

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

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TWO ANNAS

POLITICAL WORK AND SOCIAL WORK

In his post-prayer speech at Rajghat on 14th November, 1951 Vinoba chose this vital theme following his meeting with Shri Jawaharlal Nehru that morning. He met the great leader after months, on a day which was his birthday. On this occasion he wished him long life and good health.

During their meeting, Vinoba related, Pandit Nehru had mentioned how pained he was over the unpleasant task of selecting candidates for the elections. Candidates had come from various States. It was not unnatural that they should indulge in self-praise, but since such praise often meant denunciation of others, the whole thing became unseemly. The work of selecting candidates thus caused him great pain, but as it was a national responsibility it had to be carried on.

This in short was what Pandit Nehru had said. The work of purifying the Congress, Vinoba remarked, was an important one. The Congress was a great organization with a glorious past. For its present ills Vinobaji could suggest only one reason. Activity after freedom had taken a wrong direction. When the battle of freedom was on, politics was the only field of action. Even those who believed in selfless service and a life of renunciation had to enter politics. When Tilak was asked what he would do when independence was achieved, his reply was that he would devote himself to study. Search for knowledge was what gave him real pleasure. All day he would be engaged in political work, but at night he would return to his study of the Vedas.

Politics then was the first duty, since it was through politics that independence could be achieved. Politics also offered opportunities for renunciation, sacrifice and service. Hence, then, real power lay in politics. But when freedom came, politics no longer remained the source of power. Power goes into the hands of those who set themselves the task of changing the social system, of removing economic disparities and of creating a democratic society. It was in this field that people could get chances of sacrifice and unattached service.

People however, could not differentiate between real power and the political power one gained by virtue of occupying some position. Positions of political power need not be shunned.

Within the limitations of laws and constitutions selfless people could do good work there. But these positions offered temptations and there was always the danger of a fall. So people should accept them only if they could rise above temptations and attachment.

Positions of power were few. Other people who wanted to work should go into the field of social reconstruction to help the country to go forward. There they would have greater influence than in the field of politics. This was a simple enough proposition. For instance, those in political power could not stop people from smoking, but workers in the social field could bring about this reform. As a result of the activity of social workers an atmosphere could be created in which smoking could be prohibited. There was the case of prohibition. In the U.S.A. prohibition was not a success because the right atmosphere did not exist. In India, on the other hand, drinking could be prohibited because the majority opinion in the country was against drinking.

After the attainment of freedom Gandhiji had advised that the Congress should be turned into Lok Sevak Sangh (social service organization). Its leaders had, however, made it into a political party. They need not be blamed for it. But the Congress must not be an organization for fighting elections alone. It should have a programme of service before it. Unless it showed interest in social service it could not be purified.

He had been telling his friends, whether of the Congress, the K.M.P.P. or the Socialist Party, that they should not think of politics alone. Unless they worked in the sphere of social reconstruction, society would remain as it was and might even deteriorate.

Social workers should neither worship power nor look down upon those in power. They should be a body of selfless people who, while remaining aloof, could express their views with courage to influence all round them. The country needed such a body of workers.

Some said there was the need of an opposition. If there was no opposition, there was the danger of the growth of Fascism. This was a Western doctrine and in its limited application it was right. But an opposition would not be enough. The nation would not be purified unless

a body like the Sarvodaya organization was formed to serve the people. The Sarvodaya ideal alone could help India towards progress.

(Adapted from the *Hindustan Times*, 16-11-'51)

EXPORT OF BONES — II

Apparently, the Government case, looks so nice. They exchange bone-grist for a ready fertilizer and dollars. But the exchange is like one made by Alladin's mother, who parted with her son's magic lamp, because it was old, in exchange for the new lamp of the magician. Or, to take a more historical example, it is like the exchange which the simple Adivasis of U. S. Peru, and other American countries made with the European settlers, parting with their vast lands and large gold stores in lieu of glass beads, wines etc. provided by the latter. The sale of bones is like selling away un-refined gold ore in exchange of ready-made aluminium-gold articles, simply because we have not at present the wherewithal for melting and refining the ore and putting it to industrial uses, while the aluminium-gold looks as nice as gold, and can as well serve the purpose of pure gold for a period, and at a low cost. It is forgotten that even like the gold-ore, the bones, even if they lie unused with us for years, are still our potential wealth.

Indeed, the bone-wealth of the country is, in its own place, even more useful than gold; because unlike gold it can be directly used for several industrial purposes and with less technical skill and no elaborate precautions for safeguarding against plunder etc. It wastes slowly under exposure if not used. And if buried under cultivable soil it slowly feeds and enriches the soil in the course of its disintegration. The fertilizer, on the other hand, like the aluminium gold, wastes away quickly and — worse than aluminium-gold — even injures the soil by creating false and injurious stimulation in the productive capacity of the earth. It is like wine and opium given to horses for making them work and run hard.

The crushing of raw bone, it is alleged, requires heavy machinery. But I am informed that Shri Valunjkar has devised a simple mobile bone crushing unit. It is a quite handy set and a demonstration given at the Delhi Ministry of Agriculture proved its utility as a very useful combination for utilizing bone *in situ* in villages.

There are other ways also, even if perhaps a little wasteful, of breaking bones. For instance, it is well known that if bones are charred partially, they can be easily ground in the ordinary Indian mortar-mill worked by bullocks or buffaloes. This can be done in every village and may be directly used for manure. The result of crushing bones in large plants is that since all these factories are located in cities like Bombay, Calcutta etc. raw bones are transported from *mufassal* into cities, and broken into grist and meal. The grist is exported and the meal is re-transported to *mufassal*. The village bone collector sells his raw bones at about Rs 2-8' per

maund, while the bone-meal does not sell for less than Rs 10 per maund. At this price only proprietors of large estates can afford to purchase the bone-meal. In actual practice, it is generally drawn away by tea, coffee and other plantation estates. Neither the village bone-collector nor the village cultivator is able to derive any profit from the bones found in their vicinity.

Perhaps, this is attributed to the incapacity of the cultivator to appreciate the value of bone-manure. Assuming that it is so, the remedy is to educate the people. There is no sentimental or religious prejudice against the use of bone-manure among cultivators generally, so far as I am aware. Rajasthan is pointed out as one, where the cultivators are not inclined to use bone-manure. I believe that there too, this may not be true of all cultivators. For, such articles as buttons, cuff-links, paper-knives, knives and forks with bone handles etc., are freely employed even in orthodox high-caste Hindu homes, even as they make use of hides. Fish manure is widely employed wherever available. The non-use of bone-manure might be due to want of knowledge and not prejudice. Bone is after all a heritage of pre-historic civilization, and its use has been known to mankind for scores of centuries. Indeed, when hides, horns, tusks, guts etc. are freely used inside the home and for medical purposes also, there cannot be a grave objection to the use of bone-manure in the fields, if its value is known and its cheap supply is organized.

The manufacture of small house-hold articles from bones does not require very expensive tools or large plants. A few village and cottage industries can be started even immediately, with a little encouragement, and technical experts like Shri Satish Chandra Das Gupta and Shri Valunjkar would be able to give small-scale machinery for production of even glue, gelatine, bone-charcoal etc., for which bone-grist is largely exported.

Agro-economically, the effect of encouraging exports of bones has been one of raising the price of bones inordinately high. Foreign industrialists can afford to pay high prices, making it practically impossible for Indian agriculturists and the few small manufacturers that may be or have a desire to be, to purchase them. If a thing that has to be simply picked up from out-of-the-way places at a cost equivalent to the wage of a Harijan or Adimjati labourer is suddenly made costly by a few foreign companies, the Indian cultivator and bone-artisan would have simply to stand by, helplessly watching the large heaps being carried away by railway wagons day after day to countries he knows not which. We do not have even the consolation of seeing the actual bone-collector, the forest-tribesman, getting a proportionate increase in his rate, or the village-industrialist of making the grist. The bulk of the high price goes to the middleman who organizes the collection, and the city crusher. The labourer himself is almost a slave in his hands and at his mercy,

though it is he who often wanders over miles of difficult tracts in search of the materials.

On the one hand, the Government encourages this export. It even subsidizes the exporter by carrying raw bones to the cities at a lower freight than grist—which is just the reverse of what shippers do. All this is done, for, what is called, a favourable dollar balance. At the same time, the Government advises the cultivator to put more manure into his fields, and for this purpose imports large quantities of chemical fertilizers of superphosphates and nitrates and is often supposed to sell them at a loss. The cultivator does not understand the right proportion in which these drugs should be administered to the soil, and does not have the organic manure which should be mixed with it in order to prevent it from injuring his soil and crops.

There can be no doubt that every step should be taken to organize the collection of bones lying in any uncultivable place. Owners of cattle and village *panchayats* should be advised not to allow their cattle and other bony animals to lie dead and uncared for at any place they happen to breathe their last. If they cannot do anything better, they might at least bury them in their own fields or in the common fields of the village. Even if the earth absorbs the flesh and slowly works into the bones, it is better than allowing the carcass to be eaten as carrion by human beings, or broken into by vultures and jackals, scattering away pieces of bones in unapproachable places in the process of their plunder. The fact that foreign industrialists can afford to pay handsome prices for these bones shows how valuable that wealth is. If the foreigners can put it to a hundred industrial uses, we can put it to at least half a dozen uses immediately, and by and by would be able to do so to more.

From whatever point of view the matter is considered, the bone-export policy seems detrimental to the best interest of the nation.

Wardha, 12-11-'51 K. G. MASHRUWALA

SARVA SEVA SANGH PROCEEDINGS

1. Bhoodan Yajna :

The Sarva Seva Sangh in its meeting held on the 23rd November 1951, has passed the following resolution on the *Bhoodan Yajna* :

"Whereas the Sarva Seva Sangh believes that the *Bhoodan Yajna*, inspired and advocated by Shri Vinobaji, is an essential and inevitable step towards the building up of a non-violent society in India, it wholeheartedly supports the movement for *bhoodan*.

The Sarva Seva Sangh welcomes the enthusiastic response which the move is obtaining from all sides. The Sangh further appeals to all land-owners, small or big, to respond to this inspiring call of Shri Vinobaji and to take their full share in this great sacrifice.

The Sangh specially appeals to the constructive institutions started by Mahatma Gandhi and all those individuals and institutions who have been inspired by his philosophy

to work for the speedy progress of this *yajna* with all their strength and devotion, so that the moral conscience of our nation may be awakened, and equality and peace established in this land through a peaceful and non-violent social revolution". (Resolution 10).

2. Syllabus for Three Years' Training :

The meeting also approved a syllabus for a course of three years' duration to train village workers for Samagra Grama Seva. During these three years, the workers will receive training in the Hindustani Talimi Sangh, the Charkha Sangh, the Gramodyog Vibhag, and the Krishi Go Seva Vibhag. For the first year, 25 students will be admitted from all over the country on a preliminary test examination. The training will start from February next.

TOWARDS BOYCOTT

(By Dharendra Mazumdar)

I have been talking to the constructive workers for some months past to work for a boycott movement against machine-production, at least in respect of food and cloth. It is a matter of gratification that the attention of workers is attracted to it. After the publication of the Congress Manifesto and the First Five Year Plan, followers of the Sarvodaya School of thought cannot afford to remain indifferent to this matter. That is the reason why conferences of *Katai Mandals* (Spinning Clubs) have recently passed resolutions in favour of the boycott movement against machine production.

Several persons raise a question, "Why boycott?" My counter question to them is "Why *khadi*?" *Khadi* has two aims to achieve. First, we are faced with a problem of unemployment, and the spinning-wheel and the hand-loom are a great source for providing employment. Secondly, to bring into existence a non-exploiting and non-violent social order, it is necessary to replace centralized, mechanized method of production by a decentralized, self-sufficient one. Those who subscribe to the first aim only will seek merely ways of how best to provide employment to the maximum number of men. But those who desire to achieve the second aim will have under all circumstances to work for the boycott movement against mill-made articles in respect of food and cloth. There is no alternative remedy.

But mere expression of pious intentions or passing of resolutions will not help us much. An organized movement will have to be carried on. Therefore the constructive workers who support this idea should prepare a form of pledge and themselves take it and ask friends to do the same and thus initiate the boycott movement.

A report of progress in taking such pledges should be sent to A.I.S.A., Sevagram, for publication in *Sarvodaya*, *Harijan*, and *Katai Mandal Patrika*.

Sevagram, Wardha,
21-11-'51
(Translated from Hindi)

HARIJAN

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1951

LOSE NOT FAITH

A correspondent writes:

"Recent discussion in the columns of the *Harijan* on the Nehru Five Year Plan by Shri Agarwal, Acharya Bhawe and yourself prompted me to write this letter. . . . It is generally believed here that 'The Nehru Five Year Plan' is an election stunt and is not better than even the leading Indian Capitalists' Plan published in 1944.

"We are in a dilemma as we do not know where we stand and what we shall do for the future. The Congress leaders are trying almost frantically to come to power again. We like that the present Government be changed for the better constitutionally, but more impatient sections of (the) people may resort to force in future if favourable change be not possible through the normal method. Why this impatience? Is it not due to gradual restriction of normal and fair means of livelihood for the present as well as the next generation? Is it not due to ever rising cost of living, without fair means being available to the people to increase their income at the same time? Moving in the opposite direction and curtailing the expenditure may be a solution under the present circumstances, but who is going to "Bell the Cat"? Surely not the Indian Capitalists and their supporters, the Congress Government. Our noble-hearted Prime Minister Nehru, in spite of all his goodness, now appears somewhat impatient and irritable. Why?"

"I do not like to lengthen my letter any further. Only I wish to express myself to you that the general discontent must be smoothened to some extent immediately. Acharya Bhawe's approach for the solution of land-problem is wonderful. This may be called the revival of 'Do or Die Peace Mission of Gandhiji', for the removal of one of the most vital injustices to the toiling rural population of India. Is there no one who can boldly come forward similarly to save and guide the toiling urban population of India? Frustrated and mis-guided, the literate urban people are no less a danger spot in the society."

It is not fair to say that the Five Year Plan is just an election stunt. With all the criticisms and differences of approach put forth in *Harijan*, I am bound to say that the Plan is an honest attempt to solve the country's problems according to the ideas of the Planners. Had it been conceived of in terms of a stunt it would have been drawn up in a more catching and deceptive style, holding out all sorts of extravagant promises, with some if's which could not be fulfilled. It would certainly not have been drawn up in a manner, which did not create a wave of enthusiasm among voters in general.

Some of the country's economic difficulties are unavoidable. They are in common with other countries of the world. Indeed, if the economic situation of India and the British Possessions in Asia had not appeared insoluble to the British, they would not have parted with power so readily and hurriedly. They saved themselves the odium of failure and the danger to themselves in staying among millions of discontented people. They left the house after it had become

completely gutted, leaving the Congress to rebuild it as best as it can. While a part of the odium earned by the Congress administration is its own acquisition, a large part of it should in fairness be transferred to the British. Even if other huge problems which arose after the partition and during the last four years had not been created, it would have been no easy task for the Congress or, for the matter of that, any other party Government to improve the economic situation quickly.

How far a change of Government by itself can improve the general economic situation, it is difficult to say. Not a single party has a sufficient number of leaders with deep study and experience of public affairs and capacity to organize. Several have not even an adequate idea of the magnitude of the problems and the exact manner of solving them. Experts too are often experts in making conjectures and generalizations, rather than men who have earned that distinction by having themselves previously solved such problems. Several — perhaps a majority — of the ministers hold their offices not because they possess any particular ability to handle the portfolios entrusted to them, but because they have to be appointed somewhere on considerations of party politics. As for the duties of their office, they are like a professor of chemistry, who knows for the first time the distinction between a chemical compound and a mechanical mixture after his appointment. They begin to understand the problem of their departments by the hit-and-miss method, if they attempt to make any change in the established routine. It is not sufficient to have even clear ideals and objectives, if the ideas of putting them into practice on a large scale are vague. Hence the various muddles. For some years to come it is possible that the same story will be repeated, whichever party comes to power. Hard experience alone will give us efficiency.

Heavy economies in expenditure are, of course, necessary. If a party pledges itself to that programme alone, it might bring about a desirable reform and create a healthy atmosphere. The example set by the Head of the Tad-gur Department of the Government of India is a pertinent one in this respect. It may not be possible for every one to live like Shri Gajanan Naik, but none need raise his mode of previous life, simply because he has now accepted some office in the Government. I understand that New China has provided us with standards, which we might emulate. The present trend is in the opposite direction, and ruinous.

At the same time it should be borne in mind that those whose sole qualification is thriftiness are often weak of imagination and timid in undertaking big plans. For reconstructing a great country like India, statesmen with imagination and venture are also needed. Often, however, such statesmen have a tendency to regard the ministry of finance and the offices of

accountants and auditors as deserving to be first abolished if retrenchment was needed.

I would ask the correspondent and others holding views similar to him not to take too pessimistic a view of the situation. Providence will supply us with such great leaders as we need and deserve from time to time. While we should make every genuine and strenuous effort to improve the administration and our affairs, let us also have faith in the doings of Providence. Let us look at the regular line of all-India leaders of the first rank, whom God sent to us during the last 60 years or more. Dadabhai Naoroji, Surendra Nath Bannerji, Lala Lajpatrai, Annie Besant, Tilak, Gandhi in the past — each greater than the preceding one. He also presented us during that period great leaders in the spiritual realm. And the deaths of Gurudev Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Ramana Maharshi, Shri Aravinda have not left us altogether forsaken by God. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Nehru, Vinoba immediately stepped into the various vacancies created, by no means as second class luminaries. Each has contributed to the country with a speciality of his own and, taking everything into account, each has rendered an absolutely needed service of the moment. Let us not therefore lose the faith that God will always throw up for us the right man at the right moment.

Wardha, 22-11-'51

K. G. MASHRUWALA

BHOOMI DAN YAJNA

(The following are Shri Vinoba's utterances culled from his various speeches in Delhi and places round-about. They have been thankfully taken and adapted with suitable changes from the detailed reports in the *Hindustan Times* of the 13th to 25th November 1951, along with those in the Hindi *Hindustan*. — K. G. M.)

Its Spiritual and Ethical Basis

I am only an instrument in the hands of Him who is the Lord of all ages. It is a phenomenon inspired by God. For, how otherwise, can people who fight even for a foot of land be inspired to give hundreds of acres of land freely? My appeal to all and everywhere is to, take this as a thing which God desires them to do and to bequeath their lands to the landless liberally and lovingly.

As a friend and well-wisher of both the rich and the poor, I could feel happy only if I could make the rich look upon the poor as members of their own family. Suppose the owner of a 10,000 acre farm has four sons, and a fifth is born later. Would he not have to make five shares of his property instead of four? I ask the land-holders to regard me as an additional heir born to them and give me my share for the benefit of the poor.

A psychological change like this cannot be brought about by war and violent revolution. It can only be brought about by the methods of Buddha, Christ, Ramana and other great teachers. Ultimately, it is to be the dedication of one's all for the well-being of all. (H. T., 13-11-'51)

Unless the existing social order, which is based upon inequality, strife and conflict, is replaced by one founded on equality and mutual co-operation, there can be no salvation for mankind.

In a society where some own land and others are landless, there can be no peace. People might bring legal documents to substantiate their claim of proprietorship. These serve no useful purpose. They tear our hearts and

keep us divided. Let us light their bonfire on the occasion of Holi.

People should accept the principle that all land belongs to God. If all land is socially owned, the present-day discontent would disappear and an era of love and co-operation will take its place. (H. T., 14-11-'51)

What I want people to do is first, to give away some of their land. Secondly, they should engage themselves in the service of others. Finally, in their service, they should lose all and voluntarily sacrifice everything. This is the path into which I want to initiate the people. I know people can accept this path. They are sound at heart. I have had enough evidence to be convinced of that. I have received even today, (13th November), a gift of 578 acres of land made by two people of Jhansi by telegram. If the desire to give away spreads like an epidemic, we would be much nearer a solution of the land-problem. (H. T., 15-11-'51)

I have taken up the task not because it was easy. It is a difficult task. I was led into taking up the work, and I have little doubt that the Power that has inspired me to start the work would not let me leave it unfinished. I approached the work with all humility, and I have faith that I shall receive every help in completing it. I am sure that those believing in the Sarvodaya ideal will give me support and sympathy. (H. T., 18-11-'51)

Its Historical Necessity

I refuse to agree that my attempt to make landed people give away their land voluntarily to the landless is contrary to the trends of history. New things can happen. Nothing like the Russian Revolution had happened before, but it happened. So also this could happen. However, I believe what I am doing is not against the trends of history. It is a historical necessity.

My mission is not to stave off a revolution. I want to prevent a violent revolution and create a non-violent revolution. The future peace and prosperity of the country depend upon the peaceful solution of the land problem. My attempt is to create an atmosphere in which the limitations in the Constitution can be got rid of. Zamindars can be made to agree that they cannot get full compensation and that they should be satisfied with getting what was enough for them.

"Why not amend the Constitution?" asked a correspondent. Vinoba replied:

For that we need the moral support of the Zamindars. Legislation should not be forced on people. Every one, including land-owners, should accept it.

Another correspondent said that the psychology of vested interests was "not to liquidate themselves". Vinobaji replied:

I believe this idea about psychology is not correct.

If land-owning people do not part with land and a proper atmosphere for land reform legislation is not created, the third alternative would be a bloody revolution. My attempt is to prevent such a violent development, and after my experience in Telangana and in U. P. I am convinced that peaceful methods can succeed. Land, like air, sun or water, is a free gift of God, and what I am asking for, on behalf of the landless, is no more than justice. (H. T., 25-11-'51)

My target is 50 million acres of land. Since there are 300 million acres of cultivated land in India and an average family has five members, I felt that every family could give away one-sixth of its land-holding, accepting the poor landless man as the sixth member of the family. This is a way of bringing about a peaceful revolution in the country.

There is one difficulty. At the rate at which land is being gifted to me so far, it would take many, many years before the scheme could be completed. I, therefore, hope that the work of transfer of land will be speeded up and this vital problem facing the country solved to a considerable extent.

My mission, however, is not confined to collecting land-gifts. I am trying to convince land-owners that they should part with some of their land. If they are convinced of the right of the landless to some land, the proper atmosphere for suitable legislation will have been created. Once the atmosphere was created, any legislation on the subject could be expected to be effective, since it would have the approval of the people even if land-gifts did not total one-twentieth of the target of 50 million acres. (H. T., 15-11-51)

Limitations of the Mission

A donor with his wife came here (Delhi), all the way from Madhya Pradesh, to give away all the land he had. He had 50 acres of land without any other means of livelihood. When it was suggested to him that he may give part of the land, he insisted that he had come to offer all he had. The couple had three children. I said he could treat me as the fourth and give me one-fourth of the land. I thus accepted 12½ acres out of 50. If the man had 37½ acres, I would have accepted ten or twelve acres, and the man would have been left with about 25 acres only. In some cases, I had accepted half an acre out of five acres.

What is the system I have been following? I accept one-fourth out of 50 acres and take land even from those who have very little of it. Do I or do I not think of creating economic units of land? Well, that is not my work. Shri Deshbandhu Gupta died today. I might be going tomorrow. I am not trying to solve the big land-problem. I do want it to be solved peacefully, but nobody can resolve all the world's affairs. We had Rama and we had Krishna. They had done what they could for the world, but there was no end to problems. One could only do one's work.

My mission is to create a proper atmosphere for economic reforms. I have formed no organization to propagate my views. People who accept my ideas themselves become its preachers. Those who give land provide an example to others. The main thing is that one should do one's own duty. Fire merely burns; it does not worry whether anyone puts a pot on it, fills it with water and puts rice into it to make a meal. It burns and that is the limit of its duty. It is for others to do theirs.

The sun too does its duty without feeling concerned with how many people rise with it or keep in bed when it comes out. It is always there, punctual and ready to shine on anything that is exposed to it. It does not push the door to enter into places barred to it. It does its duty within its own limitations. Like the fire and the sun, I know my own limitations. It might appear a bit crazy to some that I should accept land from those who have little as well as from those who have large tracts of it, and that I should take the same share, whether people have 50 acres or five acres. My purpose is to create a change in everyone's heart. I cannot predict when it will come. I only tell the people my ideas, and accept land if they offer it.

I go by no economic calculations. I do hope that others will also be able to think as I do. They too are men like me living in the same society. If I have certain ideas, so would have others. If people accept my ideas quickly, my work can be completed without much delay. But, God willing, the work will be completed sooner or later.

As to the economic side of the land problem, society itself can look after it. Not that I cannot think about it or do not have my views. But I have chosen as my work, the creation of a moral atmosphere in the country so that the land problem might be solved peacefully. (H. T., 23-11-51)

Execution of the Programme

A Calcutta paper had raised the question whether the lands given to me are mere verbal promises. If so, people might not redeem their verbal promises. The paper need have no anxiety on the point. Every gift deed is legally executed with the proper signature of the donor and the witnesses. In each case, it is legally binding. But even

then, I do not want to bind anyone to it. If I find that any one had given away the land under pressure of some kind, I shall allow him to take it back. If I am not sure of the voluntary nature of a gift, I shall myself destroy the legal document.

My aim is to bring about a threefold revolution. First, I want a change in people's hearts; secondly, I want to create a change in their lives; and thirdly, I want to change the social structure. Nothing can be achieved through pressure or force. If force is to be used, I am not required. My feeble hands would not be of any use. (H. T., 21-11-51)

The Programme of Distribution

Our men go to the villages and distribute land to the landless. We have to find out who are the landless and then offer them land. Just as a man who wants to marry his daughter searches for a suitable bride-groom, similarly, we would search for people deserving land-gifts. Just as, after we solemnize the marriage of our daughter, we give her jewellery and other gifts, similarly we should arrange for other necessities of the tiller, a pair of bullocks, seeds and other requirements.

On the appointed day, Sarvodaya workers offering land to the landless visit the village. All the people are gathered there. The workers enquire from them who are the most suitable persons entitled to receive the gifts. They then indicate their choice. The first priority is given to Harijans and other backward communities. Care is taken to bequeath land only to those persons who are not engaged in any other calling and are in a position to do cultivation work, provided land is made available to them. The workers are accompanied by revenue officials who complete the work of registration and other legal formalities. The man returns home as the proud possessor of land. A new life has begun for him. He has become a land-holder.

The rules framed by the Hyderabad Government, where land distribution work has already started, are simple. They provide that on receipt of the *razinamas* donating land, the Tahsildar shall obtain a report and ascertain whether any amounts are due to Government either as arrears of land revenue or otherwise. On completion of the enquiry, the Tahsildar accepts the *razinama*, and the land from then on vests in the Government. The Committee (appointed by Vinobaji) then selects the persons to whom it is to be granted. The grant is subject to the condition that if a co-operative society is formed in the village, the recipient will join it. Another condition is that the land will not be sold for ten years. If the land granted is a cultivable waste, and the grantee reclaims and begins to cultivate it within two years of his receiving possession, it will be exempt from revenue assessment during the first three years. No stamp fee or registration charge will be levied.

Similar rules with modifications to suit local conditions are expected to be framed in other States.

In Hyderabad, the Committee has decided to allot each family an acre of wet land or one acre for each family member in case of dry land, subject to a maximum of six acres. Allotments on a similar scale are to be made in the Madhya Pradesh. In the case of Vindhya Pradesh, the size of allotment may be raised. For U. P., allocation to an individual grantee may be on a smaller scale, as the average size of holdings is much smaller here. No final decision on the matter has, however, been taken so far. (H. T., 14-11-51)

Charges Answered

In the morning a visitor asked me sharply, and pointedly how long my work will go on. He suggested that legislation should be brought in to redistribute land as soon as possible. My plan is based on non-violence. Non-violence does not rule out legislation. But it should be legislation backed by public opinion. The majority opinion should be in favour of it. It does not matter if some people are opposed to it. The main thing is that it

should be generally acceptable to people and they should be mentally prepared for it.

I say this because Communists also want legislation. They begin with murder and want to bring in legislation at the end. My plan also envisages legislation at the end, but I want to begin with pity and kindness. When every heart begins to feel that the present order is unjust, when pity is created and a proper understanding of the situation brought about, legislation can come in at the end. This is the non-violent way.

There is no escape from the position that land belongs to all. As I have said again and again, land is God's free gift like sun and air and water. The Hindi poet, Maithili Saran Gupta, has emphasized this point in a recent poem on this mission. Some think that I began by asking for land in charity, and now I have begun to ask for it as a right. This is not so. From the very beginning, I have asked for justice. But it is God's justice, not legal justice. I have cleared this point in my book, *Swaraj Shastra*, a grammar of politics.

When in jail 20 years ago, I had told Sane Guruji that legislation should be enacted for redistribution of land. I did not remember this. But Sane Guruji had written about it, and Shri Kishorial Mashruwala had read the passage and reminded me of it.

One way of redistributing land is by force and violence. Another is through non-violence and I am preparing the ground for the use of the peaceful method. In this method, the main work is of spreading the idea. Propagation of an idea takes time in the beginning. But once it spreads, there is no more delay in accomplishing things. I do not think it would require many years to spread my ideas about land. If all work hard in propagating, even one year would be enough to complete the task. Success, however, would depend on their persuasive power, their sincerity and their attitude to the problem.

While collecting land, I have done my best to see that gifts are made without pressure of any kind. I have been at pains to maintain purity in this work. I believe my ideas are right. I want equal treatment for all. If my intention is pure, I have little doubt that the idea would catch on and my mission would be achieved without much delay.

The present law lays down that compensation should be paid for land. This is as it should be, in the present social set-up. In any case, *jagirdars*, big land-owners and zamindars are our own brethren. Their interests should not be ignored. In order to secure this, payment of compensation is not against the tenets of non-violence. But compensation need not be paid or accepted in full. I hope to tell big land-owners that they should accept only as much as was necessary for their own needs and donate even from the compensation received by them.

In God's world, I want equality as God wished. I am collecting land for the landless. I want each village to become like a family, but only through persuasion and affection.

Agent of the Poor

Some people say I am an agent of the rich, of the landlords. The truth is that I am an agent of the poor. I am presenting their case. I have lived among them and have tried to make my life like theirs. But I want to be big landlords' agent too, if they give me generously. If they are liberal in giving away their land, I shall not have any hesitation in becoming their agent. I hope that they will behave generously and the charge that I am their agent would be justified. If I am the agent both of the rich and the poor, I shall be glad, for that is the aim of Sarvodaya.

There is also another complaint made against me. I am considered dangerous. Even some of those who have lived with Gandhiji allege that I am bringing the law into disrepute. It is alleged that I am assailing people's right to own land by declaring that land belonged to everyone

like the sun, air and water. If the law does not help in redistributing land, my work will pave the way for the Communists.

My way might be more dangerous than that of the Communists, if people were stingy and wanted to hold on to their lands. Not that my plan or my ideas would provide excitement for the murder of zamindars, but stingy, miserly people would lose their prestige, their respect, which is worse than losing one's life.

Thus there are two charges against me. Some say that I am a supporter of the old system. Others say I open the way for Communists to take charge. The fact that opposite charges are made against me shows that my work is on the right lines.

I am an humble servant with goodwill towards all. I have faith in the people. I shall go to U. P. and explain my ideas. Everyone says that people do not want to part with land. Still I have the courage to go about asking people to give it away. Such a request does need courage. I have that courage because of my utter humility. I go everywhere. I can go to a rich man's palace as well as to a poor man's hut. I also approach people of the middle class.

In everyone I see the image of God Himself. The great Hindi poet, Tulsidas, has said that if one went on praising and propitiating the Master, one could get anything for the asking and live a life of peace and comfort. That is my attitude. I shall praise people, never denounce them or say harsh things against them. Everyone has his good points. I am convinced that people have great qualities. They have to be discovered and appreciated. I shall approach them with humility and am sure they will give what I want. It is with this sense of devotion that I approach and it is with humility that I hope to carry on my work. (H. T., 24-11-'51)

SHRI VINOBA'S TELANGANA TOUR

IX

April 21, Vavilapalli (Seventh Halt, 12 miles)

The bee-line distance between Sarvail and Vavilapalli, our next halt in the scheduled programme, was only seven miles. But the people of Narayanpur wanted Vinoba to visit their village and Vinoba agreed, even though it involved a meandering of about six miles, because they had promised to secure land-gifts.

We reached Narayanpur by sun-rise. The village was once the flourishing capital of a kingdom and had the look of an old city with roads, arched gates, the dilapidated fort and the massive rampart. The population was mainly Muslim. We got 54 acres and 38 gunthas of land, from a single person.

Addressing the villagers, Vinoba said that the village had not been included in the programme, but their insistence made him change the programme. But he made out of it a bargain in the interest of the landless, and secured for them the gift of land.

Vinoba diagnosed the malady of Telangana. He said, "Our villages are suffering from a malignant disease. The rich exploit the poor and fatten at their cost. We felt that the disease should be attacked and treated. We therefore prescribed that the rich should give away their lands in charity. The prescription is both a remedy for the disease and a reward for service of the physician.

"I am glad that you gave so much land for the Harijans. This is how people should learn to look after the well-being of the entire village. We are like five fingers on the hand. The fingers are not all of equal length, but they work together. Even so, there are in the village, big people and small people. But if they combine and work together and in harmony all could be happy.

"I hope that this is only a beginning, which will grow and expand until all of you are equally happy and prosperous."

I have said above that Narayanpur was once the capital of an old kingdom. The remains of the old capital may be still seen. It was here in the Rajkonda Hill that Poet

Potana was kept imprisoned by the king who wanted the Poet to dedicate his great work, the Telugu Bhagawatham, to him. Poet Potana was a peasant, but he was a great scholar and an equally great devotee. Absolutely above temptation, and averse to worldly riches, it was not for him to seek a king's favour or fear his wrath. He refused to do the king's bidding.

Vinoba referred to Potana whenever there was an occasion, either in the course of conversations or speeches, and drew the attention of the workers to the study of his Bhagawat. Potana's Bhagawat occupies the same place in Telugu as the Ramayana of Tulasidas in Hindi. However, when in the course of a workers' meeting Vinoba once enquired how many of them had read Potana's Bhagawat, only one hand went up. Vinoba was surprised to find that they did not read a book which had such a universal appeal. It was, as such, the people's book, and the workers, pledged to the service of the people, could neglect reading it only at their cost. Vinoba explained to the workers the need of studying and reciting, as part of their daily programme, the sayings and writings of great saints for the purification of one's mind. It is the source from which one derives one's capacity for work and service, and the lack of it results in the diminution of one's urge and capacity to work. Moreover, workers could not serve the people adequately unless they had assimilated the wisdom of a book which had such a strong hold on the people's minds and influenced their lives so greatly. Whoever wanted to serve the villagers must be able to share with them the noble ideas and sentiments which have become a part of their mental make-up and the spiritual climate of the region, through such great books.

Shri Keshava Rao, Shri Kodanda Reddi and Shri Ramakrishna Reddi who accompanied us on our Telangana tour with other workers, were very much devoted to Potana. They often related to us anecdotes from the poet's life, and recited portions from his Bhagawat, and we moved along in a highly edified atmosphere. On this particular day, Potana was the main theme of our talk throughout our walk.

It is reported that the hills by the side of the village are still infested by the Communists. They have their hide-outs there where they keep stored their guns, ammunitions and radio-sets. The hills appeared into sight, one after another, like the petals of a blossoming lotus. It occurred to me that the Communists were bees imprisoned in the inside of the lotus and I wondered how they felt while we moved on freely and merrily.

Such happy and ennobling incidents and experiences are a part of our daily life. Vinoba himself remarked, "The profound spiritual experiences which are coming to me in the *yatra*, could never have been possible in a railway journey. I have travelled a lot by train previously, but the whole thing was too insipid by comparison."

In the room where Vinoba was lodged, there was on the wall a big painting of Shri Hanuman, his face irradiant with the glow of love and devotion. Vinoba kept gazing at it for a long while. His own face nowadays shines with all his inner beneficence, quite as brilliantly.

One is simply struck with amazement to see all his efforts to identify himself with the people in this part. Every day there is a regular recitation of the Telugu Gita and the Potana Bhagawat. Though he cannot speak Telugu fluently, he asks everyone who comes to see him to speak in Telugu. On reaching a village, he makes it a point to go round it and visit as many homes as he can. He would have a look at the kitchen, the sanctum where they keep the deity, the cradle of the child, and the cow-shed. He gives one the impression of a scientist in his laboratory intent on his experiment, and immersed in his quest.

Vavilapalli has a large population of a community known as Lambada. They originally came from Rajasthan and have been settled here for several generations. They have, however, preserved their Marwadi costumes and dialect. It was a picturesque sight to see about forty Lambada women dressed in their elaborate Marwadi attires, and reciting Marwadi songs. They are petty traders. Vinoba advised them about their dress, costumes, ornaments, trade etc.

In his post-prayer speech in the evening, Vinoba referred to his talk with the workers during the day. It was here that he was led to make a statement, which has since become famous, "I have, now grown into the incarnation of Vaman. Give me only three steps of land; that will be quite enough for me." The background out of which this significant statement burst forth like a flash, had been gathering since morning when the Muslim friend announced his generous donation of nearly fifty five acres of land. The incident had moved Vinoba quite profoundly. Here too, the gifts came in a spontaneous flow. The owner of the house himself gave twenty-five acres; there were other gifts and it appeared that the trickle which had now started was fairly on its way to widen into a mighty stream.

Vaman had covered and outdistanced the whole of space with his three steps. Vinoba's demand for three steps of land was equally symbolic in that it carried within itself the seed of the future revolution, which may encompass the whole world and bring the long-cherished solace and happiness to the dispossessed of the earth.

(Translated from Hindi)

D. M.

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