

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: MAGANBHAI P. DESAI

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TWO ANNAS

THE LEGACY OF MAHATMA GOKHALE *

(By M. K. Gandhi)

यत् करोषि यदशनसि यत् जुहोषि ददासि यत् ।

यत् तपस्यसि क्षीन्तेः तत् कुण्ड्य सदर्थेण ॥

भगवद्गीता ९-२७ ।

'Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer as sacrifice or gift, whatever austerity you perform, O Kaunteya, dedicate it all to me.'

हस्तां यथां प्रवत् हरिं वेत्तुं दे

आरं जीव्युं सफलं तव सेवुं दे ।

मुक्तानन्दनो नाथ विहारी दे

ओषा जीवन्दीरी अचारी दे ॥

मुक्तानन्द ।

'I shall have lived to some purpose only if I see Hari (the Lord) face to face as I laugh and play. O Uddhava, Krishna, Muktananda's Master, is the Lord of our life.'

It seems that Mahatma Gokhale functioned as if the words addressed by Krishna to Arjuna had been addressed to him by India, the mother of us all, and had been made by him the guiding principle of his life. For it will be readily admitted that whatever he did, whatever he enjoyed, whatever he sacrificed, whatever he gave in charity, whatever austerities he performed, he dedicated them all to his motherland.

The Gopi's devotion to Krishna as pictured by Muktanand is a just measure of Gokhale's devotion to India.

What is the moral of Gokhale's life? What legacy has he left for us?

These questions were answered by Gokhale himself in his last words to the members of the Servants of India Society who were present beside his death-bed:

'Don't waste your time in writing a biography or setting up a statue, but pour your whole soul into the service of India. Then only shall you be counted among her true and faithful servants.'

We have also before us Gokhale's views as regards the implications of service to the country. The Congress organization must be maintained in full strength; people should be brought to a

* From a message sent on February 19, 1916, the first anniversary of the death of Shri Gopal Krishna Gokhale on the occasion of the foundation of the Bhagini Samaj, Bombay, to perpetuate Gokhale's memory.

realization of the real state of the country through speeches and writings; education should be made available to every Indian child. But to what end? And in what manner? As we try to answer these questions, we become aware of Gokhale's standpoint. When he drew up the constitution for the Servants of India Society, he said that it was the Society's object to spiritualize public life. This is a comprehensive definition.

Gokhale's life was that of a man of religion. Every thing he did was done in the spirit of a devotee as I can testify. Gokhale once called himself an agnostic. He observed that he had not, but wished he had, Ranade's faith. Even so I could discern a religious strain in his work. It would not be improper to say that his very doubt was inspired by religion. A man who leads a dedicated life, who is simple in habits, who is the very image of truth, who is full of humanity, who calls nothing his own—such a man is a man of religion, whether he himself is or is not conscious of it. Such was Gokhale as I could see during the twenty years of my friendship with him.

In 1896 I tried to bring to public notice in India the question of indentured Indian labourers in Natal. Before I did so, I knew our leaders only by name. But on this occasion I first came into contact with the leaders in Calcutta, Bombay, Poona and Madras. Gokhale was then known as a disciple of Ranade. He had already become a life member of the Deccan Education Society as a professor in Fergusson College while I was quite an inexperienced young man. Still when I met him in Poona, I fell in love with him at first sight, and hence was established a bond of affection between us, such as I cherished for no other leader. I now had a personal experience of what I had heard about him, but I have never been able to forget the impress he left upon my mind by the love written in his eyes. I recognized him at once as the very embodiment of religion. I also saw Ranade about the same time, but I could not have access to the innermost recesses of his heart. I knew him only as Gokhale's master. I do not know why; perhaps it was because he was so much my senior in age and experience that I could not know him as I knew Gokhale.

Since our meeting in 1896 referred to above, Gokhale's political career served me as an ideal. I

installed him in my heart of hearts as my teacher in politics.

Fearlessness was a very important element in Gokhale's composition. Indeed this virtue is an indispensable quality in a man of religion. There was a reign of terror in Poona subsequent to the assassination of Mr Rand and Lt Ayerst. Gokhale was in England at the time and referring to it he spoke to a committee of influential members of the British Parliament. Some statements made in that speech could not be substantiated later on. Therefore, when Gokhale returned to India, he tendered an apology to the European officials whom he had charged with misconduct and thus incurred the displeasure of some ignorant people who called him a coward and advised him to retire from public life. He rejected this advice with the noble words :

'Public duties undertaken at the bidding of no man, cannot be laid down at the desire of any one. Whether one works on a higher plane or a lower one is a matter of small importance. One is always glad of the appreciation by the public of what one has done. . . . But it is not the highest purpose of existence, nor really the highest. If it comes, to give the words of Herbert Spencer, well ; if not, well also, though not so well.'

Gokhale did his duty conscientiously and never wasted a single selfish thought on what view the public would take of his action. I believe he had the capacity cheerfully to mount the gallows for the country's sake if necessary. I know to mount the gallows more than once was very much easier for him than to face a difficult situation. But he never so much as thought of turning his back to it.

If therefore we would learn a lesson from the life of this great patriot, we should follow his method of working in the spirit of a devotee. Every one of us cannot become a member of the Supreme Legislature, and members of that Legislature are not always seen in the ranks of the servants of the nation. Every one cannot serve on the Public Service Commission and men designated as its members are not always found rendering service to the country. We cannot all acquire learning like him and learned men do not always serve the people. But we can all cultivate virtues like courage, truthfulness, patience, humility, a sense of justice, straightforwardness and perseverance and dedicate them to the nation. This is the spirit of a devotee. This is what Gokhale meant when he spoke of 'public life being spiritualized.' All who conduct themselves in such a spirit of dedication will always see their way clear before them and claim a share in the legacy which Gokhale has left for us all. Such devoted workers will be endowed with all such gifts as they need, as the Lord has promised, and Gokhale's life is an illustration of that promise having been abundantly fulfilled.*

* Translated from the original Gujarati "धर्मोदा गोखले" by Valji Govindji Desai.

BASIC — PRIMARY AND SECONDARY — EDUCATION

The Avadi Congress passed the following resolution on one of our most important nation-building subjects, viz. Basic Education. The subject was considered so important that the resolution was sponsored and moved by the Prime Minister himself. The Resolution is as follows :—

"Far-reaching changes in the existing educational system are absolutely essential for achieving the national aims and social objectives of Free India and in particular to train the right type of personnel for the speedy execution of the developmental plans. The Congress welcomes the scheme of the Ministry of Education for reorganization of secondary education, particularly the decision to establish multi-purpose schools throughout the country to give adequate and basic training to students for specific vocations in life as well as for proceeding to higher educational courses.

"The Planning Commission and the Government of India have already accepted the policy of introducing basic education as the future pattern of primary as well as secondary education in India. Since basic education uses the medium of productive activity and co-relates academic subjects to different crafts and to the social environment, it is eminently suitable for the needs and conditions of India. The Congress calls upon all the State Governments to further, as early as possible, this policy so as to implement it fully in both rural and urban areas in a systematic and well-planned manner within a period of ten years."

Moving the resolution Mr Nehru said * that, purely from the educational point of view, any modern educationist was bound to accept the method of basic education and yet unfortunately, to his great surprise, some educationists in the country had criticized it. They had said that this was a throw-back to some primitive stage of education. He could only say that they had not taken the trouble to understand what basic education was. Further, they had not quite understood what India was aiming at to-day.

The old style of education, it was well known, had originally been started by the British with the particular purpose of getting a number of Indians trained to help in the administration of India in lower grades. It was true that since then their education had progressed and it was also true that even under the old style of education, India had produced very fine educated men and women. But this was no argument against basic education.

"Unfortunately, in our country there is a tradition," Mr Nehru regretted, "that manual labour is something bad and degrading and is meant for the lower class of people. I doubt if any other thing had done more harm to the country than this mental attitude that manual labour is meant for the lower class and that high-class persons should not do anything by hand and should only do what is called mental, intellectual work."

Mr Nehru remarked that the idea still persisted. He would describe it not only a wrong idea but a pernicious one. "I do not think if any nation thought that way, it can really progress.

* Abridged from the press report, *Indian Express*, Madras, Jan. 24, 1955.

Apart from everything else, from the point of view of character development, manual labour is essential."

Mr Nehru explained that they were concerned with the type of education which could give them both mental and physical fitness. The type of education which concerned itself only with reading of books was, from any point of view, incomplete.

It had become extremely important to lay the greatest stress on physical fitness and ability to do things, Mr Nehru said.

Explaining the purpose of education, Mr Nehru said, "After all, we want to educate a person for something. What for? Well, perhaps, previously it was to get a job in Government service. Government service is, of course, a honourable calling. There is nothing wrong about it. Certainly, not in Free India. But obviously, only a small handful can get into Government service and the vast majority of people have to do something else.

"We want a society in which everybody is a producer in some way or other. Everybody is a consumer; he must be a producer also. If he is to be a producer, an effective producer, he must know his job well. For this, he must learn.

"We want everyone to be good at the particular job he does. And there are hundreds of thousands of millions of ways of working. I do not particularize this work or that, but you must work in some field of activity and be a producer.

"If that is our objective, then our whole training—ideological, intellectual and physical—must be aimed at that.

"Now the whole concept of basic education is, as I understand it, that for a period of seven years, everybody in India, every boy and girl between the ages of 7 and 14, must go through this course of basic training and that training must give every person an adequate background to do something. He may, at a later stage, go to higher studies—not necessarily degrees like B.A. or M.A. It will probably be studies in some technical or scientific institute, where he can go and specialize. But seven years of basic training will be common for all. It will give some cultural attainment, character, capacity to work, that is, fitness to carry on manual activities and intellectual ability. We want that kind of basic education throughout."

Turning to pre-basic education, Mr Nehru said that he considered pre-basic training as a very essential part of the educational system. The pre-basic training, which according to his conception, would begin after the child was a year or two, was of the highest importance, much more important than any training given afterwards, because the child's character was largely formed in the first five or ten years.

The next step would, of course, be, Mr Nehru said that the basic education should be fitted into it. After that, many would not seek additional training. They might become farmers, shop-keepers or artisans. There was no need for these people to go to college or university. But those who had the capacity, should go in for higher technical—scientific, medical or engineering—training. So the basic training and the other training should be dovetailed. At present, they were not.

So here is a subject of the highest importance—training of our youth, training of the mind, of body and hand.

"I hope and trust that our State Governments will take this up with speed and enthusiasm. Because, this is largely a question for State Governments. Of course, the Central Government come into the picture also, and they must play their part. Nevertheless, it is largely a question for State Governments and they must push it through."

NOTES

Dr. Krishnam Raju

Lovers of Naturopathy all over the country will be shocked at the sudden demise of Dr. Krishnam Raju, the founder of the Prakriti Ashram, Bhimavaram, which worked for Gandhiji's ideals in the field of Naturopathy. Gandhiji loved and blessed him and his work. Dr. Raju's faith in Dame Nature's healing potentialities knew no bounds. His approach was original and his experiments were based on self-experience. All his life he struggled against the tyranny of medication and remained firm in his faith to the last. A day is not far off, when science will proudly seal his experiment.

Prakriti Ashram, DAMODARDAS MUNDADA
Bhimavaram

Uttar Pradesh Betrayal

Two days ago I came across the following figures of consumption of liquor in the U. P. in the columns of *Sakal*:

	1953	1954
Deshi liquors	775	810 thousand gallons
Foreign liquors	64	104 thousand bottles
Foreign beer	219	383 thousand bottles

And today while turning over the pages of Gandhiji's *Delhi Diary* I lit upon the following sentence in the post-prayer speech on November 7, 1947 (p. 150):

"If the Governments, Central and Provincial, were true to the Congress requirements, there would be no spirituous liquors or intoxicating drugs such as opium, ganja and the like to be had in either Dominion (i.e. India or Pakistan)."

31-1-55

V. G. D.

By Mahatma Gandhi

GOKHALE—MY POLITICAL GURU

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THE IMMEDIATE TASK

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

Various kinds of exhibitions are being organized these days. It is natural that many of them are of the industrial variety. We now aim at developing our industries and giving gainful employment to all our people. It is obvious that this practice of holding exhibitions is helpful towards the achievement of this aim to a certain extent.

As is well known exhibitions are being held along with the sessions of the Indian National Congress. The practice began with the session held at Ahmedabad in 1921. It has continued without break since then. Before this practice was started the All India Industrial Conference used to hold its sessions along with the sessions of the Congress. Ways and means for the development of the industries of the country were discussed and considered at these conferences. The Social Reform Conference also used to hold its sessions in the same manner. During the Gandhian era both these activities found and took their proper place in the nation's march towards freedom and formed part of the country's comprehensive and larger endeavour. As a result both the Industrial and Social Reform Conferences withered away and the National Congress itself began to discuss and consider problems of development of industries as well as social reform in a certain manner.

One aspect of this process of the merging of these activities in the current of the nation's larger endeavour has to be particularly kept in mind. A limit was set that the idea behind these activities had to be related to the endeavour of the Indian people as a whole and that it could not be permitted to be a separate or miscellaneous detail serving the narrow interests of some particular section or class of the people. And absence of such a limit and want of strict adherence to it would have dwarfed the nation's mighty effort for freedom; would have turned the nation from united progress on the high seas of independence to some narrow back waters to be lost in them for want of direction or space to go ahead. This was why movements like those for communal unity and removal of untouchability which embraced the nation as a whole found a place in the nation's programme. That was also the reason why items like Khadi and village industries which were from the entire people's point of view the last resort of the helpless and the lost were given a prominent place in the nation's activities.

This did not mean ignoring or discarding sundry other industries or other miscellaneous details of social reform which might have been considered necessary. What was sought to be done was to keep in mind those broad items on which people as a whole could concentrate so that the entire nation may share the endeavour on a footing of equality and gain strength.

This was why exhibitions held along with the Congress sessions were confined to Khadi and processes and products of village industries. That was the limit set for those exhibitions. Products of the textile mill industry and factories found no place in them. This prohibition was based on the understanding that these industries needed no support and were strong and that the whole nation's energies need not be wasted on their encouragement. On the contrary if they were given a position of national importance it would result in tying together industries though small but of vast national importance which had become helpless for no fault of their own and industries though of lesser national significance but considered big and leaving the former at the mercy of the latter. Such misconceived impartiality would not have indicated any wisdom on the part of the nation nor would it have made it possible to fulfil the nation's objective of establishing economic swaraj by developing small industries spread over the whole country.

It is highly important that we keep in mind this peculiar aspect of our economic development even today. Since we have become independent all those who are running large scale mechanized industries and the classes who own capital seek to expand their business and desire that Government as well as public opinion supported their cause. As a consequence exhibitions being organized these days are flooded with products of mills and factories; these products occupy most of the space; and industries which should be particularly brought to the notice of the people are not brought out in relief so that they go unnoticed. This unhealthy peculiarity of most of these exhibitions needs to be remedied.

The first and immediate problem facing India is not one of setting up large scale industries. Because those industries do not exist here it is likely their products have to be imported today. If instead, those products have to be manufactured here the industrialists of the country can surely undertake private ventures and build up those industries. They can invest their money in them. The Five Year Plan allows scope for it too. What the nation however sorely needs today is the development of industries that would supply work and employment to the crores of the poor and backward people who live in our villages and suffer from compulsory unemployment. The nation must not only concentrate on the solution

of this problem but the popular mind should feel the effects of such concentration. The people should come to realize concretely that the nation has begun concentrating on the solution of the problem. Exhibitions can play an useful part in this direction. But they can do so only if they accept and act upon the purely national view of the problem as pointed out above.

Viewed from this angle the conception of dividing the development of the industries of the country into a private and a public sector turns out to be illusory and proves mistaken. This division can apply only to the large scale centralized industries of the country. The socialist idea applies only to this field of development and needs to be taken into account. And the declaration by the Avadi session that the Congress would throw its weight on the side of the public sector of large scale industries is certainly welcome to that extent. But the real task before the country is to animate the vast unemployed population of the country by starting and encouraging village and cottage industries. This field of national development does not allow of a division into public and private sectors. It is the truly national task or the work for the masses. In that task the socialistic view of division into public and private sectors finds no place. The Sarvodaya idea here goes ahead of the socialist idea and presents a new ideal. We could secure more work and more gainful employment for the people and raise the hope of the emergence of the true welfare State in their hearts only if Governments based their industrial policies on this basis and went ahead with their firm execution.

Besides, we have to remember that we want to bring in the Welfare State by the democratic method; we have discarded the communist way to it. This means that an atmosphere should be created wherein everyone of our citizens can contribute to the welfare of the State or the nation by his or her own labour and feel enthused to do so on a footing of equality. If this is to be achieved the need of the most backward, and the weakest and the last should receive first consideration. Thus only could an atmosphere of true democracy be created. This further means that cottage and village industries which are national in the true sense of [the word should receive prime consideration and that if large scale industries really need consideration they may get it without in any way being in opposition to or in competition of the other ones. Thinking on this problem that has developed in the country so far has not yet risen to this desirable level. The sooner it did the better. Otherwise, we would be facing difficulties on the way to the establishment of a democratic State i.e. a State of peace and goodwill.

10-2-'55

(Translated from the original in Gujarati)

By Mahatma Gandhi

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VINOBA IN SANTHAL PARGANAS—IV

(By "Dadu")

Government and Janashakti

"Ever since the achievement of freedom, the strength of the country seems to have been held up. The main reason behind it is that the eyes of all people are turned towards Delhi. But all the strength lies in the villages. They are all under the false impression that the strength lies in the water contained in the kettle placed above the hearth. On the contrary the strength lies in the fire burning in the hearth, and the water above it is simply cold. If there is heat below, the water can become hot. But those who think that water is the source of it are under a delusion. For, if the fire ceases to burn, water can never become hot. The heat of the villages can make Delhi warm. But what Delhi can do with regard to the villages is like extinguishing that fire. I do not underestimate the value of Delhi. What I want to say is that Delhi has a value which is only secondary. Take another illustration. A zero on combination with unity yields ten. The zero has its great utility, but its intrinsic worth is zero. Without unity it is of no use. So unity represents the self-reliant power of the people, while the zero represents the official power. The students of mathematics know that vast researches are conducted to investigate the qualities of zero. Yet it cannot be gainsaid that it has no independent strength of its own. Likewise, the official power can be effective only if it is based on the people's power or the Janashakti. This is why I do not count much on the official power and always stress on Janashakti. It is regrettable that nothing is being done to generate the Janashakti. Once we realize its significance, your inertia will disappear and you will know no rest like me." These observations were made by Vinoba at a meeting of the Congress workers of Santal Parganas district, who had gathered to hear him at Dumka (the district headquarters) on Sunday noon, December 12, 1954.

Clash of Old and New Generations

Vinoba's post-prayer address of that day was a remarkable plea for the urgency of tackling our economic and social problems by peaceful and non-violent means. He said,

"Every generation is inspired by a new idealism. Often the vanguards of the old idealism are not able to appreciate the new one. Whence they complain of want of discipline in the new generation. The fact is that the old discipline does not suit the youth. New generation, new idealism; they can only pursue the new ideal. Should they be stopped from reaching it, they are diverted along the wrong path. And this is they term as 'indiscipline'.

"These days it is often heard that our students do not observe any discipline or decorum. True that sometimes they do things not very desirable. But I would like to know whether our boys have turned madcaps. The truth is that our universities are really very orthodox and conservative. What an old pattern they are sticking to! Our boys and girls find no consolation therein. Thus those of the old generation fail to discern the new ideals. Hence there goes on in vain a conflict between the two.

"You know that Parashuram was a great *avatar* who fought against the *Kshatriyas* no less than 21 times. But such a great man as he could not comprehend the arrival of Rama. You might have read in the *Ramayana* that Lakshmana ridiculed him. Who is Lakshmana? A youth of modern universities! Whom is he gibing at? At Parashuram, the leader of that age! Yet Tulasicdas is glorifying that youth! He did not realize that it would beget indiscipline. I am afraid that if such a dangerous book is taught to our boys and girls, they would hardly listen to any teacher. At long last, Parashuram recognizes Rama, bows low before him and withdraws. Rama keeps calm. Yet he too cannot resist and speaks out, "My name is simply 'Rama', while yours is big with 'Parashu' (hatchet) added to it." Thus we find that even the greatest men fall to read the sign of the times and are, therefore, sneered down. In case they realize the same in time and bless the youth, the latter would serve as effective arrows.

The old leaders are like a bow. The experience of the aged coupled with the enthusiasm of the youth can work wonders. Otherwise, a gulf grows in between and the young are blamed as undisciplined. During the last three and a half years, not a single meeting of mine was disturbed by the youths who are dubbed as indiscreet. There is no indiscipline in them: only a new idea, a new music has caught them. If you strike the new symphony and play the right chord, they would simply dance at your behest. But they do not obey you because you have nothing to offer them worthwhile.

"What do they teach in college today? The same old courses and the books as if the country is not yet free! Has freedom any prestige or not? Is there any other country whose children are burdened with English in this manner? Well, they argue let us proceed slowly and also toast to the glories of the English language. I do not belittle the importance of English. But is it for these buoyant children before whom lie extant vast fields of work and valour, who have opened their eyes after the achievement of freedom through Ahimsa? Why should you saddle them with this weight of English? How can it enthrone them at their delicate age?"

"Another staggering feature is that he who works the least in the college is paid the heaviest. They have reduced a year to six months. Therein too teachers don't work for more than three to four hours a day, and the Principal for not more than two. On the other hand, you expect labourers to work for eight hours. And yet the former draw far more than the latter. What Economics can you then teach? How can such people command respect in this age? Respect is no commercial commodity to be had at the grocer's shop. The new age rings in the message of equal wages and opportunities. But the collegians demand more and parade their degrees, native or foreign! Can it inspire any youth? Will anybody obey such people? I simply wonder how our students observe even that much of discipline which they do. It is only the great cultural heritage of India which keeps them in restraint. I cannot say more. I am but expressing the agony of my heart. I submit that this is not the way to inspire the youth. A new age has dawned. A new ideology is in the air. You have to take that up and practise it before you can inspire them to any activity."

Vinoba concluded, "It is fantastic to state that we are a backward nation. As the poet Iqbal says, there is something in us whereof we are as vital as ever. Unique is the current that flows in India. That is why we attained freedom in our own unique way. Other countries have also fought for freedom, but there is something remarkable in our fight for freedom. India has her own mission to perform. It charges us with the responsibility of solving our economic and social problems by the help of Janashakti, by peaceful and non-violent means."

Next day we walked 13 miles and reached Ranighat. For some days past there was a visible effect on Vinoba of the strain of the unusual marches in the Santhal Parganas district. When he returned from the prayer on Monday he was suffering from fever. It continued all through the night. So, next morning, we requested him to make use of some conveyance. Vinoba declined and maintained his routine strictly. We reached Fatehpur at 7.35. Vinoba's fever persisted all through the day. It was a little above 100 degrees when he proceeded to the evening prayer meeting.

Vinoba began his discourse by thanking Providence for the regularity with which his programme has been executed. He next referred to the visit of a young man some days back. He inquired Vinoba what he (Vinoba) would do if he did not obtain five crores of acres of land. "I told that young man," added Vinoba, "that in that case he (young man) would be hanged. He was struck dumb. I told him that that could happen only if he and others did not do their duty as I was doing mine."

Man's Right to Land

Later he explained the basis of the demand for five crores of acres. "Man has," he declared, "some fundamental rights which must be accepted. It has been recog-

nized here that the hungry must either be given food or be provided with some work. It is the duty of the society to see that none remains hungry. The right to food or work is a basic one, even as the right of freedom to worship God in one's own way. So also everybody has a right for education. Likewise, I say that if anybody wants to serve the soil and demands land for the same, he has every right to do so. And this right for land to till must be fulfilled. These days they pretend the necessity of a minimum of ten acres of holding or so. I want to ask you: how are you authorized to decide this? Suppose the population of the country rises tomorrow from 36 crores to 3600 crores, then the people will do as they like. But you have no right to say that you will allow only a few to till land and not others. It is man's birthright to serve the soil. If today only, say, sixty cents of land per capita is available, and tomorrow with a population of 3600 crores, it is only a hundredth part, you would have to give the same to each. You cannot refuse that. Of course, those who want to take up other crafts can gladly do so. One need not impose land-cultivation on them. But those who want it should be given it. If there is enough land, they will use a tractor, if less then a bullock, if still less, then a spade and if very much less then they will cultivate it with their hands. None can deprive anybody of one's right to render one's services to the nature or soil. I would like more and more people to do some agricultural work and come in intimate contact with the soil. This will improve their health, eliminate mutual differences, and impart inner peace. I also regard cultivation as a means of divine service. Hence my insistence on the acceptance of this fundamental right to land. It is why I say that individual ownership of land must be abolished, and that land cannot be owned. It is only God's.

Closing Vinoba reiterated his faith in the stirring words, "Land should now belong to the village where it lies. Everybody has a right to land for work. Tilling the soil is nothing short of the worship of God. I want you to convey this message from door to door. I would regard this mission as fulfilled only when those with land go out anxiously in search of the tiller and gladly give him land as well as other necessities like seeds and implements to work with, even as they go out today in search of a groom for their daughter and equip her with all household requisites when she leaves her old home for the new."

Remove Untouchability

Late at night, Vinoba was feeling better. So he proved that all our fears were unfounded. Next day, we entered the Deoghar sub-division and encamped at Chitra. It was at Deoghar in September 1953 that Vinoba was mishandled by its Pandas. Recalling that event, Vinoba called upon the Deoghar sub-division people to wash off that blot and establish socio-economic equality in their midst. "There is no basis," he observed, "for regarding anybody as untouchable. No Shastras make such a recommendation. This evil has resulted in depriving millions of people of their fundamental right. Gandhiji was perfectly right when he remarked that unless untouchability was wiped off, Hindu religion as such would disappear. His prophetic advice roused the people to some extent. We secured freedom and gave no place to such differences in our Constitution. But no constitution can purify hearts. Heart purification is the call of the day. It is as much necessary today as it was before the legislation. And I trust that the attack on Deoghar would prove to be the last of its kind. I believe that its spine has broken. But much *prachar* (propaganda) is required for it. People would have to practise accordingly. The Harijan children must enjoy same status in every hostel. God has blessed Harijans with the same feelings and virtues as others. Great saints and Sadhus have been produced among them as in any other community. There is, therefore, no reason to perpetuate such differences. I am sure that the people of Deoghar would realize this truth and find for Harijans a place not only in their *poosha*-temples but also in their heart-temples. This is the one thing they have to do to wash off that blot."

Blot of Social Inequality

He continued, "The second thing is that you would

have to destroy economic disparity as severely as social inequality. Both of them should be annihilated simultaneously. What is the condition of the scavenger today? In the name of religion you have built economic barrier around him and vainly argue that God has so willed that he should remain a Bhangi. Some go even to this extent that he is punished for sins of his previous existence. But I want you to think over this point. Marathi is my mother-tongue and Maharashtra stretches from Nagpur to Kolhapur. It includes about 30 districts. But in these districts there is no scavenger with Marathi as his mother-tongue. They do understand it but their mother-tongue is either Hindi or Gujarati or Kanarese. Has God designed non-Marathi scavengers for the Marathi populace? How can it be possible? The fact is that during their regime the Marathas captured Kshatriyas from different parts of the country. Moghals or earlier Muslim rulers began this practice. These Kshatriyas or *Rajvamshis* were thrown into prisons and asked to do scavenging work. They had to do it in captivity. On their coming out, society refused to own them and kept them aloof. They were, therefore, compelled to continue scavenging and became scavengers for all time. We find many *Rajvamshis* among the scavengers today. I do not say that all scavengers came into being that way. But it is undoubtedly true that they were imprisoned and made to do that work. The people captured by the Marathas near Nagpur must have Hindi for their mother-tongue, those near Khandesh Gujarati and those near Konkani Kanarese. Even today the condition of the scavengers is no less miserable.

"You very well know that after partition Hindus were turned out of Sindh. The scavengers there also wanted to migrate to India. But they were not allowed to do so. As an 'essential service', they were prevented from coming to India. Consequently, they have to be there. Now, is this freedom? Does freedom consist in transfer of power from the British to a few Indian hands? Does it denote that old values must continue to stay? Freedom confers equal right of citizenship on each and every citizen, in which none exploits or fears another. When shall we attain such a freedom? What I mean is that economic disparity follows social disparity. This is why we find them woven today like the warp and woof in Indian life. This is why I insist on every landless getting land."

Communism and Capitalism

Vinoba further remarked, "A friend told me that Bhoodan is a front against Capitalism. This is true. But the first capitalist whom we have to subdue is our own body. Bred and brought up in the capitalistic society, it has acquired some habits which have to be discarded. We would have to work by our own hands. So the first front is our own home. Capitalism is of several kinds. Capitalism means earning capital, which requires centralized administration. It cannot be done in decentralized manner. Thus those who call themselves communists are also capitalists to the core. The communists want centralization in production and equality in distribution. They are under the false illusion that decentralized distribution would follow centralized production. They are born of a reaction against capitalists. There is no independent ideology. They have no life-philosophy of their own. They are a product of the reaction against the evils born of capitalism in Europe. There is not a thesis, but an anti-thesis against capitalism. Synthesis is that which has philosophy for the whole of life. Whence they accepted capitalism in the sphere of production. So no ideology held forth as a reaction against some other evil can serve our purpose. We would have to lay the very foundations anew and build the whole structure thereupon.

"Our *Shastras* describe a type of Bhakti (devotion) as Virodhi Bhakti (opposite devotion), as Ravan's against Rama or Kamsa's against Krishna. These reactionaries merge into those whom they oppose. One proves to be merely a replica of the other. Hindu Mahasabha advocates the adoption of all evils of the Muslim League. One Brahmin leader went so far as to say that the Hindus would not face the Muslims unless they took meat regularly! Again, there are Congressmen and Praja Socialists.

Both are power worshippers. While the former are power holders, the latter are power-aspirants. Hence all the evils of the Congress are there in the Praja Socialist Party. If the former resorts to communalism for election purposes, so does the latter. Thus the same matter pervades both. Bhoodan strikes a new departure. It does not stand against any ideology or party. It stands for the wellbeing of Sarva (all). The Sarvodaya is concerned with one and all, it is neither communalistic nor communalistic. It speaks for all and treats all at the same level."

On the sixteenth we were at Karon, the home-village of the great writer, Shri Sakharan Deuskar, who though Marathi speaking, has rendered immortal service to the Bengali literature. He passed away in 1914. His daughter and grand daughter saw Vinoba in the morning. In the evening, Vinoba went to their house and spent there some time. There was the workers' meeting in the moon when fifteen people offered to do nothing save Bhoodan work until the next Sarvodaya Sammelan.

Power of Thought and Non-violence

In his post-prayer address, Vinoba stressed on the importance of right knowledge and right thought. "Upanishads teach us," said he, "that the spoken word is microscopic and universal. We can now catch it by the Radio. Now 'thought' is far more microscopic or infinitesimal and universal than the word. Hence my greatest faith is on right thought. But if one gets restive and resorts to coercion, it would ill-serve the right cause. They have coined a phrase 'non-violent coercion'. What a fascination for coercion! Their reliance is on pressure or suppressing people. But I believe in releasing or opening their hearts. Can heart-suppression be of any avail? I feel that if there is such a strength of non-violence as leads to suppression of hearts, it is no non-violence at all. The strength of non-violence accrues from the faith in right thought. This faith in right thought is termed Ahimsa or non-violence.

"When the disciples asked Christ how many times they should pardon others, Jesus replied, 'seventy times seven.' But the devotees of Sazadevi (Goddess of vengeance) believe in punishment or vendetta. They feel that forgiveness may fail, right thought may fail but sword will never fail. They have suspicions about non-violence but none about violence. Well, if sword were so effective why did it not solve our problems inspite of its continuous use during the last ten thousand years?"

Man-power and Decentralization

Pavia was the next halt. That day Vinoba made a passionate appeal for adopting productive manual labour as a programme of a national worship. He said,

"As the greater part of our population resides in the village—and it has been residing there from time immemorial—power should not be concentrated at the centre but distributed from village to village. Decentralized power is the first requisite for building the country. The powers of the centre should be very limited. Every village should run its affairs of its own accord."

"The second thing," he continued, "is that the main power of the country is man-power and the amount of land per capita is very small. In such a country machine can have a very restricted sphere. It is not possible in India to employ machines for agriculture and to ignore bullocks. Cows and bullocks can be eaten outside India but not here. Their method would not suit us in our country. Man-power is our basic strength and machine should only be supplementary to it.

"Thirdly, the man-power of this country lies idle today. If people do not work and lead an idle life, it would ill-serve the interest of the nation. Hence manual labour must be given the most respected place—verily, we must worship this Shramshakti (labour power). Everybody should realize this new religion for the country. In ancient times, our people did manual labour all right and felt no need to adore it as a worship. But now we should adopt it as a religious duty. I give you an illustration. Daily bathing is common throughout the country. It has become a universal part of our life and culture. It is a small thing to look at, but it is really very significant,

Because of bathing rivers are more glorified in India than in other countries. Bathing forms an important part of many activities of ours. Like bathing, I want the idea of bodily labour to be rooted down in the country. No food without work. It should form a vital part of our being."

Vinoba concluded, "Today bodily labour commands no prestige in society. The peasant works hard but he likes to see his son on some job in an office. In other words the field labourer too has no respect for his bodily labour. It is therefore, very imperative for us that bodily labour should be daily performed as worship. It will result in the production of Lakshmi, wiping out differences and forging unity."

Limitations of Law

We were at Jamtara on Saturday. In the noon a worker met Vinoba and inquired of him why we should not resort to law to secure land for the landless. Vinoba smiled at it and said, "How many times have I answered this question! But you people do not read anything. However, I will deal with it in the prayer meeting."

Referring to this in his evening speech, Vinoba observed, "The Government is yours. You have voted for it. You make it to do whatever you like. I won't stand in between. But can a Government change the heart of the people by law? Can it beget love where there is envy? Can it inculcate the spirit of distribution where hoarding holds the field? Can it induce one to give where everybody is anxious to take and to take more? Can law achieve all this? Had it been so, the Buddha would not have given up the kingdom and power he had. If law could bring about revolution in thought, the Buddha who had it in full measure would have stuck to it. But why did he renounce everything and go for penance in solitude? He saw that law could only keep the status quo whereof the misery of the miserable was bound to mount up. He then thought upon the problem, concentrated upon it for months and years with the result that he generated a new faith which he expressed in the form of compassion. And he came out with that message and conveyed it from door to door. He influenced the whole world so much so that even today, 2500 years after, the world feels that it can save itself only by practising his teachings.

"What is required now is to change old values and establish new ones. If somebody were to smoke *bidi* and burn a house thereby, law can stop him. But law cannot check him from smoking as such. Law cannot go beyond the existing values. Nay, it cannot always prevail upon the people to make them abide by the current values. Marriages below the age of fourteen go on still. Thefts and robberies are committed even in broad day-light. Those who think of solving problems by law resemble those going round like a bullock. It has a fixed course. It does work but only within the fixed circle. Its revolutionary progress is impossible. I know that our planners work day and night. Some ministers work for fifteen hours a day. But have they been able to bring about any change in the society? If the people could be so courageous as to submit all records, specially ownership records, to the fire on the coming Holi, it would illuminate the country with a religious light. What is the use of consuming timber? The attachment of the heart has to be burnt out."

In conclusion, Vinoba added, "So far you have been presenting to the God in the temple your *thali* of sweets, fruits and flowers, which is returned to you intact. That God did not feel hungry so far. But now He is hungry. So you must contribute some share for Him and He would accept it. This farce of feeding an idol at the cost of the hungry God must go for good. Give a part ceaselessly to God and enjoy the rest. First give and then take. Your food will then turn into a *Yajna*."

We are for two days more in Santhal Parganas and then enter the Manbhumi district.

4-2-55

VICTIMS OF SOCIAL INFAMY

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

An educated friend from Vellore, South India, sends the following communication to me and invites remarks on it. He says:—

"There are several cases of infanticide on the part of unmarried girls and young widows as well which, besides exposing them to moral obloquy, also lead to their prosecution in courts of law for the offence of homicide. This can doubtless be traced only to social tyranny which will not tolerate such lapses on their part. The criminal law is equally inexorable and renders these unhappy victims of sex-instinct liable to be punished for the above offence with a sentence that may stagger belief. It may be possible to avoid these disastrous consequences if institutions engaged in doing social and other ameliorative work in every town or city should provide facilities for these new born babies being left at some place safely and secretly by their mother or other relations and then taken care of by the institution itself. Love and sympathy for our erring sisters should replace unreasoning and unreasonable hate and prejudice. Leaders of society should tackle this problem boldly and seriously, particularly in view of the changed conditions of marriage and marital relationship prevailing at present."

And he adds:

"My town is a strong centre of missionary activities and I have known personally some cases where young girls and widows (expectant mothers) have sought asylum in Christian missionary institutions which welcome them with open arms and afford them all facilities with a view to convert them ultimately to their own faith. This is one of their silent and subtle methods of adding to their number."

The question is as old as orthodox Hindu society, though illegitimate children are known to all societies in all climes. We know that there are homes or orphanages for such forsaken babies. These are surely not a remedy for removing this social scourge; at best, they are only a palliative, because society maintains these institutions and silently eases its conscience on the question of the perpetual sin it tolerates. The greatest sufferers in this are our erring sisters who should deserve better from the aggressive male. Should he not boldly own his sin and atone for it? I know of institutions keeping a foundling box wherein to secretly lodge and do away with the unwanted baby. Is it good to encourage secrecy here? Does it not mean a sort of a passport for this infamy to go on?—though I know that the infamy is born of other reasons.

The remark of the friend about Christian missions is, I think, not relevant, though I know about their proselytizing activities. The question of the forsaken babies and pitiable girls and widows should be tackled purely on a humane plane, without bringing in the vexed question of conversion etc. I agree with the correspondent, that society, in the meanwhile, must see to it that these babies are cared for and duly brought up to be part of our free society. They can have no stigma.

25-12-'54

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