

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: MAGANBHAI P. DESAI

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TWO ANNAS

THE UNKINDEST CUT OF ALL

(By Bharatan Kumarappa)

On Gandhi Jayanti day, October 2nd, of this year, Major General Sokhey contributed an article to *The Times of India*, which was given prominence under the title "Prohibition as Mahatma Gandhi Regarded It".

In this article the writer suggests four measures to deal with the drink evil. Briefly they are as follows: (1) Provide clubs and places of recreation for working people; (2) Close down street corner pubs; (3) Carry on propaganda against the abuse of alcohol; and (4) Make alcohol available at a normal price to those who need it, through a few Government Stores, the Government holding a monopoly for the manufacture, import and sale of alcohol. He suggests that Gandhiji would have supported this method of dealing with the drink evil. One of his reasons for this view is that Gandhiji had, in the *Harijan* of November 13, 1937, while commenting on an article of the writer published in that issue, remarked: "The suggestion about State monopoly of manufacture and sale of intoxicants and about unfermented toddy is perfectly sound." And so far as the other three measures mentioned above go, the implication is that they are similar to Gandhiji's own suggestions from time to time.

In regard to the first two measures, one may agree that they are unobjectionable and similar to what Gandhiji himself had proposed. But one feels that there is a weighty difference between the writer's and Gandhiji's position in regard to (3) and (4) above.

The Major General wants propaganda against the *abuse* of alcohol; Gandhiji wanted propaganda even against the very *use* of alcohol. To the former, alcohol is all right so long as it is taken in moderation. But Gandhiji saw that some who took to drink, thinking at first that they would keep within moderate limits, were unable later to be moderate drinkers and became addicts. They wanted to be helped against themselves and could not be thus helped so long as liquor was available to them. So Gandhiji was against alcohol itself, and not merely against its abuse.

Similarly in regard to (4) above, there is a profound difference between the writer's position and that of Gandhiji. Gandhiji would have the Government take over the monopoly of the manufacture and sale of liquor, so that in the case of those who require it for medical reasons (which is the only exception Gandhiji made for Indians wanting liquor for purposes of drinking) liquor may be made available. Major General Sokhey, on the other hand, states: "At these Government Stores it should be possible for everyone to buy alcohol in a closed package..." Evidently he would make it available for all. He is vague as to whom the Government will sell liquor; whether, for instance, it would discriminate between buyers—children, young people, moderate drinkers or addicts—or will sell freely to anyone who wants it. This, of course, will not be Prohibition by any stretch of imagination, but its opposite where the flood-gates to drink will be opened good and wide. Nor does he say whether the Government will sell only a limited quantity to each drinker, and whether it will ensure that what a buyer buys will be used by himself and not sold at a higher price to someone else.

Questions such as these are left unanswered. Consequently the unwary reader is apt to be misled by superficial similarities into thinking that what the writer advocates is in line with Gandhiji's views. Worse still, the title of the article bare-facedly misguides the reader into thinking that the views propounded are actually the views of Gandhiji himself.

It is more especially unfortunate that this should happen, on Gandhi Jayanti day when we should do all we can to revere Gandhiji's memory, spread his teachings among the people, and strive to put them into practice. Instead, to divert the mind of the public from what he taught in order to propagate our own views which are at variance with his and to pass them as his, and on a topic of such grave national importance as Prohibition which was so near to his heart and which he was so impatient to achieve at all costs, is, it seems to us, "the most unkindest cut of all" on his birth anniversary.

COMMUNALISM AND CASTEISM

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

[In continuation of the article "Community and Caste" in the *Harijan* of 8-10-55]

Community and caste are ancient institutions of our social organization. The sentiments of communalism and casteism arising out of them are also known to the Indian social order in one form or another from almost equally olden times.

Let us first examine the difference between the two institutions. Community is a part of society indicating separateness from the whole; it tends to emphasize the feeling of separateness. Caste is not a part showing separateness but is a constituent unit of the whole; though indicating separateness it is a classification of society rooted in unity, synthesis and co-operation. The evil of becoming an independent mode of sentiment and behaviour enters both the institutions when the separateness between the communities is exaggerated and emphasized out of all proportion and when co-operation between castes is vitiated by feelings of superiority and inferiority. Both the unhappy influences can be seen working during the course of the history of our country.

1

During the ancient age of Indian history communalism is not in evidence. Various communities practised their own religions and constituted one social unit by keeping in view a certain ideal of synthesis. The prominent races or clans in society used to absorb other races or clans in themselves so that they together formed one larger community. All the races and clans evidenced largeness of outlook. Accordingly a progressively broadening view of religion and standards of beliefs and practices was cultivated by the people at large. This process of assimilation and absorption had reached a fairly mature stage in the country before the emergence of Islam.

The process of the formation of one community or one nation thus seems to have led to the institution of caste. One is led to the conclusion because the clans or races which accepted a larger duty of synthesis and formed one society must have had their separate entities in the beginning; they must have had their different occupations. They went on preserving their peculiarities of this kind in spite of their amalgamating in one great race or community; they kept to themselves their peculiar practices — but the latter were adjusted to the larger uniform pattern of the whole. In other words, they gave up their communalness to convert it into caste-ness. When the different clans or races shed their separate entities they gave up their sense of separateness and became constituent units of one single community or society. Still, however, the feeling of separateness which may have residually persisted expressed itself as feelings of superiority and inferiority and the strict restric-

tions of separate intercourse regarding partaking of food and marriage. It seems logical to believe that the evil of casteism entered the institution of caste in this manner. How terrible the evil was was clearly proved by the aggression of a powerful community on India.

2

The Mussalmans came to India as a new community. They were able to strike a blow on a society which had weakened in cohesion on account of casteism and pride of clan or family which is an offshoot of the evil. The new immigrant races held a distinctly different view of religion and life. The old traditional process of evolving a synthesis of the different races or clans had by the time ceased to be a living force and had become a dead weight. The new immigrant races, therefore, did not convert themselves into this or that caste and were not assimilated into the Hindu social order. Thus their separateness was not remedied. The new Muslim races who entered India did not only remain a separate community but gave birth to the evil of communalism also. Islam did not confine itself to the field of religion alone but advanced so powerfully as to inspire a communal spirit based on religion. The reason was, it had been accepted as their faith by the rulers of the land.

Besides, Islamic society did not have any distinctions of caste. Like Christianity Islam also believed in converting followers of other faiths to its own. Castes in Hindu society which were reckoned inferior to others and also some others which were actually held in spite on account of the spirit of casteism began to be converted to other faiths as a consequence of the social injustice. There may have been economic causes operating in favour of the process also. Besides, Islam had the power and brilliance of a new faith. In short, the Mussalman community took shape in India along with the Hindu community and the spirit of communalism emerged on the Indian scene.

The Hindus resisted this aggression during the centuries of the Rajput age of Indian History; a society which had lost cohesion on account of pride of caste and family ultimately did not prove strong enough to stand it; and so the new community settled down on the soil making it its home. This gave rise to an age of synthesis with a view to creating unity and harmony between the two communities. Kings like Akbar and saints like Kabir, Nanak and Dadu were the great figures of the brilliant age. During the same period also Ramanand and many of his disciples organized a big struggle against the evil of casteism. That is to say, for about three or four centuries India gave a good fight to the evils of casteism and communalism at this period. Till the advent of the seventeenth century the history of India had reached this stage when a current of new influence, which had an entirely

different effect on the process of exorcizing the evils of communalism and casteism which was going on till then, made its appearance on the scene.

3

Emperor Aurangzeb gave a rude shock to the process of synthesis which had set in during the Mogal period. As a result the Hindu community reacted to it equally forcefully through the Marathas and the Shikhs. But the logic of their reaction was not the same as that of the age of the saints. It was inspired more by pride of separateness of community than by a spirit of a religion of humanity working for a synthesis. The pride of a separate communal entity lodged a strong virus in the body politic of India. If the Maratha power had come out triumphant out of the struggle the history of India would have taken a different course altogether. That was, however, not to be. The Maratha power was not only communal in spirit but it gave birth to a new evil — the evil of provincialism or regionalism. The Maratha power did not prove capable of acting as one national authority in a continent like India. The Shikh power had not advanced beyond its provincial boundaries. When the Mogal power disintegrated neither a single sovereign Maratha State emerged nor was a spirit of being one nation left in the people inhabiting the sub-continent that was India. On the other hand the British had begun infiltrating into India. And a new age began again.

This new age coming after the age of Islam in India brings her in contact with the modern European nations. The characteristics of the new age were totally different. European Christian trading communities had begun to enter India for the first time. They came by the sea route. The Hindu community, possibly as a measure of self-defence, had prohibited sea voyages. Besides, with a view to preserve its separate identity as a community, it had set up many barriers in the form of various curious prohibitions. In contrast the British came as a sea-faring people and brought with them various new skills like a disciplined army, cannon, technique of organization etc. The state of society and politics in India at the time was such that success came easy to the British so that they cleverly took possession of the machinery of the States in the country and during the nineteenth century were able to absorb India in the empire of their queen. Foreign rule was thus firmly established in India for the first time in her history.

The British were a Christian community, but it is remarkable that they acted here more as a foreign ruling community. The Indian society witnessed for the first time an absolutely new type of communalism, a separateness based on a superiority of the whites in the dealings with the Indians and began to be influenced by it. This communalism was based more on the colour of

the skin than on religion and was national. The British community was a national community. It brought to India the idea of country-wide nationhood over and above the one of a community based on religion. As a consequence the idea of community came to be confined not only to religion and culture but was carried to the field of politics also. This was something new during the British age of India's history. Its consideration had better be left to a separate article.

27-4-'55

(From Gujarati)

Oh, the Inhumanity of It!

A few days back, we read that in a U.P. village, two people were done to death by a mob. One of the unfortunate victims was an M.L.A. who had bravely stood to save the other who was the real target of the mob. The cause might be, presumably, some political madness or unrelenting revengefulness.

A correspondent from Tanjore district writes about another madness or blind-headedness which is equally inhuman. This is what he says :

"At about 11 a.m. (13th Oct.) I was supervising transplantation in my fields. Some Harijans were ploughing in the adjoining fields. Suddenly I heard one Harijan crying when I turned back and saw one Harijan being thrashed with a bamboo stick. The Harijan fell in the ploughed field and still he was beaten by his master. After about quarter of an hour he got up and ran for his life saying, "Let me go and earn my bread elsewhere." But he was not allowed to go. His master chased him with a stick, all the way to a distance of about a furlong hitting him with clay and brick bats. (The Harijan) jumped into the river, Pamani, and escaped. The other Harijans who were working in the field begged not to beat. But.... (the man) threatened to crush (the Harijan's) family and children living in the... village. (He) also lives in the same village. What happened to.... (the Harijan) later on and to his wife and children God only knows. Only the previous day this.... (man) was forced by his master to plough without food (*kanji*) from morn till eve at 5 p.m. when I left my fields. I have read about lynching and I have now personally seen what lynching is."

Oh, the inhumanity of this! I hope the Government might have come to know of this and will take due note of it.

20-10-'55

M. P.

By Mahatma Gandhi

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THE S. R. C. REPORT (By Maganbhai P. Desai)

I

Friends are asking me whether I propose to write on the S.R.C. Report. And they particularly ask how I feel about it. The question is natural. We all know how the issue of States Reorganization for Free India is of very great and far-reaching importance. This is apparent even from the simple fact of our people's tense feelings that have been exhibiting themselves during the last few years. And this paper has by now already given its opinion on the main principle of this vital question. And it is as follows :

Our people should immediately have provision for the use of their languages scheduled as India's languages in the Constitution, in all the spheres of their national life and affairs like education, administration, justice etc.; and if, to that end, it is felt necessary that the States should be linguistically reorganized, then it should be done so. What we cannot afford to forget when doing this is that we all belong to India; as such we have one common nationality or citizenship, which does not change any way in spite of the diversity of languages, customs and such other ways of living. As Gandhiji said in his post-prayer speech on 25-1-1948 (*Delhi Diary*, p. 379) :

"The world outside did not know them as Gujaratis, Maharashtris, Tamilians etc. but only as Indians. We must, therefore, resolutely discourage all fissiparous tendencies and feel and behave as Indians. Subject to this paramount consideration, a linguistic redistribution of provinces should give an impetus to education and trade."

Our people have, in their pre-independence days of fight for freedom, experienced how it would fare if we worked on this principle. We must all remember that during the eventful years 1915 to 1920, the one great change that came about in our national affairs was that the politics of the Liberal School of thought which worked chiefly through the English language came to an end and the new age of extremist politics of Swaraj which worked through the languages of the common man or of the masses of our people began to function. The most noteworthy attribute of this new age in our political life was that its leaders organized the Congress provinces of India, mainly according to the above linguistic principle and they worked among the people through their regional languages; and the A.-I. Congress Committee resolved that for interprovincial and all-India purposes, Hindi-

Hindustani should be used as India's *Antar Bhasha*.

I am reluctant to remark that there are to be found some Congressmen also who even now, more like the remnant followers of the old Liberals, harp on saying that India had unity through English; they do not seem to have noted the above fact of our recent history. That we could evoke and establish successfully the sense of nationalism and our one nationhood among the people by working through diverse national languages is a point equally noteworthy. Language is a means to an end; we should not mistake it as an end. For example, there are people who say that if regional languages of the people are made the medium of all instruction, or that if States are reorganized linguistically, there will not be the unity of India! Such loose thinking is being put forth, only because we have not truly arrived at or assessed the essence of the work put forth by our previous generation. If we wish to have a stable basis for real democracy, then we will have to give to our great Indian languages their proper place in the new set-up, and due consideration when reorganizing the States.

II

This experience which we had in pre-independence years and the principle of States Reorganization that was implicit in it cannot be disregarded now in post-independence reconstruction.

On the other hand, it is also practically necessary to reorganize them, if we see that after the Indian States merged in the Indian Union, a temporary device of arranging them as A, B, C States was resorted to. It was presumed then that when the first opportunity came to reorganize them, it will be immediately taken up. The country is now planning five-yearly development programmes on a grand scale. This made such a need even more imperative. The result was the appointment of the S.R.C., which has now reported to the nation. The Commissioners deserve the thanks of the people for this their great job. Their report will be considered an important document of India's history, as also it will obviously affect the course of our future.

The most praiseworthy thing in the Report is that it has clearly put down the fundamental principles that should guide States Reorganization. They recommend to form 16 States with equal status in the Union. Delhi, Manipur and Andaman-Nikobar have been recommended to be territories under the Centre. This carries the merging idea of the Indian States a step further and completely integrates them in a new Plan.

III

Secondly, the Commission accepts the general principle of linguistic States, and clears the confusion that still persists about its meaning. For example, it does not mean that all people with a common language in contiguous areas

should form one State. Further, the States are not nations with their own separate territories, but they are sub-States of the one great common State, the Indian Union; they are only the limbs of this one sovereign State. Therefore, the Commission has clearly refused to accept that any language area is a separate State of its own with its own history or citizenship or nationality or sovereignty, as that would not be the real or proper meaning of the principle of linguistic redistribution.

Admittedly, it is highly convenient to have the administration of the people and their affairs and education etc. conducted in their own language; and further, that so doing our people can build real democracy. However, if in doing that there may be economic or such other practical difficulties in the way, from the point of view of India's unity and national interest, it is met that such other factors should be considered also. Therefore, when we are out to arrange our new map, all these aspects of the case must be cumulatively considered and wise and proper decision should be arrived at.

After independence these considerations other than the only one of languages have been increasingly emphasized, and the Commission has accepted its validity by agreeing to such a need today.

That is because of the over-emphasis that came to be given to the language principle in some quarters and the exclusive and wrong meanings that began to be given to it, — to such an extent as to jeopardize India's unity and the true position that the States are a joint family with common wealth. The Commission gave a stern warning against such an approach to the question and thus has cleared the atmosphere in a desirable manner.

IV

Another fundamental principle that came to be noticed after we became independent is a political one. All the States or say the sub-States of the Indian Union should enjoy equal political importance; i.e., there should not be a State so large as to constitute an inordinately large single political group representing it in the Parliament. If this principle is not observed, there might be avoidable jealousies and rivalry. The Commission would have better paid more attention to this. One of its members, Shri Pannikar wrote a separate note to emphasize this aspect, for which he should be congratulated. In the new map of the Union there should not be States too large or too small. If the area speaking one language, say like Hindi, is very big, then it should be properly divided into more States, taking into consideration all the relevant points in that behalf. And, on the other hand, if there are contiguous areas speaking the same language, but are divided into separate small political units, they may as well be integrated into one; as for example, the Gujarati-speaking areas.

V

The Commission has accepted a third principle, viz., economic. There are two or three things here — 1. Viability, 2. Enough resources for development. Really speaking it is these considerations mainly that have provoked among linguistic groups separatist outlook and given rise to bitterness and rivalry for territorial gains. And this constitutes the real danger, and not the principle of linguistic redistribution of States. The principle is being wrongly abused, on account of its being misused to cover economic or territorial acquisitiveness, and is confused with claims on the disruptive grounds of separate geography, history, culture etc.

The two economic points of viability and existence of ample resources for reasonable development cannot surely be overlooked. But this cannot be considered as if for a separate nation. It must be viewed as a joint family property being equitably distributed, as the States are only the limbs of one body politic, India. Ultimately we cannot afford to forget, there is the Centre whose duty it will be to see that all its limbs are financially well provided and cared for through judicious subventions, grants etc.

The Commission examined the question of States Reorganization from such three-fold point of view and have submitted detailed proposals for it. The Parliament will now base its legislation and decide the matter on these recommendations. It cannot be that these cannot be improved or amended; nor can it be maintained that there is nothing in it that does not require to be improved. Because the question itself is of such a nature that one must seek the line of happy compromise; there can hardly be found a solution that may please all the parties concerned. Therefore whatever amendment we may seek to do in the proposals of the S.R.C. may better be with maximum consensus available on it.

VI

The example of Bombay City has been typically significant from these points of view. It appears that the Commission was too much carried away on financial grounds to maintain a balanced view. And it seriously erred in it when it pleaded for a bi-lingual State for Bombay on the ground of national unity. It would have been good if the Commission had *ab initio* recommended for Bombay a solution which is emerging out of the discussions to arrive at a happy compromise, that go on at Delhi these days.

The Delhi talks do not reveal a novel solution. Let alone here the fact that the Congress has constituted Bombay City as its separate province; but we know that two important bodies, viz., the Dhar Commission and the J.V.P. Committee, considered the matter during the last decade and gave their verdict that Bombay City should form no part of a linguistic area and that it should be a separate unit by itself. The Commission should have accepted this and working on that basis

should have itself said that there might be Sanjukt Maharashtra with Vidarbha if it agrees, but Bombay City cannot be in it, because of Bombay City's special position looking to its history, language, administration, development, industries, finance etc. On these considerations it would be wrong to include it in any single language group. Just as Andhra was told that it could form its own State, but without Madras City, so also it could have been declared to Gujarat and Maharashtra that the cosmopolitan and unique nature of Bombay is such that it will not form part of either language group, and any reorganization of Bombay State will therefore base itself on this basic understanding of the case. This the S.R.C. did not do, and it now remains for the Congress and the Central Government to declare such an amendment of the S.R.C. recommendation, and we hope they will do so and further carry on the great work of States reorganization.

In the onward march of Swaraj, the work of States Reorganization is a very consequential and important stage. It must be negotiated by us calmly and with liberality of approach and understanding and keeping in view that we all belong to one common nationality. The eyes of the world are on us today. They watch us whether we solve this question peacefully, tactfully and with the full sense of responsibility as a great nation that wishes to pursue truly democratic lines.

21-10-'55

(From Gujarati)

THE 'LANGUAGE LANDSCAPE' OF INDIA

[From the address delivered by Shri B. G. Kher, Chairman, Official Language Commission on the 17th October, 1955 at the inauguration of the Autumn School of Linguistics at the Deccan College Post-graduate and Research Institute, Poona.]

It seems to me that in the numerous languages and dialects, great and small, which constitute, so to say, the 'language landscape' of India, there ought to be immense material available for study of linguistics. Apart from the number of distinct languages and dialects, we have an extremely wide range in respect of the stages of development attained by the various languages. At one end we have the primitive forms of speech, with only an oral tradition and without any written literature, of some of our countrymen inhabiting the hills and tribal areas. At the other end we have the fourteen great languages enlisted in the Constitution, several of them spoken by as large or even a larger number of people, than the speakers of some of the advanced languages of the West.

The most widely spoken of these, the Hindi language, ranks in the world's languages next only to the Chinese and English in the number of persons who speak it. These fourteen languages have an enormous wealth of literature and a literary tradition going back several centuries and, in the case of some of them, more than two thousand years.

During the last hundred years or so of British rule, all these great languages, to a more or less extent, came under an eclipse, and their growth and development, which would otherwise have taken place in the natural way in response to the requirements and stimuli of modern industrial and scientific progress, were aborted. Increasingly, over the last hundred years, the English language, on account of the educational policy adopted by our rulers and the official prestige which English enjoyed, came to supersede the indigenous languages in practically the entire public life of the country.

Normally, languages develop in response to the requirements of communication and intercourse felt by societies which speak those languages. English, however, came to occupy the unnatural position in our country of being the sole means of inter-communication at the all-India level or the *lingua franca* of all persons in public and private life holding positions of authority or prominence. With a rich and well-developed language like English at hand, which was the sole means of communication at all-India levels of intercourse, the official language of governance, the medium of instruction for all advanced education and also the language of all the learned professions, no wonder the indigenous languages languished and failed to develop a sufficiently rich and precise vocabulary for the requirements of social life, in spite of its being a period when the progress of scientific knowledge wrought a great revolution in the physical conditions of living in the country. The result is that there are many inadequacies to make good when the time has now come for the Indian languages for taking over from the English language and gradually displacing it.

Intrinsically, I believe, each of these languages is fully capable of expressing the most complex or abstruse thought, notion, or shade of meaning. Language is essentially a perfect means of expression and communication for its own environment and there is no warrant for supposing that any well-developed language, let alone the rich regional languages of India, is incapable, under appropriate conditions, of expressing any thought or sentiment which the members of a linguistic group find it necessary to communicate. Mahatma Gandhi, with his astonishing insight into the fundamentals of controversial issues, said as long ago as 1928 that "there never was a greater superstition than that a particular language can be incapable of expansion or expressing abstruse or scientific ideas."

Now, with the attainment of Independence, the problem that presents itself to us is one of developing our Indian languages so as to make them adequate vehicles of thought and expression on the eventual displacement of the English language without harm to the cause of science or advancement of learning or prejudice to the unity and integrity of our national life.

While it is customary to enlist as many as 170 odd languages and a further over 500 dialects as current in the sub-continent of India, it is only 13 or 14 of them which, for purposes of literature or education or public life, need to be considered as our major or literary languages. Considering the size of the country as well as the population, and further, having regard to the close affinities between these different languages generally, and more especially in the two or three groups into which they fall, what is striking is not the multiplicity so much as the extent to which we find common elements and strong affinities in them.

These affinities are, of course, only a reflection of that fundamental bedrock of common cultural traditions, ideals and values, — in short the Indian way of life — which underlies the apparent diversities and differences amongst cultural groups in the Indian community. For one thing, both the great families of languages, the Indo-Aryan as well as the Dravidian, have borrowed extensively from Sanskrit.

Apart from this, over the entire Indian sub-continent there has been unceasing intercourse in the fields of social and religious movements, repeated changes in the frontiers of political authority, etc., so that through the crucible of history over many centuries an Indian way of life has crystallized and emerged.

A language is the standing record as well as contemporary expression of the culture and experience of the particular group speaking that language. It is the loom on which these cultural patterns are woven, and it is obvious to me that all of us who are justly proud of our common cultural inheritance must cherish and develop all important languages, more especially all those recognized by the Constitution as such.

The central concept of the Indian tradition and way of life is one of harmonizing and uniting diverse cultural expressions. I submit, therefore, that we ought to approach each of our languages in a spirit of humility and reverence, even if it be the rude unwritten speech of a tribal group, because each such language is a unique expression of the culture of the particular social group who speak it. We must sustain and cherish each of the elements entering into the multiform cultural life of India.

Furthermore, as each of our regional languages has identical problems to face, the growth and development of each is sure, in some measure, to be assisted by the growth and development of all. Properly conceived, therefore, there is no antagonism between the official language of the Union as recognized by the Constitution and the other languages, or between the different regional languages *inter se*. We must assist each of them to become a still better vehicle for the expression of its language group and a harmonious and worthy component in the integrated cultural life of India.

(To be continued)

GANDHIJI AND TRUSTEESHIP

(By Suresh Ramabhai)

What a paradox that disparities and inequalities deepen in the society with the growth of science! Though every new discovery in science caters to some human comfort, it results in aggravating the gulf between the rich and the poor. Labour-saving devices do save labour but they also kill it in a shocking degree. Sociologists and philosophers have tried to probe into this strange phenomenon. Different schools like democracy, democratic socialism, fascism and communism have sprung up in consequence. Yet disparities and inequalities persist. They are as much there in the U.S.A., a country of free economy as in the U.S.S.R. a country of controlled totalitarian economy. The salvation of the common man is yet a distant scene.

Failure of capitalism to meet the social ills is obvious and natural. But not so of socialism or communism, whose love of the underdog is legendary. One cannot help concluding that communism is only a reaction born of capitalism, an anti-thesis against it. But there is a basic resemblance between the two, viz., their belief in essential selfishness of human nature. To both of them, man is no more than a self-centred economic animal. They ignore the vital truth that man is basically spiritual, can rise superior to the passions that he owns in common with the brute and can respond to the call of the spirit in him. No scheme or plan of socio-economic amelioration can succeed if it denies the spiritual element in man.

With this plain fact in view, Gandhiji put forth his theory of trusteeship as a solution of human exploitation and class-conflict. He taught us that the rich should deem themselves only trustees of their property and should use it mainly in the public interest. If all men, said he, realized the obligation of service (as an eternal moral law) they would regard it as a sin to amass wealth; and then, there would be no inequalities of wealth and consequently no famine or starvation. He pleaded for abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour — i.e., for levelling down of the few rich, who command the bulk of national wealth and levelling up of the famished masses. He always held that mill-owners are not exclusive owners of mills and that workmen are equal sharers in ownership. Likewise, ownership of land belongs as much to the ryots as to the Zamindars. He wanted the haves to reduce themselves to poverty in order that the have-nots may have the necessities of life. In keeping with the Biblical injunction: 'In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread,' he believed that the needs of the body must be supplied by the body and he, therefore, stood for bread labour, i.e., everybody labouring enough for his food.

Whether the rich would voluntarily abdicate ownership of wealth or property and take

to service-cum-bread labour is questioned by many. Surely, in the dictionary of western economic thought, which is money-centred and treats man as a marketable commodity, the very idea of renunciation finds no place. So they, in half ridicule, pose the question: "Can there ever be a trustee?" Or, "Who follows trusteeship?" Gandhiji replied it in unequivocal words:

"My theory of 'trusteeship' is no make-shift, certainly no camouflage. I am confident that it will survive all other theories. That possessors of wealth have not acted up to the theory does not prove its falsity; it proves the weakness of the wealthy. No other theory is compatible with non-violence."

Still the answer might not satisfy many. Some others may mistake it as a mask to perpetuate class differences and inequalities. Nothing could be farther from truth. Gandhiji gave the warning as early as 1929:

"There is no other choice than between voluntary surrender on the part of the capitalist of superfluities and consequent acquisition of the real happiness of all on the one hand, and on the other the impending chaos into which, if the capitalist does not wake up betimes, awakened but ignorant, famishing millions will plunge the country and which not even the armed force that a powerful Government can bring into play can avert."

And this method for bringing about the desired consummation of economic equality was conversion. To quote him:

"He (the non-violent worker) may not however wait endlessly. When therefore the limit is reached, he takes risks and conceives plan of active Satyagraha which may mean civil disobedience and the like."

Besides, Gandhiji stressed on the education of workers. It cannot be gainsaid that there would be no exploitation if people refuse to obey the exploiters. "Exploitation of the poor," said Gandhiji "could be extinguished not by effecting the destruction of a few millionaires but by removing the ignorance of the poor and teaching them to non-co-operate with their exploiters." Thus the conflict is not between haves and have-nots but between intelligence and unintelligence. Could labour organize itself and act as one man, it would command greater weight than money. In the words of Gandhiji:

"The problem therefore is not to set class against class but to educate labour to a sense of its dignity. Moneyed men after all form a microscopic minority in the world. They will act on the square, immediately labour realizes its power and yet acts on the square. The moment the labour recognizes its own dignity, money will find its rightful place, i.e., it will be held as trust for labour."

It follows from the above that Gandhiji's idea of trusteeship rests on three pillars:

- (i) Voluntary abdication of ownership of wealth and property;
- (ii) Universal acceptance of bread-labour as a creed;
- (iii) Education of labour to stand on its own feet.

Curiously and happily enough, these three tenets form the basis of the Sampattidan Yajna Programme evolved by Acharya Vinoba Bhave. Through his Sampattidan Yajna, Vinoba paves the way for all to free themselves from the tyranny of possession and sublimate their appetite for belongings. Vinoba asks all who possess money or property in fact, all who earn their living themselves to renounce ownership of what they have and thereof part regularly with a portion of it preferably one-sixth for the society.

The characteristics of this Yajna are:

- (i) The donor has to donate a certain percentage of his or her income of expenditure throughout his or her life;
- (ii) Money would remain with the donor;
- (iii) He or she would spend it according to Vinoba's instructions and submit annual accounts.

Based on the idea of non-possession, or possession on behalf of and for others, Sampattidan Yajna seeks to make the rich and the poor shed off their sense of ownership and share their richness or poverty together and each to draw according to his or her need from the bank contained in every home. It bids fair to eliminate richness and poverty by merger of the rich and the poor and create a *sama-ras* or classless society.

It is how Gandhiji's theory of trusteeship has been given a practical shape. Work has started to that effect and about two thousand people are already subscribing to the Sampattidan Yajna pledge. As its message spreads from door to door, more and more people will take to this idea actively. And the day is not far off when we will be able to establish in our country the Rama Raj of Gandhiji's dreams.

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