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To
All the Zonal/Divisional/State/Regional Units

Dear Comrades,

The 2nd October, 2019 is the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of Nation. Gandhiji did leave a lasting impression not just on Indian people but also on the entire world. Commemorating the occasion we reproduce hereunder the article written by Comrade Amanulla Khan, President AIEA in Insurance Worker.

With greetings,

Comradely yours,



General

Secretary.

ENDURING LEGACY OF MAHATMA GANDHI

India is celebrating. The world too is celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. Unarguably Gandhi remains one of the greatest personalities to have walked on earth. He is the most revered and equally the most hated person. He is revered by all those across the globe who see in him the symbol of resistance against oppression and exploitation. He is hated by those who consider him instrumental in not allowing India to become a Hindu Rashtra. These forces celebrate the assassin of Mahatma and temples are constructed in his honour. Ironically, the very same forces are making a serious bid to appropriate Gandhi for partisan political reasons. This has to be resisted and hypocrisy exposed.

Gandhi's birth anniversary is being celebrated at a time when globe is experiencing hundreds of conflicts and sectarian violence of unprecedented magnitude. Imperialism has made Middle East the theatre of war in pursuit of gaining control over the strategic and critical natural resources of the region. The world spends

nearly \$ 2 trillion annually over military expenditure. A fraction of this amount is enough to wipe out extreme poverty from the face of the world. Countries have been accumulating nuclear weapons endangering the very existence of humanity. In mad pursuit to maximise profits, the capital is damaging ecology and environment risking the very future of planet earth. The globe is witnessing unprecedented inequalities. 26 richest people in the world own assets as much as those of the 3.8 billion people who make the poorest half of the global population. The wealth of 9 richest Indians is equivalent to 50% of the bottom half of our population. In such a situation, the 150th birth anniversary of Gandhi provides an opportunity to understand and find from his rich legacy the solutions and forms of resistance against this unbridled exploitation, oppression and violence the world is experiencing today.

India's national liberation movement remained the issue of elite and upper middle classes till Gandhi appeared on the stage. He turned the movement to unarguably the largest mass mobilisation in the history of humankind. He mobilised the women, depressed classes and united them to work for the cause of Swaraj. For him Hindu-Muslim unity, Khaddar and removal of untouchability were the foundation of Swaraj. Gandhi wanted to win Swaraj for the masses. He said "Real Swaraj will not come by acquisition of the authority by few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused". Unfortunately Gandhi was assassinated just after a year of independence and did not live long enough to build an India of his dreams.

Did the Indian people achieve real Swaraj? The answer is both yes and no. Independent India adopted a progressive Constitution and declared that all citizens are equal before law. It guaranteed certain fundamental rights and civil liberties. It promised to ensure that there is no concentration of wealth in few and the gains of development reach the last person. Unfortunately the lofty principles on which the foundations of India were laid are under severe stress and strain. Democracy has turned into majoritarianism. Politics has become the most profitable industry devoid of all moral and ethical values. For Gandhi, Swaraj was an instrument to bury untouchability but we see deepening of caste divisions making some to believe that India today is a Republic of Caste. It is no exaggeration to say that Hindu-Muslim unity under the present political dispensation has become a mirage with the country witnessing unprecedented sectarian violence justified and backed by those in power. Questioning the authority today is treason in the same manner Gandhi was levelled charges of treason and sedition by the British rulers. Police cases are hoisted on the President of Gandhi Peace Foundation for its critical views of the way the Modi government has acted on the issue of Kashmir.

The personality of Gandhi, his political commitment and social understanding developed during his struggle against racial discrimination in South Africa. The Great Russian writer Leo Tolstoy and British historian John Ruskin influenced his

political and economic thinking. Gandhi imbibed two important lessons from the work of Tolstoy. The first is the belief in the power of non-violence in resistance movement and the second the triumph of the power of love over the ideologies of hatred. Horrifyingly India today has so distanced itself from Gandhi that even the judiciary is alarmed if someone keeps the great work of Tolstoy at home. Gandhi developed Tolstoy's concept of passive resistance into Satyagraha – holding firmly to truth. Therefore, Gandhi believed that true civilisations can be built only on the basis of non-violence. For him truth became the supreme principle and realisation of truth the purpose of human life. Therefore, he developed and guided the national liberation movement on the basis of Ahimsa and Satyagraha.

India has traversed a long distance from these Gandhian principles. India today is living in an era of post-truth where emotions occupy primacy pushing truth to the margins. For the people in authority, truth is at a premium. Blatant lies, falsehood and fake news dominate the country today as weapons of political mobilisation. Violence against minorities is justified and backed by the State. Hate has become the potent weapon to create divisions in the society undermining social cohesion.

The economic beliefs of Gandhi were influenced by the British historian John Ruskin. John Ruskin rejected the classical economic theories advanced by Adam Smith and others. He believed that the good of the individual is contained in the good of all which Gandhi developed into the concepts of Sarvodaya and Antyodaya. Ruskin said that all labour has the same value and stressed on the dignity of labour. The arguments of Gandhi on village economy, dignity of labour and trusteeship emerged from this influence of John Ruskin.

The massive struggle led by Gandhi on the basis of truth and non-violence influenced many resistance movements across the globe. Gandhi inspired the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. The South African Ambassador to India Harris Majake says "Nelson Mandela was inspired by Satyagraha campaign by Gandhi. It was a compelling act of passive protest against oppression. This would later inspire formation of the African National Congress and strengthened Mandela's belief in our shared humanity'. Martin Luther King Jr adopted Gandhian methods in the American Civil Rights Movement. King acknowledged that "India's Gandhi was the guiding light of our technique of non-violent social change". Martin Luther King pointed out that the Biblical appeal of Jesus "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" resonates with Gandhi's Ahimsa and Satyagraha. The most amazing success of Gandhi was to convert the violent Pashtun community in the North West Frontier Province under the leadership of his devoted disciple Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan into the first major non-violent army of 1 lakh Pashtuns called as Khudai Khidmatgar.

India of today is not the India Gandhi struggled for. His teachings of communal harmony, promotion of sustainable economy, eradication of untouchability no longer

appeal to a large section of the population. Gandhi is reduced to a symbol of Swatchhata turning upside down his concept of dignity of labour. Gandhi would have been ashamed of the fact that manual scavenging remains a reality and India sends hundreds every year to these gas chambers to die. The massive wealth and income inequalities would have come in conflict with the concept of Gandhi's trusteeship. Gandhi would have dreaded to see the Indian atmosphere filled with the air of hatred. In true sense, the soul of Gandhi's India has been lost. What else would you say when a person glorifying the killer of Gandhi and calling him a great patriot wins elections with huge margins and represents the people in the Parliament.

This is a period of great turmoil for the world. Conflicts and hatred dominate the political discourse. There is an unbridled exploitation of the nature in pursuit of maximisation of profits. Here we must recall what Gandhi had said. He said that nature has abundance to meet the needs of all its inhabitants for a dignified and peaceful life but what it has is not enough for anybody's greed. It is this greed that has made the future of planet earth and its inhabitants totally uncertain. The life and struggles of Gandhi continues to motivate all those who are fighting for liberation and a just and fair society. The 150th birth anniversary of Gandhi provides an opportunity to scholars and progressive forces to undertake a deep and critical study of his life and struggle. Surely, it would be possible to find solutions atleast to some of the burning issues of the present times.

The situation in India today causes distress and a sense of hopelessness. But to lose hope is to lose faith in oneself and humanity. The life of Gandhi is an inspiration to resist the authority and to work for a dignified life for all the citizens. The rich legacy of Gandhi and his principles of truth, love and non-violence is our great heritage. We must resist the attempts to appropriate and reduce Gandhi to just an ambassador of Swatchhata Abhiyan. While paying our tributes to the greatest son of India on his 150th birth anniversary, we assert that humanity has never been defeated by its enemies. Humanity has always triumphed over wars, hatred and cruelty. Love always wins as the Great Persian Poet Hafez Shiraz said "Every foundation you see is faulty, except that of love, which is faultless".

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