Whom to Elect?

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HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

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MAKE VINOBA'S PILGRIMAGE A SUCCESS

[Acharya Kripalani has issued the following statement calling upon the workers and people of the U. P. to make Vinoba's tour through that province successful.]

I have watched with keen interest Vinoba's efforts to follow the Gandhian way for restoration of land to the tenants and the landless. At a time when all practical schemes of Gandhiji for political, social, and economic reform — especially economic reform — have been abandoned by our Governments it is heartening to see that there is one whose faith stands out in bright contrast to the general cynicism of post-Independence years. With his great and penetrating adequate conception and his austere life of *sadhana* Vinoba is most eminently fitted for the work he has undertaken. It was no accident that made Gandhiji choose him as the first *satyagrahi* to inaugurate individual civil disobedience against the war-effort of the British in India ten years back. Vinoba was little known then. But Bapu with unerring insight chose him for initiating the movement. Gandhiji knew that unlike his previous mass movements individual Satyagraha emphasized the individual who stood fearless even when deprived of the psychological support of fellow-travellers. In the same spirit Vinoba is again singly and by himself out to solve some aspects of the agrarian problem in India.

He is holding a conference of constructive workers at Mathura on 1st November preparatory to his tour on foot throughout Uttar Pradesh. I wish the conference and his tour success. May it open the eyes of the sceptical to yet unexplored possibilities of the Gandhian way. May it afford our leaders necessary guidance in their high and delicate task. Without such guidance this country, so desperately in need of social reconstruction, is likely to fall a prey to cruel and bloody creeds, whether of right or left. The real fight today is between methods of reform that are moral and those that are materialistic. If moral methods get no chance because of want of faith and effort, those of violence, hatred and untruth are bound to follow. For the demand grows insistent that men's pressing needs must be fulfilled anyhow. I call upon all constructive workers in Uttar Pradesh to see that everything is done to make Vinoba's pilgrimage a success. I also request the public to respond to his call and make his path smooth.

SHRI VINOBA'S NORTHERN TOUR

III

Through the Narmada Valley — I

Berman

When Vinobaji reached Berman, a small village on the bank of the Narmada, the whole scene reminded us of the Paramdham Ashram. Vinobaji has a special regard for the Narmada (literally, the giver of happiness). It marks the meeting place of the North and the South. It was on the bank of the Narmada that Shankaracharya sat at the feet of his master and studied philosophy. Not a few South Indian families are still inhabiting this village. One of them, a lady, old and deaf, came to see Vinobaji and donated 5 acres. Her husband also gave more than one hundred acres.

Unlike the Tapi, the Narmada has been able to penetrate into the heart of the country and traverse a long distance through it. The progress of the Tapi (literally, daughter of the hot Sun) has been hampered as she did not care whether it was a stupid rock ahead or plain ground. It knew no adjustments, no compromises, no sympathy for others' weaknesses. The Narmada has been very sympathetic to each and every one that she met on the way and has not forced herself on any one. She has, therefore, been able to travel a long distance. Such description, Vinoba said, was given to him by his mother, when he was young and it had impressed him very much.

Tetarpani

We left the Narmada to enter the Vindhyas. Tetarpani was the first station in the range of this great mountain. We were put up in a Dak Bungalow and a friend from Sagar offered us hospitality. With a few cottages on both the sides, a small stream in the rear, and a hillock in front, our place provided a charming but modest sight. We, therefore, thought that the first day in the Sagar District might prove one of complete rest to all of us. But as the sun went high, people from the surrounding villages began to gather and by evening more than a thousand assembled to join the prayers. The news had already spread that 'He collected lands and distributed them to the poor.' Ninety-four acres were received in this small place. Shri Palival, who had given about 300 acres already in the Narmada valley, gave 51 acres more here.

Deori

The next halt was at Deori. As usual we left at 4 a.m. and to our surprise found that at about 4-30, when it was still dark, people were singing *Ramadhun* and marching towards Vinobaji. We were escorted to the village Maharajpur where we found several men, women and children awaiting. *Bhoodan* was declared by the people one after another, and they made up 21 acres within 5 minutes. What could please Vinoba more? It was all so spontaneous. Said he to them: "Imagine how happy the children will be when they will remember in their youth that their parents had given away land for the landless in the morning hours. They will certainly come forward to make greater sacrifices. You must all come to Deori, join our prayers and give as much *bhoodan* as you can." He recited:

तुलसीदास अति आनंद, निरखिके मुखारविंद।
दीनन्हको देत दान, भूषण बहुमोले॥

(Tulsidas is extremely happy to have the morning *darshan* of the lotus-like face of Rama, who is giving away precious ornaments to the poor). Here the lotus-like faces made valuable gifts in the form of *bhoodan*. He repeated the stanza several times, until he was filled with the sentiments that inspired the poet himself.

At Deori, the public meeting was held on the terrace of the fort. The arrangements were very good. More than five thousand people had assembled. A Gond Chief, Lalkamal, gave 903 acres. Deori's actual contribution came to only 141 acres. This was all given on the spot. Poor people rose one after another and announced their respective donations.

A Congressman, who was with Vinobaji in Nagpur jail during the Individual Satyagraha, had asked him previously a few questions. One of them was, "How and when should a person retire from family life and devote his time to service?" Replying to the question in the workers' meeting, Vinobaji put the problem differently: "If you want *lakhs* of social workers — educated, trained, experienced, self-reliant and selfless — you will have to revive the system of life based on *ashrama dharma*. He criticized the present life which was not based on self-reliance and self-restraint but on self-indulgence. He pointed out how ancient people handed over domestic responsibilities to their children and carried on *tapa*, i.e. experiments of social good. The system had been forgotten even by the priests. How ridiculous it was to see the son, the father and the grandfather, all practising together in the Law Courts as if they had no other work to do, and only death could relieve them of their occupation! Unless people freed themselves from lust, they could not get workers in *lakhs*. In this connection Vinoba narrated how Manu handed over the responsibility of the administration of his kingdom to his son and retired much against the latter's wishes, because he knew that that was the only way to a healthy tradition. Vinobaji wanted that public opinion should be created in favour of retirement from family life and taking to *vanaprastha*. That was the key to procure selfless workers.

To another question, asking whether *Rama Rajya* would ever come, he replied that it was like asking whether the clock would strike three after it had struck two. No calendar could foretell the coming of *Rama Rajya*. It was up to the people to bring it. They could establish *Rama Rajya*, *Ravan Rajya* or *Sugreeva Rajya*, according to their own inclinations. If they sincerely craved for *Rama Rajya*, let them prove worthy workers like Hanuman. *Rama Rajya* could not be brought by voting, but by developing mutual affection and a will to work for others. The population of Deori is 8,000. Vinobaji said that 2,000 social workers could come forth from that town if they followed his precept.

Gorjhamer

At Gorjhamer, the next halt, which also was a small village, Vinobaji received 46 acres. The day was cloudy. Pointing to the clouds he asked, "What do they tell us? Like the sages of the *Upanishads*, the clouds want to suggest *dama, dayaa, daana*, (control of the senses, service of the oppressed and giving away all)." He pointed out how vain it was to consider oneself as the owner of the land which remained in its own place while the so-called owner turned into dust.

Surkhi

And then came Surkhi, another village, where Vinobaji got only 4 acres in the meeting which he addressed. After the meeting, he had just put his head into the *Upanishadas* as usual, when a villager came from a distance of six miles. He had heard that Vinobaji collected and distributed lands. He owned six acres. He gave away one. He had hardly left Vinobaji when another gentleman came from a long distance and gave 51 acres. Who had inspired them? They had not listened to his speech. They had not attended his prayers. Then who could have brought them there? Certainly, it was not only the words, nor the visible world that alone worked. There was something else in this universe that acted and acted effectively, but was not always visible to the naked eye.

Sagar

Sagar was the next halt. A Sarvodaya Conference had been arranged there. Many workers from all over the State had come. Sheth Govind Das, President, Mahakoshal Provincial Congress Committee, was overwhelmed with emotion when he met Vinoba. "You have undertaken a very great mission and it is sure to bring about a revolution. I have not known its parallel. I will refer to it wherever I go." And then came Thakur Niranjansingh, (then) a political rival of Sheth Govind Das. He too promised full support. His workers were already engaged in collecting *bhoodan* and had shown good results.

In the workers' meeting Vinoba invited questions. They should not run away with the idea that doubts should not be raised. At times doubts presented quite an important side of the question. Then he asked: "It is true that I claim to distribute land to the landless. But I do not own a pie. What sanction then do I possess?" And he himself replied, "My sanction is my country, its environment, its culture. I do not know about other countries. I cannot therefore say anything about them. But I know that there is enough of goodwill here in spite of the black market and bribery that are prevalent. I do not believe that the goodwill that is evident is superficial and untrue. I know that devotion and devilry have lived together. There are moments in life when devotion predominates and the stream that is within manifests itself through service and sacrifice. If there are more such occasions, a day will come when devilry will totally vanish. I am not prepared to accept that because thousands of men are involved in black-marketing and bribery they have all become corrupt. It is the system that forces them to such evils, much against their will and it is therefore the system, that is to be blamed and eliminated. I have not the slightest doubt that there is nothing wrong with the heart of the nation, that is why I have great faith in the success of my method, which is one of persuasion and not of killing, which has been vainly tried in Russia and other countries. If that method gains ground here, we are doomed. But God wills otherwise, or else why should He have made me the tool of His mission?"

Vinobaji spent two busy days at Sagar. He met the workers individually and collectively, tried to understand their difficulties and gave necessary guidance. Organizers for *bhoodan yagna* were appointed district-wise. Workers from Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Vindhya Pradesh had also come. Shri Baijnath Mahodaya said in the workers' meeting that he could at once realize the revolutionary nature of the *bhoodan yagna* and admitted that he would not have known all the aspects of the mission, had he not attended the Conference. Shri Shrimannarayan Agarwal pointed how, in China, the Communists were distributing small units of lands to the people and how Vinoba's ideas were put into practice by other nations, of course, on their own initiative. He asked them not to waste time in discussion, but to put into practice Vinobaji's ideas without delay.

The day was marked by donations received from all over the province. Shri R. K. Patil, ex-Minister, M.P., and a member of the National Planning Commission, in a touching letter to Vinoba surrendered his 255 acres of land in the Chanda District. Shri Govind Das and Beohar Rajendra Singh also promised 101 acres each. Shri Abdul Ghani, the Socialist leader, gave all his 32 acres including one house also. The contribution of the city, not unlike other cities in the State, was a meagre 128 acres. Other contributions such as mentioned above, amounted to 516 acres. The workers assembled took a solemn pledge to collect at least one *lakh* acres on behalf of Madhya Pradesh.

Vinobaji hardly finds time to visit institutions. But as Sagar had taken two days instead of one, he agreed to visit a couple of institutions. In one of them he inaugurated

the weekly prayer organized by the Gurudev Seva Mandal. He also visited the Digambar Sanskrit Vidyalaya. Replying to their address, he said that the Jain *samaj*, by its contribution to society, had added, as it were, sugar to milk. He paid tributes to the literary contributions of the learned Jains in the development of non-violence. He made also a suggestion: "Not that you are indifferent to truth; but being a mercantile community, you have begun to believe that truth is not as essential as non-violence. But that is a mistake. Truth and non-violence are indivisible and cannot be separated from each other. Mahatmaji's life was an experiment in non-violence based on truth alone."

Those who listened to Vinoba on the Gandhi Jayanti Day were moved by his emotion and heart-searching. Although the speech was mainly addressed to himself, there was much that could be helpful to us for our own self-purification. But, we had to ask ourselves, whether we can also say with him, "movements have come and gone, elections also have come and gone, but, the friends and the people know that here is a man who is deeply engaged in his work of social service." And he further said, "On me they have showered love, and nothing else but love."

D. M.

THE TRAGEDY OF A WALL

(*By S. N. Agarwal*)

A few months ago I had occasion to go and see the sanatorium at Gorakhpur and stayed there for a fortnight at the suggestion of Shri Mahavirprasad Poddar. I knew there were a few sites round about Gorakhpur associated with the life of Lord Buddha; but it was a pleasant surprise to hear that the sacred birthplace of Mahatma Kabir was only about fifteen miles away. It is called Magahar, one of the smaller stations on the O. T. Railway. Kabir's tomb is about half a mile from the station; one can even see from the train white structures clustering round the place. The village of Magahar is close by where weavers have been plying their trade since olden times.

I have loved and revered the personality of Kabir since my childhood. His poems are simple but deeply suggestive. Not only was he a saint who had attained spiritual peace but a great synthesizer also. Particularly, he was one in line of those gifted seers, who had striven with might and main to bring amity between the Hindus and the Muslims and to rescue them from the evils of bigotry and fanaticism.

Naturally I wanted to go and pay my respects at Kabir's tomb and one day found myself at the place. It is said that when Kabir died, the Hindus and Muslims quarrelled among themselves over the final rites over his remains. The Muslims wanted to bury them, the Hindus to cremate them. Finally, happening to lift his shroud, they found that two flowers were all that remained of his mortal frame. The Hindus took one, the Muslims the other and both erected shrines over them in accordance with their respective customs. The two memorials, one a temple and the other a masjid, are still standing as places of daily worship and prayer.

First I went to the Hindu temple, and found two Kabirpanthis engaged in a religious discussion. I learned that every evening poems are recited from Kabir in the temple. Once a year, on the full-moon day of Agrahayan, Mahant Rambilas Dasji of Benares comes to Magahar and a great festival is held which is called *bhandara*. I sat in the temple for some time and then expressed a wish to go to the Masjid.

"There is no way from here to the mosque, Sir!" I was informed.

"Why, how is that?" I exclaimed in surprise.

"There is a wall in between".

"And why a wall between two such places as these?"

"Please don't ask that, Babuji! The wall has been there since very long."

"Isn't there even a wicket-gate to let one pass from one shrine to the other?"

"No, Sir! What good would a gate be? We don't go there at all."

I felt very grieved to hear this. There are both Hindus and Mussalmans among the followers of Kabir who had so tirelessly laboured to bring the two communities together. All that effort has been in vain: a dark wall stands erect between them.

I came out of the temple and wended my way to the masjid. Entering the shrine, I chatted with a Muslim follower of the saint and learned that here too they held a great *bhandara* once a year.

"Of course you all, Hindus and Mussalmans, must be eating together on the occasion of the festival," I naively asked.

"Oh no! We send flour, dal, rice, sugar and other things to the temple. All the cooking is done there."

"Then the Hindus too must be sending the same things to you at your own festival."

"No, they send us of the feast ready cooked."

"Now, how is that? Why can't the Hindus eat food prepared by you? Are you not both followers of Kabir?"

"That is right, we are both followers of Kabir. None of us ever takes meat or fish, but the Hindus will not eat food of our cooking. We don't object to eat theirs."

So even the followers of the great Kabir keep to this don't-touchism! It was very sad to hear this. The terrible chasm of don't-touchism that separates the two communities has at last cleft this land of ours in two and verily a wall has been raised between them.

I was curious to know whether the wall had always been there, and questioned my friend.

"No," he said. "There was no wall at first. But there were frequent quarrels between the Hindus and Muslims. So about eighty years ago, an English officer raised this wall between the two shrines."

How very symbolic! It was an English officer who raised the wall between the Hindu and Muslim followers of Kabir at Magahar! Eighty years later an English Governor-General raised a political wall between the Hindus and Muslims of the whole country, to rend it in two. Here too no door is to be seen in between! Did not that wall at Magahar rising eighty years ago lay the foundations for a future Pakistan? At least I felt it so. Oh the tragedy of it all!

(*Note*: Let the Hindus consider whether their social institutions are not more responsible for these quarrels and cleavage. Here are followers of the same Master, studying the same scriptures, and following the same customs of diet etc., and yet the Hindu followers regard their Muslim co-followers as not good enough to dine with or even to accept the food cooked by them! Is the British officer too much to blame if in order to end their quarrels he erected a wall between them, as the only practical way for maintaining peace? — K. G. M.)

HARIJAN

Nov. 3 1951

WHOM TO ELECT ?

(By R. R. Keithahn)

Many of us are already becoming excited about the elections. In our constituency there seems to be a good deal of agitation. One of the "important" castes is reported to have said, "We are a very important section in this area. It is right that one of *our* men should be nominated for the Assembly !" Is this our free India ? Is this what we fought for ? Is ours to be a caste or sectional raj ? Surely that is not a true basis of real democracy. Surely any section of the electorate that thinks or talks in such terms ought to be severely criticized by the rest of the public and its nominations should be ignored. If we were to work on such a basis then surely a candidate from the weakest community should be selected so that the weaker and the exploited people might get justice. But even that is not an adequate basis on which to work. May I suggest for your consideration some of the questions that we should ask a candidate who would like to represent his constituency ; or better still, the questions we should raise when we select a candidate or vote for our representative ?

One aspect of the genius of Gandhiji was that, as he gave us a method to attain political freedom, he also developed a nation-building programme which would bring *complete* freedom and justice to all. That programme was to result in "a casteless, classless society". Does the candidate believe in such a society ? Does he stand above caste and above sectarian community ? We should ask him and make him answer frankly : "What will you do to bring about this casteless, classless society ?" And we should study the life of the candidate to see whether he does act above caste or sect, which would be an earnest as to his political integrity.

Gandhiji told us that we must work for communal unity, that is, for a true society. Does the candidate believe in such a society ? Does he patronize caste or communal institutions or organizations ? What will he do to promote communal unity ? He should answer us clearly before we give him our vote.

Again Gandhiji stood for great social reforms. He said that drink and gambling must go. Does the candidate believe in social purity ? Is he going to support prohibition ? Is he going to support every good social reform ? For example, is he going to insist that women have equal rights with men ? How ?

Again, does the candidate believe in economic equality ? What will he do for it ? Is he ready to make radical changes in the present Land Tenure system ? Is he ready to insist that there be no absentee land-ownership ? Is he going to give his best efforts that the landless agricultural labourer be given land ? Is he going to insist that if the Government is going to build houses for the rich and middle classes, even more it must assist the poor villagers, and especially the Harijans, to build better houses and villages ? Does he believe in village industries ? Will he do all in his power to promote such industries so that the agriculturist may have some supplementary work when agricultural activities fail ? Is the candidate going to insist that the processing of food be done in the village and in a manner that food values are conserved ? Will he insist that there be no polishing of rice in rice-mills and no destruction of food values in oil-mills ? Will he encourage, in every way possible, these village industries that save the food values of rice and vegetable oils ? Will he do all in his power to see that the cotton industry is promoted in the village and discouraged in highly centralized centres such as Coimbatore, Madras and Madhurai ?

A Rural Development Programme has been formulated for this State (Madras). It has been carrying on good work. Some encouragement has been given to rural workers. Will the candidate promote and strengthen this programme ? Will he see that more of the tax income goes to the needy rural areas and less to urban, which have had an undue portion of such income during the past ?

Does the candidate believe in a healthy and sanitary village ? What has he done to promote such health and sanitation ? What will he do ? Is he ready to promote a substantial health programme and give all co-operation possible from Government agencies ?

Does the candidate believe in universal and life-centred education ? Is he ready to promote whole-heartedly the accepted Basic Education programme in his State ? What will he do to bring about universal elementary education ? Is he ready to give a larger proportion of the educational funds to education in the villages and much less, if necessary, to urban education ? Is he ready to promote a substantial citizenship training that will help every villager to know how to be a creative citizen, and establish "Peoples' Colleges" ?

Does the candidate believe in his own culture and in his own language ? Is he a good representative of that culture ? Can he use his own language well ? Does he believe in our great common culture ? Is he ready to promote the accepted national language of India ? Does he know that language ? What will he do to bring about this common language ?

Does the candidate believe in a minimum wage for all people ? What will he do to see that all industrial labour receives a minimum wage ? What will he do to ensure a minimum wage to agricultural and other labour ? Is he ready to promote a movement for lower income for the wealthy and middle classes until every citizen in India is assured a minimum wage ? Is he ready

to promote lower wages for the top civil services and higher wages for the lowly-paid ?

These are some of the questions that all of us must ask when candidates seek our votes during the next two months. We must insist on a clear-cut reply. It would be good if each village would organize a great public meeting, invite all the candidates to that public meeting and then place before them such a series of questions, or better still a positive programme which it believes in, and ask the candidates for a definite reply. In other words we should not look to the candidates to give us a nation-building programme but we must give them such a programme and give our vote to them only when they assure us that they will support such a programme whole-heartedly. I take it that such an approach to the elections will be true to the spirit of *Sarvodaya*. Let us even from the beginning place our elections on a very high level. And as you read this article I am sure you will have even better suggestions to make as to the conduct of our elections. The important thing is that we get at the job and do something about it.

Gandhi Gram, 12-10-'51

NOTES

Wrong Advice

A news item in the *Indian Express* (Oct., 3) says :

> "Madurai, Oct. 1 : Presiding over the sixth anniversary of the Madurai Bread and Biscuit Manufacturers' and Merchants' Association this evening, Mr N. S. Arunachalam, Collector of Madurai, suggested the making of *maida* flour out of wheat in Madurai itself.
>
> "This, he said, would cater to the requirements of Madurai bakers. He wanted the Madurai bakers to examine this proposition. Mr Arunachalam added that the starting of such a firm in Madras last year was of great help and it relieved the demand for *maida* to a great extent. The Collector exhorted the bakers to prepare pure stuff through hygienic methods."

This is an instance of how Government officers do just the opposite of their duty towards the people. Here there was a fine opportunity for the Collector to advise the biscuit-makers of Madurai that they should not use *maida* at all in the preparation of their manufactures, but employ whole-wheat flour, instead. He could have informed them of the nutritional value of the whole-wheat flour, and even hinted that in the interest of public health, one fine morning they might find a ban imposed on the manufacture of the *maida* bread and biscuits. Instead of this, the Collector advises the merchants to start a *maida* factory in Madurai itself !

"If this is to be the Government policy," the correspondent says further on, "there is no point in our keeping up a costly Nutritional Laboratory at Coonoor, which had for its first Director Dr. Robert MacCarrison, whose researches have contributed so much to revolutionize the scientific views on food-values." Here is a Government department which teaches the people how to destroy food-values with the help of science, while another department is busily engaged in discovering, preserving, or restoring them !

Wardha, 5-10-'51

Public Urinals and Water-closets

The article, "Corruption to Escape Penalty" (*Harijan*, 29-9-'51), has provoked some correspondence. Some of the correspondents have objected to the two suggestions made therein for obtaining relief in a legal manner. These suggestions cannot diminish public nuisance, they urge, and the object of penal rules would be defeated thereby. The condition of gutters between the houses and of the water-closets on the ground floor of most of the houses is already very filthy, and if men on the streets also made use of them, the nuisance will increase awfully. The occupants of the neighbouring houses would not permit it.

I admit that there is force in the objection. Hence the only way is to erect more public urinals and water-closets at convenient places. A correspondent says that in London there are clean underground urinals constructed in public streets. The use of the urinal is free, while a penny is charged for using the W.C. Indian Municipalities should erect similar urinals, underground or overground according to convenience. Of course, great care should be taken both by the authorities and also by the people to keep the urinals and water-closets very clean. It must be remembered that occupants of houses in the neighbourhood of a proposed public urinal raise objections to its erection on account of the filthy conditions and manner of use of these public conveniences. If cleanliness were guaranteed, their erection would not be objected to. It must also be remembered that no Municipality can succeed in maintaining cleanliness, unless those who use them do so in the right manner, and treat the place with respect.

Wardha, 6-10-'51

Indian Nomenclature

The papers announce that it is proposed to rename the B.B. & C.I. and G.I.P. Railways as Western and Central Zone Railways or something akin to it. If the nomenclature has to be changed, it is desirable that they should be given an Indian name, even if, for the time being, the railway administration employs the English language in all its transactions. Even assuming that the word *railway* is adopted in Hindi, as it is, and not changed into simple *rail* (रेल), the words *Western and Central Zone* which are by no means technical terms should be of Indian origin ; e.g. Madhya-Pashchimi Railway (or better Rail) — मध्य-पश्चिमी रेलवे (or रेल). The popular pronunciation will perhaps be मध-पच्छिम रेल.

Wardha, 23-10-'51 K. G .M.

Augean Stables on Railways

About a year ago the Government of India set up a Committee with Shri A. D. Shroff as chairman, two other members and Shri K. M.

Rau as member-secretary ' for the purpose of reviewing the working of the Stores Organization on Indian Railways.' This Committee found a ' shocking state of affairs in some cases ' (Report, para 113, p. 52) and gained the impression that some of the railways were ' carrying unconscionably excessive supplies.' Indeed they had reason to suspect that an attempt was made to keep back from them essential information. Even so in para 114 of their report they listed a large number of items of which there were excessive stocks. The list is rather long with over 100 items. I therefore give below the details of those items only which were expected to last over 100 years according to the estimate of the railways themselves !

Assam Railways

	Annual Consumption	Stock	Years the stock would last.
Enamel, carriage body painting ..	5 gls.	523 gls.	105
Bricks, fire, loco ..	5	1,360	272
B. B. & C. I. Railway			
Cutter for wood working machinery ..	1 No.	192 Nos.	192
Bolts, black, hex-head round neck ..	1 cwt.	126 cwt.	126
S. M. round 5/16' dia.×16/18' long ..	8 cwt.	64 tons	160
E. P. Railway			
Tin plates 28"×20"×22G ..	6 sheets	1,334 sheets	222
M. & S. M. Railway			
Keys, steel, transverse ..	500 Nos.	69,521 Nos.	139
S. I. Railway			
Paper, brown 29"×45"— 200 lbs. ..	24 qr.	7,293 qr.	304
Spring wire round ..	0–2 lbs.	108 lbs.	864
Keys, wooden 52 lbs. ..	50	9,773	195

Comment is needless.

V. G. D.

ON PROHIBITION

Only a small fraction of the Indian people plead against prohibition. Generally they belong to the well-to-do and so-called educated classes. They do so under the pretext of individual liberty, which is one of the fundamental principles of democracy. But I am sure in the depth of their hearts it is only the craving for drink that prompts them to resort to that pretentious plea.

However strange it might appear, there is a sharp difference of opinion on this point between the educated and well-to-do drinker and the ignorant and unlettered victim of the habit. While the educated man puts forth every plea to justify his habit, the ignorant one frankly denounces it in the harshest terms possible.

About three years ago I lived in a village not far off from Wardha. By and by, I formed an acquaintance with a village elder. He was a notorious drunkard, almost lame, with deep-sunk eyes, and a very pale face. This physical wreck was once a known wrestler of the village. Otherwise an intelligent man, he was an irredeemable liability to his family. But he too never defends drinking. Addict as he is for the last several years, he does not justify it but regards himself an unfortunate victim of it.

A year and a half ago, I was an employee of the Rural Department of the Madhya Pradesh. As a part of my duty I had to tour several backward and aboriginal tracts of the province. Once it so happened that one of the ministers of the province with some rural officers paid a brief visit to a remote village of the Drug district. In a public meeting the Hon'ble Minister appealed to the people to abjure drinking. Instantly a village leader rose and said, " Sir, we heartily accept your advice,but ban it once for all. Its lavish display before our eyes simply tempts us." I was agreeably surprised that a backward person of his type could make such an appeal !

The argument that an administration, however efficient, cannot check this evil, has only a grain of truth in it. For, hardened drunkards are few and the Government machinery can successfully check those people who drink only occasionally. In a village with a population of only 600, I have seen twelve liquor shops. The village may be regarded as a suburb of Wardha. There is a chain of middlemen, the village Patel being an indispensable link, between the distillers on one side, and the ultimate consumers on the other. The bulk of the latter are city people, including Government servants. If any of the producers does not fit in their chain he alone is victimized ; the others are forewarned before a police raid takes place. A police constable once told me that on one occasion while they were rounding up the liquor-*walas* the police themselves were taking heavy draughts of it. I think this is a great pointer to our administration.

In my childhood, I had read one amusing anecdote. A rich man went to a liquor shop on his horse and drank liberally. But in his intoxicating mood he also poured a little of it into the mouth of his horse. The next time when he visited the shop, the horse kept itself at a safe distance, fearing the lack of even the horse-sense in his master. Is this not an object-lesson to our drinking section from a meek and mute animal ?

G. M. NANDURKAR

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PANNAI ASHRAM NOTES — III

Election to Serve

On the 8th of July there was a good deal of commotion in the village as the Government had fixed that day for the election of the new Patel. Immediately four candidates came into the arena to contest the election more or less on communal basis. The village was divided into Lodis, Telis, Kisans, and others. Feelings were running high. It was suggested by some workers that the elections were not healthy for the public life of this village and that Kumarappaji who was then away in Wardha, should be immediately sent for. This was done and on his arrival the interested parties all gathered before him. After a little discussion to gauge their ambitions and probe into their contentions, Kumarappaji spoke to them and said, 'I am extremely happy to find so many of you having such a keen desire to serve the public. Under British Imperialism the Patel was a British agent, but today under our own independent Government the Patel becomes the servant of the people. He should be prepared to stand between the people and the Government should the need arise. So I must congratulate this village in having four protectors in the candidates coming forward to serve the people. But unforunately, the Government will accept only one name and therefore we must devise a means of havng the benefit of the servces of all the four and at the same time sending up only one name to the Government.' He invited suggestions to this end. A brother of one of the candidates immediately suggested that all the four may be made into a council of Patels, but one should be selected to represent them as far as the Government is concerned. It was also suggested that lots may be drawn as to whose name should go up to the Government and the other three candidates should withdraw in favour of this selected candidate. This procedure was followed and only one name was put up for election and that candidate was declared elected. Thus a political ebullition subsided through common understanding and cool thinking.

Our Goshala

On July 12th when we were all having food, two messengers arrived with a beautiful three-year old heifer with a *kumkum* mark on its forehead and said that Sheth Ramgopal Badrilal Patodia of Sindi — a village four miles away — had sent this calf as his offering to the Ashram Goshala. Although we had thought of having a Goshala as one of our activities we had not taken any step to buy any animals as we had no lodging place for them. Hence this calf was the first to enter the Goshala. It was suggested that we should receive this heifer ceremonially and name it.

A good many of the villagers gathered together on the next day at the Sarvodaya meeting and suggested that the naming ceremony be carried out after the Sarvodaya prayers. Accordingly we held the Sarvodaya prayers followed by the spinning programme for about half an hour.

Then, as all the school children had also come, Kumarappaji explained the significance of Sarvodaya to these children in a conversational style. He told them that Gandhiji's effort was directed towards making man, the animal into man, the divine, by bringing out the spiritual in him as expressed by his moral action. When we think of ourselves only we live a very restricted life, but when we enter into the lives of others and help them in their difficulties we truly represent God the Immanent. Whatever we do must have a moral value and not merely an economic value. In this connection he brought out the difference between using mill-cloth and *khadi* and showed how by wearing and using *khadi* we live a larger life and relieve the distress of the poor. He, therefore, pleaded that they should give up wearing mill-cloth and act on Gandhiji's message of the *charkha* and use *khadi*.

He also explained to the grown-ups that by buying mill-cloth they are allowing so much of the village production to go out of the villages in return for the mill-cloth. On the other hand, if *khadi* were produced out of the cotton grown in the village in their spare hours all their grain and other village products would remain in the village and yet they would be able to meet their demands of cloth. In subsequent days many of the villagers joined in our spinning hour and the spinning classes we held were thereafter transferred to the Board Elementary School as part of their programme and the grown-ups also are now attending these classes.

After this talk, at the suggestion of some of the villagers, the heifer that was brought was decorated and with a *kumkum* mark placed on its forehead by Shri Kumarappa was named "Kaveri".

Village Safai

In the morning, between 8-30 and 10-30, there is a regular programme of village *safai* (cleaning). We have begun with the cleaning up of the neighbourhood of the wells in the Harijan quarters and Gondvadi. The waste water from the wells was running like a black gutter through the middle of the village thoroughfare. Into this had fallen a good deal of *Jowar* waste and other vegetable matter and was rotting. We cleared about 80 baskets of this rubbish into manure pits. Then the sides of the road were cut and the *murrum* thus obtained was used to fill in the trench that was formed by the clearing of the rubbish. The transformation was striking — so pleasing to the eye, with so much valuable manure going to enrich soil for good crops. This was a demonstration as to how waste can be turned into wealth with a little effort and proper use. Thus our well programme led us on to road-building programme. In the beginning we were the only workers but in the course of a day or two the villagers who at first, kept looking on, began to understand the purpose of our activities. Then some of the children who were shy spectators picked up idle *powdahs* (shovels) and began to imitate us and this brought the villagers who drove out the children, picked up the instruments and started working with us wholeheartedly. Within a day or two we had enlisted several enthusiasts, amongst whom were Niranjan Lodi, the *Sarpanch* of the village, Ganapatrao, the Patel, Ganilal and Namdev. The last gentleman constituted himself into an overseer for our voluntary P. W. D. and he undertook to keep our implements sharpened and in good form.

One day while we were working thus on our road the Assistant D. C. of Wardha, who had come on a visit, saw the work in progress and remarked that if the villagers only had this type of programme a great deal of the difficulties of the village development would soon disappear as the villagers will have learnt to co-operate to look after their own needs.

In our work at Seldoh, the village where the Ashram is situated, we are being helped by two students from Maganwadi all the time by turns. They come in batches and each batch stays there for two days when the next one comes in. The second batch dovetails into the first batch for three days. In this way the continuity of the programme is maintained. The students spend two hours in the evening carrying out a detailed family economic survey. In this manner the training that they get at Maganwadi is seasoned with the practical work under actual village conditions.

Our Vessels Etc.

In our kitchen we use mud vessels and our eating utensils are also "fritted glazed vessels" made in the Maganwadi Pottery Section. This glazing is simple but is superior to lead glazing. The process can be carried out co-operatively by a few potters getting together. This glazing will stand acids that would otherwise corrode metals. We also use vegetable oil lamps which have been developed and prepared at Maganwadi. Naturally these idiosyncracies of ours attract the curiosity of the villagers and afford us a point of contact for purposes of our programme of educative work. If we are able to carry on this type of work, in a little while we should be able to solve our adult rural education problem. R. R.

SHRI VINOBA'S TELANGANA TOUR
V

April 17, Batasingaram, (Third Halt, 12 miles)

Our route today lay, partly along *pucca* road, and partly along *kachha*. People came to greet us from the various wayside and adjoining villages. They stood on the part of the road nearest to them waiting for our arrival. They brought with them fruits, flowers etc, as presents, and the scenes were touching. At one point we noticed men, women and children running down a hillock to meet us. We drew Vinoba's attention to them and he stopped for them. In a while, they came and paid their respects to Vinoba by forming an arch in an original manner.

We reached our destination, Batasingaram, at 8-30 a.m. The village was very clean. The houses wore a festive look with festoons. Roads were interspersed with arches. People who had come to receive us accompanied us to our halting place. We asked them to come at 2 p.m. at the time of congregational spinning. By two o'clock there was quite a big crowd at our doors.

Vinoba, according to his usual practice, took his curds or butter-milk at the place where he was lodged. But the rest of us were escorted to another place in the village for our meals. On the way we were invited as the companions of their saintly guest to visit a few other houses for a few moments each. What love, and what innocence! I wondered whether we deserved it!

After the spinning was over, Vinoba began to interview the callers one after another. They posted us with the state of affairs in the village. The Communists, when they made their first appearance in the village, had paid for their requirements. But afterwards they began to take away forcibly whatever they could lay their hands upon. Most people seemed to us to be fear-stricken; a few seemed to be friendly to them. Those who were fear-stricken gave somewhat exaggerated accounts, while the sympathizers seemed to hide something. We also met two Sikhs who owned a dairy in the village. Previously they used to live in the village, but having suffered molestation and loss at the hands of the Communists, they have now shifted to Hyderabad and go there only during daytime.

The villagers guard the village at night. There are four groups of twenty each, which detail themselves for patrol work on the four sides of the village. This was good, but they were tired with it and wanted deliverance from this irksome task. Vinobaji asked them, "Who else will protect your village?" The villagers wanted that the police should do it for them. To this Vinoba said, "In that case their expenses will have to be borne by you." But, they were prepared neither for this, nor for allowing the police to be withdrawn.

The ways of the police too were shockingly queer. On one occasion a Communist leader was kept engaged in eating and talking, and the police was informed. The police turned up but, instead of arresting the Communist, in their hurry they shot the host himself. The widow of the unfortunate victim came to Shri Vinoba along with her fourteen-year old son and complained that neither had there been any inquiry into the affiar, nor had they been given any help.

This was the condition of a village which is only twenty miles from Hyderabad. The journey into the interior had yet to begin. We had not yet stepped into Nalgonda which had gained wide notoriety due to red activities. In the evening prayer, there were, as usual, several thousand men and women. Shri Lakshmibai Sangam henceforth acted as the interpreter. Shri Lakshmibai and Shri Kodandram Reddi had joined our party on behalf of the State Congress from Hyderabad. Shri Lakshmibai is an accomplished artist and was holding an important post in the Education Department. But she had resigned it in the days of the Razakars and has since then devoted herself to the service of the people. Shri Kodandaram is a promising young man, modest able and dutiful.

In his post-prayer speech Vinoba advised the people to relate only matters, they had actually seen. Truth, as the proverb puts it, was only four finger-breadths away from falsehood. They might under-state but never exaggerate an account in order to make an impression. Then only would he be able to learn the truth regarding their condition. He had gone there with the sole purpose of understanding their afflictions. He would be able to suggest a remedy only when he was apprised of the real condition.

Shri Vinoba advised them to shed all fear. They should truthfully answer every question. Even God could not protect those who feared. They should not be afraid either of the Communists or of the police. It was the duty of the villagers to protect their village. If there was unity among them, they could easily protect the village. Even the animals which were weak, organized their defence by mutual co-operation and combination. If, however, they chose to carry on mutual quarrels none could save them.

"You must have noticed that even an animal notices the fear in us. They look into our eyes to know whether we are struck with fear. And if they perceive its presence they attack us; otherwise they pass by. In the same way you should put your things before the police or the military quite fearlessly. People tell me that they were oppressed by both the police and the Communists, and they did not know whom to look to for protection. I am amazed at this. There should be no fear of the police and the military, because they are sent here for your protection. As for the Communists, there is no reason to dread them either. The raiders are only a couple or two, but you are in thousands. You should form your volunteer corps which will guard and protect the village. They should be trained to do this work efficiently. If you discard fear, the Communists will stop frightening you. After all they are not demons, but as much human as ourselves. Once they come to know that the people are fearless, they will stop their depredatory activities."

Vinoba next referred to the economic condition of the village. In their village there were people of all the classes, — rich, poor, and middle. The rich and the middle classes should mix and identify themselves with the poor. Those who possessed wealth should regard it as having been entrusted to them for the service of the poor. God tested both the rich and the poor. The rich man passed the test if he was charitable and spent his riches for the benefit of the poor. The poor man had similarly to prove his worth in the sight of God by rising above the circumstances. If he did not lose courage, did not give himself up to dejection, faced poverty bravely and did not feel any sense of humiliation on its account, he passed God's test. If the rich and the poor of the village would thus help one another, neither the police nor the Communists could give them any trouble; they would then have real *swarajya*.

Concluding his speech, he warned the rich:

"You must see the danger round the corner. The rich will survive and prosper, if they spend their money and intelligence and power for the poor and lift them up to their own level. If they prove equal to the opportunity there is no fear for them in India. I pray to God that He may grant you the wisdom to love and help one another."

(Translated from Hindi) D. M.

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