

# BHOODAN YAJNA

[LAND-GIFTS MISSION]

*By*  
VINOBA BHAVE

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**VINOBA BHAVE**



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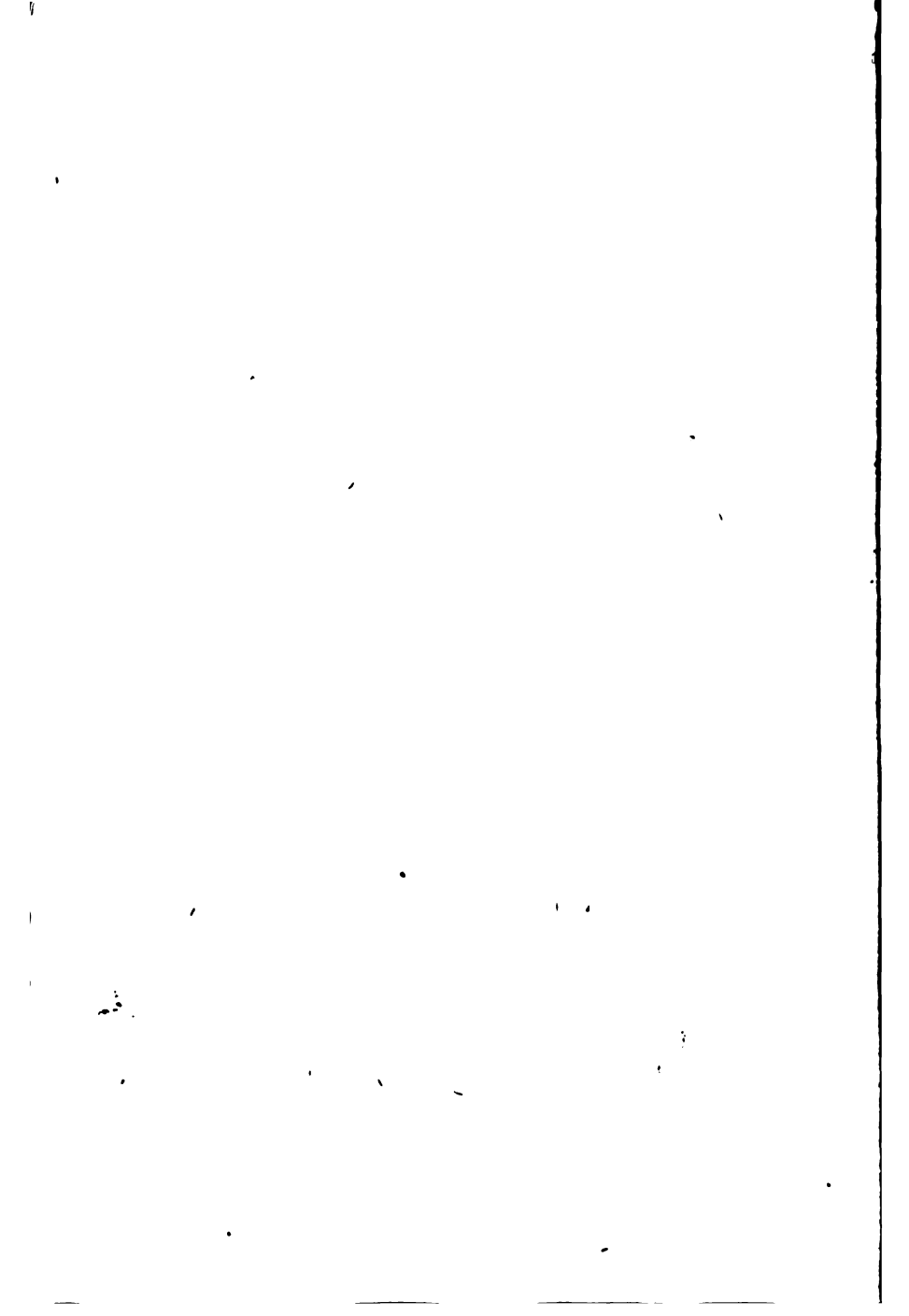
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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

It was more than two years ago that Shri Vinoba got the idea of Bhoodan — land-gift — to provide the landless with land and so put them on their way to rehabilitate themselves in our decadent economy. He was then touring Hyderabad. Since then, he has till now covered a fairly large part of North India by his walking tour, delivering his message ; and it has been very well received by our people all over India. And more : it has caught the eye of the outside world also. People outside are wondering at seeing that in India land could be had for mere asking for it, that here in India Shri Vinoba has thought of a non-violent way of resolving the land question peacefully and without State intervention or legislation. Constructive workers and political parties in India have also been deeply impressed by this silent revolution slowly taking shape and gathering pitch and volume as also meaning and significance under the unique leadership of Shri Vinoba. It has created a common platform for all those who would like to work among the people and for them, in a silent and non-partisan manner.

The story of this work is continuously being reported in our daily and weekly press. The *Harijan* weeklies have been its avowed organ. It was thought, it is high time now to put in the hands of the reading public an authoritative statement about this great movement. Hence this book. It is a selection of articles of Shri Vinoba, that appeared in the *Harijan*. It is hoped the book will present to the reader the case for the Bhoodan movement in the words of its author.

5-8-'53



## TO THE NATION

My dear fellow countrymen,

I was touring Telangana during the summer of the last year. All the while I was thinking of the grave problem confronting the people there. At one place at the request of local Harijans to get some land for them, I asked the village people to donate sufficient land for them. The people acceded to my request and I received the first Bhoomidan that day. This was on 18th of April 1951. This is how the idea of Bhoomidan Yajna came to me, and I tried it during my Telangana tour. It gave encouraging results. Within a period of two months I received about twelve thousand acres of land. I believe that it was very helpful for easing the situation there. It had its effect on the whole of India and we find that Telangana is much quieter today.

I had been trying to find some field for experiments with non-violence since Gandhiji's death. I took part in the work of rehabilitating the Meo Muslims with this very idea. It was a good experience. It encouraged me to go to Telangana. I saw there the vision of Ahimsa — Non-violence in the form of Bhoodan Yajna.

There was a background for the Bhoomidan I received in Telangana. It was doubted whether the same experiment could be carried on in other parts of India, in the absence of that background. It was necessary to test it in other parts in order to clear that doubt. In the meanwhile I received an invitation from

Pandit Nehru to place my views before the Planning Commission. It provided me with a reason for starting on this walking tour. In the course of two months which I took to reach Delhi, I received some eighteen thousand acres of land. I then realized that the masses were eager to welcome non-violence.

At the request of friends of Sarvodaya in U. P. I ventured on this experiment of Bhoomidan Yajna in the larger field of U. P. There are more than one lakh villages in U. P. In order to settle at least one Sarvodaya family in each village, we decided to collect, at the rate of five acres for a family, five lakh acres of land. Notwithstanding that many of the workers were busy in the elections for about three months, the people gave good response. We have received more than one lakh acres by now. I see in this nothing but the hand of God. He wills and welcomes this activity. Some of my companions also feel like that. The result is that the workers who met in the Sarvodaya Sammelan at Sevapuri have resolved to collect at least twenty five lakh acres of land within the next two years.

I am aware that the problem of India's landless labourers cannot be solved by merely distributing 25 lakh acres among them. It will require at least five crore acres to solve this problem. But if we can collect 25 lakhs as a first step, and thereby convey the message of non-violence to India's five lakh villages, I believe, it will create a favourable atmosphere for equitable distribution of land.

I have not only asked for land from big landholders but have also requested small landholders to contribute their quota to this *yajna* and I am very happy to say that these poor people of magnanimous



hearts have responded to my prayers with great affection. The offerings of the poor people in this *yajna* remind me of the offering of berries by Shabari to Rama and of parched rice by Sudama to Krishna. I will ever remember the gifts of these devotees of God. This *yajna* inspired the poor to work for their own salvation and the rich for self-purification and relinquishment of ownership.

I have received land-gifts from people of all classes and denominations, Hindus, Muslims and others. Even those who hardly have anything left with them as Harijans, and women, who do not have much right on immovable property, have given me land-gifts. The donors came from all political parties and all stages of life. I have asked all to regard *Daridranarayana* as a member of their families, and give him his share as a right, and not as a piece of charity, and people have given me with the same feelings.

We should not feel ill at ease with the word *dan* (gift) in the term Bhoomidan Yajna. Shankaracharya has explained the word *dan* as equitable division. I use the word with that connotation. The receiver of the land will not get his bread for nothing. . . . He will have to work upon the land, improve it, and wet it with his own sweat before he can get his bread from it. He has no reason to feel humiliated. So we are giving him his own share and not bestowing charity on him.

We approach people for land-gifts with love and humility and reasoning. We have set before us three principles :

1. We do not mind it if one does not give land even after understanding. Because we believe that one who does not give today, will give

tomorrow. The seed of thought sown in his heart is bound to bear fruit some day.

2. If one gives with understanding, we feel happy, because it creates deep and far-reaching goodwill.

3. If someone gives without grasping the idea behind it and under pressure, we do not feel happy because we do not want to grab land anyhow but to create the sentiment of Sarvodaya and *Samya Yoga* in the world.

I believe that in Bhoomidan Yajna we have found a programme wherein all parties can co-operate. They say that the Congress needs purification. As a matter of fact all parties need purification but the Congress is mentioned because it is the biggest organization. I believe that if the Congress and other parties accept this programme and work it in the spirit of truth and non-violence, there will be a general purification of all. It will increase the strength of all and bring about unity.

Fellow countrymen, I appeal to you all to contribute your share in the *Prajasooya Yajna* and by making this mission successful, establish non-violence as the rule of society in the economic sphere. I make a claim of the correctness of this work for three reasons. It is in tune with the cultural traditions of India. It contains in it the seed of economic and social revolution. And, lastly, it can help in the establishment of peace in the world.

I know, I have no right to give a programme to the nation. I am not a leader to give a call to the nation. I am an humble devotee of God who regards the service of the poor as the way to the attainment of the highest goal of life. If Gandhiji were alive

today, I would never have appeared before the public as I do today, but would have concentrated all my attention on scavenging village streets and on conducting my experiments of *Kanchan-mukti* (elimination of money economy) through agriculture. Circumstances have compelled me to come out and be audacious enough to be an initiator of this great *yajna*. But whether it is impertinence or humility I dedicate it to God and request all my sisters and brothers to co-operate with me.

Akbarpur, 28-4-'52  
(*Harijan*, 17-5-'52)

विनोबा भावे

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(VINOBA)

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# **BHOODAN YAJNA**

[Land-gifts Mission]

## THE BASIC CONCEPTION

[From the speech at Warangal]

Though humanity has been in existence for thousands of years, for centuries groups of men remained so unknown to one another that they, owing to inadequate means of travelling and communication, often believed that they were the only people living on the earth. The extent of the world was also imperfectly known. Events as catastrophic as the late Assam earthquake might happen in one part of the world without the people in another part becoming in the least aware of them. With the growth of knowledge, man's knowledge both of nature and of other groups of men, increased. The contact was many-sided — physical, mental, religious, spiritual, cultural, political etc. It was not always happy ; at times, it was very bitter. But I believe that on the whole, the result was good.

Examples of this might be cited from all parts of the world. The confluence of the Aryans and the Dravidians in India is an example nearer home. It was a meeting of the mountain civilization of the North and of the sea civilization of the South. They had lived unknown to one another for thousands of years. When they met, they had both war and peace, segregation and mixture. Both had their independently developed separate cultures. The Aryans were more intellectual and the Dravidians more devotional. Their confluence

ultimately produced a big nation, in which the good points of both the North and the South were absorbed. But this new culture, too, later on proved to be imperfect.

In course of time came the Muslims with their own civilization, and there was a conflict between the old and this newcomer. The Muslim civilization in its expansion seems to have followed two different methods: one of violence and destruction, the other of love and construction. Gazni and Aurangzeb are examples of the first; Akbar and Kabir, those of the second.

But Islam filled a deficiency in the Indian culture. It regarded all men as equal. Although this principle was recognized in the Upanishads, it was not visible in our social order; the principle had not been acted upon. Islam put the principle into practice. The Indian culture, with its mutually exclusive castes, came into conflict with the casteless civilization of Islam, and history records the progress and the result of that conflict. None can say that Islam conquered India on the battlefield. But before the Muslim soldier came with his sword, the Muslim *fakir* (saint) had come with his teachings, and he wandered from village to village and gave a message which was attractive.

At the same time India also produced a number of preachers who attacked caste divisions and laid special emphasis on the unity of God. No doubt, Islam had a great share in it. It is a valuable contribution of Islam to Indian culture. Thus with the addition of Islam a new compound of Indian civilization was produced.

Then came the Europeans about three hundred years ago, attracted by the wealth of India and stimulated by the spirit of the Renaissance, which ultimately produced, among other things, the advance of modern science and the Industrial Revolution. As a matter of fact, at the time when the Europeans came here, India was far more ahead of Europe in science, industry, philosophy etc. She was also far more prosperous. Once again the meeting of the two civilizations was both bitter and sweet. Indian civilization was tremendously affected, and in fact a new compound is in the process of formation. A new way of living and thinking has been introduced. The new thought-currents, like Socialism, Communism etc., have arrived from the West and they have come to stay.

Necessarily there is a struggle between the two. I believe that ultimately Indian culture will lose nothing thereby. The scum will be washed off, and a new compound culture will be produced. I say this because in spite of a great import of new ideas and knowledge from the West, India has not ceased to produce profound original teachers, thinkers and investigators all along. Of course, in the present formative stage, we witness both good and evil.

Though I had not directly attended to the Communist problem of Hyderabad so far, ever since Gandhiji's death I have been watching it and keeping myself informed of its violent developments. I confess that incendiary and murderous activities, painful as they were, did not unnerve me, because I know that the birth of a new culture has always been accompanied with blood-baths in the past, and hence there is nothing new in it. What is needed is not to



get panicky, but to keep our heads cool and find peaceful means of resolving the conflict.

The Government have kept a special police force in Telangana to restore peace. Policemen are not expected to think out and institute reforms. They can only use their arms and strike terror. If it were a question of clearing a forest of tigers, their employment would be quite useful. But here they have to deal with human beings, however mistaken and misguided. There is a new idea and a goal behind these activities, and where a new ideal is born mere repression cannot combat it. Not that the Government do not understand this; but they have a responsibility to protect life and property, and so I do not blame them for the measures employed by them.

But I had all along been seeking a better remedy. "चरन्वेति" (*charaiveti*) — Move on, say the Vedas; and I thought that a tour through the district was essential to seek it. But I wondered how I should do it. Tour develops thought. But the tour which does that is not the one undertaken in modern times through motor cars, railway trains and aeroplanes. In olden days horses and camels were considered to be the swiftest conveyances. They could cover as many as two hundred miles in a night in an emergency. But teachers like Buddha, Mahavir, Kabir, Nanak, Namadev, Chaitanya preferred to go on foot in order to deliver their messages far and wide. Thought becomes clear, mature and remodelled while you walk.

This happened to me as I walked to Shivarampalli from Wardha. All the way I was seeking a solution of the problem which the Communists tried to solve in their own way. One day, the story of the

Vamana incarnation flashed through my mind, and Brahman that I was, I took it up and commenced begging gifts of land.

I was not confident of the result. How can a few drops of nectar sweeten a sea ? But God put strength into my words. Somehow people understood the spirit. They realized that the events that were happening would bring a revolution in their life, which was beyond the capacity of Governments. They began to give free gifts of land, at times beyond my expectation. For instance, at one place 80 acres of land were needed for Harijans, and a single land-owner gave one hundred. A land-owner of Nalgunda, who had donated 50 acres already, later on gave 500 following a settlement of his family dispute. It was a fourth of his total share.

But this is a mere beginning and a gesture. The spirit must spread and catch all possessors of property. A gift of a few acres out of a thousand cannot solve the whole problem. Moreover, it is not a problem of one or two districts ; it is not even the problem of India alone. It is a world problem, — a revolutionary programme. And when a revolution in the way of life is contemplated, it must take place in the mind. The mere material gift of a hundred acres out of ten thousand cannot be sufficient. As a friend and well-wisher of both the rich and the poor, I could feel happy only if I could make the rich look upon the poor as members of their own family. I desired them to consider how they would take the birth of one more son to them. Suppose an owner of 10,000 acres has four sons, and a fifth is born later. Would he not have to make five shares of his property instead of four ? I asked the landholders to regard me as an additional

heir born to them, and give me my share for the benefit of the poor.

A psychological change like this cannot be brought about by war and violent revolution. It can be brought about only by the methods of Buddha, Christ, Ramanuja and other great teachers.

Ultimately it has to be the dedication of one's all for the wellbeing of all. Those who have must look upon those who have not as a mother looks upon her hungry child. She feeds it before she feeds herself ; she starves before she allows it to starve. Let those who possess the strength, skill and knowledge of producing wealth, or the power of holding it, dedicate them to the service of the poor. I desire that the love necessary for doing this is generated in the heart of every one.

I had an interview with some of the Communists in the jail at Warangal. One of the questions which they put to me was to the following effect : " Do you want to resettle the rich in their old homes ? Do you think that their hearts have changed ? They simply deceive you." I did not discuss these questions there because I had gone there only to study their minds. But here is my faith. If God dwells in the hearts of all beings, and controls every movement of theirs, even their breathing, and if He is the source of all inspiration, a change of heart is always possible. The Lord of the Ages is eternally present, and if He desires a change, that change has to be. When a man falls into a stream, it is not only his own capacity of swimming, but also the force of the current that helps him, and it does so whether he likes it or not. Similarly, when the current of the age goes this way, it will help him in changing his heart. In our present

world, burning with discord and quarrels, if God desires to sprinkle a few drops of love through me I shall gladly be His instrument. I took lands even from the poor. At one place a person owning only one acre of land donated a *guntha* ( $1/40$ th of an acre). I was asked what I would do with such small pieces of land. I said, I would ask the owner to till that *guntha* as a trustee, and utilize the produce for the benefit of the poor. That a man who owns only one acre is prompted to part with a *guntha* out of it is certainly a revolution. It is an ideological revolution, and where there is an ideological revolution, life marches towards progress. Our country has produced men who have renounced large kingdoms as if they were worthless straw.

Thought-force has no limitations. The light of a new idea often brings about a radical change in a man's life. We have seen great men, the power of whose thoughts has transformed the lives of others. It was with this idea of igniting the spark of thought in others that I accepted even small donations. And when Vaman-like I accepted land from the rich, God blessed and assured them that they need no longer run away to the cities to save their lives. It meant that by accepting lands from them, I generated a healthy thought in their minds. There are good and evil thoughts in the minds of every one. And when a good thought enters the mind, it starts a struggle with evil thoughts. Ultimately, the good thought wins. It might take time, but there is no reason to think that the donors are hypocrites. I grant that these donors must have committed many acts of injustice, in coming by the thousands of acres of land. How is it possible for an individual to acquire so much

land justly ? But in the hearts of even these people, there will now start a struggle and they will begin to think of the injustices they have committed. God will grant them wisdom and they will give up doing wrong. This is how a change of heart takes place in man.

The time has come when we should enlarge our hearts and part with our belongings to others. Giving is a divine weapon — *daivi sampatti*. Base weapons, i.e. *asuri sampatti*, cannot stand before it. They melt away before it, because they are made of selfishness, and not of universality or equality, like a divine weapon.

When a gift is given, we may hope that it will generate purity of mind, motherly love, feelings of brotherhood and friendliness and love for the poor. When a person begins to feel concerned for another, a feeling of equality manifests itself, and feelings of hatred and enmity are unable to survive. Enmity has no absolute existence. Like light, virtue is power, a positive substance. Sin is like darkness, without any power of its own. It is negative — absence of substance. Carry light to age-long darkness and the latter will disappear in no time. Similarly when virtue makes its appearance, hatred and enmity cannot exist in its presence. This Bhoodan Yajna (Land-gifts Mission) is an application of non-violence, an experiment in transformation of life itself. I am only an instrument in the hands of Him, who is the Lord of all Ages, like even those who give and those who will receive the gifts. It is a phenomenon inspired by God. For how otherwise can people, who fight even for a foot of land, be inspired to give away hundreds of acres of land freely ? My appeal to all and everywhere is to take this as a thing which God desires

them to do, and bequeath their lands to the landless liberally and lovingly.

Let me repeat in this connection what I said once before. Non-violence is not opposed to science ; it wants fully to avail itself of it. Science can transform this earth into heaven. It can do so only in combination with non-violence. If science and violence are joined together, the world will be shattered to pieces.

There was a time when issues were decided by war in the form of duels. Jarasandha and Bhima had a duel. Jarasandha was killed and the Pandavas got his kingdom. The people were saved from destruction. There was violence in that, but the destruction was small. If duels could settle issues today, I would reconcile myself to that procedure. If a Stalin and a Hitler wrestled and decided for Communism and Capitalism, I would accept the proposal and would not condemn the world, which wants to witness the duel, because the world has nothing to lose in it. But the age of duels is gone. War began with duels ; but the system did not work ; so thousands began to fight against thousands ; and when even that did not prove enough, lakhs gathered on either side, and each party vied with the other in increasing its number of combatants. And we have reached the time when not lakhs but crores participate in war. The choice now is either to prepare for total war, or abandon violence altogether, and accept non-violence. That alone is the problem, man is faced with today. To my Communist friends, I would say, you are committing a murder here and a murder there, with some arson and looting ; you come out at night and hide yourselves in the hills during the day ; of what avail is all this ? If at all you want to fight, you must prepare for

a world war. Await it. But so long as you do not make preparations of a big war, wherein crores of lives will have to be destroyed, give up these tactics of petty strifes, and avail yourselves of the right of voting, which you have got. Prepare the people for your ideology. A total world war or pure universal love is the choice, with which science has confronted us today.

To the landholders I say, if you will accept the path of love and non-violence, you will have to abandon the attachment to land. Otherwise the age of violence which is approaching will destroy not only the land but also those who are occupying it. Let us therefore realize that the problem has been presented to us by God Himself, and let us therefore give and give incessantly.

This is the basic conception underlying the Land-gifts Mission.

*Harijan, 22.29.9-'51*

## 2

### THE CALL OF THE AGE

[From the speech of Shri Vinoba at the Sarvodaya Conference at Sagar on 2nd October, 1951, the Gandhi Jayanti Day.]

Six months ago, I had not the least idea that God was going to make me an instrument to do the work for which I am walking now from village to village and door to door. But it seems it was the design of God that this work suggested itself to me spontaneously and also began to bear fruit. Gradually, it has taken such shape that the people have come to feel that this is a very powerful programme which is useful not only to our own country but also to the entire world.

The people have realized that it is the call of the age. The call got reflected in my heart also. The result is that after staying at Wardha for about two and a half months after the completion of the Telangana tour, I have again commenced a walking-tour in the course of which I have come to your place.

The mission I have undertaken is an act of devotion and service not only of the poor but also of the rich — of all the people. I have a strong conviction that this work is going to appeal to all. In the course of my begging if I happen to get less land at some place, I do not feel that I have received only a little. On the contrary the feeling with me is that whatever I get is only a *prasad* (a token of grace), and that ultimately God is to give me with His thousands of hands, and the two hands of mine will prove quite useless and inadequate for receiving. The present work is only the preparation of a psychological atmosphere. I do feel at every moment that God's will is working behind the present mission. On this sacred day my first humble prayer to Him is: Let me not mind whether or not people give me land in my mission. Let it be as Thou willest. But let me be Thy humble servant. Destroy my ego, annihilate my separateness and the memory of my name. Let Thy name alone prevail in the world. Free Thy child, from the dross of attachment and hatred lurking in its mind. I solemnly declare I have no other desire left in me. I am speaking this in the language of Tulsidas, but it is my soul that is speaking :

चहों न सुगति सुमति संपति कछु, रिधि सिधि विपुल बडाओ।  
हेतु-रहित अनुराग राम-पद, बढै अनुदिन अधिकाओ ॥

(I do not desire salvation, nor intelligence, wealth, prosperity, success, name or fame. I have no



other ambition but that of strengthening my devotion to Thy holy feet.)

People ask me when I shall reach Delhi. My answer to them is, I do not know. It all depends upon His will. I am advanced in age and my body has been showing signs of fatigue and exhaustion. This is the only desire of my mind and I feel it constantly. Whenever I get even five minutes' rest or solitude, the only urge uppermost in my mind is that my ego should completely get destroyed. In what language am I speaking today with God? What have I been speaking with the human tongue? I say, "I am experiencing the Presence of Bapu along with that of the Supreme Spirit." Bapu continuously showered his blessings on me. By nature I have been a man of the forest and stranger to ways of civilization. I even dread to meet great people. But nowadays I enter everybody's house unhesitatingly, as did Narad among gods, demons and men. This is all the miracle of Bapu's blessings. I have a conviction that Bapu will be feeling satisfied with my present work from whatever corner of the Universe he may be in. I sing with Mirabai : \* I came across two deliverers on my way, the Saint and Rama. The first I placed on my head, the second is enshrined in my heart.

My dear friends, though I am trying to speak today, it is going to be a difficult task. It will, however, be my attempt to do it as best as I can. Sometimes I reflect about the efficacy of speaking. To what extent does it bear fruit? I shall narrate only yesterday's incident as an illustration.

---

\* मारगमें तारण मिले, संत राम दोजी ।

संत सदा सीस उपर, राम हृदय होजी ॥

In a place where I spent the whole day and delivered a speech before the prayer audience, I got only four acres. I returned to my place after the conclusion of the speech, and began my study of the Upanishads, as I have been doing of late. Hardly ten minutes had passed before a villager came to me. He had neither participated in the prayer nor heard my speech. He said, "I have come to donate land." He had come from a distance of six miles. He gave me one acre out of his six. Scarcely had he turned his back, when another villager from a longer distance came and donated fifty-two acres. I began to reflect, who is the inspirer of these donations? I got only four acres, where I spent the day and made a speech. And here are donations without that effort. What is it that influences the minds of people? Why should man need the help of speech? If man's life becomes absolutely pure, not a word will he need to utter. A thought in the heart conceived at home would do the work. But it is a stage, which is yet to come, when God will grant me that purity of mind. For the present He makes me go from place to place and inspires me to ask for land donations. I, therefore, speak and beg alms of land for the poor. But not a shadow of doubt there is in my mind that it is not my efforts that will achieve any results. It is only His inspiration that will achieve and is already achieving them.

Though my own stomach is very small, that of the *Daridranarayana* is very big. So if any one asks me what my demand is I say, "Five crore acres of land." I mean thereby cultivable land. If there are five sons in the family, I want to be considered the sixth; if four, the fifth. Thus I claim one fifth or one sixth of the total cultivable land in the country.

This is no ordinary conventional charity. Giving of land to the poor and the needy is very much more than that. We earn merit if we feed a man even for a single day. When feeding a man for a day is so meritorious, how much more so would be the gift of an acre of land which will feed him for the whole of his life ! I, therefore, appeal to all of you to contribute your mite for the worship of *Daridranarayana*. This is real *yajna* — sacrifice. I, therefore, beseech every one to come forward and put his shoulder to this task.

This will usher in an unprecedented and mighty revolution in our country. I can, even as I stand here, behold it taking place before my eyes. People talk of the Russian revolution. America presents an example of a revolution of another type. But looking at both these countries, I find that neither type of revolution is in accordance with the genius of India. They are not in accord with our traditions and culture. I firmly believe that India should be able to evolve, consistent with her ideals, a new type of revolution, based purely on love. If people begin to donate lands of their own free will, readily and generously, the whole atmosphere will undergo a sudden change in the twinkling of an eye, and India might well show the way to a new era of freedom, love and happiness for the whole world. This sacrifice embodies this great aspiration and, speaking for myself, I am convinced that this aspiration is going to be fulfilled. I therefore urge all of you, whether you are a member of the Congress, a Socialist, a Praja Party man, or an independent, to ponder over this problem, and realize the value of the Land-gifts Mission. Other things may be left to take their due course, but this one brooks no delay. It is a desideratum to which all must attend. If it is done,

India will save herself and the world too, for our action will have trailed a path to freedom and peace which the world may see and tread.

Wherever I go, people speak to me of the rampancy of black-marketing, corruption and bribery. But I do not feel depressed. I do not believe that the heart of India has begun to decay. Nor do I believe that the rich have become corrupt beyond redemption. Our land, we say, is सुजला, सुफला, मलयज-शीतला — rich with water and fruit and fragrant with the cool southern breeze. This is how we praise it. However this is not our greatest wealth. The sacred ideals and traditions, the spiritual riches which our forefathers have bequeathed to us are certainly more valuable than any material wealth. Hence though there is black-marketing and corruption, yet I do not believe that our people as a whole can be too bad. Therefore we should look for the root of this elsewhere. Lin Yutang, the well-known Chinese writer, says somewhere that India is a land of God-intoxicated people. This description of India by him is true of our people even today. Even today our people are God-minded. All this corruption, therefore, which we see around us, is due to the evils in the present-day economy. The organization of our economic life is bad. People are swept away by the tide of these outer evils, and led to commit mistakes. Therefore if we can change the structure of the economic life, you may be sure that our people can well set a unique example in the world.

Hence, after Gandhiji's demise, some of us who believe in Sarvodaya formed a brotherhood, Sarvodaya Samaj, in which no one hates anybody. Every one loves every one else. There is no exploitation. I

hold to the belief that the moment we succeed in creating a society free from exploitation, the intellectual and spiritual talent of the people of India, which lies obscured at present, will shine forth. We, the believers of Sarvodaya, therefore, have vowed that we will change the present structure of society. I have absolute belief in this mission, otherwise I could not have approached you to give away your lands so openly and unreservedly. I realize that God has rewarded my effort more than I deserve. I have no cause for complaint. All that I have to do is to explain the idea to the people.

*Harijan*, 27-10-'51

### 3

#### **BHOODAN MOVEMENT**

[The following are Shri Vinoba's utterances culled from his various speeches in Delhi and places round-about. They have been adapted with suitable changes from the detailed reports in *The Hindustan Times* of the 13th to 25th November 1951, along with those in the Hindi *Hindustan*.]

#### **Its Spiritual and Ethical Basis**

I am only an instrument in the hands of Him who is the Lord of all ages. It is a phenomenon inspired by Gqd. For, how otherwise, can people who fight even for a foot of land be inspired to give hundreds of acres of land freely? My appeal to all and everywhere is to take this as a thing which God desires them to do and to bequeath their lands to the landless liberally and lovingly.

As a friend and well-wisher of both the rich and the poor, I could feel happy only if I could make the rich look upon the poor as members of their own

family. Suppose the owner of a 10,000 acre farm has four sons, and a fifth is born later. Would he not have to make five shares of his property instead of four ? I ask the landholders to regard me as an additional heir born to them and give me my share for the benefit of the poor.

A psychological change like this cannot be brought about by war and violent revolution. It can only be brought about by the methods of Buddha, Christ, Ramanuja and other great teachers. Ultimately, it is to be the dedication of one's all for the wellbeing of all.

*H. T., 13-11-'51*

Unless the existing social order, which is based upon inequality, strife and conflict, is replaced by one founded on equality and mutual co-operation, there can be no salvation for mankind.

In a society where some own land and others are landless, there can be no peace. People might bring legal documents to substantiate their claim of proprietorship. These serve no useful purpose. They tear our hearts and keep us divided. Let us light their bonfire on the occasion of Holi.

People should accept the principle that all land belongs to God. If all land is socially owned, the present-day discontent would disappear and an era of love and co-operation will take its place.

*H. T., 14-11-'51*

What I want people to do is first, to give away some of their land. Secondly, they should engage themselves in the service of others. Finally, in their service, they should lose all and voluntarily sacrifice everything. This is the path into which I want to initiate the people. I know people can accept this path.

They are sound at heart. I have had enough evidence to be convinced of that. I have received even today, (13th November), a gift of 578 acres of land made by two people of Jhansi by telegram. If the desire to give away spreads like an epidemic, we would be much nearer a solution of the land-problem.

*H. T., 15-11-'51*

I have taken up the task not because it was easy. It is a difficult task. I was led into taking up the work, and I have little doubt that the Power that has inspired me to start the work would not let me leave it unfinished. I approached the work with all humility, and I have faith that I shall receive every help in completing it. I am sure that those believing in the Sarvodaya ideal will give me support and sympathy.

*H. T., 18-11-'51*

### **Its Historical Necessity**

I refuse to agree that my attempt to make landed people give away their land voluntarily to the landless is contrary to the trends of history. New things can happen. Nothing like the Russian Revolution had happened before, but it happened. So also this could happen. However, I believe what I am doing is not against the trends of history. It is a historical necessity.

My mission is not to stave off a revolution. I want to prevent a violent revolution and create a non-violent revolution. The future peace and prosperity of the country depend upon the peaceful solution of the land-problem. My attempt is to create an atmosphere in which the limitations in the Constitution can be got rid of. Zamindars can be made to agree that they cannot get full compensation and that they should be satisfied with getting what was enough for them.

"Why not amend the Constitution"? asked a correspondent.

Vinoba replied: For that we need the moral support of the zamindars. Legislation should not be forced on people. Every one, including landowners, should accept it.

Another correspondent said that the psychology of vested interests was 'not to liquidate themselves'.

Vinobaji replied: I believe this idea about psychology is not correct.

If land-owning people do not part with land and a proper atmosphere for land reform legislation is not created, the third alternative would be a bloody revolution. My attempt is to prevent such a violent development, and after my experience in Telangana and in U. P. I am convinced that peaceful methods can succeed. Land, like air, sun or water, is a free gift of God, and what I am asking for, on behalf of the landless, is no more than justice.

H. T., 25-11-'51

My target is 50 million acres of land. Since there are 300 million acres of cultivated land in India and an average family has five members, I felt that every family could give away one-sixth of its land-holding, accepting the poor landless man as the sixth member of the family. This is a way of bringing about a peaceful revolution in the country.

There is one difficulty. At the rate at which land is being gifted to me so far, it would take many, many years before the scheme could be completed. I, therefore, hope that the work of transfer of land will be speeded up and this vital problem facing the country solved to a considerable extent.



My mission, however, is not confined to collecting land-gifts. I am trying to convince landowners that they should part with some of their land. If they are convinced of the right of the landless to some land, the proper atmosphere for suitable legislation will have been created. Once the atmosphere was created, any legislation on the subject could be expected to be effective, since it would have the approval of the people even if land-gifts did not total one-twentieth of the target of 50 million acres.

*H. T., 15-11-'51*

### **Limitations of the Mission**

A donor with his wife came here (Delhi), all the way from Madhya Pradesh, to give away all the land he had. He had 50 acres of land without any other means of livelihood. When it was suggested to him that he may give part of the land, he insisted that he had come to offer all he had. The couple had three children. I said he could treat me as the fourth and give me one-fourth of the land. I thus accepted  $12\frac{1}{2}$  acres out of 50. If the man had  $37\frac{1}{2}$  acres, I would have accepted ten or twelve acres, and the man would have been left with about 25 acres only. In some cases, I had accepted half an acre out of five acres.

What is the system I have been following? I accept one-fourth out of 50 acres and take land even from those who have very little of it. Do I or do I not think of creating economic units of land? Well, that is not my work. Shri Deshbandhu Gupta died today. I might be going tomorrow. I am not trying to solve the big land-problem. I do want it to be solved peacefully, but nobody can resolve all the world affairs. We had Rama and we had Krishna.

They had done what they could for the world, but there was no end to problems. One could only do one's work.

My mission is to create a proper atmosphere for economic reforms. I have formed no organization to propagate my views. People who accept my ideas themselves become its preachers. Those who give land provide an example to others. The main thing is that one should do one's own duty. Fire merely burns ; it does not worry whether anyone puts a pot on it, fills it with water and puts rice into it to make a meal. It burns and that is the limit of its duty. It is for others to do theirs.

The sun too does its duty without feeling concerned with how many people rise with it or keep in bed when it comes out. It is always there, punctual and ready to shine on anything that is exposed to it. It does not push the door to enter into places barred to it. It does its duty within its own limitations. Like the fire and the sun, I know my own limitations. It might appear a bit crazy to some that I should accept land from those who have little as well as from those who have large tracts of it, and that I should take the same share, whether people have 50 acres or five acres. My purpose is to create a change in everyone's heart. I cannot predict when it will come. I only tell the people my ideas, and accept land if they offer it.

I go by no economic calculations. I do hope that others will also be able to think as I do. They too are men like me living in the same society. If I have certain ideas, so would have others. If people accept my ideas quickly, my work can be completed without much delay. But, God willing, the work will be completed sooner or later.

As to the economic side of the land-problem, society itself can look after it. Not that I cannot think about it or do not have my views. But I have chosen as my work, the creation of a moral atmosphere in the country so that the land-problem might be solved peacefully.

*H. T.*, 23-11-'51

### **Execution of the Programme**

A Calcutta paper had raised the question whether the lands given to me are mere verbal promises. If so, people might not redeem their verbal promises. The paper need have no anxiety on the point. Every gift deed is legally executed with the proper signature of the donor and the witnesses. In each case, it is legally binding. But even then, I do not want to bind any one to it. If I find that any one had given away the land under pressure of some kind, I shall allow him to take it back. If I am not sure of the voluntary nature of a gift, I shall myself destroy the legal document.

My aim is to bring about a threefold revolution. First, I want a change in people's hearts ; secondly, I want to create a change in their lives ; and thirdly, I want to change the social structure. Nothing can be achieved through pressure or force. If force is to be used, I am not required. My feeble hands would not be of any use.

*H. T.*, 21-11-'51

### **The Programme of Distribution**

Our men go to the villages and distribute land to the landless. We have to find out who are the landless and then offer them land. Just as a man who wants to marry his daughter searches for a suitable bride-

groom, similarly, we would search for people deserving land-gifts. Just as, after we solemnize the marriage of our daughter, we give her jewellery and other gifts, similarly we should arrange for other necessities of the tiller, a pair of bullocks, seeds and other requirements.

On the appointed day, Sarvodaya workers offering land to the landless visit the village. All the people are gathered there. The workers enquire from them who are the most suitable persons entitled to receive the gifts. They then indicate their choice. The first priority is given to Harijans and other backward communities. Care is taken to bequeath land only to those persons who are not engaged in any other calling and are in a position to do cultivation work, provided land is made available to them. The workers are accompanied by revenue officials who complete the work of registration and other legal formalities. The man returns home as the proud possessor of land. A new life has begun for him. He has become a landholder.

The rules framed by the Hyderabad Government, where land distribution work has already started, are simple. They provide that on receipt of the *razinamas* donating land, the Tahsildar shall obtain a report and ascertain whether any amounts are due to Government either as arrears of land revenue or otherwise. On completion of the enquiry, the Tahsildar accepts the *razinama*, and the land from then on vests in the Government. The Committee (appointed by Vinobaji) then selects the persons to whom it is to be granted. The grant is subject to the condition that if a co-operative society is formed in the village, the recipient will join it. Another condition is that the land will

not be sold for ten years. If the land granted is a cultivable waste, and the grantee reclaims and begins to cultivate it within two years of his receiving possession, it will be exempt from revenue assessment during the first three years. No stamp fee or registration charge will be levied.

Similar rules with modifications to suit local conditions are expected to be framed in other States.

In Hyderabad, the Committee has decided to allot each family an acre of wet land or one acre for each family member in case of dry land, subject to a maximum of six acres. Allotments on a similar scale are to be made in the Madhya Pradesh. In the case of Vindhya Pradesh, the size of allotment may be raised. For U. P., allocation to an individual grantee may be on a smaller scale, as the average size of holdings is much smaller here. No final decision on the matter has, however, been taken so far.

*H. T., 14-11-'51*

### **Charges Answered**

In the morning a visitor asked me sharply and pointedly how long my work will go on. He suggested that legislation should be brought in to redistribute land as soon as possible. My plan is based on non-violence. Non-violence does not rule out legislation. But it should be legislation backed by public opinion. The majority opinion should be in favour of it. It does not matter if some people are opposed to it. The main thing is that it should be generally acceptable to people and they should be mentally prepared for it.

I say this because Communists also want legislation. They begin with murder and want to bring in legislation at the end. My plan also envisages legis-

lation at the end, but I want to begin with pity and kindness. When every heart begins to feel that the present order is unjust, when pity is created and a proper understanding of the situation brought about, legislation can come in at the end. This is the non-violent way.

There is no escape from the position that land belongs to all. As I have said again and again, land is God's free gift like sun and air and water. The Hindi poet, Maithili Saran Gupta, has emphasized this point in a recent poem on this mission. Some think that I began by asking for land in charity, and now I have begun to ask for it as a right. This is not so. From the very beginning, I have asked for justice. But it is God's justice, not legal justice. I have cleared this point in my book, *Swaraj Shashtra*, a grammar of politics.

When in jail 20 years ago, I had told Sane Guruji that legislation should be enacted for redistribution of land. I did not remember this. But Sane Guruji had written about it, and Shri Kishorlal Mashruwala had read the passage and reminded me of it.

One way of redistributing land is by force and violence. Another is through non-violence and I am preparing the ground for the use of the peaceful method. In this method, the main work is of spreading the idea. Propagation of an idea takes time in the beginning. But once it spreads, there is no more delay in accomplishing things. I do not think it would require many years to spread my ideas about land. If all work hard in propagating, even one year would be enough to complete the task. Success, however, would depend on their persuasive power, their sincerity and their attitude to the problem.

While collecting land, I have done my best to see that gifts are made without pressure of any kind. I have been at pains to maintain purity in this work. I believe my ideas are right. I want equal treatment for all. If my intention is pure, I have little doubt that the idea would catch on and my mission would be achieved without much delay.

The present law lays down that compensation should be paid for land. This is as it should be, in the present social set-up. In any case, *jagirdars*, **big land-owners** and zamindars are our own brethren. Their interests should not be ignored. In order to secure this, payment of compensation is not against the tenets of non-violence. But compensation need not be paid or accepted in full. I hope to tell big landowners that they should accept only as much as was necessary for their own needs and donate even from the compensation received by them.

In God's world, I want equality as God wished. I am collecting land for the landless. I want each village to become like a family, but only through persuasion and affection.

### **Agent of the Poor**

Some people say I am an agent of the rich, of the landlords. The truth is that I am an agent of the poor. I am presenting their case. I have lived among them and have tried to make my life like theirs. But I want to be big landlords' agent too, if they give me generously. If they are liberal in giving away their land, I shall not have any hesitation in becoming their agent. I hope that they will behave generously and the charge that I am their agent would be justified. If I am the agent both of the rich and the poor, I shall be glad, for that is the aim of Sarvodaya.

There is also another complaint made against me. I am considered dangerous. Even some of those who have lived with Gandhiji allege that I am bringing the law into disrepute. It is alleged that I am assailing people's right to own land by declaring that land belonged to everyone like the sun, air and water. If the law does not help in redistributing land, my work will pave the way for the Communists.

My way might be more dangerous than that of the Communists, if people were stingy and wanted to hold on to their lands. Not that my plan or my ideas would provide excitement for the murder of zamindars, but stingy, miserly people would lose their prestige, their respect, which is worse than losing one's life.

Thus there are two charges against me : Some say that I am a supporter of the old system. Others say I open the way for Communists to take charge. The fact that opposite charges are made against me shows that my work is on the right lines.

I am an humble servant with goodwill towards all. I have faith in the people. I shall go to U.P. and explain my ideas. Everyone says that people do not want to part with land. Still I have the courage to go about asking people to give it away. Such a request does need courage. I have that courage because of my utter humility. I go everywhere. I can go to a rich man's palace as well as to a poor man's hut. I also approach people of the middle class.

In everyone I see the image of God Himself. The great Hindi poet, Tulsidas, has said that if one went on praising and propitiating the Master, one could get anything for the asking and live a life of peace and comfort. That is my attitude. I shall praise people,



never denounce them or say harsh things against them. Everyone has his good points. I am convinced that people have great qualities. They have to be discovered and appreciated. I shall approach them with humility and am sure they will give what I want. It is with this sense of devotion that I approach and it is with humility that I hope to carry on my work.

*H. T.*, 24-11-'51

*Harijan*, 8-12-'51

#### 4

### **A CALL TO CONSTRUCTIVE WORKERS**

[From an address to the constructive workers of U.P. at Mathura on 1-11-'51]

All of you know the work that was done in Telangana—I mean in reference to the Land-gifts Sacrifice. When I left Wardha for Shivarampalli no such idea had crossed my mind. Had it done so, I would have surely asked for land donations on my way to Shivarampalli. After the termination of Shivarampalli Conference I went to Telangana with a completely open mind. I had the desire to see for myself the conditions prevailing there. I had no notion then that a solution of the problem would also suggest itself. The problem and the solution both came naturally in their course. During my tour I was faced immediately with a specific demand for land. Some people in a particular village demanded land from me. I asked for it of those who had it, and my request was immediately met. It was an unprecedented event that a man asked for land and received it so easily. Instances, of course, can be cited of donations of land

to institutions such as temples, *maths* etc. But an instance of land-gifts for the landless was quite a new one. A man does not find it difficult to part with some money, but to give away land in charity is felt like sharing one's body with others. We all know the story of the Mahabharat. The Pandavas asked Duryodhana to give them only five villages. But he refused to give them even as much land as could be held on the point of a needle. These days the price of land has shot up. And the people's greed for land has increased in proportion to the rise in its price. Attachment for land has also increased. In this context of things to make an appeal for land and to get a response to it was no easy task.

But I began asking for land with utmost humility and love. I am not able to express with what humility and devotion I proceeded with my work and in two months the people gave me 12,000 acres of land for *Daridranarayana*. I have appointed a Committee there, which has, according to the latest figure, received about three thousand more acres of land in donation.

### **Money-Funds**

Owing to the monsoon I returned to Wardha and resumed my agricultural work. You know that I have become a cultivator these days. I have been lately seized with a mania of running institutions on manual labour alone. I am convinced that without doing so our institutions can no longer function vigorously. It is not proper that after the passing away of Bapu people should still be asked to give money donations and we should carry on our work with the support of donated money. I hope that the Gandhi Memorial Fund will now be the last monetary fund collected in

the name of Gandhiji. Hereafter none can and should collect monetary fund in his name. Hereafter, we must build up labour ; for, though people will be kind enough to give money for the sake of Gandhiji, it will spell our ruin.

### **Extension of Telangana Discovery**

I was contemplating about my future programme when I received a call from Delhi. In my departing speech at Wardha, I had said that now my non-violence as also people's goodwill were on trial. The land donations which I received in Telangana had the history of Communist atrocities in their background. Hot ground is cooled by rain-drops. But since there was no such hot ground elsewhere, it was feared that a similar success might not attend my appeal for land-gifts. But this would mean that *sarvanasha* (total destruction) must precede Sarvodaya (the rise of all). If it was to be so interpreted, it was augury of a great disaster.

### **Sarvodaya without Sarvanasha**

Some people hold that violence is necessary even for the success of non-violence. But the experiment of non-violence met with as much success in this pilgrimage as in Telangana. Thus it proved that Sarvodaya was possible without *sarvanasha*. The people of India are ready for Sarvodaya.

### **India's Peculiar Tapas**

In the Sarvodaya Conference held in Sagar (M. P.) on the 2nd of October last, I had observed that for the solution of the land-problem of India we shall need one-fifth of the land for the landless. If this one-fifth part is obtained from landlords through donations made with love and faith, a great revolution will be wrought in India. In Europe also efforts in this direc-

tion are afoot. The Upanishads say that in God's realm donors earn encomiums. *Dana* (charity) is not an occasional duty. Like eating, it is an item of one's daily work. Indeed, Gita has placed before man a programme of constructive work in the form of *yajna-dana-tapas* (sacrifice-charity-austerity) for everyday practice. Fallen as we are, there are many in our country who practise one or the other type of austerity. I am on a walking-tour at present, but there are hundreds of men and women who tour like me. Jain *munis* (monks) and *shravikas* (nuns) also do so. Maybe, some of these walking-tours have something irrational about it, but the fact stands that austerity in the form of pilgrimages on foot has never ceased to be practised in our country. Gandhiji maintained that our country has continuously developed non-violence. People numbering in crores have given up meat-eating. What an amount of austere practice must have taken place to bring about this change in men's lives? I do not want to enter into a discussion of merits and demerits of meat-eating here; but it indicates how our people have always practised austerity in various manners. Similarly our country has a history of its own in the field of renouncement of arms. And it should be remembered that even when India was equipped with sufficient military strength, she never invaded other countries. All this history shows that India is a country of ceaseless austerity.

The way in which we won our freedom through non-violence is unparalleled and unique in the history of freedom struggles of the world. All these achievements are symbolical of that austerity, which is characteristic of our country's traditions. In the atmosphere of India austerity is possible to be

manifested in ever new forms. With this faith I have fixed the target of five crores of acres for land-gifts.

### **Call to Sarvodaya Workers**

But this is not a mission which I alone can carry out. Of course, I speak subject to God's will. He has His own ways of doing things and He may get it done through even me alone. But speaking humanly, if it goes on at its present pace, it would take five hundred years to finish it. Hence, if we want to achieve it sooner, and within a specified time, we will have to bring into its service a hundred-fold more devotion, energy and effort. It is a critical period in the history of our national movement. If non-violence fails to solve this the greatest of our problems, we may be sure that the whole fabric of Gandhiji's constructive work is in danger of being destroyed. On the other hand, if it succeeds in this sector, it will make for all-round success. Khadi, Harijan work and every other constructive work will also advance. People ask me : Should all of us join together and pool our efforts to this task ? I wonder why they cannot see the obvious. But there are three categories of men : To some a hint is sufficient for understanding ; others require to be told in so many words ; there are still others who do not grasp, even if they are so told. I heard the call of the times and set out on the mission notwithstanding my old age. I worked for Khadi for thirty years, but today I am using all my energy for this work, because I can see it includes Khadi and all the rest of the constructive programme. Khadi signifies an ideology and I am glad that it does not spread like *bidi* and tea. Khadi means a revolution — the acceptance of a new way of life. The *charkha* is indeed very old, but then it did not symbolize a revolution. They plied the

*charkha* then because if they did not, they would have to go without cloth. But the present day *charkha* does much more : It stands to oust the mill. It is not the hand alone that turns it now, but intelligence, devotion, and faith — all have to combine and co-operate with the hand. Hence even for the promotion of Khadi, it should be supported by the means of resolving the present problem. Therefore whatever else we may do, the most pressing need is that of resolving the land-problem. And if we succeed there, we will be acclaimed as having shown a new way out to the world. The world is terribly tired today. It is getting more and more entangled in the vicious circle of ever increasing armaments. It is groping in the dark and does not believe that non-violence can help it out of this gloom. Therefore, if our workers choose to engage themselves in this work, they will be but doing the very thing, which has to be done at present. If they keep away from it they are committing a mistake.

I have been reminded that I should do something in the way of Harijan work also in the course of my pilgrimage. This is like reminding the Ganga to water the trees on its banks as it flows on. It will do it as a matter of course. It does not need to be told about it. A major portion of the lands that we are getting will go to Harijans. I desire that those of our people who are engaged at present in scavenging should take to farming. Their present work is not worthy of human dignity.

So it is my considered view that at this juncture the entire community of Sarvodaya workers should and must devote itself to this work of the Land-gifts Mission.

## **Sarvodaya Organization**

I am held partly responsible for setting the pattern of the Sarvodaya Samaj. They complain that the Samaj lacks an essential attribute of an organization, namely, rules and regulations. My plea is: There are enough of these rule-bound organizations. Let there be one which merely advises and does not command. The workers in the Sarvodaya Samaj are free to accept the advise or reject it as they please. But just see, even without any discipline so many of you have gathered here to confer together! The truth of the matter is that a thing gets going and spreads if it appeals to the people and invokes in them the sense of duty. This is how our Samaj works without any recourse to an external discipline. Let those who have eyes to see look at this gathering of responsible workers, and judge for themselves how responsible workers have come here voluntarily merely on an invitation.

This insistence on rules arises from the fact that people are ignorant of the power of the soul. I do not know if there is anything more degrading than this ignorance of one's intrinsic power, the power of the soul. What power have I to summon you here? It was love which prompted these workers to respond to our humble invitation. So we must realize that there is an idea behind all this, and hence if we want to reach our target of one crore acres of land in Uttar Pradesh, we shall have to bend our strength and talent to this work.

## **Congress and Other Political Parties**

One thing more. Jawaharlalji wants to purify the Congress. I am not associated with the Congress in any way, and yet I issued a statement in support of

Pandit Nehru. But unless an organization accepts a programme of service involving sacrifice, it cannot purify itself. It is true that a programme of self-sacrifice may create for the workers domestic and other difficulties. But that is unavoidable. The teachings of Jesus created domestic quarrels. The same happened in the case of Gandhiji, because both placed programmes of self-sacrifice before the people.

New parties are coming into existence these days. They say that there must be an opposition in a democracy, otherwise it cannot work properly and may well develop into a dictatorship. I do not disapprove of this development. But when these parties also enter into a contest for elections, they too practise corruption. I would therefore advocate the setting up of a party which will keep strictly away from power. It will be composed of workers totally detached from power, devoted to ceaseless service, with unfailing adherence to the principles of right conduct and morality. They will serve the people and keep in touch with them through service and disseminate among them the right kind of knowledge. The existence of a party of this type only will purify the administration.

### **Concluding Appeal**

Lastly I ask you all to give yourselves heart and soul to the mission we have undertaken and make it successful. I can pass through only three or four villages while I go forth across the district. I would like that the workers should, during the period, collect land-donations all over the district and report them to me in the village where I may be at the moment even as rivers join together and flow into the sea. You will have to send your workers over the entire area and in every *tahsil*. We need hundreds of workers for this



work. Then only, can we meet in an appreciable measure the demand of one crore acres that I have made of your province. Then only can we hope for a revolution — a real non-violent revolution. Else I am afraid we shall have to wind up all our activities, activities which Gandhiji initiated and left to our care. It is the most momentous work to be done at the moment and not of one of the many types, but one which must be done in suppression of everything else.

*Harijan, 5-1-'52*

## 5

### THE SPIRITUAL BASIS OF THE MOVEMENT

[From the speech at the U.P. Sarvodaya Conference, Mathura, on 1st November, 1951.]

The very entrance into your ancient city reminds me of various past associations. For those like you who are permanent residents of the city, these associations might be just memories. But when a stranger like me visits this place, his heart throbs differently and his mind begins to move in a celestial atmosphere.

It was in the forest of this place where the child Dhruva had practised his *tapas* (austerities). There are also several later events which are associated with this place. Of all these, those connected with Lord Krishna have become a thing of eternal glory for Indians. Wherever they might live, they always remember Bhagawan Shrikrishna. Being overpowered with this sentiment it has become rather difficult for me to speak to you even a few words. When the heart is full of emotions the tongue becomes mute.

## The Universal Teaching of Gita

Lord Krishna gave to the culture of Bharata a peculiar turn expounded in the Gita. But the tragedy is that the ideal placed by the Gita and practised by Bhagawan Krishna himself is not to be seen practised in actual life in Indian society. Our fall had been so great that this country became subject to constant foreign invasions and actually passed into complete subjugation for nearly 250 years. During this period our misery reached its zenith. Partly on account of the world situation and partly on account of our Satyagraha Movements we became a free nation. It is now four years since we became a free nation. But even after Independence the evils that had crept in us before, have not disappeared, but have rather become intense. If we neglect them and do not try to purge them out, we shall not reap the benefits of Swaraj, and might even reap disasters.

The very start of the teachings of Gita is based on the principle that whatever might be the position in which a man is placed by birth, if he performs his duty with love, devotion, and singleness of purpose, he becomes worthy of *moksha*. But look to the history of India. We see that our society has continually broken into graded groups. Some people have regarded themselves as high and relieved themselves of physical labour. Those who had to perform it have been treated as low. Harijans who worked as cobblers were treated lower than *kisans* whose occupation was agriculture, while scavengers, the most serving class, were treated as the lowest. In this way several high and low grades came into being. Those who spared themselves from physical labour were given higher status in the society. A country which regards its

working class as low and less respectful heads towards destruction. This very thing occurred in the history of the Roman Empire and has been repeated in India. Foreign traders came to India and our own trade began to decline. The common man could not cherish any particular love for our trading community, for the latter had never tried to mingle with the masses. Consequently the foreign traders gave a death-blow to our trade, and the country passed under foreign domination.

### Samya Yoga

Had the common man any love for the trading class, he would have sacrificed his all to save the country from ruin. But the society was divided into high and low grades from the type of work they did. The dignity of labour disappeared. The same condition exists even now. By Gandhiji's teaching, some people have understood the value of work and a few do some body labour too. But people as a whole still regard the performer of physical labour as lower in social status.

This work is valued low even in economic terms. In ancient India no Brahman or priest claimed a higher status than the *kisan's*. He had to live a life of poverty. But the present-day man of letters puts a high price on his learning. This feeling is very harmful. As long as economic life and social life are not mutually harmonized, the society will not emerge strong. We shall have to change the existing order of paying as high as possible to the high-born and paying as low as possible to the physical labourer, and in its place, to establish *Samya Yoga*. Indeed, no money appraisal should be made of the intellectual and spiritual services of any person. Can one appraise the

invaluable services of a man who has saved the life of a drowning person ? To value his service in economic terms is absurd. Similarly, neither the services rendered by the mother to the baby nor of the Rashtrapati who gives his deep thought for the good of the country can be evaluated in money. The three types of services described above might be different in their character, but none of them can be measured in terms of money. There can be no two opinions on this.

A plantain fruit and a stone belong to different categories of material objects, and the latter cannot be compared with the former, even though the latter is of gold and silver. Similarly the services of a scavenger, a mother, a professor, and numerous others of that type cannot be determined in terms of money. Therefore the rule should be : A man who wholeheartedly serves the society should be held entitled to his living wage. Likewise, the President of the country, who serves his country with equal zeal, although intellectually, should be given the wage sufficient for his living. The basis of payment to the President must be the same as that of the *kisan* and the scavenger. I have served the society in various capacities, as professor, judge, peasant, writer, editor etc., but I never experienced the feeling that one type of work was of a higher type than that of another. I derived the same mental satisfaction in everyone of them. It is however true that I did not get the same experience of muscular exertion from every work. It differed in every different type of work. But that does not make any difference in the degree of mental satisfaction. When anybody desires to give me more than my needs I get perplexed. I cannot accept it. Why should I take more curds than what I need ? And I

am at a loss to know why I should accept it, simply because somebody offers to do so. The right principle is : Everyone must have his bread for the day and not also for the morrow. And the economic, social and spiritual value of every work should be equal. Thus alone can *Samya Yoga* be established. Gita has very distinctly proclaimed that the law applicable to oneself should be equally applied to others.

After the attainment of Swaraj, we must aim at the establishment of this *Samya Yoga*. We have also called it 'Sarvodaya'. You may call it by any name. I am wandering from place to place for the establishment of this *Samya Yoga* or Sarvodaya.

### **The Reason for Bhoodan Mission**

You all know that these days I have been asking land-gifts. I have plunged myself into this strenuous task with the purpose of eliminating the various distinctions of high and low from the society and to facilitate everybody to take to physical labour. It is highly inconsistent that those who possess land should not till it themselves, and those who cultivate it should possess no land to do so. Those who cannot plough get it ploughed by others, while those who can do so have to do so as labourers. Since they have no right on the yield produced by them, they work half-heartedly. Moreover, they are paid in coin, and they do not get even sufficient food. Why should this be tolerated ? Is it unjust to stop this false system ? And am I doing disservice to the landholder, if as a friend, with full love for him, I request him to donate fifty acres from his one hundred ? Is this not an indication of my genuine love for him ? And if he insists on his old way of living, I shall reason with him

saying that it is goodwill and friendliness towards a too fatty friend to advise him to reduce his weight, just as it is one's duty to try to put on some flesh on another, who is too lean and emaciated. A corpulent person will have to make some changes in his mode of living in order to reduce his extra weight. If by so doing he changes from a leisurely pacing elephant into a swift horse he should willingly adopt this change.

### **The Panchayat Principle**

I request you to consider what could be God's plan. Can His plan permit only some to possess land and nothing to others? I shall not say that all those who possess land have acquired it by unfair means. They might have acquired it industriously. But that does not mean that they have a right to retain its possession. The land that you have acquired from others should be returned to them, even though you are its owner today. I even do not say that everyone should get an equal share in the total cultivable land. I do not want arithmetical equality, but I do want equity, or such equality as, for instance, the five fingers of the hand have. These five fingers are not equal in dimensions, but they all work in full co-operation and together perform innumerable tasks. Again, their inequality is not as disproportionate as it would be if, say, the smallest finger were an inch in length, while the largest one was a foot. The moral is that even if there cannot be absolute equality, there should also not be disproportionate inequality, but there should be equity, even through their inequality. The five fingers possess different powers. Similarly each man possesses a different capacity. All these inherent capacities of each person should be developed. This is called the *Panchayat Dharma*.

The principle of a *panchayat* (Council of Five) was : ' God speaks through the five ', i.e. a unanimous decision of the *panchayat* was respected as the verdict of God. If three or four out of five gave one judgment and the others gave a different one, it could not be taken as the verdict of God. If it were not so, it would give rise to majority and minority distinctions. Therefore the only way to achieve unity is to accept the principle of ' God speaks through the five ', i.e. to achieve the ideal of unanimous decision.

### **Decentralization in the Scheme of God**

If we accept the proposition that every man should have the same social and economic status, all these distinctions would immediately vanish. If you all will help me in this Land-gifts Mission, it will take the shape of a big movement, which will provide solution for the various baffling problems of our country. We won Independence with the power of Ahimsa. Other countries had to adopt violent techniques for it. But if we do not take the next step to achieve social and economic freedom, verily our Independence is in danger. To achieve this, we shall have to follow the decentralized technique of God. Through co-operative institutions we will have to control economic activities. Had there been no decentralization in God's planning, He might have been obliged to travel from Bombay to Calcutta, Calcutta to Delhi and so on. But He gave two eyes, two hands, and two ears to everybody to co-operate with one another. Had He given four eyes and no ears to one ; and four ears and no eyes to another ; the former would have had to take the help of the latter to hear ; and the latter, of the former to see. If this had been so, the Almighty would not have

enjoyed so care-free a sleep in the *kshirsagar* as He is said to be taking today. We must understand the principle and beauty underlying this pattern of co-operation.

Politicians talk of 'One World'. But for God, one world comprises the whole universe with all its stars and stellar systems. If He had entrusted the monopoly of distributing intellect to only one being, one would simply shudder to think of the volume of corruption and maladjustment that might have taken place in His Supply and Distribution Departments. The cure of all these ills lies only in the growth of *gramodyoga* (village industries). Its first step is the distribution of land to the landless; and the second to establish village industries in every village.

My plea, that every son of the soil has a right on Mother Earth, is not my own. The Vedas had proclaimed it. No brother can prevent his another brother from serving his mother. And I shall even go to the length of saying that whosoever demands land must have it; and it is the duty of the landlords to give it to him. Is drinking water denied when asked for? And if it is so denied, how ashamed he looks! Similarly one should feel ashamed to refuse to give land to one who asks for it.

### **The Role of the Government**

I can understand that one should not give food to another without asking him to labour for it. But if one demands the means to do that labour, it is our duty to provide him with them. It is also the duty of the Government to allot land to the needy at the rate of five acres per family.

But the Government is unable to do so at present. What is Government after all? The Government of



a country can function only with the consent of its people. If people decide once for all that all people have a right to land and it cannot be the property of a few, the key to open the locks of the Government is in their own hands. I wish to unlock it by a key and not break it by a hammer. And so if you all will help me in this mission we can achieve success and can establish *Samya Yoga*. India will then become the lighthouse for the world. The world too expects India to show it the light. Therefore, if you set aside all other work and take to this alone, you will be able to present the live picture which Gandhiji had envisaged for free India. It is the duty of all those believing in Gandhian ideology to concentrate all their energies on this mission.

*Harijan*, 26-1-'52

## 6

### A MORAL MOVEMENT

[The following is taken from a letter of Shri Vinoba to Shri Vallabhsawami, Joint Secretary of the Sarva Seva Sangh.]

I do not want to agitate for any legislative measure. Mine is a moral movement. Whatever success I get is on account of this difference. Otherwise I would prove quite useless. A legislation which follows a change in the moral principles of a people is just a formality of record. It takes the form of a *smriti*. It is like the words "THE END" formally put in at the end of a book. In a non-violent social order, law is like this formal "The End" of a book. It is only affixing the final seal. The end of the book does not depend upon the affixing of that seal. The book had ended already, and is not less finished by omitting to

write the word. Hence I am indifferent about legislation. I do not say this just to give an idea of my personal attitude, but because this alone can be the right attitude in an agitation of this type. On a question being put to me, I do say that there is no objection to legislation being brought in after the moral atmosphere is ready for it. To those who think that this question will not be ultimately solved without legislation, I say that they might take my efforts as preparing ground for them. Personally, I think my work is sufficient in itself. In fact, I can work only on that faith. Even after legislation, my work will have to continue. Because the law will be like the one for the Prevention of Child Marriages. It prohibits marriages under the age of, say, fourteen years only. But I don't want people to marry before twentyfive. Hence, a law like this does not put an end to my work. To be brief, in my mission there is no question of giving compensation to the donor of land ; rather, my appeal is to give the land as one gives away one's daughter in marriage, i.e. with full dress, ornaments etc.

The propaganda must be quite self-reliant and independent. Hence, it must be carried on by a person in his individual capacity. The person should have understood and accepted my method. If possible and necessary, he should personally see it. In Hyderabad, the Kodandaram Committee is carrying on its work in the manner laid down by me. The Committee is like a cipher. Sarva Seva Sangh should affix figures to its left and enhance its value. In Uttar Pradesh, I shall necessarily place my faith on Karanbhai and other co-workers. All others should come to their help. By all others, I mean all those who are convinced of my

ideas. And it should be so arranged that the work which all these people might do may be regarded as Sarva Seva Sangh work. There are no workers of Gandhi Nidhi as such. All those, who are thoroughly convinced of and fired with my ideas are my men — whether they are otherwise workers of Gandhi Nidhi, Congress, KMP, Socialist, Communist, or any other party. In short, this is the work of the Sarvodaya Samaj.

*Harijan, 9-2-52*

## 7

### THE WORKING OF THE MOVEMENT

[From the speech on the first day, 13th April, at the Sarvodaya Conference, Sevapuri, U.P.]

Bhoodan Yajna (Land-gifts Sacrifice) is a work of basic importance. It is true that, as a friend suggests, it has its limits. Even then let me place before you my ideas in the matter. The powers of the indwelling Spirit are immeasurable and unlimited. If I set a limit to them, I must regard myself as incapable of attaining self-realization. We have seen that without the pressure of law people have parted with their lands. When I explain to them that like air, water, light etc., land is also a gift of God and all sons of the soil have equal right over it, they willingly respond to my appeal and donate lands. The people have thus accepted this revolutionary programme and given us a glimpse of the unlimited power hidden in the Spirit.

If we believe that the State has to “wither away” one day, why cannot it happen in 1952? We should have an unflinching faith that others can do what I

can. If I approve of this idea, manifest my faith in this method, and first gift away all *my* lands, why will it not inspire others to do the same? One zamindar donated 500 out of his 1900 acres, saying that they were three brothers, and now I was the fourth. Similarly another accepted me as his third brother and gifted two acres from his six. Hardly any day passes when such incidents do not take place. I ask you that if God inspires *me* to ask for land and if one man believes that he can do a particular thing, why cannot all people do it? Surely the nature of the Spirit in one is not different from that in another and there is no limit to Its powers. Hence, I proceed with my work with the faith that the Spirit is present in all men, and there is no limit to his powers, and what sacrifice one can do, all can do.

It has been often suggested to me that we should agitate for legislation. My reply to them is: Let it be left to the legislators. We must follow our own method of doing it. Maybe, all land might get distributed among the landless through the Land-gifts Movement and there might not at all remain any occasion for legislation. But if human will fails to become strong and successful enough to solve the land-problem, and it becomes necessary to resort to legislation, our achievements would have paved the way for legislation. That is to say, our achievement will make legislation either unnecessary or create an atmosphere for its easy passage.

Moreover, there is a method—a particular attitude of mind in my asking. I ask with great humility. I do not want to resort to threats and intimidations. If I were to tell them that if they did not part with their lands in Bhoodan Yajna, I would

deprive them of their lands in the course of the next three or four years with the aid of law, I do not know the proper way of asking. I must not give up my faith. Faith is like a firm wall. It is not like a curtain suspended with strings. Faith either stands firm or lies flat. It is either complete or not at all. Just as a person is either wholly alive or quite dead, and cannot be 40, 50, or 60 per cent alive, and 60, 50, or 40 per cent dead, so too faith cannot be halfway. No important work is ever accomplished without faith. Act (*kriti*) follows faith (*shraddha*) and conviction (*nishtha*) follows act. Before conviction grows in a man, he works with faith. Conviction is faith affirmed by experience. Faith precedes conviction and has to be there before a man commences any work. Hence I say that since we want to solve this problem by the moral force of man, we should have unflinching faith in our method.

I have been often asked if I expected to solve the entire land-problem in this manner. My reply to them is neither Rama nor Krishna could solve all the problems of the world. World problems can be solved by the world alone. I can make no egoistic claim that I can solve anybody's problems. That is why no worries disturb me at night and I go into sleep as soon as I lie down on my bed. I do my work throughout the day. Whether a day brings me four thousand, or four hundred, or only four acres, I am neither elated nor depressed. I sleep and work as king Janaka, and that is the reason for my being able to work day after day.

Now about Satyagraha: You should know that if I have any reputation in the country, it is only as a

Satyagrahi. It means that if I ever find that Satyagraha was imperative, nothing will prevent me from offering it. But Gandhiji gave us as a maxim the famous line, "One step enough for me". That does not mean that we know nothing about the next step. But as soon as a person gives room in his mind to the next step, he begins to harbour a doubt about the success of the first step. If I have to nurse a sick person, it would not be right for me to simultaneously plan to arrange for his cremation, in case the patient died. I should serve him with the hope that he will be cured by my treatment and nursing. If, however, he dies in spite of my care, I should take the fact peacefully and proceed to make arrangements of his funeral as the next step. Does not our contemplation of the next step indicate a fear that people might not in response to our appeal donate lands? This way of thinking betrays our lack of faith in the donors. This is not the way of a man of faith, but of the politician. If there were some alternative ready-made method, it might also perhaps fetch land. But it would not have been the right way of accomplishing the task. It would have spoiled the work and weakened our will. And weakened will cannot bear fruit. Let me assert as a truth of personal experience that whatever *sankalpas* (wills) that have arisen in my mind have been invariably fulfilled. I therefore approach the people for land-gifts with the faith that the Lord who dwells in me, dwells equally in the hearts of others. So I must reason with them to make them understand my mission. I must do so not once, twice, but again and again. Even Shankaracharya had no other weapon except that of reason. Ultimately we must rely only on our power of persuasion. The Lord says that we

should forgive offenders and there is no limit to forgiveness.

Hence, what you call 'Satyagraha' will remain a real Satyagraha only to the extent it retains its persuasive character. As soon as it takes the form of coercion, it ceases to be a Satyagraha. As the mother always hopes that her wayward child will improve some day, so also a Satyagrahi must have an unshakable faith in the people's capacity to heed to reason and call to duty. There is, of course, a place for Satyagraha in this. But if we have not properly grasped the spirit of Satyagraha, it will not remain a Satyagraha but become violence.

A question was put to me today : "Should a donation of a few acres by a landlord owning a thousand to ten thousand acres of land be accepted ? How can such giving of alms be good ?" As a matter of fact this question comes before me almost every day, and I refer to it in my speeches and put my answer into operation also. I explain to the people that I desire to humiliate neither the poor nor the rich. So if a great landlord donates a few acres, I decline to accept his gift. But my experience has been that if people are properly persuaded, they give a sufficient donation. To cite an incident : A landlord owning 300 acres came and offered me one acre. I declined to accept his gift. On my explaining to him my point of view, he unreservedly raised his donation to 30 acres. It took hardly two minutes to persuade him. Man likes to please the Lord with a small sacrifice if it is possible. If the Lord would be pleased by the offering of a flower, he would not offer Him a fruit. He wishes both to worship the Lord and save his money. If I had been asking for donations for the erection of a temple

or a *math* I would have been satisfied with an acre. But I ask for land as a right of the poor. About ten thousand people have so far donated lands in this way. Some of these donations are indeed examples of such nobleness of mind, that I shall carry their sacred memory throughout my life.

Another question put to me is, "If a landlord gives donations it might add to his name, but is it not a humiliation for the donee who has to accept it as a favour?" My reply is, 'No.' Because I do not beg alms. I ask for the land as a right of the poor. If I gave him cooked food instead of land it would certainly be his humiliation. As a thirsty man is not humiliated if he asks for and accepts water, so is the landless not humiliated by accepting land. Rather, he must be thanked for accepting the donation. For a mere acceptance of land will not give him crops. It is only when he puts in hard labour that he will reap the harvest. So the donee has no reason to harbour any inferiority complex.

There are two more charges made against me. First, that I give a fresh lease of life to the landlords. I accept this charge. I certainly desire to give a fresh lease of life to the landlords; but remember that I do not give a new life to zamindari. It is a disease of which I want to cure the landlord and give a new life to him. My remedy partakes of a special feature by which the poor do not remain poor and the rich do not continue to be rich.

The second charge against me is that I am generating a spirit of revolt in the people by making them land-hungry. I accept this charge also. For I desire to stave off a violent revolution and bring about a non-violent one.



Let me say a few words about the question of the legal hurdles which we may have to face in effecting the transfer of the gifted lands. A friend asks what would our position be if the Government does not offer the necessary legal facilities? I must say that I do not share his doubt. The Government will certainly come to our help and provide all facilities. It is in its own interests, apart from the fact that it is its duty. However, supposing it does not, we have hardly any cause for fear or worry. I shall thank the donors and go forward on my way. A *fakir* has nothing to lose. It is for the Government to think, and weigh up the problem and arrive at the right decision.

Finally, a word about the goal we aim at and the work for which indeed we have gathered here. It is obvious that we aim at creating an ideal social order. The purification of the mind for our individual salvation cannot be the sole concern and purpose of our convening such a large gathering. Kripalaniji has explained it quite lucidly. He gave us a masterly analysis of the problem. Analysis is useful in elucidating the varying importance which is to be accorded to the various elements composing a thing. But analysis has its limitations. Ultimately it is in the synthetic product that we find the real satisfaction of a thing. Mere analysis might even rob the thing of its life. As normal human beings, we like *modak* (sweet-balls). Analytically it is just flour, *ghee*, and sugar. But none would care to eat them separately or even as a simple mixture. We relish them in their peculiar preparation. In the same way we say that we have accepted this work because we want to change and revolutionize the society; and also because it will alleviate the miseries of the poor; and further again because we

want to cleanse and purify our minds and hearts. Really it is like a piece of confectionary which we have prepared of all these purposes and accepted it in the hope that it will give us all that it may have to give.

I hope that the followers of Sarvodaya who have gathered here will realize that Bhoodan comprehends all that they want to do, and success in this work will make for success in every other field of constructive effort.

*Harijan, 10-5-'52*

## 8

### INSTRUCTIONS TO BHOODAN COMMITTEES

[The following instructions were given by Shri Vinoba in the course of talks with him some days ago concerning Bhoodan. They were published after confirmation by him.]

#### 1. Custody of Gift-deeds

Gift-deeds should be prepared in duplicate, each of which should be duly signed and attested by witnesses. Regional Bhoodan Committees should collect and keep them in their office and when a sufficient number is collected, they should send them to the Sarva Seva Sangh, Sevagram, *under registered post* to eliminate the chance of their being lost in transit. The Sarva Seva Sangh will return them to the respective Regional Committees after getting Shri Vinoba's signature on them.

#### 2. Form of Gift-deeds

The forms sent from the Sarva Seva Sangh office will be used in places where the regional language is Hindi written in the Devanagari script. In other

provinces, the form of the gift-deed should be printed in both Hindi (Devanagari script) and the regional language and script. The regional language form should be printed on one side and that of Hindi in the Nagari script on the other. Donors and witnesses should sign on the regional language form, and the Regional Bhoodan Committee should fill in the names and addresses of the donor, witnesses and other details on the back in the Hindi-Nagari form, so that it might be understood by others.

### **3. Money Donations in the Bhoodan Yajna**

Several persons have indicated their desire to donate money for purchasing land and distributing it to the landless. Vinobaji declines such donations and asks intending donors to purchase land themselves and offer it in the Bhoodan Yajna. The Committee should follow the same practice. They too will not accept money donations for Bhoodan. The same rule will be observed in respect of donations of bullocks, wells etc. That is to say, the Committees will ask the donors to donate in the form of land, wells, bullocks etc. Donations of wells should be accepted judiciously. For in several places it will be difficult to estimate the cost of wells. Hence, donations for wells should be taken only from persons, who are prepared to see through the construction of a well whatever it might cost.

### **4. Distribution of Gifted Land**

(a) Land should be distributed only after a gift-deed is signed by Vinoba.

(b) The work of distribution can be carried on even in the rainy season. But land will belong to the new cultivator only after the crop is harvested.

(c) In the initial stage the work of distributing land should not be entrusted to local committees. Though their help should be taken, and the preparatory work should be got done from them, the responsibility of distributing land should entirely rest with the Pradesh Committees. The work of distributing land plays an important role in the success of the Bhoodan Yajna. If it is not done properly, and deserving persons do not get land, the very object of Bhoodan will be defeated, and no new land-gifts will be available. But if it is carried on properly, new land-gifts might be obtained even at the time of distribution.

(d) No haste should be made in distributing land. It is not proper to start distributing land immediately land-gifts are obtained. It would be advisable to wait for some months before they are distributed to the landless.

(e) Our first object is to give land to the absolutely landless people. Those possessing some land (though not much) will be given if surplus land is left after it is distributed among the absolutely landless.

### **5. Acquiring Land-gifts**

(a) Regional Bhoodan Committees may, if necessary, form District and local Committees and appoint even individuals for the purpose of collecting land-gifts. In order to keep up the high standard of Bhoodan work and to co-ordinate it, it is necessary that the intending volunteers first send in their names to their respective Bhoodan Committee and undertake the work only after they have received its consent. Regional Committees will declare names of volunteers from time to time.

Needless to say that every person is personally free to persuade his friends to make their offerings in the Bhoodan Yajna.

(b) Every donor should be explained at the time of accepting land-gifts that it will be his duty to look after the gifted land and even to sow crops in it if it is not distributed before the rainy season. He is expected to hand over the produce of the gifted land to the Bhoodan Committee after deducting the amount of expense incurred by him on it.

*Harijan, 26-7-'52*

## 9

### NEED FOR TAPAS

[Speech at the U. P. Workers' Conference, Kashi, on 11-9-'52]

We on whom God has placed this heavy responsibility should prepare and prove ourselves to be worthy of this great trust. We exhort the people to do *dan* (charity) and *yajna* (sacrifice) and they have been responding to it so well. I do not think that the three lakhs and a half acres which have been lovingly given to us for the landless are a small thing. But it is true that this is only a fraction of what we have got to achieve. Therefore we and particularly I should pray for strength. But he alone can demand and grow in strength who will humbly but steadily grow in *tapas*.

The seers of old and the Gita prescribe three things: *Yajna* (sacrifice), *dan* (charity), and *tapas* (austerity). Of these, through Bhoodan, I called for two, *yajna* and *dan*. But unless we insist on *tapas*, *yajna* and *dan* will not be fulfilled. The three together

constitute one indivisible whole. It is for the workers to do the *tapas*. *Yajna* and *dan* are expected from the people, but it is for us to intensify the *tapas*. I was therefore deeply searching within myself as to what we could do in this respect. And I feel I should relate to you what came to me from these musings.

I had often said in the words of Hanuman :

“ There can be no rest for me till Rama’s work is done.”

I pursued the idea and eventually reached the conclusion that I should do some act of sacrifice. And then I resolved that until this problem is satisfactorily resolved I should give up the idea of going back to my Ashram. The Ashram is a place steeped in the flavour of renunciation and *tapas*. It was there that I carried on unceasingly my work in the service of the poor, and of the country. Even today the Ashram is carrying on the most revolutionary experiment of our times, the experiment of *kanchan-mukti*, or freedom from money. Yet the Ashram does afford us a kind of protection too. And I felt that I should leave off this protection as a form of attachment. Thus I made this resolve and now I am dedicating it to the Lord in your presence.

You know that I have spent 30 years of my youth in quiet contemplation, in *dhyan-yoga*, *karma-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga* and constructive work. I am no propagandist. A propagandist does not spend his youth in the way I have done, nor would he think of starting on a walking pilgrimage in his old age. I am only an humble devotee of Truth, a seeker and a servant who believes in constructive work. I get satisfaction only in constructive work. After a close

study of our village problems I have reached the conclusion that our basic problem is that of land and we must find out a non-violent solution of it. In the event of a failure, we should abandon our claim to the practice of Ahimsa. It goes without saying that with the abandonment of Ahimsa, constructive work must also go. Of course, you can take to mechanization and build up a certain kind of order. But it will be far from our ideal. Because mechanization is bound to lead to its inseparable concomitant, the militarization. I have no faith in that. If we have love for Indian culture, non-violence, Sarvodaya and all else which they imply, we must needs apply ourselves ever more to the Bhoodan work. Then only can we revivify and speed up other items of constructive work. Failing that, they are bound to fade away. That was how I came to leave the Ashram and wander about on my present mission. I ask all those who consider themselves to be the disciples of Gandhiji to think over it and see if what I have done is correct or otherwise. And if they adjudge my work to be right, they should give me their full co-operation. Just as they used to leave off their individual activities to join the Satyagraha campaign when Bapu launched one, even so should they co-operate with this movement, with the same joy and zeal which a fighter feels as he hears the battle-cry. I also call on others to give me as much help as they can.

*Harijan, 8-11-'52*

## A MEANINGLESS RESOLUTION

I came across a curious news-item in yesterday's daily paper.\* It says that the Peasants' and Workers' Party (a political party in Maharashtra) has expressed opposition to the Bhoodan Yajna Movement and has asked the people to beware of it. What is one to make of this resolution ?

Does it mean that those who are donating land should stop doing so ? People have till now been occupied with the acquisition of wealth, regardless of the means for it. If, instead of this, the mentality of the people is directed towards the equal distribution of wealth, how would it harm any one ? One may well say that the giver should not feel vain over his gift. I agree and say so.

Does it mean that the landless should refuse the gift when it is offered to them ? How will this benefit the landless ? One may well say that they should not receive them in the spirit of servility. I have been saying from the beginning of my campaign that we are not conferring any favour on the landless, we are merely restoring to them what is theirs by right.

Does it mean that when landowners holding 100 or 200 acres offer only a petty acre or two, the offer should be refused ? If this is what is suggested, I am in agreement with the suggestion, and I have been acting accordingly. Lately I have started asking for the one-sixth share. If a man who owns ten thousand

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\* *Vide — The Times of India, 29-10-52.*



acres has offered only a hundred, I have openly declined to accept the gift; and there are several examples of this. Moreover the demand for the one-sixth share is made of men of moderate means only. I have stated that in case of the rich the one-sixth share will only be a first instalment to be followed by more.

Does it mean that this movement would hinder or in any way interfere with the passage of a more radical land-reform legislation by the Government? But those who are interested in the passing of legislation are free to proceed with their efforts in that direction, I do not stand in their way. On the other hand, the awakening which the movement is creating on every side is bound to give a fillip to the question of legislation on this subject.

Is it feared that the movement may take off the edge from the resistance against the iniquities of the existing order? I feel on the contrary it will sharpen it. I have been asked why I ask for land even from the poor. I have adduced several reasons for it, one of which is that I want to raise an army of adherents of my idea. Those who are participating in this sacrifice by voluntary acceptance of poverty are, so to say, registering themselves as the soldiers of this non-violent army. Where the zamindars are evicting tenants from the lands which the latter have been cultivating over years, I have asked them to offer non-violent resistance. This has produced good results in Uttar Pradesh. It has heartened the tenants and the Government has also instructed its officers to give just protection to them. I have only recently come to Bihar. Here too, I am doing the same thing and hope that the result will be as good as elsewhere.

To conclude, the said resolution of the Peasants' and Workers' Party is to all intents and purposes meaningless. I know there are some very sincere workers in that party. I should like to request them that if they have the uplift of the landless at their heart, they should shake off all misgivings and co-operate with me for the success of the Bhoodan Yajna. Even after that if they still have some of their doubts left with them, I invite them to discuss their doubts with me. Either they will have their doubts removed, or they will convince me of what they think right. I am a friend to them and am ever ready to explain as also to understand any view-point.

*Harijan, 22-11-'52*

## 11

### **ALL WEALTH BELONGS TO GOD**

It was on the 28th day of April, 1951, that the idea of launching the Bhoodan Movement flashed into my mind. And it may now be safely said that it has drawn the attention of the people all over the country and won their approval. From Bhoomidan to Sampattidan (i.e. from land-gift to gift of wealth) was a natural step, and the idea that along with Bhoodan, I should also ask for Sampattidan did occur to me and held my mind. But the land-problem was a basic one and I saw that unless something was done to meet it, it might develop into a big danger detrimental to the security of the nation. I, therefore, thought it fit first to concentrate my energy only on that question. Besides, in case of land, all could easily see that it was the direct gift of God. Again, it is the basic factor in

the production of wealth. This was another reason, why, in the beginning, I preferred to limit myself to the land-problem alone. Moreover, to proceed step by step was also in keeping with the technique of Ahimsa.

But as the work of Bhoodan progressed, it became increasingly clear that the idea behind the movement could not be fulfilled unless we went further and asked for a portion of wealth and property. And hence, I made up my mind that I must also ask for a share of wealth and property from the people. I have now done it and placed my demand at one-sixth of it ; but it is upto the people to decide what they can and will give me. The idea behind the demand is that all wealth, even though we may acquire it with our individual effort and skill, is not for us alone, but has been granted to us by God for all of us. The energy and initiative which went into the making of this wealth are themselves a gift of God.

I have said on and again in the course of my walking-tours that I do not want money. Now however I am asking for a portion of wealth. How are the two to be reconciled then ? The answer is that I am not going to take charge of it ; nor will I shoulder the responsibility of managing and spending it and keeping the accounts. I will remain free as always. I also do not envisage creating trusts as is often done in the case of funds collected for public good. There is another vital difference between these funds which are raised from time to time for various purposes and this Sampattidan Yajna : it is this that a portion of the income will have to be donated to this *yajna* recurringly year after year. I have therefore decided that the money will remain with the donor himself,

but he will use it as we want him to do, and annually render us the account. It means that the donor will not only donate a portion of his property, but also give us the benefit of his skill and intelligence in the use of it. It is true I want the donor to spend the money as we desire him to do, but he may also put forward his suggestions in this regard.

Obviously, I am putting the entire responsibility on the donor himself and am proceeding on trust in his integrity. The critics may find fault with this procedure. But then righteousness cannot stand on anything other than trust. No legal safeguards can give us the protection which trust can. It is from this point of view that I have laid down this procedure.

Those, who desire to take part in this movement should do so joyfully, after fully satisfying themselves and after consulting other members of their family. I believe that if men of faith and goodwill come forward and help the movement grow, then this idea which opens out a new way of life will spread in our country and pave the way for *Samya Yoga* — social equality. And in that belief, I put it forward for consideration by the good and the virtuous.

*Harijan*, 29-11-'52

## THE IDEAL OF NON-POSSESSING SOCIETY

[Speech delivered at Tikari, Bihar]

The work I am doing is based on the perception of a certain philosophy of life. No idea would endure for long unless it probed deep into the root of the matter. And so I have been continuously meditating in quest of the root of the change that we want to bring about in society, and having got at it, I go about my work with a firm step. No problem frightens me, for I believe that there is no human problem but can be solved by human intelligence.

### Non-possession vs. Divestment

The ideology which seems to be in ascendent at the moment and which stands pitted against my teaching may be called *Apaharana* — divestment. Advocates of this ideology believe that ultimately the individual is for the society and therefore there is nothing wrong in divesting him of his property ; rather whatever goes against this idea of divestment is wrong. Today a good many countries of the world have been drawn to this doctrine. As against this, I put forth the ideology of *Aparigraha* — non-possession.

### Theft and Property

It is generally held (quite wrongly of course) that non-possession is only for *sannyasis* — ascetics like Gandhiji and Vinoba ; the common mass of people cannot do without possession. That is why though we respect the *sannyasis*, we do not follow them ; though we accept *sannyasa* as the ultimate ideal of life, in our mundane world possession continues to hold the

field. When a truth is thus truncated and accepted only in part, it can yield only partial good. The result has been that to fight an evil, one is led to take recourse to the very evil one wants to drive out. And if we succeed even in such an attempt, we only succeed in destroying it physically, but immortalize its essential spirit. Hence at present greed and possession are the order of the day, the ruling principle the world over. What is more, an imposing legal frame-work has been raised around it giving it a look of respectability, and therefore it does not strike one as wrong. We consider stealing to be a crime, but connive at those who encourage this anti-social activity by amassing heaps of money. In a story in the Upanishad a king says: "In my kingdom, there is neither a thief, nor a miser." As we know, it is the miser who gives rise to the thief. We condemn the thieves to rot in the prison-house, but let their creators roam about in complete freedom. They even occupy seats of honour and respectability in society. Is this justice? The Gita calls them thieves, but then we have put it away as the book of the *sannyasis* with which we are not concerned.

### **Possessing through Dedication**

As at the time of putting oblations into the sacrificial fire we say, "This is for Indra, not for me", so we should say of whatever we produce in fields or factories, "This is for the community, for the nation; it is not for me." We should dedicate all that we have to society. And then, what we receive back from society according as we need will be life-giving like nectar.

### **An Anomaly of the Present Order**

This is the ideal, but what do we find actually?

The highly expensive administrative and other departments of the Government are known as 'services'. And there are services galore : Civil Service, Medical Service, Educational Service. The officials of the Civil Service are paid four figure salaries, while their masters, the poor of the country, whom they profess to serve have to live on a pittance of annas 8 a day. It is a tragic paradox that those who earn lakhs are called servants, while those who produce food for the nation are regarded as self-seekers who work merely to feather their nest. What is one to say of these 'services' ? If words are not to be deprived of their meaning, then this is nothing but cant and hypocrisy. It is in order to put an end to this hypocrisy that I have put forward the idea of land being the common property of all. All that we have, our land and property and intelligence ; everything has to be an offering to society. Let there be no fear that non-possession will impoverish us. It will surely enrich us as members of a community, though not as individuals with separate interests. Thus shall we, on the basis of non-possession, build up a grand and beautiful society. My mission of land-gift is to achieve this great end.

### **Changing Order through Non-possession**

Today he who earns money, does also earn worry and disease. Though he may make money, he loses something more precious than money, viz. the love of his fellowmen, the love of friends and neighbours. That is why even the moneyed are unhappy in the existing society. Both the rich and the poor are unhappy. The remedy is to change the order and place it on the secure basis of non-possession.

I should caution you against a possible misconception. What I am propounding is an ethical idea. I want you to set yourselves free from attachment and accept non-possession to the greater good of society. It should not therefore be assumed that we have to approach only those who have heaps of wealth. Attachment may lurk even in a loin-cloth. Therefore we have to go to every one irrespective of whether he is rich or poor and convince him of the truth of this idea and secure gift-deeds. These gift-deeds will be-token the acceptance of this new way of life,—a documentary evidence of it.

### **Non-possessing Social Order**

When people get so far prepared as to offer their all to society, we will build up a Government which will not need to seek help from America, nor the paper-money from the Nasik Press. Every Indian home will be its bank. People will readily comply with whatever demand it may choose to make on them. People will leave all their worries to the care of society and be themselves free from any worry or insecurity. But to-day they are not prepared for it. So to begin with, I have placed my demand at only one-sixth of one's property. I had declared quite early about a year and a half ago, that I was going the way of Lord Vaman \*. My first step was Bhoodan, next is the Sampattidan, i.e. donation of property ; I will take a third step which will be nothing less than surrender of everything in the interest of the poor, the acceptance of poverty that all may equally partake of God's good riches.

*Harijan*, 29-11-'52

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\* An incarnation of Vishnu, literally a dwarf. He covered the whole universe in three steps.



## SAMPATTIDAN

[Prayer-speech at Chandil, 30-12-'52]

I have received a very welcome letter from Tamilnad. Some friends from there have donated one-sixth of their property to the Sampattidan Yajna. It shows that the idea has begun to draw attention of the people even at this early stage. But I am not in haste. I want to proceed with this work rather slowly and build it on deeper foundation. That is why I have enjoined that it will be a life-pledge, and once a person agrees to it, he will continue to give the pledged portion of his earnings year after year.

But our minds are so firmly fixed in old grooves that many cannot even bring themselves to think of it. Their minds shrink from the prospect of having to part with their money every year for the whole of their lives. However if they stop to think they will see that there is nothing very strange about it. For example, marriage is a thing which binds a man for life and yet they accept the bondage and observe it. It is true, Hinduism provides a way of escape in the form of *sannyas*, but how many avail themselves of it? So why should those who willingly accept the life-long bondage of marriage hesitate in accepting this pledge which is no bondage at all, because it is the way of *tyaga*, i.e. sacrifice and not of *bhoga*, i.e. enjoyment. It is *bhoga* which binds and not *tyaga*. Those who are anxious to know the truth and practise it should readily adopt this idea as a part of their life. Just as we insist on wholesome food and clean air

throughout our life, so will we donate a part of our wealth to the needy throughout our entire life. In truth, we should agree to give not a part but the whole of it. But we may be permitted to keep a portion with us as trustees and make over the rest to society.

The Sampattidan does not involve the physical transference of money from the donor to me. The money will remain with the donor. This saves us from many difficulties. We had raised many small funds in the course of the national movement. Recently we raised quite a big one, viz. the Gandhi Memorial Fund. But we hardly know what to do with it. And the money lies unused. There is no such fear in Sampattidan. Whatever we get will be put to immediate use the same year. For this, at this moment, I have two things in mind : first, the provision of the means of livelihood to the poor, and next, help to the self-sacrificing workers for their physical maintenance. But as the work goes ahead, I will have many more items to add to this programme. There is so much work to do that we can use all the money immediately as we get it.

We are going to distribute land to lakhs of people who will need other kind of help too before they can stand on their legs. Not only that, I also want to raise an army of workers. If India continues to be the poor and miserable country which it is at present, there is no hope for India. Even at the rate of two workers for a group of fifty villages, one of whom will be out touring about them and the other settled at some central place, we will need 3000 workers for Bihar only. For India, at that rate, we will need many times more. But how few, alas, they are ! I am not worried at all about the maintenance of the workers provided,

of course, they are real workers. Six persons each giving a sixth share can take care of one. And six families may well undertake to maintain one family. In that way, we may maintain thousands. This may easily grow into an extensive programme, but I will not do it all at once. I want to achieve personal intimacy with each donor and enter into his life as it were. I would accept only what he offers me with full deliberation and with the consent of other members of his household. I want to set about it with care and circumspection so that it should be free from every blemish. That is why I am not entrusting it to any organization at present. There will be time to decide further as our work prospers. My satisfaction lies in the fact that people are giving freely and after mature thought about it. Of course, I want that ultimately there would be none but would make the offering to this great *yajna*.

We aim at nothing less than obliterating the distinction of rich and poor. God in His infinite bounty has certainly given one thing or another to each one of us. Then why should not every one share a portion of that God-given thing with others? When this happens, all around us will immediately begin to change giving rise to a happier and brighter Bharat. I am sure the Sampattidan Yajna will also bring forth the same strength and power as did the Bhoodan movement.

After Bhoodan, I was thinking of the problem of Sampatti, i.e. the inequalities of wealth and all the evils which arise from them. We accepted *parigraha*, i.e. possession of wealth for our institutions. The Sampattidan Yajna will show us how to run them on the basis of non-possession. We are not going to raise

funds. Our funds will lie with whosoever accepts our ideology. Non-possession is infinitely more powerful than possession. Sampattidan will show the power of non-possession to the people.

*Harijan, 31-1-53*

## 14

### TO LOVERS OF GANDHIAN THOUGHT

The 12th February draws near. It is one of the great days of the year, for it calls us to a duty very close to our hearts, the duty to make yarn-offerings. People are not yet conscious of the power which lies behind this act of offering. But in the building up of the Sarvodaya order it may very well fill in the same place as that of Hanuman in the life of Rama. As I think of it, it evokes in my mind a vision of the most exquisite charm. Throughout India, wherever these fairs are held, I fancy there is rising up, hank upon hank, a veritable mountain of the yarn-offerings. This is no vain fancy. The people are mentally ready for this consummation. There is however the scarcity of workers. The few that are, lack imagination and the fewer who have imagination lack the capacity of organization and execution. We are thus an odd assortment of 'cripples'. I hope, however, that God willing we may yet be given to gaze upon the marvel of the 'cripples ascending and crossing the mountain'.

Last year our people, even those who belong to the Sarvodaya Samaj, were so far swept away by the spell of the elections that the yarn-offering — *sutranjali* work was mostly neglected. I was then touring the

region of the Ganga and the Yamuna on the Bhoodan mission. I continued in my work without break, though under the excitement of the elections some of my companions who, it was expected, would help me, left me much in the same way as the proverbial relatives of a rich man who desert the latter when he is reduced to poverty. But my work went on. People helped me in full measure and I was able to collect enough land. There were friends, however, who went to the extent of suggesting to me that I had better wait for a month until the elections had passed off. This is just to illustrate from personal experience how distressed the mind of the workers had then become.

All that is past story now and we may well forget it. Let the workers and the lovers of Sarvodaya take up the work with earnestness and devotion this year and I am sure if they do so we can bring into sight a glimpse of the New India that is to be. The lakhs of women spinners in the Charkha Sangh will gladly offer a hank of yarn in Gandhiji's memory. What is required is to approach and explain them the significance of the act. And so will the students and teachers of the Nai Talim and other educational institutions. There are numerous institutions throughout India which owe their existence to Gandhiji. They can also contribute to this work. The members of the Congress and the Praja Socialist Party and others who grew up under Gandhiji's beneficent care and who swear by his name on every conceivable occasion can easily offer a hank each. Supposing we carried the message to every nook and corner of the country, we would easily collect 30 lakh *gundis* at the rate of one *gundi* for every hundred individuals, and the mounts

of yarn-offerings which are only a hope at the moment would be a veritable reality.

Last year, it was resolved to collect two and a half lakh *gundis*, but actually only a lakh were collected. That would suggest that 30 lakhs are still a far cry. I would say therefore that we should jointly strive to collect as many as we can. Young workers of Gujarat have declared the resolve to collect fifty thousand *gundis* this year. I wish they had resolved to collect a lakh and a quarter *gundis* at the minimum, at the rate of one for every hundred. But this is the first time they have made a resolve in this regard. I therefore consider this somewhat light resolve quite sufficient for them. Gandhiji belonged not only to India but to the whole world and yet he belonged more particularly to Gujarat. He did a very substantial part of his writing in Gujarati. And we cannot forget that though he was invited by several other cities, he chose for his *ashram* the *patnagar* i.e. the capital city of Gujarat, so that he may serve India through serving Gujarat. Therefore, I hope that, if not this year then next year, Gujarat will lead the way and guide the rest of India in this respect.

The Congress is faced with the problem of 'bogus' members at present and they do not know how exactly to eradicate this particular evil. If for their membership fee, they had prescribed productive labour instead of the four anna piece, as they do at present, much of this danger would have been removed, and besides, they would have gained something more worthwhile. Gandhiji had tried for it once, but he did not succeed. Though there is no lack of sermonizing about the dignity of labour, in practice all the plethora of speech about labour ends only in the

fact of the four-anna piece. However if the Sarvodayists and other lovers of Gandhian thought are able to make a success of the programme of yarn-offerings it will lead to labour being restored to its deserved place and a way will have been opened for others to follow suit.

Afflicted with poverty Mohan-das \* of old took to Lord Krishna a handful of rice which too he secured by begging. If this idea had occurred to him, he need not have begged; for, then in place of the rice procured through begging, he could have taken to Him self-spun yarn-*gundis* including his and those of the members of his household. And I have no doubt in my mind that the Lord would have been so highly pleased that instead of investing him with the doubtful favour of a golden city, He would have conferred on him the boon of self-sufficiency and the consequent freedom from the bondage of gold. The modern Sudama §, however, who willingly accepted poverty, found out this truth and has left it with us as his most precious gift. And who will be more unlucky than we, if we who are his children fail to realize the value of this gift ?

*Harijan*, 31-1-'53

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\* This refers to Sudama who was a devotee and friend of Lord Krishna. 'Mohan-das' literally means servant of Krishna.

§ This refers to Gandhiji.

## IN MEMORIAM

[Speech on the 30th January]

Though my heart is overwhelmed, I will try to speak a few words. It is now five years since Bapu left the mortal body and departed from our midst. Every one is fated to leave the body. It is a law which applies equally to the great and the small, to the *avatar* as well as the ordinary man. But the great leave something behind them, something which is of the essence of their life on earth and which endures. Of the great in India, we hear of Rama, Krishna and Buddha and many other names. We hear of such illustrious names outside India too, names like Zarthustra and Christ and Mohammed. But they all flourished in ages past and we did not see them. Some of their contemporaries saw them and made records of their doings and sayings as their sacred bequest to mankind. This has come down to us and we cherish it.

But in case of Bapu, we have had the opportunity to see him. Some of us had the good luck even of associating with him in his work. A number of people made changes in their lives by following his path. And India obtained its freedom by following his lead. We now observe his anniversary and do something as a mark of respect to his memory. We do so not for any good that it may do to him, for he by his own noble deeds has attained the highest state and we cannot hope to help him in any way by our remembrance. We remember him obviously for our own good.



So today when we remember him we should ponder what good we have done to ourselves by our remembrance of him over these five years. What have we achieved in our individual lives, and the collective life and in the life of the nation which has chosen to call him the Father of the Nation ? Have we done anything to improve our life ? How far did we try to tread the path he showed us ? We must reflect over all this and do our utmost to advance further along this road.

I was in the Ashram for 32 years before he passed away, and spent my time in meditation and contemplation and in rendering service to the villagers in the way he had pointed out. After he passed away, people asked me and I also felt the need to go out among the people and to wander about and see the country. First I travelled by rail and surveyed about half of our country. I was under the impression that in thus moving about I would be able to do some service. But the question haunted me : What should be done to implement the fundamental programme of Bapu ; how are we to achieve the social revolution, he envisaged, through Ahimsa ? And finally I came upon the *chintamani*, which is now before you in the form of Bhoodan Yajna and Sampattidan Yajna. I call it *chintamani* in the full sense of the term, for verily that which is capable of fulfilling all our needs is certainly entitled to be called *chintamani*. Bhoodan Yajna and Sampattidan Yajna together constitute a programme which, if it is carried forward to its full fruition, will help all the rest of constructive activities thrive and prosper. Failing that I fear they are bound to languish and wither away. Therefore I have been devoting myself

to this all-important work for the last two years. And I believe that I am doing just what Bapu would have done after independence. I wish that all the workers, irrespective of the party or the group they may belong to, should forget their separatist labels and devote themselves to this work for a year or two. If this is done, I am sure, we will have the real taste of the freedom we have won. Because, though the freedom is come, we have not had its taste and flavour. Now this cannot be until the poor man is not raised. He has reached the lowest rung of the ladder whence there can be no more going down. Indeed the depth of poverty and misery he has fallen to is so abysmal that we are finding it difficult to reach down to him and drag him up. But while they should be the first charge on our attention, I am sorry, efforts are not being made to raise them. My submission is that if we direct our efforts to raise them, all the rest will rise automatically. All the other efforts that are being made at present to raise the country benefit first the upper strata, next they benefit the middle ones, and then only the last ones. From what we have proposed ourselves to do, the benefit will first go to the last ones.

The Charkha, the Harijan uplift work, village industries, nature cure, his scheme of Nai Talim and all the various items of constructive activity which Bapu put forward were so devised as to touch these, the lower strata of our society and bring immediate benefit to them. Today I find that this approach to the work of national reconstruction is being neglected. Bhoodan work and Sampattidan work are in line with this fundamental approach. Therefore I demand that all parties should sink their differences and join

together in a common endeavour to make a success of this work.

I also demand that besides the workers, the big zamindars and landholders should also accept this work now as their own. Until now I had to go to them. Now after two years, I think I can ask them that they should voluntarily come forward to donate the land and themselves take up the responsibility for this work. Not only should they give, they should also ask others to give. I hope they will rise equal to the occasion and take up the task. I hope my voice will reach them and they will see that what I am asking them to do will bring in as much good to them as to the poor. It will give rise to Sarvodaya, i.e. the good of all.

I am glad that some of them have already taken to this work. They are only a few at present, but the number will increase. Bapu wanted the rich to convert themselves into trustees for the people. This is now time when they should act on his advice and prove themselves worthy of the trust of the people by working for the poor. While there are some, as I said, who are doing so, I am sorry, there are others who are still evicting the tenants from their lands. I request them with folded hands : Brothers, do not do so. This will displease God, which can only lead to all-round misery. We are a people wedded to faith in God and do not give ourselves to the quibblings of reason. We believe in what our Rishis have taught us. I have a feeling that the present-day famines and other calamities are all due to our sins. Let us then give up the sin and pledge ourselves to living a nobler life on this day. Let us give up the petty desire to aggrandize ourselves at the cost of others. And along with this, I want that as long as the land-problem remains

unsolved, we should continue to devote all our time and energy to this task and should give up attraction for other activities. Let us pledge ourselves completely to work out the solution of this problem and plunge into the work. I have already taken the pledge and I continue to repeat it. Today I again repeat it in your presence and in the presence of God and Bapu. I want that my friends should do the same. And then we will witness the rich fruitage which will blossom forth in our noble land out of such noble endeavour. I have no manner of doubt that it will bring about before long an unrivalled revolution in our country.

We have been doing this work only for the past two years. For a year, I was almost alone. Next year I had helpers and Sarva Seva Sangh also decided to take it up. The Congress, the Praja-Socialist Party and the Jan Sangh expressed their sympathy for it, though they have yet to translate this sympathy into action. In spite of the limited nature of the effort, we have been able to collect five lakh acres. Calculating at the rate of two hundred rupees per acre, we have made over at least ten crore rupees worth of property to the poor. And if we continue the effort, these ten crores can be multiplied a hundredfold. But calculation in terms of rupees does not give the true worth of what has been done. Because money runs out sooner or later, while land lasts. If so much has been achieved with so little of effort, it is obvious that if all of us apply ourselves to this momentous task we can bring about the economic revolution, we have been striving for, quite easily, peacefully and in an atmosphere of love and goodwill. May God give us and our co-workers the inspiration and the devotion to duty.

*Harijan, 28-2-'53*

## OUR UNIQUE MISSION

[From the opening speech at the Chandil Sammelan in Bihar]

We are a group of workers. On an occasion like this when we are meeting in a conference we do talk a little, but even this little talking which we permit ourselves is part of work. It is not empty talk nor mere eloquence unrelated to work. We work all the year round, offer what we have done to God and then gather here, compare our notes, exchange thoughts, and hope to draw and take away with us enough strength and inspiration for the next year's work. We shall then with this purpose in our view try to see the philosophy which lies behind our movement and inspires it and also examine and revise our programme of work, if necessary. Let us consider our approach, and the programme we have set ourselves and the final picture of what we wish to achieve.

### The World Situation

However remote the corner of the world we may be working in, today the world situation is not such that we may ignore it. We have to take into account the forces which are working in the world today. We have also got to look at the new currents which are emerging, and consider the ideas and motives which are in collision and conflict with one another. All these must be considered before we can take any step forward, be it ever so little. In the absence of a right view of things action becomes blind.

Today we find that there is too much of instability in the world. The situation is pregnant with

explosive dangers. We seem to be sitting on a volcano which may blow up any moment. I am not over-drawing the picture. I do not fear it nor do I intend to frighten you. I am only drawing your attention to the impending fearful reality. The shadow of disaster bestrides the world, there is no peace within or without.

Some two or three months back, some scholars and philosophers drawn from all over the world had met in Delhi in a seminar and they discussed the philosophy of non-violence. Some of their deliberations were reported in the daily Press. Pujya Rajendrababu had an occasion to observe in the course of its proceedings that no country in the world today had the courage to declare that it would do without the military. He expressed his regret that though we had the good fortune to hear Gandhiji's teachings from his own mouth and the privilege to work with him for a considerable time, even India was not prepared to launch on this bold venture. Our great leader Pandit Nehru has declared on numerous occasions that no problem of the world could be solved through physical might. Both of these our brothers on whom the people have placed the responsibility of governing and leading the country believe in the supremacy of non-violence with all their heart. They do not believe in violence. And yet it is strange that under the pressure of the existing conditions they are required to consider it their duty to build up an efficient military force and to make it ever more strong. Such is the situation with which we find ourselves hamstrung today. We believe in one thing, and yet we are driven to do things which are quite contrary to our belief. We desire that people in India and in the world should

change over from violence to non-violence, that they should love and not fear one another. We are fully convinced that only love can succeed and love alone can conquer. But our mind which pins its faith in what we call practical intelligence distrusts this truth which issues from the heart. The heart says : Violence can solve no problem ; it may appear to succeed at times but for one problem which it may appear to have solved, it will create a score of new ones. But the mind does not see so clearly. It is beset with the three *gunas* — qualities which obstruct true understanding. It sees partly and partly it does not see. Thus this turbid mind says, " We cannot do away with the army. The people, whose representatives we are, are not strong enough for that. Therefore, we as their representatives have a responsibility laid on us to build up and strengthen the army." This is the situation. The heart desires that we should do some constructive work, but the mind says we must build up the army and put into use such machines as will help us in doing so. When those who have faith in Charkha are asked whether they can build up and equip the war-machine through Charkha and village industries, they and we along with them, for we are included in them, are forced to reply in the negative.

### **An Impasse**

Let us take for instance the Community Projects. The Government wants to start these projects in five lakhs of villages. They have been introduced in only a small number of villages at present but the Government intends to extend them further and hopes to end the poverty and bring prosperity to our rural population. But supposing war breaks out tomorrow, no one, not even they who have started them, can say

that these projects will continue to work. The mind will then dominate the heart and say they should be wound up in face of this danger to our national existence. I am speaking by way of self-introspection. I am sure were we to occupy the position and shoulder the responsibility which they do, we would act much in the same manner as they. Whoever occupies office and wields governmental authority must needs think in a narrow, cramped, and a set circle. There can be no freedom of thinking for him. He finds himself, as it were, under an obligation to think and act as the world seems to be doing. Even big nations like America and Russia fear each other. Nations less big like India and Pakistan do likewise. We know this fear of one another leading to ever-growing dependence on military strength will not solve anything and yet we stick to it. Such is the strange situation which surrounds us. Not that we are hypocrites. It is helplessness from which we suffer, and though people may charge us with hypocrisy, in fact our condition calls for pity. The question then is how are we to get out of this impasse ?

### **Our Special Responsibility**

Rajendrababu just told us that it is the special responsibility of the Sarvodaya Samaj to find the way out of it, because people expect it of us. They expect that we will keep unflinchingly to our faith and create the necessary atmosphere to bring it into actual practice under the existing conditions. If the Sarvodaya Samaj does it, that will be the best help it can give to our Government. We have to work for creating a society which may function without any military force.



I am sometimes asked as to why I remain outside of the Government. Why do I not take up administrative responsibility ? I reply — when two bullocks are already yoked to the cart, how will the addition of a third one help it ? If instead I can repair the road for the cart to go on it right merrily, I can render it the greatest possible service. Those who are in the Government do not want us to do things which they are doing, but look to us for filling in if we can what is wanting in their work. We have to understand all this and bear it in our minds and devote ourselves to the kind of work which may create what I call स्वतंत्र लोकशक्ति or the self-reliant power of the people. Then only shall we be able to render real help to the Government and real service to our country.

### **The State and the People**

I said we should create — *swatantra loka-shakti* the self-reliant power of the people. Let me make it clear. It should be distinguished from the other two forms of power — the power of violence (हिंसाशक्ति) and the power of the State (दण्डशक्ति). The power of the people is the opposite of the power of violence, and though there is no such trenchant opposition between the power of the people and the power of the State, yet the two are different. There is of course an element of violence in the power of the State too, but inasmuch as this power has been entrusted to the State by the people, its character differs from that of naked violence and the two cannot be put together in the same class. We however intend to go further ahead of it and create conditions which will do away with the need to use even the power of the State. Then only could it be said of us that we have realized our स्वधर्म or essential duty and done it. On the contrary,

if we go after political power in the mistaken belief that it is the only way to serve the people, we will not only fail to fulfil the expectations people have of us but may also prove a burden to them.

I admit political power can be an instrument of service. That was why we sought it and accepted it and so long as the society needs it, we are not going to give it up. It is certainly an instrument of service, but not the kind of service which may be conducive to creating the conditions which will do away with the use of this particular sanction. I will give an illustration.

### **Kingdom of Kindness Our Aim**

Suppose there is a war going on. There will be some who will undertake to nurse the wounded soldiers. These men are full of love and sympathy and compassion for living beings. They do not make the distinction of friends and foes and volunteer to go to the front at mortal risk to their lives. They serve the sick and the wounded with the devotion of a mother to her child. There is no doubt that they are kind and their services are valuable. Nevertheless it should be clearly recognized that their service cannot contribute to the abolition of the war evil. Their kindness is only an aspect of a society which believes in war. Just as the wheels in the machine working apparently in different and even contrary directions are nonetheless parts of that machine contributing in different ways to the total working, so the killing of living soldiers and nursing of the wounded soldiers are both parts of the war-machine. Only the appearances they wear are different. Evidently one is a cruel job and the other is kind. However both the cruelty of the cruel and the kindness of the kind go to make up the war-

machine. To be scientifically true and frank, so long as we recognize war as legitimate, both the doctor who undertakes to treat the wounded and the soldier who kills are on the same footing. Both are guilty of war. This means that by mere acts of kindness we cannot hope to create the kingdom of kindness, that is, the kingdom where kindness will rule. We do not aim at doing acts of kindness but at creating a kingdom of kindness. Kindness can and does exist even in the kingdom of wickedness, but only as a pinch of salt does in food, — kind acts only add to the taste of that with which they are mixed. Such kindness brings a sort of flavour to the violence of war, it cannot end war. So if we merely indulge in such acts of kindness, as will make of it a handmaid to wickedness, acting in obedience to the latter, we will not have done our real work. We must therefore develop a longer view and desist from undertaking any activity merely because it appears to be a constructive act of service. Though we may thereby do service of a sort but it is not the service which is our special responsibility and which we have accepted as our *swadharma*.

### **Why Not through Legislation ?**

Let me give you another example. Many ask me : You seem to have considerable influence with the Government. Why do you not then press them to pass a suitable legislation and thus bring about the distribution of land without compensation ? I reply, I do not stand in the way of legislation. If however this does not satisfy you and you want more from me, I may tell you that whatever the measure of success I may achieve in my work, it will surely facilitate the passing of such legislation. I am creating the atmosphere which will smoothen the way for it. But there

I must stop. If I go a step further and start repeating that our objective cannot be achieved except through legislation, then it means I have strayed from my duty, the duty imposed on me by the particular path that I have chosen to go. My duty is clear. It demands that without taking recourse to legislation we should be able to bring about a change of heart among the people, so that they may voluntarily distribute land without waiting for the legislation. Is it because of legislation that mothers suckle their children ? There is then such a power as love in the hearts of men which enriches human life. Man lives on love, he is born through love and through love is he sustained in his life and finally when he makes ready to depart from here and looks around to catch a sight of his dear ones it is love which consoles him and strengthens him to start on his unknown journey. If inspite of such overwhelming evidence of the power of love on every side, I do not endeavour to enlarge the bounds of this force so as to make it the basis of social life, if instead I merely keep harping on legislation, I fail to discharge my duty and I falsify the hope of the Government. I therefore want to devote myself to the creation of *jana-shakti* ; the forging of the sanction of enlightened masses, — a power which is opposed to the force of violence and different from the authority of the State.

### **The Khadi Board**

I will give you another example. The Government has recently constituted a Khadi Board with a view to helping Khadi. Pandit Nehru remarked he was surprised that what should have taken place four years ago was happening after so much delay. Whatever may have caused the delay, now that the Board

has been constituted and the Government wants to raise the production of Khadi, it becomes our work, — the work of the Charkha Sangh to help the Government, especially because the Charkha Sangh has long experience in that line. And yet I feel that though as citizens and experts we must offer whatever help we can to them, we cannot lose ourselves into it completely. Because, we cannot serve Khadi as we want to do in this way. We must keep our conception and our aim of Khadi pure and unsullied, and render help to the Government in promoting the production of Khadi only secondarily, while continuing to work for Khadi in our own way. We should seek ways and means to put an end to the violence of war and yet be prepared to go to serve the wounded soldiers, in case war still breaks out. We cannot refuse to do that, though we cannot forget that it is not our real work. Our Khadi work will have for its aim the establishment of the village-raj. This time, a few days ago, when Pandit Nehru came to see me he asked me for my views. I told him that if there is anything we want from the Government for Khadi and village industries it is this: Just as we believe that the knowledge of reading and writing is an essential part of a citizen's equipment and therefore undertake the responsibility to provide facilities for educating all our people in this regard — it is granted that circumstances may prevent the Government from fulfilling this responsibility in full; but then there will be this sense of failure and the consequent urge for greater striving in the right direction — so should the Government agree, at least in principle, that every Indian citizen must be trained in spinning. It may not find it possible to give effect to this responsibility, but

then it should accept the view that those who do not know spinning are not educated. We do not want the Government to help us with money. Acceptance of this demand will be enough help for us. You will note that I made only this demand of him and no more. Had I gone further and asked that the Government should undertake to impose Khadi on the people, I would have transgressed the limits of my position. Because it would mean that I have forgotten my mission which is to build up *loka-shakti* — popular power, as distinguished from *danda-shakti* — the coercive power of the State.

I have given you these two examples, one of Bhoodan and the other of Khadi, to illustrate the difference between our method of work and that of the Government. A democratic government may use its *danda-shakti* in solving these problems, and none can object to it. But that will not create *loka-shakti*, though it may succeed in creating wealth and prosperity. Such is the outlook behind our work. Naturally our method of work must accord with it. It is clear that the way we will proceed about our work will be marked by a certain distinction in so far as it will help the people develop freedom from dependence on the State. Look at it from this point of view and you will see that our work should proceed on the basis of — one, *vichar-shasan* or peaceful conversion of people to our view by making them think about it, and two, *kartritva-vibhajan* or distribution of work among the individuals without creating an administrative authority.

*Vichar-shasan* means the readiness on our part to understand the other person's point of view and to explain ours to him. In no case shall we seek to impose

our view on anyone. We will rather insist that they accept it only after they are convinced of its correctness. The peculiar set-up of the Sarvodaya Samaj has led some people to describe it as a loose organization. But it is not true. Such a thing cannot work. It is rather an organization, in which we rely only on the power of thought as our sole instrument for our work. We neither give orders nor take orders. On the contrary we hold friendly consultations. The Koran says of the devotees of the Lord that they do their work by mutual consultation. I will rejoice if a person refuses to act on my advice because he does not approve of it. If however he acts on it without understanding it I will be sad. This is the way we will work for our objective, and I am sure that the organization that will build itself up in this way will far surpass any, however efficient and disciplined. I do not deny that a disciplined organization using authority to enforce its will has some power. It certainly has power, but not the power to produce good. If this is borne home to us we will realize the high importance of the propagation of thought as a part of our programme. This makes it clear why the Buddha started the institution of the *bhikshus*, and Shankaracharya that of the *yatis*. They were expected to carry on a ceaseless campaign for the propagation of right thought. But the creation of *sanghas* led also to some evil results. So while we are not going to set up any *sanghas*, we must have workers who will move about among the people—even as an ever-flowing stream of water—and carry to them thoughts and ideas inspiring them to nobler life. People may perhaps ignore us or not listen to us in the beginning. But that need not depress us, rather it should spur us to

greater effort. Such must be our zeal to preach our mission and such our faith in it. I am sorry to say this aspect of our work is not receiving the attention it deserves. Many of us are imprisoned, so to say, in the various institutions where they work. The institutions are quite important, but the proper attitude towards an institution should be one of regard and respect and not of attachment. The institutions should carry on their work but some of the workers should always be moving among the people while some stay at the centre and work. If we do not build up our work after this pattern, the thought we stand for will lose its active power, and *vichar-shasan* i.e. winning over people to our view and way of life, will become impossible.

The Bihar people say with a sense of pride to which they are perfectly entitled that it was the Bihar Congress which first took up the Bhoodan work. The All India Congress at Hyderabad took it up only afterwards. But let us see how exactly it works. It all begins with a circular letter from above urging on the Committees below that Congressmen must co-operate with the Bhoodan work. The Ganga arises in the Himalayas and flows down to Haridwar and then to Gadhmutkeshwar and it remains the same Ganga, however far it may flow. In the same way this circular letter which arises from the A. I. C. C. office goes first to the provincial committees and from there to the district committees and so on and it remains the same paper circular. A species can only produce its like. In the same way, I once humorously remarked about it, circular letters can only bring forth circular letters. After all some one must come forward to take up work and go to the villages. We have got to collect 25 lakh



acres and though it comes only to five acres per village which looks quite easy, yet there must be workers to go to the villages and explain our mission to them.

But this we hesitate to do. We shrink from the prospect of having to go round so many villages and in our impatience we develop a liking for the short cut to our objective. We then want that there must be legislation for it. But though legislation would be welcome, it is not for us to raise that cry. Our own natural duty (स्वधर्म) would be to keep faith in the power of thought to move the people and to go from village to village explaining and convincing the people of the truth of our mission. We cannot complain — how long shall we go on explaining? Because as devotees of Ahimsa that is the only way open to us for achieving our ends. I think I have made sufficiently clear the importance of *vichar-shasan* to us as an instrument of our work.

The other instrument of our work, as I said earlier, is *kartritva-vibhajan*, or the distribution of work among the individuals. There should be no concentration of the power to act and execute at any one centre. Every village should be enabled to develop it. I therefore want that the village must have the power to decide what things it will import or what not. If a village decides that it will use *ghani*-oil and mill-oil should not therefore be allowed into its area, it must have the power to enforce its decision. The Government, however, will object to this suggestion on the ground that they cannot allow a State to grow within a State.

But there can be no freedom from dependence on the military if we refuse to do so. Freedom from dependence on armed might can come only by follow-

ing the policy which God has adopted in regard to creation. He has distributed intelligence to each one of His creation — to the scorpion, the snake, the tiger, and the man. And He has advised them to seek guidance from their intelligence and act. And so the world goes on without His having to worry Himself about it. Indeed He has so far removed Himself from the scene that some of us are led even to doubt His existence. In the same way we should strive to create a State whose very existence may be in doubt because it will not need to exercise its authority. Then only will we be said to have a non-violent State.

So with this end in view we make the demand for investing the villages with the power to manage their affairs so as to convert them into village republics. We also want that the villagers should equip themselves for shouldering this responsibility. This again raises a problem which would need the building up of *loka-shakti*. The villagers must wake up to the realization of their duty and decide what things they will produce in the village and then ask the Government to ban the import of those things which thwart their efforts. If the Government does not come to their help, they should be bold enough to stand up against the Government. Such resistance by the people against the Government will be of great help to the latter because that would pave the way for doing away with the need for the military. The centre can never develop enough intelligence for governing all our numberless villages well and wisely. It is simply impossible. Therefore instead of a body of planners, howsoever competent, for the whole nation, every village should be enabled to become its own planner. The Central Government would only come in to help

this village planning wherever and whenever it is approached to extend such help. This is what we mean by *kartritva-vibhajan* or the decentralization of work.

Let me illustrate the point further. In regard to the problem of redistribution of land, suggestions are often made to fix the ceiling. It would be noted that these suggestions are themselves an outcome of the awakening brought about by the Bhoodan Movement. But as in the case of a building the flooring comes earlier and is more important than the ceiling, so also in regard to the distribution of land we must first fix the lowest limit of the land that a cultivator should own. And why do I want this first? — because I want *kartritva-vibhajan*. The labourers today labour at their jobs but they have no *kartritva*, e.g. the initiative and the power to act. They work like lifeless machines. We want that they should work not only with their hands but also with their intelligence. Others, the capitalists for example, may have more intelligence than these poor labourers. But we cannot forgo all the vast store of intelligence of our numberless peasants and labourers for the greater good of our country. We should therefore provide for the utilization of all this intelligence of our toiling population and plan accordingly. Land-distribution is a part of this plan to train the people in the use of their intelligence and in shouldering their individual responsibilities in the social whole. This is an instance of the *kartritva-vibhajan*.

I have dealt with the various aspects of our work. I explained the ideological background from which our work proceeds, the means and methods which we must adopt, and I have also given you the general

direction of our programme. I will now tell you something of the mechanism of our work in relation to our institutions.

### **Our Two Institutions**

We have two institutions: One is Sarva Seva Sangh and the other is Sarvodaya Samaj. The latter will work in an impersonal way as a word expressive of an idea-force, while the former will work in a concrete manner. Complementary to each other, they will advance our cause together. Sarva Seva Sangh will not be a loose organization but a well-knit one. While Sarvodaya Samaj, as explained earlier, will not be an organization as such. It will be a sort of free association of those who think and who are inclined to abide by and follow such enlightened thought. The members of the Sarvodaya Samaj must be thinking men and women. And we should find ways and means which may help us to do so. We aim at creating a society where thought and not a set discipline imposed from without will be our supreme guiding principle. The members of the Sarvodaya Samaj must therefore try for the propagation of thought among the people. One of the things which we should emphasize in this connection is the need for the propagation of our literature. People should be encouraged to study our ideas and think over them. Study centres should be opened at different places by the members of the Sarvodaya Samaj which would provide for a comparative study of our ideas and thought along with other ideological systems. This is about Sarvodaya Samaj. As to the Sarva Seva Sangh, it should not be a mere congeries of different constructive institutions, but strive to achieve a homogeneity of purpose and programme. I should confess we have not been able

to do much in this direction. The institutions must change their forms so as to accord with this need. The older forms will not do now.

I will give you an example of how this lack of homogeneity affects our institutions and sets at naught the good which they may be capable of doing to the people. You will please note that I am not doing it in the spirit of fault-finding. Take the instance of the Hindustani Prachar Sabha, Wardha. Imagine what is happening there. Some students—the number might have gone down nowadays because students are required to learn both the Hindi and Urdu scripts for which the prevailing atmosphere is not favourable—come there and learn the courses prescribed for the various examinations. Now if the Sangh were to achieve homogeneity, the students would learn not only the prescribed courses but receive training in other items of constructive work also. They must devote a part of their time to agricultural work and spinning and cooking. Piecemeal work will not produce the strength and the active power which our institutions need. Every institution must therefore integrate its particular piece of work with the rest of the constructive programme. Lack of this integral conception of our work is the main reason behind the failure of the institutions to produce power and strength. The Sarva Seva Sangh therefore must strive for homogeneity in its working.

### **Bhoodan Work**

I will now speak a few words about the Bhoodan work. Our attitude in regard to this work must be that of total devotion. There should be earnestness not only in our speech but also in our mental attitude.

We want to transfer five crore acres from the present owners to the landless by the year 1957 A.D. And I have firm belief that we can do so if all of us take up this work in the right spirit. I say — all of us, which includes not only us who are known as the followers of Sarvodaya but all those who accept it as valuable, such as the Congressmen and the Praja-Socialists. It will be a glorious achievement if we are able to do it without legislation with the aid of *jana-shakti* alone, i.e. as a result of the voluntary efforts of the people. I will then dance with joy. This will be ideal. But then we may not achieve such perfect success and may have to do it partly with the help of legislation. In any case, our emphasis must be on doing it mainly with *jana-shakti*.

This joint endeavour by all parties in furtherance of a common objective will lead to some very desirable results. There are a number of political parties at present and each party has a considerable number of good men in its following and these parties fight against one another and waste much valuable energy. It is like a war between Bhishma and Arjun who were both of them good men. With the success of our programme all good men will be brought closer together on one side, so that when the election takes place, it will not be between one good man and another, but between all good men ranged on one side and those who oppose progress on the other. It will then be a war between Rama and Ravana — Rama representing the forces of good and Ravana those of evil, resulting in the vanquishment of evil. The Government which will then emerge will be very strong and possessed of tremendous power to do good to the people.

## Sampattidan Yajna

Along with the Bhoodan work, I have recently launched on another programme—the Sampattidan Yajna. It is necessary for the fulfilment of the Bhoodan Yajna. We cannot achieve our object of economic independence and economic equality unless we give effect to Sampattidan. I knew it from the beginning but I chose to follow the formula which says—Attend ye to the root, and all else will grow automatically. The land-problem was more fundamental than any other. So we carried on only Bhoodan Yajna and that still remains our main occupation. But when I came to Bihar and we decided to solve the land-problem of this province on a big scale I felt that it was now time to start the Sampattidan Yajna. I have already explained some aspects of this work elsewhere in some of my speeches and writings. Here it is enough to say that in regard to this work also we intend to proceed on the basis of *kartritva-vibhajan*. The money, which is donated will remain with the donor, but he will spend it in accordance with our instructions. I do not wish to widen this programme and give it the form of a social movement. It is to be done through personal approach to individuals. We have to touch his heart and impress his mind and convert not only him but also other members of his family, so that he may accept the pledge of Sampattidan voluntarily and gladly. The donor should never be hustled into the acceptance, he should rather be restrained from making a precipitate decision because the pledge requires him to continue the donation year after year throughout his life. I will not say any more about it here. I will only request

those of you who have wealth to think over it and join it.

### Yarn-offering

Another thing, besides these two, which we have been doing is *sutanjali*, i.e. yarn-offerings in Gandhiji's memory. It is a thing pregnant with tremendous power, only we have not yet recognized it. We want the people to offer *sutanjali* as a sign of the realization on one's part of one's responsibility to add to the wealth of the country by agreeing to do physical labour. I look on it as a vote for Sarvodaya. The *sutanjali* work will be of great help in inculcating the dignity of labour among our people. The work is not difficult provided we go to the villages and explain to the people what it means. I envisage another important use for *sutanjali*. Until now we have been conducting our institutions with the help of money from our friends and sympathizers among the rich. There was nothing wrong in it. But now times have changed, we are now in the age of the supremacy of labour. It is a welcome change and we should help it. One of the ways in which we can do so is to run our institutions on the basis of labour. If they cannot attain self-sufficiency with the labour of their workers and require outside help, then they should seek this help also in the form of labour. *Sutanjali* will then enable us to run our institutions without any dependence on money and to produce spirited workers.

I have touched almost all the aspects of whatever I had to say. We will be discussing many other things here but I hope you will think over the points I have placed before you and bear them in your mind while you carry on your work over the next year.



In the end I will caution you against one thing. We are neither a sect nor a party. Therefore the word 'Sarvodayists' which is often used to describe us is misleading. We are simply men, human beings like other human beings. Political parties have their different labels which may continue because they are useful to them. But we are not a party. If anything we are 'a third power', not the third power of political phraseology, which some political-minded persons desire to bring about as the way out from being entangled in the American or the Russian Bloc, but the third power which is opposed to violence — *himsa-shakti* and different from the power of the State — *danda-shakti*.

*Harijan*, 2, 9, 16-5-'53

## 17

### IN CONFERENCE WITH SARVODAYA WORKERS

[Speech on the morning of March 9, at the Chandil Sarvodaya Sammelan]

#### I

#### SARVODAYA AND POLITICS

I propose to discuss and place before you my views on the following three questions: (i) our attitude towards Government schemes and the various political parties in the country; (ii) the way we should plan and regulate our effort in order to step up the Bhoodan campaign, and (iii) the defects and deficiencies which we should guard against. I will leave the third for the evening and limit myself just now only to the first two.

Speaking about the Bhoodan movement in the course of my *yatra*, I do not just content myself with

saying only what is necessary to give an impetus to our present work. Bhoodan is after all a particular manifestation of the Sarvodaya ideal for which we stand and towards which all our efforts are directed. And Sarvodaya being an all-inclusive ideal embracing the whole of life, I naturally dwell on many other subjects besides Bhoodan. At times it so happens that I speak very little about Bhoodan and much more about other questions which have a bearing on our work and which therefore demand our attention. Sometimes these questions crop up because people want to know what we think about them. And I welcome this because it accords with my nature which does not like setting any limits to the range of inquiry, and because this raises our activity from the level of a campaign for a particular objective to that of a full and free propagation of knowledge.

### **The Five-Year Plan**

A question which has figured quite often during such discussions is : What is our attitude towards the Five-Year Plan and the Community Projects, as also towards the various political parties and their different ideologies? I have my own way of dealing with such questions—I just refer to the points of agreement between their programme and ours. A friend once remarked that this was not the correct way of dealing with such questions; what was required was to bring out the points of disagreement. Since some of you may also share the doubt, I will also explain, as I proceed, the importance of this particular approach in dealing with the ideologies and programmes of different parties in the country.

### **Our Non-violent Attitude**

Let us first consider our attitude in regard to the

Five-Year Plan. Our main objection against this Plan is that it is based on a different outlook, — on an outlook which is far removed from ours. This is the basic defect ; all others are included in it. I placed this objection before the Planning Commission as clearly as I could and they tried to understand my view-point. They even tried to make some adjustments and you will find that in the new report they have introduced a number of modifications in the original plan. However, the difference remains and is bound to remain because, as I said, their outlook is different from ours. However my avoiding to dwell on points of difference beyond what is necessary for clarity of thinking, creates the impression that on the whole I am for the Plan, that it has my approval. And this impression is not wrong. This attitude of approval to a thing based, on our own admission, on an outlook which is different from ours springs from our desire to prevent *buddhi-bheda* — confusion in the mind of the people. Today we may, if we decide to oppose the Plan, retard its progress. But this is not the same thing as the capacity for construction. We have not yet enough hold over the people to place our own programme before them and to get it implemented by them. I therefore think it improper, from the point of view of non-violence, to use our influence in creating *buddhi-bheda* — confusion, and preventing even the good points from being given effect to. The fact is a government depends on *danda-shakti* — the coercive power of law and must from its very nature remain incapable of going much beyond what is warranted by the circumstances existing at a particular time. As such, no matter how good the plan made by the Government, it will always fall short of our ideal and

expectation. Therefore, as followers of non-violence, it is our duty to express our approval for the good points in any such plan and desist from creating confusion.

There is another vital consideration in adopting this approach to such questions. Quite often when we criticize anybody for anything, we not only criticize the thing in question but go further and attack his *bona fides* also. It is evident that this is unjust. Besides, we thereby confer on him the right to suspect our *bona fides* also, and thus injure our own interests.

### **Government and Capitalism**

I know, and at times I also say so, that the Government is very much under the influence of Capitalism. However this is not because they want Capitalism, but because they think there is no alternative under the existing circumstances and it would therefore be useful to utilize the intelligence and ability of the Capitalists, and partly because they share some of the views of Capitalism. I say this not only of the present Government but also of the Communists. Our plan aims at the decentralization both of production and distribution. But the Communists do not countenance decentralization in respect of production. There is hardly any difference on this point between the Capitalists and those who call themselves leftists, for they both accept centralized production by means of big machines. And because this is a central feature of Capitalism, Communists themselves might be called Capitalists at least in this regard. It is only we who do not countenance Capitalism in any form. So if you consider the differences between our views and those of the Government in this way, you get a clearer understanding of the questions involved, without

falling into the error of doubting anybody's *bona fides*. Given the ideology which they accept and the limitations of the circumstances under which they work, even you and I would act very much as they do, were we to occupy their place. We cannot therefore doubt their *bona fides*. Hence our good wishes for what good the Government is doing.

### **Our Attitude of Helpful Co-operation**

But as I explained to you in my speech the day before yesterday, we have our own goal and the way leading to that goal, and we should not let ourselves be drawn or deflected away from our chosen path. We must continue to go ahead in our own direction. People ask me how far they should co-operate with the Government plans. I say to them, we should certainly co-operate in those plans which we approve of, but we must keep ourselves free. We cannot accept any of these plans and projects as our own and get entangled in them. We may give to Government our advice if and when sought and may occasionally help it when there is need, but it will be a mistake to make its plans any of our responsibilities. This is my view. But our Sarvodaya Samaj is based on freedom and *sewakas* are free to think for themselves. Some *sewakas* consider the projects to be good enough and they have even lent their services to the Government in order to work for them. There are others who reject them as being totally ruinous to the country. There is a third section of workers who regard them as good in part and are prepared to help the Government if the latter would agree to certain conditions. My own attitude is, as I told you, to go our own way like the 'elephant' in Kabir's well-known *bhajan*, devoting all our energy and time chiefly to our chosen

mission. When we take to criticizing others we waste a good deal of energy. I therefore think that both criticizing others and getting involved in what is not our own work are undesirable and eventually detrimental to our cause.

### **Political Parties**

As regards the related question of our policy towards the different political parties, I am inclined to take the view that they should cease as different parties and combine to form a united front made up of all good and honest people in the country carrying out commonly agreed programmes. And to that end I try to put before the people a programme of work which may be acceptable to all and in which all can join forgetting their differences. This will tend to draw the parties nearer one another with the result that their differences will gradually shrink and the points of agreement increase. Now we have such a programme in Bhoodan which is acceptable to all, which helps the country go forward and which makes for the growth of *jana-shakti* — the inherent strength of the people. If all these parties take it up in the right spirit, we may hope that the next elections in 1957 will not be, as at present, between good and honest people opposing one another but between all of them ranged on the one side and those who oppose progress on the other.

### **Western Democracy**

But Western democracy which we are practising in our country at present believes that there must be two parties for its successful working. It holds that the co-operative opposition between them will keep the nation going on the right path, and act as a deterrent and a corrective to the defects which the

Government may develop at any time. I think that while this view of democracy has its advantages, it also gives rise to certain evils which we should try to eradicate.

### **India's Political Experience**

India's political experience finds its culmination in our unique institution of Gram-Panchayat, which was based on the unanimity of the five, that is, all the members in the council. Whereas the present democracy is based on the principle of reaching a decision by a majority vote and so gives rise to what is called the problem of minorities. And this problem cannot be solved unless we adopt the principle of the unanimity among all persons of honesty and goodwill.

### **Our Way of Common Agreement**

We should therefore direct our efforts towards enlightening the people and finding out a programme acceptable to all men of goodwill and honesty. And this should not prove difficult because the differences which divide the good are only superficial, and one can always find a core of common agreement which can serve as a basis for a common programme acceptable to all. The differences should be left out of the programme of work. They should be discussed and debated but not included in the programme of work. I hold the view that a thing on which the good differ among themselves is not worthy of implementation. Only such programmes should be placed before the people on which the good are in agreement.

Here the question can well be raised as to who is a good man. I will not go into that question now. I will only urge on you to deem it our duty to bridge the gulf between different parties. The Gita has said about it that all the differences we see are only on the

surface, at bottom there is unity and we should try to seize that. Then only can we create the atmosphere of unity. Differences in views there will always be, but in the field of action we must aim at unity.

In this respect the Hindu thought offers a most instructive lesson. Hinduism includes many diverse philosophies, a few of which are even atheistic and they attack and refute one another in very strong terms. Thus there is full freedom of thought. But there is unanimity in regard to the sphere of conduct. All prescribe the same code of virtuous conduct. So in the field of action we must proceed on the basis of general agreement leaving out the differences for further enquiry and discussion. But the programme of work which we take up for implementation must be one which has the approval of all men of good intent.

*Harijan, 23-5-'53*

## II

### OUR IMMEDIATE PROGRAMME

[Speech on March 9, at the Chandil Sammelan]

I will now take up the question of how we should organize our efforts in order to accelerate the pace of our work. This movement, as you are aware, started about two years ago in Telangana. The friend who gave us the first donation in the village of its origin is present here in this Conference. The Harijans of the place asked for eighty acres of land and on my suggestion that someone should come forward to satisfy their demand, he offered them one hundred acres. You can meet this friend and learn from him how and in what atmosphere the whole thing originated in that



village. To me this appeared to be a signal from God and I decided to start the campaign. It is evident that in the absence of this pointer I could not have thought of this solution of the land-problem. Even if it had occurred to me I could not have made bold to undertake it, because it meant collecting crores of acres and in all conscience I could not presume that I would be able to rouse the people to an active sense of duty to an extent necessary for this purpose. My friends and colleagues too, had I consulted them, would not have advised me to take up this programme. All the same I took it up with faith in God and decided to try my hand at it. Thus I began to ask for land.

And as I went on with the campaign, each day that passed brought out hidden meanings and disclosed new possibilities of this movement. Thus I grew in my own understanding of its vast potentialities and had what I may call a vision—a new revelation of the power of non-violence. However a doubt still lingered—not in my mind, but in that of others: It was feared that the success in Telangana might be due to the special conditions prevailing in that part, and may fail to repeat where conditions were different. Soon afterwards I was required to go to Delhi following an invitation from Pandit Nehru and I decided to avail myself of the opportunity it provided to see how it worked under changed conditions. I set out to Delhi on foot and all along the way I explained the message of Bhoodan to the people. The result was that the people showed the same enthusiasm for it as they had done in Telangana. It proved that the conditions in Telangana were no way special and the reason for the success was rather to be found in the fact that time-spirit itself was in its favour.

After Delhi I undertook to tour Uttar Pradesh. Here I asked the workers to fix a target of collection for the province and pledge themselves to achieve it. The Uttar Pradesh workers who were very few in number worked heroically and put in tremendous efforts for ten months without any respite, and as work proceeded it was found that the pledge was not beyond fulfilment. Today, as you know, they have announced in the Conference that it is well-nigh fulfilled. Not only that, they have now decided to raise their quota from five lakh to eleven lakh acres. This was in Uttar Pradesh.

Then I thought if I continue to tour the country in this way, I will get two to three lakh acres every year, but at this rate, in five to six years which I would need for touring India, I will have collected at the most ten to twenty lakh acres only. Collecting ten to twenty lakh acres, however, cannot solve the problem. Times were moving fast and if we did not keep pace with them and solve the problem within a specified time, our efforts would be in vain ; that is, though we might succeed in bringing help and relief to some, here and there, yet we would fail in achieving our object of ushering in a new social order based on justice. It was therefore evident that somewhere we must concentrate and try for the full solution of the problem. And I felt that Bihar should be an ideal place for this experiment. It was neither a very big province nor a small one. The reserve of goodwill among its people, I thought, will be — if not greater — not less than elsewhere. Besides, it was the place from where Buddha preached his message of Ahimsa to the world and my faith suggested to me that it must therefore prove specially favourable for this new

experiment in Ahimsa. With these considerations in my mind I decided to try for the full solution of the land-problem in Bihar. And the decision was made known to the people the day I entered Bihar.

Our initial experience in Bihar was not quite encouraging. It appeared as though we had come up against a rock. But it did not depress me. For two months, in spite of our best efforts, the results were very meagre, so much so that in the Saran District we could raise only a thousand acres in spite of the fact that our President, who hails from that district, himself issued an appeal urging the people to do their utmost for the success of Bhoodan in Bihar and specially in Saran. There were days when we got only two acres or three acres. Nevertheless I persisted in my determination in making Bihar a test-case for proving the efficacy of Bhoodan as the weapon for working out the socio-economic revolution. And when I entered the Gaya District, I resolved that this district, which was the scene of Lord Buddha's austerities and which is sacred to crores of Hindus as the place where they offer Shraddha to their forbears, should be asked to collect one lakh acres as the first instalment. I expressed this feeling to the workers who approved of it and accepted to work for it. You know that this has borne fruit, and encouraged by this their success the workers have now fixed their target at four lakh acres.

Meanwhile I have been reflecting over the situation to find out how best we should plan our efforts so as to achieve the maximum result in the minimum time ; and experience has led me to the conclusion that for some time we should concentrate all our energy on Bihar, and even in Bihar on a few selected districts. If these districts succeed in solving the land-

problem in their respective areas without recourse to legislation, albeit with the help of the Government, there is no reason why the same should not happen in other parts of India. These districts will serve as an example to the rest of India, which will strengthen the faith of the workers and the people in the practicability of this programme. And once this faith is brought into existence and begins to work as an active impulse the problem will be solved in no time.

I want therefore that for a year from now you should give all your time and energy to this thing, each in his province. And this you should do in the spirit of dedication, leaving everything else—even good things. I am not telling you anything new. It is a recognized precept in *bhakti-marg*—the way of devotion. The devotees are asked to abandon not only what is not virtuous but also what is virtuous. The Gita says : Come to me as thy sole refuge abandoning all *dharma*s. This is a characteristic of the way of devotion that it demands total dedication. And our way is a way of devotion, for we seek to introduce love and harmony into the society, which cannot be done except through devotion. We want to generate love. Then this becomes our chief duty for which we should be prepared to abandon all other smaller duties.

Next I want that while you organize work in your respective provinces, a few workers from every province, who can be spared for the purpose, should also come to Bihar for two or three months. It will benefit us in two ways. First, the presence of these workers in Bihar will improve the atmosphere of this place which is at the moment highly contaminated by political rivalries. Secondly, they will learn how to

work under such atmosphere which will be useful to them when they go back.

Thirdly, I want that Bihar workers should also concentrate the greater part of their effort on the few selected districts. If they do so and are able to achieve complete success in those parts, that will give a tremendous impetus to our work. People ask me whether it would be in the interest of Bhoodan work, if I thus remain tied to Bihar. Is it a right strategy? I say to them that it would undoubtedly help the cause of our movement if we can accomplish our work in a given area within a specified time and present the same as an example before the people. The practicability of our programme will have been vindicated and the rest will then be merely a matter of time and the number of workers required in proportion to the quantity of the work to be done. The need of the hour therefore is to produce such an example as early as we can.

I had told the people of Bihar that I would not leave this province until the problem here was finally solved. But I want that the next conference should not meet here again. I will therefore request the workers of this province to fulfil the quota of 32 lakh acres and thus enable me to proceed to another province.

We had decided to collect 25 lakh acres by the time of the next Sammelan. Supposing that Bihar alone is able to collect 32 lakh acres, our pledge will be more than fulfilled. This revolution will then spread to other provinces and our work will be easily and swiftly accomplished. It cannot be that while Bihar does so much, other parts of India will just look on and remain where they are. This is against

human psychology. Human society is after all a unity and a change in one part must affect the rest.

*Harijan*, 30-5-'53

### III

#### TO THE WORKERS

[Concluding speech on the evening of 9-3-'53 at the Chandil Sarvodaya Sammelan]

I have discussed with the workers from different provinces the work they did last year in their respective areas. And though with more careful organization we could have done still better yet there is no reason for any dissatisfaction over what has been achieved. The resolution which was read out yesterday refers to the seven or eight lakh acres of land which were collected last year with a sense of just pride. And though in the course of the discussions I had with the workers I at times admonished them in order to rouse them to greater effort, yet I am also full of admiration for them and acknowledge that those who worked for the success are entitled to great credit.

#### **Need for Introspection**

Next year we want to go further ahead and fulfil the target that we have adopted. It should not be difficult to do so. This year we had only eleven months for our work, next year we will have thirteen months. And since there is a greater awakening among the people and our work is now better planned and more organized than before, I hope that our efforts for collecting the required amount of land will succeed without much ado.

But our work is much more comprehensive and our aim more exalted than that. We will therefore do

some introspection, so that we may become worthy of our high responsibility. We should try to remove the faults we suffer from. And we should do so with absolute honesty without yielding to the temptation of looking for similar faults in others. It is not for us to seek satisfaction in the fact that there are others who have the same faults as we.

### **Reject Intolerance**

In this connection, the incident which occurred here yesterday may be regarded as an eye-opener. A friend wanted to place before us the question of the ill-treatment being accorded to the Bengali language in Bihar. He was overcome with excitement and said something which some of the audience did not like. They lost their patience and began to hoot the speaker. There were cries of 'sit down' from all sides. If they had kept calm, they could have won his heart. He had expressed his gratitude for being given the opportunity to speak. These cries, therefore, must have hurt him. We must remember that it is very difficult to unite the hearts and very easy to divide them. What made the occurrence more deplorable was the fact that this exhibition of temper was collective; it was not a thing between a few individuals which we might not note as serious. Nor was it just a chance occurrence. It was an expression of the vicious malady of intolerance which we suffer from.

### **Beware of Superiority Complex**

But the evil arises from something deeper than that. We seem to think that since we belong to the Sarvodaya Samaj and hold Sarvodaya views, we are in some ways more virtuous than others. I fear that some of us might be led into the mistake of considering it a thing of great merit to be a member of the

Sarvodaya Samaj or to hold Sarvodaya views irrespective of whether they act on them or not. It is evident that indulgence in this sort of self-deception will be very harmful to us. We aim at serving the world and the humanity and as servants of humanity it behoves us to cultivate utmost humility so that we may discharge our duty well. Otherwise if we develop a superiority complex we will come to grief like the Brahmans at one time. The Brahmans were given to the acquisition of knowledge but they became proud of it and developed a superiority complex which eventually proved their undoing. This intolerance and the pride from which it arises is, therefore, a great fault which we should guard against.

### **Need to Study and Contemplate**

There are other things which are not so much faults as shortcomings. One of these is that many of us neglect the study of ideas. We do not go to the root of things with the result that our thinking remains superficial. This has been an old complaint. When I refer to it I am not speaking of pure academic study without relation to work. But there are certain ideas behind our work and they are very deep. If we do not study them and fail to realize their profound content then the inspiration which keeps us working begins to pall and fade away. But I am sorry our workers do not seem to have given much heed to this aspect of our work. I once asked a worker if he had read a recent article by Gandhiji. He replied that he had not. When I said that the article was worth reading and he had better go through it, he answered, "What Gandhiji writes must always be worth reading. But I am doing his work and after all that is the essence of what he says. I may therefore forgo reading it if I



find no spare time for it." I then explained that if workers had no need to read it, Gandhiji too would not require to write it. He was also engaged in work, yet he found time to write something every week. We should know then that it might give us a new light and a new insight into things.

Some people justify this neglect of studying and thinking by citing Gandhiji's own words in their support. It is true that Gandhiji did say at times that while people read too much, what they really needed was to do work. But this statement was meant for those who read to no purpose and whiled away their time in useless speculation, not for those who work and hence have a real right to the acquisition of knowledge therethrough. Without it action loses its power and becomes insipid. The nature of our work and the position in which we have consequently placed ourselves is such that we need to think and meditate a great deal. We expect that if we are truly devoted to truth the people around us are bound to develop the same quality. This entails on us the responsibility to go deep into the Truth of ideas. We as Satyagrahis believe that if our heart is pure it must exercise a beneficent effect on the atmosphere around us. This idea is basic to Satyagraha ; the whole practice of Satyagraha rests on the acceptance of this idea. And if we accept this idea then we must be prepared to shoulder the responsibility which it involves. We should dive deep into the laws which govern life. If we do not do so, if we do not enter into the depth of the ideas we advocate, I may warn you that however much we may work, the way of life we preach and practise will not last in this land. It may last for us because we will keep hold of it by the strength of our

will, but it will not take root in India. Because India is a land of philosophy ; people here are used to search for the philosophic rationale of any conduct that may be preached. The Buddhist religion remained confined to practice. They instituted some social reforms, but did not go into the depth of philosophy. The result was that though India received its beneficent touch yet the Buddhist religion did not stay here for long. I mention this merely to show that this country does not tolerate any practice for very long unless it is supported by a profound philosophy. For example, we see that the Gita starts with the simple question whether Arjun is right in his reluctance to face the battle. And in seeking to answer this question the Gita covers the whole range of human life and thought. This is a characteristic of our land and of our people. We should cultivate the habit of deep thinking and going into the root of the ideas we hold and preach.

The third major defect which we suffer from is the lack of co-ordination in our work, to which I have already referred in my first speech. We have enough capacity and people expect much from us. But our institutions carry on their work almost in isolation from one another. The tendency is so far advanced that one does not know what the other is doing, and this is why we have failed to show much in the way of concrete result. We cannot produce light if one man has the lamp, another oil and a third the match-stick. These different factors have to be brought together for producing light and destroying darkness.

Let us, for instance, consider the Katai Mandals — spinning clubs — to see how the absence of this unity between different items of our activity leads to

frittering away of our energy. These *mandals* are started and the members gather together for spinning once a week and disperse after it is over. So it goes on and gradually their own inspiration weakens. About fifty *mandals* were started, twenty-five of them are defunct. The remaining twenty-five are working, but few care to know about them. The Gramodaya Sangh does not bother where they are and what they are doing. In the same way the Charkha Sangh does not think it any of its responsibility to feel concerned if Gramodaya Sangh fails in any of its ventures. This is how we are working at the present time. This is wrong. Every one knows that this is totally ineffective and yet it has continued for the last four or five years. I have thought it fit to draw your attention to this once again because we have now embarked on something which is very big and would require all our concentrated efforts for success.

However the question is receiving serious attention now and I am glad to inform you that all the different institutions will merge themselves in the Sarva Seva Sangh and the Sarva Seva Sangh will introduce homogeneity in the working of the different institutions. Centres of work run by these institutions will not only carry on their special activity but represent all other constructive activities also in due proportion — due proportion being determined by the qualifications and the aptitude of the worker in charge of the centre, as also by the demands of the local conditions.

In the end I will draw your attention to one thing more. I have come to the conclusion after a great deal of observation that the morning and evening prayers we hold have become a formal observance. I have

seen that they are carried on in many institutions as part of the routine — as a matter of good manners. Good manners are all right. But prayers offered as a matter of good manners cannot yield the experience which is the pleasant fruit of the prayers sincerely offered. Bapu taught us much in this regard through his life and also through his death. At the time he departed from here his mind was intent on prayer and merged in prayer did he leave his mortal frame. He uttered the Lord's name when the bullet struck him. This was not anything accidental. He was always wakeful and his prayer twice a day was not a formal affair ; he put his heart into it. He used to say his prayer continued with every breath that he took. This was not an expression of egotism or fancy but a central fact of his life. In our prayers while we observe the form we do not enter into the depth.

Not that one needs to do much in the way of outer work in order to be able to pray well. All the preparation is done within and that does not take much time ; it may well be done even in a minute's time. This we should do and I need not tell you that it will give us great strength. We should know that in the difficult tasks which lie ahead of us we can count upon no other strength than that of the support of God. If we do not put sincere faith in God we cannot hope to follow truth and other disciplines that we have accepted unflinchingly.

Yesterday Shankarrao said that while we were working for the actual betterment of life in this world *yatras* and *yajnas* in olden times were aimed at the attainment of heaven beyond this world. He was right in pointing out this difference between our attitude and that of the people in olden times. But we should

consider the point as to why they linked their efforts at virtue with the heaven beyond this world a little more closely. Suppose we ask a man to observe truth and tell him that this will also serve his interests more than dishonesty. He, however, points out to a situation under which he is sure to die if he opts for truth whereas he can easily save himself by telling a lie. Now what will they, who advocate unflinching loyalty to truth and forbid lying even in the interests of one's country or one's life, say to him? It was this difficulty which led the people of old whose approach was different from ours to link moral conduct with one's well-being in the other world. They said, if you tell a lie you may seem to gain in this world, but you shall lose a great deal more in the other. Besides, while the other world is permanent, life in this world is merely transitory. One should not then risk what is of permanent value for the sake of a transitory gain. One might say that this conception of the other world as the reason for unflinching loyalty to truth was rather immature. The correct explanation would be to say that recourse to lying, whatever the circumstances, cannot give inner satisfaction. However the main thing is to remain loyal to truth, and though we may hold that the inner satisfaction offers a more potent motive force for a steady devotion to truth, we cannot yet find fault with those who pinned their faith in the other world, because their aim was the same as ours.

The point is that we need support from within in order that we may remain steadfast in our devotion to truth and duty, and prayer can be of very great help in finding such support. I therefore want that we should strengthen our faith in God and put heart into our prayer so as to make it more living.

Finally we need workers who will work full time for at least a year in order to carry through the task which lies before us. Those of you who can do so will please send in their names to the Sarva Seva Sangh.

*Harijan*, 13-6-'53

#### IV

### THE MESSAGE OF THE CHANDIL CONFERENCE

[A Letter to a Worker]

The Chandil Conference has made for greater clarity of thought among our workers who will now realize the far-reaching implications of the Bhoodan Yajna and their role in its implementation more vividly than ever. That, to my mind, has been the main achievement of this Conference. Many constructive workers are occupied with their various normal activities. When Bhoodan work was launched they thought that one more activity had been added to the ones they were carrying on. The deliberations held at Chandil have now made it clear that what they were required to do was to wind up as many of their present activities as possible and plunge themselves in the Bhoodan work. The Bhoodan work does not mean just one more addition to their activities, but something which comprehends all of them and which is therefore entitled to claim their sole attention.

The old, experienced workers are limited in number. Hundreds of new workers will get an opportunity to help them in their work and receive necessary training. From the amount of enthusiasm that I find for this work in the country, I hope that new workers

will be forthcoming in sufficient number. They will also have to be trained for which arrangements should be provided by the Sarva Seva Sangh.

Collection of land-gifts is the least part of the work of Bhoodan Yajna. The main part of the work comes after that. The land collected will have to be distributed. Then, those who receive land will have to be provided with the wherewithal, so that they may start work, that is, they will have to be securely settled on the land. Then in the villages where land is received we will have to work for the establishment of Grama-rajya with Khadi, village industries, Nai Talim etc.

Where we have received or might receive uncultivated but cultivable land, efforts will have to be made for establishing new villages and help them settle down to new life. It will be necessary for this purpose to secure co-operation from all concerned, to rouse the people to a sense of their strength and create *jana-shakti*, i.e. democratic force, and seek all possible aid from Government which will have to be moved to see its duty.

The Bhoodan Yajna and the work following it cannot be carried to fulfilment without Sampattidan Yajna, i.e. sharing of property. This will call for efforts to explain to the people the idea of Sampattidan as an inescapable principle of social life and make them accept it.

The work we are out to do is as vast and extensive as it is deep and solid. This is Sarvodaya. Land is the foundation of this structure. Constructive workers are the builders. The Sampattidan Yajna provides the tools and the attainment of self-sufficiency in food and cloth represents the various items

through which the work proceeds to its fulfilment, and the people are the deity by enlisting whose goodwill and favour on our side, we will march to success. I hope that all lovers of Sarvodaya will, simultaneously and in concert, lend their entire might to the fulfilment of this great endeavour.

*Harizan*, 11-4-'53

## 18

### SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

[At a meeting of young Bhoodan workers at Gaya, Shri Vinoba answered various questions regarding Bhoodan, which are reproduced below. — Ed.]

**Q :** Do you want us to leave our colleges for Bhoodan work ?

**A :** I said you might leave them even if you had no intention to take up Bhoodan work. I did the same ; I left it in 1916. I hope you will outgrow the attraction for the college after a year of work outside. Those who do not may rejoin. For those who do not want the old type of college education but who desire to continue their studies, suitable arrangements for their education through Nai Talim methods may be made by the Sarva Seva Sangh. One or more such institutions may be started in every province. The students volunteering to take part in the Bhoodan work will be of three types : 1. Those who will work only during the vacation ; 2. Those who will leave the college for a year only for devoting themselves to this work, and 3. Those who will leave their colleges for good.

Tilak Maharaj, when he was in the college, was very weak physically. He therefore decided to leave



it for a year. He devoted this period for improving his health. Thus instead of four years he completed his college course in five years. But, as he used to say, he did not lose anything by it ; on the other hand it enabled him to brave all the sufferings which he was required to go through in his later life. And you know he had to suffer a lot.

Q : It is said that Bhoodan Yajna can successfully stop communism from spreading in India. Has the Communist Party in Telangana lost its previous hold over the people ?

A : Bhoodan work in Telangana was not practised on any extensive scale. What we did was only a beginning and then it was not pursued beyond where we left it. Besides, those who worked with us did not stand for the election. It was Congressmen who contested the elections against the Communists. The Communists were released from the jails just then following their change of policy. They had been in jails for two years, in some cases, even three years and naturally they were received as heroes. Therefore they won. Congressmen could not win by capitalizing our work and prestige, unless they had something of their own to show.

Then, stopping communism is not our concern. Ours is a positive ideology ; it is not an expedient useful for certain temporary ends. There is no disputing the fact that there is acute poverty in India, and we need to eradicate it. Now if this can be achieved by fair means, there is no reason why anyone should still think of employing foul means. A thirsty man, if he can get good, clean water, will not touch dirty water. If we are able to resolve our problem of

poverty through good means, we may be sure that communism will be automatically stopped. We collected twelve thousand acres of land in two months *during our tour through Telangana*. This was only a beginning. It should have been *continued and carried forward*. If they do it earnestly and vigorously even now, they can surely bring the people to have faith in this method as a better solvent of their miserable conditions.

Q : What do you think of the Indian Communists ?

A : It is a complete misnomer to call them Communists. I do not see in what they have done in India anything even remotely resembling communism. Whatever little they have done was done in Telangana ; and there continuously for two or three years murder, pillage and banditry were the order of the day. And the result was that peasants did not get anything at all. That is why I hold that the Communists in India are mere propagandists, and that they do no constructive work at all. They are no doubt very enthusiastic about propaganda. The Communists in India are not only materialists, they have also 'developed' what we may call a material intelligence — their intelligence is as dense as matter. Materialism is after all a plausible philosophical view. Hence it would not matter much, if they were merely materialists. But then they do not use their intelligence and plan their action according to what goes on in Russia. If Russia changes its line of action, they do likewise. They have no independent intelligence of their own. How can we have any opinion good or bad, about a person who is merely copying others ?

Communism with the Communists is not a living thought. They have turned it into a dogma based on a book. Like the Arya Samajists they pin their faith in that book and take leave of both the existing conditions in a given place and their intelligence. Actually there should be a proper synthesis between the book, the conditions and one's own reasoning. But they regard the book as their *Veda*. Had Marx been living today in India, he would have certainly changed his ideas. I tell the Communists that you may be Marxists, but Marx was not a Marxist. He was simply Marx and therefore he could change. The Communists have no knowledge of the ten thousand years of the development of Indian thought. Even assuming that this ancient Indian thought is defective in certain respects, its knowledge would still be necessary if only to know those defects. I therefore find that the Communists have two very serious defects: One, they are book-worshippers, and two, they are ignorant of the development of Indian thought.

Q : Do you think that Bhoodan work on such an extensive scale can be carried on efficiently without an organization to regulate and guide it ?

A : We are not against setting up an organization as such. You can form local organizations. But setting up an organization on an all-India scale involves enforcement of discipline and then, as we know from experience, everything becomes bogus. We want to keep clear of this great pitfall. A big organization, while it becomes useless so far as work is concerned, engenders a feeling of vanity in its followers. It then serves as label which people use for selfish ends. People tend to speak of themselves as Congressites or

Socialists and so on. Everybody seeks to build up his party and in effect isolates himself from the people in general. Instead of shaping the society after what they believe to be true and desirable, they just cut themselves away from it. Had we set up an independent organization of our own, we would not have received the co-operation that we are doing.

Q : The People's Government of China has taken tremendous strides in the past three years. Foreign visitors have felt simply amazed to see the progress achieved and they have praised it in glowing terms. Why cannot India adopt the Chinese way for bringing happiness to her people ?

A : People do praise China a great deal. But the change in China has been brought about through a political revolution. A political revolution has its own way of doing things. This revolution in China, we have to remember, was preceded by a long civil war extending over 30 years. Those who praise China ignore this aspect and confine themselves merely to the 2 or 3 years of constructive work following the revolution. Besides, the Government which takes over after a successful revolution has almost an absolute power put into its hands which the Government in India has not. The India Government has not enough army to go the Chinese way. Even at present they have to spend 60 per cent of their budget over the military. So there can be no question of expanding it. You will thus see that the Chinese example is not applicable to our country. But we do think that our Government can and should quicken its present pace of progress. But the Congress has now become the ruling party and therefore capitalists have also entered into its fold. The Government have not the

courage to go against them. And what is most important, they are not yet clear in their ideas and policies.

Q : Why does the India Government not nationalize big industries ?

A : One reason why they do not is that they do not believe in it. There is a strain of capitalism in their economic outlook. Moreover, it is not true that nationalization is bound to solve problems. Railways have been nationalized but that has not brought any remarkable advantage to the people. If the Government cannot use their present powers to the best account, what is the use of investing it with more power ? We cannot do much until people develop character. For example, there is a good deal of bribery going on in the administrative offices. If now we put more power into the hands of the officers, things may deteriorate still further. What we need therefore as a condition precedent to our success in our efforts is the mental and moral purification of the people so that their conduct may improve.

Q : How will capitalism be ended ?

A : Capitalism cannot be ended either by love or conflict, but by right thought. Conflict leads to ever more conflict which can only weaken both, while love also cannot bring about a change of things. Love brings forth enthusiasm, but only right thought can initiate and effect a revolution. That is why we do not beg for gifts, but demand a share to which the poor are rightfully entitled. We want the people to understand and accept the idea that in a just and equitable order of society, land must belong to all. We rely more than anything else on the force of this thought for furthering our cause. And yet if the conflict

becomes necessary, we will not avoid it. Conflict is also one of the factors of progress, but essentially it is propagation of right thought which alone is qualified to bring about a revolution.

Q : The Bhoodan work does not seem to create new leadership. It is rather giving a fresh lease of life to the old leaders.

A : Supposing that this is true, where is the harm in it ? If they approve of this thought and adopt it in their life, they will certainly get the leadership. But there is no harm in it. If it is only a pretence which they are putting up for ulterior motives, that would not help them. There is a proverb in Sanskrit which says, 'the advent of the Spring distinguishes the cuckoo from the crow.' In the same way this work will put the sincerity of the workers to severe test and unmask the pretenders before long. But it is not correct to say that the Bhoodan movement is not creating new leadership. It is a movement inspiring the spirit of sacrifice in society ; naturally therefore it is attracting new workers and throwing up a new leadership.

Q : You insist on good means,—why do you allow bad persons then in Bhoodan work ?

A : A bad man is not so for all time. It was believed of old that one born in a Brahmin family remained a Brahmin all his life, he cannot change. The question betrays such an idea. Change always goes on in man. Therefore we do not hold him either good or bad ; we only look to the means he employs. If a bad man gets into this movement and extorts land from people, land would not be forthcoming. If however anybody acts so, people will tell

him, this is not what Shri Vinoba says. The fellow will thus be nonplussed. Some say that any form of fear or favour might well be resorted to in the work. However, people will say for such persons that they do no honour to the band of Bhoodan workers. Thus, there is always going on in this movement a sifting of good and bad.

*Harijan*, 1-8-'53

## APPENDIX

### SAMPATTIDAN PLEDGE

[A specimen form of the pledge for the Sampattidan is reproduced below.]

Shri Vinobaji,

With a view to the furtherance and fulfilment of the economic revolution, which in its non-violent working follows the best traditions of our country, you have enjoined that in addition to land, people should now come forward to donate a sixth of their wealth and property also. This throws open the door to those also to associate themselves with your sacred mission, who could not do much so far because they did not possess land. In response to this call in the cause of *Daridranarayana*, I surrender the -th of my income to you and undertake to devote the same every year to social welfare work in such manner as you may desire me to do.

I will continue to send in regularly the annual account of my income to you or to the agent or body which you may empower for the said purpose.

I accept the responsibility of keeping whatever amount of money may accrue to the donated share in safe custody and to spend it according to your instructions.

To this pledge, willingly undertaken, I, as the Antaryami, i.e. the Inner Guide in me, am myself a



witness. I am conscious that I have to be faithful to my Antaryami.

May God help me.

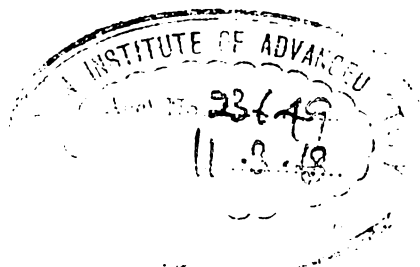
Attached herewith please find the statement of my wealth and property.

Date :

Sd.

Full Name :

Address :



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