

Acceptance speech of Lenin Raghuvanshi

Distinguished Lord Mayor, Distinguished representatives of the City Council (Stadtrat), Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends,

It is a great and landmark honour for me, my colleagues at the People's Vigilance Committee on Human Rights (PVCHR), partner organizations especially Child Right and You (CRY), Danish organization Research and Rehabilitation Center on Torture Victims (RCT), Sir Dorabji tata Trust(SDIT), Indo-German Society of Remscheid and associates Ms. Helma Ritscher from Germany and Ms.Parul Sharma of Sweden to receive the the Human Rights Award of the City of Weimar fighting for the dignity of the poor and "untouchables" of India. Secretary General of Council of Europe Thorbjørn Jagland portrays the authentic picture of marginalized *"The poor and marginalized are ignored by political parties and the media. When they are victims of crime they hesitate to report it because they do not trust the police or courts. Corruption is widespread. Poor people are forced to pay for protection and services which, according to human rights law, should be free. The economic crisis only makes things worse, providing an excuse for politicians to blame the victims rather than help them."*

Greetings and thanks to award selection committee, City council of Weimar and Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom(FNST)for acknowledgment of most wretchedly treated people in the world, the Dalits of India, known once as 'untouchables'. The culture of silence imposed by draconian suppression sanctified by religious rituals of the Upper Caste was such that the outside world knew little about this colossal cruelty.

Even after 63 years of attaining freedom, India -- the largest democracy in the world -- lags to ensure justice for all. Money and muscle power of caste and patriarchy together with political string pulling often result in denial of justice for the hapless -- have not's ravaged by poverty coupled with illiteracy.

Colonial legacy continues in administrative framework with atrocities, extortion, fake-encounter, refusal to register complaints against the 'haves', arbitrary arrests on false charges and detention without process, custodial deaths due to torture by police force that hardly has accountability. In the absence of a modernized social audit system, the law protectors who normally perform under a demanding environment and often unleash a 'police raj' (A police regime), which is quite common in the rural India.

Crippled National Human Rights Commission and its state subsidiaries having only a limited recommendatory control with a dysfunctional Legal Aid System depict a gloomy picture for the poor and uneducated. In a system of age-old legal procedures, economically weaker and socially backward section often falls victim languishing in legal entangles where money speaks the last

word. Official reports show the impact of 100 days guaranteed work @ Rs 100 a day under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) is a suspect.

Schedule caste, Indigenous groups, Minority and other backward caste are mostly facing atrocities and discrimination in all spheres of life. It verifies in the data collection of 123 survivors in the pilot project under RCT-PVCHR project on testimonial therapy, in which 89% of survivors belong to schedule caste, indigenous groups and other backward caste (OBC).

The general impression is that poor dalits and tribals not only do menial work in the society, but also form the major source of churning out unsocial and criminal people. Unfortunately, there is a culture of silence permeated in the society historically. The privileged people mostly believe and have convinced even the state to believe that they cannot go wrong.

That is why, one finds most of the custodial torture, violence and deaths are committed against marginalized and deprived caste. Many dalits are tortured and subjected to humiliation and degrading treatment in public like garlanded with slippers and sandal, coloring face (*black/white*) and riding over ass etc. So they have the divine right to use and abuse or discriminate against the dalits, tribals and other backward category people.

Indian Police learnt from practice of caste system of demoralization and community punishment. Demoralizing the lower caste is very common with a view to make them quiet. When a person from upper caste commits crime, after trial the person is punished. However when it comes to the lower caste the entire community is punished. This punishment is not from court of law, but from the upper caste and the police provide its sound support in implementing such punishment to lower caste.

However two thousands and eight hundred years ago, Lord Buddhaⁱ, a spiritual teacher took up the challenge to end the caste system. In the modern times, Bhakti movementⁱⁱ gave birth to two main spiritual leaders and poets Kabirⁱⁱⁱ and Raidas^{iv} in Varanasi later Periyar^v- a famous leader of self respect in South India, Savitri Bai Phule to Jyoti Ba Phule^{vi}- great social reformer from west India and recently Dr. Bhimrao Ambedker^{vii}- a dalit ideologue and father of Indian constitution, who took the courage to shake it.

Lastly the movement of Marathwada^{viii} in west India, ongoing Dalit uprising in whole India and new form of reconciliation movement is the base of Dalit movement in India, which consisted of feminist and progressive social transformation; this caused mortal shocks to caste system, patriarchy, feudal Brahminism.

On the other hand, Rastriya Swayam Sevak Sangh(RSS) ^{ix}-a Hindu fascist force germinated in 1925. The RSS chief organizer Guru Golwalker, who held Hitler and Mussolini in very high esteem, described India to be a purely Hindu Country and Muslims second class citizens.

The danger faced by the caste dictatorship created a new link in communal Hinduism-fascism and structure based on exclusion. Till all progressive powers joined hand to crush Brahminism from its roots, till then Manu's patriarchal dictatorship would persist and flourish. Although very little can be attained so quickly such time communal fascism not get crushed. The typical danger is from Indian Hindu communal fascism to the entire globe is that every fifth person of the world is Indian.

PVCHR is fighting back the caste system of India through participatory activism in philosophy of "local thinking and local-global action". Now Dalit is un-censoring themselves and claiming their own rights in sustained way,

In the last I would like to conclude by saying that any process should be taken after taking into account the peoples' emancipation and empowerment. For this, people should be involved in decision making, implementation and ownership, which inculcates the participatory activism. However there is the possibility that people may give unsystematic and un-concentrated idea. After scientific analysis and validation base on values of justice, equity and non-violence, systematic and concentrated idea will be generated and this idea should certainly be the peoples' idea for dissolution of centralized structure in favour of control system of small communities solving local problems with their own material and intellectual resources.

At the end, kindly, I would like to tell you that I am well informed of and aware of the legacy of this beautiful city which is known to the world for its outstanding cultural heritage, which includes the classical legacy of Goethe and Schiller, of the Bauhaus and the Weimar Republic. And I would also like to tell you that I am from Varanasi city in India, which is known as one of the oldest cities in the world and has rich cultural heritage. The great socially and religiously radical poets like; Kabir and Raidas were born and brought up in this city and the most importantly Lord Buddha, soon after attaining enlightenment, came to this city and famously, preached first time to his five disciples about his learning.

In such historical backgrounds, I have a big hope to develop link between the Weimar (Germany), Varanasi (India) and Gwangju (center for Human Rights and democracy uprising in Asia) cities and to work industrially to establish the rule of law based on human rights and pluralistic democracy and to bring about peace and solidarity among the communities and nations across the globe.

Thank you

End Note:

- ⁱ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gautama_Buddha
- ⁱⁱ <http://www.sikh-history.com/sikhhist/events/bhakti.html>
- ⁱⁱⁱ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kabir>
- ^{iv} <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ravidas>
- ^v http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Periyar_E._V._Ramasamy
- ^{vi} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jyotirao_Phule
- ^{vii} <http://www.liveindia.com/freedomfighters/3.html>
- ^{viii} <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marathwada>
- ^{ix} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rashtriya_Swayamsevak_Sangh