



The Right Livelihood Award

for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people

Lokayan (India)

(1985)



...for linking and strengthening local groups working to protect civil liberties, women's rights and the environment.

Lokayan representatives

Lokayan is a dialogue for the consolidation of democracy, for exploring the possibilities and principles of coherence within the explosion of democratic assertions, for equity and people's control over natural resources, women's empowerment, cultural plurality, health and well-being for all.

Lokayan, meaning 'Dialogue of the people', started in 1980 as a forum for interaction between activists and concerned intellectuals through meetings, workshops, working groups and lectures. Professors Rajni Kothari and DL Sheth provided the organisation's overall leadership during the initial phase. They were followed by Shiv Visvanathan, Vijay Pratap, and Prof. Imtiaz Ahmed as chairpersons, with Suresh Sharma, Harsh Sethi, Smitu Kothari and Vijay Pratap as conveners at different points in time. DP Rajendra Ravi became convener in 1998, and Prof. VB Singh became chairperson in 2003. In addition to the core group of conveners, Lokayan's activities are sustained by a group of part-time associates and volunteers.

Lokayan's interactions involved a large network of intellectuals, non-party and mainstream political party activists. Through these the Lokayan programme has sought to evolve a systematic critique of the established models of development and the state, and also to promote political action drawing upon the large variety of micro-initiatives that are engaged in the struggle for a just society. The aim is to build a body of knowledge, opinion and concrete strategies of intervention at the 'macro' level that will promote a decentralised democratic order and enhance respect for the cultural and social diversity of marginalised sections of society. The thinking, values, aspirations and experiences of these people provide the basis for alternative cultural, economic and political thinking, helping to unify the various movements for egalitarian change.

Over the past decades there has been a burgeoning of democratic urges and assertion by deprived groups in India, and this has been paralleled by much ideological debate among activist groups and movements. Being preoccupied with the dynamics of survival, however, these groups have not linked up with each other or with the mainstream democratic processes, so Lokayan has sought to provide a forum for such exchanges. It publishes regular bulletins of comment and analysis, as well as struggle notes, movement documents and book reviews, which express the wide range of its concerns. Then English-language 'Lokayan' journal appears six times a year.

Quotation

For us regaining power for the people, for communities, for autonomous societal forces is crucial. To that end Lokayan aims to be a dialogue of the people .

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