

Gandhian Response to Economic Meltdown: Vandana Siva, Satish Kumar, and Peter Sellers (December 2008)

Nonviolence, Swadeshi, Self-Reliance and Simplicity: A Gandhian Response in Times of Economic Meltdown and Terrorism

What follows are my notes from an inspiring afternoon at the India International Center in Delhi. I attended a panel discussion with Dr. Vandana Siva, Satish Kumar, Peter Sellers and Ashish Ramgobin.

How is Gandhi relevant in times of a financial crisis?

This is an amazing potential to transform...

The bailout is asking us to consume more, consumption gets a boost in times of crisis. Are there other ways?

Satish Kumar

Was in US during 9/11, US response has not brought an end to terrorism, the idea that weapons do not bring security...if this was possible the US would be the most secure nation on earth but it has no real security. 4000 US soldiers have died and continue to die. What is the response of terrorist attacks in the context of Gandhian principles and reality. No end and no solution in sight, go beyond and find the root causes. We are very intelligent people yet we have not found solutions to our chronic problems—Israel and Palestine, Kashmir. We don't know how to solve our conflicts. Technology cannot solve our problems. As people we have to raise our awareness and voice.

What is driving people to kill themselves and kill others? Gandhi said there are many things I am prepared to die for but none I am prepared to kill for. We need to go deeper and search for the root causes. Communities have stuck together after the attacks. Terrorism is a way for us to come together—a good chance for India and Pakistan to come together. Credit crunch, bail out banks, free market and globalization is the solution. What have the realists achieved? The Ivy League educated have left us in the state where we are. We've had enough of realism. The economy cannot survive without ecology. You must know your place in the scheme of nature. Economy is a subtext of the biosphere. SARVODAYA – upliftment of all

Ashish Ramgobin (Participative Development Initiative)

South Africa—liberation, nonviolent measure bringing a common principle of humanity. Sanctions are the least spoken about tools but the last straw that broke the camels back to end apartheid. Nelson Mandela was released because the economy was failing. Problems in South Africa are exactly the same. There is a notion of patriotism outside of India that isn't in India. The circumstances and situations of today demand a different response.

Why did people follow Gandhi? What do we need as a global community? People should rule themselves, governments rule on greed and power corruption is everywhere. It takes two people to make corruption happen. Activism, there is something that needs to be done on the basis of moral regeneration. Self-reliance is an economic reaction. We

need to look at alternate media, alternate education systems. We need to start from the bottom up. Gandhi didn't start with attacking the British he mobilized the poor. How do we see the poor? Look within ourselves.

Peter Sellers ("There is plenty of doing to do")

This is a new chapter. All of us are the great grandchildren of Gandhi. New models of citizenship, leadership. Internet community...based on moral conviction and spiritual search...solidarity not reduced by the power of money. Democracy's in the US mostly purchased...Obama raised money in small amounts by many people responding to his idealism. The 21st century was hijacked by Bin Laden and Bush but now we can begin with idealism, not as a distant hope but the only option. Things that are not sustainable collapse. Do we have the alternative ready? Do we have the blue prints for the alternative ready? For artists, idealism is the clay we sculpt an image of justice in. We need to respond to the hunger today and prepare our imagination for the next political reality. Mozart...image of equality first created in art. Alternative information systems—what art always was. Can we demonstrate equality? The 6th chapter of the Bhagavad Gita can only be realized in a temple. The task of the artist is to create a space for accuracy and precision, experiments with Truth, democracy people are starved of. In Ancient Greece as important as the senate was the theatre, each of us as beings are infinite. Infinity is our very being. If you lived in Athens you had to vote to attend the theatre. In the theatre, music, poetry and dance is where the voiced of the unheard are heard. Listen deeply to the unheard voices to keep democracy alive. The project for the arts is to create the space for truth. The lack of communication is why there is violence. We need to open the channels of communication and stop violence and communicate with skill. How do you bless the person who is killing you? This is satyagraha—Nelson Mandela is forming a government with those who want to kill him. Mozart's last opera...responsibility and representation. No one is safe until the most troubled voice in the room is not suffering. Truth is found in the spaces between us, larger than each of us, owned by none of us. The ability to share a measure of what we embody. We need to create with imagination and energy, this shared space, the larger truth becomes sacred. Greek Olympics...what was impossible yesterday is possible today. Democracy of achievement, there is nothing impossible. Empower the beautiful, astounding generation.

Questions

What would Gandhi do?

He would begin with the poor (WPA created by FDR, the government empowered the weakest). We need to find and recover our soul and rebuild our values and humanity

India's youth lured into call centers are the lost generation, lives taken from them. \$ they get is not worth the psychological melt down, no skills aside from working in a call center. IT has saved 40 billion by moving to India and it has created a class of socially brutal, environmentally irresponsible. Globalization has stolen 15 years from these youth.

Emerging generation we need to move beyond narrow identity

Assuming that the earth is limitless limits us!

Take what we have learned from Gandhi and take it forward two more steps.

We have to move from defining ourselves from the opposition. What are we for?

Right livelihood, not being a consumer, invite young people to be creators

Limits generate abundance

(Jesus) worse than murdering when we think someone is less than us. This is the worst form of mental violence.

Masses is a term from the 20th century (mass production) we need to NOT take it with us to the 21st century. Everyone is unique.

We need patience, it will take longer but the roots will go deeper. The wisdom of India is that we can grow slowly with deep roots across many generations. This is the only thing that will save the planet. We can create small zones of quality. Anything on a mass scale loses quality.

Right now movements are emptied of their spiritual power.

What we've built in 200 years has destroyed everything before. Wanting to move quickly we have destroyed the planet.

Communication is not only through words, real communication is through living examples. Live it and practice it. Transformation is about understanding the limits of oneself as an agent of change.

When we try to measure things we lose the infinity of spirit. You can never know the effects of your actions. All you can do is commit deeply.

Rembrandt, Cezanne—change the world through art

Science and Spirituality...Everything is a part of God...no room for self doubt

Indian Opinion (1903-1906)

Ashish – how different we all see the world...we all believe in Gandhi's teaching and want a better world but we will contribute in different ways...see if you can change the life of even one person

Gandhi would have asked, "What would you do?" each of us has to understand ourselves, truth and justice and apply it with in ourselves.

Never make an excuse and don't be afraid to walk on the danger path.