

## GREEN JUSTICE PARTY OF INDIA

### STATEMENT OF VALUES

#### Why do we exist? What do we want?

1. We, the people of India, are exceptionally vulnerable to environmental crises including the global climate crisis. Neither our present government nor any of our major parties have adequately recognized the scale of the problems at hand, nor have they shown the willingness to act on the threats to our shared environment, which are of primary and overwhelming concern to us. This is an unacceptable abdication of responsibility to ourselves, to our country and to our future generations.
2. Our primary agenda is to put the present environmental crisis and crises front and centre in decision making by government bodies and corporations, and to ensure that decisions that have an environmental impact are assessed by all stakeholders on scientific grounds in transparent public fora. Where poor and damaging decisions have been made, we believe in determining responsibility and accountability and correcting negative outcomes.
3. We believe in the inherent value of Earth and all of its species, in the centrality of natural ecosystems, of which human beings are a part, and we believe we must protect and nurture them from harm. Human societies have proved unparalleled in their ability to destroy ecosystems and cause cataclysmic and irreversible change. This is wrong, and it does not only start to be wrong when it begins to harm us.
4. We believe in the following green principles as primary values, existing in balance with each other:
  - a. Ecological wisdom
  - b. Social justice
  - c. Participatory democracy
  - d. Non-violence
  - e. Sustainability
  - f. Respect for diversity
5. We believe in the cardinal values of the Constitution of India. As a document, it may evolve and be altered to meet the times, but its key values are immutable and transcend the document they are contained in. We believe that India is, and should always be, a sovereign socialist secular democratic republic that guarantees to all its citizens justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity. We believe in the inherent equality and dignity of all the peoples of Earth.
6. We believe in thinking and learning globally because the problems we face are problems faced by people across the world. Hence, we follow the principle that one must 'think global, and act local'. We are all connected to one another, and to all the living beings of the Earth, in an inseparable whole – Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.

7. We believe in human rights and a future for all, free from discrimination on grounds of caste, class, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or belief and to that end, it is the interests of the marginalized, the poor, the disabled, the voiceless, and the distant that need to be brought to the front. Equality that is not redistributive in nature or framed so as to protect the marginalized is not true equality.
8. We believe that the natural resources of Earth are held in trust by us to use responsibly, sustainably, and equitably, and cannot be monopolized by individual or private interests. Economic growth cannot be growth that happens at the cost of the marginalized or of the survival of ecosystems. At this advanced stage of ecological damage, our goals must be restorative and regenerative, and not merely retardant.
9. We believe in the principles of feminism and the equality of women. Our political, social, and economic systems have treated women unfairly throughout history and silenced their voices. Every policy, regulation, and action should be evaluated for gender equality and gender justice, in theory and in practice.
10. We believe in civil and political liberties, and that a vibrant and successful democracy must contain a broad spectrum of views and identities. Our diversity makes us wise and tempers our actions. Majoritarianism and the rule of the mob are inimical to true democracy.
11. Unchecked capitalism is a threat to the equality and freedom of people. The rich have gotten richer than ever before, and the poor have never been relatively so poor. 1% of the population controls 73% of India's wealth. Inequality at this scale is dangerous to democracy. It is only a fiction that our robber barons enjoy the same political rights as our subsistence farmers. These extremes of wealth and poverty must both be eliminated.
12. The principle of intergenerational equity must guide us. If we have inherited resources and riches, we must make sure we use them to ensure that the generations to come have equal opportunities. Currently, 65% of Indians are under 35 years of age. The members of that generation will see radical, and perhaps catastrophic, changes to the world around them in their lifetimes. Their interest must take the centre stage in our policy making.
13. India is still a primarily rural and agricultural country, where 60% of our population consists of farmers, and their financial health is critical. It is their right to earn a commensurate wage for their work and produce, and ensuring their livelihood is of paramount importance to the nation. Food security is a real and primary threat for our rural poor, whose survival is marginal and dependent on food production, storage, and distribution. Agricultural practices must be sustainable – and policy change can move towards more responsible agriculture.
14. We believe in the ecological centrality of our wildernesses and species that inhabit them. The conservation and preservation of our forests, deserts, oceans, and other ecosystems are essential to our survival as a species. For the first time in the history of the human race, we are complete strangers to the wilderness – a state of being that would have been unthinkable anywhere on Earth a century ago. The toll our distance

from nature is taking on us physically, mentally, and spiritually is evident to us. Therefore, we must conserve and protect our wildernesses and our species.

15. Our cities must not become urban deserts, but be planned to be sustainable. Urban planning must treat water sources and green areas as sacrosanct. Our major metropolitan cities, which house almost 100 million Indians, must be made liveable again.
16. Accountability in public institutions and institutions need to be restored. Institutions, educational, political, economic must be permitted to function independently and protected from external influences. Key appointments must be made with the consent of oppositions. The people must be able to have faith in institutions and believe that they will act fairly.
17. Governance must be more transparent. It should be the duty of public bodies to disclose and publish the details of work and projects that will have an effect on the public. Government cannot be permitted to function in a secret and clandestine manner, its workings shrouded in “national interest” and other phrases without a clear meaning.
18. We believe in universal access to justice and the power of an independent judiciary to right wrongs consistently and creatively. Securing the independence and impartiality of our judiciary is paramount to our political system. As non-violent agents of change, we will petition authorities and courts for change and the redressal of wrongs.
19. There are no quick answers to the problems of a third-world nation. Health and education have to be the focal points of public policy and spending if future generations are to live happy and healthy lives. The rewards for the investment in education and health will only be visible in the next generation, but it is the only answer.
20. We will not enter into the politics of distraction or cults of personality. We will not engage with sensationalised flashpoints unless they concern deeper issues in a material way. Token or symbolic issues only take attention away from deeper structural and policy problems.
21. The growth and success of the party does not matter; what is important is the spread and survival of its message and principles. It is of no concern who occupies what chair in the party, or whether the party itself survives in its present form. When this party has to compromise its message or principles, or alter itself fundamentally to meet the ends of success or even survival, it has failed its mission, which is to drive a change in the role of government in environmental and social justice.
22. The initial authors and adopters of this document are not the people this party is primarily meant to serve. The platform we provide must be occupied by those who have the greatest need, whose lives and livelihoods are most affected, and who need the voice that a political party can provide to them. We are caretakers and we are advocates; we are not owners and do not want to be.

First Members of the Steering Committee