

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: MAGANBHAI P. DESAI

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TWO ANNAS

THE CONSTRUCTIVE POWER OF BHOODAN*

(By Vinoba)

Ours is a big country with an ancient civilization. Agriculture which is our main industry has been practised here from times immemorial and people have lived mostly in villages. There are cities, no doubt, but they are only a few and most of them are of recent origin. As at present, so also in olden times, the vast expanse of our land was dotted all over with villages. Cities were very few and not so important. Men in India have always lived in the villages and the village has been held in high esteem. A Vedic text, for example, says, "May our villages grow and prosper and be strong." We thus find the village ideal being upheld in India from very old times. Every village in those days was a State in itself. It was ruled by a *panchayat*, that is, a village council consisting of five elders representing the five *varnas*. The members of the *panchayat* worked with one accord like the five fingers of a hand. What the five said was for the people, as the proverb has it even today, the word of God.

There were then no schools in the present sense of big buildings and paid teachers. The pupils sat for their lessons in the cottage of the teacher, or a corner of the village temple or under the shade of the trees and were taught by men of real learning who then preferred to live in the villages. They did not demand any money for their service which was for them a duty and a labour of love. Today, however, everyone who has passed some kind of an examination wants money like the *bania* demanding the price for anything that one may purchase from his shop. It means a double loss to the society which pays for their education and is again required to pay for providing them with a comfortable living. Learning has been stripped of its glory and converted into a commodity for sale and purchase. Men of learning in olden days were men of renunciation. They did not hanker after material wealth. All that they required was a small cottage for shelter, a piece of cloth for apparel, and just enough food

for keeping the body which they obtained by begging. Imparting of knowledge in those days was regarded as a sacred duty to be performed by those who were fit for it, in the spirit of utter selflessness.

The village provided for all its needs both intellectual and material locally. It was for all practical purposes a self-contained unit. Every village had its carpenters, cobblers and weavers. They too did not get money. They served the peasants in their different ways and received an adequate share in the produce. The share increased or decreased according to increase or decrease in the year's production. The artisans were thus members of the village community on the same level as the peasants. The land and the produce were owned and shared by the community as a whole.

Things have changed since and today we find that though the villages still produce all the raw material, they depend for most of their wants on cities. They grow cotton but buy cloth, they grow sugar-cane but buy sugar, they grow oil-seeds but buy oils. Formerly when a man was in need of oil he went to the *ghani*-man who readily pressed his oil-seeds. There was no need of money. He took the oil and left the oil-cake with the *ghani*-man. But now money intervenes in everything that we do. This money is a great cheat. There is no constancy about it. Its value changes from day to day. The same rice which sells today at 9 seers a rupee, sells tomorrow at 2 seers a rupee! It is really amazing why we have put the management of our affairs in hands of this cheat. This is the reason for the destruction of the villages. Lands have passed from the peasantry to those who own money. Formerly there was no occasion for the wealth of the village to go out of it. But now the villagers purchase most of their wants from cities with the result that they have been reduced to slavery. It is argued at times that it is not possible to distribute lands to all because they are owned by Zamindars and we cannot dispossess them. How then do they propose to solve the unemployment among the landless? They would perhaps say that we will solve it by providing them with other occupations. We will only like to know whether these occupations are to be

* From a speech at Medianath, Bhagalpur.

provided while they are still living or after they are dead.

We need to do three things for reinvigorating the village-life. First, we must change the system of education; next, we must start village industries; and thirdly, land must be redistributed. Individual ownership in regard to land is absurd, for land is, as we call it, Mother Earth. It is the support, the 'ground' of human existence and life.

Both wealth and poverty are diseases like other diseases and people should be helped to get rid of them so that they may regain normal health. It is not true, as is generally believed, that the rich are happy and the poor alone are unhappy. Both are unhappy each in their own way: one by their excessive wealth and the other by their abject poverty, contribute to the weakening of the Indian nation.

We therefore appeal to those who have more than enough land to give it away. Indians are by nature a grateful people. They forget the wrongs done to them. If the rich against whom they have many just grievances act in time and give away their excess land and wealth to those who need it, the latter will not only forgive them but love them and be ready to die for them.

We have set our target at five crore acres. It is indeed a large order and some people find it hard to believe that we can fulfil it. We say that God will find ways to get it done; meanwhile let each one of us do his part of the work. If he has six acres let him give only one acre. God will give him ample return for his having done his duty. Those who have 100 or 150 acres should give more than a sixth, while those who have less than six acres may give only a fraction of an acre. Sudama and Shabari were paupers without any resources but they did find something to present to the Lord. Even so the poorest amongst us should share the urge to offer something to this great Yajna. Lord gave to Sudama in ample measure but not before Sudama had made his gift to Him. That is why we ask even the poor to bring their offerings to the Bhoodan. Giving is a *punya-karma* i.e. an act of merit, — why should the rich have a monopoly of it? An act of merit is a duty and all alike have an equal right to it.

(Adapted from the original in Hindi)

The Ensuing Hindustani Examinations

The ensuing Hindustani Examinations, from Likhavat to Quabil, will be held on 26th and 27th December, 1953. The applications, together with the fees, should reach the Wardha office before the 30th November, 1953.

For details write at the address given below :

Hindustani Prachar Sabha
Wardha

Amritlal Nanavati,
Secretary

GANDHIJI AND CONVERSION

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

An English friend and well-wisher of the *Harijan* writes to me as follows :

"I am somewhat puzzled at your point of view (regarding) Gandhiji and 'Conversion'. I see that in a recent number of the *Guardian* you quote what Gandhiji said about our wishing a Hindu to be a better Hindu, and so on. Yes, indeed! But surely that is not all that he said. More than once, referring to the 'forcible conversions' to Islam, Gandhiji, in his after-prayer speeches, drew a sharp distinction between such forcible conversions and a genuine 'heart conversion' from one faith to another, for which there must always be due place. Let me give an example from the English Hindu sadhus who live near Almora. One of them told me this summer that he was brought up in the Anglican Church, but it all meant nothing to him. Then he had a true 'religious experience' in India because a Hindu, it was Mr Chakravarti, who, so to speak, led him to God. Later, when he was in England, he discovered that the Anglican ritual was built on the same experience. But he remains a Hindu, because it was in Hinduism that he first found the life of God. Such things do happen and will happen, though no doubt they are not very common. Most of us find the light in the tradition in which we have been nurtured."

It was in answer to a similar complaint from a Christian correspondent in the *Guardian*, that I was required to reply to him through that journal which the English friend refers to above. I had said it as follows :

"Mr says that it is wrong to say that Gandhiji was against conversion and that I have done injustice to Gandhiji in this matter. I do not know how he concluded this way. I have quoted Gandhiji himself wherein he says that we should never wish that any one should be converted, but our innermost prayer should be that a Hindu should be a better Hindu, a Muslim a better Muslim, and a Christian a better Christian."

The English friend cites the case of an English Christian who became a Hindu. But he is careful to note that the Christian friend could as well have come to the spiritual awakening through his own Anglican Church. Therefore it would be, even spiritually, far better to call himself a Christian even while profiting from a Hindu co-aspirant to true life. Why narrow down the conception of Christianity by giving it up?

Only a few days back I came across an instance in a daily paper (I forget which). It is also noteworthy in this connection. I reproduce it below :

"Why must it be," impatiently demanded an earnest American tourist, "that you will not convert other peoples to Hinduism? You have such a beautiful religion, and yet you keep so many struggling souls out of it. If you say 'Yes' I will be the first to become a Hindu!"

"But why", came the counter question, "do you want to change your religion? What is wrong with Christianity?"

Taken aback, but not daunted, the tourist said: "I cannot say what is wrong, but it has not given me satisfaction."

"Indeed, it is unfortunate", was the reply, "but tell me honestly whether you have given it a real

chance. Have you fully understood the religion of Christ and lived according to it? Have you been a true Christian and yet found the religion wanting?"

"I am afraid I cannot say that, sir."

"Then we advise you to go and be a true Christian first. Live truly by the word of the Lord, and if even then you feel unfulfilled, it will be time to consider what should be done."

The sage who thus turned the doubting Christian back to Christ was His Holiness Shri Chandrasekhara Bharati Swami of Sringeri Peetha.

To put the puzzled American at his ease the sage explained:

"It is no freak that you were born a Christian. God ordained it that way because by the 'samskara' acquired through your actions (karma) in previous births your soul has taken a pattern which will find its richest fulfilment in the Christian way of life. Therefore your salvation lies there and not in some other religion. What you must change is not your faith but your life."

"Then sir" exclaimed the American, beaming with exhilaration: "Your religion consists in making a Christian a better Christian, a Muslim a better Muslim, and a Buddhist a better Buddhist. This day I have discovered yet another grand aspect of Hinduism, and I bow to you for having shown me this. Thank you indeed."

Gandhiji's position is very well illustrated by this story. He surely believed that man does have spiritual rebirth or conversion. I may say, every human soul should have it as that is his spiritual destiny and avocation on earth. But it is a matter between him and his God. It is a purely spiritual activity and therefore should not be allowed to vulgarize itself to be a socio-political one of proselytism. Therefore Gandhiji deplored all missionary efforts of conversion from one faith to another. It was therefore that he always said that none could have the business of converting others. To one's faith, but should always wish to see everyone to be better in whatever faith he belonged to.

There is a deeper reason also why Gandhiji's position is true. He held that all religions are equal, and none of them should assume or arrogate any special superiority over others. Missionary activity surely presupposes and assumes a kind of the sense of superiority and unique or exclusive possession of Truth. This is, to say the least, the most disturbing assumption on its part. This is more so in the context of present world tensions, racial, religious and political. Gandhiji, I think, is the first in our times to proclaim and raise his voice against this a-spiritual assumption of superiority. It was born,—it came to him, from his own lifelong spiritual experiences lived in the thick of our modern social life and its conflicting problems. This great truth of the equality of all faiths is the real basis of a secular or modern State, whether it may be Hindu, Muslim, Christian, or Buddhist. It does not negate religion nor propagation of one's faith. But it does say, no institutionalization of conver-

sion as a social missionary activity. To quote from Gandhiji,—

"There is a proper evangelization. When you feel that you have received peace from your particular interpretation of the Bible, you share it with others. But you do not need to give vocal expression to it. Your whole life is more eloquent than your lips. Language is always an obstacle to the full expression of thought. How, for instance, will you tell a man to read the Bible as you read it, how by word of mouth will you transfer to him the light as you receive it from day to day and moment to moment? Therefore all religions say: 'Your life is your speech.' If you are humble enough, you will say you cannot adequately represent your religion by speech or pen.... Language is a limitation of the truth which can only be represented by life.

"Life is its own expression. I take the simile of the rose I used years ago. The rose does not need to write a book or deliver a sermon on the scent it sheds all around, or on the beauty which everyone who has eyes can see. Well, spiritual life is infinitely superior to the beautiful and fragrant rose, and I make bold to say that the moment there is a spiritual expression in life, the surroundings will readily respond.

"There is no desire to speak when one lives the truth. Truth is most economical of words. There is thus no truer or other evangelism than life.

"I should like to see all men, not only in India but in the world, belonging to different faiths, become better people by contact with one another and, if that happens, the world will be a much better place to live in than it is today. I plead for the broadest toleration, and I am working to that end. I ask people to examine every religion from the point of the religionists themselves. I do not expect the India of my dream to develop one religion, i.e. to be wholly Hindu or wholly Christian or wholly Mussalman, but I want it to be wholly tolerant with its religions working side by side with one another.

"Tolerance does not mean indifference towards one's own faith, but a more intelligent and purer love for it. Tolerance gives us spiritual insight, which is as far from fanaticism as the north pole from the south. True knowledge of religion breaks down the barriers between faith and faith. Cultivation of tolerance for other faiths will impart to us a truer understanding of our own."*

11-11-53

* Quoted from *The Mahatma and the Missionary*, pp. 129-30, 31.

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1953

A FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

A correspondent from Bombay raises the following poser while discussing the Pardi Satyagraha. He says "While a few landlords and capitalists who are socially conscious and responsible may respond to Shri Bhavé's appeal to share lands with landless peasants, the majority of them will not easily respond to such appeals." Such a doubt and want of faith is patent and fundamental, mainly with those who are Marxist in their ideology. Some of them have chosen to be with Shri Vinoba in his Sarvodaya and Bhoodan campaign in the same way as they were with Gandhiji in truth and non-violence during the fight for Independence.

The poser raises a fundamental issue in the social philosophy of Marx and Gandhiji. To the orthodox Marxists, it is not a doubt but is a certainty that the have-nots as a class will have to give battle to the haves. The Neo-Marxists or say the Gandhian Marxists in India say that even such a battle should better be non-violent. This is a leaf from Gandhiji's book that they wish to take for the Indian Marxists.

It is a question whether the Gandhian technique of non-violence can be grafted on the Marxist ideology. The Marxian social philosophy of two classes in society warring against each other and the technique of class-war which is its direct derivative are different from the Gandhian ideology of social trusteeship and class-collaboration based on it. The whole concept of property and ownership under the latter ideology is radically changed from its orthodox meaning which Marxists hold in common with others. It was no mere rhetoric or vain sentimentality which made Gandhi say that all property belongs to God, which in modern language means the State, i.e. the people; man is only a trustee unto Him for what he might be allowed to have under a social order. The doctrine gives us a dynamic of non-violent social action. Both individually and socially it disturbs the *status quo*. As an individual he has to be answerable to God; i.e. in modern language it means, as a citizen he can own property only as a trustee under the State. Socially he becomes a part of the whole and not of a class or a section only. The basis for such a doctrine is a spiritual interpretation of society. It was therefore that Gandhiji said that Satyagraha was not possible without belief in God, which to him was another name for Truth and Love. On the other hand, the Marxist, in the ultimate analysis, is a materialist.

The belief in the existence of inherent conflict of class interests is fundamental to him.

This difference in the two ideologies is necessary to be noted, specially at a time when Shri Vinoba's Bhoodan movement is also fast becoming a plank in some Marxist groups' programme. Some theorists of these groups say that if the common appeal to the people fails, the next thing is to organize and use the strength of the landless classes; if that also fails there is no way left for us. This distinction of the whole — *Sarva* — as against the part — class (*varga*) — is where Marxism differs from Gandhism. According to the latter there are two ways only — the violent and the non-violent, and the non-violent way is based on the spiritual interpretation of man and society, unlike the violent way which is based on a materialist interpretation.

Coming to the immediate question raised by the correspondent, I may only quote Gandhiji. In the Aga Khan Jail Shri Mirabeen asked Gandhiji, 'How will the land be distributed after Swaraj?'

Gandhiji replied, "Land will be owned by the State. I presume the reins of Government will be in the hands of those who have faith in this ideal. A majority of zamindars will give up their lands willingly. Those who do not do so will have to do so under legislation." (*Harijan*, 10-10-'53, p. 250).

We must realize that the power of legislation is also a potent weapon in the hands of a democracy. We have still to learn how to use it successfully and well. But that cannot warrant us to ignore the use of democratic weapons if we care to work through non-violence. The ultimate sanction of these weapons is Satyagraha or reliance on truth and its assertion. The point is that the Truth has to be the Truth of the whole people and not of a class or section however big or important: 'It is *सर्वसत्य* that we aim at and not *वर्गसत्य* to coin a new word to express what Marxism would say. To speak in terms of our ancient philosophy, Satyagraha is a doctrine of oneness — *advaita* of the whole people; the Marxist doctrine is one of the duality — *dwaita* of the people — the haves and the have-nots, the owner and the serf etc. etc. The difference between the two is as fundamental as between spiritualism and materialism, democracy and dictatorship, non-violence and violence.

13-11-'53

BHOODAN YAJNA

[Land-gifts Mission]

By Vinoba Bhavé

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A SATYAGRAHA STRUGGLE

(By Gandhiji)

[The following paragraphs are from Shri N. K. Bose's *Selections from Gandhi*.^{*} They will provide the reader with instructive material on *satyagraha*.]

1. A *satyagraha* struggle is impossible without capital in the shape of character.

2. The leaders of every clean movement are bound to see that they admit only clean fighters to it.

3. Those who claim to lead the masses must resolutely refuse to be led by them, if we want to avoid mob law and desire ordered progress for the country. I believe that mere protestation of one's opinion and surrender to the mass opinion is not only not enough, but in matters of vital importance, leaders must *act* contrary to the mass of opinion if it does not commend itself to their reason.

4. A leader is useless when he acts against the prompting of his own conscience, surrounded as he must be by people holding all kinds of views. He will drift like an anchorless ship, if he has not the inner voice to hold him firm and guide him.

5. An able general always gives battle in his own time on the ground of his choice. He always retains the initiative in these respects and never allows it to pass into the hands of the enemy.

In a *satyagraha* campaign the mode of fight and the choice of tactics, e.g. whether to advance or retreat, offer civil resistance or organize non-violent strength through constructive work and purely selfless humanitarian service are determined according to the exigencies of the situation. A *satyagrahi* must carry out whatever plan is laid out for him with a cool determination giving way to neither excitement nor depression.

6. A wise general does not wait till he is actually routed; he withdraws in time in an orderly manner from a position which he knows he would not be able to hold.

7. Having fixed one's minimum from which one may not recede, one may stoop to conquer the whole world.

8. In a pure fight, the fighters would never go beyond the objective when the fight began, even if they received an accession to their strength in course of the fighting and, on the other hand, they could not give up their objective if they found their strength dwindling away.

9. Indiscriminate resistance to authority must lead to lawlessness, unbridled licence and consequent self-destruction.

10. Non-co-operation, when its limitations are not recognized, becomes a licence instead of being a duty and therefore becomes a crime.

11. Some students have revived the ancient form of barbarity in the form of 'sitting *dhurna*'. I call it 'barbarity' for it is a crude way of using coercion. It is also cowardly because one who sits *dhurna* knows that he is not going to be trampled over. It is difficult to call the practice vio-

lent, but it is certainly worse. If we fight our opponent, we at least enable him to return the blow. But when we challenge him to walk over us, we, *knowing* that he will not, place him in a most awkward and humiliating position. I know that the overzealous students who sat *dhurna* never thought of the barbarity of the deed. But one, who is expected to follow the voice of conscience and stand even single-handed in the face of odds, cannot afford to be thoughtless. Non-co-operation, if it fails, will fail only through internal weakness. There is no such thing as defeat in non-co-operation. It never fails. Its so-called representatives may so badly represent their cause that it may appear to the spectators to have failed. Let non-co-operationists therefore beware of everything they do. There must be no impatience, no barbarity, no insolence, no undue pressure. If we want to cultivate a true spirit of democracy, we cannot afford to be intolerant. Intolerance betrays want of faith in one's cause.

PLANNING FROM THE BOTTOM

(By S. N. Agarwal)

One of the Directives of the Indian Constitution is that "the State shall take steps to organize Village Panchayats as units of self-government." Gandhiji also laid great stress on the desirability of decentralizing economic and political power in India through the revival of Gram Panchayats. His dream of true Swaraj consisted in the creation of "self-sufficient and self-governing village republics" throughout the country.

Village Communities in India have formed an integral part of our national life from times immemorial. It was mainly during the British regime that these Village Panchayats gradually died down owing to excessive centralization of administration and economic organization.

It is being recognized by all the leading political and social thinkers of the West that modern democracy, in order to succeed as a practical measure of socio-economic organization, must be decentralized. "If men's faith in social action is to be revived," states Prof. Joad, "the State must be cut up and its function distributed." Dr. Boodin also regards "small, closely-knit republics to be the true moral units of civilization." Modern Sociology upholds the principle that "man is happiest when living in small communities." Analysing the drawbacks of modern States, Prof. Adams wants us "to go to the root of the trouble and pursue a bold policy of devolution, of decentralization." Lewis Mumford, the well-known American Sociologist, recommends the building up of "small balanced communities in the open country." In modern America the small communities are yet playing a very important role in the revival of rural life and co-operative effort. *Kentucky on the March* is a romantic story of men and women working together for the common good of all in a small locality. Prof. Richard Peston, in his book entitled *Small Town Renaissance* emphatically asserts

^{*} Price, Rs 4/-; Postage etc., Re. 1/-.

that "vigorous small communities provide the only atmosphere in which democracy can thrive and remain a powerful force." Dr. Borsodi has been trying the same experiment of decentralized, small-scale community in his School of Living near New York. Dr. Morgan's work at Yellow Spring, Ohio, for the organization of community life is also a heroic attempt to preserve and stabilize the democratic way of life.

The idea of Village Panchayats is, thus, not a medieval conception; nor is it a relic of tribalism. As Dr. Radhakrishnan remarks, "going back to villages is not to become primitive; it is the only way to keep up a mode of existence that is instinctive to India." Dr. Radhakamal Mukerjee in his *Democracies of the East* points out how the village communities "will furnish the basis of a new type of polity which in its co-ordination of diverse local and functional groups will be more satisfying in the State constructions of the future than the centralized structures of the parliamentary pattern."

Instead of being old-fashioned and out-of-date, this pattern of rural Panchayats as the basic units of administration and economic organization is in accordance with the spirit of this age of scientific progress. Science, with all its modern technological achievements, should make for decentralization rather than for centralization. It is also not right to think that Village Panchayats will lead to isolationism. Even in ancient times there was well-organized co-ordination at all levels. In fact the progress of science and democracy must inevitably promote devolution of economic and political power in modern times.

The ancient traditions of Village Panchayats in India have been in the direction of "composite" democracy as against the present type of "party" democracy. The voice of the *Panchas* was always considered to be the voice of God. "*Panch Parmeshwar*" was the ideal of these rural republics. Elections to the Panchayats were mostly unanimous; whenever it was not possible to achieve unanimity, election was completed by means of lots drawn by the youngest child in the village. If we desire to rebuild the country from the bottom on sound foundations of democracy, we must resuscitate our Panchayats on the traditions of composite democracy. It is but proper that the Congress Working Committee has instructed the Pradesh Congress Committees that, as far as possible, Congress should not try to contest the Panchayat elections on a party basis. The Praja Socialist Party is also of the same view. It is hoped that other political parties in the country will consider this matter seriously and solemnly decide not to make the Village Panchayats an arena for party politics. We must all co-operate whole-heartedly in revivifying our ancient Panchayat traditions on the model of a broad-based, non-party, non-communal and enlightened democracy. Only then can we hope to reconstruct India according to the real genius of the nation.

(Adapted from the A. I. C. C. *Economic Review*, 1-11-53).

THE BULLOCK-CART vs. THE MOTOR-BUS

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

A correspondent from Kandivali writes as follows:

"Not long ago every home in the village had full employment throughout the year which provided it with enough income. An average peasant owned 5 to 10 *bighas* of land, necessary agricultural implements, a pair of bullocks and a cart. He worked on his land and on those of others for which he received wages in cash. Occasionally when he was free he plied his cart for the transport of crops or passengers and earned a good deal by way of cart-hire. In this way while attending to the work on his land, he made an additional income of three to five hundred rupees in the year. Along with that he also kept a cow. Then there were marriage parties going from his village to other villages and passengers who had to be conveyed to and brought back from the railway station. All this provided a very good source of income to the owner and the driver of the cart. This in its turn benefited the village carpenter and village smith. And so it went on quite smoothly and peacefully in the manner of a perfectly organized economy.

"Presently there appeared on this scene of peace and plenty a monster in the shape of the motor-bus which shattered the even tenor of the village life by depriving the villagers of one of their main sources of employment. Let me illustrate what a single village has to spend (and waste)—because most of it goes out of the village) on this one machine:

"The railway station is one and half miles from our village. There are six passenger trains stopping at this station. The number of passengers going to or coming from the station is on the average 250 per day. At the rate of 0-30 per passenger the total conveyance charges will amount, to Rs 45-14-0 for a day, Rs 1,406-4-0 for the month and Rs 16,975-0-0 for the year. The driver and cleaner together get about Rs 100-0-0 per month, that is, Rs 1,200-0-0 in the year. Deducting Rs 1,200 and Rs 3,000 as the yearly profit of the owner of bus, we find that a huge sum of more than twelve thousand rupees goes out of the village for petrol, tubes and tyres and other necessities of the bus. There is another bus in our village operating on the road to Navasari, a distance of five miles only. I have made thorough calculations in regard to this bus also and find that it drains about sixty eight thousand rupees from the village in the year. In this way the village is sending out Rs 80,000 every year which could have been easily conserved in the village, if the cart and not the bus had continued to be means of rural transport.

"Another very undesirable result was that the small landholders stopped keeping bullocks and cows because they were now no longer economic to them. Could not anything be done to stop this wasteful outflow of village-money? It is the State Transport which is now operating all these bus-services and yet the waste continues as before."

This plea for a bullock-cart might appear absurd to a certain class of readers. How dare anyone to object to a motor-bus in this machine-age? — they will say.

One is welcome to exclaim like that, but the question which the correspondent has raised is far too serious to be dismissed in that off-hand manner. It demands a satisfactory answer. There is no denying the fact that the introduction of the motor-bus has led to the disruption of the village economy. Those, therefore, who are all for enjoying the blessings of this much-vaunted

invention must also face the responsibility to show how the harm it has caused, albeit unknowingly, can be made up.

One may add here that the small capitalist who owned a bus might get a good share of income. But that would be centralizing the cart transport. Thus, the bus transport industry, whether private or state-owned, suffers from evils of centralization.

The central fact about the life of the village peasant is that he lives by working on his small plot of land for which he needs bullocks. If he keeps a cow, he not only gets milk and ghee for his children but also good manure for his fields and bullocks. If he also keeps a cart, it helps him in his agricultural work as well as provides him with a good source of income in the shape of cart-hire. If *charkha* were also added to these, there will be full employment for him throughout the year. This is the only way in which he can make his small holding economic as also save himself from unemployment and under-employment.

Moreover, this helps other village industries to be organized around it and all together make a system of economy which would keep both the agriculturists and the craftsmen gainfully employed.

Now if one introduces into this picture a flour-mill, an oil-mill, a tractor, a motor-bus, a milk-dairy like the Aarey Colony, it just evaporates into thin air. Even assuming for a moment that this does not matter, the advocates of the machine economy must point out quite clearly how they propose to redraw the new picture. The policy of *laissez faire* will most certainly not do; because it can only result in enriching the few and impoverishing the rest, with the inevitable danger to the security of the society. And nothing can be allowed to endanger the security of the society.

It is at times argued that if Western countries were able to organize their economy through machines, why should not we? Even big economists and reputed planners are found to use this argument. But they forget that the course of economic development in the West has been altogether different from ours. The rise of the newly-invented technology in the 19th century set Europe going on the road to industrialization and all that it has meant to it and the rest of the world. Europe is now making frantic efforts to preserve the structure which it built up so laboriously over more than a century and a half, but the 20th century is thwarting it. Apart from that, despite all this industrial advancement and seeming prosperity, it also suffers from the evils of unemployment, inequality between different groups, and the conflict and bitterness which it breeds. What then it has achieved through the machine if all these economic problems remain unsolved? There is conflict not only between groups within the nation but also between different nations on account of rivalries for getting raw materials and markets. The situation has so far deteriorated that the Western nations are at present living in a state of perpetual tension alternating between

hot and cold wars. Indeed, the wars are regarded as almost necessary for ending unemployment and keeping industries going! Do we want to carry our country to the same pass? The advocates of machines and motor-cars have to face this question and provide a satisfactory solution to the problem raised by the correspondent.

Lastly one thing more: The motor transport services are being managed in Bombay as also in other provinces by State Governments. The Governments owe it to the villages to so operate them as to avoid any harm being done to the cart-transport industry of the villages. It should see that the cart is not crushed out of existence through undue rivalry. If, as is coming to be widely recognized, machine industries and village industries can co-operate with each other in other spheres by each keeping itself within its defined boundary, the motor-car and the village-cart can also be made to co-operate with each other. For example, motor transport should not be permitted over a distance below a fixed minimum. I hope the Government Transport Department will consider the matter and do the needful.

7-10-53

(Adapted from the original in Gujarati)

HEALTH AND CIVILIZATION

[The following is adapted from an article in a cyclo-styled journal, *The Life Natural*, organ of the Indian Institute of Natural Therapeutics, May and June, 1953.]

Civilization (*नागरिकता* city life) has grown up as a resultant of a mixture of human motives, chief amongst which was the love of pleasure. As the indispensable means of pleasure, first wealth, and then money as the means of commanding wealth, have overshadowed and enslaved human life. The apparent rulers, the professional politicians, are far from indifferent to money, and hence they owe their allegiance, never to the people whose votes put them into the places of power, but to the Money Bags, who have unlimited means of subjugating even the incorruptibles, sooner or later.

During the last few centuries an important ally has come into being, to serve the cause of the Money Bags, namely Science. Science is nowadays venerated and submitted to far more than God ever was in the past. At one time Science was an unassuming branch of philosophy, it had no name of its own, because it was treated as a part of philosophy. Now it has superseded both philosophy and religion and reigns supreme over the civilized peoples of the earth, itself subject to the inexorable dictates of the Money Power, secretly of course.

Money Power has taken over full control of nearly the whole of human life. It has invested untold millions in every single means of money-making that capitalist ingenuity could discover. Many of these businesses intimately concern our health and happiness, and even our lives. Education and acquisition of knowledge are now fully dominated by this secret sovereign.

The so-called science of medicine is also now completely dominated by the money-makers,

Millions are invested in the drug, vaccine and serum trades, and these are far from being without influence on the secret trends of medical practice. Only those procedures are allowed to flourish which make for the success of the financial ventures, in which the medicos are subordinate partners, deriving a great part of their earnings by serving as tools of these concerns.

The procedures, called vaccination and inoculation, in which the products of disease, vaccines and serums are put into living bodies, under the pretext of conferring immunity from diseases, are logically incapable of doing anything of that sort. They add to the foulness in the body and thus convert tendencies to acute disease into chronic states of ill health, thereby conferring an undesirable kind of immunity—immunity by the presence of much more serious disease. But even this often miscarries, because of Nature's severe disapproval, and tragic consequences follow.

This line of exploitation has incidentally resulted in establishing as a legally permitted procedure the practice of unlimited cruelty upon innocent animals—dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea-pigs, monkeys and so on—which are not even given the benefit of anaesthetics. This heartless cruelty consists in inflicting tortures of great variety for weeks or months, until they die of agonies. This is glorified as *research*. The people are fooled into acquiescence by being told that great discoveries are going to be made, which will be utilized for the cure of human ills.

Money-making is such a sacred calling, that the law and its administration are deliberately crippled so as to let it go on unhindered. The trade in depressant poisons, like alcoholic liquor, tobacco, opium and so on is encouraged. The newspapers derive a great part of their income from advertisements paid for by the dealers in these items. Hence efforts to put the people wise about these health-destroyers are not allowed to be made in their columns. Trade must flourish though the Heavens may fall!

We have on many occasions dealt with the denaturing of foods, due to Big Business taking over the right of distributing them over to the consumers. The sieving and bleaching of wheat flour, the use of poisonous chemical preservations to keep the foods 'good'—only apparently so—till they are sold to the consumers, the refining of sugar, the manufacture of Vanaspati out of the oil of groundnut, these are a few examples of how good foods are allowed to be robbed of its health-value, so that Business may prosper.

Even the soil on which our foods are raised has suffered through the unholy alliance of Science and Big Business. I refer to the use of chemical fertilizers, which have taken the place of natural manures. The chemicals have succeeded in winning a stronghold over agriculture

in that it is difficult to displace them, even though it has been demonstrated scientifically, that they are really ruinous to soil-health exhausting the soil, so that it becomes desert land in a few decades.

Sir Albert Howard demonstrated by his work at Indore that the proper way to maintain the fertility and health of the soil is to use organic compost-manure. Also it is known that the gritty substance of rocks, washed down by the rains, is valuable for increasing fertility. But the so-called agricultural scientists who serve under the governments are still for the artificial fertilizers, and it is reasonable to suspect that the fertilizer trade has something to do with their indifference to natural manures.

The soil whose health has been undermined by the artificials, produces weak crops, which attract parasites. To kill them, poisons are sprayed on the crops. Thus fruits and vegetables are covered with a layer of poison, which needs to be washed off before they are consumed. DDT is one of the deadliest poisons that Science has given to Business and this is used on fruit and other foods. It is said that if the soil be redeemed in a natural way, the pests would cease to attack the crops. But there seems to be no chance of this being done.

Quite a lot of our food comes from afar in tins. These foods are no food at all, because of the mere lapse of time, as well as other causes. The manufacturers take care to make the contents tasty. But there is no knowing whether or not stale or rotten foodstuffs have been used in preparing them. It is said that stale eggs are freely made use of in preparing the foods in the place of fresh ones. Tinned foods should as a rule be eschewed.

Civilization has thus greatly contributed to our loss of health. This is proved by the almost universal decay of dental health. Faultless teeth are rarely to be found, except among savage peoples. There are other telltale evidences—constipation, indigestion, neurosis, a vast increase in mental disease, and even moral decay,—these and a great many others are incontestable proofs that civilization has taken a heavy price for the doubtful blessings it has conferred on us. Certainly it has not made mankind happier or morally better.

CONTENTS	PAGE
THE CONSTRUCTIVE POWER OF BHOODAN .. Vinoba	297
GANDHIJI AND CONVERSION .. Maganbhai P. Desai	298
A FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION .. Maganbhai P. Desai	300
A SATYAGRAHA STRUGGLE .. Gandhiji	301
PLANNING FROM THE BOTTOM .. S. N. Agarwal	301
THE BULLOCK-CART <i>vs.</i> THE MOTOR-BUS .. Maganbhai P. Desai	302
HEALTH AND CIVILIZATION ..	303
NOTE:	
THE ENSUING HINDUSTANI EXAMINATIONS .. Amritlal Nanavati	298