

Friedenspreis 2020

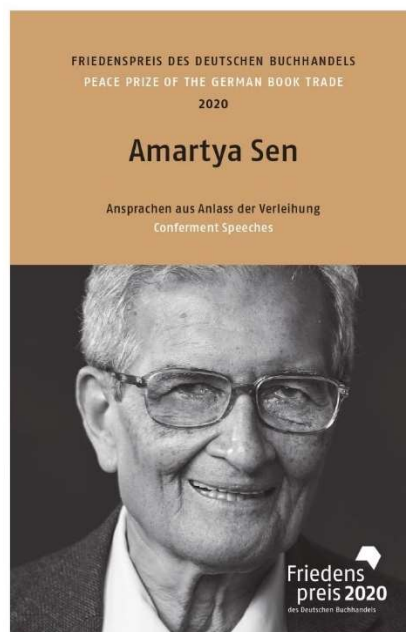
des Deutschen Buchhandels

Amartya Sen

Peace Prize of the German Booktrade 2020

Speeches

Sonntag, 18. Oktober 2020,
in der Paulskirche zu Frankfurt am Main



Hinweis: Die ausschließlichen Rechte für die Reden liegen bei den Autoren. Die Nutzung der Texte ist ohne ausdrückliche Lizenz nicht gestattet, sofern nicht gesetzliche Bestimmungen eine Nutzung ausnahmsweise erlauben. Es gilt das gesprochene Wort. Die in der Paulskirche gehaltenen Reden werden im tatsächlichen Wortlaut in dem nebenstehenden Buch veröffentlicht.

Friedenspreis des
Deutschen Buchhandels 2020
Amartya Sen
Ansprachen aus Anlass der Verleihung

Hrsg. vom Börsenverein
des Deutschen Buchhandels
im Verlag MVB GmbH,
Frankfurt am Main 2020,
deutsch/englisch,
ca. 100 Seiten, 14,90 €
ISBN 978-3-7657-3331-4

Ab dem 18. 11. 2020 im Buchhandel
oder beim MVB-Kundenservice,
Tel. 069 1306-550,
kundenservice@mvb-online.de

Certificate

The German Publishers and Booksellers Association hereby awards the 2020 Peace Prize of the German Book Trade to the economist and philosopher

Amartya Sen

In doing so, the association and its members have chosen to pay tribute to a pioneering scholar who has addressed issues of global justice for decades and whose work to combat social inequality in education and healthcare is as relevant today as ever. Among Sen's most important contributions is the idea of evaluating a society's wealth not solely based on economic growth indices, but also on the opportunities for development available to all individuals who comprise that society, in particular its weakest members.

Throughout his work, Amartya Sen has consistently highlighted solidarity and a willingness to negotiate as essential democratic values, proving in the process that cultures need not be the source of disputes over identity. His vivid and powerful descriptions have also served to elucidate the fundamental ways in which poverty, hunger and illness are intimately linked to the absence of free and democratic structures. The »Human Development Index«, the »capabilities approach« and the notion of »missing women« are just three of his groundbreaking concepts that continue to set high standards to this day with regard to generating, preserving and evaluating equal opportunities and decent living conditions for all.

Amartya Sen's inspiring oeuvre represents a compelling call to establish a culture of political decision-making borne by a sense of responsibility for the well-being of others, including the right to self-determination and the right to articulate one's interests and have a say in one's own future.

German Publishers and Booksellers Association

Chairperson of the Board of Trustees

Frankfurt am Main, Church of St. Paul

October 18, 2020

Peter Feldmann

Lord Mayor of the City of Frankfurt

Greeting

This year's Peace Prize could not have gone to a more worthy recipient. Today, we are witnessing an era in which the way of life we were accustomed to has entered a state of crisis. Indeed, the global pandemic is putting not only our health systems to the test.

Our economy, with its seemingly never-ending pursuit of growth, is starting to falter. Climate change is raising a number of urgent questions, and nothing less than the fate of humankind hinges on the effectiveness of our response. Is it the end of the world as we know it? Is it the end of humanity, as some people would have us believe?

On the contrary, I hope it marks the start of something entirely new. I hope it is an indication that a number of key insights have been made.

The first insight is that we must be willing to pay more for our health from now on. Indeed, health is a collective good that cannot be increased at will; it is a good we must not allow to be subject to any free-market laws; it is a good that reminds us time and again that we must think not just of ourselves, but of everyone in society, especially those people who seek to protect us over the long term.

The second insight is that the only way for us to successfully tackle climate change is by fundamentally rethinking our investments and our ways of life.

The third insight is that the ongoing development of our society cannot be related solely to an increase in gross domestic product.

*

Professor Sen, you have, in your work, long since expounded on these and other insights. Your books were always bestsellers that led to fruitful discussions among experts and laypersons around the world – even before you were awarded the Nobel Prize. Large numbers of people listen to you, just as those of us gathered here in the Church of St. Paul in Frankfurt are looking forward to doing today.

Yes, our way of life has entered a state of crisis. I would therefore like to emphasise once again that there could not have been a more worthy prize-winner this year. I encourage all of us not merely to listen to Professor Sen; let us also work hard to change our own actions and behaviour.

Translated into English by The Hagedorn Group.

Karin Schmidt-Friderichs

President of the German Publishers and Booksellers Association

Greeting

I would like to take this opportunity to greet Svetlana Alexievich, the recipient of the Peace Prize in 2013. I would like to wish her strength and offer support for her efforts to ensure that Belarus – at long last! – becomes a state rooted in democratic and human rights.

And I would like to extend an especially warm welcome, to you, dear Amartya Sen.

We are honouring you today with the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade, and you will be listening and speaking to us from Boston.

*

Amartya Sen was eleven years old when his idea of a just world was shaken. His father was a professor at the University of Dhaka and his family lived in a home near the campus. Sen describes himself as having spent his entire life on university campuses. Today he teaches at Harvard and lives a private life in a home near the campus. He could enjoy the advantages of his position. He could choose to look away. But instead he chooses to look. Precisely and meticulously. This is what he has done for many, many years, at the latest since that day in 1944.

Kader Mia, who staggered into the Sen family's garden covered in blood that day, was an Indian day labourer. He was a Muslim. He had been attacked by Hindu thugs on his way to work. He had been attacked by individuals who did not know him personally. People who had never seen him before. They had no reason to attack him other than his religion. That was enough. It was the wrong one.

Kader Mia had argued with his wife that morning. She had pleaded with him not to go to work in any hostile areas as long as the clashes between Hindus and Muslims were still raging. He had defied her request. He had wanted to feed his starving family.

The bloodbath in which Kader Mia suddenly found himself had been deliberately staged, instigated by fanatics keen on bringing about the division of the country by all means possible. The political instigators who incited their fellow citizens to kill in the name of »our« people – a term claimed by both sides of the conflict – caused peaceful individuals to transform into fanatical thugs. They no longer saw themselves as Indian, as members of a common humanity. Instead they saw themselves solely as Hindus. Or Muslims.

Kader Mia stumbled to the Sen family's home. Eleven-year-old Amartya opened the door, brought the man some water and called his parents. His father took the injured man to the hospital, where he died soon thereafter.

Kader Mia had not done any harm to anyone. The various facets of his personality had been reduced to one single attribute: his religion, his community of faith.

*

When we read this passage in Amartya Sen's »Identity and Violence« three quarters of a century later, we can draw parallels – to German history, but also to other instances in which violence was used to prioritise dogma over human rights.

When the Board of Trustees of the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade met for the first time on 6 April of this year, Germany had already been in lockdown for two weeks. In a state of emergency that has long since become a somewhat normal state of affairs. My fellow board members and I spoke about whether COVID-19 should influence our selection, whether our criteria for choosing the recipient of the 2020 Peace Prize should include the individual's origin, place of residence and connection to the

pandemic. We very quickly agreed that we did not want to intentionally associate the Peace Prize, with its rich and eventful seventy-year history, with a pandemic, about which we knew so little at the time, including how long it would last and the full extent of its impact.

We decided to stick to the same criteria that had been used in all previous years to choose the Peace Prize recipient. We met more often than usual. We gathered digitally, never in person. We pleaded our cases, we delved deeper into the work of those individuals who had made it to our increasingly short list.

On 5 June, when Amartya Sen became our final choice as Peace Prize recipient in this exceptional year, I began doing something I had not done since graduating from university. I began reading book after book. And I didn't just read; I studied. I followed the footnotes. I tried to understand philosophical-historical references, to find my way into the mind of the man next to whom I was still sure I would be standing here today. The deeper I immersed myself in his work – from one line to the next, from one book to the next – the more certain I became of one curious fact: We hadn't actually been looking for a perfect prize-winner in the year of COVID-19, we had simply found him. Indeed, as far as I'm concerned, Sen's writings on identity and justice provide the ideal foundation upon which to build a better world after the current pandemic.

As an economic philosopher, Sen does his thinking on a meta-level. But that doesn't mean he shies away from addressing more concrete issues, such as the unfair distribution of vaccines, the legacy of colonialism and a Eurocentric worldview that partly ignores or is incapable of recognising the wisdom of the world. For me, Sen's work became a radar and resonance chamber for my thoughts and actions this year, a year marked by deep uncertainty and a state of unknowingness. He gave me an ever-increasing

level of certainty that it was not going to be possible, nor would it even be desirable, to go »back to normal«. Sen revealed himself as a visionary in matters of just distribution, but also as a feminist and a global citizen who gives a stronger voice to the wisdom of the East.

The German Publishers and Booksellers Association has been awarding the Peace Prize for seventy years. The prize has always functioned as a signal sent out by an industry that embodies the practices of reflection and thinking ahead. The prize is a cue given to a society that is obliged to prove itself worthy of its free and democratic order time and again. The oeuvre of Amartya Sen provides us with a North Star guiding us towards a more open-minded and just society. His work gives us orientation and an incentive to act. It helps us avoid lazy compromises and instead find ways to take more courageous paths.

My wish would be that the works of Amartya Sen be read in schools and at universities, that his words be discussed in seminars – and at home around the dinner table. My wish would be that we learn from his texts that so-called »culture wars« are only conjured up in an attempt to prevent people from encountering each other openly in all of our different facets and attributes.

Amartya Sen shows us that behind abstract numbers, diagrams and formulas there are only human beings and their fates. Sebastião Salgado, who received our Peace Prize in 2019, does the same with his stunning photos: his chief concern is the inviolable dignity of each and every human being. The human being always comes first.

A human being like Kader Mia.

Translation by the Hagedorn Group

Frank-Walter Steinmeier

Global justice – a universal promise, much longed-for throughout the world

Laudation on Amartya Sen

The book fair exhibition halls are empty, the Paulskirche is nearly deserted and the Peace Prize laureate is on another continent – these are truly unusual times. Times that make our hearts grow heavy.

These days, there is no such thing as normality. So it is good that we insist on having this ceremony. Today, we are honouring a person who like none other is associated with the idea of global justice. The quest for justice and freedom must never cease, *especially* in the tense times of the coronavirus pandemic.

And who is better suited to lead us on this expedition and quest than today's laureate? In Amartya Sen, we are honouring a cosmopolitan, a great public intellectual, a moral authority.

*

Dear Amartya Sen, we are reaching you at an unusually early hour – so despite this, or maybe because of it, a very good morning to you in Boston! How we would have liked to welcome you in person here in Frankfurt today. The coronavirus pandemic has made that impossible. So, today, you are both far away and very near. Far away because we are separated by six thousand kilometres and six time zones. And near because your ideas and visions overcome all distances – between different parts of the world, cultures and outlooks on life.

The digital world will never be a true substitute for meeting in person. But I have seldom been happier than today about the invention of video conferencing. We look forward to hearing your acceptance speech!

Amartya Sen once said about himself that he »was born in a university campus and seem[s] to have lived all [his] life in one campus or another.« Cambridge, Delhi, Harvard, Stanford, Yale. He was

awarded his first professorship in Kolkata at the very young age of 22. Back then, indignant students scrawled a graffiti image of a baby cradle on the institute's walls.

Although Amartya Sen is an academic through and through, his writings cannot be classified as such – at least not in the sense that they present overly intellectual, abstract concepts to an ivory tower audience. He wanted to be understood. And, as a scientist, he not only wanted to understand the world. He wanted to change it. Amartya Sen has changed it.

His writing spans six decades and ranges from economic theory to moral philosophy. His books are best sellers. Amartya Sen holds more than one hundred honorary doctorates, and in 1998 he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences.

*

And now, he has also been awarded the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade. Some observers have commented: Does a Nobel laureate even need this distinction? My reply is the same that was given by Carlo Schmid: The Nobel Prize for Economic Sciences may well be the expert's crown that is bestowed in the field of economics – but the Peace Prize is the »civil crown of humanity«.

Today, we bestow this civil crown on a philosopher who himself does not wish to be a philosopher king. Sen would rather have those who govern become »true and circumspect philosophers« – that is, enlightened politicians of freedom. Freedom from hunger, violence and oppression. Freedom to become educated, knowledgeable and realise your full potential.

In his writing, Amartya Sen confronts the inequalities and injustices of this world. His Human

Development Index looks not only at Gross National Product, but also at how happy people are. For a society, Sen insists, »can be Pareto-optimal and still be perfectly disgusting«.

Who therefore is more deserving of this distinction than someone whose work, although intellectually brilliant, is characterised by one thing above all: humanity. Consequently, the Peace Prize honours the human Amartya Sen – and the human Amartya Sen honours the Peace Prize. And we, both here in the Paulskirche and in front of our televisions at home, are happy we can celebrate this moment together.

The right of every person to live a self-determined life, regardless of his or her origin, skin colour, gender or sexual orientation, the right to an education, to realise your full potential, and not least the responsibility of the state and its institutions to make precisely this possible: These are the beliefs of Amartya Sen. They are the core beliefs of a democrat – and ones that I, too, believe in deeply.

Amartya Sen has influenced generations of students, scientific colleagues and, indeed, his readers throughout the world. His works have also broadened my perspective on economics. How do we measure the prosperity of a society? What exactly is good economic development? How can we achieve more global justice?

A call for more global justice rings hollow if we do not take a critical look at our own actions. Germany benefits greatly from the international division of labour. Our companies' value chains span the globe; our companies manufacture their products in all parts of the world. Our prosperity depends on free global trade. We, too, are responsible for fair global trade.

And our responsibility goes beyond that: Global justice between North and South and can only succeed if we become aware of imbalances, the asymmetry of power and the various interdependencies – and if we act accordingly. In the words of Amartya

Sen: Global justice will only come about if we »share the world« with one another.

More than seventy million children around the world must still work to ward off hunger. They are exploited in mines and quarries, toil away in cotton fields and on banana plantations. They should be in school.

Clothes in our stores were manufactured in that very garment factory in Dhaka that forced thousands of people into crowded sweatshops where they operated sewing machines. A fire broke out. We will recall that the factory had no emergency exit. Well over one hundred women died in the blaze.

Dhaka is not an isolated case. Dhaka has come to symbolise what are often inhumane working conditions in thousands of garment factories in South Asia and Africa. Dhaka represents the throwaway mentality and carelessness that has taken hold in the metropolises of the North under which people in the metropolises of the South so often suffer.

*

In an interconnected world that so closely links us as producers and consumers, as contracting agents and purchasers – in this world, we need rules for globalisation. These rules are not God given. They are man-made. If we realise that these rules are unjust, are we not then also obligated to change them?

In the arts and culture pages of some newspapers, observers had the following to say about this year's Peace Prize laureate: Global justice and freedom – that is all fine and well. But in these turbulent times of the Black Lives Matter movement and climate protests, are other issues not more urgent?

I think that's a misunderstanding. Because Amartya Sen is focused on something fundamental and particularly urgent. When Sen speaks about social and ecological justice, then he is essentially concerned about one thing: democracy. For him, democracy is the prerequisite for justice. And justice is an underlying prerequisite for democracy.

The fight against discrimination, or against the life-threatening climate crisis – these are, after all, burning questions related to justice, questions to which our democracies must find answers. So are these not also fundamental questions about justice, questions that democracy in particular can find answers to? What other form of government can constantly realign and renegotiate justice for all, under prevailing conditions that are constantly in flux?

Sen knows about the weaknesses of democracy. »Democracy,« he says, »isn't an automatic remedy« for injustices. »Democracy is a way of enabling [people] to stand up for justice. In his words, »Democracy isn't an automatic remedy of anything. It isn't like quinine to kill malaria. Democracy is a way of enabling.«

Do not the hundreds of thousands of young people who took part in the climate protests – and the enormous power they brought to the ecological question, moving it to the centre of politics – show the extent to which democracy can enable people to fight for their convictions and drive politics forward?

Criticism, opposition and protest – outside of all institutionalised processes – are an important part of democracy. They drive social transformation. Through them, what began as minority opinions can become part of the mainstream. However, protest is no substitute for democratic majorities in the institutions that are responsible for decision-making. Reconciling various opposing interests in them remains a tiresome and often drawn-out process. Often enough, the outcome is a compromise and sometimes not satisfactory. Indeed, democracy is not perfect. Nor will it ever be. It is as imperfect as the people who live in it.

And herein lies the challenge for our democracy: In the competition of political systems, it must prove time and again it has better answers to the pressing issues of our time. It must prove it is the better system for ending discrimination. That it can do a better job of meeting the twofold challenge of

the ecological transformation – that is, do the right thing for the planet *and* ensure social justice.

*

Democracy does not protect us from making wrong decisions. But it does allow us to correct mistakes. No other form of government has a built-in auto-correction tool. And this tool for adjustment is free, fair and equal elections by secret ballot.

We are called on to prove that democracy can prevail in this competition of political systems. So let us tackle this challenge!

The motto and slogan of Ferdinand I, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, was: »fiat iustitia, et pereat mundus«. Let justice be done, though the world perish?

Amartya Sen is a pragmatist when it comes to justice. He is not bent on fighting for a completely just world – even if there were agreement on what it would look like.

Amartya Sen is an admirer of the theoretical brilliance of John Rawls' philosophy of justice. Building a just world behind the »veil of ignorance« – that is to say independent of your own situation – is truly tempting. Sen, however, believes this is neither practical nor realistic. He wants to eliminate concrete and obvious injustices right here and now.

Whether this should be done through a state or market-based approach is something on which Sen takes a sober view, free of all ideology. He's focused on the result; he wants to know: in what areas does the state enable people to live a self-determined life? In what areas do justice and freedom emerge through individual responsibility? And in what areas is solidarity needed, also beyond the borders of one's own country?

These questions are never abstract; they become all the more compelling and real now, during times of great crisis. We know that crises have never been the great equaliser, as they were so often described. Crises deepen existing rifts. The coronavirus

pandemic affects all people and countries, but it does not affect everyone equally. Places with a lack of healthcare infrastructure, or with food insecurity and great poverty, are disproportionately and more severely affected by the virus.

The coronavirus pandemic is an acid test for international solidarity and global cooperation in politics and research. Nowhere else does this become more apparent than regarding the question of fair distribution of a vaccine throughout the world. Fair, global distribution is two things: it serves our vested interests, and it is a categorical imperative. Let us do everything in our power to make sure that humankind passes this test of its humanity!

*

For Sen, there can also be no justice without political freedom and no political freedom without democracy. One cannot be had without the other. To him, democracy is therefore also not a luxury that only rich countries can afford, and it is also not just a normative project of the West. It is something that is longed for the world over and a universal promise. The people demonstrating on the streets of Caracas, Minsk and Hong Kong remind us of this, as well!

The universalism of democracy and fundamental human rights – these are the main pillars of Sen’s philosophy. This is the essential and fundamental discovery that is coming under pressure again these days.

Sen’s writing is a tapestry of sources written in Sanskrit and sources from the European history of ideas; he links John Stuart Mill to John Rawls and Bhagavad Gita to Jürgen Habermas. He wants to show that many parts of the world have similar concepts of justice, democracy and freedom.

Fundamental human rights' claim to universality is not a western or eastern, European or Asian, German or Indian idea. Instead – and this is important to Sen – it is a human idea.

Seventy years ago, this hope was successfully laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: »All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.« Not only Europeans or North Americans can lay claim to this sentence. And it is not exclusive to the Judeo-Christian tradition. This sentence was co-authored and adopted by Africans, Asians, Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus. Even though this promise has never been perfect and has never been equally applied, it is still a tremendous achievement, despite all its imperfections.

But an achievement is not automatically guaranteed. Around the world, there are signs that the achievements of civilisation are being called into question, that obligations under international law are being violated. Even in our neighbourhood, fundamental democratic principles are being challenged. Personal freedoms are being eroded; the independence of the media and the judiciary is being co-opted by governments.

Where democracy erodes, there human rights do also erode. And where human rights erode, democracy erodes. Democracy does *not* die in darkness. If it dies, it does so in broad daylight and in plain sight. We see, after all, how the international order is under attack, how authoritarian tendencies and nationalism are on the march around the world. Is there still hope?

My answer is a clear yes – and it is up to us to decide where we go from here. Have we not seen during this pandemic that our democracy can respond to existential threats? And swiftly, efficiently and forcefully, at that. At the same time, it can safeguard freedom. Whether it can continue to strike a balance between safety and freedom is not a given. It’s up to all of us to make sure it does.

Trust, rational thinking, diversity, solidarity – these are the strengths of our democracy. If we continue to stand by these strengths, *then* we have every reason to be hopeful. Today, 75 years after the end of the Second World War and in the thirtieth year of German unity, we Germans at least can say

with full confidence that it was not democracy that was on the wrong side of history. It was the enemies of democracy that were on the wrong side of history. Let us draw courage and hope from this.

When opening the book fair, David Grossman referred to hope as an »anchor« of sorts: He said that »when the anchor is cast, it holds on to the future.«

Believing in the future and having hope - that, too, is what the Peace Prize stands for. And for this we are honouring Amartya Sen today.

Amartya Sen writes prose - but he loves poetry. He often quotes the Bengali poet Ram Mohan Roy:

»Just imagine how terrible it will be on the day you die. /

Others will go on speaking, but you will not be able to respond.«

Amartya - that translates to »the immortal one«. Yes, his visions are immortal - and they will elicit answers. So let's get to work.

I warmly congratulate you, dear Amartya Sen, on being awarded the 2020 Peace Prize of the German Book Trade!

The Federal President's speech was presented by the actor Burghart Klaußner in the Paulskirche.

Amartya Sen

»Books and Freedom «

Acceptance Speech

I cannot describe adequately how honoured I feel by the gesture of the German Book Trade in giving me this wonderful award. I am most grateful for the encouragement from President Steinmeier – I am very inspired by his remarks and also very moved by the way Mr. Klaußner presented his words to us today. I much appreciate being welcomed by the Lord Mayor, and feel greatly emboldened by the kind thoughts of Karin Schmidt-Friderichs, the president of this Association and the chairperson of the Jury.

The Peace Prize is closely connected with reading and writing, which makes it particularly attractive to me. My life would have been much poorer if my passion – from my earliest days – for reading whatever I could find, as well as my temptation to write down the thoughts that came to my mind had been supplanted by some other activity, no matter how pleasing. I am very happy that my hosts have found a little corner for me in the world of books.

Reading books – and talking about them – can entertain, amuse, excite and engage us in every kind of involvement. Books also help us to argue with each other. And nothing, I believe, is as important as the opportunity to argue about matters on which we can possibly disagree. Unfortunately, as Immanuel Kant noted, the opportunity to argue is often curtailed by society – sometimes very severely. As the great philosopher put it:

»But I hear on all sides the cry: Don't argue! The officer says: Don't argue, get on the parade! The tax-official: Don't argue, pay! The clergyman: Don't argue, believe! All this means restrictions of freedom everywhere.«

Kant discussed why it is so important to argue. We can make sense of our lives by examining what makes them worthwhile. When freedom of speech is curtailed and people are penalized for speaking their

mind, we can experience serious harm in the lives we can lead.

Unfortunately, significant restriction of the freedom to argue is not a thing of the past, and there are more and more countries where authoritarian developments are making the freedom to disagree harder – often much harder – than it used to be. There is reason for alarm in the repressive tendencies in many countries in the world today, including in Asia, in Europe, in Latin America, in Africa and within the United States of America. I can include my own country, India, in that unfortunate basket. India has had in the past, after it secured independence from British colonial rule, a fine history of being a secular democracy with much personal liberty. People have shown their commitment to freedom and their determination to remove authoritarian governance through firm and decisive public action, for example in the general elections in 1977 in which the despotic regulations of a government-imposed »Emergency« were firmly rejected by the people.

*

However, recently things have changed a great deal, and there have been many cases of severe suppression of dissent. There have also been governmental attempts to stifle anti-government protests, which – strangely enough – have often been seen by the government as »sedition«, providing grounds for arrest. This diagnosis has been used to lock up opposition leaders. Aside from the despotism implicit in this approach, there is also a profound confusion of thought here, since disagreement with the government need not be a rebellion for violently overthrowing the state, or subverting the nation (on which the diagnosis of sedition must depend). India is not the only country where such confusion can be found – in fact abuse of this kind is increasingly common in the

world. However, as a proud Indian citizen I have a sad duty to discuss how autocratic the governance of my own country has become.

When I was in school in British-ruled colonial India, many of my relations, who were non-violently agitating for India's independence (inspired by Mahatma Gandhi and other champions of freedom), were in British jails under what was described as »preventive detention«, allegedly to stop them from doing anything violent, even though they had not done any such thing. After India's independence, preventive detention as a form of incarceration was halted, but then it was reintroduced, initially by the Congress government, in a relatively mild form. That was bad enough, but under the Hindutva-oriented BJP-government, now in office, preventive detention has acquired a much bigger role, allowing easy arrests and imprisonment of opposition politicians without trial. Indeed, from last year, under the provision of a freshly devised »Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act« (UAPA, for short), the state can unilaterally declare someone to be a »terrorist«, which allows them to send this alleged terrorist to prison, without trial. A number of human rights activists have been designated as terrorists and are in jail already under this governmental arrangement, and many others have been warned that the UAPA would be applied to them unless they obey the authorities and stop being anti-government.

When someone is described as being »anti-national«, this is, of course, a big philosophical denunciation, but in today's India it may mean nothing more than the person has made some critical remarks about the government in office. There is a confusion here between »anti-government« and »anti-national«. The courts have sometimes been able to stop some of these abusive practices, but given the slow movements of the courts, and the differences of opinion within India's large Supreme Court, this has not always been an effective remedy. Human rights of individuals have been restricted in India in many different ways. Organizations - national and international - that fight hard in favour of individual rights have been put increasingly under pressure. One of

the most prominent defenders of human rights in the world, Amnesty International, has been forced to leave India as a result of governmental intervention, including the closing of its bank account.

The pursuit of authoritarianism in general is sometimes combined with the persecution of a particular section of the nation. Specially unequal treatment often relates to established divisions of race, colour, caste, religion, or immigration status. The low-caste former »untouchables« - now called Dalits - continue to get the benefits of affirmative action (in terms of employment and education) that were introduced at the time of India's independence, but their lives remain very deprived. In terms of social relations, they are often very harshly treated, and cases of rape or murder of Dalits by upper-caste men, which have become common events, have frequently been ignored - or covered up - by the Government, despite public protests. This type of inequity, while depressingly persistent in India under present rulers, is, again, not unique to India, but it is particularly intolerable in India given its long history of fighting against caste-based inequity, under the leadership of Gandhi, Ambedkar and other political leaders.

However, unique it is not. For example, while America has been a pioneering leader in advancing the understanding of individual rights in general, and human rights in particular, the firmness of the white-black division in America, originally connected with the institution of slavery, has helped to sustain the deprivation and degradation of black Americans. The interesting thing about the recent expansion of protest movements in America, such as »Black Lives Matter!«, is not that they receive support (it could hardly be otherwise), but the fact that the issue of equity of African Americans has been so slow in getting effective recognition despite the vigour of the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s. Happily, the need for racial equity is at last receiving considerable attention in America now, but it is surprising how much resistance - and sometimes opposition - the movement can even now encounter, in implicit as well as explicit ways.

Returning to India, and considering another kind of inequality, the present authorities have been particularly severe on the rights of Muslims, even to the extent of restricting their citizenship rights, compared with non-Muslims. Despite centuries of peaceful co-existence between Hindus and Muslims, there have been striking attempts in recent years by politically extremist Hindu organizations to treat indigenous Muslims somewhat like foreigners who are often accused of doing harm to the nation. India was not like this until the power of extremist Hindu politics became as strong as it has recently become.

Mahatma Gandhi was a Hindu, and so was Rabindranath Tagore – I should add, so am I –, but as Indians they did not treat the Hindu-Muslim distinction as a matter of any political moment. Tagore chose to introduce himself at Oxford, when giving his famous Hibbert Lectures, as someone who came from the confluence of three cultural streams, which – in addition to Western influence – combined Hinduism and Islam. Indian culture is a combined – indeed a joint – product of people of different religious faiths, and this can be seen in different fields of culture – from music and literature to painting and architecture. Even the very first translation and propagation of Hindu philosophical texts – the Upanishads – for use outside India was done on the initiative of the Mughal prince, Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of Queen Mumtaz, in whose memory the beautiful Taj Mahal was built in Agra by Dara’s father, Emperor Shah Jahan. The Hindu sectarians have done their best to suppress important facts about the joint history of Hindus and Muslims, making India a lesser country. Led by the Government’s current ideological priorities, school textbooks in India are, to a great extent, being rewritten now to present a seriously revisionist history, reducing – or ignoring altogether – the contributions of Muslims.

Despite the government’s power to call anyone a terrorist under UAPA, those accused are typically committed to non-violent protests, in the way that Gandhi had advocated. This applies particularly to newly emerging secular resistance, often led by student leaders. For example, Umar Khalid, a Muslim

scholar from Jawaharlal Nehru University and a major student leader, who is appreciated by Hindus, Muslims, everyone, has been arrested and imprisoned as an alleged »terrorist« through the use of UAPA, has eloquently expressed the political commitment to peaceful protest of the secular movement he leads:

»We will not respond to violence with violence. We will not respond to hate with hate. If they spread hate, we will respond to it by spreading love. If they beat us with lathis [sticks], we will hold aloft the Tricolour [the Indian national flag]. If they fire bullets, then we will hold the Constitution and raise our hands.«

As commentators – at home and abroad – have pointed out, the political activities of Khalid and other student leaders have not given any room for the government to call them »terrorists«, no matter what license the Government has given itself to call anyone anything they like, for keeping leaders like Khalid in jail.

As a school boy, I remember asking my uncle, who was imprisoned by the British Raj under preventive detention, how long would the injustice of arbitrary imprisonment continue in India, and he had then given me what he thought was a pessimistic answer: »Until the British rule ends.« It appears, alas, that the end of British rule may not be quite enough. I saw in the papers today that the Government has decided to try them for sedition immediately.

*

I have been mainly talking about a couple of countries – India and the USA – to illustrate the hold of autocracy and inequity in the modern world, but I could have talked about many more – at least twenty or thirty other countries. The exact process of the imposition of authoritarianism and the justifications presented can vary between one country and another, but the end results have considerable similarity.

To start with an example from Asia, the use of despotic power in the Philippines by the ruling

government has been championed as something essential for stopping the drug-trade and other criminal activities. That power has often been widely used for killing people without trial.

In Hungary the government has grabbed authoritarian powers in the name of stopping immigration of refugees from outside Europe, and for the alleged need to control the media and to silence opposition parties, claimed to be necessary for orderly governance. In Poland, several individual rights have been abandoned to help in giving priority to the government's policy of persecuting homosexuals, including the establishment of particular regions of the country that are to be kept as »LGBT-free zones«.

To add an example from Latin America, the intolerant present government of Brazil came to office by campaigning for the alleged necessity of higher wages of the military (whose help they needed) and through its promise to save the country from such conservative nightmares as same-sex marriage, homosexuality, affirmative action, abortion, drug liberalization and secularism. The pursuit of autocracy is clearly a many-splendoured thing.

Authoritarianism imposes direct penalties on people, including the violation of liberty and political freedom. But going beyond them, social advancement depends greatly on human cooperation, and a splintering of society through the persecution of disfavoured groups can make collaboration for progress that much more difficult. It is not my intention to argue that no social progress can ever be made in an authoritarian system. That can sometimes happen,

but there tend to be serious obstacles to progress when arguments and critical discussions are prohibited, and the interests of some people are persistently ignored. As Coleridge had noted, it is possible to read Shakespeare »by flashes of lightning«, but there is a case for doing our reading in normal light.

The world does face today a pandemic of authoritarianism, as well as a pandemic of disease, which debilitates human life in distinct but interrelated ways. Given our global connections and the importance of our shared humanity, there are reasons for us to be seriously concerned not only about our own country, but also about others, taking an interest in problems all over the world. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote in 1963, in a letter from Birmingham Jail (not long before he was assassinated): »Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.« It would be hard to find a more urgent social need today than global resistance to growing authoritarianism across the world.

The needed resistance can come in many different ways, but greater use of reading, talking and arguing would undoubtedly be a part of what Immanuel Kant saw as »freedom to make public use of reason on all matters.« The opposition to political tyranny is inspired by ideas and by books. For Martin Luther King, as for the young student leaders today, it has to be a non-violent process. It is also a journey towards durable peace.

Kontakt

Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels e.V.
Geschäftsstelle Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels – Martin Schult
Schiffbauerdamm 5, 10117 Berlin
Telefon 030 2800 783-44, Fax 030 2800 783-50



Friedens
preis 2020
des Deutschen Buchhandels

- 1950 Max Tau – *Adolf Grimme*
1951 Albert Schweitzer – *Theodor Heuss*
1952 Romano Guardini – *Ernst Reuter*
1953 Martin Buber – *Albrecht Goes*
1954 Carl J. Burckhardt – *Theodor Heuss*
1955 Hermann Hesse – *Richard Benz*
1956 Reinhold Schneider – *Werner Bergengruen*
1957 Thornton Wilder – *Carl J. Burckhardt*
1958 Karl Jaspers – *Hannah Arendt*
1959 Theodor Heuss – *Benno Reifenberg*
1960 Victor Gollancz – *Heinrich Lübke*
1961 Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan – *Ernst Benz*
1962 Paul Tillich – *Otto Dibelius*
1963 Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker – *Georg Picht*
1964 Gabriel Marcel – *Carlo Schmid*
1965 Nelly Sachs – *Werner Weber*
1966 Augustin Kardinal Bea und W. A. Visser 't Hooft –
Paul Mikat
1967 Ernst Bloch – *Werner Maihofer*
1968 Léopold Sédar Senghor – *François Bondy*
1969 Alexander Mitscherlich – *Heinz Kohut*
1970 Alva und Gunnar Myrdal – *Karl Kaiser*
1971 Marion Gräfin Dönhoff – *Alfred Grosser*
1972 Janusz Korczak (posthum) – *Hartmut von Hentig*
1973 The Club of Rome – *Nello Celio*
1974 Frère Roger, Prior von Taizé – *(keine Laudatio)*
1975 Alfred Grosser – *Paul Frank*
1976 Max Frisch – *Hartmut von Hentig*
1977 Leszek Kołakowski – *Gesine Schwan*
1978 Astrid Lindgren – *Hans-Christian Kirsch, Gerold U. Becker*
1979 Yehudi Menuhin – *Pierre Bertaux*
1980 Ernesto Cardenal – *Johann Baptist Metz*
1981 Lew Kopelew – *Marion Gräfin Dönhoff*
1982 George F. Kennan – *Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker*
1983 Manès Sperber – *Siegfried Lenz*
1984 Octavio Paz – *Richard von Weizsäcker*
1985 Teddy Kollek – *Manfred Rommel*
1986 Władysław Bartoszewski – *Hans Maier*
1987 Hans Jonas – *Robert Spaemann*
1988 Siegfried Lenz – *Yohanan Meroz*
1989 Václav Havel – *André Glucksman*
1990 Karl Dedecius – *Heinrich Olschowsky*
1991 György Konrád – *Jorge Semprún*
1992 Amos Oz – *Siegfried Lenz*
1993 Friedrich Schorlemmer – *Richard von Weizsäcker*
1994 Jorge Semprún – *Wolf Lepenies*
1995 Annemarie Schimmel – *Roman Herzog*
1996 Mario Vargas Llosa – *Jorge Semprún*
1997 Yaşar Kemal – *Günter Grass*
1998 Martin Walser – *Frank Schirrmacher*
1999 Fritz Stern – *Bronislaw Geremek*
2000 Assia Djebar – *Barbara Frischmuth*
2001 Jürgen Habermas – *Jan Philipp Reemtsma*
2002 Chinua Achebe – *Theodor Berchem*
2003 Susan Sontag – *Ivan Nagel*
2004 Péter Esterházy – *Michael Naumann*
2005 Orhan Pamuk – *Joachim Sartorius*
2006 Wolf Lepenies – *Andrei Pleşu*
2007 Saul Friedländer – *Wolfgang Frühwald*
2008 Anselm Kiefer – *Werner Spies*
2009 Claudio Magris – *Karl Schlögel*
2010 David Grossman – *Joachim Gauck*
2011 Boualem Sansal – *Peter von Matt*
2012 Liao Yiwu – *Felicitas von Lovenberg*
2013 Svetlana Alexijewitsch – *Karl Schlögel*
2014 Jaron Lanier – *Martin Schulz*
2015 Navid Kermani – *Norbert Miller*
2016 Carolin Emcke – *Seyla Benhabib*
2017 Margaret Atwood – *Eva Menasse*
2018 Aleida und Jan Assmann – *Hans U. Gumbrecht*
2019 Sebastião Salgado – *Wim Wenders*
2020 Amartya Sen – *Frank-Walter Steinmeier*