

A 23-POINT PROGRAMME

GGIF advocates the following 23 Points Manifesto for any political party fighting future elections:

The party believes in the liberal democratic values of the original Constitution of India as enacted by the founding fathers keeping in full view their intent and purpose as documented in the Constituent Assembly Debates. It rejects the gradual defilement of the Constitution by various parties in power.

1. **Constitutional Rule of Law:** It believes in genuine rule of law, as envisaged by the founding fathers of the original Constitution as it was enacted in 1950. It believes in a government limited by constitution and thus does not believe in seeing the constitutional limitations as a constraint. It will review all the amendments in this light and try and restore constitution to its pristine glory.
2. **Rejection of Socialism as State Ideology:** It rejects Socialism as the fixed ideology of the state, as rejected by the founding fathers of the constitution. Thus, it opposes the 42nd Amendment declaring India a 'Socialist' state. If it gets required majority it will annul the said part of the amendment. If not, it will use any other means available to challenge to this amendment, e.g. supporting legal challenges in the Supreme Court of India.
3. **Right to Property:** It believes in inalienable private property rights, Thus, it opposes 44th amendment repeal of Right to Property from the Fundamental Rights (Art 19(1)(f) of Chapter III). If it gets required majority it will annul the said part of the amendment. If not, it will use any other means available to challenge this amendment. e.g. supporting legal challenges in the Supreme Court of India.
4. **Protection of Smallholders:** It believes that public good cannot be at private cost. It will issue clean land titles to crores of landholding farmers and *Adivasis* of the country, so that they become full-fledged property owners with full right to their property. It will provide guaranteed protection of all kind of properties esp. source of livelihood, including in urban areas. It will never acquire any of these properties compulsorily, unless it is absolutely required only for true public purposes like building of roads or bridges where unhindered public access can be allowed. In such cases too it will pay fully adequate compensation on true market rates. An independent tribunal comprising eminent private citizens as well will be set up to decide compensation in case of compulsory acquisitions. It will protect rather than abuse the rights of small property owners and smallholders. For example, it will empower the said tribunal to decide minimum support prices for various kinds of lands, for voluntary and market led consolidation of land parcels. Thus it will work towards creating free and fair market of lands.
5. **Federalism:** It will initiate greater move towards Federal Policy, as enshrined in our constitution as a desirable objective. It will empower states to collect taxes and pay an agreed share to the Centre, rather than other way round at present. It will set up mechanisms to derive a formula in which the Centre's share will be gradually reduced from the present level. It will work towards genuine federalism including in financial matters.
6. **Protection of Minorities:** It respects the right of the minority as equal citizens. It will protect minorities as equals. It will expect the same treatment for minorities in other countries esp. in its neighbourhood. It will question and even take steps to protect minority rights in other countries. In doing so, it will not resort to tit for tat but will mobilize world opinion or even force, if legitimate minority rights are violated anywhere. It will join other countries and societies in their campaign against violation of minority rights anywhere in the world. For example while it will directly intervene in minority rights violation of a Hindu or Sikh in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka or anywhere in the world, it will join the chorus if there are other countries fighting against minority and human rights violations anywhere in the world.

7. **Effective Delivery of Justice:** It will strengthen law and order machinery including courts and police, by at least doubling the funding in these areas. It will set up a Federal Police to assist states in establishing better rule of law. It will focus on implementing the directions of the Supreme Court in the *Prakash Singh* case. All court backlogs will be tackled on emergency basis. This will be achieved by setting up more courts, increasing number of judges, working overtime, increasing the retirement age of judges by 5 years and bringing in retired judges on an ad-hoc basis to dispose of old appeals. It will also bring about concepts like plea bargaining and greater limitations in terms of time-barring litigation in minor offences.
8. **Liberal State Policy:** It will enter into international cooperation in all these areas, to emerge as a vibrant market democracy. To achieve this, it will let the country first evolve into a modern Social Democracy of European type, with full respect to individual rights including private property rights. It will pursue an informed policy of state enforcing a free and fair rule of law in which private enterprises including small and medium enterprises flourish.
9. **Dismantling Politics – Business Nexus:** It rejects crony capitalism of present variety which encourages businessmen to inculcate politicians and politics for private gain. It believes in truly free and fair entrepreneurship under tight rule of law which must be fair in the first place. It rejects the present ideal of overlooking lawbreaking on one hand and letting unfair laws remain as they are, one justifying the other. It will freshly analyze all laws in this context. Any new law will have to go through tight scrutiny of constitutional fairness and to the extent desirable will have sunset clauses.
10. **Balanced growth:** By furthering the above objectives, it will aim at a double digit growth rate but without sacrificing any of human rights esp. property rights of smallholders. It will encourage small and medium enterprises without making them dependent on state and by removing hurdles for free and fair enterprise.
11. **Encourage charity:** It will encourage charitable programmes for people below poverty line. In this regard, it will consider distributing controlled cash handouts and vouchers to those who deserve. It will encourage private charity rather than high taxation led government programs that have more leakages.
12. **Market price for Farmers:** Rather than artificially suppressing food prices, it will work towards prosperity of farmers by letting them have market price if it is better than minimum support price.
13. **Food programmes:** It believes protection from starvation as an extension of right to life and hence a human right. It will initiate programs like distributing food stamps to ensure that everyone is guaranteed help with at least two square meals, if they can't find productive employment. Apart from curtailing hunger, it will also create bigger markets for farmers and healthier workforce.
14. **Gender Justice:** It believes in gender justice. It will work towards an independent women's police force under a woman minister at the apex level. It will encourage women to join law and policing. It will open new law and police academies exclusively for women. It will work towards all-women police stations in major cities to start with. Special policies and programs will be introduced to encourage women to join all branches of Government and the party.
15. **Strictest action against Trafficking for Sexual-Slavery:** As the party believes in protection of human rights as the highest ideal, it will act heavily against human trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation, whether from India or to India. It will pass laws to provide highest punishment up to life imprisonment and exemplary fine which will be used to compensate the victim. Special mechanism will be introduced for ensuring fast and effective action to control and eliminate this scourge. (At present, a professional trafficker can get away with lesser punishment than one-time rapist.)
16. **Funding of elections:** It rejects unaccountable political funding of elections, generally by businesses having vested interests. It will set up a transparent election funding process for collecting small amounts from large number of supporters. It will work towards limiting campaign expenditure. It will

campaign itself and will request Election Commission to educate people not to vote for candidates who overspend in publicity etc.

17. **Strict internal standards:** It believes in highest standard in public life and will expel any party member however powerful if found wanting on this scale. It will accordingly institute robust mechanism within the party, to be able to do so. It will amend the party constitution to this effect if required. It does not mean that it will go into the questions of private morality of any individual.
18. **Meritocracy:** It rejects divisive politics of discrimination on the basis of caste, colour or creed. It believes in meritocracy. In terms of affirmative action, it believes starting early by creating more and better capacity building for participation e.g. at the time of schooling, rather than reservations in jobs that require merit.
19. **Supremacy of Human Rights:** The party rejects elevation of animal rights to the status of legal rights esp. when it is at the cost of human rights of citizens. It will withdraw or reform law aimed at animal protection, to effectively ensure human rights as a first principle. For example, it will restore legitimacy of traditional professions like those of Circus organisers, Madaris, Snake Charmers esp. till an alternative employment guarantee could be given to them. It will empower local bodies again to reduce and even eliminate stray dogs which are increasingly becoming threat to human life esp. people living in slums and their children. However, it will encourage non-legal means to reduce cruelty to animals by promoting least painful methods for taming or eliminating, by promoting training and education, involving NGOs etc.
20. **Administrative Reforms:** The party will bring about administrative reforms to bring parity in specialist and general services, e.g. IPS will be at least at par with IAS. Lateral entry into IAS from graduates of prominent institutes like IIMs, IITs and Law Universities will be opened up. It will introduce remuneration for full-time public administration work provided by elected representatives like Ministers, which will not be less than the immediate bureaucrat subordinate. In other words, salary of a minister will not be less than the salary of the Secretary to the Government who reports to the said minister.
21. **Innovative use of Resources:** The party believes that Innovation is the key to the future of governance. It will set up think tanks to usher in Innovation for big impact in all areas of governance. For example, it will set up a network of Universities in Rashtrapati Bhavan and Raj Bhavans, with the President and Governors staying comfortably within the campus as Chancellors, to put the massive colonial infrastructure to public use without denigrating the existing institutions.
22. **Literary Freedom:** Freedom of expression esp. in art and literature will be protected. There will be no banning of books of Indian or foreign authors.
23. **Confederation of States in Indian Subcontinent:** It believes that the idea of partition of Indian subcontinent has caused immense hardships in the subcontinent and in retrospect it was a bad idea whether pursued accidentally or deliberately. It will work towards the vision of confederation of states in the Indian subcontinent, on the lines of the EU. It will be pursued only through intellectual, democratic and peaceful means like debate, opinions and referenda, and force will never be utilized for furthering this objective.

Sanjiv Agarwal

Author is Founding Trustee of Good Governance India Foundation and has challenged the Constitutional Amendments in points 2 and 3 above, before the Supreme Court of India.