



INFO: Dalit Solidarität

No.21

Gandhi und die Dalits Eine Einladung zur Diskussion

Nach jedem meiner Vorträge zu den Dalits kommt bei der anschließenden Fragerunde früher oder später auch die Sprache auf Gandhi und danach, wie er denn die Kastenfrage und die kastenbedingte Diskriminierung gesehen habe. Ich habe mich deshalb entschlossen, diese Frage auch an dieser Stelle einmal eingehender zu behandeln. B.R. Ambedkar, sein großer Gegenspieler, selbst Dalit und „Vater der indischen Verfassung“, hat dazu ja zwei Abhandlungen geschrieben mit den Titeln „What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables“ und „Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of the Untouchables“. Diese wollen wir noch „aufarbeiten“ und hier in den wesentlichen Aussagen darstellen.

Mir selbst ist im Zusammenhang unserer Wahlrechtsreformkampagne und der näheren Beschäftigung mit dem sogenannten „Poona Pakt“ deutlich geworden, wie auch der angeblich so gewaltfreie Hungerstreik sehr viel strukturelle Gewalt aufbauen und dem Gegenspieler keinerlei Spielraum mehr lassen kann. Ich denke zwar nicht, dass Gandhi (und Ambedkar) wirklich schon voraussehen konnten, dass die gefundene Lösung nur auf eine numerische und keinesfalls auf eine wirkliche politische Repräsentation der Dalits und Adivasi hinauslaufen würde, dennoch hat sich in den vergangenen 60 Jahren gezeigt, dass Ambedkars Einschätzung der Folgen deutlich realistischer waren als jene Gandhis!

Auf meiner Suche nach Artikeln, welche die Ablehnung Gandhis bei den allermeisten Dalits erläutern und verständlich machen könnten, habe ich jedoch schon jetzt mehr zufällig zwei sehr interessante Beiträge gefunden, die etwas zur „Entmystifizierung“ Gandhis beitragen können. Dieser Versuch soll keineswegs Gandhis unzweifelhafte Verdienste schmälern, ihn aber auch als Person etwas zurechtrücken und v.a. seine Sicht auf die Dalitfrage und sein Verhältnis zu Ambedkar und zu Frauen beleuchten.

Ich würde mich sehr freuen, wenn diese Artikel eine heftige Diskussion unter uns auslösten und wir dadurch einer Klärung dieses Fragenkomplexes etwas näher kommen würden.

Also: nichts wie ran an den Computer!

Women suffer from Gandhi's legacy

Mohandas Gandhi held India back when it came to women's rights – and his own behaviour around them could be bizarre

Mohandas Gandhi, whose death anniversary falls on Saturday, was an amazing human being. He led his country to freedom and helped destroy the British Empire. Little wonder India worshipped him, and still worships him, as the Mahatma – "Great Soul". In the west he is viewed as a near-perfect combination of compassion, bravery and wisdom.

But Gandhi was also a puritan and a misogynist who helped ensure that India remains one of the most sexually repressed nations on earth – and, by and large, a dreadful place to be born female. George Orwell, in his 1949 essay "Reflections on Gandhi", said that "saints should always be judged guilty until they are proved innocent". If only.

Gandhi despised his own sexual desires, and despised sex in any context except for procreation. He preached that the failure to control carnal urges led to complaints including constipation. He believed that sex was bad for the health of an individual, and that sexual freedom would lead Indians to failure as a people. He sought to consign his nation to what Martin Luther called "the hell of celibacy". He took his own celibacy vow unilaterally, without consulting his wife.

Both Gandhi and his hagiographers claimed he viewed women as equal to men, pointing to his inclusion of women in India's independence struggle. He celebrated non-violent protest as a "feminine" principle, neutralising the masculine brutality of British rule. But his sexual hang-ups caused him to carry monstrously sexist views. His view of the female body was warped. As accounted by Rita Banerji, in her book "Sex and Power", "he believed menstruation was a manifestation of the distortion of a woman's soul by her sexuality".

During Gandhi's time as a dissident in South Africa, he discovered a male youth had been harassing two of his female followers. Gandhi responded by personally cutting the girls' hair off, to ensure the "sinner's eye" was "sterilised". Gandhi boasted of the incident in his writings, pushing the message to all Indians that women should carry responsibility for sex-

ual attacks upon them. Such a legacy still lingers. In the summer of 2009, colleges in north India reacted to a spate of sexual harassment cases by banning women from wearing jeans, as western-style dress was too "provocative" for the males on campus.

Gandhi believed Indian women who were raped lost their value as human beings. He argued that fathers could be justified in killing daughters who had been sexually assaulted for the sake of family and community honour. He moderated his views towards the end of his life. But the damage was done, and the legacy lingers in every present-day Indian press report of a rape victim who commits suicide out of "shame". Gandhi also waged a war against contraceptives, labelling Indian women who used them as whores.

Like all men who wage a doomed war with their own sexual desires, Gandhi's behaviour around females would eventually become very, very odd. He took to sleeping with naked young women, including his own great-niece, in order to "test" his commitment to celibacy. The habit caused shock and outrage among his supporters. God knows how his wife felt.

Gandhi cemented, for another generation, the attitude that women were simply creatures that could bring either pride or shame to the men who owned them. Again, the legacy lingers. India today, according to the World Economic Forum, finds itself towards the very bottom of the gender equality index. Indian social campaigners battle heroically against such patriarchy. They battle dowry deaths. They battle the honour killings of teenage lovers. They battle Aids. They battle the abandonment of new-born girls.

In the words of the Indian writer Khushwant Singh, "nine-tenths of the violence and unhappiness in this country derives from sexual repression". Gandhi isn't singularly to blame for India's deeply problematic attitudes to sex and female sexuality. But he fought, and succeeded, to ensure the country would never experience sexual freedom while his legend persevered. Gandhi's genius was to realise the great power of non-violent political revolution. But the violence of his thoughts towards women has contributed to countless honour killings and immeasurable suffering.

Remember, there's no such thing as a saint.

Michael Connellan, guardian.co.uk, 27th, January 2010

Gandhi refused to let his dying wife take penicillin yet took quinine to save himself

Gandhi is often ranked, directly or subtly, alongside Jesus Christ and Martin Luther King jr. as one of the greatest peacemakers - indeed, one of the greatest human beings - of all time. The mythology that surrounds him - which he built, leaving his followers, admirers, and hagiographers to reinforce and embel-

lish - has almost completely smothered the many unflattering facts about him.

In such a compact book, space doesn't permit a full exploration of Gandhi's numerous, consequential skeletons - his racism toward blacks and whites, his betrayal of the Untouchables, his acquiescence toward the Nazis. Instead let's focus on something more personal and, in some ways, more upsetting. In August 1942, Gandhi and his wife, Kasturba, among others, were imprisoned by the British in Aga Khan Palace, near Poona. Kasturba had poor circulation and she'd weathered several heart attacks. While detained in the palace, she developed bronchial pneumonia. One of her four sons, Devadas, wanted her to take penicillin. Gandhi refused. He was okay with her receiving traditional remedies, such as water from the Ganges, but he refused her any medicines, including this newfangled antibiotic, saying that the Almighty would have to heal her.

"The Life and Death of Mahatma Gandhi" quotes him on February 19, 1944: "If God will it, He will pull her through." "Gandhi: A Life" adds this wisdom from the Mahatma: "You cannot cure your mother now, no matter what wonder drugs you may muster. She is in God's hands now." Three days later, Devadas was still pushing for the penicillin, but Gandhi shot back: "Why don't you trust God?" Kasturba died that day. The next night, Gandhi cried out: "But how God tested my faith!" He told one of Kasturba's doctors that the antibiotic wouldn't have saved her and that allowing her to have it "would have meant the bankruptcy of my faith."

But Gandhi's faith wasn't much of an obstacle a short time later when it was his ass on the line. A mere six weeks after Kasturba died, Gandhi was flattened by malaria. He stuck to an all-liquid diet as his doctors tried to convince him to take quinine. But Gandhi completely refused and died of the disease, right? No, actually, after three weeks of deterioration, he took the diabolical drug and quickly recovered. The stuff about trusting God's will and testing faith only applied when his wife's life hung in the balance. When he needed a drug to stave off the Grim Reaper, down the hatch it went.

Auszug aus dem Buch von Russ Kick "100 Things You're not Supposed to Know" - S. 167-169

Alltag für Dalits: kastenbedingte Diskriminierung in allen Facetten!

Beim **2. Ökumensiche Kirchentag, der vom 12. bis 16. Mai in München** stattfindet, will die DalitPlattform auf der „Agora“ wieder mit dem „indischen Dorf“ präsent sein. Dort geht es ja darum, in einem Rundgang durch 3 Stationen ansatzweise erfahrbar zu machen, wie in indischen Dörfern die Diskriminierung für die Dalits aussieht. Die Stationen sind: die dörfliche Tee-

stube, der Dorfbrunnen und der Dorftempel. Agora-Gäste werden angesprochen und besuchen dann paarweise (als Dalit und als Nicht-Dalit) diese Stationen und werden dort entsprechend unterschiedlich behandelt. Die diskriminierende Behandlung, welche die „Dalit-Personen“ erfahren führt oft zu hochinteressanten Diskussionen, und – wie uns schon viele Gäste gesagt haben – zu bleibenden Erinnerungen. Um zu dokumentieren, dass diese Szenerien nicht erfunden sind, sollen im Folgenden einige Beispiele aus dem alltäglichen Horror der Dalits wiedergegeben werden. Täglich erreichen uns solche oder ähnliche Meldungen – es sind also keineswegs Einzelfälle. Die kastenbedingte Diskriminierung ist immer noch ein Massenphänomen!

Dalit tortured for daring to wear slippers

NDTV Correspondent, February 2, 2010, Dindigul, TN

Even after 60 years of Independence, there still exists a side of India that is hard to believe. A Dalit man in Tamil Nadu was forced to eat human excreta because he wore slippers in the presence of upper caste people.

"They said hereafter no one should come in wearing slippers. Arokiasamy told Anbu to put human excreta into my mouth. They hit me severely on my abdomen and shoved it into my mouth," said the victim Sadayandi. "Even men who come by cycle have to get down and push it in the (upper caste part of the – add. wh) village," said his wife Nagajothi.

The police took more than a week to file the First Information Report (FIR) under the Prevention of Atrocities Act. And even after that, they were not willing to book the accused. Instead, they want the victim - who is in hiding because of fear - to prove that the crime occurred. "If this has happened he has to come forward to give some clues and explain about the incident. Only then I can go deep into this matter," said the Deputy Superintendent of Police. The Madras High Court has now asked for an action taken report.

A few years ago, NDTV had exposed atrocities against Dalits in the state. In many areas they are forced to remove footwear before entering the village, walls deny them access, thorny fences greet them in fields they use as toilets. Even elected Panchayat leaders are forced to quit. Thanks to vote bank politics successive governments seem to have only gone soft on dominant communities.

Politically, Dalits are a divided lot in Tamil Nadu. While the state pampers them with welfare schemes, its tacit support to human rights violations by powerful dominant communities is only making things worse.

http://www.ndtv.com/news/india/dalit_tortured_for_daring_to_wear_slippers.php

Doctors work together, but eat by caste

By day, they work together, consulting with each other to help their patients. But at lunch, the 150 doctors at this medical college in Muzaffarpur head to seven separate rooms. The menu in each cafeteria is the same. Daal, rice, sabzi. But "the kitchens are separate for Harijans, Thakurs and Brahmins", says Shatrughan Rai, who works as a cook in the Yadav kitchen, one he describes as a kitchen for a backward class. The doctors say this is a tradition. "Our seniors followed it. Now we do", declares Dr. Aditya, who refuses to reveal his caste.

The kitchen and dining rooms were separated at the height of the caste movement in Bihar in the 60s and 70s. The call for change is not deafening, even though the majority of the doctors today are from lower castes. They say they have to proceed with caution. "It has been happening for a long, long time. It's not our choice, but a tradition. The government should intervene and stop it", says Dr. Raman, President of Junior Doctors' Association.

The principal of the college insists that doctors eat together. A few hours later, we witness them filing into their separate cafeterias. The government has not received a formal complaint, and says it therefore has never investigated the issue.

http://www.ndtv.com/news/india/doctors_work_together_but_eat_by_caste.php

Dalit 'lynched' for plucking vegetables

Express News Service, July 21st, 2009, Lucknow

A Dalit man was beaten to death for plucking vegetables from a field in Elau area of Mainpuri district. The Station Officer, outpost in-charge and a constable were suspended for laxity in handling the matter. An inquiry into the role of the erring policemen has been handed over to the SP.

Agra Range IG Vijay Kumar said victim Shri Krishna Baheliya, 50, was assaulted on Saturday and left lying injured till the next day and succumbed to his injuries on Monday. The local police lodged an FIR after his death, providing ample time for the accused to escape, he said.

Mainpuri Circle Officer (City) Ajit Kumar said Subhash Chandra and Sitaram of Nagla Kail village had assaulted Shri Krishna of the same village alleging that he plucked vegetables from their field frequently. After beating the man, they left the place leaving the victim unconscious. The CO said a temple priest informed the in-charge of the nearby police outpost after he spotted the injured man the next day. The in-charge, SI Rajesh Kumar, admitted the victim to hospital. But the SI and the Elau police station SO did not initiate legal procedure of lodging an FIR and making efforts to nab the accused while Shri Krishna died on Monday evening, Ajit Kumar said.

So Akhilesh Tripathi, the S-I and constable clerk Malikhan Singh were suspended for concealing the matter from senior officers and not initiating action.

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/Dalit-lynched-for-plucking-vegetables/492056>

Orissa temple purified after low caste minister visit

Hindu priests in Orissa are under investigation for conducting a purification ritual soon after a minister belonging to a lower caste visited a famous temple, officials said on Friday.

Minutes after Pramila Mallick, a minister in Orissa, prayed at the temple this week, Hindu priests shut the doors and threw away holy offerings, washed the floors and changed the idol's clothes, one official said. "Some priests opposed the minister's entry into the interior chamber of the temple," Upendra Mallik, a senior government official told Reuters. "We are investigating."

In India, millions of people formerly known as "untouchables" remain oppressed at the bottom of the ancient Hindu caste system. The minister said the purification ritual, at the Akhandalamani temple in Orissa's Bhadrak district, could have been conducted at the behest of her political rivals. "I have been visiting the temple for years now. Some politically motivated people want to create controversy," she said. In spite of India's secular constitution banning caste discrimination, Dalits -- those at the bottom of the caste system -- are still commonly beaten or killed for using a well or worshipping at a temple reserved for upper castes. More than 16 percent of India's 1.1-billion population are Dalits, occupying the lowest rank in a 3,000-year-old Hindu caste system. (January, 16th 2009)

<http://in.news.yahoo.com/137/20090116/738/tnl-orissa-temple-purified-after-low-cas.html>

Nepal: Dalit girl murdered - risk of poor investigation

An eight-year old Dalit girl in Nepal may have been the victim of a sacrificial murder because of her caste status. The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) is concerned that the local authorities may not do enough to investigate the crime.

The murder of an eight-year old Dalit girl in Nepal may remain unsolved because the victim belonged to the Harijan sub-caste, one of the poorest groups among Dalits. AHRC and other human rights groups fear that the police may prove careless in addressing the case due to its caste-based nature.

The girl, Manish Harijan, was found in the morning of 4 December 2009 with her throat slit after having disappeared the previous evening. Her father found her

body in a field after having searched for her in vain the night before. Local villagers in Maryadpur, Rupandehi District, and police officers suspect that a non-Dalit businessman may have killed Manish Harijan in his brick kiln as a human sacrifice to bring him good luck. The chimney of the kiln was found sprinkled with water, and bricks were covered with blood, which is seen as evidence of such a sacrifice.

The businessman and four other suspects were arrested on 4 December. Nevertheless, the victim's family and local villagers have reported that they encountered resistance from the police who allegedly showed negligence in investigating the murder and took several days to file a case.

The Nepal-based NGO Jagaran Media Center brought the murder to the attention of AHRC, which issued an appeal on 1 February 2010. Both organizations are concerned that the case may not receive proper attention from the police, as authorities in Nepal are often careless in addressing caste-based crimes.

AHRC has also written to two UN Special Rapporteurs – on racism and violence against women – calling for their intervention in the case.

Termin:

Indien-Seminar in Bad Boll: Indische Spiritualität und die Befreiung der Dalits (Arbeitstitel) vom 24. bis 26. September 2010. Bitte vormerken!

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Spenden für unsere Arbeit sind sehr willkommen.

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Website: www.dalit.de

In der „Plattform Dalit Solidarität in Deutschland“ arbeiten u.a. folgende Organisationen zusammen: Brot für die Welt, Evang. Studentengemeinde II Frankfurt, das Ökumenische Zentrum in Frankfurt, Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland, Adivasi-Koordination, Aide à l'enfance de l'Inde (Luxemburg), Aktionsgemeinschaft Solidarische Welt, Andheri-Hilfe, Caritas, DESWOS, das Dritte Welt Haus Frankfurt, FIAN International, HEKS (Schweiz), Indienhilfe Herrsching, Inkota, Missio Aachen, die Missionswerke in Südwestdeutschland, Nordelbien, Leipzig und Niedersachsen, Das Hunger-Projekt, der „Weltgebetstag der Frauen“ und viele Einzelpersonen aus dem Bereich von Aktionsgruppen, Publizistik und Wissenschaft, sowie Misereor und EED als Beobachter.

Den Grundsätzen der Plattform entsprechend ist diese „Dalit-Info“ offen für Beiträge verschiedener Ansätze und Richtungen der Dalit-„Bewegungen“ in Indien und für die Netzwerke aus anderen südasiatischen Ländern bzw. über den Kreis des „International Dalit Solidarity Network“ (IDSN) hinaus. Die enge Verflechtung mit der Arbeit der indischen „National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights“ und dem IDSN ist jedoch wesentliche Voraussetzung der Informations- und Lobbyarbeit hier in Deutschland.