
I am deeply touched by having been asked to deliver this year’s Gandhi Peace Foundation Lecture. Nobody is more conscious than I am about my inadequacy in speaking on this sacred occasion, the day of the martyrdom of the greatest son of my country. Perhaps my only qualification to talk about him is that I belong to the generation that was witness to the historic transition from subjection to freedom of our great motherland, and as a young reporter I cherish the memory of the exciting moments in the presence of Gandhi.

I am no scholar of the study of Gandhiji’s great life, rather I spent my activist youth as an impudent critic of the elders in our national movement for independence. Having spent over half-a-century as a journalist, I have chosen as the subject of this presentation: ‘Mahatma Gandhi—the Great Communicator’. This is a very subjective endeavour—a string of cursory thoughts—based largely on my personal reflections on our struggle for freedom and how it acquired its unique characteristic from the way Gandhiji built and guided it.

Our freedom struggle needs to be assessed in a historical perspective. Its dominant characteristic that marks it out from other great revolutions in history was its tremendous sweep. No other revolution in history set in motion so many millions of people. This is no idle boast but the plain statement of a historical reality which is often missed by our academics and politicians alike.

In late eighteenth century France, the objective conditions of mass discontent and disenchantment with the ancient regime no doubt prevailed, but the actual revolutionary action involved a small number of a few thousand, mostly in Paris: once the fuse was lighted, the revolution flared up in different parts of France without any coherent leadership. It was largely a spontaneous upsurge, even the leadership at the core could not hold its own and it changed hands fast so that even those who led it at the beginning were soon either left by the wayside or liquidated, giving rise to the classic phrase that the revolution had devoured its own children.

The Russian Revolution had a more organised leadership than those
who had led the French Revolution, but it was a small band of determined militant revolutionaries under a leader who had an uncanny sense of the configuration of forces ranging in a decadent imperial system. So, when the Czarist system itself cracked up with the fiasco of defeat in the First World War, Lenin gave the call for capture of power which the Bolsheviks swiftly carried out. In terms of moving millions into revolutionary action, the Bolshevik Revolution was mostly the handiwork of small groups of determined revolutionaries who, everywhere, first captured the key points of power and then sought to redesign the social structure in the interest of the common people as they thought fit. In a sense it was a sort of managerial revolution led by a party which concentrated on the means of capturing power, and power alone.

The Chinese Revolution was also similar to the Russian Revolution in its broad historical sweep. In this case also, it was a small group of a few thousand led by a remarkable leader, Mao Zedong, steeled in the Long March which was a sort of armed padayatra—a decade-old campaign to rouse the peasantry in some pockets of the vast sprawling domain of China with the administrative system itself having broken down and replaced by an ineffective regime under the Kuomintang. It was the specialisation of the guerrilla war approach which enabled Mao to spread his network taking advantage of the Japanese occupation of most of the mainland. Unlike the Russian Revolution, which relied more on the working class, the Chinese Revolution targeted largely the peasantry. Here too, the number of people actively engaged in mass action was small—the same reliance on a determined band. The form of action was essentially armed guerrilla forays which harassed the enemy and finally overpowered it. This way the authority of the state was subverted until the final citadel of power was captured, and thereby the guerrilla bands of yesterday were joined together to form the victorious People’s Liberation Army.

Compare these three great landmarks in modern history with what happened in our country in the first half of the twentieth century. Stage by stage, the premier nationalist organisation, committed to the struggle for independence, fully involved larger and larger sections of the people into the vortex of struggle for power. This way, the only weapon for winning power was to organise larger and larger sections of India’s unarmed humanity into mass action. By the time independence actually came, the Congress commanded much larger sections of the people than anybody had so far done in history.

The main feature of the Indian struggle for freedom has been that it throughout depended almost wholly on activating the masses by injecting into them the urge for independence by emphasising the strength of the Indian people vis-a-vis the colonial rulers, and thereby set them free from the fear of the ruler. The non-violence, as it was practised, emphasised on the strength of the Indian people in relation to the ruler who had to depend on the gun for establishing his authority. The fact that through the Arms Act the Indian people were denied the right to defend themselves was turned into a symbol of strength, that the people would depend on their conscious strength to ward off the foreign ruler. This meant constant effort on the part of the leaders of the independence movement to raise the consciousness of the vast masses of common people—not just a small section of determined revolutionaries as had been the case of the other great revolutions. The fact that the Indian people were not permitted to bear arms under the British Raj was not allowed to dampen or demoralise the millions. Rather, a new form of strength was instilled into their consciousness.

This aspect of the Indian Revolution marks it out as distinct from the other revolutions in modern times. Nowhere was the question of the gun permitted to be of supreme or decisive importance in the mainstream of our national struggle for independence. This does not mean that the sacrifice of those revolutionaries who unwaveringly gave their lives by taking up arms against the foreign ruler was of no consequence. From Aurobindo Ghosh and Savarkar to Bhagat Singh and Chandrashekhar Azad to Subhas Chandra Bose, they all made the finest contributions to the struggle for freedom, but the successive waves of mass upheavals that decisively brought down the British rule in India did not depend on the wielding of arms by a small minority of dedicated revolutionaries, but essentially on the raising of the level of consciousness of the broad masses of the people.

This precisely was the unique contribution of Gandhiji. When historians and publicists talk of Gandhi having taken politics from the monopoly of the intelligentsia to the wider world of the common humanity, it was not just a question of broadening the base of the movement for freedom. This was not merely a question of quantitative increase in the number of participants in
the movement, but qualitatively a different type of movement emerged with its essentially distinct hallmark.

How was this achieved, what was the weapon by which the mass consciousness was raised? How was the message of the freedom struggle conveyed to the common people? Herein comes Gandhi’s role as a great communicator. For, he depended solely on communicating the message of freedom to the masses and thereby sought to lift their consciousness. That message was not just a mere exhortation for rousing the emotional urge of a nation to be free—however important might have been that task for welding the sense of unity among the people. This had been done in a limited area during the Bengal anti-partition movement of 1905—which in a particular region had assumed the character of a mass movement and had been successful in forcing the British rulers to abandon their plan to vivisect one of the militant pockets of the national movement.

Gandhiji’s movement, on the other hand, was much more comprehensive: it tried to activate all the diverse sectors of the national spectrum. From the affluent classes to the impoverished, from the intelligentsia to the unlettered—nobody was left out. It was not just confined to tending only the grassroots level as a multitude of activist groups are doing nowadays. No doubt these are bringing some relief to the people at the bottom. By their endeavour these activist groups have certainly been educating and activating the uncared-for sections of society to stand on their own legs. What distinguished Gandhi’s movement for independence was that it was not only much more comprehensive but it sought to open the eyes of the millions left in darkness about the limited capacity of the foreign ruler and the great opening for the country’s advance once the foreign ruler was forced to quit through the demonstration of strength by the people.

Gandhiji ran the pilot project of his new technique in South Africa against the hated rule of apartheid. There too he did not advocate the taking up of arms but sought to instil in the common people a realisation of their own strength in blocking and muzzling the White ruler’s oppressive rule. From that apprenticeship abroad, when he came back to India in 1915, political activity in the country was afflicted with stagnation and political forces, mostly confined to the intelligentsia, were in disarray. The tour he undertook—his Bharat Darshan—enabled him to understand the urges of the common people and one of his first acts was the Champaran satyagraha, a form of struggle so unfamiliar to both the Indian politician and the British ruler of the day. Drawing upon his South African experience, he made a special effort at cultivating the minority Muslim community and from then onwards came his interest and subsequent compact with the Khilafat agitation. The Rowlatt stayagraha and the Khilafat were his earlier excursions before his first major national campaign in the form of the non-cooperation of 1920. For the first time in the annals of the national movement, a countrywide campaign involving the common masses was initiated.

It is not the purpose of this presentation to trace the history of the freedom struggle—what is relevant for the purpose is Gandhiji’s role as a communicator. He left out no means, no technique, to rouse the consciousness of the people—instil in them the imperative of their active participation in the movement. To enable him to do so, he took up a wide range of activities pertaining to all sections of the people—from education to village welfare, from the spinning wheel to cattle protection. His effort at total identification with the village poor made him design even his personal attire and way of living. Since he looked upon public activity as having an element of moral purpose, he regarded the entire crusade for independence as an experiment with truth. For him the freedom of the country was part of the struggle for truth—an approach which was perhaps easier for the unlettered villager, steeped in the tradition of customs, to grasp than the Western educated liberal intelligentsia of the city.

This is an aspect of Gandhiji’s movement which was not easy to understand for the educated intelligentsia and in this controversy arose the intense debate over the question of linking ends with means. From the Marxists to the radicals of all hues, the linking of ends and means could not possibly be part of the domain of politics, where the supremacy of the objective of power became of paramount consideration, and hence there could be no organised link between ends and means. In the early thirties, when Aldous Huxley reopened the question in his book, Ends and Means, the Indian Marxist response was Ends are Means. This is where Gandhiji’s insistence on politics and morality being inseparable demarcated him from the Western educated liberals and helped him in a large measure to be attuned to the philosophical base of very large sections of the corpus of India’s socio-cultural heritage. This also denoted that for him politics—
the struggle for independence—could not be compartmentalised from the totality of the human condition. In his scheme of things, the struggle for independence was but the manifestation of the wider struggle for the regeneration of the entire society.

As a communicator, Gandhiji, like most of our great leaders, used the medium of the press apart from the spoken word. In the midst of all his multitude of activities, Indian Opinion, Young India and Harijan came out regularly—a one-man endeavour—conveying his message to his countrymen. The importance that was attached to the written word by Gandhiji and other national leaders reflected their urge to reach out their message to as wide a section of the people as possible. The means to convey that message were often primitive, but no medium available at the time was left out. From traditional interpersonal means—including the travelling bards—the bauls of Bengal, for instance—to the educated student going out on literacy-cum-swadeshi missions, the composing of patriotic songs and setting up of choirs in villages, mohallas and bustees, to the immortal ‘magic lantern’—there was no video at that time—nothing was left out. It was a gigantic operation, sustained through the ups and downs of the freedom struggle, and later on followed by handwritten posters and graffiti.

How true to his convictions Gandhiji was in his actual functioning as a journalist could be gathered from many of his writings. Here is a passage from Young India (July 2, 1925) about how he strove to serve as a true communicator:

To be true to my faith therefore, I may not write in anger or malice. I may not write merely to excite passion. The reader can have no idea of the restraint I have to exercise from week to week in the choice of topics and my vocabulary. It is training for me. It enables me to peep into myself and to make discoveries of my weaknesses. Often my vanity dictates a smart expression or my anger a harsh adjective. It is a terrible ordeal but a fine exercise to remove these weeds.

As a communicator, Gandhiji was aware of the need to take into account the level of awareness of his target reader or listener. This can be seen in the very naming of each of the great upsurges. None of these were just spontaneous upsurges, but each one was preceded by meticulous preparations. By the correct standards of a communicator, Gandhiji chose the form of struggle, the target and even the language of every campaign in keeping with the level of consciousness of the common people. In the first round it was Non-Cooperation (1920). Ten years later, it was more assertive—Civil Disobedience (1930–32). And a decade later, having taken into account both the internal and the external circumstances, it was Quit India (1942). With every stage, the tempo was raised higher, mass involvement more intense and widespread than before, until the finale was reached with the battle cry of Do-or-Die. Here was the remarkable manifestation of the acute sensitivity of a great communicator.

It may be worthwhile to refer briefly to a couple of specific instances of how Gandhiji operated as a communicator. Before he undertook the Dandi March for the Salt Satyagraha in 1930, there was careful consultation within the leadership; it was not just the product of the brainwave of one individual leader. Recent research on the subject by a very perceptive scholar in social communication at Ahmedabad has brought out significant details about it (“What Moves the Masses? Salt Satyagraha as Case-Study”, by Suchitra, Mainstream, January 28, 1995). After the pledge to achieve complete independence, taken on the banks of the Ravi at Lahore on December 31, 1929, first came the Independence Day declaration of January 26, 1930 which catalogued the injustices of the British Raj. Next came Gandhiji’s letter to Viceroy Lord Irwin, in which eleven demands were raised, including the abolition of the salt tax. Meanwhile, the leaders discussed the form of civil disobedience to be launched. Pandit Nehru and Subhas Bose suggested the setting up of a parallel government while Sardar Patel proposed a march to Delhi or alternatively a countrywide breaking of land laws. Gandhiji envisaged a long drawn-out movement in which the masses would have to be drawn in. He felt the British Government would pounce upon the setting up of a parallel government or a march to Delhi. Gandhiji felt his target audience was the Indian society to be unified and he was conscious of the need to cultivate public opinion abroad. So, the defiance of the salt law was taken up as the initial item of civil disobedience. Resentment at the salt law had a long history. As early as 1844, there were disturbances protesting against this impost which touched even the poorest of the poor. The Congress, at its inaugural session in 1885, had referred to it. During the 1905 swadeshi movement in Bengal, the call was given for the boycott of Manchester cloth and salt imported from Liverpool. At
the same time, focusing on this iniquitous tax, Gandhiji expected to mobilise international support, at least to expose the exploitation of the Indian people under the British Raj. In his own hand he wrote out for the press: “I want world sympathy in this battle of Right against Might.”

Then the form of the struggle. A march from Ahmedabad to the seashore at Dandi passing through villages would provide sufficient space for non-stop propaganda for weeks against the Raj and mobilise villagers along the route, whose publicisation would be a task other volunteers in other parts of the country, and thereby propagate the vision of Purna Swaraj. The march was undertaken by 80 persons including Gandhiji himself. The other 79 were chosen to represent all the provinces in India, and they were drawn from all communities—Muslims, Christians and Hindus, both upper caste and the depressed. Abbas Tyabji and Sarojini Naidu were chosen as leaders in the event of his own arrest—symbolically representing the Muslims and the womanhood of the country. And he sent his letter to the Viceroy notifying his decision to break the salt law, through an Englishman, Reginald Reynolds, who later recalled:

*I realise that Gandhi’s use of me was symbolic—it was to show that this was not a matter of Indians versus British but of principles.*

The whole nation was electrified by this new form of mass action—totally peaceful and non-violent even when facing police brutality as the satyagrahis tried to enter the salt factory at Dharasana.

In this campaign—the first truly nationwide mass campaign against the Raj—Gandhiji often used the religious idioms as the best means of arousing the rural masses familiar with religious lore. Incidentally, Gandhiji drew the correct lesson from the poor response to the repeat performance of the Dandi March exactly two years later, in 1932—after the failure of the Gandhi–Irwin pact. From this the lesson was drawn that the repetition of a specific form of campaign does not fetch the same results. This is a lesson which many of our political parties and mass organisation activists need to keep in mind today.

**Ten years after the Civil Disobedience movement, I had a personal experience of Gandhiji’s remarkable style of communication at the Ramgarh Congress session in 1940. The Congress nagar had come up in a rural setting with bamboo and local shrubs. During his early morning walk, Gandhiji noticed a red flag fluttering at a corner of the enclosure reserved for the leaders’ camp. It appeared that the fraternal delegation from Burma’s Dobama party was put up there and so they hoisted their party flag. Panditji was sent for and he tried to explain to Gandhiji that this red flag, being the party flag of the Burmese delegation, should not be taken as a defiant rival to the Congress tricolour. But Gandhiji was adamant, and so Panditji quietly managed to shift the Burmese delegation to the nearby Dak Bungalow outside the Congress nagar. The matter betrayed an attitude of intolerance on the part of Gandhiji, some of us thought.**

In the afternoon of the same day, the Subjects Committee was scheduled to meet. In those days, the Congress as a unique national platform included within its fold different ideological and political formations from the Congress Socialist Party and the banned Communist Party (functioning as the National Front group after the name of its legal journal) as also the so-called Nationalist Congressmen representing by and large the point of view of Hindu orthodoxy. There were arrest warrants against the Communist leaders, including the notification of handsome police reward for their capture. The Communists had sent one of their leaders, Bharadwaj, to participate in the Congress session. With an arrest warrant against him and the police and their informers hovering all over the place, it was difficult for him to come out of his undisclosed shelter in the Congress nagar and place the National Front point of view before the Subjects Committee. The Communists approached Panditji for advice on how Bharadwaj could come to the Subjects Committee session. Panditji promptly went to Gandhiji for advice. Remembering the morning incident, we were almost sure that Gandhiji would be far from helpful. In a few minutes Panditji came out of Gandhiji’s camp and told us that Bharadwaj would go to the Subjects Committee pandal with Gandhiji himself in his car. We were literally taken aback when we found the car carrying Gandhiji going right at the back of the platform, and out came Bharadwaj trailing behind Gandhiji, and then sat on the dais greeting the leaders from Maulana Azad, Rajen Babu, Sardar Patel and Panditji to JP and all the others. Sardar Patel moved the official resolution, followed by JP who placed the CSP point of view. Then Bharadwaj placed the National Front point of view. Discussions went on, and at the end Sardar Patel replying to the debate took the CSP and the National Front amendments to pieces and carried the day. Meanwhile, unnoticed by many, Bharadwaj slipped out, helped by Panditji and Dr Lohia.
This indeed was an amazing experience. How could one reconcile Gandhi ji’s morning allergy to the red flag and the very same afternoon, sheltering a ‘wanted’ Communist leader to come before the party forum and place his point of view? I have thought over this incident many times since. By his conduct, Gandhi ji was transmitting two messages. First, by insisting on the removal of the red flag Gandhi ji wanted to convey the message to all, that within the national platform which the Congress represented in the struggle against the foreign power, there could be but one leadership, one flag—no question of any ambiguity. At the same time, he wanted to convey the clear message to the British Raj that in its confrontation with the Congress, no party would be on its side, that all were behind the Congress. Subsequently, it was the breach of this commitment in 1942, when the Communists went against the Quit India upheaval, that they invited upon themselves the anger of Congressmen and were thrown out of the Congress.

The protracted negotiations over the transfer of power and the Muslim League’s insistence on Pakistan finally led to the Mountbatten Award of June 3, 1947, by which the country was partitioned. As was well known at the time, Gandhi ji was opposed to the partition. The difference between him and the leaders of the Congress flowed out of his premonition about the future. As a great communicator, Gandhi ji could not only transmit but perceive as well what was in store. This is borne out by a very penetrating passage in Tendulkar’s biography, Mahatma. Two days before the Mountbatten Award, that is, on June 1, 1947, Gandhi ji had woken up in the morning earlier than usual and spent the time before the prayer in musing:

Today I find myself all alone. Even the Sardar and Jawaharlal think that my reading of the political situation is wrong and peace is sure to return if partition is agreed upon. They did not like my telling the Viceroy that even if there was to be partition, it should not be through British intervention or under the British rule. They wonder, if I have not deteriorated with age. Nevertheless, I must speak as I feel, if I am to prove a true, loyal friend to the Congress and to the British people, as I claim to be, regardless of whether my advice is appreciated or not. I see clearly that we are setting about this business the wrong way. We may not feel the full effect immediately, but I can see clearly that the future of independence gained at this price is going to be dark.

Then after a pause, he pondered:

I shall, perhaps, not be alive to witness it, but should the evil I apprehend overtake India and her independence be imperilled, let posterity know what agony this old soul went through thinking of it. Let it not be said that Gandhi was party to India’s vivisection. But everybody is today impatient for independence. Therefore, there is no other help.

Here is a seer who could communicate his premonition. For those of us who were fortunate in watching him in person, those last days of his life—with his mind heavy with the unleashing of Hindu–Muslim clashes even when the foreign power had left—were perhaps the most momentous. On the one hand came the realisation of his goal—the independence of the country—while at the same time, the menace of communal hatred was vitiating that newly won freedom.

It was the hour of fulfilment tinged with a horrendous tragedy. For him, therefore, there was no moment of rest with the achievement of independence: the struggle had to go on. Since he could not avert the partitioning of the country, he had to meet the challenge of its sombre aftermath—how to put out the hell-fire of communal animosity. And so he set out on this, his final crusade—how to turn the millions of common humanity that he had served to mould all his life and make each one of them his brother’s keeper. In the midst of blood and fire, he strove—Noakhali, Beliaghata, Bihar and Delhi—until he fell a martyr to the cause which is yet to be redeemed by his heirs and successors. Till the last drop of life ebbed out of that frail body, the great communicator never ceased for a moment to transmit his message—the message which remains a sacred injunction even to this day forty-seven years after.

Today, this country needs a Gandhi to bring about the regeneration of our democracy. As morality is being banished from our politics and public life getting corroded all around, this country has the need of the Mahatma, the Great Communicator today more than at any time in the past. Seventy years ago, Mahatma Gandhi had said:

Real swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few, but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused.

This commandment alone can enthrone social justice in this great land of ours.

[Nikhil Chakravartty (1913–88) was a famed journalist and the founder—editor of the respected current affairs weekly Mainstream.]
Romila Thapar on Bhagat Singh’s 112th Birth Anniversary

September 28, 2019 was the 112th birth anniversary of freedom fighter and iconic youth leader, Bhagat Singh. On this occasion, a book, ‘The Bhagat Singh Reader’, edited by professor Chaman Lal, was released at the Jawaharlal Nehru University on September 25. Professor Romila Thapar, professor emeritus of the university, sent this message for the programme:

Bhagat Singh has a very special place in our lives, reflecting as he does, a significant aspect of our anti-colonial movement for independence, a movement that ensured our ceasing to be a colony and becoming an independent nation. It was a movement that saw an intense concern with debating and discussing the meaning of nationalism, as well as the methods of attaining freedom from an oppressive government. To this debate Bhagat Singh made his own contribution. He was part of a large number of others, equally effective nationalists, committed to creating a recognizably secular democratic state under the leadership of Gandhi and Nehru.

We applaud Bhagat Singh today, not only for being a nationalist but also, and sometimes more so, for being a person who read widely, reflected on what he had read, and then worked out his ideas on how we might create the nation that we aspired to be. This was not exceptional. This was normal in those days not only to those who spoke about nationalism and the state, but who were directly involved in the making of such a state. Having decided on a democratic state they also discussed what was inherent to democracy. In this secularism had a major role.

The definition of secularism did not stop with just proclaiming the co-existence of all religions. It went much further. It was seen as an essential component of democratic functioning. Today this debate is marginal in the public space and seems not to reach those crafting the state.

Nationalism was not intended to cease once the nation-state had come into being. What is equally crucial is that the emerging state be one that ensures and protects the basic rights of every citizen. This meant establishing the equal status of every citizen, not just in law but in practice as well. In the last seventy years, we have succeeded in establishing an acknowledged independent state, after having been a colony.

We have still to become the secular democratic state that is universally recognized as such, and one that ensures the guarantee of human rights for all its citizens. Had Bhagat Singh lived he would have had a stellar role in making this a reality.

The editor of the book, Chaman Lal, in his comments, made a reading of two letters of Bhagat Singh.

Message to the Punjab Students Conference, 19 October 1929

Bhagat Singh sent a message for the Punjab Students Conference, which was held on 19 October 1929 at Lahore with Netaji Subhas Bose as the chair. This letter was read out in the conference and was later published in ‘The Tribune’ on 22 October 1929.

Comrades,

Today, we cannot ask the youth to take to pistols and bombs. Today, students are confronted with a far more important assignment. In the coming Lahore Session the Congress is to give call for a fierce fight for the independence of the country. The youth will have to bear a great burden in this difficult time in the history of the nation. It is true that students have faced death at the forward positions of the struggle for independence. Will they hesitate this time in proving their same staunchness and self-confidence? The youth will have to spread this revolutionary message to the far corner of the country. They have to awaken crores of slum-dwellers of the industrial areas and villagers living in worn-out cottages, so that we will be independent and the exploitation of man by man will become impossibility. Punjab is considered politically backward even otherwise. This is also the responsibility of the youth. Taking inspiration from the martyr Yatindranath Das and with boundless reverence for the country, they must prove that they can fight with steadfast resolve in this struggle for independence.

Letter to the Editor, Modern Review, 22 December 1929

Ramanand Chatterjee, editor of the ‘Modern Review’, ridiculed the slogan of ‘Long Live Revolution’ in one of his editorials. Bhagat Singh wrote a reply to the note and handed it over to the trying magistrate to be sent to the ‘Modern Review’. The reply was subsequently published in ‘The Tribune’ on 24 December 1929.
Ramanand Chatterjee wrote the following in his editorial:

According to a free press message, at a meeting of the Naujawan Sabha (Youth League) of Gujranwala in the Punjab, a resolution was passed protesting against the arrest of students on the ground of their shouting "Long Live Revolution" and "Down with Imperialism", before the Court of the Special Magistrate of Lahore. The resolution states they everyone has the right to utter these cries. It is difficult for laymen to say what cries are or are not legal, when even High Court judges have differed in their interpretation of the law of sedition. But young enthusiasts will pardon an old cynical journalist for confessing that the cry of "Long Live Revolution" has sometimes appeared to him to be a bit funny. A revolution may now and then have been a necessity in the world history, and we should personally like an early non-violent social, economic and political revolution in India. But, what is the exact meaning of "Long Live Revolution"? To be at work is a sign of life. When a revolution is expressed for revolution to live long, is it desired that the revolutionary process should be at work every hour, day, week, month and year of our lives? In other words, are we to have a revolution as often as possible? Such ceaseless revolution may make for change, but scarcely for progress, improvement and enlightenment. What one revolution offered must have time to settle down and take root and bear fruit. A ceaseless revolutionary process would make India like what James Russel Lowell called "the Catherine-while republics of South America", of his day. No doubt, no revolution can produce a final state of improvement; there must be changes even after a revolution. But these should be brought about by evolution. There may again be a revolution after several generations, if not centuries, have passed. But that is not what is implied in the shout "Long Live Revolution".

Bhagat Singh wrote the following reply:

To, The Editor, Modern Review

You have, in the December (1929) issue of your esteemed magazine, written a note under the caption "Long Live Revolution", and have pointed out the meaninglessness of this phrase. It would be impertinent on our part to try to refute or contradict the statement of such an old, experienced and renowned journalist as your noble self, for whom every enlightened India has profound admiration. Still we feel it our duty to explain what we desire to convey by the said phrase, as in a way it fell to our lot to give these "cries" a publicity in this country at this stage.

We are not the originators of this cry. The same cry had been used in Russian revolutionary movements. Upton Sinclair, the well-known socialist writer, has, in his recent novels “Boston” and “Oil”, used this cry through some of the anarchist revolutionary characters. The phrase never means that the sanguinary strife should ever continue, or that nothing should ever be stationary even for a short while. By long usage this cry achieves a significance which may not be quite justifiable from the grammatical or the etymological point of view, but nevertheless we cannot abstract from that the association of ideas connected with that. All such shouts denote a general sense which is partly acquired and partly inherent in them. For instance, when we shout "Long Live Jatin Das", we cannot and do not mean by that shout is that the noble ideal of his life, the indomitable spirit which enabled that great martyr to bear such untold suffering and to make the extreme sacrifice for that ideal, should ever live. By raising this cry we wish that we may show the same unfailing courage in pursuance of our ideal. It is that spirit that we allude to.

Similarly, one should not interpret the word "revolution" in its literal sense. Various meanings and significances are attributed to this word attributed to this word, according to the interests of those who use or misuse it. For the established agencies of exploitation it conjures up a feeling of blood-stained horror. To the revolutionaries it is a sacred phrase. We tried to clear in our statement before the Sessions Judge, Delhi, in our trial in the Assembly Bomb Case, what we mean by the word "Revolution".

We started therein that Revolution did not necessarily involve sanguinary strife. It was not a cult of bomb and pistol. They may sometimes be mere means for its achievement. No doubt they play a prominent part in some movements, but they do not—for that very reason—become one and the same thing. A rebellion is not a revolution. It may ultimately lead to that end.

The sense, in which the word ‘Revolution’ is used in that phrase, is the spirit, the longing for a change for the better. The people generally get accustomed to the established order of things and begin to tremble at the very idea of a change. It is this lethargical spirit that needs be replaced by the revolutionary spirit. Otherwise degeneration gains the
upper hand and the whole humanity is led astray by the reactionary forces. Such a state of affairs leads to stagnation and paralysis in human progress. The spirit of Revolution should always permeate the soul of humanity, so that the reactionary forces may not accumulate (strength) to check its eternal onward march. Old order should change, always and ever, yielding place to new, so that one "good" order may not corrupt the world. It is in this sense that we raise the shout "Long Live Revolution."

Yours Sincerely,
(Sd.) Bhagat Singh, B.K. Dutt

 Courtesy: Sabrang India

How Labour's Radical Agenda was Built from the Ground Up

Laurie Macfarlane

A common criticism of left-wing politics is that activists always know what they are against, but struggle to articulate what they are for. After this week’s Labour Party conference in Brighton, this taunt can safely be retired.

Labour delegates backed a range of radical policies including the introduction of a four-day week with no loss of pay within a decade; a Green New Deal that commits to reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2030; the abolition of private schools; a radical shakeup of the pharmaceutical industry; free personal care for the elderly; a host of radical housing policies including the right to requisition empty homes; the extension of free movement; and the closure of all detention centres.

These policies build on an already ambitious policy platform that includes worker ownership funds; plans to double the size of the co-operative sector; a new public banking network; a National Transformation Fund and the nationalisation of key utilities.

Taken together, Labour’s agenda amounts to the most radical political-economic transformation for a generation.

Not everyone is convinced, however. The Financial Times has described the new suite of policies as “half-baked”, warning that Labour is not offering a reform of the capitalist economy” but instead a “full-scale reorganisation of the economy.”

Last week the Financial Times published its own ‘new agenda’, launched under the strapline of “Capitalism: time for a reset”. Citing the need to “reform in order to preserve”, the editor called on business leaders to “protect the future of free enterprise and wealth creation by pursuing profit with purpose.” Despite the heretical overtones, it’s clear that the newspaper's aim is to preserve the status quo, not replace it.

But at a time when the scientific community is calling for a “rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society”, many feel that a full-scale reorganisation is precisely what is needed. And while it is true that the ideas debated in Brighton have not been given much space in the pages of the mainstream financial press, it is wrong to assume they are “half-baked”.

For many decades the boundaries of what is politically possible have been policed by a closed network of politicians, advisors, corporate lobbyists, think tanks and journalists. But in recent years, this cosy club has consistently failed to acknowledge the scale of the challenges we face, or engage in a serious debate about how our economy needs to change to overcome them. As a result, a new wave of campaign groups, organisers, think tanks and party members have stepped into the void—energised by a Labour Party leadership that is willing to listen to them.

The wave of radical policies passed at this week’s Labour conference did not come from PR lobbyists or the scribblings of special advisors. Instead, they came from the blood, sweat and tears of thousands of thinkers, doers and
campaigners from all across the country and beyond.

The four-day week would not have become policy without the research and advocacy of organisations such as Autonomy, the New Economics Foundation, the 4 Day Week Campaign and the Communication Workers Union (CWU). The Green New Deal would not have become a reality without the tireless work of activists from Labour for a Green New Deal, sections of the trade union community, Common Wealth and a host of other academics and grass roots organisations. Labour’s bold plans for the pharmaceutical industry draw on research undertaken by the UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose, Global Justice Now, STOPAIDS and the campaign group Just Treatment. The housing motion backed by delegates is packed with ideas from various groups including Land for the Many, Young Labour and the Labour Campaign for Council Housing. The vote to abolish private schools was primarily the result of an effective campaign spearheaded by the activists behind Labour Against Private Schools. The list goes on.

During his leadership campaign in 2015, Jeremy Corbyn talked about the need for “a new type of politics”, including in the way that the Labour Party makes policy. The era “when you elect some all-knowing all-seeing celebrity who sends it down the food chain” will come to an end, he declared. This year, for the first time, this vision has started to become a reality (although concerns have since been raised about whether some of the policies will in fact become official policy).

Corbyn himself will not be around forever. But the tide of people-power unleashed under his leadership is not going away anytime soon—and it is this that may ultimately prove to be his most important legacy.

(Laurie Macfarlane is economics editor at openDemocracy, and a research associate at the UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose.)

Several Reasons Why West Papua Should Get Its Freedom… Immediately!

Andre Vltchek

More than ten years ago, in Nadi, Fiji, during a UN conference, I was approached by the Minister of Education of Papua New Guinea (PNG).

He was deeply shaken, troubled, his eyes full of tears: “Please help our children,” he kept repeating:

“Indonesian army, TNI, is kidnapping our little girls in the villages, raping them, and then… in the most sadistic way cutting off their nipples and clitorises. And if they speak, entire villages get burned down in retribution. Many already have been. Some children managed to escape; to cross the border, from West Papua to PNG. Now they are staying in our refugee camps, but our country is poor; we are hardly coping. Please come to Papua, and we will take you to the border region… please tell the story to the world…”

What followed, I described in detail in my book, Oceania. In brief, I managed to scramble some money for my trip from Samoa back to PNG, I found the Minister of Education, but he refused to take me to the camps. I contacted his subordinates as well as local journalists, and was told the same thing:

“Nothing has changed; nothing improved; but the Minister was bribed and intimidated by the omnipresent Indonesian embassy.”

***

Now even the mainstream media in Java, including the generally pro-regime English-language daily The Jakarta Post, has had to react to the terrible events which are taking place on the occupied territory of West Papua. On August 19, 2019, Evi Mariani, wrote:

“Papuans are said to have endured racial discrimination from the majority Javanese. A political activist from Papua, Filep Karma, wrote in 2014 in his book, Seakan Kitorang Setengah Binatang: Rasisalisme Indonesia di Tanah Papua (As If We Are Half Animal: Indonesia’s Racism in Papua Land), that he experienced racism when he studied in a state university in Surakarta, Central Java. He often heard his friends calling Papuans ‘monkeys’, he said in the book.

“The book speaks volumes of the crimes against humanity facing Papuans on their own land.”

But what really is happening in West Papua? Of course, foreign journalists are banned from entering and reporting freely from there. Only official Indonesian journalists, basically lackeys of the regime, are regularly flown to the most devastated and oppressed areas. Their lies and twisted ‘reporting’
are the only things that the world is ‘allowed to see’.

Working for years in South Pacific (Oceania), I visited on several occasions both Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Vanuatu, where the West Papuan resistance has been regrouping. I also have some 25 years of experience of working in Indonesia itself. And I used to cooperate with a late professor from Sydney University, Peter King, a man who basically dedicated his life to the plight of West Papua. I spoke at Sydney University, side by side with him, recalling my experience from East Timor; from the Indonesian occupation, where 30–40% of the population lost their life, and where I, myself, was savagely tortured in 1996, for trying to expose the systematic gang rapes committed by the Indonesian military.

While living in Oceania, I spent days discussing the occupation with the West Papuan refugees, who resided outside Port Moresby, the capital of PNG.

I managed to enter West Papua only once, illegally, in 1999, as a ‘side-trip’ while covering the horrific sectarian conflict in Ambon.

From the information and testimonies that I have amassed so far, I can clearly see that the occupation of West Papua is, together with the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) which is being plundered by both Rwanda and Uganda on behalf of Western corporations and governments and where approximately 8 million people have already lost their lives, perhaps the most horrendous genocide taking place on our planet.

But in the region of the Great Lakes of Africa I managed to make my big documentary film, Rwanda Gambit. While in West Papua, I would never be allowed to film, photograph or even openly talk to people. I would never be allowed to enter those monstrous mines controlled by Freeport and other corporations; mines that are being ‘protected’ by the corrupt and murderous Indonesian military.

Prof. Peter King and Prof. John Wing wrote in the Executive Summary to their report “Genocide in West Papua?” (Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, The University of Sydney, 2005):

“The report details a series of concerns which, if not acted upon, may pose serious threats to the survival of the indigenous people of the Indonesian province of Papua. It covers the threats posed by the Indonesian military to the province’s stability, the recent increase in large scale military campaigns which are decimating highland tribal communities, the HIV/AIDS explosion and persistent Papuan underdevelopment in the face of a rapid and threatening demographic transition in which the Papuans face becoming a minority in their own land.

“A ‘culture of impunity’ exists in Indonesia which sees its highest manifestation currently in Papua and Aceh. Military operations have led to thousands of deaths in Papua and continue to costs lives, yet the Republic’s armed forces act as a law unto themselves with no real accountability for crimes against the Papuan population. The report discusses a number of areas of Indonesian security forces involvement, including: illegal logging and corrupt infrastructure and construction work; destabilization and manipulation of local politics, and orchestration of attacks blamed on pro-Papuan independence groups; the introduction of illegal arms and militia training and recruitment; and prostitution and the spread of HIV/AIDS.

“The report concludes with a number of urgent recommendations to the Indonesian and Australian governments, the United Nations and other involved parties.”

Since 2005, not much has improved. Actually, things have deteriorated even further.

Eliza Egret and Tom Anderson reported on August 31, 2017 in their essay “West Papua’s Silent Genocide”:

“The occupation of West Papua receives little attention in the UK. This is, in no small part, due to Indonesia’s ban on foreign journalists and its outlawing of West Papuan social movements who try to speak out internationally. However, West Papua has not been forgotten by international corporations, including companies from the UK. For them, Indonesia’s brutal occupation of West Papua provides lucrative opportunities for profit.

“Mining companies exploit the country’s vast wealth of minerals, with security for their operations provided by the Indonesian military. International arms companies profit from selling Indonesia the weapons it needs to maintain the occupation. The UK government, which gives financial support and training to Indonesian police forces, is also complicit in the repression in West Papua.

“West Papuans have called on people in the UK to help stop what they describe as the silent genocide in West Papua.”

The ‘Free West Papua Campaign’ states:

“Over 500,000 civilians have been killed in a genocide against the
indigenous population. Thousands more have been raped, tortured, imprisoned or ‘disappeared’ after being detained. Basic human rights such as freedom of speech are denied and Papuans live in a constant state of fear and intimidation.”

In a series of the official reports, fingers were being pointed at Indonesia and its genocidal behavior in the occupied West Papua. From the United Nations to human rights organizations, a gruesome picture has been emerging.

As mentioned by the ‘Free West Papua Campaign’:

“Sexual assault and rape have been repeatedly used as a weapon by the Indonesian military and police.”

In a public report to the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1999, the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women concluded that the Indonesian security forces used rape “as an instrument of torture and intimidation” in West Papua, and “torture of women detained by the Indonesian security forces was widespread”.

The Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Centre for Human Rights prepared a full report on “Rape and Other Human Rights Abuses by the Indonesian Military in Irian Jaya (West Papua), Indonesia”.

Even the otherwise ‘timid’ Amnesty International (timid when it comes to the West’s allies) admits that torture, killings and other grave human rights abuses, are regularly taking place in the Indonesia-controlled territory, in its reports on West Papua.

Information about sexual assaults and rapes highlighted in the above-mentioned UN report, is consistent with the behavior of the Indonesian military during and after the 1965–66 military coup, and later, during the occupation and genocide committed in East Timor.

It is important to point out that the Indonesian military and police are enjoying unprecedented impunity. After presiding over the murder of approximately 2 million Communists, intellectuals, teachers and members of the Chinese minority in 1965–66, no culprit has ever been sent to prison. Acts of killing are still being celebrated, publicly. Generals and officers who openly participated in the East Timor genocide, as well as in the ongoing genocide in West Papua, have been holding high positions in the Indonesian governments, including the present one.

The monstrous brutality is well documented (even some mainstream media outlets like Al-Jazeera are regularly releasing footage of torture committed by the Indonesian troops), but Indonesia is never dragged through the international courts of justice. It is because Jakarta is a well-tested and greatly reliable ally of Western companies and governments. For instance, it allows many local and Western mining companies to plunder West Papua. The Indonesian President, “Jokowi”, actually flies around the world, asking for “more investment”, promising tax holidays, “reforms” of already pathetic labour laws, and other pro-big-business concessions.

All this is brilliantly exposed in an Australian short (2:39 minute) satirical film “Honest Government Ad/Visit West Papua”.

But the world prefers to stay idle. As least for now. No mass-protest movements, like those in support of the Palestinian cause, or even the Kurdish cause. Why is all this happening?

My close friend, the renowned Australian historian, Geoffrey Gunn, Professor Emeritus at Nagasaki University, wrote for this essay:

“The crimes committed by the Indonesian military in Papua today appear very similar to East Timor under Indonesian military occupation between 1975–1999 and with some of the same Indonesian officials involved. That would include General Wiranto, the butcher of East Timor in 1999 who, far from being brought before an international tribunal Rwanda-style, enjoys cabinet-level appointment in the Jokowi government. But even when Suharto-era crimes could no longer be covered up in East Timor thanks to the courage of crusading journalists and others, so incredulously does the avowedly democratic regime in Jakarta today disallow the entry of humanitarian workers much less foreign media into Papua. If the Western-backed cover up of crimes committed in East Timor was itself a crime of complicity then Western—especially Australian—silence over the agony of the Papuan people over an even longer time frame is a crime of a special order, and with mining company, oil company interests in the fore as if this was the heart of Africa under Leopold II of Belgium.”

We saw the same chilling indifference when 30% to 40% of East Timorese were slaughtered by Indonesia. Again, and again, I was managing to illegally penetrate that then Indonesian colony, which was screaming in pain, shedding thousands and thousands of people every month. And again, and again, my stories were being rejected; no interest whatsoever shown by the mass media outlets.

Then and now. East Timor and West Papua.
And in Indonesia itself, chilling, horrifying defiance. Silence. Almost no activism, and hardly any awareness. The country lives in total denial. Like in the case of 1965–66, like in the case of East Timor: total rejection of the truth. There is near zero chance that the barbarity will stop because of the pressure ‘from within’. Indonesia has proven, again and again, that after being conditioned by decades of extreme fascist ideology, fundamentalist religions, and grotesque individualism, it has no mercy, and no sympathy for its own victims. After mass killings and consistent conditioning, it is now in a serious mental, pathological state.

The government of President Jokowi is nowhere near being deep in thought, considering a referendum on independence for West Papuans. On the contrary: it is ‘investing in infrastructure’ in order to bring even more ‘investment’ from abroad, and to extract even more natural resources.

According to investigation conducted by Eliza Egret and Tom Anderson:

“The Indonesian occupation of West Papua is directly related to corporate interests. US company Freeport-McMoRan operates the Grasberg mine in Papua—the largest gold mine and the third largest copper mine in the world. Freeport’s third largest shareholder, Carl Icahn, happens to be a Special Advisor to Donald Trump.”

According to the ‘Free West Papua Campaign’:

“Freeport is Indonesia’s biggest taxpayer, making billions of dollars for the Indonesian government every year. Freeport reportedly pays the Indonesian military around US $3 million every year in ‘protection money’, ensuring that local West Papuans are kept out of the area.”

Time states that “In 2015 alone, Freeport mined some $3.1 billion worth of gold and copper here. In addition, Papua boasts timber resources worth an estimated $78 billion.”

Amos explained the history behind Freeport’s mining in West Papua: “A contract was signed for Freeport to operate in West Papua before we were even part of Indonesia.” With the help of Henry Kissinger, Freeport was awarded the rights to pillage West Papua. Kissinger later became a Freeport board member.

Australian–British corporation Rio Tinto holds an interest in Freeport’s Grasberg mine, which entitles it to 40% of production over specified levels until 2021, and 40% of all production after 2021.

Meanwhile, British company BP continues to profit from the occupation through its massive liquified natural gas fields in Tangguh. Kugi told us: “BP’s biggest operation in Southeast Asia is in West Papua, and Papuan communities are also being pushed from their land for palm oil.” According to CorpWatch, an indigenous community in West Papua filed a complaint against Sri Lankan company Goodhope Asia for taking over their land to create a palm plantation.”

In the meantime, the government of Indonesia has been turning the pristine waters of Papuan Raja Ampat into a luxury diving destination, charging horrendous airfares and lodging prices, and making the mainly Western tourist live in a bubble.

And Westerners are now coming there, indifferent to the fact that they are actually funding genocide, legitimizing occupation. A boycotting Raja Ampat campaign is unheard of.

Now the Papuan people are rising. Their Morning Star flag, the symbol of resistance, is waving again, all over the island.

The world should support the Papuan people. They have been suffering for decades. Their nation lost hundreds of thousands of men, women and children. Torture, rape and humiliation have been widespread ever since the beginning of the occupation. Religion has been brutally forced down the throats of the robbed people, in many areas of West Papua: ‘You either embrace Islam, or you will starve to death, after we have looted you of all that you used to possess.’

Here, Java and its Western handlers have managed to re-define colonialism, bringing it to a monstrous extreme.

It is a “Freedom or Death” situation, now. Either freedom, or, the total destruction of the nation. The Indonesian President Jokowi is on a selling spree. He is flying all over the world, offering what is left of both Indonesia, and its ‘dependencies’, to the multi-national corporations, for an extremely low price, and often tax free. Papua is not his, and he is well aware of the fact that it may soon find a way to break free from the torture chamber and the horror of Indonesian occupation. That is why he is accelerating his business activities: trying to trade as quickly as possible with what is not his to touch.

(Andre Vltchek is a philosopher, novelist, filmmaker and investigative journalist, who presently resides in East Asia and the Middle East, and continues to work around the world.)
The Root Problem is the Capitalist System

Evo Morales


Brother President of the United Nations General Assembly, Tijjani Muhammad Bande.

Brother Secretary General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres.

Sisters and brothers Presidents, Chancellors and Delegates
Sisters and brothers of the International Organizations and all the peoples of the world:

Once again we meet in the most important multilateral organization of humanity, to reflect and analyze collectively on the global problems that concern the peoples of the world.

We meet in this forum to discuss and find solutions to the serious threats facing humanity and life on the planet.

We note with concern the deterioration of the multilateral system, product of unilateral measures promoted by some states which have decided to ignore the commitments, good faith and global structures built for a healthy coexistence between states, within the framework of international law and the basic principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Threat to Mother Earth

Our house, Mother Earth, is our only home and is irreplaceable. It increasingly suffers more fires, more floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, droughts and other catastrophes.

Each year is hotter than the previous one, the thaws are greater, the level of the oceans grows. Every day we suffer the disappearance of species, soil erosion, desertification and deforestation.

Sisters and brothers, we are warned that if we follow this course of action, by the year 2100 we will reach an increase of 3 degrees Celsius. That would imply massive and devastating changes.

The consequences of climate change will condemn, according to data from our organization [the United Nations], millions of people to poverty, hunger, no potable water, losing their homes, forced displacement, more refugee crises and new armed conflicts.

Sisters and brothers, in recent weeks we have been surprised by the forest fires that have been unleashed in different parts of the planet: in the Amazon, in Oceania and Africa, affecting flora, fauna and biodiversity.

In recent weeks, fires have broken out in Bolivia, which we have been fighting against using our financial, technical and human resources. To date, our country has spent more than $15 million to mitigate fires.

We thank the International Community for their timely cooperation in our fight against the fires, as well as their commitment to participate in post-fire actions.

The Root Problem: The Capitalist System

Sisters and brothers, it is essential to talk about the structural causes of the different crises.

Transnational companies control food, water, non-renewable resources, weapons, technology and our personal data. They intend to commercialize everything, to accumulate more capital.

The world is being controlled by a global oligarchy, only a handful of billionaires define the political and economic destiny of humanity.

26 people have the same wealth
as 3.8 billion people. That is unfair, that is immoral, that is inadmissible. The underlying problem lies in the model of production and consumerism, in the ownership of natural resources and in the unequal distribution of wealth. Let’s say it very clearly: the root of the problem is in the capitalist system.

That is why the United Nations is more relevant and important than ever. Individual efforts are insufficient and only joint action and unity will give us an opportunity to overcome them.

As we have already said, the responsibility of our generation is to give the next a fairer and more human world.

That will only be achieved if we work together to consolidate a multipolar world, with common rules, defending multilateralism and the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and International Law.

**Bolivia’s Achievements**

Sisters and brothers, in Bolivia we have taken very important steps:

We are the country with the highest economic growth in South America, with an average of 4.9% in the last six years.

Between 2005 and 2019, the Gross Domestic Product increased from $9.574 billion to $40.885 billion.

We have the lowest unemployment in the region. It fell from 8.1% in 2005 to 4.2% in 2018.

Extreme poverty fell from 38.2% to 15.2% in 13 years.

Life expectancy increased by 9 years.

The minimum wage rose from $60 to $310.

The gender gap in land titling for women was reduced. 138,788 women received land in 2005 and 1,011,249 up to 2018.

Bolivia ranks third country in the world with the highest participation of women in Parliament. More than 50% of Parliament is made up of women.

Bolivia was declared a territory free of illiteracy in 2008.

School dropout rate fell from 4.5% to 1.5% between 2005 and 2018.

The infant mortality rate was reduced by 56%.

We are in the process of implementing the Universal Health System, which will guarantee that 100% of Bolivians access a free, dignified service, with quality and warmth.

We passed a law to provide free health care for cancer patients.

The above data are part of the achievements of our democratic and cultural revolution, which have given Bolivia political, economic and social stability.

Sisters and brothers:

How do we achieve these achievements in such a short time? How is it that Bolivia has taken the path to defeat poverty and underdevelopment?

Thanks to the conscience of the people, of the social movements, of indigenous, peasants, workers, professionals, of men and women of the countryside and of the cities.

We nationalized our natural resources and our strategic companies. We have taken control of our destiny.

We are building a Community and Productive Social Economic Model, which recognizes basic services (water, electricity, telecommunications) as a human right.

Today we can say with pride and optimism that Bolivia has a future.

Sisters and brothers, our countries face diverse and conflicting situations, which must be approached in a sovereign manner and solutions must be found through dialogue and negotiation, in favor of the interests of the people.

Bolivia, in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations, ratifies its rejection of the economic and financial blockade imposed against Cuba, which violates all human rights.

Finally, sisters and brothers, I take this opportunity to thank all member countries for their support in the various initiatives promoted by Bolivia.

This year: The International Year of Indigenous Languages, The Declaration of the Rights of Peasants and the Declaration of June 21 as International Solstice Day.

To conclude, we ratify our commitment to consolidate a new world order of peace with social justice, in harmony with Mother Earth to Live Well, respecting the dignity and identity of the peoples.

Thank you.

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National Mahatma Gandhi Award of MP Government: Acceptance Speech

Neeraj Jain

The Madhya Pradesh Government recently conferred the prestigious National Mahatma Gandhi Award for 2018 to Lokayat. The award has been given in recognition of the exemplary work done by Lokayat in spreading the message and values of Mahatma Gandhi among the youth. As a part of this, the recipient institution is honoured with a commendation plaque and a cash award of Rs 10 lakh. The award was given to Alka Joshi and Neeraj Jain, convenors of Lokayat, at a function held in Bhopal by the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Shri Kamal Nath, on October 2, 2019. We are giving below the acceptance speech by Neeraj Jain while accepting the award on behalf of Lokayat.

On behalf of Lokayat, both of us would like to thank the Madhya Pradesh Government for honouring our work by bestowing upon our organisation the National Mahatma Gandhi Award.

Today is the perfect occasion for remembering the father of our nation, not just because it is his 150th Birth Anniversary, but also because his message, his values and ideals, are all the more relevant today—as they illuminate the path that should be followed by our country to tackle the most important problems being faced by it, some of which appear to be almost intractable—which also implies that we have forgotten his teachings.

While laying the foundations for and transforming the Indian freedom struggle into a mass movement, Gandhiji’s vision of the freedom movement was that it must not remain confined to being only a political movement, but simultaneously, must also transform the people. And so, along with the political movement, he also laid great stress on building a social movement to bring the people out of their age-old caste and gender prejudices. One of the biggest myths about Gandhiji is that he was a supporter of the caste system. But that he did not believe in caste and untouchability is best seen from the practices followed in all the ashrams he founded, where no caste restrictions were observed. As the freedom struggle moved towards its victory, Gandhiji publicly announced that he would attend only those marriages which were inter-caste marriages and where one partner was a Dalit.

Another issue that was very close to Gandhi’s heart was Hindu-Muslim unity. By the time Gandhiji took over the reins of the freedom struggle in the country, the British had succeeded in sowing the seeds of communalism among the people in order to divide the people along communal lines and thus weaken our freedom struggle. Gandhiji tried his best to build a unified freedom struggle. But he failed in his efforts to prevent the partition of the country. He then strove to douse the communal fires that engulfed northern India and was planning to do the same in Pakistan - but his life was cut short in a fit of anger by a fellow countryman. Today, seventy one years after the martyrdom of Gandhiji, the cause for which the father of our nation sacrificed his life has been forgotten, and the monster of communalism, which should more appropriately be called majoritarianism, is raising its ugly head once again.

Even in the sphere of development, Gandhiji’s economic ideas are more relevant than ever before. The inequitous development model being followed in the country has made our country one of the most unequal in the world, pushing it into a deep economic and unemployment crisis. At such a critical time, we need to revisit Gandhiji’s economic philosophy. His insistence on focussing on development of the rural economy and decentralised development, are the real solutions to the economic crisis facing the country.

Today, on the 150th birth anniversary of the greatest son that India has produced, the need is to take Gandhiji’s message to the masses, raise their consciousness in the true Gandhian way, and inspire them to stand up against all injustice; in this process of struggle, they will also transform themselves into truly human beings.

This regeneration of our democracy through the teachings and practice of Mahatma Gandhi—is precisely what the activists of Lokayat are striving to do, through the innumerable activities that we take up. As Mahatma Gandhi had said, seventy years ago:

Real swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few, but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused.

Thank you.
It is not sufficient to know that workers are exploited, or to demand higher wages within a capitalist system: it is necessary to have a framework to understand more deeply the injustices that we see in places like Foxconn factories, where long workdays and unsafe working conditions are the norm.

This framework is provided by the concept of ‘rate of exploitation’ — one of the most essential concepts in Marx’s theory. Its measurement allows us to show how much the worker contributes to the increase of value in the production process. It shows that even if the worker is paid more, by the special magic of mechanisation and of efficient management of the production process, the rate of exploitation increases.

Recently, Tricontinental brought out a report that used Marx’s rate of exploitation on the iPhone manufacturing process to show quantitatively the contradictory interests of the capitalists and of the workers. It enables workers to see how much of the share of the value produced is appropriated from them by the capitalists, and to therefore make the case for a different way to organise production and to end exploitation.

Here is a brief summary from the report:

- If the iPhone were made in the United States, it would cost at least $30,000 per phone.
- In order to purchase one iPhone for $30,000, a minimum wage worker in India would have to work for 14.5 years for one phone.
- Each time an iPhone X is sold for $999, Apple receives $603.56 of surplus value in money form. In other words, every time an iPhone is purchased for $999, Apple keeps $605.56.
- The rate of exploitation of the iPhone is 2458%. This is 25 times the rates of exploitation that are gleaned from Marx’s examples in Capital, published in 1867. Workers who make the iPhone in the 21st century, in other words, are 25 times more exploited than textile workers in England in the 19th century.
- What does this number—2458%—tell us? It tells us that an infinitesimal part of the working day is devoted to the value needed by the workers as wages. The bulk of the day is spent by the worker producing goods that enhance the wealth of the capitalist. The higher the rate of exploitation, the greater the enhancement of the capital’s wealth by the worker’s labor.

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“We are, what we repeatedly do, Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”

Aristotle

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