



GANDHI'S HISTORIC MISSION

Vinoba

From 'Vinoba on Gandhi',
Edited by Kanti Shah

Abridged by Mohan Hirabai Hiralal
(mohanhh@gmail.com)

Translation revised by Ravi Badri

Published by

Vidarbha Bhoodan-Gramdan Sahayog Samiti,
C/o. Parag Cholkar

P-2 Laxminagar, Nagpur 440022

Tel. 9822565574 | Email: samyayog@rediffmail.com



A human ideal

Bapu (Gandhiji) was never tired of saying that he was imperfect, incomplete. It was true. He did not know how to say an untrue thing. He was a votary of truth. I have come across many great men who imagine that they are spiritually liberated, perfect men. I was never drawn to any of them. But the pull that Bapu, who considered himself imperfect, exercised on me was unique. I have never been influenced by those who claim to be perfect the way I was by Bapu.

We find in Bapu a great man who is in tune with the ancient tradition and yet represented the seeds of a new tradition. He was one who heralded a new era; a social thinker of the class of the law-givers and a great man overflowing with kindness and motherly love. Our country is given to hero-worship. We have become used to looking for divine attributes in great men. Gandhiji too is being subjected to attempts at deifying him. Many talk of him as if he were God. They place him in the category of Rama and Krishna. This is not right. One must not be a blind devotee of Gandhiji. He was a human being, and we should let him be so. Therein lies our good. He will then be an example before us. His life will present before the world a moral ideal, which it sorely needs. On the other hand, if we impose godhood upon him, no good would come of it and we would have lost a human ideal.

Sarvodaya: today's Brahma

We must take from great men, only their ideas. We must not become too attached to what is incidental in their lives. This is what a scripture also says. And we should derive from their words the noblest meaning they can bear. We should look for the subtle import of their words. In this age of science the Manu of the ancient times or even Marx won't do. I submit in all humility that even Gandhi taken at face value won't do.



The dominant idea of an age is the *Brahma* of that age. *Brahma* thus changes from age to age. Some time ago, the *Brahma* for us was Swaraj. Today it is Sarvodaya.

Gandhiji and Politics

The nearer the transfer of power approached, the farther the Congress drifted from Gandhiji. The two outlooks came sharply to differ. Pyarelal, in his remarkable work, 'The Last Phase', has given an account of the last days of Gandhiji. In those days, Gandhiji was often heard to say that all the values for which he had stood and fought were crumbling. When the winning of freedom was being celebrated in Delhi, Gandhiji was far away taking upon himself yet more severe penances. Gandhiji, the man in whose name millions had made sacrifices, had in the end to cry out, as Vyasa had cried out, "With arms uplifted I cry but no one listens to me". Like Vyasa, Gandhiji cried in wilderness.

People tell me that following Gandhiji, I should take up the task of spiritualizing politics. I tell them that I want to end politics itself. I have no desire to turn a stone into an image of the Lord and then worship it. Put the stone into your pocket, I say, and worship the God that dwells within. There was a time for deifying stones. I appreciate that. But worshipping a stone image and paying no attention to the hungry would not do in this age. That time is now gone.

Where business is conducted by creating divisions between majority and minority, we cannot spiritualize politics as it is. 'Spiritualization of politics' is a contradiction in terms. The words 'spiritualization' and 'politics' contradict each other. What we need is not the State but people governing themselves. How long this consummation will take, I do not know. But if there is anything worth striving for, it is this consummation. The world today is in the grips of the love of power. Even good and virtuous persons have come to believe that they will be able to do nothing without power or at least that



they will be able to work better if they have power. A number of Gandhiji's erstwhile co-workers are also deluded by this belief. They believe that whatever the conditions, they must shoulder the responsibility of governance.

Individuals who lay emphasis on individual freedom and non-violence also hold that service can be rendered in the transitional period only through political power. To this I have to say that every period was and is a transitional period, and would be a transitional period. We must make up our minds and begin to do today what must be done. He who compromises with life cannot establish non-violence in the world. But even some Gandhians are not able to rid themselves of this lure for power. "Our teacher", they say, "attached great importance to political activity. We also should pay attention to the political power." I must emphatically declare that what Gandhiji pursued was all along from first to last was *lokniti*, and not *rajniti* (politics). If anyone wants to contradict me, he is welcome to convince me.

If you think that Gandhiji was a practitioner of politics, consider his last years. After the attainment of Independence, if he had so desired, who could have stopped him from becoming, like Mr. Jinnah, the Governor-General of India? Instead, he took the road to Noakhali. When festivities were going on in Delhi in celebration of Independence, he was trekking in that region. Take another instance. Gandhiji said that the Viceregal Lodge would be converted into a hospital. These words sum up a non-violent revolution. His lifelong pursuit was for *lokniti*. He could therefore speak of converting the Viceregal Lodge into a hospital after Independence.

Just think, had Gandhiji wanted the pursuit of politics, would he have advised the Congress as he did, to transform itself into a '*Lok-sevak Sangh*' (an organization of the servants of the people)? You will remember that just before his death, Gandhiji had issued the directive that the Congress having achieved its aim of attaining political Independence for the country should convert itself into a *Lok-sevak Sangh* and take up the service of the masses.



It was his last will and testament as regards Congress and was written just a day before his death. In it he had said that although the Congress had secured political Independence, social, economic and moral Independence was yet to be achieved for the common people. It was Bapu's wish that for furtherance of this work a *Lok-sevak Sangh* should be formed, and the Congress should completely merge into it, and that in addition all the organisations that he had established for constructive work such as Khadi and village industries, basic education, women's welfare, service of the Harijans (dalits), Hindu-Muslim unity, Shanti Sena and economic freedom, and all the workers working for these causes should bring themselves under it. He felt that such an organization should cut across all parties and sects and pledge itself to the task of making every village in India self-reliant. What Gandhiji had wanted was to make State power subordinate to people's power.

Had Gandhiji's advice been followed, the Congress would have become the largest social service organization in the country. The political purpose for which the Congress had come into being had been accomplished. For its future Gandhiji had a grand, sublime conception. He wanted that the Congress should undergo a metamorphosis and dedicate itself to constructive work, so that it would not only retain the credit it had acquired as a result of its work in the past but add to it. It was a grand idea. When I ponder over it, I think that it is like an Upanishadic vision. Unless genius is of the highest order, such a conception is not possible. Had Gandhiji's advice been taken seriously, we would not have found ourselves in the present predicament.

Dissolution of State

The State power should gradually wither away and the people's power, which is independent, has roots in compassion and foundation on perfect equality should ultimately take its place. We should work for the rise of such people's power, which is opposed to violence and different from the coercive power of the State. This is the essence of Gandhian thought, as I have



understood it. This implies a fundamental transformation of politics and development of *lokniti*. It is important to understand that so long as the word 'politics' retains currency and the notions concerning it hold, it is impossible to bring about its spiritualization. Rather, spirituality would take a beating. The only way we can make politics truthful is its metamorphosis into *lokniti*. "I am Brahmin" or "I belong to such and such linguistic group", or "I am a follower of such and such religion" or "I support such and such political party" are labels which have to be discarded, if we wish to use our faculties for developing the power of non-violence. If we wish to strengthen the power of non-violence, it is imperative to rise above all sorts of conditioning.

In the preface to my booklet 'Swarajya-Shastra', there occurs words, '*Na tvaham kamaye rajyam*' (I do not desire a kingdom) and again '*yatemahi swarajye*' (We shall work for Swaraj). Kingdom means the power of the State and Swarajya means the power that belongs to every human being. When everyone feels that he is the ruler of his affairs, power belongs to all. It is a unique thing. It is *lokniti*, call it *Swarajya* (self-rule) or *Sarvarjaya* (rule of all). To bring it about, politics has to be destroyed. He who cuts the tree does not climb it. He, who would lop the branches, will climb the tree. But we want to uproot the tree of politics. So we have to keep clear of it when we cut it. This applies not only to India but to the whole world. A handful of men today have come to possess power. We have to destroy this scheme of things. The main goal for those who have faith in Gandhiji's teaching should therefore be to awaken the masses and cause withering away of the State. Without this, we cannot establish the society of Gandhiji's conception. This is the revolutionary aim before the Sarvodaya Movement today.

Three significant contributions of India

The first is the idea of the unity of all religious, not as a matter of theory, but as an experienced truth, which Sri Ramakrishna propounded. Everyone of course glibly talks about every religion containing something good. But to



enter the predilections of different religions with a detached mind and devotion, to experience them in their essence and then to be able to declare that at heart they are one, that there is no conflict, was a unique gift to the world.

The second idea is that of Sri Aurobindo. I believe that only this idea can endure in the present age of science. The idea is that so long as we do not rise above our petty minds and experience the Divine and then descend to the level of the people to serve them, we cannot render true service. This was a great thought. True, people had for thousands of years talked of eradicating the mind and Yogis have resorted to various practices for the purpose. But Sri Aurobindo was the first to declare that only when the whole of humankind makes an effort to rise above the mind can humankind be saved.

The third idea is that of Satyagraha. It was Gandhiji's gift to the world. He demonstrated to the world that universal spiritual values that were as yet restricted to the position of desired objectives for individual life can also be applied successfully at a social level. This is what Satyagraha is about. It means 'Insistence on Truth through non-violent means'. Satyagraha is an experiment in non-violence.

Satyagraha

Fearlessness means fearing no one and frightening no one. It is easy to see that non-violence has a crucial place in Satyagraha, for frequently both sides in a conflict fight in the name of truth. Both swear by truth. Both devoutly pray for their own victory. It is possible that both the opposing sides may claim to be non-violent and may resort to fasting and such other tactics against the antagonist. Then we must put aside the question of truth and non-violence and apply the test of equimindedness. Indeed truth, non-violence and equimindedness together make up a whole idea. Where there is equimindedness, only then can non-violence and truth exist. The chief characteristic of Satyagraha is to practise what we believe in vigilantly and



constantly and to be ever ready to understand the thinking of others. Thought in the beginning, thought in the middle and thought in the end is what the Satyagraha is made of.

To hear of someone having resorted to Satyagraha should bring us comfort. Unfortunately, one sees the opposite happening. When Satyagraha starts, people become apprehensive. Some even want to counter it. It evokes reactions similar to those of war. But Satyagraha is not like war; it is by nature just the opposite of war. In war, one side wins while the other side loses. In Satyagraha, both sides win. In war, the breach between the two sides becomes wider. In Satyagraha, it narrows and the opponents come nearer to each other. Satyagraha opens the door to understanding and it induces thinking. War stultifies thought while in Satyagraha, thought blossoms in the patient effort to make the other side see the truth of one's position. If the other side will not understand in one way, you have to discover some other way. This is the highest and the purest form of Satyagraha. This faith in the power of knowledge, of truth, is Satyagraha. Satyagraha is not the way of obstruction or coercion.

Serious thought should be brought to bear on the various aspects of Satyagraha and its underlying ideas should be minutely examined. Its theory and practice must be in constant evolution. Gandhiji used to say that Satyagraha was a continuously developing science and that we had so far not succeeded in fully developing it, that it would take time. He was farsighted. He had vision. He knew the limitations of his time and possibilities of the time to come. That is why he often said that there was no such thing as Gandhism, nor should there be. He considered Gandhism a harmful word and pointed out that linking his name with Satyagraha might give inspiration to a few but it would surely be a limiting factor.



Daridranarayana

Gandhiji used to say that for him the place for penance was not the Himalayas, but was where poverty was rampant. He had to fight that poverty, remove exploitation, put an end to suffering. So long as there was even a single person who was deprived of the necessities of life, he would know no peace and he would not sit quiet. Gandhiji has provided us a shining example of the service of *Daridranarayanan* (God in the form of the poor). We must now think a little further. We now want that the word '*daridra*' (poor) should go and only '*Narayana*' should remain. I do not want that there should be poor people in the world so that I may serve them. I do not want God to appear in the form of poverty-stricken humanity in order to give me a chance of service. I want to worship God directly. Let no one be poor and no one be rich. There is no room for inequality amongst the children of God.

Significance of Charkha

There was a comprehensive philosophy behind the spinning wheel. It was not merely a means of temporary relief. It was meant to develop a new non-violent economy for the country in tune with the prevalent conditions. Gandhiji's ideas were lofty and at the same time down to earth. He had a keen understanding of the problems of the villagers and the temper of the masses. That is why he advocated production by the masses rather than mass production. He visualized hundreds of millions of hands working and producing with the tools available in a decentralized economic order. Then alone, Gandhiji said, could the villages of India become self-reliant.

The world needs peace potential far more than it does war potential. We shall have to undertake enterprises which promote peace, which offer possibilities for peace, which have a potentiality for peace.



Towards Gram-swaraj (village self-rule)

The world today is groaning under injustice, oppression and exploitation. It is being squeezed in the grip of power. It is haunted by the curse of wars and armaments. Science which should have been a boon has been turned into a blight, for science has sold itself to power, money and narrow self-interest.

Sarvodaya points the way to deliverance from this catastrophe. Very early Gandhiji had realized that the development of science and technology would open the door to centralization of power and wealth and this centralized power and wealth would enslave humankind. He therefore gave the call for village swaraj.

He had said that if India were to develop on non-violent lines, that is, in the direction of freedom from exploitation and injustice, a good many things would have to be decentralized. But if centralization were to go apace, ever-increasing violence would become inescapable for keeping it intact and for defending it. A non-violent social order could be established only on the foundations of self-sufficient and self-reliant village units.

The present movement of Sarvodaya and Gramdan aims at bringing about just such village swaraj. To change the existing situation it endeavours to generate a revolutionary consciousness among the people to awaken and organise them, and to foster justice and brotherhood among people, so that the need for centralization is done away with and every village becomes capable of shaking off the yoke of power and property.

Keep inquiring / studying

The thing to understand is that while work must always go on, the study of thoughts must also go on unceasingly. It will not do merely to go on working. While work progresses, we must also give thought to the question whether there is also development in its underlying principles. Many a time it is noticed that whereas in quantitative terms the work has gained the ideological foundation gets constricted. We must be always careful to see that the inner



flame is kept burning. The ideological foundation is the soul of work. That should be in perpetual development. It should never be permitted to suffer a decline

Without depth of thought and study, work becomes lifeless and the organization pursuing such work, however large it may be, is reduced to a body without life. The life-blood of our organizations is drying up. The reason for this is the neglect of study. If we seek a total and comprehensive outlook on life, we must develop what is unique in it and improve where it is deficient. If we want to stabilize the inner power of the philosophy of Sarvodaya we shall have to remove its shortcomings. We will have to get into the depths of the philosophy and commit ourselves to deep study. If the fundamental principles are not studied, we would be carried away by the powerful currents in the world and lose sight of our principles. But if our study continues, if the stream of thought is kept flowing, our work will continue to retain vitality.

New work

No one should hang on to the tail of Gandhiji's outward doings. He was not a man to go by the book. He was constantly developing his thought. Yet we go only by his incidental activity.

We are in a new age. We are faced with new tasks. It is not necessary that we play on the same flute that Gandhiji played. We must consider what is right in the present context and act accordingly. Today if a master looks after his servant well and feeds him well, we are not satisfied. We say that though the servant is well cared for, he is being denied an all-round development of his personality. If a husband lovingly supports his wife and the wife is always obedient to the husband doing his bidding in everything and both thus faithfully do their different duties, this cannot ensure an integrated development of the couple. Only when both of them assume both the roles can full development of both be assured. The present society does need



devotion, but it is that between friends, and not that between the servant and the master.

Such was Gandhiji's life-view. This is a wholly new view. In the light of this view, even the best way of ordering social affairs in the past fails to satisfy us today. The *varna* system of the ancient times may have been a good thing for those times; today it is wholly out of date. We are all part of God. No one is big, no one is small. Therefore we must not oppress others and we must not let ourselves be oppressed.

Gandhiji has said that the yardstick of truth should not be shortened to measure little men. It means, in short, that we should not assume that the life of Gandhiji or any other great man gives the full measure of truth. It is possible that a great life reflects not the whole light of truth, but only a part of it. Bapu therefore said that the truth as manifested in a great man's life should be regarded as only a fraction of the whole truth. For if we mistake a part for the whole, we shall miss a great deal. You should not accept anything merely on Gandhiji's authority. You should think for yourself and decide.

Some queries

Q.: Gandhiji undertook Salt Satyagraha. Salt was a symbol for Gandhiji. Is Gramdan similarly a symbol?

Vinoba: To Bapu salt was only a symbol. Gramdan is more than a symbol. It is the foundation of village swaraj.

Q.: Gandhiji said that the spinning wheel was the pivot of all constructing work. You now say that Gramdan should be considered as the pivot. You have thus put something else in place of Bapu's pivot.

Vinoba: 'Bapu's pivot', 'Bapu's charkha'! No one seems to say 'my pivot', 'my charkha'. Bapu's charkha, Bapu's vows, Bapu's non-violence! So long as these remain only Bapu's, they will remain abstract ideas. One can understand when you say, 'my non-violence', 'my vows'. But it is true that there is a shift



in emphasis: while Bapu gave central place to the spinning wheel, I give central place to Gramdan. Such differences leading to sectarianism are common in India. But Bapu was deadly against sectarianism.

Bhoodan, which began earlier, too lacked profundity. But when we arrived at the idea of Gramdan, we have secured the foundation. On this foundation, we can erect the whole edifice of our work. If we forget this foundation, where will the charkha stand? If we forget the base, i.e., Gramdan, no one will pay any attention to charkha. Spinning will become a sectarian activity. If we want to pursue an integrated programme of constructive work such as Bapu wanted, we can do so only on the basis of Gramdan.

Bapu's compassion

Gandhiji, like Buddha, was driven by enormous compassion. Suppose Gandhiji had kept himself free of the attachment born of compassion, supposing the situation had induced him to say to his co-workers, "Friends, I withdraw myself from direct personal guidance. Put your heads together and do what you collectively decide. Take up only the programme over which there is unanimity of opinion and leave aside for the time being what you cannot agree about." Had he had adopted this attitude during the last five or seven years of his life, what would have been the consequence? His co-workers would have got into the habit of working by consensus and the country would have gained.

But Bapu was not able to do this because of his immense compassion. That compassion made him provide direct personal guidance right up to the end. This compassion made him keep alive his relationship with his co-workers and the Congress even to the last moments of his life. As you see, towards the end, Gandhiji's co-workers deserted him, yet he did not desert them. In this, he was moved more by compassion than by truth. Because of attachment born of compassion even in his last moments he did not go against his comrades and agreed to what they wanted. He acquiesced in it.



Bapu had many times said that partition of India into India and Pakistan was like cutting up a live human being. Yet he acquiesced in it in the end. His view had not changed. But he was apprehensive that if he insisted on his view everything would be jeopardized. So he accepted Partition. This was because of his deep compassion.

Thus compassion gained an upper hand in a person dedicated to truth. To this extent truth suffered. This is the tragedy of Bapu's life, not the bullet he received. We cannot say what might have happened if Bapu had insisted on what unquestionably was the truth. Probably even so he might have been assassinated. But Bapu felt that if he did not say "yes" to partition, his comrades would be ruined. They would be crushed between the British Government on one side and Gandhi on the other. In my opinion, this compassionate thought made him agree to partition.

All this has to be understood. If we can understand this, we shall be able to learn something from past experiences. Ideas should be continually examined. All thoughts should be subjected to scrutiny and be purged of fallacy and evil intention. When there is this constant churning of thought we shall not find the loss of zest, which we notice today.

After accepting any idea after due consideration, it should become our own and not continue to remain someone else's. Thus Gandhiji's thought should not remain his only; it should become our own thought. Only when this happens can we follow and apply that idea with self-confidence. The idea might have come to us through Gandhiji; once we have liked it and accepted it, it should become our own. If we do this, we shall never become despondent, we shall not lack inspiration and we shall be able to work with confidence and constancy.

Keeness for reorientation

After his release from jail for the last time in 1945, Gandhiji repeatedly used the expression 'integral thinking'. Work should become integrated, he



emphasized again and again. This does not mean sewing together a number of disparate bits. Integration is not sewing, but weaving. The various constructive activities should become woven like warp and weft. Only then could power be generated. This was Gandhiji's recurring theme in his last days.

Swaraj had been won. But Gandhiji was not satisfied. The swaraj that had come had not brought fulfilment of his hopes—neither about khadi and village industries, nor about peace, nor about non-violence. He remained dissatisfied concerning the fulfilment of programmes, which were the cornerstone of his life's work: viz., freeing the masses from exploitation through khadi and village industries and from the coercive power of the State through non-violence and satyagraha. Pyarelal's remarkable work 'The Last Phase' brings this out very vividly. Gandhiji's mind was thus busy thinking out ways of giving a new orientation to his various programmes.

But he did not get the opportunity for this. He had called a conference at Sevagram. He had intended to explain something to his co-workers. The conference did meet but only after he was no more; when he was not there to guide us.

Search for light

After Bapu's departure, I began thinking about what I must do. I realized that I would have to leave my place. Seeing the predicament Pandit Nehru was in at the Sevagram conference and in response to his demand, I declared that I would, by way of an experiment, give six months to the work of resettlement of refugees. Some constructive workers had used the occasion to ask for governmental help for their work. But I told Pandit Nehru that I did not expect any help from him; on the contrary I should be happy if I could help him in his work in any way.

Thus, along with a few companions, I engaged myself in the work of resettlement of refugees. To describe the experience I had during these six



months would require a volume. My work was one of liaison like that of Narada Muni. I saw that often Panditji had one view on some matter while those who were charged with the execution there had quite another. And the matter would therefore be left hanging. When I would say something, Panditji would at once say: "I do accept it. I have already issued orders three months previously." Still those orders had not been executed. Such was the anarchical situation!

I worked very hard in those days. But the experience convinced me that we would not reach our goal by this kind of work. So I gave it up.

The question again was what I should do. I saw that Bapu's departure had plunged the whole country into despair. Constructive workers had become dispirited. They had lost all hope of being able to achieve what they wanted. They were all but convinced that Gandhian thought would soon cease to exist, that no one would listen to them anymore, that it was the beginning of a new epoch in which non-violence would not prosper. Sardar Patel had said in a speech, 'People did not listen even to Gandhiji. Who will listen to us? The country is now free and we must develop industries having war potential.'

I thought that the world needs 'peace potential' more than 'war potential'. We need to develop activities having peace potential. What could be such activities?

My search for light took me to Telangana. I knew that light does exist somewhere, but it was eluding me. It was in Telangana that I saw this light. I took it as a sign from God. It was as if a voice were saying: "Do you or do you not have faith in non-violence? If you shrink or become a prey to doubt you will have to give up your faith in non-violence."

Thus began the work of Bhoodan (land-gift). It was the beginning of a new process. It touched the heart of India. Thousands and hundreds of thousands of acres of land were received. (According to the latest data, 25 lakh acres of Bhoodan land has been distributed.—Ed.)



Not a movement, but an ascension

From Bhoodan emerged Gramdan: reordering of the village on a new foundation. It was not individual charity alone but it was reorganization of the village community through collective resolve and effort. This was a total programme for village swaraj. Slowly it spread. Today Gramdan has progressed to Prakhand-dan (Gramdan of most of the villages in a block), Zilla-dan (Gramdan of most of the villages in a district) and Prant-dan (Gramdan of most of the villages in a state). It is not just a movement; I call it an ascension. The higher we go the wider becomes the sweep of the vision. New peaks come into sight. Also the journey becomes more and more arduous.

All this has been achieved in a matter of some eighteen years (since 1951). It is no small matter. Consider the Swaraj movement. The Congress began its work in 1885 and the word 'Swaraj' made its appearance in 1906. Till then the work had been confined to serving the poor and criticizing the Government. In 1906, at the Calcutta session of the Congress, Dadabhai Naoroji declared that India's ills could not be cured except through Swaraj. Thus it took 21 years to reach the word 'Swaraj'. Then Gokhale and Tilak took up the word and gave it greater currency. Then Gandhiji came and the movement for Swaraj became intensified. In 1921, Gandhiji talked of 'Swaraj in one year'. This, to be sure did not come off, but it created a climate. Ultimately, Swaraj came in 1947, i.e., sixty two years after the founding of the Congress. Thus we may say that what we have achieved in the past eighteen years is not a small thing. The idea of reorganizing society on non-violent lines was developed and it received popular sanction. We reached a number of villages and procured signatures of millions on the Gramdan pledge. Dhirenbhai asserts that during Gandhiji's lifetime we had not gone into villages in such a big way.

The idea of Sarvodaya has thus arrived at an important milestone. True, we are nowhere near the end of the journey, but if God grants it this thing is



going to advance our fundamental idea. It provides the groundwork, the foundation, for realizing Bapu's dream of village Swaraj. A possibility has been created for bringing to fruition Bapu's half-fulfilled hopes. We have a unique opportunity to tend from the roots the establishment of a non-violent social order. Those who believe in the idea of Sarvodaya are presented with a challenge.

Association, awareness and patience

In the Gita, the Lord speaks of *samghat* (association), *chetana* (consciousness) and *dhriti* (patience). He is describing the body. It has form, organs, and a mind. But Lord Krishna felt that these constituents do not fully describe the body. So he introduced a new principle of *samghat*.

Bapu set up a number of constructive organizations. They did not have close co-ordination. Different constructive activities were pursued separately. They lacked the necessary degree of coordination. Therefore, Bapu in his last days talked of integration. He had become convinced that nothing would be achieved without bringing them together. He suggested that all the organizations doing constructive work should merge into one large organization. If you cut off the tongue, it will not give off speech. Cut off the ears from the body and they will not hear. Each organ, to perform its function, has to remain an integral part of the body. Similarly, all the different programmes should form one co-ordinated pattern. Through Gramdan, we arrive at the village unit, which provides the foundation for all of Bapu's constructive programmes.

After association, the Lord mentions consciousness. Even when everything has been organized together it will serve no purpose without consciousness. If all the institutions of constructive work are brought together but the inspiration to change the existing social order is lacking, what good can that do? It is at this stage that Gramdan movement comes in, carrying the torch of revolution and imbuing our activities with consciousness.



So we have association and consciousness. But the picture is not complete. Krishna adds to it patience, perseverance. We must patiently keep at the work without being deflected. Without steadfastness, no revolution is possible. It is in this way that we must pursue our programme based on Gramdan with perseverance, awareness and organization.

The implications of Gramdan

People often say that Gramdan has been so far only a paper transaction. It is true. These pledges have got to be fulfilled. I ask, what is all the voting, which forms governments? The votes are on the paper only. Democracy is just a drama. Still, as you see, something gets done through this.

But in Gramdan, people themselves take a pledge. They have taken a pledge collectively on a wide scale. It is now to be fulfilled. We have to bring into being Gram Sabhas (village assemblies consisting of all the adult villagers) and pursue the work on the basis of consensus. One-twentieth part of the land has to be given to the landless. We have to have all land vested in the Gram Sabha. We have to set up a Gram Kosh (village fund) by collecting one-fortieth portion of everyone's income. We have to set afoot a campaign to free the village from vices of all kinds and from police and courts. We have to organize a Shanti Sena in the village. We have to see to it that peace is maintained in the village and if quarrels occur, they are settled in the village itself. All this must be done speedily. If we can devise and execute such a comprehensive plan, we shall see a great power generated. The 'paper' transactions of Gramdans contain all these possibilities. The ballots papers do not generate such people's power.

Without Gramdan, a village cannot become a family, and we get no basis for our integrated work. In the new age the world would be a single unit. India will be one of its provinces, Gujarat will be no more than a district and the village will be a family. At present, the family unit is too small. We have got to enlarge it to the size of the village. Therefore, we must first concentrate



on Gramdan and convert the village into a family. Only then shall we have the right to talk about world peace. Only then shall we be fit for the modern age. Only if there is peace in the village can the cause of world peace be advanced.

Thus we have to think in terms of the slogan '*Jai Jagat*' (Victory to the world) on one hand and 'Gramdan' on the other. Without thinking about the village community, nothing worthwhile would happen. After the manner of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics, we must make each village a Sarvodaya Republic. Let these units then federate into a Union of Sarvodaya Republics. Only then can peace potential be realized.

Today the army is the ultimate sanction of all States, whether they be Welfare States, Socialist States or Communist States. They are all birds of the same feathers. The world is in their vicious grip. All of them rely on armies; even democracy, for fear of foreign invasions and internal disorder, is no exception. A 'democracy', which relies on army, is hardly fit to be termed 'democracy'. As long as a democracy depends on the army, it has to do exactly what Communism and Capitalism do. It also has to entrust all power to one person and place its faith in the army. Thus the vicious circle will continue. Arms and armies are today sole basis of all States. We have to free the world from this. There is a great power in Gramdan pledges. They have great 'peace potential'.

Core of our thought

We have to awaken the power of the people. "Our destiny is not in our hands"—this is a notion at which we have to strike. Someone asked me, "Do you want power to change hands?" I said, "Yes, I do."

The State power before swaraj was not deep-rooted. There might have been two to four lakhs of Englishmen. They came from such a great distance and ruled the country. All that was needed to dislodge them was for us to wake up. We said, 'Quit India' and they had to go. The Freedom Movement



was, in this sense, a negative movement. Whereas the present movement is to transform power of the people into their rule.

This is our main thesis. We have to explain to the people that their destiny is in their own hands. We want to abolish State Power and replace it by people's own rule. We have called it '*lokniti*'. If we keep this goal before our eyes and steadfastly work to reach it, we shall certainly succeed.

I am convinced that Gramdan provides the foundation for the idea of Sarvodaya that Gandhiji had placed before us. We shall raise the edifice of Sarvodaya on this foundation. Those who follow Gandhiji should therefore dedicate themselves to this work entirely. We must understand that Gramdan represents the quintessence of the Gandhian thought. Gandhian thought will scale new heights only when society is reorganized on the basis of non-violence.

