

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: MAGANBHAI P. DESAI

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TWO ANNAS

VINOBA IN MUZAFFARPUR AGAIN

(By "Dadu")

After spending more than a fortnight in the flood-affected parts of Samastipur sub-division of Darbhanga district, Vinoba turned westwards and entered the Muzaffarpur district again on 29th August, his third and last round in this district. Muzaffarpur has supplied the political leadership to Bihar during the last forty years and can pride in the large number of its public workers. Yet a curious exhaustion seems to mark them these days. When Vinoba was here in January last most of them assured him to devote themselves, partly or entirely, to Bhoodan work. But perhaps the charms and chains of party politics stand in their way of mass contact. Presently however relief operations have engaged their attention, for Ganga's three tributaries viz. Bhooari Gandak, Bagumati and Lakhandevi or Lakshmana have caused a havoc, unheard of and unseen. Among the most affected thanas are Patepur, Katra, Sedipur, Belsand, Shivahar, Sitamarhi and Berginia, which were to be covered by Vinoba in this round.

On his way to Dholi Sakra on Sunday, the 29th August, Vinoba was immensely pleased to meet a carpenter who was a self-sufficient spinner. Nay, in his family are carried on all operations of cloth, manufactured from cotton-cultivation to yarn weaving. Vinoba congratulated him and remarked that the face of the country would be changed if all of us worked like him.

Workers' meeting was held in the afternoon. They confessed that they had done no Bhoodan work at all during the last nine months and an office-bearer of the Thana Congress observed that no work could be done until December, for they were all busy in flood-relief. Vinoba smiled at the ignorance of the man and gently asked him whether they had any respect for the resolutions passed by the State Congress. It set him a-thinking and when the workers again met at night, they promised to complete the Thana quota by December next.

In his post-prayer address that day, Vinoba appealed to the people to reap the harvest of love, which was possible only if they extended the domain of their family from the limits of their little house to that of the whole village. "The flood calamity teaches us," said he, "the baselessness of earning land and wealth for the self alone. We must remember what Kabir bade us and donate with all the heart:

"Pani badho nav men ghar badho dam,
Donon hath ulechiye, yahi sayano kam."

[When there is excess of water in the boat or of money in the home, the wise throw it out by both the hands.]

He also warned them that though the flood had turned their harvest into a waste, but the greater calamity was that they sat idle and had little to do at home. He asked them to take to spinning and local crafts.

At Raghunathpur on the 30th, Vinoba encountered at the Primary School whose children seemed to be feeling very enthusiastic and active. In his evening discourse, Vinoba pointed out the great difference between funds or subscriptions and Bhoodan. The proceeds of the former

were sent out of the village while that of the latter would remain with them and be utilized for the sake of the landless in their midst. The object was to abolish the ownership or trade of land.

Next day, Vinoba was in Muzaffarpur town, his third visit to the place. As in July last, Vinoba encamped at the Bihar Khadi Samiti headquarters. The main attraction was a special meeting of the executive of the Samiti for chalking out a detailed plan of Khadi work in Bihar. Vinoba attended the meeting for two hours from nine to eleven in the morning. They have decided to have one centre in every thana of Bihar and equip their workers with the manifold features of village-betterment through the medium of Bhoodan Yagna and village industries.

Start a Sarvodaya Vichar Mandal

Vinoba addressed them for forty-five minutes. He suggested them to start a Sarvodaya Vichar Mandal for the province. It should be *mukta* (free) with no burdens except moral and act as an advisory body for all constructive activities in the State. It must grow into a nerve-centre of thought. One of its functions would also be to look to the expansion and penetration of Khadi. They could expect little from the Congress which was like a Dharmashala and did not command much confidence of the people. It could not help the Khadi work to any sizable extent. Nor from any other party. So they had to depend on themselves. But Khadi was not mere relief. It was the symbol of non-violence or the Sarvodaya Idea. It must be able to stand against the mill-industry. They should build such an atmosphere as to deepen it in the life of the people for both Khadi and mill-cloth could not go together. Hence it must find a definite place in our life as also in our economic planning. Vinoba stressed that Khadi should not be isolated from village industries. In fact, it formed a part of them and we must see how they become an integral part of our existence. For this, he went on to state that new workers would be required and old workers need be given re-orientation. Besides, they must impart knowledge to the village spinners—knowledge not only of Sarvodaya Gyana and Dharma but also of world events. In fact, for every eight hours of work, one hour should be devoted to general knowledge. The Khadi workers must take their regular class and it must be included in their wage-hours too. Also, they would have to develop Khadi in their own self-reliant and independent manner. They could take a very prominent part in Bhoodan work, both in land-distribution and cloth self-sufficiency-cum-Gram Raj establishment. Lastly, he reminded them that there were 22 items in the constructive programme that Babu gave us. Nature Cure was one of them. Though none of us could claim to have followed it all his life, yet we must always remember that it has a very prominent and lasting place in our village life. All this they could do through 'Sarvodaya Vichar Mandal'.

The journey from Muzaffarpur to Bhikampur on 1st September presented a pathetic spectacle. On both sides of the road were poor families whose huts had been washed away by the wild and irate floods. Most of them were Harijans. The village Bhikampur itself was badly

smashed, with about three-fourth of its houses gone. Yet, the people suffered from woeful inertness. When some members of the touring party (including an American lady who was there for a week) went round the village, they found a well lying unused, its bricks scattered all round. When they asked the local people why they did not fix up the bricks themselves they seemed to be unconcerned. Then the members of the party gathered some requisite material and began working on the well. This goaded the residents to activity and they assured them that they would now make the well serviceable.

In the afternoon came some people who pointed out how faultily the flood relief was being distributed and that only the vocal people, even though they might not deserve it, got the upper hand. Vinoba referred to it in his post-prayer meeting and pointed out that the solution lay only in their transforming the village into one family. But they were behaving, he regretted, in just the contrary manner. "The cinemas in your Muzaffarpur town," said he, "are running as usual in spite of the vast, sweeping flood tragedy. Where the people are not alive to the feelings of their neighbours that is a paralyzed society. I am not wonder-struck at it. For, our society has been broken up into fragments. Immovable differences, economic, social, etc. have sapped our vitality. Not that there is no love among the people, only its flow is held up. This has resulted in almost deadening our normal sensations even as the water of a stagnant pool becomes unfit for drinking." Concluding, he called upon the people to demand work in lieu of which they should meet their needs. The principle of free aid would ruin them altogether. They could not get free aid for all time. There were so many public bodies, specially the Khadi Samiti, in Muzaffarpur district that there was no reason for them to remain without work in their hands. "To eat without work is sin. And I remember the immortal law 'Happiness increases on distribution while misery decreases.' Give it a trial and you will see the change."

Next day, Vinoba camped at the English High School at Chhapra. A well was under construction. There Vinoba found labourers working at it. He stood there for some time. He saw school boys roaming about. He called a few of them and asked, "Why don't you help the labourer-friends? Your well would be ready much earlier then." "It is hard work," replied one of them, "and we are not practised to it." "Did you have a practice of reading books when you came to the school first? As you acquired the habit of reading, you must also learn how to work." They blushed and felt lost.

In the noon some members of the touring party went to the village, appealed for land gifts and got them. They were staggered to know from the village people that none had approached them so far for Bhoodan though they had heard Vinoba Baba's name. Deploing this fact in his post-prayer address, Vinoba remarked, "While the mass is flood-affected, our workers are inertia-affected. We must all work, rich or poor, high or low, teacher or the taught, and make it a point to do some productive physical labour every day." Asking them to live as members of one family, he added, "Today the land of both rich and the poor has been submerged under water. This teaches you to donate all land to me. You have the wisdom for quarrel and fight against each other but not to settle quarrels. For that you run to Muzaffarpur and Patna. Will they give you justice? The burden of idlers, police, jail, vakils and judges has been imposed upon you. Rather you have taken it on your head. Vakils are interested in the increase of disputes. If you meet any doctor, he would say that the 'season is dull'. That is, he is prosperous and has a good season when more and more people fall ill. Thus they are all interested in seeing you ill and fighting. I, therefore, warn you to resolve your disputes yourselves and to have your own garden-dispensary as also your own school."

On the way to Janarh on the third a good number of women, including some literate girls, greeted Vinoba on the way. They were singing a Bhoodan song in *Khadi Boli*.

Shri Ramvilas Sharma, the acting party-in-charge, requested them to accompany and give a song in their own native tongue. Then they walked about two miles, and merrily sang. They also related their tale of dependency and woe. Vinoba asked them to take courage, begin spinning and take out some time for acquiring new Gyana (knowledge) too. Shri Rambriksha Benipuri, Bihar's famous Hindi writer, saw Vinoba in the day and was with him for more than an hour.

In the course of his post-prayer address he assured the people, "Sat Yug is coming with a fast speed. Do you know that our Shastras say that while Kali Yug lasts for one year, Dvapara for two, Treta for three and Sat Yug for four. Kali Yug is nearing its end. Sat Yug is to commence. Wherever you go, people are ready to part with land. Only workers are not reaching them in required numbers. They come for a day or so as do members of some reception committee. I do not want my reception but that of my thought. Let it be propagated extensively and let us adopt the new way of life of giving before taking, of feeding before eating. Bhoodan is both revolutionary and distress-relieving. It is for a new Dharma."

On the last day of the week Vinoba was at Saidpur. At noon while he was attending to his correspondence, there were a few earth tremors. Fortunately, they were very mild. The attendance in the evening prayer was very large that day, exceeding fifteen thousand. Vinoba told them that they could turn the disaster into a blessing if they brought their hearts nearer. For that they should share their wealth and work together. Then he placed his five-point programme for the flood-affected areas. First, the fallen houses in the villages should be rebuilt with the help of local aid and voluntary labour. Secondly, every landholder big or small, must donate one-sixth or more of his or her land so that residents of the village may convert it into a family. Thirdly, those who could afford to pay must take no aid gratis. Fourthly, people must demand work and remain idle no more so that they may earn their wherewithal themselves. Fifthly, to avoid the post-flood calamities they should take the precaution of keeping their homes, wells, lanes and neighbourhood clean for which all the inhabitants of the village, literate or otherwise, well-to-do or poor, could work together with brooms, pickaxes and baskets, cleanliness being a part of religion itself.

On finishing his speech, Vinoba asked a boy about fifteen and sitting in front, whether he followed the five points. Vinoba called him near and bade him speak out. Hesitatingly, the boy gave three points: land-gifts, taking nothing free and keeping village clean. He then called another. This boy about eighteen stood on the dais and with the confidence of a speaker recollected all the five points vividly. Vinoba gave him a warm pat on the back and when he asked the boy whether he would follow them and communicate these points to those in his village, he replied with a smile 'Yes'.

Dr. Sukharandas, formerly of Nature-cure clinic, Uruli Kanchan, Poonna, was with the party throughout the week. Shri A. W. Sahasrabudhe and Shri Vallabhaswami of Sarva Seva Sangh, also came for a day. Vinoba would be in flood-devastated parts of Muzaffarpur district for about two weeks more.

17-9-54

By Vinoba Bhave
BHOODAN YAJNA
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ENCOURAGE SALT-FARMING

(By Swami Sitarum)

Dr. Ambedkar, in the House of the People referred to the topic of salt duty. I hope the Parliament will not commit the blunder of re-imposing salt duty.

Rather, the lands on which salt is naturally grown or can be artificially cultivated may be treated as lands liable to assessment on a moderate scale. Let the present expert salt staff be utilized in teaching the salt producers up-to-date methods of salt-making. The salt made may not be condemned. Let the salt-makers grow different varieties of salt as growers of paddy do on different varieties of land. Let salt also be, like wheat, paddy and rice, an article of purchase and sale in the markets. Those who can afford will buy rock salt like Bangarutheegulu variety of paddy of West Godavari of Andhra State. Others will go in for cheaper varieties.

Salt is necessary not only for human consumption but is utilized for cattle, as manure for lands, for fish-curing, etc. Cheaper varieties will be used for less important purposes and the dearer varieties for human consumption.

I request that this proposal may be considered.

13-9-54

[I commend this for serious consideration by Government. Salt-farming must be widely encouraged and any monopolistic control on salt manufacture or trade and commerce must give place to full freedom. This will help to reduce unemployment on our coasts which will be used for salt-farming. Technical education necessary for this should be provided for by starting appropriate institutions.

19-9-54

M. P.]

East and West

Mr Chester Bowles, former U. S. Ambassador to India, recently advised his country to speak to the East in the following terms:

"For generations, the West took from you (i.e. the East) more than it gave you. The wealth that flowed from India, Indonesia and other Asian nations to the capitals of Europe helped to build universities, railroads and ships. Some of that wealth even helped indirectly in building the United States.

"This flow of wealth from the East to the West came at a time when moral standards in the world were different from those of today. Recognizing this change and recognizing also the great needs of the underdeveloped nations of the world, we now propose to offer you our financial assistance and support.

"We ask nothing in return except your own all-out efforts on behalf of your people to create a broader prosperity, and expanding opportunities." (*The Free Press Journal*, 21-9-54)

The East must thank Mr Bowles for such a frank statement on the relationship that has existed till now between the East and the West, commonly termed as colonialism or imperialism in the East. If the West is really minded to aid the East, it must now at least end or mend it, even as the earnest of the West's change of heart. Unfortunately, the military aid to Pakistan and the recent SEATO manoeuvres tell a different tale from the words Mr Bowles wishes his country to tell us. However, let us hope he succeeds in convincing his countrymen to begin to address the East in those terms.

26-9-54

M. P.]

A PLEA FOR INTROSPECTION

Why Do We Dislike Communism?

Communism, some will argue, as though nothing further need be said, is *Materialism*. This is true. Theoretical communism is dialectical materialism. It has no room for transcendental forces or purposes. It shows only contempt for what men term "spiritual" ideas. But an impartial historian is bound to notice and to declare that, in past epochs, the most determined defenders of human rights — the leaders of the American Revolution, in fact — have been dubbed materialists. The traditional religious institutions which lay claim to preserving spiritual ideas have been traditionally insensible to crimes of injustice and opposed to the great forward movements of history.

A moral energy initiated their revolutionary movement which ended — and failed, we think — in modern communism. It is foolish to ignore or deny this, or to refuse to consider the possibility that the materialism of modern social movements has been a direct reaction to the crude indifference to human suffering shown by orthodox, institutional religion.

But communism, it is insisted, would take away by force the right of the individual to private property. This is also true. But is it the idea of losing our property which offends, or the idea of force? We are perfectly willing to admit that totalitarian communism is a travesty of the ideals of the early socialists and admit further, that the socialists may have been extremely naive in their hopes for a classless society in which possessions no longer count for anything with anybody. But the record of our moral ideals must nevertheless be kept straight. The men or Gods whom we admire the most are not remembered for their attachment to property, but for quite other qualities. The idea of sharing one's possessions freely is not a *subversive idea*. The idea of not caring about possessions at all is a noble conception honoured in every great philosophy the world has known. Let us admit it, however much we protest, that the world is not "ready" for such arrangements.

We are now able to identify with some precision what we think is wrong with communism: It destroys the right of the individual to share his possessions according to his own decision. Communism attempts to constrain the practice of a moral ideal, and in doing so completely changes its character. Compelled sharing is not moral, and it is not, therefore, sharing. Least of all is it the realization of an ideal, for a *human* ideal must be freely chosen by human beings.

Unless we pursue this analysis, and arrive at this conclusion, or something like it, we may easily fall into the trap of imagining that capitalism and free enterprise are somehow *moral* systems which are endangered by the *immoral* system of communism. The only thing that can be said about capitalism and free enterprise, in this connection, is that they have not as yet been constituted absolute barriers to moral — that is, free — behaviour by human beings. And to this

should be added that the customs, practices, and folklore of capitalism and free enterprise have few, if any, interests in common with genuine human freedom; that it is something of a historical accident that they seem, at this juncture, to go together.

In communism, all the social virtues have gone totalitarian. They have become cruel, graceless compulsions which amount to ultimate betrayal of the motives from which they sprang. This is authentic materialism. But because communism was propagated by angry intellectuals and adopted by embittered masses, the rest of the world is now preparing to submit itself to the guidance of angry anti-intellectuals, supported by the fearful and resentful rest of the masses of the world. This, too, is authentic materialism.

(Adapted from *Manas*, 26-5-54)

HARIJAN

Oct. 9

1954

DEMOCRACY AND LURE OF OFFICE

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

A very interesting case of democratic behaviour on the part of a responsible Minister of State in England has just been noticed in the Indian Press. I reproduce it below from the *A. I. C. C. Economic Review*, 15-9-'54:

"Sir Thomas Dugdale, the British Minister of Agriculture in Sir Winston Churchill's Cabinet, fell from office in the month of July; but the fall of the very likable and liked Sir Thomas passed almost unnoticed in our country. His resignation, however, is one of those happenings which confirm faith in the democratic system and enhance the prestige of the British Parliament."

"The resignation was the result of an inquiry in the conduct of five civil servants, following a single-handed fight for the rights of a compulsorily dispossessed landowner by Lt. Commander Marten. It would appear that the disposal of Grichel Down, a parcel of Dorsetshire acres, by Mr C. G. Eastwood, Permanent Commissioner of Crown Lands, was an act of injustice to a private citizen, which caused the trouble. Faced as we are with a veritable spate of ejection of tenants in almost all the States of the Indian Union, we can certainly view with amazement that the unjust dispossession of a cultivating owner in Britain should lead to the appointment of a Committee by Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill, which examined a report of an enquiry conducted by Sir Andrew Clark. This Committee recommended that Mr C. G. Eastwood should be transferred to another post, but it advised that no action should be taken against the remaining four."

"It should be noted that Sir Thomas Dugdale, who has the air of a brisk jolly farmer and is the very antithesis of the ambitious politician, was hardly in any way responsible for the lapse of the Civil Servants but, as he told the House, he accepted fully the doctrine of Ministerial responsibility and would be no party to weakening it, since 'that must have the disastrous effect of bringing Civil Servants into party politics.'"

"As a tailpiece it may be added that before the week was out, the two Parliamentary Secretaries to the

Ministry, Mr G. R. H. Nugent and Lord Carrington, decided that they too shared Sir Thomas's responsibility for what had happened and should resign. They offered their resignations to the Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill, however, was unable to accept them, deeming that these junior ministers had nothing to atone. At his request they decided to remain at their posts."

After narrating the English episode as above, the *A. I. C. C. Review* concludes to say:

"The story of this eviction of a landowner in Britain is pregnant with meaning and a lesson for us in India. We would commend the story to all."

No more comments are needed here. But the episode naturally leads us to turn our eye to our own country and how our Ministers behave. Surely in such matters much remains to be learnt by us and we have hardly begun to realize that we have to build up democratic traditions of this nature with due detachment, scrupulous care and zealous perseverance. Shri Giri's resignation from the Central Cabinet is a good instance from that point of view. This is not to go into examining it at any length here. The chief point to be noted in this episode is that Mr Giri, when he felt that he could not conscientiously agree to carry on as a Minister, he quitted the post. As he put it in his letter of resignation to the Prime Minister:

"There is a consensus of opinion among labour leaders and other public men that if the awards of Tribunals are to be upset by executive action, the institutions of arbitration and adjudication will not only suffer irreparable damage but will give a handle to extreme and irresponsible sections to throw the entire economic structure of this country out of gear. They also feel that modification of an award by executive action will set at nought the considered judicial decisions by influencing the executive."

"In the circumstances, I am convinced that I should tender my resignation of the office of Labour Minister."

What is more noteworthy in our conditions is where he says:

"After a public life of nearly four decades in the cause of labour and of industrial peace, I cannot let a feeling grow that on account of lure of office, or for personal vanities, I have failed in my duty to the workers and to the country."

"You will permit me to say that I cannot stifle the dictates of my conscience which naturally, are above all laws, conventions, personal advantages and inclinations."

Not only such things, but also considerations of personal or party prestige etc. should not come in the way of doing the right thing in a democratic way. Mr Giri raised a fundamental issue for the Cabinet and he could not carry the Cabinet with him. As the issue was a matter of principle for him he left the Cabinet in good grace and as its friend. It is a matter of joy indeed that the Prime Minister was able to fill in the vacancy with an equally experienced veteran labour leader like Shri Khandubhai Desai. I congratulate both the Prime Minister and Shri Khandubhai Desai, for the sense of responsibility and obedience to the dictates of duty that inspired them to behave as they did in this internal Cabinet crisis.

The crisis was brewing silently for a few months last, and it came to its climax when a judi-

cial tribunal's award was interfered with by the executive, legally empowered though it was to do so. The Finance Minister of the Government of India said in its defence that it was to mind the larger interests of lakhs of investors in banks rather than those of a few thousand bank employees. It is surprising that he could miss to see, when he said so, that it contained an aspersion that the Tribunal did not mind these interests, which, really speaking, are the interests of the great bank money-lords or industrialists who mostly control and are helped by the banks. It also suggested that the bank interests were as if not awake nor competent to put their case before the Tribunal. However, he submitted to the pressure of the events and said in Parliament that an official enquiry in alliance with the Reserve Bank will be made to view the whole situation created by Government interference. This was something surprising, specially because it was learnt that not an official but a kind of impartial judicial inquiry would be instituted before the year was out. This was the least that Government could do to retrieve the democratic practice that, it seemed, was in danger. It is a matter of sincere congratulations for the Prime Minister and the Labour Minister that a judicial inquiry has been formally announced.

There was another case of ministerial resignation, in these days, worthy to be noted. Shri R. K. Patil resigned his ministership in view of his differences with his Chief Minister. The lure of offices must not be too much for our ministers; because it is a veritable rock where the slender ship of democratic government in India, which we begin to establish in our country now, might endanger itself.

29-9-'54

TWO ANNIVERSARIES

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

The second week of September is remarkable for two noteworthy anniversaries. One, September 9, which is the date on which, exactly two years ago, Shri Kishorlalbhaj departed from our midst; the other, September 11, Shri Vinoba's 60th birthday—his Diamond Jubilee. The first is a death anniversary, the second a birth anniversary. When I talk of them together here, this difference between them, to our common view, might seem odious, but according to the two noble personalities of whom I propose to write here, both life and death are alike, as to them both are phases or stages of an eternal existence in which we have our being.

It was in 1921 that I left the Elphinstone college and joined Gandhiji's Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati. The small school of the Ashram was then a sapling of National Education which we now see sprouting as a mighty tree. Education being my chosen profession in life I attached myself to the school. This gave me the opportunity to know Shri Kishorlalbhaj and Shri Vinoba who were teachers there. I came in a somewhat closer contact with Kishorlalbhaj. With Vinoba, though I came to know him, there

was hardly any contact, he having left just then for Wardha to start there a branch of the Satyagraha Ashram, at the request of late Seth Jammalal Bajaj. In 1934, I went to Wardha in connection with the work of the Mahilashram and remained there for about two years. I came in contact with Vinoba during this period. At that time Shri Kishorlalbhaj was also there and Gandhiji too had established his Ashram at Wardha, having left Sabarmati. Kaka Saheb Kalelkar was also there. Thus the presence of all of them together at Wardha was naturally reminiscent of the old days at the Sabarmati school.

Gandhiji's greatest fortune was that men devoted to selfless service and to the pursuit of a religious life had come together round him. The secret lay in his genius to attract such people to himself. He succeeded in his unique mission precisely because he was able to draw to himself such devoted co-workers.

What a curious assemblage of human beings do we find among them, looking at those who joined him early and those others who came to him at different periods of his life! What different types did they represent—different in background, temperament, capacity, training and, most of all, in the attitude towards life. I am not speaking here of the thousands spread all over the country who drew inspiration from him, but of the few who constituted his Ashram: It was perhaps the late Shri Mahadevbhai who wrote, —humorously, of course, but in words which seemed true to some,—that the Ashram was a zoo of different types of men. The secret of Gandhiji's power to achieve Swaraj lay in his ability to be a focal point to which converged an endless variety of able men and women, fired with the zeal to live a religious and dedicated life. Thus did he canalize the energy of a multitude of such men and women into constructive effort for the nation, awakened in them the capacity for integrating diverse elements of their personality to one co-ordinated end,—in short, he gave them a new initiation. Thus did he harness the great inner or spiritual strength of the nation to the service of the motherland and humanity, effected a harmonization of knowledge and action in the life of many of us and forged from it, throughout the length and breadth of India, a massive experiment of Karma-yoga, directed towards the welfare of the society.

In a way, this national Yoga—such nationwide Sadhana of our people had its early beginnings in the life of our nation a long time before 1915—the year when Gandhiji came to India. Efforts were already in progress to reorganize our social and political life on the rock-like foundation of true religion inspiring and energizing national life and culture. The ideal of Moksha (absolution) through service preached by Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and especially by Swami Vivekananda; zealous efforts made by the Arya Samaj

for the revival of the old Aryan way of life; the Theosophical Movement devoted to the old Hindu ideal but in terms of the modern age and shrouded in a type of neo-mysticism; the Prarthana Samaj ideology, particularly in Western India, inspired for the most part by the Bhakti ideal resembling that of the medieval saints; and lastly the rise of modern Western thought—the product of the new English education—with its insistence on social reform;—all these forces were at work behind the Indian Renaissance which Gandhiji was to lead to fruition, after his advent on the Indian scene in 1915.

This great movement of New India's Sadhana was at that time flowing along two broad and distinct streams; one of which was headed by stalwarts like Shri Lokamanya and Shri Aurobindo, and the other by those like late Justice Ranade and Gokhale. The confluence of these two streams was achieved in the Gandhian era, and the nation's strength that flowed through diverse channels was welded into one common pool; though it may be noted that, if we look closely at the individuals constituting that unique confluence, we may yet find them flowing inwardly in their own individual way. What Gandhiji did, by the unique alchemy of his moral and spiritual breadth and vision, was to draw them all together as an integrated group and make of them, to speak in mathematical terms, a function of one common term—the emancipation of the Motherland through moral means. It would not be wrong to say that Gandhiji's Ashram was a model specimen of such confluence and commingling of these streams. With Shri Kaka Saheb and Swami Anand, who came from the Ganga of Lokamanya, was thrown together in perfect harmony Shri Kishorlalbai who came flowing along the Yamuna of Gokhale. Shri Vinoba did not belong to the first and though he cannot be said to have come from the second, he may yet be included in it from the tint and the tone of his bearing and his genius. He had in him more of Bhakti, which we see as the distinguishing attribute of the Prarthana Samaj school of thought. However the springs of his dedication and those of Shri Kishorlalbai were a little different from each other. I am not writing this here to discuss them in any detail. I just put down here what comes out easily to the pen, as I reminisce about these two saintly elders, whom I have had the good fortune to meet and work with.

Ideas of Karma i.e. action and Sannyas i.e. renunciation or giving up of action as denoting two different but equally important attitudes towards life lie inextricably woven at the very source of the cultural and spiritual life of India. They have not only influenced individuals here and there but our entire spiritual, social and cultural life. Take the Gita for instance: This question is the root of its exposition on life and it resolves the question in a manner that makes it the Book on our way of life and culture. The age of Shraman culture of Buddha and Mahavir resolved this question in its own way. Both these great men—who were the harbingers of a new age in our history—decided it in favour of Sannyas which, therefore, gained in this period,

a status of the most noble way of life. These two seers also propounded a new philosophy which was in accord with their teaching and in which Nirvan i.e. the cessation of our being and becoming, and Karmanash i.e. cessation of Karma or active life were held forth as the most important things.

During the period when this age entered on its downward curve—as every one moving as it does in the manner of a wheel has both an upward and a downward curve—the society in its downward curve witnessed an excess of cessation or rejection of action, out of tune with the whole of life. The barren philosophy to which the original purity of the Master's doctrine degenerated, was felt to be a partial or truncated truth, in no more than a limited sense, and it was found necessary once again to go to the root of the matter and restate and answer the problem afresh. This was done by Shankaracharya. He could not, of course, deny the truth of the great life-force which Sannyas is. He himself embraced Sannyas, but he kept to himself, in his own life, the love of his mother and took to the disinterested service of the people, in the cause of Truth as he saw and realized. He reorganized the institution of Sannyas and pointed out the important place of the house-holder's stage of life in our social order. His was the creed of knowledge mellowed and shaped by Bhakti, compassion and devotion. This produced such a change in the climate of the age as if a new philosophy and a new vision had been granted to the people. The Gita ideal was re-established in the Indian society. But once again decadence set in giving rise to the arid intellectualism of the Vedant and a lot of pointless controversy between competing schools of its philosophy. The subsequent history is quite interesting, but it would be out of place to go into it here. If I have considered it right to touch things here, it is because Shri Vinoba has been advocating for sometime past a new synthesis of Buddha and Shankar and the building up, at present, of a new way of life for our people on its basis.

Looked at from this point of view, Shri Kishorlalbai was more a Vaishnav than a Shaiva or a Smarta.* He had been nourished with the spiritual milk of the saintly culture to be found in the Swaminarayan sect. This sect leans more to Vaishnavism than to Smarta Hinduism. Vinoba too like him has been nourished on the milk of the age of our medieval saints. He has, no doubt, drunk deep at the fount of Sanskrit Shastras, but his inner being has found a more wholesome and nourishing food from the literature of medieval saints, especially the saints of Maharashtra. The life of these saints is full of the Vaishnava temperament, but the Sannyas or Vairagya to be found in them is of a different hue. Vinoba has always had that rather intense disposition to an austere life and the extreme concentration on one's objective which are the distinguishing characteristics of Maharashtrian saints. The influence of this temperament can be seen in his life, in his speech and in his writing. It is found in him right from the days

*Follower of traditional Hinduism as set forth by the Smritis.

of the Ashram school. Even at the risk of lengthening the article I will give here one or two instances of his this quality :

There was a rule in the Ashram school in its early days under Vinoba that students should take bath early in the morning at four in the river. No change was made in this rule even in the coldest season. Once the cold was so severe that the moment Vinoba had a dip in the water his body stiffened and began to flow down the stream almost like a log of wood. The students who had accompanied him rescued him out of the water in the nick of time.

Another example, though of a different sort, is as follows: It happened at the Wardha Ashram. A girl student was placed under his charge by her father for her education. The simple girl obeyed the teacher to the best of her capacity. Shri Vinoba had her hair cut off — one might say as a symbol of her initiation into pupilage — and right away started teaching her Shankar's commentary on the Vedanta Sutras.

It is hardly necessary to point out what these examples tell us about him. It is obvious that Vinoba has always had this bent for rigorous discipline proper to Sannyas. And this to such an extent that he hardly ever seemed to have realized that there existed another entity — the society, different from the individual and possessed of its own independent status. He never gave any thought to the fact that apart from one's individuality, a part of one's existence lay incorporated in the society also. He was quietly playing his part — which was in accord with his disposition and capacity — in the glorious manner of a Karma-yogi in the vast and extensive scheme of work which Gandhiji had placed before his followers and the country. Which was the reason why most people did not know much about him until recently.

This attitude of Vinoba underwent an automatic change with Gandhiji's departure from our midst. He then had an opportunity to look at and know the Indian society from close quarters. In 1934-35 the Gandhian workers had set up an organization — The Gandhi Seva Sangh, for undertaking social work on Gandhian lines. Gandhiji entrusted the organization to the care of Kishorlalbhai who continued to guide its activities as long as it lasted. Vinoba was not even a member of this Sangh, though he did not disapprove of it. His position and that of others like him who had not formally joined the Sangh was, as Shri Kishorlalbhai humorously described it, that of *ब्रह्मचर्य-सभ्य* i.e. non-member members.*

But after Gandhiji's departure, Vinoba was, so to say, forced to direct his gaze on society and realize his responsibility in this respect. The change is noteworthy. He then accepted to guide the Sarva Seva Sangh and the Sarvodaya Sam-

*The word *सभ्य* in Sanskrit carries a double meaning: (i) a civilized person, (ii) a member of an organization.

melan. One might say that with this change, he began learning and teaching new lessons not only for himself but also for the country.

It was after this change that Vinoba discovered the idea of the Bhoodan Yajna. And in the course of his journeyings in its behalf, he had the perception of the power of the society — which he then resolved to serve with undivided devotion. That shows that his is a growing personality and that his Sadhana too was fundamentally one of achieving the *summum bonum* of life through service and not through Sannyas. Gandhiji's work consisted in the reconstruction and renovation of the Indian life. It was basically an effort to spiritualize the society. That was the reason why he was able to attract to himself rare workers imbued with spirituality. Shri Kishorlalbhai and Vinoba were among them the most distinguished.

Starting from their different bases and proceeding ahead in the spiritual life evenly together, these two Sadhakas had come very close to each other in later years owing especially to the Bhoodan work. How does it matter if one of them is now no more? Such never die. They live eternally in their wise co-workers and in the large circle of their lovers and admirers. Today Vinoba represents not only himself but also Kishorlalbhai. It is his firm conviction that our Swaraj cannot blossom forth in its perfection unless we reconstruct our society on the foundation of religion and spirituality. It was on this very basis that Gandhiji had awakened the people to a dream of glorious India and created in them the urge for independence which brought us freedom. The next step would naturally be to imbibe thoroughly the spirituality of the Gandhian age and to go forward. It is for those who are left behind to do so. Vinoba is doing it today.

In Gandhiji's hand the Congress had become the instrument of a cultural and spiritual regeneration. Shri Vinoba has been instrumental in making us see that in the new set-up it does not degenerate into merely an instrument of political power. Freedom has to be used for Sarvodaya and Sarvodaya is not possible without the spirit of mutual help and co-operation from all. Such co-operation would be achieved only when every citizen pledges himself to pursue his work in the spirit of a Yajna, for the service of society. The only way to cultivate this spirit lies in observing Swadeshi Dharma i.e. the duty towards one's immediate neighbours. The ideas of Bhoodan, Sampattidan, Shramadan etc. all spring from this sense of duty towards the neighbour. To cherish love and service for one's neighbours without in any way betraying the interests of the humanity is Yajna which is the foundation of Rita i.e. the Divine law which is the basis of the life of the world. That is indeed the meaning of the Swadeshi Dharma as preached by Gandhiji. Vinoba's Bhoodan Yajna is based on such five-fold concept of Freedom, Sarvodaya, Co-operation, Service and Swadeshi, which is the core of

Gandhian social philosophy. On the occasion of his sixtieth birth-day, let us pray to God to grant Vinoba long life and health for fulfilling his task and to grant us the power and the will to help him in his noble mission. May he live for hundred years.

3-9-'54

(From the original in Gujarati)

THE MESSAGE OF KHADI

[From a broadcast talk of Shri Vaikunthbhai L. Mehta, the Chairman of the A. I. Khadi and Village Industries Board, on 23-9-'54.]

To millions, today should be a day of rejoicing, for on this day 87 years ago was born on this land of ours a person who could rank among the greatest of benefactors that have ever trod on this earth. Although Mahatma Gandhi is entitled to be venerated as a saint and a seer, the uniqueness of his service to humanity rests on the fact that to "the politics of eternity" he related "the politics of time".

Translated into mundane terms, the "here" mattered to him as much as the "hereafter". He realized more clearly, more acutely than saints or seers have ever done that contemplation of the infinite is not within the ken of a person with an empty stomach. And in his day and in his country Gandhiji bore witness to the fact that those with unfilled or half-filled stomachs, by far, outnumbered those with the wherewithal to sustain themselves.

It is as a remedy for this soul-killing poverty which robbed India of its spiritual strength that Gandhiji set about to drive out the political force that was responsible for the degradation, and planned to rid us of the economic force that brought about glaring inequalities. Half of the task has been accomplished, with the withdrawal of the British authority; but half, namely, the achievement of economic equality still remains.

In the field of agriculture, the undone task is being attended to by Acharya Vinoba Bhave through his Bhoodan campaign. In the sphere of industries, the gospel of Khadi was preached by Gandhiji and propagated by his co-workers as a means of securing economic equality. The decentralization of the production and distribution of the necessities of life that this gospel connotes, is a counterpart of the Marxist demand for the vesting in the workers of the ownership of the means of production and distribution. For this form of decentralized production, Gandhiji selected as eminently suitable the manufacture of cloth. This was symbolical; for, on the ruin of this industry was built the economic domination of Britain over India. It was this industry, again, which not only was the most renowned but which provided employment for the largest numbers of population.

The need for this economic reorganization remains as keen now as it was in the days when

Gandhiji first gave us the message of Khadi. Economic power exercised through the highly developed Indian textile industry — the products of which have almost wholly replaced foreign textile manufactures — is largely concentrated in a few cities, that industry in spite of its growth cannot find employment for the millions its development has displaced among workers by hand, and disparities in conditions of life are even larger than before. Withal, pressure on the land gets accentuated, under-employment and unemployment in rural areas are on the increase, and there is continuous decay of traditional skills and corresponding rise in slovenliness and sloth.

Hence it is that the Planning Commission have accorded to the promotion of Khadi and other village industries a central place in their first Five-Year Plan. To carry out this part of their programme, the Central Government have created the All-India Khadi and Village Industries Board and have agreed to place substantial funds at its disposal. The plans of the Board for the Khadi industry visualize a tenfold increase in production in a five-year period. It will be the Board's earnest effort to see that this goal is reached.

But when production increases, there must be a corresponding increase in off-take. Some part of the larger production will be absorbed by Government themselves. For the bulk, however, the Board has to turn to the general community as customers. To facilitate purchases by the public, a system of Khadi hundis has been devised, as used to be the practice in Gandhiji's own days. The celebration of Gandhiji's birthday by the public was to him an occasion for urging wider support to the cause of Khadi, it is as Khadi Jayanti alone that he recognized that day. Today, the appeal is for the same cause, the service of the half-fed millions in the countryside who ask for work and not for doles. The President and the Prime Minister as the inheritors of Gandhiji's traditions have urged all sections of the community to purchase Khadi and thus render help to a movement which promotes economic equality and can provide productive employment for millions.

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CONTENTS	PAGE
VINOBA IN MUZAFFARPUR AGAIN .. "Dadu"	253
ENCOURAGE SALT-FARMING .. Swami Sitaram	255
A PLEA FOR INTROSPECTION ..	255
DEMOCRACY AND LURE OF OFFICE ..	
TWO ANNIVERSARIES .. Maganbhai P. Desai	256
THE MESSAGE OF KHADI .. Vaikunthbhai L. Mehta	257
NOTE:	
EAST AND WEST .. M. P.	255

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