



# Contemplating Gandhi

Essays on Mahatma's life and thought

Chandrasekhar Dharmadhikari

**JUSTICE CHANDRASHEKHAR DHARMADHIKARI** was born on 20th November 1927. His parents were Dada Dharmadhikari and Damayanti Dharmadhikari. He comes from an illustrious Maharashtrian family settled in Multai in the Betul District of Madhya Pradesh. His father, Dada Dharmadhikari was a front-ranking freedom fighter and a seminal Gandhian thinker. His mother was a freedom fighter in her own right and a symbol of life togetherness. Chandrashekhara Dharmadhikari was married to Tara Dharmadhikari—a highly educated and cultured person and true picture of life togetherness. His daughter is a medical doctor. His son Satyaranjan Dharmadhikari is a judge at Bombay High Court. His other son Shri Ashutosh Dharmadhikari is a practising lawyer at Nagpur Bench of Bombay High Court. Chandrashekhara Dharmadhikari as a mere lad of fourteen participated in the Quit India Movement. As a part of his family inheritance, he has devoted the major part of his life in interpreting and propagating Gandhian ideas in the context of our times. He made a sincere effort to imbibe Gandhian ideals in his own life. He has his own contributions to the public life by participating in the major intellectual discourses, particularly in respect of women empowerment. He has been a source of inspiration to the youth of our country.

He practiced law at Nagpur for many years and was elevated to the Bench, as a judge of the Bombay High Court. He worked as senior judge and acting chief justice of the Bombay High Court from 1972 till his retirement in 1989. He also worked as the first Chairman of the Maharashtra Administrative Tribunal. As a judge he delivered historic judgements in respect of the right of women, *adivasi*, children, mentally handicapped persons and other weaker sections of the society. He has been associated with a number of cultural institutions. He has been heading a number of Gandhian institutions including the Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha. For his contribution in the field of education and literary work, he has been the recipient of Gopal Krishna Gokhale Award, Government of Maharashtra Literary Awards and Karandikar

Trust Dharwad Literary Award. He has a number of books to his credit in Marathi, Hindi and English.

He has received the Padma Bhushan Award from the President of India in 2003. Besides, he has also received a Doctor of Laws (Honorary) from Rani Durgavati University, Jabalpur. Other awards which he received include the Distinguished Citizens Award from Rotary Club of Bombay, Michael John Memorial Award, Gandhi Jan Puruskar, Ramashastri Prabhune Social Justice Award, Justice Ranade Award for social service, Rashtra Gaurav Puruskar, Go Seva Ratna Puruskar, Hindi Seva Puruskar and a number of other awards. He is one of the few living Gandhians who had the privilege to be personally associated with Gandhiji from his very childhood.

Prof. M.G.K. Menon, one of the most eminent scientists of the country rightly observes: 'Justice Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari has remained unbowed for the whole of his life, always true to his principles, and always listening to the small inner voice of his conscience. At the same time, he is the most affectionate, generous, courteous, gentle and mild human being that one could ever come across.'

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## THUS SPAKE BAPU

- What I am concerned with is my readiness to obey the call of Truth, my God, from moment to moment, and, therefore, when anybody finds any inconsistency between any two writings of mine... he would do well to choose the later of the two on the same subject.
- I have no desire for the perishable kingdom of earth. I am striving for the kingdom of Heaven which is *moksha*. To attain my end, it is not necessary for me to seek the shelter of a cave. I carry one about me, if I would but know it.
- I may not aching for martyrdom, but if it comes in my way in the prosecution of what I consider to be the supreme duty in defence of the faith I hold... I shall have earned it.
- My mission is to teach by example and precept under severe restraint the use of the matchless weapon of *satyagraha*, which is a direct corollary of non-violence and truth.
- I have no desire to found a sect. I am really too ambitious to be satisfied with a sect for a following.
- I know the path. It is straight and narrow. It is like the edge of a sword. I rejoice to walk on it. I weep when I slip.
- The world knows so little of how much my so-called greatness depends upon the incessant toil and drudgery of silent, devoted, able and pure workers, men as well as women.

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**Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari**

*Translated from Hindi by*  
Ramchandra Pradhan

**INSTITUTE OF GANDHIAN STUDIES, WARDHA**

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## **Dedication**

*This book is dedicated to the sacred memory of Ramkrishna Bajaj, a man of rare faith, trust and self-effacement and who in the words of Dada Dharmadhikari could be rightly described as 'Maryada Purushottam Ramkrishna.'*





Ramkrishna Bajaj  
(1924-1994)

## FROM THE PUBLISHER

Life, thought and work of Mahatma Gandhi are increasingly becoming the major subjects of studies from different viewpoints and perspectives. Gandhi is taken to be the ripen fruit of thousands of years of Indian *Sadhana* as well as the seed for the future evolution of its spiritual and worldly seeking. His life, thoughts and philosophy hold an exceptional significance for the coming generations. They have all the potential to create and uphold a schema for a new and humane civilisational order. That is why the world community has begun to make sincere efforts towards building a new world order based on Gandhian philosophy.

In the present seminal work, Justice Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari has made a similar attempt based on his life long engagement with Gandhian ideas. We are very happy to publish such a scholarly work by Justice Dharmadhikari—a Gandhian scholar, and an activist in his own right. But his range of interest goes much beyond mere scholastic concerns.

We are sure that like his earlier works, this book will also be well received by the academia and general readers.

**Bharat Mahodaya**

*Director*

Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha

# INSTITUTE OF GANDHIAN STUDIES, WARDHA

## Publications

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| 1. Essays on Gandhian Thought  | Ravindra Varma et al. (2004)  |
| 2. Explorations in Culture of Peace  | Siby K. Joseph (ed.) (2006)   |
| 3. Essays on Conflict Resolution   | Siby K. Joseph,<br>Bharat Mahodaya (eds.) (2007)                    |
| 4. Khoj Gandhi Ki  | C.S. Dharmadhikari (2008)   |
| 5. Non-violent Struggles of the<br>Twentieth Century:<br>Retrospect and Prospect | Siby K. Joseph<br>John Moolakkattu<br>Bharat Mahodaya (eds.) (2009) |
| 6. Contemporary Perspectives<br>on Peace and Non-violence                        | Siby K. Joseph, Bharat<br>Mahodaya (eds.) (2010)                    |
| 7. Reflections on Hind Swaraj  | Siby K. Joseph, Bharat<br>Mahodaya (eds.) (2011)                    |
| 8. Gandhi, Environment and<br>Sustainable Future                                 | Siby K. Joseph, Bharat<br>Mahodaya (eds.) (2011)                    |
| 9. Gandhi Meri Nazar Mein  | C.S. Dharmadhikari (2011)   |
| 10. Contextualising Gandhian<br>Thought  | Siby K. Joseph (ed.) (2012)   |
| 11. Continuing Relevance<br>of Swadeshi  | Siby K. Joseph, Bharat<br>Mahodaya (eds.) (2012)                    |

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## PREFACE

I am reminded of an incident and conversation which my father, Dada Dharmadhikari had with Bapu on the eve of independence and partition days. Many angry refugees had asked Bapu to go to the Himalayas for his saintly *sadhana*, instead of meddling with the politics of the country. Bapu had refused to go to the Himalayas as he said that he carried a cave inside his inner being for such *sadhana*. Those were hectic days for Bapu. He apparently looked sad and tired amidst the holocaust of partition. Dada told him that he appeared to be overworked and tired. Bapu responded by saying that it was not so. He further added that it is not the work that tires a man and makes him listless. It is worry that really kills his spirit and enthusiasm. But he had offered his worries and problems at the feet of Lord Krishna. Later on, Dada commented that it is the real *anasakti yoga*—‘the *yoga* of desirelessness and detachment.’ That is also true *karmayoga*—the *yoga* of action. That is also the true art of living. One should live amidst people, live for others: One should live like a true human being and should never avoid the company of other people. This is a new *yoga* of humanism. This is also the true spiritualism of our age. This is also the real background of the present work.

The essays compiled in this book were written on different occasions. They were penned at the behest of my friends, well-wishers and others. On those occasions, it did not occur to me that one day these essays would be put within the two covers of a book. I am aware of the fact that I am not one of those writers who put their ideas in a very concise and precise way. No one has accused me of being such an adept writer! I speak on different themes on different occasions and many themes and thoughts keep on coming in the course of my lectures. In such situations, it is quite natural for different streams of thoughts and themes to get intermingled. Some of these essays are based on my lectures.

Hence, some repetition of my thoughts and themes are bound to be there in these essays. I have not been much bothered about such repetitions. After all, what is repetition? It is not so easy to decide about its nature. Once I even sought the opinion of Dada on this issue. He responded to my query in his own characteristic style. He said: 'There is nothing like repetition as things always come as new and real in changing contexts.' Besides, even for a full explanation of a subject, repetition is necessary. For it is not necessary that every reader would go through the entire book—from the beginning to the end. He might choose to read one or two essays in the book. If he is to get an overview of the major themes discussed in the book, repetition becomes unavoidable. Thus what apparently looks like repetition could very well be a creative act. Hence, I have not felt any inner urge to make any drastic changes in the body of these essays to get rid of my so-called repetitiveness.

My readers could very well take my repetitiveness of my thoughts and themes as the reiteration of my positions on different issues and problems confronting the people of our own country as well as of the world. In any case, I leave it to the judgements of my scholarly readers and enlightened critics. That seems both appropriate and convenient for me at this stage.

I spent my childhood in the environment influenced by Gandhi's life and thoughts. Gandhi and his fundamental ideas are more of a matter of faith for me. Hence, I lay no claim on objectivity and neutrality about them in my writings. Once Gandhiji took me for a morning walk and put his hands on my shoulders. Today, I feel energised by recalling the memory of those unforgettable moments. I had so much love and respect for him that on his assassination I felt that some one who was closer to me more than even my own father had gone forever from my life. I have never wept so bitterly and copiously as I did on that occasion. It is not taken as a part of a civilised behaviour to cry openly as the children often do in their innocence and open heartedness. The moment I came to such realizations my pains were infected by the artificiality of civilization. But that copious and open cry on Bapu's

assassination is my greatest emotional treasure which I will keep till the last breath of my life.

My life and thoughts bear high imprint of my father, Dada Dharmadhikari. In fact, I started my journey towards Gandhian ideas under his initiation and inspiration. Dada was of the opinion that instead of taking an individual or any book as a proof for the validation of our own ideas, we should proceed in the matter keeping our inquisitiveness and objectivity intact. Moving beyond the bookish approach, we should seriously ruminate about their relevance in the present context. That was his basic intellectual position. He further averred that ideas are always dynamic and the moment they become static, they start losing their value and relevance and even their authenticity in the new context. Dada always insisted that we should start our thought processes about Gandhian ideas precisely from the point where Gandhiji had left. With such an approach and mindset alone, we could extend and bring Gandhian ideas in tune with our times. Whenever a great man passes away, we invariably say that a vacuum created by his loss could never be filled up. But that is not the right thing to say, as its only obvious inference would be that great men end up by creating only vacuum at the end of their life and their successors are always forced to live in some kind of a vacuum all the time. If that is so, then the life of every great man would be taken to be a failure! Unfortunately, that seems to be the obvious and logical conclusion! Admittedly, such a conclusion sounds too logical to be true. In any case, we have to ponder over the Gandhian ideas only in the context of new times.

We should not look for solutions in Gandhian ideas for all our pressing problems. In other words, we should not look for formulae solutions from Gandhian lexicon as we look for meaning of words from a dictionary. There is no readymade solution for any of our problems. We have to look for their solutions through our own independent thinking. That was Dada's approach to the entire gamut of Gandhian ideas.

I, in my own modest way, have tried to live through such an approach. How successfully and how far I have imbibed such an



intellectual approach, I have my own doubts about it. Therefore, I have a desire just to take a dip in Gandhian ideas. It is not necessary that the ideas expressed in the present work should be acceptable to one and all of its readers. After all, dissent and difference of opinions are the life-blood of democracy. In fact, it is quite natural that we differ from each other in respect of our ideas. This is for the simple reason that we as individuals have a different mindset, different temperament, different heads and different proclivities. But it is my humble submission that despite our differences in opinion, let there be no mental antagonism and animosity in our dealings with each other. We must always bear in mind that there is nothing like Gandhism. Hence, there is no question of any kind of indoctrination or imposition in the field of Gandhian ideas.

I have been using Dada's writings and ideas to my heart's content. As his son, I take it as my birth right. I am his son, that is my original position, the rest comes to me as *ex-officio*. Hence I consider myself nothing more than a coolie/carrier for the thoughts of Gandhi and Dada. I am aware that the readers are of scholarly and inquisitive temperament. I am just wondering about their interest in the present work. But I keep on moving around in the country particularly among our youths. Some of them are acutely aware of the problems confronting our people. Besides, they do not want to stand aside rather they want to actively participate in the struggle for change. They are quite keen to have a basic understanding of Gandhian ideas and relate them to the present context. My earnest desire is that the present book should provide some intellectual food to the youth on their march towards a better society. I will be more than happy if it also proves useful to those who think that Gandhian ideas are out of tune with our times. I am also happy to bring to the notice of the readers that the present work has already gone through Marathi and Hindi editions. It has been well received by the readers in both the languages.

The Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha is our own institute. It is not just an institution rather it is a centre of Gandhian ideology. It has received international acclaim and recognition.

I am happy that Bharat Mahodaya, the Director of the Institute and Siby Joseph, the Dean of Studies, have taken upon themselves the onerous task of its publication. Ramchandra Pradhan, a senior faculty member of the Institute, has translated most of the material presented in the book from Hindi to English.

I am sad to note that today physical elimination (murder) by resorting to all kinds of stratagem is considered to be the surest way to put an end to someone's thoughts. It is such a way of devilish thinking which has led to the murder of a number of leaders including Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan. And faith in violence is ever on the increase. At such a critical moment of our history, the publication of the present work is quite timely and appropriate.

My dear friend, Shri Ramkrishna Bajaj, was the main source of inspiration behind the Institute of Gandhian Studies. Shri Jamnalal Bajaj was taken to be the fifth son of Mahatma Gandhi. Thus Ramkrishna could very well be taken as the grandson of Gandhiji. It was in the environment saturated with the life and thoughts of Gandhiji that Ramkrishna was brought up. He grew up and was educated in a spiritually surcharged atmosphere. Thus Gandhian ideas became an integral part of his life and living and indeed his *sadhana*. He tried to live them through in the given circumstances to the best of his abilities.

When Gandhiji launched his Individual Satyagraha in 1940, he picked up Vinoba Bhave as the first individual *satyagrahi*. Gandhiji himself used to select individuals as *satyagrahi* for that movement. He used to consider the pros and cons before picking up someone as individual *satyagrahi*. Ramkrishnaji was selected by Gandhiji as the youngest individual *satyagrahi*. At that time, he was less than eighteen years of age. He was imprisoned during the movement. Subsequently, he was also active during the Quit India Movement.

Ramkrishnaji was a leading light of the Indian business world. But essentially he looked at himself as a 'servant of industry'. He has imbibed Gandhian idea of trusteeship as a part of his family inheritance. He used to call himself as 'Gandhi's coolie'. He carried Gandhian ideas on his broad and strong shoulders throughout his life. Faith, trust and self-effacement were the foundation of his

life and living. He stood for the principle of fair play in business. People took it to be an impractical idea; as if he was selling mirrors amidst the blind people. His primary interest was social work. For him *Jammalal Marg* was not made of cement and concrete. It was a kind of an ideology. Hence, Dada used to call him '*Maryada Purushottam Ramkrishna*'. It is with such a feeling that I am dedicating this book to his sacred memory.

I am thankful to all my colleagues and friends for their contributions to the present edition of my book.

**Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari**

#### **About the Translator**

**RAM CHANDRA PRADHAN**, a well-known social activist and a Gandhian scholar, taught at Ramjas College, Delhi University for several decades. As one of the conveners of the Lokayan project and as an activist thinker of the Movement for Peace and Alternative Development, he has travelled all over the world and interacted with activists and scholars across the continents. Dr Pradhan has been a recipient of the Senior Fulbright Fellowship (1979-80) and the Indo-Canadian Shastri Fellowship (1993). He is the author of several books including *Raj to Swaraj* (both in English and Hindi); *Reading and Reappraising Gandhi and Colonialism in India* published by Macmillan India. He has another book on Gandhiji, *Integrating Body, Mind and Heart: The Gandhian Way*. He has also books on the Bhagavad Gita and Koran Sharif to his credit. At present, he has taken to whole time writing and is engaged in a multi-volume study of the Indian Socialist Movement. Presently, he is attached to the Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha, Maharashtra.

## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The very idea of another study on Gandhi's life and thought sounds presumptuous, if not preposterous. There are genuine reasons for such a feeling. In the first place, Gandhiana is no longer a virgin intellectual field for research and writings. There are books galore on all major Gandhian themes. In fact, it is an intellectually over-cultivated field, giving out numerous scholarly yields. One has also to bear in mind that Gandhi's own voluminous writings covering one hundred volumes, virtually touch upon every human concern ranging from sexuality to spirituality.

Despite the above scenario, surprisingly the books dealing with the Gandhian themes are being published on an uninterrupted pace. The reasons for this puzzling situation are not far to seek. It underlines, on the one hand, the ever growing relevance of Gandhi in the context of the problems confronting the cosmic order. Besides, it also underscores the irrelevance of ruling ideologies like liberalism and Marxism and their variant forms like neo-liberalism and neo-Marxism. Thus there is a fervent search for a new civilizational vision and dream which points a way out of the present human predicament. It is such a felt-need on the part of the sensitive minds all over the world which explains and justifies the plethora of Gandhian literature being published on a break-neck speed.

Another reason for such development is that Gandhi has become a handmaid of specialists and experts. The intellectual gaze of such specialised and in-depth studies is quite narrow. In the process, the holistic vision of Gandhi's life and thought is missed. Even the biographical studies of Gandhi are resulting in projecting different and even diametrically opposite images of the Mahatma. The scholars engaged in different academic disciplines like history, political science, sociology, philosophy, psychology and comparative religion have mostly studied Gandhi from the perspective of their own disciplines. Though these studies are

quite germane to their own discipline, but they do fail to present a holistic vision of Gandhi's life and thought.

On all these counts, the present study undertaken by Justice Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari offers its own justifications. It gives a holistic view of Gandhi's life, thoughts and relates them to the present times. What is more, his overall presentation is highly judicious and balanced. Besides, as a scholar, thinker and writer, Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari has all the qualifications for undertaking such a serious study. His interest in Gandhian studies goes much beyond mere intellectual inquisitiveness and academic concerns. He is the son of Dada Dharmadhikari—one of the most seminal thinkers and activists who was not only a front-ranking freedom fighter, but also played a crucial role in evolution of Gandhian thought in the post-independent era. He had participated both as a thinker and as an activist in Sarvodaya-Bhoodan and JP Movement. But that is not the only or even the most important qualification of Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari for undertaking the present study. He is a thinker, a writer, and an activist and above all a highly concerned citizen of the country.

Besides, having spent the major part of his life in judiciary, he has an innate tendency to take a very judicious and balanced view of things around him. Moreover, today he is among a handful of living Gandhians who has seen Gandhi leading the national movement and even the contexts in which he articulated his major ideas. Besides, Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari is a freedom fighter in his own right. As such, he had imbibed Gandhian ideas in his own life and living. He displayed these traits when he delivered a number of judgements protecting the rights of the citizens even during the black days of the Emergency. He has also had the privilege of Gandhi putting his hand on his shoulder in the course of his morning walks. All this uniquely qualifies him for undertaking an important study like the present one.

The present study had several points of strength which need to be underlined. The themes covered in the present study speak volumes for the author's wide range of interests and concerns. Starting with some reminiscences of Gandhi, it covers most of the Gandhian key ideas like truth, non-violence, *swadeshi*, *swaraj*,

trusteeship and other political and social ideas. What is more, he makes a serious attempt to relate them to the challenges of our times, particularly to those of the new phase of globalization and liberalization. Besides, he also deals with some of the most frequently asked questions by the youth of today regarding Gandhi's relationship with some of the stalwarts of national movement like Bhagat Singh, Subhas Chandra Bose, B.R. Ambedkar and others.

Going through the present study, a reader might be struck by the repeated references to similar thoughts and themes. But for several reasons that could not have been avoided. In the first place, truth told even umpteenth time loses neither its lustre nor its luminosity. Secondly as a teacher, I know that at times repetition of thoughts and themes becomes unavoidable for hammering out certain points in the hearts and minds of the audience. Thirdly such repetitions in the present study might help the reader to read any of its chapters in an independent manner, without going back to the previous ones for its contextual understanding.

The present work is basically an English version of Dharmadhikari's earlier Hindi book *Gandhi Meri Nazar Mein*. It has also run through a Marathi edition. As the English translator of the book, I would like to frankly state that I have not gone in for a literal translation. Rather mine is an attempt on trans-creation, unless that sounds too presumptuous on my art. However, I have tried my best to retain the flavour of Dharmadhikari's style of literary presentation and his line of nuanced argumentation. However, I leave it to the discerning eyes of its readers to judge for themselves how far I have succeeded in my attempts.

Translating Dharmadhikari's book from Hindi to English has been a very challenging task for me. I am not a professional translator of either of the languages. But for the active support from a number of my friends it would have been impossible for me to take the work to its logical conclusion. First of all, I am extremely grateful to Chandrashekar Dharmadhikari for his trust and faith in my ability and competence to undertake such an onerous task. Shrikant Kulkarni and Manohar Mahajan of the Institute have helped me in various ways. Bharat Mahodaya, our Director as usual has been supportive of my present work as

well. Siby Joseph, the Dean of the Institute, has been of constant and continuous help to me. Whenever in difficulty, I have always rushed to him for help, particularly for the checking of quotations and references. Siby has also prepared an excellent cover for the present study. I am very appreciative of the excellent effort put in by Rajkumar Khatri, the proprietor of Om Laser Printers and Shri Sanjay Singh, the proprietor of Victorious Publishing Solutions, taking every care towards the production of the book including typesetting

Now in the realm of writings including on social themes, it is being widely believed that it must bear the imprint of the author's personality, his way of life, his thought processes and indeed his entire world view. It should not be a mere presentation of empirical facts/truth in the name of objectivity and neutrality. It must be the result of a deep sense of internalisation and recreation. That is taken to be a necessary qualification for a good writing. Anyone who goes through the present work is likely to be struck by the fact that its every page bears the imprint of Dharmadhikari's personality—his predilection and proclivities. Someone might go to the extent of saying that it bears even his pride and prejudices!

I would like to just add that through his present work, Dharmadhikari tries to give away to the younger generation all that he had learned, all that he has experienced during his life and time. Age has failed to tame and dampen his high spirits, his keen observations and bold intellectual perceptions. At the end, I find it difficult to resist the temptation to quote a few lines from W.B. Yeat's poem, *Sailing to Byzantium* which reads:

'An aged man is but a paltry thing,  
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless  
Soul claps its hands and sings, and louder sing  
For every tatter in its mortal dress.'

In these pages Dharmadhikari's inner soul sings too vigorously and yet sonorously to remain unheard even by its casual readers and passer by.

**Ram Chandra Pradhan**



## Some Reminiscences of Mahatma Gandhi

He (Gandhi) was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breath; like a beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes; like a whirlwind that upsets many things, but most of all the working of people's mind.

*Jawaharlal Nehru*

I had the opportunity to see Mahatma Gandhi for the first time in 1935 at Sevagram (Wardha) during the Congress Working Committee meeting. All the leaders from grass-roots level workers to Jawaharlal Nehru were engaged in various kinds of manual labour. I saw Jamnalal Bajaj grinding the mill. After seeing this, I felt that something is wrong with Gandhi's head. Has Gandhi gone mad? Why is he asking these great personalities to undertake such trivial works? I found that a number of great leaders were working in the kitchen at that time. Therefore, I told the manager of the *ashram* that in our house these menial activities are undertaken by our maidservants. But here it is being done by world famous leaders and activists. Is it proper to ask them to do such works? The manager asked me, 'Do you not like vegetables?' 'Yes, I like very much' I answered. Then he asked me again, 'If you like vegetables, then why do you feel ashamed in peeling, cleaning and making it consumable?' On that day, I understood the significance of bread labour. In a country or society where there is no dignity for bread labour, we respect only parasites who are people without shame.



In the course of time, inspired by Gandhi, all of us got engaged in the cleaning work including sanitation of open latrines in untouchable colonies of Wardha. 'Those who spin have right to wear and those who wear must spin' symbolised the entire message of Gandhian revolution. That is why Gandhi considered the spinning wheel and broomsticks as symbols of social revolution. If and when broomstick comes in the hands of *Brahmins* and *Bhagavad Gita* in the hands of Valmiki, there will be total elimination and eradication of caste system based on birth. It made a tremendous impact on my life and thought. Even today, I never ask anybody about his caste or income. To me, value of a person is never dependent on these considerations. It was at that time that we could really understand the importance of community prayer. Individual prayer always limits the man to himself, whereas one reaches out to the entire society through community prayer. The day Gujarati or Marathi or for that matter Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist start thinking about the welfare of each other, real Indian nationhood would emerge, based on the love, cooperation and respect of its different sections.

I had the good fortune that while going for a walk, Gandhi placed his hand on my shoulders. This became a source of real strength when I had to stand up in the face of any turmoil including the infamous Emergency rule (1975-77), while upholding the right and liberty of people. I felt that the shoulder on which Mahatma Gandhi had rested his hands would not bow down under any circumstances.

The division of Indian society on the basis of caste and religion was never acceptable to Gandhi. Unfortunately in today's Hindu religion, caste is a reality and religion is a fiction. A conglomeration of castes does not necessarily lead to the creation of a society. In a grocery shop there is nothing like an item called grocery. Similarly, in Hindu religion there are numerous castes and sub-castes but there is nothing like Hindu. In fact there is no Hindu society as such. It lacks interdependence and cooperation. According to Dr. Ambedkar, Hindu society is like a four story building. One

who is born in a particular floor, goes on living on the same floor throughout his life; as if there is no staircase connecting each other. In reality, in today's India, the Hindu is a real minority group, as it does not constitute a single community.

There was tremendous impact of Gandhi on our lives. I was born in a Brahmin family and that too in a Dharmadhikari one. But the moment we decided to renounce caste based hierarchy, we renounced all the external symbols like sacred thread etc., from our lives and living. Thus, for Brahmins I don't belong to twice born group, for them I am as good as a *Shudra*. Unless the marriage related ceremony becomes inexpensive and simple, the birth of a female child would be never welcomed in a Hindu family. We could understand this simple truth only through Gandhi and his thoughts. I had a registered marriage. The total expense was rupees 22 only including the registration fee. Usually Brahmins are invited on such occasions but that day we called the sweeper named Paku with his wife and they sat with us for dinner. We never went to the temples which were not accessible to the untouchables. We are convinced that God who is polluted by the touch of untouchables would never be our God. This also, we learned from Gandhi. Among the Dharmadhikaris, we were taken to be *Shudras* and not twice born. We were made to sit in a different row while taking meals in such families. We could not even use bathrooms used by them. Thus we came to realise the real pain of being *Shudras*. This was also a kind gift of Gandhi to us. There is no connection between citizenship and one's place, caste and religion. The Indian constitution provides only single citizenship. The vision of single Indian citizenship is also a contribution of Gandhi. Thus even Indian Muslims should identify themselves more with Indian citizenship rather than with those of Pakistan, Afghanistan, or Egypt. This is the core of Indian nationhood which was greatly influenced by Gandhian thinking. The Indian Hindus should feel closer to their fellow citizens even if belonging to different religions rather than being closer to Hindu citizens of other countries. Unfortunately, the members of middle and higher

classes temperamentally consider themselves like aliens in their own country. By temperament they are neither Indians nor inspired by *swadeshi* spirit. This is also true of those Indians who are always eager to take citizenship of other countries. Thus the foundation of Indian nationhood would not remain strong and stable because of such division between Indianess and Indian citizenship. Violence could not solve this problem as it would result in producing only counter violence. This has been clearly understood by foreigners; hence they are being attracted towards Gandhian ideas. It seems that Gandhian ideas will first be well established in the West and then exported back to India. After all we Indians are very fond of imported goods!

Gandhi revived *Khadi* and other handicrafts of India and believed that *swadeshi* would really work as real foundation for *swaraj*. He realised the significance of *Khadi* in our economic life. I have been a *Khadi* wearer since my childhood as it was an integral part of our family tradition. In our childhood, we never used crackers even on the occasion of Diwali as they were imported products. Nor did we use cloves as it was being imported from Zanzibar. Even alpins were being imported from foreign lands, so we used the thorns of *babool* tree in place of alpins. Thus use of *Khadi* and *swadeshi* items and boycott of foreign goods became a natural part of our lives. Of course, it was not our own contribution, rather we were being inspired by Gandhi and Dada Dharmadhikari. It is this family tradition and overall socio-political environment which made me, a mere fifteen year old lad, to participate in the Quit India Movement of 1942. We moved out of the schools in which we were studying and the government issued an order that we could never get an admission in any government recognized schools. But we learned great lessons from these movements which we could not have learned from any other school. It gave a great meaning to our lives.

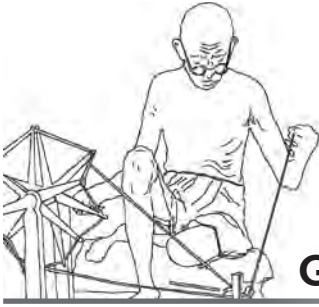
One of the major lessons we learned that we should work for real *swaraj* of Gandhian concept which would ultimately result in *gram swaraj*. It was on account of such a vision inspired by Gandhi

that I never sought to stand as a candidate in election or accepted any position in the political field. Gandhi and Jayaprakash Narayan never sought any political position for themselves in any of the so-called representative institutions. They strongly believed that power seeking people hardly make any positive contribution to societal good rather they undermine it. This great tradition of Gandhi and Jayaprakash Narayan was altogether ignored by the Indian political leadership. With the result that though India became independent, but the slavery of the people could not be ended.

In fact, what was the real place of Gandhi in our life became clear only after his martyrdom. The day Gandhi was assassinated; I cried and shed copious tears. The pain was more intense than one's father's death. After all, it was the death of the father of the nation and that too unimaginable and untimely. The subsequent developments both at the Indian and international scenarios have only re-validated the relevance of Gandhi and his ideas in the present context.



Jamnalal Bajaj with Bapu



## Mindset Behind Gandhi's Assassination

It is my constant prayer that I may never have a feeling of anger against my traducers, that even if I fall a victim to an assassin's bullet, I may deliver up my soul with the remembrance of God upon my lips, I shall be content to be written down an impostor if my lips utter a word of anger...against my assailant at the last moment.

*M.K. Gandhi*

There is a new anti-Gandhi wave in Maharashtra. It has even reached a stage of xenophobia. Whether it is a drama on Nathuram Godse (I am Nathuram Godse speaking) or flims on Babasaheb Ambedkar, Bhagat Singh or Savarkar; in all of them, Gandhi is being depicted either as a villain or as a comical character. The reason behind such attempts is that all these leaders are being projected as men of destiny. On the other hand, there is a deliberate attempt to undermine Gandhi and his role in history. Even the scene of Gandhi's assassination is being presented in such a way that it should evoke thunderous clapping from the audience. The act of assassination is eulogized. It is clear that this is the only way they could extol their heroes. Thus there is a concerted attempt at character assassination of Gandhi. This is a part of a well designed conspiracy.

It is this mindset which has prompted them to use the word *Gandhi vadh*. The Sanskrit word *vaadh* is usually used while depicting the murder of demons or bad people. Such a murder is taken to be

a religious act. My strong objection is to the use of *vadh* in respect of Gandhi's assassination. Some of these anti-Gandhi people have gone to the extent of showing me a dictionary to say that the three words, *khoon* (bloodshed), *hatya* (murder), *vadh* (killing of demons ) are synonyms. They do not know that synonymous words given in a dictionary do not necessarily convey the same meaning. We have to look at their popular connotations. If these three words are taken as synonymous then can one say that the word *khoon* could be used in case of Ravan *vadh* by Lord Rama or in the case of Afazal Khan's killing by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. They will never accept it. When people are unable to contest someone's ideas they resort to murder. They think that in such a way both the concerned person and his ideas could be finished forever. That is why Bernard Shaw said: that 'the ultimate form of censorship is assassination.' Nathuram Godse truly represented that mindset and these people engaged in anti-Gandhi drama or films are also of the same genre. It was in this context Kahlil Gibran said that ultimately all the great people like Socrates, Christ, Abraham Lincoln, Joan of Arc are martyred. If Gibran could have lived for a few years more, I am sure that he would have included the names of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. in the list.

Malice towards Gandhi was not new to Maharashtra. Tendulkar, Pyarelal and other authors have written that at least five murder attempts had been made on Gandhi's life in Maharashtra. A bomb was thrown on Mahatma Gandhi in Pune in 1934. In July 1944 when Gandhi was undergoing treatment at Panchgani, a group of 18-20 people went there including Nathuram Godse. He started shouting at Gandhi and the latter called him inside. Then Godse took out a knife from his jacket and attempted an attack on Gandhi. Again when Gandhi was coming from Mumbai to Pune an attempt was made to blow up the train. But this attempt failed due to the driver's swift and ingenious action. Another attempt was made on Gandhi's life when he was at his *ashram* in Sevagram. Ultimately Godse succeeded in assassinating him on January 30, 1948. The supporters of Godse wanted to finally bury the Mahatma forever.

Why all these happened only in Maharashtra? That is the question before me. Now it is happening in Gandhi's Gujarat. It seems that all these are a part of a larger conspiracy.

Some time back Sudarshan, the chief of RSS came out with an astounding statement that the Quit India Movement of 1942 with Gandhi's clarion call of "Do or Die" was meaningless and without having any direction. That is why the RSS did not participate in it. Whether it was his personal opinion or the authorised version of RSS, it was not clear to me. This question arises in my mind because these people make a distinction between personal opinion and Sangh's opinion. Earlier in January 2001, in *BJP Today*, a publication of BJP, had also raised the question whether freedom movement was really needed or not. According to the editor of the paper, had India patiently waited for independence then would it have not got independence as an undivided country? There was no need for struggle for independence and India could have got independence in the due course of time. In that case, there would not have been problems like Kashmir, Pakistan and Bangladesh and the suffering which the people went through during freedom struggle could have been easily avoided. After all, Congo and other countries also got their independence without any struggle. This also happened in the case of Philippines. In fact, the occupation of foreign land became an unprofitable business and hence the imperialistic counties gave up their colonies. The British left not only India but also Myanmar and Sri Lanka. The paper has attached a list of 45 countries that got their independence in the similar way. However, the paper did concede that Gandhi was not in a hurry to get independence as he was insisting on undivided India. The Muslim League and its leader Jinnah were against it. Nehru was too much in a hurry to get independence and it is he who became its greatest beneficiary. If we could have simply waited without launching the freedom movement, we could have easily got a united and independent India. It is in such a political approach that the seeds of malice towards Gandhi are to be found.

It also displays the lack of knowledge about India's struggle for independence.

On the one hand, they have been maintaining that no one has got independence without struggle. Then how the same people are saying we could have got independence as a matter of gift from the British. It is nothing short of a great insult for all those who fought for independence from 1857 onward including Savarkar, Subhas Chandra Bose and other revolutionaries. Even if we leave out the question of how Indian history is being distorted by these people, the real question is how long we would go on tolerating such mindless insult and humiliation to our revolutionaries and freedom fighters? This is an insidious and elitist attempt to mislead and misguide today's youth. There are still some people around, who think that the British rule was better than the present one. They could have stayed in their high positions and continued to live at the exploitation of the poor and the dispossessed. The youth should understand their mindset. Our leaders of those days maintained that the thirst for *swaraj* could not be quenched by the search for *suraaj* (good governance). They further asserted that once we get *swaraj*, we would establish *suraaj* by our own effort. Those who think that if they could travel from Kashmir to Rameshwaram wearing gold ornaments on their person that will be the real *suraaj*. They are least concerned about the issues like poverty, unemployment, starvation and exploitation based on religion and caste. They just want the peace and tranquility of the grave so that they could freely continue with their exploitation. How such people could understand the real meaning of fight for independence? For them slavery under the British was like an ornament which they could have worn and carried shamelessly. Here it is very relevant to refer to the speech delivered by Mahatma Gandhi on 8 August 1942, on the eve of launching of the Quit India Movement. Gandhi gave a new mantra to the people of India in his speech:

'Here is a mantra, a short one that I give you. You may imprint it on your hearts and let every breath of yours give expression to



it. The mantra is: "Do or Die." We shall either free India or die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery. Every true Congressman or (Congress) woman will join the struggle with an inflexible determination not to remain alive to see the country in bondage and slavery. Let that be your pledge.

Keep jails out of your consideration. If the Government keeps me free, I will spare you the trouble of filling the jails. I will not put on the Government the strain of maintaining a large number of prisoners at a time when it is in trouble. Let every man and woman live every moment of his or her life hereafter in the consciousness that he or she eats or lives for achieving freedom and will die, if need be, to attain that goal.

Take a pledge with God and your own conscience as witness, that you will no longer rest till freedom is achieved and will be prepared to lay down your lives in the attempt to achieve it. He who loses his life will gain it; he who will seek to save it shall lose it.'

The direction for freedom fighters and the common people given by Gandhi in his speech is crystal clear. But those inspired by Godse's mindset and ludicrous idea of Gandhi *vadh* save their lives by their non-participation in the struggle. In the words of Gandhi they lost their lives in their attempt to save it by running away from the struggle. What one could say about these spineless and lifeless people? They could not understand Gandhi and would never understand it.

It is such a Godse mentality which is responsible for everyday killing of some of the best ideas given by Gandhi like truth, non-violence, compassion, and purity of life and thought. Referring to the spread of such mindset one of the Hindi poets has written:

'Oh Gandhi! It is good you died at the right time otherwise you would be dying everyday.' We commemorate Gandhi's martyrdom day on 30 January every year. What could be more painful that Gandhi's assassination is also being staged by people of this mindset? We have to think seriously even after his martyrdom anti-Gandhi wave is not subsiding and a campaign based on

untruth and lie is being continuously launched. We may recall that out of the five attempts on Gandhi's life, Godse was involved in three of them. Those days the issue of Pakistan and giving back rupees fifty-five crores was non-existent. Gandhi never accepted the two nation theory and creation of Pakistan based on religion. His last fast during January 1948 has nothing to do with rupees fifty-five crores to be given to Pakistan. The Government of India handed over rupees fifty-five crores to Pakistan on 14 January 1948, but Gandhi's fast continued till 18 January 1948. In reality the fast was linked up with the reestablishing peace and communal harmony in the country. But the lie that Gandhi fasted for rupees fifty-five crores to be paid to Pakistan continues to be repeated at ad nauseam.

Gandhi wrote a letter to the Viceroy of India, regarding Bhagat Singh's case and pleaded with him for reducing punishment given to him. He also wrote a piece in *Young India* praising him for his bravery, sacrifice and his commitment to the country. Earlier Gandhi had expressed similar feelings in respect of Vir Savarkar. He not only wrote regarding Savarkar but also went to Ratnagiri to see him. Both of them differed on the issue of the pathway to independence of India, but Gandhi never lagged behind in pleading for Savarkar's release. Subsequently, Savarkar changed his direction. He was an accused in Gandhi's assassination case but was exonerated in the absence of credible evidence. However, he was not free from the blemish in the anti-Gandhi campaign. He was primarily brought into the anti-Gandhi campaign by his own followers. One would simply wonder whether his followers were his well-wishers or his enemies.

This is what exactly is happening in respect of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Both respected each other. It was on Gandhi's initiative that Ambedkar was made the Minister of Law, Government of India and subsequently as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly. Ambedkar stood for the liberation of the downtrodden section of our society. He was working for their liberation from social, economic and all other kinds of slavery. He

was supportive of Gandhi's service to the *harijan's* but his followers were trying to bring them to their own level and make him fight against Gandhi. In this kind of struggle who ultimately wins becomes immaterial. But the land on which these contests take place is ruined in the process. That is the real tragedy. Fortunately, some of the Dalit leaders took initiative for installing the statues of Gandhi and Ambedkar in Pune. Why should we sow the seeds of hatred in the minds of the younger generations who have not seen the leaders of previous generations like Gandhi, Savarkar, Bhagat Singh and Ambedkar. One has to consider what kind of self-interest such people have? In the name of great people, no one should seek to promote his own interest, otherwise the coming generation will never forgive us.

Pakistan emerged as an independent country because Hindus and Muslims could not live together in harmony. Similarly, India was divided into several states on the basis of language. Those people who have attachment for the land of the country and not with her people, want the entire Kashmir valley. They do not want the entire people of Jammu and Kashmir and hence they want to divide it in three parts—Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir valley. They don't want the Buddhists of Ladakh, Hindus of Jammu and Muslims of Kashmir valley to live together. They forget that this is a real divisive mentality. *Punyabhoomi* (sacred land) is the literal translation of the word Pakistan. Those who stress on religiosity in India are the real blood brothers of Jinnah. In their view differences based on religion and region are artificial but they don't accept the unity of all human beings. That is why a man like Gandhi who propounded man oriented Indianness appears as an enemy in their eyes. In fact, their entire politics is based on hatred, revenge and religious fanaticism. That is the primary reason for their anti-Gandhi bias.

Religious fanaticism of both Hindus and Muslims are equally condemnable. What is the understanding of Indian nationhood of those who reject Gandhi's version of it? They do not understand the kind of contradictions they are putting themselves in. If

nationhood is based on blood then Muslims are of the same blood as Hindus. If nationhood is based on religion then Buddhists of Japan, China, and Sri Lanka would have to be included as part of the *Hindu Rashtra*. Not only that, if the prevailing concept of nationalism would be changed according to the new conception of nationality as propounded by these anti-Gandhi groups, then there would be as many nations as religions. It is obvious that their assertion that the country belong only to Hindus and not to minorities would have to be given up. This is applicable to both Hindus and Muslims and they will have to accept the fact that the people living inside the boundary of our country, even though belonging to different religions are closer to each other rather than those of their own co-religionists of foreign lands.

Indian Constitution provides only single citizenship. Anyone who has voluntarily opted for the citizenship of another country cannot remain a citizen of India. But there are people, though citizens of India have greater fascination for foreign lands. They could not help to rid themselves off anti-Gandhi biases. They could not accept the simple living and high thinking of the Mahatma. *Khadi* village industries and concept of *gram swaraj* are an anathema to them. They are not supporters of the Gandhian concept of equity and justice. For them, British Raj was much better than the present dispensation. They like the western way of life as their economic, social and religious vested interests would be saved only under it. They have intense hatred for the poor, illiterates and the people living in slums. These people often forget that they are primarily responsible for the poverty and misery of our people. It is also for this reason that they take Gandhi as their enemy. After all, Gandhi was the true supporter of *daridranarayan* and they are only for *Lakshminarayan*.

Indian revolutionaries main slogan was that the concept like *paap* (evil), *punya* (good) should not be used as a means of earnings . But those who take religion as business, link up the present poverty and prosperity of the people with their *paap* and *punya* of the past life. They have made it a marketable commodity

and they continue to dominate the religious market. In this context, one has to accept that Marx was the first prophet who asserted that poverty and prosperity are not God made but they are man made. Gandhi even went beyond that. He rejected the caste differentiation prevailing in Hindu religion. He also wanted to obliterate the class differences. Both Gandhi and Marx wanted the society to be free from inequality and domination. Such a social order was not acceptable to those who have developed vested interest in the present economic order. That is another reason for their being anti-Gandhi. Gandhi's concept of *satyagraha* which he wanted to be used in favour of the poor and dispossessed has also alienated the present propertied and privileged classes. Naturally they reject most of the basic ideas of the Mahatma.

Gandhi's concept of *swaraj* and autonomy is another reason which has created a feeling of animus against Gandhi among rich and powerful sections of our society. It is to be remembered that Gandhi always preferred the word *swaraj* to independence. But some privileged people on the basis of their high class and caste did not evince much interest in the struggle for independence of the country. They were primarily interested in retaining and enjoying their privileges on the basis of their high social background. These people never had faith in democracy either. They always thought that those equipped with wealth and education should only enjoy voting rights or at least they alone should stand as candidates for election. On the other hand, if wealth and education alone remain criteria for electoral politics then Dalit, tribal and the poor would never have the right to participate in the political process of the country. He wanted productive labour as criteria for voting rights. Explaining his concept of *swaraj* he said: 'By *swaraj* I mean the government of India by the consent of the people as ascertained by the largest number of the adult population, male or female, native born or domiciled, who have contributed by manual labour to the service of the State and who have taken the trouble of having their names registered as voters.' Hence he rejected wealth

and education as the minimum criteria for voting rights for the citizens. Gandhi's view on the subject is clear from the following reporting in *Harijan* in March 1947.

'As to the franchise, he swore by the franchise of all adults, male and female, above the age of twenty-one or even eighteen. He would bar old men like himself. They were of no use as voters. India and the rest of the world did not belong to those who were on the point of dying. To them belonged death, life to the young. Thus he would have a bar against persons beyond a certain age, say fifty, as he would be against persons below eighteen.'

Life expectancy has gone up nevertheless Gandhi's vision is quite clear. He wanted *gram swaraj* on the basis of adult franchise. 'Our government in our village' is a slogan derived from Gandhian thinking. All issues at the village level should be settled by *gram sabha* and thereby villagers should be free from all litigations. How could the ruling classes prefer such decentralized polity, village system and economy as they have always enjoyed privileges based on caste and property? Such radical Gandhian ideas would totally destroy the present exploitative system. Hence they assert that Gandhi has become outdated. There is a need to put a full stop to these ideas and ideals. That is the reason why there is a serious programme to kill Gandhian ideas once for all. Despite *Panchayat Raj* being provided under the Indian Constitution, the colonial influences of western countries is on the increase. The economic and cultural slavery is very much at our doorstep. Those who want to destroy the dignity and independence of India, they would continue with their anti-Gandhi campaign. Gandhi's Indianess has become virtually synonymous with Indian ethos all over the world. These people forget that politics of murder could not lead to any kind of good society. By putting an ideological garb, the supporters of violence have put Gandhi's Gujarat on fire. That happened to Saurashtra as well. Such people are not at all interested in nation building. They play the politics of caste and religion. They hardly care if the country disintegrates and even

gets destroyed in the process. The world might feel that there is no alternative to Gandhian thought, but these people are scared of losing their existence if they do not continue with murderous tirade against Gandhi.

The man in the street looks at Gandhi and his ideas with hope and expectation. It is the only shelter they can look forward to. These anti-Gandhi elements want to deprive the common man from their last source of support and succour. They have the implicit if not explicit support of some political parties. We cannot forget that there were such elements who indulged in sinful acts of distributing sweets after his assassination. Even today there are people in Maharashtra who are willing to celebrate Godse's day of demise. The only thing left to be done is to get a postal stamp in the name of Godse to put him on the high pedestal or to seek Bharat Ratna for him posthumously! I will not be surprised if these elements try to make such ridiculous attempts to glorify Godse and his cohorts. It is true that these efforts may not bear fruits. This is because it would not be acceptable to the general masses in India. Besides, Gandhi is also held in high esteem by the people all over the world.

It is to be noted that some of the best coworkers of Gandhi were from Maharashtra and that too from among the *Brahmins*. It is saddening for a man like me that his assassin was also a Maharashtrian *Brahmin*. One could hardly imagine how much hurt people like Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Dada Dharmadhikari, Kaka Kalelkar, Appasaheb Pattwardhan, Shankar Rao Deo and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar might have felt all of them being Maharashtrians. The poet Mardhekar put it very eloquently: 'Let us see ourselves again by taking out glasses from our eyes'.

For religious fanatics, religion is matter of exploitation, revenge and investment. Such people are determined to teach a lesson to the people of other religions. This is a symbol of their murderous inclination and butcher's mentality and that is why they take out their deep feeling of revenge by putting the scene of Gandhi's

assassination through drama, cinema and publication of different kinds of literature. All these are done by groups of fanatic Hindus. Their *Hindutva* is based on their animus against Muslims and Gandhi. Murder and violence are found to be their mainstay. They take devilish pleasure in watching anti-Gandhi scenes. They clap, shout and even tear out Gandhi's photos and destroy his statues. Perhaps they want to put a statute of Godse in place of Gandhi. Cruelty and enmity are their bravery. This tendency is spreading all over the country and it has become manifest during 2002 Gujarat riots. It is all the more tragic that it happened in Gujarat, the very land in which Gandhi was born. Even the educated and so called middle classes participated in such inhuman and brutal riots. There was a time when the middle class was in the forefront of the national struggle. Those days it was a matter of pride to be a part of the middle class. But now the middle class has become like *trishanku* hanging between heaven and earth. They want to join the rank of Tata, Birla and Ambani. But in actuality they cannot attain that status. Hence they are in dilemma and like a pendulum moving from one end to another. Their faith is also not steadfast. They are fence sitters and try to enjoy physical pleasures as much as they can. They could never understand Gandhi or his philosophy nor do they have the desire to do so. They have blinkers on their eyes. Regimentation and indoctrination have been their faith. The whole scenario has been beautifully depicted by Kahlil Gibran in his oft quoted poem: *The Garden of the Prophet* (1934).

'Pity the nation that is full of beliefs and empty of religion.  
Pity the nation that raises not its voice when it walks in a funeral, boasts not except among its ruins, and will rebel not save when its neck is laid between the sword and the block.

Pity the nation whose statesman is a fox, whose philosopher is a juggler, and whose art is the art of patching and mimicking.



Pity the nation that welcomes its new ruler with trumpeting and farewells him with hootings, only to welcome another with trumpeting again.

Pity the nation whose sages are dumb with years and whose strong men are yet in the cradle.'

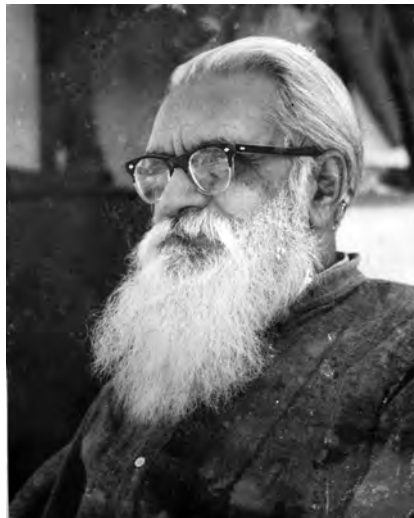
Such people deserve more of pity and compassion rather than anger and angst as they do not know what they are doing. They are incapable of using their own discretion. They can only receive order and obey. They don't know that revenge is against the true spirit of every religion. There is no difference between Hindu and Muslim fanaticism. Hence nobody is safe on account of such religious fanaticism. At least Hindus should be conscious, as except in Nepal and India they are in minority in all other countries. Religious fanaticism of one group could not be countered by that of another religious group. We call India a great nation forgetting that a country comprising small men could never be great. Rama is the symbol of truth and high ideals of our country. Thus eulogizing murderous scene of Mahatma Gandhi is nothing short of killing the true spirit behind Rama and his ideals.

Godra plot in Gujarat might have been a part of a well planned conspiracy but what happened subsequently could not be justified. Reaction to such incidents could not be based on cruelty and revenge, rather it needs to be more sober, healthy and positive. It should not also be forgotten that fanaticism of majority community could be more dangerous and cruel. The only result comes out of such thoughtless reaction is that people of two different religions could not live in peace and harmony. These people are destroying the multicultural fabric as well as the international standing of India. They have become totally insensitive and blind on account of their religious fanaticism.

These religious fanatics failed to understand that Gandhi could not be destroyed this way. His ideas and philosophy may lie low for sometime but it would bounce back again at an appropriate time. That is the kind of seed Gandhi's ideas present. He is in the hearts and minds of the poor, homeless and dispossessed. He has

got a permanent place there and could never be driven out from the popular mind. Even new interpretation of history denigrating Gandhi would not obliterate his role from the pages of history. But the real question is whether the good people are going to remain in deep slumber, leaving the entire field into the hands of bad people. As Abraham Lincoln put it: 'To sin by silence when they should protest makes cowards of men.' This is what exactly is happening at the moment to our country. Similar sentiments have been expressed by Martin Luther King Jr. when he said: 'The ultimate tragedy is not the oppression and cruelty by the bad people but the silence over that by the good people.' This is what is called silent support of the good people to the evil deeds of people with bad intentions. It is believed that the demons do not have their own powers. It is support of the good people which empowers them to perform evil deeds.

It is high time that we break our silence and actively participate in social life. There is a Gujarati saying that good people meet only at the cremation ground. If this goes on, then Gandhi will be murdered day in and day out.



Kakasaheb Kalelkar



## Culture of Peace: Some Reflections

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Those only can take up civil disobedience, who believe in willing obedience even to irksome laws imposed by the State so long as they do not hurt their conscience or religion, and are prepared equally willing to suffer the penalty of civil disobedience. Disobedience to be civil has to be absolutely non-violent, the underlying principle being the winning over the opponent by suffering, i.e., love.

*M.K. Gandhi*

It was on 11 September 1906 that Gandhiji had initiated and led a non-violent movement against the racial discrimination and other atrocities perpetrated by the South African white government on the people of Indian origin living there. Thus the year 2006 was its centenary year. Initially it was characterized as the passive resistance movement. Gandhiji was not happy about such characterization as it had failed to fully capture the nature and ethos of that movement. Hence, he wanted an Indian word to be coined to fully capture its nature and ethos. He was aware that the term passive resistance was of European origin. It was resorted to by those people who had either no right to vote or who looked at themselves as too weak to offer any kind of physical resistance though ideologically they might not have been against such violent resistance. Thus it was a pragmatic approach for them to offer passive resistance. On the other hand, the movement led by Gandhiji in South Africa was of a new and original nature. There was no place of any kind of violence in that movement. Besides, Gandhiji never considered either himself or

his followers being weak in terms of moral force. Hence there was a need for a new Indian word to fully capture the true spirit of the new movement. To that end, he gave an advertisement in his journal *The Indian Opinion* inviting suggestions for coining a new term for his movement. In response to his advertisement, Maganlal Gandhi came out with a new term *sadagraha* to characterize the movement. Gandhiji replaced the term *sadagraha* with *satyagraha*. Such is the origin of the term *satyagraha* which came ultimately to dominate our freedom movement under Gandhi's leadership.

The United Nations had declared the decade 2001-2010 as International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the children of the World. Unfortunately, the period had been marked more by violence and strife rather than by peace and non-violence. Apart from the attack on Iraq, there has been numerous terrorist attacks in various parts of the world. It is to be noted that the United Nations declaration had talked about ushering in a culture of peace particularly for the children of the entire world. The primary idea behind such a noble declaration was that the entire culture and mindset relating to the idea of war and peace would have to be changed to prevent the suffering particularly on the part of children of the world, arising out of all kinds of war and strife. To that end, the entire value system, the way of life, the entire thinking and behaviour pattern would have to undergo a radical change, so that human interactions should be marked by a deep sense of inter-dependence and the unity of all beings. Besides, the new world order would have to be marked by such noble ideas like democracy, justice, freedom, human rights, tolerance etc. For making a decisive move in that direction, we have to look into the root causes of violence and strife and also to find the ways and means to totally root them out through sincere and sustained dialogue and discussions. A new spirit of cooperation and inter-dependence would have to be instilled. In the process, the humankind would move towards a new culture based on peace and human rights. All this would not only free our children from the scourges of war and violence but would also

take them away from all kinds of prejudices and discrimination based on caste, creed, religion and region. Indeed, all this would also lead to the emergence of a new social order. To that end, what is required is the introduction of a new educational system marked by these social and moral values. Thus the entire thinking pattern of our children would be re-oriented and reshaped.

Unfortunately, all such hopes and expectations for a new way of thinking and living were belied by subsequent historical developments. The period was marked by all kinds of war and strife. General Douglas MacArthur had said in the wake of Gandhi's assassination: 'Nothing more revolting has occurred in the history of the modern world than the senseless assassination of this venerable man. That he should die by violence is one of those bitter anachronisms that seem to refute all logic.'

In the evolution of civilization, if it is to survive, all men cannot fail eventually to adopt his belief that the process of mass application of force to resolve contentious issues is fundamentally not only wrong but contains within itself the germs of self-destruction. Gandhiji, however, was one of those prophets who lived far ahead of the times. The problems of the world would be ultimately solved by the ideas expressed by Gandhi and not by military means. It was on account of Gandhiji that peace and non-violence have come to be accepted as a major human values even amidst all kinds of conflicts. Even Eisenhower, the American president had said that there was no alternative to disarmament. He had further added that it had got to be an integral part of the behaviour pattern of the nations of the world. Total disarmament may not be in the realm of possibilities, but there is all round talks about the reduction of arms and arms race. Presently, there is a universal desire for peace and non-violence. Hence the present era could rightly be called the Gandhian era—the age of peace and non-violence. It was such deep yearnings for a peaceful world which prompted thousands of women to assemble in New York on the occasion of the Mother's day. They unanimously declared that they give birth to beautiful

children but men teach and prepare them for cutting each others throats.

Hence, they pleaded for the instant stoppage of the production of arms and banning their use forthwith. They also made it clear that they would not vote for the leaders and groups who fail to take such steps in the right direction. It is quite natural for the mothers and sisters to be deeply concerned about the growing tendency among young children towards violence and conflicts. There is no ban for arms purchase in USA. Hence, a young boy killed nineteen school children, just to test whether his father's gun was in working condition or not. That shocked and shook the entire American people, as there could hardly be a more tragic situation than that. That also prompted New Jersey legislature to pass a resolution to the effect that non-violence, compassion, and non-violent resistance as taught and practiced by Gandhi, Mother Teresa and Martin Luther King Jr. respectively should form an integral part of the syllabi in the educational institutions. Not only that, a T.V. Company had also prepared a film of ninety minutes duration on the lives of these three eminent personalities. But our experience is that America never practices what it preaches. Their profession and preachings are primarily meant for others.

Atomic weapons are still being experimented and produced on a large scale. All parties are involved in such arms competition; though they claim that they are doing all this to promote a culture of peace and non-violence. However, the truth is that the cold war in some form or the other is still on. Military attack is still being launched in different parts of the world. The entire American economy is based on armament industries. Vinoba Bhave had called cold war as 'hot peace'. He further added that thoughts and ideas are being broadcasted but unfortunately, they are never 'deep casted'. In other words, they are a part of just lip-service and therefore they lack both depth and dimension. He really put his finger on the contradictory behaviour pattern of nations of the world: they talk of peace and non-violence, but indulge in the production of arms on an uninterrupted basis.

In this context, one is reminded of what Gandhiji had said about peace and order under the British rule. He has called it as the peace prevailing in the graveyard. Thus talking about peace and non-violence is like a temporary feeling of renunciation at the cremation ground. The real challenge is to develop a culture of peace and non-violence as conceived and declared by the United Nations. Culture stands for a feeling and behaviour marked by a sense of equality, evenmindedness and above all a feeling of *advaita*—non-dualism. Culture is not a divisive concept—it is a uniting force. It never creates a barrier between man and man. It involves a feeling of cooperation, mutual respect and interdependence. It also means to have space for others in one's mind and heart; to have empathetic feeling for others and to share and take their pains and pleasures as our own. In other words, it means seeing one's self in others and other's self in oneself. But culture could be of two kinds: culture of consumerism and hedonism and the culture of renunciation. The core of Indian culture and tradition lies in an *advaitic* vision of the cosmic order, faith in the essential goodness and divinity of man and a strong faith in some kind of supernatural power. The real meaning of theistic faith is that no man is beyond redemption forever, i.e. no one could be taken as one hundred per cent demon. Here the emphasis is on human values, more than the good and bad qualities of human beings. Such a faith is expressed in terms of conciliation, compassion, dialogues and non-dualism. In other words, here emphasis is not on the 'otherhood' rather it is on the 'brotherhood'.

It is true that science has brought people of the world closer to each other. But science on its own would never make them comrades in arms. That job is to be performed by culture. If the culture of peace is to be established there is no alternative to the Gandhian way. Non-violence is a cultural and social value. But quite often it also works as a revolutionary value. Hence, non-violent resistance to all kinds of injustices based on human bravery and strength is of crucial importance in the entire scheme of things. But the culture of peace could not be established so long

as there is injustice, inequity and social disorder. There are people in our society who have so many clothes in their possession that it is difficult for them to make a choice of clothes for a particular occasion. On the other hand, there are people who do not have enough clothes to hide their nakedness—to cover their bodies. How could the culture of peace be established in such an environment of inequality and inequity? Gandhi had raised his powerful voice against such iniquitous state of affairs. He said it in clear terms that human life should be based on need and not on greed. For whatever might be the level of human needs, there would be always a limit to it. But human wants have no upper ceiling, no upper limits—no point of satiety. If society is to be based on insatiable human wants there would be no peace and non-violence in such a system. Thus to build a culture of peace, a new social order based on equity, fair play and justice would have to be founded. That would require a revolutionary change in the existing social order. In fact, we have to go into the roots of violence and also find a way out. In other words, we have to find a pathway to peace. To achieve that, we would have to bring about a revolutionary change in our educational, cultural, economic and social policy.

In this context, it would be relevant to bring to our attention the views of Thomas Robinson, a scholar from Stanford University. He is firmly of the opinion that if T.V. viewing time among our children is reduced, their level of anger and aggressiveness could be certainly brought down. Not only that, even the selection of video games and T.V. serials would have to be done in a judicious manner. The kind of T.V. serials which American teenagers often view is full of violent and pornographic scenes. These teenagers are in the frontline of those who indulge in eve teasing, physical fight and even engaging in threat giving activities. In all this, our teenagers are also tending to walk on the same American path as imitating the western culture is becoming their second nature. They are also learning from cinemas and films the art and science of committing murder, rape, theft and other criminal activities. These mediums and means are posing a serious threat to the



culture of peace and harmony in our society. It needs to be clearly understood that they could not be simply taken as a means of entertainment. In fact, they only promote the culture of violence and disharmony. One of the leading poets rightly observes that we are teaching geography to our children by removing earth from under their feet; and teaching them poetry and scriptures by gagging their mouth. We often forget that *sanskar* is imbibed out of the overall social and family environment and it could not be taught by rote.

Cultural and educational institutions also play a crucial role in *sanskar* formation. Unfortunately, today there is nothing in our environment which could promote the culture of peace in our society. In fact, we lack a mindset to instil a deep sense of culture and *sanskar* to our children. According to the poet Kusumagraj, the real challenge before our generation is to promote the purity of body, mind and spirit among our children. Besides, a cooperative and non-aggressive spirit would have to be instilled in them. According to him, in such a scheme of things, community singing, co-operative games and other cultural activities would play a crucial role. They should not be taken just as mediums of entertainment. All this could be used to create and promote a new consciousness among our children.

Today playgrounds are missing from our educational institutions. We know from our experience that if the flowing water does not get a straight path, it moves forward in a zigzag way. That is also true of our children and their abundant energies. In the absence of good channels for expressing their youthful energies, they tend to indulge in cinema and similar other anti-cultural activities. We cannot blame only our children for such a state of affairs. Does an ass make a distinction between a lottery paper and a page from the *Bhagvad Gita* while eating rags from the dustbin? Our present hedonist culture is sailing in the same boat. It hardly promotes a deep sense of discrimination between the good and evil in the minds and hearts of our children. It is not surprising that the major ethos of our culture is on the decline.

Hence sensitive souls are of the opinion that there is an urgent need to bring about a radical change in our educational system which is basically promoting the culture of cut-throat competition. As we know that war and violence arise first in the hearts and minds of men before they are given concrete expression on the battlefields. Hence, our educational system must be re-oriented to promote the culture of co-operation, peace and brotherhood.

We have never thought about our children and their problems as independent units. We have always looked at them as inseparable parts of our own life. Both Kahlil Gibran and Rabindranath Tagore made some apt observations on the problems of the children of the world. In fact, we have always taken them for granted. These observations are worth considering. Gibran writes:

Your children are not your children.  
They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.  
They come through you but not from you,  
And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.  
You may give them your love but not your thoughts,  
For they have their own thoughts.  
You may house their bodies but not their souls,  
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,  
which you can not visit, not even in your dreams.  
You may strive to be like them, but seek not  
to make them like you.  
For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.  
You are the bows from which your children as living  
arrows are sent forth.

The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite and  
He bends you with  
His might that His arrows may  
go swift and far.  
Let your bending in the Archer's hand be for gladness;  
For even as He loves the arrows that flies, so He loves  
also the bow that is stable.

Rabindranath Tagore in his sonnet *Snehagrass* also expressed similar views and advised the mothers not to treat their children as their private property.

Unfortunately, we are used to looking at our children like nothing more than our own properties. We bear and rear them up and provide them education in the hope that they would look after us during our old age. We have another problem in respect of our children. We want them to be carbon copies of their fathers. If some of them fail to do so, we consider them to be failure—good for nothing. This is a very reactionary and regressive stand. We forget that if God wanted to make the sons the carbon copies of their fathers, He could have very well extended the age of the fathers themselves. We could have also escaped the problem of overpopulation. We start committing various kinds of atrocities on our children in the name of discipline. Today, it has acquired a universal dimension. We parents start to decide how they should live and what they should do. We expect total obedience from them. Should we accept Parasuram as an ideal son who cut the throat of his mother, Renuka, at the behest of his father Jamadgni? In fact, we should look at Prahalad and Bharat as ideal sons who defied his father Hirankaashyapa and his mother Kaikeyi respectively for the sake of truth and fair play. The truth of the matter is that the root cause of the problems in respect of our children lies in our selfishness. Even the problems like sexual abuse of our children and child labour also have their roots in our selfishness. These problems also start from our homes. The United Nations has come out with a charter of Children's Right. It has raised its powerful voice against the abuse and exploitation of the children of the world. But all this has not made much difference in the behaviour patterns of their parents and guardians. Even our society has been overlooking such atrocities against our children.

True, there is a law against child labour. In actual practice, it has met the same fate as it has happened to other radical laws. We never feel concerned about the atrocities committed against others

children till it happens to our own children. That is the bitter truth. That is why violence against children is on the increase both inside and outside their homes. Similar, situation also exists in respect of our women folks. Though we have accepted democracy as the system of our governance but there is no democracy in our homes. Atrocities inside homes have also become a worldwide problem. Violence and atrocities against women is always on the rise. Moral trafficking, sexual abuse, kidnapping have become the order of the day. Scholars and researchers have concluded from their detailed investigations that forty per cent of married women suffer from domestic atrocities and violence. According to one survey in USA, a woman is killed every second over there. Incidents of rape are on the increase. According to Amnesty International Report published in March 2001, 'torture is fed by a global culture which denies women equal rights with men, and which legitimizes violence against women.' Present male dominated world culture is primarily responsible for all these atrocities. It rejects gender equality despite verbally being committed to it. Women are caught in the web of globalization on the one hand and the system of patriarchy on the other. Women are kept under male's domination. But they are also taken as a thing for enjoyment. They are not even in full command of their bodies.

Women would have to struggle hard to come out of desperate situations. Such a view has been expressed by Nawal El Saadawi of Egypt. A world organization has held globalization as the main villain of piece for the atrocities against male children. Strangely enough, Mohamed Kamal Mustafa, a Muslim cleric of Spain, in his book *Women in Islam* has made a detailed presentation on how to inflict physical violence against women. This has further encouraged males to deal harshly with women folks. In his book, he has suggested that men should not inflict injuries on the soft parts of women's body. Rather they should use a stick for mild beating on their hands and legs. He was awarded fifteen months imprisonment for promoting violence against women. This is a matter of some consolation for the feminists. In India, the so-called

religious and spiritual country, foeticides and infanticides are being carried out on a large scale. Thus it is clear that women could have a sense of security only when they are under self-protection. Admittedly, *shanti sena*, particularly *mahila shanti sena*, is the need of the hour.

To that end, we have to change the entire conception and the way of thinking about our culture. We have to build up a new culture of peace and harmony both inside and outside our homes. Unless that is done, there would be no end to the acts of violence against women and children in our society. In course of watching acts of violence against their mothers, children do imbibe a culture of violence and nuisance. Such acts of violence and atrocities indulged by seniors even become culturally acceptable to them. Hence, atrocities against women must cease, if we want to take away our children from culture of violence. Obviously if the environment inside our home is peaceful, cultured and psychologically healthy, our children would easily imbibe the culture of peace and harmony. If we fail to do that, our children will go towards the violent way.

It was with such a perspective that Gandhiji had stated that constructive programme would provide a real foundation for *swaraj*. He had also made a proposal for *shanti sena*. It is the time for us to take a serious note of his proposal. As early as 1938, he wrote in *Harijan*:

‘Sometime back I have placed a proposal for Peace Brigade/*Shanti Sena*. The *shanti sainiks* would work for peace and harmony putting even their lives at stake. They would play a very crucial and useful role particularly at the time of communal riots. Their pristine reputation would be their earning. There is a need for such *sainiks* who would replace regular police/army by making their use as redundant.’

He also reiterated his proposal for *shanti sena* during 1946 during a meeting on peace. Subsequently, the idea of *shanti sena* was given a more concrete shape by Vinoba and Jayaprakash

Narayan. I vividly remember that during the Second World War a civil defence organisation was set up at Wardha. We used to work as the watchmen during night. It has to be clearly understood that the nature and work of the *shanti sena* is quite different from the Peace Brigade set up by the United Nations or from civil defence organizations. The job of *shanti-sainiks*, unlike the members of the Peace Bridge and civil defence organization is not meant to be confined only during war/riots or other types of disturbances. They work for peace and harmony as a part of their *nitya sadhana* and not just a *naimetic sadhana*. In other words, they have to be active all the time for promoting a culture of peace and harmony in the society. They have to go into the roots of violence and continuously engage themselves in the task of eliminating them from our social life.

‘A *sena* (army) for peace’ in itself is an extraordinary idea. Even the idea of Peace Brigade as conceived in the western countries, creates ripples of disharmony in our minds and hearts. It brings language of war and conflicts even in the task of establishing peace. The work of the *shanti sena* would have to be viewed in a larger perspective. Today even local and regional issues have assumed a universal dimension. It is a strange situation that people’s power is missing even in the present time of democracy and citizenship. In fact, the idea is that the *shanti sena* should emerge out of citizen’s/people’s power. A number of experiments have been made with *shanti sena*. It has been successfully used in places like south India, Bihar and Assam. *Mahila shanti sainiks* in particular intervene during any incident of riots or disturbances. They try to enter into dialogue with the people of the area in general and the parties involved in particular primarily with a view to establish peace and harmony. What is more creditable to these brave *sainiks* that they do not hesitate even to put their lives at stake in the process. They of course, keep away from village politics which mostly contribute to such conflicts. Hence, their credibility with general public is never in doubt as they work without any fear or favour—always

in a non-partisan way. Besides, they combine in their personalities both the roles of a *shanti sainik* as well as that of a *lok sevak*.

It needs to be borne in mind that the usual image of a *sainik* is of a person who is hard, both in his heart and mind. He is trained to kill and get killed, if it comes to that, *passé*. He is basically trained to tackle the enemy forces. In sharp contrast a *shanti sainiks* are made differently. They remain compassionate and empathetic all the time. It is the milk of human compassion which fills up their heart. They are ever ready to lay down the lives for saving the lives of other people.

Not only that, they have to rise above the feelings of caste, creed, region and religion. Their role has become all the more important as the conflict-situation in our society are always on the increase. In fact, a similar situation is also prevailing at the universal level. Hence, they have to play a constructive role at the universal level. The real challenge before *shanti sainiks*, whether at local or international level is to create an environment of peace and brotherhood.

Vinoba once asked the people to take particular care of old people, children, widows, sick and unemployed. They should see to it that no one goes to bed empty-stomach. Drug addiction is also another problem to be tackled by the *shanti sainiks*. It is an organized conspiracy against the poor people. On that count, they always remain in the grip of poverty. Hence a *shanti sainik* has to be active in this area as well. In Assam *shanti sainiks* are active in the Bodo area as well as in Bihar. My own agony is that there is a little understanding about the role of *shanti sainik* from local to the universal level.

In this connection, it is good to remember that the year 2005 happened to be the platinum jubilee year of the salt *satyagraha*. Gandhiji started his movement with the clear understanding that salt is used even in the poorest of the poor's homes and hearths. In several way that was an extraordinary movement.

In the evening prayer meeting of the Sabarmati Ashram, a day before starting his Dandi March, he explained the significance

of the salt *satyagraha* to the inmates of the ashram. He said: 'I believe there are men in India to complete the work begun by me today. I have faith in the righteousness of our cause and the purity of our weapons. And where the means are clean, there God is undoubtedly present with His blessings. And where these three combine, there defeat is an impossibility. A satyagrahi, whether free or incarcerated, is ever victorious. He is vanquished only when he forsakes truth and non-violence and turns a deaf ear to the inner Voice. If, therefore, there is such a thing as defeat for even a satyagrahi, he alone is the cause of it. God bless you all and keep off all obstacles from the path in the struggle that begins tomorrow. Let this be our prayer.'

He started his Dandi March on the morning of 12 March 1930 with his seventy-eight followers from the ashram at Ahmedabad. For purposes of the March, his followers and workers had arranged for milk from Surat to be used by the volunteers. They had also hired the workers who would carry it with candle light on their heads on the way to Dandi. Gandhiji did not like the idea. In a self-introspecting mood he said that all of us are made of blood and flesh. Hence, we are subject to all kinds of temptations. We could easily come under the temptation or even delusion. He pleaded with them to avoid such occasions of temptation for his followers or even for himself. He pointed out that whereas we are supposed to spend only seven paise on our individual needs, they have made us spend more than fifty times of that amount. If we do that, how could we oppose the hefty salary received by the Viceroy? We have to work as the representative of millions of the marginalized and mute people who are unable to raise their voice. In such a perspective, how could we afford to spend such huge sums? We hardly need candle for the way. Even if needed, we could very well carry them on our heads. If we do not mend our ways, we could not hope to usher in *swaraj*.

After covering the distance of 241 miles, the marchers led by him reached Dandi on the evening of 5 April 1930. In the early



morning of 6th April, he picked a pinch of salt. Subsequently he was arrested. He asked the marchers to work under the leadership of Abbas Tyabji and Sarojini Naidu. He also called upon the women to come forward and join the movement in a big way as they are temperamentally more suited to *satyagraha* struggle.

He also expected them to continue with their picketing work against the liquor shops and the shops of foreign clothes. Thousands of people from all over the country were arrested while defying salt laws. The government unleashed a reign of terror on the people. He exhorted *satyagrahis* by saying that the prestige of the country was in their hands. Hence, they should not make any compromise with the government and its salt laws, irrespective of any risk to their life and limbs. But the government was determined to crush the movement. Shooting and lathi-charge became the order of the day. That did not deter our people from defying the law. Women in particular displayed extraordinary courage in the entire process. Sorajini Naidu as the leader of the volunteer group had asked Gandhiji as being women how long she was expected to hold the flag flying. He told her, to do it till her hands are broken or she has fallen dead. Subsequently, a decision was taken to raid the Dharasana Salt Depot by *satyagrahis*. Gandhiji was convinced that the *satyagrahis* would be able to withstand all acts of atrocities inflicted by the government. He was proved right as *satyagrahis* were able to hold their ground even in the face of the worst kind of atrocities unleashed by the colonial administration. The rest is the history which is known to most of us.

In Maharashtra, the salt *satyagraha* was launched at a number of places. Many people faced lathi-charge and even imprisonment. The symbols of revolution are like those of algebra and not like arithmetic. Padayatra is March on the road not a *morcha*. Salt *satyagraha* was a symbol of revolution. It was during the course of our freedom struggle that the science of *satyagraha* evolved in a big way. The slogan during J.P. Movement Hamla chahe jaisa hoga, hath hamara nahi uthega (whatever may be the nature of attack, we would not raise our hands in self-protection) was an

offshoot of our freedom struggle. We have to bear in mind that J.P. Movement also tried to build up a new culture of peace and harmony by overcoming all obstacles to them. Let us not forget that disarmament could not be equated with peace. We have also to understand the distinction between peace movement and non-violent revolution. They do not differ just in words; rather they differ in their spirit as well. The former is negative in conception whereas the latter is positive in spirit. That is why Einstein on 12 February 1950 had said that it was wrong to think that armament could ensure security: so long the humankind takes any step as a counter measure, anticipating the future threat, there would be no peace in the world. The issue is that all measures should be taken to promote co-existence and cooperation among the nations of the world. To that end, we have to get rid of distrust and fear of each other. Violence in every field would have to be discarded. This is what we may call a real culture of peace. Such a culture of peace should be reflected in the life of individuals, society as well that the nations of the world. Unless that is done, all kinds of armaments would continue to be produced and the scourge of war would continue in the world. We have to bring about a real unity between our thoughts and action. Authentic and concrete measures would have to be taken to build up a true culture of peace and harmony. That is the ultimate truth.



Gurudev and Mahatma



## **Gandhi: The Commander of Brave Soldiers**

A body of civil resisters is, therefore, like an army subject to all the discipline of a soldier, only harder because of want of excitement of an ordinary soldier's life. And as a civil resistance army is or ought to be free from passion because free from the spirit of retaliation, it requires the fewest number of soldiers. Indeed one PERFECT civil resister is enough to win the battle of Right against Wrong.

*M.K. Gandhi*

It is usually believed that armies are State oriented and power oriented. In some respect it is also individual oriented as it has to receive and obey the order of the commander. Most of the soldiers are salaried people. They are obedient and committed to their work and assignment. Some of them might hold their own faith but it is not considered as a positive quality for them. If they start doing independent thinking then the discipline of the army will be loosened. The soldiers of government army are usually not supposed to be emotional people, as any soft feelings on their part might come in the way of the performance of their hard and difficult duties.

However, the soldiers of army of Shivaji Maharaj and Indian National Army (INA) of Subhas Chandra Bose could be put in an entirely different category. They were fired by the feeling of freedom and *swaraj*. They were more of volunteers rather than paid soldiers. As such they were willing to sacrifice their life for

the sake of their cherished cause. They were personally committed to their respective commanders or leaders. They were wedded to swords and were convinced that blood letting and revolution have very close relationships. But for them the words of their chief commander almost carried scriptural sanctity. Hence, if their commander was removed from the scene, they used to get disoriented.

According to Dada Dharmadhikari, the fight against the British demanded people with great tenacity and willingness to suffer and make sacrifices. Gandhi provided the role of the commander of a unique non-violent army. He sought such soldiers in his fight against the British. They were inspired by the ideal of *swaraj* and they were committed to their cause and their leader. There was a popular notion in Maharashtra that even his enemies could sleep on the lap of Gandhi as he can never betray their trust. It was taken as a negative side of Gandhi's personality and he was not taken as a fighting soldier. It was also propagated that by opposing all kinds of wars, Gandhi disqualified himself from being a fighter. This is how the anti-Gandhi bias was propagated in some parts of the country. These people forget that Gandhi has fought against racial discrimination in South Africa. True, it was not a war but it was certainly a non-violent battle, *satyagraha*. Gandhi's struggle did not encompass only his non-violent soldiers. His was a popular movement. Maybe, India could have got independence some day even without Gandhian struggles. But it is more than certain that without Gandhi the common men and women would never have participated in the freedom struggle. In particular, women would never have come out in the streets leaving their homes and hearths behind. This was a rare contribution of Gandhi which has hardly any parallel in the world history. Besides, he introduced moral and civilized values in our struggle for independence. He refused to play the politics of enemy symbol. He even reposed his faith in his opponents. This was a real bravery and faith of its own kind.

Once Dada Dharmadhikari was asked whether there was any example in history where independence had been attained by

non-violent means. Dada replied in his own characteristic way by saying whether Dada Dharmadhikari was born earlier in history but he is just standing in front of you. It would not be correct to say that something that has not happened earlier in history would never happen in future either. We can learn this lesson from the life and times of Mahatma Gandhi. The kind of non-violent movement he launched both in South Africa and India has no precedence in history. *Satyagraha* has been an instrument of non-violent resistance at the individual level. Socrates and Prahalaad are considered to be its earliest practitioners at their own level. Prior to Gandhi, there is no historical evidence to prove that it had ever been used as a popular means of non-violent resistance. It is Gandhi who made *satyagraha* a means of popular non-violent resistance on a massive scale. *Satyagraha* was primarily based on the underlying idea of love. That is why it made a tremendous impact on the minds of the people. Besides, there was no sense of enmity and revenge in Gandhian lexicon. He rejected the popular notion that one's present friend could be turned into his future foe. He actually reversed it by saying that your today's enemy could become your tomorrow's friend. Hence human beings should not start their life journey with a feeling of distrust and revenge.

This was fully demonstrated during the movement for boycott of foreign clothes. One of the female participants took off all her jewellery and handed them over to a *Khadi* wearing person who was totally a stranger to her. She wrote down her address and asked him to take them to her home. The stranger asked her as to what was the source of trust in him. She instantaneously replied that since you are wearing *Khadi*, I don't have to think twice before trusting you. This is the kind of trust the *Khadi* wearing people enjoyed in those days. That was the real miracle of Gandhi. *Khadi* wearing was a symbol of being a Gandhian *satyagrahi* and a man leading a life of purity, non-violence and truth. But things have drastically changed in the post-independent India. Once I along with a friend was walking with Dada. My friend saw a *Khadi* wearing person fully drunk. He told Dada that an ordinary man like him who

neither wears *Khadi* nor drinks is thousand times better than the *Khadi* wearing drunkard. Dada sarcastically replied that there was something wrong with the way you had looked at the whole situation. Why are you not saying that *Khadi* wearing has become so prestigious that even drunkards have started wearing *Khadi*. This incident is an indication of the sanctity which was assigned to *Khadi* by the common people of the country and any dilution or deviation was not acceptable to them.

It has to be remembered that *satyagraha* was not only meant for opposing a State and its laws. It had a distinct place in the public life of the country, even in the post- independent India. It is a fit instrument for establishing a society based on equity, justice and rule of law. In *satyagraha*, we find the height of non-violent bravery. It was not just meant to create anarchy and instability in society. Social change and creation of new social values were its final destination. Thus Gandhi revolutionized the concept of social change and also brought about a radical change in the nature of the very means to attain it. He clearly stated: 'Real Swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused.' (*Young India*, 29-1-25).

The greatest social value which Gandhi promoted was that the real bravery increases with the reduction of violence and enmity. In the other words, bravery increases in direct proportion to reduction of cruelty and violence. Gandhi insisted that both Constructive Programme and *satyagraha* are of equal importance in the fight for social change. In fact, he went to the extent of saying that the day the Constructive Programme is fully implemented, there would be hardly any scope left for *satyagraha*. According to Gandhi, Constructive Programme is the major means for attaining *swaraj*.

Writing for the commemorative volume on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Gandhi's birthday General Smuts observed: 'I have worn these sandals for many a summer since then even though I may feel that I am not worthy to stand in the shoes of so great a man.' Later

talking to Churchill in Cairo in 1942 General Smuts said about Gandhi, 'He is a man of God. You and I are mundane people. Gandhi has appealed to religious motives. You never have. That is why you have failed.'

This is a virtual letter of both acceptance and appreciation on the part of his South African bitter opponent, against whom he had struggled for years. As such, it has its special importance and weight. Through his protracted and persistent struggles, Gandhi had demonstrated to the world that truth would prevail over untruth, non-violence over violence and love against anger and animus. All this could be both on individual as well as on collective plane. Not only that, based on one's purity of means and heart, one could also change the heart of the people including those of one's opponents. He further established the fact that through *satyagraha* even those who are weak in physical terms could be turned into brave soldiers with an extraordinary soul force. Such non-violent soldiers endowed with the soul force could ultimately prevail over the regime which is based on physical force. It was on the basis of all this that Gandhiji could say with an extraordinary confidence that 'My life is my message.' It was such non-violent and heroic battles of Gandhi which could inspire people like Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela and Aung San Suukyi during all their non-violent struggles.

In this context, an exemplary incident from the life of Gandhi is worth consideration. Gandhi went to England to attend the Second Round Table Conference in his usual half covered body below the waist and an old and torn shawl as the top. He had a meeting with the king of England. As per protocol and past practice, Gandhi should have gone there in a suited and booted form. Ordinarily, no one could have the entry in the palace without such dress code. But Gandhi was allowed to have an audience with the king in his usual dress. He demonstrated that he was the true representative of the common people, who usually had the same kind of dress on their body. That was a special honour given not only to Gandhi but to the entire people of India. Responding to such unusual meeting

between Gandhi and the King, some feudal lords of England started talking about its impropriety. They even asked why the Imperial power of England should make such compromise with Gandhi, a half-naked mendicant without any visible power and pelf. Someone made an incisive comment by saying:

‘He is the man whom gun can not frighten  
whom money can not buy  
whom women cannot seduce.’

In the face of such a non-violent valiant fighter, the entire power, property, weapons and the military are totally of no consequence. In the course of his London stay during those days, he was asked by a reporter as to how could he expect to fight and win the battle against the mightiest imperial power on earth, without having any requisite counter force in terms of money power and physical power. He instantaneously responded by saying that the day the thirty-three crores of the Indian people learn and dare to say ‘No’ to all acts of injustice and slavery, that very day India would be free. Gandhi instilled such power of will and determination among the common people of India. That was one of his greatest and everlasting contribution.

In a way, Gandhi brought about a radical change in the very conception of war, resistance and revolution. In the course of the salt *satyagraha*, he picked up a pinch of salt, and this simple act shook the entire foundation of the British Empire. In the course of the same *satyagraha*, Sarojini Naidu asked Gandhiji as a woman how long is she expected to uphold the flag in her hands? Gandhiji quietly but firmly replied that she should uphold it till the bones of her hands were broken or no life was left in her body. It was entirely a new experiment that a woman had been entrusted with the task of leading a non-violent force in a battlefield. She along with the army of non-violent fighters stood the ground even in the face of brutal lathi charge. It was also a new experiment of woman power in our social life. He taught the ordinary men and women of India to be totally fearless even in the face of the greatest danger



on earth. And that was another major contribution of Gandhi in our national life.

It is not true that all armed soldiers are always fearless. Quite often they are not free from fear as they have greater faith in physical force rather than in soul force. We know that the weapons could be snatched and taken away or more deadly weapons could be posited against them. That leads to a vicious circle of unending arms race. After the 11 September incident in New York, a new realization has dawned on the people of the world that arms however big and deadly, could not provide fool proof security to them. President George Bush was reminded of Gandhi and his power of non-violence on such critical moment of the national life of America. The pride of the American people in their military power was dashed to the ground along with New York's World Trade Centre. It was clearly demonstrated that new battles could not be fought with old weapons. It also became clear that physical force could not be a substitute for the soul force. It was on the basis of such realization that the American Deputy Defence Secretary had told the people of Palestine that they should give up their armed struggle and take to the Gandhian method of *satyagraha*. Such a realization clearly establishes the superiority of the non-violent struggle over armed struggle.

At least a section of the western intelligentsia had come to realize the centrality of the Gandhian method, but unfortunately we in India are still wary of it. Gandhi rejected the impression that India had adopted a non-violent method of struggle out of helplessness, as her people have been disarmed by the British. On the other hand, as a matter of principle, he clearly demonstrated the futility and irrelevance of armed struggle. He became free from terror of arms and remained fearless in all circumstances. Thus Gandhi's non-violence was not a negative, but a positive concept. He clearly stated that physical non-injury was a very minor part in his conception of positive non-violence. In fact, non-violence in its true sense would have to be imbibed in thought, speech and above all in action. In the course of the evolution of human culture that

the old principle of “might is right” had been replaced by a new moral principle of “live and let live.” Gandhi took this principle to a higher level by saying that we should help others to live in security and comfort. Non-violence is the product of a combination of two human qualities of *karuna* (compassion) and *purusartha* (incessant endeavour). Such a world view has its roots in the concept of love in its generic sense. Non-violence is not passive, rather it is always active in its true connotation. It is not the weapon of the weak but that of the brave and fearless. Gandhi was fully aware that without fearlessness and bravery, non-violence would have no meaning. He fought fearlessly to banish all fears from our national life. It is to be accepted that fear breeds negativity and it is the mother of all evils. Hence it has to be eliminated thoroughly from the minds and hearts of all non-violent resisters. Unless fear is totally banished, non-violence would remain the weapon of the weak and the helpless. That is why he had said that if he had to choose between violence and cowardice, he could choose violence. His *satyagraha* was based on justice, fearlessness and non-violence.

Gandhi established a unique relationship between the means and the end. He likened them with seeds and trees respectively. This was another version of the saying: “as you sow, so you reap.” He said: ‘They say “means are after all means.” I would say: “means are after all everything.” As the means so the end. There is no wall of separation between means and end. Indeed the Creator has given us control (and that too very limited) over means, not over the end. Realization of the goal is in exact proportion to that of the means. This is a proposition that admits of no exception.’ He emphatically rejected the old concept of the end justifying means. In other words, he never accepted that a good cause should be well served by any kind of fair or foul means. He called even peace through force and violence as the peace of graveyard. Hence, he emphasized the centrality of non-cooperation, civil disobedience and even fasting in extreme cases as the various forms of *satyagraha*.

Ordinarily, those people who break law, do it secretly. They even produce false evidence in their legal defence in the courts of law.

They even deny all that they have actually done. But a Gandhian *satyagrahi* never indulges in such kind of acts. He boldly owns up his acts of law breaking and even expresses his willingness to undergo the punishment provided under the law. In this way he helps in maintaining the high majesty of the rule of law and the entire judicial system.

It has to be clearly understood that true *satyagraha* could never become *duragraha* as it could never be based on untruth and falsehood. Besides, it would have to remain 'civil', never take the shape of being 'uncivil'; Gandhi found new ways and means of struggle against injustice and slavery not earlier available to the people. He opted for non-violent civil resistance after imbibing truth, non-violence, *brahmacharya* and non-possession in his own personality. He expected every *satyagrahi* to imbibe these values in his life. Besides, such a *satyagrahi* would never indulge in any act of injustice, domination and exploitation. Gandhi made the boycott of foreign goods as an integral part of his struggle. But Gandhian struggle was not for preserving and promoting the interests of the elite. They were more interested in the comforts and conveniences of their life than the freedom of the country. The interest of the Gandhian struggle was to put the common man at the centre stage; he was to be the instrument of social revolution and national resurgence.

Gandhian struggle was not meant to pull down some people; it was inspired and fired by some high ideals of struggle and reconstruction. For Gandhi, they were two sides of the same coin. He sought not only to destroy the entire structure of injustice and inequality, but also to raise a new social structure based on justice and equality. In other words, Gandhian struggle was as much for social revolution as for social reconstruction. He was firmly of the opinion that fear and cowardice are the mother of all evils and he regarded them nothing less than sin. Besides, he also believed that they would bring more violence in its trail, as it would breed an unending chain of revenge and violence. Such a chain could be broken only by the deep feeling of love and non-violence.

Hence, his insistence on non-violent resistance against all kinds of injustices. This is the sum and substance of the Gandhian thinking on *satyagraha*.

If someone has slapped you, and you do not have the courage and compassion to forgive him, then one could engage even in a violent struggle against such a person. But if he has run away from the fight, you have no right to punish his family members. That would be an act of cowardice and cruelty. But today's wars are being fought on such cowardly and inhuman considerations. Millions of peoples who have hardly anything to do with the issues involved are killed in such wars without any moral compunction. That is cowardice not bravery. One could use one's soul force and if necessary even physical force in self-defence. At the same time, resistance to slavery and injustice is also one's duty. Revenge could never be an integral part of non-violent resistance. We must protect women. That is the demand of our manliness. But real revolution would come only if women could defend themselves on their own.

Ours is a divided society based on caste, creed, region and religion. These differences have percolated even to the village level. If these internal cleavages go on increasing, then we would not be able to fight against any external enemy. It was quite clear to Gandhiji that unless these differences are bridged, the struggle would hardly have a successful ending. Hence, he emphasized the need for internal unity among our people transcending all our differences of caste and creed. Whenever such deep sense of popular unity came under stress, he resorted to fasting to restore its pristine glory. His fasts were also a kind of atonement—a kind of self-punishment for his failure to keep our people united. That is why his fasts made great impact on every section of our society. They not only impacted the people, and his followers but also his opponents. In a way, they were an expression of the popular will. They could play a more positive role than even the army in the restoration of peace and harmony among our people. That is why Lord Mountbatten called him: 'one man boundary force'.

One of the Hindi poets had depicted an imaginary dialogue between Mahatma Gandhi and Indira Gandhi in the heaven. Mahatma asked Indira Gandhi as to the extent the country had progressed in the wake of his martyrdom. Indira told Bapu that there had been tremendous progress in the country after his murder. So much so that it would take years to describe it. She said that progress could be illustrated by the different ways both of us were murdered. You were murdered while you were going for prayer. Your assassin stopped, did *pranam* after bowing down before you and shot you dead using only three bullets. But in my case, the guard who killed me, emptied all the bullets of his machinegun into my body; you could very well imagine how much progress our country has made in the intervening period between your murder and mine in the sophisticated art and science of murder. Later, human bomb was used in the murder of Rajiv Gandhi which recorded still greater progress in the art of murder.

Gandhi's highest ambition was to wipe out every tear from every eye! After his death, the number of eyes and the volume of tears have risen in geometrical progression. Unfortunately, the hands that could have wiped out those tears have become non-existent. Diplomacy and betrayal became the order of the day. They have become more acceptable to all sections of our society. Gandhi could utter 'Hey Ram' after being hit by the bullet. That was his bravery and spiritual attainment. His life became more meaningful and perfect after his death. His courage of conviction, his will and determination to pay a price for them were unprecedented in historical terms. He had used three main symbols for the kind of revolution he had led—*charkha*, broomstick and community prayer. *Charka* symbolized his emphasis on productive work; broomstick symbolized the end of social discrimination and domination and community prayer was meant to promote unity among our people—seeking to make them one people and one nation.

It needs to be underlined that there is a lot of difference between individual prayer and the community prayer. Individual prayer

may be for individual gains; while community prayer could be for common interest of the people. A man drawn from one particular province prays for the welfare of the people of other regions. It leads us to a situation where the emphasis is on the people not as an individual. All this ultimately leads us to have a deep sense of national integration. Gandhi and his movements worked for creating a unified and a united India subduing all the differences of caste, creed and religion. He virtually created a new nation of India by uniting our people and instilling in them a deep sense of unity. India did exist as a landmass, as a geographical concept even before Gandhi. But nothing like Indian nation existed in pre-Gandhian era. It was our struggle for independence led by Gandhiji which contributed most to the emergence of Indian nationhood. It was not for nothing that Subhas Babu called Gandhiji the 'father of the nation'. Today we are faced with all kinds of cleavages in our society. But they remained subdued during the Gandhian movements.

Gandhiji had proposed the concept of *shanti sena* to work for the unity of the country by promoting peace and harmony in the society. Talking about the programme of *shanti sena* he had said:

'He will get training through nursing the sick, saving those in danger even at the risk of own life. Patrolling places which may be in fear of thieves and dacoits, and by laying down his life, if necessary for dissuading them from the said purpose. Just as one must learn the art of killing in training for violence, so one must learn the art of dying in the training for non-violence.' (*Harijan*, 7 April, 1946)

It was such conception of the soldiers of peace that his clarion call of "Do or Die" of the Quit India Movement had emerged. He not only gave such death-defying calls, but also himself became such a soldier of the movement. He was as much the commander of his soldiers of peace, as much a soldier himself. The job of the soldiers of peace was to save life. A *shanti-sainik* was not to have even an iota of fear in his being. His life was to be built up on the basic principle of freedom from fear, partiality and enmity.

Not only that, his entire persona should develop in such a way that it should not stir any feeling of fear in others. He wanted women to work as a *shanti sainik*. Women in particular had all the potentialities of being a fearless *shanti sainik*. In Gandhi's scheme of *shanti sena* there was every possibility of developing soul power and women power. I myself have been associated with the working of the *shanti sena*. In Bihar and Assam the soldiers of peace are quite active. They work for the protection of the villages from *goondas* and even from the terrorists. Terrorists and *goondas* run away the moment *shanti sainiks* reach the place of occurrence. This is based on actual experience. Thus the idea of *shanti sena* is one of the major contributions of Gandhiji.

Gandhiji was the founder commander of such soldiers of peace. Protector of life and limb any day stands on a much higher pedestal than the killer and the murderer. We need such people in our country today. If *shanti sena* spreads its wing in every nook and corner of the country, then peace and harmony would be the order of the day. There is a need for peace movement all over the world. The United Nations have also a Peace Brigade. Demand for a ban on all kinds of war is also gathering momentum. In our own country we call it the ministry of defence and not the ministry of war. There is also a movement for disarmament. The tendency for bravery and peace would increase in proportion to the decline of the tendency for committing murder and atrocities in the world. Cruelty and enmity could never be taken as bravery. The real bravery lies in one's willingness and preparedness to die for others; to die for a noble cause. Gandhiji tried to inculcate such bravery in the minds and hearts of the people. That was the main message of his struggle. In the words of Dada Dharamadhikari:

'Everywhere in the world the specters of casteism, racialism and communalism are on the rise. The sound of arms is becoming more and more shrill and audible. Man is trying to find the meaning of his life by being at inimical terms with each other. In such a desperate situation, there was a man (Gandhi), who shouted from his housetops that he was not ashamed of his "non-

violence.” He spoke from his heart based on his own experience in the depth of his inner being. Even in those days of hatred, violence and enmity, the milk of human compassion was ever flowing in his heart. His character, his heart, his deeds, his thoughts and his entire life-philosophy was as deep as the sea; as pure as Gangajal and as high as the Everest. If for Kalidas, godly Himalaya was a yardstick for measuring the vastness of the earth, Gandhi, the humanist, became a measuring rod for humanness and human compassion. One could not think of another person like Gandhi whose thoughts, whose deeds, whose bravery, whose limitless faith, courage, inner strength, whose manliness and *purusartha*, nay, whose entire *vriti*, *pravriti* and *swabhava* could be taken as the measuring rod for understanding the height, depths and vastness of human compassion and humaneness. Let us recall and remember Gandhiji, his life, thoughts and acts and hail and salute him every day and that too hundreds of times. Let us not forget even for a moment that such a man is always patient, thoughtful, industrious, courageous, and what you have. And a man full of such godly qualities is always strong and free from fear.’



Vinoba Bhave





## Unpleasant Fatherhood of the Father of the Nation

I shall work for an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people; an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony. Women will enjoy the same rights as men. We shall be at peace with all the rest of the world. This is the India of my dreams.

*M.K. Gandhi*

What is our relationship with Mahatma Gandhi? This question is before us as one of the political leaders has said that Gandhi could not be taken as the father of the nation. Earlier a leader from Uttar Pradesh had raised the same question. I did not feel hurt by such questioning, because there are many sons in this country who are not willing to accept their father as their own. Gandhi was declared as the father of the nation even during the freedom struggle by no less a person than Subhas Chandra Bose. Hence, he could be considered as the father of all of us. Each of us has a right to speak well or ill of our father. A man like Gandhi who is considered to be the father of all could not be taken as the father of a particular person. In that sense, he is father of none. A piece of municipal land is taken to be the common property and everyone gets the right to use it as a dustbin. Attempts are being made to give similar treatment to the memory of Gandhiji.

As stated earlier, it was Subhas Chandra Bose, who was considered to be Gandhi's rival, called him as the father of the nation. Similarly he was annointed as Mahatma by a no less

a person than Rabindranath Tagore, one of the greatest sons of India. Subhas and Gandhi had taken two different paths based on organised violence and non-violent mass resistance respectively. Subhas Babu had launched his Indian National Army and Gandhiji his Quit India Movement. Both were working wholeheartedly for the liberation of India. Subhas Babu had written a letter to Gandhiji seeking his blessings. It was in that letter that he called Gandhi the 'father of the nation'. It was Gandhi who had aroused intense desire and aspiration for freedom in the minds and hearts of the Indian people. Prompted by Subhas Babu the people of India felt that Subhas had given a voice to their own innermost feeling about Gandhiji and his status in our national life. They intensely felt that it is the Mahatma who had instilled a deep sense of unity among the Indian people transcending all the differences based on caste, creed, language, religion and region. He had also launched a mass movement for their freedom. Hence, the people at large along with leaders started calling him as the father of the nation. Whether or not Gandhiji has been rightly described as the 'father of the nation' is not the main question today. The main question today is whether or not India existed as a nation before Gandhi?

A prominent writer has asserted that historically there was never a country like India. Subsequently, Sir John R. Seeley, an eminent historian, also stated that 'India is a mere geographical expression like Europe or Africa.' Deep sense of unity was always missing from the lives and thoughts of the Indian people. There are two types of people who refused to accept India as a nation. Among them are: (a) foreign writers and (b) some political leaders in India. They think that India has been a scattered geographical area, lacking a common history, common tradition and a common philosophy of life. They have vested interests in making such an assertion. Such people are still there who assert that India is nothing more than a geographical region. Even inside our own country there are people who believe that India is just a conglomeration of different sub-nationalities who have different culture, tradition, history and language. Hence some regional leaders do think and

behave as if their region/State is an independent country. This is also true of the leader of different religions. They are inclined to believe that religion is the only basis of nationhood. Hence there could be as many India as different religions. After all, India was partitioned on the basis of religion in 1947. Today there is greater emphasis on regional, linguistic and cultural differences and at times the interests of a region is put before the national interests. Kaveri water dispute between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu which remains unsettled till date, could be cited as an illustrative case. Regional differences even of sharper kind did exist before Gandhi appeared on the political scene of India. It is he who gave a deep sense of unity among our people. It appears that we as a people are getting back to the condition of disunity which existed in pre-Gandhian India.

The terms 'country' and 'nation' are used with somewhat different connotation. Country is a geographical concept. River system, mountain ranges and land masses constitute a country. But a nation is constituted by the people who live on such a landmass. It is not enough to say that we must love our country as our motherland. What is required is that the people living in any geographical area must make a deliberate decision to live in peace and harmony. That alone would make people to live and behave like a nation. Even a *zamindar* might love his land, or villages under his tutelage, but that does not mean that he loves the people of the area under his influence. He might be just interested in exploiting these people. The chief characteristics of a nation is not just its people's preparedness to live together, it comprises in their intense aspiration and desire to engage themselves in such a relationship. One of the leaders of Nagaland once raised a question whether there is anything like Indian nation? The people of India, he further asserted, are not attached to the people of Nagaland, they are just interested in their land. So much so that even if all the people of Nagaland migrate to any foreign land, not a drop of tear would be shed so long as their land remains as an integral part of India. Such a feeling might be there among the people of Kashmir

as well. Victor Hugo while explaining the concept of the nation said: 'A man's life and its way is decided by his daily decision, similarly people's daily decision to live together with a deep sense of unity actually constitutes the nation.'

The central question here is whether such intense desire of unity and togetherness existed in pre-Gandhian India? That is the primary question. In early medieval times, Sankaracharya tried to unite the Indian people and he travelled all over India to create such an awareness of unity. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, S.N. Banerjea tried to do something like that. But the real sense of unity and togetherness among the people of India came only during the Gandhian era. Now we are once again moving towards some kind of disunity if not disintegration. At least such fear does exist in some sections of our society.

In Pune, a well established and prominent religious leader has recently said that the bones of Godse have been kept in safe custody. Even the entire family of Godse was honoured publicly in Pune. It is also being asserted that Godse had done a religious act by assassinating Gandhi. Gandhi's murder is being called *Gandhi vadha*. The term *vadha* is used for the murder of a miscreant like Kansa and Ravana. A man who dares to engage in such heroic and good cause deserves all praise from the society. Both Lord Rama and Lord Krishna were praised for Ravana *vadha* and Kansa *vadha* respectively. Godse committed Gandhi *vadha* not his murder according to such people. Hence he deserves all praise! Could it be any thing more atrocious than this? Did Gandhi become a miscreant by instilling a deep sense of unity among our people? Have these people gone out of their heads? The fact of the matter is that Godse was not just an individual. He represents a mindset – a way of thinking. Such people believe that if they physically eliminate a person, they might succeed in killing his thoughts, his world view. They did not have the capacity to engage in an ideological warfare with such eminent people. Hence, they decide to murder them in the hope that their way of thinking would end along with their physical dissolution. That is why all great people

of the world have suffered at the hands of assassins. But history has proved otherwise. The thought processes of such great people gather greater momentum after their physical elimination.

But these people hardly want to learn from history. Godse and his ilk thought that by murdering Gandhi, they could very well eliminate his thought processes. This tendency among a small section of diehard conservatives is even taking deeper roots. It is they who challenge the idea of Gandhi being the father of the nation. Through that challenge they want to destroy the very nationhood of India. Such tendency is fast growing in our country. What is worse, good people have lost all interests and directions on all such vital issues. Today linguistic, regional and religious interests are being put above the national interests. By taking different parts of India as independent entities, we are also breaking Gandhi's fatherhood of the nation to pieces. Such mindset is posing a serious threat to the very concept of the Indian nationhood.

Acharya Vinoba Bhave had said that after Gandhi's murder, there should not have been any problem like Hindu-Muslim discord. After such martyrdom, all religious discords should have ended and all religious traditions should have been purified. Unfortunately, nothing like that has happened so far. Jayaprakash Narayan once commented that it seems that the devil's thirst for blood-letting had not been satisfied with Bapu's assassination. It is hankering after more blood-letting and more martyrdom. It seems that JP's observation contains a lot of truth.

Indian people must understand that majority in number does not mean majority in opinion. For it is possible to have change of opinion, or even the change of heart. That is the lifeblood of democracy. Parliamentary democracy is based on opinions not on mere numbers. Everyone has a right to hold on to his own opinion and respect for difference of opinion is the heart of democracy. But the idea of caste, religion, rebirth, and other such elements are deeply ingrained in our blood. Hence the basic

democratic principles have not become an integral part of our physio-psychological system. Representation and candidatures for election could not be equated with democracy. It is not necessary that a people's representative would always be a good person. Today the opposite might be true. Ideally people's representative should be a man of character, having no lust for power, no faith in money and muscle power. He should have greater faith in the people instead of party leaders and the group. But today it is difficult to find such a popular representative. All parties want to capture maximum seats by hook or crook. None of them wants to enhance and enlarge people's power and that of the nation. They are seeking protection from the people. Hence the need for such a big demand for police protection on the part of the political leaders. It is worth remembering that the Mahatma had refused any kind of police protection when offered by the government; though he was fully aware that there was a serious threat to his life. He strongly believed in the principle that instead of having police protection, people like him should prefer to go to the other world. He had firm faith in the goodness of man as well in the power of *ahimsa* (non-violence). For him, popular acceptance and respect was the best protection. Presently, no foolproof police protection could be offered to any one in view of the sophisticated nature of arms. Besides, violence begets violence. Hence, it could not solve any problem. Even in the western countries, a realisation about the futility of violence is dawning on the popular mind. Now they have a better understanding of Gandhi and his ideas.

In our country, money, caste, creed, religion and sects are unabashedly being used to weaken the other party engaged in political contest. They are being used both as weapons of offence and defence. That is one reason why the elite is turning towards a hedonist way of life. Hence we have to delve deep into the basic roots of violence and make a planned and serious effort to counter it. Such a programme for promoting non-violence should touch every walk of our national life.

In the words of Madhav Jyulian:  
'Our uneducated but people with faith  
Are much better than those  
Who are regressive and fund grabbers  
These hungry men with slavish mentality  
These nuisance-creators and throat cutters  
Playing havoc with the lives of the people  
What that 'Mahatma' could do alone?'



Jayaprakash Narayan with his wife



# 6

## Taking the Law into One's Hands: Its Appropriateness and Inappropriateness

Civil disobedience must not be carried beyond the point of breaking the unmoral laws of the country. Breach of the laws to be civil assumes the strictest and willing obedience to gaol discipline, because disobedience of a particular rule assumes a willing acceptance of the sanction provided for its breach. And immediately, a person quarrels both with the rule and the sanction for its breach, he lends himself to the precipitation of chaos and anarchy. But I hold the opinion firmly that Civil Disobedience is the purest type of constitutional agitation. Of course, it becomes degrading and despicable if its civil, i.e. non-violent character is a mere camouflage.

*M.K. Gandhi*

Gandhi always underlined the central importance of the 'golden-rule' of never taking law into one's hands without any exception. Strange as it may sound, this is the feeling of the Mahatma who led a movement for law breaking during salt *satyagraha* – one of the major struggles during our freedom struggle. It has to be borne in mind that this was a movement for civil disobedience and not for uncivil disobedience. It was a fully non-violent and peaceful movement. When and where a *satyagrahi* would break the law used to be informed to the appropriate authorities in advance. Only exception was the mass movement. On being arrested and produced in the court, the *satyagrahi* would accept the responsibility for the breaking of the particular law



by declaring it lawless and immoral in character. He would also willingly accept the punishment provided under that law, though stating very clearly that he had not committed any crime. Thus in a way, a *satyagrahi* had great respect for the principle of the rule of law in the country. Thus while defying a law which he considered immoral and unethical, he was expressing his deep faith in the rule of law. So much so that even the opposite party was convinced of the genuineness and civility of the entire process of law breaking.

Now a number of people are breaking law surreptitiously without any kind of prior intimation. They also try to avoid punishment provided under the law. Even the peaceful and non-violent part of civil disobedience is being kept aside. Gandhiji had very clear idea on the entire issue. His idea of law-breaking under civil disobedience movement was a part of the struggle for freedom against slavery. It was not against any individual in particular. He further observed: 'It is clear to me that if India is to retain her dearly won independence, all men and women must forget the lynch law.' In other words, no one should be hurt without the due process of law. Because, by resorting to lynch law, we would be destroying the whole idea of the rule of law.

In olden times, most of the disputes used to be settled through violence or war. Thus, "might is right" became the general principle. In those days disputes used to be settled on person to person basis. Later on, it took a more organised form in which groups and relatives started participating in the process. War became the culminating point of such a process. Man ultimately came to realise the futility of such methods of dispute settlement as it was primarily taken from the animal kingdom. Then a need emerged for peaceful settlement of the disputes. In subsequent times, *Panchayat/Pancha* started playing a crucial role in settling disputes between individuals or groups. That was the first organised and peaceful judicial system. That led to the *Pancha Parmeshwar* concept. Caste *Panchayat* also started playing a crucial role in dispute settlements. Besides, there also came religious system of dispute settlement. People used to gather at a religious place and settle the dispute after taking oath

for fair play and justice in the name of God. With the emergence of monarchical system of governance, the king took over the task of the delivery of justice. In still later period, a new system of justice emerged which was primarily based on hard and truthful evidence. Thus free and impartial system of justice became the lifeblood of democracy. So much so that judges came to be regarded as godly figures and judicial courts as the temple of justice. The real majesty of law is that it is equally applicable to the framers of law, dispenser of justice and its end users. Equality before the law became the guiding norm of the present system. One is reminded of what Adi-Sankarcharya said about the majesty of law. He asserted that real majesty of God lies in the fact that He himself is bound by His own law. Hence the rule of law is supposed to be the integral part of every form of the government. Similarly, police came into the process as it was assigned the task of investigation. Police was authorised to have weapons like sticks and guns and was given the authority to use them if and when it became necessary. A similar right was given to citizens for their own self-defence. It was left to the judiciary to decide whether they have been used rightly or wrongly. Unfortunately, there are still some individuals or groups which think that in whatever manner they act, all that is always lawful. They often forget that liberty does not become a license to hurt/harm/kill others in the name of self-defence.

In Section 300 of the Indian Penal Code, it has been provided that only in certain exceptional circumstances a murder committed by a person in self-defence would not be taken as amounting to an act of murder. In other words, that would not come under Section 302 but it would be covered by Section 304 of the IPC. Even if the murder was committed in self-defence, it has to be proved that it was not done in a pre-planned way and it was not possible to have approached the police for lodging a complaint. Thus right to act in self-defence has been circumscribed under the same law. Similar conditions are also laid down for police and other governmental agencies. All that it means is that no one has the right to take law into his own hands. If one indulges in such acts, it amounts to a

cognizable offence. Thus it is a condemnable and punishable act, if someone commits a murder by taking law into his own hands. There might be some exceptional circumstances in which acting in self-defence or for protecting one's dignity/prestige one's act of murder may be considered to be pardonable. But if there is no immediate threat to one's life, to hurt anyone in a planned way is not acceptable in the eyes of law. Even if such murder takes place against a *goonda* or murderer, in the eye of law it is a crime as except the judiciary, no one else has the right to give such punishment to another person.

The main question is: Whether we want the rule of law to be established or a reign of terror and *goondalism*? In no case the act of murder even against a *goonda* could be eulogised. It is an act worth condemnation. Whether or not someone is a *goonda* is also to be decided by the judicial system and he could be punished only by the judicial process. It is also a well established principle of law that unless proved otherwise, by the due process of law based on hard evidence, even an undertrial is considered to be innocent. Besides, under the legal system, onus of proving his innocence is not on the accused. Prosecution alone would have to prove his guilt and that is based on hard evidence and cross examination. No one can take the stand that since a particular person was guilty of crime and so the murder of such accused should be taken as a religious act. Such an attitude is highly objectionable. But this is the line of argument which Godse presented as the justification for Gandhi's murder. Now this heinous act is being upgraded as a religious act and hence it is being called Gandhi *vadha* and not Gandhi-murder. An act of *vadha* is related only to a devilish person. Hence the person engaging in such an act is considered to be a religious one. This is the mindset of the people who are talking of Gandhi *vadha*. Even Godse defended himself on that count. Subsequently, the murder of Indira Gandhi by his guards was also defended on that count. Her guards were taken as martyrs. The Marathi drama *Me Godse Bolato Ahe* (It is Godse Speaking) has been written to defend Godse and his heinous act with the same

perspective. Mrs. Indira Gandhi's assassin, was declared a martyr by no less a person than the chief of the Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. His mother was offered a *Saropa* just as an act of honour to her. A slogan was also raised on the occasion, viz., *Jo Bole Sonihal Sat Shri Akal*,. The Secretary to the Committee spoke with a lot of pride and hubris that anyone who dared to despoil the Golden Temple or Akal Takht would never be spared by the valiant fighters of the Sikh community. It is a question worth considering whether such an eulogy would be in the interest of the country. If such trends continue, it would be difficult to protect the core value of democracy and even the principle of the rule of law. It would amount to the murder of justice and the rule of law.

In this context, it is relevant to recall an incident from Nagpur. Akku Yadava was killed in the premises of the Nagpur Court by a group of women. They were honoured by the women's association and they even confessed to their crimes. Whether the crime was really committed by them or they were just used as hatchet persons is a matter of detailed investigation. Since the entire matter is sub judice, it would not be fair to write or to say something about it. Akku Yadava was a devil. He had committed rape on a number of women. Police was not acting decisively against him. No one was prepared to come out as a witness against him. Hence, he was acquitted by the court virtually in every case. He should not be allowed to indulge in such crimes in future. That was the reason why a group of women including his victims decided to end his life in a planned way. Punishment should have come from the police and the judicial courts. But they had failed to discharge their duties. Ultimately, that devil was punished by his women victims. Whether that was within the parameter of law is another question. But there are many people who might accept it as a moral act. The act that is moral is not only taken as being civilised but also being lawful. There are many people who hold such view. The women victims had come to the firm conclusion that all the options are closed for them. Hence they murdered him finding no other way out. In this way, they have helped the police and the judicial court

in the process of delivery of justice. In that way they had upheld the dignity and majesty of both police and the Courts. In the process, they have also upheld the principle of the rule of the law. Such heroic role these women victims have assigned to themselves. How far it is appropriate and just is the question to be considered. We have to keep in mind that a particular crime might be pardonable from social and moral point of view, but that does not make it lawful. Thus the tendency to take the law into one's hands, and even to welcome and promote it, is no way in keeping with the Gandhian principles. It is not simply the question of the death of Akku Yadava, but the way he had been killed by taking the law into hands by these people. This could not be accepted as a matter of principle. If this tendency to street justice persists ignoring judicial courts and their due processes, then the authority and majesty of law and the judiciary would be undermined forever. Justice could not be left to the crowd, nor could it be left to the majority opinion. If the complainant himself/herself becomes the judge, then there would be no scope for justice. Then murder would be committed on one pretext or the other, and all kinds of justification would be sought for such heinous crime. Then there would be a general tendency in the society to put an end to an enemy in such unlawful way.

The question that deserves due consideration in this context is about the role of general society in this process. In the words of Kahlil Gibran:

'Oftentimes have I heard you speak of one who commits a wrong as though he were not one of you, but a stranger unto you and an intruder upon your world. But I say that even as the holy and the righteous cannot rise beyond the highest which is in each one of you, So the wicked and the weak cannot fall lower than the lowest which is in you also. And as a single leaf turns not yellow but with the silent knowledge of the whole tree, So the wrong-doer cannot do wrong without the hidden will of you all.'

One could legitimately ask about the responsibility of the good people in the society for the rise of miscreants like Akku Yadava.

Are they not responsible for the emergence of such elements? Women could not get protection from our large society and that might have emboldened Akku Yadava and his ilk to indulge in such heinous crime. Thus the blame for such heinous crime must also go to the inaction and impotence of the so-called good people. When the society is divided between good but inactive and indifferent people, on the one hand and active but devilish miscreants on the other, that provides most fertile environment for the emergence of criminals like Akku Yadava. In the words of Gibran: 'Good people could never be taken as being free from misdeeds of the bad elements in the society.' Are the people who are honouring the women victims who killed Akku Yadava free from blame? All those who remain inactive and indifferent in the face of such crime; who refuse to depose in the court; those who produce false evidence even after taking oath in the name of God, do not all these people have their share in the whole process? How long such a state of affairs would continue? Will they just go on honouring the persons like those victimised women taking it as the end of their moral responsibility? When will all this end? Unless we answer such questions, only blaming the police and the judicial system would not do. Our entire judicial system is based on hard evidence – both oral and written. No one speaks the whole truth even under oath. That is the real tragedy.

Our media and other means of communication are more interested in dramatic presentation of any incident from any walk of our national life. They are just marketing these incidents so that their owners could make more money. The way media presents such news and pictures them also contributes to the emergence of certain social perspective. That leads to the emergence of miscreants like Akku Yadava. The media also wants the police and judiciary to act using their full strength under the law. But perhaps it wants them to take its intelligence on loan. The media forgets that the judiciary would have to act based on well-laid judicial processes. Media should examine its own negative role in

the entire process. It could not afford to pass the buck to the police and judiciary.

Recently, a man under death sentence approached the Supreme Court with a request for the remission of his sentence. His argument was that on account of presentation of obscene, violent, and pornographic scenes he started taking to crimes. Hence in real sense, all those responsible for such presentation should be held responsible even for his crimes. Supreme Court did make some critical observations on the quality of our cinema and their picturisation of pornographic scenes. It also held the Censure Board responsible for such lapses. Could the society claim itself blameless for the crimes committed by people like Akku Yadava by simply blaming the police and judiciary or even media? In such a situation, in place of the rule of the law, a pernicious social norm of inaction and indifference would emerge based on the feeling what we have to do with such incidents? Could we leave everything to our destiny and God? A society which has been taken over by the Kaurava would have to witness disrobing of Draupadi again and again. That would lead to a social order based on bribery, or it could really lead to an anarchical situation. If everyone starts taking the law into one's hand, how could we establish a society based on the rule of law? Eulogisation of crimes should be stopped at the first instance to achieve such goal.

Today the rule of law has a royal road, but we hide ourselves in lanes and by lanes in our shameless attempt to avoid it. Law breaker enjoy higher social status than those who abide by law. Criminals are getting elected and they are elected by the people! Hence we who elect such people could we remain blameless for their criminal activities? We neither inform the police, nor help in investigation, nor depose evidence in the Court. We just remain as silent spectators. Not only that, we even honour such people. How could the rule of law and justice be established in the country? That is the moot question. Today if at all there is any abidance of the law, it is out of fear and not out of respect for it. How to restore

the real respect for law? We have to give serious thought to this question.

In fact, we have to think about the long-term consequences of any incident instead of concentrating on its immediate implications. If the victimised women took the law into their hands and murdered Akku Yadava, it was due to the failure of the law enforcing agencies who failed to assure justice to these unfortunate women. Hence, there is a temptation to justify their action on moral grounds, though it remains legally indefensible till date.

But we must look at the other side of the picture. Some acts may be legally correct, but not necessarily moral and ethical. Drinking, gambling and prostitution might be legally permissible in certain societies, but they do remain morally reprehensible. But illegal acts, though morally defensible, should not be eugolised as that would lead to social anarchy. Social anarchy in its turn would pose a great threat to the entire democratic set-up. Hence, the acts of murder and other heinous crimes, even if they might be morally defensible in certain circumstances, should not be eugolised, as their widespread social acceptance would adversely affect the moral health of the society.

Heinous crimes like murder do not just affect the two opposite parties. In fact, they have their impact on the peace and harmony of the entire society. Besides, they result in the emergence of a parallel social system which is supported by muscle power, money power, and mafia power. As these forms of 'power' rise, the rule of the law goes down in the society.

Gradually, these forms of power get social recognition by even performing such good acts like monetary donations to religious institutions, educational institutions and similar other institutions. In the process, the people ignore their criminal background and they get elected as people's representatives. People ignore and even forget about immoral and criminal basis of their power. In this context, one is reminded of Gandhi's emphasis on the symbiotic



relationship between the means and the end. According to Gandhiji, good ends could be achieved only through good and pure means. He had further added that only means are in our hands, not the final result. The purer the means, purer would be the end. Gandhi put it by saying: 'As the means, so would be the end. Means are seeds and the end is like trees. There is no exception to such rule. And that is the mainstay of the rule of law and justice.'



Sane Guruji



## Mainstay of Humanist Faith

The ocean is composed of drops of water, each drop is an entity and yet it is the part of the whole, the one and the many. In this ocean of life, we are little drops. My doctrine means that I must identify myself with life with everything that lives, that I must share the majesty of life in the presence of God. The sum total of this life is God.

*M.K. Gandhi*

Pierre Simon Laplace, a French mathematician and astronomer was giving a copy of his work *Celestial Mehanics* to Napoleon Bonaparte. On that occasion Napoleon asked Laplace: "They tell me you have written this large book on the system of the universe, and have never even mentioned its Creator." Laplace responded: 'I had no need of that hypothesis.' In similar vein at times the man in the street, who has remained unlabelled for millennium, often asks as to where he stands in this so-called world. It is a puzzling question before the humankind. Man should be in the centre of the world and also the measuring rod of the other values in the world. That is the basic understanding of humanist approach. But man is becoming stranger to the world he has created. This is a famous and oft-quoted statement now being used in a mechanical way. Today a number of obstacles are coming in the way of close and well-intentioned relationship among human beings. Even the simple acts of civility, handshaking and embracing while meeting each other have become an artificial and ritualistic acts.

With gloves on the hands and *Bakhtar* on the chest, even sheer physical contacts are not spontaneous and free: they have become crooked. True meeting of mind and heart between man and man has become a matter of past.

On account of the fast growth of all kinds of means of communication, people of the world have physically moved closer to each other. But it is difficult to say whether they have moved closer to each other for loving and embracing one another or for making war. Protagoras, a pre-Socratic Greek philosopher long ago observed that 'man is the measure of all things.' Man himself is the embodiment of humanism on earth. Restraint, balanced approach, sense of proportion and equanimity are some of the living symbols of close human inter-relationship and ties. But all these are missing from human behaviour in today's world. There is a growing tendency of distrust and distancing in human relationships. Purely in physical terms, man is moving towards the concept of "one world," but in real spiritual terms they are moving apart. Terms like "mutual suicides" and "mutual annihilation" are being frequently used in popular lexicon. And terms like "mutual sharing," "mutual cooperation" and "mutual survival" are missing from popular lexicon. In other words, the forces that create distrust, distancing and resentment and conflicts are on the rise. Human beings are getting torn apart with underlying forces like greed, nationalism, religion and regionalism. After the 11 September attack on the World Trade Centre in New York, the youth started asking the question whether the memories of such audacious and atrocious attack could ever be obliterated from the popular mind. But one could raise a more fundamental and deeper question prompted by such horrendous attack. And that question is: If man could be at inimical terms even with strangers, why could he not be at friendly and loving terms with them? The same question was also raised during the Vietnam war. "Make peace not war" became its main slogan. The youth again is asking the same question, raising the same slogan. They want to sow the seeds of peace, harmony and love in the world. That is their primary aim.

Muslim Public Affairs Council has raised a still more fundamental question: If man does not find it difficult to live as Muslims, Jews, and Christians, then why should he find it almost impossible to live simply as a human being? Why religion is becoming a breeding ground for negative feelings instead of being an inexhaustible source of positive feelings? All Muslims are only friends of Bin Laden and as such are as permanently inimical terms with other people, why such feeling should grow in the hearts and minds of the people of other religions? All such understanding based on mutual distrust and suspicions would have to come to an end if people of the world are to live in peace and harmony. Suresh Bhat, a prominent poet has expressed the same feeling in poetic terms when he writes:

In the cremation ground, the dead  
Are enquiring about each others caste  
None of them is asking,  
Who is the man who has died.

All these developments are divisive and disturbing in nature. In such an environment of hostility and suspicion, it has become difficult to live and feel like a normal human being. All human values are disappearing fast from human relationship.

John Maxwell Coetzee, a recipient of the Nobel Prize for literature, had stated clearly that the suffering of the common man has not ended on account of any previous revolution in the world. He further adds that this would not happen in future either. He is a White of South African origin. Here is a poet who is not self-conscious of his race; nor is he concerned about his loss and profit, nor is he bothered about which kind of ideological label would be attached to him. This is an observation of a true literary person who is primarily interested in upholding higher human values and equally concerned about human predicament which man is faced with today. He further states that enquiry about someone's caste, religion, nationality would become totally meaningless, when one fails to live an unlabelled life, purely as a human being.

In such a situation, what is left of a human being is just a living entity, out to hunt other's life or out to use others for his own ends. Maxwell is conscious that so far the suffering of the common man is concerned, it hardly eases however strong the wind of violent change is blowing or by obsessive concern for nation-building. All these hardly affect the mind of a self-seeking man. He has not only raised an extremely important question in respect of the common man but he also reposed his great faith in the man of the street. As a man of literature, he has given expression to deep, genuine human feelings for the unlabelled man. He has still more sensitive observations to make when he says: 'In our history, we could cite thousands of instances when decisions by the commonest of the common man has vitally changed the course of history. And there are instances when decisions taken by the persons other than the common man has turned their life into hell, instead of taking it to any higher level.' The real question is: Which side of the battle field are we in? In fact, we have to see and find our future in the eyes of the common man. We would find them there in his life, in his aspiration, in his hope and despair. This is because the common man is the real man of destiny. That is why a great Marathi poet, Kusumagraj observes:

There is an assurance  
In the field of culture  
That the common man never dies  
Even though, killed several times.

There is a strong reason behind such undying faith. All human beings would never be totally useless, and the common man never totally worthless. Both Gandhiji and Jayaprakash Narayan has such realization. Both of them demonstrated their strong faith during their popular movements. And common people responded to their call in their own massive way. We have seen that common people brought about the change of government through power of ballot rather than that of bullet. We have seen this in our own lifetime. Gandhiji was once asked that he had hardly any power,

property or weapons, then how does he expect to bring *swaraj* by ending the British Colonial Rule? He confidently replied that the day the common men and women of India learn and decide to say an emphatic 'No' to the British rule, *swaraj* would be achieved that very day. The real strength behind all Gandhian movements was the support of the common men and women of India.

It is not often realised that even the common man could become influential and powerful. There is a natural tendency in him to live in harmony and cooperation with other people. And the people desirous of living in cooperation and harmony with others could always play a role in any kind of situation. For such people, every one is a friend, comrade and like filial relations. For them, the pains and sufferings as well as joys and pleasures of others are always like their own. As such they remain cooperative in both the situations. In other words, they do not know the ways of leading a double life—uttering *Ramanama* from mouth and keeping a hatchet under their armpit. This is a kind of superficial life which many people consider is to be a symbol of high culture. Many of us have adopted the borrowed mannerism and superficial etiquette based on the western style. That virtually remains external to our inner being. Thus a number of people from our elite section are turning into Resident Non-Indian (RNI). They often forget that compassion is the symbol of universal love and unity and not external behavioural mannerism. It is a kind of love which performs miracles. Love and faith could move even the mountains. In this kind of relationship there is no expectation of even for the return for the good being done to others. Compassion is always based on pure and selfless love and which in turn is no less than devotion. Devotion could be for God, for the country or for the nation. Such devotion never divides the people but it always works towards their unity and never plays a divisive role in the respect of the people. That is why I call it *manavyoga*—the yoga for the man.

Unfortunately today, man has started behaving in a licentious, unthinking and unbalanced way. He has become egotist and self-

centred. Science has also become his handmaid. Instead of looking at the Nature as symbol of godly traits, there is a serious attempt to subdue, conquer and turn her into a slave. Science has become a companion of the man in his unabashed venture of subduing the Nature. There is an attempt to place science on the high pedestal like God. Man wants to be the creator instead of remaining as a creature. Laxmi the Goddess of wealth, disrespects physical labour and Saraswati the Goddess of learning, is lured by wealth and as such, they are always at loggerheads. Laxmi, devoid of physical labour and Saraswati devoid of selfhood, could never become our true Goddesses. Surrender and purity are all pervading qualities. Surrender is not just seeking a powerful shelter; it is not even a formality, and in no case it could be equated with egotism. It simply means that one could make a lot of sacrifice and undergo a lot of suffering for one's dear ones. It is a matter of joy to extend cooperation to others and even suffer for others. Even the so-called bad elements do have some good qualities hidden in their inner core of personality. Thus *manavyoga* is the best ornament for materially and spiritually evolved persons.

In *Abhigyan Shakuntalam* of Kalidas, it is said that any father is really great whose son plays in the dust and mud. He should consider himself lucky if he leaves his son in that condition. The idea is that even dust and mud give a rare fragrance of their own and human touch gives an added importance. It is a great thing to include others as an integral part of one's own life as it leads to high character building and also gives him a sense of responsibility. This is true humanity which alone gives a sense of perfection to human life. For any man living alone could be torturous. It is a great punishment. In fact, it is the inter-dependence which provides a real basis of a happy and good life. True, it might be seen painful purely in physical terms; but certainly enjoyable in spiritual and humane terms. Do not the people who try to climb the top of the Everest suffer on the way? But can we imagine their sense of joy once they are at the top? Similarly character building and leading a moral and ethical life could be an uphill task. It also requires a

lot of patience and perseverance. It also requires equal amount of determination and courage. Hence it is often said that the most difficult task for any man is to become a true man. Till date, greed and fear had provided the main driving force of human existence. Where there is fear, how could love exist there? It is said in the Bible that we are members of one another. It involves both compassion and empathy. This is what we call the milk of human compassion. If one's neighbour's house is on fire, one does not require an invitation to extinguish it. This is a simple human proclivity. Culture is nothing but a civilized life, close inter-relationship and a purified and close-knit social life. This is what *Bhagavad Gita* called equanimity and equal mindedness, viz., yoga. To have the feeling of oneness and friendship with others is true yoga. Our faith in science and its efficaciousness would remain incomplete unless it is also joined by our faith in humanity. Devoid of such faith, science could very well pave the path of our total ruination. That is why Vinoba wanted an appropriate human perspective to be based both on science and self-knowledge. Such an approach could provide a real basis for scientific-spiritual development.

Now a new term, neo-humanism is getting popularized. It is difficult for me to explain and elucidate its real meaning at this stage. There are both external as well as internal aspects of human life. There might remain some gap in between these two aspects of human existence. But the real challenge is to minimize the gap between the two, if it is not possible to totally bridge them. External aspect of human existence is based on egotism. This has got to be changed. One who could change the material aspect of one's life in tune with the internal spiritual life, leads a life of *swadharma*. If everyone starts acting on the basis of his own whims and fancies, that could lead to all kinds of atrocities and conflicts. Such a man lacks culture and could be taken as ill-bred. Such a man becomes egoist and thinks that he has the best human material in his personality. Such a person lacks good conduct and good intentions. He fails to understand that human life would become monotonous if everyone is to become the copy edition of a single person. The fact of the



matter is that we complement each other in terms of both positive and negative qualities. Such an understanding enriches our lives. This is based on a philosophy of life together, which in traditional terms is called *satsang*, viz., good company of high minded people. It does involve tolerance. We do not simply have to tolerate each other but love and learn from each other. We have to imbibe each other's good qualities to make our life worthwhile. This is a kind of collage—combination of different materials in a picture, this is art. This also gives a sense of evolution and development. Such an approach sweetens our life. There is no joy in eliminating all kinds of differences from different human personalities. That would be a kind homogenization and uniformity which would take away joys of diversity. Let individuals retain their own individual qualities and their own freedom and distinctiveness. But let us cooperate with each other, work with each other for the community. This is the path of cultural humanism.

Mahatma Gandhi has very clear understanding of the concept of neo-humanism. He rejected the concept of new man, a secular self-seeking man—that emerged in the wake of the Renaissance and the enlightenment. Nor was he greatly enamoured of the post-renaissance ideology of humanism which not only make the man as the central figure in the cosmos but also put all its resources at his disposal. In this perspective, man was taken as a self-defining, self-seeking being whose only limitation was to be contacts with similar other human beings. Such a man was supposed to work for his satisfaction, happiness and self-aggrandizement. John Locke has provided a solid argument for such a world view. To quote his words:

‘We are not born in heaven but in this world where our being is to be preserved with meat, drink and clothing and other necessities that are not horn with us, But must be got and kept with force, care and labour and, therefore, we cannot be all devotion, all praises and hallelujah and perpetually in the visions of the things above.’

Gandhi, while rejecting the above view of man, put forward his on view of man. According to him, there is a true self in every

human being though apparently envelopes in his phenomenal personality. The tragedy of man is that his true self remains masked and hidden. Hence, the real challenge for him is to unmask and rediscover his true self which bears nothing but a speak of divinity in himself. However, he does not totally reject the empirical man, and concedes that both godly and devilish tendencies are inherent in human heart.

We quote he own words which reads as follows

‘I look upon an increase of the power of the state with the greatest fear, because, although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality which lies at the root of all progress’

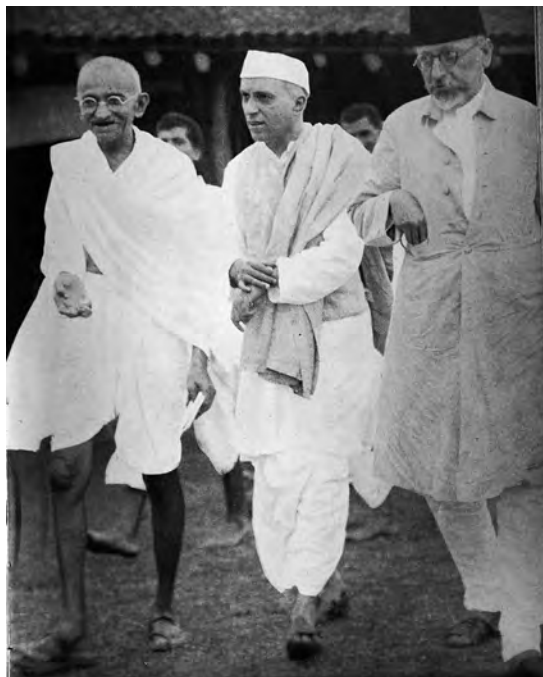
Man does not get tired of physical labour as such, he gets tired by getting discouraged and by losing his heart in the process. One must learn the art of surrendering everything at the feet of his Lord. This is called *karmayoga* or *anasaktiyoga*. Let us live happily with each other. Let us love each other. Let us live like true human beings and let us not disrespect or dominate each other. This is my conception of neo-humanism or *manavyoga*. To keep relationship, to build up bridges without much interference in each other’s life is the real meaning of love and cooperation. Human life would reach a new height the day our hearts and minds become one and our speech and work have the same goal of universal welfare.

Today, one of the central questions confronting human kind is that of fear and distrust. Everyone is working against others in the name of his self-defence. Such an approach has its roots in fear and distrust. Thus there is a real danger of total destruction of humankind. The question, in such a situation of distrust and fear, is how to promote the idea of mutual trust, mutual cooperation and mutual love. We have to realize that united we survive, divided we perish. This feeling alone would save the world and its creatures including human beings. This idea has been endorsed by no less a person than William Faulkner, a Nobel Laureate who said:

‘I decline to accept the end of man. It is easy enough to say that man is immortal simply because he will endure: that when

the last dingdong of doom has clanged and faded from the last worthless rock hanging tideless in the last red and dying evening, that even then there will still be one more sound: that of his puny inexhaustible voice, still talking.

I refuse to accept this. I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance.' Such an undying faith in human values and human survival gives a new hope. And that was also what Gandhiji believed. Let man live in love and let his goodness prevail over his own evil tendencies. That is both our hope and prayer.



Bapu with Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Azad



## Gandhiji and Harijans

I do not want to be reborn. But if have to be reborn, I should be born an untouchable, so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings, and the affronts levelled at them, in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from that miserable condition. I, therefore, prayed that, if I should be born again, I should do so not as a Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya or Shudra, but as an Atishudra.

*M.K. Gandhi*

The power seekers and power brokers hardly engage themselves in creating a new social order. Rather they are ever engaged in vitiating, dividing and even destroying the social fabric. We firmly believe that the mind, social fabric and the culture of Maharashtra has been built up by our saints and sages. Even the mind of Indian society has been built brick by brick by ardent and high minded social reformers and spiritualists. But presently a number of political parties have undertaken the task of vitiating its social and cultural mind. It is also a part of such conspiracy that a faceless and mindless assertion is being made to say that the Mahatma was anti-Dalit and he even heaped insults on them by calling them *harijans*. This is nothing but a shameless attempt to promote their own interests by making caste Hindus and the rest (particularly the Dalit) to fight each other. There is no intention of doing any good to any section of the society, least of all to the Dalits in the entire game. This is just an attempt to butter their own bread. There is a

saying in Vidarbha that which of the bulls engaged in a fierce duel wins is hardly of any concern or consequence to the plot owner. The plot in any case, would be destroyed in the process. This is an undeniable truth.

We should never forget that Mahatma belonged to all of us, indeed to all humanity. He did not belong to any particular province or caste or language. One who belongs to all, in fact belongs to none. Hence everyone has the freedom to criticise or even condemn him without any rhyme or reason. Power seekers are hardly interested in any objective study of history. They pick up some stray points or incidents out of their historical context to support their allegation even against an innocent and pure person like Mahatma. But they could not change the glaring and truthful facts of history. It is much easier to attack Gandhi without making a close study of our freedom struggle or even his life and teachings. But such attempts do confuse the common man. That could be a serious cause for worry.

Kusumagraj, a leading poet, has a poem called *Akherchi Kamai*—the last earning. It depicts a scene where five phantoms sit together in a city place and engage each other in a kind of dialogue. The phantom of Jyotiba said that he ended by just being the leaders of the gardener caste. Similar sentiments were expressed by the phantoms of Shivaji, Tilak and Ambedkar who regretted that they too ended up by becoming only the leaders of Maratha, Chitpavan Brahmins and the Buddhists respectively. Then the Mahatma's phantom cleared his throat and stated that all of you are fortunate that each one of you is the leader of at least one community. Thus at least a small section of the people are standing behind you. But behind me is only the wall of the government offices. It is a fact that the followers of Gandhi have done nothing more than putting his picture on the walls of the government offices. Could there be a greater punishment to the Mahatma than this?

The word *harijan* was used by the poet Narsi Mehta much before Gandhiji used it. Mehta himself was a Nagar Brahmin but

he was very close to the *harijans*. Shailendra Mahato, one of the prominent leaders of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, has come out with a new finding that poet *Valmiki* was the first to use the term *harijan*. Perhaps *Valmiki* himself belonged to an untouchable caste. Mahato has accused Ambedkar of being anti-*adivasi*. He put them in the category of scheduled tribes, just to obliterate their separate identity. Sometime back the Indigenous People's Conference was held in Geneva, which vehemently opposed the categorization of the *adivasi* as the "scheduled tribes." Mahato also said that Ambedkar never wanted the *adivasis* to have their own representation in the Indian legislatures on account of his being small minded. It was Gandhi who fought for the rights of all categories of the deprived people including *harijans* and others. According to Mahato, but for the support of Gandhiji, Ambedkar could not have been appointed as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly. In Mahato's opinion, Gandhiji was never a supporter of the *Varna Vyavastha* in Hindu society. Mahato raises the question that if Ambedkar was a true protagonist of the Dalits, why did he marry a *Brahmin* woman and that too in his old age?

In short, if in the eyes of some Dalit leaders Gandhiji was anti-Dalit, Ambedkar was anti-*adivasi* in the eyes of the *adivasi* leaders like Mahato. This kind of biased comments go a long way to vitiate the social environment.

Gandhiji had drawn a comprehensive programme for rendering service to the *harijans*; though he was fully convinced that one could not achieve liberation through others. One has to work for it. He was aware that unless one eats, he could not have full stomach or one could not see heaven unless one meets his death. Basically his programme for the *harijan* liberation was for changing the hearts and minds of the caste Hindus. To that end, he and his *ashram* inmates engaged themselves in daily scavenging work in the *ashram* and even sometimes in the surrounding areas. He was firmly of the opinion that as part of their atonement for

the oppressions of *harijans* by their ancestors for centuries, the members of the upper caste must serve them in all earnestness. He did believe that the untouchables are true *harijans*—the children of God. These children of God dirty their hands and bodies so that people of other sections of the society could lead a clean and healthy life. If the untouchable fail to perform their work, how could *Brahmins* lead a life of purity and cleanliness? But all this must change and even the upper caste people would have to undertake their own scavenging work. Hence he prayed for the day when sweepers would hold the *Bhagavad Gita* in their hands, and the *Brahmins* would have broomstick in their hands. It is only through such change of social roles that a new social order based on equity and justice could be established.

Of late a very clever question has been raised by the people with vested interests: If *harijans* are the children of God, then are all others the children of Satan? This question itself is based on bad logic. All that Gandhi meant was that the untouchables are as much the children of God as others. *Harijans* may be the special children of God as they serve his creation with their all strength and sincerity. But he went a step further while replying to the above question. He asserted that when the caste Hindus would give up the practice of untouchability voluntarily, only then all “touchable” people would deserve to be truly called *harijans*. And in such a situation alone the grace of God would come over them. Gandhi worked for a society free from the scourge of untouchability based on equity, equality and justice.

He described himself as a scavenger, weaver, peasant and worker. In the course of his trial he described his profession as that of a scavenger. He turned himself into a scavenger on his own volition. We should not forget that the word “mehatar” (scavenger) is a derivative of the word *mahatar* (greater). He looked at the elimination of untouchability as his life's work and for that he was willing to sacrifice his life. We know that the aim of his life was to attain *moksha* (salvation). But he asserted that if at all he

would have rebirth, he would prefer to be born as an untouchable so that he could feel their pain and suffering in his own persona. During a meeting at Ahmedabad in 1916 he said with all sincerity and seriousness at his command that he was even willing to offer his head in the course of his effort to eliminate the scourge of untouchability in the society.

For Gandhi broomstick was a symbol of revolution. He was of the opinion that society devoid of equality and brotherhood could never reach the state of revolution. Such a society can never fight against slavery. He believed that the *Valmiki*s are the most downtrodden even among the Dalits. They occupy the same place in the society which the mother occupies in the family. He said:

‘By treating removal of untouchability as an Ashram observance, we assert our belief, that untouchability is not only not a part and parcel of Hinduism, but a plague, which it is the bounden duty of every Hindu to combat. Every Hindu, therefore, who considers it a sin, should atone for it by fraternizing with untouchables, associating with them in a spirit of love and service, deeming himself purified by such acts, redressing their grievances, helping them patiently to overcome ignorance and other evils due to the slavery of ages, and inspiring other Hindus to do likewise....

Removal of untouchability means love for, and service of, the whole world, and thus merges into *ahimsa*. Removal of untouchability spells the breaking down of barriers between man and man, ultimately leading to unity of all beings. We find such barriers erected everywhere in the world, but here we have been mainly concerned with the untouchability which has received religious sanction in India, and reduced crores of human beings to a state bordering on slavery.’

Gandhiji stood for *sarvodaya* but the journey must start with *antodaya*. He was never moved by the feeling of pity rather he was driven by a strong sense of duty. That was also true of his work for the *harijans*. That is why in his scheme of constructive programme, *harijan seva* occupied a central position. In Gandhian perspective,



both Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King Jr. were the real messiahs of the poor and the downtrodden. Dr. King always underlined the fact that unless the mind of the Whites becomes pure and compassionate, the problems of the Blacks could not be solved. Gandhi exhorted the caste Hindus to undertake *harijan seva* as a matter of their self-assigned duty so that they could undergo a genuine change of heart and could reach a state of purity and piety.

Dada Dharmadhikari's letters as a member of the Constituent Assembly have been published in a collection called *Aapalya Ganarajyachi Ghadana!* (The making of our Republic) In those letters Dada had written about Ambedkar's contribution in the making of our Constitution and had underlined their centrality. He had described Ambedkar as the symbol of Indian identity and also called him the gem among men (*nararatna*). He further commended Ambedkar's contributions by saying:

'Ambedkar invested his extraordinary talent and ceaseless endeavour towards the liberation of the Dalit *samaj*. He put in *Bhagirath* efforts towards upliftment of the most oppressed sections of our society. In the process, he emerged as a rare personality whose reputation spread in all directions and about whom every Indian could take legitimate pride. His *purusartha* assumed an all India character. He would not remain just a symbol of Dalit identity, but his name would go down in history as a symbol of Indian identity. Towards the end of his life, he reached to the conclusion that the Dalits could never have the life of dignity while living in a *chaturvarna* ridden Hindu society. Finding no other way out, he opted for the religious conversion as the last resort. But here again he displayed a rare sense of patriotism and nationalism when he opted for Buddhism for his and his follower's religious conversion. In the entire process, he never lost his deep sense of rationality and discrimination.' As there was no scope whatsoever for caste conversion, hence he had to go in for religious conversion; but he did opt for Buddhism, a sister religion of Hinduism.

In Maharashtra, a deliberate attempt has been made to put Gandhi and Ambedkar against each other, as if they were always at hostile terms. But this is far from the truth. For instance, on 25 June, 1934 a bomb was thrown on Gandhi by an unidentified man. Fortunately he escaped unhurt. On 14 July, 1934, a meeting was held in Bombay to condemn that cowardly attack on Gandhiji. Ambedkar delivered a moving speech condemning it and wishing Gandhiji a long and purposeful life. He also paid a glowing and heartfelt tribute to Gandhiji in the Constituent Assembly after his assassination on 30, January, 1948. He even went to the extent of proposing that the money collected through salt tax should be put in a separate account and it should be called Gandhi Fund. He also suggested that the Fund should be used for the welfare programmes for the needy Dalits. In the course of his speech, he heartily acknowledged the tremendous contributions made by Gandhiji towards Dalit cause.

The truth of the matter is that the works done by Gandhiji and Ambedkar were complementary to each other. Gandhiji wanted to bring back the Dalits to the mainstream of the society through service and elimination of untouchability, primarily through a movement for the change of heart of the caste Hindu. On the other hand, Ambedkar wanted to achieve the same goal through getting them involved in a struggle for their liberation.

But many people forget that but for Gandhi's support, Ambedkar would not have become the Law Minister of the country. Jawaharlal Nehru wanted to bring foreign experts for the making of the Indian Constitution. It was on Gandhi's initiative that Ambedkar was made the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly. Gandhiji wanted Ambedkar to work as a representative of all sections of the Indian society, instead of remaining just a representative of his own community. Thus transcending different castes and sub-castes, through the works of Gandhi and Ambedkar, a collective identity of the entire *harijan* community emerged. That was no small contribution. Gandhi's

commitment and contribution to the *harijan* cause could be also illustrated by the fact that towards the end of his life he refused to bless any married couple if one of them was not from the untouchable community.

On the other hand, we must take into account what Ambedkar said on 25 September 1932 after signing the Poona Pact with Gandhiji. He said:

‘I must confess that I was surprised, immensely surprised when I met him, that there was so much in common between him and me. In fact, whenever any disputes were carried to him.... I was astounded to see that the man who held such divergent views from mine at the Round Table Conference came immediately to my rescue. I am very grateful to Mahatmaji for having extricated me from what might have been a very difficult situation’ (*The Life of Mahatma Gandhi*, by Louis Fischer, Bhavan’s eighth edition, 2003, p. 407).

Gandhiji tried to make caste Hindus get rid of the feeling and practice of untouchability. Ambedkar, on the other hand, worked to organise Dalits to make them struggle to have their own dignity of life and identity. Thus their movements, though taking to different paths had the same goal—a new sense of dignity and identity for Dalits.

As stated earlier, their movements were complementary to each other. It was on account of such movements that a national consensus emerged which led to the abolition of untouchability as provided under Article 17 of our Constitution. It was also made a cognizable offence. It was for the same cause that the Mahatma treated himself as *harijans* for all practical purposes. He identified himself entirely with them.

Among the fundamental duties ascribed under our Constitution, it becomes the sacred duty of every Indian to work towards the spread of unity and brotherhood among the Indian people, transcending all differences and distinctions based on religion, language, region and class. That idea was also one of

the major contributions of Gandhi who not only had perceived such a dream for India, but also had worked tirelessly to that end. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that he lived and died for that cause. Ignoring all this, those who create unnecessary controversy by putting our leaders against each other are failing from their primary duty enshrined under our Constitution out of their small mindedness and selfish interests. Nay, they are also committing a crime against our society and against all Indian people. The whole country should realise this truth in the depth of its being.



Dr. B. R. Ambedkar



## The Issue of Purity of Means in Our Times

I would say 'means are after all everything'. As means so the end...There is no wall of separation between means and end. Indeed the Creator has given us control [and that too very limited] over means, none over the end. Realization of the goal is in exact proportion to that of the means. This is a proposition that admits of no exception.

*M.K. Gandhi*

It is widely believed that the present is the age of science and universalism. Everything including economics, markets and commercial exchange of goods are getting globalized. But it seems that we are not examining the underlying idea behind all these developments. The first question worth considering in this regard is whether there is any intimate connection between material and spiritual aspects of human life? Another question that comes to my mind is whether there is any relationship among principles of philosophy and human conduct? Or are they different from each other and as such should be taken as being mutually exclusive? There are people who believe that principle and practice, the means and the end are two different things and there is no need to establish any kind of symbiotic relationship between the two.

As an extended corollary, it is said that a man of truth and high principles is not a practical man. He finds it difficult to grapple with the empirical realities of the world. But on a closer examination one could clearly see that such broad assertion is not true. This could

not be a universal truth. On a more fundamental level, one could ask whether there is a real distinction between profession and practice? We often forget that a man of truth could be a practical man—a man of the world. It is a basic premise of science that the veracity of any principle could be tested in terms of experimentation and observation. But the latter also must be truthful. New finding in the arena of science are of two types—discovery and invention. To unveil some realities, some principles which are already existing is called discovery. Creating something brand new, whether in material or in terms of idea is called invention. But we accept the findings of only such scientists, whose mind and heart are pure and authentic. Anyone who is untruthful and unauthentic could never be taken as a scientist. But we look at the practical side of life in a different perspective. Something that is not simple and straightforward is called practical. Hence a simple and straightforward man could never be considered as a practical man. At the same time it is also said that honesty is the best policy. That is taken to be a guide for the practical side of life. Unfortunately, the term policy is interpreted in such a way that under the garb of truth, most of the times, untruth and falsehood are marketed in the world. This is not principle but just a policy. Nor is it truthfulness. Most of the time when we make purchases, we do it on the basis of trust and honesty of the shopkeeper. We do not buy everything after testing or tasting or closely examining it. We stop purchasing things from a shopkeeper if we find him dishonest and unauthentic. Thus it is expected that even the market should be governed by certain norms and certain rules of moral conduct.

It is true that black market and smuggling are quite widespread. Many of us try to free ourselves from the consequences of our sinful acts, by making some donation to some temple or social organization. An economics based on exploitation is nothing but bad economics—an economics of human misery and selfishness. Taking undue advantage of someone's helplessness and on the top of it making it a source of earning is nothing short of an art and science of misery. Unfortunately, the goods produced by child

labour, women, the poor, and the unemployed turn out to be less expensive. But why should it be so? Is it the exploitation that makes them less expensive? If our goal is to build an exploitation free society then why not to insist on the kind of social practice which is in consonance with that high ideals? Otherwise, under the name of globalization, exploitation would increase in geometrical progression. Market and the entire economic science would be in the grip of globalization. All of them would be devoid of the milk of human compassion. Hence, there would be only globalization of exploitation. And that kind of globalization would only lead to the misery and penury of the people. It was to prevent such a scenario that Vinoba had said: 'Think globally but act locally'. In other words, the basic thought should be universal but *swadeshi* should be the guiding norm of our action or practice. In the absence of such a word view, we cannot think of the purity of means as a practical guide to our life. In modern times science and spirituality would have to be kept in consonance. In the absence of human approach, science would be nothing short of destructive in nature and its gradual progression would ultimately result in total ruination. It is a well-known principle that if the food is pure, then its essence would be the same. The same principle should apply to the basic unity of profession and practice—thought and action. If purity of means is lost, then the end in its outcome is bound to be impure.

In response to the question as what is *swaraj*, Lokmanya Tilak had said that national education is *swaraj*, *swadeshi* is *swaraj* and even boycott is *swaraj*. All these were as the means of *swaraj*—pathways to *swaraj*. Similarly, Gandhiji had equated *swaraj* with *Khadi* and the elimination of untouchability. Hence he wanted the purity of means to be maintained which would automatically take care of the ends. Thus, no revolution would be possible unless its end, individual practice and its major means are kept in consonance with each other. That is the reason Gandhiji has often asserted: 'My life is my message.'

Unfortunately, today we are leading a double life— a life full of hypocrisy. We have divided our conduct or character in two compartments—one for the individual life and the other for the public life. When a question is raised about individual conduct, one is asked to look at his public conduct. Similarly, when fingers are raised against one's public conduct, we are asked to focus on the good record of his individual life. That means that we should examine only that part of one's life which is convenient for us at a particular moment. In such a perspective, both individual conduct and the purity of means become context specific—to be judged on the basis of the context and not that of universal human values. Such a life could not make any positive impact on the wider society, as it would be simply taken as the life of hypocrisy. Hence there is a need for the unity of the means and the end. This would come only through one's purity of mind and insistence on the purity of means. That is why Gandhiji had insisted on his eleven vows, which serve both the purpose of purity of mind as well as that of means. These vows are always helpful in freeing man from various kinds of bad worldly entanglements.

In our age, democratic system is our goal and election is its major means. Hence there is an insistence that candidates for election should be of high moral character. At the time of nomination for the election, a prospective candidate would have to provide detailed information about his property and his conduct and about criminal cases pending against him. He has also to provide relevant information about his entire family, including their ownership of the property. In the absence of such restrictions the goal of democracy could not be achieved. In other words, it is expected that such code of conduct is applicable to the prospective candidates and that would also serve the final goal of popular rule. I am strongly of the opinion that similar code of conduct should be evolved for the citizens as well. Voting right is a sacred duty. It is like chastity of a woman. It could not be taken as a gift without proper thought and consideration. Sale and purchase of votes on



monetary consideration as well as its misuse on the basis of caste, religion, creed, language and region are sinful acts. Voting right should not be made a marketable commodity. It should not be allowed to be vitiated under any kind of power, be it muscle power, wealth power, political power or mafia power. Thus any misuse of voting rights, whether under the compulsion of fear or greed is nothing short of the murder of democracy. It is the betrayal of the popular trust. Our votes should never be cast in favour of those who suffer from any kind of drug addiction or those who practice untouchability or those who have violated and deprived the people of their fundamental rights. There should be some restrictions on the nature of election campaign so that it is not carried out on the basis of falsehood and misinformation. All these norms should be equally applicable to the elections to even cultural, social and literary organizations.

Some moral norms must also be observed by people's representatives in the post-election period. Bribery is not the only type of corruption. It involves all kinds of immoral acts. Today social acceptance of corruption has reached an unprecedented scale. It is often forgotten that anyone, who fails to observe certain moral norms and purity of means in his dealings with others, could be taken as indulging in a bigger act of corruption than one who is simply taking a bribe. Such a behaviour could lead to the vitiation of the entire social environment. The primary reason for such deterioration in our all walks of national life is the insatiable desire for ever rising standard of life in material terms. Greed and not the need has become the driving force of our life. Another factor contributing to such a state of affairs is our deep sense of cut-throat competition. Everyone is competing against each other. Cooperative spirit has virtually disappeared from our social life. In the process, we have come to repose greater faith in violent means, rather than in the change of heart. So much so that a belief is growing that physical murder of any person would also eliminate his thoughts. It is such a false belief which is responsible for the assassination of great men of the world like Socrates, Christ,

Abraham Lincon, Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi. 'Ends justify the means' is becoming an inseparable part of popular psyche. Achieving one's desired goal by hook or by crook is gripping the mind of the people. Not only that, it is also being said that the means would have to be invented and used in keeping with the needs of our ends. We have come to a point where we are forgetting the simple truth that pure ends could be achieved only through pure means.

Everything is coming under the purview of commercialization. Price of a thing, not its value is becoming the ruling norm. Every attempt would have to be made to restore the primacy of value in our social life. It has to be introduced even in the marketing system. Goods being sold and bought in the market must be of the same quality as it is claimed on their wrappers or advertisements. Both producers and sellers should be held accountable to it. Otherwise all kinds of adulterated goods would be ruling the roost. Such adulteration would not remain confined merely to consumer goods, the entire society would be dominated by adulterated human behaviour, including police and judiciary who are supposed to be the custodians of value and norms in the society.

There is a saying in Sanskrit that sins committed elsewhere could be washed out at a place of pilgrimage, but how to get rid of them if they are committed in the very place of pilgrimage! That is a puzzling question before a common man. It is widely believed that science is based on truth—pure and unadulterated truth. But science is not an end in itself. Rather it is a means for relieving human beings from drudgery, misery and penury. Hence it has got to be based on high moral values. But if the purity of means is not observed in scientific fields, it would lead to total ruination of human kind. It goes without saying that scientific field is being vitiated through the use of impure means. Where should we go then in our search for purity of means? This is a situation of total despair and helplessness.

In such a changing situation, man is becoming selfish and self-centered. Gradually, he is moving towards a state of total hedonism. The main obstacle on the path of human salvation are: casteism, mobocracy, multi-nationalisms, misuse of rights, armaments and corruption. Today's terrorist might turn into tomorrow's freedom fighter! This is not an imaginary situation. It is coming in the very realm of possibilities. Everyone is aspiring to gain fame and social recognition, through means whatsoever! The civil society is on the decline and the power of the State is on the increase. Scientific instruments and implements are also contributing to the process of self-centredness of man. He is getting socially isolated. Cellular phone, credit card, tele-transactions, telemarketing would get him confined to his isolated place of residence. Sources of energy would multiply and the society would move towards greater industrialisation. Every work would be done at a faster pace making it difficult for man to fruitfully use his spare time. As a resultant boredom, the tendency towards suicide would be on the increase. Prosperity would bring more misery in its trail. Mental disorders might become the order of the day. In the process, man would become less and less important. Human values would go down the drain. Idealism would be out of tune with our times. This is the total situation facing man today.

In such a situation of total despair, who would talk about the importance of such moral value as purity of means? Will symbiotic relationship between means and ends survive in such a desperate situation? Will the ultimate goal of human salvation last in such a mindless search for material success through fair or unfair means? This is the question which confronts the human mind today. The future generations would have to find answers to these puzzling questions. There would be people who would say that Mahatma Gandhi with all his emphasis on the purity of means and its symbiotic relationship with ends has become outdated and anachronistic. If that happens, it would be our ill luck, as the international prestige of our country along with its cultural identity would be wiped out. One sincerely hopes that such a tragic situation would never overtake India—Our motherland.



## **Gandhi's Expectations from Our Judicial System**

The government of the village will be conducted by the Panchayat of five persons, annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. These will have all the authority and jurisdiction required. Since there will be no system of punishments in the accepted sense, this Panchayat will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office.....

*M.K. Gandhi*

In earlier times, all works relating to the State used to be handled by the king or the emperor. The king used to make laws and also enforce them. With the subsequent new developments in culture and civilization, the concept of independent judicial system emerged. Besides, civil society has its own kind of judicial systems in the form of *gram panchayat* or caste *panchayat*. Similarly the eldest member in a family used to give his own decision in case of any conflict among the members in the family. In other words, there was a decentralized system of justice prevailing in our country.

It was the British colonial system which ended such decentralization of justice and replaced it by a centralized one. New colonial judicial system was not meant to provide justice to the Indian people. It was introduced just to strengthen the sinews of the British imperial rule. It was such a judicial system which

looked at every Indian patriot as traitor and even put them behind bars. It even sent ardent patriots like Mahatma Gandhi to jail and Bhagat Singh to the gallows. There was nothing Indian, not even an iota of *swadeshi* element in this judicial system.

When the laws of government are not just, then any judicial system is only geared to run the entire government machinery without any challenge. In such a situation, the entire judicial system becomes totally unjust and biased. It is turned into a major instrument of support and sustenance to an authoritarian rule. It is also used to protect the vested interests of the people with property and privileges. One can see this happening even today. The rich and powerful intimidate the poor and the downtrodden by dragging them to the courts of law. Thus the entire judicial system is geared to exploitation and domination. Unfortunately, we opted for such a unjust judicial system even in the post independent era. We experienced its seamy side more intensely during the Emergency period when the entire judicial system appeared impotent. It is true that our Constitution did provide for a judicial system which could work free from fear and favour. But most of the political parties and their leaders attempt to use it for the protection and promotion of their political interests. They would consider it being free, neutral and independent, only so long as it gives judgements in their favour. The Establishment considers it unfair and biased, the moment it delivers any judgement against them. Thus the present judicial system has become a pastureland for the rich and the powerful. It was for such a reason that Gandhiji had castigated the prevailing judicial system in the following words:

‘Justice in British Courts is an expensive luxury. It is often the longest purse that wins. The economic drain that the Law Courts cause has at no time been considered, and yet it is not trifle. Every institution founded under present system is run on a most extravagant scale. Law Courts are probably the most extravagantly run... There is something sinful in a system under which it is possible for a lawyer to earn from fifty thousand to one lakh rupees per month. Legal practice is not-ought not to be—a speculative business.’

But even today there is no material change in the situation. The amount of money which an advocate could earn during Gandhi's era in a month, he could very well earn the same amount in one day in the present time. Even the salary of a judicial officer has increased many times: what was his one month's salary has become one day's salary today. What is more, people are being cheated in the name of independent judiciary. It appears that the God of justice has put a veil on his eyes. That is why it is said that judges have only ears and not eyes. They can only hear and listen and could not see things as they are.

All laws made by the Parliament and even State Legislatures are mostly drafted in the English language. They are simply translated in the regional languages. But the English version is primarily used as the standard one. There is nothing in the existing system to acquaint or familiarize them to those sections of the society for whom these laws are made. Thus they remain unaware about the provisions and nature of these laws. Such ignorance of laws on the part of the poor helps the rich and the powerful in their nefarious game of exploitation and domination. The real irony is that it is taken for granted that everyone becomes aware of the laws the moment they are published in the government gazette. Since English continues to be the language of the judicial courts, hence Raj Narayan and Madhu Limaye were not allowed to plead their cases in Hindi. In most of the countries, their own languages are used in their judicial system. India might be the only country in the world where judiciary does not function in people's language and therefore one could not put forward one's plea in his/her own language. Thus the colonial judicial system is alive and kicking even today. This is what Gandhiji has anticipated in *Hind Swaraj* when he said that the English system might continue even without the Englishmen. But then India would not remain Hindustan but would become "Englistan", he had added.

Our independence brought a change in the national flag and national song but hardly any change in the judicial system. Hence, our present judicial system has hardly any *swadeshi* element in it.

There is an urgent need to change it at once without any dilly-dallying. The present system suffers from three afflictions—casteism, corruption and expensiveness. Such a view has even been expressed by a number of legal luminaries. Unfortunately, nothing concrete has been done in this direction. As a result, our judicial system has reached from Ramashastri to Ramaswami.

Acharya Vinoba Bhave has described the entire situation in his own inimitable way. He quoted the bible: 'Do not judge so that you will not be judged'. He further added that the delivery of justice in the present system is a tall order. Explaining his observation further he said that if a judge delivered true justice in ninety-nine out of the one hundred cases, he could not earn *punya* as he is paid a salary for it. But he is bound to go to hell, if he fails to deliver true justice even in one of the hundred cases. Even if he does so not on his own deliberation, but he is forced to do it on the basis of documents and false evidences or the twisted pleadings of advocates. He must go to hell, because he is bound to fail in delivering true justice in all the cases. Earlier delivery of justice was a part of the duties of the king.

In earlier times, India had its own judicial system. Whatever was decided by the *Panch Parmeshwar* (Five *Panchas*) was taken to be the voice of God. Our present system is of the British origin. Hence decision is always on the basis of majority and minority. Gandhi wanted the present judicial system to be done away with.

It is said in the *Vedas Anujanat Yayete Panchadhir*. In other words, those who were knowledgeable and endowed with the immense amount of patience were made the *Pancha*. Their opinion and decisions were binding on the entire village. That is how the judicial system and other services used to be run in our villages. Now the entire system has totally changed. Hence Vinoba pleaded for freedom from such unjust judicial system. To that end, the word *nyaya* (justice) should be replaced by *samadhan* (solution/satisfaction). In the coming years it should be called *samadhan pranali* and not *nyaya pranali*. Today if one party engaged in litigation is happy, the others is unhappy. The litigation cases go

up to the Supreme Court and no one is satisfied, even after such protracted litigation as it is meant to deliver judgements and not justice. In the present system, justice is delivered on the basis of oral evidence, and records. Both could be false and unreliable. There are people or parties who have developed some kind of expertise in this area. In the western countries even the accused do not ordinarily resort to falsehood. But in our country witnesses, even after taking oath either in the name of God or that of their religious scriptures, more often than not resort to lies and falsehood. This is based on my own experience as a judge. I found out that even the prominent leaders and men of religion did not speak the whole truth despite being on oath. On the other hand, the entire village knew the truth—who was the victim and who was the perpetrator of the crime. But under the existing system their primary effort is to hide the truth so that it does not come before the judicial officers.

Despite all this and ironically enough, our motto continues to be *Satyameva Jayate*, the truth prevails. Our judicial system based on two parties of the complainant and the accused is confined to the narrow precincts of the courtroom. Lies spoken in the courtroom does not adversely affect anyone's prestige and self-honour. That is why even men of honour and prestige continue to speak lies and produce false documents and evidence in the courtrooms. Sometimes we forget that its impact does not remain confined to only two parties involved in a dispute. Rather it affects the entire society. For example, any dispute between the employer and the employees also affects the consumer and the end user. But this is not taken into account during judicial adjudication in the courts. Murder, rape and similar other heinous crimes do make their impact on general law and order, peace and happiness of the members of the entire society. Thus the judicial system has got to be freed from the closet of the courtrooms and brought within the purview of the wider society. In the absence of such a participatory judicial system, there would be no solution for the contesting parties in a litigation, what to speak of delivery of



true justice. My experience is that a witness might produce false evidence in a courtroom, but could not do so in the people's court. A witness might get away by telling lies in a court room, but not in the people's court in the presence of the people with whom he has to live for the rest of his life. Therefore, there is an urgent need to organize *gram sabhas* comprising all adult members of the village community. In old central provinces, along with a *gram panchayat* there used to be *Nyaya Panchayat* also.

The rich, the powerful and the so-called wise people might think that the village *Panchas* hardly understand anything like legal niceties as they are ignorant people. This is not true. There is no need to split hairs about the nuances of law. What is needed is the delivery of justice. The common people have lot of common sense. Moreover, when justice is delivered in the presence of the entire village population, then justice would be truly delivered. In such a situation the principle of *Satyameva Jayate* would be proved to the hilt. That is the idea of *Panchayati Raj*. Without decentralization and wider participation of the community, justice could never be delivered.

Under the present system of administration and justice, in the case of a dispute or clash between two neighbours, police would catch hold of one or both the disputants and judiciary would punish one of them, who would be found guilty. But the present system could not provide them with an environment in which both could live amicably with a deep sense of brotherhood. Gandhiji sought to spiritualize both the judicial system as well as the legal profession. Hence, a serious attempt should be made towards freedom from the law courts and the present legal system. In this connection the words of Vinoba are worth quoting:

'It is the British who were responsible for the destruction of the *Panchayat* system for the first time in the Indian history. They greatly succeeded in their attempt as the country was under their tutelage during those days. Villages were also under their control. But even after we got our political independence, the villages continued to suffer from some kind of slavery. Earlier final justice

used to be delivered in London, now it is being delivered in Delhi. Earlier, all types of power was concentrated in London, now it has reached Delhi. It might be an improvement, but it is a tragedy that the power has stopped at Delhi. The real challenge is to take it to the villages. Now any dispute arising in the country is settled within its own boundary. It does not go to the foreign land. This is a good development as a symbol of our freedom. But what is the symbol of the freedom of the villages? There is none today. Only when no dispute goes beyond the boundary of the village and all of them whatever be their nature, are settled in the presence of the villagers, we can say that the slavery of the villages has ended.'

This would be, what I say, the mainstay of future judicial system in the country. In such a system, instead of redressal of grievances and complaints through legal and judicial system, the primary emphasis would be on love, cooperation and desire to put an end to all disputes at their very roots. That alone will put an end to the prevailing practice of giving and taking bribes and lead to a permanent solution for all the parties involved. This would also lead to the establishment of rule of law in our country.

Today our judicial system is not only too expensive, particularly for the poor and the downtrodden. So much so that they could not even think of getting justice through it. Similarly, the entire system is so protracted in terms of time that it fully justifies the saying that 'justice delayed is justice denied.' It also justifies the saying that 'judgment is delivered, but justice is aborted.' In the two disputants based system, one of them might like to subvert the judicial delivery system through delaying tactics. For instance, in case of a dispute between the landlord and the tenant, the latter would always like to resort to delaying tactics so that he could virtually enjoy rent free accommodation on a long term basis. Besides, on account of high number of original court cases, it appears that the entire judicial system would collapse under its own weight. Hence, there is gradually developing a parallel system of (in) justice based on money power, muscle power and mafia power. This kind of illegal system is turning out to be most powerful, overshadowing

the legally constituted judicial system. What gave a further fillip to the emergence of such system is the indifference and inaction on the part of good people of the country – the so-called gentlemen of high gentry. All this virtually leaves a field day for all those who do believe in the notorious principle of “might is right.”

It is relevant here to relate an incident from the life of poet Akbar Allahabadi, who was working as a civil judge. One of the parties to a dispute approached him seeking justice from him. In a couplet full of pathos and sarcasm he said:

‘To ask for justice from me  
Is like seeking water in the desert  
I am presiding over a court  
That is *Deewani*’

(Here the word *deewani* has double meaning: Civil and ‘out of mind’.)

All this simply means that for the common man judiciary is the last pilgrimage for justice. But if he fails to get justice there, he looks up to God as his redeemer for justice or tries to seek some other avenues for justice. There is a saying in English which simply states that if a sin is committed at some other places, it could be washed out in a place of a pilgrimage. But if it is committed at the very place of pilgrimage, where should one go to get it washed out?

Perhaps that was the reason why Gandhi had said: ‘We shall promote arbitration courts and dispense justice, pure, simple, home made *swadeshi* justice to our countrymen.’ Unfortunately, today arbitration system has turned out to be too expensive. These courts have become five star judicial courts. We have inherited it from the British. Hence there is nothing *swadeshi* about it. Gandhi had also opined that Hindi should be the working language of the Supreme Court as it is both the national language and the people’s language. Regional courts should work through regional languages. The last court of appeal should work through Hindustani/Devanagari script. He wanted a radical change in the English language dominated judicial system. He also wanted that regional

languages to be used in the State legislatures. Even teaching and training in the legal profession should be done through people's language or national language. If all this happens, that would be a symbol of establishment of the rule of law and not the rule of men. There should be popular support and sanction behind the judicial system. It should not remain confined under the purview of a small section of the elite. In other words, courts should turn into service providing centres and not remain just a formal system of judgment delivery. They should be run in the spirit of *swadeshi* or Indianness. This is the demand of our time. Unfortunately today the common man is just an object of the judicial system and its subject is something else.

The main question is what is the mainstay of the rule of law—power of punishment or the popular will? Is it fair to expect people to obey law only out of fear of the hangman on the earth or *yamraj* in the heaven? In such a situation people get more interested in finding an escape route for their defence rather than offering natural and habitual obedience to law. Fear is a kind of closet where only negative feelings could flourish. If there would be no feeling of genuine awe and respect for the State made laws then could they be respectfully obeyed? Today law-breakers are more respected than the law-abiders. Not only that, even the hands of law enforcing authorities including the police could not reach up to them, not to speak of catching them. They are taken to be the most respected lot of the society. It is such a blatant capability of law-breaking that gives a man all the qualifications to be respected in our system.

Ideally, judicial system seeks to establish a social system based on equity, justice and good conduct. Here there is no provision for any kind of reward for abiding by law. That is taken to be normal practice. People are ordinarily punished for law-breaking and for indulging in any kind of unlawful act. We take jails as reformatory houses, and precincts of judicial courts as the house or temple of justice. And one who delivers the justice we call him *nyayamurti*—justice. *Taraju* is taken as the symbol of justice as it has to be based

on a balanced approach—taking into all viewpoints, arguments and evidences into account. A judge at the time of delivering justice is hardly concerned who is standing in front of him, the greatest or the least. He has to deliver justice, free from fear and favour. That is why the God of justice is to remain blindfolded, so that he is not influenced by any other consideration except fair play and justice.

In the building of Bombay High court, the statue of the God of justice is shown with open eyes. But he has himself put a veil on his eyes so that he is not affected by the presence of anybody, however powerful and mighty he might be. He has a sword in his hand to punish the criminals and the miscreants. Thus the God of justice is not blind, instead he keeps his eyes open.

When one offers prayer to Allah, the God of Islam, one calls him by several names like *Rahim* (compassionate), *Hakim* (pain-reliever) and *Vakil* (protector from injustice). All this means that the legal profession is considered to be a noble one. But lawyers have become commercialized professionals or law traders, so to say. True, all of them may not fall in that category, but one rotten fish might spoil the entire water in the pond. All this must change and the legal profession must become an effective profession of service to the people. But it gets linked up with livelihood and with insatiable desire for raising the standard of life. This noble profession is turned into a trade—a means of making money. In the process, it turns into black marketing. A common man goes to the court as the last shelter for justice. He does not go there voluntarily. Our endeavour should be to build up a just society so that chances for going in for judicial redressal is either totally eliminated or at least it is reduced to the bare minimum. It is a welcome sign that people have greater trust in judiciary than any other institution including social and religious ones.

The God of justice has three major symbols—police, jail and judicial courts. Every common man wants to keep away from them. This could be possible only if arena of self-restraint and self-rule is expanded to its fullest maximum. We have to eliminate all

the wrongs to be found in the present judicial system and replace it by a *swadeshi* system. For that we have to move in the direction of freedom from the courts. People should approach the court only in exceptional circumstances. In such an ideal situation, there would be no backlog of the court cases, nor the judges would be overburdened with work nor there would be undue delay in delivery of justice.

When I became a judge, my father, Dada Dharmadhikari, wrote a letter of blessing, wishing me good luck. In that letter he said: 'Today politics and social dealings have become so corrupt that both judiciary and judges are fast losing their social prestige. The God of justice is becoming subservient to the State power. Everyone tries to use his social, political and economic power to put pressure on the judges. But judiciary should never be allowed to become a handmaid of any kind of extraneous power. When a judge does not behave in a heartless and compassionless manner then alone he could act in a neutral and compassionate way. Always remember that a stone is not neutral, it is just hard and devoid of all feelings. The God of justice is compassionate. People should feel his compassion in his neutrality and objectivity.'

All this leads to one inescapable conclusion: There is an urgent need to raise a *swadeshi* judicial system. No tinkering with the present judicial system would achieve its basic objective. The need for a fundamental and revolutionary change in the judicial system is widely felt. But no one is sure about the contours of a viable and workable alternative. On the top of it, there seems to be no political will to change the entire system.

Hence the present system with all its limitations continues. But it has to be borne in our mind that we could not afford to throw the baby out with the bath water. To put it differently, if a scorpion is sitting on the *Shivaling*, while killing it with a shoe, a special care would have to be taken that the shoe does not hurt the *Shivaling*. This kind of sense of discrimination would have to be maintained while tackling the issue of judicial reforms, otherwise it would

be like putting the temple on fire in the process of getting rid of mosquitoes. In other words, attempts at the reforms of the present judicial system should be done in such a way that its majesty and prestige remains unspoilt. Our democratic system would lose all its meaning, if our judicial system fails to remain fearless, neutral and free from any feeling of malice. Besides, one should not forget that the liberty and dignity of the individuals are primarily protected through the judicial system. Judges and judiciary are described as the "Truth in Action." *Satyameva Jayate* (truth prevails) is our national motto. If and when it becomes an integral part of our everyday life, that would be really an auspicious day. I do not know whether I would have the good luck to see that auspicious day. But I hope and pray that the coming generation would witness it soon. My best wishes for them.



Ravishankar Maharaj Soul of Gujarat



## Gandhi's Preferred System of Governance

In this structure composed of innumerable villages there will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of village, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance, but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units. Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle, but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it.

*M.K. Gandhi*

Gandhi has a very definite and well-thought out views on the concept of *swaraj*. Writing about it he said:

‘Swaraj for me means freedom for the meanest of our countrymen .... I am not interested in freeing India merely from the English yoke. I am bent upon freeing India from any yoke whatsoever. I have no desire to exchange “king log for king stork.” On another occasion he explained poorna swaraj as follows:... ‘It is as much for the prince as for the peasant, as much for the rich landlord, as for the landless tillers of the soil, as much for the Hindus, as for Musalmans, as much for Parsis and Christians, as for



the Jains, Jews and Sikhs, irrespective of any distinction of caste or creed or status in life.'

He further wrote: 'By Swaraj I mean the government of India by the consent of the people as ascertained by the largest number of the adult population, male or female, native-born or domiciled, who have contributed by manual labour to the service of the State and who have taken the trouble of having their names registered as voters.

Real Swaraj will come, not by the acquisition of authority by a few, but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. In other words, Swaraj is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority.' (*Young India*, 29-1-1925, p. 41)

'The word Swaraj is a sacred word, a Vedic word, meaning self-rule and self-restraint, and not freedom from all restraint which 'independence' often means.' (*Young India*, 19-3-1931, p. 38)

It was on that basis that he looked at the entire question of his preferred system of governance—what should it include and what could it exclude? The system of governance which we accepted in the post independent India, was inherited from the British. There was nothing *swadeshi* about it. During the British rule it used to be said about the ICS officers that they are neither Indian nor civil nor servant. Even the officers of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) appear to be of the same temperament and tendency. They could truly be called Resident Non-Indians (RNI). They live in India, are paid hefty salaries out of the fund collected through heavy taxation on the people but their mindset is not Indian. That is why it is said that the Englishmen might have left India, but the Britishness in the field of administration still continues. The system of 'red-tapism' initiated by the British to strengthen their rule is still ruling the roost. Gandhi was firmly of the opinion that such a system of governance could not continue in a democratic and republican set-up. He was of the opinion that true democracy and republicanism is the system in which the views of the man in

the street are taken into account in every walk of administration. It was crystal clear to him that such a kind of administration could not run from the air-conditioned rooms and offices.

The people who live in palatial buildings and use huge and expensive cars are incapable of running such popular administration. Such people could never understand the real feelings and the problems of the common man. Only if they do *padyatra* and talk and interact with the people in a free and friendly manner, they could understand the real situation. Unfortunately, they are used to working on files from their office premises. In the process, they always remain and behave like a busy bee. For all these reasons, such system of governance does not gain popular sanction and support. They often forget that gone are the days when the administrators used to behave like masters while dealing with the people. Now they have to work as the authentic servants of the people, in a system of governance which Gandhi has called *Panchayati Raj*. They have to rise above the prevailing system of bribery, favouritism and other major weaknesses of the colonial era. Gandhi prescribed certain norms even for the members of legislatures, ministers and other public men. He went to the extent of saying that all these public men should not make personal use of official things like stationery, vehicles and other amenities provided to them in their official capacities.

They should try to avoid unnecessary expenditure of even a pie, and give full account of the entire public expenditure. They should also keep away from the lure of honorary titles as they often come in the way of rendering true service to the people and the country. This is so because even the governments which make such offers often attempt to take undue advantages, favour and support from them even for their illegal and immoral acts. Acceptance of such honour makes it difficult for anyone to act in a neutral, compassionate and objective manner. Flattery and court jesting would have to be avoided. There is also a need to narrow down, if not eliminate, the gap between the living standard of the people and those in power positions. That would create a hiatus between

the people and the public men of power. If the big gap remains, it would be difficult to understand the nature of the problems faced by the people. According to Gandhiji it is both unjust and sinful on the part of the elite to avail big bungalows, heavy salaries, cars and perks in our country. The British had indulged in such systems just to create a sense of awe and fear among the popular psyche. Now the things should change as this is the age of democracy and republicanism. Hence, the people in the power position must behave like servants of the people and never as masters.

In a democratic set-up, the emphasis should be on *swa shashan* (self-regulation) rather than merely on *shashan* (external control). One should act on the basis of restraint not only on the basis of constraint—the emphasis should be on voluntariness rather than forced acceptance. Restraint is more of moral rather than of physical nature. Discipline is needed in every walk of our national life. And the word discipline is derived from the root word “disciple” which is closely related to the system of teaching and training. Respect for moral norms in the society comes mostly from a cultural mindset rather than from the fear of punishment. If people act purely on the basis of fear and punishment, they develop a negative attitude. In such a situation, people hanker after material possession even at the cost of their self-respect and equanimity. This creates another problem in the society. Breaking laws and social norms become the symbol of power and social prestige. In the process, those who break law start being more respected in the society than those who abide by the law. Law-breaking by such people is considered as an essential part of their art of cleverness. Their efficiency and dexterity in the work place is also assessed and evaluated only on that basis. Such a state of affairs also becomes a breeding ground for widespread corruption in the society.

Gandhi wanted our public servants and even our legislators and ministers to buy things like sugar, groceries from the public distribution shops as buying these from other shops would be like indulging in black marketing. If these men of power and positions

purchase these things from the government shops, then those shopkeepers would not be able to sell rotten grain and substandard materials to the public. But today it is considered to be below the dignity of man of power and position to do such things. They prefer to go to the most expensive shops to avail such services. In England, there is a tradition whereby the men of power and position go to the public distribution shops to buy their goods of daily necessities. But in India, these high-up people never go to the government hospitals for their treatment. They prefer to go abroad or to the most expensive private hospitals for their own treatments as well as for their dependents. In all these cases, the payment is made from the government treasury. Government hospitals are meant just for the common man. Hence non-availability of doctors and medicines does not become an issue of public concern. In these institutions even the appointments of the experts are made on the basis of recommendations by the high-ups mostly on the basis of their family connections. It is not surprising that the mortality rate is very high in these hospitals.

In the *adivasi* area, the problem of malnutrition is very serious and the children are its worst victims. There is total lack of sympathy on the part of the high-ups in the society towards the suffering of the poor and downtrodden. Their exploitation goes on uninterruptedly by the elite. What is more, these high-ups indulge in corrupt practices and make huge money, more than hundreds of times of their salaries. Yet they often fight for the raise in their salaries though they live in all comforts. Such a state of affairs was totally unacceptable to the Gandhian concept of *swaraj*. He averred that the rights come out from the performance of one's duties. But today it is the right and not the duty which are occupying predominant place in our public discourse. Therefore, the people occupying lower position prefer to become subservient to the high-up instead of dealing with the common people in a sympathetic way. They also adopt extremely domineering attitude towards the people occupying lower position. A saying in Vidarbha

captures the whole situation in a very succinct way. It runs like this:

‘When the dog of *Saheb* died  
The entire village gathered for the condolence.  
But when *Saheb* himself died,  
Not even a dog came to sympathize.’

Such things do happen as there is no genuine love and sympathy for the *Saheb*. This is called practical wisdom in administrative circle wherein there is hardly any place for genuine love, respect and humanity.

Kahlil Gibran put it in extremely pithy words in his work ,*The Garden of the Prophet*:

‘Pity the nation whose statesman is a fox, whose philosopher is a juggler, and whose art is the art of patching and mimicking.

Pity the nation that welcomes its new ruler with trumpetings, and farewells him with hootings, only to welcome another with trumpetings again.’

In the same work he said:

‘Pity the nation that wears a cloth it does not weave, eats a bread it does not harvest, and drinks a wine that flows not from its own wine-press.’

What is the primary reason for such a state of affairs? The basic malady for such sad state of affairs lies in the predominance of the elite in every walk of our life, including political, social and educational life. Our children are taking to the western way as the ducks take to water. English is virtually becoming the mother tongue of the elite and their own mother tongue is being banished from their hearths and homes. There is the usage of mummy in their homes, but the Maa (mother) is nowhere to be heard. Their children go to the public school not to the municipal and government schools. There was a time when we thought that education would bring about equality in the society but this was not to be. Education has become the major instrument for creating

all kinds of inequality and differentiation in the society. The children of the elite families are getting highly westernized. The real fear is that all the traces of *swadeshi* would be lost in their lives. Thus there is an urgent need for Indianization of our political and administrative system. We do have our political independence, but in the cultural and educational fields we continue to suffer from the slavish mentality. Poet Akbar Allahabadi has captured the entire situation in his sarcastic manner: 'How could children imbibe their parent's faith when they are living on tinned milk and English education?'

Hence, there is need for making our administrative system based on the *swadeshi* spirit. One could easily feel some kind of an alien feeling among our administrators. They do not take their work as their own. They suffer from a feeling of alienness in performance of their duties. In the present system, one is taken to be efficient if he knows the art of lessening if not avoiding, the burden of his work. To have maximum gains at the cost of minimum work and pains has become the common norm of the administrative field. They think that whatever salary is paid to them is for the work they do as the government servant. But what about the payment for the services they rendered to the people! Do not they deserve some extra payment for that part of their service? Hence they justify their extra income which they do not accept as being bribery. They think that only those administrators should be taken as corrupt who do not actually deliver the goods even after taking bribe. Thus giving and taking bribe has become a common norm in the society. There are many government departments where bribe money exceeds their salary on regular basis. No one feels any kind of shame in taking bribe in such a situation. Rather in the marriage market the dowry rates of such people go up in a big way.

In Mussorie there is an academy for the training of IAS probationers. The rich people go there in search of prospective son-in-laws. They buy the husbands for their daughters at a heavy price. An IAS probationer from Godawari district of Andhra could

demand and get a dowry of rupees one crore or more. Could one trust such an administrator who himself openly defies the anti-dowry act, to be honest and incorruptible in his future career? Could he maintain a high moral standard in his social dealings or even in respect of his wife or other women? Judiciary is also not totally free from such vices. There is nothing *swadeshi* about it in terms of language, dress or even thinking. It is mostly based on an alien culture. True, everyone is not like that. There are some good people and people depend only on such elements for the smooth functioning of the administration. One of the Hindi poets, Shri Gopal Prasad has said:

‘The thing that is received after letter is called telegram.

The thing that starts after getting pushed is called car.

And that which does not move even after being pushed is called *Sarkar* (Government).’

There is greater amount of anguish rather than sarcasm in the above lines. There is a kind of stability and permanence in the government service. Such permanence has been given so that an administrator could work with dedication without any feeling of insecurity, or fear or favour. But the net result is just the opposite, as it has resulted in tardiness and indiscipline. An attempt was made to change the system, to make them more accountable and loyal to the political bosses. But after some time it was business as usual. Till date we have not succeeded in creating a cadre of fearless, fair-minded and dedicated administrators. Casteism, misuse of power and lack of discipline are three major weaknesses of our administrative set-up. No senior official could write the Confidential Report (CR) of his juniors in any objective manner. He would be accused of being castetist if the junior officer happens to be of a different caste. That is the reason why annual CR writing has become a farcical thing. The problem of the misuse of power is always there. It breeds both corruption and atrocities. Lack of transparency in administrative matters is promoted in the name of secrecy. It totally negates the democratic value of our polity. It

is said humourously that one should not go behind an ass and in front of the boss, both have bad habits of hitting with their legs. The employees at the lower rung mostly act in such a clever way.

Gandhi had asserted that our administrators should be free from all kinds of addiction as it leads to corruption. In the mid-1980s, India's then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi lamented that out of every rupee spent on welfare schemes, only 15 paise reached the poor. Hence an attempt has been made to get things done through non-governmental agencies (NGO) by bypassing the bureaucratic set-up. That has created its own problems. However, we are not concerned with that as our primary focus is presently on bureaucracy. All said and done, bureaucracy is one of the main pillars of the governmental system. Hence every effort should be made to strengthen it by freeing it from its major weaknesses.

In this context it is important to note that the ministers and peoples' representatives are elected for five years only. They are not there permanently, only bureaucracy works on a permanent basis. It provides both stability and permanency to the administrative machinery. The policy matters are decided by ministers and the legislators enact the laws. But it is the bureaucracy which implements these policy decisions and laws. Hence they could not be ignored or even totally condemned as they are primarily responsible for running the administrative machinery on a permanent basis. Even for their weaknesses they alone could not be held responsible. As Kahlil Gibran observes that even a single leaf of a tree could not wither away without the silent consent of the entire tree. Similarly, civil service could not go corrupt without the silent consent of the society. For instance, the bribe giver is as much responsible for the prevailing corruption in the society as the bribe taker. In fact, the so-called good people could never totally free themselves from the misdeeds of the miscreants in the society. When the good elements are inactive in the society, the bad elements get a free field for their misdeeds. Thus on the basis of money power, muscle power and mafia power, a parallel system of administration is created which is used by the rich and



the powerful to their advantage. Could we ever claim not to be responsible for such a sad state of affairs? We could not end up by just blaming the entire system. The fact of the matter is that good people must stand behind the good elements and constantly remain watchful about misdeeds of bad elements.

There is an urgent need to humanise the entire system. Gandhiji even gave a mantra for such an attempt. He said that there is a symbiotic relationship between the means and the ends. He kept a picture of a new social order of his dreams before his eyes. In his view, in such a society there would not be much difference between the rich and the poor; woman could move freely without any kind of fear; there would not be drug addiction; the individual would forgo his interests for the sake of the society. In a word, in such a society *swaraj* would be meaningful for all the sections of the society. If such an ideal state of affairs prevails in the society, there would be no need for the people in power to seek the shelter of the gods and the temples for freeing themselves from the guilt feeling. Not only that, people would remain law abiding and disciplined. They would be free from selfishness and opportunism.

Gandhiji had very good opinion about the social workers of Maharashtra. He thought that they had an immense capacity for self-suffering and self-sacrifice. He said that *swadeshi* was the golden key for opening the gate of *swaraj*. We must justify his expectations by using the golden key of *swadeshi*. He also gave a talisman to judge for ourselves the nature and contents of our actions Gandhi said: 'I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to *swaraj* for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and your self melt away.'

If we want to have a fearless and impartial system of governance, then it is absolutely necessary that our administrators should have freedom to express their views boldly. Ministers, people's representatives and high officials must respect such bold and impartial officials. They must pat their backs and back them up to the hilt. If these things do not happen, then the entire administrative set-up would be vitiated. Let them have their own ambition, let them seek promotions, but let them not place and promote untruth as truth. Let them never compromise with truth. Let them never indulge in the sycophancy and flattery of the high and mighty for getting out of turn promotion or some assignment after retirement. Their so-called neutrality or even impartiality should not be another name for their insensitivity and stone heartedness. A piece of stone is not neutral or impartial, as it lacks all sensitivity and compassion. But these administrators should have special feelings of compassion while dealing particularly with the poor and downtrodden. Today there is cut-throat competition among officials. Hence, there is no feeling of brotherhood among them. There is always a lack of cooperation among different officials and also among their respective departments. All this adversely affects their efficiency and cooperative functioning. We know that the political parties come to rule the country on the basis of elections. They ordinarily come to run the administration for five years. A different party might be placed through the next election. It might like to undo what has been done by the previous government. They prefer to take some dramatic and populist measures, so that their political stock goes up in popular mind. In such a situation, it is the administrative machinery that provides stability and continuity of major policy planks. It also tries to maintain a balance between continuity and change of policies.

They also have to take care of the interests of the people amidst these political contests. That requires high level of efficiency, discrimination and intelligence, so that no harm is done to the people's interests. After all, they are the servants of the people and not those of the high-ups.

Of late, among the civil servants a new tendency is fast emerging: they are seeking political power. Some of them are entering into the realm of political power through elections after their retirement or even after seeking voluntary retirement. The nearer their retirement, the faster runs their political ambition. They even go to sacrifice their administrative impartiality to promote their political interests by aligning with one or the other political party. At times, they even use their junior officials in their political game. This mars both the efficiency and impartiality of the entire administrative set-up.

There is a saying that "corporation has no soul." That means that the government has no mind and soul of its own. After independence, the government officials were expected to behave as the servants of the people. Sardar Patel, as the Home Minister and their political head had even thanked them for their changed role and perspective. However, all this was being done essentially on the pattern of the colonial administration.

Gandhi had a different opinion on the entire issue. He had described them as: 'His Majesty's most obedient servant.' After all, what is the meaning of obedience? Does it simply mean to obey the orders of the high-ups, however unlawful, anti-people and immoral it might be? It could never be anybody's case that such blind and thoughtless acts could be a part of an obedient and disciplined administration. Is it not their moral duty to record their own independent opinion on the file? Yes, they might be duty bound to implement the final order of the high-up unless they choose to resign from the service. But it is also likely that even the high-ups might not totally ignore their opinion boldly recorded on the file. Such boldness of approach is all the more necessary as they owe something to the people, the ultimate source of political power, and not to their high-up bosses. That is what democracy means. After all, the rise of democratic polity everywhere marked the replacement of the rule of men by the rule of law. But on account of widespread nepotism, favouritism and corruption, we are again going back to the old ways of the rule of men. We should

never forget that as per Article 14 of our Constitution, every citizen of our country stands on equal footing. But in actual practice, this provision is being violated every day. The rich and the powerful on the one hand, and the poor and the downtrodden on the other hardly stand on equal footing.

In this context it is relevant to refer to what Adi- Sankaracharya wrote about the majesty of God centuries back. He said that even God remains bound by the moral and ethical norms created by Himself. His majesty lies there only. He is omnipotent but he obeys the moral norms. There lies his centrality and importance. And that is the true symbol of good administration, as the people are the ultimate source of power and not the politicians and officials who are simply exercising their power on behalf of the people. The high-ups have no legal and moral right to misuse their power positions and force their juniors to obey their orders, whether or not they are based on law and morality.

After all, what is the meaning of discipline? There is a lot of difference between hardness and steadfast persistence. The people in power positions with a whip for punishment in their hands are not necessarily disciplined, though they are expected to be disciplined and law abiding. This is what Gandhiji called: 'the individual code of conduct.' Is it being obedient son to cut the throat of mother Renuka at the behest of his father Jamadagni? During the days of the Quit India Movement a company of the Sikh Regiment refused to carry out the order of their officers to fire on the people who were protesting in a peaceful way. After all, they had been trained to fire on the enemy forces and not on innocent and peaceful people. Did these brave soldiers indulge in any illegal act by refusing to fire on the peaceful and innocent people? Even today, a judicial enquiry is held in case of any police firing on the crowd. Usually, the terms of reference in such enquiries are who gave the order for firing? Was it absolutely necessary? Was there excessive use of force? Were there better ways to control the crowd? The central question before our consideration is whether or not an order of the high-ups would have to be obeyed by the juniors in all

situations without any exception? It is a very important question in the context of a democratic system. Dissent could be taken as a branch of discipline as it provides life-blood to any democratic system.

The people engaged in politics always take it as 'an art of possible.' For them, what is possible is also right and appropriate. Then what about the citizens? How should the principle of art of possible be applicable to their behaviour? Politicians are turning into hedonists, their actions are against their professed principles and dialogic method. It is always to be borne in mind that the administrative officials are also the citizens of the country. Gandhi had rightly observed that the recognition of the golden rule, i.e. never taking the law into one's own hand, had no exception. This rule is applicable to all, whether one is a private citizen or the government official. A discussion took place between my father, Dada Dharmadhikari, and Jayaprakash Narayan. Spiritualisation of politics was the main theme under discussion. Dada said that spiritualisation has its root word in "spirit." The word "spirit" is also used for alcohol. Dada said that the alcoholic part in spirit is in excess. That is why the power-addiction. J.P. was of the opinion that if Tweedledum is replaced by Tweedledee, it hardly makes any difference. This principle is also applicable to bureaucracy. It should stick to law and always remain inspired by human consideration fired by compassion. Moral character and conduct alone could provide cure for the prevailing widespread corruption in the society. There are still some good people in the administration. Hence it has not totally collapsed despite some bad elements found in it. Along with good character there is need for humility and sensitivity. But humility does not mean helplessness. Similar distinction must be made between self-respect and egotism. Vinoba traced the root cause of the problem when he said: 'Ambitious man wants to impose his powers and domination over others. That leads to exploitation. Humility is the sign of aliveness. The dead is always rigid and stiff. Humility is the sign of the living and the powerful.' Gandhiji used to say that

one can not dare to confront the whole world without humility. Tornado uproots big and powerful trees but not the grass on the ground. Flexibility and humility prepares a congenial ground for success. In the process, one could truly understand the distinction between lust, service and penance. Such an understanding marks a point of departure in one's life. Then alone one could understand Gandhi's saying that 'my life is my message'.

People in the administration should always remember that despite the popular saying that the bad currency drives out the good currency, it is the good currency which is openly respected in the market. Even bad currency is used in the market in the name of good currency only. There are still some good elements in the administration and it is in their count that the administration is able to do some good work. In the end, I may like to re-echo a line—'May his tribe increase!' from James Henry Leigh Hunt's poem: *About Ben Adhem*. That is both my hope and prayer.



Mahadev Bhai Desai with Bapu



## Gandhi's Concept of Trusteeship

Supposing I have come by a fair amount of wealth—either by way of legacy, or by means of trade and industry—I must know that all that wealth does not belong to me; what belongs to me is the right to an honourable livelihood, no better than enjoyed by million of others. The rest of my wealth belongs to the community and must be used for the welfare of the community .

*M.K. Gandhi*

Today the word 'management' has acquired a magical implication. Presently, the wind of globalization is blowing at a high speed. Hence, new dimensions are being added to the concept of management almost on a daily basis. This is the age of experts and specialists. Consequently, in the field of management, technological innovation is giving a new momentum to an efficient and dexterous functioning. Thus, like in many other fields, different departments and sub-departments are being founded endlessly. Financial marketing, human resource management, and similar other areas are emerging as its important branches. Not only that, even the idea of micro-specialisation and super specialisation is fast emerging in the arena of management studies. The following story very well illustrates how a mad race for specialisation is breaking the holistic view of knowledge into bits and pieces. A traveller approached a man, who happened to be a historian, and enquired about the road leading to the railway station. The historian suggested to the traveller that he should ask a geographer as geography was not his

area of specialisation. More important example one could find in the report of a School Inspector who wrote: 'I saw a fraction of a teacher teaching a fraction of a subject, to a fraction of students in a fraction of time.' All that it meant was that there was nothing in totality – no holistic approach to anything or subject. There is another story illustrating the same theme. A teacher asked his students to identify the living being in the following story. There were four men walking in the Queen's garden. They came across a living being there. On closer examination, they described it in four different ways. One of them found it like a pillar, the other as a wall, third one as sieve and the fourth one as a rope. Who were these people? The teacher asked the students. One of the students who had studied Aesop's Fables replied that all the four were blind. A still smarter boy stood up and said to the teacher: 'No sir, they were experts and specialists.' Hence they could see only that part of the elephant they had specialised. None of them could see the elephant in its entirety.

Similar development is taking place in the area of industrial management and even in the cultural and educational field. Thus, intensive knowledge in a narrow field is becoming the order of the day. One result of such development is that the end user (the common man), is hardly associated with the entire process. He is missing from the entire decision making process; though everything is being planned and done in his name and for his consumption. In sharp contrast to these specialists and experts, Mahatma Gandhi was a votary of the common man. He was also a man of strong common sense.

Today management has become an integral part of our social reconstruction. It is a new discipline which is being taught by innumerable institutions. It is fast gaining ground in the industrial and commercial establishment. Hence a number of institutions are running both long-term and short-term courses. Management studies have three important segments – management of industrial and commercial establishment, the training of the managers and the training of the employees and the workers.



The drive for the conquest of nature in all fields has radically changed the entire mindset of man. Hence, fast changes are taking place in the area of management as well. Now management study is reduced to two prominent areas: management of material and the management of men. The earlier understanding about the management of men was that man is essentially lazy and a work shirker. Behind that understanding was the feeling that man is more concerned with his rights rather than his duties. Hence he could work only when guided by the principle of reward and punishment.

Gandhi rejected such a perspective on man and his nature in his scheme of things. He had greater faith in self-regulations than all the external controls put together. Besides, he was also a great votary of cultural and spiritual tradition and its major ethics. He accepted and promoted one of the major spiritual values of Indian tradition: Man is not a fallen being as he has not committed any 'original sin.' Rather he carries a speck of divinity in his persona. Hence certain godly tendencies are very much inherent in his personality. It is on account of self-forgetfulness that certain ungodly tendencies get attached to his thought and action. Hence, one has to get rid of the veil of *avidya* to know and feel his true self. Once that is achieved, he comes into his true form. It was such a perspective which made Gandhi a trusting person. He always believed in the basic goodness of man and his capacity to move towards perfection by overcoming some of his apparent weaknesses. To that end, he presented his *ekadash vrata* to be imbibed and followed.

It was from such a perspective that he looked at the entire question of management of men and material in our times. He did not believe in reward and punishment being the basic principle behind human action, as it is based on the heart-wrenching feeling of fear and greed. His entire thinking about management was based on love, trust and human goodness. He asserted that the entire human behaviour should be based on mutual love and trust.

It was such a view of man and his world which was the underlying idea behind his concept of trusteeship. He strongly pleaded that voluntary decision based on self-inspiration could be used to inspire man to forsake his self-interests. That would also prompt him to work as a trustee on behalf of the society for all that he possesses in terms of material, skill and talent. He further avers that if such a perspective is introduced and accepted in the realm of human affairs, then the entire present thinking about management would have to undergo a radical change. He always emphasised the fact that both propertied classes and the workers should consider themselves as trustees for their property and labour respectively. We know that in the present system, workers sell their labour and the rich buy it from the market. Thus the rich hardly engage themselves in any kind of physical labour, whereas the workers have to constantly engage themselves in physical labour. The ideal situation would be one in which the workers have their leisure time and the owners of the means of production also engage themselves in some kind of physical labour. Then alone the dignity of labour would be established in the society. Today the entire situation is so queer that workers want maximum price for their labour while doing the minimum work and the owners want to pay the minimum wages and take the maximum work. Thus, if one is *kamchor* (labour-thief) and the other is *dhanchor* (money-thief). Thus both are thief in their own way as both of them suffer from the same capitalist mentality. In other words, both groups try to extract maximum advantages from their assets, though each of them has taken them from the society itself. The tragedy is that with such mindset they could never come closer to each other. Hence, a new idea has come in the field of management, that is, the workers should have shares both in the process of production as well as distribution. Even some of the State laws give such rights to the workers.

It was with such a perspective that the Supreme Court in the National Textile Workers Union vs. P.R. Ramakrishnan and others (AIR 1983 S.C. 75) had made a ringing observation that

in a Company apart from the shareholders, the interests of the workers are also involved in the entire process. This is premised on the fact that the products of the company are the result of the capital investment by the owners and the labour investment by the workers. In fact, in a way the contribution of the workers in the entire process could even be taken as being more substantive than the capitalist who invests his capital in any concern. This is so because the capitalist might invest a part of his capital in one concern, whereas the worker puts in all his efforts in the process. That is the reason why the working class is given so much importance in the socialist system. After making such ardent observation, the Court supported them by making references to the various Articles of our Constitution. However, it is to be noted that if the capitalist system is kept intact, even the workers are also governed by the same capitalist mindset. The real question arises whether worker's mere participation in the process of management and as such their contribution in the entire process, could or could not be considered as being socially useful or is it nothing more than a compromise with the capitalist system of production? Our actual experience in the field is that those labour leaders who are taken in the management boards as the representatives of the working class hardly represent the interests of workers, or buyers or end consumers or even those of the society. They just end up becoming a part of management; keep enjoying perks, privileges and all kinds of amenities, even at the cost of all the above groups including the workers.

There is another problem with the present system of the capitalist production. The owners and the workers have full control over their concern. Owners make profit; shareholders get their dividends and the workers their bonus. But the buyers hardly get anything. They may end up by getting some gifts which is not even a pittance. Strangely enough, even when the profit is of huge proportion, one never hears about any discussion on price reduction of such products. What is more, the so-called capital invested by the owners does not actually belong to them. It comes

from banks, insurance and other companies or from the common man. That is why Vinoba made a pithy observation when he said that in our country a capitalist is considered to be one who had the least capital of his own. Thus in the present capitalist system, the owners and at times even the workers rule the roost at the cost of the buyers and end consumers. Gandhiji suggested a way out of such a tricky situation. He proposed that both the capitalists and the workers should consider themselves as the trustees on behalf of the society in the entire process of production and distribution.

In this age of modernity, the central role of human beings is missing from humanism. So the greater emphasis is being laid on horse power rather than man power. There is even an attempt to build up a super structure of equality and equity on the basis of industrialism. We often forget that in a relationship of love and interdependence, there is a two way traffic of receiving and giving. But modernity teaches us only to grab and not to give. Even all technological innovations encourage us to move towards a state of self-indulgence rather than self-renunciation. Man, though the creator of all technologies, is becoming their slave rather than remaining the master. As such, his entire world view is based on selfishness. In the process, he is becoming lonely and isolated. Sometimes, we think that the accumulated and aggregated interests of all individuals would result in the sum total of societal interests. This is a false premise. This would result in a situation of free for all – an anarchical situation.

We often fail to understand that there is a lot of difference between working for our rights and pursuing all kinds of things of comforts and convenience for us. Pursuit of rights brings responsibility in its trail. The basic malady of modern man is the absence of love, faith and idealism from his life and thought process. This malady could not be got rid of by iron discipline or technological efficiency. In fact, that requires unstinted empathy and feeling of unbreakable friendship. But the modern man has lost his sense of proportion and even equanimity. His capacity for technological and scientific innovations has added to his egotism.

He is behaving like a creator rather than remaining a creature. It is time to remind ourselves that the heart of Indian tradition lies in the true feelings of the unity of all beings, inter-dependence in the entire cosmic order and a sharing and cooperative mindset. To that end the scientific mind would have to be injected with a dose of spirituality, love and compassion. Then alone science would provide life-blood to humanity. And in the entire process, man and the interests of his higher self would be a measure of everything. All this can not be achieved by removing man from his central position.

## II

It is in the above context that the idea of trusteeship as propounded by Gandhiji would have to be explained and evaluated. It has been one of the core beliefs of our tradition that everything in the cosmos belongs to God and thereby to all, and not to any individual. Once this basic premise is accepted, then man would remain nothing but a trustee. He would never consider himself as the sole owner of anything. Based on such basic understanding Gandhiji gave a new orientation to the much age old concept of trusteeship. He wrote:

‘Everything belonged to God and was from God. Therefore it was for His people as a whole, not for a particular individual. When an individual had more than his proportionate portion he became a trustee of that portion for God’s people. God who was all-powerful had no need to store. He created from day to day; hence men also should in theory live from day to day and not stock things. If this truth was imbibed by the people generally, it would become legalized and trusteeship would become a legalized institution.’ (*Harijan*, 23-2-1947, p. 39)

Every member of the society would have to utilise his mental, moral, physical and material resources for the common interest and welfare of the society and not for his self-interest. The real test of a well-organised society is not the number of rich people it has in its midst, but to what extent it is free from starvation and

malnutrition. Gandhiji averred that the rich and the powerful might utilise their skill and talent to make millions, but even their self-earned wealth should be utilised in the common interests of the society. He was aware of the fact that quite often vast wealth could be made only through unfair means. But as someone who also has faith in the goodness of man, he did not totally rule out the possibility of wealth creation through fair means. Such a possibility becomes still more greater if one is conscious of the fact that his wealth ultimately could not be used for his personal or family interests. His critics believe that Gandhi's idea of trusteeship is too good to be true and implemented in its real spirit. But if the society constantly harps on it and also takes practical steps for its implementation, then the life on earth could be free from exploitation and domination and even from conflict situations. In such a case, the social order could be based on cooperation, co-existence and mutual love and respect. True, like Euclid's principle of geometry, the idea of trusteeship might be taken as indefinable, unachievable and as an ever elusive concept. But if we persist and persevere, some day we might succeed in building up a society based on the very concept of trusteeship.

As a practical visionary, Gandhi was aware that in the beginning people find it difficult to implement even a good and useful idea. Hence in the beginning, a number of people full of faith and idealism might opt for it. But human history is witness to the fact that in the subsequent period, there might be many takers of an idea which appears difficult to follow in the beginning. Besides, Gandhi has great faith in the goodness and perfectibility of man. He favoured the idea that the society should be built on need and not on greed, as there is no limit to greed, but there is a limit to our need. He wanted the society to be built up on the basic principle that each one of us should work according to his capacity and should receive things according to his needs. This is a principle derived from the working of a family and Gandhiji wanted it to be applied on the whole society. Explaining the concept of equality he said:

‘Economic equality of my conception does not mean that everyone will literally have the same amount. It simply means that everybody should have enough for his or her needs. ... The real meaning of economic equality is “To each according to his need.” That is the definition of Marx. If a single man demands as much as a man with wife and four children, that will be a violation of economic equality.

Let no one try to justify the glaring difference between the classes and the masses, the prince and the pauper, by saying that the former needs more. That will be idle sophistry and a travesty of my argument.

Everyone must have a balanced diet, a decent house to live in, facilities for the education of one's children and adequate medical relief...’

Gandhi's idea of trusteeship could be considered in a holistic way. Once the idea of trusteeship grips the society, then the whole idea of philanthropy and gifts would disappear from the society. A trustee would never entertain the feeling that he has given away something of his own, as he would never have the feeling of exclusive ownership of his property. He would never take himself to be more than a trustee. When Gandhiji was imprisoned in Aga Khan Palace in the wake of the Quit India Movement, a practical draft on the idea of trusteeship was prepared by his co-workers, Narhari Parikh and Kishorlal Mashruwala. He made some changes in their draft on the basis of his discussion with them. Pyarelal, his secretary, took note of it and presented the draft in its final form. It ran as follows:

1. ‘Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. It gives no quarter to capitalism, but gives the present owning class a chance of reforming itself. It is based on the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption.

2. It does not recognize any right of private ownership of property except so far as it may be permitted by society for its own welfare.
3. It does not exclude legislative regulation of the ownership and use of wealth.
4. Thus under state-regulated trusteeship, an individual will not be free to hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction or in disregard of the interests of society,
5. Just as it is proposed to fix a decent minimum living wage, even so a limit should be fixed for the maximum income that would be allowed to any person in society. The difference between such minimum and maximum incomes should be reasonable and equitable and variable from time to time so much so that the tendency would be towards obliteration of the difference.
6. Under the Gandhian economic order the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed.'

I am firmly of the opinion that the idea of trusteeship should be included in the syllabi of management studies. Kishorilal Mashruwala, an interpreter of Gandhian ideas and thinker in his own right, had said:

'The theory of trusteeship makes no distinction between private and non-private property. All property is held in trust no matter who possesses it and what its nature or quantity is. Indeed the theory of trusteeship applies not only to tangible and transferable property but also to place of power and position and to intangible and non-transferable property such as the muscular energy of labourer and the talent of Hellen Keller. Even a cripple of an asylum for invalids is a trustee to the extent he is able to exercise his will. Every human being not mentally deranged is only, a trustee of all that is within his control.'

Today there is a big gap between the rich and the poor in the society, leading to a situation of cleavage and conflict. This



question relating to an egalitarian order was raised during the freedom struggle as well. There was an inherent conflict between the interests of the princes, *zamindars* and the big businessmen on the one hand and the common man on the other. Unfortunately, in our country money is being used not just to buy goods but also human beings. Earlier there was a demand for the abolition of the institution of private property and expropriation of these properties without any compensation. Such demands were raised from several quarters, but Gandhiji always stood for the change of heart. He was firmly of the opinion that the rich and the powerful should voluntarily surrender their wealth for the welfare of people as a matter of their duty. And everyone participating in the process of production should be given his due share. In other words, payment should be made on the basis of their needs and not on the basis of their share in the production processes. This could result in the promotion of the idea of shared societal life. He wanted an exploitation free production and distribution system which would promote an environment of mutuality, co-operation and brotherhood.

Fortunately, these ideas in their own ways are being integrated in the modern system of management. At least among the well established corporate houses, there is a new tendency of not to go in for profiteering, by using all kinds of fair or foul means. Among the intelligent managers such change is discernible today. There is also a tendency to take the management of the concerns beyond the purview of the family members and other relations.

The idea of collective management, beyond the family inheritance, is gaining ground. Managerial responsibility is getting divided instead of remaining concentrated in one hand. Thus there is a trend towards the decline of selfishness in the affairs of management. Now greater emphasis is being laid on the dignity of labour, human relationship and the larger societal interests. Thus a new breed of managers is developing more humane approach. Even employees are getting better opportunities for the participation in the management. Now along with the cost of production,

due consideration is being given to the idea of social cost. Even motivation behind the work along with research and development is being given due consideration. True, these tendencies are more pronounced in the western countries. It is a matter of regret that we in India are moving at a slow pace in these directions. It is a matter of even greater regret that a number of people have failed to grasp the finer nuances of Gandhi's concept of trusteeship, which could have encompassed some of these new challenges in the field of management.

In modern times, the State is taken to be as the final arbiter and repository of all human concerns and affairs. So much so that if any property is not under any individual ownership, it must go to the State. The word used for such power is 'vest' which means that the State would not behave in respect of that property as the original owner might have behaved. Rather it would work as its trustee on behalf of the entire society. It would be virtually under popular ownership and the State would use its proceeds for the welfare of the general masses. The people in the Establishment could not use it to promote their own personal interests. In legal parlance, this is called the Public Trust Doctrine.

This public trust doctrine in our country, it would appear, has grown from Article 21 of the Constitution. According to Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, every citizen has the right to life and liberty. That right does not mean just vegetative existence or survival, but to live with dignity. This has been further explained by the Supreme Court in number of judgements. This right to life includes the right to health, clean environment that is needed by a human being to lead a life of dignity. This right to life is also applicable to the right to participate both in the ownership and management of the industries. Thus it could be safely concluded that Gandhi's trusteeship has also a base in our Constitution as well as it has close linkage with the right to lead a life of dignity.

It is widely believed that profit-making has always been the driving force behind trade, commerce and industry. It is further argued that if there is no scope for profit-making, then why

should a man engage himself in all these activities? There might be a grain of truth in such a line of argument, but this is not the whole truth. For, there might be equal if not more potent reason for such engagements. In this connection, Vinoba Bhave raised a fundamental question: Did Jnaneshwar Maharaj write *Jnaneshwari* to make money or to get something like a Nobel Prize? This is true of most of the saints, sages and even prominent writers and poets. In fact, it is moral and spiritual inspiration which has been behind most of the great works in the world. Social welfare, commonweal, patriotism and human concerns have often inspired people to undertake death-defying tasks. All of them could be put in the single category of moral and spiritual inspiration. Can anyone take the position that such inspirations have ceased to exist? This is the basic question we must ask. Gandhiji was gripped by such moral and spiritual inspiration and it was the same inspiration which lay behind his idea of trusteeship. If such inspiration also grips the industrial sector, that alone would humanise its working. In Western countries such ideas are gripping the minds of the leaders of industries. Unfortunately, such a mindset on the part of the Indian corporate world is far from reality. Here, the concept of the corporate social responsibility is only confined to making some donation/gifts or to extend some financial help to some social institutions. Here again, it is mostly a part of strategy for tax planning. Gift/donation is the greatest saviour of capitalism. Whatever may be the source of money making, some donations to social institutions absolve the donor of all his sins. He also earns a lot of *punya* and even gets a lot of social recognition and prestige. We often forget that the recipient of such donation is considered to be a helpless and hapless man. Hence, alms giving and gift/donations should never be taken as a means to meet the social responsibility of the rich and the powerful. It should come out of a deep feeling of sharing and cooperation. In the same way, it is also a moot question in our country, to what extent our private sector is truly private and our public sector is truly public?

Even the institutions of private sector, including banks and insurance companies, are run on the basis of public funding. Mostly, they remain as profit-making institutions run under the private ownership. If they start making losses, the government or the public institutions could takeover them. Once the financial problems are over, they once again return to the private sector. Thus the general policy is to nationalise the sick and loss-making institutions and let profit-making institutions remain in private hands. Now multi-national companies have also joined the rank. Their only concern is money-making without caring for the use of the purity of means or otherwise. They are rarely concerned with the interest of the country they are operating in. Profiteering is their sole consideration and exploitation their common norm. Non-Resident Indians (NRI) are given greater respect than the Indian businessman. In fact, they could be very well described as Non-Reliable Indians or Non-Required Indians. Another category of Resident Non-Indians (RNI) has also emerged in our country. Physically, they live in India but, temperamentally they are of alien culture. Their Indianness or *swadeshi* remain only as a matter of their entertainment. They produce good quality goods for export and goods of inferior quality for local consumption. That is their normal policy. To some extent, our working class is responsible for such distortions. Even the demand for the nationalisation of sick industries is also a dishonest policy, as they are mostly done to retain the services of the employees working there and not actually improving their financial health. Our public sector has also become a pastureland for our bureaucrats and administrators. They are hardly concerned about the financial health of these concerns. They are mostly concerned about their perks and privileges. The policy of depreciation becomes the dominant feature of public sector undertakings. Consequently, their basic vitality is sucked away, and they are left without life and energy.

In our country, the industrial culture has not taken deep roots. Hence, corruption has assumed a pandemic form. There is a heavy

dose of bureaucratisation in every industry and providing jobs has become the primary goal of the public sector undertakings. One could very well imagine why Gandhiji laid such emphasis on the purity of means. Today such emphasis and his advocacy of the close relations between the ends and the means appear to be of seminal importance. In this context it is relevant to quote what one commentator said about Jawaharlal Nehru's opinion on this point:

'Shri Nehru refused to believe that there was much difference between the public and private sectors and stated that it was ultimately the public sector which meant the well-being of the people and the country. Today it was not the capital alone but also the intelligence and labour that counted among the productive potentialities. He also deprecated any class-conflict as well as any controversy over respective interests. All would have to work for the ultimate good of the people.'

In the above context, Gandhi's concept of the oceanic circle appears to be of crucial importance today. Unless, there is a firm commitment towards societal welfare from all sides, it would be difficult to introduce discipline in every walk of our national life and a policy of fair pricing of the goods along with maintaining their high quality. Besides, the race of advertisements for promoting poor quality goods is not going to subside. Presently goods and commodities are being produced for the market. As such maximisation of profit remains the primary motivation.

In sharp contrast to the above perspective, Gandhi's trusteeship was based on brotherhood of men marked by co-sharing and cooperation. Here production was meant for the consumption of all the members of the society and not only for marketing and profiteering. According to trusteeship, all this is not just an economic issue. What should be the primary motive behind human labour? Does one work simply for promoting his financial interests? Or could man work for sharing and contributing his labour towards societal commonweal? Could man find another

motivating force for labouring beyond his self-interests? These are the seminal questions for serious consideration.

Gandhi's trusteeship was based on such alternative motivation for human labour. Production being a cooperative venture, every member must contribute his/her might to that end. Once such realisation dawns on human beings, inspiration and motivation based on self-interests is automatically done away with. Thus it could be safely said that Gandhi's idea of trusteeship is based on the culture of sacrifice and concern for others. Can we ever say that such feeling and mindset would never become an integral part of our dominant social culture? Is it possible to think that one could never sacrifice his own interests for the sake of others? Is it not possible to base our new economic thinking on the concerns for others, unlike the old economic thinking which was based on profiteering and selfishness? Could not it become a bounden social duty? Could one rule out all such possibilities forever? Our answers could be an emphatic. 'No.' In this connection it is relevant to recall what Gandhiji had told H.G. Wells on the "Rights of Man" prepared by him: 'Begin with a charter of Duties of Man (both M and D capitals) and I promise the rights will follow as spring follows winter.' Hence, let there be no cut-throat competition or competitors in the economic life of the society. Even if the feeling of competition is retained, let it be inspired by duties and not by consideration of rights.'

Our difficulty is that such high ideals and moral principles are often not to our liking. They also appear impractical to us. Gandhi underlined all kinds of high social values not only human and spiritual values. Could any society ever have sustained existence in absence of such values? If not, how could we say that they are too impractical to be practiced?

We Indians have not accepted the whole lot of Gandhian ideas so far. He has pointed a way for human and societal salvation. Some day we have to make a vital decision. Why not to walk on the path shown by Gandhiji. Even a section of the western society has underlined the centrality of his ideas – their practical use for the present

time. Today people of the world have moved closer to each other on account of fast means of transportation and communication. Whether such closeness would bring love or conflict is the moot question. It is the time to give a fresh look at the Gandhian ideas and ideals with open eyes and with an open mind. That his ideas are not outdated is being demonstrated by a number of developments from all over the world. Let us also contribute our might in that direction. That is my ardent wish and prayer.



Gandhiji nursing Parchure Shastri



## Towards a Gandhian Educational System

By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in a child and man – body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education nor even the beginning. It is only one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education. I would therefore begin the child's education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training. Thus every school can be made self-supporting, the condition being that the State takes over the manufactures of these schools.

*M.K. Gandhi*

Though India became politically independent, the impact of British colonialism continued in all facets of Indian life. Literally independent India followed all institutions and systems of the colonial period with slight modifications. Everybody thought that after independence, the system of education will radically change, but nothing of that sort happened and practically the same system of education continued. Here I am reminded of a couplet by a well known English poet, John Dryden, who rightly said:

'By education most have been misled;  
So they believe, because they so were bred.  
The Priest continues what the nurse began,  
And thus the child imposes on the man.'



On the other hand, one should also remember what Lord Henry Brougham said: 'Education makes a people easy to lead, but difficult to drive, easy to govern, but impossible to enslave.'

Education plays an important role in the life of an individual. In fact, school is the place where the life of a pupil is moulded. The great philosopher, Leo Tolstoy said about the impact of his school as follows: 'It was all my life, it was my monastery, my church in which I redeemed myself while being saved from all the anxieties, doubts and temptations of life.'

Almost all philosophers and thinkers reflected on the education, the role of schooling and the issues connected with it. Alvin Toffler, the author of well-known work *Future Shock*, and *Third Wave* expressed his opinion about the educational system, in the following words:

'In every school system, there is an overt curriculum and a covert curriculum. At overt level, there are differences from place to place. We teach American History, Japanese teach Japanese History. All these systems teach three basic courses. The first course is punctuality. Kids must show up on time or be punished. The second is a course of obedience. Even in schools that pride themselves on teaching kids to think and ask questions, the smartest kids quickly discover which questions not to ask. The third is a course of rote work. The school has the task of breaking the child into a life of routine and repetitive toil. We must teach what life would hold later on—an advanced stimulation of adult life. It is not history that we need to know. It is fabulously valuable experience for students to start thinking about their own and the society's alternative future.'

In the late nineteen sixties the Students' Movement took place in the western countries and its leader Daniel Cohn-Bendit severely criticised the then education system because it was creating only a stereotype society or the society of employees. Daniel Cohn-Bendit aptly described the disgusting system of education in the work '*Obsolete Communism: The Left Wing Alternative ...*' many students are becoming increasingly disgusted and sickened not

only by this system but by the very culture that produces and fosters it. After the Students' Movement, the Director General of UNESCO observed: 'The gulf between young and adult seems to be growing every day not only with university but with society as a whole. With their needs for absolutes, the young are less than ever able to tolerate injustice and disorder of this world.'

If this has to become a reality, then the education system must undergo a drastic change. What is required now is a deep rethinking about the whole system and process of education. It should include not only the teacher-students relationship, but also their relationship with the parents, because the values cannot be taught, but can only be caught. The catching of values by pupils will obviously depend upon the educational system as well as the society in which they live. Learning is a process in itself. Bernard Shaw has rightly said: 'I wanted to learn, but they went on teaching only.' Therefore, the learning and teaching process should be the same for the teachers and students. A teacher, who is not able to learn new things, can never teach or meet aspirations of the students. Rabindranath Tagore wrote: 'A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its flame.' The teacher must invest his life in the development of the personality of students. To borrow the words of the immortal Helen Keller: (blind and deaf, who touched the lives of millions) 'I will not just live my life; I will not just spend my life; I will invest my life.' In the primary schools, students either worship or fear the teacher. In the middle school, they either admire or ridicule him. In the senior classes, they assess their teachers and emulate them. Whatever else students might do, they could never remain indifferent to their teachers. They have become an inseparable part of their lives. A teacher must have a mother's heart. Mother does not love her children by adopting percentage formula. For her every child is a cent full personality and integral whole. The success of schools or project or plan cannot be measured by its capacity of spending. In any case, it is not an indication of quality or the standard of education. A model or blueprint will have to be developed and

created, which will provide for the quality control at every stage. Otherwise, as it is normally said that the success is counted on the basis of the money spent. But standard of spending cannot be equated with standard of education. The whole system of education will have to be an integrated and correlated one, and it must be a system, which can be rightly described as 'learning and teaching' system. This system should be organically correlated with social and physical environment of the country.

Having spent the earlier years of my life at Wardha and having been associated with the concept of Mahatma Gandhi's Basic Education, I feel that we should consider Gandhi's concept of education, which is known as *Nai Talim*, very seriously. I am aware of the fact that we are living in an era of globalization and we have to look at the issues from a global perspective. But it is my firm conviction that ultimately we will have to "think globally, but act locally." Therefore, all of us have to do some loud thinking about the system of education we follow and the issues involved in it. Mere thinking, planning and legislations will not solve the problem in this field, because our nation is well known for its maximum legislation and minimum implementation. So far, we are following a top to bottom implementing system, but in that process nothing reaches at the bottom and everything is vanished in between. Therefore, the implementation will have to be oceanic, meaning thereby that there is first a small circle, and then circle widens up. Therefore, the beginning should be from the bottom. Then alone fruits will reach to the bottom.

When I travel abroad, I have experienced that people from the western and other countries are eager to know much more about the *Nai Talim*, because they feel that the present educational system will not solve the problems, faced by today's world. Instead of cut-throat competition, they feel that education should help in developing the qualities of love, friendship and fraternity. It was thought that the modern education could solve all the problems, but unfortunately, education itself has become a problem. That is the reason why rethinking and relooking about the educational

policy, as a whole, is necessary. It is good that compulsory and free education (*Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*) for all at the primary level has been introduced. But that will not be enough. Equality means to treat equals equally. To treat unequal equally results in inequality. The reservations or concessions, as contemplated by the Constitution of India, are meant for achieving the said objective. The starting points of different lives are not the same or common. Concept of equality contemplates equal opportunity. We cannot achieve equality without equal opportunity for all.

In the field of education, there is gradation and classification of the educational institutions. Rich people choose public schools for their children, which are run at the public cost, but where the common public can never go. Others choose convent education. Children of this class, get all the advantages because their parents are educated. Apart from this, they can afford tuitions or attend tuition classes. The last and the worst category is of the children, in whose house, nobody is educated, no facilities such as electricity and water and books are available. They live amidst ruthless poverty. They normally opt for the educational institutions run by the municipalities or the *Zilla Parishads* or *ashram*.

Even if we want to achieve the goal of universal education, still inequality persists, because of poverty and other circumstances. Apart from universal education, neighbourhood school system will have to be vigorously implemented because the culture at home and the culture at school will have to be harmonised. Today, unfortunately, students are well disciplined in the school, but they are undisciplined at home. Therefore, the system will have to be one which will reach out to the homes. We want to educate parents through these children. In a sense, it will be an education of the parents also. Ours is basically an economy based on agriculture. Even if there is free and compulsory education, it is noticed that the children are not able to go to the schools at all. This is because of the domestic circumstances prevailing in rural areas where the children have to help the parents in agricultural operations. Elder brother or elder sister is forced to live at home to take care of their

younger brothers or sisters, as their parents go out in the field for the agricultural work. Therefore, the whole timetable of the educational institutions will have to be rationalised. It was good, when the British rule was there and as the rulers wanted to go to the hill stations in the summer. Therefore, there was a summer vacation for the educational institutions also. These vacations have no meaning for the Indian situations. Now, we will have to think to give vacation in a season, when the parents can live at home, and when the initial agricultural work is over. Therefore, children can go to the school, because their presence at home is not needed to take care of their younger brothers or sisters, or for the household work. Vacation will have to be harmonised with the agricultural work, so that the children can afford to go to the school or to be precise, their parents can afford to send their children to the school. In our view, this is the crucial question before the system of compulsory education.

Martin Luther King Jr., in his speech "Youth and Social Action" rightly observes: 'The largest group of young people is struggling to adopt itself to prevailing values of our society. The second group is of radicals. They agree that only by structural change can current evils be eliminated, because the roots are in the system rather than in men or in faulty operation. They are in serious revolt against old values and have not yet concretely formulated new ones. Ironically, their rebelliousness comes from having been frustrated in seeking change within the framework of existing society.' It will be almost impossible to think about *Nai Talim* or *swadeshi* educational system within the framework of society in which we are living. A total restructuring of political and economic system is a prerequisite for the natural flowering of the education system.

It would be appropriate to discuss briefly Gandhi's concept of *Nai Talim* or Basic Education. *Nai Talim* is an educational system that draws out the best in child and man. It takes care of all the problems relating to his body, mind and spirit. It is a system of education for life, through life and throughout life. It was universal

education, free for all and free from the control of the Government and others. If you want to have freedom in education, it has to be self-reliant and self-supporting. It was an education through medium of craft. All subjects were correlated to the basic craft. An appropriate craft has to be selected which will ensure socially useful production. It will make the education system self-supporting. This handicraft has to be taught scientifically and not mechanically. This in turn requires highly trained teachers. They should know why and wherefore of every process of the craft selected. Man is born with two hands and the process of education should be “learning by doing” and not from the books alone. A similar system is followed in China and Korea where artisans, like potters, blacksmiths and carpenters and others viz. are involved in the educational system. They teach the students crafts and dignity of productive labour. Their status is that of a teacher.

In today's educational system, there is no *swadeshi* spirit. Everything is based on foreign ideas and concepts. Akbar Allahabadi, a noted Urdu poet, described present day education in his Urdu couplet as follows:

तिपल में बू क्या आये माँ बाप के ऐतबार की ।  
दूध तो डिब्बे का है, तालीम है सरकारकी ।

The above couplet means that the culture of parents is not reflected in their children because they are brought up on milk powder and government education. *Swadeshi* education cannot be a borrowed one. It has to be evolved taking into consideration our environment. We wanted to create independent thinking in children and man through *Nai Talim*. The purpose of education is not to produce clerks who are not supposed to use their brains. *Nai Talim* aims at producing self-reliant and socially useful citizens trained through real life situations. They will possess skills/capacities required for all round development of both society and individuals. By its very nature, its emphasis is on character building rather than on providing information. The moot question

is whether we want only “*Saksharta*” (literacy) or our aim is “*Sarthakta*” (meaningful life).

According to Gandhi, literacy in itself is no education. He observes: ‘literacy is not the end of education nor it is even the beginning.’ Literary education should follow the education of the hand—the one gift that visibly distinguishes man from beast. True education must be self-reliant and should fulfil the requirements of individual and correspond to the needs of the society. Otherwise, it is not a healthy growth. The function of *Nai Talim* was not merely to teach an occupation, but through it to develop the whole man. The true education should be easily accessible to all and should be of use to everyone in his daily life. The notion of education through handicrafts originates from truth and love pervading life’s activities. Persistent questioning and healthy inquisitiveness are the first requisite for acquiring learning of any kind. If we want to impart education best suited to the needs of the villagers, we should take the *vidyapiths* and educational institutions to the villages. In a democratic scheme, money invested in the promotion of learning gives a tenfold return to the people even as a seed sown in good soil returns an abundant crop.

Acharya Vinoba Bhave also expressed views about education or *Nai Talim*. He said: ‘On the day India attained independence, I had said that as a new flag necessarily followed in the wake of the establishment of a new State, new education or *Nai Talim* should also follow in its wake in the same manner. I do not see anything but a desire to maintain in now maintaining here the same system of education which suited those who kept the country under bondage.’ That was our first misfortune.

The second misfortune was that the standard of living of those who were given education was raised, which was against the cultural traditions of this country. Here, the spirit of sacrifice has been deemed as a concomitant of learning and wisdom. It has been held that while there is not much harm, if those who are uneducated indulge in the enjoyment of sense

pleasure for they are ignorant, it is not proper for men of wisdom to indulge in them.

The third misfortune was that work was not linked with education. The result is the tendency in the educated to enjoy pleasures without doing work and to look down upon physical labour, even of their parents.

There is no true joy for the man whose life is cut off from the heavens above and the world of Nature around. This means that the task before education is to change the whole system of values and the ways of life that are current in our cities. How this is to be done? It is not a question only for you and me. It is for the whole humanity.

Whether the children have been educated or not should be decided by the criterion, whether they have developed such qualities as loyalty to truth, spirit of service and fearlessness. What is also to be looked into is how far they have developed practical knowledge and qualities useful for social service.

I am personally of the view that just as judiciary is independent and the government has no authority over it, similarly the educational institutions should be free and independent. If the education is in the hands of the government, it is open to two objections. One, it acquires a rigid form and is coloured by the complexion of the government. Two, all teachers become government employees. The ideal situation would be that education institutions should be in the hands of public men of knowledge and if the government so desires, it may extend some financial help to them.

The philosophy of *Nai Talim* does not accept the unequal values assigned by our present society to physical and mental work. It takes the position that every kind of service rendered by a man, whether it is physical or mental, is ethical in its nature. The value of an ethical act cannot be calculated in economic terms.

The spiritual principle of *Nai Talim* is that knowledge and work are not two separate things. They are the same thing. It is



a mistake to say that knowledge is higher than work or work is higher than knowledge. *Nai Talim* is based on the concept of unity of knowledge and work.

It is not possible that the people take over educational system into their hands all at once. Until and unless it happens, it is bound to remain in the hands of the government, precluding any reform. Hence, there should be such independent schools in the country as will be able to act as models for the government. By “independent” I mean that the government will have no control at all over them, be it of any type. If, in spite of it, the government helps them, it does not matter. This is one definition of “independent” schools. There are also institutions, which neither accept government aid nor are controlled by it. There should be three kinds of schools in the country; (1) government schools, (2) schools accepting government aid but not controlled by it, and (3) fully independent schools, accepting neither government help nor its control in any form, whatsoever. The “independent schools” would be looked upon as the model schools. They would be undertaking independent research and experiments to point out the way for the progress of the nation. This will give us an idea how Vinoba looked upon education and related matters.

H. L. Wayland has correctly said: ‘Universal suffrage, without universal education, would be a curse.’ After framing of the Constitution and adopting adult franchise as the basis of election process, it was said that “We must educate our own masters, meaning thereby, a common man, who is real master of democracy.” No political party was interested in this because obviously, if the people are ignorant and poor, then they can manipulate the whole election process to their advantage. Therefore, no political party undertook this sort of education. Today, it is necessary that at all stages of education should be such, which will make a person a good citizen. The preamble of the Constitution lays down broad blueprint of the direction in which the country should move forward. Our agony is that while emphasising upon

fundamental rights, incorporated in the Constitution, we are forgetting that, every right has a corresponding duty. Rather, it is to carry out the duties that, rights are given. Duty gives the birth to right and not vice-versa. Therefore, while considering the right to education, we must also consider corresponding duties of parents, teachers, government agencies and the schools. Since we did not realise this in the initial stages, the chapter relating to the fundamental duties namely Article 51 (A) was added to the Constitution by an amendment. It includes the duty of the parents to educate their children. This necessarily calls for the inclusion of fundamental duties of the citizens in every system of education directly or indirectly. This should also be a parts and parcels of *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* and adult education. I expect, at least the fundamental duties of citizens enumerated in Article 51 (a) of the Constitution of India, will find a place in our educational system. The education will have to be at two levels — one at students' level and other at the citizens' level. *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* should cover such subjects, which will help them to become good citizens and realise their duties and responsibilities towards the society, as a whole.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was the Minister for Education, when the Constitution was under preparation. He was of the emphatic view that education as a subject should be included in the Union list and that under no circumstances should it be left to the States. He had an apprehension that if education is retained in the subject list of the State, an educated man in India would become a narrow provincialist. In a letter written to the Drafting Committee of the Constitution, Maulana Azad advocated that education should be under Central guidance if not under Central control. He strongly opposed leaving education with the States. According to him, if education was not under Central guidance or control, the intelligentsia of the country would become regional in outlook. Azad also believed that the educational planning should be a Union subject. Nehru also supported his point of view.

Gandhi was an advocate of national education. He established national level institutions like Gujarat Vidyapith during the wake of non-cooperation movement. The aim of national education according to him was the inculcation among the young people of the values of patriotism and similar other social and cultural values. So that they rise above the feeling of personal gain or loss.

National education was not just a change in the medium of instruction. Singing the glory of slavery in Gujarati or Marathi instead of in English could not be called national education. A change in the medium of instruction was a matter of details. Similarly, a change in subjects taught could not be equated with national education. Change in the medium of instructions and in subjects or syllabus are incidental to the idea of national education. They would be subject to change as per the changing needs. The content of national education must be truly national. Its object must be to create patriotic citizens who would be prepared to give their lives for the nation's regeneration. A student is a citizen of tomorrow and, therefore, the custodians of a nation's future dreams, of what the country ought to be in future. Therefore, the direction and the content of education must not be and cannot be guided by the present needs. Experts in the field of education ought to rise above the trivialities of today and think of the coming world of future generations. That is why education was considered a national question.

National education did not consider intellectual labour superior to physical labour. In fact, one of the purposes of institutions imparting national education was to give dignity to physical labour. It was a national programme to foster the ideals of equality and fraternity and promote genuine nationalist feelings. Our leaders wanted a system of education that would instill among the students feelings of common nationality and fraternity. Under a uniform system of education, the new generation would become truly Indian in outlook. That was the reason why many insisted on avoiding regionalism in our educational system. We think

education moulds the minds of men. Today our national situation has deteriorated to such an extent that even an educated Indian is not accustomed to thinking in terms of India. There seems to be a common view that when everyone thinks of his own province, the sum total of Indians will be thinking of India. This is a fallacious view. If every individual thinks of himself, he does not thereby ensure social good. The overall individual interest does not add up to social welfare. Every individual and region has to think in terms of the nation. Many educationists are of the view that if every Indian is imparted the same type of education, then the horizon of the Indian educational system would broaden. That would also result in promoting amity among Indian States by reducing inter-State conflicts. For this purpose, the syllabus and the medium of instruction will have to be the same throughout the country. Such a policy will accelerate our march towards equality. To achieve this, a 'three languages formula' was framed, but it did not work, because ultimately regionalism prevailed over nationalism. In substance, we will have to prepare afresh a blueprint of the entire educational system.

It is said that "Indian culture is agriculture." That should be reflected everywhere, including in education. Rahul Gandhi visited a house of an agriculturist in Vidarbha. He enquired whether any of his sons would like to be agriculturist? The reply was in negative. They told him there is no status or dignity for an agriculturist. Even a Class-IV Government servant is respected more than a farmer. The problem of suicide by the agriculturists cannot be solved alone by giving proper price to agricultural products. The more important question is respect and dignity for productive labour. Today Government employees are paid city allowance, where all the facilities are available. Even a teacher gets an additional income by running tuition classes or taking tuitions. Now what is necessary is to pay rural allowance, so that the teachers will be encouraged to go to villages or rural areas, where though there are schools and the educational schemes, but teachers or tutors are not

available. Therefore, all these aspects have to be taken into account while planning the educational policy at the national level. These are my random thoughts relating to educational system. I hope they would provide scope for loud thinking and may be of some help in developing a *swadeshi* educational system. I fervently hope that someday the system of education will change from Macaulay to Mahatma.



Thakkar Bapa with Bapu



## Gandhian Vision of Environment and Development

The snowy mountain heights, and thy forests, O earth, shall be kind to us! The brown, the black, the red, the multi-coloured, the firm earth..... I have settled upon, not suppressed, not slain, not wounded.

*Atharava Veda*

The present crisis we are facing in respect of environment is manmade. It is the result of undue and excessive exploitation of nature by human beings to serve their selfish ends. Human beings thoughtless action has resulted in the increase or concentration of greenhouse gases, mainly of carbon dioxide, which is leading to an increase in the temperature of the earth and rise in the sea level. This is precisely what we call global warming. To put it differently, the manmade emission of greenhouse gases is the cause of global warming. A number of environmental problems now affect our life. I need not have to explain fully the various problems, like climate change, global warming, ozone layer depletion, pollution of air, water and soil, hazardous nuclear waste, de-forestation and so on. These problems are not limited to a particular country or a particular continent. As a result of the globalization and the greed of market forces, there is hardly any country which is left untouched by major environmental problems.

The protection of environment is a global challenge and it has been voiced in international organisations like United Nations. Let me cite the well-known report of the United Nations: *Only*

*One Earth* published in 1972 which tells us that, “the emotional attachment to our prized diversity need not interfere without attempts to develop the global state of mind which will generate the rational loyalty to the planet as a whole. As we enter the global phase of human evolution, it becomes obvious, that each man has two countries, his own, and the planet earth. Now that all habitable parts of the globe are occupied, the careful husbandry of the earth is *sine qua non* for the survival of the human species and for creation of decent ways of life for all the people of the world”. The global environment outlook and the urgency of the situation have been reflected in the various reports published by the UN and various Earth Summits. I would like to draw attention to a speech made by a 12 years old girl Severn Suzuki at the Earth Summit held in Brazil in 1992. She said:

“Hello, I’m Severn Suzuki speaking for E.C.O.—The Environmental Children’s Organization.

We are a group of twelve and thirteen-year-olds from Canada trying to make a difference:

Vanessa Suttie, Morgan Geisler, Michelle Quigg and me.

We raised all the money ourselves to come six thousand miles to tell you adults that you must change your ways. Coming here today, I have no hidden agenda. I am fighting for my future.

Losing my future is not like losing an election or a few points on the stock market. I am here to speak for all generations to come.

I am here to speak on behalf of the starving children around the world whose cries go unheard.

I am here to speak for the countless animals dying across this planet because they have nowhere left to go. We cannot afford to be not heard.

I am afraid to go out in the sun now because of the holes in the ozone. I am afraid to breathe the air because I don’t know what chemicals are in it.

I used to go fishing in Vancouver with my dad until just a few years ago we found the fish full of cancers. And now we hear about animals and plants going extinct every day—vanishing forever.

In my life, I have dreamt of seeing the great herds of wild animals, jungles and rainforests full of birds and butterflies, but now I wonder if they will even exist for my children to see.

Did you have to worry about these little things when you were my age?

All this is happening before our eyes and yet we act as if we have all the time we want and all the solutions.

I'm only a child and I don't have all the solutions, but I want you to realise, neither do you!

You don't know how to fix the holes in our ozone layer.

You don't know how to bring salmon back up a dead stream.

You don't know how to bring back an animal now extinct.

And you can't bring back forests that once grew where there is now desert.

If you do not know how to fix it, please stop breaking it!

Here, you may be delegates of your governments, business people, organisers, reporters or politicians—but really you are mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles—and all of you are somebody's child.

I'm only a child yet I know we are all part of a family, five billion strong, in fact, 30 million species strong and we all share the same air, water and soil—borders and governments will never change that.

I am only a child yet I know we are all in this together and should act as one single world towards one single goal.

In my anger, I am not blind, and in my fear, I am not afraid to tell the world how I feel.

In my country, we make so much waste, we buy and throw away, buy and throw away, and yet northern countries will not share with the needy. Even when we have more than enough, we are afraid to lose some of our wealth, afraid to share.

In Canada, we live the privileged life, with plenty of food, water and shelter—we have watches, bicycles, computers and television sets.



Two days ago here in Brazil, we were shocked when we spent some time with some children living on the streets.

And this is what one child told us: "I wish I was rich and if I were, I would give all the street children food, clothes, medicine, shelter and love and affection."

If a child on the street who has nothing, is willing to share, why are we who have everything still so greedy?

I can't stop thinking that these children are my age, that it makes a tremendous difference where you are born, that I could be one of those children living in the Favellas of Rio; I could be a child starving in Somalia; a victim of war in the Middle East or a beggar in India.

I am only a child yet I know if all the money spent on war was spent on ending poverty and finding environmental answers, what a wonderful place this earth would be!

At school, even in kindergarten, you teach us to behave in the world. You teach us: not to fight with others, to work things out, to respect others, to clean up our mess, not to hurt other creatures, to share—not be greedy.

Then why do you go out and do the things you tell us not to do?

Do not forget why you are attending these conferences, who you're doing this for—we are your own children.

You are deciding what kind of world we will grow up in. Parents should be able to comfort their children by saying "everything's going to be alright", "we are doing the best we can" and "it's not the end of the world".

But I don't think you can say that to us anymore. Are we even on your list of priorities? My father always says "You are what you do, not what you say."

Well, what you do makes me cry at night. You grown-ups say you love us. I challenge you, please make your actions reflect your words. Thank you for listening."

So far we do not have answers to the questions raised by young Suzuki. Similarly, Gandhi has placed certain questions before humanity and showed the direction in which humanity should

move forward. Those who would like to know the path of Gandhi should read his seminal work *Hind Swaraj* published in 1909. This booklet is severe condemnation of western industrial civilization which is one of the major causes of environmental degradation. It represents Gandhian vision of environment and development. He wrote in *Hind Swaraj*: 'We notice that the mind is a restless bird; the more it gets the more it wants, and still remains unsatisfied. The more we indulge our passions the more unbridled they become. Our ancestors, therefore, set a limit to our indulgences. They saw that happiness was largely a mental condition. A man is not necessarily happy because he is rich or unhappy because he is poor. The rich are often seen to be unhappy, the poor to be happy. Millions will always remain poor. Observing all this, our ancestors dissuaded us from luxuries and pleasures.' This vision is essential to overcome the maladies of consumerism which leads to the exploitation of nature. The guiding principle of our civilization was reverence for all forms of lives including the vegetation and the animal kingdom. We had certain traditions or religious values which protected our Mother Earth. It was forbidden to take food without offering water to *tulsi* plant. Similarly, cow was considered as a sacred animal. Animals were considered as members of our family and society. It is significant to note that in the Constitution of India it is the fundamental duty of a citizen to protect environment. Article 51-A (g) of 42nd Amendment Act of 1976, Section 11 of the Indian Constitution states that "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures". The earth is known as *Vasundhara* or *Vasumati*. *Vasu* literally means wealth. To make our lives gratifying and blessed we can judiciously use wealth, but we do not have any right to overexploit it. The reverence for human life first, then animals, and then for nature is known in our ancient lores as *Vibhuti Yoga*—the worship of all, and relationship with everyone that makes life rich. We believe in *Advaita*, that is,

oneness, harmony, co-ordination and mutual co-operation of all creation.

With the advent of modern industrial civilization, the whole scenario has changed. There is a drastic change in man's attitude towards nature and environment. The last century was a century of conquering nature. All the resources in nature were looked upon from a commercial angle, with an eye on the market. The 'standard of spending' is equated with the 'standard of living'. Unfortunately, people are in a mad rush to exploit nature. The moot question is whether nature is our ally or enemy. The very word 'exploit' is volatile. If we treat nature as our enemy, man cannot survive on this planet. If we destroy all our wealth and resources, the future generation will not forgive us. We must treat the question of protection of environment on a priority basis. We have to stop the destruction of Mother Earth, otherwise we are only left with the task of post-mortem. We are not the masters of Mother Earth and its resources. We are only the trustees. In fact, we have borrowed non-renewable resources from our children and deprived the future generation to access the same resources. The Supreme Courts of USA and India have declared that Government is the trustee of the natural resources and not the owner of it. The public trust doctrine in our country has grown from article 21 of the Constitution of India, i.e. right to life. In the case of *M.I. Builders Pvt. Ltd. Vs. Radhey Shyam Sahu and others* (AIR 1999 SC 2468) the Supreme Court of India clarified:

"Mahapalika is the trustee for the proper management of the park. When true nature of the park, as it existed, is destroyed it would be violative of the doctrine of public trust as expounded by this Court in *Span Resort Case* (1997 (1) SCC 388). Public Trust doctrine is part of Indian law. ...

In the treatise, "Environmental Law and Policy: Nature, Law, and Society", by Plater Abrams Goldfarb (American Casebook series- 1992) under the Chapter on Fundamental Environmental Rights, in Section 1 (The Modern Rediscovery of the Public Trust

Doctrine), it has been noticed that “long ago there developed in the law of the Roman Empire a legal theory known as the Doctrine of the Public Trust.” In America Public Trust doctrine was applied to public properties, such as shore-lands and parks. As to how this doctrine works it was stated: “The scattered evidence, taken together, suggests that the idea of a public trusteeship rests upon three related principles. First, that certain interests—like the air and the sea—have such importance to the citizenry as a whole that it would be unwise to make them the subject of private ownership. Second, that they partake so much of the bounty of nature, rather than of individual enterprise, that they should be made freely available to the entire citizenry without regard to economic status. And, finally, that it is a principle purpose of government to promote the interests of the general public rather than to redistribute public goods from broad public uses to restricted private benefit... With reference to a decision in *Illinois Central Railroad Company v. Illinois* (146 U.S. 387 [1892] ), it was stated that the court articulated in that case the principle that has become the central substantive thought in public trust litigation. When a state holds a resource which is available for the free use of the general public, a court will look with considerable skepticism upon any governmental conduct which is calculated either to reallocate the resource to more restricted uses or to subject public uses to the self-interest of private parties.

In the judgment of Civil Appeal No. 1251 of 2006 the Supreme Court of India expressed similar views when it is said::

“The responsibility of the state to protect the environment is now a well-accepted notion in all countries. It is this notion that, in international law, gave rise to the principle of “state responsibility” for pollution emanating within one’s own territories [*Corfu Channel Case*, ICJ Reports (1949) 4]. This responsibility is clearly enunciated in the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm 1972 (*Stockholm Convention*), to which

India was a party. The relevant Clause of this declaration in the present context is Paragraph 2, which states:

The natural resources of the earth, including the air, water, land, flora and fauna and especially representative samples of natural ecosystems, must be safeguarded for the benefit of present and future generations through careful planning or management, as appropriate.

## II

Thus, there is no doubt about the fact that there is a responsibility bestowed upon the Government to protect and preserve the tanks, which are an important part of the environment of the area.”

Gandhi was one of the greatest worthy sons of the last century who boldly declared that God is Truth. The humanity has to understand his experiments with truth and non-violence, so that we may survive or otherwise in the words of Martin Luther King Jr., we may ignore Gandhi at our own risk. One should remember that science is not confined to laboratories which are equipped with expensive apparatus. The goal of science is to find truth behind a phenomenon and not to find out the ways to exploit the resources of nature.

Gandhi's vision of life call for application of truth and non-violence in all walks of life. Gandhi said: 'Non-violence is not a garment to be put on and off at will, its seat is in the heart and it must be inseparable part of our very being.' His concept of non-violence was an all encompassing and a positive one. It is not merely a 'live and let live', formula, but it involves a principle of 'Live and help others to live', and these others should include human beings, animals and nature. Gandhi's concept of non-violence was not a negative one. It is a dynamic and positive approach to 'Life'.

Gandhi visualised a non-violent economic order based on equality and justice. He advocated a simple life which fulfils basic necessities of life and is in tune with nature. It is not a life of poverty or penury. On the contrary, it is a meaningful life of fulfilment and happiness. It is well known that Gandhi's economic

ideas revolved around *swadeshi* and *Khadi*. *Khadi* is not a piece of cloth. It is a symbol of decentralisation of production and distribution. It stands for a non-violent lifestyle. The application of the principle of decentralisation leads to a life of simplicity in which there is hardly any scope of amassing unnecessary goods of the market. This checks the exploitation of natural resources and helps in maintaining the delicate balance or equilibrium of nature. What applies to *Khadi* equally applies to *kutir udyog* and *gramodyog* products.

Village sanitation was an important item of his Constructive Programme. Our villages and cities have turned into heaps of dirt and disease due to lack of proper sanitation facilities. By promoting the village sanitation and research in the field, Gandhi wanted to make our villages pollution free. Gandhi's concept of bread labour has also deep ecological implications and sustainability. Every able bodied citizen must devote time and energy for manual labour and ensure sanitation.

Gandhi was the first man to introduce the concept of service to nature in order to enrich nature. Gandhi said: 'the earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need but not for every man's greed.' The environmental wisdom of Gandhi is ingrained in this *mantra*. He lived a life was in tune with environment. That is why he said: '*My life is my Message*.' His life was full of examples of his love for nature, environment and all that exists.

It is true that Gandhian vision of environment and development is holistic and it can not be implemented in bits and parts. It requires a totally alternative model of economic development and a new attitude towards nature and its bounties. My contention is that today we are presented with a given system of development which is based on the principle of conquest of nature. However, there is distinct possibility for integrating Gandhian vision of development in the present system which may not give the desired result in totality but it could bring great relief to the common man and could also work for the preservation of environment. This is

based on my actual field experience as the chairman of Dahanu Taluka Environmental Protection Authority. This authority was set up under the orders of Hon. Supreme Court of India. The Court while directing the government of Maharashtra to constitute such Authority of Environmental protection referred to the principles laid by the Supreme Court in *Vallore Citizens' Welfare Forum Vs. Union of India and others* (AIR 1996 SC 2715). That order *inter-alia* laid down the principles as follows:

This Court in *Vallore Citizens Welfare Forum Vs. Union of India & Ors.* –JT 1996 (7) 375, considered in detail the “Sustainable Development” to the extent which has been recognized under the International Law and also its practicability under the Environmental Law in India. This Court in the said judgment held that the “Pre-cautionary Principle” and the “Polluter Pays” principle have been accepted as part of the Law of the land. The relevant part of the judgment reads as under:

Some of the salient principles of “Sustainable Development” as culled-out from Brundtland Report and other International documents, are Inter-Generational Equity, use and conservation of natural resources, environmental protection, the pre-cautionary principle, polluter pay principle, obligation to assist and co-operate, eradication of poverty and Financial Assistance to the developing countries. We are, however, of the view, that “the Precautionary principle and “the Polluter Pays” principles are essential features of “Sustainable Development”. The “Precautionary Principle” in the context of the Municipal law means:

- i. Environmental measures—by the State Government and the Statutory authorities—must participate, prevent and attack the causes of Environmental degradation.”
- ii. Where there are threats of serious and irreversible damage, lack of scientific certainty should (not) be used as reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation.

- iii. The “Onus of proof” is on the actor of the developer/ industrialists to show that his action is environment friendly.

“The Polluter Pays” principle has been held to be a sound principle by this Court in *Indian Council for Enviro-Legal Action Vs. Union of India*- J.T.(AIR 1996 SC 1443- ) 1996 (2) 196 –The Court observed, “We are of the opinion: simple, practical and suited to the conditions obtaining in this Country”. The Court ruled that,” once the activity carried on is hazardous or inherently dangerous, the person carrying on such activities is liable to make good the loss caused to any other person by his activities, irrespective of the fact, whether he took reasonable care while carrying on his activities. The rule is premised upon the very nature of the activity carried on.” Consequently, the polluting industries are “absolutely liable to compensate the harm caused by them to the villagers in the affected area, to the soil and to the land. Hence, they are bound to take all necessary measures to remove the sludge and other pollutants lying in the affected areas”. The “Polluter Pays” principle as interpreted by this Court means that the absolute liability for harm to the environment extends not only to compensate the victims of the pollution but also the cost of restoring the environmental degradation. Remediation of the damaged environment is part of the process of sustainable development and as the polluter is liable to pay the cost to the individual sufferers as well as the cost of reversing the damaged ecology.

It was noticed that though the policy of rehabilitation and re-forestation is laid down by the Government, such rehabilitation or re-forestation never takes place. We have experienced this, in the Panshet tragedy at Pune also. Pune is known to be a cultural and educational capital of India. But rehabilitation has not taken place for all these years. Therefore, Dahanu Taluka Environment Protection Authority, under my Chairmanship, has formulated/ introduced the new concept—which is known as “Pre-habilitation”



and “Pre-afforestation”, meaning thereby that before a house is demolished or man is displaced, another house should be built in, in the same vicinity where he can shift and then alone demolition can take place. If one tree is to be cut for the project or even for widening of National Highway, instead ten trees should be planted before cutting the trees. The ratio prescribed is 1:10. Not only this, then arrangement is made for watering these trees for the first five years, so that the survival rate should be at least 90 to 95 per cent. In this process, about eighteen *upvans* have been established in Dahanu Taluka, in which all together 2,55,566 trees have been planted. Employment to the *Advasi* women was provided for five years for watering these trees.

This is not an end of the matter, the Authority insisted on providing some community projects, for the village, which is likely to be adversely affected because of the project. Such projects are: Common Community Hall, and such other things. Even the project agencies ultimately realised that by providing these public amenities to the public, they have purchased the peace as there is no resistance from the public.

In the process of protecting the environment and ecology of Dahanu Taluka, Authority has also protected human environment. i.e., conducting medical examination and, study of the problems of women in the area. This examination revealed that about 75% women of the area are suffering from stomach diseases/problems, obviously because there are no latrines and they are required to go to the open area for defecation. This is possible only before sunrise or after the sunset and this is the reason for constipation and related stomach problems. Similarly, survey was taken for the child labour and necessary efforts were taken by the Authority to eradicate it.

We have noticed that rehabilitation is not only a physical problem, but also a socio-economic problem. It was experienced that the people who were rehabilitated at places which were far away from their present native place, came back. And when enquiry was made it was revealed that they came back because

of the several socio-economic problems. Some of them came back because persons belonging to their community were not at the places where they were rehabilitated, that created problem of marriage of their daughters and even education of children. Therefore, while thinking of development, various factors which existing in a caste-ridden society must be taken into consideration. Rehabilitation should not only be peaceful but also provide peace of mind. Further, it will have to be taken into consideration that man cannot survive without animals or the nature. Nature is our friend. God has created nothing which is not bound by any kind of duty or totally useless. Therefore, destruction of the nature or the animal is bound to adversely affect the human culture and human environment. Therefore, a holistic approach is necessary in the matter of development.

In this context reference could be usefully made to the recent Supreme Court Judgment in Union Territory of Lakshadweep & Ors vs. Seashells Beach Resort & Ors.- decided on 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2012. In this judgment Hon. Supreme Court clarified that,

“Equitable considerations are wholly misplaced. No one could in the teeth of mandatory requirements claim equity in such matters.”

It is quite clear that one has to see that the so-called development is for whom and at whose cost. It has to be holistic, comprehensive, which cannot be at the cost of destruction of environment and ecology.

Right to Good Environment is treated as part and parcel of Article 21 of the Constitution i.e. Right to Life. Therefore, care should be taken of the people living in the vicinity; that is “Human Environment”.

Therefore, Dahanu Taluka Environment Protection Authority had adopted the new concepts of “Pre-afforestation” and “Pre-rehabilitation”, keeping in view of the said Right to Protection of Life. Government agencies always say that the Lands for rehabilitation are already earmarked, then it is better to follow this

principle, of Pre-afforestation and Pre-habilitation to avoid further complications.

To that end, the slogan accepted by this Authority was “Development without Tears” and the development should not be for only the few, at the cost of the public. For this purpose, a Social Cost was added to every project. This helped the industries also to purchase peace. Land for Land is a good concept. The word used in the Law, is ‘just compensation’, which means that the money paid should be properly spent, otherwise, the word just compensation has no meaning. Therefore, even after payment of the compensation, monitoring is necessary.

To sum up – The Principle of “Development without Tears” is the only solution for Sustainable Development. On the basis of my experience with Dahanu Taluka Environmental Authority, I am firmly of the opinion that Gandhian model of development is the best suited model so far the problems of the common man is concerned. The primary reason why the Establishment all over the world has been discarding it is that it totally goes against the interests of the privileged classes. It also ensures a symbiotic relationship between man and the nature. Moreover, it is also likely to promote the feeling of universal brotherhood by eliminating all kinds of distinction based on caste, creed, region and religion. Gandhi wanted any social order to be judged on the basis of the treatment meted out to the common man in respect of food, clothing, housing and their other needs. Besides, he wanted such a system also to cater to the moral, ethical and spiritual needs of man. This is what he called *Ram Rajya*. This might be a distant dream for human kind. Could there be any better dream worth pursuing by the people of the world? The answer is an emphatic No:

It is time to move beyond academic discussions and highlighting the practical and alternative strategy in the field of environment. The technical solutions to the problems proposed by the scientific community should be disseminated at different levels so as to reach the common man. There is a need for rethinking on

the part of planners and policy makers to look at the problems from a holistic perspective.

As we have discussed earlier in this study commercialization of our lives and society is the primary reason for our environmental degradation. For instance, earlier the people looked at the different aspects of nature as a part of *vibhuti-yoga*. Hence, there was a popular attitude of awe, wonder and respect to them. But industrial civilization with its concomitant commercialization changed the whole scenario. Whether it were mountain ranges, river systems, members of animal kingdom or plant-kingdom, everything started being looked upon as the sources of unending profiteering. All this ultimately resulted in deep ecological crisis which is posing a serious threat to the very existence of humankind.

We in India also got too much enamoured of Western way of life. We fail to listen to the good and wise words of Mahatma Gandhi. Fortunately, with the ecological crisis looming large on the horizon, Gandhi's sane advice on the protection of our environment and development is becoming more and more relevant. The youth is getting attracted to the Gandhian ideas also. Therefore, if Gandhian ideas are put in scientific form, then there is greater likelihood of their being easily acceptable to the younger generation. The whole thing could be put in a mathematical formula what I call S+G, i.e., Science plus Gandhi.

In this perspective, I suggest a five-point campaign plan to be led by the youth. They are:

1. The entire cosmic order comprising animate and inanimate beings including Homo-Sapiens should be treated as an extended family marked by a spirit of co-operation and inter-dependence.
2. The basic wealth of the world is held in the womb of the Mother Earth. That should be taken out and used in a judicious and balanced manner always keeping in mind the needs and interests of the future generation.
3. The entire cosmic order should be looked at with a sense of respect and reverence.

4. We should consider our sacred duty to protect the sanctity of our environment. We must imbibe a deep feeling of compassion towards our fellow beings as well as the members of animal and plant kingdoms.
5. The youth would chalk out a practical and comprehensive plan for not merely protecting the environment rather serving it with all sincerity and dedication.

I strongly believe the future of humankind depends upon adopting non-violence as the principle of life which is a happy union of science and spirituality. That alone can save our environment and eco-system.



Dr. J.C. Kumarappa



## Gandhian Economics: Some Observations

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I must confess that I do not draw a sharp or any distinction between economics and ethics. Economics that hurt the moral well-being of an individual or a nation are immoral and, therefore, sinful. Thus the economics that permit one country to prey upon another are immoral. It is sinful to buy and use articles made by sweated labour.

*M.K. Gandhi*

Strange as might sound, two different nations are emerging within the boundary of our own country. In the absence of any better characterization, they could be called India and Bharat respectively. India comprises those groups of our society which belong to the upper and middle classes, primarily located in the urban areas. Bharat, on the other hand comprises primarily rural based people, half-fed and naked peasants, *harijans*, *girijans* and similar other deprived sections of our society. Our country is going through difficult times and its social fabric is overstrained. In such a situation of deep despair, there are people who believe that the British Rule was much better than what you have today in the name of democracy. Today there is an exploitative relationship between India and Bharat in which the former exploits the latter. As a result, these exploited groups comprising the deprived sections are fighting to protect their individual dignity as well as social prestige. Besides, they are also struggling to actually avail those rights which accrue to them under our Constitution as

the citizens of this country. Like other more prosperous groups, they also aspire to reap the fruits of development and progress. The upper classes want to protect their vested interests and for that they employ all kinds of stratagem. People of upper classes are always concerned about the problem of standardization in the entire system of the country. They have hardly any empathetic approach to the problems of the poor and the deprived. Hence, any step towards democratization of our society is anathema to them. For them even expansion of education is not a welcome step, as it has led to the deterioration of its standard. They also say that the decentralized system of production of goods has also resulted in the poor quality. They often forget that the food prepared for ten people might be better in quality than the food prepared for hundreds of people. That may be true. But does it mean that for providing good quality food for ten people, the rest should be kept half-fed? These people look for standardization in every walk of our national life not so much for its democratization.

In sharp contrast to their perspective, for Gandhiji *swaraj* always meant freedom for the lowliest of the people and not for the prosperous and powerful. Rather it would consist in making the poor lead a better and richer life. Hunger and malnutrition are the problems of our national life. Corruption is another disease of our national life which is corroding its vital parts. It should be taken not just a moral issue, rather it has close connection with the problem of bread and butter of our people, particularly those of the poor and downtrodden. Corrupt people take away most of the resources meant for poverty alleviating programmes. Thus moral health of the country plays a crucial role even in the economic development of the country. That is why Gandhiji always stood for clubbing economics and morality together.

Thus the central question is whether production should be done primarily for the market or for self-consumption? The truth of the matter is that production for the market, which is the motive force behind capitalism, might result in the creation of huge wealth for a handful of people; while denying the fruits to the millions of

the marginalized people. The result is that under capitalism wealth creation has increased in geometrical progression, while human misery and inequality has also increased in the same progression. Hence Gandhiji favoured a system in which production could be meant primarily for family consumption. In fact, in an ideal society of Gandhian conception, sale and purchase of human labour would be taken as a sin. This is so because if labour becomes a marketable commodity, there would be a black market for the labour as well. In such a situation, labour would lose its dignity, while people who would be in a position to buy it from market would earn all respect and social recognition. In other words, goods would be available only to the people with resources irrespective of their actual need, whereas those who actually need them would continue to be deprived. Thus trading in the market creates a situation of clash of interests between middlemen and the end-consumers. Traders and middlemen get a godsend opportunity to make huge profit out of the entire transactions. Thus non-producers start ruling the roost and exploitation continues. That is the primary reason why revolutionaries have raised the question that the kingdom of non-producers must come to an end for creating a society based on equity and justice. That is why *charkha* promoted by Gandhiji became a symbol of revolution. It is also a symbol of productive labour.

There is another aspect of the same problem. Gone are the days of individual enterprise based on individual capital investment. This is the age of limited companies in which the major portion of the capital investment comes from a large number of share holders or banks, insurance or general public fund. Vinoba Bhave made a very pertinent observation when he said that in our country one who has the least capital of his own is taken to be a capitalist. Such companies do produce goods on large-scale basis and that too based on the exploitation of the working classes engaged in the production work. Sometimes high technology and the high scale also help them to keep the unit price of things produced on the lower side. On the other hand, if the wages of the workers



engaged in *Khadi* and other industries are paid at reasonable rate, then the products would appear to be more expensive. This is a big problem in modern economic thinking, particularly in a country where there is a need for a large-scale employment. This could be provided only by labour intensive industries. Most of the time a country like India appears to have fallen between two stools viz. technology intensive and labour intensive industries. The only way to restore the dignity of labour of the peasant and working classes is to give them living wages and to provide for the right prices of their products. Unless that is done, there is little likelihood of their condition improving. Thus while wearing our clean *Khadi* clothes we must feel in our heart that irrespective of their prices we are doing it for the sake of *daridranarayan*—for the people who are half-fed and half-clothed. In other words, we must have an empathetic attitude towards the working class and their problems, otherwise we would be doing injustice to them. The following would be taken as an illustrative case. We often get the caning work of furniture done by the students of the blind schools. At times, some ladies from the upper strata of our society refuse to get their sofas and chairs caned by blind students, as these visually impaired boys may not be in a position to carry out their work to the level of the maximum perfection. These ladies often ignore the fact that it is through such works that a living relationship is established between the sighted and the visually impaired people. Therefore, keeping aside perfection or imperfection of the job undertaken, they should realize that prejudices and the hurt-feelings in the minds of the visually impaired against the sighted people is somewhat removed on account of such relationship. Therefore, all those who talk about the inferior quality of *Khadi* and village industries products do not understand the full implication of their observations. They totally forget the human aspect of the problem. The banality of their observations remains a matter of deep concern for sensitive souls.

It is to be remembered that Gandhiji presented an ideal picture of Indian economy which was to be marked by its non-

exploitative and non-hierarchical character. He himself described it as the “oceanic circle.” Village was to be in the centre of his entire scheme of things. The small circle which would start from that centre would be turning bigger and bigger, ultimately covering the entire universe. Thus he tried to strike a real balance between the economic forces of localism, nationalism and internationalism. In other words, here is an economic framework for alternative development to be operative from local to the universal levels. He was also convinced that such an economic order would also bring real *swaraj* to the people of India. Hence he preferred an economic system based on *Khadi* and village industries. He also made it clear that the means of production in his economic system would not be fully controlled by the individual or the family. In fact, he made it clear that non-producer and those who would not be engaging in physical labour would be certainly deprived of such ownership. That was his real dream. Hence, “those who spin should wear and those who wear should spin” became his clarion call. In this way, he tried to remove the hiatus between the producer and the consumer. In such a scheme of things the prestige of all those who produce by engaging in physical labour would go up. To that end, he had also pleaded for the adoption of the principle of bread labour i.e. everyone would have to engage in a minimum amount of physical labour irrespective of his location or vocation in the society.

There are people who have started saying that Gandhian economic ideas and all his thoughts are out of tune with our times. Such critics fail to understand the deeper aspects of his economic thinking. Let us try to understand the ultimate aim of an economic order. It has ultimately to cater to the needs of human happiness and common well-being. The debate is about the different pathways leading to that ultimate goal. Gandhi has suggested his own pathway to that end. In the process, he was neither against the use of machinery per se nor was he opposed to the idea of wealth creation or economic prosperity as it is commonly believed. What he was emphasising was that prosperity could not be taken only in

material terms. It has to be holistic in nature covering all the major aspects of human existence. In fact, in his entire scheme of things, he tried to reconcile the four *purusarthas*— *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*. That was one of his major theoretical contributions.

He wanted the forces of market and science to join hands. In other words, what he was emphasising was that all scientific discoveries and inventions should be used to enhance human prosperity in the generic sense of the term. They should be used for taking the material prosperity to a still higher level. All this should be used to establish a kingdom of universal brotherhood. That was all that Gandhi preached and practiced. He was firmly opposed to the idea of economics being used as the science of selfishness. For him, man would remain as an end in himself; in no case he should be used as a means. That is why he disfavoured the idea of man being dominated and dwarfed by scientific instrumentation. In the olden system, man was just being treated as an animal and under the capitalist system he became nothing more than a means or an instrument. Gandhi stood for the system in which machinery should contribute both to his work efficiency as well as his happiness leading both to his social and spiritual growth. Machinery should not become a total substitute for men and animals; they should work just as the facilitator. But Gandhiji was certain that the village producer would never get justice so long as non-producers continue to control and dominate both labour and production market. Thus the real challenge is to abolish the ownership rights of the non-producers over various means of production. Once that is done, their dominance would come to an end.

This brings us to a fundamental question: What is the ultimate purpose of a sound economic order? It could be nothing less than elimination of all kinds of inequalities from human society. In other words, all hiatus, distinction and discrimination would have to be obliterated at the final stage. But let it not be misunderstood. Let it be clearly stated that equality does not mean equal distribution of poverty and penury. Nor does it mean that the life of people must

become equally miserable. For the ultimate aim of any system is to promote human happiness and a feeling of an overall well-being. But we have to bear in mind that material prosperity alone may not lead to a sense of holistic or a better and richer cultural life. Cultural and spiritual developments could be located in a broad and all inclusive view of human life. It could be built up on the foundation of a cosmic brotherhood of all animate and inanimate beings marked by human compassion.

Marxist and the materialist school of thought underline a close relationship between the nature and structure of the means of production and the productive relationship. There might be some grain of truth in these formulations. But Gandhian perspective on these issues is quite different. For the ultimate purpose of Gandhian economics is to establish a kind of relationship among all the stakeholders involved in the process of production based on the pattern of an extended family. Gandhi's primary seeking was to empower the poor and the weak and inspire them to work for the emergence of a social order based on equity and justice. To that end, he welcomed all mechanization of production which would improve efficiency and productivity and would be in keeping with the new social order. For instance, electricity should reach every village and could be used to relieve man from his working drudgery. But Gandhi also insisted that both its generation and distribution should be under the ownership of the village or the nation. But in the process of mechanization we should not lose sight of its central figure, that is, man. Mindless mechanization should not throw him out of employment. That was the reason why he pleaded for production by the masses instead of mass production. All that the production by the masses means is that manpower, not the horse power, should play the crucial role in the entire system of production. It was on this count that he considered *Khadi* and village industries as the symbol of truth and non-violence. Workers engaged in *Khadi* and village industries are doing some kind of sacrifice and penance and their life is based on a deep sense of purity and piety.

There is another problem in this connection which needs to be given a serious thought—the relationship between the producer and the consumer. We know that in the presence of rapid mechanization and automation, the relationship between the producer and consumer is totally destroyed. There is hardly any connection, let alone relationship, between the shoe makers and those who use them. There is another dimension of the problem. The worker who makes expensive shoes has hardly any means to take them for his personal use. Those who build aeroplanes could never travel by air. The reason for such state of affairs is that the entire system is based on exploitation.

Inflation has created still bigger problems, particularly for the poor. Every employed person is demanding increase in dearness allowances and it has also become the collective demands of the workers of organized sectors. They also demand that the prices of food grains and those of goods produced by artisans should be brought down. Peasants and artisans of the rural areas rightly feel that there is an organized conspiracy against them. Hence, it is becoming difficult both for peasants and artisans to remain in their present profession. Peasants are being forced to opt for cash crops like tobacco, and even opium in certain areas. Village artisans are under pressure to close their shops and migrate to the urban areas for livelihood. In the entire game, Block Development offices are also playing a pernicious role. Someone has given a very apt and appropriate description of the rural scene. Peasants have to visit the Block Development office for twenty days out of a month. In these so-called development offices, there is a *triveni* of cap, chair and purse. They work in tandem to fleece the peasants. Cap is the symbol of political and social leadership; purse that of contractors and chair represents the government officials. Rural producer is taken as an object and not as a subject and creator. They are never taken as entrepreneurs; though handicrafts and other products of village industries are the greatest generators of employment. My own experience is that they provide the greatest opportunities for employment for widows and women of weaker sections. They are

contributing significantly to the betterment of their living. Today, if they are not migrating to urban areas, the credit must go to these *Khadi* and village industries. These industries use many worn-out and left-out things as new raw materials for their products. It goes without saying that big industrial establishments are not able to provide large-scale employment opportunities to the people. Rural unemployment including those of educated youth is on the increase. People like me go on emphasising the role of labour intensive *swadeshi* industries as they alone could provide employment to the people on a large-scale. There is need to promote *swadeshi* which could then capture the sentiments of the people. Once that happens, the problem of rural unemployment would be solved through these village industries. There is a real strength in *swadeshi* spirit. It takes care of both economics as well as morality. To that end, the centrality of rural economy would have to be re-emphasized. That was the reason why Gandhi favoured *swadeshi* goods. It was for the same reason that he called for the boycott of foreign goods. Under Gandhi's inspiration and leadership *swadeshi* became an integral part of our freedom struggle. It also constituted a part of his constructive programme. Struggle and construction became the core programme of our national struggle. The idea was to win freedom for the country as well as to establish *swaraj* for the people. *Swadeshi* was so central to Gandhian programmes that it was being taken as one of the vows of his *Ekadash Vrata*. The slogan that we would win *swaraj* by plying *charkha* was born out of such conviction. There was not much animus against the foreign goods, but there was special love and preference for *swadeshi* goods. In a way, *swadeshi* spirit symbolised the movement against slavery and bondage.

It needs to be emphasised again and again that for Gandhi, economics was more than an academic discipline. It has to combine both morality and economy i.e. the process of creation of wealth should be governed by a deep sense of morality. This is how he made a fine distinction between human needs and wants. Human

needs do have a ceiling, a limit but human wants are limitless and insatiable.

He also made it clear that material prosperity, one's capacity to spend money, does not symbolise the quality of one's life, it does not even decide the pattern of one's life. In *swadeshi* spirit, it was always being asserted that human life should be based on fulfilment of basic needs rather than on material abundance. The moment we decide to give up collection of unnecessary goods, our journey for a better philosophy of life starts from that point. Thus self-reliance is the core of *swadeshi* spirit. Even the goods produced in India by the foreign companies, irrespective of their quality, could not be put in the category of *swadeshi* goods. They are based on exploitation and profiteering. Hence there is no trace of *swadeshi* spirit in them. Besides, their primary motivation is to plough back all the profits they make to their metropolitan centers. This is total negation of the *swadeshi* spirit. In fact, only small-scale industries and *Khadi* and village industries, are based on *swadeshi* spirit. Thus in the present age of globalization, there appears to be an urgent need for taking a vow for *swadeshi*.

It is to be noted that *swadeshi* is not merely an economic programme. It is a way of life. Vinoba Bhave had explained it in his own characteristic way: A lot of milk was being produced in Gokul. Price of milk fell down there. Mother Yasoda said that we should go and sell our milk in Mathura, so that we get good price for it. Lord Krishna replied that there was abundance of money in Mathura, but Kansa was also residing there. We are also in the same boat. We are also harping on an escapist approach. Large-scale migration from the rural areas would not solve our problems. We have to solve the problem of rural unemployment through creating employment opportunities in the rural areas itself. This could be done through *Khadi* and other village industries. Production of goods alone would not solve the problem; we have to find market for these goods. Now a number of eminent economists are veering around these views. Rural youth could play a crucial role in the entire process—in the production of goods as well as in their

marketing. Hence a definite vow for using *swadeshi* goods is very important.

It is important to note that Gandhi in the course of his trial in 1922 had described his profession as that of a peasant and a weaver. Mama Varerkar in his drama *Satta Ke Gulam* (slaves to power) has demonstrated that production of foodgrains and clothes are the true symbol of nationalism. Kahlil Gibran had also expressed the same sentiments in his own way. 'All that is being underlined here is that unless dignity of labour is accorded its due place, we would not be able to fill up the gap between the high and the low. Thus due social recognition to productive labour is the symbol of revolution.'

But assigning dignity of labour alone may not solve all our problems. It may not end the social domination of all those who never want to engage themselves in any kind of physical labour. That is why Gandhi included *sharira-shrama* in the list of his eleven vows. Vow gives a unique strength and determination to the people. It adds to physical labour a sacred dimension. Once one is inspired by purity and sacredness backed by a vow, one hardly needs any external inspiration or support. With such mindset, people could move towards a new social order based on the foundation of productive labour. That was the primary idea behind Gandhi's clarion call: 'Those who spin should wear, and those who wear should spin.' He also quoted some words of a Roman Catholic writer saying that a culture devoid of the dignity of labour could very well be compared with an act of vomiting. An eminent Hindi poet, Bhavani Prasad Mishra expressed the same point in one of his poems:

Do spin some thread  
And produce some food grains  
You have enough to eat  
Please now do eat your shamelessness as well.

There are people who allege that *Khadi* clothes are turning out to be expensive. They are going beyond the reach of the common



man, if their durability and cost of maintenance is taken into account. But we have to keep in mind the interests of peasants who produce cotton, the weaver who weave the cloth and spinners who spin the threads. All this would have to be taken into account while deciding the prices of *Khadi* clothes. On the other hand, cloth produced from big mills are based on the exploitation of child labour, female workers and other kinds of needy people. They are at times not even given the minimum wages. Products based on exploitation are bound to be less expensive. But they carry the bloodstains of exploitation with them. *Khadi*, on the other hand, is based on the idea of establishing an intimate relationship with *daridranarayan*. Despite its glorious base, if it appears to be expensive in the eyes of some people with vested interests, something is wrong with their entire theories of economics. In their economics, the rich take advantage of the helpless and the poor for maximising their profit.

Gandhi also asserted that the kingdom of non-producer must come to an end sooner than later. Besides, there is need to re-establish an intimate relationship between the producers and the end-users. Earlier shoes used to be made after having received the size of the feet of the prospective consumer. There was an intimate relationship between the shoemakers and the shoe-users. In fact, the entire artisan class people used to be addressed in familial terms like uncle, brother, grandfather, sister etc. Now most of these services and goods have assumed only commercial character. Goods are produced in the factories and services are being outsourced from companies set up for that purpose. Hence, producer and service provider on the one hand, and their end users on the other, remain unacquainted with each other. In this connection, I am tempted to relate an incident from my own life. I took my father to a shoe-shop which had thousands of pair of shoes. But no size fitted my father's feet. The shopkeeper told me that they produce shoes carrying particular number. They do not produce them for any particular person. This is the market system. Here goods are produced for the market and not for the

people. Gandhiji favoured production for the people. But true *swadeshi* spirit is not confined to the production of goods alone. Unless productive labour becomes our way of life, a part of our life's philosophy, there would be no end to economic inequality and injustice.

The products of peasants and artisans should be priced at a level which ensures them a life of dignity. If this is done, their products may appear to be expensive. On the other hand, foreign goods appear to be less expensive in terms of their sophistication and so-called high quality. If we take into account the real interests of our people, such a view would appear to be a false conception. Now high quality goods are also being produced in our country. The youth are in the forefront in the process of such high quality production. However, that is not our basic submission. Even if we accept for argument's sake that our *swadeshi* goods are of ordinary quality as compared to foreign goods, even then we must become their habitual buyers and users. This would give a boost to creative and constructive works in the country. Besides, this would also result in establishing an intimate relationship between the producer and the consumer. In the process, thousands of people would be gainfully employed. In such a situation, our youth would feel discouraged to take up jobs offered by the foreign companies. A lot of materials which go waste presently would be used by our *swadeshi* industries. As Martin Luther King Jr. had said long back that 'Nothing in our glittering technology can raise man to new heights, because material growth has been made an end in itself. And in the absence of moral purpose, man himself becomes smaller as the works of man become bigger. Another distortion in the technological revolution is that, instead of strengthening democracy at home it has helped to eviscerate it.' Automation, is becoming an end in itself, instead of remaining just as a means. The basic premise of *swadeshi* spirit is that the kingdom of non-producer must come to an end and productive labour must get its due recognition. Those engaged in productive labour may be provided with some instruments which would relieve them of

their working drudgery. Their products should be adequately priced and ample marketing opportunities should be provided to them. Today, artisans like weavers, carpenters, blacksmiths and others could not use and consume their own products because of their grinding poverty. It is obvious that by keeping millions of people too poor and deprived, we cannot progress.

In Gandhian economics there is an adequate scope for development and abundant production. People at every level would work in cooperative spirit; then things would certainly improve. This would also lay a sound foundation for self-reliant economy. Hence, Gandhi emphasised *Khadi* and other village industries. Today we have gone to the other extreme. We have even handed over the job of pickle production in the hands of a foreign company. We could never solve the problem of unemployment in this way.

Thus decentralised economy as conceived by Gandhiji is the real need of our times. That would create sufficient employment opportunities for our people. We have to promote *swadeshi* spirit among our people once again. We have also to focus on our rural population both for production of goods as well as their marketing. Besides, we must get rid of the middlemen. Unless we do all that, we would not be able to change our social order.

The real challenge is to re-establish a new intimate relationship with *daridranarayan*. We have to share their suffering and miseries. To that end, we must use *swadeshi* irrespective of their quality and costs. This would restore dignity to the millions of workers engaged in these industries. We have also to keep in our mind that these workers must receive living wages. If we look at things in such perspective, the prices of *swadeshi* goods would not appear to be high and prohibitive. In such a *swadeshi* scheme, both economic development and morality based on equity and justice would join hands. On all these counts, it is high time for us to insist on *swadeshi*.

Our ultimate goal should be to get social, political, economic and cultural freedom for our people. Our people should feel happy and prosperous. Everyone gets an opportunity to actualize his potentials. They must get rid of all kinds of domination and exploitation. Fear and feeling of cut-throat competition must go and brotherly cooperative and *swadeshi* spirit must prevail in every walk of our national life. That was the primary aim of Gandhian economics which is relevant today and would be relevant forever.



Shrikrishnadas Jajoo



## Gandhi and Multi-National Companies

European civilization is no doubt suited for the Europeans, but it will mean ruin for India if we endeavour to copy it. This is not to say that we may not adopt and assimilate whatever may be good and capable of assimilation by us, as it does not also mean that even the Europeans will not have to part with whatever evil might have crept into it.

*M.K. Gandhi*

Today it has become quite fashionable to say that Gandhi and his ideas have become outdated. Some of his critics have even gone a step further by saying that he could not be taken as the father of the nation. Others described him as anti-*harijan*. It seems that Gandhi belonging to everyone, could not be taken specifically belonging to any particular group. So even if he is criticized or given bad names, no one in particular would have an opportunity for any kind of hurt feelings. Besides, he is taken to be the father of the nation. Hence everyone automatically gets the right to speak against him. Putting aside these controversies, let us consider the basic issue of his being out of tune with modern times. To consider that question, thoroughly, we must ask a fundamental question. And that question is: What are the meanings and implications of modernity?

Acharya Kripalani, an eminent Gandhian, has earlier raised this question. He himself stated that such consideration would prompt us to ask a still more fundamental question: Whether Buddha,

Mahavira, Jesus Christ, Mohammad, Guru Nanakdev could be considered as being modern or not? Our common understanding of modernity is that something which is not from the West could not be taken as being modern. That is one of the reasons why some people think that Gandhian economics is rustic, as it is based on rural life. So it could not be taken as being modern. So goes the opinion of some of our economists.

J.C. Kumarappa, a prominent Gandhian economist, opposed the idea of big dams at the meeting of the Planning Commission. He made an alternative suggestion for providing a well for every piece of five/six acres of our land. Some members of the Planning Commission felt that Kumarappa wanted to take India back to the age of bullock cart. These members were too enamoured of the western model of economic development to even give his suggestion a serious thought. He never went back to the Planning Commission meeting after that initial encounter. There is another incident relating to Kumarappa. He was on a visit to the Ashoka Hall of the Rashtrapati Bhavan. He was asked as to what difference he found between his hut in Sevagram and the Ashoka Hall. He instantaneously replied that there was a fundamental difference between the two: in his hut in Sevagram, all windows were kept open twenty-four hours, so that we could see outside things clearly and could even do our reading and writing under bright and natural light. But in the Ashoka Hall, hundreds of electric bulbs of thousand watts are installed, and yet we could not have a clear vision of things there. Thus concealed lighting could be taken as the symbol of modernity. It was too much for Kumarappa to understand such kind of economic thinking.

Today, the term, multi-national companies, is also quite confusing. These companies have no national moorings. They work neither in the interest of the country of their origin, nor in the interest of India. Their primary aim is to promote their own interests and indulge in all kinds of exploitation.

Joseph Ernest Renan, a well known French theorist, in his famous essay *What is a Nation?* has explained the term "nation" as

follows: 'A nation is therefore a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future. It presupposes a past; it is summarized, however, in the present by a tangible fact, namely, consent, the clearly expressed desire to continue a common life. A nation's existence is, if you will pardon the metaphor, a daily plebiscite, just as an individual's existence is a perpetual affirmation of life.' This is not the primary motive of multi-national companies. Hence it is much better to describe them just as foreign companies. Their primary aim is to control and dominate the Indian market. They have created a stir in the market by entering into the field of biscuit making, chocolate and cold drinks. Some foreign companies have also taken over some of the Indian companies. It is also being rumoured that foreign companies like Nippon, Kinetic Honda and others have taken over all the shares of Indian investors and thus are in full control of these companies. Pepsi, Coca Cola, Parle and others have also driven out Indian companies from their respective fields.

There are people in India who believe that we would not progress taking shelter behind *Khadi gramodyog*, unlike Soviet Union which could develop behind the iron curtain. These economists also assert that Gandhian thought is totally out of tune with modern industrial civilization; hence it could not become the basis for the economic development of our country. They go on saying these things ad nauseam and these pro-foreign economists are ever engaged in such cultural and economic activities.

In this connection, the first thing we have to remember is that *Khadi* is a symbol of revolution. It not only covers the nakedness of human bodies, it also covers the nakedness of our nation. Bertrand Russell in his book *Authority and the Individual* talked about the importance of sinking Scottish handicraft industry. He said: 'First, there is the loss, added to those we have already suffered in the blind and greedy heyday of the Industrial Revolution, of one more local and traditional skill, which has brought to those who exercised it the joy of craftsmanship and a way of life which, though hard,

gave pride and self-respect and the joy of achievement, through ingenuity and effort, in circumstances of difficulty and risk. Secondly, there is the diminution in the intrinsic excellence of the product, both aesthetic and utilitarian. Thirdly, this murder of a local industry aggravates the tendency to uncontrollable growth of cities, which we are attempting to avoid. The independent weavers become units in a vast hideous and unhealthy human ant-hill. Their economic security is no longer dependent on their own skill and upon the forces of nature, it is lost in a few large organisations, in which if one fails all fail, and the causes of failure can not be understood.'

In this book he further talked about India and the importance of preserving the village communities and traditional way of life. He wrote:

'India, for example, is traditionally a land of village communities. It would be a tragedy if this traditional way of life with all its evils were to be suddenly and violently exchanged for the greater evils of urban industrialism...'

These are not the views expressed by Gandhi or other Gandhians. Hence they could not be brushed aside by the modern economists. In fact, they should take pains to understand their deeper meanings and implications. Indian villages came under a state of economic slavery under the British rule. Unfortunately, they continue to be in the same condition of slavery even after more than sixty-five years of independence.

For thousands of years, the five basic elements viz. earth, water, air, fire and ether have been freely available to humankind. They are an integral part of a cosmic order. But for quite sometime, we have launched vigorous campaigns to destroy their purity which is posing a serious threat to our existence. Today, we have invented other types of five prime movers—bakers, managers, advertisers, brokers and exporters. Added to this lot is the sixth element i.e. the irresponsible government. While thinking about these new prime movers, one is reminded of the story of Marie Antoinette, French Queen who had the audacity to say that if people could not



avail bread, let them eat cake. In the same vein, the powers that be are advising people to go for mineral water, fast food, noodles etc. Could there be a more ironic situation than this? I am reminded of a cartoon which was published in a leading magazine which tried to capture the nature of a dialogue between two beggars in the context of globalization. Both were in agreement that the begging bowls made out of the packaging materials of the globalised goods are both lasting and beautiful. Besides, their children as beggars are doing well in places like Dubai and USA! In the wake of new economic policy, some of our young girls won the world beauty contests. Such international contests are handled by a number of multi-national companies. Mostly the young girls coming from the developing countries are given such awards. A careful and detailed analysis of the entire selection process of these beauty contests would reveal that the selected girls mostly come from the countries which have permitted free trading for these multi-national companies. These girls are used for advertising their products in their respective countries. They are put under the condition that they would be used for the promotional work of these companies. A similar situation exists in the field of sports. These sportsmen are also being used as racehorses. Banners are put on their chest. In the process, they start taking more interest in the advertisement and modelling rather than the sport. The sponsors of sports work as owners as well as organizers. For them sports are just a means to make big money. So sport-spirit is being replaced by lottery and bargaining spirit. All this prompted Vinoba Bhave to say that money is nothing short of a demon. It is being said in Japan that they are engaged in the business of creating artificial human brain. Computers and calculators are their just forerunners. Similarly, these companies are at the job of creating artificial needs. They have succeeded in making washing machines, vacuum cleaners, computers, calculators and refrigerators, an essential part of our daily life. In the process, we are overexploiting the non-renewable natural resources.

Gandhiji was never agreeable to such a state of affairs. In his economic thought, all creatures of the world including man, animals and vegetation have crucial roles to play in the sustenance of the cosmic order. The Indian Constitution is only one Constitution in the world which prohibits cow-slaughtering. We call our earth as *vasundhara*. Gandhiji said: 'Earth provides enough to satisfy everyman's need but not for everyman's greed.' But we have forgotten about it in the course of our zeal for globalization. We have opened the market for all these multi-national companies, which are out to promote human greed by creating artificial needs. It is becoming obvious that we are not much concerned about the interests of our coming generations.

As against such perspectives marked by materialism and greed, Gandhiji wanted both economy and morality to be taken together. Ideally, we are also committed to build up an exploitation free society. Such a society would be free from fear and all kinds of cheating. There would be the rule of law and not the rule of man and money. Might would not be the basis of the right. We would be concerned about each others problems and all of us would be willing to work in the spirit of cooperation rather than in competition. Money would be no body's God. Goods would be available to all those who need them. Goods would not be available only to the rich and powerful, simply on account of their having purchasing power. A sharp distinction would be made between wants and needs. Cooperation and not competition would be the hallmark of the new society. Today even medicines are available to only those who have the purchasing power and not necessarily to those who actually need them. This is no economics, no development. Inequity and inequality are on the increase in the present society. The real challenge is to find an economic model—in which development could take place without tears; in which peasants would not be forced to commit suicides and the millions of people would not go to bed empty stomach.

All these are relevant questions. After all, what is the meaning of development or progress? In this context, I am reminded of an

interesting conversation between S.K. Dey, the then Minister of State for Community Development and a renowned Gandhian economist J.C. Kumarappa at Kallupatti in early 1956. The Minister told Kumarappa about the great success of Community Development Programme by citing the figures of achievement in various programmes. Kumarappa reacted to it sharply by stating that 'Mr. Dey before I cover a particular area with the Community Development Programme I would count the ribs on a few persons and if after three years of work there is some flesh to cover those ribs, I will call it a success.' He further added: 'You are attempting to throw a silk shirt on a hungry person; you will never succeed.' Nor does the statistics regarding import and export are relevant in such perspective on true development and progress. Similarly, an economy based on interests and dividends could be taken as nothing but an unproductive economy. But in the present state of globalization, the emphasis would be on one's ability for manipulating the art of loan taking and Foreign Direct Investment. In such an economic order of cut-throat competition, the rich would become richer and the poor would become poorer. Even today the number of people below poverty line is increasing virtually on a daily basis. Imitation of the West would lead us nowhere as consumerism could not be taken as a symbol of progress.

Presently, our economy is dependent on export. Even the food-grains and essential needs of our people are being exported. They are becoming non-available to our people. As a result, thousands of people are suffering from malnutrition and even starvation. On the other hand, out of these export earnings, only luxury goods are being imported to be used by a select few of our elite. This is the true feature of our present economy. All out attempts to expand our exports is being done to import such luxury items like chocolates, expensive soaps, toothpaste, shaving cream, blades, nail polish, lipstick and similar other goods. That is the reason the Companies dealing in such goods are encouraged and promoted. We know that in some parts of the Himalayan region, potato is

produced on a large-scale basis. In this part of the country, women used to make potato chips to earn their livelihood. Men used to go out to find jobs. Today, Uncle Chips, a foreign company, has virtually captured the market and traditional potato chips are out of the market. Potato is bought very cheap—two or three rupees a kilo, but a packet containing 50 to 100 grams is being sold for rupees ten or more. How long would Lijjat Papad stay in market is a question worth considering. Recently, even pickle making industry has been taken over by an American company.

It is interesting to note that sixty lakhs of people are employed in *Khadi-gramoudyog* industries. In other words, sixty lakhs families run their homes and hearths from these industries. None of the multi-national companies could provide employment on such a large scale to our people. It is my simple contention that even if all our people buy and use one *Khadi* dress once a year, that would provide employment to one crore of our people. In Maharashtra region, spinning of *Khadi* cloth are mostly done by divorcees from the Muslim community. If we lose sight of the social dimension of our economy, there would be anarchy in our national life. Suppose, the *papad* industry is taken over by a multi-national company, what would happen to thousands of women who are gainfully employed in this industry? Those people who often say that the products of village industries turn out to be somewhat expensive, often forget the social dimension of the problem. They totally ignore the social cost of these industries once they are taken over by the multi-national companies. We should remember that in making of these products, the peasants, the producers of the raw materials as well as the weavers, are paid on a reasonable basis. If these social dimensions are taken into account, then these products should not be taken as being expensive. On the other hand, the products of most of the multi-national companies are based on exploitation of child and women workers. Their social cost is very high even if their prices might not appear to be so expensive. The real challenge is to understand the fine distinction between productive and non-productive labour. Productive labour must be given social respect

and recognition; while non-productive labour must be shown its actual place. A culture based on the dignity of labour is true culture. On the other hand a system based on exploitation and devoid of any sense of dignity of labour has to be likened with an act of vomiting. Such a characterization was made by a Roman Catholic priest whom Gandhiji approvingly quoted in his writings.

Competitiveness and money-spinning trading have emerged as the primary basis of the present economic order. Today, money is not just a means of investment, but it is being used to buy men and even the nations. Deals, gambling and competitiveness are its mainstay. One's misery is another's opportunity to make money. Non-productive business based on capital, crime, commission is on the increase. Market has always been some kind of black market. But today the black market is being called white market under the law. It is being run in the name of competitive market. Money has become the singular measure of production and economics. It is the drive for money all the way from the production of goods to their distribution. Vinoba Bhave rightly observed: 'Could Saint Jnaneshwar write *Jnaneshwari* under lure of receiving the Nobel Prize? Or could Tukaram compose his *abhangs* for being awarded with one lakh rupees? Or could Einstein discover his theory of relativity under the lure of receiving a prize of one crore?' All that Vinoba Bhave is underlining is the fact that money has never been the main inspiration behind big and creative works. But money minded people have taken advantages of even such creative works. They have raised market based on competition. They have put an end to feeling of neighbourhood and commercialization has spread its wings over all aspects of human life.

Gandhiji always emphasised the fact that production should be done according to the needs of the people of the neighbourhood. In other words, production should not be done primarily for the market but for one's own self or family consumption. He was totally opposed to the kind of economic thinking which promotes the interests of the rich and the powerful at the cost of the poor. It also promotes market with a singular motive of making money. Such

economics is nothing but the economics of misery in Gandhian perspective.

Free trade and globalization is related to an integrated development of Indian economy. But we must once for all come to understand and enunciate the real meaning of development. We have to make a clear choice between development based on exploitation and competition on the one hand and development based on cooperation and inter-dependence on the other. The fundamental question is whether development should be based on horsepower or manpower, i.e. which of the two would mark the main feature of our economy? In India, we have enormous amount of manpower. We could not be supportive of any kind of mechanization which unnecessarily replaces manpower in the name of modernization. That would create large-scale unemployment. That does not mean all out opposition to the use of machinery in the productive system. But we must maintain a balance between man and machinery. Gandhiji was not opposed to machinery per se. This kind of misinformation and misunderstanding has been deliberately created. After all, *charkha* is also a machine, which Gandhi went out of his way to promote. Hammer would always be used to promote the efficiency of man, but it should never replace human hands. In the name of mechanization and automation, we should not throw out millions of people out of employment. It could not be used to reduce creative and productive power of man. Productive labour should enhance human efficiency and productivity. Hence the entire production system should be geared to enhance and promote them in a big way.

Machinery is of three types. Some of them like motor, trains and cars are time efficient i.e. they save time. The second type of machinery like *charkha* and agricultural implements contributes to human efficiency. The third type of machine tries to take the place of man. There are also machines of destruction as well. Gandhiji was never opposed to all machinery or mechanization or to human prosperity. Mass production as conceived by Gandhiji is a symbol of prosperity. But prosperity in Gandhi's view was much

more than material prosperity. It symbolized an enrichment of human life in all aspects. Science should end in promoting human relationship. One's capacity to spend money could not be taken as the only sign of high standard of life. In fact, in no way man could be taken as a means: he is an end in himself. He should be at the centre of all economic activities. Machines should enhance the joy of man and animals engaged in the works of production. In the age of slavery, man was treated as an animal, in this industrial age he is being treated as an instrument. Means and the end should be in consonance with each other as ultimately the former would decide the nature of the latter.

Elimination of inequity and inequality is the ultimate aim of our new economic order. However, equality does not mean mechanical equality. Another aim of economic order is to promote the all-round prosperity of human life. To that end, we need a decentralised pattern of economy and polity based on the principle of redistributive justice. But material prosperity does not necessarily lead to a highly developed cultured life. Hence we have to take a holistic view of human prosperity. There is a close linkage between the ownership of means of production and production relationship. Hence social relationship is contingent upon the nature and structure of the means of production. There is some truth in such statements. Thus we have to work out an economic system which is need based and not greed based. Hence 'think globally and act locally' should be the guiding norm of our economic activities.

Gandhiji had a holistic vision of human life. He never looked at it in an isolated way. The basic premise behind all his economic thinking was that man, one of the finest creations of God, should not be lost in the mad race of mechanization and automation. That constituted the core of his thoughts.

The age of science is marked by planning. It should also become the age of the performance of community duties. In the name of globalization, the desire for instant prosperity based on exploitation and inequity should not be promoted. The entire balance and

equilibrium is being disturbed on account of corruption, crime and destruction of environment. An all out attempt should be made to halt such a pernicious process. A new foundation of an economic order based on cooperation, inter-dependence, equity and justice should be laid out in a systemic way. The present system based on cut-throat competition and insatiable desire for money making would have to be discarded. To that end, *Khadi* and other village industries would form the backbone of the new economic order. In other words, *swadeshi* industries would have to be promoted for ushering in a new economic order. Thus starting from *gram swaraj*, we have to move towards a new international economic order.

Mahatma Gandhi had quoted seven types of sins in *Young India*. They are: “politics without principles, wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, knowledge without character, commerce without morality, science without humanity, and worship without sacrifice.” (*Young India*, October 22, 1925).

In this context we have to look at the entire process of globalization devoid of *swadeshi* spirit as another kind of sin. Taking a practical view, we have to import less. For that we have to promote our *swadeshi* industries. Foreign companies based on share-capital tend to take away dividends to their own country. Hence they could not be taken as a part of our *swadeshi* industries. It should be clearly understood that *swadeshi* is not a mere geographical concept. It is more of a spirit, a feeling and a special mindset. Its foundation is based on an exploitation free social order. A product based on exploitation could never be taken as being *swadeshi*.

In view of the large-scale unemployment, *swadeshi* industries appear to be very much relevant and necessary, more than what they were during the days of Tilak and Gandhi. But the meaning and implications of the term *swadeshi* should not be changed. There are people who migrated to foreign countries years back. They had earned enormous money by fair or foul means. They want to be more respected than our own businessmen, primarily on account



of their enormous wealth. They believe only in money and are totally devoid of other social values. They should be shown their actual place and no undue respect and social recognition should be given to them. It is a matter of sadness that the government of India is taking a contradictory stand in respect of its economic policy. On the one hand, it is allowing Foreign Direct Investment in the name of a new international economic order. On the other hand, it also claims to work for the promotion of *Khadi* and other village industries by spending hundreds of crores on them.

Long back, Gunnar Myrdal, author of an Asian drama: *An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations*, questioned the relevance of Western economic models in Asian conditions including India. He also emphasised the need for employment oriented economic order. Essentially, Myrdal's ideas were based on Gandhian economic thinking. But the economic policy of the government of India had fallen between two stools of globalization and *swadeshi* industries. There is no authenticity in its economic policy. It is a real irony of history that we have to take lessons in *swaraj*, *swadeshi* and patriotism from those people who are essentially self-seekers and money-makers. They talk of Gandhi and Godse in the same breath. They pretend to take pride in Gandhi but in reality they are the followers of Godse. A man like me strongly feels that it was good that Gandhi went away from the world at the right time; otherwise he would have to suffer every day at the hands of such people for the sake of his ideas and ideals.

There is no alternative to Gandhian economics based on productive labour. The sooner we realize this truth, it would be better for our country. Otherwise, the country would suffer irreparable losses. We would never be able to save the prestige and majesty of our nation, while seeking economic aid and grants from the rich countries. The present economic order has created good opportunities for pleasure seekers and money makers. Economic inequality is also on the increase. There is a growing tendency towards exploitation of land, environment and even men

and women. Capitalism including crony capitalism has got strong footholds in our country.

Our revolutionary slogan was that *paap*, *punya* and drug addiction should not be commercialized. Now they have become nothing less than commercial commodities. Even the government is involved in the process. Drug addiction, lottery and gambling are a part of the larger conspiracy against the poor and the downtrodden. The idea is to perpetuate their slavery and penury. The poor are spending the bulk of their earnings on these soul killing addictions. Astrology, dice-playing and fake *Babas* are playing havoc with the life of the common people. They would never allow the man in the street to improve his quality of life, despite their somewhat better material condition. Foreign liquor shops are being promoted on an unprecedented scale. New breweries are being promoted virtually on a daily basis. The irony of the situation is that the need for prohibition is also being promoted in the same breath. How long could we continue with such a contradictory policy? It is a well-known fact that molasses is becoming a major product of our sugar mills. In the name of free economy, we are moving towards a life of non-productive labour which would ultimately lead us to a state of economic slavery. Corruption, black marketing and atrocities on the weaker sections of our society are on the increase in the process. What is worse, our people have started accepting these vices as a part of our social life. Our people are losing their sensitivity. During our freedom struggle, high dreams and aspirations arose in the heart and mind of our common people. They were also reflected in the provisions of the fundamental rights and directive principles of the State Policy. One shudders to think of the consequences, if all the dreams and aspirations of the common people are dashed to the ground. It is nothing more than a slogan to say that there should be workers-peasant *Raj*. The things on the ground are moving just in the opposite direction.

Even those who have benefitted from the present economic order are not investing their money in productive work. They are

using their resources on pleasure-seeking or money-making. How all this is affecting the mindset of younger generation is an issue which needs immediate attention. Families are being destroyed. Accumulation of fat in the body does not improve one's health. Rather it is a disease. We do not have time to ponder over the issue how we are ruining the prospects of our future generations by promoting drug addiction and lust for comfort. *Jal* (water), *jamin* (land) and *jungle* (forest) are being destroyed on an unprecedented scale. A kind of madness seems to have taken over the elite section of our society. As people, we are moving towards our own destruction and that too in the name of development. We are destroying our ecological balance. Besides, we are forgetting the fact that the progress and development could not take place in bits and pieces. We would have to prepare a comprehensive blueprint for social and economic development. Gandhiji had a dream of *swaraj* and *swadeshi*. He had also presented a blueprint for it.

If Gandhi's schemata of development is not acceptable to us, then we must have an alternative blueprint, otherwise we would remain misguided and misdirected. We cannot afford to go on a fishing expedition. We must explore a definite path. At present, money power, muscle power and mafia power are ruling the roost. Our country is suffering from such *tridosh*. We are faced with all kinds of problem in our social and cultural life. We are taking an escapist attitude in the name of spiritualism and seek shelter in astrology and fake *Babas*. Presently, we are unfocussed and we are losing all our concerns for *purusartha*. We are caught in the web of hedonism.

We have to judge the present economic system on these Gandhian yardsticks. For opening the door of *swaraj*, we have to use the key of *swadeshi*. That is the only way to protect and promote our national interest and honour.



## Gandhiji and Social Institutions

It is my settled conviction that no deserving institution ever dies for want of support. Institutions that have died have done so either because there was nothing in them to lost faith or, which is perhaps the same thing, lost stamina. I would, therefore urge the conductors of ....such institutions not to give in because of the general depression. It is a time of test for worthy institutions.

*M.K. Gandhi*

It is quite natural to raise the question: Why are voluntary agencies losing their relevance in the present times? Today various dimensions of voluntarism have become complex and involved. One of these questions relates to government grants. This is becoming much more complex than the puzzles appearing in the newspapers. On the other hand, politics is losing its original purpose of service to the people, virtually on a daily basis. Servility, flattery and court jesting to the powerful politicians are becoming its major hallmark. All powerful groups of neo-rich and neo-elite have emerged in our society. They are playing a pernicious and divisive role among our people, creating in the process, a big gulf between them and the common man. Consequently, one is forced to bribe to get things moved and done at the government levels. Five star hotels with all their associated comfort facilities would have to be provided to the government auditors and their teams. Thus, voluntary agencies are faced with insurmountable problems

and are greatly stressed on account of corrupt and irresponsible government officials. In the process, the government agencies and officials are making a broad distinction between pliant and non-pliant voluntary agencies in the course of their dealings with them. But that is not all. Powerful politicians and retired government officials are engaged in raising their own voluntary agencies. All these pernicious developments are creating a sense of despair among the sincere workers engaged in voluntary work. It appears as if we are selling mirrors amidst blind people. Despite such ominous development in the voluntary sector, it is my considered opinion that in the absence of honest and committed voluntary agencies, a social order based on equity justice and brotherhood, as ordained by our Constitution, could never come into existence.

One could clearly see the impact of various kinds of social and political movements India went through in the course of the national movement. We know from the early history of our national movement that social (reforms) conferences used to be held along with the annual meetings of the Indian National Congress. In fact, movements for social change and national independence were complementary to each other. Admittedly the impact of these movements could be seen in the contours of our Constitution. Our Constitution has underlined the centrality of the lives of the common man which was earlier missing from our national life. It is not for nothing that our Constitution has clearly laid emphasis on the duties of the Indian citizens while underlining their fundamental rights. Under the section on the Directive Principles of State Policy it is clearly stated that the State would seriously work towards the establishment of a Welfare State and would strive hard to remove inequality by providing equal opportunities to all its citizens. To that end, the State would not only help the citizens to enjoy their right to education but also offer appropriate help for the people afflicted by disabilities, unemployment and old age. It is also taken to be the bounden duty of the State to work for raising the standard of life of the people by making adequate facilities for nutrition and public health. In fact, the right to life ensured by the

Constitution does not mean just leading a vegetative life, rather it encompasses the clear ideas of living with all human dignity. In other words, it means that people must be in a position to lead a meaningful and purposive life. Such a life with dignity includes the right to food, water, justice, education, health and a clean and life sustaining environment. It is true that such an ideal society could not be built up by the State alone as it has also to perform various kinds of administrative works. Hence, it is absolutely essential that the voluntary sector must also undertake such responsibilities along with the State. In the absence of such joint efforts, a society based on equity, justice and brotherhood could not be built up. Thus existence and active participation of the voluntary sector in various walks of our national life could hardly be over emphasized. It is true that internal bickering among these institutions might create and even overshadow the other problems. But such issues could be considered and tackled in a holistic manner rather than in a partial and truncated way. Their success or failure could not be measured on the basis of any ready-made premise or formulae as mere arithmetical calculations could not be applied to these institutions. In fact, algebraic considerations might be more suitable while assessing the contributions of such institutions. Hence, one has to look for the answers in respect of these institutions which are all comprehensive and applicable to all.

It is a matter of deep concern that presently all the three types of institutions—religious, scientific and political have failed to deliver goods to the people. Basic promise of religion was that it would be successful in bringing people closer to each other as well as in taking them nearer to God. But the net result has been just the opposite. Religion has turned into a great divisive force, creating a great hiatus between the members of different religions. Nor has it succeeded in leading men to God. It has brought God of death (*Yamraj*) nearer to humankind. Harold J. Laski rightly observed that religion surpassing all other institutions, has brought hatred and violence on an unprecedented scale in its trail. Ritualism has become the primary symbol, nay even the embodiment of religion.

What is more, truth, non-violence and other eternal moral values, which earlier constituted the core values of all religions, have been relegated to the background, if not totally left out. Hence, as per one of the basic rules of mathematics, if all common elements are taken out, all that would remain are rites and rituals. The idea of the other world has been added in all major religious traditions which is primarily based on greed and fear. The last dispenser of justice on earth is taken to be the hangman on the earth and *Yamraj* in the other world. Thus fear of punishment has become the mainstay of good conduct. But fear breeds only negative feelings in the human heart and mind. According to the so-called religious people, the phenomenal world is like the night shelter and the real home of the man is in the other world. Hence, it is said that after his death man goes to his real home which lies in the other world. These pseudo-religious people have greater faith in the other world than in the present phenomenal world. That is why even the inspiration for social work is sought to be found in individual salvation or a place in heaven. Even the service to fellow-beings is done with the same purpose, though many people consider it to be selfless service.

Compassion and donations in material terms are given with the same feeling. The donor is taken as a giver and the donee as a helpless recipient. In such a relationship, the dignity of all those who are at the receiving end are adversely affected. Moreover, this has also become a commercial proposition. It has become a means to avoid taxation. Thus unlike earlier times when *dan* was considered to be a social obligation, now it has assumed the form of a financial calculations. Thus, service spirit and humane approach are missing from the entire scheme of things. But *dan* and *daya* are taken as sure pathways to heaven. In other words, poverty, disease and inequality should stay, so that the rich and the powerful could attain their salvation and ensure their place in heaven. This is a material and not spiritual inspiration behind such approach. Even in the arena of service, casteist, sectist and sectional approach remains dominant. Such an approach plays a divisive role in the society. Political elites are driven by party

interests. True service to the people is neither their ultimate goal nor their ideal. They are primarily governed by politics and their personal interests.

The institutions covering different branches of science are faring no better. Like religion, initially science also sought to bring people closer to each other. True, science has brought people of the world nearer to each other in terms of physical distance. Strangely enough, the people of different continents and countries have physically moved closer, but only to engage themselves in situations of conflict, cleavage, competition and occasional wars. In any case, they have not come closer to love and embrace each other. Let us not forget that science, after all, is the progenitor of all kinds of deadly weapons including atom bombs. True, some countries do extend financial and material help during the period of natural tragedies like famine, earthquake, etc. But even such helps are guided and carried out in terms of political considerations rather than in terms of true humanitarian and service spirit.

Peoples' experiences with the political institutions are still worse. Politics has reached a blind alley. It moves in singular direction, i.e. politics and still more politics. In the arena of politics, even social service is primarily motivated by power considerations and not vice versa, service for power and not power for social service. What is worse, party politics, marked by casteism, religion and regionalism, has become the prime mover in the field of social service. Every political person could be seen asserting with a sense of pride that he or his wife is selflessly engaged in some kind of social work. His visiting card would bear a clear testimony for it. In fact, under the hypocritical garb of social service, such people unabashedly pursue their political interests only. A similar drive has also entered into the religious and social service fields, polluting these areas in the process. Thus social service and religious works are not only being politicised but they are also being commercialised. Their real values are being diminished but their market prices are on the ascent. In this context, one is reminded of Oscar Wilde's oft-quoted statement:



'Cynic is a person who knows the price of everything and value of nothing.' Social and moral values are being replaced by the market values. Social institutions are also being used for securing power positions and all the ills of power politics have entered into the arena of social service in a big way. Search for power positions and its concomitant electoral politics have become the order of the day, even in social and religious institutions like temples, orphanage, old-age homes, blind schools and in similar other institutions. Elections in these institutions are held to garner and grab power positions. Thus, even the centres of social service have come under the game of power politics. It is high time that we take some steps to rid these institutions of these evil influences and designs. This could be achieved only by these vibrant voluntary agencies which are non-governmental and self-reliant in nature. It is a real tragedy of our time that in every field good people remain indifferent and passive, whereas bad elements are ruling the roost. As a result, power and wealth are dominating all areas of human concerns. Hence cut-throat competition and cooperation is becoming the order of the day.

Anti-social elements are being produced by meaningless leisure and unemployment. Leisure means full stomach and free time and unemployment results in empty stomach. Therefore, the situation where both leisure and unemployment are prevailing, could be much worse than wherein only useless leisure is available. This is what has happened to our country. A sizeable section of our people do not know how to use their leisure meaningfully. Hence there is an unprecedented and voluminous increase in criminal activities and drug addiction. Unfortunately even the family ties are getting weakened making the situation still worse. There is a saying in English that houses/buildings are constructed by contractors and the government, but they could be truly turned into homes by the people residing inside them. Hence goes a popular saying: 'House is a place to live in; home is a place to love'. Thus family is a social institution wherein human relationship is based on selflessness, free from all forms of self-seeking. In a family, members work

in accordance with their capacity and get their share based on their needs. That is why even the old, disabled, children and unemployed members of a family are given good and nutritious food even though they may not be contributing much to the family corpus. The underlying principle governing the family is close-knit human ties. One would like to introduce a similar kind of close relationship in the working of the voluntary agencies. Presently, only membership is the hallmark of these institutions and there is total absence of warmth and feelings of a close familial relationship. Membership of such institutions could be terminated on the basis of one's free will. In sharp contrast, familial relationship could never be broken off. To replace institutional membership by close-knit familial ties would require an intense process of purification and selflessness in mutual relationship. We know from our own experience that while membership of any organisation is formal, the familial relationship is based on heartfelt feelings. The former is institutional and organisational, but the latter is always personal and sometimes even spiritual in nature. The ideal is to replace institutional membership by a kind of personal relationship. To that end, we have to build up a social order based on a familial relationship and ethical social norms.

It goes without saying that social service is a major means for bringing about social change. We have to conceive and engage in raising a social order based on our concept of mutual relationship between man and man. Administration does not just involve regulation of the members of any society and their relationship. In bread a little husk could go along, but one could very well realise as to what would happen when it is only full of husk! In most of the social institutions, there is a marked and visible kind of irresponsibility and even indifference in respect of proper accounting and auditing. Therefore, using the services of auditors has become a dire necessity. And that is why today there is a greater interference by the government in the working of all kinds of institutions. Certain things are taken as necessary evils, but at

times we look only at “necessary” part and forget about its “evil” part.

If one has engaged himself in some kind of an evil deed in any other place, one could go to the Ganga and take a dip to wash out its evil effects. But where does one go to wash out the sinful consequences of his evil deeds, if he has committed them on the very bank of the Ganga? It is really tragic to watch selfishness and egotism even in the arena of social service. If one fails in the process of penance, one is certainly turned into a demon. One could hardly stop in the middle. It is for such a reason that a feeling is growing in the society that the voluntary agencies are apparently becoming irrelevant in the present context. But on a closer examination, one could easily see that is not the whole truth.

We continue to use terms like *niskam karma* (selfless action) and *niskam seva* (selfless service) without fully grasping their implications. These words have been also used in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Ordinarily *niskam karma* means that the primary motive behind one's action should be neither to grab the fruits of one's action nor profit-seeking. However it does not mean purposeless action as even a foolish person would never engage himself without a purpose. In fact, every work would have a purpose behind it and it would also have some kind of results. Thus the idea behind *niskam karma* is simply this: One's action should not be purposeless, but one should not concentrate on its results with bated breath and anxious eyes. Such an action carries full purpose and meaning in itself without having any extraneous reason.

The moot question in the respect of voluntary agencies is how far are they truly voluntary in nature and self-reliant in their workings? Gandhiji insisted that voluntary agencies must be self-reliant. In other words, people working in any voluntary agency need not be dependent on it in terms of their livelihood. Nor should voluntary agencies be dependent on the government or even on the moneyed people. This is so because any institution dependent on the government is bound to lose its verve and vigour. In other words, truly non-governmental agencies alone could

remain forceful and effective. Similarly over-ambitious people lose their true significance. Unfortunately, today social service has become a golden slave to wealth and self. It has become a keep of the powers that be. Present mindset behind the working of such institutions is that their survival is not possible without external help. Hence, there is a growing tendency inside these institutions towards "individual-worship." Instead of service, the powerful man becomes the embodiment of power of such institutions. Today, *purusartha* (incessant endeavour) is missing from our social and even individual life. Hence, even the people are preferring flatterers and middlemen who could deliver goods in the present context. In fact, today people are looking for such redeemers/liberators who are deriving their power from these institutions. In such a situation, it is the government which directly or indirectly starts running all such institutions. Thus State control is increasing even in voluntary sector on an unprecedented scale and virtually all institutions are coming under the government purview. As a result, these institutions are becoming more and more liable for being used for electoral politics. And that is a primary reason why politicians and political parties are keen to capture these institutions and their resources for their political ends. They are aware that men and material resources of these institutions could be used for their electoral battles. Such anti-people conspiracy is on these days. Sometimes, we forget that power-seekers and power-brokers could not build up an ethical and moral social order. In fact, they only play a destructive role in the entire process. Human history is a witness to the fact that moral and ethical fabric of the society is built up by saints and sages, who hardly ever enjoyed power positions in ordinary sense of these forms. True social workers hardly care for power, property, posts or position. They live on moral power of their character. In the face of such moral power, even the mightiest empire fails to match up with them. That is the real strength of the workers and institutions in the field of social work. In a way, this is also the real strength of the society. Such institutions are needed to build up character in the society.

We have reached a stage in our discussion when one could legitimately ask the question: How should institutions be run? The point that needs to be emphasised is that these institutions, if at all they seek or receive financial help from the powers that be or money magnates they should be free from all strings. Of course, the best thing that could happen to them is that they should rest on people's resources and cooperation. Whatever financial help comes from such sources should come as *dan* and not as a tax-saving measure. It should be inspired by the co-sharing just like an extended family. In a family, one of the brothers may not be in a position to earn his livelihood, yet his needs are taken care of by other earning brothers. This is never done out of pity rather it is done in the spirit of co-sharing. Even gifts/donations (*dan*) should be extended in such a way and with such a feeling that it does not adversely affect the dignity of one who (whether individual or institutions) actually receives it.

But it should not be forgotten that a social worker is also a human being. He has a world around him with all kinds of social responsibilities. He has also to fulfil his physical and financial needs. In the Konkan region, there is a temple for the stomach of living beings. If every stomach is turned into the stomach-God (*pet-devata*), then *Petoba* (stomach-God) would be turned into *Vithoba* (the God of Pandarpur). This takes us to the concept of *annabrahma* (the God of the grains). Meeting the needs of one's stomach becomes something like a *yagna karma* (an act of sacrifice). If every one reduces the needs of one's stomach and surrenders it to the *Petoba*, then it would become the sheltering ground of the world. In the process, everyone would be contributing his or her might to the social work. A clear understanding should grow that the basic needs of a social worker is also an essential part of the social work. In the course of his work, a social worker has to move from place to place and that involves expenses. It is incumbent on the society to make arrangements for such expenses. It is sheer exploitation and even amounts to virtual insult to a social worker if such expenses are not taken care of by the society. If one does

not want to be exploited, how could one look at the exploitation of a social worker with any sense of aplomb. It is true that earlier generations of scholars, nationalist leaders and social workers had opted for a life of voluntary poverty. Such an approach gave them a rare sense of enthusiasm and abandon which even surpassed those of the money magnets. That only behove such selfless workers of yester years. But on the part of the society, it did reflect not only some kind of indifference but also poverty and smallness of mind. It should be borne in mind that the society is greatly benefitted from their selfless service and the respect they earned in the course of their work. Hence, it is obligatory on the society to take care of their financial needs. The fact of the matter is that looking after the needs of social workers is also a kind of social service. A man like me in childhood has seen and known such people who took care of the needs of the nationalist leaders. Only with such an approach, we could lead a life of dignity and self-respect. My father, Dada Dharmadhikari, while remaining penniless received such adequate medical care which even a rich man would aspire for. He could travel to every nook and corner of the country virtually empty pocket. Everywhere he went, he was given high respect and dignity. A time came when I became a practising lawyer. My father was under the treatment of an eminent doctor. I had the audacity to enquire about his consultation fee. He was aghast and took it as an act of personal affront. He politely told me that he would aspire to engage in social service, but on account of professional commitments, he was unable to pursue it. He added that by serving the social workers he would get his share of *punya*. Why should he be deprived of that? Even today such good people are around in the society. Me and my family members could easily feel the broadmindedness of such people. That is the real earning of a social worker.

But such social and spiritual compensation is not enough. Allah, the God of Islam has given his teachings which is recorded in *Koran* and other religious works. It carries a symbol of *taraju* which balances “giving” and “taking.” One has to weigh whether

he has given back to the society at least in the same measure as he has taken from the society, if not a little more. Man has been given a *taraju* in his hands. Let us take the example of agriculture. A peasant sows a few seeds and he gets from God a thousand times more grains. *Koran* also talks of *zakat*—one of the five pillars of Islam. The idea behind *zakat* is that whatever you get from the society must be returned to it in some measure. Hence, even the poor are expected to give *zakat*. This is ordained by the *Koran*. It is taken as a part of purity, piety and dedication and devotion. Now *zakat* is given in the form of a tax, though it remains a voluntary act. *Zakat* or *khairat* also leads to purification of one's heart and mind. Similar acts of piety have been ordained by *Puranas* and other religious scriptures. If business men contribute some amount of money towards meeting the needs of social workers and their travelling expenses, then social workers would be able to perform their social work more efficiently. I made such experiment when I entered into the field of social service during 1960. I had made a list of one hundred people and would ask any one of them to contribute rupees one thousand, if and when needed. They were fully aware that their money would be spent only for good cause. Hence, none of them ever hesitated in giving the required amount. I did not have to go to their place to receive the money. They would send it on their own. Thus I used to have a ready arrangement for one lakh rupees any time at a short notice. Even today there are friends who take pleasure in extending financial help to social workers. Social workers need not approach them, they on their own are always ready to extend such help to such self-respecting social workers. That is the way the financial help should be extended to any social worker.

All this is based on my own experience. Such enlightened persons do not look at such help as a burden, rather as an obligation to the society and to the cause of social work. This is so because they are people who have the requisite skill to make money, but they do not always find good avenues to spend their money for a good cause. In spending their hard earned money for a good cause,

they always feel obliged to a man like me who works as a facilitator. This is my experience which is worth emulating by social activists and social organizations.

The essence of Gandhi's concept of trusteeship is that an individual is not the sole owner of his wealth or income. Rather he is just their trustee on behalf of the society. Acharya Vinoba Bhave, in the course of his *Bhoodan* Movement asked for one sixth of their land from the landlords to be redistributed among the landless. He also arranged for *sarvodaya patra* to be kept in every household for making contributions in money or material terms towards some social cause. Whether through such schemes, financial problems including those of social workers could be taken care of, is a proposition worth considering. A social worker serves the society. Hence his own needs should be taken care of as part of social work. The amount collected for such purposes must be used discreetly. It should also be subject to strict accounting. The entire process must be fully transparent. Besides, money must be used strictly to meet the basic needs of the social worker.

Any number of institutions of social work are a must for social change. Such institutions must work collectively to that end. In such a scheme of things individuals and not institutions should be taken as being primary concern. If there is a single, distinct aim of the institution, and every member works sincerely to that end, there would be cooperation and brotherly feeling among its members. It is such feeling which provides stability to the institution rather than various rules and regulations under its constitution. If this is not properly kept in mind then the latter becomes much more important than the former. That provides a godsend opportunity to conflict-promoters and illogical minded people; leading to a situation of conflict, confrontation and litigation. The only way to avoid such situations is to work in the spirit of cooperation with great interest, and inspiration. That is also the way to avoid selfishness.

Here the question arises about the relationship between social service and livelihood. In English language three different



terms are used to capture the entire process. They are: profession, vocation and occupation. These terms are used with different meanings and connotations. Whatever one does for livelihood is called profession. Vocation stands for the work of one's own keen personal interest. Whatever one does for keeping occupied is called occupation. If there is real integration among one's profession, vocation and occupation, it would truly lead to a situation of social change. If they clash with each other, that would mar the true service spirit, as that would result in divided mind and purpose. Social workers must judge for themselves whether there is a connection between livelihood and social work. Today institutions of social work have become the major source of livelihood. That leads to the emergence of vested interests among its members resulting in the downfall of such institutions. In older tradition, *vriti* was the word for profession. If profession (*vriti*), vocation (*vyavasaya*) and service (*seva*) are in unison in one's work, then a feeling of close human tie emerges. That also leads one to a state of faith, dedication and social service, which in turn brings out real change in one's personal life. In the process, one is truly empowered. Social service is an intensely human work. It is not at all governed by a feeling of pity. Its primary source is human compassion (*karuna*). The first letter in the term *karuna* evokes deep sense of duty (*kartavya*) in the hearts and minds of both the benefactor and the beneficiary. That is the true base on which the society should stand.

Ordinarily, we look at social work as a matter of doing some kind of benediction. That is a wrong interpretation of the word *upkar*. In true sense, the word "*up*" stands for closeness and hence *upkar* must mean a situation in which two people move closer to each other. In English it is called philanthropy. The word philanthropy is combination of two Greek words: *philos* and *anthropos*. The former stands for love and the latter for the humankind. Thus the work that involves human love is philanthropy. That is also the true meaning of the word *upkar*— an act done with love for another person. In fact, social order should be built up on such a

basis that there should be no need for social service or if at all it is required it should be minimal in nature. Gandhiji in his concept of *swaraj* has clearly opined that if and when true *swaraj* comes, there would be no need for doctors as no one would fall sick, there would be no need for jail, as there would be no existence of crime and criminals. To create a society in which there would be no need for social service would be real social service. In Wardha there is an institution for service to the leprosy patients. Gandhiji was invited for its inauguration. He said he would not come for its inauguration. Rather he would prefer to come on the auspicious occasion of its closure as that would indicate that the problem had been solved once for all. All that it means is that if social service continues to be needed in a society, that only means that the society is in the grip of ill health. To reduce the need for social service leading finally to its total elimination could be the ultimate goal of any scheme of social service. Those who make business out of human suffering would never entertain such an approach. Such work could only be done by social activists and voluntary agencies. If these institutions do receive some government grants, the government is not doing any special favour to them, as they are doing the same work which a welfare state is supposed to perform.

Of late, there is an emergence of a new mindset among workers engaged in the voluntary sector. Desire for social recognition and fame and excessive attachment to their own institution is on the increase. It has to be borne in mind that the performance of these institutions would be much better if excessive attachment is eliminated or at least reduced to the minimum in their scheme of working. To that end, we have to keep ourselves prepared even to dissolve any particular voluntary agency if such exigencies arise. This is what Gandhiji did during the national movement. The moment he felt that any of his institutions were neither serving the public cause nor they were of much use to social workers, he would get them dissolved at once. He did not believe in institutions for the institution's sake. The principle of sheer institutionalism

was an anathema to him. For him human beings were not mere instruments for such institutions rather service to them was the ultimate goal of these institutions. Hence, they were neither individual oriented nor social worker oriented. They were based on humanist approach, with self-inspired service spirit without any consideration of electoral politics. Social workers engaged in those institutions used to work for *lokasangraha* and as such they could take the entire society with them on the path of constructive work. They were the men of sterling character. We also believe that such institutions should not depend on the government funding, as financial help always comes with strings. That might even adversely affect the mindset of social workers engaged in such institutions or they at least might come under some kind of governmental pressure. Social institutions free from all external pressure alone could work as the laboratory for the shared life.

Gandhiji played another type of role in respect of these institutions. He felt that the working pattern and structure of these institutions should be a replica of the future ideal society. They would also work as a role model for the welfare state. He wanted to raise a cadre for these institutions who would dedicate their lives with a determined vow of social work. There is an urgent need for such institutions even at the present times as well.

There is a provision for the Directive Principles of State Policy in our Constitution. But there is no arrangement for their proper implementation. The present administrative machinery and their working pattern is based on the colonial mindset. There is no *swadeshi* element in it. N.C. Kelkar, a great litterateur, rightly observed that those who were neither Indian nor civil servants were called ICS. They behaved like alien rulers, they were more of military rather than civil mentality and they behaved more like masters, rather than servants. Today's IAS officers are more like them as they are Resident Non-Indian (RNI). As they are not true Indians in their true spirits, as a result no welfare project reaches out to the people. Hence, welfare projects would have to be undertaken through the channels of voluntary agencies for

the people at the grass-roots levels, at times even bypassing the bureaucratic machinery. Unfortunately, today all welfare projects are either statistics oriented or money oriented.

There is a saying that corporations have no soul. This is also true in respect of the government, government agencies and even in respect of voluntary agencies. But it may not be applicable to those which are well-steeped in humanist approach. In fact, such institutions are badly needed at present times. They could play a crucial role in promoting commonweal of the people. Their role (*bhumika*) is of great significance. The word *bhumika* has two different connotations—role as well as attitude or mindset. Both these *bhumikas* are needed in respect of voluntary agencies: they could be governed both by actual service as well as service spirit. Social workers engaged in such institutions must possess the service and constructive spirit. They must be self-inspired. In other words, they must be inspired and fired by social and human incentives.

We must work towards bringing an attitudinal change in the society. This is also called change of social values. To that end, the social workers must go through the process of the change of hearts and minds. The needy common people should not be covered by any label of caste, religion, region and sect and his dignity and self-respect must be restored and respected. That alone would enhance the value of human service. Unfortunately, most of the governmental, administrative, religious institutions indulge in the acts of attaching these labels to the common people to serve their own vested interests. As against them, genuine social institutions alone could work towards the egalitarian society and laying a sound foundation of brotherhood as ordained by the Indian Constitution. They alone could work towards creating a welfare society. There is no alternative to such institutions.

My own thinking has been primarily based on Gandhian thoughts and that of my father, Dada Dharmadhikari. I have been greatly influenced by their written and spoken words and the majesty of their lives and livings. My father though not a poet but

he did coin a few poetic lines with full of wit and sarcasm. He wrote to me:

If elected, one becomes a minister;  
And being defeated a governor.  
If not, then a vice-chancellor  
And if nothing else  
Then a social and *sarvodya* worker.

It is typical of those ambitious people who seek power positions and privileges and self-promotion even in the world of voluntary agencies. In sharp contrast to it, saint Tulsidas clearly states that: 'The task of serving others is the most difficult job.' A similar sentiment has been expressed by Bhatrighari, when he says that service to others is difficult even for the sages and saints. Today a large number of hypocrites and power seeking persons have entered into the field of social service. If hypocrites and power desirous people have started taking to saffron colour dresses, genuine saints and sages could not be blamed on that count. A scorpion sitting on *Shivaling* would have to be crushed with shoes in such a careful manner that the latter does not get hurt in the process. If there are mosquitoes in a temple, would it be ingenious to put the entire temple on fire? One has to constantly bear in mind that social service could not be totally equated with relief work. Through service one has to transform someone's frustration and despair into joy and happiness. This is what Gandhiji wanted. So long there is poverty, inequality and diseases in society, till then social service would be required. It aims at creating a close-knit relationship between man and man. Hence, voluntary agencies/ non-governmental agencies would never lose their relevance in the society. Rather they would work as a sustaining force for any kind of social order.

Under the British, India was a slave country. It became independent on 15 August 1947. Unfortunately, till today common men have not gained political, economic, social and religious freedom. Thus, India remains a free country but large sections of

its citizens continue to be slaves. In English there are two separate words: independence and freedom which broadly convey the same meaning, but with a subtle differences. We have gained independence but not freedom. During our freedom struggle, we thought that in independent India every needy person would get his due. But even today it remains a distant dream. Someone is sick. He does not have financial resources for medical care. Nor does he enjoy political power and privileges. In such a grim situation, voluntary agencies alone would have to pay the bill, otherwise he would remain deprived of the medical care. Would the poor survive in such a pitiable condition in the absence of voluntary agencies? That is the real relevance of voluntary agencies. A rich man could get medicine at any time and could store them for future use. Thus drugs have greater connection with money rather than with the actual disease or its need. One could safely see the difference between *Ramarajya* and *Haram Rajya*. In the former the needy could easily get the required things whereas in the latter only the rich and the powerful could get things easily even without actually needing them. This kind of economics is devilish. It breeds selfishness, misery and even violence. That was one of the reasons why Gandhiji used the term *swaraj* instead of independence as the final goal of the Indian freedom struggle. Today there is a black market for everything required by the needy persons. Hence the poor continue to remain deprived of them. Commercialisation and consumerism have virtually killed the humanitarian feelings in the society. Everything is being weighed in terms of money and power. Milk of human compassion has dried up in the hearts of people. Hence needy people continue to suffer. In such a desperate situation, voluntary agencies alone continue to hold the ray of hope. They provide medical care to the needy based on humanitarian and not on commercial considerations. If such medical facilities and charitable dispensaries are not there, the poor would continue to suffer and die uncared for.

What is more, joint family system is fast disappearing and heart and mind of man is virtually shrinking on a daily basis.

The old and the disabled are being taken as burden and things to be discarded. Earlier it was thought that a religious and spiritual country like India might not require special homes for the aged and the disabled. But today there is a drastic change in the situation. Culture could be based on two entirely different premises—sacrifice or hedonism. The God of consumerist and hedonist culture is *changanal* and not *manganal*. Hence, there is no ceiling on desire in such a social order. Increase in life expectancy has become more of a curse than a boon. Even old parents are being discarded and left to fend for themselves. The need for orphanages and widow shelter and *nari-niketan* is ever on the increase. Government institutions are marked by all kinds of corruption and malpractices. Welfare measures and government funds hardly ever reach out to the man in the street. All claims of running these institutions on neutral and objective basis have turned out to be bogus. Sensitivity and compassion are completely missing from these institutions. What is more, it is impossible to integrate the feeling of selfless social service in the framework of the government agencies. Such attitude and instincts come with birth and could not be transplanted in the governmental agencies. An economy based on self-interest has only contributed to the worsening of the situation. It could never lead to any radical social change based on equity, justice and brotherhood. In such a grim situation voluntary agencies alone provide a glimmer of new hope. As such they have got a new role and relevance in the society.

Every person in India carries a debt burden of thirteen to fifteen thousands rupees individually. This is increasing on a regular basis. Today not only the country but also the poor people are getting poorer. The entire situation would get worse in the coming decades. Overall wealth might have increased, but in the face of iniquitous distribution, it is creating more problems than it has solved. Someone's wealth might be a source of misery for the others. That is why Gandhiji always insisted that constructive programme alone could lead to the state of true *swaraj* and voluntary agencies provide life-blood to such social endeavour. That is one

reason that even today a social worker and a *sanyasi* command greater respect from the people than the power-seekers and power-brokers.

Only when one has to seek some favours from the rich and the powerful, that one shows some deference to them. But genuine respect in the society is reserved only for those who have offered some kind of selfless service to the people. These kind of social values need to be preserved and promoted. Those who say that Kauravas have taken over the entire society, often forget that so long as Pandavas continue to hold their heads low and remain in the state of surrender, Draupadis' in the society would continue to be disrobed. To that end, good people in the society would have to remain ever vigilant and wide awake. And such work could be performed by selfless workers engaged in genuine voluntary agencies.

There is another point which is worth considering. In Hinduism and in some other religious traditions, idol-worship and human compassion are considered as the pathways to human redemption. In Christianity, service to the fellow-beings is taken to be the most effective means of human salvation. At a later stage, even Hinduism came to accept service to fellow-beings as a guaranteed pathway to salvation. Initially its emphasis was on temple-building, religious shelter at the places of pilgrimage, cow-shelter; not much importance was given to the institutions of healthcare and education. Even today such mindset continues to be dominant among the rich businessman. In Jain religion, non-possession (*aaparigraha*) was taken as a major cultural and spiritual value, so much so that *digambar* monks refused to wear any clothes on that very count. But the idea of non-possession is on the decline. Now Jain temples have become the symbols of wealth and splendour, pomp and show. Even service spirit has been pushed to the background. Unless service to the fellow beings acquires its due place as a dominant social value, a society based on deeper human values could not be built up.



There is another problem with social service today. It is becoming some kind of fashion, entertainment and hobby. It is also being linked up with leisure, meaningless free time. Here emphasis is on fame-earning rather than extending genuine service to the fellow-beings. It has also become a means to move closer to the rich and the powerful people by using various types of publicity mediums like television, radio and others. It is also being used to promote one's business interests. Advertising has become the most powerful medium for promoting various kinds of products including social service. Such publicity mania has also taken over the government agencies. Different departments are competing with each other in presenting their achievements in an exaggerated manner. All these developments simply underline the centrality of voluntary agencies which alone could render genuine service to the poor and the downtrodden.

The primary job of administration is to maintain law and order. It is called "regal function." The work being carried out by voluntary agencies are not job of the government. But State power on account of party politics and its own system of governance has lost its pristine glory. There is a distinct decline of the power of State and religious institutions, so far the onerous task of social change is concerned. Even otherwise hatred and jealousy are on the ascent in the society. Social fabric is being broken to pieces. Neighbours do exist but without neighbourly feelings. In every walk of life, atrocities against women, Dalits and the poor are on the increase. In such a situation law and its institutions could not solve the problems. In India there are a large number of radical laws but their implementation is tardy. These laws have their own limitations. They have no legs to stand on their own. In the absence of popular support, even good projects fail to deliver goods. In the event of a fight between two neighbours, police and courts may succeed in punishing both of them, but they could not make them live in peace and harmony. On the other hand, governmental interference in social and human relations presents a danger to the social cohesiveness. Bertrand Russell rightly observed that

taking advantage of slumbering God, Satan rushed and succeeded in creating the phenomenal world. Otherwise how could a kind and benevolent God create a world full of such misery, poverty, inequality and death and disease?

Now the corporate world is also engaging itself in different kinds of social service. In the process, they have raised various kinds of social organisations like hospitals and schools. They save taxes as well as earn some *punya* as dividend. But here again the driving force is profiteering and money making. The bigger the size of the buildings, the smaller their mindset. They lack human sympathy even while providing all kinds of medical facilities. In such institutions, a patient is just a guinea pig, an object of experimentation. In such institutions there are servants but no social workers as they are built on the basis of the owners and employees. They are being run like any other industry and service spirit is totally missing in them. That is the reason why the law courts have ruled that laws relating to pharmaceutical companies should apply to them. They are not only being run purely on commercial basis but also as a conduit for turning black money into white money. The most important question in such situation is what should be done to the poor and the deprived sections of our society? Should they be left to fend for themselves and die? It is in the context of such questions that the role of voluntary agencies should be viewed and evaluated.

At one stage, Gandhiji observed that Maharashtra has a good crop of social workers. There might have been a long tradition of social service even before Tilak. But it was Tilak who gave a proper shape and perspective to public life and social service in Maharashtra. He started his public life after taking the vow that he would take for himself only those things which were absolutely necessary for his living. That led the emergence of a galaxy of social workers who were willing to work on bare minimum considerations. Here whatever payment they accepted was more of a *dakshina* rather than salary/honorarium. And what is more,

the amount of *dakshina* had no correlation with the kind of service they rendered.

Whatever may be the amount of *dakshina*, they would never be short of service. God might be omnipresent, but idol would be always needed to make Him easily accessible to the people. A symbol is always necessary for service of all pervading God. The land we are born and the people who reside in it provide symbols. To serve one's neighbour is the first step towards serving the larger humanity. One is truly empowered if one truly serves the people with dedication and detachment. Only that renunciation is genuine which brings peace and joy in its trail.

Acharya Vinoba Bhave has given a *sutra* in this respect: Giving is atonement for possessiveness; hence there is no place for egotism in it. Through renunciation we get rid of the basic capital of our sin and through giving we pay back its interests. That is why rendering selfless service is considered much superior to giving away even power-position and even one's property. God in the heaven is taken as the father of the entire humankind, but we, as His children have failed to develop a deep sense of brotherhood among ourselves. The final goal should be that all men should live with dignity and an appropriate social order should be around to promote such life of togetherness. To that end, we have to first go through the process of change of heart and then persuade others to walk on the same path. Voluntary agencies and its members could play a crucial role in the entire process. It is through these institutions that people could be brought under one umbrella, who would work for the final goal. Initially only a handful of people may be inspired to work for such high ideals but it is such people who create a new mindset of change in the society.

We have not been able to change the map of cities and villages even after many decades of independence. The entire social system remains as it was earlier. The rich and the poor are to be found side by side. The wind of globalization has not changed the situation on the ground, particularly for the poor and the dispossessed. The

rich and the powerful want to continue with the present system so that their vested interests remain intact.

They do not favour a new social order based on equity and justice. Hence, social work is not only relevant today, but it has all the potentials of playing a revolutionary role. They could change the situation of despair into that of hope. There is a lot of poverty and misery in our country. In this context, Gandhiji said that sharing our poverty and misery among ourselves would lead to prosperity and happiness. Therefore, there is the need for self-opted non-possession. Yasoda adopted and brought up Lord Krishna—the son of Devaki. There has been no second Yasoda in our history. Now voluntary agencies would have to play the role of Yasoda. There is no question of having fear of success or failure, fame or ill repute in the entire process on this path. The failure of Jatayu is of greater significance than the apparent success of Ravana. Hence, why should we bother about these things? The real question is to take up the right cause and moving in the right direction. Sunrise alone could not bring morning: When people rise that is the real morning. Social change was brought by the saints and sages in historical times. In our times Gandhiji and Jayaprakash Narayan have played a similar role. Earlier the people of the middle classes were in the forefront of the struggle for social change. But presently they are playing the role of *trishanku*. They have sympathy for the poor but they also want to become rich and powerful like Tata and Birla. That is being neither here nor there. They are not decisively living on the side of the poor and the deprived. They are in the grip of a dilemma. In such a situation genuine social organisations will have to play the crucial role in this battle of right against might. Man is prone to dreaming in a big way. Animals could hardly have any dream. Whether gods could dream, we do not know. I have great respect for those who dream and who work for their fulfilment. I have not seen God, but have seen and lived in close affinity with those who have big dreams for social change. They are the real soldiers of peace and social change. They provide the life-blood to the society.



## Success and Failure of Sarvodaya Institutions

The true building up of Swaraj consists in the millions of Indians wholeheartedly working out the constructive programme. Without it the whole nation cannot rise from its age-long torpor. Whether the British remain or not, it is our duty always to wipe out unemployment, to bridge the gulf between rich and poor, to banish communal strife, to exorcize the demon of untouchability, to reform dacoits and save the people from them. If crores of people do not take a living interest in this nation-building work, freedom must remain a dream and unattainable by either nonviolence or violence.

I am firmly of the opinion that India's salvation depends on the sacrifice and enlightenment of her women.

*M.K. Gandhi*

After the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi on 30 January 1948, a conference of constructive workers was held, which finally led to the establishment of *Sarvodaya Samaj* on 13 March, 1948. Its prime objective was: 'The *Samaj* would strive to build up a social order based on truth and non-violence. Such new social order would be free from all kinds of caste differences and exploitation and would provide congenial environment for the all round development of both individual and the society. It would also aim and insist on the use of the purity of means, for its ultimate ends to be achieved.'

In March 1948 itself, *Sarva Sewa Sangh* was founded. It also aimed at working for a society based on truth and non-violence.

Such society would also be free from all kinds of domination, immorality and injustice. To that end, the *Sangh* would remain uninvolved in power politics which constitutes the core of today's politics. The *Sangh* would also attempt to develop and build up that kind of democracy which would be free from party politics. It would work for genuine *lokaniti* as against *rajniti*. In such a society there would be no place for such divisive forces like caste, sect, language, religion, etc. Besides, the *Sangh* would continuously strive to work out and promote a lifestyle which would ensure brotherhood, cooperation and equality in the society. Class differences would end, the conflict between labour and capital would be transcended under a new system of decentralised economy. *Khadi*, agriculture, animal husbandry, small scale village industries would become its mainstay. *Sangh* would also work to promote love, compassion, and a sense of justice among the members of the society. Under the overall parameter of non-violence, it would attempt to build up people's power. Both constructive programme and *satyagraha* would be used to build up a new social order. In other words, it would work on the basis of Gandhian ideas for a new social order.

Gandhiji in his last Will and Testament has suggested the establishment of a new organisation, viz., Lok Sevak Sangh after dissolving the Indian National Congress as a political party. He was aware that though India had gained political independence, but lakhs of villages are yet to enjoy their social, religious and economic freedom. He also held the opinion that civil power should prevail over military power that might involve some kind of struggle. Political parties should themselves stand aloof from competitiveness of the communal organisations. That was and continues to remain the main working principle of *Sarvodaya*. How much success or goodwill the *Sangh* has earned working on these principles is the real moot question. However, it goes without saying that there is no alternative to an organisation like *Sangh*.

It is an undeniable truth that the bulk of the members of the Sarva Sewa Sangh earlier had the background of freedom struggle. They had suffered imprisonment and were freedom fighters in all

respects. Many of them had no personal ambition and no attraction for power or positions. Even today the man on the street has faith in their integrity and dedication. Those who suffered during Bombay blasts were reminded of Gandhians and their selfless work. They had faith in their honesty and dedication. That speaks volumes for the high reputation of Gandhians and their work.

After Gandhiji's death, Vinoba Bhave launched *Bhoodan* Movement and *Gramdan* Movement. It had no parallel in history. Before *Bhoodan* Movement, there were only two ways to get the land for the landless: Either the government would acquire land after paying due compensation or it could be grabbed illegally by the land grabbers. No one could imagine that millions of acres of land could be received as gifts from the landlords and landowners through the process of change of heart. Some middle class people commented that the bulk of the *Bhoodan* land were wasteland. There could be no cultivation on them. Some of these lands might be uncultivable. But to think that forty lakh acres of land is wasteland in its entirety is nothing but an intellectual bankruptcy. They forget that the people used to sell their worn-out sandals and even old newspapers. They were used to selling everything for a price. And yet the same people got persuaded by *Sarvodaya* workers led by Vinoba to freely donate their much loved land. The bulk of the land thus donated has been distributed among the landless people. No one gives up his ownership over anything easily. Hence, land donation on such a vast scale could be rightly taken as a revolutionary act. It is true that after the death of Vinoba, the pace got slowed down and not much land donation came afterwards. When told by some of his critics that he had failed, Vinoba responded by saying that if at all anyone had failed, it is not he but the people had failed. After all, it was their work and not that of Vinoba. Even today *gramdan* villages do exist and some of them are working towards *gram swaraj*. *Khadi* and other village industries are being run by these *sarvodaya* institutions.

After a kind of split in the *Sarvodaya* movement, it got divided into two camps. One group insisted on keeping away from political

parties. The other group rejected such a non-political approach as it might herald the death of democracy in the country. That is why a dominant section of the *sarvodaya* workers actively participated in J.P. movement for Total Revolution. Jayaprakash Narayan ultimately turned out to be right. He succeeded in proving that the government could be changed through ballots and not necessarily through bullets. Unfortunately, political parties as participants of the movement had hardly had any faith in the concept of Total Revolution. Their aim was: Remove Indira Gandhi, remove Congress and let people put the leaders of these political parties in the vacated power positions. It was such selfish political elements which ultimately ruined the entire movement. They took advantage of the movement for their political ends. Jayaprakash Narayan being a man of trust and honest nature did not doubt their intentions. As was his wont, he trusted them. Even some of the members of *Sarvodaya* movement also reposed their trust and faith in these political elements. They faced imprisonment with rare courage of conviction. Neither they nor their much beloved leader, Jayaprakash Narayan, ever sought power positions for themselves, even in the wake of their political victory. They had stood for revolution and not for political power. For them the change of the government was the first step towards Total Revolution. But the power-seekers and power-brokers ruined the entire movement and the call for Total Revolution remained unfulfilled. When Jayaprakash Narayan became aware of the problem, he wrote a long letter to the people of Bihar. He even acknowledged and accepted his mistakes.

*Sarvodaya* movement lost its momentum on account of its close relationship with such elements who were not only sceptical about Gandhian ideals but were its vehement critics. They had always been hostile to Gandhian ideals. All these developments led to a great setback for the *Sarvodaya* movement and its constructive programmes. There was a section among these anti-Gandhi elements who believed that Gandhiji should not have launched and led the freedom struggle. According to them, if



India could have patiently waited for some time, it could have gained freedom without any struggle, like many other countries. But, the whole thing happened as Nehru and Patel were out to grab political power. These kind of thoughtless and even harmful observations were made in *BJP Today*—a mouthpiece of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Could there be a greater insult to our freedom fighters than this? It is a real tragedy that *Sarvodaya* people had worked with such elements during JP movement. Yes, in the wake of the JP movement, Janata Government did come into being, but it was nothing more than a conglomeration of power-seekers. The government failed in its primary objective as its constituent elements were politically over ambitious. They were never inspired by the vision of Total Revolution. Such power-seekers could never contribute towards building up a new social order, they could only play a destructive role. Subsequently, when BJP came to power, they tried to capture all those institutions being run on the basis of Gandhian ideals. To that end they used all kinds of strategies and subterfuges. They even tried to capture the Gandhian Institute of Studies located at Varanasi which was founded by no less a person than Jayaprakash Narayan himself.

They even started making such ludicrous formulations that they were the true Gandhians and the *Sarvodaya* people were the fake ones. This is how they hijacked the idea of *swadeshi*. They changed the very meaning and interpretation of *swadeshi*. According to Gandhiji's concept of *sarvodaya* economic order, village industries, small scale industries and indigenous industries were to tackle and take care of the economic problems of the people. But BJP started even welcoming foreign multi-national companies. That was their idea of *swadeshi*. *Sarvodaya* people favoured a society free from exploitation. Any production based on injustice and exploitation could never come under the purview of *swadeshi*. But they extended definition of *swadeshi* to cover all companies including the foreign ones which were engaged in production work in India. In doing so they had no moral compunction. *Sarvodaya* people were harassed. Hence they could not work properly. That was their

real difficulty, in the way of taking their social work of the optimal level.

It is being widely felt that old values and visible symbols of respects are falling down and new social values have not been established. Man is becoming a slave to machine and external agencies. In the absence of gripping social ideas, desires for meaningless leisure and physical comforts and conveniences are becoming the order of the day. There is ever increasing number of not-reliable Indians or not required Indians (NRI). There is also a group of Resident Non-Indian (RNI). They live in India but they are not Indians by culture and their proclivities. Their gaze is constantly fixed on America. There is another pernicious development in our country. Here money power, muscle power and mafia power are turning out to be the real and effective power. As a result, the rule of law is being replaced by the rule of the corrupt elements. Politicians have become self-indulgent involved in auctioneering of our precious natural resources for making unlimited and unearned money. The cumulative result of all these developments is what one of the best English poet said: The best lack all convictions and the worst are full of passionate intensity. In such a situation, the *Sarvodaya* people have been virtually left behind. Nevertheless they do think more of social and national problems keeping aside their own interests. Unfortunately, power-seekers and power-brokers have also entered the *Sarvodaya* institutions from the back door. They are sticking to their power positions in these institutions despite their advancing age and failing health. Groupism has also entered these institutions in a big way. Despite all these limitations the *Sarvodaya* institutions and their workers are in the forefront of the struggle for social change.

Voluntary institutions provide life-blood to any society. They also work as the harbinger of new social values. They bring all those people who are desirous of social change under the same banner. In the process, a cadre for the revolutionary work of social change is created. They consider social service as their best *dharma* (duty) taking *tyag* (renunciation) as their primary source of inspiration.

Gandhian institutions were the major instruments of social service earlier. They used to play a double role—Constructive workers during peace time and *satyagrahis* during national struggle. Service oriented institutions are also of two types. Some institutions are leader oriented. People join them inspired by the leader who works as the prime-mover. Social workers rally around him and he is the last word in these institutions. The other type is thought-oriented and has a humanist approach. Here service and thought are the primary things. Here it is the thought that works as the prime mover. In such institutions positive thinking is their primary asset which is even more important than the constructive work. Such an approach and process brings about a radical change in the thought and working patterns of the social workers engaged in such institutions. This process continuously moves on. It is such a positive mindset and thinking which works as the main support base for development at the universal levels. *Sarvodaya* institutions do provide a congenial forum for the development of such positive thought. The primary foundation of such institutions is the feeling of brotherhood and *lokasangraha* and that in turn leads to a state of total integration of 'profession', 'vocation' and 'occupation' as discussed earlier. There is a need for a true consonance between one's profession and his social life. In case, there is a dissonance between the two, then an institution just becomes an instrument of earning one's bread and a means of livelihood. The basic principle behind any *Sarvodaya* institution was that its workers should not be dependent on it and in turn, the institution should not be totally dependent on government funding. But in course of time, political minded people found entry into these institutions and they are also caught in the web of politics. Such people were looking for alternative ways to politics, but the real aim of *Sarvodaya Samaj* was to find alternative to politics. Political parties were determined to capture these institutions. The founders and builders of these institutions, the genuine *Sarvodaya* workers were treated as being outsiders and as such, were shunted out of these institutions. Pretension for social service with the final aim of securing power

positions is becoming the motive force of these new groups. That has led to groupism and dynasticism. That is most tragic and painful development.

Dada Dharmadhikari, based on his own experiences of such institutions, had earlier asserted that cleavage, conflict and murmuring in such organisations are more pronounced than those inside a family. He was firmly of the opinion that once one reaches the age of 75, one should give up the membership of these institutions/organisations and should try to live the life of a free man and every one's well-wishers. You can call it *vanprastha* or *sanyas* or whatever name you may like to attach to it. If these aged people do not follow these rules, the younger people would grow old while waiting for the retirement of the people of the older generation. But the *Sarvodaya* people failed to fully understand these things. They fail to grasp that politics has entered into these institutions and even the concept of *dan* is getting politicised and commercialised. Thus social institutions free from politics and property appropriation are becoming a rare commodity and that is the real tragedy in the arena of social service.

People of good calibre are also of three types—Intelligent, clever and cunning. Men of low cunning are on the ascent in most of the institutions. This has created real crisis in the institutions whether they are active in the field of politics, religion or voluntary sector or even in the field of science. What is more tragic is the fact that the people in power-positions appear determined to capture these institutions. This is also happening in *Sarvodaya* institutions. Aged people are ruling the roost. Young and energetic people are not getting opportunities to work as there is no retirement age in these institutions. But the young people are also aspiring to get into power positions without much suffering, sacrifice and service. Yet they do realise that there is no alternative to *Sarvodaya* institutions and workers for building up of a new social order.

Quite often, we forget that war could not be fought with old, rusted and outdated weapons. We do not find any wind of fresh thinking even among *Sarvodaya* institutions. They are walking on

the beaten track. In the face of any new and challenging problem, an attempt is made to dig out some excerpts from Gandhi-Vinoba literature as a part of ready-made formulae. To constantly remain inquisitive and engage in independent thinking based on eternal values is a challenging task. If there is stagnation in the thought processes of any movement, it slowly might reach the ideological dead end. That is why when Sam Pitroda is taken as a new Gandhian by some media persons, then the traditional Gandhians get a shock of their lives. Pitroda observes that if Gandhi was alive today, he must have a personal computer for himself. On that basis some people think he is un-Gandhian, if not anti-Gandhi. We should not forget that telephone and typewriters did exist in Gandhi's ashram. He also travelled in railway trains and even in motor cars. He also kept a watch attached to his waist. All said and done, he was a modern man. Today modernity has become the latest orthodoxy. Machines have an end in themselves instead of remaining as a means. Gandhi was not opposed to modern machinery per se. Even *takli* and *Charkha/Kargha* are machines in their own way. Gandhi favoured the kind of modern machinery which would add to the efficiency of the man. He only disfavoured the idea of machinery dominating the life and thought of man. Besides, he was very clear about the relationship between the means and the ends. Our problem is that we want to look at Gandhi from our own perspective and would like to apply our own yardstick on the problems and their solutions conceived by him. This is another kind of orthodoxy and fanaticism. In the process, free thinking and inquisitiveness is getting eroded. In fact, for the *Sarvodaya Samaj*, the point of departure for its onward journey should have been the point where Gandhi had left. He himself has rejected any idea of Gandhism. That is why he asserted that his latest statement on any subject should prevail over the earlier ones.

He was nothing but a truth-finder. Acharya Kripalani rightly observed that among the Gandhians there was a lot of recrimination on account of personal pride and prejudices. In mutuality and close relationship, one has to own up even the misdeeds of one's

friends and co-workers and has to give up egotism and personal ambition. In fact, mutual regards and love are essential among the members of such organisations. Looked at from such perspective, there are certain weaknesses even among the *Sarvodaya* workers and institutions.

There is another challenge before *Sarvodaya* institutions. There is a group of people who have spent their life in politics, and power positions; who had accepted and promoted the British cause, who at least supported all kinds of injustices, and who never dared to raise their voice against the British rulers. It is they who have the audacity and temerity to advice and adopt a patronising attitude towards the *Sarvodaya* workers. It is a matter of great regret that the *Sarvodaya* workers who have spent their entire life in the Gandhian movement, who have tried their best to live their lives based on ethical and moral values, who have led the life of humility and self-abnegation and had never compromised with untruth and injustice are taken as being impractical and even foolish. This has greatly hurt the feelings of the *Sarvodaya* workers. And that is another challenge before the *Sarvodaya* workers.

Presently, the wind of globalization is blowing very swiftly, heralding a new era of economic slavery. Atal Behari Vajpayee, the ex-Prime Minister of India in a speech from the ramparts of Red Fort, had accepted the fact that fifty-five lakh workers are engaged in *Khadi* work even today. Thus *Khadi* is a source of livelihood for fifty-five lakh families. My own estimate is that if every Indian buys one *Khadi* dress once a year, it could provide employment for one crore people, making it possible for the livelihood of one crore families. Employment on such a vast scale could not be ordinarily provided by modern industries—Indian or foreign. But the government is indifferent towards our own handicrafts and village industries. So much so that it has started handing over even such home industries like making of pickles and *papads* and other food items to foreign industries. They use big machines replacing men by machines. Not only that, the government makes appointment of such persons to the *Khadi* Commission who are interested in their own commission rather than the work of the Commission

itself. Some of them neither use *Khadi* on their own person, nor do they have faith in its utilities. They look at their job in *Khadi* Commission just as any other employment. They just try to deceive the *Sarvodaya* workers. There is a need for running village industries and *Khadi* work independent of the government. But *Khadi* industries are not becoming self-reliant on account of old habits of receiving subsidies from the government. Vinoba used to say that only non-governmental agencies could be effective and efficient.

Earlier *Sarvodaya* institutions were based both on constructive and combative action. In the absence of struggle against injustice and corruption, constructive programme alone could hardly have much meaning. On the other hand, struggle in absence of constructive programme also would be futile and meaningless. Today, there is a growing tendency to resort to violent means to solve all kinds of problems. It is such mindset which is responsible for murders of a number of eminent world leaders.

Gandhi has been given the honour of the greatest man of the millennium. When the World Trade Centre in New York was destroyed; American President George Bush remembered Mahatma Gandhi and his philosophy of non-violence. But in India anti-Gandhi tirade is still on in a very sinister and planned way. A similar attitude could be seen against *Sarvodaya* workers and opposition to them has become the life-work of some of these groups. Their main propaganda is that Gandhian ideas along with *Sarvodaya* institutions have become outdated and irrelevant. In such a vicious and hostile situation, it is becoming difficult for *Sarvodaya* workers to work among the people. It is a very challenging situation. But in spite of all these difficult terrain, *Sarvodaya* workers are still in the forefront of struggles on the issues relating to environment, water management and economic freedom. Their number might be small, but some of them are the men of sterling character. Revolution never depends on the number of men involved, but on their character and their capacity to suffer and make sacrifices. Such people of high moral values are

badly needed in the country, as there is a general decline of moral and ethical values in the society. Thus they could greatly contribute towards raising moral standard of the society. Of course, they have to suffer. But after all it is Rama not Ravana who suffers in the pursuit of truth. Should Rama give away to Ravana and should good people deviate away from the path of truth and goodness, fearing suffering and sacrifices? These are the real questions. *Sarvodaya* institutions are based on the thoughts and works of Gandhi, Vinoba and Jayaparakash. True, they could not succeed in building up an India of their dreams. A new social order based on the ideas and ideals of *Ramrajya*, *Bhoodan-Gramdan* and *sampurna kranti* remains still unfulfilled. But we have failed only in its apparent sense. Jayaprakash Narayan has his own yardstick for failure and success. Gandhiji used to say that every positive movement goes through five different stages: indifference, ridicule, condemnation, repression and respect. On which step of such a ladder *Sarvodaya* institutions stand today is to be judged by the people alone. But one thing is there: There is an army of social workers in the form of *Sarvodaya* institutions. They have a clear dream of a new social order. Even if they have not succeeded so far, their failure could provide foundation for their future success. *Sarvodaya* institutions do point out the direction in which India must move if she has to usher into *Ramrajya*. That in itself is a big assurance and could give a glimpse of their future success.



Manohar Diwan





## Baba Saheb and Mahatma

Dr. Ambedkar is not alone in his disgust. He is its most uncompromising exponent and one of the ablest among them. He is certainly the most irreconcilable among them. Thank God, in the front rank of the leaders he is singularly alone, and as yet but a representative of every small minority. But what he says is voiced with more or less vehemence by many leaders belonging to the depressed classes.

Today Brahmins and Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras are mere labels. There is utter confusion of varna as I understand it and I wish that all the Hindus will voluntarily call themselves shudras. That is the only way to demonstrate the truth of Brahminism and to revive varnadharma in its true state.

*M.K. Gandhi*

The Nagpur airport has been rechristened as Dr. Ambedkar International Airport. We must hail and thank the Indian government and its Civil Aviation Minister for such a splendid work. One is reminded of the fact that in one of the parliamentary elections, Dr. Ambedkar was defeated from his Bhandara district. People like me always had a feeling of deep hurt on that count. Today, that very district has gone through an act of atonement. We also believe that few people should be elected unopposed as the members of our Parliament and that too even unanimously. That alone would give our Parliament an Indian character. This is also essential for upholding the dignity and majesty of our democracy.

But Baba Saheb was never given that honour, though in terms of qualifications for it, he could have certainly topped the list in that category. That speaks volumes for the kind of power politics that is going on in our country. It is our misfortune that the nation and its interests come last in our consideration. This is on account of the kind of power politics we are pursuing in our country.

In this context it is a very welcome step on the part of the government of India to have renamed the Nagpur airport after Baba Saheb. Now all those who want not only to go to Nagpur, the land of enlightenment of Baba Saheb but also to Wardha, Gandhi's land of action or Paunar, Vinoba's land of God-consciousness, would have to pass through the newly renamed Dr. Ambedkar International Airport. The real purpose behind associating something with the name of a great person is that people should continue to seek inspiration from their lives and times for generations to come.

There is another reason why I welcome such a bold and auspicious step. We have imbibed a bad habit of making our great men stand and fight against each other. We do not have to go far to seek such illustrative examples. Various attempts have been made to posit leaders like Tilak and Agarkar, Tilak and Gandhi and even Gandhi and Ambedkar against each other. I have an instinctive feeling that such imaginary and self-created conflicts between such great leaders work as acts of entertainment for their respective followers. Maybe, these are also needed for the very existence of their followers and their organisations. On such occasions, one could easily recall the words of George Bernard Shaw: When God could not easily decide the fate and what kind of punishment to be given to the great men, he decided to create the tradition of disciples (*shishya paramapara*) for them. A disciple may or may not be the true successor to his *guru*, but certainly he is entitled to perform his last rites and rituals. It seems that all the *gurus* collectively assemble at the top point of a triangle, but the disciples stand separately on its two lower points. Since they could never reach the height of their *gurus*, they are ever engaged in bringing down their *gurus* to their own levels and constantly

engage in proxy war on behalf of their *gurus*. It is not surprising that Maharashtra being the topmost enlightened and progressive State also stands on the top of such a list!

Gandhiji always held Dr. Ambedkar in high esteem. They did differ on ideological grounds. But they never lost mutual respect for each other. Their paths may have been different but the final destination was the same. Both of them were striving hard to build a new society free from all kinds of domination and exploitation. In other words, both wanted to bring about revolutionary changes in the basic structure of the Indian society. It is evident from what Gandhiji wrote about Mahad *Satyagraha* launched by Dr. Ambedkar. He said:

‘For, it should be remembered that it was not the drinking of water at the tank which had brought together the “touchables” to the temple but the false report that the untouchables were wanting to enter the temple. But one can hardly expect sanity to exist side by side with unreason. Untouchability itself has no reason behind it. It is an inhuman institution. It is tottering and it is sought to be supported by the so-called orthodox party by sheer brute force.

The so-called untouchables have brought the question a step nearer to solution by their exemplary self-restraint under most provoking circumstances. Had they retaliated it would have been perhaps difficult to distribute the blame. As it is, the blame is all on the side of the “touchables”. Brute force will not sustain untouchability. It will bring about a revulsion of feeling in favour of the suppressed classes. It is a sign of the times that there were at least some “touchables” who tried to defend the poor untouchables. One could wish that there were many more in Mahad. Silent sympathy on such occasions is not of much use. Every Hindu, who considers the removal of untouchability to be of paramount importance, should on such occasions prove his sympathy by publicly defending the suppressed classes and having his own head broken in defending the helpless and the downtrodden.

I cannot help thinking that Dr. Ambedkar was fully justified in putting to test the resolutions of the Bombay Legislative Council and the Mahad Municipality by advising the so-called untouchables to go to the tank to quench their thirst. No incident of this character should pass by unnoticed on the part of associations like the Hindu Mahasabha interested in this reform. Let them investigate the statements made by my correspondent and if they can be substantiated, let them condemn the action of the "touchables". There is nothing like the growth of enlightened public opinion for eradicating everything evil, which untouchability undoubtedly is.' (*Young India*, 28-4-1927)

At another occasion, Gandhiji spoke highly of Dr. Ambedkar: Speaking at a meeting in Oxford in October 1931, Gandhi said: 'He had the highest regard for Dr. Ambedkar. He has every right to be bitter. That he does not break our heads is an act of self-restraint on his part.' Writing to an English friend two years later, he said: 'He found "nothing unnatural" in Ambedkar's hostility to the Congress and its supporters. He has not only witnessed the inhuman wrongs done to the social pariahs of Hinduism,' reflected this Hindu, 'but in spite of all his culture, all the honours that he has received, he has, when he is in India, still to suffer many insults to which untouchables are exposed.' In June 1936 Gandhi pointed out once again that Dr. Ambedkar 'has had to suffer humiliations and insults which should make any one of us bitter and resentful.' Had I been in his place, he remarked, 'I would have been as angry.'

(Source: Ramachandra Guha <http://www.ambedkar.org/research/GandhiAmbedkar.htm>)

Referring to Dr. Ambedkar's intent to leave Hinduism and embrace some other religion, Gandhi remarked:

'Dr. Ambedkar is a challenge to Hinduism. Brought up as a Hindu, educated by a Hindu potentate, he has become so disgusted with the so-called Savarna Hindus or the treatment that he and his people have received at their hands that he proposes to leave

not only them but the very religion that is his and their common heritage.'

But despite all this, of late some people have tried to present the picture as if Gandhiji and Dr. Ambedkar were hostile to each other. They forget that in spite of Ambedkar's outstanding, intellectual abilities and academic qualifications, the country could have denied him his due and deserving place in our national life. Let us recall that on the eve of independence when the Constitution for the country was to be framed, there was a proposal to bring foreign experts for the job. It was on Gandhi's initiative and insistence that Dr. Ambedkar was assigned the job. This is how the man who had earlier burnt *Manusmriti* succeeded in creating a new *Bhimsmriti*. He also became the Law Minister of India. On every count, he was equal to the task assigned. In the process, he drafted the Hindu Code Bill and thus rendered a great service to the Indian society in general and the Hindu society in particular.

Dr. Ambedkar also had great respect for Gandhiji. In the wake of a bomb attack on Gandhiji during 1934, Dr. Ambedkar chose to preside over the meeting which was held to condemn such sinful and nefarious act. He used very strong words to condemn such a cowardly act and wished for a long and purposeful life for Gandhiji. He also paid high tribute to Gandhiji after his martyrdom. He even suggested that by fixing some tax on salt, an independent fund should be created and that should be used for extending financial help to the needy and deserving dalits. He wanted that fund to be called Gandhi Fund. He also asserted that Gandhiji had done tremendous good work for dalits. In this context, it is relevant to remember what Dr. Ambedkar had said about Gandhiji, after they had signed the Poona Pact. Louis Fischer, the American author in his book: *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi* had quoted a part of that speech, which runs as follows:

'I must confess that I was surprised, immensely surprised, when I met him, that there was so much in common between him and me. In fact whenever any disputes were carried to him—and

Sir Taj Bahadur Sapru has told you that the disputes that were carried to him were of a very crucial character—I was astounded to see that the man who held such divergent views from mine at the Round Table Conference came immediately to my rescue and not to the rescue of the other side. I am very grateful to Mahatmaji for having extricated me from what might have been a very difficult situation.’

It is a puzzle to me whose selfish interests are being served by creating a situation of conflict between these two great sons of India. The fact of the matter is that through service to Harijans, Gandhiji tried to eliminate the sin and scourge of untouchability from the hearts and minds of the upper castes of India. On the other hand, Dr. Ambedkar rendered a great service to the entire society by leading a movement for Dalit liberation. Both these movements were complimentary and supplementary to each other. All this ultimately led to the abolition of untouchability under Article 17 of the Indian Constitution. According to Dr. Ambedkar, many of the sages and saints of India have expressed deep concern and compassion for the Dalits of India. But most of them did not actually stand by the Dalit in their suffering and humiliation. Nor did they openly defy and oppose those sections of the upper castes of India who were perpetrating all kinds of injustices against the Dalits. But the only saint who not only empathised with them but also launched relentless battle on their behalf was no other than Mahatma Gandhi. That is my humble submission. And ignoring all this, anti-Gandhi tirade is being spread by a section of our own people. I am more than sure that all this is being done only to promote their own petty selfish interests.

Now even the use of the word “*harijan*” is being opposed. An attempt is on to replace it by another word ‘Dalit’. One need not have much objection to such campaign. But let us not forget that it was Narsi Mehta, the Gujrati poet-saint, who had first used the word “*harijan*” in his writings. He was a Nagar Brahmin but was very close to *harijans*. According to Shailendra Mahato, the leader of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, the word “*harijan*” was for the first

time used by Maharshi Valmiki who himself was some kind of an untouchable. Now some Dalit leaders are raising the question that if the Dalits are the children of God (*harijan*), then should others be taken as the children of Satan? Even today those who are polluting the environment carry greater social prestige than Valmiki's who help in keeping it neat and clean. This is a question deserving serious thoughts on the part of every section of our society. Moving beyond the politics of caste and religion, all of us must join hands towards building up a society based on equity and unity. It is for that reason that Gandhiji made 'broomstick' as the symbol of revolution along with *charkha*.

Making a reference to the low status of the Dalits in the Indian society, Gandhiji said:

'I do not want to be reborn. But if I have to be reborn, I should be born an untouchable, so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings, and the affronts leveled at them, in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from that miserable condition. I, therefore, prayed that, if I should be born again, I should do so not as a Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya or Shudra, but as an Atishudra.' (*Young India*, 4-5-1921)

I am constantly reminded of the glowing terms in which Dada Dharmadhikari had spoken about Dr. Ambedkar. Dada was also a member of the Constituent Assembly of India. It was during those days that I happened to meet Dr. Ambedkar both at Delhi and also at Nagpur. I could never forget those moments of my life. They are ever stored in my memory. Dada called him the *Narratna* (the gem among men). Dada says: 'Dr. Ambedkar is one of those great men of India about whom the people of India would continue to take pride for generations to come. They would always aspire to emulate him. He would remain a shining symbol not only of dalit identity but that of India. His name would stay in Indian history forever and forever. He used every ounce of his talent and energy to the cause of dalits, so that they could lead a life of dignity and self-respect, while remaining in the broad framework of Hindu society. Mahad

and Kalaram Temple satyagrahis became the source and symbol of inspiration for all those who wanted to work for the liberation of dalits. But towards the end of his life he came to the firm conclusion that the dalits could not lead a life of dignity and self-respect, while living within the fold of Hinduism. Consequently, he along with his large number of followers embraced Buddhism during 1956 in Nagpur. Even while taking such a bold and momentous step, he refused to go against the national interest and major ethical and spiritual ethos of India. He opted for Buddhism which has non-violence as its main message. That was also the primary faith of Gandhiji.'

The names of Buddha and Gandhi would together go down in Indian history who stood for and represented the best moral and ethical values of the Indian tradition. It was with such an understanding that I had gone to Nasik attend the centenary celebrations of Dadasaheb Gaikwad –one of the closest associates of Dr. Ambedkar. The convenor of the Committee had handed over a letter that he had addressed to the Chief Minister of Maharashtra. In that letter he had fervently pleaded that statue of Gandhi and Ambedkar together should be installed at Pune. Many people feel that such an initiative should also take place in Nagpur. Nagpur is not only a place at the centre of India but it is also its cultural centre. But statue installation may not be the main thing. The real challenge is to change our mindset for a new social order. We should not forget that during Mahad *Satyagraha* photograph of Mahatma Gandhi was put on the platform. It is an auspicious and welcome initiative taken by the central government that the road to Sevagram would start from Dr. Ambedkar International Airport. This is a doubly welcome step. All that we can say is: Let God bless all of us with good intention and resolve.





## Importance of Motherhood

I am firmly of the opinion that India's salvation depends on the sacrifice and enlightenment of her women.

*M.K. Gandhi*

In a conference at Sevagram, one of the participants commented that without motherhood, the life of a woman is unfulfilled. Responding sharply to such a caustic comment, Premabai Kantik, one of the old women associates of Gandhiji retorted that even Vinoba Bhave could never become a father. Could we then say that his life remained unfulfilled? What about Bhishma, Hanuman and Swami Ramdas and others who were never blessed with fatherhood; did they waste their lives? If this is not so, why single out women for such an observation?

This is a real puzzling question for the life of a woman. If we accept the premise that without attaining the status of a mother, the life of a woman ever remains unfulfilled; then the questions regarding her freedom, citizenship and her own identity becomes meaningless and irrelevant. Not only that this would lower her status as a human being and even as a member of the society. Besides, the society expects her to be mother of a son to give her a real sense of fulfilment. How unjustified is such an expectation is a question which must be considered by all sensitive minds of the society.

Even men could have a deep urge for fatherhood. But aspirations for fatherhood and motherhood are radically different. Fatherhood is never considered as being the highest achievement

of a man. For man celibacy is taken to be of greater importance and value than fatherhood. Traditionally, women are not given the right to celibacy. As such, her life remains unfulfilled in the absence of her attaining the status of motherhood. It is highly unfair that the society has adopted different yardsticks for judging the sense of fulfilment/unfulfilment for man and woman. Man should strive towards celibacy and woman must try to drag him in the web of marriage is a very unfair social value. This would lead to a loss of human and social values. In such a perspective, the life of a woman would always remain body-oriented as she would be always treated as a candidate waiting for marriage. In that event, marriage and motherhood would be taken as her ultimate goal and purpose. She should remain dependent on man, as without being with a man she would never attain the status of a mother. The idea behind such social value is that a man could have a feeling of fulfilment even without being a father; whereas the woman has to be a mother to attain that feeling. A man could justify his life on counts other than just being a father. Why could not a woman do that? If not, then she would have to remain always subservient to a man or her husband. Why could she not be given the right to celibacy? Why motherhood should be taken as a symbol of purity and auspiciousness in the life of a woman? What about the motherhood of an unwed mother? All these are important questions in respect of women and their social status.

I am reminded of an incident in a meeting with a sex worker who was having her ten year old son by her side. She told me that she was undoubtedly the mother of her son but need not specifically point out who was his father. She also said that she wanted to be the mother of a son, hence she gave birth to her son and added that he was the fruit of her autonomous and heartfelt desire. As his sole guardian, she had provided her name to her son and got him admitted in a school. She wanted to give her son the best education possible. Then why should not her motherhood be considered as pure and auspicious?

There are a number of other questions involved in her basic submissions. If a son/daughter does not know the real name of his/her father, and the motherhood of such a mother is not taken to be pure and auspicious, in that case singular importance is being attached to the concept of fatherhood. In such a situation the womb of a woman just becomes a medium and means for bearing children for the man. Motherhood carries no independent sanctity and auspiciousness.

Irawati Karve rightly observed that presently the womb of a woman was being taken just like a field for sowing seeds by the man. She has summed up the entire truth and tragedy about the women folk in the above sentence. What happens to unwed mother, widow-mother or forcibly imposed motherhood on a woman? What kind of place such mothers have in our society? Whatever way motherhood has come, could it carry blemishes on that count? A child cannot choose his parents. For him a mother is just the mother—no category and symbol could be attached to it. How could the motherhood in any form be taken as immoral or inauspicious? Could a child become a victim for no fault of his/her own?

In this context, the views of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyaya, a great Bengali writer is worth considering. He was asked if the devotion towards the husband was the symbol of a chaste womanhood; then why you wrote with concern and empathy about fallen women and disloyal wives. He replied to this question in his own characteristic way: 'Womanhood is greater than just being a devoted and loyal wife. If woman has fallen from such a given path out of her own option or under certain compelling circumstances, the idea that her entire womanhood is lost forever was not acceptable to me. It is entirely inhuman to think that the body of a woman is everything and her heart, mind and her entire personality is of no consequences. All these have their own independent importance irrespective of her body.'

The historical period when Sarat Chandra was writing as above was also the time when Indian women were taking the first

revolutionary step towards their liberation. A female character of his novel *Shrikant* was shouting from her housetop: I do not want to buy chastity at the cost of my whole womanhood. One who is born of truth could never become a fallen woman. In the above statement of *Abhaya* lies the truth of our social life. Motherhood outside wedlock is considered to be immoral and unsocial. Hence, a woman under such circumstances opts for abortion which is called infanticide. Is not the man equally responsible for such criminal act of infanticide?

If it is so, why should he remain so uninvolved in the entire process? According to Dr. Rammanohar Lohia, the society has adopted different standards of morality for man and woman. He said: 'It is not proper and fair to have different yardsticks of morality and social behaviour for man and woman. Divorce, illegal abortion and similar other things are considered to be a matter of ill-reputation for a woman. But a woman, who gives birth to an illegitimate child in her entire life, should be any day taken as being more cultured and moral than one who had given birth to six children within her wedlock.' Only when abortion is not taken as being immoral and illegal, then and then alone all incidents of foeticides would come to an end. The very idea of motherhood becomes a curse, the moment we make a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate motherhood.

In this connection, there is another question which is worth consideration. Does a woman get greater respect and social status by simply making motherhood as the highest fulfilment of her life? Even today the mother of a son gets greater social recognition and respect than the mother of a daughter. In olden times, the newly wed women were given the blessing for ultimately being the mother of eight sons. In a society where the birth of a girl child is not welcome, it is impossible for a mother of a girl child to get high social recognition and status.

The leaders of modern feminist movement are saying that seeds of slavery in the life of a woman are inherent in her very desire of motherhood. T. Grace Atkinson, one of the feminist leaders,

pleads for the abolition of the very institution of marriage as it is solely responsible for the slavery of woman. In the same vein Judith Brown observes: In marriage a woman 'is locked into a relationship which is oppressive politically, exhausting physically, stereotyped emotionally and sexually, and atrophying intellectually. She teams up with an individual groomed from birth to rule, and she is equipped for revolt only with the foot-shuffling, head-scratching gestures of 'feminine guile.' Marriage 'is the atomization of a sex so as to render it politically powerless. The anachronism remains because women won't fight it, because men derive valuable benefits from it and will not give them up, and because, even given a willingness among men and women to transform the institution, it is at the mercy of the more powerful institutions which use it and which give it its form.' Mary Wollstonecraft moves a step further when she says: 'Beauty of a woman is praised as she rises over man on that count. She loses the value of her own personality and becomes just a puppet in the hands of a man.' Elisabeth Badinter asserts that 'maternal instinct is just a myth, invented years ago to subjugate woman. Rape is a social and political instrument to oppress woman.' This might be an over reactive statement uttered by the extremist element of the feminist movement. But it could not be dismissed on that count as it contains a whole lot of truth and empirical realities.

Long back Dada Dharmadhikari asserted that the high status presently given to motherhood only helps man. But a man looks at his mother just as his mother and not the wife of his father and also takes his wife just as the mother of her children in a thoughtful way, then there would be a revolutionary change in his outlook. There would be a new meaning in the life togetherness of a man and woman.

Is motherhood just a physical and natural incident or is it deeply inherent within human feelings? This is a thought provoking statement. Sane Guruji, a great Maharashtrian leader and intellectual, had imbibed deep motherly feelings in his own persona. Though he was a celibate, he even taught a lesson or two

to a large number of women, how to love their children. That only means that having a womanly heart and the feeling of motherhood is a high class human feeling. It is not confined to the institution of family or attached to the institution of marriage alone. In fact, motherly feeling could be extended beyond the family and could extend to the level of the society or even humanity. As Elisabeth Badinter says: 'The taboo of motherhood is something that can not be attacked. Woman gain no glory from being mothers. The instinct of motherhood is simply an oppressive fiction.' She further asserted that the man would have to undertake the job of rearing of the children in future. Paternal instinct is still waiting to be born. She gave a clarion call to women with a new slogan: 'Down with motherhood.'

In the western world the entire family structure is undergoing a great change on account of same sex marriage and homosexuality. A woman is taken just as a field for the man to sow his seeds. A woman is just a repository of his seeds. Now the concept of test tube baby is getting popular. There is also a system of child adoption. Not only that, through adoption a woman could easily become a mother. There is no need for a husband or the father of her child. Now even the concept of surrogate mother is getting popular. Thus without going through labour pain, a woman could enjoy motherhood. Thus the very concept of motherhood is under challenge. What shape the institution of family is going to take in future? Whether the institution of marriage would survive in the coming years? How man and woman relationship would be viewed, both inside and outside marriage? How would be the societal attitude towards the very concept of motherhood? One would have to find answers to these weighty questions in the coming years.

Strangely enough, in the western world there is also an attempt to revive and rejuvenate the failing institution of family. However, in our country the idea of giving freedom to man and woman for a life togetherness based on love and equality is not presently even under consideration. Undoubtedly, the present family system in

India, primarily rests on the sacrifices of the woman folks. But in reality, it is based on the slavery of women. A slave has hardly any right to renounce or sacrifice. Those women who prefer security to their freedom hardly feel the need for their independence. They are so much used to the sense of security that they only aspire for greater and greater material security. In other words, like a caged bird, a traditional woman in India could hardly fly away from her hearth and home into the open sky, even if the gates of the cage are kept wide open, as her wings remain clipped. For such women, family works as the fortress of security. It cannot become a laboratory for life togetherness between man and woman.

It is in the above context that some of the Gandhian ideas regarding man and woman relationship could be considered. He had envisaged the concept of *brahmacharya* in the very centre of married life. Our institution of marriage is based primarily on sexuality— sexual urges and their gratification. In earlier times, there used to be a mention of physical relationship in the invitation letter on the occasion of marriage. Now the wordings have changed but the essence and the spirit remains the same. On account of the peculiar woman's physiology, she today could be used even without her consent and motherhood could forcibly be imposed on her. And that too not once but several times.

Gandhiji treated Kasturba more of a mother than his wife. That was the symbol of his *brahmcharya*. One's own wife reaches the status of a mother and she lives in the family primarily on the basis of that kind of relationship. According to Gandhiji, *brahmacharya* stands for being nearer to God and regulate one's entire life pattern on that basis. Gandhiji and Kasturba addressed each other as Bapu and Ba – Bapu being the synonym for father and Ba for the mother. Many people took objection to it as they felt that it was nothing short of an improper and unjust act. Such people fail to remember that even in earlier social system, it was quite common to call one's wife as the mother of one's child's name. So was the case when the wife addressed her husband. In fact, in that style of address was involved the high philosophy of husband-wife relationship.

I myself have known and seen a number of couples who lived together comfortably under the vow of *brahmacharya*. J.P.-Prabhavati, Kishor Bhai Mashruwala and Gomati Kaki, could be easily cited as such couples. We know that when Prabhavati took the vow of *brahmacharya*, J.P. was living in the US as a student. Gandhiji suggested that JP could go in for marriage with another woman. JP told Gandhiji that if he himself would have taken the vow of *brahmacharya*, would Prabhavati have opted for a second marriage? If not, why should there be different norms of behaviour for men and women? They presented the ideals of life togetherness while strictly following the vow of *brahmacharya*.

Now another social development is taking place. Many earning couples are refusing to have children. For them, physical relationship is the only real relationship between husband and wife. They fail to understand that family relationship also means involvement of mind and heart. Even the social relationship has no meaning for such people.

At this stage of our discussion, it is time to ask the question: What is the real answer to the question raised by Premabai Kantak? Usually in any society, men would become fathers and women as mothers. But something would have to be done to raise the status of woman in the society. New symbols would have to be established to that end. Women like men, should have the right to *brahmacharya* on their own volition. She should enjoy similar high social and spiritual status as a male celibate enjoys in the society. An unmarried woman should have equal social recognition and prestige.

Acharya Vinoba while commenting upon Gandhi's view on these issues stated: "That even leading a life of a householder, a man could lead a life of *Vanaprasth*. This is a new philosophy which Gandhi presented. Such a couple could have children while remaining totally committed to each other. But gradually giving up sexual relationship, they should live the life of *Vanaprastha* and should even come out of it ultimately. This is what Gandhiji demonstrated through his own life.



One could differ with Gandhiji on all these counts, including his views on birth control. But observing total *brahmacharya* in pre-marriage stage, and in the post-marriage stage remaining totally committed to one's own partner could be promoted as a good social value. This could also be a great help in control of AIDS and similar other sexually transmitted diseases. Of late, lust is gaining ground both in our personal and social life. There is a greater acceptance of sexual relationship in pre-marital stage as well as a renewed emphasis on various means of birth control. It is being openly asserted that self-control has no place in our personal and social life. Gandhi did observe the vow of *brahmacharya* in full measure in his own personal life. There could be difference of opinion on his way of experimenting with *brahmacharya*.

According to Dada Dharmadhikari, with a view to maintaining *brahmacharya*, traditionally a kind of untouchability used to be observed between a *brahmachari* and a woman based on our old scriptures. Gandhiji displayed a rare sense of moral courage in rejecting such a notion of *brahmacharya*. He favoured free mixing of man and woman and disfavoured all kinds of segregation of the two sexes. For that he even put his reputation at stake. Some scholars have stressed the need for a psychoanalytical study of Gandhi's personality. It is great luck that similar things have not been said about Lord Krishna. After all Lord Krishna is taken as being a *Purna Avtar*. But to the extent a man of freedom and character could risk his reputation and even his life, Gandhiji faced the criticism with rare courage and fortitude. Dada firmly stated that today though it may not be an acceptable norm in our society, but man and woman could be able to live as friends some day. This is what Gandhiji tried to prove through his own life. We must understand the value and importance of his experiments in *brahmacharya* and man-woman relationship.

In the words of Dada: 'Between man and woman the relationship based on friendship and devotion should prevail. Such family feelings should prevail all over the society. This is the first step towards man-woman relationship based on equality and

justice. Friendship between man and woman should be built on such a foundation. It was after centuries in Indian history that Gandhiji appeared and experimented on both these counts. He underscored the point that men and women could live as friends on equal footing. Unless and until such a relationship becomes widely acceptable in our society, the status and dignity of women would continue to be compromised.'

When Gandhi or Vinoba assert that there is an urgent need to develop women's power in our society they do not mean to say that a woman should have more children. It simply means that the importance of *brahmacharya* in the life of a woman should be realized and accepted. It is difficult for a woman to adopt *brahmacharya* so long as she accepts the role of a wife. Motherly feeling alone could enable a woman to imbibe such feeling of *brahmacharya* both in pre-marriage and post-marriage stage. Hence it should be promoted as a moral value in the popular mind.

*Brahmacharya* or motherly feeling is not physical but it is an extreme soft feeling. For a celibate man remaining away from the company of woman is taken to be a positive value. So is the case of a celibate woman—she is expected to keep men at bay. In both these situations, there is no scope for love and soft feeling.

There should not be even an iota of feeling of denigration for woman in the minds of a celibate man. Rather he should have respect for women in general and should not deliberately avoid their company. Similarly, a *brahmacharini* or a married woman totally devoted to her husband should not have any fear and disrespect for men. She should not feel the need for a protective cover from a man. This is the real meaning of life togetherness between a man and a woman based on true friendship and love. In the absence of such feeling there would be no possibility of developing a feeling of co-citizenship based on a healthy man-woman relationship. That requires a fundamental change in the thinking processes of both men and women. So far the question of developing a true feeling of citizenship and democratic processes are concerned, Gandhiji reposed greater faith in women folks than

in men. Earlier females used to play different roles of a daughter, wife and mother in the society. Now she has to play the role of a citizen. Our Constitution lays great stress on the gender equality. The participation of women in our democratic processes would add an element of gentleness and motherly feeling to the working of our democratic processes.

Gandhi used to say:

‘Thus women should be encouraged to participate in our democratic processes. She should be trained in the art and process of voting. She should come to believe that voting is an auspicious and good deed.’

A strong feeling of co-citizenship based on man-woman relationship should be taken as the life-blood of our democratic polity. According to Gandhiji, apart from the natural differences between man and woman, they should be treated in terms of equality. Such a feeling of equality alone could be the basis for co-citizenship of man and woman. It is in such a situation that the birth of a girl child would be welcome in our society. After all, India is a spiritual land and a woman is taken as being the better half of man. Unless that state of affairs is really established, India would continue to remain in paralytic state with its better half of the body remaining atrophied. That was the feeling of Gandhiji.

Those who think that Gandhiji has become outdated should try to understand his world view in an objective manner. A thought might get associated with a particular person, but it may transcend his time and space. Gandhiji himself rejected any idea of Gandhism. But he did insist on man making his own experiments with truth. He himself did that. Hence his life and thought would work as a beckon light for generations to come.



## Jyotiba Phule: The First Mahatma

Lack of education leads to lack of wisdom, which leads to lack of morals, which leads to lack of progress, which leads to lack of money, which leads to the oppression of the lower classes. See what state of the society one lack of education can cause!

*Mahatma Jyotirao Phule*

Thirtieth January is the day of Gandhi's martyrdom. On this occasion, Maharashtra Sarvodaya Mandal has organised a *padayatra* starting from the place of Mahatma Phule in Pune, covering such places as Gagoda, Mahad and Satara under the banner: 'From Jyotiba to Vinoba.' Myself and Baba Adava were present on that memorable occasion. This *padayatra* was organised on the initiative of Vijay Deevan, a resident of Vinoba's village Gagoda. Such an eventful occasion could not catch much of popular attention as the people could not envisage that there could be lot of common ground between the thoughts of Vinoba and Jyotiba. The idea of the saintly tradition from Jnanoba to Vinoba was conceived by some of the litterateurs. They also referred to a long scriptural tradition, from Jnaneshwari to Geetai. But the followers of Jyotiba and Vinoba had not given serious consideration to the common ground of the thought processes of their respective leaders. *Sarvodaya* workers, while leading all kinds of popular movements inspired by Gandhi-Vinoba tradition, have never given a serious consideration to Jyotiba's thoughts. Nor did the followers of Jyotiba ever seriously consider that Gandhi and Vinoba also belong to the

same tradition. In Maharashtra there has been a long tradition of putting one great man against the other. Maharashtrian mind has been deriving vicarious pleasure in putting such stalwarts as Tilak-Agarkar, Tilak-Gandhi and Gandhi-Ambedkar as rivals and contestants. Hence this new initiative based on the thoughts of Jyotiba, Gandhi and Vinoba and also covering such an important place like Mahad appeared to me of great significance. After all, the ultimate aim of our freedom struggle was the elimination of the idea of superiority based on birth leading to the establishment of peasant-worker *Raj*. From among the thought leaders of Gandhi-Vinoba tradition, Dada Dharmadhikari alone could grasp and fathom the real greatness of Jyotiba's thoughts. He also underscored the greatness of Dr. Ambedkar. Dada has included the life-togetherness of Jyotiba and Savitri Devi in the long list of all those great people who are worth remembering on every occasion. According to him, Phule couple occupies a unique place in the tradition of total social revolution. Their contributions in this area are both unique and unprecedented.

Dada writes: 'Jyotiba inspired a fervent philosophy of revolution among the *Shudras* and untouchable people of India. According to him, real revolution occurs only when it results in the liberation of that section of the society, who are really downtrodden and deprived. In this respect, Jyotiba was a real seer of revolution and also one who tried to put it into practice. In other words, he was both a seer and a *Karmayogi*. It goes without saying that true faith encompasses revolution only, through individual's revolutionary practice. It is such unity of thought and action which gives a true meaning and momentum to any revolutionary movement. Mahatma Gandhi also belonged to the same category of revolutionaries. Much before Gandhi appeared on the scene, Jyotiba had pioneered similar kinds of revolutionary ideas in his area of thinking and working. Therefore, Jyotiba could be taken as the first and original Mahatma. He could very well be taken as being the successor to such stalwarts like Buddha, Mahavir, Nanak, Martin Luther King Jr. and other similar leaders. In this

connection, one could not forget Karl Marx. He added a new dimension to world revolution by including the liberation of the workers of the world in his scheme of things and even initiated the process of all round revolution. He cut to size the reactionary influences of the priestly classes, and posed a serious challenge to the predominance of the rich and powerful elements of the society. He gave a clarion call of revolution to workers, peasants, women, *Shudras* and all other weaker sections of the society. He really blew the trumpet of revolution which could inspire all the struggling sections of the society. The real importance of Jyotiba lies in the fact that he came as a forward banner and even as a vanguard of revolution for slaves, *Shudras*, untouchables and for those who were even lesser than them. In this revolutionary work of Jyotiba, Savitri Devi, his wife, played the role of a revolutionary partner. She walked in step to step with him and worked shoulder to shoulder with him in his entire revolutionary task. She became a true symbol of life-partner and life-togetherness. They virtually became one soul despite remaining confined in two bodies. She came at par with him in all respects. She really turned out to be a true female Mahatma. I salute Jyotiba and Savitri Devi – the messengers of revolution for the deprived and true upholders of high moral and ethical values, and harbingers of all-round revolt on their behalf.

Dada Dharmadhikari had put every aspect of Phule's work in a nutshell – in a quintessential manner. Dada has also made a suggestion that to end privileges based on birth, a complete ban should be imposed on all same caste marriages.

Vinoba was a revolutionary of the same tradition. He has opined that in the pre-independence days India as a country suffered under slavery. So did the villages. After independence politically India became independent but the villagers continued to remain slaves. Thus India is an independent country with slavery in the villages. He further stated that without ending the slavery of the villagers, true *swaraj* could not be established in our country. Hence, Gandhi and Vinoba put forward the concept of *gram*

*swaraj*. He also averred that unless women feel protected, all talks of women liberation would be meaningless. Both of them planned for woman empowerment. In this perspective, it could be safely concluded that the point on which Jyotiba and Gandhi left became the point of departure for Vinoba's intellectual and revolutionary journey. 'One family of the entire village' became his clarion call. He talks of a new social order based on cooperation. We should always bear in mind that in a society where labour classes are not respected, the idlers enjoy all social recognition and prestige at the former's cost. The only way to tackle this problem is to get rid of all those middlemen who simply make money without contributing much to the production system. Unless their empire is broken to pieces, true *swaraj* and *swadeshi* could never be established. To that end, Vinoba launched an integrated revolutionary movement comprising of *bhoodan*, *gramdan*, and *sampatidan*. He walked on foot for several years to spread all these ideas and to give them a concrete shape.

Earlier there were only three ways in which land could change hands: It could be bought in terms of money; or could be acquired by the government by paying due financial compensation to the owners or could be illegally acquired by the miscreants by the use of physical force. But Vinoba received lakhs of acres of land by way of gift on the basis of persuasion to be distributed among the landless people. Unless there is an empathetic relationship with the poor people marked by a strong feeling of cooperation and closeness, there would be no true *gram swaraj*. This is so because an economic system based on exploitation is an economics of misery or ill-economics or no economics at all. No society could reach the state of goodness (*paramarth*) and freedom while working on the principles of selfishness and domination. Therefore, *swadeshi* is not just a matter of production of things and their uses, it is a matter of deep feelings. Hence the real question is one of establishing a social order marked by the dignity of labour. Any product based on a system of exploitation could never be considered as being *swadeshi*.

Today lawyers, doctors and business people themselves decide on the prices of their services; only peasants have got no right to decide the prices of their products. Thus their exploitation continues. It was for getting rid of such exploitative system that *Panchayat Raj* was sought to be established. But in the absence of *gram swaraj* the present system of *Panchayat Raj* could never become a living and effective system. Nor could it ever end the widespread incidents of suicides among the peasants. Therefore, the liberation struggle launched earlier by Jyotiba and Gandhi-Vinoba needs to be persistently continued.

Vinoba used to call agriculture as the godly work as it is a system of direct creation or production. It is rightly said that God created the countryside and the man has created the urban areas. It was after the introduction of agriculture that man became householder (*grihastha*). Earlier he was living in palaeolithic age (*pasan yug*). Despite such high status given to agriculture, the exploitation of peasants still continues. All those engaged in the service sector and who demand and receive an increased amount in terms of Dearness Allowances, still propose and insist that the prices of agricultural products must be kept low. This is an organised conspiracy against the peasants. That is why long back Vinoba had said that the pathways through which the wealth of the villages is drained out, would have to be closed once for all. Market is the pathway for such draining out of wealth from the villages and it, more often than not, comprises black market. Marriage, religious and social ceremonies, drug addiction are based on the imitation of the urban people, also drain out the wealth of the villages. Peasants hardly receive anything in return. Vinoba further added that presently peasants had to look towards the blue sky without batting their eyelids, while praying for rain from Indra – the god of rain. But, when it comes to the fixation of prices for their products, they have to look up to other lords of the society. Thus the entire system is based on the sheer exploitation of peasants; even today. They are in the grip of social, religious and economic slavery. To get rid of such slavery, Jyotiba had long back conceived the idea of



‘whip of the cultivators.’ It was also for the same that Vinoba had his movements like *Bhoodan* and *gram swaraj*. He also struggled against the religious slavery imposed by the priestly classes on the peasants. In the process of such struggle he was beaten by the priests of Panderpur – the temple of Vithoba. Vinoba in his characteristic way suggested that the villagers must take care of five ‘B’ (c) *Bekar* (unemployed), *Bimar* (sick), *Beba* (widow), *Bachcha* (children) and *Briddha* (old age people). It should be the collective responsibility of all the villagers to look after the above categories of people. No one in the village should go to bed without taking his/her food. It should also be their collective responsibility. In the absence of such responsibility, there would be no cooperation among the villagers. He also pleaded for the abolition of caste *mohalla*—segregation of the villagers on the basis of castes. In fact, the entire caste system would have to go lock, stock and barrel. Interestingly, this was also the major goal of *Satya Shodhaksamaj* founded by Jyotiba Phule. In one word, the entire village system would have to be changed in a revolutionary manner. That alone would lead to the end of the exploitative system engineered by divisive politics which make the village people fight against each other.

Dr. Ambedkar had opined that the Hindu society is like a four story building. It has no staircase to move from one floor to another. Hence, once one is located (born) on a particular floor (caste) he could not move to another floor in his entire lifetime. He had also favoured reforms inside every caste. For example, during Mahad *Satyagraha* he had called upon women not to feed their sons if they came home drunk, and refuse to open the door of their homes if the husband came drunk. According to him, drug addiction and alcoholism is a part of an organised conspiracy on the part of the urban capitalist class to keep the villagers in abject poverty. It is to be remembered that Jyotiba, Gandhi and Vinoba had also launched vigorous campaign against such social evils.

It is a well established premise that the disciples of different *gurus* make them differ and fight for their own selfish interests. Hence, it is a very welcome step that the present *padayatra* has

been arranged by taking Jyotiba, Gandhi and Vinoba belonging to the same spiritual and secular tradition. Meanwhile in Mumbai a new organisation has also been launched which is called Gandhi-Ambedkar Foundation. All these are welcome steps.

On the occasion of the centenary celebration of Dadasaheb Gaikawad at Nasik, I was handed over a letter written by the organisers to the Chief Minister of Maharashtra. In that letter a suggestion had been made that a joint statue of Gandhi and Ambedkar should be installed at Pune. I am just wondering whether or not such a proposal would take concrete shape. But there is certainly a need for taking an integrated view of the tradition of Jyotiba, Gandhi, Vinoba and Ambedkar. There is an urgent need for making an all out attempt in that direction. Hence all the above initiatives should be taken as the right steps in the right direction.

Gandhi was a great spokesman of Indian peasantry. He stood for *Kisan Majdoor Raj* and the principle of land to the tillers. That was also an underlying idea behind our freedom struggle. It is the same idea which had inspired Gandhiji to launch his Champaran, Kheda and Bardoli *satyagrahas*. He even went to the extent of saying that if the Indian National Congress ceases to be the representative of the Indian peasantry, then it would lose all its relevance and meaning. He used to call himself a peasant. He also said that it was the existence of middleman (*dalal*) which leads to the exploitation of the Indian peasantry. Jyotiba also held the same view. They also worked for the promotion of women-power. That is why Dada Dharmadhikari had called Jyotiba as the true and first Mahatma. It is the right time to make a demand for the installation of statues of Jyotiba, Gandhi and Ambedkar at one place at Pune, as all the three were the real messiahs of the poor, the deprived and the Dalit. The installation of their statues at once place at Pune would be real *Trimurti* of our times.



## Ba: The Fragrance of Kasturi

Beloved Kastur,

I love you so dearly that even if you are dead, you will be alive to me. Your soul is deathless. I repeat what I have frequently told you and assure you that if you do succumb to your illness, I will not marry again. Time and again I have told you that you may quietly breathe your last with faith in God. If you die, even that death of yours will be a sacrifice to the cause of Satyagraha. My struggle is not merely political. It is religious and therefore quite pure. It does not matter much whether one dies in it or lives. I hope and expect that you will also think likewise and not be unhappy. I ask this of you.

*Mohandas*

Twenty-second February is the death anniversary (*punya tithi*) of Kasturba. Ba was six months older to Bapu. She breathed her last on 22 February 1944 while being imprisoned in Aga Khan Palace. She became the martyr on the altar of the Quit India Movement of 1942. On her *samadhi* Gandhi wrote in his own hands: 'Hey Ram'. Bapu's clarion call of "Do or Die" during the 1942 Movement was literally proved to the hilt by Ba's death. On the *samadhi* of Mahadev Bhairi, a *swastic* and a cross had been earlier depicted. All this was not a part of any religious rites and rituals, but just symbols of their goodness and commitment to the national cause. It was a way to pay glowing tributes to them. The idea was to make people seek inspirations from their selfless life and heroic deeds.

Dr. Sushila Nayar has given a picturesque narration of Ba's story of life, particularly during her imprisonment in Aga Khan Palace. Ba wanted to be with Bapu in prison. But he asked her to carry forward the struggle initiated by him. Ba had agreed to do the needful. Bapu was to address a public meeting at Shivaji Park before he was to be sent to prison. Ba decided to address the same meeting at the same place. She was apprehensive of being arrested. Hence, she had written a brief note in which she stated: 'Mahatmaji has told you all that was needed to be told. He had spoken for two and a half hours at the AICC meeting and had poured out his heart during the same. Now it is time to act upon his words. Even sisters have to show their strength on this occasion. Sisters drawn from all religions and social sections and castes should join hands to make the battle of *swaraj* successful. Let no one deviate from the path of truth and non-violence.' As expected, she was arrested much before she could reach Shivaji Park for the meeting. As decided earlier, every freedom fighter was supposed to write on his clothes: 'Do or Die'. When she was reminded of the decision, she firmly told that she hardly needed it as everything was already inscribed on her heart. There are still many people in Maharashtra who make undignified comments on such a non-violent fighter. Many scholars have still temptations to write adversely on the sacred relationship between Ba and Bapu. What could one say about such despicable people? One could simply feel that some day this kind of poverty of mind and heart, thought and action would come to an end.

Bapu once commented: 'Man has made his wife a thing to be bought and sold, instead of making her the empress of his heart and hearth. Is it all that man has learnt from his study of English literature? Woman is treated as the better half of man. But she has been reduced to the status of a slave. Hence, our country has been struck by some kind of paralysis.' But it seems to me that all those who question the sacred basis of Ba-Bapu relationship have gone out of their mind. Gandhiji has said that 'out of our foolishness we taught our woman folks to go in for *sati*. This is the height of

individual worship. The real duty of a wife is to complete the work undertaken by her husband.' Kasturba had fully internalised and imbibed such value in her life. Talking about Ba's contribution in her life, Bapu has said: 'Ba never came in the way of decision for leading a life of purity and piety. There might be some differences in terms of capabilities, but our life was one of contentment and happiness with a constant feeling of spiritual upliftment. This is my firm view. If ever I have to choose someone for being my wife, I would still prefer to choose Ba as my wife. She was free from guile, selfless, devoted, with limitless faith. I did not find another exemplary life like her. Both in our marriage and in my life's struggle she stood like a rock by my side. She was totally devoted to the causes I undertook. One could hardly find another perfect person like her. She turned out to be my *guru* in the practice of non-violence.' Bapu paid such a glowing tribute to Ba's memory after her death.

Bapu called her Ba (mother) and she called him Bapu. Traditionally, it may not look like a correct social behaviour. But Gandhiji was not leading a life of an ordinary householder. They had not only taken the vow of *brahmacharya*, but they were leading an *ashram* life. He was not an ordinary family man. For him not only his own country, but also the entire humanity was a family. In the commune of Communists, all members including brother, sister, mother and father are taken as comrades. Similarly, in Gandhi's *ashram* there was a family spirit but no family relationship as such. To call one's wife as the mother of one's children could be taken as being the most liberal and broad minded attitude towards one's wife. There the feeling of motherhood is the basis of family. Kalidas expressed the concept of father and mother i.e., Parvati and Parmeshwar in a single word *pitarau*. Some day the same idea could be expressed in terms of another word, *matarau*. Even though it is a plural term, but here the emphasis is on unity and singleness. Dada Dharmadhikari has put the word 'Ba' on the same high pedestal. But those who look at man and woman relationship

purely in physical terms could hardly understand such nuanced meaning of the term.

Ba was a co-worker of Bapu – a true symbol of life togetherness. She was more committed to his ideas and she never considered herself just as his wife. At times Bapu did try to behave like a husband but she stood her ground. Even in the respect of Harilal, their son, she stood by her principles rather than being just as a doting mother. She went through *agni pariksha* and came out unscathed like Sita from it. That is how she became and behaved like the mother of all those who came into her contact. In the words of Sane Guruji, Ba and Bapu were the mother and father of modern India. Her life had a fragrance of *kasturi*. Oh, mother how could we ever forget your martyrdom in the prison of Aga Khan Palace. Your sacred *samadhi* is a pilgrimage for the country. The life of Bapu and Ba was the real sacred wealth of India. Let this wealth grow ever in leaps and bounds. This could be the only wish and hope of a grateful nation.



Kasturba Gandhi



## Bhagat Singh and Gandhi

Bhagat Singh was not a devotee of non-violence, but he did not subscribe to the religion of violence. He took to violence due to helplessness and to defend his homeland. These heroes had conquered the fear of death. Let us bow to them a thousand times for their heroism.

*M.K. Gandhi*

Shahid Bhagat Singh was born on 28 September 1907. It is our bounden duty to recall and hail his unmatched sacrifices and contributions to the cause of our national independence. His struggle and martyrdom was a milestone in the history of the armed struggle which a section of our youth launched to free India from the British clutches. His life and thought have left an indelible impact on the hearts and minds of millions of our countrymen, particularly the youth. We in our younger days used to move like him, wearing a belt and hat, as if we were his political heirs. He had left his college studies to participate in the non-cooperation movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi. It was during 1925 that he founded Nav Jawan Bharat Sabha to spread the fire of Indian revolution among the youth of the country. It was through that organization that he came into contact with other revolutionaries, who themselves were committed to the cause of Indian independence through armed struggle. The primary aim of Bhagat Singh and his comrades was to capture and hand over all means of production in the hands of the common man of India after ending all vestiges of capitalism and imperialism

in the country. They also believed that it was the sacred duty of every Indian to work for breaking the chains of slavery of our people. Subsequently, he along with some of his other comrades joined Hindustan Socialist Republican Association/Army which sought to establish a new democratic system free from all kinds of exploitation and domination. In other words, they wanted to establish a socialist system in the true sense of the term.

It was during 1928 that the British government set up the Simon Commission comprising entirely of White members. The Commission was to work out a new constitutional framework for India and yet it had no Indian member. That created a sense of outrage among our people. 'Simon go Back' became the battle cry of the agitation against it. Protests and street demonstrations were launched all the over the country. It was during one such demonstration that Lala Lajpat Rai was assaulted by the British police in the course of a lathi charge which soon led to his untimely death in September 1928. This stirred a deep sense of resentment, particularly among the youth of the country. The young revolutionaries felt that if such blatant attack on our national dignity and identity was not avenged, then all protests and agitation against the Simon Commission would have gone in vain. That led to the murder of Saunders, the police superintendent who had led the assault on Lalaji. Our people were thrilled by such daring acts of young revolutionaries led by Chandra Shekhar Azad and Bhagat Singh. These youthful revolutionaries also felt that there was need for some still greater daring acts like bomb explosion, which could end the deafness of the colonial administration towards Indian demands. It would also make them wide awake to the limitless suffering of our people. They also felt that such an act would also ignite the fire of revolution among the Indian youth, both against capitalism and imperialism. Thus the battle cry came in the form of the slogans like '*Inqalab Zindabad*' (Hail the revolution) and '*Samrajyavad Muradabad*' (Death to Imperialism). It was such an understanding which prompted Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Datta to throw a low intensity bomb in the hall of the Central



Assembly on 8 April 1929. That bomb was never intended to kill anybody. Its primary aim was only to awaken the colonial administration from their deep slumber and indifference. All these revolutionary acts ultimately led to the secret hanging of Bhagat Singh and his comrades like Sukhdev and Rajguru on 23 March 1931. Only this much of historical fact is known to the average man in India. It had also led to the popular belief in the minds of the people with vested interest that Gandhiji hardly took any step to save the lives of Bhagat Singh and his comrades. Such a baseless allegation had come up on account of lack of knowledge of historical facts, as well as that of animus against Gandhi among a section of our elite. The truth is entirely different. Gandhiji had met Lord Irwin, the Viceroy of India on 19 March 1931 and pleaded for the remission of the death sentence of Bhagat Singh and his comrades. But the fact of Gandhiji-Irwin meeting was immediately brought to the notice of the Punjab Governor along with Punjab wing of the colonial administration who strongly felt that Gandhiji might succeed in saving these youthful lives. Hence, setting aside its earlier decision to take these revolutionaries to the gallows on 24 March 1931, they were secretly hanged on 23 March 1931 itself. Gandhiji also wrote a long letter to Lord Irwin, pleading such remission on 23 March 1931. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Jawaharlal Nehru and Tej Bahadur Sapru had also joined hands to save the lives of these revolutionaries. In his address at the Karachi Congress on 26 March 1931, Gandhiji made a detailed reference to his various efforts for saving these young lives. He also told the delegates that he had been hopeful that his efforts would bear fruits. The truth is that Gandhiji was to meet the family members of Bhagat Singh on 23 March 1931. On the same date he had written a long letter to the Viceroy in which he had poured out his heartfelt feelings in their entirety. The colonial administration clearly frustrated his efforts by predating the hanging of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev. The Karachi Congress passed a resolution drafted by Gandhiji paying glorious tributes to Bhagat Singh and his comrades. The resolution had

also expressed deep feelings of condolence and sympathy for the bereaved families of these revolutionaries. Jawaharlal Nehru had recorded in his autobiography that Gandhiji had tried his level best to save the lives of these revolutionaries but he could not succeed. Gandhiji's letter to the Viceroy is also available in the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi.

People like Gandhiji or Jawaharlal Nehru hardly need any defence from a man like me. But a lot of historical facts are distorted and presented in the form of cinemas and dramas relating to Gandhiji's dealing with Savarkar, Ambedkar and Bhagat Singh. The aim is to make a villain out of Gandhi by these distorted presentations of the historical events. Such an attempt is based more on fiction rather than facts. My only plea to them is that these people should read modern Indian history more closely and truthfully. We often forget such glaring historical facts that Bhagat Singh, a brave and selfless soldier of Indian independence, never wanted any kind of remission in his own death sentence. Nor did his comrades. That is why they did not even participate in the fake trial and never put up any legal defence or mercy petition for themselves. Desire to offer their life on the altar of Indian independence was the driving force behind their death-defying actions. It is because of his martyrdom that his life and thought became the source of inspiration and a symbol of beckon light for millions of our countrymen. He not only wanted freedom for the country but also worked for a new social order in which all its members could live in peace, free from all discrimination and deprivation. It was a clarion call for a socialist society.

It is to be noted that Bhagat Singh did not put up any legal defence in the course of his trial. When questioned about it, he unequivocally stated that his aim of human liberation could be achieved by his martyrdom. It would also inspire our people to fight more vigorously for the freedom of the country. Prannath Mehta, his advocate, asked him about his message to his countrymen, just before he was being taken to the gallows. Bhagat Singh said that his last message and testament is inherent in his two clarion

calls—Death to imperialism and Hail the Revolution. In the same vein, when asked about his last wish, he said that he would like to be born in this very land so that he could serve it once again in his next life. In response to the request for offering his prayer to Wahe Guru before he was to be taken to the gallows, he said that he had never offered religious prayer in his entire life. So if he asked to be forgiven now, then Wahe Guru might consider him to be a coward and a fearful person. It was during these last moments of his life that he delivered a stirring speech in which said: 'Our people are the real revolutionary force in the country. But our upper class leaders could not take them along with themselves. They had neither the will nor the courage for that. Hence let us put an end to our little interests. Let us not aspire for little pleasure and move forward with courage and determination. We have to move forward inch by inch. Let no obstacles come in the way to your final destination. Let no acts of failure or betrayals deter you from your heart cherished goal. Success could be achieved only through suffering and sacrifices. This is how the ultimate goal of revolution would be achieved.' In his own characteristic way, while referring to his impending martyrdom, he added:

'This is the highest award for patriotism and I am proud that I am going to get it. They think that by destroying my terrestrial body they will be safe in this country. They are wrong. They may kill me, but they cannot kill my ideas. They can crush my body, but they will not be able to crush my spirit. My ideas will haunt the British like a curse till they are forced to run away from here. But this is one side of the picture. The other side is equally bright. Bhagat Singh dead will be more dangerous to the British enslavers than Bhagat Singh alive. After I am hanged, the fragrances of my revolutionary ideas will permeate the atmosphere of this beautiful land of ours. It will intoxicate the youth and make him mad for freedom and revolution and that will bring the doom of the British imperialist nearer. This is my firm conviction. I am anxiously waiting for the day when I will receive the highest award for my services to the country and my love for my people.'

‘This is the highest award for my patriotism for the love of my country. I feel proud of the fact that I am the person chosen for such highest award. If the British think that they could feel secure in this country after destroying my body, they would be proved wrong by history. They could kill me, but they could never destroy my ideas. They could easily trample over my body but they could never succeed in killing my feelings and thoughts. My thought would continue to work as a haunting curse, till they are forced to leave this country.’ He further added: ‘For the British, Shahid Bhagat Singh would be more dangerous than the living one. My revolutionary ideas would grip the youth and put a new consciousness of freedom in them. I am waiting for the day when my services to the country and my love for the people would be widely recognized and respected. That would be the highest award for me. My ideas would never perish.’

Mahatma Gandhi as the leader of the Indian struggle for Independence has his own views about the methods to be used in the course of struggle. As he put it:

‘I contend that the revolutionary method cannot succeed in India. If an open warfare were a possibility, I may concede that we may tread the path of violence that the other countries have and at least evolve the qualities that bravery on the battlefield brings forth. But the attainment of *Swaraj* through warfare I hold an impossibility for any time that we can foresee. Warfare may give us another rule for the English rule, but not self-rule in terms of the masses. The pilgrimage to *Swaraj* is a painful climb. ... It will not spring like the magician’s mango. It will grow almost unperceived like the banyan tree. A bloody revolution will never perform the trick. Hate here is most certainly waste.’

After the death of Bhagat Singh, ‘*Inqilab Zindabad*’, became the battle cry of all the dispossessed and the poor, fighting against every kind of exploitation, injustice and domination. He never intended to indulge in any act violence and murder. He went on to say that the present system based on exploitation would have to be ended. He wanted a society free from exploitation, inequality

and injustice. Did not Gandhiji seek the same goal which he called *Ramrajya*. Did both of them not opt for their martyrdom in the service of the country? Both of them had nourished the feeling that their thought, their *sadhana*, their feelings would survive even after the dissolution of their bodies. Both had chosen different paths to their goal of freedom for the country and its people. Their self-chosen motto was not revenge but revolution, bravery not cowardice. Therefore the poet wrote:

‘Every year there would be gatherings of the people  
On the cremation ground of martyrs.  
That alone would remain  
A remnant symbol of those patriots  
Who shed their blood for the sake of the country.’



Bhagat Singh



## Who is Scared of Gandhi and Why?

.... I am wedded to adult suffrage.... Adult suffrage is necessary for more reasons than one, and one of the decisive reasons to me is that it enables me to satisfy all the reasonable aspirations, not only of the Mussalmans, but also of the so-called untouchables, of Christians, of labourers and all kinds of classes. I cannot possibly bear the idea that a man who has got character but no wealth or literacy should have no vote, or that a man who works honestly by the sweat of his brow day in and day out should not have the vote for the crime of being a poor man.

*M.K. Gandhi*

Gandhi wanted a society totally free from all kinds of fear. In his lifetime no one was afraid of him as the people had great amount of respect for him and he hardly evoked any feeling of fear in the hearts and minds of the people of the world including the British. On a personal plane, everyone felt secured in his presence. Besides, one who is afraid of none could alone give the people freedom from fear. Love was an ever abiding source of his life. Love and fear are mutually exclusive. One tries to avoid and keep someone at a distance if he is scared of him. Hence nobody could love someone if he is afraid of him. We as people have always put an extra emphasis on the feeling of fear rather than faith. We often teach our children to fear God if not anybody else. We never ask ourselves if our children are scared of God, then how could

they love Him. We have totally obliterated the line of distinction between love and fear. Even some of those, who keep on taking the name of Gandhi on every occasion, do not have genuine respect for him. They also appear to be scared of the Gandhian thought. Hence they have neither respect for him nor do they fear him.

Their dominant feeling is that neither Gandhi nor his thoughts could do any harm to them. They only love the currency note which carries his pictures. They want to keep away from that Gandhi who always warned them not to fall to the lure of the Mammon—instead he favoured production of grains and other essential goods. Today there is a general belief that there is no solution to any problem except through violence and nuisance. Neither in the government nor in the society, could one earn respect without such stratagem. Hence, such violent people neither respect Gandhi nor fear him. Gandhi was assassinated as some people were scared of him and his thoughts. In fact, all great men in the world would have to attain martyrdom at the hands of those who are scared of their thoughts. Assassins think that by killing them, they could put an end to their revolutionary ideas and thought. Hence, Bernard Shaw stated that assassination is the extreme form of censorship. After killing Gandhi, some people might have thought that Gandhi is censored forever. He was an obstacle to their nefarious game and is removed forever. Godse might have thought that he had the last laugh by scoring a victory over Gandhi by physically eliminating him.

Why should anyone be scared of Gandhi and his thoughts? Neither he nor his thoughts have the killing instinct or any big nuisance value. They only have a life-giving value. Hence, the process of the last rites of Gandhi and his ideas is still on. It may continue in future as well. It is also noteworthy that Gandhians have stopped entertaining new ideas and fresh independent thinking and ideas are missing from their life and work. They are forgetting the fact that the problems which we were facing today were non-existent during Gandhi's lifetime. They also fail to understand that new battles could not be fought with old and rusted weapons. There is a widespread feeling that Gandhi had become outdated

and anachronistic. He is not in tune with our times. If so, why should we respect or love him? Only his name survives, not his work or his programmes! Now no one is bothered about the kind of high character and high mindedness which Gandhi represented. Such social values are out of tune with our times. On the contrary, only miscreants and criminals are occupying most of the high positions in the field of politics and even in social organisations. Even the doors of universities are opened in the directions of jails and they have become the playgrounds of power, property and *goondaism*. When told that he is talking in the air, Gandhi replied he had not been a flyer, so how could he talk in the air! He was a man of the earth. But the ground comprising good character and high mindedness on which Gandhi walked is now non-existent. So what is his relevance today! Then why fear him.

Gandhi was not very fond of talking about independence or freedom of the country. He was all for *swaraj*. In the word *swaraj* both *satva* (essence) and *svatva* (selfhood) are inherent and intertwined. Now, both the words *swaraj* and *swadeshi* have become outdated and they have lost their majesty and relevance. Now the people with alien mentality carry greater respect than those with *swadeshi* mentality. Today the powerful wind of globalization is blowing. *Khadi*, handicrafts and *swadeshi* mentality are taken to be reactionary and outdated. We welcome the imported goods and debt taking is the basis of new economic order. New economics is what Gandhi called bad economics, i.e., economics of selfishness. Now economic slavery is considered to be the best economics. This is also called new international economic order. It goes totally against the basic formulation of Gandhi that winds blowing from all sides are welcome, but they should not blow away his feet from his own land. "Think globally and act locally" no longer appears valid. Hence *Khadi* and small scale industries as conceived by Gandhi are no longer of any consequence. Horsepower has taken the place of manpower. Every production is being done for the market or export. The entire Gandhian economics has turned out



to be useless and irrelevant. Gandhi and his ideas are fit only to be put in the museum as exhibits.

Gandhi used to talk about productive labour. Now the market is full of people who just want to buy labour and not of those who want to engage in physical work. 'Those who spin should wear and those who wear should spin' was the main motto of Gandhi. He wanted to establish a new and innovative relationship between production and consumption. What is more, such an approach could have taken care of the market as well. Presently, the primary emphasis is on the export and import of goods which is in turn giving undue importance to the money market business. Foreign companies are prospering at the cost of the indigenous companies and the entire market is dominated by foreign goods.

Today everything is on sale such as science, honesty, knowledge, nay, even man and God are there for sale. There is hardly anything which could not be bought and sold in the market. In a market, dominated with a price tag on everything, where is the place for the value of things! Gandhi's emphasis was on the value of things and not their prices. He even tried to base his social and economic thinking on such a worldview. Mammon is demon was his basic premise. Now the meaning and interpretation of morality and immorality has completely changed. Corruption has become the way of life. The entire market has been turned into a kind of black market. Fair market has virtually become non-existent. There was a time when in every shop there used to be a placard saying 'honesty is the best policy'. Now honesty has ceased to be the principle, it has been turned into a policy. And this kind of policy only means that untruth should be presented as truth putting on it false and attractive clothing. How could be there any place for honesty and moral and upright persons in such a market. In such an environment of loot and dishonesty, why one should fear and respect Gandhi?

Now a facsimile of Gandhi is put on the currency notes. Thus notes ranging from Rs. five to Rs. one thousand are judged only on the basis of their market price. Currency notes are medium of

exchange and as such they carry only exchange value otherwise they are just pieces of paper. Gandhi is there on the stamps of the post office and he is stamped with a kind of big bang. Currency notes are kept in the lockers of banks as a part of black money. A parallel economy is being run on the basis of black money. Now currency notes bearing Gandhi's facsimile are not merely a medium of exchange, but even men and women are being bought and sold through them. They are also being used to buy votes during election times. Men and women have become marketable commodities as they are openly bought and sold in the market. Bad currency drives out the good currency, one of the basic principles of economics, has started covering every walk of our life including our social, political and religious lives. Money market is full of fake currency notes which are turning out Gandhi-currency notes. Now Gandhi has been uprooted from every arena of our national life. To banish Gandhi from all walks of our lives, he is placed in statues made of marble and metal alloys. He is also to be found in photo frames at different places including government offices or in musical and devotional songs on television and other audio-visual systems. His life and thoughts are being discussed and debated by the people who neither wear *Khadi* nor understand the value of *swadeshi*. Munnabhai's *Gandhigiri* is becoming more popular than Gandhi himself. Gandhi's picture is hung in the government offices. But it is mostly put on the wall behind the working tables of officers so that Gandhi does not see their acts of bribery. The real importance is given to the man sitting in the front and occasionally he also takes the name of Gandhi. Now *Vaishnav Jan* (the man of God) is not one who empathises with the suffering people (*pir parai jane*) but one who victimises helpless and hapless people. Even honouring Gandhi on certain ceremonial occasions is done more as a matter of ritual rather than out of genuine respect.

Gandhi is permanently placed and confined to his *samadhi*, far away from the day-to-day life of our people. Why one should be scared of such a lifeless Gandhi! One could sum up the entire scenario in the words of a Hindi poet, as follows:

'Flowers I have offered  
On the dead body of the man  
He has also been murdered  
At my instance'

This is fully true of Gandhi and his place in our national life. He has just become a figure of ritualistic worship. Gandhi is totally driven out of our social and national life. He is dead along with his thoughts! That is the real tragedy of our national life.



Jyotiba Phule and Savitri Phule



## The Real Context of Gandhi's Fast

It relates to my 21 days' fast for the removal of untouchability. I had gone to sleep the night before without the slightest idea of having to declare a fast the next morning. At about 12 o'clock in the night something wakes me up suddenly, and some voice within or without, I cannot say whispers, 'Thou must go on a fast.' 'How many days?' I ask. The voice again said, 'Twenty-one days.' 'When does it begin?' I ask. It says, 'You begin tomorrow.' I went quietly off to sleep after making the decision. I did not tell anything to my companions until after the Morning Prayer. I placed into their hands a slip of paper announcing my decision and asking them not to argue with me, as the decision was irrevocable. Well, the doctors thought I would not survive the fast. But something within me said I would, and that I must go forward. That kind of experience has never in my life happened before or after that date.

*M. K. Gandhi*

According to Gandhi, fasting has its own art and science and its own rule book. Referring to the various fasts undertaken by him in the course of his long and eventful life, Gandhi offered his own analysis and commentary on his practice of fasting. He also asserted subsequently that even fast unto death is an integral part of *satyagraha* and could be used in special circumstances as an unflinching and effective means in the armoury of a *satyagrahi*. But it requires proper practice, not just in physical terms, but primarily

in moral and spiritual terms. He further said that positive non-violence is based on love, though the latter has lost much of its wider and deeper meaning. Presently, it is being used in a narrow and limited sense. But it continues to be a powerful force as a lot of suffering is inherent in it. The primary purpose of love and positive non-violence is to evoke and arouse a deep feeling of altruism and goodness in human heart. He added that fasting was an integral part of his life. But such fasting could be resorted to only against those with whom one has a deep sense of bond and love. Hence, it could not be used for seeking something from others, rather it is used to bring about the change of heart of such people. This is my inner voice the voice, of my *atman*.

Gandhi's view on fast as the ultimate instrument of *satyagraha* has been greatly vitiated. In fact, fasting has become a matter of ridicule and is assuming an epidemic form. Those who undertake fast today are not inspired by the idea of martyrdom, rather it is being used as an instrument of intimidation and violence to finish off the opponent once for all. It is a kind of gun or even like a live bomb. In other words, it is forcing the other to concede to one's demands by putting a gun against his neck. It is nothing short of an ironical situation when fasting is resorted to draw attention to one's issues or grievances. Such fasts are more inspired by a feeling of enmity rather than that of love and goodwill. It is not difficult to find people who have developed some kind of special skill for such fasting. In this kind of fasting, the real purpose is put aside, and the ending of the fast gets focused by calling some leader or getting the request from some eminent person. Unless they are fully assured that the fast would come to an end soon, such people would never undertake any fast. The process of such conspiratorial fasting is something like this: Someone sits on fast, his followers engage themselves in stone throwing and try to make their unreasonable demands acceptable to their opponents and finally it ends on an appeal from someone holding power position. All this is part of a well-planned conspiracy. In such game of fasting, violence and not self-purification is the basic aim. Selfishness and politics are its

inherent and integral part. All this simply violates Gandhi's higher moral principle based on love and non-violence. I have known and seen many people undertaking fast unto death. But except Shri Ramlu in Andhra and Pheruman in Punjab, one could hardly find instances when people died in the course of their fasting. Thus, we have shamelessly made fasting cheap. This is no *Gandhigiri*, rather it is the murder of Gandhi's thoughts and something like its last rites.

It is a worth remembering truth that fasting is to be undertaken as the last resort in the course of any non-violent resistance. This is not meant for any Tom, Dick and Harry. Fasting for Gandhi was on the basis of a call from his inner voice. But others who resort to fasting have an axe to grind. They do it mostly on outside prompting. They themselves indulge in various acts of injustice in their dealings with others. How could they have any moral right to fast as a part of any non-violent resistance? On the other hand, a *satyagrahi*, who has undertaken fasting, is inspired by an ardent desire to offer non-violent resistance to every act of injustice. Besides, he is formally committed to the principle of truth, non-violence and change of heart. Fasting as a part of non-violent resistance is not like fasting on any religious and ceremonial occasion, viz., Ekadashi, Shivratri and similar occasions. If fasting is undertaken keeping the desire for food intact, then that is not the genuine kind of fast. Those whose will and desire remain untouched and unmoved even in the presence of tantalizing food items, they alone are competent to undertake fasting. Those who lack such faith, at times, ridicule Gandhi and his fasts, even attempt to present him as a villain or jester through cinemas and dramas. Some of them felt that Gandhi should act on the basis of their intelligence and understanding but should be using his own strength—both inner and otherwise. But Gandhi simply asserted that if he had to act on his own strength, then he must act on the basis of his own thoughts. There are people who believe that Gandhi's last fast was undertaken to force the government of India to hand over a sum of rupees fifty-five crores to Pakistan.

Such people often forget that his fast lasted even beyond the actual payment of that sum to Pakistan. In fact, the primary purpose of the fast was to create an environment of goodwill and communal harmony in which both Hindus and Muslims could live amicably. It is also to be remembered that the recognition to Pakistan as a separate and new nation was extended by keeping Gandhi in dark, as he had disfavoured it. Gandhi never fasted against General Dyer as the latter had no respect for Gandhi. In fact, he looked at Gandhi as being his enemy. On the other hand, on the eve of the partition of India, Gandhi fasted several times and earned the goodwill of all communities. There was always a possibility that his fasts could lead to his demise. This should be clearly understood by all those who ridicule Gandhi and his fasts. He never undertook any fast either to intimidate his opponent or to seek social recognition or out of any considerations for immediate political gains. Such people do not understand the genuine nature of Gandhi's fast as their own fasts are based on self-interest. They are never willing to put their life at stake in the process of their fasting as violence, domination and other ulterior motives are inherent in their fasts. Gandhi had never feared death. He wanted to offer everything including his body in the service of the country and its people. He was neither a power seeker; nor a pleasure seeker. He attempted to send a simple message to the people that they should live in peace and harmony. We could never understand the spiritual importance of his fasts; we unnecessarily have given a political colour to them. His fasts handled by men of lesser purity have turned into a mimicry based on corruption and selfishness. As a poet puts it.

‘It is good, O Gandhi

That you died at the right time,

Otherwise, you would have been dying every day.’



## Sevagram Ashram

Sevagram is to me a laboratory for ahimsa. If my experiments here were successful and I could find a solution for the little problems that confront me here, I am sure the same formula would provide me a solution for the bigger issues that today face us in the country. That is why I am so reluctant to leave Sevagram. It is my laboratory for *satyagraha*. It is there that I expect to discover the key to India's Independence, not in Simla or New Delhi.

*M.K. Gandhi*

Sevagram *ashram* stood for all that was divine, good, pure, sweet and what could be the best combination of all these elements in our national life. Social workers coming from different nook and corner of the country used to assemble and live there as members of an extended family. All this gave the *ashram* an inter-provincial, inter-religious, nay, even an international character. In any case, it was not an *ashram* in the traditional sense of the term, i.e. not a simple religious place, a *math*. It was one of the *karmabhumi* of Gandhi – his land of selfless action. He was firmly of the opinion that the 'constructive programme' was the real instrument for attaining *swaraj*. It was also the foundation on which true *swaraj* could be established through good governance. It was a revolutionary programme for nation building – from laying of the foundation to the raising of the entire superstructure. And Sevagram was the place of experiments for the same. While going out of his



Sabarmati *ashram* at Ahmedabad for Dandi March on 12 March 1930, he had vowed not to return to it, without attaining *swaraj* for the country. Subsequently, during 1934 he resigned even from the ordinary membership of the Indian National Congress and had made the constructive programme as his primary goal. On the request of Jamnalal Bajaj, Gandhiji came to Wardha, Maharashtra, on 29 October 1934 to settle down there permanently. Initially he lived in *kanya ashram* and Maganwadi at Wardha. Subsequently he decided to live at the backward village, 'Segaon' located at a distance of eight kilometers from Wardha. Jamnalalji was the landlord of Segaon – mostly a *harijan* settlement.

That was the background of the establishment of the Sevagram *ashram*. Service to the people particularly to the poor, the deprived, viz., *daridranarayan* had become the motive force of his life. Even rechristening of Segaon as Sevagram also symbolised that spirit. Gandhiji assigned a unique importance to the broomstick, *charkha* and collective prayer and as a result, they become the symbol of his schemes of social change and revolution. *Charkha* was the symbol of dignity to physical labour; while broomstick symbolised the abolition of caste system based on birth. Through the introduction of collective prayer Gandhiji was attempting to create a new India free from differentiation based on religion, region, caste, language and sects. Essentially it was an attempt to create a new and deep sense of unity and inter-dependence among the people of our country, nay even among the people of the entire world. All three, viz. *charkha*, broomstick and collective prayer were to work as the building block of a new social order based on Gandhian ideals. It was a programme which starting from *Antodaya* was to culminate in *Sarvodaya*. In other words, Gandhi's constructive programme based on truth and non-violence was nothing short of a well planned project to attain *purna swaraj*. Gandhiji rarely used the term 'independence', he preferred the use of the term *swaraj* which was also marked as the final goal of our freedom struggle. He firmly believed that if the constructive programmes are implemented in their entirety, the final result would be nothing

short of *purna swaraj*. The constructive programme comprises the following eighteen points:

1. Communal Unity
2. Removal of Untouchability
3. Prohibition
4. Khadi
5. Other Village Industries
6. Village Sanitation
7. New or Basic Education
8. Adult Education
9. Women
10. Education in Health and Hygiene
11. Provincial Languages
12. National Language
13. Economic Equality
14. *Kisans* (Farmers)
15. Labour
16. *Adivasis* (Tribals)
17. Lepers and
18. Students.

He founded separate organisations to carry out the different aspects of the constructive programme. All these programmes, their organizations, civil disobedience movement and the entire freedom struggle were the integral parts of the Sevagram *ashram*. In his pamphlet *Constructive Programmes*, underlining its centrality, he asserted that an attempt at civil disobedience movement without constructive programme would be like an attempt to pick up a spoon with a paralysed hand. And Sevagram *ashram* was the launching pad and life force of all these programmes including the conception and struggle for *swaraj*.

It is true that once Gandhi settled down at Sevagram *ashram*, it became the central point of national politics and even that of our entire battle for *swaraj*. It was from this very *ashram* that a unique programme of our national struggle, viz., Individual *satyagraha* was launched. It was a movement to protest against the

British decision to drag India into the Second World War without the consent of her people. Gandhiji himself selected a number of individual *satyagrahis* well steeped in truth and non-violence. That was the reason he picked up Vinoba Bhave, almost an unknown figure in the political field till then, as the first individual *satyagrahi*. Jawaharlal Nehru and others were to follow him. In the same way he selected my mother Damayanti Bai and Ramkrishna Bajaj – a mere lad of eighteen years, as individual *satyagrahis*.

Not only that, even the programme for the Quit India Movement was conceived at the precincts of the Sevagram *ashram*. He took the momentous decision of the Quit India Movement in July 1942. It was on the eve of the movement that he told the *ashram* inmates that the government might impose a ban on water and grain supply. Hence only those who are willing to face difficult situation should stay, the rest should head towards their home towns. It is an entirely different matter that not a single inmate left the *ashram*. The clarion call of the Quit India Movement was 'Do or Die'. He told the *ashram* inmates: 'I am going to Bombay tomorrow. I cannot say what will happen. But I hope to be back by August 11, and in any case not later than August 13. Those who are in the *ashram* should know that anything can befall them. It is possible that Government may even stop the supply of our food. Only those therefore should stay here who are ready to live even on leaves. The rest should leave. It will be a matter of shame for us if they leave after the trouble.'

I do not intend to make a detailed presentation on the Quit India Movement as its major course is already well known. But it is clear from the above discussion that constructive work and non-violent resistance were taken as the two sides of the same coin by Gandhiji. If any struggle does not have the potential of constructive work at its end, it has to be taken as being futile. On the other hand, if any constructive work completely ruled out possibility of struggle against injustice and bad governance, then that should also be considered being useless. It is this basic message of the Sevagram *ashram* which should be fully grasped

by those people who are interested in the struggle for struggle's sake only. Besides, just to say 'let us go to the village' or 'human life should be based on needs and not on wants' is not enough. Such a message must come from one's own life and living. Gandhi had rejected a pyramid like sociopolitical structure as such a system remains top heavy. Hence nothing reaches from top to the bottom. Most of the resources are retained and consumed at the top only. Gandhi proposed a bottom to top system based on his concept of the oceanic circle. The basic idea behind oceanic circle was that if one throws a piece of stone in a pond, at first it raises a small circle followed by bigger and bigger circles. Thus starting from covering the village, it goes on to cover *taluka*, district province and the entire country. Nay, it might even encompass the entire cosmos. An independent country comprising slave-villages or the *swaraj* for the country with the people remaining as slaves was not acceptable to Gandhiji. All this was not the goal of the Sevagram *ashram*. Its primary seeking was the attainment of *swaraj* for the people through both constructive and combative (*satyagraha*) programme. Sevagram *ashram* was not just a building made of bricks, stones and mortar. It was an embodiment of both *swaraj* and *suraj*.

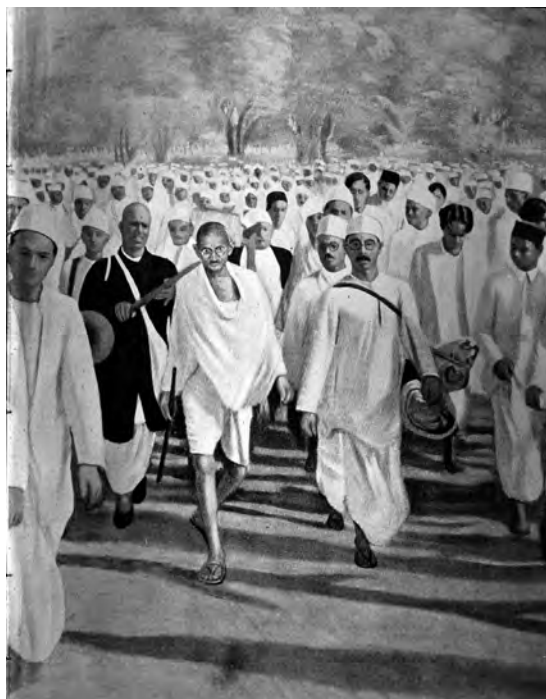
It needs to be borne in mind that Gandhi had every intention of coming back to the Sevagram *ashram* after settling the affairs at Delhi in the wake of India's partition. He was to return to Sevagram in February 1948. Dada Dharmadhikari had a meeting with Gandhiji on the morning of 30th January 1948. He enquired about the well-being of my mother whom even Gandhiji called *bahini* (sister). She had spent three years in jail during the individual *satyagraha* and the Quit India Movement. Such a long and torturous incarceration has adversely affected her balance and peace of mind. Gandhiji was aware of it. Dada told him that according to medical doctors there was not much possibility of improvement in her mental condition. Gandhiji told Dada that after coming back to the Sevagram in February 1948, he would take her as an inmate of the *ashram*. Dada told him why you

should waste precious time on her. Gandhiji responded by saying that how could it be that he did not have time for those who had put all that they had at stake at his call. But that was not to be. In the evening of that very day he was assassinated by Nathuram Godse. Godse was not just an individual; he represented an anti-Gandhi mindset.

On this auspicious occasion of the platinum jubilee of the Sevagram *ashram* we should gratefully recall Bapu's earnest desire to return to the *ashram* during February 1948. Sevagram is not just a piece of land with some buildings on it. It represents a way of life, a mindset inspired and sustained by high moral values and ideals like *karmayoga*, fair-mindedness, steadfast wisdom, fearlessness and friendship to all and enmity to none. Persistent pursuit of high ideals of purity and piety, a familial atmosphere with all its positive values like love and cooperation and similar other social and spiritual values were integrated in the intellectual perception and programmes of the *ashram*. Here there was no place for selfishness, beggary, possessiveness. Here there was no account of work put in by inmates, but all honorarium paid to them were accounted for till the last pie. The amount of the honorarium was decided on the needs of the inmates and not on the basis of their work/labour. There was a total ban on loan or donation on the part of inmates. Today how far we are able to live up to such high ideals is difficult to say. Here *anashakti* was neither *vishadyoga* nor *askatiyoga*. The entire atmosphere was marked by such high principles like the dignity of labour, social and individual *brahmacharya*, devotion, selflessness and collective *sadhana*. In the *ashram* humanism was the supreme faith to be practiced by all the inmates. It was a place of pilgrimage for spiritualism; cultural existence and human cooperation. From such an *ashram*, the theft of Gandhi's spectacles is great shame and all of us deserve blame and blemish. For his spectacles was not a thing, it was a symbol of universal value. It represented a unique worldview. This has given immense pain to the people like us. As Shri Mardekarji puts it.

'Many years have gone by  
And Mahatma came  
Let us do some self-introspection.  
By taking off our worn-out glasses!'

If this happens, then the platinum jubilee could have some meaning. It might be looked upon as being successful. On such auspicious occasion I just want to say: 'Let God blesses all of us with good intention and resolve!'



Dandi March in progress



## Socialism and Secularism

I am striving to become the best cement between the two communities. My longing is to be able to cement the two with my blood, if necessary. There is nothing in either religion to keep the two communities apart. In nature there is a fundamental unity running through all the diversity. Religions are no exception to the natural law. They are given to mankind so as to accelerate the process of realization of fundamental unity. The need of the moment is not an establishment of a Universal religion but there is a greater need to develop mutual respect towards the different religions.

*M.K. Gandhi*

How much of Gandhian thought and socialist ideas are inherent in the Indian Constitution has not been well-considered by the enlightened thinkers and scholars. The original Constitution of India was adopted during 1949. The preamble of that basic document did not contain any terms like 'socialist' and 'secular'. Not only that, in one of the provisions under Article 19 under the section of the Fundamental Rights there was an explicit mention of the Right to Property was made which included its Right to 'Acquire, Hold and Dispose' off property. This was against the very spirit of socialism apart from being violative of the basic aspiration of our people expressed during our freedom struggle. It was with the 42nd Amendment of our Constitution that both the terms, viz., 'socialist' and 'secular' were inserted in the Preamble of our Constitution. But what would be their explanation and

interpretation was not mentioned under 42nd Amendment of the Constitution. However, it was under 44th Amendment of our Constitution during 1978 that the right to property was removed from Article 19 (1). Under the same amendment an attempt was made to give an explanation of the terms 'socialist' and 'secular'. It was clearly stated therein that 'Socialist Republic' means a Republic in which there is freedom from all forms of exploitation, social, political, and economic and the word 'secular' was meant to convey a feeling of equal respect for all religions. Thus these terms were given one kind of explanation under the above amendment which had been proposed under the Janata regime during 1978. The amendment was passed by the Lok Sabha but failed to muster adequate support in the Rajya Sabha in the face of opposition from Indira Congress which enjoyed majority votes there. That is how the terms "socialist and secular" remain unexplained while they continue till today being an integral part of the Preamble of the Constitution. As a result, everyone is free to have his/her own explanation of these terms, Supreme Court of India has offered its own commentary on these terms.

In view of the above, the real puzzling question, we are faced with is: What could be the true explanation of the above terms – "socialist and secular"? Mahatma Gandhi in the *Young India* of 10th September 1931 explained his vision of the exploitation free society. After many years he once again tried to offer his own explanation of socialism when wrote in *Harijan* of June 1, 1947: 'The basis of socialism is economic equality. There can be no Ramarajya in the present state of iniquitous inequalities in which a few roll in riches and the masses do not get even enough to eat. I accepted the theory of socialism even while I was in South Africa. My difference with the Socialists and others consists in advocating non-violence and truth as the most effective means for any reform.' And that is why he emphasised his concept of trusteeship. Now the Supreme Court of both India and the United States of America have explained that the government could not be taken as the owner of the natural resources of the country, rather it should be taken as their 'trustee'. Their true inheritors and beneficiaries are



the people. Thus socialism is nothing but freedom from all kinds of slavery and exploitation. This is the meaning of the term 'equality' which our Constitution talks about.

But today the wind is blowing in favour of globalization and competitiveness. India is inviting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and also Multi-National Companies. All this simply means that India is once again moving towards the state of economic slavery. In such a situation my humble submission would be for the removal of the word "socialism" from the Preamble of our Constitution so that the people clearly understand that we do not want to build up a socialist society. The other alternative is that the explanation of "socialist society" which the Janata government had attempted to insert in our Constitution should be made its integral part.

This is also true of the word "secular." The Hindi version of the Indian Constitution as published by the Department of Law, Justice and Company Affairs, Government of India, uses the Hindi term *pantha-nirpeksha* for secular in English. But in Marathi version as per the documents of the Government of Maharashtra for 'secular' the term *dharma-nirpeksha* has been used. We have still to look for other versions of the term 'secular' in other languages of India! What is more, in some other documents of the Government of India, the term "secular" has been explained as *sarva-dharma sama bhava* or *dharma-nirpeksha* or even *Laukik*. Instead of giving my own commentary, I prefer to quote what Dada Dharmadhikari wrote on this theme:

'The history of the word secular is an old one. But it was being used with different meanings in different contexts, viz., secular games, secular clergy and secular "oscillation of the moon." George Jacob Holyoake was the first person to use the word secular in the sense of "this worldliness." It was in 1950 that he explained his differences with Charles Bradley in this regard. He said that the words "religion" and "secularism" are antonymous. They should not enter into each others world. He further added that one could willingly accept that morality is inherent in religion but religion could not be taken as being the singular basis of morality. All this simply means that secular could be *dharma-nirpeksha* but it could

not be anti-religion. In the dictionary, the word “secular” has been used for “atheism.” Thus it would be more appropriate to take into account the context in which the words like religion, atheism, spirituality and secularism are being used. Their meanings and contents could be fully understood only by taking into account their contexts.’

In our country, a number of eminent people have tried their hands at reconciling different religions and cultural traditions through inter-faith dialogues. One could think of three prominent names in this context. They are Ramakrishna Paramhansa, (which includes Vivekananda) Gandhi and Vinoba. Ramakrishna went to the extent of following and imbibing the religious practices of major religions in his own life and realised their basic unity in his own persona. Gandhi opted for community-prayer drawn from all religious traditions and tried to establish a new tradition of *sarva-dharma samabhava* in India and in the world. Vinoba made quintessential presentation of the scriptures of all major religions and put before the people for their essential unity. It is clear that denomination is excluded from the concept of secularism. Vinoba underlined the essential nature of secularism when he said that both religion and politics have become outdated and the present is the age of science and spirituality. On several occasions, Jawaharlal Nehru lent his own support to Vinoba’s perspective. Thus it is more than clear that secularism might negate religion but not spirituality.

On the basis of the above discussion, one could draw the conclusion that even the use of the term *sarva-dharma samabhava* is not free from all faults. One could always find fault with some of the rites and rituals of our own religion. For instance, could a Hindu, as a votary of equity and humaneness, support such concepts like sacred thread ceremonies or the pernicious practice like untouchability? Gandhi, despite claiming to be a *sanatani* Hindu, went to the extent of saying that if it is found that untouchability is sanctioned by the Vedas, then he would reject the Vedas itself. It means that even one’s faith in different aspects of one’s religion is to be guided by his deep sense of rationality and

discrimination. It was with such understanding and commitment that Gandhi on the one hand, stuck to Hinduism but opposed its pernicious and immoral practices tooth and nail, on the other. One should touch and enter into the heart of another person through his religion has been the primary approach of the social sciences. But a deep sense of discrimination should not be lost in the process is the basic understanding of man with reasoned faith. He must have similar approach to the religions of other people. Everyone should be free to practise and propagate his religion including its rites and rituals; but such a right must be governed by humanism, morality and rationality. This is not happening today in our country. Hence, there is no genuine practice of the principle of *sarva-dharma samabhava*.

It seems that law has gone beyond religion in respect of observance of moral laws in the present world. Law has established such universal moral values which are applicable to every human being. There is no place for creed, caste or racism in such a worldview. In this respect, such laws are secular or *dharma-nirpeksha* as compassion for all beings is their foundation. Here religion is left behind and law marches ahead.

There is no denying the fact that there should be equal respect for all religions; but in the process the moral and humane approach should not be lost. Such an approach is of utmost importance. If this is done, there would be a rare consonance between the *sarva-dharma samabhava* and the concept of secularism. This is because if there is *dharma-nirpekshata* in secularism and there is no special preference/insistence for any religion in the concept of *sarva-dharma samabhava*.

The problem is that these formulations relating to religion, science and spirituality have not been fully explained. Hence a lot of confusion is being spread and religiosity is on the ascent and all kinds of atrocities are being committed in the name of religion. One way to get rid of these problems could be to take out the word secular from the Preamble of the Constitution so that all confusions created by its various interpretations could be ended. This is my plea and appeal.



## Guarding the Vanguard

To safeguard democracy the people must have a keen sense of independence, self-respect and their oneness, and should insist upon choosing as their representatives only such persons as are good and true.

*M. K. Gandhi*

I would like to hail Anna Hazare for putting aside the question whether it was his victory or the government conceded too quickly to him. I am associated with Anna for many years. Quite a few people allege that his interests are involved in special kinds of movements. Thus he uses these movements to promote them. Similar kinds of things were said even about Jayaprakash Narayan. But the people had great faith in him. It is also true that the people of this country continue to look for a liberator. People's power is not fully alert and awakened and good people are basically indifferent and even inactive. Hence, the bad elements and miscreants are active and effective. That is the real tragedy of our society.

The youth of the country stood behind Anna Hazare and even a section of good people lent their support to him. That, to a great extent, contributed to the success of the movement. Thus the State power yielded to the people's power. That is quite expected in a democratic set-up. This is being described by some people as 'bowing down' on the part of the government. Such people forget that it is specifically mentioned in the Preamble of the Constitution that it would be the duty of the government to respect the popular will. This is what Anna Hazare's movement has proved.

Mahatma Gandhi called the British Parliament like a sterile woman as it could not produce a single good action purely on its own strength. This has been proved once again by the success of Anna Hazare's movement. A new hope was aroused that a new Lokpal Act would be passed, which has been lying in the cold storage for the last forty years. Law could at the most open a new path, but it could not make people to walk on it. Inspiration should arise in the minds of the people and the level of the civil society. India is described as a country with maximum laws but with the least implementation. Everyone wants to end the present pandemic form of corruption, but today the law breakers any day outnumber the law abiders. The former is even more respected than the latter. Today money, muscle, mafia and media appear as the most powerful force in the society. One hopes that this kind of situation would change after Anna Hazare's movement. As the poet Faizabadi put it:

‘Whenever I take up sword  
for using it somewhere  
I find that my own head  
Is the target on every occasion.’

In such a situation, one is reminded of Gandhi's opinion that in the absence of purity of means, the end would get corrupted. This is the real difference between real Gandhi and fake Gandhi. The cap which is associated with Gandhi still carries a lot of social respect and recognition. But even fake monk wear saffron dress as it is respected in the society. But such hypocrites only take undue advantage of renunciation that is still respected in the society. Not only that there are people in the society who even exploit good people and their goodness. There are people who also indulge in violence taking the cover of non-violence. They do not understand the symbiotic relationship between the means and the end. This is also a kind of corruption. At times even good people go down to that level on account of lure of social recognition. If one allows one's goodness to be used by bad elements, that is also a corrupt

practice. That is the real meaning of the above poem of Faizabadi. Like Tsunami in nature, at times similar kind of social movements do occur in the society calling for a revolutionary social change. It creates a big social stir for sometime and then subsides. There are leaders who assert that people full of life and verve do not wait for five years for any revolutionary change. But tragically enough even such leaders and their followers do go in slumber for many years. They even become a part of the established order. That is the tragedy which struck even the J.P. Movement. Hence some people called it a total confusion in place of total revolution. To preclude such possibilities once and for all we have to develop some yardsticks for such movements and their leaders. For instance, we have to go beyond the consideration of caste, religion, creed, language, region, money and social pressure. Besides, at the time of exercising our voting rights, we have also to go beyond taking any candidate as our own, based on the above considerations. It becomes the sacred duty of every citizen to elect someone as the people's representative who bears a high moral character. Not to do so should be taken nothing short of indulging in corruption. It is not enough merely to take such decisions, it has to be put into practice with all sincerity.

Corruption starts from the student union election held at the college or the university level. Hence it has to be put to an end at that very level. Similarly, corruption at examination system would have to be curbed. J.P. asked the students to get rid of sacred thread. That was a call to end casteism and untouchability at every level. We cannot forget that when Jagjivan Ram, the Deputy Prime Minister of India, unveiled the statue of Dr. Sampurnananda at Varanasi, during 1978, a section of the people went to the extent of washing it with Gangajal for its purification.

Something similar happened in South India on 7 April 2011, when an upper class man who was occupying the chair vacated by a retiring dalit employee. He got the entire office premises washed on that very count. Such kind of untouchability must be put to an end here and now. The youth would have to move a step further.

They have to take a pledge that they would not accept any kind of dowry either in cash or kind, and would not even attend any marriage where such things have happened.

Drug addiction is another problem affecting our society. It has got to be stopped along with its commercialisation. The government would never undertake such onerous task. It has got to be done at the civil society level. We know the social history of man that there are two types of culture—consumer culture and renunciatory culture. We have to adopt a culture of renunciation and sacrifice. In the process, we have to insist on decentralisation and redistribution of power and wealth. Those who have faith in astrology, gambling and exorcists should be considered as the promoter of corruption in the society. This is a bitter truth. We have to struggle against such mindset. We have also to remember that any act of injustice and exploitation amounts to corruption. We have to oppose even our own people if they indulge in any kind of corrupt practice. While talking about our Fundamental Rights, we should never forget that rights are born from the womb of duties. Not performing our duties is also a kind of corruption. Misuse of power in a democratic set up is the mother of all corruption. Desire to gain or grab something putting aside rules and social norms are the breeding ground of all types of corruption. Use of unfair means in the examination and manipulation of entrance examination for admission are illustrative examples of corrupt practices in the educational field. All such malpractices must be put to an end. Sometimes we think that only the bribe taker is to be blamed. This is not true. One may go along with J.B. Kripalani when he said that one who gives bribe should be considered as a greater sinner than the one who demands and accepts it. Those who give tacit social acceptance to such malpractices are equally blameworthy. Similarly all those who make money by unfair means, and then try to offer their black money for any social cause, in their attempt to be accepted as great philanthropist, do also fall in the category of corrupt people. They would have to be identified and discarded. They should also be socially boycotted. It is also

unethical to invite such people on social and religious occasions. Those who lack self-control and use abusive language are to be considered as violent people.

Some of us feel that the compromises we make in our dealings are a part of our pragmatism. But we look at similar compromises by others as a part of their corruption. There is a saying in Gujarati that good people meet at the cremation grounds. It is our good fortune that on account of Anna Hazare's movement, some people have met at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi. It could not be said with any great sense of certainty that all those who gathered there were good people – totally free from corruption. In any case Anna Hazare's movement could not be compared with Gandhi's *satyagraha*. *Satyagrahi* is one who has imbibed truth and non-violence in every walks of his life. If one feels that he alone is truthful and non-violent, that is also a kind of egotism. Even any claim of sacrifice and renunciation should also be taken as an act of egotism. That also indirectly helps corruption. The people who crave for social recognition or who just put Gandhi cap on top of their heads could not be taken as true Gandhians.

It is a historical experience that those who apparently desire change are themselves scared of change, as they do not feel secure about their own position in the new set-up. Hence they compromise with existing situations or even in the new set-up forgetting their earlier commitment of revolutionary change in the society. Hence the moot question in democracy is who would guard the vanguards? Society could not just feel secure by putting some guards on the job. Whether he is wide awake or in deep slumber would have to be watched. There is a need for constant vigilance. At times a committee is set up just to put the issue in cold storage. Will the movement led by Anna Hazare meet the same fate which JP's movement earlier met? JP wanted Total Revolution in cultural, social, economic and political fields. But the people who came to power in the wake of the movement were just interested in occupying positions vacated by Indira government. That was their conception of the movement. The truth of the matter is that



corruption in the society would not come to an end unless there is change in all walks of our life including social, political, economic and even cultural fields.

Is there any guarantee that we would not go back to the same old ways after the present Tsunami against corruption? Such movement leads to upheaval rather than revolution. To build up a new social order we have to curb three types of power—emanating from wealth, religion and business. Unless this is done, no renaissance is possible in our social system. We all expect and hope for such change to take place sooner than later.



K Kelappan



## What Gandhi Would Have Done If Alive Today?

I have not conceived my mission to be that of a knight-errant wandering everywhere to deliver people from difficult situations. My humble occupation has been to show people how they solve their own difficulties.... My work will be finished if I succeed in carrying conviction to the human family, that every man or woman, however weak in body, is the guardian of her self-respect and liberty.

*M.K. Gandhi*

Once I asked my father, Dada Dharmadhikari, also a great commentator and interpreter of Gandhian ideas: What Gandhi would have been doing if he was alive today? He replied: 'He does not know what Gandhi would be doing if he was alive today?' He further added: "Think of things he would or could do in the present context.' The nature of problems is no longer the same as it used to be in Gandhi's lifetime. There is nothing like Gandhism or Gandhian sect. There is just a dynamics of his ideas.

As such, it ever continues to develop and unfold in the changing context. There are a number of people who believe that Gandhi's thoughts are outdated and irrelevant as they are not in tune with the present times. On the other hand even some Gandhians are mechanically depending on his words to meet the challenge of our times, instead of making their own creative thinking. The real challenge is to start our thought process from the point Gandhi left after his assassination. In this context, two questions appear to

be of great importance. One, what is the meaning of the present civilization? Two, is it a boon or a curse? If we consider it as a curse and crisis, then we must go into the roots of the problem and an attempt should be made to find its solution. In this context I would like to quote a sentence from Kahlil Gibran, a great thinker and poet who said: 'And as a single leaf turns not yellow but with the silent knowledge of the whole tree, So the wrong-doer cannot do wrong without the hidden will of you all.' Likewise the present crisis would not have been created in the absence of our hidden desires and aspirations.

In the present atmosphere of globalization and marketing system, man himself has become a marketable commodity. Such a commercial mindset has reached a phase where we have come to believe that every man carries a price tag on his persona. He or she could be bought and sold for a price. Such a thinking is on the ascent. Emerson was right when he said that the position of women in any civilization could provide a singular yardstick to judge its quality. The present marketing system has placed women in the market as a commodity to be bought and sold. In almost all the beauty contests, a young and beautiful woman is selected by those who want to have the lion's share of the market for their commodities. Thus, woman's bodily beauty is used for advertising their commodities in the market. She is becoming a commodity and in the process she is losing her dignity of womanhood. Today even parents want their daughters to become 'models' which is turned into a commodity.

We have to find new ways based on the Gandhian thought to tackle this problem. We have to bear in mind that constructive programme and struggles are complimentary and supplementary to each other. In the absence of one, the other is meaningless. It is also bereft of all powers. Gandhiji put forward the idea of *shanti-sena* particularly *mahila shanti-sena*. It is a matter which deserves serious consideration.

Today there is a growing tendency to insist that Gandhian thought is on wane as untruth, violence and selfishness are

becoming the order of the day. It is being widely believed that by physically eliminating a person, we could easily get rid of his thoughts. That is the reason why some of the great men in history have met their violent ends.

After all, civilization simply means that people have a shared life marked by cooperation and interdependence. In fact, surety of life and its concomitant prosperity could be very well taken as the true meaning of civilization. But strangely enough, modern civilization is based on excessive exploitation of natural resources. It is giving no respect to the dignity of labour and promotes prosperity of a few at the cost of millions of marginalised people. In sharp contrast to it, fragments of a new civilization emerged on account of Gandhi's non-violent resistance. It is not so difficult to understand the meaning and implication of Gandhian concept of civilization and culture. According to him, a true civilization is one which shows the path of duties towards people and which teaches the way to self-control. In other words, a truly civilised person is one whose life is marked by the fulfilment of his needs instead of unnecessary wants and desires. But modern civilization is promoting the culture of possessiveness by luring us towards a state of ever increasing human desires. The more we get, the more we desire. This is an endless process.

This is leading human kind towards an acquisitive society. Earlier it used to be said that Gandhi had done away with the power of religion, business and wealth. Instead he replaced them by the power of the bag, the broomstick and the flag. He wanted to put an end to religiosity, as well as the power of market and wealth. Hence, he wanted the human society to reach the state of welfare for all (*sarvodaya*) by starting with the welfare of the least and the last (*antodaya*) Modern civilization has no such desires and dreams. It is based on human selfishness. Its primary assumption is that if everyone takes care of his/her self-interests, its sum total would be the progress and prosperity of all.

Lacking the iron will to grapple with the whole range of problems confronting them, the humankind is taking to an escapist

route. They are seeking the shelter of *jyotish* (astrology) and *ojha* (exorcist). This is so because they find it difficult to cope with the uncertainty created by modern civilization and science. Hence, they are desirous of extra sensory power. Our civilization is faced with innumerable crisis. What is more, such crises are not only on individual level but even on societal plane. We need people in general and the youth in particular whose lives would be marked by intelligence, truthfulness, and will to suffer and sacrifice for others. All this could be the undying hope of the humankind.



Young Gandhi as a Satyagrahi in South Africa

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## **INSTITUTE OF GANDHIAN STUDIES**

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# Appendices

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## Appendix - I

### Gandhi's Last Will and Testament

*January 29, 1948*

This constitution was drafted by Gandhiji for the Congress on the eve of his assassination. His intention was to show how the Congress which was till now mainly concerned with achieving political independence might convert itself into an association for the Service of the People (Lok Sevak Sangh), and work for the establishment of a nonviolent society

NEW DELHI  
January 29, 1948

Though split into two, India having attained political independence through means devised by the Indian National Congress, the Congress in its present shape and form, i.e., as a propaganda vehicle and parliamentary machine, has outlived its use. India has still to attain social, moral and economic independence in terms of its seven hundred thousand villages as distinguished from its cities and towns. The struggle for the ascendancy of 'civil over military power is bound to take place in India's progress towards its democratic goal. It must be kept out of unhealthy competition with political parties and communal bodies. For these and other similar reasons, the A.I.C.C. resolves to disband the existing Congress organization and flower into a Lok Sevak Sangh under the following rules with power to alter them as occasion may demand.

Every panchayat of five adult men or women being villagers or village-minded shall form a unit.

Two such contiguous panchayats shall form a working party under a leader elected from among themselves. When there are one hundred such panchayats, the fifty first grade leaders shall elect from among themselves a second 'grade leader and so on, the first grade leaders meanwhile working under the second grade leader. Parallel groups of two hundred panchayats shall continue to be formed till they, cover the whole of India, each succeeding group of panchayats electing a second grade leader after the manner of the first. All second grade leaders shall serve jointly for the whole of India and severally for their respective areas. The second grade leader may elect, whenever they deem necessary, from among themselves a chief who will, during pleasure, regulate and command all the groups.

(As the final formation of provinces or districts is still in state of flux, no attempt has been made to divide this group of servants into provincial or District Councils, and jurisdiction over the whole of India has been vested in the group or groups that may have been formed at any time. It should be noted that this body of servants derive their authority or power from service ungrudgingly and wisely done to their master, the whole of India).

1. Every worker shall be a habitual wearer of khadi made from self-spun yarn or certified by the A.I.S.A. and must be a teetotaler. If a Hindu, he must have abjured untouchability in any shape or form in his own person or in his family and must be a believer in the ideal of inter-communal unity, equal respect and regard for all religions and equality of opportunity and status for all irrespective of race, creed or sex.
2. He shall come in personal contact with every villager, within his jurisdiction.
3. He shall enroll and train workers from amongst the villagers and keep a register of all these.
4. He shall keep a record of his work from day to day.
5. He shall organize the villages so as to make them self-contained and self-supporting through their agriculture and handicrafts.'
6. He shall educate the village folk in sanitation and hygiene and take all measures for prevention of ill-health and disease among them.

7. He shall organize the education of the village folk from birth to death along the lines of Nai Talim, in accordance with the policy laid down by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh.
8. He shall see that those whose names are missing on the statutory voters rolls are duly entered therein.
9. He shall encourage those who have not yet acquired the legal qualification, to acquire it for getting the right of franchise.'
10. For the above purposes and others to be added from time to time, he shall train and fit himself in accordance with the rules laid down by the Sangh for the due performance of duty.

The Sangh shall affiliate the following autonomous bodies:

1. A.I.S.A. (All-India Spinners Association)
2. A.I.V.I.A. (All-India Village Industries Association)
3. Hindustani Talimi Sangh (Society for Basic Education)
4. Harijan Sevak Sangh (Society for service' of "untouchables")
5. Goseva Sangh (Society for Cow-protection and Improvement)

## Finance

The Sangh shall raise finances for the fulfillment of its mission, from among the villagers and others, special stress being laid on collection of the poor man's piece.

—*Harijan*, 15-2.1948



## Appendix - II

### Dharmadhikari Family and Mahatma Gandhi

This brief note is not primarily meant to eulogise the contributions of Dharmadhikari family to the cause of our national movement. Rather it seeks to underline how Gandhi's life, thought and his leadership of the national movement drew and greatly impacted the life and living of a traditional Brahmin Maharastrian family. In the process, they not only fought for Indian independence but also contributed greatly to the cause of social reform movement in the country. Thousands of families like Dharmadhikari suffered during our struggle for independence. But they never flinched from the struggle. Our younger generation must be reminded how these families suffered in the course of our national struggle. This should work as a primary source of inspiration for them.

*(Ram Chandra Pradhan)*

Dharmadhikaris' belong to an illustrious family of Maharashtrian Brahmins. They came from Paithan in Maharashtra. One of their ancestors was appointed as the priest of the goddess of the village by a Maratha chieftain. Finally, they came down to Multapi (now Multai from where the Tapti river originates), a part of Betul district of Madhya Pradesh. Now they have branched off and are settled in different parts of Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra including Vidharba, Mumbai and Pune. 'Shri Dutt' is the family deity of the Dharmadhikaris'.

Dharmadhikari family came to occupy a prominent position in and around Multai on account of their wealth, high moral and ethical behavior and scholarly and intellectual attainments. The members of their family though essentially being traditional were more governed by the *shastras* (scriptures) rather than mere out-worn social traditions. Hence, they played a crucial role in spreading a strong stream of scholarship, work ethics and moral behaviour in the entire area around Multai. Some of their family members could recite the *Veda-sanhita* in their pure and sonorous voice which greatly influenced the people in the area. But it was a forward looking family and many of its members were also adepts in several secular fields like painting, sculpture, cookery, carpentry etc. They had also *vaidyas* in their family whom the people of the area used to consult regarding their health problems. Their real forte was that

whatever works they would undertake, they would perform them with full dedication, sincerity and seriousness. Their life was informed by high moral aesthetic and artistic values.

There were two family houses of Dharmadhikaris at Multai known as *Bada Ghar* (Big House) and *Chhota Ghar* (Small House). Big House was like a kind of fort, while even the small had a big courtyard at the centers surrounded by livings rooms, big verandas and a big boundary around the settlement. The ancestors of Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari resided in the *Chhota Ghar*. The name of his ancestor was Dhundiraj (Bapuji). He had all the traits of spiritual and worldly wisdom. He was known for his sharp intellect and high artistic values. Many people in the area even looked at him as the *guru* and used to consult him and seek his guidance in respect of their problems. He was a *vaidya*, a wrestler and was an adept in several branches of learning. He was a man of progressive outlook. Hence, he was successful in keeping away the reactionary social values at bay.

When English education was introduced in the country, Dharmadhikari family took it up in a big way. Some of them took up law and others medicine as their profession. But they did not give up the traditional Sanskrit learning either: Some of them went up to Kashi for it. T.D. Dharmadhikari alias Babasaheb father of Dada Dharmadhikari got the job of a civil judge. He became additional session judge which was considered to be quite a high judicial position for an Indian during those days. He was known for his dedication, integrity and impartiality. Another member of the family, Narayan Laxman alias Nanasaheb Dharmadhikari started his legal practice in Morshi in Vidharbha. He earned considerable goodwill and pristine reputation. And yet another member of the family, Krishna Mahadeva alias Babasaheb junior settled down with legal profession at Betul. He also was quite successful in his profession. What was more, he was quite progressive both in his thoughts and social behaviour. He joined *Swaraj* Party when it came into being around 1923 and also became a member of the C.P and Berar Council.

Another uncle of Dada Dharmadhikari, Kashinath alias Annasaheb was a practicing medical doctor at Daryapur in Amaravati district. He was son of Ram Krishna Bhaiya, who was the elder brother of Dhundiraj (Bapuji). Annasaheb occupied a unique place in family. It was because of his progressive and social commitment that the Dharmadhikari family

got interested in the issues like *swaraj* and *swadeshi* and also giving precedence to social work over family interests. Earlier he was a student of the Grant Medical College, Bombay. It is he who brought the wind of social change, which was blowing in and around Bombay and Puna during those days, to Multai and surrounding areas. He introduced English dress, tea and stove and even a modern hair style in the family. He used to come over to Multai during summer vacation with a message of *Swadeshi* for the area. He used to organise assemblies of quite a few of the youth of Multai and sing *Vande Matram* and '*Singharh ka povada*'. He also used to stage some dramatic performance at Multai. He was also interested in *Kirtan* as his life was full of devotion as much for the country as for the gods and goddesses. He also introduced a new concept of fund raising which was called '*paise fund*'. Such novel experiments in the fund collection were praised by Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhiji even wrote about it in *Harijan* in 1935.

Dharmadhikari family never believed in the lopsided development of human personality. They believed in full development of both human brain and the brain. Hence physical exercise got as much importance as the study of scriptures. They were also engaged in public discourse on public and social issues. What was more, on account of the nature of the joint family, all individual angularities were smoothened and the family members easily learned the art of living in cooperation and mutuality. Another, strong point of Dharmadhikari family was that there was not much segregation between its male and female members. The art of cookery occupied a significant part in the family. Hence, male and female could easily interact with each other in and around the kitchen. Hence, the women in the family could not remain too much bound by the tradition. Annasaheb's progressive ideas worked as the prime mover in the evolution of an atmosphere of amity and friendliness among the members of the family. Thus new hair style and other symbols of modernity entered into the family which also influenced other people in and around Multai.

However, that did not mean that there was no conflict between modernity and tradition in the family. One example from the family history would easily explain the entire situation. Krishna Mahadeva alias Babasaheb of Betul, who was uncle of Dada Dharmadhikari, was a progressive man with lot of modern ideas. But his father Mahadeva

Shastri, a Vedic scholar, was a tradition bound person. He would not take his food without performing some *yagna*. Babsaheb of Betul used to allow the *Harijans* to draw water from the well of the family. Not only that, as a widower he got married to the sister of Govind Pandurang Devadhar, one of the leading Marathi poets despite some opposition from the family members. The problem was that she was already married to a non-Brahmin person who had duped her by hiding his real caste. The result was that the *Sanatani* members of the family boycotted him and they would not accept water from his family. But the father and grandfather of Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari stood by him. All this became the talk of the town particularly among the Brahmins of the area. The dispute among the members was fierce and it was taken to Nityanand Parvatiya, a prominent Vedic scholar of Kashi. Fortunately, he favoured the stand taken by the modernist members of the family and opined that Babasaheb's marriage was under scriptural sanctions. But even his opinion did not deter the tradition bound members of the family who continued to boycott the families of Babasaheb and Dada Dharmadhikari. Gradually, other members of the family ended the boycott except one of the Dada's uncle Nilakantha Shastri alias Bhau Saheb. Even Dada's mother used to refuse water from Dada's hands.

Subsequently, Dada Dharmadhikari, (the father of the author), joined the national movement led by Gandhiji. He left his education and became a non-cooperator around 1921-22. He was married to the daughter of a rich family of Mirapurkar, from a village in the Wardha district. He had joined the national movement soon after his marriage and his own family suffered some kind of neglect at the hands of other members of the family both for his progressive ideas as well as for his non-earning status. Subsequently he joined Tilak Rashtriya Vidyalaya at Nagpur at a mere monthly salary of Rs. 30. Damayanti Dharmadhikari, his wife, started wearing Khadi and valiantly adapted to a new life of simplicity and self-imposed poverty despite her own rich family background. She sold all her ornaments to support the family. She always remained as a symbol of self-respect, and dignity. There was a rare kind of majesty in her entire demeanour and behavior. The whole family adopted a simple life style of Gandhiji and the total expenditure of marriage of Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari and two brothers was less than 25 rupees and the form of marriage was secular one, that is, registered marriage.

Dada Dharmadhikari had a part of his school education at Sagar, Hosangabad and Nagpur. As a school boy he had the occasion to see such prominent leaders like Rash Behari Bose and Satyadeva Parivrajak. Dada Dharmadhikari came to acquire excellent command over several of languages including Marathi, Sanskrit, Hindi and English. He ultimately turned out to be one of the finest orators our country could boast of.

Despite the several breaks in his education, he ultimately passed matriculation examination from Midnapur in West Bengal . His father was in judicial service. But his father stood by him when he joined the national movement. In the process he was denied promotion in his service on account of his support to his son.

It would not be out of place to mention that Dada Dharmadhikari subsequently went to Multai for a while to study Prasthan Trayi from Nilkantha Shastri alias Bhausaheb. Bhausaheb was not in favour of Gandhian movement and he had sharp differences with Dada on that count. But despite such differences they never lost mutual respect for each other. Bhausaheb extracted a promise from his disciple, Dada Dharmadhikari, that the latter would never discard the sacred threads (yagyopavitra) from his persona. Dada was totally against any distinction and discrimination on the basis of caste. But he kept the promise given to Bhausaheb all his life. Sacred thread ceremony for Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari and his younger brother was never held by Dada on account of his opposition to all kinds of caste distinctions. His family had to pay a heavy price for all his progressive ideas.

Dada Dharmadhikari stayed with his father at Nagpur till he died in 1934. His mother opted for a life of traditional Hindu widow despite strong opposition from Dada. She persisted and suffered at the hands of other family members. Widowhood was supposed to be a symbol of inauspicious and misfortune during those days.

Another incident from Dharmadhikari family needs to be retold to underline the sufferings the families of freedom-fighters in the cause of the national struggle. The younger brother of Dada, Balla Dharmadhikari went to jail though his wife was suffering from T.B. Their son, Devdutta was still a kid. Devdutta ultimately went up to become the judge of the Supreme Court of India. But as a kid he and his mother, Malati Dharmadhikari suffered on account of his father being in Jail. They were even neglected by other members of the family.

## II

Dada Dharmadhikari had five children one daughter and four sons. Their eldest child was Usha who was born in January 1921, just after Dada had joined the Gandhian Movement. Till 1934 all the children were born at different places including Nagpur.

Dada went to Jail during all *satyagrahas* launched by Gandhiji including salt *satyagraha*. In the Quit India Movement of 1942 eight members of Dharmadhikari family were imprisoned.

Dada was not in favour of any inheritance of family property. He has renounced his share as a matter of principle. He could not take even a kilo of food grains from the joint family. In fact, his concept of family extended even beyond the extended family not to speak of his own nuclear family. His family comprises the people drawn from different castes, creed, region and religion. All his children went to Nagarpalika School in which Marathi and Hindi were the medium of instruction. During those days, there was not much difference between the children of the rich and the poor so far school education was concerned. In any case, as the children of a freedom fighter and someone who had renounced his share of joint family property, they could have hardly afforded any other type of schooling except the municipal schools.

Dada's children also suffered some neglect from other members of the family as their father was not in the business of money making. He was virtually a secular *sanyasi* for all practical purposes.

After 1935, Dada's family comprising his wife and five children shifted to Wardha at the request of Jamnalal Bajaj. They set up home in a part of Bajajwadi. Life at Bajajwadi was marked by inter-caste, inter-region and inter-religious living. Sevagram ashram was also nearby where Gandhiji lived and led the national movement. Wardha was the place where the Gandhian stalwarts of freedom movement like Kishorlal Mashruwala, Mahadeva Desai, Kaka Saheb Kalelkar, Shrikrishna Das Jajoo lived and fought for the freedom of the country. Their deep sense of commitment, a life of simplicity and contentment, their nationalist fervour was seen to be believed. The entire environment was marked by a high sense of equity, equality and purposeful living. Narayan Jajoo, Narayan Desai, Gautam Bajaj, Ramkrishna Bajaj and Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari and other young children became great chums fired by a sense of nationalism. Above all, Sevagram and Bapu were the primary

source of inspiration for all the people including these children. All these youngsters set up an organisation called *Ghanchakkar Samaj* which activities ranged from sports to the national movement. It was Dada Dharmadhikari who had christened it as the *Ghanchakkar Samaj*. It was a matter of great satisfaction for these youngsters that Mahatma Gandhi and Acharya Kripalani consented to become its President and Vice President respectively as both of them also considered themselves belonging to the same tribe of *Ghanchakkars*. The active members of the *Samaj* belonged to the age group of ten to twenty. All Dharmadhikari youngsters were active participants of the *Samaj*. There was an unwritten agreement among its members. No one should ask about any one's caste, income and other social background. Unity including men and women and equality at all levels was the hallmark of that organization. The members had the privilege to be addressed by eminent personalities like Rajendra Prasad, Acharya Kripalani and others. The family members of Dharmadhikari would not visit any temple which was not opened for *Harijans*. The use of *Swadeshi* goods was the order of the day for this family. The members of the *Samaj* had opportunities to play some games even with Jawaharlal Nehru and Acharya Kriplani and others. One of its members Ramkrishna Bajaj participated in the individual *satyagraha* launched by Gandhi during 1940-41. He was the youngest *satyagrahi*. He suffered four months imprisonment during the struggle. During 1942 Gandhiji launched his Quit India Movement. Quite a few members of the *Ghanchakkar Samaj* Narayan Jajoo, Ramkrishna Bajaj and two sons of Dada Dharmadhikari Pradumn and Yashwant Dharmadhikari went to jail in the course of the movement. Other members of the *Samaj*, including Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari participated in demonstration and picketing also on the school gate. These youngsters lay down at the gate of the school and no entry to the school premises was possible without running over their bodies. A very daring incident took place during these picketing sessions on the school gate. One of the members rushed forward and just threw himself in front of the car. He escaped death by a whisker. Ultimately, the school was closed. Another incident took place at Gandhi *Chowk* in the course of demonstrators Jangalu Hamal was killed in police firing in the course of demonstration at the Gandhi *Chowk*. Some of the students of the school who were picketing at the school were expelled and an order was issued prohibiting their admission in any other school. Chandrashekher Dharmadhikari was one of them.

Dada Dharmadhikari, his wife Damayanti Dharmadhikari along with his two sons Pradumna and Yashwant were in Jail. Their daughter, Usha had come for delivery and there was their youngest son to be looked after. Perhaps, that was the reason why Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari was spared from being arrested. It was in the course of imprisonment that Damayanti Dharmadhikari lost her mental equilibrium and developed some mental problems. She had to live with her mental problem till her end.

In the post-independent India, Dharmadhikari family engaged itself as vigorously in the task of building an exploitation and domination free *Sarvodaya Samaj* as it has fought for India's independence. Dada Dharmadhikari played a crucial role both in *Bhoodan Gramdan* Movement as well as JP Movement. He remained a leading light of these movements both as an intellectual and as an activist. Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari and his family members have made their own contributions in the spread of Gandhian ideas. In this context it is befitting to quote a few lines from *Frances Ellen Watkins Harper*, an African-American poet, which reads.

'I ask no monument proud and high,  
To arrest gaze of the passers-by;  
All that my yearning spirit craves,

Is bury me not in a land of slaves.'

Dharmadhikaris have always waged a relentless battle to free India from the ignominy of being 'a land of slaves'. Is there anything more to aspire for!



Dada Dharmadhikari



## Appendix - III

### A Chronology of Major Events in Gandhi's Life

- 1869 - Birth on 2<sup>nd</sup> October
- 1883 - Marries Kasturba
- 1888 - Sails to London for legal study
- 1891 - Returns to India
- 1893 - Goes to South Africa and faces racial discrimination
- 1894 - Founds Natal India Congress
- 1895 - Starts working in the cause of the Indian immigrants in South Africa
- 1896 - Returns to India
- 1897 - Goes back to South Africa and faces violent resistance from African whites
- 1901 - Returns to India
- 1902 - Goes to South Africa
- 1903 - Starts Publication of the *Indian Opinion*
- 1904 - Founded Phoenix Settlement
- 1906 - Takes the Vow of *brahmacharya*
- 1906 - Conceives passive resistance as a method of non-violent resistance
- 1908 - Formal adoption of *satyagraha*
- 1909 - Writes *Hind Swaraj*
- 1910 - Founded Tolstoy Farm
- 1913 - Launches great march in South Africa
- 1914 - Gandhi-Smuts agreement
- 1915 - Arrives in India
- 1916 - Founded Satyagraha Ashram in Ahmedabad
- 1917 - Champaran *satyagraha*
- 1918 - Kheda *satyagraha* and Ahmedabad mill workers strikes
- 1919 - Launches Rowlatt *satyagraha*
- 1920 - Starts Non-Cooperation Movement
- 1922 - Withdraws Non-Cooperation Movement
- 1922 - Tried and awarded six year imprisonment
- 1924 - Released from Jail
- 1930 - Launches salt *satyagraha*

- 1931 - Gandhi-Irwin Pact
- 1934 - Withdraws Civil Disobedience Movement
- 1936 - Founded Sevagram Ashram
- 1937 - Gives *Nai Talim* programmes
- 1939 - Opposes the Second World War
- 1940 - Launches Individual *satyagraha*
- 1942 - Quit India Movement
- 1946 - Fights communal frenzy in Noakhali, Calcutta and Bihar
- 1947 - Fails to prevent the partition of India
- 1948 - Fast unto death in Delhi
- 1948 - Was assassinated on 30<sup>th</sup> January

## Appendix - IV

### Glossary

<i>Abhyasa</i>	: Repetition; Practice; study
<i>Advaita</i>	: Non-dualism
<i>Ahimsa</i>	: Non-violence
<i>Akash</i>	: Ether; Sky
<i>Allah</i>	: The name of Muslim God
<i>Anasakti</i>	: Non-attachment
<i>Ananda</i>	: Joy
<i>Anekantavada</i>	: Belief in many sided truth
<i>Aparigraha</i>	: Non-possession
<i>Ashram</i>	: Abode of a spiritual teacher
<i>Atman</i>	: Soul
<i>Avatara</i>	: Incarnation of God
<i>Bhakti</i>	: Devotion
<i>Bhakt</i>	: A devotee
<i>Bhajan</i>	: Hymn
<i>Bible</i>	: Judo-Christian religious book
<i>Brahma</i>	: Hindu name of God, the creator
<i>Brahmachari</i>	: A celibate; one who lives a life of self-restraint
<i>Brahmacharya</i>	: Celibacy
<i>Brahman</i>	: The ultimate reality
<i>Brahmin</i>	: The highest caste in Hindu society
<i>Charkha</i>	: Spinning wheel
<i>Dan</i>	: Donation/gift
<i>Daridranarayana</i>	: God embodied as the poor
<i>Daya</i>	: Compassion
<i>Dharma</i>	: Duty, religious ethics
<i>Gita</i>	: Same as Bhagavadgita
<i>Gram</i>	: Village
<i>Guru</i>	: Teacher
<i>Hanuman</i>	: Monkey god
<i>Hatya</i>	: Murder
<i>Himsa</i>	: Violence
<i>Inqulab</i>	: Revolution
<i>Islam</i>	: Religion founded by Prophet Muhammad
<i>Japa</i>	: Silent repetition
<i>Karmyogi</i>	: A follower of the path of selfless action
<i>Khadi</i>	: Home spun cloth
<i>Koran</i>	: Book of Revelation for Islam
<i>Kisan</i>	: Peasant

<i>Mantra</i>	: A sacred text or formula
<i>Moksha</i>	: Spiritual liberation
<i>Nai Talim</i>	: New Education
<i>Nirvana</i>	: Final emancipation in the Buddhist tradition
<i>Niskam karma</i>	: Selfless action
<i>Nyaya pranali</i>	: Judicial system
<i>Panchayat</i>	: Village council
<i>Paap</i>	: Evil
<i>Punya</i>	: Goodness
<i>Purna Swaraj</i>	: Complete Independence
<i>Puranas</i>	: Hindu mythological books
<i>Rama</i>	: Hero of the epic, Ramayana
<i>Ramanama</i>	: One of the names of God
<i>Sadagraha</i>	: Insistence on truth
<i>Samrajyavad</i>	: Imperialism
<i>Sanatani</i>	: A follower of vedic religion
<i>Sanyasa</i>	: Renunciation of worldly ties
<i>Sanskaras</i>	: Innate tendencies inherited from past lives
<i>Sanyasi</i>	: One who renounces the worldly life
<i>Sarvodaya</i>	: Welfare of all
<i>Sat</i>	: Truth; that which exists
<i>Sattvika</i>	: Endowed with goodness; virtuous
<i>Satya</i>	: Truth
<i>Satyagraha</i>	: Insistence of truth
<i>Shastra</i>	: Hindu scriptures
<i>Shankaracharya</i>	: An exponent of Advaita
<i>Shudra</i>	: Fourth caste in Hindu society
<i>Swadeshi</i>	: Something relating to one's own country
<i>Swaraj</i>	: Self-government
<i>Triveni</i>	: Intermingling of three streams
<i>Tulsidas</i>	: The author of Ramacharitamansa
<i>Upanishads</i>	: Ancient Indian philosophical treatises
<i>Vadh</i>	: Murder
<i>Vairagya</i>	: Aversion to wordly life (Renunciation)
<i>Vaishnava</i>	: A devotee of God Vishnu, the "Preserver" among the Hindu Trinity
<i>Vaishya</i>	: Third caste in Hindu Society
<i>Varnaashram</i>	: Fourfold division in Hindu society
<i>Vedas</i>	: Ancient scriptures of Hindus
<i>Vriti</i>	: Innate tendency
<i>Yagna/Yajna</i>	: Sacrificial offering to Fire God
<i>Yoga</i>	: Hindu system of spiritual and physical discipline

## Appendix - V

### Bapu's Daily Routine in Sabarmati and Sevagram Ashrams

#### *Bapu's Daily Routine in Sabarmati Ashram*

4.00 AM	: Bell rings and every inmate thus who is not sick would have to wake up and rise from the bed.
5.30-6.00 AM	: Performance of daily chores.
6.00 AM to 6.30 AM	: Prayers and reading from scriptures.
6.30 AM to 7.00 AM	: Eating some fruits.
7.00 AM to 8.30 AM	: Doing manual work needed in the ashram premises.
10 AM to 12.00 Noon	: Lunch and washing of the utensils.
12.00 Noon to 3.00 PM	: Swadhaya and writing.
3.00 PM to 5.00 PM	: Manual work (Bread-labour)
5.00 PM to 6.00 PM	: Dinner and cleaning the utensils and other related work.
6.30 PM to 7.00 PM	: Bhajan-kirtan.
7.00 PM to 9.00 PM	: Swadhaya and meeting the visitors.
9.00 PM	: Retiring for the night.

(From Mama Saheb Phadake Diary)

#### *Bapu's Daily Routine in Sevagram Ashram*

4.00 AM	Get up from bed
4.20 AM	Morning community prayers, writing, work or rest
7.00 AM	Breakfast, Morning walk (about 5 k.m.), Help in Ashram kitchen, Cleaning work, Latrine cleaning, Utensils cleaning, Vegetable cutting, Wheat grinding, etc.
8.30 AM	Visitors, writing or reading work
9.30 AM	Oil massage in sunlight and tub-bath (shaving without glass or soap during tub-bath)
11.00 AM	Lunch
1.00 PM	Correspondence, visitors
4.30 PM	Spinning
5.00 PM	Evening meals
6.00 PM	Evening prayers (Prayers speech)
6.30 PM	Evening walk for some time
9.00 PM	Go to bed (He used to complete his pending work on Mondays by keeping silence).

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I am a poor mendicant. My earthly possessions consist of six spinning wheels, six prison dishes, a can of goat's milk, six homespun loin-cloths and towels and my reputation which cannot be worth much.

• *M. Gandhi*



Justice Dharmadhikari is an erudite and seminal scholar. However, he never confines himself within the four walls of ivory tower scholarship. Though working in judiciary which involves some kind of social isolation, Justice Dharmadhikari has always kept himself abreast of his times, surroundings and their problems. His studies, thinking and reflections are based on high moral and ethical values of life. He is prominent among the few thinkers who can provide necessary and appropriate guidance in a turbulent society.

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