

INTROSPECTION CAMP ON DEMOCRACY AND SWARAJ

LISTENING, CONVERSING AND FASTING
5-7 SEPTEMBER 2005

Happihuone yard in Linnunlauluntie
Helsinki, Finland

Visitors and participants welcome!

The background for the camp is twofold. On the one hand people's democratic aspirations are perhaps more vivid and powerful than ever before in the human history. Some of the manifestations of these are the World Social Forum, the recent positive election outcomes in Brazil (President Lula) and India (victory of a secular coalition) and the referenda on the EU constitution in France and the Netherlands. For this kind of spirit there are grounds for thinking that it has never been as good before and the golden days of democracy are coming.

The opposite side to this is that the neo-liberal hegemony with all its manifestations, including consumerism, militarism and market fundamentalist tendencies, stays in a dominant position. The gap between people's aspirations and the actual policies is large and in most cases growing.

It has been felt that these kind of dilemmas and paradoxes can not be addressed in a conventional way. The idea of *satyagraha* (insistence on truth) therefore appears most relevant and necessary to do away with the injustices. In addition to civil disobedience, *satyagraha* includes other forms of action such as reflection and fasting.

The introspection camp is not designed to promote any particular political aim. Rather the idea is to draw our own attention to crucial issues at hand and to share ideas with each other. We wish to draw on the Gandhian and other similar traditions in considering that when we search for truth, dignity and better futures conventional notions of what is possible and desirable often need to be transformed.

Some reference points for the introspection can be:

- *One way globalisation*: how can a development that has so high costs for so many people be seen by the elites across the world as almost unstoppable and irreversible?
- *The future of EU*: The referenda results has opened the discussion, but the elite is still talking in the terms of implementing the integration agenda basically in the neo-liberal fashion. How to change the tide so that those in favour of the egalitarian integration and those who are more sceptical about the EU can work together?
- *The alternative vision*: Many are eager to discuss and articulate the positive vision that would finish the neo-liberal project and bring about a new kind of world. What would it be? Can we overcome the polarisation between radicals and reformists and work together on the basis of shared values of comprehensive democracy, ecological sanity and a last person first approach in ethics, economics and culture?

Two methods are thought to be useful and worth experimenting with in the camp. One is an *introspective fast*. By abstaining from food we can bring our current, fundamental challenges more clearly into focus, such as our relation to the different aspects and demands of truth. A second method is *silence*. By concentrating on listening to others and oneself one can find new paths and dimensions to the issues at hand.

The camp is open for all and does not require all participants to observe either fast or silence. The camp will also serve as a site for some of the smaller discussions that form part of the Democratising Globally programme.

Time and programme

Monday 5th at 12 noon the Camp begins, ideas are explained to all who are interested to join and to the press, if present.

Tuesday 6th is the day when some will observe silence.

Wednesday 7th noon. Breaking of the fast. Juice enjoyed collectively.

September 5, 2005

Vijay Pratap, India
Marko Ulvila, Finland
Kai Vaara, Finland
Ville-Veikko Hirvelä, Finland