

HARIJAN

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TWO ANNAS

DEMOCRACY AND POWER OF THE PEOPLE

(By Vinoba)

[From a speech delivered on 9-2-55 at Sero in Orissa.]
Students of history know that during the past two to three thousand years some twentyfour or twentyfive kingdoms were established and disappeared in every province of India. Things which came along with these rulers of those days vanished since their time, but the life of the people of India went on as before. This is to say that the progress of Indian civilization did not depend on the power of the State nor was that power the driving force of India's progress. The progress has been a result of the people's social and religious thoughts or ideals. The hearts of our people were not influenced by the power of any State or any ruler. It is said that Akbar in his times ruled this country very well but as I witnessed even while working among the Muslims he has left no special impression on the minds of the people. While I had occasion to work among the Meos I had to call a meeting of Muslims. I asked them if they knew of a king named Akbar. Well, they on the contrary asked me who he was and plainly told me that they did not know anything of a ruler of that name! If it was so for an Emperor like Akbar what to say about others? Students of history and men having an interest in history hear and know about kings and emperors, but the hearts of the people and their lives are untouched by them. The people of India know and remember the name of only one king—Raja Rama, King Rama. In their distress and even in their happiness they call His name. This is the state of the mind of the people of India and so we intend to work among them as our saints did, as our poets did and as great men amongst us like the Buddha did. Our people do not know or remember an emperor like Akbar but they do know and remember a saint and poet like Kabir. Our people do not recognize the influence and remember the names of any persons but of the saints who lived and worked among them.

It is written in books of history that Tulsidas lived in the age of Akbar. I have always wondered whether it was the age of Tulsidas or that of Akbar. It could have better been said that an emperor of the name of Akbar ruled in the age of Tulsidas; that he tried to exercise his power over the people, that his descendants also made a serious attempt to exercise their power over the land, but that in the end they went the way mortal man goes and were forgotten. Only Tulsidas outlived all of them and people remember him, and his faith persists in their hearts even to this day. The Bhodan Yajna which we see going on amongst us today is surely not working in the way kings and emperors did. It is working in the way of the prophets.

People had their experience of kings good and bad. In the end they came to the wise conclusion that it was not proper to hand over their own power to kings and emperors however good they might be. That is why people in their wisdom abolished kings and emperors altogether.

The people have now come to feel and say that they

did not want bad kings, nor good kings either. This was a wise conclusion they came to and they abolished kings and their power. The people have thus certainly taken a step forward. But we cannot yet say that the people have come to realize their power and to cultivate it. The right to vote has been bestowed on almost every one among the people. Still we are not in a position to say that every one from amongst the people has got power and is able to make himself felt through it. Those who are once elected by the vote of the people thenceforward enjoy power which is in effect greater than that of kings. The power of the people exists merely in name; power remains and concentrates in the hands of but a few, and we are faced with the same danger which faced us when kings and emperors held the whole power of the State.

Let us have a look at the state of affairs in the various States of India. Use and distilling of intoxicating drinks and drugs have been totally prohibited in the States of Bombay and Madras, but it is still allowed in the other States. Are we to understand that public opinion in Madras and Bombay was against them and that it was in their favour in other States? Where, I ask, is the question of public opinion here? Shri Morarjibhai is there at the head of the Government in Bombay State. He does not desire that intoxicating drinks should be in vogue in the State. Shri Rajaji did not wish that such drinks be allowed in the Madras State. And because prominent people in other States do not give their minds to this vital question use of intoxicating drinks continues in them.

Somehow Shri Rajaji and Shri Morarji were able to view this thing properly and Shri Pantji, Shri Bidhanbahu, Shri Shribabu do not do so. Are we to understand that there is any difference between the state of affairs which obtained in the old days and which obtains now? In the old days if a ruler was good people had good administration and if he happened to be bad they suffered under a bad administration. They themselves did not or could not do anything in either case. What, may we be allowed to ask, is the difference between then and now?

Let me illustrate my point by another instance. Cow slaughter has been prohibited by law in Madhya Pradesh and it continues as before in Bengal. A big number of cows is publicly slaughtered in Calcutta every day. May we ask, is this as a result of public opinion in Bengal? Are we to believe that a wide gulf exists between public opinion in Madhya Pradesh and public opinion in Bengal?

I shall pose another question before you to illustrate my point further. The Government of Bombay has passed a measure to the effect that the owner of land will receive from the tenant only a fifth or sixth share of the produce as rent. Such a measure is not being enacted in other States.

All these instances I have been pointing out will clearly bring out to you how everything depends on persons at the top and how the people as such have no power in their hands. I want it to be publicly known that in reality people have no power whatsoever. They have secured only the right to vote. But what does the right to cast a vote signify? And could not votes be purchased with money? So I say, real power will come into the

hands of the people only when they will earnestly begin to free themselves from the power of the State and when they will carry on their administration by decentralizing that power. I need not have placed this phrase, decentralized administration, before you for it would not convey much to you. What you people have to do in reality is to cultivate the capacity and power to solve all your problems.

But now as things are people ask for some measure from Government for the solution of any problem that crops up before them. They want some reform in their system of marriage and they begin to cry for some legislation from the Government for the purpose. Then bills about reform in marriage go to the Assemblies and the Councils. Do we expect that our system of marriage will at once undergo reform once these bills become law? We want to abolish untouchability and expect it to be abolished by some law enacted by Government. Why do you forget that the evil of untouchability is already abolished in law but still persists in our world? We do not want child marriages. So we at once cry for a law against them. In fact such a law is on the Statute Book and yet male and female children are married to each other in their thousands.

So we want to solve each and every one of our problems by legislation. We wish to achieve every good thing through it. This tendency ultimately means that no one is keen on cultivating and developing the power of the people. No one is keen in bringing about a revolution in the ideology or the psychology of the people. What we seem to want to do is not to create the new man who will have power and make himself felt through it, but to retain the traditionally old man as he is and to play at running the State by democracy. This is not the way people will progress in strength. This is surely not the way to bring about revolutionary changes.

We have now declared that we are going to have a new order of society based on a socialistic pattern. So far as I am concerned I have welcomed the declaration. One thing is however certain. One does not know for sure whether Government will base itself on a socialistic pattern, but society at large will begin talking about the pattern and the people will certainly begin to expect to see the pattern in actual working. Government servants, however, have already their fixed grades and scales of remuneration. One grade starts at Rs 50/- a month and ends at Rs. 125/-. Another starts at Rs 200/- per month and closes at Rs 500/-. A third begins with Rs 2500/- per month and ends with a good Rs 5000/-. Is this to be new reformed socialistic pattern? Or does anyone expect to change it all by mere legislation? How could anyone expect to bring about the envisaged change without a change in the values of the people, a change in their thoughts, a change in their psychology? These gross disparities exist in the very basis of the structure of society, in Government services, among teachers in colleges and schools and in other institutional arrangements functioning in society. May I ask why the President should draw a higher salary than the Prime Minister? Will please anyone explain? I may be informed in reply that the President has to undergo sundry expenses on behalf of the State. Why, I may be allowed to ask, could not such expenses be borne by the State direct instead of allowing a higher salary to the President? We have no objection to such an arrangement. But no valid reason can in fact be given in support of the disparity. The true though unexpressed consideration is that the status of the President is supposed to be higher than that of the Prime Minister. It is believed that the burden of a larger salary deserves to be imposed on the head which is believed to be enjoying a higher status! And please do not believe that Government is particularly to blame in this matter. This sort of considerations weigh with the people also. The law which has sanctioned this inequality has, as we know, the sanction

of the people. A society based on equality can come into existence only when people begin to love the ideal of equality as also when they will realize that they are falling in their duty till they earnestly set about to establish equality.

People have not been able to realize that the Bhoodan Yajna movement has not been started to do something which can easily be achieved by legislation. The Bhoodan Yajna movement aims to achieve something which no State power on earth can hope to accomplish. Bhoodan aims at destroying traditional immoral values and to establish new moral values in their place by changing the hearts of the people. Therefore, every one of you has to understand and realize that you would be doing something wrong, why, you would be committing a sin, if you insist on your right of ownership and stick to your land on its strength while there are others who have no land to call their own or to work on. And if there is some law which supports your right of ownership of land that law too is absolutely wrong. A new law is being enacted which allows a man to hold as owner twenty or forty acres of land. In this regard even the communists say that a man could be allowed to hold twenty acres of land as owner. But I say no man can hold any land whatsoever as owner. A man can be allowed to hold only as much land as would go to him as his legitimate share. Even as God has in His mercy created air, water and the light of the sun for everyone so too has He created land to be shared by everyone. For this reason no one can have any special right to it as owner.

We hear of an act allowing thirty acres of land to be held by one man as owner. We hear of another which allows sixty acres to a man. Now let us suppose thirty acres of land are distributed to a family. This trick of allowing thirty acres to a man apparently seem to work. But let me remind you of our circumstances of land and population. We are all told about thirty-six crores of persons in population. That roughly works out to about seven crores of families inhabiting India. Leave out of this number about one crore of families who live and work in the cities. This leaves about six crores of families living and working in our villages. Let us also suppose that those of our brothers and sisters who live in the cities do not require any land for themselves. Now, if we wanted to distribute the total acreage of land in India to those who are in our villages at the rate of thirty acres per family it would be available only to one crore of families and the remaining five crores of families will have to go without any land whatsoever.

Thus, this idea of fixing a ceiling per person or say even a family will not work. If we want to give to everyone who desires to have land the share he is in full fairness entitled to we cannot have a ceiling fixed. Of course, to those who do not wish to have land we do not intend or propose to give any. We do not undertake the responsibility of supplying land to anyone who would want to keep it for no reason that is without the intention of working on it. But to whoever of our people who wants to work on it, to cultivate it, land coming to his fair and equal share will have to be given. But the question here naturally arises: Who is going to give the land of his share to whoever wants it? The law is certainly not going to do it for us. To achieve our aim we will have to cultivate the psychology of our people, to appeal to their sense of duty to their brothers, to cultivate their sense of religion.

And if our people understood their duty, if they realized what their religion expected them to do as men in the present state of our country our work would be but accomplished in a moment, and if they did not do so we would not be able to achieve our aim even after fifty years. I only desire that we all of us realized our duty to our brothers and sisters, that we perceived what the religion of the age demands of us.

(From the original in Hindi)

BOMBAY PROHIBITION WEEK

I

President's Good Wishes

"It is heartening to know that the policy of Prohibition pursued by the State of Bombay with unflagging zeal has brought economic prosperity and happiness to several families especially of the backward class and mill-hands," says Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of India in a message wishing success to the Fifth Prohibition Week that will be celebrated in Bombay State from April 6.

He adds: "Special significance is undoubtedly attached to the celebration this year in view of the appointment of the Prohibition Inquiry Committee by the Planning Commission for advising on the steps to be taken to extend Prohibition all over the country. I hope that before long we shall succeed in our endeavour to bring about complete Prohibition in accordance with the Directive Principles of our Constitution."

"On the occasion of the inauguration of the Fifth Prohibition Week of Bombay I send my good wishes to all the workers in the field."

II

Stock-taking

[Shri Morarjibhai Desai, Chief Minister of Bombay, in a message on the occasion of the 5th Prohibition Week reports as follows:]

"In the life of a movement, as in that of an institution, every year is a landmark either of progress or of set-backs and as we celebrate the fifth annual Prohibition Week it would be only appropriate that we take stock of our achievements or failures in the implementation of a policy which today needs no apology or defence; it stands fully vindicated and is enshrined in the body of our Constitution itself.

"When Prohibition as a measure of State policy was reviewed in Bombay eight years ago, there was no dearth of uncharitable or well-meaning critics; prophets of good as well as of evil abounded. Defiance and threats were in the air. But behind the State Government was a solid phalanx of the overwhelming majority of the State's peaceful and law-abiding citizens to whom the habit of drinking was the mark of social degeneration. The State Government's task thus lay in weaning the traditional addict and the conventional habitual from this evil or gradually to reduce the extent of his dependence on it in order to make him a better and more useful citizen of the State.

"The means adopted were a combination of persuasion and compulsion, of education and enforcement, and of propaganda and prohibition. That success has attended these efforts, no impartial student of public affairs or of social developments can deny. But we cannot afford to rest on our laurels. The stark fact of the large number of addicts and of those who seek to drink a poisonous pleasure still stares us in the face as a challenge to the State and the social worker alike. The organizers of the Prohibition Week, the machinery of the State and the large body of social workers and convinced citizens must meet this challenge with all their resources at their command."

III

A Question of National Discipline

[The Prime Minister of India, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru sent the following message on that occasion:]

"Bombay has taken the lead in introducing Prohibition. There has often been controversy on this subject. This controversy is based on two factors: (1) the loss of revenue and (2) the difficulty of preventing breaches of the Prohibition Law and the manufacture of illicit liquor.

"Financial consideration cannot always be ignored, but in a matter of this kind surely these considerations

should not play an important part. We come then to the second objection. That is not one of principle, but of practical difficulty. It requires a careful consideration of the manner in which the Prohibition Law is worked and the way it is broken. It may be necessary to vary our procedures in order the better to attain the objective aimed at.

"The question, therefore, resolves itself into this: Is the objective of Prohibition good or not? If it is good, it must be pursued, though we may vary our approaches to this problem. I have no doubt that this broad objective is good for our country. I am not prepared to generalize about other countries which have different habits and different ways of living. But in our country it seems to me desirable, both from the point of view of the general public and also from the point of view of the select few who appear to take some pride in indulging in alcoholic drinks, even though the sentiment of the country is against it. I think it has been adequately shown that the general mass of our population benefit by prohibition in many ways—financially, physically and ethically. The few who think that it is the right thing to indulge in alcohol, and do so rather flagrantly, do little justice to themselves or to their country. Some time ago I expressed myself rather strongly about the cocktail habit in Delhi. Even apart from the desirability or otherwise of Prohibition, this cocktail habit among certain well-to-do circles has become deplorable and, if I may add, vulgar. In a country which is poor and which is struggling hard to raise itself, this habit is peculiarly unbecoming.

"There is also the question of a certain discipline in a nation. If we decide something and make laws to that effect, we should obey that discipline and carry out those laws.

"I do not bring in the question of sin in this matter, but I do consider this kind of indulgence in alcohol is a social abuse which should be actively discouraged. More particularly, with the background we have in our country and the circumstances that we live in, it is wholly undesirable."

AHIMSA WEEK

Dear Friends,

We have great pleasure to bring to you all this message of Peace and Kindness which we hope will prove to be a source of happiness to all beings. Life is the most precious gift of all, and we have no right to cut short the life of any being large or small. It is our duty to alleviate the sufferings of both men and animals. If we wish World Peace we must try our best to make all beings happy.

The Ahimsa Movement organized by us on a minute scale in 1925 has made gradual progress during the last thirty years. Main objects are to get legislation introduced to prohibit slaughtering cattle in Ceylon, and to propagate the Ahimsa Week all over the world.

As this movement is universal and it is neither political nor sectarian, we kindly request all to observe the Ahimsa Week, which falls on the first week of May every year. The following three precepts have to be observed during the week:

1. To refrain from killing
2. To take only Vegetarian diet
3. To give rest to animals from 11-30 a.m. to 1 p.m. and to refrain from travelling in vehicles drawn by animals during that time.

Further in order to increase food products in the country and to keep our fellowmen gradually away from taking flesh food, we kindly request all to plant as many food producing plants as possible commencing on May 1st at 6-30 a.m. and continuing through May and June.

Universal College,
Panadura,
Ceylon

W. S. FERNANDO
Principal

HARIJAN

April 16

1955

TWO QUESTIONS FOR THE CONGRESS

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

The Congress President's recent speeches when he was in Bombay a few days ago have provoked a good deal of welcome heart-searching in the Congress and also significant criticism both in the press and among the thinking people. He referred to various matters of a very fundamental nature that have their bearing on the things and affairs of our present situation in the country.

The most striking of his remarks was about the relationship of the Congress Governments vis-a-vis the Congress organization, central and provincial. He is reported to have said that in the shape of things to come, it is desirable that henceforth the Congress should direct its Government and not *vice versa* as appeared to be the order at present.

The remark is obviously as devastating in its effect as it is pregnant in its meaning and significance, in the present situation of the Congress. Some observers of this remark said that it reminded them of a similar position taken up by two Congress ex-presidents, Shri Kripalani and Shri Tandon. I do not know whether it is exactly so. The circumstances of the situation then and now as also the position taken by those ex-presidents as compared with the statement of Shri Dhebarbhai are I think vitally different; surely they are not identical. It is better therefore to leave out such comparison and examine the remark on its merits and in the light of the true interests of the people.

Surely, the Congress is greater than the governments it sets up in the country. It is a popular body; its aim is to be in intimate contact with the people, know their wishes and aspirations and lead them. It should, to this end, formulate programmes for the nation as well as the Government it may assume to conduct on its behalf. The voice of the Congress, therefore, should prevail, if the people in a democracy, which we in India are, have handed their government to it. This is surely not to lay down that Government should take its orders, all and sundry, from the Congress. The main items of the programme and the policy are what is meant here, of which the party manifesto may be said to be a general or over-all statement.

Therefore, Shri Dhebar's statement, as a doctrine of political behaviour for ruling parties vis-a-vis their party organizations is, I think, sound, apart from whatever bearing it might have on the personal or the organizational aspect of it in the present set-up of the Congress and its leadership. That aspect requires to be gone into by that body, which, we hope, it will do now. It is high time the Congress should do it.

There is another question of a similar nature which is raised by Shri Vinoba in his address to

the Puri Sarvodaya Samaj Conference last month. This is more serious and deeper than the above one raised by the Congress President himself. Shri Vinoba's question is a challenge to the Congress to search its own heart and find out how best to reorient itself as the largest and the most important and effective institution of the people today. I request the reader to study Shri Vinoba's address from this point of view.

Shri Vinoba has raised a further question, and a still more fundamental one, about the doctrine of one-man-one-vote-majority-rule democracy. He has said that the Congress has reduced itself to be a mere electioneering body, as if wedded to this doctrine, and in utter disregard and neglect of its fundamental duty of service.

Shri Dhebar's question is in the interest of fulfilling the doctrine of democratic rule, viz., that a party in power must be generally guided by the party organization working outside it among the people. He further says that the party organization, in order to guide and inspire its parliamentary wing truly well, must work among the people in a constructive manner and serve them through various national constructive activities. Then only can it really guide and direct its Government.

These are the two questions for the Congress posed by the two most competent persons in the country. Shri Vinoba emphasizes the latter aspect of Shri Dhebar's question, although wholly denouncing the democratic doctrine and its ideology. This denouncement of the democratic doctrine appears to be a common plank of important Bhoodan workers. I feel this is a wrong thing to do, though there is much to be said for the other point of view, viz., that the Congress should not be an electioneering body merely, but should earn the sterling merit of being a Lok Seva Sangh, as Gandhiji wished it to be in his last days. But this is something totally different from the disbelief in the democratic ideal and its mechanism that is generally evolved by the political world and is in vogue at present.

Admittedly the democratic stratagem of majority rule is imperfect as all human institutions generally are. As is well said, to perfect it the price to be paid is eternal vigilance; and we may add a dynamic approach and enduring efforts for the task, on the part of a people. Therefore, defects and shortcomings are bound to occur and irritate a perfectionist idealist; but they are only a challenge to him and the people to call forth further efforts for 'Atma-shuddhi' or self-purify. As I feel, to deny democracy would be to deny the truth of Satyagraha, because the two are inseparably interlinked, the latter being the ultimate and invincible sanction of the former. But I may not dilate upon this here any more, important though it is. I may revert to it in future and conclude my remarks with saying that the question raised by Shri Dhebar as the President of the Congress and by Shri Vinoba as the founder of the Bhoodan movement and as the guide,

friend and philosopher of the large body of Gandhian constructive workers in India is one composite whole and is serious enough.

11-4-55

FACTORIES AND UNEMPLOYMENT

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

The A.I.C.C. *Economic Review* of April first quotes from a recent speech of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. A sentence from the quotation is as follows:

"We could remove the unemployment problem in India today, if you like, by breaking down all the factories in India. Everybody will be working, but the average income today, whatever it may be, say a rupee a day, will go down to annas four a day. There will be trouble."

Is the fear expressed here true? Can the statement be justified on valid principles of the science of economics? I must confess I have my doubts. It would be better if, however, some economist were to say about it.

But two or three points which the statement concedes are worth attention. It grants, for one thing, that the factories working in the country as well as those being newly started are at the root of unemployment people are made to suffer. Of course, such factories as produce goods and articles which the people can produce by themselves such as cloth, oil, sugar, leatherware etc. are meant here.

For another thing, the statement frankly concedes another important point that these factories ought to or rather can be closed to remove unemployment. It is obvious that factories producing textiles should be closed and Khadi should be brought into universal vogue in the first instance, because we have fairly trained and prepared ourselves for it from the days following the year 1920.

Two problems face us if we seriously started closing down factories. We have to see that (1) everyone in the nation is gainfully employed in something or the other; and that (2) such a procedure does not lead to a shortage in the production of goods and articles that is wealth; rather, production should increase.

Let us consider the second problem first. It should not require much argument to see that if a vast number of persons were to be employed in one sort of production or the other and were to perform the service which the factories are performing today, there could be no problem of shortage in the production of wealth. On the other hand, if more and more people were able to earn their living in this fashion, almost everyone now compelled to remain unemployed would be inspired to take to some work or the other and we would have more production as a matter of course. As a result there would not be any shortage of goods and articles. And because everyone would be gainfully employed purchasing power would, in the nature of things, be more or less evenly distributed so that everyone would be enabled to buy according to capacity goods and articles of his needs.

So, one cannot escape the feeling that some fallacy is concealed behind all this argument of wages being reduced or wealth being produced less. One may be able to prove by convenient statistics that the unemployed person when he starts working by the hand on his own will earn less by way of daily wages than the workman in a factory. But the argument is totally misleading. Why, even the comparison is wrong. Does the fact of a few workers in factories apparently earning a rupee a day by compelling a large number of their countrymen to suffer unemployment indicate production of true national wealth? And is the principle on which this fallacy is based one of socialistic brotherhood and equality or is it one of capitalistic exploitation and inequality induced by self-interest? Does such an order assure an equitable distribution of wealth?

But the real problem is the one which has been stated first. Will the vast number of the unemployed in the country at once take to cottage industries under a system of decentralized production with faith and confidence? Closing down factories means that they should. But the mere fact of factories being closed down would not of itself lead to such faith and confidence. The people as a whole and the unemployed in particular will have to be inspired and enthused to employ themselves in producing goods and articles. Does the Government of the day do anything to enthuse the people and create confidence in them? Well, one is forced to confess it does not furnish evidence of doing so.

Governments functioning in the country, Union as well as State, appear to have turned their energies towards setting up mechanized industries and towards centralized large-scale production. They seem to be enamoured of big large-scale production on the strength of machinery and capital. They seem to have a special love for planning schemes for such production and they are prepared to print crores worth of currency notes to ensure the needed finance and capital. They do not seem to have heart for the big revolutionary change which would be assured by crores of our people devoting their energies with one mind in the process of producing wealth. Truly speaking, however, real revolution lies that way. Unless this way to production of wealth was adopted we can hardly hope to establish true Swaraj or a real socio-economic order based on a socialistic pattern.

Governments in the country lack this faith. Consequently, they lack the capacity to inspire and enthuse all the people to take to work. And if they cannot enthuse the people to take to work, naturally, they cannot cultivate enough courage to close down factories. Both these questions are closely inter-related. And people will surely begin to work in order to supply their own needs if they had not to compete with the factories.

This vicious circle has to be broken, which means that competition by the factories needs to be immediately checked by proper controls and

they must ultimately cease working gradually one by one. With such controls imposed with such an aim in view, people will, of their own accord, apply themselves increasingly to the task of production. The unemployed certainly are not in love with their unemployment. But what can they do against an economic system which forces them into it? This is the problem facing the Government of India. It should therefore set aside the bug-bear of reduction in wages. Removal of the unemployment of the people is its first duty and where all people are gainfully employed a living wage is ensured to all as a matter of course. In fact this is the real beauty of decentralized production. Unfortunately, the science of economics prevailing today has not seen its way to study a system of decentralized production. It must be recognized as one of its serious defects; it proves itself unscientific to that extent. It is for India now to develop its own political economy on these lines.

It is often repeated that electric power and more efficient implements and tools should be employed for hand industries. But who opposes or does not want it? The pertinent question is: who has taken the trouble to invent more efficient implements and tools or who has encouraged such inventions? And if those who advocate employment of such tools were to invent them would they be able to supply them to the people so that the latter will be able to afford them?

As to the talk about employment of electric power in hand industries it would have appropriate meaning only after it is distributed to the villages at rates which people living in them and wishing to employ it can afford. As it is crores of rupees are spent on setting up plants for producing electric power at the cost of the whole nation, but it is supplied to the large-scale industries and to the cities for their amenities. Is this fair?

Really speaking electricity should be available to the villages at rates cheaper than those allowed to the cities. Then only could it be claimed that the wealth of the nation was justly spent in producing electric power. Under the present dispensation the cities enjoy it at the cost of the villages. This is not said out of any jealousy of the cities. It is merely an assessment of the prevalent conditions. A truly just and fair order would allow equal scope to the villages for development along with the cities.

The key to such an order lies in concentrating on removing unemployment in the villages in the first instance. This removal is possible only through encouraging and organizing cottage and village industries. True revolution in India consists in inspiring and encouraging these industries. Gigantic machines and equally gigantic dams for producing electricity may dazzle the eyes and stun the ears. But they have no capacity for revolutionizing the life and ways of the people. That is because they are lifeless material achievements. Living achievement would be in enthralling crores of our unemployed to work. The way to such achievement lies along the economy of Sarvodaya, not along the economics of large scale mechanized industrialism.

5-4-55

(From Gujarati)

SERVICE OF THE PEOPLE AND THE POWER OF THE STATE

[An abridgment of the inaugural address by Shri Vinoba Bhave on 25-3-55 to the Sarvodaya Samaj Sannetan held at Puri in Orissa.]

Everyday as we look at the sky we see that its travellers, the birds, return to their nests in order to find their life and in order to rest. The Vedas say that all souls as they had their various lives performing various acts, fulfilling multifarious desires and suffering the inevitable consequences of their actions ultimately get tired and then meet again in one place to gather courage and enthusiasm, to find peace and to compare notes with each other to test the truth of their experiences.

'Where the Universe Becomes but One Nest'

After Gandhiji's departure from this world the Sarvodaya Sannetan has become a resort for rest and peace and shelter to persons who lived and had their being in and under that sky. It was very likely that our various non-violences would have clashed with each other, consciously or unconsciously, if we did not come together in this manner once in a year. I believe it is our great good fortune that we have found this nest—the Sarvodaya Samaj Sannetan. Here we are able to meet, consult each other and discuss our problems. Shri Shankarrao Dev has aptly compared our meetings to the meetings of the devotees of Lord who get together to sing His praises and to discuss the ways and understand the difficulties of reaching Him. Surely, we should not and cannot have reservations or concealments or feel distance among ourselves in the discussions that we hold here, nor should there be any passion or excitement about them. And if we happen to hold different views we should all together endeavour to so carry on our free discussions as to reach our goal in one stream even as all the rivers ultimately find their way to the ocean. So please do not feel that I am asking you to agree with me in the views I am going to place before you. Please take them as if I was expressing my thoughts aloud. We in the Sarvodaya Samaj should at least cultivate such an attitude of frankness, tolerance and non-insistence.

Some Government will Remain

Most of us believe that ultimately there will not be any necessity to have government based on coercion or the power to punish. Even the communists recognize the futility of government based on force. But they also believe that at the present stage of man's development there should be strong centralized government so that they could destroy and abolish other unjust organizations. They propound that even as fire in consuming wood also consumes itself and cools itself off, the centralized power of the State too will destroy other organized centres of injustice and power and would in the process liquidate itself and wither away. This, in very short, is the essence of their ideology about power and the State and we know that they have reduced their whole thinking into a science.

There are others who, too, believe in the necessity of at least a minimum of government. As the world is the manifestation of the interplay of the three qualities, *satva*, *raja*, and *tama*, they say, some government, however little, is inevitable for man.

But all people realize and feel in their innermost hearts that only a social order which has eschewed the use of force and punishment altogether will last. Our Samaj, the Sarvodaya Samaj, believes in this idea and works for that ideal. But we do concede that under the conditions of the present moment even in a non-violent social order some, a little, government is essential.

Will not the Congress Come in the Way?

There will be no place for coercion or power in Sarvodaya. A Sarvodaya social order will give the place of honour to service, service of the people. When we think of our work from this point of view we begin to wonder if the Indian National Congress of today is not going to prove the greatest hindrance to the establishment of a system of life based on non-violence.

The Congress is the biggest popular organization in the country. Its programme is elections, from elections to State power, and of serving the people through State power secured by way of elections. I wonder, I ask myself, whether in a country where its greatest organization has its basis on elections, has based its programme for serving the people ultimately on elections, it will not come in the way of establishing a non-violent social order.

He who had the vision to see far ahead, and also those lesser persons who worked under him, all of them together had thought and wished the Congress organization which brought freedom to this country from dependence upon others or political slavery to convert itself into a Loka Sevak Sangha, an organization wedded to the service of the people. I have always felt and we have always wondered what great sense of vision, what expert intelligence people who had so desired had given proof of. It is now said and contemplated that the newly established Bharat Sevak Samaj will devote itself to the service of the people. But when the biggest organization of the country has set its heart on functioning through the power of the State the Bharat Sevak Samaj will not gain enough strength or capacity to serve the people. I believe it will always occupy, a less important, a secondary place.

Need of an Organization Devoted to the Service of the People

There is always a need for service in human society. Even in an order based on coercion or violence there is place for service. But in a non-violent social order the biggest organization will, in the nature of things, be devoted only to service, to serving the people. The idea of a Loka Sevak Sangha visualized that barring certain very few fields of social life the rest of society, almost all the functioning of society would have absolutely no need for the coercive power of the State; service would have occupied the throne of sovereign authority as queen and power would have been its maid; the organization devoted to the service of the people would have had the authority of control over the instrument of power; indeed, elections would have been run only after that organization had sanctioned and blessed them.

That, however, was not to be. What has actually come about has been if not the reverse, at least against the idea. I will refrain from going into an analysis of the causes or reasons. Any way, I felt and believed at the time that if the organization which had proved itself so strong and capable were to confine itself and its programme to the field of elections only, the newly born State would possibly be safe. But this was a phenomenon as a consequence of which the way of non-violence was hemmed in by difficulties all round.

So, the need of building up a new organization has arisen. Let us build up an organization which is only for, and devoted to, the service of the people, and which is the biggest of its kind. To build up such organization is a difficult task. Those on whose strength it will be sought to be built up are weak, are but small. Small men can surely build up small organizations even though a Congress or even a super Congress were to come in their way. The responsibility is certainly very heavy but God willing even small persons with small strength will build it up. But the true responsibility lies with persons functioning in the political field and therefore let them help us. Whoever they are and wherever they are, and to whatever party they belong, let all of them come together and working from where they are today create such an organization, let them help build up an organization devoted only to the service of the nation and which is also free from elections. I am not pleading for forming a new group; nor am I recommending such a course. For, I do not wish that the strength of any of these persons be undermined or destroyed till they have an illusion of it.

Limitations of Elections

Whatever importance be given to elections it has to be recognized that it is not a thing, it is not a process, it is not a mechanism which is going to strengthen society, or conduce to its progress. This elective process is a mechanism set up in a democracy. Democracy demands that every one's opinion be sought and recorded. Every one knows that such a scheme has certainly not been ordained by God so that we have to justify its existence on that account. In this man-made one-man-one-vote scheme Pandit Nehru has a right to one vote, and his *chaprasi* too has a right to one vote. No one is able to demonstrate to us the sense underlying such a scheme. I only feel that the principle of the equality of all souls underlying our *Vedanta* philosophy is being possibly propagated thereby; and possibly also, we would be enabled to establish an equalitarian society thereby! Elections do not show any capacity to bring about a fundamental change or revolution in society. So, I say, whatever the change the elective process may be effecting in the practical affairs of society they can never effect a change in values. I would, therefore, plead with all those political persons who feel they are placed in positions of power to effect a fundamental change as a result of elections to leave them when they feel convinced that their attempt to bring about a change in values is falling.

The Urge for Non-violence should be Intensely Acute

The next point I would like to discuss before you is regarding Gandhiji's *ahimsa*. Some of us have gone to the government and others have remained outside or kept aloof. Government these days seems to interpret non-violence to mean as little of harassment of society as is possible. We feel that this definition of *ahimsa* is very dangerous for non-violence and its progress. Such definition may apply to violence. When these friends in the government talk of an order based on a socialistic pattern and non-violence, both taken together cannot, to my mind, have any meaning but *satyagraha*, any meaning but a Sarvodaya social order.

The Buddha has said: if we set about doing good slowly, evil sneaks itself into it at once and with force. The go-slow idea has meaning only so far as coercion or violence is concerned. Please do not apply it to *ahimsa*. It has been said of old: **नैत्रस्वेनानिनामन्नः ।** I pray to God to bring home to all those who profess to follow Gandhiji that the urge for non-violence has to be intensely acute, that non-violence has by its very nature to be very speedy.

Rajaji has placed two or three valuable suggestions before the world. He is a philosopher and also an expert in statecraft. He is also a great craftsman in the art of wielding the power that is in language. He has pleaded with the Americans to cultivate goodness unilaterally. But all the people of America are learned. This learned people will find it difficult to understand this sane advice. They have handed to a man from the army all the atom bombs and all the hydrogen bombs and asked him to employ them on Formosa if he thought fit. This for them is a great dilemma indeed. How could they now heed the advice offered by Rajaji? But I would like to ask if even the people of the nation to which Rajaji himself belongs back up and enforce his suggestion. Are we, I ask, putting speed in *ahimsa*? I will answer my own question and say we are not. The language which defines non-violence as something which goes slow is very dangerous language and also very deceptive language.

Ahimsa will Gain Strength by Satyagraha

A third point. Many in this country are afraid of the word *satyagraha*. But this is wrong. In fact *satyagraha* is the refuge of this war-torn world and it will surely prove itself the charmed word that will redeem it.

People very often repeat that *satyagraha* has no place in a democratic State. It is true there will be no room

for free collective *satyagraha* in a social order where all decisions are taken with the consent of every one. There may be scope for cases of individual *satyagraha* but none for a collective one. But I will emphatically repeat that *satyagraha* will give strength to those who want to work for and by non-violence though the statement may appear novel. Though it is difficult to act only after gaining the consent of all, still we can go on attempting to do so.

The Fear and Attraction of Satyagraha

The definition of *satyagraha* has assumed a negative character; that is to say it has come to mean some movement for coercing people who differ from you to come round to your view of things. This is why some people are attracted towards it and some are equally afraid of it. With this sort of idea about *satyagraha* in view people pester me by asking now and then how long I was going to beg for land as I am doing. They tell me that they can show me various ways of violence to achieve my end but they wanted to know from me when I was going to release my potent instrument of non-violence, or whether I was going to use it at all.

Gandhiji was placed in circumstances under which he had to function negatively. But he had the genius which could endow constructive capacity even to his movements for the negation of certain things. People very often used to ask him what relation his spinning wheel bore to the Englishman quitting India. So, we should not run away with the belief that the *satyagraha* movements of those days were the last word in the technique of *satyagraha*.

We ought to learn that the *satyagraha* which seeks to be effective in democracy will have to be more constructive and less in opposition to something or the other. It is entirely wrong to say that *satyagraha* has no room under a democratic order of government. But we must train ourselves and get seasoned by applying our constructive way of work to the situation before us to the best of our capacity till the year 1957.

I have seen in Bihar how effective our method of work has proved. I see that here too. And surprisingly enough I saw it in Bengal also. If we applied ourselves to our task with all the strength and capacity we have I venture to prophesy that we shall be able to see in Bihar the full picture of *bhoodan* in actual working. But if for want of applying our whole strength our aim was not fulfilled by 1957 we would have proved ourselves unfit for our task. But suppose, our aim was not achieved in spite of our having applied ourselves to our task to the best of our ability. Then by doing so we shall cultivate the capacity to take a step ahead; we shall also have developed such capacity as will enable us to decide the nature of the next step; and we shall also surely be able to see our way clear to the next step in our endeavour.

Not Useful to Non-violence

The idea that when now we have Swaraj we should not act only with some single aspect of life in view is not baseless; it has some substance in it. Why, the responsibility to act with the whole of social life in view is all the greater today. We, however, have to think and find out who it is that has shouldered on the responsibility to our shoulders. The responsibility lies surely in the first place on those who have taken the people's vote in the elections and who are now administering the State as a consequence. One friend informed me how cows were being slaughtered in large numbers every day in the city of Calcutta. Then we are told that we have to make allowance for such daily slaughter if milk was to be supplied to the cities. But when we are asked to attend to these, no doubt, important questions, do those who ask us to solve them really suppose that we have nothing of our own to do? And are we to understand that in a scientifically perfected scheme, as it is claimed, for supplying milk to the cities cows have to

be slaughtered every day? If every good thing has to be successfully demonstrated in Delhi before it can be accepted as such by governments, such procedure is not going to be of any use to non-violence to which we have pledged ourselves.

Not Good for the Nation

Some people remind us that the legislature is there to hear our grievances. But there, unfortunately our voice is represented under a whip! And are we to suppose that government has no ears for anything but what it hears in the legislature? What then shall we do? Why should we waste our words on the servants? Why not tell, what we have to, to the masters, the people whose servants those elected representative friends are? When we ask government to do something, to close down textile factories in the interest of Khadi we are told off by the reply that we do not know public opinion. That is why we approach those who can pull these representative friends up and ask the former to take notice and think seriously of these matters.

There are some others who complain that men of *satvik* temperament keep aloof from elections. They then ask as to what they could do to make such good people take part in elections. Some people ask our friends why the latter do not join the Congress. We should therefore also consider these questions and decide whether our joining the Congress would benefit us. We should also think and find out whether such a step though it may be of some advantage to some of us as individuals it will be of any advantage to the nation as a whole. My considered opinion is no, never, it will not be of any advantage to the country.

No Insistence on Conformity but Freedom to Think

Friends, make up your minds to go and join where you see the good of the people. Even our friends in the government and the legislatures say the same thing. They propound that there should be an opposition for the success of democracy. But they fear there would be danger if it was either too weak or too strong. The servants of the people with *satvik* temperament should gather courage to change the very quality of these elections. We may take part in them, or keep aloof from them but we should from now on be strong enough to make ourselves felt regarding them. Today we feel we have fallen a prey to some sort of infatuation. But we have friends in all the organizations of the country. I do not insist that they should all think and feel as we do. But they should freely think for themselves. We do not wish that the strength of any organization be undermined. But I would like to ask every one if our remaining weak was going to benefit them.

Suppose Vinoba went Congress. What I believe, however, is that there are good men in the Congress as also in the Praja Socialist Party. Our joining the Congress, therefore, is not going to benefit the nation. Let us clearly understand that all the ideologies that are prevalent in the country should not weaken in strength. I would appeal to all of you to think over and consider the things I have placed before you.

(From Hindi)

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