

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

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TWO ANNAS

SHRI PATIL'S APPREHENSIONS—II

It was shown last week that the ultimate goal of the Planning Commission in regard to agriculture was to establish a system of Co-operative Village Management. Let us now see the immediate programme contemplated by it, as steps towards this goal. It is given as three-fold :

- (i) Establishment of Village Production Councils ;
- (ii) Establishment of Registered Farms and ;
- (iii) Promotion of Co-operative Farming.

The Village Production Council is designed to be the virtual controlling body of village agriculture. Whoever cultivates the land, will have to do it in accordance with the instructions of this Council. It will also be the dispenser of all aids to cultivators, and stand between the Government and the agriculturists. It will be bound, I believe, to carry out the instructions of the Government regarding the production of crops.

The Registered Farm is the rebirth of zamindari and absentee landlordism in a new and worse garb. It has been already noticed that the Planning Commission has rejected the method of "placing a ceiling on existing holdings and utilizing land in excess of ceiling for increasing the size of uneconomic holdings, or for distribution to the landless, or for co-operative cultivation." But Tenancy Reform Laws of some States have already passed such legislations. Possibly the Commission regards this as an erroneous step and wants to rectify it in a different manner.

The device proposed is the 'Registered Farm' system. For this, it is suggested that :

- (i) holdings above a prescribed level should be organized as Registered Farms; and
- (ii) holdings below the prescribed level should be brought together increasingly into small co-operative farms.

The minimum size of the Registered Farm will depend upon the nature of the land, but the suggestion is that it should be "about six times the economic holding" for that region.

It is suggested by the Planners that the policy of the State should be on the one hand to

encourage the formation of such Farms, and on the other to bring them under State control. The controls will be :

- (i) adoption of "approved scientific methods of agriculture" and development of the farms as "efficient units of production" ;
- (ii) sales of improved seeds and surplus food grains to government ; and
- (iii) employment of agricultural workers on prescribed terms and wages.

The Registered Farm System has, I understand, already come into existence at least in U.P. Perhaps also elsewhere. Just as a large-scale industry pushes out one of the same type on a small-scale, so is this Registered Farm doing in the field of agriculture. Like the textile mills, the sugar mills, the *vanaspati* and oil mills, the bone-crushing industry, the Registered Farm is being patronized by Government in various ways, such as, supply of seeds, manure, loans, transport and other facilities. It is easier and more advantageous for the administrative machine to deal with a handful of big and influential applicants than to do so with a thousand small ones. These influential managers can easily contact the highest officers directly and get their demands promptly executed, with the result that small holdings are forced to look more uneconomic than they actually are. Moreover, the Registered Farm System makes all actual workers on agriculture a gang of mere wage earners. They are like Tea Estates and Coffee Estates brought down on the planes! Their existence is hostile to the basic conceptions of Sarvodaya. Shri R. K. Patil with his great enthusiasm for Registered Farms naturally looks askance at Vinoba's land-distribution scheme.

In cases where the Registered Farm System is not feasible, the Planning Commission suggests the method of establishing Co-operative Farming Societies. The following encouragements have been suggested for their formation :

- (i) the area should not be less than that for a Registered Farm, no maximum need be prescribed ;
- (ii) societies should be preferred by Government in the supply of seeds, finance, technical assistance and marketing ;

(iii) in consolidation proceedings such villages should be given first preference as have established such societies;

(iv) culturable waste lands should be preferentially assigned to these societies; and

(v) "no adverse tenancy rights should be allowed to accrue against those of its members who may not be engaged in personal cultivation. The object of this condition is both to encourage the formation of Co-operative Farming Societies and to assist them in reducing the number of workers required for cultivation of any given area."

Thus the Planning Commission prefers cultivation by paid labour directly under the officers either of the Village Management, or of the proprietors of Registered Farms, or of the Co-operative Farming Societies to cultivation by agriculturists as free individuals. The principle that land must belong to the actual tiller is rejected. The actual workers on the land will be paid their wages, and they will purchase their food from the local ration shops. It may well be something imported from abroad. The actual crop produced by them will be sold in the best market.

The word "co-operation" is looked upon with favour by all schools of economics. Sarvodaya also blesses 'Co-operation'. But it is clear that the Co-operative Societies envisaged here are quite a different type of economic organizations than those conceived of by Sarvodaya workers. The first-mentioned are but Joint Stock Companies of small shareholders trading in agricultural produce. There is no reason why these Societies should not be called Limited Companies trading in agriculture. The word Co-operative Society applied to them is a misnomer. These companies are designed to facilitate State control, administrative machinery and regimentation, and to make every agriculturist a farm labourer. They are also intended to reduce the number of farm labourers without any guarantee to find employment for the dismissed workers. The co-operation for mutual help among producers and artisans following a common trade, craft, or occupation stands on altogether a different footing from the above societies. Both the Registered Farm system and the Co-operative Farming Society system as envisaged above are antagonistic to the Sarvodaya ideal.

Obviously Vinoba's movement is a hurdle in the policy advocated by the Planning Commission, and naturally Shri R. K. Patil is not reconciled to it.

But Vinoba's movement has caught the imagination of the people. Its moral and psychological appeal has affected Shri R. K. Patil himself. Hence, instead of opposing it on the ground of its conflict with the policy of the Draft Plan, Shri Patil has put forth the plea of insufficiency of the acreage proposed by Vinoba, thereby

causing a fall in production and prevention of diversification of employment in the rural areas.

We shall hereafter examine how far these pleas are good on merits and whether Vinoba's scheme of distribution stands in the way of increasing production and development of rural industries, and even of consolidation of holdings and the like.

Wardha, 10-5-'52

K. G. MASHRUWALA

REFERENCE TO GANDHIJI BY

A. W. BAKER

Mr A. W. Baker, a Carpenter, Lawyer and Missionary of South Africa refers to Gandhiji in his autobiography *Grace Triumphant* as follows:

"The South Africa General Mission sent several lady workers to Pretoria to do mission work among Europeans, and to learn Zulu. To make myself competent to teach them I had to go in for a systematic study of the Zulu language. Several of them subsequently went to Swaziland and established mission stands at Bethany and Ezulwini.

"It was at this time that M. K. Gandhi came up from Natal to assist me in a law case. These ladies, and Mr Michael Coates, took a deep interest in him, which he refers to in his articles *My Experiments with Truth*. He was scandalously ill-treated on his way up from Natal, and also in the streets of Pretoria, but showed no signs of retaliation or resentment. I had great difficulty in getting leave for him to travel in the same compartment of the train with me to the Convention at Wellington, and could get no separate accommodation for him there. My host, who was a Dutch Salvationist put a double-bedded room at our service, and I had the great distinction of sleeping in the same bed with the now so highly esteemed Indian philosopher. May the Lord soon lead him out into the full light of the glory of God, which is radiant on the face of Christ!" (*Grace Triumphant*, pp. 85-86 by Albert Weir Baker)

The copy presented to Gandhiji bears the following autograph:

To my friend
M. K. Gandhi
in memory of old associations
in Pretoria in 1893
A. W. Baker

"He that followeth me (said the Lord Jesus Christ) shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life" —

John 8-12

John 14-23/27

Ismand PM Burg, Natal 13/7/40

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FOOD AND POPULATION

The Western world seems to be divided into two camps over the question of food and population. There are those who, like Bertrand Russell and Vogt, hold that the "Road to Survival" or the "New Hopes for a Changing World" lie in birth-control as the panacea for the problem of world's hunger. Russell further believes that it is not merely a 'yellow peril' but is an Asian and African peril. He fears that humanity in Asia and Africa is increasing so fast that it will surely bring down the standard of life that the West, by dint of effort through science, has built up during the last century. He almost seems to divide the world into white and non-white and to fear the ghost he himself is raising. The other school is led by Josue De Castro, who in his latest book, *Geography of Hunger* refutes the main contentions of the Birth-control School and suggests how the peoples of the world can survive the crisis of hunger that faces them today. He charges them with want of clear thinking based on scientific data and almost total misunderstanding of the world problem today.

In our own land today there has recently arisen a school of neo-Malthusians who advocate birth-control as a remedy for our food scarcity. They have a very simple logic — almost infantile in its over-simplification. It amounts to saying, there is less food; hence there should be less mouths to need food; therefore control birth. And in the pride of scientific knowledge to secure birth-control, they forget the great spiritual problem that naturally raises itself from the depth of the human heart, viz., the problem of irresponsibility of self-indulgence that is let loose on the human world. Self-indulgence is a well-known agent of death and disease. It is regarding mistakes in the problems like these which touch the very depth of our being, that the Biblical curse of Sodom and Gomorrah is said to have come down on the erring humanity. Birth-control, not by self-restraint which is life- and health-giving, but by mechanical appliances helping let loose the self-indulgent in us, brings in its wake the prostitution of not only marriage and motherhood but also virginity as well. It is a spiritual danger that humanity faces this way. It is 'moral bankruptcy' bringing in an inner rot of the human soul.

But some may, in their pride of scientific materialism that is the philosophy of the day, brush aside this aspect of the problem, though very vital and true, and view the problem merely from the point of view of feeding the world. It is on this ground that the author of *Geography of Hunger* meets this school of thought and clinches the issue with saying:

"Two schools of thought about world hunger are, in my opinion, really dangerous to the future of humanity, because they falsify the social reality of the problem. One theory attempts to prove that famine is a natural and incurable phenomenon; the other offers as our only salvation a forced reduction in the world's birth-rate. These dispiriting and pessimistic

theories can be described as products of a world in transition, speculations of minds formed in a cultural structure which has since been over-thrown. Their authors refuse to recognize the social revolution as a *fait accompli*, and spin their thoughts out of data that are nothing more than hangovers and phantoms. One characteristic of historical crises, Ortega Y Gasset says, is the way old social convictions tend to lose their value before new values, which will give direction to the thought and conduct of the future, are put in order. Many people are left with no way of knowing what to think, and withdraw into the past to overcome their inner emptiness." (P. 21)

Having stated his main position in the above manner De Castro gives his reply to the two schools. To those who believe that famine is natural, he says it is not; he shows that it is a man-made social disease:

"The contention that famine results from a kind of natural law has no basis in scientific knowledge. Analysis of certain fundamental statistics will show how artificial that notion is. The ocean covers 71 per cent of the surface of the Earth, and the remaining 29 per cent is the solid part of our planet. This land covers an area of about 56 million square miles, of which 30 per cent is forested; grassy plains are 20 per cent; 18 per cent is mountains and 32 per cent desert, either torrid or polar. According to Robert Salter and Homer Shantz, specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, only 25 million sq. miles — half of the land surface of the planet — can be agriculturally exploited by present methods of soil utilization. Desert and mountainous regions are not considered arable, although lately there have been notable triumphs of agricultural technique in such areas. Yet this conservative calculation gives mankind some 16 billion acres to cultivate, or 8 acres per individual of our present world population. Authorities on agriculture and nutrition, studying the correlation of area cultivated and food supply in the light of modern knowledge of nutrition, have estimated that about 2 acres per person will supply the indispensable elements of a rational diet. Cultivation according to that ratio would use one-fourth of the world's arable land. As yet, the area cultivated has not reached 2 billion acres, an eighth of the earth's natural possibilities. Clearly, hunger and famine do not result from any natural law." (P. 2-2)

And thereafter he concludes that,

"Essentially it is not a problem of production at all, but rather one of distribution."

And he puts down his short thesis that

"War and hunger are man-made. It can be concluded that hunger and war arrived when man had reached a stage in culture when he began to accumulate reserves and to defend his collected wealth; they began, that is, with the difficulties man created in the distribution of natural riches."

I am reminded here of Tawney's thesis that we are suffering from the ills of "Acquisitive Society", which, in our phase of human history today, has brought about the evils of imperialism and capitalism helped and buttressed by modern mechanical and economic sciences.

Having disposed of the first school of thought — viz. those that hold that "famine is a natural and incurable phenomenon", De Castro turns to the other, viz. the neo-Malthusians who hold that "our only salvation is a forced reduction in world's birth-rate".

This we shall take up in the next issue.

HARIJAN

June 7

1952

REGRETTABLE NEGLIGENCE

About eight or nine months ago a public-spirited merchant of the West Khandesh District (Bombay) brought to my notice that so far back as November 1950 orders had been passed to establish a Civil Court at Taloda (West Khandesh), a building had been occupied and excepting the Judge all the clerical and other staff had been appointed and maintained at a cost of about Rs 1,000/- per month. I was told that since then all the litigation falling within the jurisdiction of the new Court was being nominally transferred to that Court and all new litigation had to be filed in that Court. But, curiously, although more than half a year had then already elapsed no Judge had taken charge of that Court, and all cases triable by that Court remained suspended. He desired me to take public notice of this delay, waste of public money and inconvenience to the public.

I regret that for a long time I did not believe his story and neglected him. I thought that this was hardly possible, and that he was either exaggerating or misinformed. As he would not rest or allow me to do so, I demanded more substantial evidence. He thereupon sent me copies of a resolution of the Bhil Seva Mandal, West Khandesh, pertaining to that subject, and of some correspondence between that body and the Government of Bombay, and asked me to publish his complaint on his personal responsibility. From the correspondence I found that the Government of Bombay had referred the Bhil Seva Mandal to the High Court of Bombay, as that Department was responsible for the appointment of Judges. But the Mandal did not seem to have pursued the matter with the High Court, and the matter had stopped there. I decided that before taking notice in *Harijan*, I should personally enquire into the matter. This correspondence between the merchant and myself was responsible for the lapse of some months. It was on 26th February, 1952, that I sent my first letter to the Registrar A.S. of the High Court of Bombay. After narrating what information I had I wrote:

"I feel, however, that there must be some serious misunderstanding in the matter, and the public is not aware of the true facts. I shall therefore thank you to enlighten me on the subject at an early date."

As I did not receive any reply from the Registrar A.S., on 10th March, I wrote to the Chief Justice himself.

This was followed by a prompt reply (14th March, 1952) from the Registrar A.S., replying on behalf of the Chief Justice and Judges of the

High Court. It revealed a distressing state of affairs. It admitted that the information given to me was not incorrect, but explained that the reason for not appointing the Civil Judge was that their District Judge had reported that:

"The ordinary suit work of the Taloda Taluka and Mehvasi Estates was too meagre to keep a Civil Judge fully occupied and that therefore no Civil Judge should be appointed till the Government issued the notifications for vesting that Court with the jurisdiction to hear B.A.D.R. Act (Bombay Agricultural Debt Relief Act?) work of these areas."

The letter proceeded to say that:

"Government were, from time to time, expedited to issue the necessary notifications but they had not taken their decision."..... "It was under these circumstances that no Civil Judge was appointed at Taloda so far." Even then, "the District Judge had to make arrangement in connection with fresh institutions of suits etc., and he has therefore maintained a skeleton staff for the Court in anticipation of further orders of Government."

However, (the letter continued):

"Since the public of Taloda have been agitating for the appointment of a Civil Judge at Taloda, their Lordships have now posted a Civil Judge there with effect from the 17th March, 1952 for doing such suit work as may be pending."

This means that but for my having taken up this matter, this appointment might not still have been made, and a skeleton staff costing Rs 1,000/- per month to the public would have continued to be maintained for an indefinite period.

And even now it will be some time before the new Judge and his staff will have sufficient work to do, until the Government of Bombay are able to vest him with some additional powers.

As the High Court laid the blame on the Government of Bombay for this waste and delay, I asked that Government (18th March) to let me know how they regarded the matter from their side. The first letter did not elicit a reply. I sent a reminder on the 6th April. This brought me a reply dated 16th April. It says, *inter alia*:

"...Government was not aware that a Civil Judge had not been appointed at Taloda, nor did it know why the appointment was not made.... It is now found that the District Judge had reported to it that no Judge should be posted to it till certain notifications were issued. One of these notifications was for making a (particular) Regulation.... Examination of the question of this Regulation is a complicated legal matter and it has taken time. This could also have been expedited, if Government had been aware that for want of this notification the Court at Taloda as was left without a Judge."

Moreover, the letter says, certain steps which had been taken previously became ineffective

under the new Constitution, and so, a new draft had to be prepared. "It will be necessary to refer it to the President and this will take time."

The net result is that there was a wasteful expenditure of Rs 1,000 per month for 15 or 16 months, and even now there is not sufficient work for the Judge, and necessarily, therefore, for the staff. For the same period, the public was left without any judicial authority to attend to their even urgent grievances. The absence of State-established judiciary is not in itself an undesirable thing, but it would have been welcome if it had been brought about by the people. In this case it has been due to gross negligence on the part of the Judicial and/or Executive authorities of the State.

The High Court and the Government shift the blame on each other. In what manner shall I apportion the blame?

The Government have been frank enough to write to me expressing regret "for the waste of public money involved in this," and "for the state of things in which such a thing happened." They also add, "We are trying our utmost to minimize such incidents."

I did not pursue the matter further with the High Court as there was no more occasion left for it. But I believe that if I had, the Chief Justice and the Judges would also have expressed their regret for what had happened and promised to try to improve the administration from their side.

If a case of such negligence of trust funds had come to the notice of the High Court in the course of a legal proceeding before it, I can imagine what strictures the High Court would have passed against the Trustees. Perhaps they would have been held unworthy of holding positions of responsibility.

But who am I to pass strictures on either the Government or the High Court when I feel myself guilty of contributory negligence on my part also? If I had believed my correspondent, and written to the High Court, when the matter was first brought to my notice eight or nine months ago, perhaps the matters would have been set right much earlier than they have been. But it did not strike me.

The tragedy of the situation is that there is none either in the Judiciary or in the Executive who attends to these matters. The Bar Room of the District concerned should have pursued this matter. It too did not. And there is no public institution—not even the Congress Committee—keenly watchful of public interest. It was left to a poor village shopkeeper who is also a public worker to pursue it. When he failed to interest the officers, legislators, and public bodies of the district, he turned to me. Unfortunately, I too turned a deaf ear to him for long. But for his perseverance, the waste might have still gone on.

A sense of fear that my correspondent to whom all honour and gratitude is due for this

act of public service might incur, the displeasure of influential people in the locality and be harassed by them prevents me from publishing his name. I hope a time will come when his service will be publicly recognized. He has pursued single-handed a matter which local public bodies ought to have pursued.

Wardha, 6-5-'52

K. G. MASHRUWALA

METHOD OF LAND-DISTRIBUTION

On 17th May, 1952, in order to demonstrate the method of land-distribution, Vinobaji gave a demonstration of it at Pukhraya in Kanpur District. The distribution of land received in the course of the *Yajna* has already been going on in Hyderabad and Madhya Pradesh through their respective provincial committees. But it had not begun in U.P. until now. Baba Raghavadasji suggested to Vinobaji that he should himself give the workers a demonstration lesson before they undertook to do it, and Vinobaji agreed.

Vinobaji started from his last halting-place Dingh as usual at 4 in the morning and reached Pukhraya a distance of 6 miles by 5-45 a.m. After taking the breakfast, Vinobaji set out for the inspection of the land to be distributed there. It lay partly near Pukhraya and partly near Sunripur (named Sundarpur by Vinobaji)—a village 2 miles from Pukhraya. When we reached the spot Vinobaji insisted on pacing up and down across the fields to have a good look at them. Vinobaji was in a state of deep emotion.

Vinobaji had a look at other fields also by the time we reached Sunripur. The first thing Vinobaji did as we reached there was to have the distribution programme reannounced to the village, by beat of drum. The villagers were invited to attend the meeting. The workers went to every house personally so that the information might reach every landless resident. Then came the meeting. The people were asked to give the names of the landless. It was discovered that there were in the village 4 shepherd families which had neither land nor any other occupation. There was no other landless person there, nor Harijans. Naturally it was decided to gift the land to these shepherds. They were asked to come to the public meeting at Pukhraya to receive it. The land at Sunripur had come from Shri Ramswarup Gupta. It was 21 *bighas*. On inspection Vinobaji had found that it was a little short of the required piece. Vinobaji asked Shri Gupta to make it up which he readily did.

The land-distribution meeting at Pukhraya began at 9 a.m. Besides the members of the 4 families of Sunripur, ten from Pukhraya were also present as per invitation.

The meeting opened with a short speech from Vinobaji. He said, "We have met here to execute a very happy and noble programme. We are going to distribute the land received in *Bhoodan* to the landless and unemployed. It should be done with the utmost love and justice, and I hope that more gifts will come forth in case there is need for them."

The place of the meeting was tastefully decorated with the *kalash* (water-jar) and rows of auspicious lights. After the preliminaries of the meeting had been gone through, the landless were called to place their cases before the village gathering. We had only 10 *bighas* of land at our disposal, and there were 10 families, consisting of about 40 members, asking for it. After some discussion three withdrew their claim. There were now seven but we had land enough only for two. We needed 30 *bighas* more to satisfy all the seven. At first Vinobaji asked them to choose two from among themselves. They conducted themselves as *Panchs* with the utmost dignity and chose the poorest two, one of whom was a Harijan. But then Vinobaji also appealed to the people to rise equal to the occasion, to

shake themselves free of the subjection of money and property. The appeal had instantaneous effect. It touched to the quick the inner being of *Bharat* latent in every Indian heart and there was spontaneous response. Those who had given raised their figures higher, while those who had not, announced their donations. Sardar Harisinh, a refugee from Punjab, who had given 5 acres already, announced his will to gift his all, i.e. more than 15 acres. The audience was moved to its depths; there was an upsurge in every heart of the feeling of all-embracing fraternity, and every one shed tears of joy. It demonstrated once again that given love and compassion, the land can be had for the asking not in little drops but amply enough to satisfy every thirsty man. There was absolutely no pressure, nor inducement, only the will to stand up for the landless poor and to work for the cause in obedience to the call of the Lord seated in the heart with faith in the power of Love. It was a most ennobling sight, the Lord seemed to have awakened in every heart, a catharsis and a transformation was in operation and every trace of the common human littleness was swept off clean before its rising waves. Eventually there were 36 *bighas*. The last *bigha* came from a Socialist friend and the village *patwari*. Thus 36 *bighas* were distributed among 12 families consisting of 40 members. There was in the audience one more landless brother from a nearby village. And a zamindar friend stood up and gave him 7 *bighas*. This was the crowning success of the day's proceedings. It may not look very grand in terms of *bighas*, but for those who could see behind the appearance, it signified the birth of a new world. Mahadevital, one of our companions, urged the donees to appreciate the responsibility which was thus east on them. She said, "This is no mere land, this means your initiation into a new way of life. It now rests on you to improve your life and that of the society." Baba Raghavadas expressed his heartfelt thanks to the people of the Kanpur District and when he recited Guru Nanaka's prayer-song: "ਭਿਕਾਰ ਜੀਐ ਸਭ ਆਪ ਪਰਾਏ" (i.e. I have forgotten the selfishness of mine and thine); he was just giving vent to the collective feeling of the audience.

Winding up the proceedings, Vinoba said, his voice quivering with emotion: "Blessed are they who have received land, but twice blessed are they who gave it. The landless, in any case, are bound to get land, through other means, if not through *Bhoodan*. But then this revelation of Rama, the Immanent Lord, who dwells in the heart of every being, is unique. And that is the great glory of the method we follow. I will ask the givers to regard the poor as members of a common village-family and serve them. There are many who doubt the possibility of getting merely by asking for it. They ask, how do you hope to solve this question of land in this way? I say to them, there is no solution more effective than this. It fosters love and goodwill between the giver and the recipient. They feel the kinship of spirit. People say that this is *kaliyuga* i.e. the age of sin and degradation, but I say that an age is what we make it to be. The spirit is the same, equal and indivisible everywhere. This is the great truth which has been evident to us today. I undertook this work with great faith but without attachment. If I had attachment, I would have despaired long ago. Maybe I too would have transferred my allegiance from faith in the cause and in oneself to that in legislation and government machinery. Thank God that this did not happen and I remain free and independent. I ask for land, I get it and I give it."

Thus, amidst scenes of great joy and the elation of spirit, the function came to a happy close. The landless of the three villages were vested with land and all were bound to one another with ties of unbreakable love.

The names of the donors are as follows: Ram Swarup Gupta, Ishwarchandra Tripathi, Sardar Harisinh, Krishna Datta Pandey, Kallumal Patwari and Revati Raman Sachan.

(Translated from Hindi)

D. M.

SHRI VINOBA'S UTTAR PRADESH TOUR — III

[It had not been possible to give a continuous account of Vinoba's tour through U.P. for some period before he reached Sevapuri. It would be too late now to give D. M.'s detailed narrative of it, interesting as it is. A few extracts of permanent interest from his letter may, however, be shared with the reader. — E.J.]

Land-Gifts

In my last letter I ended with our tour through Sitapur District. This one will cover seven districts. The following table gives their names along with the land-gifts received in each:

District	No. of donors	Acres
Bahraich	135	4,300
Gonda	500	5,000
Basti	167	424
Gorakhpur	197	371
Deoria	107	386
Azamgarh	377	637
Ballia	381	5,758
Total	1,784 (Slc.)	17,476

This gift from seven districts only compares more favourably against gifts of 28,308 acres by 1,747 donors in the nineteen districts between Delhi and Sitapur. It means that the message was spreading and having effect.

Fragmentations

This part of U.P. is thickly populated. The price of land is high and the extent of holdings very small. The land is measured in official records in terms of 'decimals' (strictly cents) of an acre, the local nomenclature of smaller divisions of an acre being different in various districts. There is (now, was) no doubt the zamindari system or permanent settlement, but the rights under the zamindari have become fragmented into tiny bits, — as

small as $\frac{1}{2,88,69,18,400}$ th part of a rupee! If each sharer

insisted on having a share in the land specifically allotted to him, some claimants would not have a greater area than that covered under a cow's hoof, they say! But the ratio of Government assessment to rent is nearly 1:100, so even this fragmentation brings the sharer some income. However, the small sharers in zamindari often do not earn even as much as Rs 150 per annum. Necessarily they do not rely on land for their living, but migrate to cities and even foreign lands in search of labour. The actual cultivated holdings are as small as 40 to 49 in many cases; that is, less than half an acre.

Muslim Donors

Another feature worth mentioning in connection with our mission is the interest and part taken by the Muslim population of the districts in making gifts. In Gonda District, out of 101 donors who gave lands in a village, there were 50 Muslims; at Panchpadua out of 60 donors, there were 31 Muslims; at Ghosi 50 out of 150. In several places we were received and housed by Muslim hosts. A Muslim Tahsildar as well as the Muslim Collector of Ballia districts took keen interest in *Bhoodan-Yajna* and getting gifts. The Hindus and Muslims lived amicably in villages; as elsewhere, the poison of communalism starts from and is intense in towns and cities only.

Vinoba enjoys the fullest confidence of the Muslims. It will be remembered how three years ago he had been warmly received and listened to at the Ajmere pilgrimage, where Muslims came even from foreign countries. His work among the Meos of Punjab also won their affection for him. His knowledge of the *Quran* also contributes in winning for him their love, respect and confidence. The Muslims of U.P. received him wholeheartedly.

Vinoba's Linguistic Studies

The reader will be interested to know that throughout the U.P. tour Vinoba regularly reads from and studies

Tulsi Ramayan and Vinaya Patrika. He has also been studying Tamil Ved, the well-known scriptures of Tamilnad, as preparatory to his visit to that province. Vinoba holds that if we want to mix with and work among a people and win their sympathy and love we must be well-versed with their language, literature and culture.

I can give instances of several gifts worthy of specific and detailed mention. Some day and somewhere I may compile such literature. But since you insist on my being brief, I have to omit these details here. But I cannot resist the temptation of giving some instances from which you will choose a few for the readers.

One of our companions is by name Harish. His village lay on the way of our tour. We stopped there for a few minutes. After the usual salutations etc., Harish's mother approached Vinoba and bowed. She seemed desirous of saying something but wanted courage to open her lips. Ultimately with some hesitation and difficulty she said she owned 12 *bighas* of land for a family of five. Vinoba having become the sixth, she wanted to give him his share of 2 *bighas*. It was not much, but she desired Vinoba to do her the favour of accepting it. Vinoba was overwhelmed with emotion. He accepted it very gratefully, and in the evening speech referred to the gift as being as precious as a gift of two lakh *bighas*.

During our tour through Gorakhpur we were being guided one morning to the next halt by a Harijan. He told me he owned 5 *bighas* for a family of twelve. The land was insufficient for their maintenance, and they had to do other labour to supplement their income from land. Nevertheless he too was anxious to have a share in the *Yajna*, but hesitated to give a petty *bigha* or two. He asked me what his duty was under these circumstances. I could not presume to offer an advice. I silently bowed to his generous spirit. It reflected the true and noble culture of India. For his satisfaction Vinoba accepted the gift of few cents of land from him. Encouraged by this acceptance our cartman of the day also gave ten cents of his land.

At one place, while Vinoba was talking with some big landholders, a Harijan named Mangru entered the room and entreated Vinoba to accept his gift. He owned only 21 cents of land and wanted to give it all. Vinoba looked gratefully at him and enquired about his condition. He was a factory labourer with six or seven dependents. Vinoba asked if the land did not help him. Of course it gave him rice. Vinoba asked him to keep the land to himself. He did not expect any gift from him. But he was insistent. Ultimately Vinoba took a gift deed from him, and then made an endorsement thereon that since he belonged to the class to whom land was to be distributed he gave the land back to him as a donee. He told Mangru to take the land as his *prasad* (part of an offering returned by a deity or guru). Mangru could not refuse. He reverently bowed and accepted the *prasad*.

Our tour through Gonda district was a continuous experience of faith and love. When we left the last village of the district and bade goodbye to our local companions they were in tears. Vinoba and many of us also were deeply moved. Though we had been together only for a week, it seemed as if we had been making a goodbye to old companions. In his parting speech, Vinoba asked what it was that made them confer so much affection upon him. Surely it was not his personal friendship, but the mission on which he was engaged. They (the people of Gonda) had realized, as every thoughtful person would realize, that his mission was important not only for the people of Gonda, or for the people of India, but for the whole world. If it was not carried to success, life was in peril and would remain in peril. If on the other hand, the mission was successfully carried out it would bring not only economic prosperity to India, but also spiritual advancement. The centuries old teaching of India is, Vinoba said, that a *dharma* (ethical activity) was no *dharma* if it did not control *artha* (economic activity) of the people, and *artha* (economic activity) was not

artha (economic), if it was inconsistent with and imperilled *dharma* (ethics). Hence economic activity opposed to ethics was not good economics and ethics which made economic activity impossible was not ethics. Vinoba said that what he had undertaken was a *sarvato bhadra* (good-on-all-sides) work. It did us good economically as well as spiritually; it spread love; it purified the mind; it led us towards God; it employed us in the service of the poor.

(From Hindi) (To be continued)

D. M.

NOTES

Direct Land-Gift

A few days ago a correspondent informed me that a landholder of Vadodar, a village in Saurashtra, being inspired by the *Bhoodan-Yajna* movement donated 2 acres out of his 24 acres of land to a landless Harijan peasant of his village through the village *panchayat*. As he did not desire publicity of his gift the transaction had remained unnoticed.

Such voluntary gifts directly to the landless without the intervention of a Committee are ultimately a welcome feature, and the act of the donor of Vadodar deserves appreciation. On being informed of this gift, however, Vinoba has desired to give the following caution:

"Though I would like it, the time for decentralized direct gifts is not yet ripe. The atmosphere is not ready for it. On the contrary, it might even impede the movement. The object of the *Yajna* might not be attained, and the sacrifice might take the form of charity. The land-gift-sacrifice implies renunciation of ownership in land, non-expectation of any return or gratitude from the recipient, absence of conferment of favour on any particular individual and various other principles. On this consideration, so long as the atmosphere is not ready, it is better that all gifts should be made through the *Bhoodan* Committees. However, if such direct individual gifts are made, we shall not prevent them. Nor shall we encourage them for the present."

"Moreover, it is necessary to legalize such gifts. It is difficult in modern age to give or take lands, without legal formalities. For the present it will be possible to get only such gifts to be legalized as are made through the Committees."

Wardha, 26-5-'52

(From Hindi)

Socialist Support to Bhoodan

In the course of a long resolution captioned "Redistribution of Land", the Socialist Convention, which met at Panchmarhi (M.P.) last week says:

"14. This Convention notes with joy the noble effort of Acharya Vinoba Bhave to draw the attention of the nation to the urgency and justice of this problem by his unique method of *Bhoodan*. The Socialist Party further welcomes the move of the Sarvodaya Samaj in this direction and reciprocates its invitation for co-operation."

I welcome the Socialist appreciation of the *Bhoodan* movement and their desire to co-operate. I hope they will work for it with the same love and fraternal spirit as Vinoba expects of the workers. There is no room in it for any class-war propaganda or slogans of that nature, even as there is no room in it for the spirit of giving or begging alms. It is a preliminary step towards the reunion of something like families separated in estate, food and worship. While doing this work there should not also be indulgence in political propaganda in favour of Socialism or against Congress and other political parties. If we are serious in our service to the poor, let us realize that political labels are even worse than communal, regional or linguistic labels.

Wardha, 29-5-52

Manure From Gas Plant

In answer to the doubt raised by me about the wholesomeness of the manure obtained from the gas plant on account of its repugnance to flies, rats etc., I have received two explanatory replies. They give a satisfactory explanation, which may be briefly stated as follows:

"The final result of digestion of cow-dung and plant-debris in a gas plant is something not very different from humus. Animal and insect pests do not care for humus, which does not mean that humus is, therefore, of no use or of danger."

Humus is the real substance needed for plant growth. It is the substance which remains when the dung and plant-debris have undergone complete change in course of time in the manure pit; that is, has become ripe for being used as manure. It is food for plants, but not for animal life, because it cannot be digested by the animal creation. Rats etc. get food from manure pits only before the debris is transformed into ripe manure; and they thrive only in the upper layer of the pit. In the lower layers the heat of decomposition is too strong and oxygen is deficient. Hence, even in pits the lower part is free from insect life.

In the process of decomposition combustible odorous gases are produced. The gas plant makes good use of these gases. Instead of allowing them to escape into the air and be wasted, the gas plant collects them and provides a way for their use, either for light or fuel.

"When the process of decomposition is carried out with a limited supply of oxygen, as it happens in a gas plant, the bacteria break off the oxygen from the carbon and hydrogen compounds and what remains is hungry for oxygen—which means is combustible. Some of it is also volatile and when collected can be used as a fuel."

Hence there is no such danger as suspected by me about the manure obtained from the gas plant.

(Quotations taken from the explanations given by Shri Maurice Frydman).

Wardha, 19-4-52

K. G. M.

Bhoodan Latest Figures

"Four days ago, the people of Mangroth (District Hamirpur) gifted away all the land of the village, nearly 700 acres to Vinoba. There are 54 landholders in Mangroth, and 50 landless families. Vinobaji will now redistribute the land among these and a plan for the village will be prepared under his guidance.

"During the month and a half since the Sevapuri Conference, we have obtained fifty thousand acres of land. The average receipts should come to a lakh acres per month for the attainment of the target. So we should have by now 150 thousand acres. Vinoba has obtained a third; the remaining two-thirds must be completed by other workers."

Camp Mahoba, 27-5-52

D. M.

(From a letter in Hindi)

"Peace News"

I wish to thank the Editor of *Harijan* for his note about *Peace News* in the March 29th *Harijan*, and to those persons who responded. I most desire to increase subscriptions among people who are not interested in *Harijan* as well as those who are, and have to rely upon you who read both papers to help in this. For bonafide new readers of *Peace News* who are not sure enough of its usefulness to wish to order for the half or whole year, there is a special trial subscription of Rs 2/- for 10 weeks.

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