

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)
Editor: MAGANBHAI P. DESAI

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TWO ANNAS

ATOMIC EXPLOSIONS AND AMERICAN AID

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

Scientific opinion about the after-effects of nuclear explosions on life is crystallizing that they are surely adverse for human survival on this planet. Naturally therefore the humanitarian world is raising its voice against having any more experiments of nuclear weapons poisoning earth's atmosphere.

Shri Rajaji made a specific appeal to America for stopping these nuclear experiments. As if in total disregard of it, America had one or two experiments just recently and the British Government decided to manufacture H-Bomb in England!

The new weapon has divided the States of the world into those that are in possession of the secret of that weapon and those that are not so. Among the latter there are some States like India who has declared that she will use atomic power only for peace and not for military purposes.

The situation created by the advent of this new demon-king of weapons in the world is really disastrous. It threatens not only the would-be belligerents of a future war, but also it will kill all life in its ambit and pollute the atmosphere of the earth with radio-activity ruinous to life on earth. It is almost as if man is out to annihilate himself! The sheer tragedy of it is wholly staggering indeed. Therefore it almost becomes a world problem for human survival.

But human beings as they are today are conditioned by the idea of the Nation-State. This they came to and adopted as the way of the peoples of the world, in the course of the last few centuries of their history and in wake of the Industrial Revolution and the indiscriminate use of science and technology. They cannot therefore normally act as simple men and women or as world citizens. They can act, if at all, through their respective States and as their delimited citizens.

From this point of view, it is a welcome move on the part of the nations that met recently at Bandung to have resolved that nuclear experiments must stop. It is a lesson for the larger body

of the States of the World, viz. the U.N.O. to decide similarly. But this voice of Bandung may not be heeded, — is not being heeded. The U.N.O. is in almost exclusive possession of the few nuclear powers, who are woefully divided as opposite blocs, highly charged with almost irremovable mutual suspicion and hatred.

What should be done then? What possibly can be done under such a baffling situation? Surely man should, if need be, transcend his national limitations here. For example, an apostle of the use of non-violence for solution of mass problems like Gandhiji would take up such a challenge and appear on the world stage and guide thinking men and women in all the countries to some common thought and action. Shri Rajaji, thinking in his footsteps, suggested even unilateral action on the part of the most effective power today, viz. U. S. A. He has now, in all seriousness, suggested that we should refuse to receive aid from that country if it does not stop to pollute world's atmosphere by nuclear explosions. He has explained himself that it was not boycotting the U.S.A. aid but would rather be an act of self-denial and renunciation on our part. It would be an act of N.C.O. like the one we had had against British rule. Likewise, it should mean no hatred or enmity of America.

I am afraid, this suggestion of Rajaji is not likely to be accepted. As a matter of fact, just a few days ago the Colombo powers met at Delhi and decided about some questions of receiving such aid!

And there are good reasons for it. N.C.O. with the British came at the end of a long process of frustrations and loss of faith in the *bona fides* of the British ruler in regard to the grant of Swaraj to India. Have we any such close relationship or continued contact with the U.S.A. on this question? Can mere declaration by us to use nuclear power for peace give us a moral authority and a just status to invoke a weapon like N.C.O. against a country who also wishes to work for peace according to its own light? An appeal to its conscience may be all right so far as it goes, but a call to N.C.O. with it looks not well placed. May not such unilateral move on the part of India jeopardize any further work of strengthening a

peace front through the newly devised instrument like the Afro-Asian Conference?

But the substance of Shri Rajaji's suggestion is welcome on the general grounds of a sound domestic policy. In these columns it was said, when the U.S.A. aid was first mooted, that it was neither necessary nor advisable from the point of view of India's progress and development on sound and self-reliant lines. It was objected to on grounds of its having strings entangling India's freedom. The aid is surely having socio-economic and commercial strings that may prove to be undesirable entanglement for our new economy. It is a big question, requiring close study of social and cultural effects the U.S.A. technological aid is having on our people. I may leave it here with the question to our social thinkers that they might consider how the socio-economic strings contained in U.S.A. aid affect our self-reliant and free growth. So far as the foreign policy goes, I think, it would not be proper to non-cooperate with the U.S.A. on the plea of nuclear explosion experiment.

18-5-'55

BIG INDUSTRIES AND STANDARD OF LIVING

(By P. Srinivasachari)

Protagonists of big industries put forth the argument that the standard of living of the masses can be raised only through the large-scale industrialization of the country. They state that the general progress depends on the increase in the production of wealth, which according to them is closely associated with the progress of big industries. They cite the example of other industrialized countries and claim that the continuous growth and expansion of the big industries alone will usher an era of prosperity. In their opinion the development of cottage and small-scale industries will not help us to solve the problems facing us today. To them, the dynamic and positive role ascribed to the cottage and village industries is only a Gandhian fad—an illusion. At best, they declare that these industries can be feeder to large-scale industries.

We have to state in the beginning that we are not opposed to all kinds of big industries. We should make intelligent exceptions in choosing particular type of big or heavy industries which are necessary for our real progress. We are not able to subscribe to the oft-repeated enunciation of the economic policy advocating big industries in every field of production, whether the production of consumer goods or capital goods. The examples of other countries like U. S. A. or England will not guide us in our task, as the industrial development in those countries took place under totally different circumstances and the conditions actually existing in our country have nothing in common with them. Nor is it correct to say that production by cottage and village industries will set back the hands of the clock of progress.

We should not forget that the standard of living of the people cannot be improved merely by the increase in the production of goods through large-scale industries. Unless people are provided with necessary purchasing power to consume the goods that are produced, their living conditions will be as miserably low as it is now, in spite of any increase in production.

In our country where 70 per cent of the population is living in the rural areas the extent of unemployment and under-employment prevailing today is something staggering. The figures given below (taken from the recent Census Report) will give an idea of the colossal problem that is demanding our urgent attention:

	Agricultural Class	Non-agricultural Class
Self-supporting persons	710 lakhs	333 lakhs
Non-earning Dependents	1470 "	673 "
Earning Dependents	311 "	69 "
Total	2491 "	1075 "

Out of 2,491 lakhs belonging to the agricultural class, only 710 lakhs or 28.5 per cent are self-supporting persons. In the non-agricultural class group, out of 1,075 lakhs only 333 lakhs or 31.0 per cent are self-supporting persons. A large number of people as high as 59.0 per cent in the agricultural class and 62.6 per cent in the non-agricultural class are remaining idle. In the total population of 3,566 lakhs, the number of non-earning dependents comes to 2,143 lakhs and that of those whose earnings are not sufficient to meet the bare necessities of life is 380 lakhs. Even after excluding old, sick, children and others and taking the working population as 40 per cent of the total population, the number of those who are unemployed at present comes to a huge figure of 900 lakhs, (9 crores).

Apart from providing employment to these vast number of persons which will dispel any doubt about the magnitude of the problem, we have to create employment opportunities at the rate of 1.8 million jobs a year for the annual rise in the growth of the working population.

Any talk of increasing the standard of living of the masses through large-scale industrialization should be viewed against this background. Unless the vast army of idle men is absorbed in useful occupations which would give them enough purchasing power to meet their requirements, the figures of production by big industries will not reflect the true condition of the masses.

Past experience has convincingly shown the limitation of the large-scale industries to create fresh avenues of employment. Mass production and rapid increase in the volume of employment do not often go together. In spite of many years of development, and even though nearly Rs. 450 crores* have been invested in industries, the number of those who are employed in all the factories is only about 2.9 millions. This is less than the figure of the new jobs to be created for the rise in the working population in two years.

In India, a more serious problem than the urban unemployment, is the underemployment and unemployment prevailing in the rural areas. According to moderate estimate our agricultural classes are remaining idle for 3 to 4 months in a year. The recent survey on 'Farm Labour' conducted by the Government of India points out that 350 lakhs of agricultural labourers are employed on an average for only 189 days in the year. Practically for half the year they are remaining idle for want of work. The only way to increase their earnings is to provide subsidiary occupations to the agricultural classes. That this stupendous problem cannot be tackled by the development of large-scale industries needs no explanation. Only cottage and village industries can provide ready employment to such a vast number at their own door steps.

Moreover large-scale industrialization can be undertaken only at huge capital cost, running to several thousand crores of rupees. We have to depend on imports for machinery and other things which will drain the country's wealth into faraway lands. Further, the prerequisite of mass production is extensive markets. Large-scale industrialization will inevitably drive us to join the race for markets in other countries which will ultimately

* A low estimate of the actual cost of investment as the figure is arrived at on the basis of the value at the time of purchase many years ago, minus the value by which the item had deteriorated since its purchase.

lead to exploitation of other people and other like evils. The industrial development of the Western countries has followed a similar pattern and should be a timely warning to us.

It should be borne in mind, that even as they are, the unorganized small-scale enterprises are contributing more to our national income and providing employment to greater number of people than all the large-scale industries in our country.

Distribution of working force and contribution towards national income.

	1950-51	1950-51
	Working Force (Figures in Thousands)	Contribution to National Income (Figures in crores)
Factory Establishments	2969	550
Small Enterprises	11,521	910

(From the Report of the National Income Committee)

The small enterprises are giving employment to nearly four times more than the organized big industries. The former share in the national income comes to nearly as much as double the contribution of the latter. If proper steps are taken to organize the small enterprises on sound lines and sufficient encouragement is given to their products, they have got great potentialities to increase the wealth of the country and the level of employment and thereby the living standard of the people.

Enough has been said to show that under the prevailing conditions the standard of living of the masses cannot be improved to any appreciable degree by undue dependence on big industries. It will only perpetuate the glaring inequality of the high standard of living of the handful few and the miserably low living standard of the large mass of the people.

It therefore becomes imperative that we should adopt the decentralized way as our pattern of production. To increase the volume of employment at a rapid rate bold steps should be taken to decentralize gradually all the big industries producing consumer goods. We can have such heavy industries like engineering, chemicals, iron and steel etc. which cannot be decentralized. Even in that sphere, ceaseless efforts should be made to produce as far as possible the component parts of the final product in small factories distributed in rural areas. Such a scheme of production only will solve the problem of giving gainful occupations to crores of people.

Those who advocate to base our economy on large scale production, relegating an insignificant role to small enterprises are not alive to the real issues facing the country. Instead of cottages and small scale industries being a feeder to heavy industries, the role should be reversed. The latter should be made complementary to the cottage and small scale industries and supply their requirements of implements, tools, and small machines.

The magnitude of the problem of bettering the conditions of our people is such that there is no other short cut method to solve it and we cannot expect quick results. For many millions of people any prospect of work to eke out a living will mark a great improvement in their condition. The big industries cannot afford relief to even a fraction of them. Decentralized industries alone can absorb them and with improvement in the technique and organization of production of the cottage and small scale industries we will achieve all-round progress and raise the standard of living of not a few but the general mass of people.

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A FOREIGN FRIEND'S QUESTION

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

As time goes on, it is being cleared that what is called Socialistic Pattern is not Socialism, but is only a euphemism for expressing a certain group of concrete things that the Jawahar Government wishes to have for the country. The concrete things are some large-scale big industries desired to be set up as public sector and in no spirit of rivalry or antagonism with the so-called private sector.

In the new India that is shaping itself consequent upon Swaraj unleashing popular forces from foreign rule that kept them down, the Government force may as well have its schemes under the Prime Minister's direction and as desired by him. Even they must conform to the real and immediate needs of our people who live mostly in the villages. It is up to the leaders of popular opinion to examine them and educate the people accordingly.

From this point of view, a foreign friend's warning about such programmes is very welcome. It particularly touches their employment potential aspect, which is most pertinent.

The friend is none other than Mr Charles Bowles, ex-Ambassador of U.S.A. He visited our country some time back and put down impressions of what he saw. The following is from those impressions :

"I am pleased to see that the Second Five Year Plan includes bold plans for large-scale industrialization. I am concerned, however, about the assumption in certain quarters that this will substantially ease the employment problem.

"America produces more than half of all the steel of the world with only 12 lakhs of workers.

"We produce three-fourth of all the automobiles in the world with only 13 lakhs of factory workers.

"Even the most rapid industrialization will do no more than take up the employment in the cities of India. What about the crores and crores of unemployed and underemployed throughout the villages and small towns? These can be only employed through blacksmith-shops, as village cobblers, carpenters and in diversified small and village industries. Employment must be brought to the people or the people will move to the already overcrowded cities in search of employment.

"But what enormous employment opportunities exist everywhere throughout rural India! For instance, the impact of a passive village, housing effort alone has immense possibilities for the employment of stone-cutters, brick-kiln operators, carpenters, blacksmiths and, eventually, glaziers, and plumbers. The unfilled needs are there and the skills to fill those needs can be readily made available. How are the two to be put together on a massive scale?

"Last but not least, what about India's greatest natural resources—her young people? Today many thousands of students in India are frustrated and insecure. How rapidly and fully can these potentially explosive intellectuals be tied into the dynamic growth of India?" (From *The Times of India*, May 5, '55, p. 6)

This is also the question formulating itself on behalf of the large body of Constructive Workers who are working scattered all over the country.

Viewed in its ultimate analysis the Bhoodan movement also poses the same thing. It particularly asks which among the various things being attempted at present, should have the top-most priority in India today? And it replies, surely land distribution aided by home and small-scale industries and Go-Seva so as to give full employment to lakhs of small peasant-proprietors, that will be created consequent upon Bhoodan. This is a direct step to secure full employment for the largest bulk of our people, unlike the socialistic programme of mass production with its *laissez-faire* attitude to the vital problem of unemployment and the proper distribution of increasing wealth.

17-5-'55

HARIJAN

May 28

1955

GRAM PANCHAYATS

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

Shri S. Ganeshan from Pichhiyakkam (S. I.) writes as follows as "a suggestion or an honest doubt":

"I have read with interest your review of the Bhoodan movement (*Harijan*, 23-4-'55). It is a very clear statement of the progress of the movement, its non-political nature, the working of Vinobaji's mind in this regard and the philosophy underlying this movement. There can be no two opinions on the subject and its wholesome effect on the mind of the suffering masses as a training ground to prepare the workers and the country in a non-violent way for a Stateless society. I feel a Stateless society may be an ideal of a few individuals of very high mental calibre and personages like Vinobaji who can be counted on one's fingers. But as a practical step in the present day world in which we are living and circumstanced, I feel it is a far cry. Even though one may reach a mental level of ignoring the State, the State interference is too great and constant in everybody's day-to-day life. The people are suffering and are unable to get over it. They are all victims of the system quite against their will. I find you have realized this when you write, 'Experience of distributing land showed that the help of suitable legislation and government machinery in a certain manner was necessary for effective and speedy disposal'. So it leads one to think of the way of changing the system at a very early date. That system is agreed by all to be Panchayat Raj or Gram Raj or Ram Raj by whichever name you may call it.

"Side by side with walking tours of Vinobaji for the collection of land and money for the Daridra-narayan will it not be better to organize a Panchayat Raj in one taluk, Firka or even in one village?"

"From my experience of village work, I say it is the government with its machinery, the village officials being the men on the spot coupled with the rich and reactionary elements who are oppressing and exploiting the large masses. The terror created by the British Government miscalled respect for law and order has got to be uprooted. Working for the Panchayat Raj alone will be the solution. This is my experience at Plehhiyakkam. I am hemmed in on all sides by the slow moving machinery of the government almost strangling

me to death. The lesson of perseverance, I learnt from Gandhiji is sustaining me and is carrying me through the struggle and silent war with the government and the local powers."

The suggestion is welcome. As history shows, the Gram Panchayat was our potent institution in pre-British days. The imperial needs of foreign rule almost wiped it out or, say, changed it almost beyond recognition. On the advent of freedom, we decided in our Constitution that "the State shall take steps to organize Village Panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government." (Art. 40) This is one of our most important Directive Principles of State policy. It requires to be implemented by the combined and co-ordinated efforts of the people and their government.

In the absence of live Village Panchayats working in our body politic, we had to frame a Constitution for ourselves denying this basic unit of self-government, its place of pride and importance in the edifice of our country's political set-up. We could have easily built up a Swaraj Government primarily based on the Panchayats through indirect election of our legislatures by these primary village institutions. The latter would be constituted on the basis of adult franchise and on no-party basis. This would have secured to us, in a very natural and truly democratic manner, both the devolution of political power as also a simple and easy indirect electoral system for the legislatures. It would have facilitated building from below both economically and politically. The common man in the village would have immediately felt the glow and the good of freedom and independence that have come to us after a long time.

But this was not to be as the vital or the primary link of a living Gram Panchayat was missing in our midst. The absence is sought to be removed by the Constitution directing the State in India that (i) Gram Panchayats should be organized in every village, and (ii) they must be endowed with necessary and sufficient powers to be able to function as units of self-government in our country.

It may be remarked that the State has not till now heeded to this Directive Principle as well as it should. Firstly it should be noted that the Directive Principle says something different from what used to be known as Local Self-Government. The mistake persists till this day. The Gram Panchayat is to be a unit of India's self-government, it is basic to the idea of our Swaraj, not something just to be local and hence negligible or just to be minded to by the way as and when one may. As a basic unit of our Swaraj, it must have its own independent financial resources and all necessary powers to execute, guide and control all welfare services that will have to be obviously organized at the village unit level. The unit may as well be endowed with certain administrative and judicial powers also. I may not

attempt here to give its whole picture; this we have to evolve and work out in conformity with the genius of our people. If the Gram Panchayat was a peculiar institution of India's ages-old democracy, it can have no ready-made model to copy, except the one that surely inheres in our people's genius.

Shri Ganeshan has some harsh words to say at the end of his communication about the official world. As a remark about what really obtains at present, I am afraid, it is difficult to find fault with it. The other side of the picture is village factionalism, groupism, casteist aristocracy etc. — a dismal situation of our village society. Both sides together — the official and the non-official — define the village as it is today which we desire to rebuild into a Village Panchayat. Therefore it will not be proper for Government to say that no beginning in the devolution of power and authority can be made under such a situation of our village people. To say so would be as wrong for them as it was for the Britisher when giving us Swaraj. It must not be overlooked that the evils of factionalism, groupism, casteism, communalism etc. that we find at the village level obtain equally so at almost all the higher levels also, *mutatis mutandis*. Therefore the kettle-and-the-pot-cavilling approach here will help nobody. We should rather begin to work at the village level also and devise a phased programme for implementing the Directive Principle in a forthright way. I am glad to report that Bombay State has made a beginning in this matter. Let us hope it leads in it in the same way as in the matter of Prohibition.

12-5-'55

LURE FOR GLAMOUR AND POMP

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

A correspondent from Bombay had occasion to go to the rural area. He has conveyed to me some thoughts which struck him from what he saw. He suggests that his casual ideas may be publicly discussed if thought proper. One of his writings has the caption which forms the heading of this article. He says therein :

"One reads in the newspapers that half a crore of rupees is to be spent on constructing two new platforms at the Churchgate railway station. Sometime ago newspapers gave the news that the Municipal Corporation felt that the Ahmedabad railway station was shabby and has therefore asked for building a new one which would be good and commodious. What the Corporation seems to ask is, why Ahmedabad and such other cities should not have big showy railway stations when Surat and Baroda have secured them.

"It may be conceded that planning is essential for building up a Welfare State and that the present generation should bear some burden with future development in view, but it has also to be borne in mind that there is a definite limit to the capacity of the future generations to bear the burden. The usually patient people would naturally feel impatient when they are needlessly burdened for mere ostentation.

"One can easily understand the need to lay new railway lines, to spend after new engines and carriages, to erect roofs and railway stations where there are

none, to make proper arrangements for supply of drinking water to passengers, and to set up new or repair old waiting sheds or rooms for passengers to sit and rest. But one cannot help feeling that the trend to spend 'immense sums of money' for building 'palatial railway stations' before supplying the primary needs of passengers indicates a sort of insanity."

It is likely that railway stations built with the needs of past days in view may prove inconvenient and incommodious today. It is likely, too, that when not only has the population of the country increased to a large extent but goods and passenger traffic has also increased to a larger extent some alterations may be necessary. But it cannot be denied that there is some truth in what the correspondent has said. Man is prone to gaudiness in the things he uses and very often is seen to strain himself beyond his capacity to satisfy himself regarding it. This trend can be observed in other fields of development in India also. Take for instance the policy adopted to build huge gigantic dams at the cost of crores of rupees. Let not the reader carry away the impression that there is something inherently wrong about constructing such dams. The question is somewhat different. Are the dams immediately necessary? Is the way they are constructed good and proper? Are there no other works which are smaller and less showy but more essential which should be given priority when spending national wealth? Should not prior attention be devoted to so many regions in the country where even pure drinking water is not available or scarce? In the light of such questions the wisdom of the policy of constructing gigantic dams with the consideration of producing electric power becomes questionable.

We are assured that the dams would give facilities for irrigating agricultural land. But could such facilities be available only under a plan of constructing such gigantic dams in the first place? We have in almost every one of our villages wells, tanks, streams and rivulets. They have silted up and lost their utility on account of neglect over long years. Would it not have been proper to undertake a broad programme of repairing these sources of water supply first? Think of the universal influence it would have exercised on the popular mind. Think of the enthusiasm it would have generated in the people. And also think of the vast amount of willing labour people would have offered for its execution. Instead, the 'lure for glamour and pomp' seems to play its part in leading us to a technique of planning in imitation of America and other countries where works are executed from the top downwards with the help of gigantic machines. Those who are working on the plan seem to feel that if we worked with the aim of dazzling the eyes of the world our country would carry weight among the nations and earn a great reputation for progress.

What a journalist has recently written about the policy of constructing huge dams is also

worth attention. Quoting the instance of the dam constructed across the Brahmani in Saurashtra he points out that it was planned and built in pursuance of the advice of the veteran engineer Shri Vishveshvaraiya of Mysore. Its remarkable feature is its length of 8,700 feet, breadth of 380 feet and its height of 61 feet. Only simple earth is used in its construction and the whole of the huge work has been completed with an expense of only eighty lakhs of rupees. Masonry has been used only at the ends of the bund where water is likely to wash away the earth. Cement has not been used in the masonry; only earth, rubble, metal, pebbles and sand are brought into service. Warning was given about the dam that it would not stand against the rush of waters in a big flood. But it has successfully withstood the pressure of water even during the unusually heavy rains of the previous monsoon.

After furnishing the details the correspondent points out that we have huge man-power at our disposal and that we are short of such articles as cement etc. He then goes on to ask if it would not be better for us to build our dams on the lines of work across the Brahmani. If we put up small dams across streams and rivulets, repair wells and tanks and clean them so as to be of maximum utility, we can achieve much by utilizing our labour power and our people would see the advantage immediately. We would not then have to wait long for actual results in terms of service to the people nor would we be compelled to carry the burden of the gigantic expenses involved in the equally gigantic works and in the consequent economic handicaps. Besides, once these small bunds started working they would be so much easier to manage.

The philosophy of centralized as against decentralized organization of our economic processes applies here also. The difficulties we experience in this case are of two kinds: They are the industrial technique of the West and the lure of glamour and showiness. The rural culture suited to Indian life demands a new way for the solution of our problems in this field of development. We will have to realize that the urban way of city civilization would not suit the rural way of life. Along with this realization will we also have to refuse to be dazzled by the glamour of showiness. The glamour is of course absent from the simplicity of the decentralized economic organization. One need not, however, feel there would be no grandeur in it. Only, we will not have the counterfeit satisfaction of seeing it as centralized showiness. The human physical eye has from times immemorial been dazzled by the outward pomp and showiness! If we overcome this lure or infatuation we would be able to achieve most of our development works and schemes in a very short time and also at comparatively very much lesser expense to the nation.

13-4-'55

(From Gujirati)

SHRI VINOBA IN ORISSA—V

I

During the ten days stay in Jagannathpuri the 'Om Om' roar of the ocean fell upon the ears everyday, but when the last day of the Sarvodaya Sammela arrived Vinoba in a roar deeper than that of the sea declared, "We want to establish a social order free of the rule of the State and peace in the world by the year 1957. An odd two years are now left to us. So come all ye leaving all your various activities and devote all your energies to this task of the revolution. My call is not only to the Sarvodaya workers; nor is it only for India; I am reaching out with the call to the whole world. You have to carry the message of the revolution to every man and woman in every village and have to explain to each one of them that their gifts-deeds are really their votes for world peace."

Making this clarion call in these brilliant words after ten days in Puri Vinoba took leave of the sacred place on the auspicious day of Ramanavami, the day of Lord Ramachandra's birth. The foot march started again with the regularity of the sun.

When small boys from villages collect round him Vinoba transforms himself into one of them. Then is heard on occasions very interesting conversation between these small friends. It was so at Chandabrahmapuri. The boys surrounded him. Vinoba asked one of the small friends, "Do you know why, for what purpose, I have come?"

A small boy immediately stood up and said, "Yes, we do."

Another began to say, "You have come to ask for land."

Vinoba further asked, "What will I do with the land I will take?"

All of them together shouted, "You will give it to the poor, to those who have none of it."

Vinoba's third question to them was, "Do you like this work of mine?"

They all replied in unison, "Yes, yes."

Vinoba then asked them to go to their parents to give the good news to them that Baba had arrived to demand land and that they should certainly give it. The boys went away and brought their fathers to the afternoon meeting and made them give land in gift to Shri Vinoba. Pleased with this event he said in his speech, "Look at the enthusiasm these youngsters have for the mission! They turned themselves into volunteers and carried the message to their parents. This, surely, is not a small thing. We have a tradition of old that the words that fall from the mouths of youngsters are God's own words."

Whenever he comes across a temple or a monastery (*math*) Vinoba usually enquires as to what was being done with the land belonging to it and discusses the topic. He says, "Dharma or the religious duty of man goes on taking new forms like the flowing water of the stream. Time was when sacrificing goats was believed to be a religious duty. But the Vaishnava saints taught us that we have to surrender to the Lord not the flesh of animals but our own belongings. People then began to donate land to the temples with great faith as part of their religious duty. Those days there was more of land and less of population. But these days when we are short of land and there is a universal demand for it it would be irreligious to take land away from the poor or to keep them away from it for the advantage of a temple or a *math*. God will never be pleased by such acts. So those who own temples should accept the Bhoodan movement as their own because it is a cause for establishing righteousness among men. If they did so the good reputation that the temples enjoyed in those days will return to them and the flame of religion will be lighted and begin to shine again."

At Nimapara at a distance from the camp in the peaceful, and quiet light of the moon in a mango grove Vinoba sat discussing Bhoodan with some Communist

friends in a small open space under the sky. The Communist friends wanted to know from Vinoba why when he was carrying on his mission in his own non-violent way he was not obstructing the law of the State. Vinoba informed them that non-violence had no quarrel with the law. A non-violent movement cultivated public opinion and law is framed according to it. If there was a law that all land in a village should belong to the whole of it as such it would be in the interest of our cause. Such law comes within the limits of non-violence, that is, it would be a non-violent law.

The discussion proceeded a little further. Vinoba following its trend, said that the Communist friends did not seem to be in opposition to the movement. Could not their help then be available to his work?, he asked.

Showing their willingness the friends stipulated, "The Bhoodan workers, too should help us in our cause in that case."

Vinoba replied, "That would amount to my bargaining with you. But the work for Bhoodan does not allow of any difference of opinion. There may be such difference regarding other movements. For instance, the Congress does co-operate in the Bhoodan movement, but we do not help it in elections, in enrolling members, or in its other activities of the same sort."

In the end the friends agreed that there was not much particular difference between their cause and the cause of Bhoodan. And they gave an assurance that they would work for it according to their convenience.

Before women-folk Vinoba places the ideal of the brilliant and powerful Gargeyi, Maitreyi, Sulabha and such other women of old who had attained knowledge. He insists that our sisters should cultivate a permanent hunger for knowledge because without the knowledge of the soul they could not have any hope of their regeneration. These days he teaches to the women-folk verses from the Upanishads during mid-day. This is a piece of work he loves much to do. When he sings the verses in his sweet high-pitched voice one has the welcome illusion of hearing a *rishi* of the Upanishad days.

94-55

2

Referring to the call to devote the coming two years to Bhoodan alone given to workers of every sort by the Sarvodaya Sammelan Vinoba says that it becomes difficult for those who are entangled in good activities to leave them. Iron shackles can be broken easily but one finds it very difficult to break away from those of gold. The reason is we forget they are shackles and grow into believing they are ornaments.

Vinoba has called the work for the Bhoodan Yajna the way of *bhakti* and often repeats that it is a movement for the purification of the heart. In his speech at Begunlapara he declared: "Bringing about a change in society through purification of the heart is the fruit of the endeavour. To purify our own hearts is like creating new seed, to bring about a change in our own lives is like sowing the seed and bringing about a change in society is like reaping the fruit. There are some people however, who create good seed and keep it concealed in their homes for their own use. And there are others who seek to reap the fruit without sowing the seed!"

The people of the West are like raw inexperienced boys while the people of India are seasoned by an experience ten thousand years old. That is why, according to Vinoba, the civilization of India is more developed.

On the way while talking on the subject of education he said to a friend from Madras, "The scheme of *brahmacharyashram*, *grihasthashram* and *sannyasashram* have evolved of old is the best scheme imaginable for the education of man. The scheme envisages pursuit of knowledge throughout the whole life of man. The idea of dedication which the scheme contains is our special contribution to the theory of education. The Western scheme of education is unaware of the idea of dedication. But we have to

learn science from the West. But in sociology and psychology they are yet infants. These two sciences have developed fully in India." And in the long speech of the evening he pointed out that the process of *dan* is a fundamental principle of Indian sociology.

From the thirteenth to the eighteenth of April all workers in India are marching on foot carrying the message of Bhoodan to the people. Here the friends both male and female who compose the group accompanying Vinoba, when they arrive at the place of the day's camp divide themselves into small groups and go out to the neighbouring villages. Some groups carry literature with them and propagate the Bhoodan idea while others carrying Vinoba's message ask for land-gifts. Every worker is thus carrying from village to village the spark that would ignite the revolution.

In his prayer speech of the thirteenth Vinoba analysed at length the three forces which were operating in Bhoodan work. He pointed out that the first was truth. It was clearly true that there would be no ownership in land and it was for and belonged to all. That was why the landless who wanted to live by working on land should get it. This was how the force of truth was a divine force. The second was the force of the austerities which the poor practised. The third was the force of love and generosity which resided in the hearts of the landowners and the rich. The last was the contribution of Indian culture to human growth. Thus in the country where these forces were going to manifest themselves the problem of land was going to solve itself very speedily indeed, Vinoba concluded.

At Khurda Congress workers assured Vinoba that they would get one-sixth of the land in their *thana* in Bhoodan. Referring to the assurance Vinoba told his audience in the speech of the day that the Congress was a big organized association of men and women. If therefore the organization took the responsibility of the work on itself much could be achieved. The Bihar Congress Committee by a resolution took a vow to collect 32 lakhs of acres of land from its Pradesh. They thereby set an example before the country. When one undertook some work co-operation from all others was bound to follow but the initial resolve to do so demanded courage.

At Khurda Communist friends also met Vinobaji. They pointed out how those very persons who gave land to him in Bhoodan drove away the tenants from land belonging to them. Did not Vinoba feel this was wrong, they asked. Vinoba replied that he did believe it was wrong for the donors to do so. He further informed the Communist friends that he had evolved a plan to meet the evil in Bihar. A Committee was formed. Vinobaji explained that they persuaded those who drove away the tenants from their land to see that their action was wrong. If they deprived some people of work on land for a living by making them landless it was their duty to give adequate land to Vinoba in Bhoodan. He would pass it on to the evicted tenants. The owners of land liked the solution. Some land-owners in Bihar did give land-gifts in this manner.

In the speech at Sarma Vinoba pointed out that the Bhoodan Yajna was creating good feelings in distant places. The reason according to him was that he had trusted in trusting. Therefore, he went on to say, he had no doubt that as the movement went on spreading and advancing it would influence the lives of all and thus help mankind to raise its life to a better level. So the churning rod of the Bhoodan movement he had taken hold of, Vinoba said with confidence, was surely going to churn up the life of man so that it would in the end yield the essence which would prove the highest kind of nectar.

164-55

3

People believe that works like the Gita and the Bhagavata are only for those who are interested not in this but the other world. But Vinoba says that if his faith in these great good books has not been firm he could not have had that perennial inspiration for the Bhoodan Yajna cause which he had.

Readers, I am sure, remember my having reported that in Vinoba's journey through Orissa we are having a collective study of the Udiya Bhagawata on the way. One day Vinoba began telling us while we were marching:

"When we were in jail Government officials decided what books we were to have or not to have. To some of us when they asked for some book on politics or the other the officers used to say it was dangerous and could not be given. But whatever book I asked for, Government always allowed to me. Government believed that the books I asked for were so innocent that they would not harm. The British Government believed it was thus immune from any danger. This was how I always obtained for myself books like the Gita, the Bhagawata, and the lives of saints. But the foolish Britishers failed to see that if their rule had any danger the greatest was from these very books. They had invariably sustained the courage of those political prisoners who had entered the jails and they came out of them with greater strength and faith on account of them. Besides, if there was no sustenance to be had from the Gita we could not have had a Gandhi made for us, nor could a Tilak have sustained himself, nor could an Arvind Ghosh achieve anything. Thus the books which form the very seed or foundation of life prove the most dangerous for irreligious societies and tyrannical rulers. This was also why such societies persecuted the saints so much. Today, of course people sing their glory but when they lived society strongly opposed them and their activities. The reason was that what they propounded and taught through their lives would in the end upset society. . . . This is also why I so much wish these great good works had a vogue among our youths. Inspired by the teachings of these books young men and women would not rest till they had set fire to present day society and the flames they would ignite would be so cool that no water could be found to quiet them.

On the last eighteenth April Vinobaji had encamped in the Nai Talim centre at Rajsunakhala. On that day some thousand meetings must have been held all over India to celebrate the last day of the Land Revolution Week.

In the afternoon meeting Vinobaji in his short speech told the audience that it was for God to give the fruit of man's endeavour. But He was watching whether the *bhaktas* was performing his duty honestly. So, he concluded, we must be honest and have faith in Him.

The Sevagram Ashram was wound up on that auspicious day. Welcoming the historical decision by the inmates Vinobaji declared that that was not a small event. Gandhiji had lived there and it was a place of pilgrimage for the nation. When the inmates of that place go out to devote themselves to Bhoodan work it becomes a challenge to the nation. Today our non-violence was on test. So, he exhorted all those who were in the political parties, in the constructive activities, in the Government machinery to leave their work for two years to jump into the Bhoodan revolution.

Referring to the problem of evictions of tenants by the landowners he asked the Bhoodan workers to take it in hand.

Concluding the speech he said that the soul had the power of true will. It was that power which made the world go. The power that we felt in our minds was in reality the power of the soul within. Wherever it manifested itself the resolve was fulfilled. For all great undertakings men took vows collectively. That was known as the collective will today. Wherever the powers of the collective will was manifested a good cause succeeded.

At the village Rajsunakhala a member of the centre and the Secretary of the Rampur Thana met Vinoba. Placing his revolutionary ideas before them he said, "The basic education schools which are working today absolutely resemble the Narasimha incarnation of Vishnu. They are neither animals nor men. As Government have now given

recognition to Nai Talim it will spread in the country. But we have to bear in mind that we will have to conduct some model Nai Talim schools and constantly to remember that Nai Talim is fundamentally opposed to the present social order. Nai Talim can take root and grow and flourish in a new socio-economic order. The system of education which is not in opposition to the present order can in no sense be Nai Talim.

Shri Padmavati Chaudhari, mother of Shri Gopabandhu Chaudhari, died recently. On the twentieth of April, on the occasion of her Shradhha day, prayer was held precisely at eleven o'clock and a chapter from the Bhagavata was sung.

In that chapter of the Bhagavata Uddhava has asked Lord Shrikrishna a question about life and death. The Lord in reply states that life and death both are caused by the mind. But they do not affect us. A circle contains innumerable points and the centre is not related to any one of them. In fact the circle is determined by the centre. Even so the mind and the senses surround the soul but it is only a witness and sustains them. But we identify ourselves with the mind and the senses and feel happy or unhappy. Therefore he who is able to see the soul and the body separate becomes a lamp-post which remains aloof from worldly affairs while shedding its light on them. Thereafter the Lord has sung the glory of the *sthitaprajna*—the man of secure understanding. Uddhava then wishes to know whether any such man had till then existed. In reply they sang the song of the beggar. Explaining the song Vinoba said that the cause we had undertaken was begging. We begged by appealing to everyone, "Brother, recognize your brother and take him in your family; give up your ego and give up your sense of mine and thine." We do not know when we shall be able to attain the beggar's peace described by the Bhagavata but in order to attain it we have to learn to realize that we are not the mind and the senses but are quite distinct from them.

23.4.55

K. D.

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