



THIRD POWER

(A NEW DIMENSION)

VINOBA





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Vinoba

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

We are glad to publish an authorised collection of Vinoba's addresses and writings regarding the *Third Power*, which is according to his vocabulary "a power which is opposed to the power of violence and distinct from the power of the State".

In the vocabulary of world politics the *Third power* consists of those who are not attached to the American or to the Russian Block, but Vinoba seeks to realize this non-violent third power on the widest scale. He believes that this third power is the only power which can save humanity from impending disaster.

We are very thankful to both of our translators. Our thanks are also due to Jayaprakash Narayan who has kindly given a most suitable introduction to this book.

We hope that this book would be widely welcomed.



TRANSLATORS' PREFACE

Martin Luther King made some striking contributions in some of his later writings, to the discussion of the relationship between “power” and “love”. The theme is vital to any programme of revolutionary non-violence, in fact, to any genuine revolution towards a more human and humane society. This book contains some examples of Vinoba’s thinking on the same theme. It develops some of the topics discussed in a previous volume on *Loka Sakti*. (‘Democratic Values’ : Sarva Seva Sangh Publication : Varanasi 1962). The passages selected for the present volume appear in the Hindi collection *Tisari Sakti*, but this is not a complete translation of that volume.

Vinoba’s addresses, delivered at different times to different types of audiences, are not intended to be a systematic exposition of his ideas. His talks, interspersed as they are with humorous sallies, similes and illustrative anecdotes, spring out of the inspiration of the moment, place and circumstances, There is a certain amount of repetition which is natural and unavoidable. We have, therefore, taken the liberty of bringing together passages from the spoken word so as to weave a fairly cogent and continuous argument for the benefit of the reader of the English version. Care has, however, been taken to ensure that the message remains complete and accurate. Our chief aim has been to choose those talks which have a direct bearing on the relationship between free human creativity and the power structure, and present them in language-forms intelligible to the interested non-Indian reader.

It is hoped that this edition will be welcomed by persons who are interested in the building of a truly human society and in the practical measures which must be taken to that end.



INTRODUCTION

The concept of three “qualities” (*gunas*), three “disorders” (*dosh*), three aspects of divinity, three worlds, has come to us from ancient Indian tradition, In modern politics we speak of the “three worlds”. That part of the world which lies beyond the respective spheres of influence of America and Russia is called the “third world”. Likewise, we have the concept of a “third force”, as a power for the promotion of world peace. But we have no clear mental picture of this force.

Vinobaji has provided us with a philosophical justification and a practical application of this new concept in the various addresses which have been brought together in this publication. A careful study of this book is necessary for a proper understanding of *Sarvodaya* ideas and of the movement. Though *The Third Power* is the title of only one of the sections in this volume, we find that in almost every other chapter some aspect or other of this all-pervasive power is referred to, and the methods of promoting it described.

What, we may ask, is this *sarvodaya*, or this “third power” conceived by Gandhi and Vinoba? There are only two powers known to history for the transformation of human society, for its reconstruction and preservation—the power of violence (*himsa-shakti*) and the power of law (*danda-shakti*). The power of love is mentioned, of course, but is almost always limited to the family-circle. Jesus preached love without limit, it is true: he taught his fellow-Jews that the “neighbours” whom it was their duty to love included not only their own countrymen but all humanity, even their enemies. But there is nothing to show that the disciples of Jesus tried to get the whole life of society permeated by the principles of love. This much, however, is certain: during the early days of Christianity the followers of the religion did found a few communities based on love, and these communities were to a large extent successful in moulding their lives on Christian ideals. Later, with the spread of Christianity and its acceptance as the State religion of the Roman Empire, the influence of the principle of love on society became weakened. Nobody can say that today’s “Christian” societies are



governed in any measure by the principles of love and non-violence propounded by Jesus.

So long as Christianity was not a State religion, Christians withstood the corrupt practices of the Roman Empire with great courage and heroism and in a completely non-violent way in accordance with the teaching of Jesus. But after it became a State religion, practically all efforts to give a non-violent shape to the political, economic and other aspects of the life of society came to an end. The older tradition lingered, and emerged from time to time, in small communities such as (later) the Society of Friends (Quakers). A few idealists in Western countries, inspired by their dreams of a better world, have tried from time to time to establish model communities, but these have not had a long lease of life, nor have they had much influence on ordinary society.

In India Mahaveera and Buddha made compassion (*karma*) the foundation of their *dharma*. But this compassion was limited to individual practice, or at best applied to the inner life of the *bhikshu sanghas*. The Emperor Ashoka is the only example in history of a ruler who accepted the Buddhist *dharma*, and after the blood-bath of his victory in Kalinga vowed that he would not make war again. It does not seem, however, that Indian society in Ashoka's time was permeated by non-violence or compassion. It would, in fact, be a mistake to imagine that non-violence means merely the absence of outward violence. The exploitation, oppression, gross inequality and other social evils which exist within the legal framework of the State are all aspects of violence even though there may be no open violence.

These three religions (Christianity, Jainism, Buddhism) are founded on the bedrock of love, non-violence and compassion, yet their adherents have not been able to build their own societies on this foundation. That they have failed is obvious: to understand why they failed calls for some reflection. It cannot be said that Mahaveera, Buddha and Jesus failed to recognise the violence, latent but all-pervasive, in the societies in which they lived. On the contrary, it is clear from their profound teachings



on the relationship between the rich and the poor, on acquisitiveness, attachment etc., that they were fully alive to the hidden violence in the society of their times.

There appear to be two reasons why these religions failed to cast out violence from the heart of society. First, the moral values of self-discipline, non-acquisitiveness, renunciation, conquest of lust, compassion etc. were regarded only as means to the spiritual uplift or salvation of the individual. The first great Founders had envisaged a world transformed and reformed by these values, but the religious institutions which were established in their names did not accept this social purpose. If they had done so, they would have had to face the displeasure and opposition of the authorities and of the exploiting classes, so that the expansion of their sect would have been hindered. The second reason for their failure was that all three movements became official State religions and so lent their support to the State's organised military and legal power. It was, therefore, not possible for them to create a society based on non-violence.

The coercive and legal powers of the State (the latter are a disguised form of coercion, although in a democracy this much coercion is approved by the people) continue to rule human society even today. This is because, on the one hand, the possibility of atomic warfare has brought mankind to the brink of a precipice; and, on the other hand, the freedom and autonomy of the individual human being (no matter what the form of his government) have been crushed beneath an over-centralised and over-mechanised politico-economic juggernaut. In the U. S. A., the richest country in the world, 15% of the people are living in poverty; there is gross inequality and colour prejudice; the young and the intellectual classes are in revolt. In Russia, after fifty-two years of Communist rule, factories are still not in the hands of workers nor farms in the hands of farmers, nor universities in the hands of students, nor is there a government of workers, with power—economic, political and social—in the hands of Soviets (Panchayats) of labourers. There is no freedom of thought, and power is still in the hands of the Communist Party, in which there is a complete lack of democratic practice. Russia has countered the “Monroe doctrine” of the U. S. A. by promulgating the



“Breshinev doctrine” according to which Soviet Russia has claimed as her birthright that in the areas of her influence in Europe i.e. wherever Communist parties are in power, she may intervene as she sees fit, sending in her armies, as she did in Czechoslovakia. When Mao of China announces that power grows out of the barrel of a gun, he is merely speaking the harsh and naked truth about modern human culture.

The democratic socialists aim at nationalisation, But even where this socialist nationalisation has been carried out, there is no sign whatever that inequalities and exploitation have come to an end, or that power has passed into the hands of manual workers, or even that in the nationalised establishments the workers are treated as equals by the officials, and have been given their rightful part in decision-making, or that a new spirit inspires both officials and workers alike, and transforms their attitude to their work and to one another. Technical and industrial progress has certainly brought about considerable improvement in the workers’ economic conditions; the power of the trade unions has greatly increased, the day of the Welfare State has dawned. But all these things together do not add up to socialism. The touch-stone of socialism is in the changes which have been hinted at above.

It is clear from the foregoing discussion that the forces of coercion and of law have both failed to solve the basic problems of human society. Some third force is plainly needed. It is this force which Mahaveera, Buddha and Jesus have set before us in such masterly fashion—the power of love, non-violence, compassion. But the question at once arises: what likelihood is there that this “third force” can succeed today, when it failed to solve the social problems of the prophets’ own times, in societies composed of their own followers, no matter how well it may have worked at the personal level ? This is a crucial question, and no one has a complete answer to it today. Nevertheless, it is possible to conclude from circumstances, experience and reason that the “third power” has a better chance of success in our times than ever before.



One favourable circumstance of our times is to be found in the fact that the habit of conscious reflection is much more wide-spread than in former times. One mark of this awakened consciousness is that men are no longer content with the kind of society which the forces of coercion and law have created, nor with the political and economic structure which they have set up. The youth of western countries in particular are showing themselves to be thoroughly dissatisfied with the present social order. It would seem that this discontent is also wide-spread among the youth of Communist countries. Our historical situation today, therefore, demands that we should have recourse to some third force, different from those of coercion and of law.

Secondly, it is possible for the present generation to learn from mankind's previous experience and not to repeat previous mistakes. The powers of love, compassion etc., made a grave mistake formerly by seeking the protection of the State for their work. The result was the opposite of what was intended. The power of love was swallowed up by the power of the State, non-violence was lost in violence, and compassion in the law. We must profit by this experience and develop the "third force" independently of the power of the State. It was for this reason that Gandhi used to say that those who had faith in non-violence should not enter politics. For the same reason Vinoba advised *lok-sevaks* (Servants of the People) not to join political parties, and developed the idea of *lok-niti* (government by the people) as an alternative to *raj-niti* (conventional politics).

There is another lesson which we may learn from past experience. In former times experiments with the power of love were limited to the life of individuals or religious orders; it is our task now deliberately to base all the practices and institutions of society on this power, and so to build up a non-violent social order founded on love. In this context it is more important to root out the violence latent in the structure of society than to make peace when open violence breaks out. This is something to be kept constantly in mind.



Thirdly, reflection on previous experience leads to the conclusion that if we are to avoid former mistakes all our activities must be based on disciplined thought, and that in carrying them out our energies must be effectively distributed. Our real task is to explain our ideas to the people, to change their old habits of mind and to arouse both in individuals and in communities a faith in their own power to act. Thinking on these lines the conviction will grow that if we can create a social revolution by these methods, the new experiments may succeed where the old ones failed. Naturally, the practice will always fall short of the ideal, just as the finest-drawn line on earth falls short of the definition of an 'ideal' line.

Fourthly, in our own times Gandhiji has taught us most valuable lessons by his large scale experiments in South Africa and in India with the use of this third power in the social field. These lessons are new, we could not have learnt them from the experience of former generations. Vinobaji also is today engaged in far-reaching experiments which have brought us new understanding and from which the pioneers of the future will derive much help.

These are the reasons which lead me to believe that ordinary people like us may be able today to succeed where even Mahaveera, Jesus and Buddha failed in their day, if only we will use to the full our powers of intelligence and faith. The present collection of speeches delivered by Vinobaji over an 18-year period (1950-1968) will prove of great value to all those who are striving to make the "Third Power" effective in human society. The Sarva Seva Sangh deserves our thanks for having published these speeches.

Sarvodaya Ashram

Sokhodeora (Gaya)

1st September, 1969.

Jayaprakash Narayan



CONTENTS

Translator's Preface

Introduction by Jayaprakash Narayan

- I. Gandhi and Marx
- II. The Third Power
- III. Gramdan
- IV. Self-knowledge and Science
- V. Literature : the Link
- VI. Three-fold programme
- VII. Acharyakul : A Teachers' Fellowship
- VIII. The Sarvodaya Movement



I: GANDHI AND MARX

(*From Vinoba's Introduction to K.G. Mashruwata's book of that name*)

Human life, say the scientists, is probably a million years old by now. In comparison with this vast stretch of time, what are a couple of hundred years or so? Yet for us, the last two centuries have come to assume so much importance that we tend to think of them as the greater part of human history.

The present, naturally, always has a special significance. It is the fruit of the past and the seed of the future. It has a character of its own. It is by its very nature a turning point, a time of revolution, for better or for worse. Moreover, it is unique; it has never existed before; it will never exist again. In short, the present is a time not only of revolution, but of revolution without precedent. And it gains immeasurably in significance when it is also a time of pain. Pleasure is quickly forgotten, but the memory of pain persists. The past hundred and fifty years, which constitute our present, have been years of pain; no wonder that for us they eclipse the whole of human history.

What has happened to make this present age one of pain? It is the very increase in comfort, in objects of pleasure, which has given rise to the pain. We call pleasure and pain opposites, but the truth is that the one is the parent of the other. Pleasure begets pain, pain begets pleasure. In our age we are celebrating the birth of pain, and it has been born of the troubles which beset the sharing of pleasures. For in the sharing of pleasures one demands the lion's share and another the jackal's. There is nothing left for the lamb; the lamb in fact gets shared out between the other two, and that is a parable of the fate of countless human beings today. The question before us is how to extricate ourselves from this situation; all the unrest, upheaval and agitation in the world is caused by our struggles to do so.

In 1930-32 Indian jails were filled to bursting with *Satyagrahi* prisoners. The Government even released criminals to make room for them. Heaven alone knows all that went on in those over-crowded 'houses of correction'. Many immersed themselves



in the study of astrology, and predicted the date of our release. But their predictions failed, and each succeeding month sat heavily upon us. Some of us took to religious observances, some to experiments in cooking; some succeeded in combining the two. Others devised other occupations, but some were still left idle with nothing to do. These began to speculate, with the earnestness of a Buddha, about how to do away with the sorrows which afflicted India and the world.

Those who believed that these evils could only be set right by following Gandhiji's way began to reflect upon their own shortcomings. "We have come to jail as *Satyagrahis*," they thought, "but we send out secret messages and surreptitiously get hold of the things we want. Is this our 'Truth'? As for our 'perseverance', we find even a few months' imprisonment too difficult to bear. Yet we call ourselves *Satyagrahis* (perseverers in truth). What broken reeds we are! If we are serious we had better use this opportunity to strengthen our own character." They therefore began to practise self-discipline, and after completing their jail tasks busied themselves with carding, spinning, weaving, even scavenging.

Others however did not approve of this self-examination, and argued: "You insist on these meticulous standards of truth and non-violence in the political fight. Tell us where in all history you can find an example of a political fight conducted with more self-discipline than we have displayed? If ordinary human nature has to be transformed before a non-violent struggle can succeed, then a non-violent struggle is a mirage. How long is it going to take you to educate the whole nation in self-denial? How long will it be before our enemies experience a change of heart or before the people's sufferings can be ended? We took to Gandhiji's way because we did not see any alternative. It's a good way, no doubt, but why should we continue to follow it if it does not lead us to our goal?"

"Now look at Russia! What a revolution has come about there before our eyes. They have changed the face of the country, and now they are out to change the face of the world, while we, with our truth and non-violence, are cooped up in jail. What good



is that? It would have been a different matter if some agitation were going on outside, but nothing is going on! Let us recognize that we have gone about things in the wrong way; let us stop searching our souls and start searching for the right way. There is nothing much wrong with our souls!”

These young people then plunged into the vast ocean of socialist and communist literature—and really this literature, deep in some places and shallow in others, is as wide as the seas. A few began to fathom the depths of Marx’s *Capital*. But most were content with a dip into the not very deep propagandist literature emanating from Russia. The modern Russians share with the Puranic Rishis the belief that however much the reader may forget, *some* impression will be left in his mind if a statement is constantly repeated. At the time of the individual *Satyagraha* of 1940, a communist friend in jail advised me to study their literature, and I requested him to read to me while I span. As I had already read the basic work, Marx’s *Capital*, before my imprisonment, I did not have any difficulty in following what he read. He chose selected material to read to me, and yet the amount of reiteration in it strongly impressed me. It is not to be wondered at if our young men’s minds, far from being wearied by repetition, should be saturated with these slogans.

Two ideals, both one-sided, have been current from the beginning of history. One sees the purpose of life as the development of character, the other as the building of a social order.

The advocates of the first doctrine maintain that the welfare of humanity depends on man’s moral qualities. The development of the social order is a natural consequence of the development of human character. All men of good will should therefore concentrate on the development of the moral qualities. Direct efforts to change society only lead to egoism. The phrase *Jagad-vyāpāra-varjam* (control of world-forces excepted) defines the limit for a devotee. Our whole duty is to strengthen faith in the spiritual disciplines—non-violence, truth, self-control, contentment, co-



operation—and try to express them more and more fully in daily life. Let us do this and all else “will be added unto us.”

The communist doctrine is the very opposite of this. They say: “What you call the development of moral virtues is a mental process, but it does not originate in the mind but is the result of its environment. The mind itself is shaped by its environment. *Bhautikam chittam*—mind is a product of matter. It is not an independent entity, it is a reflection, a shadow, of the world outside. Does shadow control substance, or substance shadow? A good night’s sleep makes the mind fresh and clear, and the *satva* quality emerges. After a while one feels hungry, and *rajas* gets the upper hand. After the meal *tamas*, lethargy, takes over. Create the appropriate conditions and they will be reflected in the appropriate qualities. Therefore, you should change a bad environment as quickly as you can and by whatever means you can. Do not delude yourself with fantasies. The mind of man will not change—you cannot make it brutish, you cannot make it what you imagine to be divine. Its range is limited; it improves a little as the environment improves, it deteriorates a little as the environment deteriorates. You need not be anxious about it. If violence has to be used to change the social order, do not cry out that virtue is dead, consider that an evil order is destroyed. The violence needed to gain that end is not ordinary violence, it is a noble use of force, it is actually a virtue. Once you accept that, the qualities of character which you are so keen on will develop of themselves.”

These then are the two extreme doctrines. Other ideas fall into their place between them.

One group says: “We do not deny the importance of changing the social structure. But the change should go hand in hand with the development of moral attributes. A stable society demands certain moral values, and if we lose these values in our haste to create a new social structure, we shall have lost our capital in our greed to realise the interest. No social order can be permanent. We cannot create it once for all and then rest content. It will and must change with changing circumstances, and it



is no good making a fetish of any particular pattern. After all, who makes society? Obviously, the people. As the people are, so will their society be. Moral values must therefore be preserved and enhanced so that they themselves are the basis and tools of social change. No matter if the change seems to come slowly, the slow change may prove speediest in the end. It is true that a good society assists moral development, but it is truer still that adequate moral development brings about good social structures. Steadfast faith in moral values is the foundation; the social order is the superstructure. How can the superstructure be strong if you destroy the foundation?"

Another group replies: "We agree that in changing the social order the permanent moral values must be preserved. But one must not forget that general rules sometimes have to be modified to meet particular (*naimittika*) situations. You may on principle pray daily at an appointed hour. But if, just at that time, a fire should break out near your house, would you not rush to put it out? Afterwards, you would recite your prayers calmly at a later hour. This is what is called *nitya-naimittika-viveka* (discrimination between a general and an immediate duty). This sense of discrimination is needed in every sphere.

"We do not agree with the communists that there can be no revolution without violence. We believe that in a democratic country like India a revolution might be brought about through the ballot-box, and we would not mind if it takes a few years to create the necessary public opinion. But if the party in power were to abuse its position to rig the elections we should not regard it as wrong to use other methods. We should regard it as *naimittika dharma*. You may call it *apad dharma* (excusable action in an emergency) but please do not call it a crime. Such acts need not destroy permanent values. If a screw has to be loosened to carry out repairs, it can be re-tightened afterwards. This temporary resort to violence is in the interest of non-violence itself, otherwise, we may find non-violence more remote than ever. Do we not prune a plant to make it bear fruit? It is one thing to lay the axe at the root of the tree, it is quite another to prune its branches. Capitalism, imperialism, racialism, strike at the root of



non-violence. So does communism. It may not intend to do so, but the result is the same. Therefore we cannot support communism, but neither can we support a rigidity which blocks all social progress and prolongs the miseries of the poor in the name of moral values. Besides, we contend that the use of arms against foreign aggression or treason at home is not violence but part of the duty of a State. Otherwise we agree with your insistence on non-violence for all other purposes.”

The Saints and the Communists base their teachings on fundamental conviction; the two intermediate positions may be considered as differing ethical approaches. The former has been expounded in this country most effectively by Gautama, the Buddha and Gandhiji. A few other religious teachers and a few *Smriti* texts have given it their support. Most *Smriti* writers however advocate the second ethical approach. Most Congressmen and socialists who are also Indian nationalists seem to belong to this school, and many so-called Gandhians also tend to veer round to the same position.

There could be no more fascinating study than a comparison of the thought of Gandhi the ‘great soul’ and Marx the ‘great thinker’. From the last century of human history these two names stand out supreme, and the two ideologies confront one another across the world.

On the surface it might seem that it is capitalism led by U.S.A. which contests communism in the world arena. But I do not regard capitalism as really able to stand against communism. It has lost its vitality. On the other hand, though the Gandhian ideology has not yet appeared in an organised form, it is full of virility, and I believe that it will be Gandhism which will ultimately challenge communism.

Gandhi and Marx have become a daily topic of discussion among the educated in our country. There is a halo of spirituality around Gandhian thought; communism is backed by a scientific terminology. As Gandhi's methods achieved *swaraj* they can no longer be dismissed as visionary. Communism has shown its virility by rejuvenating China. This leads some people to seek to reconcile the two systems by formulae such



as ‘Gandhism is communism minus violence’. But in fact the two ideologies are irreconcilable; the differences between them are fundamental.

It is obvious that Communism is an ideology of *asakti* (attachment) and is devoid of any real philosophical content, although communists have erected an imposing philosophical edifice around it. Communists have elevated conflict into a kind of universal principle, and see it in operation everywhere, even in what we should regard as examples of co-operation. They also frequently discuss whether mind has emanated from matter or vice versa. None but a lunatic will doubt that mind has emanated from matter. But the *atma*, the Spirit, is something other than either mind or matter. This *atma* is nowhere to be found in communism, and if anyone were to put the evidence before a communist, he would simply deny its existence. Shankaracharya is reported to have said to one such unbeliever: “Friend, I have no quarrel with you. You who deny the *atma* are yourself the *atma*.” The man who says that he is awake proves that he is awake—but so does the man who says that he is asleep. Because communism rejects the *atma*, this third factor which shapes both mind and matter, it attaches no independent importance to virtue. What to us are spiritual qualities are to communists merely the product of economic conditions. An ideology which has no place for the soul has no place for the freedom of the individual.

These thinkers have traced the whole course of human history, and arrived at the conclusion that mankind’s past history has determined once for all his future course. There is no freedom of action left for us. Marx foretold even the order and sequence in which revolutions will take place in various parts of the world. This prophecy has not exactly come true, but such slips in calculation (like slips in astrological prediction!) do not really alter the destined course of revolution. All that a man can do is to co-operate with it.

The trend in Gandhian thought is exactly the opposite of all this. If communism is like a solid and completed building, Gandhism is like an empty basement. It is easy to see how Gandhi’s own thought went on developing. Gandhi himself would have told us



not to bother about inconsistencies between some of his earlier and later statements, but to take the later one and ignore the earlier. His greatest political campaigns were fought without previous planning, without settled strategy or tactics. When a man says: “One step enough for me,” why should the Lord show him two? And how far are even his latest utterances to be regarded as final? His own reply was: “Don’t take anything I say as final. Use your own brains. So long as I am here you can consult me. Afterwards you must think things out for yourselves.”

Consequently, even the closest of Gandhi's associates do not always see eye to eye. There is not a single aspect of life, not even such a fundamental of *sarvodaya* as *khadi*, upon which Gandhiji's friends and fellow-workers speak with one voice. Because of this, someone once suggested to Gandhiji that he should set out his ideas in a systematic treatise. Gandhiji refused, saying: “For one thing, I have no time; for another, I am still experimenting. The results may be gradually systematised later on, perhaps.” A perfectly good answer, but it struck me for a different reason. A systematic exposition of ideas only provides one with ammunition against rival systems. Like military armament, it tends to increase the conflict. The war of words, far from clarifying issues, adds to the confusion. It is much more useful to allow ideas to enjoy their freedom than to beat and drive them into cattle-pens called systems. No doubt, freedom may lead to diversity. The four disciples of Buddha took four separate roads, and ten Gandhians may choose ten different directions. The only right thing, as Gandhiji said, is that each should exercise responsible judgement and make his own decisions.

With due regard for this elasticity and freedom we may consider Gandhi's thoughts on the social order under three heads: *varna-vyavastha* (life-vocation), trusteeship and decentralisation.

Gandhi adopted the traditional concept of *varna-vyavastha* and infused a new spirit into it. The new idea is nevertheless based on the old one and preserves its meaning and purpose.



This in itself is an experiment in *ahimsa*. The non-violent way is to respect the old concepts which society cherishes, and give them new life, new forms and a broader meaning. Changes are brought about gently, almost imperceptibly, and without doing violence to values which people cherish. There is a danger however that the meaning of the old word should be distorted in the process; if this happens it is non-truth, not non-violence. The new meaning must be a valid interpretation of the old principle.

Gandhiji was born and bred in Indian culture, and accepted the principle of *varna* (hereditary occupation) as part of his idea of a non-violent social order. If he had been born elsewhere, he might not have used the actual word *varna*, but he would still have accepted its underlying social principles. These are (1) equal wages for all work (2) absence of competition and (3) a plan for education which will make use of all hereditary skill. Even if one dislikes the word *varna-vyavastha*, one may agree that these three things are essential to a non-violent social structure.

The second principle is that of trusteeship. Many people dislike this word, just as they dislike *varna-vyavastha*. There is no doubt, however, that the original concept embodied in *varna-dharma* was good and wise. Perhaps the same cannot be said with certainty about the idea of trusteeship which seems to have been subject to abuse from the beginning. But it has a good connotation in law, and Gandhiji was a good lawyer. He took up the word, and as a votary of truth he associated with it only its basically good meaning. I myself have no legal training, and so in spite of Gandhiji's use of the word it has not attracted me and I have not taken it up. But that does not prevent me from appreciating what Gandhiji meant by the word. The concepts of *aparigraha* (non-possessiveness) and *samabhava* (sense of equality) found in the *Gita* had taken a strong hold of Gandhiji's mind. The legal word 'trustee' helped him to give practical shape to these ideas. He says in his *Autobiography* that the study of the *Gita* illuminated the meaning of the word trustee, and the word in its turn solved for him the problem of non-possession. In short, Gandhiji considered that the only practical method of



practising *aparigraha*, in our present society or indeed in any circumstances, is to use all one's powers as something one holds in trust for humanity.

We may do away with the inequalities of wealth which result from an unjust social order, but inequalities of intellectual and physical endowment cannot be wholly eliminated, even though education may reduce them to some extent. Even in the best conditions, we cannot imagine their total abolition. This being so, every person must understand that whatever intelligence, bodily strength or wealth he possesses is his for the welfare of all. This is genuine trusteeship. But this word trusteeship has been so debased that it appears impossible to restore it, and I therefore propose instead the phrase *vishvastavritti*, the attitude of confidence.

As a general rule, we believe in self-reliance; no one should be dependent on another. But life would be hell on earth if no one could place confidence in another. Mutual trust is the foundation of human relationships, between parents and children, between neighbour and neighbour, between nations also. If we are afraid to give our confidence, it means that we are operating on a sub-human level. This attitude of confidence can be fostered by education; and in fact a social order based on mutual trust implies that the varied capacities of all its members are wisely encouraged and used. *Aparigraha* means that the individual should, from a feeling of confidence, use his talents for the good of all. If we do not like the term 'trusteeship' we may reject it; but we must not reject this fundamental principle of confidence, of mutual trust.

The word 'de-centralisation' is in a different category. It is new, and has therefore gathered no associations, either good or bad. It is also a new word for a new idea. Some people will say that the idea is not new, that everything was de-centralised before the machine age. I reply that the fact that industries were carried on a small scale in village does not in itself constitute a decentralised order. A decentralised order means that there should be an integrated and comprehensive plan behind the various industries. In the absence of such a plan they are merely scattered enterprises. Such isolated industries broke down inevitably at the first impact of the machine age. A



genuine decentralised order will not break down; on the contrary, it will break down the machine age. This so-called machine age of today is in reality un-machine like. Communism wants a properly mechanised machine age. But machines are like weapons of war in that, although they are invented by human beings, they are in themselves inhuman, and they cannot be humanised beyond a certain point. On the contrary, it is man who becomes the plaything of the machine. By machine here I mean those robber machines which take away a man's work and condemn him to idleness and mental stagnation. I am not referring to those tools which, as it were, run to man's assistance, work with him like an additional hand, and have a naturally human "feel" about them. A wheel-barrow, for example, is such a tool. "Blessed, blessed be this tool!" And this also is a gift of the machine age.

When therefore we say that decentralisation will destroy the machine age, we mean that we shall first make use of whatever good it can provide. The old, unorganised village industry had no power to assimilate the machine age in this way. This is the basic difference between *un*-centralised and *de*-centralised industry. This is why I say that both the word decentralisation, and the idea which it expresses, are new. If this distinction is borne in mind the edge of most of the arguments against decentralisation will be blunted.

But the principle of decentralisation is not limited to industry, it applies also to the authority of the State. Those who call for a non-violent social order sometimes lose sight of this and demand a strong central authority (at least for a time) to guarantee the industrial decentralisation.

Communists also envisage the state power as finally melting away like *ghee* in the summer heat. But until then they want it to be solid—not merely like *ghee* in winter, but solid and strong like the iron hammer which smashed Trotsky's head. Almost all 'responsible' leaders, from the earliest times down to the present, have fallen into this inconsistency and pleaded for a strong central government during the transition stage. Gandhiji alone has envisaged the decentralisation of power at every stage—beginning,



middle and end. Our friends, however, tell us that this is merely a fable of the *Ramrajya*, of the golden age, or else a dream of a future 'sarvodaya' Utopia; such talk, they say, is irrelevant to the present.

There are thus many differences between Gandhism and communism, but there are also important points of similarity. How could it be otherwise when both these 'isms' spring from a noble desire for the welfare of the masses? Both are steady champions of the poor. So wretched is the condition of the poor throughout the world that whoever takes up their cause with a mother's tremendous tenderness, whoever has the courage, the enthusiasm, the compassion to work in every possible way to lift them out of the pit, has achieved a quality of humanity which swallows up his faults.

Both Gandhism and communism, in their desire to save the poor, show the tremendous power of this mother love. But some mothers, in their wild longing for immediate results, are blind to the long-term effects of their actions. This has happened with the communists. The mother's affection, however intense, cannot in itself solve the child's problem. What it does is to provide the driving power and the determination to find a solution, but the solution itself needs the skill of an expert, a '*guru*'. Most communists are only concerned with quick results. They are obviously filled with the mother's love and concern for the needy, but they do not show the discernment of the *guru*, the 'Master-Mother' as he is called.

However that may be, the illiterate people of India are in a pitiable condition today, even after *swaraj* has been achieved. They long to be rescued and do not care how. They have neither the time nor the talent to go into the various 'isms'. Whoever grants their desire will be their God. It is of no use denouncing communism, or confounding it in argument, or suppressing it by force. What we should be doing, all of us, is hastening to the help of the poor in their distress.

In spite of all their suffering the heart of the people is still sound. The village folk still believe that if ever they are to be saved it will be by Gandhiji's methods. The Government, the Congress party workers, the sarvodaya constructive workers, the



socialists, are all in various degrees inspired by Gandhiji. How could any poverty or misery survive if all these four, with their varied capacities and outlooks, were to come together for united service of the people? But instead they are going their four separate ways, and a fifth actor is appearing on the scene; in the language of the Upanishads, “the fifth is Death”.

I am not blaming anyone for this state of affairs, and I certainly do not despair. I blame no one, because in a country as big as this our problems are big also, and it is not surprising that opinions differ. And why should I despair so long as I have a pickaxe in my hands? During a discussion at our *ashram* someone said that if more wells were to be dug food production would increase and there would be less hunger; so the Government should see to it. I said: “We are the Government, who else? Come, let us begin to dig.” The diggers had no experience at all, but the pickaxe went on digging, and after a time water appeared. The people round about regarded our well as a place of pilgrimage and came to drink the water. One of them, a village Patel, said: “If that old Koti Baba, who is nearly eighty, can work on a well, why should we not dig a well in our village also?” And so he did. The boys of Sargaon also did a remarkable thing. They decided among themselves that they would spend their Diwali holiday working on our well. About a dozen of them turned up without notice and did four hours’ hard work and then went quietly home. When God so wonderfully inspires the hearts of the people why should one despair? Come friends, let us worship the Goddess of work and ask her for our food. She says to us: ‘Ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find.’

To me at least it appears that the salvation of India is to be found in freedom from the lure of money and in hard bodily labour. This seems to me the essence of Gandhiji’s thought, and the point at which it meets communism. It is the answer to the problems raised by communism and capitalism alike.



II: THE THIRD POWER

(Speech at the Sarvodaya Sammelan, Chandil, Singhbhum, Bihar on 9.3.1953)

This is a gathering of workers. We have met here to offer to God whatever we have done during the past year and to carry away with us provision for the year ahead. At this juncture we need to give some thought to three things: our methods, our programmes, and the ways in which our work may be integrated.

No matter where we are working or what we are doing the state of the world is such that work cannot be done in isolation from the total world picture. We cannot take the smallest step without being continually aware of the influences at work in the world, the new trends which arise, the interplay of ideas and the conflicts of emotion. It is plain that the world is in a very unsettled state; it is also in a very explosive state. Anything may happen, at any moment. The mental climate, and the outward conditions, are equally unsettled.

An Evil Paradox

A month or two ago a number of intellectuals and learned men met in Delhi and held deliberations on the philosophy of non-violence. Our revered Rajendra Babu,* in addressing the gathering, said: "No nation in the world today has the courage and confidence to declare that it can govern without an army." He went on to say, sorrowfully: "Even though we had Gandhiji's teaching direct from his own lips, even though we worked side by side with him, India herself today lacks that courage." Our great leader, Pandit Nehru, has said on many occasions that: "Not a single world problem can be solved by force of arms." These comrades of ours, on whom our country has laid the responsibility of leadership, believe from their hearts in non-violence and have no faith in the efficacy of violence. And yet they have had to assume responsibility for forming, extending and strengthening the army. This is the evil paradox of the situation in which we find ourselves today.



We are in the position of putting our faith in one thing while in action we are forced into something else. It is our heart's desire to see non-violence accepted throughout India and the world, so that men no longer fear one another, but live together in love. Our hearts are filled with the faith that only love can endure and that love can overcome every obstacle. At the same time we possess something called the intellect (*buddhi*). Heart and intellect are inextricably intermingled; each is a part of the other. On the one hand, the heart tells us that no problem can be solved by violence, and that even when violence appears to solve one problem, ten new ones will arise in its place. The intellect, however, partakes of all three *gunas*; it can be responsive, it can also be dull; it can see, it can also be blind. This heterogeneous intellect tells us, "We cannot get rid of the army. The people whom we represent have neither the strength nor the skill to do without it. As their representatives, therefore, it is our duty to see that an army is organised, expanded and properly equipped."

This is the state of affairs. Our desire to give our energies to some constructive service is a "heart" desire only, and our intellect intervenes to say: "But the army must be organised efficiently, and that means organising the kind of industry which can maintain it." For those who have no faith in the spinning-wheel this poses no problem, but for people like us the question arises whether arms production can be organised on the basis of spinning and other village industries. Their intellect—and ours too, for we cannot stand aside—says : "No small-scale industries like these cannot provide a base for arms production."

'Community projects' have now been started in some places, and the government wishes to extend their work to all our five hundred thousand villages, so that the problem of poverty may be overcome and the national wealth and prosperity increased. But if world war should break out tomorrow, I doubt whether even one of these projects would survive, and even those who have organised them share my doubt. The intellect would at once take charge, and the heart would be silenced. "The main thing now", the intellect would assert, "is to save the nation."



I say this in a spirit of self-examination. If we ourselves were to occupy the seats of power and carry the responsibilities our friends now carry, our actions would differ very little from theirs. The seats of power are magic chairs. Those who occupy them are obliged to think in a narrow, limited, artificial and conventional way. They are compelled willy-nilly to think in terms of world trends as they appear to be. The trend is to fear. America, Russia and other big countries fear one another. Weaker nations like India and Pakistan also fear one another. And even though we are convinced that none of our problems can be solved by these mutual fears, weapons or armies, we still base our policies on military strength, and the strange thing is that we are helpless to give it up. When a man is driven helplessly into any action, it is no matter for pride, it is a matter for pity. We in India are in that pitiable condition.

Our Distinctive Task

Rajendra Babu has reminded us that the people look to the Sarvodaya Samaj to fulfil one task—that of faithfully maintaining its own basic principles, and of creating a congenial atmosphere for these principles to be practised today. If the Sarvodaya Samaj could do this it would be of the greatest assistance to our national government. In fact, if one of us today were to take office, and become involved in all the schemings and stratagems of office, neither his schemes nor his stratagems would be of as much help to the government as the efforts of the man who devotes himself to building up a society free from military force.

People often ask me why I am out of politics and why I do not accept responsibility in the government of the nation. I answer: “Two bullocks have already been yoked to the cart; of what use would it be to take me as a third? The best way for me to help the cart along is to repair the road so that it can travel in the right direction.” We must devote ourselves to building up an independent “people's power” (lok-shakti), and that in itself will be our true service both to the government and to the nation.

By “an independent people's power” I mean a power inhering in the people, which is totally opposed to the power of violence, but other than the power of the law,



and which it must be our task to call into being. We have handed over the power of the law to our government, and although it contains an element of coercion, we regard it as being in a different class from out-and-out violence because society as a whole has conferred these legal powers on the government. It is our task to create a situation in the country in which there will be no need to use even these sanctions of the law. If we can do that we shall have fulfilled our own true *dharma*. If, on the other hand, in our greed for results we depend on the power of the law for carrying on our public service, the distinctive work which is expected of us will not only not be completed, it may even be hindered.

Public service based on legal authority is certainly possible, and for that very reason we in India have sought, and assumed, control of our own government. So long as society needs a government, we must not shirk the responsibility of government. The duties of government are undoubtedly a service to the nation, but they are not the kind of service which can ever make the sanctions of law unnecessary.

I will illustrate what I mean by an example. Picture a battlefield where soldiers are being wounded. Those who go to the help of the wounded are filled with compassion; they serve friend and foe alike at the risk of their own lives, like a mother serving her children. There is no doubt about their human kindness and the value of their service. But they cannot stop war. Their service is bound up with a society which accepts war. One and the same war machine has two parts, one to kill, the other to rescue the wounded. The contrast between these two functions is clear; everyone can see that one is cruel and the other merciful. War is made up of the cruelty of the one and the humanity of the other, and both work together to ensure that war goes on. To speak in the blunt language of science, so long as we accept war at all we are guilty of its crimes, whether we fight or whether we nurse the wounded. I have given this example to show that we must not imagine that we can create a merciful government by a few merciful actions. Government in essence means brute force.



If our works of mercy are subject to the overall authority of the kingdom of brute force and done by order of the unmerciful, we are not doing our real work. On the surface this Government-sponsored work appears humane, even constructive; we may be tempted to take it up by the prospect of quick results, without looking at it in the wider perspective. If so, we shall no doubt achieve something, but we shall not give the service which is our own distinctive responsibility and which both we and others regard as our true *dharma*. It is our duty to find means of putting an end to war itself. This does not mean that we should refuse to help the wounded—we should certainly do what we can to care for them—but we should always remember that this is not our real work.

The Place and Limits of Legislation

Let me take another example. Everyone says to me: “You seem to carry some weight with the government; why do not you put pressure on it to get legislation to secure land distribution without compensation?” I tell these friends: “I am not blocking legislation; on the contrary, the work I am doing will make legislation much easier, even though I may not be cent per cent successful, but only 75% or 50%. I am not obstructing legislation, I am facilitating it. I am creating a climate of opinion in its favour.” But if I were to go further, if I were to declare and insist that without making laws, nothing can be done, then I should have betrayed my own *dharma*. My *dharma* calls on me to believe that we can evoke such a spirit in the hearts of the people, that without the aid of legislation, and no matter what the law may say, they themselves will distribute the land. Do mothers need a law to induce them to nurse their babies? There is a power in the heart of man which enriches his life, and that power is love. Man depends on love, he is born of love, he is nourished by love and when the time comes for him to leave the world, he dies content if he can see his dear ones around him at the last. If, in spite of this experience of the power of love, we have not the courage to appeal to it in the wider life of society, and go on demanding legislation instead, we shall not be able to help our government in the way it expects of us—by building up “people’s power”. This is our task, to build up a people’s power which is distinct from the power of the State. I



say that these two powers are distinct; I do not say that they are opposed, or incompatible. What is incompatible with people's power is the power of violence.

Let me cite one more example. The government wishes to help in the *Khadi* programme and has established a Khadi Board. Pandit Nehru expressed his surprise that something which should have been done four years earlier (soon after Independence) had been so long delayed. The Government desires to extend the scope of *Khadi* work and increase production. It is our duty, and that of the Charkha Sangh to help the government in this work. The Charkha Sangh has experience in this field, and the assistance of men of experience will be needed. But here again, in my opinion, although we should give the government the help expected of a knowledgeable citizen, we must not become wholly absorbed in its programme; otherwise we shall not be able to carry out our own *Khadi* programme properly. We may help the Government as much as we can with production, but at the same time we should be clear about our own point of view and carry on our own work accordingly. Let us never lose sight of the fact that our *khadi* work is a means to the establishment of a village-centred polity.

Pandit Nehru came to see me and spoke with great affection and I listened humbly to what he had to say. When he asked my advice, I expressed my views briefly. I said: "We expect the government to treat *khadi* and village industries in the same way as it treats the subject of literacy. We accept the principle that every citizen must be able to read and write, because this is an essential part of citizenship. The government therefore recognises an obligation to make everyone literate. Circumstances may make it impossible to succeed completely but so long as we do not succeed, so long as some remain illiterate, our conscience will continue to prick us. Let our government, in the same way, accept the proposition that it is its duty to teach every citizen and villager of India to spin. Let the government accept the idea that a villager or townsman who does not know how to spin is not properly educated. The people will do the rest. We do not ask the government for money. The greatest assistance that they can give us is the acceptance of the idea." Nehru heard me with patience, and I think he liked the



proposal. He said half-jokingly: "If everyone is taught to spin, how will the yarn be used?" I countered: "If everyone is to be taught to read, how will the reading be used?" I have met many persons who have had two or three years of schooling but never found any use for it for the rest of their lives, but, as you see, I asked no more for *khadi* than this, that a popular government should be ready to fulfil the desires expressed by its people. If I had gone further, and demanded that *khadi* should be forced upon the people by law, I should have shown myself ignorant of my own duty, and forgotten my own slogan, that we must establish a people's power distinct from the power of law.

I have given you illustrations of my theme from Khadi and from the Bhoodan programme. We have our own method of solving the land problem. If our government, democratic as it is, decides to tackle the problem it will do so by legislative authority. There is nothing wrong in that, it is merely a different way of doing things. But Government help of this kind will not nurture the power of the people, although it may increase their prosperity: Our aim, on the other hand, is not merely that people should be prosperous, it is that they should realise their power. This lies at the root of all our work; if that objective is kept steadily in view, there will be no need to spend much time on discussions of method. Every constructive activity will be characterised by methods which we may expect to result in an attitude of independence and self-reliance vis-a-vis the authority of the government.

If we think along these lines it naturally follows that the two main characteristics of our work will be discipline of thought and a wide sharing of authority.

The Discipline of Thought

By 'discipline of thought' I mean that ideas should be clearly understood and expounded. Nothing should be accepted without understanding the principles involved. It should be a matter for regret when anyone accepts our ideas without having understood them; we should be satisfied with explaining our ideas without imposing our will on others. Some people say that the Sarvodaya Samaj is a 'loose organisation. A loose organisation would certainly be useless and serve no Purpose. But the



Sarvodaya Samaj is not a loose organisation; it is not an organisation at all. It is a society based solely on ideas. We compel none to carry them out without first understanding them, and we will not obey anyone's orders without first considering and approving them. We meet only to exchange our ideas. The Koran, in singing the praises of the saints, says that their work is marked by mutual consultation. We too must devote ourselves to mutual consultation and pooling of ideas. We should be happy when people refuse to accept our ideas because they are not convinced; we should be very unhappy if someone puts these ideas into practice without understanding them. It seems to me that there is more strength in such an organisation than in one which is efficient, clearcut and bound by regulations. I am not saying that a strictly regulated legalistic organisation has no power at all; but that its power is not *Shiva-shakti*, it is not a power for good. It is because we wish to create *shiva-shakti* that we desire only the discipline of ideas.

It follows, then, that one aspect of our work is dissemination of ideas. From this point of view I can see why the Lord Buddha established the *Bhikshu Sangha* and Shankaracharya the *Yati Sangha*. I have, it is true, come to the conclusion that we ourselves should not form any such Sangha, because experience shows that their defects are likely to outweigh their advantages. Nevertheless we ought to reflect on the reasons why those great men felt the need of Sanghas and on the ideas that lay behind them. We want our ideas to flow out to people like a perennial spring of water, and therefore, we need messengers to carry them. Without such messengers the Sarvodaya Samaj cannot do its work. We must take every opportunity for meeting people and coming into close touch with them. People are not likely to accept our ideas at the first hearing: our workers must be filled with such enthusiasm that they will enjoy repeated discussions with the same groups, their faith and confidence in the power of the idea must be strong enough for that.

The fact is that many of us have got entangled in various institutions. These institutions have their own importance no doubt. Nevertheless let us show our regard



for what they stand for without becoming attached to the institutions as such. Let them continue their work, but let some of their members be always moving about among the people. If we do not organise our work on some such lines, our ideas will lose their vigour, and the discipline of ideas will not be effective.

The Bihar workers say with some pride—and the pride is justified—that it was the Bihar Congress that first took up *Bhoodan*, which was later approved by the All-India Congress at the Hyderabad sitting. But what does this approval amount to?—a circular from the top, from the All-India office, that ‘every congressman must help the *bhoodan* movement’. As the Ganga comes down to Haridwar from the Himalaya, so the circular comes down to the State offices. The Ganga moves on from Haridwar to its lower reaches; the circular too moves on towards the district offices. No matter how far the Ganga flows, it remains nothing but water: and in exactly the same way the circular remains nothing but paper. Like begets like, every species reproduces its own kind, and circulars beget nothing but circulars. Yet the work must be done after all, by the village people themselves. And how is this circular to reach the villages when it simply goes from one office to another?

So the work of the *bhoodan yagna* will not be successful unless we reach every home. Our goal is to collect twenty five lakhs of acres of land from five lakhs of villages. Put like that it seems easy. Five acres per village on an average is not a big thing. But who is to reach every village? Therefore the most important tool we possess is the dissemination of our ideas; we must plan for it and make our programme accordingly.

But if you are not bold enough for this, if you quail before the prospect of carrying the message to every village, and turn instead to short cuts by proposing legislation, then I must tell you that making laws, and relying on laws, is not our job. By all means let there be laws, good laws, as quickly as possible. But if we get involved in the law making, we shall be forsaking our own calling, our own *dharma*, for an alien vocation. Our own job, our *dharma*, is to travel round the villages and to maintain our faith in our ideas. Do not say that the work will never be done by discussion of ideas.



The work will never be done in any other way. It can be done only through acceptance of the idea. The power of the idea, the discipline of the idea, is our first tool.

The Sharing of Authority

Our second tool is that of decentralisation of authority. This means that all capacity for work, and all power that accrues from work, should be built up in every village instead of being centralised. To that end, we desire that every village should have the right to decide for itself what things should come into it and what should not. For instance, if a village decides to run a village oil-press and therefore excludes mill-processed oil, it should have the right to stop mill oil from coming in. When we propose this, the government tells us that it is not possible to have “a state within a state”; but what we must understand is that unless we distribute power and authority in this manner, military rule is inevitable. We cannot do without the army today, we shall not be able to do so tomorrow. In practice you will have to make up your minds to make use of the army, and therefore to maintain it in good order. In that case, do not pretend that you want ever to be rid of it.

But if we really do desire to rid ourselves of the army, we must do what God has done. God has distributed to each of his creatures a share of intelligence. Everyone has been given his portion, the scorpion, the serpent, the lion and the man. True, some creatures have less and some more; but God gave a share to each one and commanded them to manage their own lives by their own intelligence. The Creation has worked so smoothly on this plan that God is able to take complete rest, so much so that men even doubt that He really exists. We should do the same; we should so manage the government that people doubt whether there is a government. If people were to begin saying that India appears to be without a government, you may be sure that the rule of non-violence has begun.

That is why we call for *Gramswaraj*. We want to see the power to manage its own affairs vested in the village, that is, in the hands of the villagers. They should, for example, stand up and decide for themselves what things they will produce, and they



should inform the government what things they wish to exclude. If the Government cannot or will not stop these things coming in, the villagers must be bold enough to oppose it. If this kind of people's power is built up it will be a great help to the government, and will do away with military sanctions; but without it the power of the army will never be ended. Even if Delhi were to acquire the intellect of the Lord Brahma, with four brains, and eyes for all the four points of the compass, it could never plan for, and manage, all the affairs of every village with benefit to them all.

Therefore we should have village planning instead of national planning. I said 'instead of.' It would be far better if 'national planning' really meant 'village planning', and that Delhi should give the villages whatever help they may need in their planning. This is the second part of our programme. Whatever we do is in the direction of decentralisation of authority, and that is why we wish to distribute land in the villages.

When the question of the land is raised, some persons want to prescribe a "ceiling", a maximum legal holding. This proposal has been put forward ever since the *bhoodan* movement began to take hold of the people. But I say, first decide the minimum to be given to everyone. Why do I say this? It is because I desire to distribute authority. Today the labourers are all working for someone else. They work, but the direction of the work is not in their hands. The wheels of work roll on, but the workers are not responsible. We want them to put into their work not merely their hands and their feet, but their brains and their hearts also. There are some who argue that Indian labourers have such limited intelligence that it is better they should work under the direction of others. But that is not the way of non-violence. What intelligence they possess is our capital; if we let that go, we have no other intelligence to take its place.

Let us admit that a capitalist is often more intelligent than a labourer. But the combined intelligence of all the labourers in the country is equalled by no other intelligence, and our country will be much poorer if it is not put to use. The labourers' intelligence whatever it be, must be fully employed. At the same time their mental



powers must be stimulated and one method of doing it is to give them land. The gift of land is part of an educational process, it is a tool for developing their intelligence.

Let us now turn our attention to our own movement. We have built up a Sarva Seva Sangh and also a Sarvodaya Samaj. The Sarva Seva Sangh will do the work. It will not be a loose organisation but a strong institution bound by rules. The Sarvodaya Samaj will not be an organisation at all, loose or otherwise. It will be a fellowship of those who believe in the power of the idea. It is our task to strengthen further its basis of ideas. We do not want to create merely a more disciplined group; we must work to make it more fruitful of ideas and more ready to accept ideas as the basis of living. We must work for the creation of a fellowship of ideas among all members of the Samaj, whether they are present today or not, whether their names are listed or not. One way of doing this is to be moving about continually, as I have already described, to disseminate our ideas. Another way is to publicise Sarvodaya literature and encourage study, reflection and discussion of it. For this purpose there should be study groups which should make a comparative study of our ideas and those of other ideologies.

The Work of the Sarva Seva Sangh

We shall next take up a discussion of the programmes we have in hand in the Sarva Seva Sangh.

Bhoodan Yagna (The gift of land)

We have commenced the work of Bhoodan-Yagna. In regard to that, my aim and object is that five crore (50,000,000) acres of land should change hands. We can do it; we can solve the land problem, if we all work for it. By “all” I do not mean only you and me, only the Sarvodaya Samaj; I mean all who accept the idea, Congressmen, socialists and all others. We may be a hundred percent successful without legislation, or we may be only 75% or 50%, successful, and the law will complete the task. I cannot say exactly what will happen; I am no prophet. But however it happens, it will have to be done *mainly* by the power of the people. If it should be done *wholly* by them I should dance for joy; but I should be well content if it is done *mainly* by them. If it can be done, the



next election will not set one good man against another in opposing parties, which happens today as it did when Bhishma fought Arjuna. We want no more contests between Bhishma and Arjuna, we want Ram to fight Ravana. A programme which can win the wholehearted devotion of all good men will put an end to their present differences. *Bhoodan Yagna* is such a basic programme.

Sampattidan (the gift of money)

I have started another programme along with this, which I call *Sampattidan Yagna*. Without it, the *Bhoodan* movement cannot succeed, and our programme of economic freedom and equality will not be fulfilled. The programme was in my mind from the beginning, but I had to do one thing at a time; besides, money is not so fundamental a thing as land. So I preferred to take up the land problem in the light of divine hand in Telangana. Later, when there began to be talk of a complete solution of the land problem in Bihar, I realised that it was possible only if the two movements were carried on side by side. But I am not going to handle that money. Here too authority must be dispersed. Those who offer us money will dispose of it themselves in accordance with our directive.

Sutranjali (the gift of hanks of yarn)

In addition to the above two, we have a third programme, namely offering of hanks of hand-spun yarn. This is a very powerful thing but we have not realised its power. Let us make this offering in memory of Gandhiji, and as a token of our belief in manual labour, and as a sign that we accept our responsibility for adding to the nation's wealth. I consider it a vote for Sarvodaya. It is a big thing. The only difficulty is that we have to collect it from door to door, in village after village. And that, in my opinion, is not a difficulty but an inspiration, because it gives us a chance to visit every home. We should expand this programme, and aim at a target in terms of lakhs, as we do for land. It will be most helpful in increasing faith in bodily labour.



Sramdan (The gift of labour)

I want to add one more thing. All the institutions we have established so far have been run on money. Wealthy people, good people, our friends and well-wishers, have helped us and we have accepted their help. There was nothing wrong in that. But now times have changed, now is the age of labour, and faith in labour must be instilled. Let us then establish a few institutions in each State, founded on manual work, and accepting no gifts except gifts of manual labour. My idea is that vigorous workers could be trained there who could both disseminate our ideas and carry on practical work.

Our Common Humanity and the Third Power

One word more, before I close. This work of ours is not of a sectarian nature. We should not even call ourselves “the Sarvodaya group” because that also gives a wrong impression. Let us think of ourselves as human beings and nothing else. Otherwise even this Sarvodaya Samaj, with all its freedom from institutionalism, will little by little become a sect, a narrow group in which we shall be separated from others. Let us never allow our tongues to slip into labelling people as ‘socialist’, ‘congresswala’ or ‘sarvodayawala’. Such terms will, of course, continue to be used, because there are men who wish to work under party names and find them useful. But we belong to no party; we are “the third power”. In the vocabulary of world politics the “third power” consists of those who are not attached either to the American or to the Russian block. But in my vocabulary, the third power is that power which is opposed to the power of violence, and distinct from the power of the State. There are three kinds of power; first, that of violence; second, that of law; third, our kind of power which is neither the one nor the other. This third power is inherent in man as man, and we seek to realise it on the widest possible scale. And therefore it is not for us to form a separate sect; it is for us to identify ourselves with the common run of humanity and to work among men simply as fellow human beings.

* Dr. Rajendra Prasad, then President of India.



III: GRAMDAN : A COMPREHENSIVE CONCEPT

(*Speech at the Gramdan Conference at Yelwal, Mysore, 12.9.1957*)

It is my fundamental faith that there is a divine spirit in the heart of man. Superficially there may be faults, but these are not of the inner essence. We need therefore to find a way of entering that inmost heart of man so that all its goodness is revealed. And a way can be found; I found it in Telengana. I asked for land, and a man came forward to give me land. To me this tiny incident was a sign from the Lord; it confirmed my faith in man.

It is against both *dharma* and reason to think that land can be individual property. And as I began to appeal for land in a spirit of love, so did people began to respond. A fresh wind began to blow as it were, and people came from far and near to join our pilgrimage. It mattered very little to me whether or not this movement would “solve the land problem”; what mattered was that it was a kind of experiment in what Gandhiji had taught us. The world today is so terrified by violence that it cannot think clearly; it piles up more and more weapons because it sees no alternative, although weapons solve no problem. We were striking out a new way, and people came eagerly to see it.

Gandhiji always stressed the principle of trusteeship. Some people are under the impression that this call to relinquish land-ownership is something different if not contradictory, inconsistent with his ideas. I would like therefore to clarify this word “trustee”. Parents are trustees for their children, and they are the best example of the real aims of trustees. One is that they consider the welfare of the children entrusted to them, before their own. Another is that as soon as the children have become capable of responsibility they will hand over charge. These are the two marks of a trustee. So that when I advise people to treat their property as a trust, I am in fact telling them to work for the completion of *gramdan*.



People used to criticise *bhoodan* as tending to break up the land into very small fragments. I replied that my work is not to break up the land, but to join together divided hearts. This union of hearts is the chief aim of *bhoodan*; once we achieve it, everything else will follow.

If I had talked about *gramdan* from the beginning it would never have come about. It could only come into being as a result of *bhoodan*. In *bhoodan*, there was compassion; in *gramdan* there is co-operation, and an aspiration for equality; but this equality must be based upon compassion. I do not believe that an equality brought about by other, artificial methods can result in real well-being.

We must understand the concept of *gramdan* in its full meaning. People commonly think that once the land-owners have given up their land, *gramdan* has been achieved. I also talked like that in the beginning but then I realised that I was wrong. *Gramdan* is not going to come about merely by gifts of land. People commonly think in terms of “haves”, “have nots”. But one day it dawned on me that by the grace of God every human being is a “have”, there is no real “have not” in the world. Some have land, some have wealth, some have strength to labour, some intelligence, some love. Everyone has something, but they keep what they have for use inside the four walls of their homes. There is no lack of love, but it is all locked away inside the house, and outside it competition prevails. But love cannot grow strong if it is confined to the house.

In *gramdan* therefore we do not merely ask the landowner for land. We say to the labourer: “Up to now we have spent our wages only on our own families, we have considered our earnings to be ours; but now we must offer them to the village.” *Gramdan* is only complete when this spirit is there. The full implementation of *gramdan* means that whatever one possesses should be put at the disposal of the community as a whole. It will not work if some are expected only to give, and others only to receive. The principles and standards of *dharma* apply to everyone. Truth is for all alike, and so is compassion.



The principle of *gramdan* then is far-reaching and comprehensive, and needs the co-operation of all. It applies to village industries. If we hope ever to see peace and a non-violent social order, then it is essential that every village should be self-supporting. People should work together so that all raw material produced in the village is processed in the village, and so that the tools and methods of production are continually improved. This means education, education linked with industry, work integrated with knowledge. Today we have the pitiable spectacle of the farmer who has not enough to eat but sends his children to college. If this happened because of a thirst for knowledge it would be all right, but what he wants is for his children, to be able to avoid hard work. The son as a result does not follow his father's occupation unless he is obliged to, and has no interest in it. As a nation we shall neither increase our production nor develop a strong character unless we change our educational methods and unite knowledge with work.

The Upanishad regards the production of more food as a religious duty, to be sealed by a vow. I am no traditionalist. I say that only if science and *ahimsa*—that is to say, spiritual knowledge—are joined together, then heaven can come on earth, and for that, as many people as possible must be engaged not only in agriculture but in industry. But everyone ought to have some direct experience of agriculture also. Nothing, not even religious music and ritual, contributes so much as agricultural work to the steadying of the mind as well as to the health of the body. So every family should be given at least half an acre of land; the remainder may be farmed co-operatively.

I am naturally disposed to co-operative enterprises. The idea of *gramdan* raises co-operation to the level of community, and in this community-co-operation “community projects” find their place. I believe that the atmosphere of India is becoming favourable to this comprehensive vision of *gramdan*.



IV: SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND SCIENCE*

My father was a scientist; my mother's bent was towards the spiritual knowledge. At school, science was my favourite subject, but I was also attracted by spiritual literature. These two streams of knowledge, the scientific and the spiritual, mingled together in my life. In my view they both deserve equal respect and have one and the same significance. The subject matter of the one is the external physical world, while that of the other is the inner world of man. Together they present a complete and integrated picture of the nature of the universe.

While I was in prison in June 1942 I meditated a great deal about the movement for Indian independence. My reflections led me to the conclusion that the only way to freedom, not only in India but throughout the world, is that Science and Self-knowledge should be integrated. There is no meaning in talking about the freedom of the country without first attaining freedom of the mind. The first thing to do, therefore, is to liberate the mind from its shackles, and this can be achieved only through *atma-jnan*, spiritual knowledge. "The kingdom of God is within you", says the Bible, and also "Thy kingdom come on earth". I became convinced that the only way to establish the kingdom of God on earth is to unite science with self-knowledge. Otherwise, if science allies itself with violence, the two together will bring about universal destruction. The day of violence is over. Science is with us; no one can stop its progress and there is no need to try. But if science is to make genuine progress it must be guided aright, and only self-knowledge can provide that guidance.

*Note : *Atma-jnan* : literally knowledge of the Self, *atma*, which implies both the individual self and the Supreme Soul. In the course of this essay Vinoba uses a number of words to describe this level of human experience; the translation also uses various alternative phrases in various contexts.



I. : SCIENCE

Science is the systematic study of the laws governing the processes of the physical world. It investigates the nature of water, air and other forms of matter, and the laws by which they operate.

Metaphysics is different. The metaphysician reflects on the basic nature of creation. He asks how the physical world came into being and what is its relation to concepts of "Spirit". He considers the nature of God and of the individual soul. Metaphysics in short considers the question "Why?", while science answers the question "How?"

Man is an animal, but there is a difference between him and other animals. In what does that difference consist? The essential thing about other animals is their vital energy. The essential thing in man is his self-consciousness. Man also possesses this vital energy, but it is his conscious mind which rules. The animal's actions are governed by its vital energy—to flee, to attack, to leap and gambol, to swoop upon its prey. Children often behave in the same way. Their vital energy expresses itself in play; they may throw stones, not with any conscious aim or purpose, simply from an urge to throw. But if the stone hits someone and makes him bleed, the child realises what has happened, his mind comes into action.

Although a man is thus moved by his vital energies, he is predominantly a self-conscious being. There may be some dim mental life in even the lowest orders of animals, but it is their instinctive vitality which primarily controls them, whereas in man, it is the mind which takes control. He is swayed by his mental states, his emotions, desires, hopes and fears. He is played upon by courage and by terror, by honour and dishonour, by love and hatred, by attachment and contempt, according to the bent of his mind.

Science however is now warning man that this mental equipment is no longer sufficient, and that he must now build his life on a scientific foundation. His old psychological equipment is useless. For man now holds in his hands the power of the



atom—the very building-block of creation, and at the same time the energy which can destroy that creation itself. For life or for death, the atom is in man's hands. One atom bomb can put an end to man and beasts alike. Like a river in spate, which sweeps away whatever lies in its path, cattle and trees, men great and small together, the atom bomb cares nothing for psychology.

This is not all. Man has launched satellites which revolve round the earth like planets. This means that he must learn to think not only on an international scale but on an interplanetary scale. How can he do this from his habitual mental level? It is not a question of making a few modifications in our old mental assumptions, but of getting rid of them altogether. We cannot simply add a chapter XXI to the existing twenty chapters of our psychological text-books, we have to make a bonfire of the lot of them. Our old ideas and accepted standards of conduct have to be completely abandoned.

Science operates on a higher plane than that of the mind. The fact that science is higher than self-conscious mind has been known from ancient times. The Upanishads say that Brahma is first the vital principle (*prano brahma*) then that He is mind (*mano brahma*) and lastly that He is science (*vignanam brahma*). The vital principle is the plane of animal life, the mental is that of man, the scientific is that of the sages. In those early times the scientific plane of living was known, but it was not then essential for all men. Some men attained to it in the course of striving for self-development, but it was thought of as an individual achievement only.

In the world of today this individualistic approach is no longer sufficient. It is now essential that all men should reach the plane of scientific thinking. Both spiritual insight and physical science call upon the mind to transcend itself.

That is why Sri Aurobindo spoke of the “supra-mental” state. He thinks of the mind as rising above itself to taste the immortal bliss of the vision and touch of God, and then returning to the earthly plane as what he calls an *avatar*. He does not regard spiritual liberation as an end in itself. The *avatar*, says Sri Aurobindo, is one who has



transcended the mental plane and found liberation, and has then taken up his work in the world from the “supra-mental’ level.

This is a magnificent vision, but we may not all aspire to become *avatars*. Even if we are not capable of such great things, however, we must still raise ourselves above the mental level. If we do not do so, there will be constant friction in society, and we shall be always pouring oil on to the machinery. We ought to be able to develop a social machinery which works without friction and does not need oil. Our bodies *are* such machines; our bones and muscles work without friction because they operate by the power of love. If the foot is in trouble the hand goes to its help at once. If our social machinery were built like our bodies, we should have no need of the oil-can.

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People ask whether the continued growth of science on its present lines will really make for the welfare of the world.

We should realise that science is not merely a product of the modern age. Scientific thinking began with the birth of man, and the science of today is founded upon the experiments and discoveries of previous ages. The first men did not know how to make fire; once that was discovered, how it transformed life! If there were no fire there would be no cooking; people would be shivering with cold, and how could herbal medicines be prepared?

The first men had no iron and made all their tools of stone. But when iron was discovered what a change was brought about!—penknives to sharpen pencils, needles to stitch cloth and scissors to cut it, ploughshares; axes and spades for the farmer.

Early men did not know how to milk cows. They hunted animals for food. What a genius that man must have been who first discovered that men could feed and care for cows and so enjoy their milk! All these great scientific discoveries, and that of the use of cotton to make cloth, go back to early times. So does that most wonderful discovery of human language.



Today we have reached the atomic age, when it is possible to manufacture goods by using atomic energy—when such decentralised industries can also be run in villages. Science has been growing from the earliest times until it has reached this stage, and it must and will continue to grow. The development of science will bring beauty into the life of men. The more we know about nature, the better we can understand its laws and utilise its power.

But today there are some scientists, even brilliant ones, who are ready to sell their knowledge and skill for cash. So long as they are paid, they will carry out whatever research they are told to do whether its results are good or evil, even to making weapons of destruction. If these scientists were to vow that they will sell themselves to no one, that they will never have anything to do with the manufacture of weapons or researches into weaponry, the world would indeed be saved. But until society as a whole supports this stand these government-sponsored scientists will not behave so sensibly. Their researches into weaponry will only be stopped when the peoples of the world refuse to allow it.

If then we want science to go forward for good, it must be linked with non-violence. Science and non-violence together can bring heaven down to earth; science allied with violence can bring ruin. It is just because science has made so much progress that non-violence has assumed so much importance. If you want science to go on developing, you will have to accept non-violence. If you are not prepared for that, if you want violence to have a place in society, you must put a stop to science. In the old days it was different. When Bhima fought Jarasandha, one died and the other lived, and the world as a whole suffered no great loss. But the atomic weapons which are in our hands today could destroy the whole earth. If scientific knowledge is limited, violence cannot do so much damage; but if we want to develop science, the only way to save the world is to develop non-violence also. This means that men must settle their disputes by peaceful means, for if violence is used it will be the end of man and of his science along with him.



Science in itself is neither moral nor immoral; it is amoral and its standards of value must be supplied from elsewhere. Wrongly directed it leads to hell; rightly directed it may lead to heaven. The only power which can direct science aright is that of self-knowledge, spiritual knowledge.

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The scientific attitude is a respect for facts; it is characterised by an objective, experimental attitude to life. If we have a scientific outlook we shall regard every aspect of life as a field for research. Malaria has decreased in India because we have applied science to the problem. We must act scientifically in every aspect of life, in deciding what clothes to wear, what bedding to use or how to organise our household goods. The light of science should enable us to get the maximum use from a minimum of possessions to build houses that are simple and easy to keep clean, to reduce the amount of time and labour needed for cooking, to provide ourselves with a balanced diet and to see that no one falls ill. We ought to study what modern science can teach us about every aspect of daily living.

A scientific life is a simple life. People often think that science makes life more complicated, but this is a mistake. Science will help us, for example, to understand the value of fresh air. We are in the habit of covering ourselves with clothing all the twenty four hours; some parts of the body are never exposed to the sunlight, and the body loses its vitality. Science teaches us to wear fewer clothes and so to simplify life. In a scientific society men will build houses of one storey rather than ten, and see that each house has open space around it so that light and air can enter. Science will improve health so much that medicines will scarcely be needed, though the very best remedies will be available if need should arise. There will be doctors, but their services will not be much in demand. Good spectacles will be available, but men of a scientific outlook will take care of their eyesight. In the same way, aeroplanes will continue to fly, but they will be needed only occasionally; men will prefer to walk, and to enjoy themselves by rambling in the forests. And in a scientific world there will be little need of artificial



lighting, for people will prefer to spend the night sleeping under the stars. Science will not be used to deprive man of healthful bodily labour, but to lighten his burdens and to increase his vitality and vigour.

Today however a good deal of science is controlled by politicians. For too much scientific research is governed by political considerations. The politicians buy a number of scientists who then become their slaves. These so-called scientists do not deserve the name; a true scientist would not put up with this kind of slavery. Science has expanded, no doubt, but the scientific attitude is still lacking to a large extent; life in general has not become scientific.

Science is a two-edged tool; it can develop or destroy, serve men or kill them. The same fire will cook our food or will burn the house down; and science itself cannot decide whether the fire shall be used for the oven or for the arson—that is the province of self-knowledge or wisdom.

Man, like a bird, has two Wings—science and spiritual wisdom—and he needs both together for his happiness. The design of every machine provides for two forces, one to generate energy for movement and the other to guide and control it. One cannot work without the other. A car has an engine and a steering wheel, so does a human being. We walk with our feet and not with our eyes, but the eyes show us where to go. Self-knowledge or wisdom is the eye, science is the feet. With no eyes, man would not know where he is going; with no feet, he would be able to look about him but would have to sit still at home. Nothing can be done in this world without science, but science cannot go in the right direction without self-knowledge.

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India is an ancient land with her own distinctive character. She has never in her history attacked any other country; even in the days of her greatest rulers, when learning and art flourished and she was at the height of her prosperity, there is no record that she ever committed aggression. The Indian travellers who took the road to China, Japan, Burma, Indo-China, Ceylon, Tibet and Central Asia carried a message of



learning and the good life; they carried no arms and were backed by no political power. They went only to spread the light of knowledge. Moreover, as India did not impose her rule on other lands, neither did she impose her ideas. She was content merely to expound them. This has been the distinctive feature of India's history and it is one of which we may be proud.

In India the teaching of the good life has not been linked exclusively with the name of any individual. It is good that we have not identified our way of life with the teaching of any one great man, nor tied down our thinking to his ideas. The Indian people have always enjoyed freedom of thought. Indian philosophy never quarrelled with science. There is nothing in the *Vedas* which contradicts the facts of perceptual experience recorded by science. Students of history know that in Europe there was a raging controversy between science and theology. The scientists were obliged to oppose the theologians, and the theologians persecuted the scientists. But in India there was no such conflict between science and religion. The greatest philosopher of our land, Shankaracharya, said: "Knowledge is not subject to men, but to objective reality"—in other words, no man can have any authority over the natural order of the universe.

Shankaracharya has thus, as it were, given science its "Magna Carta". Science can come out into the open, religion has no quarrel with it. Today also, India has a great opportunity to show that her spiritual traditions have a place for science and welcome it.

At present, unfortunately, India is weak in science and we must learn from the western peoples, as we have every right to do. As we learn, let us also learn to use science in non-violent ways. This is India's special task in the age of science in which we live, and Europe and America are looking to India to show them how to move in this direction. First, we must resolve that all our human problems shall be solved by ethical and non-violent methods, that our villages shall be truly free to manage their own affairs in peace, and that we shall all live together in mutual good-will and without



conflict. Secondly, we must determine to use science as a tool of service not as a weapon of destruction, to increase our harvests not our armaments. Thirdly, we must decide on the merits of each case whether to use our scientific knowhow to build large-scale or small-scale machines. If we keep these points in mind science will serve us well.

Science and scientific technology are to be differentiated. It is not science but spiritual wisdom which must decide how far scientific technology should be applied in practice, in a particular society at a particular time. There should be no restrictions on the advance of pure science; the more it progresses the better. But its use and application should be directed by self-knowledge. Science, as such, is indifferent to ethical considerations and its effects will be good or evil according to the guidance it receives.

2. SELF-KNOWLEDGE

For many different reasons, the human race has become divided up into many groupings, large and small. But there is one division about which there can be no dispute; each one of us is in a body, and our body separates us from all other bodies.

If I fall ill, I alone experience the illness. Another man may imagine my troubles and even suffer with me, but only mentally; he cannot feel my bodily aches and pains. Neither can he reap the benefit of the sound sleep that I enjoyed last night. Our bodies are separate, apart, and they are a fruitful source of our divisions.

Because each one of us is bound to a body, we feel bound also to those with whom we have some bodily relationship, fathers and mothers, wives and children. Around our bodies we build up a further circle of relatives and friends. The caste into which I am born is mine too; I associate with it and keep other castes at a distance. This is the basic reason for all those divisions of caste, creed, language, province, nation etc. by which the world is broken into fragments. I put myself into a group, in other words I put what is “mine” on one side and the rest of the world on the other. Then I go on enlarging “my” circle. Of course, if I end by including the whole world in my circle, well and good. But as things stand, “I” am a human being, so I exclude animals, birds etc.



from “my” group; “I” am an Indian and so exclude other nations and peoples. And so it goes on.

Who am “I”? The ancient sages answered: “I am Brahma”—that is, all-inclusive, cattle and donkeys and all. This experience of the unity of life is termed *Vedanta*. It means that I must try to treat all beings with equal respect. I shall certainly try to do this, but I shall not wholly succeed because of my body. The desire will be there, but the body will pull the other way. This idea that equal honour is due to all is the basis of *ahimsa*, non-violence.

Ahimsa is a way of living, *Vedanta* is a way of thinking. *Vedanta*, thinking, tells us what is; *ahimsa*, conduct, tells us how to act. Each complements the other. *Vedanta* is the basis for the practice of life; *ahimsa* is the house built on that foundation. Our task in the villages is to explain to the people that we are all one and that we must try to practise this equality in our daily living.

How then shall we understand this idea, *I am Brahma*, and realise its meaning? Well, I have ears, eyes, and nose; I have a mind, sense, and an intellect. And “I” am one who recognises these faculties, I am the “witness” who observes them all. Suppose my watch loses two minutes a day; I know it and set it right. I am the witness of my watch. In the same way I can observe my own mind, try to correct its shortcomings and make good use of it. This “I” who recognises all this is other than the mind. By following out this line of thought we can reach the truth that I am the witness, knowing myself as other than my senses, my consciousness, my intellect; knowing myself as I am in myself. This is the method of the *vedanta*, to think of the self as the “witness”.

The search for equality is the aim of the *vedanta* as it is of *ahimsa*. How shall we begin to practise this idea of equality? Well, what do we do when one of our sense organs is defective—like my own ears, for example? Do we not give our first attention to the weak and defective organ? In the same way, when we work in the villages, we must first of all do all we can to help those who are in the most pitiable condition. This is the secret of non-violence.



In India we have come to accept a very low standard of what we expect from “Self-knowledge.” We think it should make a man calm and contented in all circumstances, in illusion and delusion, good and evil, free from concern for the welfare or suffering of the world outside. If one asks how a man can be at peace amid so much suffering, the reply is that this suffering is illusion, merely the “play” of the Lord.

Our people seem to think that “liberation” can be had merely by stretching out a hand for it. A man has been writing to me, saying something like this: “How far you have sunk into illusion and pride! Do you imagine that the world can be saved your way? Why don’t you give it up?” I had met this man’s *guru* several years earlier; she was a woman who lived a peaceful, simple life. His letter urged me to go and sit at her feet; he looked on her as a divine being. In my reply I asked what I should do there. He answered: “How can you ask? The very question shows your ignorance and pride. What is there to *do*? Simply come and sit here, and supreme peace will be yours.” This is how our people think of “liberation”—as something easily within one’s grasp; they assure one that they have attained “self-knowledge”. Gandhiji alone used to declare to the end of his life that he had not yet attained it. Real self-knowledge, like full scientific knowledge, is an endless quest, an unattainable goal. Just as science aspires to sovereignty over the whole physical universe, so should we aspire to lordship over all the powers of the spirit.

My study of religious literature leads me to conclude that so far the human race has had only the merest glimpse of the nature of self-knowledge. When a man gets stung by a scorpion we may perhaps feel a little sorry for him, nothing more. If we had real knowledge of the Self, of the truth that “he and I are one”, we ought ourselves to feel his pain; alternatively, if we remain cool and cheerful, the man who was stung ought himself to experience the same calm cheerfulness. One of these two things ought to happen; either our bodies should feel the sting of the scorpion, or our feelings of bodily comfort and peace should enter into the man who was stung. We men have certainly not reached such full self-knowledge; we can only feel a little pity.



Superficial forms of unity will achieve nothing so long as we do not have the inward experience that in spite of all diversities of appearance we are all one. We “Gandhians” observe a form of prayer, and we keep on improving this form. It is not without its uses, but we do not seem to experience the melting of the heart in devotion which is the inner reality of prayer. We undertake programmes of service for the sick and others in need. They are good programmes, but are limited and rigid. Our institutions do not appear to have any life and spirit in them—only superficial techniques. Nai Talim, for example; there is discussion of its content and so on, but the real heart of it, the experience of work and knowledge as one, is not there.

Certain of Gandhiji’s teachings are on the purely spiritual plane. To the five traditional principles of *ahimsa*, *satya* etc., he added others which constitute our “eleven vows”. Gandhiji did not invent this spiritual tool, but he was the first to declare vows to be necessary for social service. Before his day they had been considered necessary for spiritual growth, for *yogis* and *sadhaks*. We find references to them in this context in Patanjali and others; and they have been practised by saints throughout the world. But it was only in Gandhiji’s *ashram* that I was first introduced to the idea that without the discipline of these pledges social service is not possible. Gandhiji set before us as our aim the non-violent service of all mankind, and of humanity in India as a part of mankind; he set before us the eleven vows as the means of fulfilling this aim, and the various aspects of the *ashram*’s daily work and activities. He thus put forward a complete programme of national service through agriculture, *khadi* etc., which included the eleven vows as the *sadhak*’s articles of faith, and which was part and parcel of our service of mankind.

Great souls of all times have experienced spiritual doubts and questionings and have been impelled to seek for answers that would satisfy their souls. Jesus, the impact of whose thought is now felt throughout the world, spent his short life of thirty three years in a country scarcely larger than three Indian administrative districts, and only the three final years in public teaching. No one knows how his first thirty years were spent.



It is said that he worked as a carpenter. But except that he fasted, and had an encounter with Satan, we know nothing of his spiritual strivings. Yet he must have known fundamental spiritual questionings and reached his own solutions before he began his public work. He could not have spoken those mighty words “Love thine enemy” without personal experience. We all know also that the Lord Buddha walked and taught in twelve or fourteen districts of Bihar and U.P., saying that there should be no violence, no slaughter of animals for religious offerings. But we know nothing of his own spiritual disciplines, of his search for truth in pilgrimage or in meditation, of how he came to preach *maitri* (friendship) and *karuna* (compassion) as the words of world salvation.

In Gandhiji’s autobiography we do get some glimpses of his spiritual pilgrimage, for example in his discussions with Raychandbhai. He certainly knew spiritual questionings and he began his work only when his “mystic experience” had enabled him for service. He used to say that “Truth is God.” People imagine that this is a scientific statement, but it is not merely scientific.

These great souls saw and taught truth which we, with our limited spiritual insight, have failed to understand and interpret correctly. Most people think that the last word has been said on these matters and that there is no room for further progress—that India has inherited a complete and final philosophy of the Spirit from the *Vedanta* and the experiences of her Saints. This attitude is in complete contrast to that of the scientists, who say that their knowledge is very far from complete and that what we have discovered so far is a mere drop in the ocean. Even though Sputniks have been launched into space, even though man has realised his dream of landing on the moon, and has discovered new sources of physical energy, the scientists still declare that the knowledge men have so far attained, is the merest trifle compared with the vast discoveries which lie ahead.

Science therefore is continually undertaking new research and will always go on doing so. There ought to be similar new researches in the realm of spiritual truth, for what we know today is an infinitesimal part of an infinite whole. It is a mistake to rest



content with repeating and interpreting the ancient writings. A science which does not go forward to new discoveries is going backward; and that is what is happening to spiritual science in India today. The physical sciences make mistakes from time to time, but these are corrected by experience. At one time scientists believed that the sun goes round the earth, but they later realised their mistake and corrected it. This readiness to correct one's mistakes is essential. In spiritual sciences also apart from the need to seek new spiritual truth, we must admit that we have committed a grave error in assuming that we have nothing more to learn; because of this error, our great sages have not had the influence they should have had on the life of our society.

Mistakes due to our narrowness of outlook have distorted our economic life. Man seems unable to think beyond "my," my house, my friends, my fields, my wealth, my family's happiness, my country's welfare. The result is that one man's prosperity blocks another's way, that when I become rich another is made poor, and that his success threatens me with ruin. This kind of economics is a breeding ground of hostility. It is this economic system which makes the "developed" nations wealthy at the expense of the rest of the world.

The same narrow individualism which distorts our economics is to be found also in our thinking about spiritual matters. The mistaken economic ideas which make me consider only "my" interests and "my" prosperity, isolate me from other people. The same selfish individualism in spiritual things shows itself in a phrase like "my" salvation. People realised this long ago. Prahlad put it very clearly in his prayers to the Lord. "Many *devas* and sages," he said, "desire to see their own salvation, and do long penances in jungle solitudes in order to obtain it. But I have no desire to find my salvation alone. I cannot abandon these poor people". Prahlad's attitude is as relevant today as it was then. We have taken no steps to correct our mistake. "My liberation" is a contradiction in terms. So long as "my" remains there can be no spiritual liberation. If I seek only my own enlightenment, and am content that everyone else should remain in darkness, I



am throwing away with my own hands all hope of liberation. We have still not realised that “my” can never lead us into freedom but only into slavery.

Our spiritual *gurus* have always urged us to rid ourselves of our bondage to “I” and “me”, but they have paid little attention to what this means in practice. There is a riddle in the *Mahabharata*: “What word is bound in two syllables and released in three?” The answer is *mama* (mine) and *namama* (not-mine). In short, unless one gets rid of the ego, freedom is impossible. Yet even in this spiritual field our practices may strengthen the ego. A man may discipline himself through austerity and thus achieve certain esoteric powers—and yet be as self-centred in spirit as another man who goes after money. One man aspires to wealth, and expends all his thought and energy in order to become a millionaire capitalist. The other man, the “spiritual aspirant”, becomes a sort of spiritual capitalist. People seek his blessing, and feel convinced that his blessing has given their children happiness and brought their family prosperity. Both the aspirant and his devotees are basically selfish in their outlook; consequently our society also grows selfish.

In India, then, even our spiritual disciplines have become tainted with a subtle kind of selfishness and are not truly spiritual at all. It is true that they are on a somewhat higher level than money making, but they are essentially of the same kind. Outwardly they appear very different, but there is no difference in the inward spirit. Both are individualistic, both promote egoism and possessiveness.

Can it be said with any certainty that national leaders teach a high level from the spiritual standpoint? They may be as narrow-minded as any small farmer who does his best to grab a bit of land from his neighbour’s field. When a national leader begins to think of extending his country’s boundaries by getting his hands on another nation’s oil-bearing districts, are his aims derived from spiritual insight? The politician is as selfish as the farmer, though he may cut a bigger figure. But “ten-twentieths” is of no more value than “one-half”, even though it looks bigger.



One of the greatest defects in Indian spirituality is that we have paid no attention to *how* to get rid of this “I”, this egoism. The secret is to let “we” drive out “I”. Ideally, perhaps, it is “thou”—the presence of God—that should drive out “I”. But where is God to be found? Let us rather say that “I” should be absorbed into “we”. Only when we can think and speak of *our* spiritual striving, *our* devotion, will our work find its natural fulfilment, and individual and society be regenerated together.

Since childhood I have been in the habit of reading whatever spiritual literature came my way. There was one magazine, *The Review of Reviews*, whose editor was interested in spiritualism, which is more concerned with life after death than with this present life. This magazine used to publish accounts of communication with the spirits of the dead by the great scientist Sir Oliver Lodge. As the work of a scientist these descriptions had to be given due weight; they could not be brushed aside as illusory or baseless. But they did not attract me, for they were not concerned with the truly spiritual. Spiritualism struck me as being a method of investigating the other world, parallel to the physical scientist’s study of this world. Neither was concerned with the inner life of man.

Real spiritual insight is rooted in faith, and this faith has five aspects which we should consider.

The first aspect is the need for faith in absolute ethical values for the whole of life. There is everything to be gained by affirming such values, and everything to be lost by denying them. But they are a matter of faith, for there has never been a time when the human mind has accepted them in practice. In some places violence has been considered inevitable; in others absolute ethical values have been recognised, but men have felt obliged to make many exceptions; it is not possible to give a logical reason for believing that a man who is steadfast for truth even at the cost of life itself is, in fact, victorious. This can only be a matter of faith.

The second article of faith is in the unity and sanctity of life. It is impossible to put this into practice. We kill living things for our food, we injure innumerable others,



and in our ordinary behaviour we distinguish between higher and lower. But in spite of all this, we need to hold on to the faith that life is one and life is sacred.

The third article of spiritual faith is in the continuity of life after death. Life does not end with death, but the nature of the ongoing life is a mystery beyond our comprehension. Men make many speculations—is it material or immaterial, shapely or formless, embodied or disembodied? The belief that life persists in some form or other is a matter of faith. The intellect may take us a certain distance, beyond that we depend on faith. Without faith, a man can grasp only what his reason accepts.

The fourth article is faith in the fruits of action. We do not know when life entered the world, nor when it will come to an end. But life poses a number of insoluble problems if we think of ourselves as existing in this birth only. If our being is thought of as having neither beginning nor end, many of these problems are susceptible to reason. The concept of the fruits of action would wither into insignificance if we have no past or future beyond this life.

It is divine law that the fruit of evil action should be evil and that of good action should be good. This is God's plan for our education: "as you sowed, so shall you reap." If you sow thorns you have to reap thorns, not mangoes. Our common interpretations of this law of *karma* however are full of mistakes. I must certainly reap the fruit of my action, if not now, during another birth; for the law of *karma* cannot be broken. But this does not mean that I alone shall reap the fruit of my action and that you alone will reap the fruit of yours. The fruits of some actions are individual, but others are shared in common. When one member of a family of five does wrong, the evil fruit of his action is suffered by the other four also.

No action is completed, remember, without experience of its fruit. But the law of cause and effect must not be applied rigidly. The Lord if He so wills can release man from it—the principle of *karma* is not soulless punishment: "the Lord chastises those whom He loves". God desires in love to set you right, and in some cases He may set aside His law. The law may condemn a man to death, but the President has power to



pardon. We must experience the fruit of our evil actions, but if God wills He may reduce our sufferings. Like the individual, society also has to experience the fruit of its actions, and like the individual it may find its sentence reduced.

The fifth article of faith is the belief that the universe is ordered by an intelligent purpose. We may call it God but if God does not care about being given a name, neither do I. Our faith is in the existence of a directing purpose above and beyond the little plans that you and I make and carry out. We do not know what part we are playing in the overall plan of creation, we see only our own little concerns. That the Creator has made us for a larger purpose, that there is an intelligent order in the universe in which we have our part—this is a matter of faith.

3. SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND SCIENCE

In the world of the future, science and spiritual wisdom will have a place; power politics and sectarian religion will have none. Parties, power struggles and nationalistic interests are doomed, though they will give a lot of trouble before we are rid of them. Nevertheless they will have to go, because they cannot endure the light of science. Science has made the whole world one neighbourhood and linked it with other planets. In this new setting the old ideas must go. For one thing, politics must go; for another, the small divided religious sects. Many ancient forms of worship now serve only to restrict the heart's sympathies and to divide man from man. All these narrow traditional forms must come to an end, and the soul wisdom which is the essence of religion must take their place. This soul wisdom or self-knowledge will endure, along with science, and the cause of human unity will be furthered.

In this age of science political and legal systems have lost their value. If these systems continue to divide mankind and increase tension, humanity is doomed. The party politicians are not prepared to admit this, of course, but the truth is that modern weapons are so destructive that unless we can control our quarrels, the end of the world may well be in sight. Sensible men should disregard legalism and settle their problems on spiritual principles. Today we need the kind of political system which will



unite men and bring them together; up to now our systems have contributed to our mutual estrangement. Why should we continue to cling to them ?

Today there are parties everywhere, and new ones are continually being formed. But such parties can accomplish nothing useful. What we need is an independent group devoted to disinterested public service, which will strengthen village life by promoting unity. Power should be decentralised and all energies should be directed towards spiritual development. Problems should be solved by discussion in such a way that dissension is avoided.

Members of political parties often have a sincere desire to be of service, but they cannot realise their aims, for if one party starts a useful programme the opposition tends to look upon it with suspicion and put obstacles in its way. The result is that no one can do anything. The Government, may be, does a little; but Government programmes do not help the people to use their own strength, and that is a grave defect.

The political system that we adopted from the west has encouraged divisions. There were factions and quarrels among us before, but this western system has made things much worse, and has exacerbated the divisions of religion, language and caste which already existed. Ambitious men in every party form their own groups, and so does every minister, and groups within groups. How can the country grow strong in such conditions?

As soon as Ayub Khan assumed power in Pakistan he put an end to all political parties. A political system can do nothing against a modern mechanised army. The man who controls such an army can usurp all political power. In future only those who follow the path of spiritual wisdom will be able to wrest the sword from such a man's hands. And for this they will not need to take the sword, because they will rule in the minds and hearts of those who wield the sword. In the end the very men who wield the sword today will themselves return their weapons to the factories to be converted into ploughshares.



During my travels around India it has been my happy fate to have opportunities to meet soldiers. I was able to meet them because I am not in politics. I spoke to them about spiritual principles and they appreciated what I said, and although the politicians certainly seem to have the upper hand today, I have not lost hope; I know that the future is mine and not theirs. Only those who stand aloof from politics and rely upon spiritual principles will have a place in the world of science, and it is they who will show mankind its true path.

At present, however, there is little sign of the new society. Are we ruled by the same old men with the same old attitudes, or is there any change? Are any new values being built up? If the answer is no, if the same disputes and petty squabbles continue, what is the use of changes in externals, in housing or agriculture or communications? Even floods and earthquakes can bring about physical changes. But if the mind and heart of man do not change, all that will happen is that, thanks to science, the small-scale feuds of previous ages will be fought out on a larger scale. There can be no real revolution in the life of man without a change of heart and a change of outlook. These basic changes can only take place when men's hearts are transformed by love.

As I have said, the Government may do something for the people. The question is, what do the people do for themselves? Have they begun to get rid of landlordism? Do they work together at anything or think and plan together? If so, the new humanity is born. If not, there may be a new world, but there will be no new men. For Governments may change the environment but they cannot change the man. Only those who know the power of the Spirit can bring the new humanity to birth, for only the power of the Spirit can change the inner man. My own small efforts are directed to this end, to the increase of our spiritual strength.

Every human being has his own powers, and some agency is needed to weld these powers together. Political systems cannot do it, sectarian religions cannot do it, only spiritual power is able to make men one. I am using the word "religion" here in its institutional sense; there may be fifty "religions", but there is only one spiritual power.



Political systems and bonds of language, like religions, bring groups of men together but at the same time divide them from other groups. But spiritual wisdom has the power to unite all humanity.

4. A COLLECTIVE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

Science today impels us to move forward from the individual spiritual discipline of the ancient sages to a collective spiritual discipline, because unless society as a whole can achieve spiritual insight, science can be of no help to humanity but will bring about its ruin. The sages and the *Vedanta* used to say: “This house, this field, this body, is not mine.” Today we have to add to their words and say: “This house, this field, this wealth is not mine; *it belongs to all.*” This is absolutely essential, for the scientific age offers us only two alternatives, all or none, complete unity or complete annihilation. We must choose—either to bring heaven to earth, or to bring earth to ruin and perish with it.

The times demand that we offer to humanity our all, as we would to a God. And just as we symbolise our offering of ourselves in a dramatic act of worship, so we declare our commitment to humanity in the dramatic symbolism of *gramdan*. I am often asked whether the people of *gramdani* villages have *really* given up their possessiveness in respect of the land, whether they have *really* risen to such renunciation, whether they *really* treat all the village children as their own? Could such a miracle come about so soon? I tell these questioners that the *gramdan* resolution is a dramatic act symbolic of hope and aspiration for spiritual revolution. The drama is a necessary step; little by little science itself will turn the symbol into a reality.

You remember how it is told of Sri Ramanuja that he braved the penalties of hell in order to preach through the length and breadth of the land the spiritual truths which he had received from his *guru*. For it was the law in those days that spiritual learning should be kept secret. One cannot say that this was wholly wrong; at that time there was some value in secrecy. But there was also truth in the impulse to share the treasure, and Jnandevy, Chaitanya and Ramanuja shared it with the common people wherever they went, so that even women and little children could understand. It was commonly



said that Chaitanya was an *avatar* of Lord Krishna, bringing his love to man in human form. We have to develop and expand this religion of love which the saints revealed. The limitations of the old days no longer exist, and we must go forward. Our task is to understand the essential truths of their message, and clothe them in forms suited to our own times.

In this way the old concept of *bhakti* should be reinterpreted as *sarvodaya*. Formerly the experience of oneness with all living beings would come to some solitary sage in his ecstasy, and he would see all differences as unreal, as things to be overcome. This experience of unity must become, in our day, the common property of mankind. Not only the sage, but the man in the street must learn, as an elementary spiritual truth, that all beings are equally to be honoured.

The idea of salvation too must be reinterpreted. Salvation is not a thing to be sought for oneself. When self comes in at the door salvation flies out of the window. There is no such thing as “my” salvation. “My” must go if salvation is to come. This is something for all of us to ponder; it will revolutionise our lives and put an end to our economic and social divisions.

In medieval times great devotees like Tulsi, Shankardev and Tukaram reflected on the meaning of “liberation”. They saw that it does not mean freedom from the body, but freedom from egoism. Having realised the truth, they devoted themselves to serving and teaching the people. The disciples of Sri Ramakrishna take as their motto: “for the good of the soul and the happiness of the world.” The words are worth noting. They do not aim at happiness for themselves; the phrase is the soul’s *good* and the *world’s* happiness.

Perhaps the idea seems somewhat ambiguous. If we are to think of our own good, why not also of the good of society? I reply, because we cannot force a man to take what is “good” for him against his will. If I consider renunciation a “good”, I shall strive to attain it for myself. But if another man seeks relief from suffering it is my duty to go to his help. The great devotees chose to turn their backs on “liberation” and live



with and for the people, teaching them in a spirit of devotion. They regarded their own “good” as including the people’s happiness. Thus we have moved from “liberation” to “devotion”, and from “devotion” to service. The saints do not abandon the ideal of liberation, but they unite with it their devotion and their service. Seeking liberation from egoism for themselves, they seek it also for society.

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The great question today is whether man will learn to think in terms of equality, or keep his self-centred pride. We ought to give up singing *Sare Jahan se achcha Hindustan hamara* (our India is best among the world’s countries), and renounce the petty vanity of asserting that India is superior to other countries just because she is ours. This may be a bitter pill, but we shall have to swallow it for it is science. What we need is an attitude of equality, an attitude with no touch of pride or possessiveness, no narrowness of feeling, an attitude in harmony with science. This new attitude must pervade our whole human society or society will perish.

It is a delusion to think that we can experience. God in his fullness in this body and through this puny intellect. One glimpse, one fragment of such experience can give us peace of mind and the power to do our work. The fullness of that experience is for God alone, but we can enrich our own vision from the experiences of other men. One portion, a wonderful portion, of this divine vision has been given to Islam; another is to be found in Hinduism, a third in Christianity, and there are other revelations in each religious tradition. We need to open ourselves to the spiritual treasures of all humanity.

The culture of India goes back for thousands of years. *The Vedas, Upanishads, the Gita*, the teachings of the saints, form an unbroken tradition of thought which has given India a strong sense of unity. Our people may quarrel but in their hearts they know that they are one. Guru Nanak gave striking expression to this spirit of unity.

The whole purpose of *bhoodan* and *gramdan* is in line with this tradition. It is to reunite divided hearts. The purpose of *gram-swaraj* is to transform our villages so that the things which divide men may be done away, and there may be a union of hearts.



I have described how the greatest strength that a man can possess is his faith. If you want universal peace, happiness and prosperity, an end of suffering and hardship, you must hold fast to self-knowledge, science and faith. I have no magic formula in my possession except faith in men. In the armoury of *sarvodaya* there is no greater weapon than the faith we place in our fellow men.

Faith is the most miraculous thing in the world. The whole world depends on it. Without mutual faith the human race would have perished by mutual slaughter. Even thieves keep faith with one another. If we could only believe in the power of faith, realise its potential and act on it, it would not take long to stop the world's conflicts. They are caused mainly by lack of faith, and it is this that has to be overcome. Faith is the power of this age. People have faith in me; they have no guarantee that I shall not lie to them, but they have faith that I will not and I too have faith in them. Faith is my secret, and it has great power.

This third force, this power of faith is essential for political and social planning in the age of science. Our fitness for this age depends on the strength of our faith. Yet there is a great lack of faith nowadays, especially in the field of politics. Lack of faith is counted a virtue in politics and is considered a sign of prudence. In my opinion, the moment of imprudence has been reached as soon as the slightest doubt creeps into the mind. Without complete faith politics will never work.

So I put faith alongside self-knowledge and science, and I meditate much on these three principles. I have composed a sanskrit *sloka* which I repeat daily. It says that Vedanta, science and Faith are the three powers which by their operation can give the world the peace it so sorely needs.

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Sarvodaya work is based on two principles, non-violence and co-operation. The non-violent approach is based on the experience of the unity of the soul. It is a spiritual idea. The principle of co-operation is based on science. *Sarvodaya* therefore unites the spiritual and the scientific principles, and its thought is a blend of the spiritual and the



scientific also. Some people accuse *Sarvodaya* of being retrograde; they say that it has no use for scientific discoveries, that it prefers the *charkha* to the spinning mill and the *takli* to the *charkha*, and that if a man were to regress even further and spin yarn with his bare hands, it would like that best of all ! No one challenges its spiritual dimension, but they certainly have grave doubts about its scientific dimension. But the fact is that *sarvodaya* integrates the spiritual and the scientific into an indivisible whole.

Without science, what would a non-violent spiritual order be like? The Chinese sage Lao Tse has described one. His ideal village is self-sufficient in goods; it has no need of imports from outside. The villagers live contentedly within their own society but at night they hear dogs barking in the distance and conclude that other villages must exist. This is non-violence without science. When we talk about *sarvodaya* the leaders of our nation tend to think that we want to follow Lao Tse's pattern.

Without the spiritual principles of non-violence, what would a scientifically planned order be like? We can find an example in Russia. They have consolidated all the agricultural land. They didn't ask anyone's consent, nor did they consult the bullocks. The common people have no hand in the planning. The Government makes plans, and everyone has to carry them out. The bullocks' duty is to do a full day's work, and the manager's duty is to see that they get a full belly of food. There is food and clothing for all and no lack of physical necessities. But no one wants your advice and you have no freedom to try out your own ideas.

These two patterns Lao Tse's and Stalin's are respectively patterns of non-violence and of co-operation. In *Sarvodaya*, the two are integrated, the social pattern is both non-violent and co-operative

What is our first duty? The other day a man came to visit me at Pavnar and greeted me with *Jai Hind*. I responded "Jai Hind, Jai Jagat, Jai Hari," I showed him that loyalty to India could have its dangers without loyalty to all mankind, and that ultimately our supreme loyalty is to God. First and foremost we are men, and only secondly we are Indians, and after that we are inhabitants of one region, one house and one body!



This is a matter for education. I used to work as a teacher in the *ashram* school which is in Wardha district. But I didn't begin by teaching the children about Wardha or Maharashtra. I told them that we are all inhabitants of the earth, citizens of the wide world. Over our heads in the night sky shines the heavenly Ganges, the Milky Way; and our sun is just one star among the millions of stars in that night sky, very tiny compared with most of the others. Our world moves round the sun, carrying with it all its living creatures; scientists tell us there are more than two million species of them and no one can imagine how many individual creatures there must be. The human race is just one group among them all, and India one country in human society, in which there is a state called Maharashtra and a little district called Wardha, and in it this *ashram* with its two fields and our own little selves.

There is a passage in the *Vedas* whose recital is believed to purify from sin. It begins: "In the beginning were Law and Truth, from which sprang the Sun and Moon and the whole creation, from which sprang the stars...". You may wonder what that has to do with purification from sin? The connection is that in reciting it a man has before him such a vision of the vast universe that he realises his own littleness and his pride and egoism fall away, so that he is no longer tempted to sin.

Social revolution, social regeneration, is quite different from the small piecemeal improvements that are going on today - land reclamation here, increased production there. Such things are being done everywhere. America produces a lot, possesses half the world's wealth, but has no stability, is full of unrest and fear, and has a higher rate of suicides and mental illness than almost any other country. Everyone agrees that our own country needs to produce more; yes, but it also needs regeneration of the heart. The standard of living must certainly be raised; the standard of thinking must be raised too. Our sympathies must be vastly enlarged in their scope to match the vast scope of our scientific knowledge.

The fact that *gramdan* can solve the land problem is a very minor matter. The important thing is that it can raise the standard of thinking; it can make the village a



united family in which God's gifts of air, water and land belong to all, where all work together, not for themselves but for the community, and all plan together, not for their own interests but for the interests of the whole village. This approach will transform our whole ethical outlook. That is why I feel such enthusiasm for it. I am no longer young but I never grow weary of this work. There is a wonderful inner joy which I cannot put into words; I feel I am tasting the nectar of the Gods and long to share it with all.

Our task is to create a new humanity. Old things have passed away, the old national boundaries must be broken down. An Australian visitor was asking me about the world significance of the land-gift movement. I replied: "It is this, Australia has a lot of spare land and Japan is short of land; you should invite the Japanese to use yours." He said, "Yes, we have plenty of land, but we want to safeguard our culture, so we would rather take in Europeans whose culture is similar to ours." I said: "This is the very attitude which our movement is out to change. Our Purpose is to do away with the idea that the cultures of Japan or Australia or Europe or India ought to be kept apart, or that Hindu culture and Muslim culture are entirely separate," *Gramdan* is not a trivial local matter; it aims to revolutionise the life of man and build a new world.



V: LITERATURE : THE LINK

(*Speech at Pandharpur, Maharashtra, May 1957*)

What are the forces which, under God, shape the life of this world? Some think that the political leaders exercise this power, but it is not so. The three things which really shape the world are science, spiritual knowledge and literature.

The scientist gives form to the world's life. Here, for example, is this loud-speaker, making it possible for you to hear me; without it my voice could not reach so many people. And science brings about change not only in material things but also in mental attitudes. Our ancestors could never have imagined the extent to which the printing press has contributed to the dissemination of scientific ideas. Scientific inventions have changed life and scientific thought has shaped it. When fire was first discovered our ancient *rishis* sang hymns in its praise. *Rishis* of today may perhaps sing hymns to the atom. It is true that it has appeared before us as a Rudra, a power of destruction. But it can also be a Shiva, a power for good; and in its Shiva aspect it will transform the world's life.

Spiritual knowledge is the second agent of change. The spiritual giants have transformed life wherever they have arisen. Great souls like Jesus, Gautama the Buddha, Lao Tse, Muhammed, Namdev, Tulsidas, Manikyavachakar, have changed the lives of whole peoples by their coming.

The third shaping power in the world is that of literature.

Until I was ten years of age our home was in a village in the Konkan. My father used to spend most of his time in Baroda, but he always came home for Diwali. On one such occasion my mother said: "Your father is coming home today and I expect he will bring you some sweets." So when he arrived I ran to him and sure enough he gave me a little packet. I had expected some round *laddus*, but this packet was flat. I opened it, thinking it must be some special sweet-meat, and I found two books! When I told my mother she said: "My boy, your father has given you the finest sweets in the world; no



other sweet can compare with them.” I remember that the two books contained stories from the *Ramayana* and the *Bhagvata*. I have read them many times since then, and I have never forgotten my mother’s words, “the finest sweets in the world”. They made such an impression on me that even now nothing seems so sweet to me as a good book.

In literature there is revealed one facet only of the infinite powers of God. The working of this divine power inspires the poets and creative writers; they alone are moved and touched by it, while it passes other men by. It is said that when the prophet Muhammed was absorbed in deep contemplation, the sweat would pour from him so that those near trembled to think what anguish must have come upon his spirit. In those hours he was possessed by the Word—no mere word of human writings but that Word which brings the message of God to men. When the message of God invades the soul of a man the pangs of creation come upon him in an agony which can only be compared with the travail of child-birth. I can speak from my own experience here; the human spirit is overwhelmed, possessed by a power which cannot be shaken off, struggle as we will. And then out of the travail comes the vision, the poem, the inspired words which speak to the people. But the birth pangs of that vision are known to the poet alone.

The Sanskrit word for poet, *Kavi*, has a deep meaning. The *Kavi* is the seer of revolution, whose vision pierces beyond the immediate. These two eyes of ours see what lies immediately around us, and show us all the beauty of the world for our enjoyment. But their powers are limited. There are things which lie beyond their range, which are hidden from them. Beyond this present world is another world of interest and delight which they cannot reach; but man is blind to the beauty of that world because his two eyes are open only to this immediate one. It is only when his third eye opens that he becomes aware of a world of energies at work behind, beyond and within the common experiences of the visible world. It is this vision, this awareness, that inspire great poetry, great literature, and which deserve our reverence.



The great poets—Valmiki, Vyasa, Dante, Shakespeare, Homer, Rabindranath—have enriched the world's life for ever by the power of their creative and transforming thought. They brought peace, and vigour, and hope, when peace and vigour and hope were needed. Their insight, their thought, their transcendent vision, are the hidden springs from which have arisen the world's great revolutions.

The power of science, the power of self-knowledge, the power of the Word—these three forces have shaped the world we know and will mould it in the future. Science changes the material aspects of life, and creates an environment which makes its impact on the mind of man also. It does not influence the mind directly, however. The Word, on the other hand, directly touches the heart; self-knowledge illuminates life from within. The light of science comes from without, the light of self-knowledge comes from within, and the Word is the bridge between the two, bringing them together and shedding light on both. To use the image of Tulsidas, both the inner world and the outer can be illumined if the lamp of the Name is set upon the threshold of the door—which is the tongue. Such is the power of the Word, of speech, which is God's supreme gift to man. It is a gift potent for good and for evil; use it wrongly and society is doomed; use it well, and society goes forward in all well-being. As the Rig Veda says, the wise man winnows his speech as the housewife winnows grain, rejecting the chaff and the stones, and choosing the healthy corn. A society whose speech is clean and pure, strong and simple, is a happy society. For speech is the uniting force, joining the inner world with the outer, and science with self-knowledge, and all the energies of the world with one another. The Word is a subtle power, and many other powers are hidden within it.



VI: THE THREE-FOLD PROGRAMME

(*An address at the Sarvodaya Sammelan, Raipur, December 1963*)

We are very ordinary people yet society expects much from us. Why is this? It is because everyone knows that however impracticable our principles may seem to be, unless these principles are accepted the world will not only make no progress, it cannot even survive. People regard us as pioneers who are striving to bring in the new society of the future, and they look upon us with keen interest as the representatives of the time-spirit. This work of ours is of much more than temporary significance, for if it should fail, society itself is doomed.

The aim and purpose of the Sarvodaya Samaj is to secure the welfare of *all*, not merely of a majority or a minority, but of every individual. It is open to everyone who believes in this purpose; all you have to do is to say that you are one of us. It is an association based on trust, trust in a man's word. Man himself is the greatest of the spiritual values upon which the life of society is founded. The others are the small change, humanity is the sterling coin. This Sarvodaya Samaj does not recognise all the distinctions of language, caste, sect, class etc. The essence of its philosophy is the oneness of the self, the soul. There are differences of culture and tradition which on a narrow view appear to divide us; but if we take a broader view we realise that humanity is one. For us, this humanity is the supreme value, and the soul of humanity is one. It may seem impossible to put this truth into practice today but the Samaj recognizes and believes that what is impracticable today may be practicable tomorrow. Meanwhile we must put all our strength into the three-fold programme of *gramdan*, *khadi* and *shantisena*.

1. Gramdan

We have decided that ownership of land in a *gramdan* village should vest in the *gram-sabha* (village-council). The original owners will continue to use the land which



remains after the landless have been given a share, but they will make over the rights of ownership to the *gramsabha*.

Gramdan is an act in which everyone makes an offering. We consider the *gram-sabha* as a Mother-Goddess; we make our offerings, and accept for our own use whatever *prasad* (divine gift) she may return to us. This is a beautiful and attractive idea; what joy it would bring if it were to be put into practice!

When I began the *bhoodan* work in Telengana I told people I had come to “loot with love”. I said this because the villagers there had been only too familiar with a different kind of looting. Now I merely say that I have come to show my love, and thus I am able to touch all hearts with no distinctions of party.

This approach is reflected in the new plan for *gramdan*. Some have feared that this is a lowering of standards, a watering-down. Previously we asked for one-sixth of the land and collected 50 million acres. Now we ask for one-twentieth of the land and 15 million acres. But the land we get now will be cultivated land, whereas the fifty million acres contained a lot of useless land. Another important feature of the new plan is that every year the *gramsabha* will receive one-twentieth of the harvest. That is to say the village gets not only the land, but the fruits of the labour, which is a big thing.

The new plan also means that giving for the common good becomes a continuing feature of the life of the village. It is not a question of giving once and being done with it. The annual harvest-giving is a form of education for the whole village, young and old, men and women alike. We need such a continuous stream of sharing to purge the world of the evils of the continual pleasure-seeking that goes on today.

This new plan also leaves room for further gifts of land as need arises. Once love has entered the heart, the village community will find ways of sharing the land more widely. I say this from experience. While I was in Orissa some villagers came to me with their *gramdan* pledge. I asked for a few figures, and found that one-twentieth of the land would not be enough to meet the needs of the landless. They at once raised their



gift to one-tenth. Once we have touched their hearts we can leave everything to the villagers; they will realise their responsibility and give whatever is needed.

It is also said that while this plan gives the ownership of land to the *gram-sabha*, it will not ensure equality of possession. This is because the present owners will continue in possession, and the land cannot be transferred without their consent or that of their heirs. This seems to limit our demand for renunciation of ownership. But this is not so. If the custom of regular sharing is maintained, and villagers assume responsibility the movement will go on and the work will develop.

Gramdan is a revolution. We are convinced that a real revolution can only come about by non-violent means; a violent revolution leads to a counter-revolution. Revolution demands a method which will generate power among the people; by *gramdan* we are not weakening but strengthening the revolution. Our revolutionary fervour is second to none.

2. Khadi

We people consider it fundamental that everyone in a *gramdan* village should produce yarn. It is usually said that food comes first in importance and clothing second. But we should not accept this. Clothing protects not merely the body but also the virtue. In our culture we wear clothes to cover our nakedness. Clothes are a mark of civilisation and everyone needs a minimum even if only a loin-cloth. Clothing is therefore even more important than food.

We want every village to stand on its own feet, growing its own food and making its own cloth. This kind of basic industry should be part and parcel of *gramdan*. If *gramdan* is Sita, then industries are Ram. This is the programme we must take with us from this meeting,

Some people will probably tell us that this also is impracticable. Of what use are such small tools, they will ask, in this machine age? But as Pandit Nehru says, even after fifteen years of planning we in India have not been able to better the lot of our poorest



people. We have no confidence that even after forty years of planning we shall be able to give them the means to keep body and soul together. What is to be done? Pandit Nehru now admits that “perhaps we should adopt the method Gandhiji used to advocate, of setting our millions of people to productive work with the use of small tools and household implements.” Our leaders have begun to realise that *khadi* and village industries are essential to the welfare of the country, at least for the next fifty years.

Only village *khadi* is real *khadi*. We cannot claim that the cloth we have produced so far is really a symbol of non-violence. There is very little non-violence about it; a bit of what the English call ‘charity’, but no compassion. Good work has been done, but it has not been able to make people one, or to encourage them to think for themselves. The spirit of compassion will not rest content till this is achieved, and it is good that we are all agreed that a new approach must be made.

As I said before, *gramdan* and *khadi* must go together. The labourer, the moneyed man and landowner must sit together in the *gram-sabha* and make plans for a strong and self-reliant village. There will also be cottage industries and the manufacture of *khadi*. There will also be measures for relieving debt, providing loans, formation of capital and reserves for bad years. There will also be a *Shanti-sena*.

3. Shanti Sena

We now come to the third programme, *Shanti Sena*, without which we cannot survive. The President of the Sarvodaya Sammelan, Sri Jugatram, has proposed that every person should give one year of life for *Shanti Sena* work. This would not be by any means easy, there are all sorts of difficulties, especially for married men. The idea is that the volunteers would be given their maintenance, they would have altogether two months’ training and ten month’s work, in alternating periods. Then they would go back to their own houses and occupations and promote peace in their own community and a second batch would go for training. They would all be ready to work in areas of tension



or during emergencies. How far we can carry out such a plan I do not know, but without something of this kind we shall have no peace or security.

The *Shanti Sainiks* have begun to wear a yellow head-cloth as a distinguishing mark. Some people feel that this uniform might encourage the *Shanti Sena* to take up a 'separatist' attitude and become a kind of sect. No one could be more completely opposed to the sectarian spirit than I am. But when I watched the *Shanti Sena* rally yesterday I was really inspired. There is no sectarianism about it. When *Shanti Sainiks* are involved in all the turmoil of a riot, they must have a way of recognising one another. This is a fact of experience, and the yellow cloth meets the need. The *Shanti Sena* is above all parties; the question of sectarianism does not arise.

We need a *Shanti Sena* in every village and every town. I am ready to give it advice and affection but nothing else. Its needs can be met very simply if *Sarvodaya-patras* are used everywhere; if the *Shanti Sainiks* are supported by the people's "vote for peace" of which the *Sarvodaya patra* is the symbol, they will have truly non-violent strength behind them, and their work will be successful. When the people depend on the army for their security they lose their independence; this must not happen with the *Shanti Sena*, and the way to prevent it is that it should be maintained by the will of the people themselves, expressed through the *Sarvodaya Patra*.

Gramdan, Khadi, Shantisena—this is our threefold programme. To this Trinity, these three seen as one, we must offer our service. If the three aspects are separated, they will all wither away. In all our work, therefore, we must think of them as one.



VII: ACHARYAKUL: A TEACHER'S FELLOWSHIP AND THE THIRD FORCE

Preface

On Dec. 7th and 8th 1967 Sri Karpuri Thakur, then Education Minister in Bihar, arranged for all Vice-Chancellors of Universities, heads of institutions, and prominent educationists to meet in conference with Vinoba at Pusa Road. In his address, Vinoba urged teachers to assert themselves as an independent force. "The moral leadership of the country," he said, "should be in the hands of teachers. They must show themselves capable of ridding the land of its miseries—of poverty, disease, ignorance and ever-increasing violence."

From Pusa Road Vinoba went on to Muzaffarpur, where he met the Vice-Chancellor and the leading teachers of the Bihar University, and they discussed the recent police intervention on the University campus. "I am sorry for it," said Vinoba, "but what surprises me is that University men should think of their campus in such small and limited terms. The whole of India is the University campus, and it is a matter of shame to scholars and teachers when the police operate anywhere in it. Teachers should take a firm resolve to maintain the peace."

The teachers of Muzaffarpur responded with enthusiasm to these ideas, and drew up a form of pledge which was signed by 150 teachers. The teachers of Patna also welcomed the pledge, and when Vinoba stayed for ten days in Monghyr College, the teachers there too drew up a plan of organisation.

On 6th March 1968 Vinoba entered Bhagalpur. On the 8th he was in Kahol village near the ancient Vikramshila, which is renowned as the home of Kahol Muni. There Vinoba announced the formation of *Acharyakul*, and thus carried a stage further the establishment of the principles on which the teacher's life should be built.

The Acharyakul has come into being with the following objectives:

That the moral stature and social status of teachers should be raised;



That it should be fully accepted that education should enjoy the same independence as the judiciary;

That the power of the people should be established opposed to the power of violence and distinct from that of law;

That attitudes and dispositions conducive to world peace should be fostered; and

That teachers should be the pioneers of the non-violent revolution.

Krishnaraj Mehta

(The following four talks by Vinoba were given during some of the conferences referred to above.)

I. THE PROBLEM OF EDUCATION

The ideas I am about to place before you are the outcome of a long period of serious thinking and practical experience. But I do not expect Government or society, or educationists, to accept them merely for that reason. I do not feel strongly about my ideas. If people like them and wish to put them to the test, well and good; if they do not, I shall feel no special regret. I don't want to be treated as an oracle. I want people to study my ideas thoroughly, discuss them fully, and accept whatever they find to be satisfactory. There is an ancient saying that the seer who proclaims the path of *dharma* is like a sign-post at the crossroads. The sign-post stretches out its arm to show you "That is the way to Darbhanga." It does not pick you up and carry you bodily to Darbhanga. The man of a scientific turn of mind is a sign-post. He is there to advise, explain, suggest, but not to force you to act. That is my own approach. So you need not be afraid to give me a hearing.

As you know, much scientific research has been going on in Europe and America for the last 50 years or so, from which we have certainly a lot to learn. At the same time, India also has her own stores of knowledge. Certain sciences have been studied here from ancient times. One of them is the science of education, which has been highly



developed in India. I do not mean that we have nothing to learn from outside, On the contrary, as the Vedas say, “Let good thoughts come among us from the four corners of the world.” We welcome all thoughts, and are not concerned whether an idea is native or foreign, old or new, but only whether it is true or false. Let us take whatever is true, even though it is old. And while there is no doubt that we can take much from outside, we must also give its proper value to what we already possess. This is all the more necessary because what has developed here is suited to our own circumstances and history. Our Ayurveda deals with plants which grow in India and can therefore be very useful in all villages. In the same way our native science of education can be very helpful to us because it is in harmony with our own nature.

Of all the books on education in Sanskrit, the crowning jewel is Patanjali’s *Yoga Shastra*. It considers education from two points of view, that of the ordinary mental level and that of the supra-mental plane. It is imperative to consider education in terms of psychology. For otherwise it could never make a start. But although a knowledge of psychology is essential for the first steps in education, some knowledge of the supra-mental is also necessary in order to understand its final stage and where it may lead. Patanjali’s *Yoga Shastra* deals with both aspects—how to analyse the psychological disposition and work in harmony with it, and how to go beyond this mental disposition to a higher plane. If we do not act in harmony with the psychological nature we can achieve nothing in this world. But if our thought does not go beyond this mental level, we gain no clear insight, become incapable of farsightedness, and remain imprisoned within thoughts of the immediate and trivial. The psychological and the supramental insights are both necessary. Patanjali kept them both in mind, and the *Yoga Shastra* sets them out with admirable brevity. Many commentaries have been written on this text, and its thought is still alive in India.

Patanjali thinks of God as the *Guru*, the Teacher. This Supreme Spirit, he says, is the Guru of our ancient seers. In all my reading I have not found any other book of religion or psychology which refers to Him as *Guru*. He is called “Father of the Universe”,



or “Father” as in Christianity, or “Mother”. But in the *Yoga Shashtra* he is regarded as *Guru*. This is a significant thing for all of you teachers present here. He is the Teacher, the Supreme Teacher, who teaches us all. We, on our part, should imitate Him in our methods of learning and teaching. This *Guru* teaches us with the purest detachment of spirit; he is in the highest sense disinterested; he imposes nothing on his pupils.

But now-a-days what is happening is that governments, both in our country and elsewhere, are doing their utmost to keep students under their thumb and impose upon them the ideas upon which the governments themselves are based. If the Government is communist, communist ideas are instilled. Even history takes new forms. In Stalin’s time one version of history was current in Russia. When Stalin fell, the teaching of history was suspended for a few months and then a new version was written in which not Stalin, but some other, was installed as God; this new version was then taught in schools. You may think that history is what has really happened and that it cannot be re-made. But history is no longer what has really happened, it is what we wish to remember. We keep what we like, cut out what we dislike, and teach this kind of history to our pupils. If Fascism were to take over, they would all be taught Fascism. Each and every government tries to mould the minds of students according to its own brand of thought.

This is, in sober truth, a great danger to democracy. “One man, one vote”, says democracy. Yes, but—if you give the right to vote, you must give the freedom to think. Without that, what you give with one hand, you take away with the other. This is a great danger in all countries including our own. And you, as teachers, need to be aware of it.

II. A PEACEFUL EDUCATIONAL REVOLUTION

This assembly seems to me to be of profound importance. I feel as though God is calling those who are present to undertake this work and to bring about a peaceful revolution in education. I see the hand of God, His leading and His command, in the fact that prominent men from all the Bihar Universities are gathered here and are considering together the problems of teachers and students. I believe that I am called



to give all the help I can. I feel the same inner divine compulsion to take up this task, of peaceful revolution in education, as I previously felt to undertake the work of *bhoodan* and *gramdan*.

I believe that the work of land-sharing is of the greatest and most fundamental importance; yet I feel myself personally more fitted for this task in education which is before you, because I am a life-long and habitual student. Not a day passes without my giving some time to study. When I began to consider my whole way of life, and the teachings and guidance which I have received both in my inner consciousness and from the messages of the sages, there came to my mind the passage in the Upanishads which summarises the whole duty of man thus:

1. Follow truth, also study and teach.
2. Maintain serenity, also study and teach.
3. Master the senses, also study and teach.
4. Give service to guests, also study and teach.

Study and teaching are linked with every duty; every duty of man is to be permeated with the atmosphere of study and of exposition.

I went on to think that in my case the precepts should be these : Ask for land-gifts, study and teach; work for *gramdan*, study and teach; form *shanti-sena*, study and teach; make *khadi* village-centred, study and teach. That is the principle I have tried to follow, and my study and teaching has never been divorced from my work. I am very grateful to the great souls who taught me this.

I remember also the political leaders of our independence movement, those who inspired me. The greatest of them were genuine students. Our present political leaders find no time for study; they have the title of *mantri*, which means “one who reflects”; but nowadays there is no place in their lives for reflection. Our former leaders however, were different. Take Sri Aurobindo, for example—a great political leader, a revolutionary thinker, a devoted scholar. He has written twenty five or thirty



philosophical works. Take Lokamanya Tilak, immersed all day long in politics, but devoting himself every night, before he slept, to an hour's study of the Vedas. In jail he wrote a commentary on the Vedas and one on the Gita, *Gita Rahasya*. He was a politician, but his heart was in study and teaching. Take Sri. Ranade, one of the founders of the Congress—a regular student of modern science, economics and sociology, and also of the writings of the saints. Take Dr. Annie Besant, whose Home Rule movement shook the British Raj; she too was a scholar and wrote some twenty books on spiritual subjects. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was a great and versatile man of learning, even more distinguished in scholarship than in politics. These few examples will show you that our former political leaders were not empty-headed, they had well-filled minds. “Empty vessels make most noise”, we say. These men made little noise, but they had a great influence. I am speaking now of the politicians, not of the men who were primarily students, men like Dr. Bhagavan Das, Bhandarkar or Rabindranath Tagore. I am saying that even the politicians were also students, and that it is these men who have moulded my mind.

These thoughts have made me eager to assist you in the task of bringing about a peaceful revolution in education in Bihar. How to do it? That is what we have to consider and discuss. I have shared with you my own heart-felt aspirations; we should now make full use of the opportunity this assembly affords us, and I am at your disposal whenever you wish to consult me.

I said a little while ago that I consider myself specially fitted for this educational work, and you may very well ask me why, if that is the case, I did not take it up sooner, instead of occupying myself with *Bhoodan* and *Gramdan*. One answer would be that I felt no confidence that the experts would co-operate with me. We must realise that if two scholars were to meet and find themselves to be both of one mind, it would be a very remarkable event! Learned men never agree, as Tulsidas found long ago.

A second reason for not undertaking this work is that I have been pre-occupied with the need for compassion. Shankaracharya has probably never been surpassed as



a teacher and a philosopher, but his prayer was: “Oh, Lord, take away my pride and increase my compassion”. He was a devotee of knowledge, yet he declared that man’s first duty is compassion, that compassion must grow and spread. There is a notion that this prince of *gurus*, Shankaracharya, was a hard man; on the contrary, his disciple describes him as “a store-house of all the scriptures, an abode of learning, a dwelling-place of compassion”. Without compassion he could never have travelled as he did over the length and breadth of India, devoting himself to the instruction of the people.

Gautama the Buddha was a prince accomplished in many branches of knowledge, but he left his home in the name of compassion, not in the name of learning. And so he made his mark on India, he brought about a revolution in ideas; he is still a living influence in the country, and his thought is of the greatest relevance today. Our greatest scholars and men of learning have set the highest value not on knowledge alone but on knowledge united with compassion.

I have no special claim to learning, and I get a reputation for being learned only because people on the whole are so unlearned. If I were to leave my work of compassion and claim a place among the learned, they would ignore me. I have travelled throughout India on foot, and I have seen with my own eyes most grievous want and poverty. No food to eat, no clothes to wear, no roof on the house, no milk for the children, no right even to the land on which the hut is built, no medical help, let alone education. The Government has tried to set things right by means of its five-year plans, but things have not been righted.

I have had the opportunity of talking with the authors of the five-year plans. I asked what the plans were doing for the very poorest. It is good that there should be a higher average standard of living in the country, but what difference will it make in the poor man’s standard of living? They told me that an all-round improvement would bring about improvement of the poorest also. I call this their “theory of percolation”; a lot of rain falls upon the surface, and some of the water goes into the soil. But in some parts of the land there is rock below the surface and not a drop can percolate. There is a lot



of this rock in the Indian soil, such as caste rigidity and inequalities of wealth, so that even if the average income increases, the poor still get nothing; the people on top get all the benefit and the lower layers are cheated of their share.

I have drawn our planners' attention to this a number of times, but they are eager to bring India as quickly as possible into line with the "progressive" countries of the world, and so they draw up imposing long-term plans which bring no immediate benefit. I asked when the people would get their minimum needs. "By 1985", they said, "for the lowest income group". It is not a question of maximum, but of minimum, of the barest necessities for keeping body and soul together. When are they to get that?—in 1985. Tukaram, the great saint of Maharashtra, used a parable which I repeated to our planners. A man is drowning in a river. Another calls to him, "All right, we shall arrange to rescue you the day after tomorrow." But life-saving brooks of no delay. If it were a matter of additional comfort or convenience, one could understand that it might have to be put off until tomorrow or the day after. But to tell a drowning man that you will come to his aid the day after tomorrow? Wonderful! I cannot imagine what is going to happen by 1985; I am afraid to think what state the country may be in by then.

The Indian people have endured a great deal. I am ill-fitted to help them. I have not the physical strength to encourage them by working with them in their daily labour. But in spite of my limitations, I have been giving my time to their needs because they are so urgent, and even now I must still put them first. And yet I am conscious of the finger of God in this meeting, and it gives me hope and confidence that if we all work together, we may be able to bring about a peaceful revolution in education, at least in Bihar.

You must not pursue knowledge in isolation. I repeat, knowledge is of no value without compassion. I expect your fullest help, therefore, in this work of compassion which I have undertaken. Practically every village has a teacher, and the teachers can achieve a very great deal if they will take the lead in organising the *gram-sabha*, giving it some guidance, explaining the basic ideas, and showing people how to express the



spirit of love and goodwill in a practical way. We must recognise that India has been shaped by its teachers. Someone once told me that modern Germany has been built up by its teachers; it is certainly not less true that India has been built up, and her ideals of life, ethical, religious, economic and social, formed in their entirety by the thought and labour of her many teachers. This is the inner truth of Indian history.

If, therefore, you will consider this *gramdan* movement as your own, and devote some of your holiday time to it along with your students, you will not only be able to accomplish a great work for Bihar, but you will also experience a deep satisfaction of spirit. And surely contentment of spirit is the greatest possession in the world. When my dying day arrives and I stand before the Lord, I would like to be able to rejoice in what I have done. He has given me this body to be used in the service of the needy. I believe that a life of service is the key to inner joy, and I seek full support in this work, I want teachers as a body to plunge into it along with me.

The task of *Bihar dan* has nothing to do with party politics, so you need have no hesitation about it. You have plenty of leisure too; God made a year of 365 days, but I understand the Universities have reduced it to 180. God made a twenty-four hour day, they make a three-hour day. So I think you have time to give, even though I agree that some of it must be spent in study. I know, however, from my own experience that both study and writing can be carried on while travelling in villages—you might call them by-products of my factory. And I believe that the next generation will find these by-products quite useful. In short, I recognise that you must give time to study, but along with it you ought also to help with *gramdan*. That means you must be above politics. I do not mean that you should not study them—politics is a proper subject of study. But your chief interest should be in *Jai Jagat*, that is, in the kind of politics which can benefit the world as a whole. You should give all your mind to that. Keep clear of power-politics, let it be a matter of pride that you should not sink to that level. If you will do this, you will find that in a short time you will have regained your status and authority; otherwise the teacher will remain as he is now, a mere slave.



The ancient tradition is that in time of need a man should be able to turn for counsel to his *guru*, to the one most fitted to give it. Do you find that this holds good today? Every year at least twenty five or thirty students pass through your hands; and after twenty five to thirty years there must be thousands of them. How many of them come back to you for advice about their problems of life? They turn to their parents, to wife or husband, brother or friend, but not to their teacher. The man who should be able to help them most is not consulted. Why? –because the teacher is not a *guru*, he is only a paid servant. If however you refuse to get bogged down in petty politics, but give your attention to the political issues of universal concern, you will rise in men's estimation and they will come running to you for your advice.

A story is told about Mirabai—whether authentic or not I cannot say. Mirabai had a difficult problem and she decided to lay it before the sage Tulsidas. “My father tells me to do one thing, my husband another; what shall I do?” she asked. Tulsidas replied, “Bharat renounced his mother, Prahlad his father, Vibhishan his brother; whoever acts against God, however great or intimate a friend he may be, should be regarded as an enemy to be renounced.” Then he added humbly, “That is my own opinion; you must do as seems best to you.” In this way Mirabai sought out Tulsidas for advice. That should be a *guru's* privilege, that students in their thousands should seek him out whenever they need counsel about the problems of life. You, the teachers of India, have lost that privilege, but you can regain it if you will keep free of political entanglements.

III. THE TEACHER: SOLDIER OF PEACE

Teachers must know clearly where their duty lies.

There are two departments of Government, police and education, which are fundamentally opposed to each other. The fact is that there are mutually conflicting trends in the country, and the existence of mutually contradictory Government departments is the result.



In a number of places recently, police have forced an entry into University premises in order to put down violence. This action has been much criticised on the grounds that the police have no right to enter the University. But what astonishes me is that University men themselves should take such a limited view of the extent of their jurisdiction. The whole of India is their University campus, and it is a disgrace to the professors and teachers that there should be police action anywhere within its boundaries. The *acharya's* duty is to understand all trends of thought, to transform men's minds and hearts and to point the way to a transformation of their lives. When our very calling as teachers is to bring about such changes, we should feel ashamed that India has any need for a police force. The need would not arise if the people of India were to live in peace, alert to their rights and to their duties, and tackle their problems with a clear understanding of the factors involved. If that were so, the whole police department might be closed down, and the Government would be delighted. But so long as you do not succeed in bringing these conditions about, peace will have to be maintained somehow. If you cannot prevent outbreaks of violence the nation will have to make provision for suppressing them. Educationists—the teachers, professors, *acharyas*—are the violence-*prevention* department; the Government police are the violence-*suppression* department. When preventive measure succeed there is no need for suppression.

Many people, including myself, were pained that a police force should enter a University campus; and it is indeed a painful incident. But we must accept all India as our campus.

1. *Acharyas* should make their influence felt throughout the country.
2. They should exercise their influence in political circles.
3. They should deliberately plan to make police action unnecessary in the future.

We should be thinking on these lines, rather than giving all our attention to minor incidents on the University campus. Let violence be prevented, and it will not have to be suppressed.



Let every teacher understand the dignity and worth of his vocation, so that the blessing of the sages of old may rest upon us. India has a great tradition of outstanding teachers, from ancient times right down to the present, even greater perhaps than that of Greece. Rabindranath Tagore was no nationalist in the narrow sense; he had a universal outlook. Yet he sang with pride of how the divine word was first framed in the sacred groves of India, how the first dawn of wisdom arose in Indian forests. He reminded us again and again that our culture is neither a city-culture nor a village culture but a forest-culture. Rome had a city-culture, the aboriginal peoples of some parts of Asia have a village-culture. But the culture of India was a forest-culture. The sages made their home in the forest, withdrawn from the common life of the world, and pondered deeply, seeking truth; they would then go among the people, teaching from house to house the wisdom they had found. The root of the word *acharya* is *char*; the same root is found in *acharan* (precept), *vicharan* (travelling), *vichar* (thought, deliberation), *sanchar* (arduous progress), *prachar* (spreading knowledge); all these meanings contribute to the ideal of an *acharya*.

When a farmer prepares to sow wheat or gram in his field he doesn't discuss the matter with his bullocks. He makes his decision, and then sets the bullocks to work. Our present professors and teachers are the bullocks; they obey orders, they teach whatever "prescribed book" they are told to teach. The very people who ought to be responsible for guiding the whole nation on the right path have themselves lost their way and fallen so low that they are no better than paid servants. Universities and colleges have become an arena of political fisticuffs, where all the parties fight for control of the colleges. This is an intolerable state of affairs and we must plan to get rid of it without delay. Teachers must refuse any longer to be the puppets of the political parties; there must be a solemn resolve to keep clear of all that sort of thing as beneath their dignity.

There should be a form of pledge which teachers may sign. It should contain a statement that we regard it as the duty of our position to offer our guidance to the



whole nation, and that we will therefore take no part in party politics or power politics, whether local or national. We should also declare that we regard ourselves as soldiers of peace, armed with the best of all weapons of peace—education, education for true knowledge. What better tool can there be for the establishment of peace? With this weapon in our hands and our students by our side we shall carry out our duty, working for the peace of the whole country, and maintaining our complete freedom from political entanglement.

Such a pledge will at once raise you in public esteem. People will begin to regard you in a new light. Bihar has a glorious tradition of sages and *rishis*—Yagnavalkya, Janak, Buddha, Mahaveera. With this living tradition behind you, the people of Bihar will respect and honour you if you stand before them as true teachers, guides and soldiers of peace.

Once you have set your hands to such a pledge the flag of revolution will be raised. It is not easy to reach all the 70,000 villages of Bihar. But when the teachers undertake this work the spirit of it will spread and a new, independent power will make itself felt.

IV. ACHARYA-KUL

The Pusa Road Conference gave me great pleasure, for I had the opportunity to meet a number of learned men. I found that these *pundits*, *acharyas* and professors were eager for self-knowledge, for the perception of their own true nature. There is a stanza by Tulsidas which says:

“Awake, awake, O root of life! Do not the Vedas and the wise declare with one voice that for the disorders and distress of dreams there is a cure? —Be wakeful.”

If we try to overcome our dream troubles while we are still dreaming, the dream-fantasy will continue and we shall only remain longer in the confusion of the dream-world. The best cure for the maladies of sleep is to wake up. I am happy to say that this kind of awakening seems to me to be taking place at the present time.



The teachers, *acharyas* and professors of Bihar are undertaking a great enterprise in founding this Acharya-kul. There could be no better name for it; the word *kul* means a family, and all of us teachers are members of one family. Every aspect of the work we mean to do—to commit ourselves to knowledge; to strive for mental purity; to watch over the development of our students with affectionate care; to study the problems of society with a disinterested endeavour to reach agreed conclusions for the guidance of the public—all of these are part of the task of establishing the unity of the family. These are the reasons which led me to choose the name Acharya-kul. *Kul* is a beautiful word, and it is one of those words which have links with both Arabic and Sanskrit. It implies all (*kul*) teachers; there is no question of high or low, of great or small. *All* teachers are to be equally honoured; *all* will work together; those are the conditions of success.

Nothing can be done by remaining aloof from the problems and difficulties of India. Gautama, the Buddha, once said: “It is the man who climbs a hill top who is able to see what is going on in the world below and so give guidance.” The Vedas use exactly the same imagery: “Those who have scaled the mountain-top inspire and strengthen the hearts of those who work in the world below.” When men’s resolution fails them and their vision and will are weakened, they receive new strength from those who, having reached the summit by their own efforts, turn to help their fellowmen below. So says the Veda, so says Gautama the Buddha.

The purpose of the Acharya-kul is not to acquire power; there are other associations for that. The purpose is to make us teachers more aware of our duties and more ready to fulfil them, and so enable us to regain our rightful place in society. For we have sunk in public esteem. *The Mahabharata* describes how one day Dharmaraj allowed himself to say something in doubtful taste about the death of Dronacharya’s son. The result was that his chariot, which had always been enabled by the power of his virtue to move through the air a few inches above the ground, immediately sank to the earth. Teachers also should have kept their “chariot” raised above the world’s values,



but they have let it sink into the dust, and have come down to the common level. The remedy however is very plain and simple; it is “know thyself”, and the moment a man achieves this realisation he is set free. A man who knows himself has become a new man; the vision re-shapes the form. And I, therefore, feel confident that as we go on working on the lines which we are now taking up, we shall find solutions to the various problems which we now face. If we stand firm in our conviction that this work must be done, we shall find that our doubts are resolved, step by step, by our experience. The *Gita* emphasizes the need for decisiveness of mind, saying that a man who lacks this quality squanders his intellect on many different courses, whereas a man who concentrates on one decisive act becomes a *karma-yogi* and a man of achievement.

People have told me that they doubt whether an effort of this kind can achieve anything, or make any impact, in chaotic times like ours. There is so much darkness all round us, how can it be removed? But I say, just think a moment about what darkness really is. There is a story about a man who fell to the earth one night, with two or three companions, from his house in the sun. Being sun dwellers, they had no conception of darkness, and they thought that the darkness of night was a great accumulation of dirt and rubbish. So they began trying to dig it out, and made such a noise that the people of the neighbourhood were roused from sleep. Out they came, lanterns in hand, to find out who had come and what they were doing; and in the light of the lanterns all the “dirt” disappeared in a twinkling, leaving the sun dwellers feeling very puzzled. The lanterns brought light and light always dispels darkness. No matter how ancient the darkness, it is a weak thing; it cannot show its face before the light. A deep cave may have been in darkness for thousands of years, but take a torch into it and the darkness is put to light in a moment.

If our surroundings seem dark it is because we have no light. If we had a light, the darkness would disappear; the only way to get rid of it is to bring the light. Any other method only perpetuates the illusion that the darkness is real. Attempts to dig it out



with a shovel give it a false substance. The fact is that darkness is nothing in itself, it is merely absence of light, and when light comes in, darkness ends.

As for you and me, what is the nature of our strength, such as it is? Is it not the nature of light?—the light of knowledge of wisdom, of thought and reflection? What power in the world can stand before it?

Remember that the world is becoming one and men are coming nearer to one another. Even the high heavens are not so distant as before. When science has made so much progress, when the intellect has such far-reaching power, it will be a disaster for humanity if the heart remains small. The problems of today arise from this discrepancy; our conflicts, whether between “capital” and “labour”, between Hindu and Musalman, between India and Pakistan, or in Vietnam, all spring from the conflict between big brains and small hearts. If the brain had remained small like the heart there would not be so much trouble.

Man’s intellectual horizon has today expanded so much that the attainments of a Newton or a Vyas seem small in comparison. We possess much more knowledge than they did. An ordinary college boy nowadays knows more mathematics than Newton, who knew nothing of the differential calculus although he was the greatest mathematician of his time. The knowledge of geography also had narrow limits in former times. When an English lawyer arrived at the court of the Emperor Akbar, saying that he had come from Queen Elizabeth of England, Akbar learned for the first time that the world contained a country called England, which had a queen. Little children in primary school today know more geography than Akbar did.

So our brains have expanded, but our hearts remain small. We call ourselves Harijans, landowners, Sikhs, Brahmins; we label men as belonging to this party or to that. But differences of caste and creed, sect and language, of party and province, must all be swallowed up in Sarvodaya, and Sarvodaya will only come about when these dividing lines are overcome. So long as people’s minds are filled with these petty distinctions and their thoughts centred on such trivial questions, we are simply unfit for



the demands of our times. Our smallness of heart is unworthy of the largeness of our universe.

Should we then restrict our intellects, throw away our science? That cannot be done. Once science has come, it has come to stay. It is not possible for us to forget it and go back. On the contrary, intellectual progress is going to continue, and scientific knowledge is going to expand even further. There is no alternative, if we are to survive, except to expand our hearts. We can no longer think of human beings as “high” or “low”, as Indians or Pakistanis—that will no longer work. The world outlook of *Jai Jagat* is the only fitting one for our generation, for the world is ours, and we are world-citizens, “world-men” (*viswa-manava*), “as the *Rig Veda* phrased it long ago.

If teachers do not possess this universal outlook, how can we look for it in others? Ordinary men’s thoughts are limited to the interests of their own little family, their own little village. But a teacher’s thought must rise higher and his heart must be larger. When Acharya-kul has been brought into being, I look forward to seeing a new strength generated in Bihar, that will change the face of Bihar. We have a great company of invisible witnesses. The spirits of Gautam the Buddha, of Mahaveera, of King Janak and Lord Krishna and the Emperor Ashoka, are surely watching what their successors in this land are doing; I have no doubt that they will bless our work.

V. THE SCHOOL AS THIRD FORCE

1: Teachers and the Community

I laugh a good deal nowadays, partly because although there is plenty to weep about, nothing is to be gained by weeping. I laugh also because I have discovered a way to make all India happy, if only people will accept it, and I think of the happy future. And I laugh also because this world does not appear to me to have much reality. And yet the condition of India ought to cause us much concern; inwardly I grieve over it. We have three kinds of trouble, and we must put our whole strength into getting rid of them, for twenty years after independence they are still with us.



The first of our troubles is poverty, which seems to me to be on the increase. There may be several reasons for this, but our negligence is a major factor. We have not done our duty; we have not provided for the country's basic needs, which ought to have taken precedence over any secondary needs.

Our ancestors have handed down to us this injunction: "Increase the production of food; let this be your vow". These words come from the Upanishad, which is not a pamphlet about the five-year plan, but a treatise on the higher knowledge. This book of *Brahma-Vidya* not only directs us to produce more food, it urges us to take a vow in the matter. Yet we have forgotten this fundamental task; we have taken up various secondary matters and neglected this primary thing. Where there is not enough food, mutual love and compassion are only a mirage. Food production is of such fundamental importance that the whole strength of the people and of the Government should have been mobilized for it. But this was not done. It was not a case of idleness; work was done, but no attention was paid to food.

After Independence Mahatma Gandhi warned us that if food were in short supply our freedom itself would be undermined, and that every household ought to be growing food. He urged us to use every little corner of vacant land to grow greens and vegetables. He told townsmen who had no land to grow vegetables in pots. From two or three pots you may perhaps get only one or two kg of vegetables in a year, but that is much better than nothing at all, And if people were to begin to do it in millions, the produce would add up to a very large amount. Rain falls in tiny drops, but it falls everywhere and the whole earth becomes moist. If every home grows a little, the total will be tremendous. In this way everyone will learn that each should contribute towards national production. Otherwise we have no right to eat. As St. Paul said, "He who will not work, neither shall he eat". Mahatma Gandhi said the same thing; produce food, however small the quantity.

Japan has put Gandhiji's ideas into practice. Not a foot of land remains unused. Kagawa, a great Japanese thinker and social worker, has written a very fine book called



On the Steps, about methods of farming on hill slopes. He describes how Japanese youth cultivated the hill-sides, planting trees to prevent soil erosion, how they left not an inch of land unused, how in this way they saved the country. But here in India what a lot of land lies waste!—what a painful sight!

The second of our troubles is that we have entirely lost our belief in self-reliance and self-sufficiency. How can we talk about India standing on her own feet when even our food, and the milk powder for our children, come from outside? Grain is imported from America, and other things also from other countries. We never ask ourselves where the things that we buy come from. We do not reflect on what debts we are piling up or how we are exposing ourselves to outside political pressure. Even manufactured goods are being imported; some are sold cheaply second-hand, and our people buy them. No, we no longer believe in *swadeshi*, we no longer take pride in producing what we need.

So far as education is concerned, we have made every possible mistake, gone wrong everywhere. Education today has no spiritual dimension. It is no longer based on the principles which in the past have been India's strength and stay, and which are still her strength today. This is our third trouble; there is no productive work in our current education, it keeps knowledge and work apart. There are no jobs for those who pass out of our colleges, and the result is that if we educate people we add to unemployment, and if we do not educate them we add to ignorance. Both are dangerous. The whole of the *Bhagavadgita* bears witness against us. "Janaka and the ancients attained their perfection through work alone; therefore never cease to work. A wise man should labour for the welfare of the world as the mother plays for the sake of her children". This is the teaching of the *Gita*, the greatest scripture of India. Yet although we possess this book, we have lost our whole philosophy of work, and both knowledge and work have suffered in consequence.

Our social behaviour has also fallen to a very low level. In several parts of India riots have taken place over language issues. This is a dangerous trend—must India be



split up because of language? Communal and religious riots have taken place, provincial pride and jealousy have been inflamed, and millions of rupees worth of property set on fire and destroyed—all because of lying rumour and misunderstanding. Now while this is the state of affairs, are teachers going to shut themselves inside their schools like women in *purdah* or come out and acquit themselves like heroes? Will they wash their hands of it all, saying that their responsibility is confined to the school, or will they recognize a responsibility to the outside world also? I call myself a teacher, and I am never so happy as when I can devote myself to study and to teaching; it is such a peaceful and satisfying kind of life that I should probably live a hundred years if I could stick to it. But I have had to leave it and come out, because India is in danger. I expect you also to take on some project in a district or comparable area. There is no need to go to every village. Select a rural area and make a complete survey of the villages in it so that you are familiar with the conditions. Then consider what you can do to improve them, and draw up a plan of action. Survey the villages and plan to help them, survey the towns and take it upon yourselves to see that no riots occur. If riots do break out, do everything you can to stop them. But it should be your responsibility to take action even before any riot breaks out, so that you can control the situation.

Politicians are expert in creating divisions. If their power is to be broken another kind of power must be brought into being—the power of the village, and along with it the power of knowledge, the power of the teacher. We need them both. One is the power of production, of growing more food; the man who can rely on his fields can never be defeated even by war. The second is the power of knowledge. You, the teachers, have been entrusted with the task of forming the minds of men. But the status of the teacher today is not what it once was. There are divisions among teachers, divisions among students, and also divisions of teachers against students.

The power of knowledge will only emerge when those who are now divided unite. How can any power be generated so long as those who by nature belong together form themselves into separate organisations? The answers to the problems which



confront India can only be given by the teacher; but the teacher must first renounce politics and throw in his lot with the common man, with *lokaniti*. Unless he renounces politics he cannot influence politics. He will be effective only when he rejects the values of the power-structure and chooses those of the people.

I have been speaking of village power. As things are today people cannot imagine the possibility of a political structure without political parties. We have a delegated democracy, not a participating democracy. But nothing can be done if the teacher considers that his duties begin and end in his school or college classroom. You must get into touch with the people, for otherwise you will have no influence on public affairs.

Teachers ought to come together from time to time to discuss matters of public interest, and publish their conclusions in the name of the teaching profession. You should be prepared to offer this kind of guidance to the public, and the public should have confidence that your findings will be based upon an objective and dispassionate study of the problems. Your work will assist the Government too, and your influence will come to be felt in the country. But you will never gain any influence by entangling yourself in power-politics; you will simply get led by the nose. So keep out of politics, but come forward and take up some project for service, and give the people the hope and confidence that in time of need they may look to you for guidance.

2: Qualities of a teacher: Responsibility and Freedom

A teacher needs to possess at least three qualities. The first is that he must be an affectionate and loving friend to his students. This is of such importance that without it he can never be a teacher at all. The second is that he himself must be a tireless seeker after knowledge, always studying, continually adding new items to his store. He must become an “ocean of learning”, a votary of science.

Both these qualities are essential for the teacher. If you have affection, but no knowledge, you may make a good mother; mothers are full of affection but not necessarily of knowledge, though some have both, like the mother of the great sage Kapila, whom he instructed. Generally speaking, however, what we expect from



mothers is not knowledge but love and tenderness. But if you (as teachers) are lacking in knowledge your affections may lead you into blind devotion and sentimentality. If, on the other hand, you are lacking in love and affection, your intellect and devotion to knowledge may make you a philosopher or a detached and objective thinker of great value to the country; but you can't be a teacher. The teacher must possess *both* a delight in ideas and in the daily increase of knowledge, *and* also an affection and love for his pupils.

The teacher needs a third quality also. Political activity today has a powerful attraction for the students, and the students are under the care of the teachers. If the teacher himself takes on a political colouring and becomes entangled, it is as if the ocean were to refuse to accept the Ganga. The Ganga of knowledge approaches such professors and teachers, and they will have none of her because they care only for politics. Teachers are in a position of great authority and they should therefore keep clear of all political involvement. Imagine a hospital worker who is also a friend of some political party. If he were to start paying more or less attention to patients according to their politics, he would be unfit for his work; a hospital worker must be impartial. If he puts his party first he is useless. It is the same with a judge. Can a judge belong to a party? Can there be any party spirit in justice? Of course not. Neither can the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly show partiality to any group. Teachers are in the same position. If a teacher gets involved in politics he is no longer his own master, he is a mere tool in the hands of another, and loses his independence. He does not act, he is acted upon. He can no longer exercise the functions of a teacher, nor keep his proper status.

Education in the old days was not in this predicament. The story of Sri Krishna tells how even while he was still a child he overcame Kamsa and set the country free. However, his father realised that he had not yet had any schooling, he had no degree, and sent him to a *guru* for his education. The *guru* thought to himself: "This boy is a hero, and he has been sent to me to be taught. Well and good, I will teach him." He set



Sri Krishna to work with a poor Brahmin boy, and sent the pair of them into the jungle to cut firewood. The Brahmin boy, Sudama, was very poor, Sri Krishna was the son of a powerful king, but they studied together. There was no “public” school for the rich only, such as we have now-a-days, where the ordinary “public” cannot go. Sri Krishna’s *guru* made no such distinctions; he gave the same physical labour to both the boys alike, he taught both alike, and when their education was completed he gave them both his blessing, saying, “You have done your work well; you have given good service, and he who serves acquires knowledge, therefore your studies are completed; I bid you both farewell”.

I have told you this story to make you realise that the *guru*, in those days, was not subject to political authority. The *guru* was above politics. The Department of Education today should be just as much above politics as the Department of Justice, which is independent of the government and can decide a case against the government if it sees fit. The judges receive their salaries from the government, but they are not subject to governmental pressure. The same principle should be accepted for education as has been accepted for the judiciary. If that happens, education will go ahead. No educational problem will ever be solved unless we can shake off the clutches of the politicians in which we are held today.

On 15th August, 1947—Independence Day—I was living at Paunar near Wardha, and the people invited me to address a meeting at Wardha. “Friends”, I said, “we have got our independence. Should we now fly the old flag even for one day?” “Of course not”, they replied—for if the old flag flies it means that the old government still goes on. I then suggested that just as the new regime has a new flag, it should have a new kind of education. The old education means that the old regime goes on, and that there is no real change. Gandhiji with great farsightedness suggested a type of education which he called ‘Nai Talim.’ I do not mean to say that Nai Talim should be accepted merely because it is his. Gandhiji did not desire us to accept everything he said blindly or swallow it whole. However, if the government were in my hands—a thing which will



not happen—I would give all the school children three months’ holiday and tell them to go and play, to grow strong, to work in the fields or with the craftsmen, as they please, to enjoy their independence. Meanwhile I would call a conference of educationists and ask them to draw up a plan for education in free India, to be ready within three months. When it was ready, I would open the schools again. Instead of that, however, we have first, second, third, fourth Five-year Plans, but the same old education as before, no change at all.

The Government tells us that there is an educational “explosion”, an enormous expansion of education, which brings all kinds of new problems in its train. But my doubt is, “Do good things ever explode? If education has ‘exploded’ it must surely mean that it is a bad and dangerous thing?” And that is what it really is, today. If you don’t expand education, people will remain ignorant, and if you do expand it they will become unemployable. The choice is between ignorance and uselessness—which will you choose?” The last time Dr. Zakir Hussain came to visit me I told him all this. His reply was: “Vinobaji, you said that the educated are useless for work, but it is worse than that; they are useless and ignorant too.” That was his amendment, and I accepted it. That is why I say we ought immediately to have changed the pattern of education. What is done is done, but we must change it now.

Education, then, is said to be a big problem. Why is it, I ask, that something which is meant to solve problems has itself become a problem? The reason of it is that education has got into the hands of the State. You have given to a Director of Education an authority which you never gave to Shankaracharya or to Tulsidas. Any book the Director cares to choose becomes a text-book throughout the State and every student has to study it. It is imposed on the whole of Bihar North, South, East, West, and if the children don’t study it they will fail. Tulsidas possessed no such power to compel people to read his *Ramayana*, though plenty of people do read it of their own free will. But you consider that a Director of Education is competent to decide on compulsory text books for all.



To sum up, the whole field of education should be freed from Government control. It is in your power to bring this about, for if you yourselves, the teachers, assert your freedom, education also will gain its freedom.

3: Unite Knowledge with Work

Gandhiji, Sri Krishna and Patanjali have all taught that knowledge must not be separated from action. A society in which some people had all the knowledge and others did all the work would be a *Rahu-Ketu* affair. Rahu is nothing but head, ahead without a body; and Ketu is nothing but trunk, the lower portion without a head. The villagers would be the Ketu and the townfolk would be the Rahu. If that were to come about there would be serious consequences. We already have divisions of caste, state and language, and divisions of party are now arising also. If to all these we were to add yet another division—between those who do nothing but labour, and those who do nothing but study, so that the learned have no work and the workers no learning, and the peasants hold the power of labour, the townsmen the power of knowledge—what will be the state of affairs ? If we want to increase our production, to develop, to achieve good results, knowledge and action must go together. This is the essence of Gandhiji's teaching.

It is interesting that while India has not so far accepted Gandhiji's ideas, China has accepted them fully. In this regard, Gandhi and Mao are in agreement. The people of China have one kind of school only for everyone, which they call a "half and half school", and in which three hours daily are given to work and three hours to study. Their communist Government sees to it that when a thing is accepted it is at once put into practice. (This is an admirable characteristic of communism. We people, on the other hand, are always hesitating, thinking, considering, making rules.) In China, then, everyone without exception attends the same school and works shoulder to shoulder with the rest on equal terms, without any distinction of "high" or "low". Knowledge and action go together, and are for all alike. The teaching may have a Communist or Socialist colouring; that is another matter. But the Chinese have succeeded in educating



everyone in knowledge and work together, half and half; and we too have to see to it that all the children of this country should work and should also learn, on equal terms.

Lord Krishna is our model charioteer, warrior, author of the *Gita*, *guru*, disciple; he was ready to be all these in turn as occasion arose. He was nineteen years older than Arjuna, but he was not too proud to act as his servant. When the fighting was over for the day, Arjuna, the Kshatriya, would perform his evening worship, Sri Krishna would groom Arjuna's horses and find his worship in work. This is the ideal which we should aim at; all our *pundits* and teachers, and all our students, should become masters of both these life-forces, expert in manual work and expert in knowledge also. That is the way forward.

4: The Scientific and the Spiritual

Now another matter, in which Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was my best propagandist. Wherever he went, in Russia or America, he would tell people that "Vinoba says that the scientific and the spiritual aspects of life must be brought together." Politics and religions are outdated; their day is over. The day of sectarian religions is over, and they must yield place to spiritual wisdom. The day of party politics is over and it must give place to science.

I recall also reading a newspaper report of a speech Jawaharlal made at Patna. "Although I am involved in politics," he said, "I am in agreement with Vinoba's ideas. Party politics must go, sectarian religions must go. Our basic problems will only be solved when we apply to them a broad-based science and a broad-based spiritual wisdom." Otherwise, what will happen? Politicians who work for unity end, though they do not realise it, by increasing divisions. The Bengali language has been torn in two, so has Urdu, so has Punjabi. Jordan, Korea, Berlin are all divided. The politician knows how to tear things apart, and imagines that somehow they will put themselves together. The problems of the world will never be solved in that way. They will only be solved when people get together and think as one group, when they shake off the yoke of narrow political doctrines and narrow religious scriptures.



When I talk of being freed from scriptures people often feel distressed. I assure you that there is no need for alarm. Take, for example, the custom of making an offering. In olden times it took the form of pouring *ghee* into a fire. Does it follow that we must do the same? Is that real religion or a real offering? In those days there was no coal, no kerosene oil; thousands of cattle grazed in the forest and *ghee* was the natural means of keeping the fire burning. I once suggested to a priest at a wedding that instead of pouring *ghee* into the fire he should collect it in a vessel, offer it to the deity, and then distribute it as *prasad*. The people liked the idea. It preserves a reverence for the older custom and also recognizes the new conditions. We must realize that there is no virtue in keeping up out-dated practices in the name of religion.

I will give you another example. We all know the story of the game of dice played by the Kauravas against the Pandavas, and how at last the Pandavas staked Draupadi herself. They lost the throw and Draupadi became Duryodhana's slave. Many *pundits* were present, including the wisest men of the day. Draupadi appealed to them. "What do you think?" she asked. "Is a woman a man's property to be staked in a game of dice?" And the great sages were puzzled, they could not answer her. Yet now-a-days any school boy could answer at once. "Stake a woman at the gaming table as if she were a piece of property? What a wicked thing to do!" he would exclaim.

So it comes to this: it is foolish to accept all the ideas of these ancient thinkers without question, just because they are found in a "religious" text. In these matters, we have to use our own spiritual insight.

Yet in our schools there is no place for study of spiritual wisdom and insight. They are "secular" schools; so the *Ramayana*, the *Bible*, the *Quran* may not be taught in them. We may perhaps teach as "literature" a few selections or "pieces" from the *Ramayana* or other books. But how can this piecemeal approach promote any spiritual insight? So, in the name of secularism, our finest literature is being neglected. This is a mistaken notion of secularism. India's great spiritual heritage must be studied and taught in all schools, and side by side with it must be found the study of modern science.



5: Language and Education

A word about language. I am very fond of languages and I have studied a good many of them. I have some knowledge of all the fifteen languages recognized in the Indian Constitution, and also of Persian and Arabic. I made a special study of Arabic in order to write *The Essence of the Quran*. Besides these I have managed to get a smattering of Chinese and Japanese through friends from these countries who accompanied me for a time during my tours. I learned them for friendship's sake, not for the sake of learning. I find that the structure of Japanese is not unlike that of Indian languages. Chinese is unusual, but very beautiful. The written form is distinctive; it is a pictorial script with thousands of pictographs. China has many spoken tongues, but the pictographs have the same meaning everywhere, so that all Chinese can understand one another's written language.

I have studied English and French, and when a German accompanied me I did not find it difficult to learn some German, for these three languages have many similarities. I tried Latin, which is closely related to Sanskrit. That seemed to me to be enough, but a friend insisted that I ought to learn Esperanto, and when a teacher became available I did so. I am telling you all this to show you that I have done a good deal of work on languages and that I feel a great respect for them all. If need arises, I am ready to learn new ones even now. So when I talk about languages, you must understand that I feel no kind of prejudice about any language, for or against. There is no such thing in my heart.

First, English. Many people consider education to be incomplete without English, because English is a window on the world. I agree that it is so, but if the house has only one window, opening in one direction only, the people inside the house get a very one-sided view of the world. If you want an all-round view you need at least seven windows—English, French, German and Russian, for the Western world, Chinese and Japanese for the East, and Arabic for the region westward of Iran. With only one



language window your view will be incomplete and misleading. If we depend on that language only we shall not be able to think independently.

I agree that in India we have plenty of opportunity for teaching and learning English, so that comparatively few people study other languages. But India will be on the right road only when we have expert knowledge of all these seven languages; otherwise, willy nilly we shall find ourselves in the Anglo-American camp. I am not saying that this would necessarily be a bad thing, but I do say that if we learn only English, these countries are going to exercise a disproportionate influence upon us, and information about the rest of the world will reach us, if at all, coloured by their point of view. In my opinion it is a dangerous mistake for a huge country like India to have only one door or one window to the outside world,

Another point. We accept it as our duty to give all our children eight years of schooling. Now it is useless to introduce any of these “windows”, English, French, German etc. during that eight-year period. The children will not learn much English or French at that stage, and what little they do learn they will find no use for. Most of them will leave school at the end of the eight years and go to work on the land or settle down to some other occupation, They have no need of a foreign language, and there is no sense in burdening them with one. “What do we want with a window?” they would ask, “People need windows when their houses have walls. Our houses have no walls, and even the roof lets in the daylight.” No, we should not bother about “windows”, we should stop loading these languages on to them. They would then have time to study their own language properly. At present they get no real knowledge either of their own language or of English. If they were to learn their own language well, they would find it useful in life. But alas, the teacher—please excuse my saying so—is a mere paid labourer. He is told in written circulars from “authority”, what his time-table must be, what he must teach, how many hours to give to each subject. And the wage-slave does as he is told. So the children’s acquaintance with their mother-tongue is poor, and their



English also is poor. If instead of this, the children were to learn their mother tongue well it would be of real benefit and use to them all.

I want to make a suggestion. Children who learn Hindi should also learn Samskrit. By that I mean that they should study the derivation of words, which is the foundation of language. For example, there are in use in Hindi at least four hundred derivatives of the Samskrit root *yug* or *yog*. This is a sample of the “estate” which the Hindi tongue inherits from its parent Samskrit. Without it, Hindi would not be capable of expressing such a universal range of thought. The study of Samskrit derivations must be part and parcel of the study of Hindi, and the study of Hindi cannot be said to be complete without it.

Take one of Tulsidas’ famous couplets; it is nothing but Samskrit written so that the common people could understand it. Tulsidas was not out to teach pronunciation, he was out to teach the *Ramayana*; why should he adopt a “correct” Samskrit pronunciation which the people could not understand or learn? Bengalis will tell you that their language possesses all three sibilants—the “S” of Sankar, the *Sh* of “Shanmukha” and the *s* of “saint”. But they pronounce all three alike in their speech. Their greatest poet, Rabindranath Tagore, did not aim at teaching language, but at imparting spiritual thoughts. He wrote in the popular language, using the popular pronunciation, but he used a great many Samskrit derivatives. A large number of Indian languages owe a similar debt to Samskrit, and so the study of Samskrit roots and derivatives is necessary. If Hindi is to develop on sound lines these points need to be carefully considered.

Another question is asked—whether or not education should be given through the mother tongue? A strange question, for I do not understand how there can be two opinions on the subject. If you were to ask a donkey’s foal if he wanted to be taught in the donkey’s language or in the lion’s language, he would say that however fine the lion’s language may be, he can understand only the donkey’s language, not the lion’s.



It is obvious that it is the mother tongue which touches the human heart, and there ought to be no doubt at all that it should be the medium of education.

The next question is, how long a period is needed to master it? Four years of schooling or five? The Commission report says, rightly, that it should not be more than ten. My own opinion is that it could be done in five years if an all-out effort were made. But there is no doubt that the mother tongue should be the medium of education from first to last.

When I went to Assam I studied Assamese and the Assamese scriptures. I published a collection of extracts from one scriptural text, *The Essence of Nama Gosha*. I learnt that four hundred years ago there lived a writer named Bhatta Deva who wrote in prose. It is usually thought that prose came into use only after the coming of the English and the English language. I found, however, that Bhattadeva had written an Assamese commentary on the Gita, called *The Gita in Prose*, also a commentary *The Bhagavat in prose*. I liked these books very much. The prose *Bhagavad Gita* was being written in Assamese at about the same time as the Bible was being printed in Caxton's printing press in England. I give this example to show you what a fine and expressive language Assamese is! It will need a scientific vocabulary, and while this is gradually evolving, English words will continue in use. What difficulty is there in that? There is no need to wait until we have coined words for "oxygen" and "hydrogen", before we can teach children about the composition of water! If we begin in this way it will be easy. Our Indian languages are well developed and capable of further development.

The Marathi *Jnaneswari* was written by Saint Gnaneshwar at about the same time as Chaucer in England wrote his *Canterbury Tales*. The vocabulary of the *Canterbury Tales* is not a quarter as rich as that of the *Jnaneswari*, which was by no means the first book to be written in Marathi. It is recognized as a great classic, and the *Canterbury Tales* cannot compare with it in the mastery of its construction.



VIII: THE SARVODAYA MOVEMENT: A REVIEW

(*Speech at the Social and Political Workers' Conference, Bodh Gaya,
October 1968*)

Shortly before Gandhiji's death he was planning to call together a conference of workers at Sevagram, but this was not to be. However, a meeting of his fellow-workers was held there not long afterwards. It was attended both by political leaders such as Sardar Patel and Pandit Nehru and also by constructive workers. Some of the latter made proposals to the political leaders and asked for their help. When I was asked to speak I said that this was the first opportunity for our large 'family' of workers to get together, and that we as yet hardly knew one another. I told Pandit Nehru that I did not feel that this was the time for us to ask for help; but that we would be ready to give him any help that was possible with our limited strength.

Pandit Nehru assigned us work with the refugees, which we accepted. It was decided that we should work particularly among Muslims to restore their confidence. A few of us, including Jajuji and Janakibehn (Bajaj) went to Delhi and undertook to work for six months in the first place. Our six months held enough curious experience to fill a book; but we soon found that progress was badly blocked by the slowness, blindness or obstruction of some officials. We worked very hard, but we could not achieve what we had hoped towards Sarvodaya; so at the end of the six months we decided to give up the work.

I began to consider what we ought to do. The constructive workers were timid and ineffective and had no self-confidence. Sardar Patel said in one of his speeches that they all go on spinning faithfully but no one takes any notice. When people did not listen to Gandhiji, why should they listen to us? Now that India is free, he said, we need industries with a 'war potential'. His phrase 'war potential' set me thinking. It seemed to me that what the world needs is not 'war potential' but 'peace potential'. We must set up industries and activities with a 'peace potential'.



I began to plan for an all India pilgrimage on behalf of this ‘peace potential’, but I had not spoken about my plans to anyone. Then Shankarraoji and others began to press me to attend the Sarvodaya Sammelan at Sivarampalli. I did not feel interested, but they threatened to cancel the meeting if I would not come. So finally I said: “All right, I will come on foot; I will leave Sevagram the day after tomorrow”.

My going on foot caused an explosion like an atom bomb, and yet it was nothing extraordinary. People have always journeyed on foot, although now-a-days it is not usual. I planned to return by a different route which would bring me into touch with the problems of Telengana at that time.

So I came to a village, Pochampalli, where the Harijans appealed to me to get them land, as they were cultivators and had no other means of livelihood. At first I thought of approaching the government but decided that would be of no use. So at the evening meeting in the village, I put the problem to the villagers, and was offered a gift of a hundred acres.

I lay awake most of that night thinking about what had happened. I put my faith in two things—God and mathematics. I calculated that to satisfy the needs of all the landless of India would require fifty million acres. Could I get such an amount for the asking? I turned to God. “If you are afraid to take up the challenge”, He said, “you had better throw overboard your talk of *ahimsa*. He who makes the child hungry makes milk in the mother’s breast”. That was enough; the very next day I began asking for land and getting it. I will not go over that long story now. It was a wonderful journey. There were meetings every day and everyday people gave me land. I travelled in a kind of exaltation, humming Rabindranath Tagore’s song, “Go forth alone, O hapless one”, but I changed the word ‘hapless’ into ‘blessed’. The *Vedas* also say that ‘the sun travels alone’; it was an inspiration to see the sun travelling alone through the heavens as I travelled alone over the earth.

When we entered Uttar Pradesh the time of the 1952 election was approaching, and election meetings were going on. We also were holding meetings, and while the



election meetings were noisy and disorderly, ours were peaceful and people listened intently. It seemed to me a good omen that they should show such interest at such a time.

One of the political leaders there was Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia. He referred to *bhoodan* in one of his speeches saying that it was a 'very good' programme, by which he meant 'impracticable'; he went on to say that it would take three hundred years to carry it through. I replied that I too could do arithmetic, and at the rate of one lakh acres a year I calculated that it would take five hundred years to reach the target of fifty million acres, so that if he put it at three hundred years only it must mean that he would help us.

That year we did get one lakh acres, and when the Sarvodaya Sammelan met at Sevapuri they decided with great enthusiasm that we must get no less than two and half million acres during the next two years. By that time I had reached Benares, and a decision had to be taken whether to go next to Bihar, or to Vindhya Pradesh. Bihar has a great tradition, so I said that I would not accept less than four million acres as Bihar's quota. The Bihar Sarvodaya leader Lakshmi Babu agreed. "After all", he said, "there are seventy five thousand villages and it only means five acres from each village." So I entered Bihar and started asking for four million acres, that is for one-sixth of the land for the landless. After a while, however, I fell ill, and had to stop working for a time. The Chief Minister Dr. Sri Krishna Sinha came to see me and with tears in his eyes begged me to agree to medical treatment. (I do not normally take medicines.) I agreed, on condition that his Congress party would collect the four million acres. More careful calculations showed that one-sixth of the land was actually 3.2 million acres, and Congress undertook to collect this amount. In the States I had visited previously the Congress had declared its sympathy and promised to help 'as far as possible'. You know what this usually means! People advised the Chief Minister not to be so rash as to mention figures, but he retorted that he knew his business. However, when 2.2 million



acres had been given, I felt I should not be greedy for more, and that I should undertake next an all-India tour.

Now I will skip five years and come to the Yelwal Sammelan. During those five years *bhoodan* had developed into *gramdan*. But I sometimes wondered whether this was just a crazy fad of mine or whether it had some real merit. So we called the leaders of India together at Yelwal to examine the matter objectively. They responded well; from Nehru to Nambudripad, they all came, including people whose politics were diametrically opposed and who perhaps had never met before. Nehru was specially impressed by the fact that such diverse people could meet for a common purpose. I spoke for an hour on the first day, and then said no more. After two days of full discussion a resolution was passed calling for 'enthusiastic support' from the whole nation for the movement, as one that contributes to the moral and the material welfare of the country, and promising government help. Some of our workers expected that these leaders would throw in their lot with us, and were disappointed that they did not do so. I was not disappointed, for I knew that these leaders were not merely railway coaches to be hooked on to our engine; they were engines themselves, and engines with their own coaches to pull. They could not be expected to join our train, but they did give us the green light. They also gave us a 'certificate' that *gramdan* is an economically sound proposition.

In my speech at Yelwal I called *gramdan* a 'defence measure', and Pandit Nehru made a note of the phrase. "When you make your five-year plans", I said, "you assume that the world will be at peace. But if war should break out all your calculations would be upset, and your plans would collapse like a house of cards. But *gramdan* would not collapse." I do not know what made me say this; there was no war talk at that time, but the idea came to me on the spur of the moment.

I will now pass over another five years, to my last meeting with Nehru, in Bengal. We had often met before with other people present, but at that time of crisis (the war with China) we met alone and in private. We talked for two hours and I noticed that



Panditji was taking notes of what I said. Later there was a huge public meeting of many thousand people. I spoke for about twenty five minutes on *gramdan*, and then Nehru spoke. He referred to the confrontation with China; we had lost some land, he said, and we must get it back. “But that is no great matter. Our real war is the war on poverty, and that is a hard struggle. But Vinoba has offered you a weapon of the greatest value in that war, that is *gramdan*.” After that, wherever I spoke in Bengal I would tell the people; “I am only a servant; I can appeal, I cannot command. But Pandit Nehru is our honoured leader, who has the right to command. His command and my appeal are for the same thing; two engines are pulling the train. You should take up *gramdan* seriously.”

At this time of crisis I also began to consider how to make the *gramdan* revolution spread more rapidly and widely. It seemed to me that instead of insisting on the actual distribution of land we should insist on common agreement to the *gramdan* principle, but make the immediate practical steps simple. On this basis a lot of *gramdan* took place in Bengal, and Jayaprakash Narayan was much impressed with its revolutionary potential, and began to spread the idea wherever he went.

Next came the Sarvodaya Sammelan at Raipur. I have given up attending such meetings, but this was an exception. There was great enthusiasm and new ideas and aspirations filled our minds. The meeting launched the three-fold programme of *gramdan*, *khadi*, and *shanti-sena*. It was felt that if we could concentrate on these three as an integrated whole, other aspects of the constructive programme such as Nai Talim (basic education) and Harijan uplift would naturally fall into place.

Since then, five years have gone by. How much time have we given, you and I, towards carrying out this programme? Let each one judge himself. Speaking for myself, I cannot complain that God denied me the fruits of my labour—on the contrary, I think that God has given us more than we deserve for the time we have put in.

The three-fold programme was decided on because it was considered fundamental, and full of “peace potential”. *Shanti sena* is essential, because we cannot



claim that non-violence has effective power until we have organised *shanti sena* on so large a scale that there is practically no need for the police, and none at all for the army, to maintain law and order.

As for *gramdan*, we shall not be fit for the new age till every village regards itself as a family. For the new age is the age of world-government. The world-state will be directed by a tribunal of the world's wisest men. India will be one province; Bihar one district; our present districts will be local units and our villages the families. Nowadays our family affections are too narrow. We must enlarge them to encompass the village. There can be no world peace without this broadening of outlook. Our two slogans, *Jai Jagat* and *gramdan*, go together. We talk of the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. We need to build another U.S.S.R.—a United States of Sarvodaya Republics—and its 'peace potential' will become clear.

Now I come to *khadi*. I have been telling our *Khadi* workers over and over again that they cannot be saved by depending on government help. Such dependence destroys all vigour and initiative. *Khadi* ought to be the vehicle of a people's revolution. What Gandhiji meant by *khadi* was village *khadi*; and our *khadi* work will not become village-oriented until it becomes part and parcel of the *Gramdan* movement.

I shall give you an example of my 'impracticable' ideas. Last year, during the Bihar famine, I visited Madhubani. There were *khadi* stocks worth millions of rupees; and so I suggested to the man in charge that it should be distributed to the famine-stricken people shivering in the cold. How could we repeat the vows of *swadeshi* and *aparigraha* in our daily prayers while we hold on to all this cloth which our neighbours need? Don't bother about permission, I said. Of course it will be unconstitutional to give this cloth away, but it will be highly moral. Compassion is the essence of morality. One should be ready to go to jail cheerfully in such a cause. But who listens to me? "When the king speaks, the army moves; when the *fakir* speaks, only his beard moves"—as the proverb says. But my plan would at least solve the problem of accumulated stocks.



At the end of one of my tours I planned to spend a period of quiet reflection at the Brahma-Vidya Mandir Paunar, which I had not been able to visit for years. But I had not been there long when some people came from Bihar to meet me. Almost without thinking I found myself saying; “If you will raise a typhoon in Bihar I will come”. “What do you mean by a typhoon?” they asked. I said that it meant getting a given number of *gramdan* pledges within a given time. They talked it over among themselves and agreed.

I, therefore, went to Bihar, but people began to criticize these *gramdan* pledges, saying that they were scraps of paper and that nothing would come out of them. But a lot of work had to be done and a lot of villages visited, to get that scrap of paper. Even in Gandhiji’s times such close contact was never achieved. This movement means visiting every village and every house, even seeking people out in the fields. When I hear about this ‘scrap of paper’ I ask the critics if their election votes are not also scraps of paper—and yet they generate power. The signatures on the *gramdan* pledge are votes, votes for *gramdan*.

Our present system of democracy is unjust because it does not give the right to vote to young people under twenty one. There are many examples of young people, barely in their twenties, who did remarkable things. William Pitt became Prime Minister of England; Napoleon Bonaparte showed himself a brilliant general; in India one could name Madhavarao Peshva, Shankaracharya, Jnaneswar. Eisenhower commented that when a youth of eighteen is considered fit to fight for his country why should he not be fit to vote for his government?

The election system is also faulty. At the last election the Congress was returned to power with 38% of the votes. After that, important public measures are considered by the party before being placed before Parliament. They may be approved by twenty votes to eighteen, but the eighteen people are obliged by party discipline to vote for the measure in public. This manipulation means that the country is ruled not by a majority but by a minority.



What is the sanction behind all the “isms”? Fascism, Socialism, Welfare-ism, Communism may have different names, but they are all alike in relying on force. There is nowhere any freedom for man. China swallowed Tibet, Russia swallowed Czechoslovakia, America attacked Vietnam. All alike impose their will by military might. We long to see the world freed from the tyranny of force, and the times are in our favour. It is the call of our age; and if we wish to succeed we must set the villages upon their feet. These scraps of paper, these votes for *gramdan* lend strength to all our work. They contain a tremendous peace potential.

What next, then? First, form the village council. Next, give the landless some land, so that they have practical evidence that something is being done. Then start a village fund by pooling one-fortieth of all produce for village development. After that, get the government to recognize the *gramdan*.

The next step is freedom from drunkenness, police and law courts. That means a *shantisena* to keep the peace in the village. Disputes should not go to the courts but be settled on the spot. Then there should be a weekly meeting for prayer and for reading Sarvodaya news to the people. If ten or a dozen leading villagers each give a small contribution the necessary journals can be bought and the village can also give a small donation to the Sarva Seva Sangh. This is the way to generate real power, much more than the voting system.

Each man has his own skill, his own capacity for work. No two are alike. This is how God has made us, so that we are only complete when we work together. You can see today what tremendous enthusiasm has been aroused by our common effort in the Sarvodaya world in India. We feel we can move mountains, and why not? God will bless our resolution; we shall achieve our revolution for peace.

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