

# VINOBA: Sage of the Age

Usha

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### **Publisher's Note**

We are glad to Publish this book "Vinoba: Sage of the Age" written by Ushadi. Vinobaji is a great scholar of vedic literature and a great Philosopher, and yet he is a man of action and that makes him a unique and a great in the personality in the Contemporary history of India. Vinoba found his spiritual and Political father in Mahatma Gandhi - The Farther of Modern Bharat. He succeeded Gandhi to the leadership of his constructive work movement, primarily aimed at building a new India of Gandhi's dream. He was thrust into the limelight by being selected by Mahatma Gandhi as the first individual Satyagrahi in 1940, before the famous "Quit India Movement".

I had the rare privilege of meeting Vinobaji at Paunar Ashram. It is memorable moment, it can never be forgotten by me. Sri Gautam Bajaj the grandson of Jamlalal Bajaj, who accompanied Vinoba in his 70,000 kms padayatra for 13 long years use to remind us by his statement "to understand Gandhi one must read Vinoba" is worth remembering here.

When we glance through Ushadi's book. "Vinoba: Sage of the Age" we see her in-depth study of Acharya Vinoba. Ushdi studied him from her childhood with an analytical mind, has explained in clear terms her thoughts on Vinoba's principles and their usefulness in the modern world. Gandhi Bhavan is committed to spread the life and principles of Gandhi and his followers. This year alone we have distributed 60,000 free Gandhian literature to the youths published by Gandhi Bhavna and Navjivan Trust. Ushadi's book "Vinoba : Sage of the Age" is a value addition-to our publication.

I Congratulate Ushadi for her clarity, cogent expression of her thoughts and straight forward analysis of Vinoba's principles. I also appreciate the interest taken by our Hon. Secretary Prof. G.B.Shivarju in publishing this book. I wish this book will benefit the public and the Youngsters in building a moral and spiritual Society.

Date: 11.09.2014

Dr. H. Sreenivasiah

President, Karnataka Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi

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## Introduction

One of the famous laureates from the state of Gujarat said, "It is difficult to understand Vinoba, and accepting him is even more difficult". If one has faith one can accept his philosophy, but to understand it is extremely difficult. He describes Vinoba as a desire-less lifelong yogi and renunciate. He continues, "Vinoba is penniless yet he is suffused with the wealth of thousands of years of India's wisdom. The insightful and profound (sukshma) wealth of Indian philosophy pulsates in his heart. Sometimes he recites the verses from the Koran, and other times the verses from the Sermon on the Mount by Christ echo in his speech. Vinoba is the embodiment of all the riches of the best and subtle wisdom that humankind has achieved so far. There is no limit to the wealth of wisdom and knowledge that this enigmatic mendicant carries with him wherever he goes."

He was the one who assimilated the message of Charaiveti (move on, move on) from the Vedas and sages. This wandering messenger was a revolutionary while being a Self-anchored person. His life was a beautiful confluence of the fire of revolution and the soothing flow of peace. He constantly travelled yet was never dislodged from his own inner sanctuary. He could be in solitude while being amongst people. During the land gift (Bhoodan) movement, he was amongst the crowd yet he remained in his own sanctuary. In spite of being constantly within himself, he was hundred percent oriented towards society. While describing his Self-anchored state he once said, "I just sang a song of Saint Kabir which says, 'the world is worthless without the presence of God. The moment I remembered this it took me far away. It took me twenty-five, thirty minutes to come back. Every moment I feel as though I am not a man of this world. I understand that this human body that has been given to me is for service, hence I utilize this body for service but my mind keeps getting uprooted again and again. No matter how many times I tell my intelligence that I belong to this world, my heart gets uprooted again and again. No matter how

much interest I take in worldly matters, I can never lose the awareness of the divine nectar that I have within me."

His heart was filled with the nectar of God. He had nurtured and preserved that nectar while completely utilizing his body to serve humankind. Vinoba's life was an example of how to be a renunciate from within and karma yogi (person of desire-less action) without. He often repeated the following phrase (as an aphorism or a mantra), "a naught from within and complete fulfillment from without." His whole life was an embodiment of this mantra. While serving others he always kept himself suffused with the nectar of love for God. We can never fathom the depth of his inner nectar as it is beyond the comprehension of ordinary people like us. As it is said, "who can comprehend the mind of extraordinary people?" God sends great people so that ordinary people can receive wisdom and some gross guidance from them. Vinoba was one such soul, who distributed the divine grace of God. For those whose awareness remains engrossed in the material world, these extraordinary people remain impenetrable and unfathomable. Vinoba's personality is incomprehensible to a great extent. The speech of such people echoes the future.

Half-baked people like us are completely incapable of understanding or explaining Vinoba. Yet I am taking up this task with only one aspiration: that let people know at least something about Vinoba.

**Usha**

## Sage of the Age

The year was 1940, Gandhiji envisioned individual satyagraha in place of collective satyagraha as a new strategy in the fight for India's independence. The discussion ensued on who would be the first individual satyagrahi. That individual should be one who was the personification of Gandhiji's concept of truth and nonviolence. A hardly known name came to the forefront, Vinoba Bhave. Vinoba's character had splendor and brilliance yet he always chose to stay in the background. From his numerous followers, Gandhiji chose this young, silent servant and put him on the podium. This man, unknown to the nation as well as the world, was the most eligible in Gandhiji's eyes. To introduce this incredible individual to the world, Gandhiji wrote an article in his own newsletter 'Harijan Bandhu' under the title, 'Who is Vinoba'<sup>1</sup>.

In 1916, the young 21 year-old Vinayak came to Gandhiji's ashram. Gandhiji needed no time to recognize the inner core of this young man. Since Vinayak had come to him upon renouncing his home, Gandhiji wrote to his father, "It has taken me a great deal of courage and years of hard work to attain the spiritual evolvment and dispassion which your son has attained at a very early age." In 1917 Gandhiji wrote to Deenbandhu Andrews about Vinoba, "He is one of the most rare jewels in the ashram. He has come here to distribute his virtues within the ashram. He has come here to give rather than to receive." In another letter, which he wrote to Vinoba, "I cannot think of an appropriate adjective for you. I am enamoured by your love, integrity, and character. I wonder whether or not I am worthy of these, but you will certainly benefit from them. You will become a tool or a means of a great service to humankind. May God bless you with a long life and let that be useful for India's evolvment." Gandhiji in one of his letters to Vinoba addressed him as, "Kritayugi Vinoba", Kritayug means age of Truth. Vinoba was born, raised and lived in Kaliyug, but he gave true meaning to Gandhiji's title Kritayugi Vinoba.

Gandhiji's contribution to India and the world can be summarized as follows: 11 vows, constructive work, and satyagraha. Vinoba was the most deserving heir of

these contributions. Satyagraha verily embodies the unshakeable faith in the 11 vows and the constructive work. These two are like warp and weft of the fabric of satyagraha. In the absence of these two, satyagraha cannot exist. Gandhiji saw both of these principles assimilated in Vinoba to the maximum extent possible, and appointed him as the first individual sattyagrahi.

Vinoba had an enigmatic character. He had boundless faith in God. With this as his capital, this sattyagrahi sacrificed his whole life from 1940 onward till the moment of his death in establishing Gandhiji's principles in society. After Gandhiji's demise, he nurtured the thought of sarvodaya (upliftment of all), and made it more comprehensive, thus proving himself to be the true heir of Gandhiji.

Vinoba decided to take a lifelong vow of brahmacharya (celibacy and spiritual quest) at the age of 10 and left home at the age of 21. He was born in the small village of Gagode, which was made up of a few huts. His father was in the service of the Gaekwad state, in Baroda (in the state of Gujarat). Vinoba went to Baroda at the age of 9 where his formal education took place. He would attend school as a matter of routine but his main interest was wandering under the open, vast sky and reading. If he did not walk 10- 12 km a day, he got restless. During this period he read thousands of volumes of literature in the central library of Baroda. His intelligence was sharp, his<sup>7</sup> absorption was extraordinary and he had tremendous passion for knowledge. He knew about 25-30,000 devotional songs and verses by memory. From early childhood he had thought of renouncing the home, for which he wanted to be fully prepared. Finally on the 25th of March 1916, in the name of AthatoBrahmajignasa (Now onward the only goal is, search for the Absolute), he set his foot towards Varanasi. He wanted to study ancient religious scriptures in this holy city and wanted to travel to Himalaya to fulfill the spiritual quest. Simultaneously he wanted to sacrifice his life for India's independence, which was under the shackles of Britain at that time. To attain India's independence his mind would lean towards the revolutionary movement of Bengal. The two urge of revolution and the spiritual quest both were simultaneously taking roots. As God would

have it, Vinoba was introduced to Gandhiji in whom Vinoba saw a unique confluence of the peace of Himalaya and the revolutionary spirit of Bengal. Vinoba took refuge at his feet.



## Life for Ashram

Vinoba, who left his home in the search for the Absolute, was at heart a pilgrim on the path of spirituality. He arrived at Gandhiji's ashram on June 7, 1916. In the ashram during the prayers, the 11 vows such as truth, non-violence, non-possession etc. were recited daily and the residents of the ashram tried to practice them in their own life as per their understanding and capacity. Vinoba naturally gravitated towards those vows. His effort of living a life based on the foundation of these vows with constant self-scrutiny was extraordinary. His unshakable faith in Spirituality became manifested through his practice of the 11 vows. The five great vows are non-violence, truth, non-stealing, celibacy, and non-hoarding; rest of the vows are manual labour, restraint of the palate, fearlessness, tolerance towards all religions, consumption of locally made products and abolishment of the practice of untouchability. Out of those 11 vows, the first five make the conviction of spirituality more complete and the other six assert the unity and equality in social life. While touching both individual and social aspects from inside and outside, these vows helped transcend the division between the individual and society. They also presented a new path of social revolution. Vinoba significantly contributed in charting the map of this path. In the beginning, the residents of the ashram failed to recognize this dispassionate ascetic who always worked silently, without coming in the forefront. Yet the radiance of penance and sacrifice cannot be hidden easily. In spite of aspiring for a state that was expressed by Jnaneshwar as "let my name and form disappear." Vinoba's radiance and splendour grew in the company of Gandhiji and his sagelike personality became evident at the right time. As long as Gandhi was alive, to a great extent Vinoba remained anonymous. After Gandhiji's demise the world really came to know Vinoba in the true sense.

Vinobaji's personality could not be contained in the four walls of a home yet it got naturally assimilated in the ashram. The simple, restrained life based on manual labor and austerities became an inseparable part of his life and was in

every cell of his being. He often used to say, "I was born for the ashrams." His extraordinary contribution in evolving the institution of "ashram" and the life therein, was based on solid spiritual foundation, and demonstrated his awareness of the needs of that time. Vinobaji's soul belonged to the ashram and remained there with great delight. He undertook various significant tasks in his life. He also spent five and a half years in jail during India's independence movement. For thirteen years, he walked all over India during his Bhoodan movement (land gift movement). During this movement, wherever he stayed, he created an ashram-like atmosphere. With the conviction in 11 vows as the foundation, he undertook various experiments for the betterment of society. In his opinion, an ashram is a social-spiritual laboratory.

He spent his entire life in ashrams but was not estranged from the masses. His vision of assimilating the principles of spirituality in social life was never obscured. To establish society on a moral foundation, he carried out many experiments. Extreme vigilance and awareness were the two pillars of his life. Carrying out new experiments gave great delight to his contemplative mind. His experiments were based on contemplation, and the contemplation evolved from the outcomes of the experiments. This process of experimenting and contemplating was complementary and continuous. Futile, barren contemplation and purposeless experiments were not acceptable to him. He was simultaneously a man of contemplation and extraordinary, unusual experimentation.

From early on Gita and Upanishad were his life force, whereas his contemplation was anchored in the principle of the Self. In the early days at Sabarmati Ashram, Vinoba went for a bath in the river and suddenly started getting pulled in the current. As he was drowning, he was sending a message to Gandhiji through his colleagues who were standing on the banks, "Please tell Gandhiji, Vinoba is passing away. The soul is eternal- and the body is perishable." Death was approaching him with an open jaw to swallow his body, yet dispassionate, desire-less Vinoba was preaching the cardinal principle of Gita.

With the goal of making even the last person strong both socially and financially, Vinoba carried on various experiments in the ashram. The problem of national poverty cannot be solved only through verbal sympathy or by explaining various theories of economics. To solve this problem, experiments in practical life must be carried out. To study this aspect, he used to spin for eight hours a day. The wages that he received for that work were the only means for his livelihood and he lived on that meager budget. He wanted to have a direct experience of how many hours of labor is needed to fulfill one's own basic needs. Money is the root cause of all the inequality in a given society. He would even go ahead and proclaim that money encourages demonic qualities. One should avoid it as much as possible. Upanishad says, "Money has veiled the truth." He used to say, "I do not intend to give any prestige to money, and lack of it can also be a power." He kept on contemplating whether it was possible to have a society that was completely free from any monetary transactions. With his colleagues at the ashram, he started his experiment of freedom from money, based on a conviction in manual labor.

Scavenger's work has a social stigma attached to it, yet he did that work in a village called Sargaon for two and a quarter years with great consistency. He would start from his ashram at Paunar at the crack of dawn with his shovel. He would walk three miles to Sargaon and would pick up human waste from the street and dump it in the ditch, cover it with dirt and walk back three miles. He also carried out the experiment of farming without the aid of the bullocks. The Brahmaidya, which is the science of the Absolute, was proclaimed by the Upanishad in the peace of the deep woods. Vinoba carried out the experiment of bringing the Brahmaidya to the realm of manual labour.

Carrying out various experiments individually and socially was an inseparable aspect of his life. The inner fountain of ever-fresh intuition inspired him to carry out many such experiments in the ashram. Every aspect that was closely connected to life became a laboratory for him. He carried out his experiments in farming, cleaning, spinning, cooking, diet and health. These experiments were carried out as part and parcel of spiritual practice. He did not want to

keep the spiritual practice limited either to the ashram or individual life. It was his sincere wish that the spiritual practice that was done at the laboratory of the ashram, should be applied to society and be woven into the fabric of social life.

In his experiments the approach was scientific and the foundation was spiritual. His invaluable gift was the following equation: science + spirituality = sarvodaya i.e. evolution of all. He believed that, "the progress of science that is guided by spirituality will change the world into paradise." He was a great proponent of the integration of science and spirituality. He frequently reiterated that parochial religiosity and politics were divisive forces and were creating fissures and cracks in the world. Both these concepts had become obsolete, and science and spirituality should replace these divisive forces and function as unifying forces.

Yinobaji's faith and conviction towards the eleven vows became profound during his life at the ashram. Here his conviction in manual labour was reinforced through practice, and his faith in learning deepened. His life was like a fabric where the labour and self-study were integrated like the warp and weft. His thoughts always expressed his wish that manual labour should get more social prestige, and people should recognize its spiritual value and assimilate it in their own lives. He also emphasized that Self-study should be a daily feature of one's own life and its light should spread in the inner core of an individual as well as that of society. He always remained very vigilant that the life at the ashram be well rounded, strong and well nourished by both aspects of labour and Self-study. He inspired all to follow it and then proclaimed, "Manual labour is even more indispensable for spiritual enlightenment than *it* is for mere material achievements." In his view, cleaning, agriculture, cooking etc. were great yajnas (offerings) that were followed at the ashram.

He had a formula for cleaning - tolerable, clean, beautiful, peaceful and holy. Explaining this idea, he said, "When we first clean a dirty place, it becomes tolerable, then becomes clean, gradually becomes beautiful and finally

becomes holy. This applies to inner purity as well. When the surrounding place is clean, one is inspired to pay attention to the cleanliness of the mind."

The land of the ashram was a place of worship for him. He carried out various experiments such as farming by human labour only, freedom from money, and self-reliance. He regarded farming as a means of serving nature. The experience of unity with nature while farming gives sublimity to life. He regarded land not only as a means of production but of service unto God as well. For him, the farm is the best temple for worship, knowledge and exercise, meaning a great means of practicing bhakti, jnana and karma. He regarded cooking as a finer art and he would tell the residents of the ashram, "Prepare tasty food and eat it without titillating the tongue."

Along with all these manual tasks, he would often insist on the importance of Self-study. If one does not pay attention to contemplation and study, the work done is likely to become futile. However, the one who studies daily remains fresh and inspired. Such a person will never become old and new ideas will sprout from his mind. The body remains clean if one showers daily, the house remains clean if it is swept daily. Similarly, the mind remains fresh when one studies daily.

Towards the end of his life, he was absorbed in the thought of collective spiritual journey. So that women should have an opportunity to take up spiritual practice, he established Brahma Vidya-Mandir in 1959. Here, at the ashram he gave the seekers this mantra of collective practice right from the inception. He said, "my evolution, my spiritual practice are contradictory terms. Me and mine asunder the very roots of spiritual practice. We must propagate the idea of ours. Me and mine will limit one's spiritual practice whereas we and ours leads towards egolessness and shows the right path."

Vinobaji's intelligence was sharp. His intuitive creativity was prolific. He was a Self-anchored revolutionary as well. This believer of unity and diversity did not leave any aspect of life untouched. While being at the peak of intelligence, that soul never gave up the foundation of action. He engaged himself in tremendous constant action all his life and did that with selflessness and

detachment. Karmayoga means the work that comes to oneself naturally, is performed without attachment, without ego, without the desire of fruit and with the sense of the service to God. His Karmayoga was a testament to this principle. He was a seeker, servant, researcher and explorer. The confluence of the intensity of a seeker, the promptness of a servant, the curiosity of a researcher and the quest of an explorer equal Vinoba. He was a true embodiment of these qualities.

Though what one first noticed about Vinoba was his intelligence, at his core Vinoba was filled with the love of God and devotion. In casual talks and in discourses whenever there was a mention of God, saints or sages, he became emotional. His eyes would well up with tears. His voice would tremor. People have watched his eyes well up while reciting the commentary by Shankaracharya on the logical, terse treatise of Brahmasutra. No one knows whether the tears were there due to the memory of Shankaracharya or due to the thought of Brahman.

Faith in God and Self had filled his life to the brim. The mansion of his life had action, devotion and knowledge as the pillars. These three principles were like the three legs of a tripod in his life. One could easily see the unified manifestation of the nectar of devotion, fragrance of desire-less action and flavour of meditation in his life. Mahadev Desai described, "the harmony that one can see in his thought, speech and action is a rare thing and hence his life is a beautiful melody".

## Sanyasyoguktatma

### (Assimilation of sanyas and yoga)

This revolutionary was always anchored in the Self, yet his personality was multi-dimensional, and his perspective was all encompassing. He took the concepts of comprehensiveness and depth to new heights. He expanded the idea of human service and taught everybody to look at service from the perspective of devotion and faith. Mostly, Vinoba was a resident of the inner world. Contemplation on the Gita and various saints' devotional songs and being in tune with God would deeply absorb him. While sitting in solitude he would wander away in God's land as if he had no connection with this world. He stayed mainly in the plane of Nirguna (a belief in the Supreme Being which transcends the attributes of name and form). Yet if occasion demanded, he would demonstrate faith in the God with attributes. So that the inmates should not get tired of the drab, exhaustive! life in jail, he would make himself gregarious while he himself was in jail at various times. To make life in jail palatable, he would spend hours with his inmates. Vinoba, who was a renunciate at heart, would become a worldly man and act accordingly. His sense of renunciation never created an obstacle for the action that he deemed necessary. He also had said, "I am a renunciate and will remain one but I will always be active in the worldly sphere. Without a doubt I am first and foremost a renunciate. If anyone asks me 'Which is the greatest moment of all?' I will claim that when there is no turbulence or agitation of any kind in the mind is the greatest moment. In that sense I am a renunciate, although it might appear that I am constantly engaged in action." To some this might seem contradictory, but it is not so. There is renunciation, peace within and action without in equal amounts. In the firmament of my heart the only word that echoes is renunciation. I have an overwhelming attraction for that. Yet Gita has taught me that without Yoga, sanyasa cannot easily be attained. Hence yoga (action) *is necessary*. He was both a yogi (Karmayogi) and a renunciate. He had assimilated both action and renunciation. Although he never upheld the theory

of mysticism, it permeated his life. He would admit, "there is some mystic element in me. It is not that I desire it, yet I am not unhappy with it either. Although my feet traverse the earth, my heart and mind remain on a different plane."



## Life Behind Bars

Vinobaji was a sculptor of a restrained life based on moral values. Wherever he went he gave his own colour to the atmosphere, be it a jail or a palace. The purity, sacrifice and penance that suffused his life would both influence and inspire others. Any external force, no matter how powerful, could not disturb his inner composure quietude or peace. The British government incarcerated him several times during India's independence movement. During those days he got both bitter and sweet experiences. During his initial days in the jail, he witnessed the exchange of abuses and physical fights and also put in eight hours of labour breaking rocks. It was rigorous imprisonment. During one such stay, Rajagopllachari visited the jail and wrote about Vinoba. He writes, "Look at Vinoba. This pure soul, like an angel, roams on tire high peaks of philosophy, religion and knowledge. And in spite of that, this soul bore such perfected humility and honesty at heart that the jail officer who did not know him had no clue of his greatness. He would accept whatever category he was assigned to in that jail, and fulfill all the duties and labour hours of that class. Nobody could fathom the physical hardship that he endured".

During his term in the jail, he was also given solitary confinement. Even in the tiny cell he remained intoxicated with spirituality. Pacing up and down in the cell he would recite his favorite devotional songs and verses from various scriptures. Once a jailor out of sympathy asked him "Don't you experience any sorrow here?" In an extraordinary answer Vinoba said, "Durlabham Kham, Here the sight of space is rare. That is my only sorrow." Amongst the five elements, space was his dearest companion. He received his inspiration to contemplate various ideas from the company of space. Sometimes he would even say, "In naturopathy, some recommend earth, some water and some sun. If I am asked, I am a 'spacerian'". During the land-donation movement, his diet was milk and honey and that too in a very limited amount. People would often ask him how he could sustain on such few calories. He would answer, "I receive calories from contentment, the 18th chapter of Gita and from space."

### **Guest of Non-violence**

As destiny would have it, shortly after India got its independence, Gandhiji passed away. Although political freedom was achieved, the dream of upliftment of all (sarvodaya) was left unattained. A question was: who would guide the nation in that direction. Vinoba was busy experimenting with how the need for money could be eliminated. It was his firm conviction that money was the root cause of all social evil and contemplated whether it was possible to uproot it by fulfilling everyone's basic needs by only productive labour. He wanted to validate this concept through experiment. He had the vision of a nonviolent society behind this experiment. Yet the society at large needed his guidance even more urgently. In 1951 on the insistence of his colleagues and friends, he agreed to attend the convention on sarvodaya in Hyderabad. Since he was focused on the idea of eliminating the need for money, he decided to walk there, a trip of about 300 miles. As he passed through the villages on his way, he established a rapport with the villagers; then he reached the convention.

At the same time, in the province of Telangana, violence was wide spread causing an atmosphere of fear and anxiety. Vinoba thought of moving amongst these people to understand their problems. Providentially, a new horizon opened. In the village of Pochampally, 100 acres of land was received as a donation for landless farmers. Vinoba regarded this as a divine signal. From the next day he started asking for more land donations. The masses responded heartily and the movement of Bhoomi-Daan-Yadnya began to spread. By assuming the role of the main proponent of this Yadnya he constantly walked for 13 years. This pilgrimage had the consistency of the sun and the moon. A poet wrote "The falling rain and snow could not stop these marching feet". In that 70,000-kilometer walk across India, he received 4.2 million acres of land. As the principle of Gramdan evolved, thousands of villages were donated, and became common property of the villagers. Novel and revolutionary concepts such as Savodaya-Patra, Shanti-Sena, Acharya-Kul, Sampatti-Daan opened up

new vistas. The vision of a society based on non-violent principles became clearer.

While in the ashram, Vinobaji had a singular focus on Karmayoga that was predominantly meditative and contemplative. During the Bhoodan (land-gift) movement his Karmayoga was all-encompassing yet rooted in contemplation and meditation. At the center of these experiments of contemplative Karmayoga and Bhoodan movement was the quest for non-violence. Whether it was a spiritual quest in the solitude of his ashram or the worship through service to humankind on a broader scale, the mission of his life was the search for nonviolence. This was the direction of his contemplation. He would say, "The body is unable to propagate nonviolence as the body by definition is violent. Our understanding of non-violence will increase as we rise above the plane of physical existence. Non-violence is the true nature of the Soul.

Hence to attain nonviolence, what are mainly needed are soul-searching, self-purification, compassion for all living beings, universal love, and fearlessness. For a perfect experiment of non-violence, one needs to rise above physical existence. Yet until such a state is reached, as far as possible, my inclination has been to work by keeping myself detached from the physical existence, institutions and money. My only quest is to see how nonviolence can be established in society."

The consciousness that is shackled by the body cannot explore truth and non-violence. Similarly, the mind also creates obstacles at every step. Mind and body always create conflict in society. Hence the main aspect of spiritual practice is to rise above the plane of mind and body. He never got caught up in the web of the tendencies of the mind. The subjects that interested Vinoba were eternal principles and human service. He never inquired 'as to what is going on in one's mind. His tendency was impersonal. Many people had complete faith in him, yet he never gave instructions or commands. Once someone asked, "What is your command for us?" He said, "Commands come from God, directions from officials and advice comes from saints. Devotees like us only convey a message." To his fellow residents at the ashram, he used to say,

"It is not my tendency to hold someone's hand and take them on a particular path. I am like a sign-board that shows the direction. My tendency, nature and inclination are more conducive for impersonal work."

### Charaiveti / Walk Along

The sages of the Vedas gave a mantra "charaiveti, charaiveti" which means, "keep on moving, keep on moving." Vinoba spent the priceless time of his youth in the ashrams where he practiced spirituality while remaining stationary in one place. Without stability and continuity no spiritual practice comes to fruition nor can it attain depth. After Gandhiji's death, Vinoba felt the need of reaching the masses. Thus at the age of fifty-five he started walking, saying the second childhood starts now. He moved amongst the masses constantly for thirteen years.

People would ask him, "In this age of science when there are many faster and more comfortable means of travel, why do you insist on walking everywhere?" He would reply, "If I travel by air, I will receive many honors, but my thoughts will remain in the air too. As I am moving on the ground, my thoughts take deep roots and instead of receiving honors I am receiving land donations. My walking creates trust amongst the people and they express their thoughts to me. A feeling of unity is created and it establishes a place for me in their hearts. Besides, while walking, one comes into intimate contact with nature and the masses. All these things will not happen if I use any other means of travel. The one who wants to explore Truth and contemplate Ahimsa must travel under the vast sky in open space."

The root of the word "charaiveti" is "char," which means, "to move" (Behavior - Achar, Thinking - Vichar, Utterance - Utchar, Propagation - Prachar, Movement - Sanchar). This verb inspired him to actualize all above- mentioned aspects as they should be in a non-violent society, and kept him moving for thirteen years. He kept on moving, and the moving inspired him more and more. He himself moved, and inspired many others to move. An atmosphere of sacrifice and austerity was created, and many people set out, giving up their families and homes. He used to say, "When a person lies down, his whole body touches the ground. When he sits, only the pelvic floor touches the ground. While standing, only the soles of his feet touch the ground. When one walks, only one foot

touches the ground. The less one is in contact with the ground, the more one is in contact with the Divine.”

With the mission of land donation, he kept on moving for thirteen years. He crisscrossed the whole of India, and visited every province of India. While explaining the sentiment behind this constant moving, he would say "The thing that is moving us is not knowledge, a sense of sacrifice or our vow of renunciation. What is moving us are compassion, kindness and empathy." He kept on moving to alleviate the sorrow of the most down trodden person in the society. In one of his notebooks he had written a quote by Louis Pasteur. The quote is "I do not want to know what your religion is, nor do I want to know your thoughts. I only want to know what your troubles are, and I want to help you alleviate them." This same compassion inspired Vinoba to walk.

While speaking about himself he would say, "If I were to enumerate my good qualities, I have three - compassion, consistency and unshakeable faith in God. My compassion is more towards society rather than towards an individual." Another time he said, "From what I have understood from my studies, the cardinal principle of Vedas and Upanishads is Truth. Yet Truth cannot be explored and strived for without love and compassion. Hence love and compassion are entrenched in my heart and the same compassion keeps me moving. My body knows no other power."

This compassion kept on moving him amongst the masses for thirteen years. While explaining the result of following this mantra of "charaiveti," he said, "The Vedas say - God is adorned with thousands of heads and He works with thousands of arms and legs. This God is constantly revealed to me amongst the masses and that revelation gives me sustenance. This sustenance has enabled this body to render service under all trying and challenging circumstances. When I see people in front of me, I do not just see their faces, in them, I see the same light of the Supreme. I witnessed God's Lila (play) during this pilgrimage of land-gift. I experienced the magnanimity of the human heart".

## Born Teacher

There were two prominent facets of Vinobaji's multidimensional personality. One, he was a born teacher and secondly, he loved mathematics. Only one who keeps learning throughout his life can become a good teacher. He used to say, "I have been a life-long student. Whatever other tasks I have undertaken, I never gave up learning and teaching." He remained a student all his life and hence became a great teacher. During the independence movement of India whenever he was imprisoned, he would be asked what his profession was. He would always say "Teacher." He was never a professional teacher yet he presented an ideal example of the Guru-Disciple tradition of India. He never called himself a guru. He would say, "I have no guru, nor am I a guru to anyone." His personality was independent and self-made, and his method was to allow others to develop and evolve independently. In the Marathi language, there is a word "Guru-Mauli" which means "guru plus mother." Vinoba was a blend of the knowledge of the guru and the affection of a mother. This can be regarded as the characteristic of a good teacher. Knowledge attracts a person and affection retains the person. Because of his fierce adherence to renunciation, Vinoba appeared to his students to be stonehearted, but at heart he regarded the student as his personal deity. His concise concept of education was - the teacher should be devoted to the student, the student should be devoted to the teacher, and both should be devoted to knowledge and the knowledge should be service oriented. His definition of education was extraordinary as well, "My primary definition of education is the company of saints (satsangati) and the advanced definition is knowledge of the Self (Atmajana). He himself spread the fragrance of satsang and the radiant splendor of Self-knowledge.

People addressed him as Acharya. An Acharya's conduct should be such that there is the least distance between thought and action. Acharya also means congruence of thought and action. Other qualities of an Acharya are character, wisdom and compassion. Vinoba was the personification of exalted character, unfaltering wisdom and a heart filled with compassion. In the role of a teacher

he personally informed the lives of innumerable students, both from within and without. In addition, as a teacher of the masses, he kindled the inner virtuous qualities by awakening their inner consciousness.



### Fervor for Mathematics

Vinoba had a great love for mathematics. He had a keen interest in relating mathematics to every aspect of life. All his activities, such as waking, eating, walking and praying were regulated by the clock, as if the hands of the clock were the charioteers of his life. He was very particular about keeping time. On a daily basis, he would take a detailed account of all the activities of the day. He was insistent upon not putting off anything that could be done today for tomorrow. He would say "The setting Sun asks for a detailed account of our day. If one loses money, it is possible to earn it again, but time lost cannot be earned back." His mathematics-loving heart was extremely aware of the power of time, and he would say, "We should be as particular about keeping account of time as we are of money." His foremost faith was in God and second to that was in mathematics. In casual conversation he would mischievously say, "If I decide to become a renunciate, I would name myself Ganitanand (Finds Joy in Mathematics.)"

Kaka Kalelkar was his colleague at the Sabarmati Ashram. He wrote about Vinoba, "He is a true mathematician. He does not read, think or undertake any task without doing a cost-benefit analysis. His dispassion and aloofness should not mislead anyone into thinking that he does not understand the practical aspect of life. He might value things differently than the common man, yet he never let go of the accounting. Due to his expertise in mathematics, he became a good teacher and he was able to further the cause of Khadi (hand spun yarn). The same mathematical mind enabled him to write "Swaraj Shastra" (Science of Self-Rule) for India. And the evolution of this same mathematical mind made him a visionary. His nonchalance towards the dealings of the world was the fruition of his mathematical brain, as was his patience."

Vinoba suggested that in order to live a life based on yamas, niyamas and restraint, one should regulate all activities with the help of mathematics. To Vinoba, mathematics led to a regulated and scientific life.

## The Science of the Absolute

Vinoba's whole life was infused with Brahma Vidya (Knowledge of the Supreme,) even the experiments he carried out were infused with Brahma Vidya. The Upanishads described the Supreme Being with contradictory adjectives such as; it is both gross and subtle, micro and macro, existent and non-existent. Similarly in Vinoba's spiritual practice, one could see a beautiful synthesis of inclination and renunciation, knowledge and faith in manual labor, silence and profound eloquence.

He was a Brahmarshi, engrossed in the reflection on the Supreme. In both his speech and action one could witness the illumination that was the result of his experience of unity with the Brahman. His life was filled with the spirit, reflection and absorption of the Supreme. By establishing Brahma Vidya Mandir in the last phase of his life, he left a rich inheritance of the science of the Supreme to the world.

Gandhiji's autobiography was titled "Experiments with Truth." When people suggested to» Vinoba that he should write an autobiography, he would say, "If I write one, it would be a story of the non-self and the experiments would be of conscious forgetting." He gave as much importance to forgetting as to memory. According to Vinoba, perfect memory = remembering what needs to be remembered+ forgetting what needs to be forgotten. Forgetting and dissolution are important concepts as they give a lesson of detachment.

Even during his Bhoodan pilgrimage, he was constantly corresponding with the volunteers and Bhoodan workers spread all over India. He would dictate the letters, and a copy of those letters was kept in a separate notebook. In Indore, he established Visarjan (dissolution) Ashram and there Vinoba said, "A celestial fire should be ignited and all notebooks should be offered to the God of Fire." At a young age he had burned all his school and college certificates. He had also offered his poems to the God of Fire. He would never encourage any attachment that would come under the pretext that it might be useful for future generations or they might receive guidance from it. He was a firm

believer that once desireless action has been performed, only desireless-ness will do the work. He would say that the thought that an action would be useful for someone else is accompanied by ego and attachment. The power of egolessness and selflessness works on a deeper plane. He never gave undue importance to writing or preserving what was written. As a result nobody could make him write his autobiography. Yet on a number of occasions he analyzed and synthesized recollections from his life, and frequently narrated some of his memories too. All these have been compiled in the title "Moved by Love" as a biography, so his official biography is available. Yet, like an iceberg, as much as Vinoba was without, he was many times over within. He would say, "Out of what I reflect on, only one percent gets expressed and ninety-nine percent remains unexpressed." It is rare to come across an audience that would grasp the depth of his contemplation.

### The Three Pillars of Faith

Vinoba was a self-made and self-reliant person, yet he acknowledged his indebtedness towards his ancestors with humility. On many occasions he would enumerate the three sources of his faith, Shankaracharya, Jnaneshwar and Gandhiji, with utmost humility and gratitude. He would say, "In my life, I have received maximum help from this trio of faith in whatever worthy tasks I have undertaken." He regarded saints, sages and great souls as his true friends. This friendship had taken root from early childhood. The five saints of Maharashtra - Jnaneshwar, Namdev, Eknath, Tukaram and Samarth Ramdas, similarly Nanak, Tulsi, Kabir, Buddha, Mahavir, Christ and Prophet Mohamed were all his childhood friends. Vinoba never felt lonely in the company of these through their literature. In spite of all this he felt especially indebted to Shankaracharya, Jnaneshwar and Gandhiji. Shankaracharya influenced his realm of thought; Gandhiji sculpted his realm of action, whereas Jnaneshwar nurtured his realm of spirituality and faith (bhavasrishti). He would say, "Originally or by nature I was like a rock. Shankaracharya with his knowledge and dispassion made the rock even firmer, Gandhiji sculpted it and Jnaneshwar penetrated it so that a spring of devotion and compassion started flowing from it. Jnaneshwar's limitless jnana, boundless compassion, sweetness of language and humility all are unparalleled. My heart, my emotions, my spirit are all borne of Jnaneshwar. Arjun was a creation of his guru Dronacharya, similarly I am a creation of Jnaneshwar."

## Vinoba's Contribution Through Literature

Vinoba was a prolific writer. One of his major contributions is the translation of Gita's 700 verses into the local language of the state of Maharashtra-Marathi. The name of this translation is "Gita-aa" (aa=mother). He had given Gita the place of mother in his life. In his famous volume, "Talks on the Gita," he says, "My body was nourished on my mother's milk, but my heart and intelligence have been nourished on Gita's milk." "Gitaai" is an unparalleled translation and Vinoba regarded it as his life's most significant contribution.

Vinoba contributed substantially in other fields as well. He added a great deal to the realm of reflection and contemplation. He inspired many to become selfless, dedicated social workers, and he educated the masses. As a leader of the Bhoodan-Yajna he reinvigorated society and as a result received 4.2 million acres of land. Yet, in his eyes, this was all insignificant. His main interest was creating a spiritual foundation for the whole social system. With this outlook, one can regard "Talks on the Gita" and "Gitaai" as his major contributions. He would say, "The world may forget all other services that I rendered, but will never forget these two. I was in a state of complete absorption (Samadhi) while composing "Gitaai" and giving the talks on Gita, hence I believe these creations will keep serving mankind." Vinoba felt that he was a mere instrument in God's hands, and not the author of these works.

"Talks on the Gita" has been translated into all Indian languages and many foreign languages. These talks are a treasure where one can see spirituality and practicality integrated, and they have transformed many lives.

Vinoba's mother tongue was Marathi, of which he had an extraordinary command. He wrote many volumes in Marathi, which can be regarded as showing the path to spirituality. His other writings demonstrate his analytical, as well as his exploratory skills. Some have allocated him a place amongst the sages and seers of ancient times due to his subtle and sharp intelligence.

One common factor among all his writings is that his thoughts not only touch the intelligence but also touch one's heart and begin the process of transformation. He had tremendous faith in the power of life-oriented thought. He would say, "I have unshakeable faith in knowledge. Even a spark of this burning power can turn all the problems of the world to ashes. Based on this faith, I have spent my life so far in attaining knowledge with ceaseless reflection and disseminating it. Even if it touches only a few lives, my goal will be fulfilled".

The inspiration behind all his writing was to unite hearts. With that goal, he studied and reflected on various scriptures, such as the Koran and the Bible, and the literature of various saints of India. He took the essence of these and provided easy access to them for the masses. He studied the Koran with as much sincerity and keenness as he studied the scriptures of Indian religions. He had no religious parochialism. He would get emotional while reciting the verses from Hindu, Muslim and Christian literature. He had a unique knack for dividing the scriptures into different parts and rewriting them succinctly in Sanskrit.

Since he knew almost all Indian languages, wherever he went during the Bhoodan-Yajna he would recite the verses of the local saints, which instantly touched people's hearts.

The search for non-violence was the mission of his life, and to create a social structure based on non-violence he reflected and contemplated on various political, social and economic issues, which were published on a number of occasions. Through such writings, he made Gandhiji's teachings more comprehensive, complete and supported them with scriptural authority.

Vinoba's talks and articles, written on various occasions have been compiled in 20 volumes, of 500 pages each. These volumes throw light on the world's spiritual thought, and give a map of spiritual as well as practical progress of the individual and society. This well demonstrates his sage-like vision and revolutionary spirit, as well as his qualities such as poignancy, potency, originality, experience-based vision, and wisdom. It is simultaneously inspiring,

motivating and comprehensive. Its purity addresses both the heart and the intellect.

In an informal translation of a Sanskrit verse, he defined literature as "that which establishes truth, helps us understand the meaning of life, gives education for practical life and helps purify the heart. His literature was a testimony to this.

He would say, "We are not dogmatic about a particular religion, nation or cult. We are not bound by any culture or caste. Wandering in the garden of the world's pure thoughts is our way of self-study, and assimilating this is our religion. To establish understanding amid the various unique aspects of different cultures and evolve a universal mind should be our practice, and the goal of our lives is to unite hearts".

### **Brahmavidya Mandir**

To nurture and strengthen the concept of ashram life was a subject of great interest for both Gandhiji and Vinoba. Gandhiji had said, "I am far more interested in the various facets of ashram than I am in solving India's problems, and I am most interested in solving women's problems. Vinoba shared this temperament with Gandhiji. He said that he was born for the ashrams, meaning to purify and strengthen the fundamental principles and add new dimensions to the concept of ashrams. He himself lived his entire life in ashrams. He also founded 6 ashrams during the Bhoodan movement. Amongst all those, the ashram that he founded at Paunar (India) for women seekers is regarded as his most significant contribution.

The goal of Brahmavidya Mandir is to awaken the inner power in women with spirituality as its foundation. While evolving spiritually, women should perform the role of spiritual scientists, and lead the research and discoveries of the subtle power of human beings. Science is progressing in the field of atomic energy; similarly spirituality should be explored through the fission of consciousness by which the hidden dimensions of the inner power will be revealed. These spiritual scientists should give new direction to social life. All these expectations were inherent in the inception of Brahmavidya Mandir.

To move in this direction, Vinoba suggested a daily routine at Brahmavidya Mandir, based on productive manual labour, self-study, celibacy, and collective practice. This ashram was a horizontal organization so there should be no formal management. All should manage the ashram by collective excellence and all decisions should be made by consensus. As far as possible, the inhabitants should be self-reliant.

With these intrinsic aspects the ashram became a laboratory of collective life and kept on evolving in that direction. Vinobaji's profound intelligence had realized that to establish spirituality in daily practical life all these aspects were highly important.



He spent the last 12 years of his life in this ashram. He kept himself aloof from the day-to-day running of the ashram so that the ashramites<sup>1</sup> inner and outer power could evolve. Yet with subtle reflection and contemplation, he nurtured and strengthened Brahma Vidya Mandir, and even after death continues to do so. While alive he provided only passive guidance for Brahma Vidya Mandir (like a sign board, he never pushed an agenda), yet after giving up his earthly existence, it is as though he holds our hand and walks us on the right path.

### Naught from Within and Complete from Without

Vinobaji's consciousness was all pervading. He never allowed himself to be limited by any boundaries. Satyagraha, (adherence to truth,) sarvodaya (evolvment of everyone in all aspects of life,) samyayog, (yoga of equanimity,) samanvaya (synthesis of various philosophies) were like the warp and weft of his walk and talk. He would say, "There are four aspects to my school of thought. First is the purpose of my actions, which I call samyayog/ Second is philosophy where I desire synthesis of various philosophies i.e.samanvaya. Third is social and economic progress which I call sarvodaya and the fourth one is the execution of all the above through satyagraha.

He would never be touched by any kind of disharmony or conflict. His method was working without creating any conflict. Not everyone can digest this idea, and hence this led to many misunderstandings regarding him, but this did not perturb this self-anchored soul. On the contrary he would regard misunderstanding as an enriching component in the life of a spiritual seeker. In a way he was removed from worldly wisdom. He had a tremendous fascination for the skylark in Wordsworth's poem "To a Skylark."

People often asked him what cult he belonged to. "My cult is that of madmen. I myself am crazy and I want to make everyone else crazy." It's no wonder that ordinary people regard people like Vinoba as worthless. Kaka Kalelkar (a writer from Maharashtra, who was Vinoba's colleague) would say. "To Vinoba, the worldly life was worth zero, and hence he was of zero value when it came to worldly affairs." The secrets of spirituality are revealed only to such a person. The principles of truth and nonviolence kept Gandhiji and Vinoba always aware of trivial and significant aspects of practical life. Their sense of discretion was always at work regarding how much importance to be given to whom, where and when. Shankaracharya said, "The Supreme Being is truth and the world is a myth." Whereas Vinoba has said, "The Supreme Being is truth and the world is its inspiration." As Vinoba regarded the creation as God's inspiration, he never ignored it. He looked at the world with love and compassion. Vinoba was

steeped in Vedanta philosophy and hence was aware of the transience of the world, yet he would try and complete every worldly thing. He would often say, "The person who is yearning for Self-Realization, his very existence is the best service. Although I render many types of service, due to this thinking of mine, I never wished to evaluate my service from a worldly aspect. Everything worldly is zero and will remain zero (worthless,) yet whatever service can be rendered through the body should not be given up. While trying to make it complete, know very well it to be worthless." "Naught from Within and Perfect from Without" was the motto of his life. Everything was both important and unimportant to him simultaneously. Since he regarded everything as important, it made him reflect and contemplate over it, and take whatever action was called for, and as it was unimportant/ nothing ever caused any agitation.

Vinoba who regarded the world as a cipher received his inspiration in life from his unshakable faith in the instinctive goodness of the human heart. This faith was sown in his life early on. In school in an English class, the teacher asked the students to use the word "too", and the teacher wrote on the board "the news is too good to be true." Vinoba's sentence was "the news is too good to be false." This very faith in the goodness of the human heart fetched millions of acres of land, transformed many lives and inspired bandits to change their way of life and surrender themselves and their weapons. His idea of assimilating good qualities expresses the same thought. His definition of spirituality is "that which helps you to attract good qualities like the magnet attracts iron." Spirituality means absorbing the good qualities like a magnet. He would often reiterate the importance of recognizing good qualities, describing them, augmenting them and narrating them. He would say, "A good quality is a door and a fault is like a wall. If you want to enter someone's heart, you must enter through the door and not through the wall. Fault finding is like banging against the wall whereas acknowledging good qualities will open wide the door to one's heart."

## Yoga of Subtle Action

At the age of 40, Vinoba wrote in a self-scrutinizing letter, "The first 20 years of my life were spent in acquiring knowledge and the next 20 years were spent imbibing various observances and restraints." At the age of 21, Vinoba renounced his home, and set out in the search for the Absolute. Prior to that he had reflected upon and memorized various scriptures. He reached Gandhiji's ashram in 1916. He had an innate attraction for the asceticism of the ashram life and he would pursue those restraints vigilantly with conviction and honesty. Gradually fellow workers and students gathered around him, attracted by his knowledge and adherence to restraints. Mahadevbhai Desai wrote, "There are quite a few of Gandhiji's followers who have strong and deep influence on the general population, yet no one comes close\* to Vinoba in creating selfless active social workers who have an abiding faith in Truth and Nonviolence."

Vinoba regarded the phase after the first 40 years as the period of spreading unconditional love. In 1951, the land- gift movement started. The whole nation was charged and many dedicated themselves to this movement. One can regard this period in Vinoba's life as the period of connecting to the masses. So, his life can be described in four phases, centered around Knowledge, Austerities, Love and Compassion, and Connecting to the Masses. In reality, he was a firm believer that life was a holistic phenomenon, in spite of the four phases. All these aspects blossomed simultaneously in his life. With the help of these qualities, he rendered a great amount of tangible social service without ever breaking the thread of connectivity to the subtle aspects of action, which are: inner search, purification of the mind and subtle introspection. Purification of the heart was the foundation of all the worldly services that he rendered.

In his life there was no discord, as everything was suffused with the unity of the inner and outer aspects of life. In reality, his consciousness remained more on the subtle plane than on the gross plane. In the last phase of his life he entered the domain of subtle action. This period centered on renunciation. During this period he let go of one thing after another. First he announced freedom from

any gross action and entered the realm of subtle action. He stopped all correspondence with others. In the past, he had immersed himself in deep profound study of various scriptures, authored many treatises and also taught throughout. He declared that he would give up learning, reading and teaching. While explaining this process from Ishopanishad of spreading and retracting the rays he said, "Like Sun, up to a certain age one must spread, but at a certain time one must start the process of retraction. One must witness death prior to physical death".

Vinobaji's temperament was that of a renunciate from early on. Whatever he did, he did by remaining detached like a lotus flower. Hence letting go came naturally to him. Usually, the attachment to good work binds the doer in one way or the other. Vinoba would say, "Through experience I have understood that lots of work can be done from the subtle plane. After a certain age, one has to withdraw the attachment and passion even if the work is service to humanity. People are driven by passion and hence helplessly continue to do gross work of service. Yet a stage must be attained in human life when the gross action should become dispensable and subtle power of spirit (bhavashakti) can do the work. I believe that great service can be rendered through reflection and contemplation. There is a limit to gross service. Then the realm of subtle must be entered. One must give up the greed, insistence, desire and inspiration of gross service and enter the realm of subtle service. This realm of subtle is vast, not any less than that of the gross. My inclination is that one should witness one's own death while being physically alive."

This last phase of yoga of subtle action was a phase of action in non-action for Vinoba. The Bhagavad-Gita proclaims the concept of action through non-action and non-action through action. Vinobaji had assimilated both these paths. After coming to Gandhiji, he immersed himself in monumental ceaseless yoga of action. Along with this, he naturally remained in the inner transcendent peaceful state of non-action. He was attracted to the journey from gross to subtle and from subtle to nothingness (shunyavastha). He would say that word is more powerful than action, contemplation is more powerful than word, but a

state of non-contemplation is more powerful than contemplation. In other words, word is more powerful than action, spirit (bhava) is more powerful than word, and a thought-free state is more powerful than spirit (bhava). He believed in the power of non-contemplation and thought-transcendence.

Vinobaji reached Gandhiji in 1916. Fifty years later, in 1966, he expressed the idea of entering the subtle realm. He said, "I am not retiring as per common parlance. I am reinventing myself, adding a new tire. I want to carry out the experiment of the power of non-contemplation." Modern science has proven that subtle is more potent than gross. Spirituality attests to the fact that unmanifest is more significant than the manifest. For Vinoba, entering the realm of subtle was an experiment towards the journey from gross to subtle and subtle to nothingness. His last phase of entrance into the subtle is sending a significant message to mankind. The one who can understand will understand, the one who can digest will digest.

Vinoba is not a politician, not a social reformer, nor a revolutionary. He is first and last a man of God. Service to mankind is to him nothing but an effort to unite with God. He endeavors every second to blot himself out, to make himself empty so that God may fill him up and make him His instrument- Jayprakash Narayan

Vinoba says

A spring of tranquility will flow from the heart of the one who is self-reliant.

The music that is present in the silent sky, the music in the inner recesses of the mind that accompanies breathing, and the music that makes every act in life harmonious is true music.

The inner sweet music of silence is unmatched by any other music.

Where do I live?

Anywhere

In the company of sages and saints

In the self.

Saintly literature should resonate in speech, contemplation and life. Only then will the last moment become euphoric.

Inner contentment is a sign of God's grace. It is a receipt of His acceptance of our service.

The message of the scriptures is Charaiveti Charaiveti (move on, move on.) The one who sleeps lives in the present age, which is Kaliyug; the one who sits lives in Dwaparyug; the one who stands up lives in Tretayug, and the one who keeps moving lives in Kritayug, the age of truth. If one has to search for the supreme truth, and contemplate how to establish non-violence, one must wander in the open, under the boundless expanse of the sky.

### About the Author

Ushadi was born in Mumbai and continued to live there till her graduation. During this period she came in contact with Mahatma Gandhi and actively worked in the Khadi movement for some time. Since 1957 she dedicated herself completely to the Bhoodan movement. She accompanied Vinobaji during his padayatra in Gujarat during 1958-59 and did padayatra in the Panchmahal district of Gujarat for the movement. She was among the first few members of the Brahma Vidya Mandir, founded by Vinobaji and has continued her practice and service there for fifty five years.

Ushadi has studied Upanishads and Gita in great depth and has authored many books on these subjects. She has edited and translated many of Vinobaji's books in Gujarati. She also has translated the Jnaneshwari in Gujarati in a very lucid way. She has been writing contemplative articles in the Maitri magazine published from Brahma Vidya Mandir for last fifty years. Even today, at the age of eighty three, she is busy in activities like farming, cleaning and giving speeches in various places in front of varied audiences. Ushadi is one of the most loved and revered mentors of the Sarvodaya and Gandhi- Vinoba family.