

The Indigenous Revolution



I was an admirer of the Zapatistas since the first videos that I saw early in 1994 when Commander Ramona, an ex-nun Zapatista rebel commander, led the attack to take San Cristobal de las Casas in Chiapas. Even though they had machine guns and were fighting I could see that they were very dignified people by the look in their eyes behind their masked faces. The noble eyes behind their masked faces as well as the brightly-colored indigenous clothing underneath bullet belts and machine guns revealed who these rebels truly were: organic farmers. I felt there was an invisible grace guiding them. I didn't quite know why, but I just felt this very strongly as a first impression. It was a very lucid realization for me that awakened a strong sense of social and moral responsibility and activism. Later, the brilliant, humane discourses of the Zapatista commanders like Ramona and Marcos revealed that there was such a beautiful and humane spirit guiding them. They won so many hearts around the world with their earnest discourse. Although I was a student in the U.S., I was drawn to them and attended some talks by Liberation Theologist priests that were Zapatista sympathizers who came to speak at the University of Texas at Austin. Also, as a student of literature I had just finished reading "The Grapes of Wrath" by John Steinbeck. It was really amazing to understand the socialist currents in a writer so celebrated in the US. Comandante Ramona, the former nun turned guerilla, reminded me of the protagonist of Steinbeck's novel, the former pastor who turned mystic and activist, Jim Casey (JC), although Ramona was more militant than Casey.

I was soon distracted from the Zapatista movement, however, by my involvement with some yogis in India who turned out to also be revolutionaries. Although I admired Indian yogi-revolutionaries like Aurobindu and Subash Chandra Bose, I

was personally more yogi than a revolutionary and I thought of these Ananda Marga yogis more as monastic social activists like Vivekananda who practiced and taught yoga to keep themselves and human society physically, mentally and spiritually strong. I never thought of them as the machine gun or grenade carrying types until they made a debacle of an arms drop from a Russian airplane full of machine guns, rocket launchers and grenades over their main ashram in Purulia, India. In the linked article I argue that this was a false revolution, a revolution manipulated by Interpol, MI5, and the CIA to frame Ananda Marga as a terrorist organization. There were a few revolutionary Don Quijotes involved who wanted to be like zapatistas but they were part of a [revolutionary action that was designed to fail.](#)

After my accidental involvement and imprisonment for this revolutionary act I began to understand how truly difficult it is to create a successful revolution. I admire the Zapatistas for their courage to confront a Hydra physically much more powerful than with such a relatively small military force. I truly saw their moral courage and sacrifice as David confronting Goliath. However, what I respect most about this revolution isn't only that they were a grass-roots military force but that their continued success has really been sustained by a very well coordinated international solidarity movement and a very deep indigenous wisdom guiding them. Instead of building battalions, they are building schools and developing their communities sustainably with a very dignified collective spirit. When I hear their maxim "Para todos todo, nada para nosotros,"(For everyone everything, nothing for us) I can't help but hear the Perennial Philosophy of non-dualism sprouting up from Chiapas in a very unique, special and rebellious color. However, there is no religion or sectarianism for the Zapatistas. It is much more interesting to see their silent, natural spirituality manifest through honest sincerity and practical humanist ideals.

"Zapatismo" refers to a social and cultural movement based on the ideals and institutions of the Mexican revolution that continues into the modern Zapatista revolution. Although the Zapatistas deny political association with other ideologies, it is easy to see some parallels with [Libertarian Socialism](#) with their mutual emphasis on co-operatives and decentralized, local government.

Zapatismo has had a very unique effect on modern human consciousness, at least for those who have approached them. I really do see them as dignified organic farmers who would rather be with their families on their land instead of having to fight another war. I try not to even consider the idea that there could be war again. I don't think it is out of fear of violence but rather the belief that there are also undiscovered and unseen ways to fight a revolution against petty materialists. If peaceful, conscious, and collective organization and the moral

dedication to a new ideal of living was not working, then they still would not be around after all of these years and would have been annihilated by the Mexican government. They obviously have had the support of enough people to have made their movement a success. The mature rebels of the world have to keep helping them and other non-vanguard and local grass-roots movements to continue to move forward in peace and a wise resolution of these seemingly insurmountable problems that the whole planet faces under the Capitalist Hydra.

When I first visited San Cristobal, I saw a flier for a lecture on indigenous Mayan stories. The man in the photo had a very friendly vibration and I thought he looks like a very interesting person, a story-teller. The lecture had already happened and I forgot about the man on the flier.

The first time I ever saw a zapatista soldier was when a man approached me in the mountains. I saw a man with a walky-talky approaching me. He looked like he had military training based on his physique but didn't even have a mask. I wasn't sure if he was a Zapatista but I was meditating near one of their communities on top of a mountain, so I thought I finally will see a zapatista. He approached calmly and just looked at me. I had been lost in deep meditation for hours. He looked friendly and had a t-shirt that said "Inlakesh" which means "I am you and you are me"; exactly like the idea of "namaskar" of yogis. I asked him if it was alright to be there and he said there was no problem. I was not certain if he was a "Zapatista" or not but it made me continue to contemplate. I returned to my meditation and saw many terrible things that would happen in Mexico.

A few weeks later, I just happened to enter a conference where scholars were talking about "Zapatismo." A woman asked if the Zapatistas had a concept for the "Supreme Subjectivity," a term which I had only heard of in Tantric philosophy. I was dumbfounded....."Who are these people? The scholar happened to be the person whom I had seen in the flier and he responded by saying that the Zapatista communities were very spiritual but they have no generalized notion for god, or the "Supreme Subjectivity." It is for them to decide. I liked that response. Later, that scholar approached me and asked if I was "Geronimo" as if he already knew me. I took this question away with me to contemplate.

On January 1st, 2014 we were invited to the 20th anniversary celebration of the Zapatista Revolution in Chiapas of 1994 in Oventik. Oventik is part of a network (caracol) of rebellious and independent self-governed communities with co-operative socio-economic bases. The results of this revolution have been demonstrated as practical, humanistic, and very progressive. Visitors can see how the discipline and dignity of these indigenous communities have made some very subtle social advances that really have not been achieved elsewhere on the

planet. These simple yet wise indigenous societies are truly setting an example for global human society. Instead of having to fight in continued guerrilla warfare against the corrupt state that would just love to annihilate them at the next given opportunity, they have developed a co-existent relationship that unifies them with the peaceful, conscious rebels and humanists of planet earth through a mutual interchange of very enlightened and universal ideas. Chiapas, and the south of Mexico in general, has always been a mystery to me. It is so easy to see that this is the place for social, economic, and spiritual revolution. There is a great subterranean wisdom and force guiding this movement. It is the closest example that I can see of what Anandamurti termed a "samaj movement."

After arriving I could feel a very deep friendliness in the people and recalled how I was finally seeing the results of the efforts of the people who deeply moved me back in 1994 when I first saw the interviews with Subcomandante Marcos and Comandante Ramona. Now, 20 years later, people had gathered from all over the world to celebrate the ongoing spirit of the revolution. Although there was an obvious presence of military security, there were no weapons and the atmosphere was anything but militant. What surprised me the most was that there really was a soothing and very sane spiritual vibration. People who live close to and respect the earth and who have also made great sacrifices to protect this base of human culture are indeed blessed with a little help from the invisible forces of dharma.

I continue to read their literature, especially the communications from EZLN, but the message is so lucid that I have to take it in slowly because the impact is so intense on my mind. Their discourse is really about the most fundamental human issues of justice, equity, and dignity. It is great humanist philosophy that is the result of 500 years of suffering and terror. Their humane ideals extend far beyond the indigenous of Chiapas and teach us a little about the nature of universal humanity. Each time I learn something more, I have greater and greater respect for these bold people who have endured 500 years of exploitation and the most terrible sufferings yet have managed to achieve something so great.

In the past few years my own community in the north of Mexico has passed through a terrible genocide. I have seen so much terror and carnage that I now see the indigenous revolution as descent into the abyss to find fundamental human truth.

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