able to conduct the rectification campaign on a continuous and sustained basis, though certain problems pointed out in the 1996 document were taken up for correction and implementation in the past years. For instance, the ongoing fight against factionalism and for the restoration of the norms of democratic centralism in Kerala was an important work undertaken in the past few years. Another weakness in the earlier campaign was that the rectification process was not adopted from the top, from the PB and the CC.

5. The 1996 document had correctly pointed out the material conditions and the environment in which the alien influences and trends penetrate the Party and affect its membership. In India where the peasantry and petty bourgeois sections are a predominant part of society and the Party works under a bourgeois and semi-feudal environment, the grounds for alien class values and habits seeping into the Party are ever present. The 1996 document had set out the circumstances and factors which provide the basis for the penetration of alien class values. They were:

- (i) The setbacks to socialism and the ideological offensive against Marxism and the propaganda that there is no alternative to capitalism have had their impact.
- (ii) Imperialist globalisation and the onset of liberalisation have led to the spread of the values of market economy, consumerism and individualism. Such values are disseminated by the mass media.
- (iii) In the background of the setbacks to socialism there is the spurt in the growth of reactionary, chauvinist and fundamentalist ideologies and forces.

India too saw the rise of reactionary communal forces and the impact of identity politics. Such an atmosphere is inimical to progressive and scientific ideas.

(iv) The difficulties encountered in the struggle to change the correlation of class forces and the slow and uneven growth of the communist movement created the conditions for an attitude of adjustment with the existing bourgeois order. A large number of entrants into the Party have not acquired the basic understanding of the Party and its programmatic objectives.

(v) The tactical alliance with bourgeois parties particularly electoral alliances have led to the possibilities for the penetration of the bourgeois style of functioning within the Party. The use of money power and other bourgeois practices by these parties act as a corroding influence on our cadres.

(vi) The bulk of the Party members have joined the Party in recent years. Due to the weakness in our capacity to provide ideological-political training, both among the new members and the older members who need to be consistently re-educated, there is a low level of political consciousness. This coupled with other organisational weakness creates the circumstances for the penetration of alien influences within the Party.

6. All these factors cited in the 1996 document are still relevant today. But after more than one decade since that rectification campaign was initiated we have to see what is the situation now and what has changed.

(i) Firstly, some of the factors cited above have got further consolidated and their impact has deepened. For instance, two decades have passed since liberalisation and the adoption of neo-liberal policies. The offensive of capital has led to the rapid expansion of capitalism in all spheres. The private sector has invaded all spheres of society apart from the economy in areas like education, health and other basic services. The proliferation of market-driven capitalist values through the mass media has grown exponentially especially after the growth of the private electronic media. The assault on the people's consciousness is now more direct and insidious. There is no doubt that alien values and ideas are affecting our Party leaders and cadres much more than before.

(ii) The neo-liberal philosophy is not confined to the economy but its impact is felt in the political system. There is along with the concentration of wealth, the creation of business-politician nexus. At all levels there is a intertwining between corporate and business interests and the political

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system. The role of money power has increased to an unprecedented level in politics, particularly in elections.

(iii) The association with bourgeois parties at various levels, particularly through electoral understandings have been continuing during the past 12 years since the 1996 rectification document. With the rise of the business-political nexus, there is a corresponding rise in use of money and other bourgeois practices. These have a corrosive effect on our cadres.

(iv) At present forty per cent of the Party membership is constituted by those who have joined the Party after 2001. The majority of these new entrants are still to acquire the basic outlook of the Party and they are yet to be grounded in the class and mass struggles. Though we have expanded our Party's educational apparatus, still a large number of new entrants and due to the lack of adequate education of the old membership, there is still a gap in the requisite political-ideological level. Such a situation leads to all sorts of feudal, bourgeois and petty bourgeois trends emerging within the Party.

(v) An analysis of the class composition of the Party shows that 75 per cent of the membership comes from the working class, poor peasants and agricultural workers. But in the leading committees of the Party only around 30 per cent belong to these classes. 70 per cent come from the middle classes and other sections. This provides the basis for alien class influences.

(vi) The CPI(M) is the biggest contingent of the Left. It is heading Left-led governments in three states. The 19th Congress of the Party noted that the attack of the ruling classes against the Party has sharpened given the role we are playing in national politics. Such an attack is also reflected in the corporate media and the hostile reports against the Party and its leadership. The propaganda is aimed at undermining the Party's positions based on a working class standpoint and Marxism. Such relentless pressure is designed to disorient and undermine the Party's image and politics.

7. The replies of the state committees to the questionnaire from the Polit Bureau, show that there has been a growth in the wrong trends within the Party. Further new problems have also arisen. These are related to the factors mentioned above. In the states, some steps and actions were taken when there have been violations of democratic centralism, parliamentary deviation and violation of communist norms. But these are inadequate. Further we have been dealing with

the symptoms of the problem when they manifest themselves. Not enough is done to go to the roots and take systematic steps, political, ideological and organizational to deal with the fundamental sources of the problems. The Central Committee will be taking up the ideological issues to unify the Party ideologically in the coming period.

PARLIAMENTARISM — A REFORMIST DEVIATION

8. The CPI(M) has been engaged in developing the class and mass struggles and building mass movements. For developing the Party's mass influence it combines parliamentary and extra parliamentary work. India is a country where the parliamentary democratic system has struck deep roots and has become a basic feature of the political system. It is by working in the parliamentary forums and integrating the parliamentary and extra parliamentary work that the Party can advance. As against this correct perspective of parliamentary work, the trend of parliamentarism and electoral opportunism is harmful to the basic approach of the Party. The 1996 document had correctly nailed this deviation:

The bane of parliamentarism should not be seen merely as a deviation among individual leaders and cadres for holding elected positions and power. It is a totally reformist outlook that confines the Party's activities to electoral work and the illusion that the Party's advance can be ensured solely through fighting elections. Neglecting the work of organising the mass movements, launching struggles and building the Party is a result of this parliamentary outlook.

9. The experience of the past decade shows that the problem has got magnified. The replies from the states show a distinct increase in parliamentary opportunism. Cases of individual comrades revolting when not being put up as candidates have grown. In Tripura, a state committee member had to be expelled when he revolted on not being nominated as a candidate for the last assembly election. In Tamilnadu too, a state committee member had to be expelled for defying the Party decision on a local body election. Andhra Pradesh saw such instances in a glaring form during the recent assembly and parliament elections which led to two state committee members having to be expelled. In the last Lok Sabha there were three MPs had to be expelled

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for deserting the Party. Two of them quit as they were not being renominated.

10. The penetration of alien bourgeois influences finds one manifestation in the form of parliamentary opportunism. The growth of parliamentarism is also connected to the desire for acquiring more material positions and a better life style. Since the salaries and perks of MPs and MLAs are much more than what cadres can get as Party functionaries, there is a hankering and desire to be in such positions. In many states, the Party does not take the bulk of the salaries and allowances of MLAs. Despite this, some legislators do not pay the levy due from them or follow the norms for MLA development fund. There is the problem of the elected representative not integrating his or her work with the Party and mass organisations, particularly in the weaker states.

11. A more recent phenomenon is of candidates and Party committees using the methods of bourgeois parties in elections. As pointed out earlier, the association with bourgeois parties in electoral alliances is a source of corrosive influence. The use of money, liquor and other corrupt practices have grown. The money used in elections has reached an unprecedented level in states like Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu and it is spreading. Alliances with bourgeois parties for elections leads to their methods and practices being aped by some of our candidates and Party committees. We should firmly reject such practices. Our Party members must be educated that when we contest elections and fight to win them, the goal cannot be solely to win by any means possible.

12. Overestimation of the situation, especially of electoral prospects prevails. This is often advanced to strengthen claims for fighting elections. Such subjective assessment also lead to demoralisation when electoral defeats take place. There is also the tendency to demand that only local candidates be fielded in assembly and parliament elections.

13. All reports indicate that there is a serious problem regarding the conduct of the elected representatives in the three-tier panchayat and local bodies. Outside the three strong states, many of the elected representatives including sarpanches or panchayat presidents are not within the purview of Party control. Some of them get sucked into the institutionalised corruption and malpractices. Efforts to check them

leads to some deserting the Party. Some join other parties. Though we discussed about having a mechanism to guide and monitor their work in the 18th Congress, there has not been much progress in most states. If the elected representatives at the grassroots level deviate from Party norms, it damages the Party directly.

DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

14. The 1996 document had noted the existence of unhealthy trends, factionalism, careerism, individualism and absence of collective functioning — all harmful to the progress of democratic centralism.

15. In Kerala, the root cause of factionalism was identified by the Central Committee as parliamentarism and the struggle to capture Party committees and key positions in the Party through whom candidates and elected positions are decided. Mobilising support behind groups and individuals in the Party to get positions in the Party is totally violative of the norms of democratic centralism. When factionalism prevails, all sorts of wrong trends are allowed to flourish. The prolonged factionalism in Kerala took its toll. We saw how factionalism damaged the Party in Punjab. There have been certain instances of unethical methods being used to influence elections in conferences. Only if Party members are more politically and ideologically conscious and imbued with the basic revolutionary goals of the Party, can there be a check against the violations of democratic centralism. The growth of individualism is connected to the lack of collective functioning and the absence of criticism and self-criticism. Instances of comrades putting their individual interests above Party interests are there.

16. Though the 1996 document warned about the leakage of inner-Party discussions in leading committees to the bourgeois media, the problem has become more widespread. It is not just a question of leakage but the systematic use of the bourgeois media to project individual or factional interests. The character of the corporate media and how they are utilised against the Party is not grasped or even considered.

17. Bureaucratic behaviour and refusal to tolerate criticism is inimical to inner-Party democracy. Likes and dislikes about individual comrades on the part of the leadership results in lack of proper and

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collective assessment of cadres. At the same time liberalism and individualism is an attendant phenomenon. More attention has to be paid to protect inner-Party democracy and correct the trend of over-centralism, wherever it surfaces.

18. The problem of federalism is surfacing at various levels of the Party. In a country like India where there are various linguistic nationalities, language and cultures, the maintenance of a centralised political line and common organisational principles is especially challenging. The uneven development of the Party is also a factor for this trend. Federalism means violation of the centralised political line and the tendencies of some units of the Party to disregard the higher committees and the Central line and action their own way. This will harm the principles of democratic centralism. Hence combatting federal tendencies is necessary.

CORROSIVE INFLUENCE OF BOURGEOIS SOCIETY AND MAINTENANCE OF COMMUNIST NORMS

19. The main asset of the Communist Party is its cadres. Their selfless work among the people and simple living and integrity have been an important factor in winning the support of the people. There are tens of thousands of dedicated cadres of the Party. Innumerable comrades have laid down their lives for the sake of the movement. But if some leaders and cadres fail to live upto the communist standards and values, there is danger of the image of the Party getting blurred and it being seen as no different from bourgeois parties. It is in this sphere that the most erosion has taken place compared to the time when we formulated the rectification document in 1996. The penetration of alien bourgeois and petty bourgeois values is manifested in a lavish lifestyle, building houses which are far above the minimum needs required, spending large amounts on weddings of children, organising festivities on a lavish scale etc. Increasingly, these are being acquiesced in and no questions are being asked within the Party.

20. There are examples of comrades who have acquired assets and incur expenses disproportionate to their known sources of income. Care should be taken to see that family members and close relatives of Party leaders and those holding public office do not take advantage of their position to acquire pecuniary gains or assets disproportionate to

their known sources of income.

The people come to know when there are instances of such acquisition of assets and income beyond the means. But even when complaints are there there is hesitation on the part of the Party committees to entertain them and enquire into the matter.

21. Though we had issued guidelines in the 1996 rectification document on the acceptance of hospitality and gifts from businessmen, companies and big traders and contractors, there are cases of violation. In the earlier days members of leading committees used to seek permission from the Party for constructing houses, acquiring a car or other assets. This is not followed in most places now. We should restore this practice. Another manifestation of the outlook alien to a working class party is big expenses on conferences of Party and mass organisations in some places, use of big posters and cut outs of leaders and receptions involving a lot of wasteful expenditure. Leaders are greeted in the way bourgeois leaders are felicitated.

22. Among new problems which have cropped up is the association of Party leaders and cadres in the running of NGOs. Norms for this were laid down in the 18th Congress in the document "On Certain Policy Issues". There are cases of Party leaders running NGOs with no check or accountability about the funds being used. This should be prohibited. There has to be a check-up on running NGOs and the norms must be implemented strictly.

23. The neo-liberal policies and the consequent proliferation of capitalist and market values have expanded in the last two decades. The private sector has invaded all spheres of society. This has had an impact on all aspects of society. This has thrown up new problems. There are enough avenues for making money both legal and illegal in various enterprises and services like real estate. Along with that is the mushrooming of organised crime. Where the Party is strong, in some places, there are instances of these vested interests trying to influence our comrades. Real estate promoters, contractors and liquor contractors seek to establish connections with our comrades and those working in panchayats, local bodies and elected positions.

24. Being in state governments increases the scope for corrupt practices. There was an instance of bribe-taking in Kerala and in West Bengal. There are some complaints of malpractices in contracts and supply of building material.

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25. In trade unions, there are instances of illegal collections from workers, contractors and payment received for providing employment. Within the Party some comrades have joined the ranks of the neo-rich through various enterprises and their changed outlook has had an adverse impact in the Party.

26. There have been cases of corruption and misuse of positions in the Party and mass organisations to enrich oneself. There is reluctance or hesitation to investigate such cases which involve persons in the leadership position or those who are influential in the Party. All these tendencies are inimical to the character of the Communist Party.

REMOULDING OUTLOOK AND UPHOLDING PROGRESSIVE VALUES

27. In 1996 we had emphasised the necessity for communists to be in the forefront in fighting against all forms of social oppression — caste discrimination and untouchability, social customs which perpetuate women's oppression and male chauvinism, social evils such as child marriage and dowry etc. The second aspect is that the Party members themselves must abjure caste and social prejudices and obscurantist practices and rituals. The leadership has to set an example in observing communist standards. The experience of the last twelve years since the 1996 rectification campaign shows that some steps were taken in this regard but they have been insufficient.

28. The last two Party Congresses have stressed the importance of the Party directly taking up social issues. While most Party members do not practice untouchability or caste discrimination, they are reluctant to take up these issues and launch a campaign/movements against them. Party committees are reluctant to take up the fight against regressive social practices. It is not enough to condemn individual atrocity against dalits, instead we should take up a sustained campaign against untouchability and caste oppression. In many cases Party committees do not actively discourage or intervene to stop the observance of rituals and religious customs by Party cadres.

29. There is an increased awareness of women's issues in the Party. But male chauvinist outlook remains. There are some cases of sexual harassment within the Party. In many places, Party leaders and cadres are not encouraging the participation of their women family members in political activities. There is reluctance to assign women

cadres responsibilities on the part of Party committees. All this indicates the necessity for educating Party members on gender issues.

30. There is an erosion in the primacy of the working class outlook of the Party. This stems from a reformist outlook, parliamentarism and a tendency to adjust to bourgeois values. There are instances of leaders decrying working class struggles and strikes. There is a weakening of the links with the masses at different levels of the Party.

PARTY FUND COLLECTION

31. The Party has been stressing the importance of proper maintenance of Party accounts and observance of guidelines on fund collection. The tendency to collect big amounts of money from individuals and affluent sections, instead of mass collection, has increased especially to meet election expenses. The guidelines for collection of funds from the people in small amounts must be enforced. Given the increasing nexus between politicians and businessmen and the impact of neo-liberal policies, the scope for raising large resources from lobbies and agents of business have increased. Vigilance has to be there not to get beholden to such elements by collecting money.

32. At some places large funds are raised for holding Party conferences and mass organisation conferences and construction of offices. Accounts for these are not properly maintained and submitted to the respective committees. Guidelines should be fixed on collection of funds by Party members and committees. A ceiling on the amount to be collected by different levels of Party committees should be fixed. Receiving money from bourgeois parties and leaders during elections should be prohibited. If joint expenditure during elections is required, guidelines should be worked out for the same.

33. Organisational Steps Related to Rectification

1. The combatting of alien influences will be possible only when the Party is constantly engaged in class and mass struggles. The Party should take up the class and mass issues and launch sustained struggles.
2. The method of recruitment to Party members must be on the basis of the procedures set out in the party Constitution. The renewal and scrutiny of the Party membership must be done annually.
3. Activise branches and ensure all Party members work in some mass organisation or the other.

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4. Recruitment from the working class and other basic classes should be strengthened. Steps to equip cadres from them ideologically and promote them. Ensure that whole timers are paid wages which are the minimum necessary for their family's livelihood so that comrades from the basic classes can become whole timers.

5. Criticism and self criticism should be practiced in the Party committees. Fostering inner Party democracy and combating bureaucratic trends. Educating Party members that all types of factional activities are to be eschewed.

6. Party Education should be organised on a systematic basis which should concentrate on raising the political, ideological level of the Party members.

7. Implementation of the Central Committee resolution on Approach to Mass Organisations to ensure democratic functioning and maintaining the independent character of the mass organisations.

MECHANISM FOR INVESTIGATING VIOLATIONS

34. Experience shows that many Party Committees are not taking prompt action when complaints are received about cases of corruption or malpractice by Party cadres and leaders. Often the Party committees are unable to initiate action due to various reasons such as factional trends, liberalism and reluctance to antagonise an important Party cadre.

35. While cases of organisational discipline have to be dealt with by the Party committees in the organisational structure, complaints about corrupt practices, of not abiding by communist norms and values need to be enquired into and action taken where necessary.

36. For this a Central Discipline Commission under the Central Committee should be constituted. Such a Commission comprising some Polit Bureau and Central Committee members can be vested with the powers to investigate complaints of corruption or violation of norms set out for communist cadres. The Central Discipline Commission can conduct investigations on their own or instruct the state or district committees concerned to conduct investigations. The Central Disciplinary Commission may fix a time limit for investigation for Party committees which are already enquiring into the matter. It may ask for the reports and records.

37. All reports of the Central Discipline Commission will be

given to the respective Party committees for appropriate action. If the Discipline Commission feels that appropriate action has not been taken on any matter it can be referred to the Polit Bureau and Central Committee for a decision.

38. Guidelines for Rectification

The following steps need to be taken for implementation in the rectification campaign:

1. Educate the Party cadres on the basic approach of combining parliamentary and extra parliamentary activities with the aim of strengthening the mass movement and the class struggle.
2. Expose any trends of parliamentary and electoral opportunism and counter the trend towards one-sided emphasis only on electoral activities to the neglect of the mass movements and the organisational work of the Party.
3. Enforce the principle of two or three terms for elected representatives at different levels. Exemption should be given in special cases with the approval of the state committee in the case of legislative assembly and the central committee in the case of parliament. District committees will similarly have the power for lower level elected positions.
4. Educate the Party members to conform to communist norms and to eschew all social, caste and religious practices which are alien to them. Party members should oppose and mobilise people against social evils like untouchability, caste discrimination, women's oppression etc.
5. Investigate complaints of corruption and other malpractices and take disciplinary action where required. Enforce the regulations about proper utilisation of Party funds, maintenance of accounts and check up. Guidelines should be framed regarding collection of funds.
6. Take political and organisational measures to counter factionalism. Educate the Party members on the process of democratic centralism. While firmly putting down factional trends, ensure an atmosphere for inner-Party democracy.
7. All members of the Central Committee, state committee, district committees (and zonal/area and local committees in the bigger states) should file their income and assets statement annually to the concerned party committee. The pro-forma should be modified to include more information on assets and the source of the assets acquired. These should be scrutinised and a report submitted to the higher committee by the time the renewal report is finalised the next year.

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FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTING THE RECTIFICATION CAMPAIGN

39. The Central Committee's resolution on the rectification campaign should be:

1. Reported at all levels of the Party.
2. The Polit Bureau and the Central Committee will on the basis of the rectification document discuss the rectification process to be undertaken for the PB and the CC. Similarly the state committees will prepare their own report and implement it for its own rectification. The procedure will go down to the district committees and the lower committees after that. The time frame for the implementation of the rectification campaign is that it should be completed by end of June 2010. CC should review the implementation.
3. The rectification is meant to unify and strengthen the Party on correct principles. It is not to be used for mudslinging or private agendas. The discussion should be conducted in a free and frank atmosphere.