

The Directive Principles of the Constitution direct the Indian State to orient its policy towards:

- ✓ building an egalitarian society where social, economic and political justice shall inform all the institutions of the national life [Article 38 (1)];
- ✓ ensuring that all citizens have the right to an adequate means of livelihood [Article 39 (a)];
- ✓ minimising inequalities in income and ensuring that there is no concentration of wealth [Article 38 (2) and 39 (c)];
- ✓ raising the standard of living of the people, improvement of public health, making effective provision of education for all children [Article 41 and 47];



Unfortunately, the major political parties that dominate the Indian Parliament have decided to abandon this vision of the founding fathers of the nation. **Ever since they decided in 1991 to globalise the Indian economy, they have been running the economy for the profit maximisation of giant foreign and Indian corporations.**

- Giant corporations have launched a ferocious assault to dispossess the poor of their lands, forests, water and resources—in order to set up SEZs, huge infrastructural projects, golf courses, residential complexes for the rich, etc.
- Public sector corporations, including banks and insurance companies, are being privatised at throwaway prices.
- Indian agriculture is being deliberately strangled—so that it can be taken over by giant agribusiness corporations. The consequence: more than 2.5 lakh farmers have committed suicide since the ‘reforms’ began.
- Tens of thousands of small businesses have downed their shutters.
- Welfare services are being privatised and for profiteering by corporations:
 - Government hospitals and municipal schools are being privatised; medicine prices have zoomed; college fees have gone through the roof; electricity prices are rising; ration system is being eliminated;
- There are simply no decent jobs for the youth; probably nearly half the population is unemployed or underemployed.
- The country is heading towards an ecological catastrophe; corporations are being allowed to cut down entire forests; destroy coastal lands, over-exploit groundwater, pollute our seas—rivers—soil—groundwater—air, and damage our health.

The consequences:

- On the one hand, the rich are becoming extremely rich—the wealth of India’s 56 Indian billionaires now equals 10% of the country’s GDP, and the wealth of India’s richest 7800 people equals 50% of the country’s GDP;
- on the other hand, the poor are becoming even more poor:
 - Nearly 75% of the population is not able to eat two full meals a day;
 - 50% children below the age of 5 are malnourished;
 - 42% children drop out of school without completing basic schooling;
 - Lakhs of children die every year due to entirely preventable diseases; . . .

As the economic system becomes more and more sick, the social and political system is also becoming more and more degenerate. All-pervasive corruption; continuation of the age-old caste-based social system because of which atrocities on dalits take place almost daily, and which is exploited by politicians to make the upper caste youth believe that the reservation system is responsible for lack of jobs; a communal political system that divides people in the name of religion and fills them with hatred against each other; a value system that promotes crass selfishness and unconcern and apathy for others; a society where cynicism and moral bankruptcy permeate every nook and cranny—this is the reality of today.

The common people have not been silent spectators to this betrayal of the Indian Constitution. Like flowers spring up in every nook and corner with the onset of spring, people are coming together all over the country, getting organised, forming groups and raising their voices in protest. Though these struggles are presently small, scattered, without resources, the future lies in these magnificent struggles. As more and more people join them, they will strengthen, join hands, and become a powerful force which will transform society.

We must stop being sceptics, dream of a better future, believe that it is possible to change the world. *Yes, Another World is Possible!* But to make it a reality, we must start our own small struggles. These will ultimately unite, to transform society and build a new society in accordance with the dreams of our freedom struggle that are embedded in the Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution. And so, we have started this forum, *Lokayat*.

We organise a wide range of activities / programs:

- We organise seminars, talks, film screenings, songs concerts, street campaigns, street plays, rallies—*dharnas*, on issues such as: rising inflation; privatisation of essential services; destruction of the environment and livelihoods of people in the name of development; the dangers of GM Foods; the horrifying environmental consequences of nuclear power plants; the impact of Coke-Pepsi on our health and environment; the deepening crisis of global warming; etc.
- We have also staged numerous protests on the growing atrocities on dalits, on the genocide of Muslims in Gujarat and Christians in Orissa, and against the targeting of minorities in the name of fighting terrorism, and so on.
- Lokayat’s women’s wing, *Abhivyakti*, organises campaigns and programs on the various aspects of gender inequality and social roots of violence against women.
- Lokayat has a very active cultural wing which makes use of a wide variety of cultural forms—including songs, rock concerts, street plays, dramas, dance and traditional folk art—to reach out to people and raise their cultural consciousness.

Dear friends, if you would like to know more about us, or participate in our activities, you may contact us at any of the addresses given below.

Contact Address: Lokayat, 129 B/2 Erandwane, Opp. Syndicate Bank,
Law College Road, Near Nal Stop, Pune – 411004.

We meet every Sunday 5 – 7:30 pm at this address. You are welcome.

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