

SCIENCE & SELF-KNOWLEDGE

By

VINOBA

TRANSLATED AND EDITED

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AKHIL BHARAT
SARVA SEVA SANGH PRAKASHAN
RAJGHAT, KASHI.

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CONTENTS

1. THE UNION OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND SCIENCE	..	7
2. SCIENCE AND NON-VIOLENCE	..	11
3. SARVODAYA AND THE ATOMIC AGE	..	17
4. THE NEW IDEAL OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE	..	21
5. THE FOUNDATIONS OF RELIGION	..	24
6. THE RELIGION OF MAN	..	27
7. CREATION OF THE UNIVERSAL MAN	..	32
8. COLLECTIVE SAMADHI	..	35
9. THE TRINITY OF CREATIVE FORCES	..	39
10. SATYAGRAHA IN THE SCIENTIFIC AGE	..	44
11. TRANSCENDING THE MIND	..	48
12. THE CALL OF SCIENCE	..	51
13. THE CONQUEST OF NATURE	..	55
14. LAO-TSE AND STALIN	..	59

INTRODUCTION

These lectures of Shri Vinoba Bhave have been collected together and rendered into English with a view to introducing Shri Vinoba's precious thoughts on some issues affecting human destiny to a class of readers to whom his discourses are not accessible in the original.

Shri Vinoba, wellknown as the inspirer of the Bhoodan-Gramdan movement, has yet to be recognised as an original thinker on philosophical, religious and socio-ethical problems. His work on the Gita, recently rendered into English, is a classic on that inexhaustible topic; the commentary on the Ishopanishad bears testimony at once to his mastery over the tradition of Sanskrit philosophical heritage as well as to his capacity for original thought even in this field, trodden by great masters.

The lectures put together here have an humbler objective. They are addressed, as always is the case with Shri Vinoba's discourses, to the common village folk. Only seldom are they meant for urban intellectuals. Nevertheless, by virtue of his incomparable capacity for expressing subtle thoughts in a language with which the common folk are familiar, Shri Vinoba has succeeded in educating millions of Indian villagers.

The main thoughts contained in these lectures are the following :

1. Science and Self-knowledge—meaning by the latter term religion and spirituality—need each other. The ideal of *Sarvodaya* is born out of their union.

2. Modern science with its unprecedented technological developments needs non-violence as the guiding principle in human affairs. The alliance of modern science and violence would lead to the destruction of science itself; the alliance of

science and non-violence would lead to prosperity and let science progress unhampered.

3. The atomic age demands a new principle of social ordering and a new sense of values. 'Limit your desires and universalise your thoughts' is how Shri Vinoba expresses this twofold demand.

4. Religion and self-knowledge should strive after some remote, seemingly unattainable, ideal in the same way as science does. Such a far off ideal which Shri Vinoba recommends to religion as a source of inspiration is that of *Collective Samadhi*.

5. There are unending possibilities of human perfection a theme frequently occurring in Shri Vinoba's work.

6. The Vedanta has not yet become complete. The Vedanta, like science is a growing process. Science and the new principles of Social Ordering would be carrying our realisation of the Vedanta ever forward.

7. The Bhoodan-Gramadan movement aims at giving shape to a new type of man, the *Vishva-manava*, the man with 'World-loyalty' (A. N. Whitehead).

8. An integral religion has yet to be built and here again science favours. Such an integral religion should not be one-sided, should not be based on the support of after-life and should concern the needs of the individual as well as of Society.

9. Satyagraha in this age of science should, if it is to be really effective, cease to be a mere appeal to the heart and mind but should base itself upon a *supramental consciousness* to be imbibed by the Satyagrahi. Vinoba is here bridging the gulf that had separated Gandhian thought from the Aurobindonism.

Shri Vinoba's inimitable words will amply justify these themes.

J. N. Mokanty

I

THE UNION OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND SCIENCE

Since ancient times, a certain way of thinking continues to have its sway in India. With the coming of the English, a new way of thinking has come into play. The old and the new clashed with each other. This conflict has no doubt caused some suffering but nevertheless something valuable has also emerged out of it.

The situation would be visualised by comparing the saints of older days with those of the present age. Gujrat had produced Narsi Mehta; in our times, she has produced Mahatma Gandhi. While Narsi Mehta was a great spiritual person, Gandhiji combined scientific attitude with spirituality. The source of this union of spirituality and science in Gandhiji lies in the English language and contact with the English people. For a second example, let us look towards Bengal. Bengal's saint Chaitanya, the great devotee, is known all over India. In our age Bengal has produced Vivekananda and Shri Aurobindo. Chaitanya was great, as Shri Aurobindo too is. The two however are different in their make-up. I do not intend instituting a comparison between the two. Suffice it to point out that the two had different temperaments. Both are great, the spirituality, however of Shri Aurobindo and that of Vivekananda were united with science. Take again an example from Karnatak : Kumar Vyas had a temperament different from that of Puttappa. Both made use of the wisdom of the past. The one wrote on the Mahabharat, the other on the Ramayana; this Ramayana however combines the spiritual with the scientific approach. Contact with the English has thus yielded one good result for

us. No doubt, the English rule has given rise to poverty and misery in our country. I do not want to pay attention to that aspect for the moment; it is the benefit we have got out of it that I wish to draw attention to. I maintain that both the ancient spiritual knowledge and the new scientific knowledge have their shares in the idea of Gramdan.

Spirituality says : "Give up the 'I' and the 'mine'; this is the Vedantic teaching. Some listened to these words. A few even used to put them into practice. Those who were in search of self-development and liberation went this way. I am also saying that the villages would be happy if the 'I' and the 'mine' could be surrendered. There would be peace of mind and inner harmony. This would bring happiness to this life, not to speak of the next. Gramdan unites in itself the voices of science and of self-knowledge. The cultures of India and of the West are united here. Vedanta says : "Give up the 'I' and the 'mine'. We also preach the same thing in Gramdan. What we are teaching is not at all too difficult. We only ask you to say that the land belongs to the village.

We are thereby building a bridge, as it were. The philosophy of Bhoodan and Gramdan, one could say, rests with one end on one side and with the other end on the other side of the stream of life. A bridge touches both banks; Bhoodan and Gramdan too affect both sides of our existence. They take us towards *Paramartha* (the summum bonum) and these concern the other world; but the task of this world is also accomplished and hence also the contact with this bank. Like a bridge taking us from this side to the other, Bhoodan helps us to reach the wider *Summum bonum* starting from our individual interests.

That is why six hundred thousand persons have made gifts of land. Here is a synthesis of the thoughts of the West and India. The contact between the two cultures has proved

highly beneficial. The pangs of delivery are of course there; but there is also joy at the sight of the new-born babe. The conflict between the two cultures has been no doubt a source of much suffering; but it has also given birth to the new thought of Sarvodaya that is to say, of collective non-violence. The idea of non-violence was a result of self-knowledge, whereas the social point of view is a product of western science. The idea of collective non-violence is a result of the union of science and self-knowledge. Our problem is not to be solved through individual non-violence. People used to make gifts out of individual initiative and thus sought to acquire merit and secure for themselves places in heaven. But we are concerned with bringing about a social revolution. We have nothing to do with going to heaven after death. The Kingdom of Heaven could be realised on this earth.

One could no doubt find out in the Vedas and the Upanishadas words referring to the social point of view; we are even proud of this, but as a whole it has come from the West. This line of thought leads to the conclusion that the ancient Vedantic thought had not attained perfection. It was not complete in itself. To many this would seem very strange; many Vedantists would even get angry. The Vedanta, we are told, is perfect. How can any one take courage to label Vedanta imperfect when great thinkers like Sankara and Ramanuja considered it to be all-perfect? If the Vedantists are offended by this that would only prove that their Vedanta was incomplete; if however they are not offended then perhaps we may be able to concede the perfection of their Vedanta. The Vedanta, like science, is a growing process. No scientist claims that science has become perfect; on the other hand, he can only lay claim to a small part of the inexhaustible domain of science. Likewise, we should not claim that we have had a complete experience of the Vedanta.

The perfection of the Vedanta, of metaphysical knowledge, is also in the process of being achieved.

I do not say that Sarvodaya would come to its completion in the Bhoodan and Gramdan movements. We are only taking one step forward. Ever new ideas will come into play in the future. It is an ever-new process. It is our good fortune that the message of Sarvodaya came to us after *Swarajya*. The genius of India unites here with that of the West. New *Mantras* will appear in future—new ways of self-sacrifice. Future generations would recognise the imperfections in our self-sacrifice; but the delight that we have experienced is complete in itself.

Srirangapattam,

22-9-'57.

II

SCIENCE AND NON-VIOLENCE

I have been asked : “ Will the progress of science do any good to the world ? Is it desirable that science should progress in the manner it does ? ”

We should bear in mind that it is not true to say that science is progressing only in these modern times. Man has been striving after science ever since he came into being. Take for example wireless which is a modern invention; we think it is a great invention which has taken science ahead. But scientific inventions greater than this had been achieved in ancient times, and it is only by basing itself on them that modern science is marching forward. Man did not know, to start with, how to light a fire. When this knowledge was subsequently acquired what transformations did it bring about in the lines of men ! Just imagine what would happen to you if fire be not available to you for only a few days. Men would have to go without cooked food and would shiver in cold. And, how can we prepare all the medicines that require the aid of fire ? There was an age before ours when people used implements and weapons made of stone. Man had no iron and now imagine what change came about in human life, when iron was discovered. If we renounce iron, children would have no pen-knives, tailors would have no needles and peasants would have no ploughs and axes as well. All modern machineries are made with steel as the basic material. Formerly, men knew not how to milk the cow; they lived on the flesh of animals. It must have occurred to some one that only if we could nourish a cow with care she would give us milk. Agriculture, animal husbandry, fire and cotton textiles are some of the scientific achievements of olden days.

Then man discovered the power of steam, and now ofcourse we have reached the age of atom. The power of electricity is being long since utilised in the Western countries. In India also we would soon witness the wonders of electricity. In future factories may run with the help of atomic power and even decentralised industries may be run in the villages with its help. Science has been thus marching ahead since ancient times and should continue this pace in future. Man's life would thereby be beautified. The more knowledge does man acquire, the better will he be able to grasp the nature of this creation.

I have now a pair of spectacles; without them I am so helpless that I could not even see the man sitting in front of me. The utility of science is thus obvious and no one need doubt that science should go ahead. I am myself a great devotee of science. Science has two powers; the one is constructive, the other destructive. Science can serve and can also kill. Fire is used in the kitchen but it can also be used to burn down a house. Science, however, has not the power of deciding between these possible uses; this power of decision rests in self-knowledge. As the bird flies with her two wings, so does man go ahead with the twin powers of science and self-knowledge. You all might be knowing that every motor vehicle has two sets of mechanisms; one of them makes it move and the other steers it in the required direction. If one of these fails, the machine would fail to work. We walk on our feet, not with our eyes; but we see with them. Self-knowledge is comparable to our eyes, science to our feet. Without self-knowledge man is blind and ignorant. If one has eyes but no feet, he can only look around and has to be confined to one place. Without science, no work in this world could be done; without self-knowledge, science can not find the right way out.

Scientists are feverishly busy at inventing destructive armaments. In spite of all their intelligence, they let themselves

be purchased by money. For the sake of money they would invent whatever they are asked to, irrespective of whether that would be beneficial or harmful for the mankind. If only the scientists could take the vow never to be purchased by money and never to co-operate with the production of destructive weapons, the world would be saved. But the scientists will not be able to do this, till the society at large takes up the idea. All this can be stopped when the heart of mankind cries out, when the mentality of engaging in such inventions is looked down upon.

It must be realised that science will continue its progress and that if we want it to go on unhampered, we must bring non-violence to its aid; this alone would be to the good of the world. The kingdom of Heaven can be brought down to the earth if only science and non-violence could be united. If however science enters into close alliance with violence, the world would face total annihilation. We lay stress on non-violence, for we want science to flourish and for this purpose non-violence is indispensable. If you want to retain violence, scientific progress should have to be stopped. With the weapons of warfare that were there in ancient times, man to man combats or duels took place between rivals for political power, as between Bhima and Jarasandha for instance, in which one of them died and the other survived, but nothing happened to the world at large. If you want to have violence, fight with sticks or even with your bare hands, why go after inventing a gun? Violence may be allowed to continue if science is kept within limits, that violence would not be able to cause much harm. But if we want science to go ahead unimpeded, we must have non-violence along with it. What is the significance of this alliance between science and non-violence? It is this, that arms are not to be used for solving the problems that concern human relationships.

Such problems should be solved peacefully. Scientists would be requested to devise surgical instruments but not instruments for killing. The progress of science would be to our benefit if we could thus solve human problems by non-violent methods. That is why I have been repeating the truth that science and violence are opposed to each other. The two cannot coexist, violence must be done away with if science is to survive. If both are sought to be retained, mankind, and along with it science also, would be destroyed.

Consider Bhoodan Yajna from this point of view, and a new vision would dawn upon you. We are trying through this movement to solve the problem of land that is there in the whole of Asia. If we solve this problem through violence, ill-feeling amongst us would increase. And the consequence of it, in our scientific age, would not be welcome. If, on the other hand, we would solve this great problem by non-violent, peaceful and loving methods, there would be increasing co-operation amongst us, society would become stronger and happier. People ask me, "Why are you going round in vain ? Why are you putting forth so much effort for this work when all this can be done with the help of legislation ?" But, what precisely could be achieved by legislation ? Let us suppose, there is a law to take over land; a peasant does not agree to surrender his land and he is put in prison. The might of law reaches so far. The might of law is nothing but the might of the rod or of the armed strength that supports law. Should we place our reliance on that strength ? We should reflect over the fact that that legislation alone can bring about real good of the people which is introduced after creating the appropriate intellectual climate amongst the people themselves. A law that is imposed on people without their co-operation defeats its own purpose and gives rise to increasing violence and bad-will in society.

It is true that legislation can be compatible with non-violence. When people get a thing done by their own effort, public opinion is thereby created and whatever little might have been left undone may be completed by legislation. But in this case legislation comes in only towards the end. We should therefore understand that our effort to solve the problem of land by non-violent methods is generating a great force in this scientific age.

People find it difficult to understand one issue. "Why are you opposing science by advocating the cause of small industries?"—they ask me. They believe 'science' to be only another name for the setting up of big machines, so they think that it cannot be consistent with small machines. It is to be understood that science is not concerned with the use of machines. The question as to what machines should or should not be used in such and such circumstances has to be decided by sociology. Science is not concerned with this issue. Heavy industry cannot thrive in a country with greater density of population and proportionately lesser employment-potentiality. Japan has more men and less of land; small crafts would be successful there. Heavy machineries are meant for countries like Russia and America, that have smaller populations and more of land. Whatever machinery, big or small, be required can be produced and supplied by science. It is wrong to suppose that greater scientific skill is required for the manufacture of big machines and less for the manufacture of small ones. Consider this tiny watch. Is there less science in it? Do you find lesser ingenuity of science in the small sewing machine? Is there less of science involved in the small photographic camera? Science is utilised in big machines as well as in small ones. Which ones we require has to be decided by considering our social circumstances and then we place orders for them with science.

What have we to do if we are to save India in this scientific age ? First, we have to resolve to decide all social problems by non-violent means. Secondly, science should be utilised for producing instruments that would serve man and not armaments that would kill. Thirdly, the prevailing situation alone should decide whether science should be ordered to produce big machines or small ones. If we keep these in mind, we can derive immense benefit from science. Let the growth of science be steady and unimpeded, this is my desire.

Pattamundai.

1-3-'55.

III

SARVODAYA AND THE ATOMIC AGE

Human life is millions of years old, and with changes in time, place and circumstances, man's intelligence is now fairly well-developed. And he feels within himself the need of a change. It has to be admitted that we are passing through a transitional period. Science has made such progress and the situation has become such that possibly man will no longer have any power in his own hands. Under such circumstances, he has now to think about how best he should shape his life. The atomic age has come upon us. It cannot be made beneficial for us unless it also ushers in some changes in the social sphere. Human society may be torn asunder by the atomic power, may even be disintegrated into atoms. With proper use of that power, again, human society may find itself on the sure road of progress and strength. According to our understanding of the situation, the future age that will follow this atomic one will be the age of village-families (Gram-parivars).

When man did not know much of science, he learnt to organise his family and built up a social system on that basis. Now we find that a small group can no more stand isolated from the wide world than a family can from the village. The atomic age would become creative only when petty differences disappear. The egoistic pretensions of nations should go and the realisation that the entire world constitutes one humanity should come to stay. We cannot survive in this atomic age if we continued to consider ourselves as citizens of small nations and to parade our petty pretensions.

The above does not imply that each nation should not be self-sufficient regarding the primary necessities of its existence.

It ought rather to be such that even small provinces, small districts and even tiny villages should attain to (varying degrees of) self-sufficiency, and that atomic energy should be made available for this purpose. Small villages could be made self-sufficient with the aid of atomic power. This blessing of the atom would be available for us. But if the atom helps us in having small self-sufficient units, it cannot at the same time foster and protect our petty egoisms and vanities. We should make each village self-sufficient and teach them true religion. Science and the atomic age would be here on our side. On the other hand, we should deem ourselves representatives of the entire universe and should take pride only in humanity itself. The greatest benefits of the atomic age would be at our disposal only when mankind would have progressed far enough to permit free access of all people to all countries and the rights of citizenship of any country for any one from any part of the world. We have to realise two fundamental truths; we must cultivate collective self-sufficiency and at the same time have to develop love for the lowliest as well as for the great humanity. Now, however, the reverse holds true. Not only are small groups not self-sufficient but on the contrary we are even growing more dependent on others. We are depending on far off countries for our necessities and yet at the same time we are conceited about our small provinces, languages and religions, and have forgotten humanity itself. Today we depend on the whole world for our physical needs, but our vanities are confined to our small groups. What is desirable is the very opposite of this: we should depend on our small communities for physical necessities, while our love and concern should be for the whole world. This implies that our physical existence should be limited but our mental existence should be pervasive. We run after American, English and Japanese goods. The other day's

newspaper brought the news that five hundred tons of *American Ghee* (Butter oil) would be coming to our country to be consumed in the big cities. This, it is said, is for the present an experiment which succeeding, more of this stuff would pour in. Now let us consider the matter. We have gone up to America for our food, but our love and affections are not yet broad enough to embrace even our own country and nation. I say : "Love the world but eat your own village Ghee".!

Now our age—and the atom—is most favourable for this purpose. Atomic energy can henceforth be used to make small villages self-sufficient and for setting up modern industries in them. Atomic energy will now be available for both production and decentralisation. We shall decentralise production and yet make our souls extensive in a way that would bring us the realisation that we belong to the world and the world to us. If, on the other hand, we use goods from all over the world for fulfilling our needs, business would no doubt thrive but only to give rise to crisis of all sorts which again would lead to conflicts and wars.

Unlimited hankering after the enjoyment of worldly goods seems now to be the source of our destruction. We can escape war if we limit that hankering and take to the principle of decentralisation. On the other hand, war is also consequent upon the narrowing of our inner attitude. We think of ourselves as Bengalis or Gujaratis or Oriyas ; how narrow is this outlook ! We should therefore widen our mind and limit our desires. Many may apprehend that with such decentralised production and limitation of desires, there would not be enough goods and amenities available for a comfortable life. I want to make precisely this clear that in this atomic age, it will be possible to produce enough in a limited area in decentralised manner to provide a comfortable life for everyone. But if man hankers

after more than enough, the same atomic power will spell his doom. We are, therefore, asking the villages to unite into and function as one family and to treat all land and wealth as belonging to the village. We should strive to make the village self-sufficient regarding its primary necessities. With further progress in the utilisation of atomic energy, more and more goods would be manufactured in the villages and of course there would be more progress and prosperity. Considered from this point of view ours is the age for decentralising our desires and universalising our thoughts. There is thus a favourable situation so far as the Indians are concerned. For these two conceptions are ingredients of Indian culture.

Our saints and seers have taught us precisely this thing : limit your desires and universalise your mind. Wherein then is the difficulty when the age is favourable for realising this ideal ? There is thus a synthesis of the teachings of our saints and the demands of the age. Tell an unlettered boy of our village that all men of the world are his brothers, and he would accept the idea. People will have contentment if only we could make them understand that they should use the foods produced in their neighbourhood; all this is easy for them to grasp.

If we base our progress on these two components of our country's tradition, our lives would be happier and the atomic age would, in my opinion, prove helpful to us. I have been therefore repeatedly saying that the progress of science is not incompatible with, but is rather too favourable towards self-knowledge. Only in order to make proper use of that science, our desires have to be limited, and that is to be done through self-knowledge. Our earth would turn into a paradise if only the two forces, self-knowledge and science, could unite and co-operate.

Tendakura,

7-5-'55

IV

THE NEW IDEAL OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Man is going ahead with science; he is proceeding towards the other worlds. Man does not want merely the excitement of reaching the other worlds, the moon or the Mars but he wants also to possess all the secrets of nature, to be the master of nature. Undoubtedly this amounts to aiming at the impossible. How can all the efforts of man bring all the powers of the universe within human reach? And yet herein lies the secret of the sciences. Science cannot aim at any but such an end. It shall go on trying to bring back a dead man into life and to produce human babies from external ingredients. Such are the seemingly unattainable aims that science has placed before itself. But what about self-knowledge?

The ideal of self-knowledge that India has placed before itself is very limited. Let there be no attachment and no delusion, no virtue and no vice. It is considered enough if there is only peace of mind, whatever the circumstances may be. Even today there are people living upto this ideal with no relation to the joys and sorrows of the outer world. How can there be peace of mind, when the world abounds in so much of suffering? We are told that all this is the *Lila* of God. Liberation, these people think, is very easy to achieve. A brother wrote to me : “How much of *Maya* and egoism surrounds you. Can you thus save the whole world? Give up all such work.” My question to him was, what else was I to do? My friend’s Guru was a lady whom I had met seven years ago. She was a very peaceful and virtuous lady. This friend advised me to surrender myself to that divine lady. “What am I to do there?”—I asked. “To ask such a question” he replied “is to betray your igno-

rance and egoism. What is there to do ? Remain quiet, and unsurpassable peace will come unto you." Many such people in India consider liberation as near at hand and think they have acquired self-knowledge. There was however Gandhi who used to say that he had not yet had self-knowledge, although many others think as if liberation is already in their possession. This is a narrow point of view. Just like science, self-knowledge also ought to keep before itself an unattainable ideal. Just as science seeks to attain mastery over the entire universe, so also we ought to seek to attain mastery over the entire range of our powers within.

From whatever I have read of religious literature, I have come to the understanding that only a tiny portion of the possibilities of self-knowledge has been realised by mankind. Now what happens is this. If somebody is bitten by a scorpion before me, all that arises in me is a sense of pity. If there were real self-knowledge, that is to say, if there were real awareness of the identity of myself and his, I ought to experience that very pain which he suffers from. And, if there is peace and quietude in me, that peace and happiness ought to reach him too. The sting of the scorpion ought to reach my body and similarly the peace and joy in me ought to reach the other person. Such pervasive self-knowledge is not yet there with us. Only a portion of it is there : hence is it that only a sense of pity in whatever measure, is awakened within us. I place this thought before you for your consideration.

If the people assembled here before me are all one, what can hinder Gramdan ? If the society is agitated over some issue, what can hinder the establishment of peace ? In fact, what is there to do ? Bring in a lamp, and the darkness that was there is gone. If people, rendered senseless, are anywhere fighting amongst themselves cutting each others' throats, the

fighting would be over if only a person with self-knowledge steps in. This ought to happen, and this can in fact happen. Obviously, self-knowledge has not yet developed to that extent. Our Vedantists have claimed that total perfection has already been attained in self-knowledge. But science makes no such claims. We have yet to acquire all-comprehending knowledge of the universe. The scientists know that this is an unattainable ideal which they nevertheless cherish.

What I want is that mankind should come to experience a collective *Samadhi*. This is the seemingly unattainable ideal that the quest for self-knowledge should place before itself. In Bengal at the place where Ramakrishna Paramahansa had attained to Samadhi, I had said, "You ought to experience in the collective form the same samadhi which in its individual form Ramakrishna Paramahansa had realised." An out and out unattainable ideal. But I am unable to express how much inspiration I derive from such an unattainable ideal. This aspiration fills my very marrows.

Arsikere.

8-11-'57

V

THE FOUNDATIONS OF RELIGION

We have just now heard *Purandardas's Bhajan* that religion shall in the long run be victorious. People in India have faith in religion, but here the victory of religion is scarcely to be met with. No doubt, we got independence because of the little of the religious spirit that was manifest in us. And we also did realise that the measure of our victory will be proportionate to the religious spirit that would dawn within us. But the misery, the poverty and the misfortunes that abound in our country are certainly not signs of a victory for religion. The reason for all this is that we have not understood what true religion is. People have faith; they worship, and offer oblations to their deities. Such faith is better than having no faith at all. So the foundation for religion is there; even the poorest of the poor experience this. Otherwise, the people of our country would have been very unhappy. But, inspite of all their poverty, there is brightness on their faces; they do not look as unhappy as they should. This is because of their faith. If they had not this basic faith, they would have been lost by now.

This, however, is only the basis. The house of religion is yet to be built. Man cannot live on a foundation alone; he is in need of a roof. Only when we have a house built on the foundation of faith can we live in it with love.

What would be this religion like? The house yet to be erected would be one of the Religion of Man. This religion of man would be the same for Muslims, Christians and Hindus alike. There have been, no doubt, attempts in the past to erect such a universal religion of man, but the building work could not be completed. The brick and mortar were not of good quality; rain and storm have pulled the structure down. People have deserted the house.

I will give you an example. *Vasavanna* of Mysore was a great saint, a religious *Guru* (preceptor) of the Shaivas. He had tried to build up such a religious structure. He wanted people of all classes in a society to have the same rights, he would have the caste system abolished; he ordained that every person should put forth manual labour. But that religion is not yet in vogue. Many other saints—and not merely *Vasavanna*—have worked with that end in view. But the house of religion has not yet been raised. And yet with God's grace the foundation has remained intact. So let us again begin on this project. Some may discourage us by asking whether we also would not be frustrated in our attempt. Would not the building again collapse, as before? Yes, it may collapse, but let us hope it would not. Our attempt may not succeed; but once it succeeds, the work cannot be undone. Let me give an example. Formerly, all were using *Khadi*, for there was no mill-made cloth. With the manufacture of cloth in mills, however, *Khadi* disappeared. But now if people use *Khadi* they would do so in spite of the availability of mill-made stuff. They would do so only after necessary reflection and understanding; their use of *Khadi* would not therefore wane. The *Khadi* of those days was unreflective; now it would be based on reflective understanding.

Similarly, there was no science in those days. Attempts were therefore made to found religion on the basis of mere faith. The structure collapsed as soon as this faith was attacked. Religion cannot any longer subsist on unreflective faith; it has to be founded upon reflective understanding.

Consider as an example a song of *Purandardas* in which it is said that a person who disobeys his parents would have the skin peeled off his body in hell. There are many such threats; can religion stand any longer on this basis? How could this house stand rain and storm? The rain and storm came in the form of

modern science, which based itself on observation and experiment and denied heaven and hell.

If religion has to be re-established, it must be made to rest on the support of scientific thought. What would happen if the children do not obey their parents ? We could tell the children that otherwise they could not profit by the experiences of the parents, and that, in that case, the world would not progress. We could tell them that the parents had given them their love and that if they did not in their turn love their parents as well as others, they could not hope to be loved by others. The children of the scientific age would ask : “ It is proper that we shall love our parents and obey them so long as we have not developed our powers of independent judgement. But what are we to do after that ? ” We reply : “ You should also serve them. But if what they say is not approved by your own power of judgement, then you are not obliged to obey them in that matter.”

Tulsidas has said, “ Who knows who would go to heaven, and who to hell ? But Tulsi loves to remain in this world as Ram’s obedient servant. ”

Religion cannot subsist on the basis of after-life. We have to produce the cash-value of religion, who would care to taste that sugar which would sweeten the mouth after death ? Show some immediately perceptible consequence which would be compatible with the findings of science. “ Live with love and co-operation and you shall be happy and would be free from poverty and distress. Without love violence would thrive and as its last consequence atomic bombs would spell disaster.” *Gramdan* won’t assure you a place in heaven’s realm of riches; but it shall certainly bring you unsurpassable delight here in this life.

Bhysandra (Mysore)

3-11-'57

VI

THE RELIGION OF MAN

I had said that in our country as well as in the entire world the foundations of religion have already been laid. This foundation consists in faith in God. The faith is there, in varying forms though, in the different societies. But what however has not yet been built upon this foundation is the superstructure—the house of religion—in which the individual as well as the society were to find their shelter. The foundation is there, but not the living room. Religion has therefore to be built up.

One may ask if anything more can now really be done about religion, when, inspite of the fact that so many religions have been founded, true religion has not come into being? Fifty different religions have not made that possible. The only religion for mankind is the religion of Man. This is not yet there. Attempts have been made in that direction. It had even to been brought about partially. But there was a total collapse. The foundation however is as strong as ever. There is faith in man's hearts; but religion as man's honourable creed is not yet there.

Let us take one example. Vasavanna Swami had taught you the ethics of manual labour. He had preached that every person big or small ought to do manual work. This was preached by him as a religious creed. But that religion has not yet come into being. Even today crores of people do manual work. They used to do so in those days also. Whence then the necessity of elevating this into a matter of religious duty? The fact is that if people were or are, doing manual labour, it is because they have no way out. There is no belief in the dignity of manual work; and those who do not work, do not even

recognise that dignity. What does the manual worker aspire after ? The peasant does manual work, yet what he aspires after is to give his children such an education as would spare them that labour. He has to work for he can not help it but he desires that his children should not take to cultivation, if that can be helped. This sort of bodily work is thus being done only out of helplessness. It may be true that bodily labour should be done in a spirit of religious dedication, it may be asked, but how to bring it about ? Would it be enough if we all do bodily work, irrespective of consequences in this life and hopeful of better fruits only in the next ? Is this how the religion of bodily labour should come into being ? Bodily work will be accepted as a religious duty only when its economic value would be the same as that of all other kinds of work, only then would the dignity proper to it be restored to bodily work and it would become a matter of religion. There should be the social strength to back it up. Society favourable to it has to be built up. The benefits of bodily labour here—in this world—have to be demonstrated. To say that the benefits would come not in this life but in the next, would not do.

A professor is now paid five hundred rupees per month. He works six months a year, the rest being covered by holidays. He works for not more than three hours daily. Counted over the year, his working hours amounts to 600, while his wage is Rs. 6,000; this brings his wage to ten rupees an hour. Other labourers those who do manual work—may be the disciples of Vasavanna—are paid at most only two annas per hour. Besides, a college teacher enjoys the benefit of pensions after he has worked for twentyfive to thirty years. But what is there in store for the manual worker, for this disciple of Vasavanna ? Nothing at all. How can a religion subsist on this basis ? That is why, I have been saying that this religion has not yet come with

being. The Hindu, Islam, Christian and other faiths are there as foundations, but the 'House of religion' has not yet been built.

Let us consider a second case. Religion teaches that stealing is bad. But how can stealing be sinful, if accumulation of wealth is not ? This sort of one sided teaching won't do. One who accumulates wealth is being honoured in this world; may be, he goes to hell afterwards. But, on the other hand, there is the poor manual worker, who has no honour in this life but who might perhaps go to the heaven of heavens in the next. But we must realise that religion can no longer subsist on the supports of after-life, it requires the support of this life. *Religion should be integral, not onesided.* If stealing is a sin, accumulation also is so. Both these ideas, taken together, shall constitute religion. There may be a religion for the individual, but it must have recognition in the entire society, the society has to be shaped accordingly.

Religion can not be onesided, it must apply to all. It won't do to apply it to one group and not to another. It is the wife's duty, for example, to have a mark on the forehead and an auspicious thread around the neck as symbols of her married state and to proclaim that she is loyal to her husband. Is it not also the man's duty to be loyal to his wife? Why does he not carry a mark on his forehead ? One does not know which of the men are married as one can know at a glance which of the women are married. Why does not a man carry around his neck some mark of his faithfulness ? A religion which bases itself on laying down duties for one section of the society and has nothing to say to the others cannot survive.

I have pointed out three requisites for religion :

- (1) Religion can not be founded on the basis of after-life.
- (2) Religion has to be integral ; it cannot remain onesided.

(3) Religion is not complete with the individual alone; society has to be shaped accordingly. Only then will the place of religion be assured in the entire society. The ' House of religion ' will come into being, when these three conditions are fulfilled. But, these three conditions have not yet been actualised. The saints have endeavoured in that direction, but they have not succeeded. We have yet to build it up. We can do this with the help of science. The foundations of religion have to be made permanent, because we ourselves would not survive, if religion does not. Science has enlarged the frontiers of human intelligence; but the heart remains small. The peasant dreams : " This is my field, this is my house. When the neighbour is not watchful, I will push my plough into his fields and extend my field by a cubit." On one hand man talks of exploring the moon and on the other he schemes to encroach upon a square foot of land. Would men survive under such circumstances ? This breeds jealousy and dissensions, leading to wars. Let us in India maintain harmony in each and every village and establish the religion of society and of man: There is the secure basis that we all are children of God.

People ask, " Do you hope to succeed in achieving what people in olden days have failed to do ?" I would say, " Yes, for, I have now the aid of science while this was not so in those days. Science is not merely helping, it is also threatening. Quarrels and dissensions threaten to annihilate humanity while love and co-operation can usher in the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth. "

Heaven and Hell, both in this life

People in olden days talked about heaven and hell. Good work was supposed to lead to heaven and selfishness to hell after death. Science shows that love, virtue and co-operation would bring heaven to us in this very life. Science is thus

pointing to direct and perceptible results. If the catastrophe of Hiroshima is not hell, what else is ?

We want, therefore, to build up a religion in which virtue and vice should be directly experienced. It is on this new foundation that we are to build the house of religion. Self-knowledge favours us, we have also the help from the austerities of the saints. What however is most significant is that science is favourable to us. What we have to do is only to sacrifice a little, not too much.

Turveker (Mysore)

4-11-'57

VII

CREATION OF THE UNIVERSAL MAN

We must first understand what we primarily are. Am I first a Kanarese, then an Indian and last of all, a man ? Or, am I first of all a man, then an Indian and only lastly a Kanarese ? And then, of course the member of a family, and a being with this corporeal frame ?

This is a subject matter for the science of education. Years ago when I was working as a teacher in the Ashram, I was of course residing in the district of Wardha, but I did not talk to the children about Wardha or Maharashtra. On the other hand, I used to tell them that we were all inhabitants of this earth, that we were world-citizens. How vast is this universe ! The sun is only one amongst millions of heavenly bodies. How tiny is the sun compared to the universe ? Our earth is revolving around such a sun. Upon this earth, again, there are countless living beings. Science speaks of twenty hundred thousands species while our scriptures place their number at eightyfour hundred thousand. Whatever it may be it is a matter of millions, not of thousands. When there are so many species of them, how could one count the individuals ? Man is a small item in this list. India is one country amongst others inhabited by man. Maharashtra is a part of India, Wardha a small district in that province. This Ashram belongs to that district. The Ashram has two fields on its two sides, standing between them, I am totally nothing.

There is a *Sukta*, in the Vedas, by reciting which one is said to be purified from all sins. This *Sukta* says : “ At the beginning, there was Rita and truth. From Rita were created the sun and the moon and the stars.” If this is all that the *Sukta*

says, it may be asked, what relation could its recitation have with purification from sin ? The significance lies in its capacity to bring home to us the conception of this vast cosmos which makes us realise how small we are and thus reduces our egoism to nothing, leaving us no motive for sin.

The sum and substance of this is this that there would be a total change in values when we realise that we are first of all human beings and only then Indians, Kanarese etc.

What immense powers are there today at man's disposal ! If inspite of such powers his mind remains small, he would experience an inner conflict which would make his personality disintegrate. In olden days even emperors had little knowledge of the geography of the world. How little of geography did such a great emperor as Akbar know ? It was only when the English came to this country and visited his court that he learnt of a country called England. Today however even small children have some knowledge of the world. If such vast and extensive knowledge be accompanied by pettiness at heart, we would be torn into bits. Man can turn this world into heaven if he can match the greatness of his knowledge with that of his heart.

That the Gramdans etc. are helping to solve the problem of land is a small affair. What is more important in it is the fact that our understanding is rising to a higher level. Our entire village shall turn into one family; air, water and land are all gifts of God and shall be shared by all, we shall work with mutual co-operation, I shall work not for myself but for the society; I shall think not about myself but about the society ; all this would bring about a total change in the normal level. This is what inspires me for this work.

We are to give shape to a new type of man. The old is dead and gone. Once a friend from Australia came to see me, and asked if the Bhoodan movement had any significance for the

world at large. "The world significance of Bhoodan," I told him, "is this; since Australia has plenty of land while Japan has not enough, you in Australia should invite the people of Japan to come and live in your country." On hearing this, our friend was nonplussed and said, "We do have enough land but what we want is the preservation of our culture. We would therefore welcome people from Europe, who are nearer to our culture." "Bhoodan is meant for eliminating this poison." I replied. "It is meant for outgrowing such ideas as that Japan's civilisation is different from that of Australia and Europe or that the civilisation of the Hindus is different from that of the Muslims." We have no small goal before us in Bhoodan. We have to transform human life and to build the new Vishwa-manava—the universal man.

Bangalore,
18-10-'58

VIII

COLLECTIVE SAMADHI

The story of Shri Ramanujacharya is welknown. In order to make his *Guru's* teachings known to all, he preferred even to suffer the torments of hell and openly taught them to the common people all over the country. Till then there prevailed in our country the idea that the knowledge of Brahman should be kept secret. I do not say that this was all wrong. There certainly was some truth in it. If the knowledge of Brahman were commercialised, it would lose its worth; hence the sweetness of guarding its secret. But there is also a quite different sweetness in revealing the secret. Jnanadeva and Ekanath have done that here. Just as Ramanuja opened the portals of Brahmanavidya for the country as a whole so did Jnanadeva here for Maharashtra The great things that Jnanadeva did in Maharashtra, Ramanuja and Chaitanya did for the whole country. Wherever they went, they disseminated knowledge. They went on spreading knowledge amongst all; women, children and the common folk alike.

We are now to carry further ahead the religion of love which has been taught by these saints. We are to bring to the people the wisdom taught by the saints, give it a new form and place it before the whole world. This programme is in accordance with the spirit of our age; the Vedic religion shall now be given a new form.

Devotion (*Bhakti*) would be transformed under *Sarvodaya*. 'To look upon all beings as the same' can no more stand for the highest devotion (*Bhakti*) it is to be called the lesser devotion (*Bhakti*). Any one individual, when under Samadhi, has the experience that all beings are one's fellow beings, all differences

are false and should be removed. What however is needed today is that every one should have this experience. In other words, what is needed is the practice of collective *Samadhi*. God has expressed a great truth through my mouth. Three years ago, during my *Padayatra* in Bengal, I came to a place where Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa had experienced his first Samadhi. Sitting there by the side of a pond I said, "We have yet to give shape to the collective form of that Samadhi which Shri Ramakrishna had experienced here". Jnanadeva had also said so. The experience of identity should come upon all.

Today science has brought about such a situation that mankind should either cultivate this higher form of devotion (*Bhakti*) or perish. The demand of the age is that you get rid of the distinction between 'mine' and 'thine' and mould one's own life in accordance with this higher form of devotion (*Para bhakti*). The idea of *Samyayoga* is no more to be merely sung in songs; it has rather become an idea that should be directly and clearly experienced in everyday life. This is the challenge of science. Our *Padayatra* is inspired by this challenge.

In the age of science, *Samyayoga** is not something to be experienced in *Samadhi*. But it has become a matter for realisation by the society at large. *Samyayoga* was so long the roof, now it has to become the foundation. Now we are to

**Samyayoga* is a new word coined by Vinoba to denote the spiritually inspired non-violent and scientific effort for the achievement of socio-economic equality in which the emphasis is as much on the inner evolution of man as on changing the outward form of society. The use of the suffix *yoga* also seeks to distinguish this approach from the approaches of the various 'isms' that tend to emphasize dogmatic exclusiveness and conflict.

mould our lives on the basis of *Samyayoga*. The way we are trying to inspire even the common folk to do such things is sure to receive the approval of our forerunners.

I have said earlier that devotion (*Bhakti*) should undergo a transformation under *Sarvodaya*. It is *Prabhlada* who has given us the key to the notion of *Bhakti*. *Narada* was *Prabhlada*'s teacher; nevertheless *Prabhlada*'s name tops the list of great devotees, *Narada*'s coming next to him. When God appeared in the awe-inspiring *Narsinghavatar*, even his close companion *Lakshmi* got unnerved and even *Narada*'s lyre which otherwise never stopped even for a moment became silent. *Narada* also became confused. But *Prabhlada* stood fearlessly before the *Narsinghavatar* and said, "I am not afraid of you". This is the reason why he is considered to be the greatest of all devotees.

Now, what did *Prabhlada* pray for? "There have been in the past plenty of gods and saints who have sought their own liberation", thus prayed the great devotee—"and have taken to the silence of solitude free from any thought of the good of others. I however do not wish to be liberated alone leaving all these lesser men behind." What a great thought this was, the thought that even the saints were not free from selfishness. "I do not wish to be liberated alone": when he said this, what great inspiration must have overflowed the poet's heart! This is one of the best creations of the sanskrit literature.

In reality, liberation is not something which could be 'mine', *Moksha*--liberation--eludes him who thinks that it is to be possessed by him alone. *Moksha* vanishes with the appearance of 'mine'. The very expression 'my *Moksha*' is a contradiction in terms. *Moksha* is attained only after 'mine' is dispelled.

Tukaram has said that while the saints have sought liberation out of the fear lest they be cast into the cycle of rebirth, he himself considered liberation itself as a sort of fear. What

Tukaram realised belonged not to his age but to the future. The farsighted sage saw into the future; he could anticipate the sort of society that was going to be built up in future. His desire was to have a society in which every individual would have turned into Brahman. *Tukaram* does not mean that a person while in Samadhi sees every one as Brahman; this *Tukaram* had experienced long before, what however he hoped for was to see that men who are at present involved in self-interest and errors get rid of them and experience *Samadhi* while yet living their everyday life. "When shall I see all become one, all become society, all become Brahman?" It was out of this desire for collective *Samadhi* that *Tukaram* wrote this couplet.

This is a matter for every one's thought and reflexion. The main point to be borne in mind is that we should now transform our lives. With this end in view, let us abolish the various distinctions economic, social etc. that today affect our lives.

Pandharpur.

29-5-'58

IX

THE TRINITY OF CREATIVE FORCES

I feel greatly inspired by literary works and my heart is full of faith in the goddess of poetry.

An old memory creeps into my mind. I spent ten years of my early life since childhood in a small village; after that I spent another ten years in the city of Baroda. When I was in our village, my father used to stay in Baroda for his studies and work. But he used to come home during the *Diwali* festival. Once my mother said to me, "Your father will come home today. He will bring fruits and sweets for you." This happened in early childhood, but I had already begun my lessons. There was no school in the village, but my uncle had started teaching me the alphabets.

Father came. As soon as I went to him, he gave me the sweets. I had thought that the sweets would be some round stuff. But the packet that my father had brought was not round but flat. I thought it contained some special kind of sweets. Opening the packet, I found two books within. I took them to my mother and placed them before her. Mother said, "My son, there can never be a finer sweet than what your father has given you today." The two were books of tales from the Ramayana and the Bhagavat. Since then, I must have read them several times. But I have never forgotten my mother's words that no sweet could excel them. These words have so strongly gripped my mind that no sweet seems to me sweeter than a book of good thoughts.

God has infinite powers, but literature manifests one of his special powers. It is this which inspires the poets and the men of letters. Only the poets and the men of letters know this

power, others do not. It is said of Mahammed that when he was absorbed in *Samadhi*, he would perspire so profusely that people around him would be completely at a loss as to what was happening to him. But he possessed that thing, i. e. that through which God's message comes down to man. When God's message burdens a human heart, there ensues an unspeakable torture. This torture could be well compared with the pangs of child-birth; it would even surpass the latter. This I say from my own experience. There is the painful anguish of being lost, as if something has caught hold of me, something which I would like to shake off but cannot : some such thing takes possession. At the end of the torture comes the direct vision and a work of art comes into being. Afterwards people have access to the work of art and know that here is something that pleases and satisfies. But they do not experience and have no idea of the tortures that the poets and the artists go through.

The word '*Kavi*' (which stands for 'poet' in Sanskrit) can not be explicated in a few words. *Kavi* is one who knows what is going to be; that is to say, he sees what lies beyond, on the other side. We all have a pair of eyes with which we see what lies on this side; they are indeed useful, for they report to us about the world that lies before us. They exhibit to us all the beauty of the world. But these two eyes are not free from faults. There is something which is beyond their range and which is hidden by them. A second world, more interesting than this one, remains unknown because of these two eyes. Man does not feel attracted by that world, one is vouchsafed a glimpse of it only when the 'third eye' is opened. And with that vision, there comes the realisation that some power is working secretly behind and within even the most insignificant events. Out of this realisation, again, is born great literature.

When asked "Who other than God has a share in shaping the world ?" some refer to the politicians. " Babar came, and did such and such things ", we are told. " So did Lord Clive ". History, consisting of such tales, has been written and is read in schools. But Babar and Clive have left no trace in the society of today. Actually there are three forces that shape the world. These three are: *science*, *self-knowledge* and *literature*.

The scientist shapes life in the world. These loud-speakers before me have made it possible for so many people to listen to me peacefully. The ancient people could not even imagine this. This not only brings about an outer change but also leads to an inner, mental change. The ancients could never have thought of the immense extension of knowledge through the printing press. It is true that evil things are also spreading, but nevertheless life is undergoing transformation under the influence of science. When fire was discovered, the sages prayed to it with devotion and sang its praise. Today we could sing the praise of atomic energy. Atomic energy has made its appearance as the destroyer. But apart from the destructive, *Rudra*, form, it has also its constructive, *Shiva*, form. Life in the world would undergo total transformation when this energy takes on the constructive form.

The second of the powers that determine life is self-knowledge. Wherever self-knowledge has come into play, it has radically transformed life. Wise men like Gautama the Buddha, Jesus, Mahammed, Lao-Tse, Jnanadeva and Tulsidas have appeared from time to time and with the appearance of each human life has undergone a big change.

The power of Literature :

The third power is that of the man of letters. Men like Valmiki, Vyasa, Shakespeare, Homer, Sankaracharya and Rabindranath Tagore have each given something which is of

permanent value to mankind. When there was need of peace, they have given that which bestows peace; when there was need of inspiration, they have given that which inspires; when we needed hope, they have given us that which kindles hope. Whatever was needed by society has been provided by them. Great changes in life, far-reaching revolutions have taken place in human history. Behind all these stand the thinkers and the men of letters who had shown the way.

These three powers have so far given shape to life; they would also continue to mould our way of living in future. Science causes external changes, but also creates circumstances that influence human mind. Only, science is not able to change human mind directly. *Vani* (or speech) goes further ahead of science and directly attacks the human heart. Self-knowledge manifests what is innermost. Science is concerned with the outer and self-knowledge with the inner. Literature mediates between them and builds a bridge, as it were connecting the two. Connecting the two extremes, she also adds beauty to each. *Tulsidas* has said, " If you want to have both the inner and the outer worlds illuminated, then place the name of *Rama* at the entrance of the tongue !" This means that the *Ramanama* on one's lips could illuminate both one's outer and inner lives. Speech is God's unique gift to man, not given to other animals. It is said of Solomon that he knew the languages of birds. I do not know whether birds have languages or not. But the power that belongs to human speech is indeed very great. Its misuse would break up society. When we clean food-grains we take only the solid and whole grains and throw away the husk. The goddess of prosperity, *Lakshmi* blesses that society—so says the *Rigaveda*—in which speech is likewise scrutinised. The wise men thoroughly scrutinise speech; they search for the best, the finest and the most transparent of expressions and make use of them. This brings upon society the blessings of *Lakshmi*.

It is often said that Saraswati (the goddess of learning) and Lakshmi (the goddess of wealth) do not see eye to eye with each other. The Rigaveda however has said what amounts to its very opposite. What astounding ignorance leads one to say that Saraswati and Lakshmi are enemies ! Saraswati is but the uniting force; she unites the outer with the inner, science with self-knowledge. If there is anything that can unite the various powers on earth, it is *vani* or the power of speech. How can Saraswati be hostile to Lakshmi ? *Vani* or speech is a subtle power and many other powers lie hidden within her. I have great trust in her. I am ceaselessly talking. I listen too.

I do not want propaganda. I want revelation. '*Prakash*' is an unique word of Hindusthan. The English words 'propaganda' and 'publicity' are wholly superficial. I do not want that the idea of our work be placed before the people in superlative terms. What I want rather is that the philosophy that underlies it be deepened so as to touch every one's soul. Let this philosophy be made stronger, deeper and more universal. I have not as yet experienced an idea deeper and more universal than this. May be, the future generations would come to realise that. To strengthen the philosophy of Sarvodaya we shall have to go deeper than all the wise men and saints of yore; that would be the touchstone for testing Sarvodaya.

An *Atma-jnani* (one who has attained self-knowledge) can never sell himself. He is wholly autonomous. He does not care whether the world listens to him or not. Tulsidas has therefore said, "that is creative speech ('*vak-visarga*') which washes off the sins of the people ". That alone deserves to be called literature; that alone is *saraswata*, great literature, the rest being mere speech.

Pandharpur.

29-5-'58

X

SATYAGRAHA IN THE SCIENTIFIC AGE

Pyarelalji has stated in his book 'The Last Phase' that Gandhiji used to confess that his acquaintance with *Satyagraha* was only very meagre. The science of Satyagraha is very deep and much research has to be undertaken about it. This is not merely modesty on Gandhiji's part. This is a statement of fact. Whatever experiments we have made with Satyagraha have been like groping in the dark. No clear light had been available to us. Of course, the little glimmerings of light that were vouchsafed us helped us to go ahead. I have said a few things before on the role of satyagraha in democracy. Today I shall not talk from the point of view of democracy. Democracy is a small affair. Ours is the age not of democracy alone, but also of science. I said in one discourse that there are three forces that shape human life. These three forces are science, self-knowledge and speech.

Many are of the opinion that it is the great politicians who most influence life. Babar influenced life in India, so also did Alexander the Great and Lord Clive. But this is an erroneous notion. It was science, that had made great headways in Europe during the days of Lord Clive, that helped the ascendancy of England. She had better ships than India had. Shivaji used to buy swords from the Portuguese. The invasions of Alexander the Great and Babar as well as the voyages of Marco Polo and Columbus were made possible by science.

Self-knowledge teaches man to make the best use of science. The use that an age makes of science corresponds to the measure of self-knowledge attained during that age.

The power of speech as expressed in literature mediates between science and self-knowledge.

Today I shall talk to you about the form Satyagraha should take in this age of science. When an opponent approaches us with a rod in hand, anyone kind and merciful amongst us could exercise an influence upon him and make him see that the use of the rod was sheer folly. As Valmiki, the robber, was transferred while attacking Narada with an axe, so also could our opponent change for the better. But what could be done when the enemy drops bombs from an aeroplane or by simply pressing a switch in the safety of his own room? How could Satyagraha be undertaken under such circumstances? What could the Satyagrahi achieve in this case with the kindness of his look and the softness of his voice?

With the progress of science, we are called upon to go deep into the spirit. We are to reach even greater depths than those attained by men in days past. Science has brought it within the power of a few to destroy the universe while sitting in their own corners. We too have to develop the might of Satyagraha in such a way that we could cast our influence on the entire world. There is no other way left open for Satyagraha.

I do not consider this mysticism. The realisation experienced by the mystics or the devotee through meditation is not the ultimate thing; it amounts to a consolation. God consoles the devotee in accordance with his desire. One misses the still deeper experience and realisations if one remains content with such consolations, treating the latter as amounting to direct realisation. Mysticism no doubt is a great thing, for it is certainly a great achievement to establish direct contact with the unknown universe. But the power that it yields is not sufficient for our present purpose. We have today to discover the power which could counteract the destructive power of the atom. This power, however, we cannot acquire so long as we are confined to the limits of the mental world. Whenever I have meditated on

this problem the local issues about state-borders, languages, religions or communities have seemed insignificant in comparison.

After all this development of the sciences we ought to be able to grasp the truth that mind cannot be transformed with the aid of a process that is itself mental. But if we leave mind behind and go ahead, mind would die of itself; there would then be no question of simply changing it. When speaking of 'change of heart' we think as if we are to help a man to change for the better by getting rid of his faults. I am however thinking of proceeding with the supposition that there is no mind at all.

The time-worn methods are not of much use in this age of science. When I say all these things, people complain that Vinoba has turned a follower of Shri Aurobindo. This thought however is not new in me. The old methods of diplomacy and the traditional literature would not help us now. We must have to adopt new policies. I had even said that true religion has not yet been built up, for we did not have the proper foundation needed for that purpose. In the days of yore there was no science and people accepted on faith the few things the *Rishis* had apprehended by meditation. Certain beliefs, no doubt, have come to stay as a consequence, but those beliefs have not been adequately founded. This is the fate of principles like truth and non-violence. People consider truth desirable but not so under all circumstances. Man has not accepted truth in the same spirit in which the mason follows the laws of geometry. This means that an inviolable law of truth has not yet been set up. True religion therefore has not been built up. Science alone would provide the foundation for religion. What passes today for religion is confined to the mental sphere. This has to be transcended before true religion could be established. There would then be harmony, and not conflict, between science and religion.

Concerned as I am with these issues, I am proceeding towards a state of spiritual quiescence or *Nivriti*. Such *Nivriti* however is not opposed to *Pravriti* or world-affirmation. *Nivriti* or world-negation that is so opposed is also itself another kind of affirmation or *Pravriti*. I am however searching for that power with which to counteract the destructive power of the atom. That power can only be, it so seems to me, the power of *Satyagraha*.

Only a few are investigating into the secrets of atomic power; but their discoveries would be available for use by the common man. One person had discovered electricity but it is now used by all. Likewise, spiritual power could be discovered only by an individual but harnessed for the good of all.

Of what use could *Satyagraha* be in the field of international affairs? *Satyagraha* represents a spiritual power. It is not a physical power, neither is it mental. Science by its very nature subordinates the human mind. We have to ascend to the level of the supermind, if we are to get to know this power of *Satyagraha*. If you intend solving the international problems by way of *Satyagraha* and not through popular opinion or governmental agencies then you would have to raise yourselves to the supramental level. My contacts with the people during the Bhoodan pilgrimage have convinced me that the minds of men are basically alike; everywhere human mind is in the same stage of development. We should therefore acquire such power as could influence the whole world while being manifested in an individual soul. This is possible when the individual in his own life transcends the limits of mind and attains to the supramental level of consciousness.

Usmanabad.

12-6-'58.

XI

TRANSCENDING THE MIND

As this movement acquires more of intensity and depth, the workers should raise themselves to higher and higher levels and should go deeper into the realisation of spiritual thought. This is the process leading to the elimination of all differences and to the purification of heart.

What Bapu used to do when two persons had differences was to summon them to his presence and coming down to their level to discuss the issue with them for hours and hours. Sometimes he succeeded, sometimes he did not. This is one method but not a very effective one. It would not work well in the age of science, for it is mental in nature. What comes to the forefront in the age of science is objective, impersonal truth. It matters little what is there in somebody's mind. Both science and self-knowledge subordinate mind as compared with the universe. Spirituality demands that mind should transcend itself. Science also makes the same demand.

What then is to be done in cases of mental differences ? These can be counteracted only by indifference, we have not yet realised the power of 'indifference'. In fact, we can be effective only if we act from a plane higher than the mental. Shri Aurobindo therefore used to speak about the supramental. It is not proper that one should remain content with the nectar of divine realisation. Even such a person takes on a new life. Most of us are reborn under the weight of our *Karmas*; that is not of any consequence. But when a person comes down even after he has drunk to his satisfaction the nectar of divine realisation and has raised himself above the mental plane, the process involved is called by Shri Aurobindo the process of 'descent.' Liberation is

not the end. A new programme of action begins, according to Shri Aurobindo, after liberation and after the transcendence of the mental. This is the plane of the supramental.

So long, it was thought that a liberated person could not descend even if he wanted to. He would be in that case absorbed in liberation. Shri Aurobindo's philosophy however makes this of secondary importance. Others like Shankara say that there should be no return after liberation. For Shri Aurobindo however liberation or *Moksa* rather qualifies a person for the service of mankind. One cannot serve in the true sense so long as one has not attained liberation, for otherwise there is always the chance of doing something wrong.

Likewise, we have to ask if we possess the strength necessary for bringing about a change in society and change of heart. One has to attain liberation (*Moksa*) in order to acquire that strength. Even that is not enough. One has to experience the divine and thereby to reach the supramental plane but then he should descend from that height on the plane of wordly existence in order to change life with the help of his thoughts. He has to divinise the entire society. This is a grand philosophy. For the present, even if we cannot aspire to descend after reaching that sublime height, nevertheless it is necessary that we should at least rise above the mental plane. Otherwise we cannot remove stain from society and we would have to continue lubricating the social machinery from outside to lessen tension. The structure of the social machinery ought to be such that it would not generate any friction and hence would need no lubrication. No bone jars with another in this body of ours; there is a natural cooperation that pervades the entire structure. The hand hastens without delay to help no sooner than the foot suffers a prick. If the social machinery is similarly organised, the oil-can would be rendered useless.

I have just now made mention of Shri Aurobindo's philosophy. We ought to be acquainted with the thoughts of such great men. We should not be totally ignorant of the thought-currents of the world. We should know what is new in them, what would be their possible influence on people and also what we could accept from them.

In Mysore the otherday I asked Shri Puttappa‡ how he could write such great epic in this age. He replied, "This indeed is the age for epics in India. Nowhere else in the world were so many great men born within last fifty years as in India. We have here therefore just the age for epics."

It is therefore wrong to think that the age of science is not suitable for poesy. This age continues to reveal more and more of the mysteries of creation. In ancient times men no doubt knew less of these mysteries. Science, it is usually supposed, concerns what is known, whereas poetry concerns the unknown and the mysterious. But the ancient man was not aware of the range of this mysterious the scope for poetry was correspondingly limited. In fact, the more the mysteries of creation shall come to be revealed, the more room would there be for poetry. The age of science is therefore especially favourable towards poetry.

Pandavapuram.

30-9-'57

‡ Shri Puttappa is the author of a new Ramayana conceived from the modern point of view.

XII

THE CALL OF SCIENCE

Though man is an animal, he is yet distinguished from other animals by virtue of certain traits. The distinction could be drawn by saying that whereas animal existence is dominated by the vital principle, human existence is chiefly mental. Man of course, has both life and mind. Yet of these it is mind that predominates. If an animal moves, it runs fast, if it makes a noise, that too it does very loudly. Such movement and such noise manifest the vital, and not the mental. Animals jump, run about, or bark. All these are vital processes. It matters but little if an animal suffers or is injured through these activities. Children also throw stones while playing, and though they aim at none, they may yet hit another to cause him pain and injury. But in children such activity is not totally free from the mental. Thought and desire, hope and despair are the mental powers that work in man. Fear and courage, love and attachment are also mental functions in man.

Animals belong to the vital and man to the mental plane. Science however is teaching man to rise above the mental to the level of *Vijnana*. This means that what we call psychology or the science of mind would be rendered entirely useless. Science from the very beginnings is indifferent towards psychology. The atom bomb dropping from above does not consider whether the men below are guilty or innocent. The distinction between good and evil is obliterated. Like a river in spate, it sweeps away along with it men, animals and logs of wood without stopping to brood over their differences. Science is thus above the mental level.

The universe has been created out on atomic energy and

would disintegrate if atoms are separated from each other. The universe originates from and again dissolves back into this atomic energy. It is this above power that has now come within the reach of human hands.

Man has been able to send up satellites into space. This means that we cannot any more remain satisfied with international problems; we must have to grapple with inter-global issues. How can this be possible so long as man confines himself to the mental plane ?

Let us suppose that I love one and hate another, but that all three of us are being swept away by a river in spate. We do not know how to swim. All three of us would be drowned; own loves and hates would not be able to help us in such a situation. A similar situation has come into being now that atomic power is in human hands. Man has raised himself to the level of God. Like God, man also can create and destroy. He has turned into a small God. God however is not moved by mind; he is above the mental plane. He is above attachments and jealousies. But if man continues, even after he has acquired the status of God, to be dominated by the mental, the consequences would indeed be ruinous. Just imagine what would have happened if God, like man, were actuated by the mental forces. What would have happened if likewise the mind of an ass worked within man ? Man being mental and an ass being primarily vital, the consequence would be complete disharmony.

Human emotions are today capable of yielding dangerous consequences. If we lived in olden days, we could settle our issues by fighting duels. But today Bulganin and Eisenhower if they turn enemies would not take to wrestling. They would take to atomic weapons but with what consequences.

Man can therefore utilise the power that has come within his

reach only if he gets rid of mental attachments and jealousies. The human problem today therefore is to render the traditional psychologies ineffective. It is no use adding only a new chapter to the old scriptures and text books. They deserve only to be burnt to ashes.

The plane of *vijnana* or science is above that of mind. Science is trying to force us to ascend to that higher level. The Upanishadas knew of the plane of *vijnana* as being higher than the vital and the mental planes. But it was then a matter of individual realisation. It was enough if a few individuals reached that plane through personal effort while the rest lagged behind. There was no pressure of the circumstances that all should have to rise to that level of *vijnana*. Today, however, science makes it imperative on us to go beyond the mental. This could be done only by spiritual effort. Science therefore is compelling us to undertake spiritual reflection. The sages of the past undertook individual spiritual effort (*Sadhana*); science demands that we should take to a collective form of the same spiritual effort (*Sadhana*). For, only then science would benefit mankind, otherwise, we would go to ruins.

The sages of the past gave up the sense of the 'I' and the 'mine'. The Vedanta taught that nothing—neither this house nor this field nor even this body—was mine, likewise, when we rise to the level of *vijnana*, we should say that this house, this property, this field, all these are *ours*. This is unavoidable in the age of science. Two paths are open to us : either to take to collective spiritual effort (*Sadhana*) or to perish. Either usher in the kingdom of Heaven upon earth through spiritual effort, or be destroyed along with the world.

'Supramental level' is a metaphysical expression. But now we must have to take a more practical view of it and to discover its applications in our everyday life, in the laboratories

of the teacher and the pupil as also in the lives of peasants and tradesmen, of the ruler and the ruled. Judged from this new point of view, all our age-old text books, and literary works betray their inadequacy. No such literature would do now; they belong to the lower level. New literature has to be created. The old religions also would not work. To please God by burning lamps and incense before an image would not do. The entire humanity has become a living image of God. We are to worship this image. We should have to enquire for example, if mankind has enough food for it. This would indeed be a drama of worshipping humanity as our God. At first, it would be like stage-acting. But in course of time, we would experience reality.

We have initiated the drama of *Gramdan*. People ask if the villagers of Gramadan units have give up all attachments. Are they practising such selflessness that they look upon all the children of the village with the same affection with which they treat own children ? How can all this happen in a day ? I reply in this way. They have brought about *Gramdan*, which means that they have staged a drama. Science deems this drama essential for this age. Science again will turn this stage-acting into reality.

Dharwar.

31-1-'58.

XIII

THE CONQUEST OF NATURE

This morning a student put a very interesting question to me. His question is, "How much freedom do we really have? Have we really any effective control over external circumstances? If we are not really slaves of circumstances then to what extent are we free?"

This question is almost as old as the hills. But let us look at this problem not from an individualistic point of view but from, let us say, a collective view point. That is because, we will be able to obtain a greater control over external circumstances if we make collective resolves instead of individual ones. What are we doing now? I set up a goal for myself and try to achieve it all by myself. It is not quite certain that the people amongst whom I live, have a favourable attitude towards it. The external circumstances may also not be favourable, and in such a situation I have to struggle all alone against my fellow beings who may have goals that are opposed to mine, against the prevailing circumstances and against the physical world on the top of it all. I shall have thus to fight on two or three fronts at the same time. Every one else has the same right to make independent decisions as myself and if some one else's goal is contrary to mine, he will come into conflict with me. Under such circumstances it becomes very difficult to achieve mastery over the world. This is almost exactly the situation in which Man now finds himself.

The power of science is not going to be favourable to individualistic efforts. Its help will be available to us collectively only when we make a joint resolve to strive for something. Then it will be easier to achieve mastery over the external world. It will be easier for men to co-operate with each other and there will be a cessation of mutual conflict. Then we will

fight jointly for mastery over Nature, our victory will be aided by science and Man will no longer have any reason to feel that he is the slave of circumstances. But we must have to take the help of science to gain the confidence that we can master the external world. To this end it will be necessary for us to decide upon our goals jointly, to strive for them jointly, not individually and this 'jointly' should now mean the whole humanity. It will then be the duty of the individual to exert to the utmost for the achievement of this common goal and he will have the satisfaction of feeling that he is working for this common purpose. Now we have the power of science at our disposal and this power is growing day by day, so that in the future we will have more of it at our disposal than we have now. So we must make use of it freely. We can master nature if we make use of the scientific method and then questions such as whether we are really free agents and have any control over circumstances will not rise at all.

Recently I had said that science must continue to grow and scientists must take a vow not to help in the invention and manufacture of destructive weapons. The daily press has welcomed my statement with the comment that it is a happy sign that these protagonists of Sarvodaya have now begun to appreciate the value of science. People have taken it for granted that these Sarvodayites are wedded to out dated modes of thought and are not in favour of scientific progress. On the other hand, those others who do not accept the Sarvodaya point of view and are wedded to so many other 'isms', those stalwarts of dialectics, are supposed to be great lovers of scientific progress. There can not be a greater mistake, a greater misapprehension than this. Actually it is the believer in Sarvodaya who is fully entitled to make the freest use of science. One who does not believe in Sarvodaya, that is, one who has not the welfare of the entire humanity at heart is not entitled to have any access to the powers that science has placed at our disposal, because science in the control of such people will only

encompass the destruction of mankind. So nobody else in this world can welcome science as freely and as whole-heartedly as one who accepts and has complete faith in non-violence. That is why, when people accept the Sarvodaya point of view and pursue science in that spirit, it will become a succouring, redeeming and divine force in the service of mankind.

I know that there are some people in the Sarvodaya movement, who have a good word to put in in favour of traditional forms of social organisation and further more who believe that it is safe to stick to traditional methods of production and dangerous to adopt modern technological innovations. But science and mechanisation are not the same thing. Science or rather technology cannot decide as to what kind of machinery will be useful for which society. That decision has to be made by taking into consideration the social situation, the population problem, the land-man ratio, the employment situation and such other factors into consideration and different countries will come to different conclusions as to the type of machineries they will adopt. These decisions will also change with the passage of time. Today we may have to tolerate the use of certain types of machineries but tomorrow we may or may not do so, while we may then no longer welcome such other machineries as are being welcomed by us today. This may happen in other countries also. Thus the particular *form* of technology will depend upon and vary according to the prevailing circumstances. There ought not to be any question of zealotry in this. Science as such has nothing to do with the form of technology. There can be as much science in small machineries as in big. So we must have to grasp the idea that the Sarvodaya point of view accepts science completely and unreservedly.

Very few people lay such great stress on the importance of science as I am doing today. Today there are many who love science but they want to go ahead with only the love of science at heart, without caring for self-knowledge and so science leads to terrible consequences. The Sarvodaya approach is firmly

based on self-knowledge and hence it is not in the least afraid of science. Rather it welcomes science with an open mind and is in a position to utilise it properly.

So, the main idea in Sarvodaya is that the Soul does not dwell in bondage, in narrowness, but is to be found in pervasiveness, in universality. That is why our decisions and endeavours ought to be collective, and then with science added unto these collective resolves, we will be able to master our circumstances. It may be too much to claim that we will be able to have complete mastery, but we can certainly be successful to a considerable extent.

It is inconceivable that God who created this world has ordained a life of sorrow for His children. He has provided for our happiness, but we have been so enterprising that we have changed that happiness into sorrow. He gave us grapes and we turn it into wine. He gave us iron and we are making weapons out of it. Cow gives us both milk and dung, but if instead of using the dung for plastering we use it as food and plaster our walls with milk it will be no fault of the cow. We do not know how to live correctly and that is how we have made our lives sorrowful.

I place this proposition before you, that whatever we may have we should consider as belonging to the society as a whole and should partake of it only after sharing it with others. This thing is an unavoidable necessity and will prove very useful in this age of science. This idea of sharing has been handed down to us through the ages, but in the scientific age neither the individual nor the society can do without it. That is why I am placing before you the idea of joint endeavour and joint enjoyment. Only this can make us happy in this scientific age.

XIV

LAO-TSE AND STALIN

All-India leaders belonging to different ideologies attended the Gramdan conference at Elwal³ and have issued a joint statement giving their blessings to the Gramdan movement. In doing that they have used two significant words. 'They have expressed their appreciation of 'the *non-violent* and *co-operative* means used by Vinoba for the solution of social problems.' They have perceived two significant things in our movement; firstly, the non-violent method, which is a blessing of ancient wisdom and secondly, the cooperative method, a modern blessing.

Now let us go into the significance of this statement. Both the non-violent and the cooperative methods are joined together in Gramdan. The non-violent method has evolved out of spiritual thought based upon the experience of unity of Atman and the cooperative way has evolved out of the experiments and experiences of the scientific method. Both these methods are united in the Sarvodaya approach and that is why it has been acceptable to the leaders.

We have been saying all along that Sarvodaya evolves out of the synthesis of the spiritual and the scientific approaches. Some used to think that these Sarvodaya people are wedded to conservative modes of thought and do not appreciate the value of scientific research. They prefer the Charkha to the textile mill, the Takli to the Charkha and will even prefer a bamboo Takli to one made of steel. Perhaps they will be happier if

*A conference held at Elwal in Mysore State in September 1957, attended by leaders of the Congress, the P. S. P. and the Communist Party of India.