

The Bhoodan and Gramdan Movement in India: A Critical Assessment of Achievement and Failure¹

THEODOR BERGMANN

Summary

The unique Indian movement of bhoodan and gramdan is explained as one of the attempts to come to grips with the urgent and chronic problems of agrarian reform. Government measures failed, the peasant's selfhelp was quelled by the army or faded away. Bhava instead aimed at a substitution of State activities and revolutionary coercion by persuasion and politics of love. The aims were set higher and higher both in quantity of land to be donated and redistributed and in quality, calling for a general, radical, non-violent re-shaping of Indian society. These high-flying goals were to be achieved by prayer, preaching, good example. No technical, administrative steps were offered or planned to implement the follow-up or to achieve the goals.

The effective achievements of this movement without mass support are analyzed both statistically — in terms of land donated and distributed — and in change of social attitudes. After a review of the Indian and foreign discussion the organizational setup is analyzed. It is assumed, that the charismatic personality of Bhava and his selection by Gandhi could not balance the decline of "Gandhiism" after independence. The general political situation after independence and the relationship of the opposing social forces are such that Gandhi-type politics are abortive by necessity. The particular traits of the bhoodan and gramdan movement, which intentionally, voluntarily rejected political mobilization and pressure, let alone coercion or violence, contributed essentially to the full failure in the main goal of solving the problem of the landless rural masses.

Indian agrarian problems have gone full circle. There is no rest and relaxation of village tensions imaginable, until these basic issues of economic development and social liberation are tackled in a process of general modernization and social change.

1. Introduction: The Hypotheses

This paper tries to analyze a movement of a particular type regarding its socio-cultural roots and environment, its long-range aims and its organizational form and methods. The following main hypotheses shall be tested.

(1) Any political and social movement is dependent for its success on mass support, which can be more or less formalized. The less it is formalized by official membership, the more difficult becomes the achievement of its aims.

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- (2) The concept of the bhoodan and gramdan movement does not fit into an environment, which was fundamentally changed by independence.
- (3) The unsolved dilemma of achieving something for the village poor without calling for and mobilizing their political forces led to the full failure of bhoodan and gramdan.

2. Agrarian Reform — Basic Issue of Development

The bhoodan and gramdan movement, initiated by Bhave², tried to deal with land distribution and to change voluntarily the basic features of the Indian land tenure system. Agrarian reforms were acclaimed by the Congress Party before and after independence at many instances. They are, however, one of the most controversial social and political issues everywhere, particularly in a predominantly agrarian society, in which both the living standard and status are closely linked to land titles.

The main facts of the agrarian conditions may be stated here very briefly.

- a) More than 70 per cent of the population depend economically on farming, more than 80 per cent live in villages.
- b) Property of land is very unevenly distributed. Social polarization is very strong and aggravated.
- c) Tenancy has diminished, though the real extent of tenancy relationships and share-cropping — dropped from the statistics — may be larger than the official assessment. It leads to economic drain from cultivators to unproductive landlords, thus barring investment, modernization, and increase of production.
- d) The various attempts at agrarian reform have been largely abortive. But, the issue itself is concomitant to many political movements and changes since about 1875.

The history of the independence struggle as also the history of modern India is one of continuous agrarian unrest. Congress derived its strength largely from the Kisan Sabha, the radical organization of the cultivators. Zamindars and maharajahs represented for the cultivators the direct unproductive exploiters and social enemies. At the same time, they served as the stronghold of foreign rule. Both before and after independence, agrarian reform was one of the rallying slogans of Congress at party congresses, during election campaigns and in legislation.

Some of the peasant movements were without renowned leadership, since they were and are movements associated with lower class and caste, or no famous name has been recorded. But their effects can be traced in various ways. Thus, the agrarian unrest in the 1870's provoked the British administration to look for remedies. After outdrawn investigations, the cooperative "movement" was initiated to organize rural self-help activities.

Agrarian reform implies — among other socio-cultural, political and psychological effects — a certain economic equalization, a countermovement against social polarization. This influences the power structure of the village, particularly of the

² Vinayak (Vinoba) Narahar Acharya Bhave was born on 11 September, 1895. Originally he was an unorthodox monk. Later he became a disciple of Gandhi and claimed to be his true heir.

caste-bound rural society. Therefore, opposition of the powers being against any change in the social setting can be expected³.

3. Agrarian Reform Activities

The bhoodan and gramdan movement can only be explained as a reaction and a substituting move against both Government measures in this field and uncontrolled self-help of the cultivators. The official, legal and the spontaneous activities against the old land tenure system have to be briefly described as background of Bhave's activities.

a) Government Measures

During British rule, no agrarian reform was planned, discussed or made. The tenure system, installed by the foreign administrators, was integral part of British domination and beyond doubt. Only relief measures — like credit co-operatives — were permitted. This situation changed with the coming of independence in 1947. Legislation in matters of land tenure is now vested in the States. Though generally the slow action in the legislative institutions and in implementation is known and widely criticized, some basic changes have occurred since independence. Overall, however, the result of land reform was not very impressive.

About 1970, the issue was taken up in a wider political context by Indira Gandhi and her followers. The Congress leadership and the Central Government are urging the States to pass and implement new and more efficient land ceiling legislation. Given the social origin and ties of many of the State ministers and legislators, it has still to be seen, whether this attempt will be more successful and lead to more radical results than its predecessors.

Following the meagre results of official agrarian reform measures before 1970, some substitutive methods have been proposed:

- (1) Gradualistic reforms of land tenure to change the village setup.
- (2) Strong taxation of land property to bring economic pressure to bear upon the proprietors and induce them to intensive land utilization.
- (3) Reclamation of wasteland and settlement with landless labourers.
- (4) The so-called green revolution.

These substitutes have not been efficient under the given socio-economic conditions⁴.

b) Spontaneous and Organized Land Distribution by Cultivators

It would be impossible to enumerate fully all the self-help activities of tenants, share-croppers, village poor and landless labourers to improve their lot by imme-

³ See e.g. Thorner (27), who describes the effect of the caste-system on the social structure of the village and on land utilization. Myrdal (14) stresses the key role of socio-economic inequality in the villages for the effect of all promotion activities and the functioning of the institutions.

⁴ For discussion of these points cf. Bergmann (4).

diate action. The most important revolts were undoubtedly the peasant soviets organized on a large scale over a vast, coherent and important region in Telengana (Andhra Pradesh) in 1947–1949⁵. The Indian army was brought in to suppress this genuine, widespread and radical movement.

In the late sixties and early seventies, peasant and share-cropper dissatisfaction expressed itself in different ways: Mansions and estates of the landlords are looted and sometimes put on fire; landlords are murdered; the cultivators refuse the payments of debts and carry away the harvest without delivery of the part due to the landlord; land is occupied – more or less symbolically – as protest against non-implementation of land reform legislation (land grabbing movement). The Naxalite movement can be seen as another expression of the same mood of angry protest against social fetters and administrative inactivity⁶.

These movements, perhaps to be described more appropriately as spontaneous eruptions, find their strongest support just in regions of heavy pressure on land, a narrow man-land-ratio, prevalence of sharecropping system, high land rent, slow technological innovation⁷.

4. The Voluntary Land and Village Gift Movement: Bhoodan and Gramdan

To anticipate radical and revolutionary land distribution by cultivators themselves and to substitute for inefficient and slow legislative and administrative land reform, Bhave started his land gift movement in 1951. Both the timing and the geographical location of the movement prove that it aimed at making revolutionary activities superfluous. So shortly after independence high hopes of rapid and peaceful transformation might have been nurtured and seemed realistic to faithful people.

a) The Aims of Bhoodan

There is no comprehensive description or analysis of the thoughts and political philosophy of the bhoodan-movement by its initiator. All sources, forwarded by the sarvodaya publishers, have only collected quotations from numerous speeches, gleaned by an anonymous official⁸. Bhave wanted to appeal directly to the land-

⁵ The communists claimed, that in the region of Telengana, particularly in the districts of Nalgonda and Warrangal, 3 000 villages and one million acres of land had been seized by the peasants.

⁶ A study of the Indian Home Ministry (1969) has revealed that "... the persistence of serious social and economic inequalities in the rural areas has given rise to tensions between different classes... Generally speaking, agitations have been launched on issues of distribution of land to the landless workers and increase of agricultural wages... Although the peasant political organizations in most parts of the country are still organizationally weak, and their capacity for launching sustained agitations is limited, the tensions in the rural areas, resulting from the widening gap between the relatively few affluent farmers and the large body of small land holders, landless agricultural workers, may increase in the coming months and years. A bad agricultural season could lead to an explosive situation in rural areas." Quoted after Nayar (17), p. 126–127.

⁷ This is also emphasized by Oommen (20).

⁸ See e.g. Bhave (1, 2, 3). Ram (23), Revolutionary bhoodan (28).

lords to donate land for the settlement of landless people or for the enlargement of unviable dwarf-holdings. He admonished the landowners to reappraise their role and feel moral and political remorse. They ought to become aware of their social duties and to limit their property, as long as other people had no land and no livelihood:

"We appeal to the owners to voluntarily surrender their right of ownership over land and accept the ideal that land can be owned by society alone" (Bhave, 1, p. 2). "What do we mean by achieving the bhoodan revolution in this year? — We mean, first, to establish the right of the landless labourers over land... The next step would be to say that all would be the owners of land. Just as we all share light, air, and water alike, land should become common to all... No individual can own land. All land belongs to the village community" (Bhave, 1, p. 7–8).

But he even went further:

"Bhoodan is not a reformist activity. It aims to bring about a radical change in society. It wants to do away with all the class divisions that exist today. It wants to create real equality. Gramdan may be said to lay the foundations of the new order. It ends private ownership in land" (1, p. 10).

In a later stage, the gift of whole villages was proclaimed as aim and method. Gramdan, then, was defined in the following words:

"In it there is no individual possession of land, labour and wealth. Each owns everything. Each will offer his all to the community and the community will take care of him... Gramdan is not a sacrifice, but a sound investment in good living" (1, p. 12).

The aims are then described in a poetical way. The outstanding debts will be taken over by the village community, which will negotiate a reduction with the money-lender and then pay the remainder in annual instalments. It would be a socialisation of all liabilities and debts. On the other hand, no new individual loans would be allowed. But, for all these radical social changes, no violence is envisaged:

"When all the people in a village act as one family they create a moral force which has an effect on other people including the absentee landlord. He will be 'impelled' by inner conviction or sense of social guilt. He will not be subjected to any violent pressure" (1, p. 14).

To initiate the rich, "the poorest has first to give at least his labour".

"The money-lenders will have to change their lives. They will be looked after, as the ruling princes... provided they accept to live and work like the other villagers" (1, p. 18).

In the villages, people will again make their own clothes, woven on handloom, no power-looms shall be forced on the villagers by Government. Cottage industries are to be revived as part of the bhoodan and gramdan program. A self-sufficient village economy with a minimum of monetization would make large-scale industries and central administration largely superfluous.

Here, the thoughts of Gandhi are taken up and revived. There is, at least, some consistency in the idea of cottage industries, though, it's economic thinking is not very modern. Other proposals seem rather naive, e.g., that moneylenders should not charge usual interest for their loans, but offer to the debtor a repayment of 94 per cent, i.e. accept a loss of 6 per cent when lending money. — On the very crucial and touchy issue of family planning. Bhave criticized the official schemes and

argued, that "the Government had no right to interfere with the domestic affairs of the people"⁹.

Bhave tried to integrate the communists into his movement during his tour of Kerala in 1957, a State governed by a communist-led government at that time. He implied, that his was an improved pattern of socialism, even a more Marxian one, with no coercion, a withering away of the State etc. On the other hand, Bhave had tried to induce the landlords in West Bengal in 1955 to prevent communist action by land donations:

"The ideology of the communists must be faced by a positive ideology and sound action. If the rich people of Bengal donate one-sixth of their property, the suspicion of the communists will vanish. But if these people would avoid bhoodan and evade us, I want to know where they can find a safe corner! I, therefore, humbly appeal to the rich not to be afraid of me and liberally participate in the bhoodan yajna... Who else is there in the world to save the Rajas other than those who believe in sarvodaya ideals?" (2, p. 18-22).

Later, gramdan is proclaimed as the synonym "for total economic and social revolution, seeking to change the very colour of Government and planning"¹⁰. Bhave even goes one step further and declares himself willing to accept violent revolution, if voluntary land reform should fail:

"Gramdan seeks to proceed through the process of love and compassion and consent... Otherwise, I am afraid a bloody revolution may follow. Though I shall resist it with all my might and try for a non-violent revolution, yet I must confess that I shall not feel very unhappy at it. For I am in no way prepared to tolerate the status quo which means merciless exploitation and perpetual violence. If the masses throw off their yoke by violent means as they have done in Russia and China, it shall be far better than the agonising situation today. But I am full of hope and believe that the people will enthusiastically respond to the call of gramdan and bring about the desired land revolution" (Ram, 28, p. 54).

Gandhi's vision of the Indian village, inherited and enlarged by Bhave, is not free of romanticism about closeness to nature, selfsufficiency, direct village democracy, possible harmony etc.:

"There is no real freedom in the modern world anywhere. That is why it is a thrilling adventure to work for a gramraj, where every individual has the initiative and grows its own food..., settles the quarrels and keeps the peace. Each lives in happy cooperation with another and all work for the well-being of the village."¹¹

Not only Marx in his papers about India, even the Indian Ambedkar opposes this view:

"That the villages have survived through vicissitudes may be a fact. But mere survival has no value... These village republics have been the ruination of India. I am, therefore, surprised that those who condemn provincialism and communalism should come forward as champions of the village. What is the village but a stink of localism and a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and communalism?"¹²

⁹ "Family planning assailed; Acharya Bhave's criticism", *The Times of India*, March 8, 1960, quoted by Myrdal (14).

¹⁰ From a speech by Bhave in Ranchi on 30 September, 1965, quoted by Ram (23), p. 25.

¹¹ From "The Sarvodaya ideal", *The Times of India*, August 9, 1957, quoted by Myrdal (14), p. 1320.

¹² B. R. Ambedkar in H. D. Malaviya (1956), *Village Panchayats in India*, All-India Congress Committee, New Delhi, p. 258, quoted after Myrdal (14).

The Methods of Bhoodan

Though Bhave frequently spoke of a revolution in the first phase of his movement, he explicitly aimed at persuading and convincing the landowners to donate part of their land voluntarily. He never tried or thought of arousing or appealing to the landless masses, to utilize them at least as a political pressure group to promote his aims. In extended marches through the Indian countryside, he approached the landowners in group meetings and tried to motivate them for land donation. In these marches, an ever-changing group of disciples followed and supported him, to a large, but unknown extent foreigners, for whom Hindu methods of non-violence à la Gandhi had a strong appeal or who felt, it was just fashionable or an interesting experience. Largely, after a few weeks of participation, people of the following left as they had joined, while newcomers entered the group.

While the leader had and maintained the stainless image of integrity, full devotion, modesty, simple life and affability, his following was of a different calibre, though it was never analyzed sociologically. Nayar (17) reports about Nehru's criticism:

"Once, at a closed door meeting on bhoodan in Bihar, the Government was criticized for not implementing land reforms honestly. Nehru was openly chastized by a woman bhoodan worker for not being able to check corruption and nepotism. Nehru lost his temper and hit back by saying that he knew, how bhoodan workers thrived on the money they received from vested interests."

The land donations, mostly given in the high mood of a spiritual gathering and under the social pressure of a large audience, were neither defined very clearly at the time nor explicitly registered nor marked in the field. All was very informal, dynamic, in a rush. Some of the more steadfast followers rejected the idea of any administration or organization with paid officials as contradictory to the fully voluntary and spontaneous approach of the leader. This, at it were, did not reflect reality, since offices were established all over India with paid officials. But, it implied that no follow-up or after-care was intended. Neither the leader nor his followers had really thought about the problem, how the land donation should be put into practice, the beneficiaries be selected, the land demarcated and distributed, necessary assistance in inputs given to the needy, new land titles registered etc. Earlier experience of land distribution from above or from below was not considered. Goodwill from all sides would eventually do the miracle. Implementation was as vague as the formulation of aims.

b) The Achievements of Bhoodan

The land gift movement started in Pochampalli village in Telengana (now Andhra Pradesh) on April 18, 1951. The organization has published statistics about land donations, which over time show some inaccuracies. The official figures of the movement (see tables 1 and 2) prove the following points.

(1) After a strong initial response from the landlords, their voluntary enthusiasm soon faded away. After 1956, there were no more large-scale donations. The share of donations by large landowners is not known, no statistical analysis has ever been published by the organisation¹³. After the first series of donations, Bhave

¹³ One of the movement's publications (*Revolutionary Bhoodan*, 28) quotes a letter saying: "While many big zamindars owning vast acreage have bowed willingly, divesting them-

Table 1: Land donations by States up to July 1970 (in acres)

State	Land donated	donors	land distributed	receivers	land undistributable	balance ^a
Andhra Pradesh	241,952	16,627	103,351	22,733	86,385	52,216
Assam	11,935	7,344	265	—	—	11,670
Bihar	2,117,467	290,200	391,400	224,850	1,364,637	411,372
Gujarat	103,530	18,327	50,924	10,270	—	52,606
Himachal Pradesh	5,240	—	2,531	—	—	2,709
Jammu + Kashmir	211	—	5	—	—	206
Kerala	26,293	—	5,774	—	7,999	12,520
Madhya Pradesh	405,786	58,375	173,063	47,445	56,477	176,246
Maharashtra	105,094	19,953	70,950	15,199	3,316	30,828
Mysore	15,864	5,017	2,123	941	—	13,741
Orissa	185,783	84,456	96,464	42,614	—	89,319
Punjab + Haryana	14,739	—	3,601	—	3,380	7,758
Rajasthan	432,868	8,391	84,781	13,158	122,489	225,598
Tamil Nadu	51,330	21,899	16,394	11,153	—	—
Uttar Pradesh	435,458	38,296	210,091	73,318	201,653	23,733
West Bengal	12,960	—	3,898	—	8,426	636
Delhi	300	—	180	—	120	—
Total July 1970	4,166,810	568,885	1,215,795	461,681	1,854,882	1,146,095
Total March 1962	4,177,572	—	868,737	169,594	—	—
Total June 1958	4,423,132	—	761,499	—	—	—

^a To be checked and distributed

Source: Sarvodaya Prachuralayam, written, unpublished communication.

Table 2: Gramdan, blockdan and districtdan by States, Autumn 1972

State	Villages	Gramdan	Blockdan	Districtdan
Andhra Pradesh	27,084	4,281	15	1
Assam	27,702	1,682	1	—
Bihar	67,665	60,065	573	15
Gujarat	18,584	1,119	3	—
Jammu + Kashmir	6,559	1	—	—
Kerala	1,573	418	—	—
Madhya Pradesh	70,414	10,889	47	7
Maharashtra	35,851	4,625	17	1
Mysore	26,377	1,924	14	1
Orissa	46,466	12,636	70	2
Punjab + Haryana	21,269	4,011	7	—
Rajasthan	32,241	2,067	2	1
Tamil Nadu	14,124	30,605	314	11
Uttar Pradesh	112,624	32,963	186	8
West Bengal	38,454	748	—	—
Delhi	276	74	—	—
Himachal Pradesh + others	21,690	—	—	—
Total autumn 1972	566,878	168,108	1,249	47
Total end of 1969	—	140,138	1,025	33
Total March 1962	—	4,640	—	—

Source: Sarvodaya Prachuralayam, written, unpublished communication.

raised the target to 50 million acres before the end of 1957, which by that date ought to be transferred to landless labourers.

(2) All donations for bhoodan upto July 1970 represent less than one per cent of Indias cultivated acreage. 4.167 million acres were donated by 569,000 owners, an average of 7.3 acres per donor. Of the total donated, mostly long ago, only 1.215 million acres were distributed, a minor share of Indias cultivated land. This represents 29 per cent of all donations. 44.5 per cent of all donations are barren land, without value. 1.146 million acres still wait for allocation.

(3) 461,681 people benefitted from the land, a small part only of the needy. Each of them, as an average, received 2.6 acres. — Thus, the impact on land utilization and on poverty was marginal — at best. Compared with the high-flying targets, the achievements seem modest.

c) Further Developments

When the flow of donations faded away, Bhave himself tried a critical re-appraisal of his movement in early 1963¹⁴. The criticism of Nanavati and Anjaria (15) and of others were already published by that time. The main result was, that more emphasis was put on a new, more comprehensive, but more diluted, diffuse approach: Gramdan, Blockdan, Districtdan and Statedan.

Gramdan in 1963 was defined as follows by P. Mukherji (13): Total gramdan implies, that 100 per cent of the population gives all their land in that village in gift. Land ownership of a person in another village does not affect the status of gramdan in the first village. But even with lesser percentage villages are declared gramdan: if 80 per cent of all landowning and landless families agree; or if 80 per cent of all landowners agree; or if 50 per cent of all land owned by the village residents is donated.

In 1965, gramdan was again re-defined. Since an equal distribution could not be achieved under the existing social and political conditions, it was accepted as satisfactory, if all land owners donated 1/20 of their holding, retaining 19/20 with permanent rights. This Sulabh gramdan, a long step from Bhave's initial demand of 1/6, proves for Oommen (21) "a tendency towards the decline of the movement" (p. 30). A donation of 1/20 would leave many big landowners with an assured property much above the legal ceiling, if such one were enacted. Thus, sulabh gramdan would amount for them to a very gentlemanlike circumvention of agrarian reform laws.

Blockdan and Districtdan accordingly imply gift of the land of whole blocks or districts. Its implications in reality are never spelt out precisely. The notion seems vague, since all people have to give and all have to be given. The initial concept of redistribution from the rich to the poor is transformed into a larger and vaguer context. The figures given in table 2 increase these doubts, particularly the high results of Bihar and Tamil Nadu, where assumedly most of the villages have come under gramdan.

selves of a thousand or a hundred thousand acres apiece, the great bulk of the 300,000 donors hitherto registered are humble working folk holding a few acres or less each."

¹⁴ See "Bhave plans new strategy to rebuild society — Bhoodan movement may undergo change", The Times of India, 8 January, 1963; "The dark shadow", The Times of India, 11 January, 1963.

An explanation of the quantitative success of gramdan in Bihar might be the large number of Adivasi villages or settlements. In these, the notion of individual land titles is quite unknown or unusual. Inequality is not very conspicuous; there is rather equality of the very poor. Acceptance of gramdan does not change the land tenure pattern very much and does not remove poverty. If really one third of all villages have been donated to gramdan, the changing impact of gramdan might not have been very radical.

According to the movement's own data, the re-distributive effect of this voluntary and unofficial reform was quite restricted. No data are available at all about the production impact of the land donations. The quality of the land donated, the lack of production means in the hands of the beneficiaries, the failure of follow-up and extension would suggest, however, that the production was not increased to a relevant extent. But, Bhave himself (1) allotted to this point secondary rank only:

"But let it be understood clearly that increasing agricultural production is certainly not the aim and object of bhoodan and gramdan. That would be only incidental. Its main object is to widen man's loyalty to the entire society" (p. 18).

In some places, probably public administration has intervened and taken over the follow-up efforts, ignored by Bhave and his followers.

d) The Organizational Setup

The movement had high pretensions regarding voluntariness and motivation of its workers. No material incentives ought to soil it, no paid, institutionalized organization and administrative bureaucracy was planned. Government should become superfluous by the direct activity of the people in the village themselves. These claims were not matched by reality.

It is difficult to decide, which side was more interested in collaboration. Did Governments and administration seek a good pretext and veil for their inactivity in the matter of agrarian reform? Or did the bhoodan-movement want administrative aid and assistance to cope with the land donated and the ensuing technical problems?

As shown by Oommen (21), many of the voluntary workers were high-caste people with vested interests in the maintenance of the old social structure:

"The continuance of the movement, it appears, is at least partly due to the active connivance and acquiescence of the vested interest forces in the society... Perhaps it may not be too vulgar a suggestion that the perpetuation of the movement is made possible, to a large extent, due to the combination of the vested interest forces and the charismatic character of the movement" (p. 39/40).

Also Ostergaard and Currell (22) report, that 90 per cent of all Sarvodaya workers — in a sample of 218 — belonged to the twice-born varnas.

There is an organizational network with offices and officials at different levels all over India, in which 16,735 lok sevaks (people's workers) and shanti sainiks (peace soldiers) were active full-time in March/May 1964. Thus, the movement is — against its formulated principles — not free from formalized structures and from political power. The discrepancy between the ideal of charismatic movement without of-

ficialdom and the actual entrenched organization might cause serious problems, e.g. the change from periods of inactivity to others of hectic campaigning, when the charismatic leader gets a new intuition or wishes to give new impulses and a great toofan (whirlwind) is arranged with reports of sweeping success. This overall picture is interestingly reflected in the microcosmos of one gramdan village, analyzed by P. Mukherji (13). He distinguishes three phases, which were passed in a period of about 5 years:

(1) Very high level of enthusiasm, zeal and fervour of sarvodaya workers, financial assistance from voluntary and government organizations, paternalistic leadership. (2) Decline of initial enthusiasm, failures, financial losses (reasons unexplained), normalization, paternalistic — authoritarian leadership. (3) Apathy, doubts, new questions, frustrations, but not yet failure. Parasitism of rich adherents visible, deterioration of gramdan, exploitation of village hospitality by large numbers of outsiders and visitors, leadership apathetic.

In fact, the organizational set-up excluded the supporting and pushing activity or mobilization of the masses of have-nots, but favoured the leading activity of the haves and their representatives. The question is, whether such an internal balance of forces can promote the explicit aims of the gramdan movement. It rather seems to counteract and prevent them. It is in itself a logical consequence of the charismatic approach and setting of the whole movement, which rejects democratic formalization and influence of an organized membership on the high-level decisions and activities and a control of the executives by both members and leadership.

A three-tier system *sui generis* seems to have evolved. The lowest tier are the masses of landless labourers, village poor, tenants, sharecroppers with their desire for more land, more social justice, equality in the village, abolition of financial burdens and social inferiority. The second tier are the officials, executives, social workers, called employed or self-proclaimed promoters of modernization and social change. Their overwhelming majority is recruited from the higher social strata and castes. The top, the third tier, are the spiritual and political leaders, honest and sincere in their aims, saints or close to saints. They express the basic desires of the toiling masses in subtle formulae. — Such a setting probably reflects the established social structure of India: pronounced stratification, compartmentalization, social immobility and non-communication, ingrained inferiority complex of the low castes, no feedback and exchange of views between the social strata.

e) Appraisal of the Movement's Performance

Naturally, the judgment of observers, politicians, research analysts varies widely, according to political and social position. Mahtab¹⁵ strongly opposed the movement in Orissa on economic grounds:

"A generalized re-distribution would lead to an increasing fragmentation of the properties, of which already a large number are too small and thus unprofitable . . . Bhoodan distributes the misery."

P. Mukherji (13) was generally favourable to the movement, but observed little real change and a continuous trend towards disillusionment in the one village he analyzed in Bihar.

¹⁵ Quoted by Damiens (5).

Nehru was very critical of Gandhi's approach to practical politics. He did not believe that nonviolence could change the society and accomplish the social and economic revolution officially intended; the vested interests would remain, where they were. But later, facing both his own difficulties to implement agrarian reform and the challenge of the bhoodan movement, he cautiously welcomed Bhave's approach:

"But I have no doubt in my mind that Bhave's movement has a great significance, practically for what it achieves, and for the new psychology that it creates in regard to land and landholdings; it weakens a little the terrific passion for private possession of land and that is a good thing. Therefore, I for my part, and certain others, welcome it and in a distant way try to encourage it by our sympathy . . . Vinoba Bhave's movement is essentially in the right direction . . . What is his ideal, is my ideal also."¹⁶

The communist leaders had differing attitudes. Ranadive (24), member of the central committee of the CPI, criticized the whole movement, its ideology of class harmony, its aim of a village economy without modern technology. E. M. S. Namboodiripad, Chief minister of Kerala, also a member of the CPI at that time, was not hostile, even if he did not encourage Bhave's activities much. A gramdan act was passed and subsidies allocated. And Namboodiripad declared to Bhave:

"If these movements are able to realize their proposals, they could reveal themselves as alternative to communism."¹⁷

C. G. Shah (25), an independent marxist, rejected the land gift outright as typical bourgeois philosophy:

"The chaotically collected land and their redistribution among the peasants could hardly help the poor and miserable strata of the peasantry. In the absence of cheap credit for livestock, seeds and other prerequisites for agricultural operations, they could not utilize even the little advantage offered to them . . . Further, since the motive inspiring the big landowners was not any change of heart, but that of a strategic safeguard of their remaining land against any peasant demand for complete expropriation, the process of voluntary donation was bound to slow down and come to a deadlock at some stage" (p. 311).

Shriman Narayan (16) believed it to be "a revolutionary step in the progress of rural transformation in India, revolutionizing the whole countryside". D. Thorner (27, p. 77) felt, that "bhoodan fails to come to grips with the central elements in India's agrarian problem", i.e. complex property structure, survival of non-productive strata of holders of landtitles, persistence of a gap between landowners and cultivators, shortage of capital of the actual tillers, tiny production units. Myrdal (14) follows the judgement of Nanavati and Anjaria:

"Gramdan's accomplishments do not appear to have gone far beyond paper transactions, or to have substantially modified social behavior or agricultural practice" (p. 1322).

A few field studies were undertaken. P. Mukherji (13) describes largely the socio-cultural change in one village, but gives no details about land distribution before and after gramdan. Regarding the land distribution effect of gramdan, Oommen (21) is very doubtful after a thorough analysis of 4 gramdan and 3 control villages:

¹⁶ Quoted after Myrdal (14) from *On Community Development*, rev. ed., Government of India, Delhi, 1958, p. 48.

¹⁷ Quoted by Damiens (5), p. 34.

There is "serious doubt thrown on the effectiveness of landreforms in gramdan villages" (p. 81). But, there is on the other hand the opportunity to escape progressive taxation and other legislation:

"Thus an unanticipated consequence (latent function) of the movement is to nullify the impact of progressive legislations, thereby safeguarding reactionary elements and fostering vested interest forces" (p. 82).

Other socio-economic and cultural changes, assumedly connected with gramdan, were not found either in the four villages, nor the dispersion of power, the change in power or social structure, direct democracy, harmonization of interests, abolition of caste system.

f) The Personality of Vinoba Bhave

In his personal behavior, Bhave seemingly tried to be like Gandhi. Some descriptions talk about his charisma, his leadership appeal, the behavior of a wise Hindu, with small material claims and needs, simply clad, reading the holy scripts to get inspiration, writing about Hindu philosophy.

Such a Hindu scholar is above small quarrels, party squabble and partisan position. He has to be admired and praised by everybody, friend and foe, follower by heart or shrewd politician. Thus, as a saint, he discussed the problems of his movement with leaders from all political parties. Superficially, all identified with the high aims of bhoodan and promised their support. But, in fact, all took their quiet distance and maintained their cool criticism.

5. The Essentials of "Gandhiism"

The basic content of Gandhi's philosophy and teaching seems controversial. But some points might be agreed upon generally. — For the struggle of independence, he proposed civil disobedience, non-violent opposition. All layers and strata of Indian society were invited to join the independence movement. Indian social problems were relegated to the issues of secondary importance. In social struggles Gandhi maintained an ambivalent position "favoring" competing groups at different instances. Non-violence was driven so far, that in the face of Hitler's threat of world domination Gandhi rejected active military defence and expressed willingness to surrender, if Hitler came to India. He aimed at a social integration of the harijans in the Hindu society. He disliked violent class struggle and radical social change. In economics, he favoured self-reliance, strengthening of the village community and of the traditional sectors.

Without doubt, Gandhi to a large extent found the common denominator rallying very different social forces around a common aim and goal. To mould these groups with contradictory day-to-day interests, controversial issues had to be postponed until after independence. Non-violence, civil disobedience, finally was adequate to the physical power relations between wellarmed and wellfed oppressors and the largely unarmed and underfed oppressed. Gandhi's call for non-violence assumed, that the ruling class (the British administrators and their suppor-

ters) would follow the same pattern and rules of the game. And doubtless he aimed at undermining and overthrowing the British rule by the non-violent force of the many millions of oppressed. Gandhi left actual politics immediately after independence. Maybe, his final retirement implied his awareness and recognition, that the period had past and was irrevocably closed, when his methods could be useful.

Non-violence was only one of the methods used in a real mass movement. It implied mobilization of the masses, but their containment in "civilized" forms, control of the movements temperature. When in the course of events, not always fully controllable, the movement went out of control, Gandhi himself could lose his temper and withdraw in anger. His non-violence can, therefore, also be interpreted as means to keep a vast, quite amorphous movement, but composed of giant forces, under tight psychological control.

The historical assessment of Gandhi's strategy is naturally a bone of contention. A. R. Desai (8) points out, that Gandhi feared the outbreak of violent movements due to the impatience of people for freedom. Thus, he wrote to the Viceroy on 2 March 1930:

"The party of violence is gaining ground and making itself felt . . . It is my purpose to set in motion that force (non-violence) as well against the organized violent force of the British rule as the unorganized violent force of the growing party in violence. To sit still would be to give rein to both the forces above mentioned" (p. 363).

6. Immanent Weaknesses of a Movement from Above

The blessing of Gandhi, Bhave's informal selection as political heir, his behavior and methods and a few other signs of Gandhian legitimacy seemed to provide a favorable setting for the land gift "movement". What are the reasons for the failure, the slow fading away? Is it a movement? What is its character?

The goal of independence was able to unite most Indians, particularly since the social framework of a future independent State remained dim. Everybody and each social group could be rallied and was free to interpret the future society according to his or its wishes. Small groups only felt threatened in their social status, viz. those endowed with their status by the British raj. No social revolution was aimed at. Thus, even the civil servants could be assured of continued tenure after independence.

But re-distribution of land aimed at by agrarian reforms, by agrarian revolutions and by the land gift movement has deep social effects. Ownership of land implies social security, income, employment, social status, privileges, economic and political power. Land tenure in its turn is closely linked with the caste-system. The heavier the pressure on land, the stronger the social polarization due to the differentials in land tenure, the stronger the implications are felt. Any demand for change in the balance of social forces in the village inevitably antagonizes the social strata without a chance of compromise. Local hierarchy, formal and informal leadership in the village, is based on landed property.

A few, very progressive and economically independent individuals might be ready and able to renounce their privileges. But history knows no example of voluntary collective suicide of a whole social group or class.

A change in the socio-economic balance of property and power in the village, implicit in land donation, can be alleviated either by payment of generous restitutions or by popular pressure of the landless. The former was attempted by Government and was not very successful, since money is a weak incentive in a poor and only partly monetized economy. The latter was rejected by Bhave.

His appeal was not at all directed at the landless masses to demonstrate their will, not even to the extent that Gandhi had joined with the peasant organizations or at least accepted their support for the Congress. Bhave rather tried to talk reason and willingness to donate into the larger landowners. His village visit started with a prayer or a whole religious service. As long as the fear and terror of the agrarian revolution persisted, his appeals met with response, donations were made. As fear receded and "normalization" took over, land gift became a trickle: Even donated land was taken back. Various forms of formal acceptance without real effect were found.

In the Gandhian era, large parts of the Indian upper class were ready to cooperate with opposing social classes in order to achieve independence. This goal being realized, self-consciousness of this class grew with the take-over from British rule. Successful establishment of Indian administration and power, quelling of radical movements of social change (Telengana) enhanced the feeling of success in power and made social compromise unnecessary. Thus, the dilemma of bhoodan and gramdan can be said to have been created by Bhave himself. By rejecting the idea of mass mobilization, even with peaceful means and aims, he stopped the most important motor for any type of agrarian reform. That is the objective effect of the voluntary land gift "movement".

Can Bhave's attempt be called a social movement? A movement is a more or less formalized and institutionalized union of social forces with special demands. Heberle (12) goes even further:

"The main criterion of a social movement, then, is that it aims to bring about fundamental changes in the social order especially in the basic institutions of property and labour relationships... a commotion, a stirring among the people, an unrest, a collective attempt to reach a visualized goal, especially a change in certain social institutions."

Pressure in different forms is used to assert demands. The leaders try to increase, rally and mobilize the social forces of their movement to increase its pressure values. That was also the way of Gandhi, though by non-violence and civil disobedience (Satyagraha) he at the same time tried to contain and control the mobilized forces. Probably he realized the formal and institutional weakness of the Indian rural mass movements. Bhave substituted even the restricted mobilization of the masses by persuasion and moral admonition of the privileged classes. He, thus, denied the use of any pressure on the social powers that be, depriving himself of the most powerful agent and motor of social reform. Bhoodan and gramdan can therefore be called movements only in the sense of religious, revivalist movements, not in the sense of social or political movements.

Are the aims of gramdan more reformist or more revolutionary? Such a dichotomy of the notions reform and revolution seems to ignore the interdependence of both: e.g. reforms can lead to revolutionary changes or be parts and steps in a revolution. An agrarian revolution, as the Chinese one, is not one stroke or act,

but is composed of a series of steps and measures over an extended period of time. Decisive for the distinction between reform and revolution is not the absence of small steps, rather the immediate and radical change of the social relationships of the village (expropriation of the big landlords without restitution, expulsion from the village, immediate land distribution). From the outset, revolutionary measures remove the old economic, social and political power positions and, thus, make all resistance against subsequent steps impossible.

The wording of some of the talks and manifestoes of gramdan sounds quite radical, even revolutionary, maybe largely in the anarchist sense. But the real strategy and activity is rather reformist, though the effect might not be even a small reform.

It might be argued, that though the factual results are small or negligible, at least the gramdan movement has made landlords and politicians aware of an urgent problem¹⁸. I would believe, however, that economic facts and political events, i. e. peasant movements, have created awareness of the issue, if that were necessary. And I doubt what would motivate landlords more to compromise, land grabbing by squatting cultivators or a prayer meeting with a saint, who passes through the village.

7. General Features of Peasant Movements

Peasant movements have a number of innate weaknesses, discussed by Shanin (26), Feder (11) and others. The main points of weakness are: Peasants are scattered, fragmented into local segments, their actual field work increasingly individualized. They are bound to the land for production and family subsistence and to the natural rhythm of growth and production. They are socially oppressed, economically exploited, politically unorganized and culturally disadvantaged. Their political aims are diverse and vague, their organizations geographically limited, weak and not durable. They arouse wide sympathy, but are unable to find and found alliances of long standing. Solidarity is underdeveloped due to the competition about production factors. Feder (13) adds the following traits:

"Incomes at the subsistence level, combined with strong social and political pressures originating from the rural power elite to prevent peasants from organising, have so far proven to be almost insurmountable obstacles to raising individual and collective bargaining power. Traditionally, the weak position of farm people has been a by-product of a permanent rural labour surplus. Peasants face an entire environment hostile to collective action. In practical terms, this results from the efforts of the rural power elite to isolate farm people from the remainder of society and to atomize their efforts."

In India, the basic obstacles to organized peasant movements are aggravated by the size of the country, the cultural and linguistic diversity, the size of the "peasantry", the utter physical weakness, the caste-system, leading to a deeply ingrained inferiority complex of the village poor and their inability or low ability to evolve their own leadership.

A peasant leader is therefore in an unenviable position. If he is too progressive, he withdraws too much from the movement he leads and threatens his leader-

¹⁸ See even Nehru (18) and Ostergaard (22, p. 14).

ship¹⁹. On the other hand, to promote his issues, he has to be ahead of his followers, not just to represent their mood and level of understanding. He has to educate and to push them by the goals he sets and the steps he initiates. In one word, the leader must exploit the social potential of the movement to the utmost.

Bhave's goal, presented to the landowners only, did not appeal to them. And the power of persuasion diminished, the more time past after the abortive agrarian revolution and the consolidation of the new Indian powers. The movement from above, initiated and organized by an outsider avoided any mass mobilization. It drew its initial strength from peasant unrest, but was in fact against it. In this ambivalence — similar to the one of Gandhi in 1930 — the basic reason for the final failure can be traced.

Freedom is never given from above; those who want freedom, have to take it from the rulers. The same seems to apply to agrarian reform in India. If Central and State Governments are unable to solve the problem, the moral appeal is even less efficient, if it is not combined with organized political pressure. The preceding analysis suggests, that the gramdan movement has not contributed to mobilize, increase, and organize this pressure, rather the opposite.

The charisma of the leader, his sincerity and hard effort to attain his far-reaching goals, were not strong, convincing, overwhelming enough to either sweep the willing, but slow leaders or to counteract, expel and replace the unwilling ones. In the case of conflict the local leaders, who have to implement the movement's activities on the spot, are in the stronger position:

"There is a great deal of entrenchment of the vested interest forces into organisational positions in Gramdan villages. While these leaders attempt to add to their effectiveness by styling themselves as 'little charismatics', essentially they are change retarding elements and are interested in the maintenance of status quo. Thus, in spite of the charismatic attributes they seem to possess, they are system maintainers and not change agents. In the final analysis, charisma not only disrupts social order, but also maintains and conserves it, and the charismatic propensity may be viewed as a function of the need for order and stability" (Oommen, 21, p. 151–152).

Oommen concludes, that under the given socio-cultural conditions the vested interests may use the movement to maintain the status quo. "Consequently, the movement may become a tension-management or system maintaining device" (p. 183).

7. Is Gandhism Possible in the Post-Gandhian Era?

The final judgment about the bhodan and gramdan movement and Bhave's impact on Indian polity will depend very much on the position of the observer. No doubt, however, can persist that Gandhi contributed essentially to India's independence, while Bhave hardly promoted agrarian reform in a more or less voluntary form. It has been argued before, that the issue itself, taken up by Bhave, is much more controversial as all social problems, while Gandhi's main achievements fall under a heading, common to a vast majority of Indians. But, there is another important difference between Gandhi and his heir apparent: the former mainly

¹⁹ Cf. Engels (9) about Münzer as the leader of the German peasants in the 16th century.

relied on the relatively well-knit political organization of the Congress during his political campaigns; all "his" successes are closely connected with Congress and unthinkable without it. The latter, however, relied much more on his charisma, on the individual conversion of man, donations, asceticism etc. up to a point of ignoring the human reality of his supporting organization.

Some might regret the impossibility to unite India on basic issues. They look back with nostalgia to the period of national unity and feel grief, that the social tensions and struggles are a step back or at least a drain of energies on controversial issues. This approach is not accepted here. I would rather see it as a necessary and progressive phase of Indian development. The fight for independence consumed all political and social energies for a long while; this can be seen as abnormal. Normalization implies that a nation is or becomes independent and can devote its political forces to modernization, social change and improvement without diversion by foreign rulers. In such a concept, social forces and their relationships, i. e. tensions, struggle etc., are the normal law of life of a free society, promoting its development and adaptation to basic changes. In such a social view, the failure of the bhoodan and gramdan movement might destroy some illusions and show the limitations of "great leaders". But, on the other hand, it proves the progress of Indian society from the successful, but force consuming fight for independence to the new task of tackling its internal social problems.

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Adolf Cramer

Der Welthandel mit Automobilen 1950-1969

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Produktion von und Welthandel mit Automobilen haben nach dem II. Weltkrieg in hohem Maße zugenommen. Trotzdem wird der internationale Austausch nach wie vor von nur wenigen Ländern beherrscht. Die vorliegende Arbeit versucht, ausgehend von der Entwicklung eines modernen theoretischen Ansatzes zur Erklärung der Handelsströme eine Analyse der handelsbestimmenden Komponenten und eine plausible Erklärung für die charakteristische Struktur des Weltautomobilhandels zu geben, die sowohl für das Verständnis gegenwärtiger als auch für die Prognose zukünftiger Entwicklungen nützlich sein könnte. **Mit Hilfe dieser Arbeit werden auch bestimmte Erscheinungen einer zwanglosen Deutung zugeführt, die sich scheinbar einer Einordnung in weltwirtschaftliche Zusammenhänge entziehen.**

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