

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

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TWO ANNAS

THE MADRAS EXPERIMENT

[Readers know that the Congress is outright for Prohibition, by now for more than two generations; and actually it launched its implementation the moment it came to power in the Provinces in 1937. At that time Madras, under the wise and thorough-going leadership of Shri C. R. began the experiment in one district, and it was keenly watched by the whole country. Late Shri M. D. wrote about it under the caption 'Advance Prohibition',* in the *Harijan* of 12-3-38. The following is reproduced from it. Thank God, Shri C. R. is again at the helm of affairs in Madras; we hope his vigilant and unerving eye will immediately see that the state of prohibition work in Madras needs his immediate attention, even to stem the rot that seems to have set in in this regard. The following story of the Madras prohibition experiment boldly undertaken 15 years ago, will, I hope, remind Madras of its great past and awaken it to its equally great responsibility.

10-4-52.

— M. P.

PS. The following good news which arrived after the above lines were penned must be noted here. Immediately after assuming the office of Chief Minister of Madras Shri Rajaji, in the course of his talk with journalists, told them about the Madras prohibition policy as follows (*The Hindu*—11-4-52):—

Q: Will Prohibition be enforced rigidly? There is a feeling that it is not working satisfactorily.

Chief Minister: Why do you say so? So far as I am concerned, I am greatly satisfied with the present condition of the people who were formerly addicted to drink. It is the condition of the people we must mainly concern ourselves with.

"Prohibition has brought in new addicts", a reporter remarked. Mr Rajagopalachari immediately replied: "It is all imagination. It is overdoting the faults of other people."

"Are any of you addicted to drink?", Mr Rajagopalachari asked the assembled reporters. Without waiting for an answer he asked, "Can any of you easily become a new addict under the present condition? I want you to give me personal evidence; is it easy to get liquor?"

The answer was in the negative.

"Then, do not put me that question," Mr Rajagopalachari observed. "If you make me talk on that subject, I would become doctrinaire."

After a pause for a second or two, Mr Rajagopalachari declared: "So many things have to be reviewed, especially administrative aspects of things—not so much policies as administrative aspects."

14-4-52.

— M. P.]

All the Congress Governments are committed to a policy of complete prohibition, and all have begun the experiment in right earnest and in their own way according to the circumstances

in their respective provinces. The Madras experiment has been on since October 1st, 1937, and it is being conducted with the vigilant care and the thoroughgoing way which characterize everything that is associated with the name of the Madras Prime Minister. The enforcement was in the hands of the police working under the District Magistrate and the District Superintendent of Police assisted by a Prohibition Officer and a special Development Officer. The results of the experiment achieved so far have been noted in detail in the latest report by the Collector, Mr A. F. W. Dixon, who was in no way pre-possessed in favour of the experiment. In his long report of sixteen foolscap typed sheets, he has in no way overdrawn the picture. He notes the large increase in the number of palmyra trees tapped for sweet toddy, as also the evident risk of their being tapped for fermented toddy if there was not the necessary vigilance; he also notes a few cases of smuggling of ganja and opium, and says that, without non-official help, it will not be possible to put a stop to smuggling; he also says that illicit distillation is being kept under control and appears to be going on only on a small scale and in a very secretive manner; he notes to some extent a tendency to drink methylated spirit and asks the District Medical Officer to write a Tamil leaflet describing the deadly effects of drinking the spirit; also an increase in gambling arising out of the attempt by former drinkers to relieve the boredom of the evening hours; but notes on the whole that "as month succeeds month without general signs of a deterioration in the situation, the chances of ultimate success become rosier."

This much regarding the success of the actual working of prohibition. When he comes to the effect of prohibition on the lives of the people, he notices a definite improvement all round and summarizes the large mass of information received from various resources and also his own personal impressions in about six sheets. Suffice it to say here that this is the deliberate conclusion he has arrived at as a result of his own impressions on observations:

"Viewing generally the effect of prohibition on the lives of the people, I am convinced, after 3 months' experience, that prohibition is proving a great boon to the poorer classes in the District. Leading as they do a hand-to-mouth existence, they simply cannot

* See *Drink, Drugs & Gambling*—By Gandhiji, pages xi, 175, Price Rs 2-8-0, Postage etc. As. 10. Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad-9.

afford the expensive luxury of drink which used to reduce the small earnings of the labouring classes to a miserable pittance, quite insufficient for the proper maintenance of a family. Drink brought misery into the homes of many thousands of the poorer classes in this District, misery in the shape of domestic unhappiness, insufficiency of food and crushing debt. Already in thousands of homes in this District conditions have changed to a remarkable extent. Domestic brawls have ceased, a sufficiency of food is available, and the grip of the money-lender has relaxed. This has happened within a short space of four months. If the Act continues to be enforced not less effectively than it is now, I anticipate a great and permanent improvement in the material well-being of the peasants and labourers of this District."

Let us see how much these good results have cost. Said C. R. in his Budget Speech :

"The net cost of Prohibition for the last six months of the Financial year 1937-38 will amount to Rs 13,19,000 made up of Rs 13 lakhs loss of Excise Revenue and Rs 51,000 cost of additional police and special officers, offset by a saving of Rs 32,000 on the excise staff previously employed in the District." Who will say that the moral and material results do not far outweigh this cost? Apart from individual cases here is a case of the moral effect of prohibition as applied to a mill area affecting 2,000 workers. Whereas these workers were irregular and inefficient before prohibition and night brawls were a regular feature of the area, the workers have now become, regular and more reliable, the brawls have now ceased, machines are better looked after, "production increased and expenditure decreased. The output has actually doubled. Women were sickly, dirty and clad in rags. Now every woman has two or three saris, most of them have petticoats, and 50 per cent wash daily. Their financial position has improved, they have redeemed their jewels, which they mortgaged due to extravagance. Children are better clad and cleaner. Dwelling houses have improved and lights have been introduced into houses which were formerly unlit."

The United Provinces Government have also set about the task in right earnest and their experiment, like the Madras one, has several features which might be copied in other provinces. Too great an emphasis cannot be placed on the Excise Ministers of different provinces getting into touch with one another, comparing notes and trying in their own provinces the measures that have been tried with success in other provinces.

M. D.

Correct Text

Referring to Shri Mumtaz Ali's letter published in *Harijan* dated 15th March, 1952, Shri Vinoba writes that he agrees that the correct text is *Khaataman Nabeeyin* and not *Khaatimin Nabeeyin* as printed in reports. The latter reading is a clerical error. But many have translated the correct text also to mean that no new prophet was to come hereafter. Vinoba is glad that Shri Mumtaz Ali accepts his interpretation.

Wardha, 4-4-52

K. G. M.

SHRI VINOBA'S UTTAR PRADESH TOUR

I

We left Delhi on Nov. 24. The following three months from then on were a period of test for *bhoodan* work. November 24 was the day when the candidates filled in the nomination forms. Political workers all over the country plunged headlong into the whirls of election-work which continued unabated till February 24, when most of the results were announced. It was suggested from several quarters that Vinoba should suspend his work until after the elections. Even some of the close associates who were accompanying us were in favour of postponement at least during the polling days. But Vinobaji would not agree. He said how could he stop work even for a brief period, when he knew that Death was continually pursuing him from behind? The Uttar Pradesh workers who accompanied us and who were a great help indeed had to leave us now and then on account of their preoccupation with election work elsewhere. There were occasions when we were left to pursue our journey almost by ourselves.

But the enthusiasm of the people sustained us. They gathered together in thousands wherever we went. Their hearts seemed to overflow with love and sympathy and hope. From 10 a.m. which is the time when the party reaches the day's destination, the people would begin streaming in. They would stay all through the day, until prayer, the last item in the day's programme, was over. And Vinoba would not spend more than a day in a place, be it a village or a town. In the villages he met the *Daivranarayana* (the Lord in the form of the Poor); in the towns he tried to find out persons, who would be his servants. In the towns the donors were few in number, but the donations were big; in the villages though the donations were small, the donors were many,—a feature which was indicative of the moral superiority of the villages. Vinoba, as is known to those who know him, has a partiality for the villages. That is right and quite natural, for India lives in her villages and our efforts in her service must be directed to improving the living conditions of the villagers. The strength of our villages will be the measure of the strength of our country.

In his speech at the Pawaya Conference, Vinoba said, "The elections are over, and we should now join together in the service of the poor. We may have our differences in politics, but that is no reason why we should not come together for implementing common programmes like the *Bhoodan Yajna*. Indeed we should do it; it will be an example of our wider unity. People may choose whomsoever they may to represent them, but the workers must continue to preserve their unity in the field of service, by working untidely. I have been explaining and emphasizing this obvious truth wherever I have gone. *Bhoodan Yajna* provides the best platform for preserving this unity in practice. I have little doubt that given necessary co-operation between parties, this work can succeed. I need hardly add that therein also lies the good of the parties."

The period was one of trial also from another viewpoint. Our journey lay through the *tarai* (valley) region. We were walking with the Himalayas close on our side, and at several points we actually touched them. Cool and exhilarating though the breezes from the Ganga and the Yamuna were, the season being winter, it was severely cold and we had to be constantly on our guard lest any one should catch pneumonia. Even so, one of us was caught in it and had to be confined in bed for several days. Fortunately he has recovered and joined us again. Then there was that cycle accident, referred to in these columns before. For the first two or three days Vinoba's pain was confined to the region of the waist, but later it extended to the knees and became so acute that walking was out of question. On our persistent requests, he agreed to be carried on a chair, and this we did upto Kashipur. But the track was dusty and uneven, and the

mornings were so cold that it was quite a job to cross the rivers on the way. Vinobaji therefore discarded the chair and decided to trot in a bullock-cart.

Thus it was, as I said in the beginning, a period of tests and trials. First, because of the cycle accident, and secondly, because under the pressure of the elections, the workers had hardly time and energy to spare for this work. In several districts, a few local workers had to make all the arrangements. And the strain was so great, that they had not the energy left in them to contact the prospective donors at places which Vinoba covered, much less could they go to the neighbouring villages. Thus most of the gifts we received were voluntary. They were inspired by the irresistible force of the personality of Vinoba, his sincerity of purpose, and the moving eloquence and profound learning which marked his utterances. Indeed, the people felt, that here was the man who had nothing but the good of all at his heart and who was withal capable of ushering in a new age with appropriately new means and thus averting the impending disaster.

The total land-gifts received are quite satisfactory and reflect well the growing response of the people. After Delhi, from Meerut to Sitapur we covered nineteen districts and received 28,308 acres. Pilibhit with its 11,326 acres tops the list, while Rampur, with its 92 marks the rear.

The average in Telangana was 200 acres per day; from Wardha to Delhi it was 250, while from Delhi to Sitapur it has been 315. The average per donor previously was 12 acres, now it stands at 16. Of course, it falls far short of Vinoba's expectation, actually it is only a tenth of what he aims at. And he drew attention to this lag between the actual and the ideal as he envisaged it, and appealed to the people everywhere to make it up.

For want of space it is not possible to relate all the love and goodwill our simple village-folk showed for the cause. It was a moving experience to see the poor bring in their offerings to the *Yajna*, the offerings which were quite humble outwardly, but great and ennobling in their effect by virtue of the spirit of devotion with which they were distinct. There was not a day but presented us with some unique instances. I have already written in my previous despatches about the blind donor Shri Ramcharan Chaudhari of Chaudahpur. He came to us in his cart at the dead of night. Vinoba was asleep. Lest the noise should wake him, the talk one of us had with him aside was in whispers. He was asked why he had come, and he said, "I hear that the Maharaj (the great one) accepts land-gifts and distributes them to the poor. I have twelve *bighas* and I wish to offer them to the Mahatmaj." Be it remembered that Ramcharan was blind! We got him fill in the gift-deed, and Ramcharan departed for his village. The incident was reported to Vinoba in the morning. He referred to it in the prayer-speech that evening and said, "Last night a friend named Ramcharan came to us and gifted away to the *Yajna* twelve *bighas* of land which was all that he had. People say he was blind. I do not believe it. Actually it is we who are blind, that we cannot see that in the form of Ramcharan, Rama's own *charan* (i.e. feet) walked to our doors to bless our work."

Another incident happened when we were at Kalandugi a small village in Nainital District. An old woman in a neighbouring village heard about it and decided to offer her lands, part of which lay on the hills and part in the *tarai*. She reached us at eleven in the night when we were all asleep. But this did not damp her spirit. She kept a night long vigil at our doors, and I found her waiting for us in the morning when I came out after the early morning bell. The formalities of filling in the form were gone into and the old mother placed her all the land and the house at the feet of the Lord, and went away. Indeed, her gift was like an inexhaustible provision to sustain our faith during the journey.

Karhai is a small village. It was not included in the original programme, but we decided to camp there, because the next halt, Etawah, was a long way off. A friend here donated all his four acres without disclosing his name. It had the effect of prompting others to raise their donations further; one raised his offer from five to ten, and another from eleven to twenty. Still another, who was not present in the prayer-meeting met us on the way as we were returning after the evening meals at our host's. He made over to us all his ten acres and filled in the form. Thus we had about sixty acres in this small village.

Thakur Raghunath Singh of Etawah accompanied us throughout our tour in the district. It was Bapu's anniversary day. Vinoba had just finished his prayer-speech. Thakur Sahib rose to speak, but he was overcome with emotion, and words failed him. The eyes flowed with tears, and haltingly he said, "Vinobaji, we are two brothers. We have ten acres, and we lay it all by your feet. You may give us as *prasad* (a part of the offering) what you may consider to be sufficient for our livelihood."

"Thou shalt eat what is left after thou hast offered", says *Ishopanishad*. These donations fairly embodied the spirit of that injunction. Needless to say that they added considerably to the moral strength of the movement. I can recall dozens of such instances, but I shall give only a few more. At village Sherpur, (*tahsil* Purnapur in the Pilibhit district) three Muslim zamindars contributed 2,500 acres each. It is a compact plot of 7,500 acres on the bank of the Sharda Canal. We received altogether 10,000 acres in Purnapur, on that day. And they assured us that from Purnapur they would collect 25,000 acres. Thereupon the mathematician in Vinoba began immediately to calculate: There are 2,000 *tahsils* in India. He had demanded five crore acres from the country. So if every *tahsil* contributed a quota of 25,000 acres, the demand could be easily met. If Purnapur could do it, why not others?

In Ujhani a generous lady gave over her entire share of about five to six thousand acres. After Delhi, many donations have reached us from far off places by letters and wires. They came from almost all provinces—Saurashtra, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra, Karnatak and Punjab. From Madhya Pradesh a nine year old boy sent us a gift deed for sixty acres on the birthday of Shri Jawaharlal. His letter, accompanied with his father's consent, has already appeared in the papers.

A Muslim owner from Bangalore, Shri Syed Hussain, announced a gift of a thousand acres on Dr. Rajendra Prasad's birthday. He wrote that Vinobaji was getting land so far only in North India. He made this gift to him with a view to make the beginning of the movement in the South.

Shri Gangasingh, a jagirdar from Madhya Bharat, has conveyed his desire to donate a thousand acres. He has very humbly requested Vinobaji to depute someone to choose whatever land he liked from his possessions.

Socialist friends have given active co-operation in the *Bhoodan* work at various places. They have donated lands, given us company, and taken part in the propagation of the message. They feel that Vinobaji is doing just the work they are anxious to have done. But people were surprised when Shri Baburam Paliwal, the Communist leader of Mainpuri, also joined the list of donors. He gave two acres to Vinoba when we stopped at his village for breakfast and promised his co-operation in the work.

These and numerous other instances, are evidence — if evidence was needed — that He who inspired Vinoba to initiate this great *yajna* is inspiring others also to respond to it. What indeed is impossible for the Lord of the Universe who provides food to the new-born babe simultaneously with its birth? The need of the hour is to forward with faith and courage,

(From Hindi)

D. M.

HARIJAN

April 19

1952

SARVODAYA POLITICS

I find that some have taken my reference to Shri Shankarrao Deo's views in my article *The Parable and Its Moral* (29th March) as an expression of disapproval of his views. This is not quite correct. If I had a definite disagreement with Shri Deo, I would have preferred not to publish his article at all, rather than raise a controversy in *Harijan* with an esteemed co-worker.

Sarvodaya or Constructive workers are not and cannot remain quite aloof from politics. There is no difference of opinion on this matter, so far as I know, among leading Constructive workers. But their views are somewhat in a nebulous state at present. Different influences and approaches are working upon their minds. All have worked with Gandhiji for a long time, and each has indelibly assimilated some fundamental principles from him; but each according to his capacity and inclinations. Hence, it is inevitable that different emphasis is laid by different thinkers on the various aspects of politics, Sarvodaya and Constructive work. For instance, Shri Kaka Kalelkar may fairly be considered a loyal Congressman; Shri Kripalaniji as a protestant Congressman; Shri Shankarrao Deo's approach seems to be nearer the Socialists; Shri Kumarappa often speaks in a language approaching that of the Communists. Vinobaji would influence politics from outside by creating public opinion and voluntary activities of the people in favour of a desired objective; he also tries to bring all the different political parties on a common platform, by putting forth a programme acceptable to all. I feel myself nearer him than others. But my principal contribution consists in trying to understand the views of every one of them and see if a common way of thinking and working beneficial to humanity can be evolved out of it. I have no wish to join any party, to fight any, or to form a new one of my own. I have no objection to the formation of a new party, if thereby the public could be better served. Hence, I try to place before the public my views in order to help, within the limits of truth and non-violence, the various leaders and their activities, and guide the public in thinking clearly on matters concerning their welfare. My views are a sort of loud thinking.

Sarvodaya Samaj is not a political organization by itself. Hence, it was that I conceded in my article that "as legislators or members of particular parties, they (members of Sarvodaya Samaj, or for the matter of that of the Sarva

Seva Sangh) may have their own methods and programmes. . . ."

If the leading Constructive workers can come to a common understanding and formulate definite political principles, methods of work and targets to be achieved, I shall feel only too glad.

Wardha, 9-4-'52

K. G. MASHRUWALA

VINOBA'S REPLIES TO ADDRESSES

[Vinoba was presented with addresses by Harijans and Socialists at Deoria, on 20th March, 1952. The following are extracts from his replies.]

Equality and Communism

"*Samya-yoga* (practice of equality) takes its stand on the inner unity of man. It recognizes the great principle that all Life is one. And on the foundation of that spiritual unity, it seeks to build an equitable order in which everything will have its right place. The creation of the Lord is full of the manifold splendour of diversity. In any order which we may create for the welfare of man, we cannot and need not destroy this diversity. *Samya-yoga* is opposed to inequalities; it is not opposed to right discrimination. A mother loves all her children equally; nevertheless, she feeds her weaker darling on milk, which she may not give to others. This is an instance of wise discrimination. The cow lives on fodder and man on grain. A *Samya-yogi* (practiser of equality) cannot ignore this difference, and will therefore discriminate between the two in feeding them. And because *Samya-yoga* makes use of the light of discrimination, it provides scope for development to every individual. *Samya-yoga* bases itself on inner unity and armed with discrimination it seeks to build on that secure foundation a justly balanced order. *Samya-vada* (communism) on the other hand, is blissfully ignorant of the Spirit, which it denies. And because Spirit alone can base the equality we want to create, communism is an institution with no base. It seeks to impose equality from without, an equality which is wholly artificial. It does not provide scope for the development of the personality of every individual. And because it aims at an artificial equality imposed from without, it is led to employ violent means. Thus the two orders, though both seek equality are as apart from each other, as heaven and earth."

Place of Harijans in Bhoodan

In reply to an address by Harijans, Vinoba said that he knew their difficulties. They were not only landless, but in some cases they had not even the right to own land. He had therefore decided to give at least a third of the lands, he received, to Harijans. *Bhoodan-yajna* was a basic programme of the type of 'Take care of the one and the many will take care of themselves'. It sustained and served every other constructive work. It would certainly help raise the Harijan community. At present they worked merely as labourers. The *Bhoodan-yajna* would give them

the dignity of being the owners of land, which would enable them to serve the country not only physically but also intellectually. *Bhoodan-yajna* was paving the way for *Samyak-yoga*.

The Basis of Socialism

"Dr. Lohia says that *Bhoodan-yajna* will take 300 years to achieve its object. I had calculated that at the present pace it will take 500 years, if I had to do it alone. When Dr. Lohia says that it will take 300 years, I take it that he is going to help me fully in my mission, and reduce the period by 200 years at least. We must have faith in human goodness. That is the basis of service.

"Socialism is based on the postulate that the society is essentially good. If you believe in the essential goodness of society, you must agree to what I say. It is like the *kalp-vriksha*, the heavenly tree which fulfils all desires.

Power and Service

"It has been alleged by the Socialists that I do not want legislation. The allegation is misconceived. I do want legislation but preparatory to that, I first want to create the right atmosphere without which legislation cannot bear fruit.

"I do not deny that one can serve his people even through the power of office. I have often said so, but I add that power, as a means of revolutionary service, is useless. I therefore want all of them, those who have won the elections as also those who have lost them, to take to service. Both of them accept the view that they cannot win power without service, and that they cannot serve without power. But the latter half of this belief is a dangerous delusion. They begin by saying: power for service, go on to — service for power, and eventually end by installing 'power' as the chief deity on the altar of worship, though they continue to pay lip homage to service. They have to do this because, unfortunately for them, without service they cannot ascend to power. Thus real disinterested service becomes impossible and parties tend to accuse one another of greed for power and cease to co-operate even for those things on which there is common agreement. I therefore appeal to you to take to service without any thought of power.

Come All for Service of the Poor

"The poor are looking expectantly to us for help. They are looking to all parties. I therefore invite you all to come and help me so that what I would be able to achieve in 500 years, if I had to work alone, and in 300 years with the co-operation of Dr. Lohia, and in 100 years with help of the Congress, may be accomplished in the short span of five years with joint efforts of us all."

(From Hindi)

D. M.

SARVODAYA

Its Principles and Programme

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NOTES

President's Election

I confess I am not intelligent enough to understand the political or other considerations, which prompted the Communist leader to put up Prof. K. T. Shah to contest the Presidential election against Dr. Rajendra Prasad. Even if the Communists or all non-Congress parties desired to put up a rival, they ought to have sought out one, about whom the general public might feel, "Well, he too is equally great and it does not matter whom the legislators elect for them." Prof. Shah knows my personal warm and high regard for him and so he will not misunderstand me when a friend says that he would have done well if he had resisted the temptation to stand for this election.

Since the President of the Indian Republic is more a titular head like the British King than a head vested with the greatest powers in the State like the U. S. President it is desirable that his nomination should be unanimous. A distinction must be made between the head of the Union, and the head of the Government at the Centre. I do not know if the Congress consulted the leaders of other parties before announcing Dr. Rajendra Prasad's name. It seems it did not. If so, like some of the other wrong precedents, which the Congress has set up after elections, this is also one. If it had consulted the other parties, I think this rather unseemly competition could have been avoided. I do not believe that the essence of democracy lies in contested elections.

However, I expect that the legislators will not make the President's election a matter of party politics, and in casting their votes will take into account how the general public would look at the matter.

Wardha, 11-4-'52

Peasants of Italy Watch Vinoba

Shri M. P. T. Acharya, now of Bombay, having lived for a long time in Europe as an anarchist worker is better known among pacifist and labour organizations there than in India. He writes frequently in some of the papers of the European Anarchist Labour organizations.

These organizations have read accounts of Vinobaji's land-gift-mission, and been much attracted towards it. They have read Vinobaji formally referred to as Acharya Vinoba Bhave, or Bhave Acharya, and have confused him with Shri M. P. T. Acharya, writes the latter.

He adds,

"They have also written me a letter in which they say:

"The Italian paper *L'Incontro* has informed us of your action in favour of Indian pariahs, and we shall be pleased to publish your observations on your activities in this vast world which has recognized that liberation has to be pursued for the objects which the Mahatma has proposed."

"Recently, I read an article in a German paper telling (about) the activities of Shri Bhavé appreciatively.

"I am sorry for the confusion but it can be cleared."

The land problem is, I understand, as grave in Italy as in India. The Italian peasant is as wretched as the Indian, and Germany is no better, particularly since the war. Naturally therefore they watch Vinobaji's movement eagerly to see if it will show a way out for their own difficulties. Vinoba has often said that the land problem is a world problem, and if India tackles it in a non-violent way, it will show the way to world peace.

Wardha, 29-3-52

K. G. M.

An Ill-thought Proposition

Thanks to the Central Government stopping the subsidy that it was giving to urban rationing areas in the State, the Government of Bombay is required to enhance the price of rationed cereals by about 50 per cent. Naturally this has created resentment specially among the lower income groups in urban areas. Political parties and groups in opposition have, it seems, seized this opportunity of the misery of the people to agitate against the Government. It may be granted that this is as might be under a system of party Government. But it has its limits. And in this short note I wish to point at a sinister feature of this movement.

As the reader knows, the Socialists, the S. C. Federationists and some others have expressed the view that Government might give up, if necessary, the Prohibition policy and utilize the excise revenue to subsidize imported food grains. It would have been an understandable proposition from the mouth of those who are anti-prohibitionists and are for drink and its revenue. But it is not so. The people mentioned above aver that they are not opposed to prohibition. However, suppose, for argument's sake, one agrees to the proposition of finding money from excise. Does it really help the poor workers and peasants on whose name it is advanced? Who pays the excise revenue? Is it not these very people mostly? And do they stand to gain in return? Surely not. By paying excise duties and their drink bill they will begin to ruin themselves and their families and will almost have no money left to buy subsidized grains. They will squander away their income over drink, as they did in pre-prohibition days. Therefore it is not wise to suggest excise income for grain subsidy. Prohibition by itself is a distinct gain, and it cannot be and should not be bartered away for a mere monetary gain by way of paltry subsidy. It must also be noted that workers in factories will get their monthly D. A. proportionately enhanced due to the raising of prices. Government may also well see its way to helping in some way. But prohibition should be held to be too sacred to be drawn into party-

politics in this manner. If at all additional income is felt necessary, other sources might well be found out, but not at the cost of the ruination of our poor people by supplying them drink.

13-4-'52

M. P. DESAI

HIS TECHNIQUE AND ACHIEVEMENT

(By Pyarelal)

IV — Sevagram

C. THE THIRD PERIOD, 1934 TO 1940

We now come to the third period (1934-1940). He settled down at Wardha. From there he shifted to his village retreat at Sevagram, to carry out his work of educating and rejuvenating the people and through that the Congress, for the last fight. The way to inculcate non-violence as a living force, he reasoned, was by making millions weave the pattern of non-violence into the basic activities of their lives and in their everyday social relationships. He gave it the name of constructive non-violence.

The names of the organizations which he founded for the purpose and through which he worked is legion. I need not enumerate them or describe them here. A few characteristics which are common to all of them, however, may be noted. Firstly, they had all the imprimatur and sanction of the Congress but functioned autonomously of the Congress. Secondly, they were instruments for the building up of democracy, but they were not democratic in their constitution in the sense that their executives were not elected by popular vote. A reformer and a pioneer cannot afford to be democratic in the sense of following majority decisions. His function is to educate, to lead. Thirdly, whilst they all had their separate funds, the funds were intended to be spent away and not to be hoarded to enable the institutions concerned to live on interest. The institutions concerned were to vindicate their existence by the service they rendered. This served to remove the contradiction noted above between their purpose and constitution and gave to them a truly democratic character in spite of their "undemocratic" constitutions. If they did not cater to a felt need, or if they failed to win public confidence, public support would dry up and they would be forced either to close down or reform. They would never stagnate.

The Frontier Gandhi

The clouds of the second world war had already begun to gather on the horizon when, in fulfilment of his long-cherished dream, he set out for the North-West Frontier Province to collaborate with that great Pathan leader, Badshah Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, popularly known as the Frontier Gandhi, in his efforts to inculcate the non-violence of the brave among his people. Already he had performed the miracle of nearly converting the fierce, fighting Pathans of the rugged North-West Frontier into soldiers of non-violence. The British power, which had always admired their fine fighting qualities, found in the unarmed, non-violent Pathan a

more formidable adversary than the Pathan with his rifle and muzzle-loader *jezail*. But more spade work needed to be done to deepen and widen the foundation of the Pathan's non-violence, which he had so far practised largely as a soldierly discipline. How they planned and dreamt great dreams together, how their plans were interrupted by the outbreak of the Second World War, and finally how on the eve of partition, the Frontier Gandhi returned to his Province to bear testimony to his faith which he had received from Gandhiji, and how he is today bearing witness to it in a Pakistan prison, in a manner worthy of the heroes and martyrs of old, will be found recorded in my book *A Pilgrimage for Peace* * which I would very strongly recommend for perusal to all those who want seriously to study this subject.

D. LAST PHASE

"Quit India" Movement

I now come to the last phase of Gandhiji's life. Though to all appearance he had retired from the Congress, there was one more fight in his belly, the biggest, the best and the last. The World War II flung a challenge in the face of India's self-respect, when India was declared a belligerent country without her consent. But so keen was nationalist India's desire to play her part in the defence of democracies that the landslide in favour of helping the British war effort continued in spite of repeated rebuffs and refusals on the part of the British Government to give her the chance to do so effectively or even with self-respect. Frustration was writ large on every face. Out of that well of despair was born the "Quit India" cry. Never were conditions less favourable for the launching of a non-violent struggle. To many it seemed sheer madness. But with an inner certitude and determination, which staggered everybody, Gandhiji overcame all opposition and rallied round him once more his "old guard" for a final showdown. To him it was an act of faith. To the sceptics he said in effect: "I know that the country is not ready to offer civil disobedience of the purest non-violent type today. But a general who runs away from action because his soldiers are not ready, writes himself down. God has vouchsafed to me a priceless talent in the weapon of non-violence. If I hesitate to put it to use in the present crisis, God will not forgive me. I do not want India to remain a passive and helpless witness when the fate of humanity hangs in the balance. India must not lose her soul."

Pandit Nehru, torn between the conflicting loyalties of the head and heart, divided between his concern for the democracies and his impatience of the continuation of the alien authoritarian rule in India "saw and heard the passion in Gandhiji's eyes" as he discussed with him the pros and cons of the proposition and realized that

"on the whole that passion was the passion of India. Before that mighty urge petty arguments and controversies became small and without much meaning." The Congress took the plunge.

As had happened on so many previous occasions, once again the inner voice of the Prophet proved to be a truer oracle than the arithmetic of political wisdom and in less than four years the seditious slogan of August 8, 1942, became the official programme of action of the British Government and before long even "Quit Asia" became outmoded and gave place to "Quit India".

It is rarely given to a Prophet to lead his people into the Promised Land. That privilege was to be his. But before that, he had to pass through one more ordeal.

Noakhali and Its Aftermath

In October 1946 an orgy of communal madness was let loose in Noakhali in East Bengal which set the pace for a chain of similar cataclysms in other parts of India. He set out on his historic "Do or Die" mission of healing and peace in Noakhali. It was followed by similar "Do or Die" undertakings on his part in Bihar, Calcutta and Delhi. From this point onward, his life became a ceaseless quest after the secret of power that is, non-violence of the strong. If only he could discover it, he was convinced, it would provide the master key that would unlock all locks, avert the division of India and set up a chain reaction of non-violence that would inevitably envelop the whole world. Thus would India fulfil her mission of bringing freedom from fear to a distraught world, by once more presenting to it the gospel of *Ahimsa* — in its expanded form — as she had done three thousand years ago.

Thus, both in his objective and the method of realization he harked back to the tradition of India's ancient saints and seers to which he imparted a new meaning and content. "*Ahimsa*, which is the core of Hinduism, as I have studied Hindu religion, is sought to be explained away by its so-called exponents. But I literally believe in the truth of Patanjali's *sutra* (aphorism)

अहिंसाप्रतिष्ठाप्यम् तत्तद्विधौ वैश्यागः

which means that all hatred must dissolve before *Ahimsa*. Even wild animals are known to shed their fierceness in its presence," he wrote in his journal. To realize it in full became the passion of his life.

In this he nearly succeeded. His fast unto death at Calcutta in August, 1947, achieved the near miracle of quelling the rising tide of communal frenzy and enabled "our one-man-boundary-force", as Lord Mountbatten called him, to accomplish without the use of arms what a boundary force of 50,000 could not in the Punjab. The tidal wave of goodwill which his final "all-in-fast" at Delhi in January 1948 evoked had all the characteristics of an atomic chain reaction.

He had advised the Viceroy and the British Government in effect to quit India with their troops, handing over power to any party they

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liked, and take the risk of leaving India even to chaos or anarchy: "There might be chaos for a while," he said, "we would have to go through the fire no doubt, but the fire would purify us." But his "master plan", though it appealed to the Viceroy, was not acceptable to his own colleagues and so the partition of India came in spite of him. He accepted it as a *fait accompli*. A votary of non-violence may sometimes find himself so placed as to feel the need to endorse a decision which he himself would not have made. He would have been untrue to his faith if he had resorted to non-co-operation with his colleagues because their judgment differed from his own. He was, after all, a born democrat, and when the country and his trusted colleagues accepted partition, he could not very well oppose it by non-co-operation. Only by patient persuasion and service could he induce others to join in his belief, not by imposing his own views even upon his best friends over whom, he confessed, he had, for the time being, lost his original hold. The experience was nothing new. Had he not been through the same thing in 1925, when he handed over the Congress organization to those who had broken away from his programme, only to pave the way for their return in 1930?

Attainment of Independence and His Martyrdom

On 15th August, 1947, India attained independence. But the event brought little joy to its principal architect, who had toiled more than any one else, to realize it. The wave of madness that had swept over the country on the eve of and just after independence saddened him beyond measure and made life for him a veritable bed of agony. Surrounded by the pomp and circumstance of the capital city, he found himself in complete spiritual isolation from his surroundings and from almost all his old colleagues. But he was content to pursue his lonely furrow in hope and in faith. Never did he show himself to greater advantage than during that hectic period, when like a mighty Titan he rushed from one danger spot to another to prop up, as it were, the crumbling heavens. His utterances became commands, passwords, orders of the day. One wonder is that the Congress leaders, now rulers, after all realized the wisdom of his advice and their own mistake in not accepting it in time!

Gandhiji did not even now despair of realizing the fundamental unity of the Indian people, though it had been geographically broken. A Muslim leader of Pakistan, who met him soon after his Delhi fast, envisaged a 50 mile procession of Hindus returning to Pakistan with Gandhiji at the head, and the idea enthralled him. There was the Kashmir fight. He had accepted it even as he had the partition, not that he was reconciled to it or had in any way changed his fundamental attitude on war, but because he was still engaged in perfecting his weapon—

which, though it had demonstrated its matchless efficacy so far in the struggle for India's independence, needed to be overhauled or perhaps redesigned to perform the duty that now confronted it in the new set up. That it could be so redesigned, he had not the slightest doubt in his mind. He had a rough idea how he would proceed. He even felt that he was on the brink of the Great Discovery. But it was not given to him to conduct his experiment further to a successful issue, though he regarded it as a present possibility. In his later writings, there is a sufficient indication of the technique with which he was working and proposed to work. -Let those who are interested in it study it for themselves.

And then the final curtain dropped on the drama. On the 30th of January, 1948, the crown of martyrdom descended upon him and he passed from life upon earth into immortality.

ॐ पूर्णमदम् पूर्णमिदम् पूर्णतुपूर्णमुदच्यते ।

पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

It is for us to consider what use we are going to make of the rich heritage he has left us. Shall we wisely use it and enlarge it, or shall he have lived and died for us in vain?

(End of Lecture II)

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J. D.

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CONTENTS	PAGE
THE MADRAS EXPERIMENT .. M. D.	65
SHRI VINOBA'S UTTAR PRADESH	
TOUR - I .. D. M.	66
SARVODAYA POLITICS .. K. G. Mashruwala	68
VINOBA'S REPLIES TO ADDRESSES .. D. M.	68
HIS TECHNIQUE AND ACHIEVEMENT .. Pyarelal	70
NOTES:	
CORRECT TEXT .. K. G. M.	66
PRESIDENT'S ELECTION .. K. G. M.	69
PEASANTS OF ITALY	
WATCH VINOBA .. K. G. M.	69
AN ILL-THOUGHT PROPOSITION .. M. P. Desai	70
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