

PART 3 WRITING & COMMENTARY

SECTION 4 INDIA

Document 1 MR “Vinoba’s Bhjoodan” [C. 1957, for Opinion]

Divided opinion is so rampant these days that it is my fear Vinoba and the Mission, both, are being done injustice. For one who has been on the field where Bhoodan is taking its historical shape it is amusing if not saddening to hear disjointed statements by people who are perpetually suffering from the malady that whatever India and her sons are thinking and planning are threats to disrupt the entire structure of the present Western form of society. To assess the movement without knowing the cultural background of the Indian is tantamount to saying that Paris is the most beautiful port of the world, or Apartheid does not exist in S.A.

Ethical Basis

Vinoba believes that where some own land and others are landless, there can be no peace. To prove their claim of ownership some may produce legal documents but it serves no real or good purpose for they tear the hearts of people and constantly keep them divided. Because all land is owned by God it must be socially owned, then the present day dissatisfaction and strife would disappear and an era of love and happiness will take its place.

It is Vinoba’s Conviction that if land owning people do not part with land and a proper atmosphere for land reform legislation is not created then the only alternative will be a bloody revolution. His attempt is to prevent such a violent development. His mission is to create a good and proper atmosphere for economic reforms. His threefold revolution could be conveniently understood as: a change in people’s hearts, to create a change in their lives, and the change in the social structure. If these changes are to be brought by the pressure of force then Vinoba has declared that he will be no part of the revolution.

Indian Need

In India the fundamental and most acute problem is that of providing employment to the millions of poverty stricken peoples. Because the country is principally agricultural and about ninety percent of the populace live in the rural areas, the Indian Govt. is grappling arduously with the problem of landless labour that numbers approximately 4 ½ crores. [*Indian English 1 crore = 10 million*]

To solve the problem of unemployment large tracts of land has got to be taken away from the landlords to be distributed to the landless agricultural labourers. But here is a financial hitch. In terms of the Indian constitution private property acquired for public utility and use must be paid for or it is necessary to pay a nominal compensation something like a rehabilitation allowance. [*Ellipses in original*] To pay for land acquired for the purpose of the financial commitment will undoubtedly run into crores of rupees. It is necessary to bear in mind that this sum the Indian taxpayer cannot afford to pay. As a direct result of this setback it is more than often asked “Why doesn’t the Indian government amend the constitution and procure the land for the landless millions, since she has decided to be a Socialistic State with the major industries being slowly nationalised” Unfortunately at this juncture (between Independence and now) action like the above would have caused opposition and bitterness.

The solution to this severe and intricate problem was got with the advent of Bhoodan Yagna in the Summer of 1951. In Telengana, a village near Hyderabad, during one of Vinoba’s lecture-prayer tours about forty Harijan families begged him to arrange for at least eighty acres of land so that they could earn a livelihood. Without any hope or expectation he asked his audience “Is there any person here who would donate the land?” To the astonishment of all one person rose and announced that he would donate one hundred acres to be distributed among the poor Harijan families.

This movement for land donations did not only gain momentum in Telegana but in other states of India also. Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are the leading provinces where Bhoodan has gained the greatest degree of appreciation. With the passage of only six years it has grown into an all India movement of National significance. Today, using goodwill and non-violence India has achieved the greatest socio-economic revolution.

Though hatred and class struggle threatens to disrupt the world Vinoba’s Bhoodan movement came to the people of India as a permanent ray of hope and a new belief. How stupendous it sounds that by using love and goodwill, in this predominantly materialistic world, Vinoba has collected twelve lakhs (1,200,000) acres of land by the end of 1953 and the final target by the end of this year, to be achieved if five crore acres. i.e. app. One sixth of the total arable land in India.

Ideal of Love

It is my belief with Vinoba that India will be able to evolve, consistent with her ideals, a new type of revolution, based purely on love. The people have begun donating lands on their own free will, readily and generously. The whole atmosphere in India is undergoing a change and she might well show the world the way to a new era of freedom, love and happiness. These aspirations are embodied in Bhoodan Yagna (Lands Gift Mission).

When Vinoba took up the task of Bhoodan he knew it was a difficult one, but he attributes all to the Power (God) that has inspired him to start the mission. Having begun it in all humility and sincerity he has faith that He will lead him and will be assisted by all those who believe in Sarvodya (Welfare for All).

Though Vinoba dedicates his mission to the will of God he does not lose sight of the fact that at the present rate it will take approximately five hundred years to complete the work of Bhoodan, hence he calls upon all in India to serve the cause a hundred fold faster for in a critical period like the present, in the history of Indian freedom, he fears that the whole fabric of Gandhi's constructive work is in danger of being destroyed. If it succeeds sooner it will have all round success. Khadi (meaning a revolution or the acceptance of a new way of life), Harijan work and every other constructive work will also advance.

Physical Labour

Vinobaji plunged himself into this strenuous task for eliminating the high and low from Indian Society and to facilitate everybody to take physical labour. He envisages that it is highly inconsistent that those who possess land should not till it themselves and those who cultivate it should possess no land to do so. Those who cannot plough get it ploughed by others, while those who can plough have to do so as labourers. Since they have no right to the yield produced by them they work half-heartedly. Moreover the labourer is paid in coin and they do not even get sufficient food. "why should this be tolerated? Is it unjust to stop this false system?" Vinoba questions. And how justifiably.

Vinoba Bhave is a strong believer in the decentralisation of money and industry. He backs his ideology of 'Decentralisation in the scheme of God' by adopting the first step of distributing land to the landless and then in establishing village industries. His plea that every son of the soil has a right on mother earth in not his own. The Vedas proclaim it. His best analogy so far is 'No brother can prevent his another brother from serving his mother.' He even dares to say that whoever demands land must have it. There is not doubt with the results so far that if the people in India especially those who believe in Gandhian ideology, work diligently and sincerely with Vinoba India will then become the lighthouse of the world.

Distribution of Land

Sarvodayan workers and Vinoba's men go to the villages offering land to the landless. Though these bearers of land inquire from villagers who are the most suitable persons entitled to receive the gifts, priority is given to Harijans and other backward communities. Care is taken to bequeath land to those people who are not occupied in other occupations and are in a position to cultivate the land. Under these conditions a pair of bullocks, seeds etc. are given to the recipient. The Sarvodayan workers are accompanied by revenue officials who complete the work of registration and other legal formalities. Among the the fe other formalities to which the grantee must comply is 'If a co-operative society is established in the village the grantee will have to join it.'

Instructions to Bhoodan Workers

The strictest form of procedure is maintained to carry out the work of the Mission. Vinobaji sees to it that:

1. Gift deeds are prepared in duplicate and are both signed and attested by witnesses.
2. The forms, deeds etc. are to be both in the regional language and Hindi, the national language of India.
3. The committees are not to accept donations in the form of money but instead request the donor to purchase land with the money and donate in to the Yagna.
4. Land must be distributed only when a gift deed is signed by him.
5. If there is any surplus land then the committee may give the land to people who have some but not sufficient to thrive on.
6. Donors must be requested by the Sarvodaya workers to look after the gifted land that is not distributed. The donor may even sow crops but the produce is expected to be handed to the Bhoodan committee after the expenses that are incurred are deducted.

With the above instructions Vinoba began in his own humble way the work for national reconstruction. He believes he is doing exactly what Gandhiji would have done after independence. If what he wishes is done then he assures the Indian people they will have a real taste of freedom that they have won uniquely and that even though freedom has come its real taste and flavour is alien to the Indian people. Until the poor man is raised they will never be able to taste the real freedom, never mind enjoying it. The poor should be the first charge of every man who has the welfare of the greatest number of suffering people at heart. The Charkha, the Harijan uplift work, village industries, nature cure, the scheme of Nai Talim (Basic Education) and all the various items of constructive activity which Gandhiji put forward were so devised as to touch these, the lower strata of society and bring immediate relief to them.

Today there is so much instability in the world that the situation is pregnant with immense dangers or immeasurable rewards. Unfortunately we seem to be sitting on a volcano which may erupt at any moment. The forces that are working in the world today must be taken into account. If we are not to be swept away by these currents, then it is our duty to analyse and consider the motives and ideas which are in conflict with each other. Before we take any steps these things have to be considered, for it we lack the correct view of things speech and action becomes blind.

It is commendable that Vinoba has drawn the attention of all men in the world to the impending fearful reality and the shadow of disaster that bestrides the world. His Mission of Bhoodan, which embraces peace, love and goodwill as its only qualification is the best solution to the multifarious problems confronting the world to-day. It is my prayer that the movement gets appreciation and gains momentum from day to day in every part of this world. If it doesn't then I'm afraid civilisation will crumble under the weight and reign of the relentless competition, the right to make maximum profit at the expense of others and the exploitation of advantages gained so that differences between man and man may grow in geometric progression. These are all denials of not only people like Vinoba but even Christ and yet, for the execution of such unchristian plans, institutions equal in respectability to cathedrals and churches are established under the authority and protection of the state. I for one have already knelt to God in gratitude for having guided men like Archarya Vinoba Bhave.

[Written on the evening of the announcement of the results of the Indian General Election held between the 16th and 20th March 1977]

If, on the personal level, there were to be referendum between Morarji Desai on the one hand and Indira Gandhi on the other, there will be no doubt of the result. She will give this erstwhile wily opponent a trouncing. It is not an exaggeration to state that Indira Gandhi commanded a greater political legitimacy than any other person or political party in India. And this strong emergence occurred only by synonyzing her interests with those of her country. Whatever political struggle has taken place in the past weeks were therefore centred on the personality of India's Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. And yet notwithstanding the above she lost the last election in Rae Bareilly, her own Lok Sabha constituency, and her party (Congress) lost the elections as a party, nationally. And the questions arise WHY and HOW?

The Congress Party, first. Viewed scientifically Congress could not and cannot be viewed as a party, in the ordinary sense of the word. It remained, from the days of *Mahatma* Gandhi, Nehru and their successors an institution for balancing and accommodating multi-various and yet considerably important, but conflicting interests and aspirations. Whilst this was so India enjoyed or suffered, depends how one sees it, a ONE PARTY SYSTEM OR A ONE PARTY DOMINANCE over the last 30 years in a multi-party political system. Political parties can have an excessive pre-occupation with power (a destabilizing and short term objective) or they can be action instruments and a two way communication channel, between the party elite and the masses, for people's participation in the processes of nation-building and developmental programmes. Added to this the party structure can afford the government in power support in its operating activities. Yet, if there were a choice for the Indian people, the Congress Party should have been replaced, judged by its performance, a dozen times over in the last 30 years.

On the attainment of independence in 1947, *Mahatma* Gandhi, the father of the Indian nation, called for the dissolution of the Indian National Congress as a political party and urged them to relate the party to re-construction and national development. He forgot that to do so a Party required POWER. On the other hand NEHRU, the suave internationalist, assumed power (political) under the banner of the Congress and hoped that the party would become an instrument of change in a socially and economically iniquitous society. Whilst Gandhi was ignored, Nehru did not succeed. Despite the urgings of the *Mahatma*, despite the Nehru's, and despite its issue-orientated politics the Congress Party became and remained the sharpest instrument of preserving the status quo.

Many westerners have assumed and advised that Congress was not obliged to have any ideology or ideological commitment. They argued that to have an ideology Congress would disintegrate and thus there will be a tremendous set back to development and national integration. That, under the name of *Mahatma* Gandhi, the Congress Party could continue to operate and accommodate diversity. By the "friends" a plea was consistently made that the party needed a broad based consensus so that modernization could take place in an essentially tradition bound India.

This approach and advice was accepted by the Nehru-Patel combine in Congress. Accordingly the acceptance meant that Congress accepted an economically capitalistic and socially conservative ideology ONLY BECAUSE THE DOMINANT AND MOST INFLUENTIAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INTERESTS REPRESENTED IN THE PARTY WERE IN FAVOUR OF THE RETENTION OF THE STATUS QUO. IT MUST BE BORNE IN MIND THAT THE 'GREAT Birlas, the Dalmias and the great Tatas were involved in Congress politics from the days of Gandhi. This political arrangement suited not only the British Raj but also those near and distant relatives of the Raj. At best of times this kind of party in India will keep India tilted towards the West or at the worst of times it would not adopt any revolutionary strategies against the West.

When Nehru gave the slogan 'socialistic pattern of society for India' in 1955 he was merely attempting to save his Congress from slipping back and sliding into old-fashioned conservatism. He did not attack the already INTACT ideology of the dominant class within Congress. He might have remained emotionally to the aspirations of the underdogs of India. But his pronouncements, seen now in historical terms, were mere trappings. When Indira Gandhi came to power in 1966 she gave the party a fresh ideological knife as part of her struggle to maintain her rule - or is the word supremacy? Her entering into implicit alliances with the left parties bear testimony to this. But her defeat today and the defeat of the Congress Party as such is a pointer to the fact that basic relations among those who comprise the Congress Party system, an inheritance from the predecessors, were more powerful than the power she enjoyed. These relatives of her power will attach themselves like leeches to her, when necessary, or else reject her, when equally necessary. Whilst Congress could not at any one stage become the party of dynamic consensus it was for most of its life an epitome of static consensus. Feudal landlordism was removed by Nehru. Good, but what else? Princes holding privy purses were removed and thrashed by Mrs Indira Gandhi, good. But what else? Mrs Gandhi's Congress tried to minimise the power of the landed interests by reducing the ceilings on land ownership, the monopoly business interests by introducing various anti-monopoly legislations (since independence and until about 1970 almost 70% of all new licences issued in India were issued to the huge Birla Finance House with all its subsidiaries), the nationalization of Banks and the attempted take-over of the wholesale trade in the grain field. It remains an enigma as to why these efforts failed. It has been argued in many circles that she tried to eliminate or reduce the power of these interests (within and without her Party) through legislative and executive actions ONLY, while allowing them to operate, as if nothing had happened, both for the financial support of her party and for election purposes. It cannot be disputed by any observer that on the national level she depended heavily on big business for money for elections. This method was also used at the local state level by the party. Suffice to say that Mrs Gandhi's personal popularity could not sustain for long the structural and ideological contradictions of her party. One wonders whether the leaders of the Congress Party are as impervious to the mobilization and participation of numerous members of society either as individuals or through institutions for nation building or for social-economic goals.

All in all Congress one party dominance has been exposed as an elite conspiracy with all its policies, ideologies and protestations as a camouflage in defence of the elite's narrow interests. Beginning with small, sporadic protests (Bihar and Gujerat) the movement against the Congress became more and more widespread. So widespread under the leadership of Jay Prakash Narayan, that today Congress has been ousted from power.

It must be interesting to note as how a movement like JP's takes over power in India. Only the other day this movement was spearheaded by JP and people who were basically disgruntled about the non-performance of Congress in regard to the

realisation 'of the socialistic pattern of society'. The poor peasants of Bihar gave the warning. Congress was never peasant based. The industrial/urbanised workers led by trade unionists like George Fernandes joined hands with JP. Still they together could not on their own oust Congress. But the ripples of left wing support from the CPI (M) were already seen. Thus far all left wing affiliates were clamouring against Indira Gandhi and her Congress. Sooner or later the country would have been sufficiently against the Congress Party. Then the inevitable happens. Morarji Desai (the leader of the Congress (O) – a party totally opposed to nationalisation and the elimination of the financial tycoons; Raja Gopalachari's, SWANTANTRA Party aided and supported by people like *Mahatma* Gandhi's grandson Raj Mohan Gandhi of the upper echelons of the international Moral Re-Armament Group; the Jana Sangh, a predominantly, if not exclusively Hindu Party, with right wing affiliations and the newest of them all the Congress for Democracy, led by Jagjivan Ram joins hands to form a concerted opposition to Congress led by Indira Gandhi. If Indira Gandhi's own Congress has been a *pot pourri* of contradictions by housing tycoons with left wing radicals, then the question arises who are the benefactors of the last three parties. If India will not be ruled by Indira Gandhi and Congress, must India be rule by the followers of JP and his die hard left wing supporters? To fight and win an election in India a lot of money is required. People will pay this kind of money if and when they are guaranteed safe returns on their investments. It has been alleged in many circles, particularly after the Bangla Desh affair, that the CIA was ardently seeking the removal of Indira Gandhi because she became a little 'unsafe'. It is too soon to have all the details at this stage.

The Congress chose the not so difficult option of entering into an alliance with big business and concentrated all its concessions and favours on it with very minor and insignificant adjustments made for the other small or medium sized business. All this happened because the government's priorities were wrong. Whilst this kind of alliance proved very useful for electoral purposes it was counterproductive in every other respect. It is in light of this India will await the verdict of the present 'unholy alliance' between the JPs on the one hand and the Morarji Desais on the other.

Any detailed analysis of the support structure of the Congress Party clearly showed two things. That the Party was the only institutionalised and identifiable political force in the rural areas and that it had brought about a very peculiar division in the urban voters, without them creating any link between the two. In order to maintain its collapsing support in the urban areas the Party divided the urban vote between caste Hindus and all others, such as minorities, scheduled castes and religious groups. This division went to such extents that the Muslims of India were allowed more than one wife, constitutionally, whereas non-Muslims were denied this 'pleasure'. To what extent the vote catching game can go there is no demarcation. The old idea 'what works is good'. Despite all the above factors the Party was able to lag in the votes, what then went wrong with it? Everybody, especially Mrs Gandhi, now realises that one party dominance implied one person dominance. This was both the strength and the weakness of the party. Then, because of its open door policy, Congress became a victim of a double contradiction: a) the contradiction between its power elite and the support structure at some levels and b) the conflict between its professed policies and the interests of its dominant support elements. To conclude the above Congress leadership or the party as a whole refused to pay any heed to the changes required in the organisational structure of the party, its cadres and the intraparty balance of power.

As soon as Mrs Gandhi's supremacy was established after the 1971 elections it became clear that she did not receive her legitimacy from the party but that the party derived its legitimacy from her. And, as is now a fact, she did not only become a prisoner, but a victim of a system of her own creation.

Document 3

MR, Notes on South African Broadcasting programme, (Undated)

[post 1986]

SABC

India and Pakistan watchers, in the Republic of SA will have watched the program on Sunday's Mountbatten series with some or many misgivings. The over simplification and one wonders why the deliberate omission of hard facts were not reported by Lord Louis Mountbatten. For the uninitiated this matters very little but for the knowing one this was and remains peculiar to all imperialists situations.

To straighten the record, the following were the peculiar circumstances that characterized the establishment of Pakistan. Pakistan's creation was unprecedented in the history of man. For it was until 1971 a state with two components as far apart from each other as 1500 kilometres. It would not be an oversimplification to describe it as a geographical absurdity. Notwithstanding the fact that the Hindus lived and survived under Mogul/Muslim (minority) rule for centuries before the British came the Muslims of the 20th Century in India refused to be ruled by what history had to have as a majority the Hindus of India, which became independent in 1947.

The idea of having a separate state for the Muslims of the sub-continent was first put forward in 1930 by Sir Mohammed Iqbal, a distinguished poet and philosopher, who retained his knighthood handed to him by the British. His idea was to have such a state carved out of certain areas in the North West of the Sub Continent. Subsequently in a paper issued in 1934, a group of Muslim students studying at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and led by a certain Rehmet Ali endeavoured to develop Iqbal's idea. They also put emphasis on the creation of a separate state for Muslims in North West India. Whilst the hand of the British in all this is unknown it is however known that this idea underwent further transformation in the late thirties and was endorsed and underlined in a resolution passed by the All India Muslim League which was then led by Jinnah. This resolution is known as the Pakistan Resolution. Through this for the first time a formal demand for the creation of a Muslim State called Pakistan was made and imposed on India. It is very instructive to note that the resolution among other things envisaged that areas in which the Muslims were in the majority as in the north-western and eastern zones of India, should be grouped to constitute independent states in which the constituent elements shall be 'autonomous and sovereign.'

In the years following the resolution Muslim public opinion in India was divided as emphatically as the country itself became subsequently divided. What with the Jinnahs on the one hand and the Kalam Azads and the Khan Ghaffar Khans on the other. The two latter ones resisted Jinnah's suicidal path. (This was proven in the Bangla Desh debacle.) The resistance was so intense that they did not react adversely to Mahatma Gandhi's ditty to Jinnah when he pleaded, 'that a bunch of converts had no title to a separate nationhood.' All these and more the Mountbatten series omit. Notwithstanding all this and more the sub-continent witnessed the creation of two states - India and Pakistan. The call was a creation of a Muslim state, without dominance by Hindus. The 'state' was created 1500 kms apart. One in the eastern flank and the other on the western flank of India. Nationhood demands certain factors that rise above religion as a binding feature. In most respects the people of the two parts were different and the nature and level of their economic development were by no means similar. Culturally there was a chasm as wide as the Arabian Sea. Their heritage was vastly different. They spoke different languages and they wrote different scripts. The climate of the two regions and even the colour of their skins were vastly different. Of crucial importance and significance is the fact that on account of these differences and diversities the people of the two regions never shared any sense of a common nationhood. Hans Morgenthau in his book 'Military Illusions' appropriately observed some 23 years ago that 'Pakistan is not a nation and hardly a state...it has no justification in history, ethnic origin, language, civilization or the consciousness of those who make up its population.' Morgenthau said this in 1956, long before the dismemberment of Pakistan. But how true to-day. And one wonders why Mountbatten, who was placed in such a historically advantageous position, did not notice this. Was it because two states served interests outside India? Perhaps the British themselves?

Document 4 "Congress Governments in the Provinces in India", (Undated) [c. mid to late 1980's]

Congress Governments in the Provinces in India.

- i. Govt. of India Act in 1935 - after decades of commissions, debates etc.
- ii. Notwithstanding reservations of Act + its oppressive aspects:
 - a. Congress decided to contest elections to Provincial Council/Govts.;
 - b. Success in elections overwhelming - 8 out of 11 states;
 - c. Hesitation in accepting Ministerial responsibility of interference by Governor or Viceroy;
 - d. After assurances were given Congress Govts. were established in July 1937 - exceptions Sind, Punjab + Bengal. In Bengal Congress didn't participate the party was hesitant;
 - e. A majority of Congress, by elections and mandate, decided to work provincial autonomy

A DUAL policy to carry on struggle for independence and at same time this provincial legislatures constructive measures of reform. e.g. the agrarian question.

Comment 1: SAIC

- No mandate - 8% voters;
- Implementing govt. Policy;
- No answerability to people.

Congress had clear majorities in these legislatures. "Congress was a kind of coalition or joint front of various groups tied together by the dominating urge for India's independence." Nehru.

In spite of this variety it developed a discipline, a social outlook, to offer battle in its own way. Any coalition wider than that existed meant joining with people with different/divergent pol. + soc. Outlooks chiefly interested in office + ministerships. Some pure careerists. Non- Congress elements pol./soc. Conservative could tone down social program, destruct + even delay it. Even intrigues with Governor.

Comment 2: AR/PWB/AI. Hindi. Alliance.

- Congress passed legislation in favour of peasants + workers;
 - Very first step taken by Congress Legis. was release of political prisoners;
 - CAN SAIC OR TRI-Cam System do this? No.
- iii. New Congress controlled provincial assemblies - agrarian question was dominating social issue - (Zamindari System/Landlordism to be abolished). Rental indebtedness attacked;
 - iv. Congress Govt's objective, inter alia, to change a police state into a socially accepted state; Comment: What is the SAIC's objective - entrench apartheid;
 - v. Salaries of ministers were small whilst subsidize I.C.S. were 4 or 5 times more than Ministers; Comment: Commitment to alter/change from within whilst demanding all. SAIC - salaries are determinants/pensions etc.;
 - vi. 1937 Resolution by Congress Exec. Com. Of expats on national re-construction + social planning co-operation nationally unity - British attempts for provincialism;
 - vii. In 1938 Nehru head of National Planning Com. Intro. Of a system of mass education called basic education;
 - viii. Congress Govts. tried to preserve civil liberties - checked the wide flung activities of the Provincial CID who shadowed politicians + all anti-govt. Forces; Comment: Not possible in SA to-day;
 - ix. Congress Govts. resigned in 1939 - Nov. - became Congress Resolved:
 - a. major obstruction pol/econ structure imposed by British;
 - b. removal of the framework or else playing in the sands;

- c. Nehru: "instructions were issued regulating the conduct of congressmen. Between Indian Nationalism and an alien imperialism there could be no final peace, though temporary compromises and adjustments were sometimes inevitable. Only a free India could co-operate with English on equal terms."

Only a free SA can co-operate with a freely elected govt. in SA on equal terms.
