

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: MAGANBHAI P. DESAI

Vol. XVIII, No. 42 AHMEDABAD—SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1954

TWO ANNAS

LAND REFORM AND BHOODAN

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

Land Reform and Soviet Agriculture is the title of a small book* by David Mitran, the well-known author of *Marx Against the Peasant* from which I had quoted in my article "Rehabilitating the Peasantry" (*Harijan*, 27-11-'54). Going through this pamphlet, I was incidentally reminded of the controversy whether Bhoodan Movement was revolutionary. The booklet is an answer to this question in its own way.

The thesis of the book is to show how the Soviet system of State collectives in agriculture failed economically and politically and how it had to be changed in recent years to small-scale private farm-holding and helping it in the form of expert advice, equipment and supplies etc.

The author wonders how the Soviet system came to "adopt such a willful system of agriculture at all":

"From a purely theoretical point of view, of course, any kind of scale might be thought suitable for agricultural production. But there must have been some good natural reason why this oldest of human industries never and nowhere developed in practice along the lines which became normal for industrial production in the last century or so. Whether it was dependence on the fixed quality of the soil, which cannot be changed at will, or on the part which human effort and care have to play in raising plants and, especially, in raising animals, the fact is that, unless occasionally for corn-growing in exceptional conditions of soil and climate, very large units have never been found productive in agriculture. Even those few corn-growing units, unlike large-scale factories, were relatively much less productive than the small units of the farmers and peasants in Western Europe.

"There was nothing, therefore, in agricultural knowledge and experience to explain and justify the Soviet experiment in collectivization. There was, however, a sheer dogmatic basis for it in the views that had been put forward by the originators of 'scientific' socialism, Marx and Engels, over a hundred years ago....."

And hence he adds,

"How was it, then, one might ask, that with so little understanding for and interest in the peasants it at first succeeded in gaining the support of the peasants for making the revolution? The fact would seem to be that the peasant has never been an ideological revolutionary, but he has always been an oppressed and therefore discontented worker exploited most of the time

and in most places by absentee landlords. That is a fact as old as the history of the world, and one which still accounts for much of the restlessness in many parts of the globe today."

This point of the author is well illustrated by the Indian Communists also working in Andhra. As we know the land hunger of the Andhra peasants was exploited to Communist party ends and the fury was unleashed to ravage the land. And we also know how the Bhoodan trick that Vinoba came upon as God-sent in that situation worked to quell it and channelized the peasant fury into constructive activities.

This question of land hunger and Communism is not peculiar to India only. As the author remarks:

"It is strange that even after the Russian revolution the need to do justice to the peasant, if revolt is to be avoided, has still not been faced in many countries of the Middle East, of Asia and of South America..... A Report published by the United Nations in the summer of 1952 gave details of the countries in various parts of the world where land reform and support for the peasant's work still has not been faced in a fair and progressive way. And yet that problem is at the very heart of their present difficulties and future prospects."

And he shows the way to solve the problem in the following words:

"For them all is largely true what the late Mahatma Gandhi once said of India: 'India lives in her villages, not cities..... When I succeed in ridding the villages of their poverty, I have won *swaraj* (independence)..... To a people famishing and idle the only way in which God can dare appear is work and promise of food and wages.'

"Here is a simple yet complete explanation of why the Russian, Chinese and other Communists were at first able to enlist the support of the peasants; indeed why they were able to make a successful revolution at all. The revolutions in China, Russia in 1917 and elsewhere have all been really peasant revolutions under Communist management. But at the same time they have been revolutions *with* the peasants but not *for* the peasants.....

"That does not change the fact, however, that in parts of Asia, of the Middle East and of Latin America the peasant still is down-trodden and poverty-stricken; and that as long as he is in that state he is a ready prey for Communist propaganda and action."

The lesson from all this is obvious. It clearly shows the revolutionary potentialities and the deep meaning and significance of the Bhoodan Movement. The author of the booklet does not seem to have known or studied this

* Casement Publications, Bombay, Price 6 As.

movement, though he paraphrases its aims where he says at the end of his thesis :

"In a recent survey of the effect of Communist propaganda in the more Christian parts of India, the World Council of Churches had this to say: 'It is clear that the average villager Hindu, Moslem or Christian, will support any party which promises him some immediate economic relief. The Communist challenge can be met only by a radical programme of land reform and by providing the peasant with the necessary implements and seeds.'

And he warns people in all lands where land hunger is a problem that, "For the peasant the 'national' question is the land question, nothing more nothing less." And he also notes that "the peasant, by the very nature of his life and labour, is not easy to organize into mass movements. But for the same reason he can easily be overcome by political oppression. His age-long strength has lain in his power of passive resistance."

This gives us not only a timely warning but also a true reading of the situation and the way to remedy it. Real India, we know, lives in her lakhs of villages and, therefore, the question of the peasant and his economy is truly national so far as rebuilding of our country or establishing economic Swaraj goes.

3-12-'54

SNATCHING AWAY THE STRAW

(By J. C. Kumarappa)

The Central Ministry of Irrigation and Power had invited opinion as to the advisability or otherwise of the use of electricity in villages. We had already pointed out (in our last July issue) that the so-called "Cheap Power" is in reality costing the Government a subsidy of about Rs. 7-15-0 per unit. This, in the main, benefits the industrialist in a capitalistic set-up. We have to reckon our costs of benefits in a country like ours in terms of labour and human welfare. We are immediately concerned with feeding the people and not in producing material goods at all costs. Production in itself is not a goal. We have to take into consideration all the repercussions of our economic organization in the social order.

The Damodar Valley Project itself is estimated to cost about Rs 28 crores, and produce 2,00,000 K.W. of electric power per hour. This is calculated to work 29.2 crores of 1 H.P. engines for 8 hours. This is equivalent to 8.0 lakhs pairs of bullocks or 80 lakhs of adult workers. Damodar Valley Project only represents 10 per cent of the scheme. Therefore the displacement of labour by the whole scheme will be 10 times greater than what is stated above. All this, in effect means bringing into existence a fresh lot of people putting out of work as many existing ones. If we can shoot them all down there would be less objection from the humanitarian grounds as otherwise we shall have to starve them to death.

The recently conducted All India Survey of Working and Living Conditions by the Union Labour Ministry reveals facts which ought to guide us in this matter :

"Men agricultural labourers form 55 per cent of the total agricultural labourers in rural India and they are underemployed or unemployed for a considerable part of the year. The survey shows that agricultural labour provides employment to men workers for 189 days in the year. They remain unemployed for 100 days and scrap up miscellaneous labour of non-agricultural character for 29 days."

We cannot afford to depress the wages any further. Our country is largely dependent on agriculture as an occupation. The effect of the introduction of electricity in rural parts will be to depress employment and impinge on the wage rates on the one side and on the other let the ones who have the capital get access to the existing water-supply when electric pumps are used without augmenting the water-supply as the shallow wells dry up. Thus the sum total of land under cultivation will be decreased while a few acres of the rich will be intensively cultivated. In the aggregate, the production of the country will be less. The survey shows that, as it is, the average daily wage per adult male is Rs 1-1-6 and female labour gets annas 10.8 in agricultural work i.e. about Rs 104/- per capita annual income. In all conscience, no family can exist on such wages even on a starvation level. They have no proper clothing or roof over their heads. If electricity is brought in at these subsidized rates we are virtually giving those starved mankind the quit order forthwith.

I am not pleading to have electricity out. When a drowning man is clutching at a straw as his last hope what is the proper action to take? Pull away the straw, counsel him better and then search for a better floatsam? No. That will guarantee drowning. First offer him a better substitute and then his hopes will revive. Electricity at this stage makes the man on the raft more secure and the struggling one sink deeper.

What many friends, even constructive workers, do not realize is that the charge for electricity to the consumer is not its cost but nominal rate fixed by the Government and represents a subsidy out of Government funds which ultimately comes from the people. This whole question needs careful analysis if we are not to be landed into a quagmire of unemployment and poverty.

As we have repeatedly pointed out, the solution lies in raising the level of subsoil water and stopping erosion on a wide scale. These measures will also check floods. Money will have to be spent, but when it is spent in co-operation with the people it will go a long way. Electric generators are built largely out of imported machinery while canals, tanks and wells can be constructed providing work for the people and distributing wealth. At the same time we shall be

moving towards a day when we shall be able to set them on their own feet. The first thing to do is to strengthen the agricultural sector. The electricity programme seeks to aid industry and in reality is aiding mass production. This is commencing at the wrong end.

(From the *Gram Udyog Patrika*, November 1954)

RICE-MILLING COMMITTEE

Government of India has constituted the Rice-Milling Committee with the following terms of reference:

1. To examine the work of different types of rice-milling now in vogue in the country from all relevant aspects such as technical, nutritional, consumer preference, economic and employment and

2. To make recommendations as to the future policy that should be adopted and to indicate the administrative, financial and legislative measures which may be needed on the part of the Central and State Governments to give effect to them.

The Committee has started its work and will be touring Bombay State from 27-12-'54 to 29-12-'54. The Committee will go into the details of Handpounding Industry to recommend to Central Government whether hullers and rice mills should be allowed or not for further expansion and total closure.

With a view to encourage Handpounding of Rice the Committee would like to have the following informations:

1. Whether they think it necessary to exercise any control over production by mills and husking machine and if so, what measures they would propose for the purpose of such control.

2. What is their view regarding protecting measures like restriction of spearing of production and imposition of cess on mills sector and

3. The extent to which production by Handpounding can meet the total rice requirements of your State and what measure you propose in this connection.

Information is also required on the following points:

1. Different types of rice mills in the State (Hullers, Shellers etc.) and the number under each type.

2. The total number of persons engaged in these mills.

3. Chief Centres where Handpounding is predominant as compared to rice milling.

4. (a) Total estimated output by handpounding

(i) By Pestle and Mortar,

(ii) By Stone Chakki,

(iii) By Dhenkl.

(b) Total output by sheller mills and

(c) Total output by husking machines.

5. Percentage of normal recovery of rice.

It is requested that the informations required may kindly be supplied to me as early as possible.

Handpounding Industry, RAOJIBHAI N. PATEL
Patel Hall, Nadiad.

Sarvodaya Conference and Railway Concession

Those who have inadvertently not got their names registered as Sewaks of the Sarvodaya Samaj are requested to do so before 31-12-'54. If they fail to do so, it will not be possible for us to get them railway concessions for attending the next Sarvodaya Conference to be held in Puri, Orissa from 25th to 27th March, 1955.

9-12-'54

P. O. Buniyadganj,
Gaya (Bihar),

(Adapted from Hindi)

VALLABHISWAMI,

Joint Secretary,

All-India Sarva Seva Sangh

B. C. G. VACCINATION

VI

Competent authorities are agreed that tuberculosis is a social disease the control of which can only be brought about by attention to the general health of the people; this includes the provision of adequate amounts of nourishing food, of clothing to protect from cold, proper conditions in housing, workshop, factory, schools and offices, ensuring the provision of fresh air and the prevention of overcrowding.

Dr. W. Hobson, Professor of Medicine at Sheffield says:

"It is wrong to think of a single cause in aetiology. Tuberculosis provides a good case in point. It may be caused by the tubercle bacillus, but genetic, nutritional and environmental factors are of considerable importance in determining the onset of disease. How else can we explain the fact that some individuals remain perfectly healthy despite heavy and repeated exposure to the tubercle bacillus, and yet others require only a minimum of exposure to produce a widespread and extensive disease process? Very often the predisposing and perpetuating factors are of greater importance than the provoking factors."

Dr. Hugh Paul takes Dr. James to task for stating that 'there is no evidence that good housing and a good standard of living will eradicate tuberculosis' and says, 'In fact there has been such evidence for two or three generations right throughout the world.

'Dr. James is most provocative when he suggests that for the first time tuberculosis is being tackled by modern drugs such as streptomycin, but the facts do not support him. The death rate from the disease in 1950 was one-tenth of the figure 100 years previously, and during the century the drug treatment of the disease contributed nothing to its eradication. The fall during this 100 years was steady and followed closely the steady improvement in the standard of living.'

Finally, to quote the *Lancet* (28-11-'53).

"As Dr. Galdston says, 'we know that misery, deprivation, poverty, overwork, always have been reflected in a rise of the tuberculosis mortality.' He argues that tuberculosis is primarily a state of being and only derivatively a disease. The tubercle bacillus is always with us, but whether it can produce disease or remain in symbiolic balance, depends on man's state of being, which in turn depends on man's state of knowledge, awareness, conscience and wisdom—how, in a word, he manages his social and individual affairs."

This pinpoints another important aspect of the problem, concludes Dr. Bayly, which was stressed by the editor of the *Medical Officer*:

"Another danger of the widespread use of B.C.G. is that the public (at present singularly ignorant about B.C.G.) will find yet another excuse for submerging personal effort in preventing the spread of tuberculosis."

V. G. D.

HARIJAN

Dec. 18

1954

THE CONGRESS PRESIDESHIP

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

The Indian National Congress has conferred the great honour and responsibility of the presidentship of its forthcoming Session, on Shri U. N. Dhebar, the Chief Minister of Saurashtra. I congratulate him for the honour and wish him all success in the great venture of service and leadership that he has accepted to undertake at this unique juncture in our history.

The meaning and importance of this great office in our public life has naturally changed from what they were in pre-independence days. This is clear even from the simple fact that the unique name of the office — the *Rashtrapati*, on the advent of our free Constitution of the country, was transferred to and reserved for the head of the State, the President. This change was symbolic of the very material change that came about in the nature and function of the Congress, on the advent of political freedom. The Congress fast began to assume the role of the chief political party organization of the country. The change automatically necessitated for the Congress appropriate adjustments within itself, not only organizationally but also fundamentally. This process is still on and the Institution is now required to be consciously considering it and arranging the change-over in a smooth way, and without losing, — rather exploiting to their very best, the great potentialities for the service of the nation that it has the unique distinction to possess.

Shri Dhebarbhai is called upon to assume the stewardship of the Institution in such a transition. He swears by the Gandhian constructive programme as the one thing that can lead us to Poorna Swaraj or Sarvodaya. As he says, the country now needs to establish social and economic Swaraj with the strength and freedom that have accrued to it on getting political Swaraj. What are the main things that require to be immediately minded to in this behalf? It will be for the Congress to think out and place before the people in its Avadi (Madras) Session meeting a few weeks after.

Shri Dhebarbhai's choice as the Congress President has automatically removed the eventuality of continuing the dual role of the Prime Minister and the Congress Chief vesting in one person. This is a noteworthy change, inasmuch as it is a desirable practice not to combine these two important offices in the same person. This may better be set up as a healthy and necessary convention of our democracy. The chief point here is to see that the Congress functions freely

and keeping true to its own ideals performs its historical role as the bulwark of the people's march to Sarvodaya. To this end, it will need to institute many other healthy democratic conventions to guide itself as also its Governments at the Centre or the States, wherever they be formed.

There is another equally important aspect of this question: the Congress is lately thinking to have a constructive work wing for itself. In the past it created autonomous institutions for it, like the Charkha Sangh, the A.-I.V.I.A., the Talimi Sangh etc. Some others, though not created by it, worked with it, as the Congress symbolized in itself the constructive urge of the nation to rebuild itself along with the one to free itself. The two were welded into one under Gandhian leadership. This has changed with the attainment of political freedom. However the need for the Congress to have its organizational roots in the midst of the people through constructive work is not less than ever before. How to secure this is a problem that faces the organization in the next few years. We hope Shri Dhebarbhai, under his regime of two years stewardship of the Congress, will clearly set these problems and guide it to their happy solution.

11-12-'54

PUBLIC SERVICE AND COSTLY GIFTS

(From Gandhiji's Letters in His Archives)

[Last time I had reproduced Gandhiji's Letter to late Shri Gokhale, researched from his archives. The research friend gives me another interesting letter, one to late Parsi Rustomji, about whom readers of Gandhiji's autobiography* know very well. Gandhiji's letter under reproduction and its reply from late Shri Rustomji which is also reproduced therewith, refer to costly gifts that Gandhiji returned for the use of the Indian Community by creating a suitable trust for their management. It is not known whether Gandhiji wrote anything again to Shri Rustomji; there is no letter to that effect to be found in the archives. However we know that Gandhiji devoted a chapter on this matter in his autobiography. Relevant part of it is also reproduced here. The question of costly gifts given to public workers for public service was raised to a moral level by Gandhiji and it has played a great part in raising the morale of our public life during the Gandhian era. The lesson is well worth remembering and translating in a suitable form even under Swaraj.

6-12-'54

M. P.]

I

18th October, 1901
Durban,

Dear Mr Rustomji,

I have been thinking what written reply to give to the handsome and costly address presented to me by my fellow countrymen. After deep consideration I have come to the conclusion that consistently with professions made by me from time to time I must not be satisfied with

* Price Rs. 7-0-0, Postage etc. Re. 1-3-0.

merely saying that what I value is the affection that has prompted the gifts, not the gifts as such. I have therefore decided to hand the jewellery, as per accompanying schedule, to the African Banking Corporation, with instructions to deliver the articles to the Natal Indian Congress against a receipt signed by the President and Honorary Secretary or Secretaries for the time being.

I make them over to the Congress on the following conditions:

(1) The jewellery or its value should form an emergency fund to be utilized only when the Congress has no other funds to fall back upon without the two landed properties.

(2) I should have the right to withdraw any or such of the jewellery that may then not have been utilized for devoting same to any beneficial object whether within or outside the scope of the Congress.

When the necessity for utilizing the jewellery arises, and if it is possible I would feel it an honour to be consulted by the Congress as to whether the object for which it is sought to utilize same is, in my opinion, an emergency within the scope of this letter. But the Congress is free at any time to withdraw the jewellery without reference to me.

I have taken the above step deliberately and prayerfully. I feel that neither I nor my family can make any personal use of the costly presents. They are too sacred to be sold by me or my heirs and seeing that there can be no guarantee against the last contingency, in my opinion the only way I can return the love of our people, is to dedicate them all to a sacred object. And since they are in reality a tribute to the Congress principles to the Congress I return them.

Lastly I repeat the hope that our people would translate into acts their good intentions (for the institution of which the recent presentations were an earnest.

That the Congress may continue to serve the Empire and the Community and that my successors may receive the same support that was extended to me is my fervent prayer.

I remain,
Yours truly,
M. K. Gandhi

Parsee Rustomji, Esq.,
Hon. Secretary, Address Committee,
Durban.

(Schedule of)

Presents

Gold medal presented in 1896.

Gold coin presented in 1896 by the Tamil Indians.

Gold chain presented by the Johannesburg Committee in 1899.

Gold chain, sovereign purse and seven gold coins, presented by Mr Parsee Rustomji.

Gold watch presented by Mr Joosuf of Messrs. Dada Abdulla & Co.

Diamond ring presented by the Community.

Gold Necklace presented by the Gujarati Hindus.

Diamond pin presented by Mr Abdul Cadir, and a

Silver cup and plate presented by the Kathiawar Hindus, Stanger.

II

Rustomji's Reply

19th October, 1901,
Durban.

Dear Mr Gandhi,

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the yesterday's date, intimating your intentions with regard to the presentation articles, which you have received from

time to time in connection with the work of the Natal Indian Congress, of which you have been the Secretary and guiding spirit up to a very recent date.

I have given your communication my most careful consideration, and I must frankly confess that the intimation you therein make having given me pain at the first perusal, simply accentuates the regret I feel at the decision you have arrived at in respect of the abovementioned articles of presentation.

As, however, each individual person in this world is supposed to be guided in ordinary matters of this nature by his own views and convictions, I cannot find it in my heart to do other, in reference to your deliberate decision, than to meet it by my own resolve, also deliberately taken, after mature consideration, that, whatever your ultimate intentions may be with respect to the other articles of present, and however it may affect the other respective donors, so far as my own are concerned, the carrying out of your determination with respect to them will only end in my severing my connection with the Natal Indian Congress, whatever pain such severance may cause me—and to pursue the work which first brought me to this country in my own way, unaffected by considerations which in the course of things brought me in contact with your great and honoured personality in connection with what I conceived, and still conceive, as a great work of love, and as to which I have been influenced by naught, but the highest motives.

Your action I may explain, will coerce me into the step I refer to on the following grounds:

1. Because tokens of regard and esteem bestowed on any one as such must, I conceive, once accepted and received, be treasured as such.

2. Because any adverse decision arrived at with respect to such tokens at any later stage of a work in connection with the continuation of which they were given, for recognition of services, cannot but lead to misconstruction of motives in the donor as in the recipient.

3. Because what you estimate as valuable gifts are, in my estimation, trifles—so far as their intrinsic worth is in question, and that they were given with the purest intentions for good value received (if in your opinion such acts are to be measured by the standard of L.S.D.).

4. Because in consideration of the purity of motives, which actuated my acts and donations, and which by the adoption of the step you intimate, cannot but result in my surrendering, towards clearing my own conscience—certain to be affected by your communicated decision of such of the articles that have been bestowed on me for alleged services in connection with the Natal Indian Congress.

In view of the above considerations, I beg, as a conscientious member of the above Association, whose labours and efforts I value more than silver and gold, to appeal to you for a reconsideration of your decision in this matter.

I appeal to you all the more earnestly and with the greatest confidence, because recognizing your high character and great merits—recognizing your great qualities of head and heart, which alone brought forth any such token of regard and affection as have been given to you in respect of great and valued services rendered, in what I cannot but look upon as a sacred cause of humanity and justice, I must perforce view your determination as trudging to the disorganization of a great achievement—the credit of which achievement is primarily due to yourself.

I beg to repeat that I appeal to you with perfect confidence for a reversal of your decision in the above matter.

If, however for reasons which I cannot fathom—however thoughtfully I view the posture of affairs which has resulted in your aforementioned decision, your determina-

tion is irrevocable and final, I would respectfully ask that you will be pleased to defer the execution of such resolve on your part till I could ascertain the views of the President of the Congress in reference to your step, and also as regards the return of the more than tangible and ill-deserved marks of token, which have been bestowed upon myself for alleged services in connection with the Natal Indian Congress.

I have the honour, to be,
Sir,

Ever Yours faithfully,
Parsee Rustomji

III

(Extracts from Gandhiji's Autobiography relating to the subject.)

At this time I was intimately connected only with Natal. The Natal Indians bathed me with the nectar of love. Farewell meetings were arranged at every place, and costly gifts were presented to me.

Gifts had been bestowed on me before when I returned to India in 1896, but this time the farewell was overwhelming. The gifts of course included things in gold and silver, but there were articles of costly diamond as well.

What right had I to accept all these gifts? Accepting them, how could I persuade myself that I was serving the community without remuneration? All the gifts, excepting a few from my clients, were purely for my service to the community, and I could make no difference between my clients and co-workers; for the clients also helped me in my public work.

One of the gifts was a gold necklace worth fifty guineas, meant for my wife. But even that gift was given because of my public work, and so it could not be separated from the rest.

The evening I was presented with the bulk of these things I had a sleepless night. I walked up and down my room deeply agitated, but could find no solution. It was difficult for me to forego gifts worth hundreds, it was more difficult to keep them.

And even if I could keep them, what about my children? What about my wife? They were being trained to a life of service and to an understanding that service was its own reward.

I had no costly ornaments in the house. We had been fast simplifying our life. How then could we afford to have gold watches? How could we afford to wear gold chains and diamond rings? Even then I was exhorting people to conquer the infatuation for jewellery. What I was now to do with the jewellery that had come upon me?

I decided that I could not keep these things. I drafted a letter, creating a trust of them in favour of the community and appointing Parsee Rustomji and others trustees.

The gifts received in 1896 and 1901 were all returned. A trust-deed was prepared, and they were deposited with a bank, to be used for the service of the community, according to my wishes or to those of the trustees.

Often, when I was in need of funds for public purposes, and felt that I must draw upon the trust I have been able to raise the requisite amount, leaving the trust money intact. The fund is still there, being operated upon in times of need, and it has regularly accumulated.

I have never since regretted the step, and as the years have gone by, my wife has also seen its wisdom. It has saved us from many temptations.

I am definitely of opinion that a public worker should accept no costly gifts.*

* Chapter XII, pp. 269, 270, 271 and 272, August 1948 edition.

VINOBA IN PURNEA — III

(By "Dadu")

Workers' Meeting

Vinoba encamped for two days at Islampur where gathered together the workers of the Sarva Seva Sangh and of the All-India Khadi and Village Industries Board. The assemblage also included Shri Jayaprakash Narayan, Shri Shankarrao Deo and Shri Shriman Narayan Agarwal, the General Secretary of the A.-I.C.C.

They discussed several matters: village industries, land collection, land distribution, Nai Talim, Amber Charkha, etc. But the major time was given to village industries and Bhoodan. After they began, Vinoba gave them a bit of his mind:

Village Industries vs. Government

"I find that village industries are meeting a planned doom. The Government do think of them: they appoint Committee to go into them. The Planning Commission also shows some concern for them. Congress even passes resolutions about them. Yet they continue to sink. So the public has lost faith in such demonstrations. On the one hand, there goes on the process of parliamentary approvals and committee recommendations while on the other, our crafts are dying away. Had there been even a status quo in the position it would have meant something. But that is not so.

"In fact they have not a clear mind on the subject. It is said that the report of the Planning Commission is subject to improvement. This may mean that village industries will gradually prosper. It may also mean that they will gradually disappear. Yet, due to pressure of public opinion, they seem to realize the place of village industries more and more... But in no case they regard them of more than auxiliary help, fit for the so-called transitory period. They do not find them essential for the new social order. They are there for want of any alternative. This is, however, no sin. There is, therefore, no question of non-co-operation. But I firmly believe that they must draw the minimum of our energy and resources. And as few of us as possible should go there. Our one or two experts may well advise them when required. But our main energy should be devoted to the development of Jana-shakti (self-reliant power of the people). We must build up public opinion....

"I, therefore, ask you whether you actually feel that your best effort should be put up in building up Jana-shakti and the least of it in other directions. What is worth the while? Please advise what policy should be adopted. I gave about thirty years of my life to Khadi and Village Industries. They were then my whole concern. Yet, today I appear to have given them up and taken up Bhoodan Yajna? Is there any sense behind it? When you ask me my opinion on this problem or that, I do not feel inclined to answer it. For, I don't think of anything except the issue of distributing the 36 lakhs of acres at the earliest. Could we not carry out the distribution work in proper time, everything will come down with a crash. Should we waste ten years in this, our entire strength would be reduced to naught. In U.P., we have distributed only some 60,000 acres of land so far. Then a distribution of five crores of acres is mere tall talk? Attending to other activities means a vain diffusion of our energy."

Khadi and V. I. Board's Work

They were all set at thinking. Those of A.-I.K.V.I.B. (referred to as the Board hereafter) admitted that village industries were not faring well. But during the last years, they argued, there had been some change from the point of view of policy at least. Something had been done for the hand-loom. The Government had imposed cess etc. Some principles had been accepted. Manifestly, community projects could not succeed without village industries. But the project people had neither the energy nor training for the same. There was in hand today a change which should be made use of. The upshot was

that if the Board was to continue, it must have their (of Sarva Seva Sangh) moral backing. This stand was appreciated. It was then held that the Board must henceforth consult the Sarva Seva Sangh and that there should be a co-ordination in the work of the two.

The Board has made a special study of four village industries, viz., paddy-husking, Kolhu oil-pressing, leather-tanning and match box making. Of these, the case of paddy is at once straight and unrivalled. And there seems to be no ground at all for not banning paddy-hullers for good. The case of others is also strong. It was suggested that the Board should ask the Government for a clear-cut declaration of its policy with regard to the village industries in general and, in particular to the said four.

Bhoodan and Walking Tour

Bhoodan was the chief theme: land-collection, its distribution, Sampattindia offers, training of Jivandan workers, etc. There was a very frank and wholesome discussion of the various aspects involved. They all felt that Paldai Yatra (walking tour) was the most effective method for conveying the Bhoodan message and collecting land. In this connection, I may add here that about eight thousand acres of land were recently collected in about a fortnight by ordinary workers in the Yeotmal district of Madhya Pradesh. All by dint of Paldai Yatra. Stress must be laid on obtaining the gift from the small (and smaller) landholders which would generate such a climate of public opinion as to make so-called big owners part with their shares of their own accord. Shramdan (labour-gift) could be effective in organizing the landless or petty landholders.

Distribution of Bhoodan Land

As regards distribution, Vinoba pointed out, "Granted that land distribution has taken more time than collection. But can we not fix a time limit within which the 36 lakhs of acres so far obtained would be distributed? Next would collection follow distribution or would they go together? Thirdly, can there be other method of easy and quick distribution?"

The gravity of these words was duly felt. They resolved to distribute U.P.'s five lakhs of acres by March 1955 and Bihar's 22 lakhs of acres by March 1956. Also distribution work must be begun in those provinces which had realized their Sevapuri quota. Again, some 90 villages have been donated in toto. Their number will grow. They decided to bestow their special attention to such villages, carry on there the activities of Khadi, Village Industries, Nai Talim, etc., on new lines and pave the way for Gram Raj.

Sootanjali Programme

Finally, Vinoba appealed to them to give their thought to the Sootanjali programme, one hank of self-spun yarn from everybody, man, woman or child (above 4 years of age) in memory of Gandhi.

We were at Kachrahat on the 3rd. Vinoba spent most of his time with Surendrajai of Borlavi (in Kheda district). A native of Gorakhpur district, Surendrajai left his home when he was hardly 16. Later he joined Gandhiji at the Kochrab Ashram. When Bapu shifted to Sabarmati, Surendrajai also followed and was among the most silent and unostentatious souls there. He accompanied Bapu to Dandi on his historic march. Later he settled down at the small village of Borlavi where his earnest labours won for him an imperishable place in the hearts of the people. A deep student of religion and philosophy, Surendrajai is a *sadhak* in the truest sense of the term. At Vinoba's persuasion he is now staying at his Samanwaya Ashram in Bodh-Gaya.

The Unique Heritage of India

The evening meeting included a lot of Muslims as everywhere else in the Kisanraj sub-division. Vinoba began his speech with Sursi-fatihah. Asking them to discard the ownership of land, he said, "They call themselves owners of land. They show their papers on records, and claim their right. Well, what would you do with these papers? Who says that you are the owner? Has God so designed? This is all man-made. While the land

remains, the so-called owner goes away. Had he been a real owner, why would he have left it? In fact, we do not own even this body. We have to cast it off. Then, where one cannot call even one's body as one's own, how can one claim ownership of land? Verily, such a claim is heresy. It is against the Will of God."

Next day at Panjipara, we encamped just by the side of a mosque. The Muslim friends gave Vinoba a very hearty welcome. In deference to their wishes, he held his meeting at two in the noon instead of the usual four, to avoid their *namaz* time. Vinoba preceded his address by verses from the Vedas and the Quran. Recalling the days in 1948 when he worked among the Maos (that work goes on still under Vinoba's guidance) and had also spent a week at the famous Dargah Sharif of Ajmer, Vinoba pointed out that of all big countries in the world, only India's people never went out with a sword or gun in hand. "This is so because our civilization—our ancestors who delighted in Dhyana Yoga, who dived in the depths of the soul, who valued self-conquest above all else—was characterized by the high ideal of identifying oneself with the whole universe. The word Swaraj in common use today, is a very deep-reaching word. It looks like a modern word. But this occurs in our Vedas too. Therein they say: 'We must endeavour for Swaraj.' Those who said so were free in the current sense of the term. None else ruled them. And yet, they stress the need of Swaraj. 'Swaraj means one's rule over one's own self, self-control. Swaraj stands for *Shasanmukti* (getting rid of the State). Swaraj connotes living under restraint and providing facilities for others to do likewise. This idea represents our Swaraj. Our ancestors placed this idea before us. Whence people came in freely in India from outside. Thus our nationalism naturally took the form of internationalism or humanism.

"It is our duty to universalize this unique heritage of ours. Unfortunately some forces are working against it. Only today I read in the papers about some clash on Orissa-Andhra border on the language issue. This is a very small thing to look at. Nevertheless, it goes entirely against our grain. It is a denial of that culture which was built up very elegantly and vigilantly by our Rishis, Munis, saints and even by our Rajas. When we create conflicts of language or caste, we repudiate our entire history. It denotes a disavowal of what we have so laboriously earned through the ages. Nay, it hinders in the execution of the special mission which India has to fulfil on this globe. We won freedom by peaceful means, which enjoins an extraordinary responsibility upon us. Such mistakes are against our *Sheel* (genius). We can tolerate mistakes which do not go against it. But not those which belie it as also our achievement of the ages. Such things cannot be lightly ignored."

He went on, "The motto of 'Live and Let Live' is in fashion in these days. We have to replace it by another: first help others to live and then live. That makes a lot of difference. We must care for others first and for ourselves last. Then only would the life of the individual and the society merge like the warp and woof."

This topic is very dear to Vinoba's heart. However, he cut it short and closed saying, "The nearness to a mosque has recollections all these things to my mind. I only want to say that our country's is a special religion, which includes the various religions, viz., Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, etc. That special religion is *maryada* (restraint). *Maryada* is a word peculiar to our own country. There is *dharma maryada*, *kula* (family)-*maryada*, *jati* (caste)-*maryada*. We regard *maryada* as freedom. It implies freedom. Where there is *maryada*, all enjoy full freedom. The individual and the society then develop fully and freely. This is called *Sarvodaya*, or *Sama Yaga* or *Shasanmukta* (government free) society."

With Muslim Friends

At half past five in the evening, our Muslim friends took us to the mosque and requested Vinoba to address them a few words. He told them that he was a servant of mankind and went from village to village for the ser-

vice of all. After explaining to them the method of land distribution in Bhoodan, he said, "While I demand 12,000 acres from your Thana, 132 donors have already donated 5,000 acres and odd. This shows that my demand is not much. If you take it up, you can fulfil it in no time." He went on, "What is religion? To serve the poor and the orphans. Truth (*haq*), compassion (*rahim*) and patience (*sabr*) are its main features. We are asked to strictly observe *aman* (peace), *iman* (religion) and *amal* (conduct). Bhoodan will satisfy everybody's urge. Merely cramming up religious books won't do. While you want to go to Delhi, you have taken the route to Calcutta. Simply crying 'Delhi' will be of no avail. Now has the time come to follow religion."

On Friday, we were at Kishanganj, the sub-divisional headquarters. A Muslim noble saw Vinoba in the morning. He had already donated 3,500 acres of land. He gave further 1,500 acres to Vinoba that day. "You have," said Vinoba, offered all the *Gher-magnan khas* land (uncultivated) with you. Now as my right, I demand one-third of your *khud kasi* (land under cultivation)."

"I agree to your claim," spoke he politely. "But in our Muslim families a woman has also her right. And we are five brothers and two sisters."

"Then I become the eighth in your family," put in Vinoba, "and I want one eighth."

"Very gladly so." And he signed the *danpatra* accordingly.

The evening meeting attracted a huge audience. Beginning with a verse from the Koran, Vinoba observed, "The heart of the country has always been one. I have no doubt in my mind that India and Pakistan together will be of one heart. Nay, very many countries of the world will come together and be of one heart. This time is not far off when you, besides being the citizens of India, will be the citizens of the whole world, even as at present as you are citizens of Bihar as also of India. This is to be done by all of us. We must have a right or authority over the world and the world over us. Right, not to loot and ruin each other, but to love and serve others."

He continued, "The first essential for this is that you must be ready to sacrifice your ownership of land. Like air and water, it can belong to God or the village alone, not to any individual. You will claim to be owners of land, for you have the ownership 'records' with you. Well, I have a suggestion to offer. On the next *Holi* all Hindus must consecrate their 'records' to the *Holi* fire and the Muslims, Christians, Jains, Parsees, etc., should also join them in this holy and happy ceremony. You will then realize what a joy accrues in India, what generosity of heart is generated, what power comes out at the surface! Except Him, there can be no other owner. And, as the Quran teaches us, there can be no partnership (*shirkat*) in His ownership."

Full Education for Villages

The last stay of the week was at Kanki. When we reached this village, its inhabitants regretted that they had in the village only a small school which did not meet their needs. They wanted a Middle School there. "Why so little a demand?" asked Vinoba. "You must insist upon a University." They were staggered at the name of 'University'. Vinoba promised to take up this point in the evening speech. He remarked, "I want that every village should provide for education from the cradle to the grave. How fantastic it would appear if arrangements for passing childhood were provided at a village only, for passing youth at Kishanganj only, for passing old age at Purnea only, and for death at a place near the Ganga. Every village is so equipped as to let one pass his whole life. Here, as in Delhi, children are born, acquire youth, attain old age and die. But not so in case of education. There is its full provision at Delhi, but not here. Education has been broken up into compartments. Today you have your primary education in the village. Then you go to Kishanganj. Later to.....Purnea. Thereafter you run to Patna. And finally to America. But they do not think like this. Theirs is a strange method."

Present Education

"Today, able boys and girls," went on Vinoba, "do not get the requisite education. Queer is the wisdom of these education-*vallahs*. They give a pass in 33. Suppose a cook were to tell you that of the hundred *rotis* he cooks, at least 33 would be eatable. Would you employ him? Thus, there seems to be no sense in the current system from the beginning to the end. Further, the worst and most ill-paid teachers are reserved for our children. But the reverse should be the case. Again, they count so much on the number of books. They never realize that the best medium of education are the eyes, the nose, the hands etc., which must be utilized to the full. Thus it is all devoid of reason."

Vinoba added, "But why should you depend for money or for education on the Government? What power does it have? You are the real power. If we are like a well, it is no more than a bucket. The latter cannot contain more water than in the former. The power lies with the people. But the trouble is that nobody is ready to approach them. That is the real difficulty. If we contact people from village to village, we can generate tremendous strength. At present neither the leaders recognize it, nor the people themselves."

Asking them to be self-reliant, he observed, "Strange is the mode of administration too. If somebody were to ask you whether there is a majority of the fools in this world or of the wise, you will reply in favour of the former. Yet, in this democracy, 51 rule against 49. So what does majority rule connote if not that of the fools? Surdas truly said:

"मूर्ख मूर्ख राजे किन्हे, पंडित फिर भिखारी ॥
ऊनो कर्मनको गति स्वारी ॥"

(Inscrutable are the ways of Fate! While the fools are made rulers, the wise roam as beggars).

Nay, "चुन चुनकर राजे किन्हे ।"

(They are not only made, but 'elected' as rulers).

"These elections have created new differences. This fire simply burns hearts. Lest this fire may not be quenched, it is renewed every five years! Again, there are bye-elections in between. Once Gokul was set fire to. The Bhagavat says that Bhagavan Krishna devoured that fire. But who will do so now when these election-*vallahs* set fire? They know how to set fire, but not how to quench it. Therefore, the whole order has to be changed. That of the city people would no more be allowed. Even after some slight education, they refuse to work. They decorate their names with letters like B.A., M.A., B.T., and what not! They spend more on soap than villagers do on clothing. They are particularly careful to avoid a touch of earth or dust. They do not know that their whole body is dust, and it will return to dust. Yet they will not touch it! And yet, they will stick to its ownership!! What a *tamasha* all this!!!"

Vinoba concluded, "We have to transform the present structure. This Bhoodan Yajna will be at the base. On its foundation is to be erected a new house, a new society, the Sarvodaya society."

We are for two weeks more in Purnea district.

7-12-54

CONTENTS	PAGE
LAND REFORM & BHOODAN	.. Maganbhai P. Desai 333
SNATCHING AWAY THE STRAW	.. J. C. Kumarappa 334
RICE-MILLING COMMITTEE	.. Raojibhai N. Patel 335
B. C. G. VACCINATION—VI	.. V. G. D. 335
THE CONGRESS	
PRESIDENTSHIP	.. Maganbhai P. Desai 336
PUBLIC SERVICE AND	
COSTLY GIFTS	.. Gandhiji, Rustomji 336
VINOBA IN PURNEA—III	.. "Dadu" 338
NOTE:	
SARVODAYA CONFERENCE AND	
RAILWAY CONCESSION	.. Vallabhsami 335