

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: MAGANBHAI P. DESAI

Vol. XVIII. No. 35

AHMEDABAD, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 30, 1954

TWO ANNAS

SCAVENGING

(By Gandhiji)

Every one must be his own scavenger. Evacuation is as necessary as eating; and the best thing would be for every one to dispose of his own waste. If this is impossible, each family should see to its own scavenging. I have felt for years, that there must be something radically wrong, where scavenging has been made the concern of a separate class in society. We have no historical record of the man, who first assigned the lowest status to this essential sanitary service. Whoever he was, he by no means did us a good. We should, from our very childhood, have the idea impressed upon our minds that we are all scavengers, and the easiest way of doing so is for every one who has realized this, to commence bread-labour as a scavenger. Scavenging, thus intelligently taken up, will help one to a true appreciation of the equality of man.

From *Yeravda Mandir*, Ch. IX

REMOVAL OF UNTOUCHABILITY

(By N. R. Malkani)

The belief and hence the practice of untouchability can be effectively uprooted mainly by so-called Savarnas. The social disabilities from which Harijans suffer have been imposed by them and can be removed by them. The inhuman and insanitary conditions under which Harijans live have been created by them and can be also changed by them.

It is unjust and almost cruel to advise Harijans to do or not to do certain things to escape the taint of untouchability. To ask them to be clean in body or clothes but to deny them clean drinking water is to add insult to injury. If there is one urgent need of Harijans it is the sinking of new wells and digging of tanks both for drinking water and personal cleanliness. So also if they are living in insanitary conditions it is our duty to see to it that they are allotted clean sites and helped to put up their cottages.

It has become a little fashionable to ask Harijans to give up unclean occupations, like skinning of animals or scavenging. But let us remember that scavenging is a recent urban occupation almost created by the British. There are sweepers but no scavengers in villages. There is scavenging, sanitary or insanitary, abroad, but

there is no untouchability. The giving up of scavenging is tantamount to saying that it is a low occupation, however necessary. This would be understandable if those who asked Harijans to give up scavenging took it up as an occupation themselves. And all the time we know it very well that scavenging is a gainful occupation and scavengers cannot give it up, however insanitary. The real remedy is to insist on having sanitary latrines in all towns and meanwhile start doing a little scavenging at home by way of penance for our past arrogance and present indifference. It should become fashionable to keep a broom in our latrines and use it too rather than sermonize and incite the Bhangi. This occupation is far more important to society than, say, the legal or even the mercantile profession and it is up to us to consider it at least as equally honourable.

But what is even more distressing is the utterly wrong lead given to Harijans by many of their own leaders. I do not mind any criticism of Caste Hindus for all their sins of omission and commission, actual or merely imagined. The Hindu community has richly earned the bitterest attacks of the most malicious Harijans. In fact, it stands thoroughly disgraced before world opinion for this social evil as for nothing else. But for Harijan friends to harp on the 'weakness' of Harijans to do anything to help themselves or to resist the injustice of Hindus appears to me as no friendly advice. No one helps those who do not help themselves and even God is considered to be partial in this.

It is difficult to believe that present day Harijans cannot help themselves — if they so desire. If tomorrow the scavengers of Delhi or better still, Jaipur, refuse to do scavenging unless the municipality decides to introduce sanitary methods they would bring the whole public to their knees and induce some to take up the broom. A week's strike on this issue would change the nature of scavenging as if by magic. If our *dhobis* or, say, *chamars* insisted on sanitary arrangements under threat of strike they would soon develop great strength and also help Caste Hindus to be in a chastened mood. It is even time that Harijan leaders in select places organized campaigns for throwing open wells and faced social boycott or even violence.

The Hindu conscience is not so dead as not to respond to such an energetic appeal. In fact, there is a certain aptness or even inevitability about Harijans resisting the evils that are now widely recognized to be man-made and imposed by society. No depressed or suppressed class in the history of the world has felt too helpless to rise above the conditions of its suppression. In fact, this is the noblest part of man to resist evil, under all conditions, and thus help establish good. Harijans of the most backward caste are men enough to rise and fight for the defence of their manhood if properly led.

It will not be long before the Untouchability (Offences) Bill is passed giving certain rights to Harijans and imposing penalties for their breach. Harijans can certainly insist on the Government to defend their rights for them through one more bureaucracy of lawyers and to impose higher punishments. But the law would become effective only when Harijan Associations are formed in all States and Harijan lawyers are engaged for nominal fees to watch the rights of Harijans. Others are bound to give their moral and even financial support. Unless Harijan leaders themselves create a fighting front, it will take long to crystallize public opinion and abolish untouchability.

In this connection one would beg of Harijan leaders not to make a shibboleth of their "rights" in the name of reform. Whenever there is a public discussion about the abolition of 'untouchability' it is usual for Harijan representatives to complain that there are not enough Harijans in the Police, the Army and, of course, the civil administration. If they have a fair proportion of jobs in lower grades, it is insisted that there are too few in the higher executive ranks. If they have adequate representation in legislatures, they are sorry they have not enough in municipalities and local boards. If there are several Harijan Ministers they think they also want a separate Harijan Ministry to safeguard their interests. And so on.

This can lead to the growth of a large vested interest in the continuance of untouchables, if not of untouchability. In fact, it would appear that Harijans want to have the best of both worlds. They plead for more and more "rights" before the Government and almost succeed in enjoying them. At the same time they adopt a threatening and bullying attitude towards Caste Hindus for all the disabilities they suffer from. Some people suffer from one or the other complex, but Harijans adopt an inferiority complex towards the Government and its officials, but indulge in a superiority complex towards Caste Hindus. They believe that caste has led to the creation of the outcaste and so attack caste. But all the while, they observe caste among outcastes far more punctiliously than others, without

making any effort to abolish it amongst themselves.

Any frontal attack on caste has always been resisted by Hindu society in the past and the attack by Harijans can only harden it, more so as they have not yet earned the right to do so. The tragedy is that even the new term 'Harijan' is considered a label that labels them. Yet much that they say and a lot that they do or demand cannot but perpetuate the caste called 'Harijan'. That label can be abolished by abolishing the ugly thing for which it stands.

Untouchability is not essentially based on exploitation, political or economic, and cannot be abolished by the acquisition of political or economic rights. It is based on a belief that some are born high and others low. As a corollary, it is also believed that some are born to occupations that are high and others to those that are low. Untouchability will be uprooted only when these beliefs are uprooted. Harijans also can help in believing that all Harijans are equal and that some of their occupations are far more important than those followed by so-called Savarnas and that all occupations that serve society are honourable. Above all let Harijans be sick of their sickness in order to cure it and not try the impossible trick of abolishing 'untouchability' while retaining the 'rights' of untouchables.

(From *The Hindustan Times*, October 8, 1954)

THE PALMYRA TOPE

(By Swami Sitaram)

I have read with interest the extract from *West Bengal* printed at page 210 of your valuable journal (*Harijan*, 28-8-'54).

Our Ashramam is situated in a palmyra tope covering over 25½ acres in extent. When the Ashramam was opened by Pujya Mahatmaji in 1933, there were about 3,500 palmyra trees on the Ashramam grounds, and every year we have been adding to their number by planting new ones.

At that time, this palmyra tope was in the sour block and I approached Mr Gopaldaswami Iyengar to convert the same into sweet block so as to convert the sweet juice into jaggery etc. and add to the income of the Ashramam and avoid begging the moneyed people for the support of the Ashramam.

But the professional tappers who were deriving large income from the auction of sour toddy sales by the foreign Government then in existence, would not come and tap the trees for sweet toddy. It is only in 1946 and 1947 when the Congress Government came into power for a second time in the Madras Presidency that Prohibition was extended to this district.

In the article at page 210 no reference was made to the ripe fruit of the palmyra or the germinating seed of the same. The ripe fruit is

very good food both for cattle and men. Poor people eat the juice of the ripe fruit and pass days without taking any cereals and the juice from the fruit is preserved as *tandra* for use in the non-fruit seasons. The juice from the tender fruit is also taken as a cooling drink. I prohibited the use of the same on the Ashramam grounds, as such use of the tender fruit will prevent its development into ripe fruit. I sent the ripe fruit to the Food Research Department at Coonoor and the results supplied by them show that the ripe fruit contained more carbo-hydrates than rice itself.

The germinated seed is roasted and the middle stem called the 'thief' in these parts, is a dainty to children and elders and sold in large numbers in the markets in cities, towns and villages. This is a good source of income to the Ashramam fetching Rs 150/- to Rs 200/- every year.

The foreign Government of the day expelled their Sugar Expert, Mr K. S. Chowdari of Madras School of Arts, to demonstrate hand-transfugaling of sugar and jaggery direct from the sweet juice of the palmyra palm. But it did not catch the imagination of the professionals.

It is a strange thing but true — the campaign carried on by the ex-Andhra Minister Mr Latchanna and his associates. Mr Latchanna was himself a Congress volunteer who received a good beating during the times of the picketing of liquor shops. The present campaign carried on by him and his friends is aptly described as *Duragraha* by Shri Kala Venkatarao, ex-Secretary of the Congress. I can understand the tapper's tapping his own trees on his own land or his complaining about the loss of livelihood; but I cannot, for the life of me, understand his tempting others to drink the "fiery liquid". There cannot be *Satyagraha* against the abolition of thuggism, houses of ill-fame, thieving, pillaging etc. It is strange that while the Planning Commission is thinking of extending Prohibition country-wide, there should be any ill-conceived movement against the same in Andhra.

It may be mentioned in this connection that the professional tapper does not himself drink or permit his wife, his daughters and sons-in-law, and his sons and daughters-in-law getting drunk. His family should not become the victim of drunkenness while others should be. This is extraordinary logic which cannot be accepted by any Government with the least pretensions to reform and civilization.

There cannot be any distinction made between country liquor and imported liquor. The Government should not count upon this as a source of revenue. The Central Government as well as the State Governments should exclude this damnable source of revenue if they are really to be 'Welfare States' or Sarvodaya States. It is

inconceivable how Welfare and Sarvodaya States should permit the drinking and drugging of any of its citizens. The permission granted on medical grounds should gradually be decreased. I know of political prisoners in Orissa gaining in weight in 1922 after they gave up opium.

Cakes can be prepared by the poor people from the rice flour and ripe fruit juice. Biscuits can be made for the middle class and rich people with wheat flour and butter added to the ripe fruit juice. In either case gur or sugar need not be added to give taste to the preparations, for, the ripe fruit juice itself contains enough gur and sugar.

About 750 prisoners of the tappers' '*Satyagraha*' have apologized to the Government. The movement would have closed long ago but for the support given to it by the communists for their own reasons.

Vinayashram, 26-9-'54

A-I. Nai Talim Conference

The dates of the Conference to be held at Sanosra (Saurashtra) have been changed to suit the programme of the President who will inaugurate it. It has been finally decided that the Conference will be held from the 10th to the 15th.

The first three days will be devoted to the Nai Talim Workers' Conference and will be presided over by Shri Dharendra Mazumdar, President, Sarva Seva Sangh.

The General Conference will commence on the 13th and will be inaugurated by the President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and presided over by Acharya Kaka Kallekar.

The study groups suggested for this year are as follows:

1. Pre-basic Education,
2. Post-basic Education,
3. University Education,
4. Adult Education,
5. Gram Rachana through Nai Talim,
6. Preparation of literature in Nai Talim,
7. Research in Nai Talim,
8. Bhoodan and Nai Talim,
9. Teachers' Training in Nai Talim,
10. Administration in Nai Talim.

E. W. ARYANAYAKAM,
Secretary,
Hindustani Talimi Sangh

By Mahatma Gandhi

DRINK, DRUGS & GAMBLING

Pages xi+175 Price Rs. 2-8-0 Postage etc. As. 14

By Bharatan Kumarappa

WHY PROHIBITION

Pages vii+43 Price As. 12 Postage etc. As. 3

NAVAJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE
P.O. NAVAJIVAN, AHMEDABAD-14

HARIJAN

Oct. 30

1954

SALT OF FREEDOM

(By Pyarelal)

Of late there has been some talk of reimposing restrictions on the free manufacture of salt by small producers. A pinch of salt made history during our freedom struggle. It may again make history in a way we may not like if we rush into it unimaginatively. With all our experience and the experience of the British Government before us we would do well to think a hundred times before embarking on such a retrograde step.

Seldom has any item of our national programme so fired the imagination of the people or commanded a greater unanimity of support as the battle for free salt that culminated in the concession for the free manufacture of salt under the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of 1931. Under this pact people living in close proximity to the sea-side and salt-bearing areas were permitted to collect or manufacture salt for domestic use or for sale in their respective villages or in the neighbouring areas, free from any tax or licensing restrictions so long as the salt was carried on foot and not by cart or any such conveyance. The underlying idea was that the concession was intended to provide relief to the poorest class and was not for commercial exploitation.

The Salt Clause in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was in the nature of a compromise as indeed the whole of that treaty was. Its significance lay in the admission for the first time by the British Government of the principle that the vital needs of a people, who lack even the elementary means of subsistence, should not be taxed and so Gandhi continued to guard it with lynx-eyed vigilance through thick and thin and did not fail to sound a note of warning whenever it was imperilled.

One such occasion was in 1934 when the concession was withdrawn from certain areas on the ground that it had been abused. As a result of his correspondence with the Government Gandhi was able to obtain an assurance that "no change was made as a result of the restarting of civil disobedience in the Government decision to give concession about the collection and manufacture of the salt" and that wherever the concession had been withdrawn, it was "always open to the villagers concerned to make applications for restoration of the concession."

The second occasion arose when Gandhi was confined in the Aga Khan Palace Detention Camp during the Quit India struggle. There was some talk about amending the Salt Clause of the

Gandhi-Irwin Pact on the old ground that the concession had been abused. As soon as it came to Gandhi's notice, he wired to the Government about it. Back came the reply that after discussion in the Assembly it was felt to be the best course to leave matters to be regulated as hitherto under the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. No amendment was consequently made.

Three years passed before the matter again came up for attention. In March, 1946, after Mr Attlee's announcement about the sending of the Cabinet Mission to India, Gandhi wrote to Lord Wavell pressing for the abolition of salt tax only to be told that "Government do not find themselves able to accept the suggestion".

After the arrival of the Cabinet Mission in India, in a letter to Lord Pethick-Lawrence, the Leader of the Mission, Gandhi wrote after his very first meeting with him at Delhi in April, 1946: "As a means of raising revenue, it (salt tax) is insignificant. . . . The masses will hardly appreciate independence if the burden of the salt monopoly continues to afflict them."

Sir Archibald Rowlands was the Finance Member at that time in the Viceroy's Executive Council. After a meeting with Gandhi he declared himself to be completely converted to his view and asked for three months' time for the abolition of the salt tax. Wrote Gandhi to Lord Wavell referring to his meeting with Sir Archibald: "I invoke your assistance in this humanitarian work. . . . Independence should be ushered in with the greatest good grace which the poorest villager in the remotest village can at once realize."

He followed it up by another note in May, 1946: "For the sake of English honour, I say, there should not be a day's delay about the abolition of this monopoly. It is to impress upon H.E. what the monopoly has meant that I enclose herewith an additional note prepared by Shri Pyarelal."*

The Viceroy's reply was again disappointing. Instead of agreeing to the abolition of the salt duty, he wrote back: "The Finance Member reports. . . that rumours about a possible reduction or abolition of the salt duty are almost certain to cause a salt famine. . . Merchants and wholesale dealers are abstaining from placing orders." He also enclosed with this letter a draft communique which was proposed to be issued. It was to the effect that there was no prospect of the salt tax being immediately abolished, and that reasonable warning would be given if any such action was to be taken.

"This is a fine instance of how the irresponsible mind works," wrote Gandhi to Lord Wavell in reply. "You were good enough to tell me. . . that the British did not care for credit. . . . The corollary to your dictum seems to be that the British would not mind the discredit of any action. In my opinion the notice. . . is a

* Published in *Harijan*, 10-5-46

discreditable affair. The only straight answer from my mind which thinks ever of the masses, and is responsible and responsive to them, would be to abolish the hateful monopoly and tax, especially in these days of famine."

As a result the proposed communique was held over. But the question of the abolition of the salt tax continued to hang fire.

"Remember Salt Satyagraha" was one of the directives with which Gandhiji sent the popular Congress Ministers to take charge of their portfolios in the Interim Government in September, 1946. In pursuance of that directive, the Government decided to abolish salt tax at an early date and Gandhiji even drafted a notification to that effect to be issued by the Government. But in the meantime the Muslim League had been brought into the Government by Lord Wavell and in the reshuffled Cabinet Finance portfolio was allotted to the Muslim League's nominee, Liaquat Ali Khan, and he managed by some means or other to put off the abolition of the salt tax till the next budget session in March, 1947.

Ultimately the salt tax went but the licensing system continued and a salt cess of 2 per cent continued to be levied on salt production covered by the licensing system. In the correspondence that followed for the implementation of the abolition of the salt tax and monopoly between Gandhiji and Mr Greenfield, Member, Central Board of Revenue, Gandhiji made it clear that his objection was as much to Government monopoly in salt as to selective licensing of salt production. He wanted the making of salt to be "free like air and water" for the individual who wanted to labour for its manufacture and sale.

In December, 1947, when Gandhiji started the battle for decontrol in answer to the problem of food and cloth shortage, he found that in spite of the abolition of the salt tax, people were suffering from the shortage of salt. The blame for it rested partly on the mercantile class, with their short-sighted greed, and partly on the shortage of transport facility. To defeat the former, Gandhiji advised the people to take again to the manufacture of salt for their own use as they had done during the great Salt Satyagraha days. To break the bottleneck in railway transport, he suggested to the authorities that they should deration petrol so that quick and cheap road transport could come to the rescue and bring down the prices of articles of general consumption like salt etc. He made the question of tax-free and cheap salt a test for the people and the Government both. If the people could solve even one problem of such magnitude by dint of their non-violent organization and co-operation among themselves, it would constitute the first step towards setting democracy on the march and teach them how they could take their destiny in their own hands.

Unfortunately he was taken away from us soon after. After his demise in January, 1948, the

Government of India, still faced with salt shortage, permitted individuals and groups of individuals to produce salt without licence on any land to which they had lawful access, and without the licensing fee of annas two per maund levied on the production of licensed factories, provided the area enclosed for salt production did not exceed ten acres.

This was the natural culmination of a long historic struggle. Salt duty had not only been denounced by Indian patriots from Dadabhai Naoroji downwards as an emblem of India's poverty and "un-British rule in India" but also by high British Indian officials like Lord Cross, Sir John Gorst and Sir Evelyn Baring (Earl of Cromer) and lastly by Mr Ramsay Macdonald who dubbed it as "an exaction and oppression". It had been compared to the iniquitous *gabelle* — Government monopoly in salt in France — which was condemned as one of the most serious evils in the *cahiers* which heralded the French Revolution. Bastable in his *Dictionary of Political Economy* described salt duty as a "burdensome impost...equivalent to a poll tax" which "presses unduly on the poor and more especially touches on the minimum of subsistence" and catalogued it as an undesirable tax productive of "grave discontent".

One would have thought that a popular concession that had been won after such a prolonged and sustained struggle and which was charged with such historic associations would be regarded as inviolable by a people's Government and any curtailment of it would be unthinkable. But strange things have happened in our country since independence. One Minister of our Central Government, on the eve of his elevation to the august office, was even heard to characterize at a public meeting abolition of the salt duty and prohibition as "political stunts" of Gandhiji! The old dictum, promulgated under the British rule, that since the poorest do not contribute their share to the cost of running the administration in any other way, there is no reason why they should not be made to pay the duty on salt, which after all does not amount to very much, still seems to hold the ground among the services.

It has been argued that the extension of the concession to small producers in 1948 was with a view to stepping up production. Supply has since overstripped demand. The concession in question therefore should be withdrawn or curtailed. It is further argued that "quality control" should be enforced in respect of small, unlicensed producers to protect licensed manufacturers from "unfair competition" of the former. There is a demand too that the exemption from the salt cess accorded to the unlicensed manufacturers of salt ought to be withdrawn as it is being taken advantage of by financiers, who are exploiting the small producers, exempt from quality control, for their private gain to the detriment of the cess-bearing,

quality-controlled production of organized salt industry.

All these are very plausible arguments but none of them will bear close scrutiny. Over-production is only a bugbear of the statistical mind. There can be no question of over-production in a commodity which is a vital necessity for the millions, who are living below the margin of subsistence. And if there is really over-production, why not leave the adjustment to be affected by the operation of the law of supply and demand?

"Quality control" is a false cry. It has a history behind it. There are wheels within wheels. But I shall not enter into it here. Millions have used natural salt for centuries and one has yet to learn that any one was harmed by the consumption of such salt. The process of purifying salt for domestic use is simplicity itself and there is not a household in salt-bearing areas that does not refine for itself the salt purchased from the dealers, when it is not clean enough. In any case, the problem of low grade salt is a part of the bigger problem of food adulteration and does not call for either a special machinery or a special cess to deal with it. And if natural salt is really so detrimental to health, was not even the humanitarian clause in the treaty of 1931, for free manufacture of salt for domestic consumption itself wrong? Is that also then to be cancelled? And if not why not? As a matter of fact, human constitution is very adaptable and people acquire a taste for the special variety of salt to which they have got used. For instance, those accustomed to taking Sambhar salt will not take kindly to Liverpool salt or even rock salt. Lastly, if there is a large-scale demand for white salt, let those who want it and can afford pay for it. The supply will not fail if there is an effective demand.

To raise the quality of production the right way would be (a) to devise more and more simple and easy-to-practise techniques for purifying salt and instruct people in it by educative propaganda, opening of demonstration centres etc., (b) to drive out low grade salt from the market by opening depots where salt of the required purity can be provided at competitive prices, (c) and for the Government and the big salt manufacturers to go in for the recovery of salts other than sodium chloride, which are found alongside of common salt, as a side industry, so that they can put salt of the standard purity for industrial and other uses, which call for quality control, in sufficient quantities in the market at competitive prices.

Proper discharge of these functions alone could be a valid excuse for the continuation of the Salt Department which after the abolition of the salt tax ought to have otherwise followed suit in the natural course and as a natural corollary to it. Unfortunately very little seems to have been done in this direction either by the Salt Department or by the licensed manufacturers. Considering the antecedents, the

past tradition and the present organization of the Salt Department it is a question whether it is particularly suited to carry on these functions. Recovery processes could perhaps with advantage be taken up either by heavy chemical industries under the direction, guidance and control of the Industries Department of the Government of India, or by the Industries Department itself as a State enterprise. In any case the salt cess, if it must continue, should be taken off the consumer of salt and put on the industries that will benefit by "quality control" and the recovery processes, or on the sophisticated consumer who cannot do without white "table salt".

What is called for is not the protection of organized salt industry from the competition of the unlicensed small producer of salt or the consumer against low-grade salt but the small producer from exploitation by the financier and the money-lender, and in certain cases from harassment by the landlords. This could perhaps be best done by putting the whole industry of salt-making on a co-operative basis except where salt is produced for individual or local consumption (for which no special transport facilities are needed) or where elaborate operations for the utilization of the by-products of salt manufacture are to be undertaken calling for large-scale investment of capital. In the latter case, no question of protection against the unlicensed manufacturer of salt can arise, if the enterprise is efficiently run. It would be very short-sighted and pennywise to curtail the activity of the small producer as against the big at a time when unemployment on a countrywide scale is becoming the problem of problems and salt manufacture offers such a vast possibility of providing a universal, basic, home-and-village-craft, which people can engage in as a subsidiary occupation or as a basic occupation to eke out unemployment relief for themselves.

New Delhi, 13-10-'54

VINOBA IN DARBHANGA

(By "Daḍu")

Immortal Mithila

From times immemorial, Mithila commands a unique prestige of love and reverence all over the country. Associated with the name of the immortal king, Janaka, it has been the traditional home and shrine of religion and learning and culture. Politeness, generosity and hospitality have found a veritable home there since ages past. Politicians threaten to include in Mithila all area falling between Kosi and Gandak, and between Ganga and the Himalayas, i.e. the present districts of Champaran, Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga and Saharsha. There is much in common between these lovely districts gifted with a soil almost as rich as butter. But above all is the charm of northern part of Darbhanga district, i.e., the Madhubani sub-division, which I would call the cream of Mithila, where we spent more than two weeks commencing from 18th September last. The air of the place had its effect also on Vinoba who drew the attention of the Mithili populace to the meaning and import of true religion and its duty in the modern era.

Starting from Doghara Ashram at half past four on Sunday morning (19-9-'54), we walked down ten miles and reached Kamtaul at about quarter past eight. In the way we halted at the legendary Gautam Kunda and Ahalya Sthan, the place where Ahalya is supposed to have been resurrected by Rama.

In the noon there was a spinning demonstration by the local spinners. Later some poor men of the locality

saw Vinoba and presented a letter which read as follows: "We, the poor people of this area, request that in lieu of free rations which are being distributed to us, we must be given work to do."

Work, Charity and Unemployment

Referring to this in his post-prayer address, Vinoba observed, "This letter signifies the nobleness of our great heritage. Our ancestors had taught us that nobody should eat without work. People followed this in practice. But gradually they forgot the lesson of the ancients and began to live upon the labour of others. That is why they do not feel as much hesitation in accepting free rations today, as in the past. But the poor people do hesitate and I am glad for the demand they have put forth. But it must be clearly understood as to who shall give the work. I learn that old and used clothes are being sent to the flood-affected area by way of relief. But they—the rich people of Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi who always come forward for charities—do not want that Charkha should run in every home, and that the consumption of mill cloth should decrease. They are anxious for the working of their mills and sale of their cloth, part of which they want to give in charity. They do want to oblige the poor but not to give them their due right. They want to keep the poor deprived of their birthright. They want to treat them as bullocks. But my submission is that they are men and should be treated as such."

He went on, "I want to ask you whether you should like to work as bullocks or as men. You must hold meetings in your villages and pass resolutions declaring that the Indian peasant cannot survive on the basis of agriculture alone, and that you would use only village-made goods and boycott mill-products. As a Hindu abstains from beef and a Muslim from pork, however cheap they might be, so also you must resolve to abstain from mill cloth. Unless you produce your own cloth as also your gur and oil etc., there is no hope for you. Mahatma Gandhi said it long ago. More than six years have gone since he passed away. Yet the Government have not given a practical shape to his suggestions. They did a lot of planning, but it resulted in more unemployment. Well, they may go on as they like. But sooner rather than later they would realize the significance of the Mahatma's immortal message."

Vinoba concluded, "Redistribute the land in the village on family basis and prepare finished goods in the village itself. Let you take a vow not to use mill-made goods, never, never, never. Make use of the brain that God has given you and respect the lesson taught by the Mahatma. This will bring you all peace and happiness."

Fatalism A Goddess Creed

Kamtal falls in the Jale thana in the Sadar subdivision of the district. We entered the Madhubani subdivision on 20th when we encamped at Parsauni, a small village in the Beni-patti thana. Some workers met him in the day and asked the typical question: Does not one enjoy or suffer according to his *nasib* (fate) as ordained by his previous life, whence how can anybody give land or anything else to another?

Vinoba dwelt on it in his evening discourse. He remarked that this question betrayed an attitude of lethargy and helplessness and hence of Godlessness. God is like the judge who deals with the man in the dock according to his action: punishes him to death or imprisonment or discharges him as the case might require. As the punishment was the responsibility of the evil-doer and not of the judge, so also man enjoys or suffers according to his deed. "He has made," said Vinoba, "the law: Reap as you sow. You reap the result of your action. Whence God is relieved of all responsibility and the entire burden is upon us, you can turn your village into heaven or hell as you like. You can make it a dung-heap or neat like a temple. You are the architect of your fortune and not your *nasib*. God has provided you with hands and other organs for work, good work. It is for you now to utilize them properly and build up your home and

village on the right, self-reliant lines. Again, if you provide land to the landless voluntarily, love will grow between the two and both will be happy. In case you refuse to part with it, conflicts are likely to take place in which both would suffer. But you can well ask me why there is rain in some area while others suffer from drought. I cannot point out the particular action responsible for this. But I am sure that we certainly do one evil or another which results in this catastrophe. Is there anybody amongst us who can claim to be following God's will? None. We have made a very unjust distribution of land. God also, as it were retorts: When you have distributed land so uncouthly, I also do as I choose. God teaches you to learn the lesson and carry out His will and establish justice and peace."

Next day we walked down to Dhakjari, some 7½ miles away. On the way fell the village Arer, where a devoted worker, though old in age but young in spirit, had obtained 368 bighas of land (more than one-fifth of the total area) from 155 donors. While going to the evening prayer meeting Vinoba visited the local Harishchandra Public Library, a small institution running for the last three years. On the visitor's book he wrote: "The worth of a library does not depend on the number of books there, but on their selection. Good books are synonymous with good company."

The Four Pillars of Dharma

In his evening address, Vinoba expounded the four fundamental pillars of religion: faith, truth, love and sacrifice (*tyaga*). He said that on the whole, the first pillar i.e., of faith, stood erect while the other three had almost collapsed, which had reduced faith of much of its strength. Through Bhoodan Yajna he meant to enliven those three as well, whence he called it 'dharma-chakrapravartan' (the revolution of the wheel of religion).

Dealing with *satya* (truth), he regretted that untruth was accepted and practised as truth by the people at large. He pointed out, "That an individual can be the owner of land or wealth is a glaring untruth, though it has behind it presently the sanction of law and convention. Our social structure is based on this *asatya* (untruth). The truth is that only God (that is, society) can own land and wealth and that an individual can consume them on behalf of the society only as a trustee. When we go to the temple for worship and offer oblations we do pretend to stage a demonstration of this truth. But it is merely a pretence. We feed that God who is well-fed and feels no hunger, while we worry little for the hungry God. Bhoodan Yajna attempts to abolish individual worship and strengthen the pillar of truth."

Next comes love which has almost the same meaning as *daya* or kindness. "We do," said he, "show kindness but only on particular occasions. It is not an essential feature of our everyday life. We have confined our love within the home and carry on loot without. Money rules our activities and relationships. Even the learned covet for more money. Bhoodan Yajna calls upon you to give Dardranarayana a definite and permanent place in your home and treat him as one of the family. Religions enjoin universal love."

The fourth pillar is that of *tyaga* whose practice brings forth plenty i.e. *lakshmi*: "A peasant," remarked Vinoba, "has good experience of it. When he sacrifices the best seed he has, sows it and works hard at it, he obtains *lakshmi* in the form of harvest. If he does not sow that seed, he would merely find grass growing. God gives in abundance. For one mango seed you sow, you will not get in return one mango but a hundred or more. But you have to sow one. If, however, you calculate in your mind that when one seed yields a hundred fruits, we should obtain one less, i.e., 99 if we sow one less, i.e., nothing, it would be futile. For God, as the Quran says, gives bounteously without any calculation, but not without sacrifice. That wonderful advice of the *Ishavasya Upanishad*, *tena tyaktena bhunjithah* (sacrifice and you will enjoy), is the key to life." Vinoba expressed

his happiness at the revival of the *tyaga* spirit in the people who were now offering their lands.

Mammon Worship Agalore

On 22nd we were at Beni-patti, the thana headquarters. Addressing the huge concourse gathered for the evening prayer, Vinoba observed that man differed from other species in the fact that his satisfaction did not lie merely in meeting his physical needs but in doing so on right and religious lines. Religious sense and spiritual wisdom were his most distinguishing characteristics. But in the world today, in spite of the manifold means of comfort and pleasure, man was not feeling rest and contentment. And mutual quarrels and ill-will were on the increase. "The reason is," said he, "that man has abandoned the path of religion and given to money the place of religion itself. He is worshipping it as his God. This can never lead to peace. This is not in keeping with the teaching of the ancients. They taught us that in case of a conflict between religion and money, the call of the former should be obeyed. And if there is no conflict between the two, the call of the latter may be followed. Today we are behaving in exactly the reverse manner. We have become victims of the circumstances. We are being tossed away in their tide. In the wars today, nobody has any control over them. The statesmen of the world are lost in their gigantic and fearful sweep. They have not the power to check this flux. Thus man has lost all control and is at the mercy of circumstances."

Planning and Machine-Age

Vinoba added, "These days while preparing their own budgets, nations always look at those of others. They imitate others like monkeys. If we keep on imitating others, what would it lead to? There seems to be a hopeless lack of order and planning in the whole world. And yet they pride on their so-called order and planning. There cannot be any order and planning unless one works with discipline and self-restraint. Merely aping others would result in the disappearance of all initiative. Our discrimination is our own strength by which we could order and plan the society. Of course, some scheming and planning do go on in the world, but not on the basis of the independent discrimination, so characteristic of man. Hence it is no planning and may lead to chaos even as excited movements of his hands or feet by ignominy in water can only lead to drowning him down. Swimming and moving hands or feet are two different things. The planning in fashion in the world today is but pleasure-seeking. Therefore, we must build such a society as is self-reliant and intelligent." Further, he stated, "this is said to be the age of *yantra* or machine. No, this is the age of *mantra* or mind. All these devotees of machine are caught in the magic of mind. After all it is man who runs the machine. Therefore, it is not machine-age but mind-age. I walk on foot, while railroads run round the country. They are not able to take hold of me and throw me inside. So I say that this age has no hold over me. My age is my own. Action is inert (*jad*) while doer is active (*chetan*). Therefore, we must be able to order and plan in our country in our own way."

Vinoba struck a new departure in the workers' meeting. There were about eighty of them. He enquired how many of them were ready to give their major part of time until the thana quota was realized. They raised their hands—a little more than a dozen. Vinoba asked them to frame a detailed scheme of work in their thana and requested the rest to disperse. This gave almost a 'war council' like character to the workers' meeting where they could reach some substantial conclusions.

Next day, we encamped at Saher-ghat in the Mahawapur thana. It may be noted that the Madhubani subdivision is the main Khadi production centre of Bihar. Until recently, in Madhubani town were located the head-

quarters of the Khadi Samiti. Consequently, Khadi spinners are distributed throughout this division and at some places is spun very fine yarn of counts above 100. At Saher-ghat, the local spinners exhibited their spinning. All of them were women, including some widows. Four among them were spinning on self-made bamboo *takkli* and turning out strong and fine yarn. An expert in *takkli* spinning as he is, Vinoba studied the movements of their hands for a considerable time and was happy to see them at work. A sister with a shivering hand was plying her small Charkha. Some of them were carding cotton and making slivers. The whole scene depicted the great potentialities of the innocent-looking Charkha.

Our Neighbour Nepal

As Saher-ghat is quite near the Nepal territory, Vinoba referred to it in his discourse. He said, "The area I am now touring is on the Nepal border. The people of this area have a great responsibility. There are happy relations between India and Nepal today. Both are friendly to each other. Our relationship with Nepal is very old and deep as between those of a family. But being different States, each is authorized to develop on its own lines. We must learn from each other's experience and take good things and ideas. In case our people take only *ganja* and *bhung* from Nepal, it would be disastrous. We must take care not to take each other's faults. Today Bhoodan brings me here. I believe if Bhoodan succeeds in India, it will influence the neighbouring countries as also the whole world. I am not much aware of the political groupings in Nepal. But I worry about them the least. I submit that Bhoodan is such a noble and religious thought as to be helpful and useful to every country. It will be beneficial to Nepal also, I believe. It will generate fellow-feeling and human outlook. I have also received one gift-deed from Nepal. That land would be distributed to the landless there. So a beginning has been made. But a thought prospers in another country only when it has well succeeded in the country of its birth."

What is a Good Gift?

Later dilating upon the significance of Bhoodan, Vinoba remarked, "A good *dan* is that which so equips the donee that he may not require anything again. Such a *dan* is *vidyadan* (gift of knowledge), not the *vidya* or knowledge of loot taught in the universities but that of self-reliance, mutual help and comradeship. Another *dan* of the same category is Bhoodan which enables the donee stand on his own feet. A *dan* should not make the donor feel pride or let down the donee. This is blasphemy. True *dan* is what is offered with full consciousness of one's duty towards others. In Bhoodan, I don't beg but demand the right of the poor. It provides an occasion to the donors to express regrets and atone for the sin of their overmuch possessions and transform their ways. It will popularize new and right religion in the country."

Some public workers of Nepal met him in the evening. Vinoba greeted them with a smile and said, "How are the two brothers going on, whether like Vali and Sugriva or like Rama and Lakshmana?" They laughed and bewailed the unfortunate power politics. When they asked him to come to Nepal, he replied, "It is for your Government to invite me."

(Continued)

CONTENTS	PAGE
SCAVENGING .. Gandhiji	277
REMOVAL OF UNTOUCHABILITY .. N. R. Malkani	277
THE PALMYRA TOPE .. Swami Sitaram	278
SALT OF FREEDOM .. Pyarelal	280
VINOBA IN DARBHANGA .. "Dadu"	282
NOTE:	
A.-I. NAI TALIM	
CONFERENCE .. E. W. Aryanayakam	279