
UNIT 5 BHOODAN MOVEMENT

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5.1 INTRODUCTION

Throughout the late forties and the early fifties, Acharya Vinoba Bhave had been noticing the breakdown of India's economy, the perilous state of the country's agriculture and the inhuman and appalling poverty of the landless millions. Not less than 50 per cent of the agricultural labour households were landless in 1950-51 and their number was increased to 57 per cent in 1956-57. He noticed how the agrarian legislation, particularly the land distribution and land ceiling laws passed by the various state governments, failed to achieve the desired results. The big land owners knew how to escape the mischief of the law, traditional land customs were powerful, and the ignorance of the peasants was widespread enough to make the laws ineffective. The feasibility of legislation as a measure of agrarian reform remained dim. It is with the aim of evolving a change in the moral and spiritual horizons of man through large-scale and extensive social realisation of the socio-economic values of human existence that Vinoba had marshalled the prodigious movement of Bhoodan.

It was then that the idea of Bhoodan came to Vinoba – as a revelation during his Telangana tour in 1951. India's economic life could not be re-organised unless the basic land problem was solved in the interest of the tiller and the landless. It is true that Bhoodan had its immediate origin in the solution to the problem of securing land for India's landless peasants but it would be wrong to suppose that Bhoodan concerns itself solely with the collection and distribution of land. As one may subsequently see, this movement was meant to be the first step in the onward march of the Sarvodaya society purported to be an all-round revolution in the socio-economic sphere – a non-violent constructive programme of transformation of India's social structure through a radical change in values.

The Bhoodan movement is no mere mercy mission started by Vinoba on behalf of the landless. True, Vinoba exhorts the privileged to part with a portion of what they have in favour of those that have not. As land is the basic factor and source of production in this country, a solution of the problem of ownership of land by those who till it must be settled in the interests of real democracy which Sarvodaya aims to establish. Bhoodan is a step in the direction of the attainment of real democracy as it is a call to the land owners to recognise their real interest and try to protect it by conceding the landless their due rights. The "Dan" does not mean charity: it really implies equal distribution (Vinoba, Bhoodan Ganga, Vol.1, p.18).

Aims and Objectives

After studying this Unit, you should be able to

- Explain the basis and ideology behind Bhoodan Movement
- Understand the concept of Gramdan.

5.2 BASIS AND IDEOLOGY

The movement may be looked at as a concrete manifestation of the application of the universal principles of Love, Truth and Non-Violence to India's practical problems. The ideological basis of the movement is the philosophy which asserts that whatever people have is a trust and should be held and used as such, whether it is land or any other kind of property, or whether it be knowledge, skill or experience. It is a trust that people hold for their fellow human beings and for the whole community. It is not meant for their personal enjoyment alone; everyone has a share in it. It is by propagating this philosophy of Love and Truth and by persuading people to regard themselves and live as one family that Vinoba has aimed at bringing about a non-violent agrarian revolution. The movement thus arose by the surrender of part of a person's land but in course of time partial sharing, developed into total sharing.

The Bhoodan movement thus aims to prepare the groundwork for an agrarian economy wherein land ceases to be a marketable commodity and where the individual works to attain the good of the entire community. This is just one step towards the realisation of real democracy or "Swaraj" by setting right the inverted structure of economic centralisation through practices based on the principles of time and Non-violence and also the decentralisation of political and economic power.

5.3 AN INVERTED PYRAMID

The economic structure of the Indian society resembles an inverted pyramid (Jayaprakash Narayan, *Swaraj For The People*, 1961, p. 2). The millions of the have-nots and the landless at the base are at present unable to form into any concrete or solid foundation for a permanent and stable economic structure. It is of paramount importance that the base of the structure must be broadened by uniting the poor masses and the top heavy layers suitably built in conformity with the basic structure. The upper levels of the economic structure are broad with heavy concentration of economic power and the bottom levels are narrowed down to its mere point as each higher level from the bottom upwards broadens into increasing economic power.

At the village level, the pyramid like structure begins with the landless masses at the base, with the poor peasants, rich peasants and big land owners above them in that ascending order. This conical economic structure does not admit of any advantages or benefits of the government schemes and projects ever “percolating” down to the landless and the poor peasants. The benefits are sucked out at the level of the big land owners and rich peasants: little reaches down to the poor and nothing to the landless. Even the various land or tenancy reform measures have failed to benefit the latter. And out of this inverted economic system, the village’s wealth is drained out through the outlets in the structure. These outlets have been the market, the village banker, the government customs and superstitions and intoxicants. The result has been that the village has been reduced to a disparity unit where the few who own land do not work upon it while a large number who work do not own the land they cultivate.

5.4 THE NEED AND TECHNIQUE OF REVERSION

Such an economic structure, as a whole or at the village level, was neither stable, nor conducive to higher production and to the establishment of a balanced community life. It is necessary, therefore, that the broad upper levels of the structure and large portions of the vast upper floors of the pyramid are brought down to earth so that the structure could become a real, normal pyramid, narrow at the top and broad at the bottom, which involves economic decentralisation.

How to discover ways and means whereby the landless millions may obtain land, or in other words, how to revert the inverted pyramid back to a normal structure? The method and approach of the Bhoodan movement indicates the guidelines for the technique of reversion. The techniques adopted were based on love, non violence, voluntary surrender and mutual sharing.

Vinoba has contended that the problem of the landless should be solved first as it would provide a solid foundation to the village economic structure. Every one must have land to till and to make one’s living. For this, it is that ownership of land, property or resources must be recognised as Nature’s or God’s, that one who consumes must do some productive physical labour and that the vast differences between wages or salaries must go. The Bhoodan, therefore, requires the big land owners to give as much land as they can, keeping with them what they require for their self-cultivation; the demand from the rich peasants is one sixth of their land and the poor peasants are also asked to donate whatever they can as a token of their acceptance of the Bhoodan. It preaches the negation of the instinct of “acquisitiveness” or ownership of land; stands for the provision of the means of production to the producer; initiates all to the spirit of dedication in each

and every activity and requires that one should be concerned about the welfare of one's hungry neighbour and so long as he is in distress, one should eschew the temptation to enjoy happiness oneself. Since it is a "Dan", it contends for the just and equitable distribution of land among one and all; it requires the donor of land to do his duty towards himself and his neighbours; it claims to be a right of the landless poor who have been deprived of land on account of a vicious economic system and it insists that all should work on land and none should keep it who does not work.

5.5 THE NASCENT ECONOMY

Economic decentralisation is one of the ends of the movement. The ultimate objective is the setting up of decentralised self sufficient units where the villagers would decide their affairs themselves. The first priority was the problem of land.

It is interesting to visualise the economy envisaged by the Bhoodan movement. The communitarian society of the movement would be based on cooperation and co-sharing (J. P. Narayan, 1964, p. 219); its unit would be the individual worker; its aim would be the welfare of all and each of its members and it would subserve the objective of a balanced and all-sided development of its components.

The economy of such a communitarian society would be a balanced economy, particularly careful about the non-renewable resources of nature. It would not be wasteful; it would try to restrict consumption as far as possible of renewable resources.

This nascent economy is most likely to be of small machine, labour intensive type. It would be agro industrial in character evidencing an organic blending of agriculture and industry. It would naturally aim at the full utilisation of local and regional resources to the satisfaction of the local and regional needs.

This economy aimed at self-sufficiency. It would engage in production for self consumption and would be so organised where the basic material needs are satisfied as near at home as possible. Planning in a nascent communitarian society would naturally begin from below. That would imply that the unit of planning would be the village development plan prepared by the Gram Sabha comprising of a member from each family in the village.

The position of the worker would be pivotal since work would be the most essential thing for the life of the community. Work would be a meaningful expression of human powers because the worker would be a responsible participant in the work process having a stake therein. Over-specialisation is ruled out while the agro industrial nature of the community would allow him to follow a diversified occupation. A large part of industry and commerce is apt to be cooperative or owner-worker type.

5.6 GRAMDAN

Whereas Bhoodan, literally land gift, aims at a social reform through individual acts of charity, Gramdan, literally village gift, tries to accomplish a social revolution through collective community decisions, whereby individual ownership of land should be abolished. In Bhoodan, individual land donations are accumulated and then redistributed to the landless, maintaining the concept of private ownership on both the benefactors' side as well as the beneficiaries. A Bhoodan village had the same structure as an ordinary Indian village except that portions of land had been given "unto this last." In Gramdan villages, however, all the village land was to be pooled and vested in the community. In such a

village the landless labourer ceased to be a recipient of acts of charity and was elevated to the status of an equal among all other members of the Gramdan community. If that scheme had succeeded on a grand scale, then India would have made a great stride towards the Gandhian goal of village autonomy and village government. Such were the hopes of the fifties.

Gandhi's vision of independent India, as portrayed in an article in July 1946, was composed of innumerable villages in ever widening- but never ascending circles. "Life will not be a pyramid," he wrote, "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 villages, 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." (Harijan, 4-8-1940, p. 235)

This theory of a stateless society of self-contained villages was further elaborated by Vinoba. According to him, Sarvodaya Workers "believe in a stateless society as ultimate goal". They do, however, recognise "that in the preliminary stages a certain measure of government is necessary, but we do not agree that it will continue to be necessary at a later stage. Neither do we agree that totalitarian dictatorship is necessary to ensure progress towards a stateless society. On the contrary we propose to proceed by decentralizing administration and authority. In the final stage -there would be no coercion but a purely moral authority. The establishment of such a self directing society calls for a net work of self sufficient units. Production, distribution, defence, education everything should be localized. The centre should have the least possible authority."

Thus the Movement decided in 1963 to concentrate all its efforts on three main areas of activity: (1) the establishment of Gramdan villages all over the country, (2) the development of khadi and village-industries in these villages so as to make them self sufficient and independent of outside resources, and (3) the recruitment and training of a "Shanti Sena" or Peace Army, to prevent any outbreak of violence in the country or, if violence should occur, to bring it under control by non violent means. This was the only enforcement potential thought necessary in a Sarvodaya society, where mutual cooperation and not individual competition would be the driving force of motivation and behaviour.

To give not only the farmers in the villages but also the urban professionals and industrial workers a place in the Movement, Vinoba further enlarged the concept of "Dan," or gift, so as to include the following aspects:

Shramdan literally labour gift, meant the contribution of part of one's labour to a certain Sarvodaya project.

Sampattidan, literally wealth gift, meant the dedication of part of one's property or income to the Movement.

Buddhidan, literally intellect gift, meant the dedication of one's mental abilities and knowledge to the realisation of Sarvodaya ideals.

Jeevandan, literally life gift, meant the dedication of one's whole life and energy to the cause of the Movement.

These generalisations and the ambitious targets the Movement had set for itself had far reaching consequences: a modified concept of Gramdan known as simplified or Sulabh Gramdan was introduced in 1963. From then on a distinction was made between

“ownership” and “possession.” As such, the new concept of Gramdan was much less radical than the original and involved significant concessions to the principle of private property. Though all land donated to the village was to be vested in the village community, up to nineteen-twentieths of it could remain in the possession of the donors, who could only pass it on to their heirs. In this way at least one main aim was achieved: Sulabh Gramdan prevented village land from passing out of the control of the community; the means of production were controlled by the villagers themselves and could not be taken over by outside capital.

Gramdan villages where more than fifty per cent of the total land owned by resident private owners had been donated and in which at least three quarters of the adult residents had joined the programme were then to be combined at the block level, the lowest unit of the government’s Community Development Programme. If in such a block with an all India average of some eighty thousand inhabitants, more than 85 per cent of the revenue villages or 75 per cent of the adult population had decided to join Gramdan, it was declared a “Blockdan.” “Districtdan” is then district in which all the blocks have met the condition of Blockdan and “Statedan” is a State in which all the districts have gained the status of Districtdan.

With this scheme it was hoped to gradually transform the existing government establishment from the grassroots upward. By the end of the Gandhi Centenary Year in 1969, the Movement claimed to have reached 1,40,000 of India’s 5,60,000 villages; of these Gramdan villages 60,000 were in the northern State of Bihar, where the Movement had pooled a great deal of its efforts and resources. With nearly 90% of its villages covered, Bihar was proclaimed the first Statedan in India.

The Movement distinguished three steps in the development of a village:

- (1) “prapti” means that people have been persuaded to join Gramdan and transfer their ownership to the village council.
- (2) “pushti” means that the village people implement the primary conditions of Gramdan, i.e. the redistribution of one twentieth of the land among the landless. The verification of gifts and the legal transfer of titles takes place at this stage.
- (3) “nirman” means that all the necessary resources have been mobilised through the Gram Sabha (village assembly) so that constructive development programmes can be started.

The fact is that by 1970 only few villages, most of them situated in tribal areas with their own traditions of communal ownership, had reached the “nirman” stage. The majority of villages, however, were in the initial phase of propaganda and declaration of good intentions. To persuade villagers to adopt the Gramdan ideals and to join Vinoba on the Gandhian path of rural reconstruction was one thing; to follow up with the necessary legal paraphernalia and agricultural extension work was quite another. Here the Sarvodaya workers were more or less on their own and could not draw on the saintly image of their leader, who, moreover, considered these things secondary. According to Vinoba, what mattered was the change of attitude, which would by itself lead to socio-economic results. “Let it be understood clearly,” Vinoba wrote in 1957, “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.”

Seen from a western point of view, it must have been a hard lesson for Vinoba that it was in Bihar, which had been declared a Statedan at the end of 1969, that the Naxalbari Movement spread a movement which tried to show the people a shortcut to progress through revolutionary practice. Vinoba met this challenge and the growing discontent among the Sarvodaya workers in his own way and withdrew more and more into his inner self.

5.7 MISGIVINGS ABOUT THE BHOODAN MOVEMENT

The Bhoodan movement has been subjected to a lot of criticism by leading economists (of the country), philosophers, political thinkers and social reformers all alike. Even some of the disciples of Gandhi had expressed their dissent on this important issue. 'The philosophy behind the movement and the results of its working has come for sharp criticism from various quarters. It will, therefore, be desirable to assess this criticism for whatever it is worth and to examine its validity' (Ranadive, B. T, 1958, pp.4-11).

5.7.1 The Absence of Clarity

A line of argument against Bhoodan is the supposed absence of clarity regarding the objectives of the movement. It said that although a lot of things are claimed about the potentialities of the Bhoodan movement regarding the creation of a stateless society through a non-violent social revolution, no one apparently seemed to know how far the movement was to really benefit the people. To bring in Gandhi's name and to claim that the movement is born of the Gandhian idea of a thorough social awakening is one thing but to visualise concretely the objectives of the movement is quite another.

The protagonists of the movement have said that the Bhoodan aims at the greatest good of all. Based on the Gandhian ideals of non-violent social revolution, i.e., on love and innate goodness of man, it aimed at the welfare of the common man, specially the down trodden and the proletariat. In the context of the colossal poverty of the Indian agrarian population, any scheme for the well being of the people, howsoever slight its contribution may be, should be welcome.

5.7.2 The Lopsidedness

The movement is said to be lopsided in approach to the agrarian problem. Bhoodan aimed to help and provide land only to the landless villagers, thus leaving out the semi landless or those villagers who possess some land but still work as cultivating labourers and depend wholly or partly on wages. Vinoba considered the problem of the landless labourers as rather baffling and urgent. Hence the Bhoodan movement stood for the landless. No landless in the village was the first step of Vinoba and his last is that there would remain no land owner. It developed into Gramdan, where all the persons co operate for the common cause and the distinctions like the landless and the land owner would be wiped out.

5.7.3 The Insufficient Land

The movement is said to have provided insufficient land to the landless, neither providing him with employment for whole of the year nor raising the income level to an appreciable extent. Within a short period there would be a fall in the acreage under cultivation (as transfer of land takes some time to be finalised) and worsen the already bad situation of food production in the country.

But this contention is based on the plausible assumption that cultivable land received in donation, if not distributed immediately among the landless labourers, remains idle for sometime. This is not true. The land received in gifts continues to be cultivated by the donors until it has been redistributed and legal formalities are completed. As to the “insufficient land” given to the landless, it can easily be said that provision of five acres of land is beneficial when about 62 per cent of the holdings in India are below five acres of land.

5.7.4 Fragmentation and Sub-Division

The Bhoodan movement and its working were criticised as it allegedly leads to the division and fragmentation of already small and scattered fields. As it happens, the land gifts from every type of owner big or small are accepted. The donations by small farmers of little pieces of land out of their miniature holdings tend to accelerate the sub-division and fragmentation of land. The economic disadvantages of this unhealthy trend are too well known to be emphasised.

On behalf of the movement, it is claimed that the land donations from small land owners are accepted in order to create the right type of atmosphere for converting the big land owners. Vinobaji has said, “I am more worried about the fragmentation of human hearts than the fragmentation of land ... Fragmented land can be easily consolidated later with mutual goodwill and co-operation; but fragmentation of hearts owing to the social and economic inequalities is full of dangerous possibilities in a state like India.”

Admittedly, this argument may not appeal to a professional economist. But the fact is that before distribution all attempt is made to consolidate small plots of donated land as far as possible. Regarding the subdivision of land, it may be pointed out that in the majority of cases only those lands have been donated which formed complete units by themselves. Bhoodan thus has not entailed any further fragmentation of holdings but only already divided and small pieces of land and have come to its fold. No land has been further divided merely for the sake of donation in Bhoodan movement.

5.7.5 The Uneconomic Holdings

Critics pointed out that Bhoodan created uneconomic holdings. As poor persons join the movement by donating a small piece of land from their already tiny plots, the holdings are reduced to uneconomic units.

In answer to this, it is necessary to look upon the of holdings of cultivable land per family in India. As has been stated earlier about 20 per cent of holdings (in the country) are of below an acre, contributing to only a little over 1 per cent of total area, operated and about 40 per cent holdings are below 2.50 acres, contributing to only 6.71 per cent of the total area operated (The NSS Report (June 1961), 16th Round, No. 113, pp. 13 and 21). More than 74 per cent of the agricultural holdings are below 7.50 acres comprising of 29.76 per cent of the total area operated. The inescapable fact here is that 62 per cent of the land holdings are below five acres of land. The average size of land holding in India is only 6.63 acres of land.

In view of the above facts it must be admitted that holdings of five acres of land which Bhoodan provides is certainly an improvement over the existing situation. Moreover, the concept of “economic holding” is quite relative. In Japan the average holding is of 2.5 acres and yet her average produce from land is three times that of India. A small holding does not necessarily show a fall in production or become an uneconomic unit. The

intensive cultivation practices with the help of better manures, seeds and irrigation facilities can turn even a small plot of land of 2.5 acres into an economic unit. The Japanese method of intensive cultivation can be practised by the peasants and given this land of five acres each in Bhoodan, they can quite sufficiently maintain a decent standard of living.

5.7.6 Land Unfit for Cultivation

Mira Behn, an old disciple of Gandhiji, felt that most of the land donated is of inferior quality and some of it is extremely poor. She opined that over 80 per cent of the collected land, is of inferior character (Reply of Critics, Hindustan Times, 4-6-53). Also, a good percentage of land received under Bhoodan is either grazing land or covered with forests. The critics further added that Vinoba was aware of this fact but insisted that no land could be useless and that one can make the best possible use even of the rocky tracts and the hills.

It is widely believed that a high percentage of land collected in Bhoodan is unfit for cultivation. As up to 1957 no such statistics was collected regarding the quality of land received in Bhoodan. The fact is that out of the total land of 42,27,476 acres collected up to 1964, about 14,84,830 acres of land has been found unfit for cultivation. The estimate, therefore, comes to about 35.8 per cent (Sarvodaya, April 1965, p. 480). As up to 31st March, 1967 only 42,64,096 acres of land has been collected, the approximate percentage of such bad land can safely be said as 35 only.

The gifted land has been divided into three groups: (1) land under cultivation by tenants; (2) land cultivated by the donor himself; (3) cultivable land but not under cultivation. In the first case big tenants or land owners are requested to donate their tenancy rights and small cultivators are made full owners. In the second case, the land goes directly to the landless peasants. In the last case, the donor is requested to donate it after breaking it with plough or otherwise, i.e., after making it fit for cultivation. In case he is unable to do so the land will have to be broken with the help of government or money donation or the free labour volunteers. In no case the poor receiving the land are expected to meet the cost of reclamation or such other charges in making the land fit for cultivation. In fact, donors themselves are asked to bear such expenses.

Besides, the psychological effects of the Bhoodan movement should not be undermined. When a landlord donates land, no matter of what quality it is, it certainly reflects some sacrifice for the landless and an acceptance of the idea behind the movement. Through his act of land donation a change is apt to be affected in his psychology. This seed of thought sown in his heart is bound to bear fruit some day. And there are many possibilities of his donating more of his land in future. So land of whatever quality it is, is not to be refused though one may well say to the donor that this was a bad gift. Bad land can be and has to be reclaimed and put to its best possible uses.

5.7.7 The Question of Rehabilitation

The argument against Bhoodan is that it will hardly be successful in rehabilitating all the landless agricultural labourers. Land donations are not like donations of money or food grains to be immediately made use of. On immediate acquisition, land is more of a liability than an asset until it can be made productive with the help of necessary inputs and management. Thus providing land to the landless will not rehabilitate them unless they are also provided with all the resources or inputs and implements for agriculture. On the other hand, such a change of ownership of land in favour of the landless will cause unjustifiable loss of production and dislocation of agriculture without really benefiting anybody.

That is why Vinoba asked to provide implements and other facilities to the landless of the village. He started a number of other Yajnas such as Sadhandan (Haldan, Baildan, Koopdan), Sampattidan, Shramdan, etc. The objectives and methods of Sampattidan combines all the allied Yajnas of the Bhoodan movement. Vinoba himself admits that only Bhoodan or Gramdan cannot bring about any change in the economic life of the people unless their other possessions, like labour, capital and the ability are shared by all for the good of the society as a whole.

5.7.8 Why Land To The Landless?

The slogan “Land to the Landless” seems to emphasise the “indispensable” character of land for those who do not have it. But the ideology of Bhoodan by no means can be justified that land is as indispensable as air, water and Sun. By no stretch of imagination it can be compared with these objects. Sardar Lal Singh, in his minute of dissent on the land ceiling, has compared land with a factory or a textile mill and argued that it is made to yield “maximum production” and should be handled by those who are efficient and not necessarily by the landless (Sardar Lal Singh, 1958, p. 115). The need of the country is not the equal distribution of land but the higher productivity and efficiency of land, labour and capital.

The approach of Bhoodan is quite different. Land is as free a gift of nature as air, water and Sun. It is, therefore, nobody’s property. Vinoba says that if we want to rejuvenate the rural economy, the old values must change. The re-distribution of land would significantly enhance the social status and the economic power of the landless. What is the use of higher production, if the distribution pattern remains defective and the big land owners still dominate the village economy? Land being limited must not be owned by anybody is the main idea behind the Bhoodan movement. It calls for a voluntary surrender of at least one sixth part of one’s holdings for the benefit of the landless of the country. Vinoba’s next demand is the total abolition of private property in the shape of Gramdan. Vinoba has deeply studied the rural problem and found that it is not simply the problem of increasing production, but it is a great problem of transformation of human values and establishing a new economic order. The Bhoodan movement seeks to bring about a change of this type on the basis of its ideology stated above.

5.7.9 Against Mechanised Farming

It is said that Bhoodan stands in the way of mechanised farming. The small five acre holdings that the Bhoodan aims at providing to the landless of the country are unsuitable for mechanised farming which some critics hold as indispensable for increased agricultural production in view of the fast growing population. In addition, it is feared that the re distribution of land will stand in the way of subsequent general reform of the land system.

It was hoped that the Bhoodan movement, through the liquidation of vested interests and creation of socio-economic equality, would go a long way in furthering the cause of co operative farming in India. Moreover, judging from the ultimate aim of the Bhoodan movement, namely, “the greatest good of all”, there would be no objection, in principle, to make plots sufficiently large, if all the villagers agree and it does not infringe the basic principle of Sarvodaya. Similarly, though there is not much scope for mechanised farming in India, yet there is no objection to consider its use for increased aggregate efficiency if it does not, in any way, endanger the stability of the village economy.

Vinoba has repeatedly said that the present distribution of land under Bhoodan movement will not stand in the way of general agrarian reforms. As it is, our laws of inheritance and

transfer may well have to be amended suitably in order to prevent fragmentation and transfer of land into the hands of non cultivators or giant cultivators or combines. A welfare feature of the land reforms is of the land ceiling act, but Vinoba goes further and demands "Land Flooring" wherein all the landholders will shed off their right of ownership and pool their lands for common use and benefit. But the cause of land reforms was not hampered by the Bhoodan movement.

5.7.10 The Legitimate Objection

The only legitimate objection to the working of Bhoodan is that its machinery is not efficient and the distribution process is very slow. Upto 31st March, 1967 only 11,90,718 acres of land could be distributed. About 16 lakh acres of land was yet to be distributed. (The remaining 14 lakh acres of land is supposed to be unfit for cultivation).

5.7.11 Target Not Achieved

The target for land gift was set at fifty million acres which was to be, achieved by the end of 1957. It was too high an ambition for a voluntary movement depending almost entirely on moral persuasion. Up to the end of 1957 only 1/10th of the target has been achieved.

Bhoodan planned to achieve land revolution by 1957 but has failed. This is perhaps because many unrealistic and exaggerated claims were made on behalf of the movement. Also the movement relied rather too much on the goodness of human nature and Godhead in man. The attention of the movement has been diverted from Bhoodan to Gramdan. When the entire land of the village is donated, the question of Bhoodan is automatically solved. Judging from the Gramdan point of view the movement was a great success. Up to July 1971 about 1,68,058 entire villages have been donated to Vinoba including 1,249 entire Blocks and 47 districts all over the country.

5.7.12 Collectivisation or a Misgiving?

It was claimed by the protagonists of Bhoodan that they were not enamoured of collectivisation and they intended to give land to the millions of landless labourers in the country side on an individual or family basis to begin with. Later on the idea was to welcome cooperative endeavour, not so much for the pooling of land as for the pooling of various agricultural operations. Subsequently, however, there was a significant shift from the earlier views. Under it land becomes the property of the state or the village and the peasant becomes a mere worker on land.

In Gram Swaraj of Vinoba's conception it is feared, the peasant, under a more or less collectivised system of land management, may become a pawn in the hands of the village community. The authority having control over in that case may not be far removed from him and may be more amenable to his desires and demands. But he loses his individuality, a large part of his freedom and becomes absorbed in that collective order. His initiative is curbed with obvious consequences.

It is incorrect to suggest that there has been any shift in the Bhoodan thought. Bhoodan does not begin with any prior theory about individual or collective agriculture. It pools the land and then it gives some land to the dispossessed land labourers and eventually brings about a re-distribution of land. Land is apportioned to individuals but the right of ownership ceases to be unconditional.

The most important unit in Bhoodan is the individual. He has to be wide awake and realise clearly that the joy of life and sense of achievement comes only when one offers with real goodwill, whatever one may have for the social good. Bhoodan wants the people to come together, to think together and work together for the common good of all. The people as a whole and not any small elite, or a group, or a party, should have the initiative. It is thus a revolutionary effort, to create a Sarvodaya Society in which every individual has the sense of being the centre, and where all participate actively in the social process. It is an attempt on the part of the individual to become harmonious with the whole of which he is a part. It naturally wants to create a society in which every one will have a role and an importance in the measure in which they serve the well being of all. So the bonds that will bring people together will neither be those of self interest nor those of enforced collective order of suppression and serfdom.

5.8 SUMMARY

In the post-independent India, when the nation was going through thorough reconstruction, Bhoodan came as a glimmer of hope to the landless poor and needy aspiring to live a decent life free from oppressive land policies and landlords. Thoroughly rooted in Gandhian spirit, it aimed at the ultimate good of the society 'sarvodaya' but lost momentum due to lack of spirited persuasion and follow-up. It was one major effort that would be remembered forever in history that Gandhian principles were conceived and followed to some extent. Though we may not witness such movement again, it still endows us with the hope that a true non-violent movement could be worked out with absolute determination and goodwill.

5.9 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the Bhoodan Movement as propounded by Acharya Vinoba Bhave.
2. "Bhoodan Movement failed to achieve its objectives". Do you agree? Give arguments in support of your answer.
3. Critically examine the contemporary relevance of Bhoodan Movement.

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UNIT 6 TOTAL REVOLUTION

Structure

- 6.1 Introduction
 - Aims and Objectives
- 6.2 Concept of Total Revolution
- 6.3 The Component of Total Revolution
- 6.4 Mode of Action
- 6.5 Summary
- 6.6 Terminal Questions
 - Suggested Readings

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The germs of the concept of Total Revolution lie deeply embedded in Gandhi's teachings to which Jayaprakash Narayan, the leader of Total Revolution turned as a result of his disillusionment with what might be called "conventional wisdom of revolution and conventional technique" of change. Infact, Total Revolution is a further extension of Gandhi's thought on socio-economic problems and technique of change in the context of contemporary social, economic and political reality. The journey of Jayaprakash Narayan from Marxism to Gandhism resulted in Total Revolution. Unconventionality was most pronounced in Gandhi's thinking on social and economic arrangement of the society giving him a distinctive revolutionary character. Through Total Revolution, Jayaprakash Narayan tried to build upon it with a greater emphasis on specific components of the whole concept. Jayaprakash Narayan's Total Revolution is a grand vision of individual, state and society. Behind this vision lies an understanding of our entire experience of more than two hundred years of industrial development. It is based upon Gandhi's basic postulates and it envisages non-violent methods of changing society with non-violent techniques. Total Revolution is an all-enveloping process of change in the individual as well as in the society. The primary emphasis is on moral values, decentralisation of economic and political power and insistence on non-violent means to achieve good ends.

Aims and Objectives

After reading this Unit, you would be able understand

- The concept, component and dynamics of change of Total Revolution.
- The mode of action that propelled the movement.

6.2 CONCEPT OF TOTAL REVOLUTION

To understand the word Total Revolution, we have to first of all understand the word "revolution". Revolution as a concept has been defined in a number of ways. George Saweyer, Pettee, Samuel P. Huntington, Sigmund Neumann and Thomas S. Kuhn define revolution as value change. By value change is meant a change in the dominant value of the community at a particular point of time in its temporal dimension.

The most common definitions of revolution have laid emphasis on a structural and institutional transformation in the existing social relationship and institutional bases of the society. The theorists of structural change envisage that a revolution replaces one social structure by another. In a narrow sense (or Marxian tradition) it is specially related to the changes in the economic structure of the society. Economic structure is interpreted to mean the structure of property relations. So a change in social structure is basically a change in the component of the ownership of property. In a broader sense, a change in social structure does mean not only a change in the property relations, i.e., the economic structure of society but also in other aspects of the social structure.

Wilbert E. More defined revolution in terms of institutional change. He perceives revolution as a type of change which “engages a considerable portion of the population and results in change in the structure of government”. The other definitions of revolution include change in the leadership (elite) component of the government, changes brought about by legal/constitutional means, and finally violent acts.

This analysis clearly spells out that any one dimension of change may mean a revolutionary change – be it a change in the dominant values of the community or its social structure, institutional, leadership or elite component, or legal or violent change.

Total Revolution is a further extension of the Gandhian approach to social change. Social change in the Gandhian paradigm is a very comprehensive and inclusive term. According to Gandhi, a partial change in any one component of the social matrix is likely to produce disequilibrium in society. Society, therefore, will tend to move towards a state of constant instability. In order to ensure that the social organisation maintains a steady and dynamic homeostatic state, an all-round change is needed. By an all-round change Gandhi did not mean only a change in the social framework but also a qualitative change in the behavioural-attitudinal-valuational and psyche texture of the individual. Gandhi, like Hegel, believed that revolution begins in the minds of men. But Gandhi enlarged the Hegelian concept. Gandhi's primary emphasis was that an individual wanting to change the society must first of all change himself. Gandhi's revolution was evolutionary and a process of purification. Gandhi's approach was not limited to a change in individual's lifestyle, thought-structure, and behaviour-pattern only. Thus, together with a revolution in the individual, society must also change. It spans the entire continuum along which values as well as social and institutional structures are ranged. The emphasis is on each one of the elements constituting the continuum. Gandhi talked of changing the society, he conceived of far-reaching and novel changes in the entire social organisation which consisted of the economy, polity, technique of production, personnel system of both the polity and economy, and, above all, the means to be adopted for effecting the change.

Total Revolution, as a concept, was put forward by Jayaprakash Narayan (at times referred to as JP) in the wake of Bihar Movement in Patna on June 5, 1974. In a public meeting at Gandhi Maidan, Jayaprakash Narayan declared that the struggle was not going to be limited to securing the demands of the students, including the resignation of the Minister and the dissolution of the Assembly in Bihar, but would aim at bringing about a Total Revolution or Sampoorana Kranti, which alone could solve the urgent problems of the country and usher in a new society. Actually, it was Karl Marx who had first used this term in the book “The Poverty of Philosophy (1847)” in which he wrote: “... meanwhile, the antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is a struggle of class against class, a struggle which carried to its highest expression is a Total Revolution”.

Total Revolution signifies a radical transformation not merely of our material conditions but also of the moral character of the individuals. The idea was implicit in many of Gandhi's writings and speeches. Vinoba expanded the idea further. As early as 1951, he declared: "My aim is to bring about a three-fold revolution. First, I want a change in people's hearts; secondly, I want to create a change in their lives; and thirdly, I want to change the social structure. In the sixties he spoke in this vein frequently enough to warrant the use of Towards Total Revolution as the title of a book containing his speeches, published in 1968. At least once he also used the term 'Total Revolution'. It has been aptly observed in a recent study that JP's movement for Total Revolution was a 'continuation of the preceding movement for non-violent revolution through Bhoodan and Gramdan'. JP himself justified it remarking on one occasion: "There is hardly any difference between Sarvodaya and Total Revolution. If there is any, then Sarvodaya is the goal and Total Revolution the means. Total Revolution is basic change in all aspects of life. There cannot be Sarvodaya without this".

Without using the term Total Revolution JP himself had been emphasising since the mid-forties, if not earlier, the need for a social revolution which would not merely bring about a change in the structure of society, but also an improvement in the character of the individuals comprising it. After he joined the Bhoodan movement in the fifties he laid particular stress on it. In course of an article published in 1969 he also used the term 'Total Revolution' to describe the objective of the Sarvodaya movement in India. Referring to the Bhoodan and Gramdan programmes he observed: "Gandhi's non-violence was not just a plea for law and order, or a cover for the status quo, but a revolutionary philosophy. It is, indeed, a philosophy of a Total Revolution, because it embraces personal and social ethics and values of life as much as economic, political and social institutions and processes". It is, however, a fact that the term 'Total Revolution' became a recurrent theme of JP's speeches and writings only since 1974 and it is only since then that it has taken its place in Indian political discourse.

Following Gandhi, JP recognised the necessity of change in the individual, the individual who takes upon himself the task of changing society. "One of the unstated implications of satyagraha would be", JP says in his prison Diary, "a self-change, that is to say, those wanting a change must also change themselves before launching any kind of action". In this lies the whole philosophy of JP's Total Revolution. During his "democratic socialist" days, JP had reached the conclusion that no revolution worth the name was possible unless the practitioners of revolution themselves underwent a change in their individual being. Thus the cornerstone of revolution was the changed individual who in turn worked for change in the socio-economic structure of the society.

JP's faith in the change of the individual as the pre-condition for change in the society was a Gandhian approach. Like Gandhi, JP also stressed that individual change cannot be regarded as the be-all and end-all. On the other hand, it is the morally transformed individuals who would activate the process of change. To put it differently, societal change is not to wait until all individuals in the society change. On the contrary, the transformed individual and the social framework are to interact so that it can lead to an all-round change. A process of simultaneous change is therefore the sine qua non of a society expecting a revolution.

JP conceived of a revolutionary in terms of not only commitment to the cause of revolution but also his own lifestyle and attitudinal structure. He was, no doubt, a 'professional' revolutionary, but in him both profession and practice (vichar and aachar)

found a happy blending. He practised what he preached and preached what he practised. Ideas were, therefore, constantly being tested in the crucible of practice, and practice in turn leads to a modification of ideas.

JP's concept of revolution is very comprehensive like that of Gandhi's. It consists of a wide spectrum of variables. It is non-conformist in so far as it departs from the usual meanings attached to revolution.

6.3 THE COMPONENT OF TOTAL REVOLUTION

There are seven components of Total Revolution – social, economic, political, cultural, ideological, intellectual, educational, and spiritual. These numbers may be increased or decreased. JP himself thought that the cultural revolution could include educational and ideological. Similarly, social revolution, according to him, in the Marxian sense can cover economic and political revolutions and even more than that. He also thinks that each of the seven categories can be further split up into sub-categories.

For proper analysis these seven components may be rearranged in the following manner: (a) cultural, which includes spiritual – moral, ideological, intellectual, and educational; (b) social-economic; and (c) political.

Cultural: JP used the term culture in a very comprehensive sense. It connotes individual and group behaviour. At a purely personal or group level, cultural revolution invokes a change in the moral values held by the individual or the group. In any debate of moral values, therefore, ends and means must enter. It is in regard to the ends – means problem that JP, following Gandhi, has been very insistent. As far back as 1950, JP declared: "We eschew the unclean and unscrupulous methods that the communists follow". Writing on yet another occasion in 1951, he said: "The first aspect of Gandhism that must interest the socialist is its moral and ethical basis, its insistence on values. Russian or Stalinist interpretation of socialist philosophy has reduced it to a Crass Machiavellian code of conduct utterly devoid of any sense of right or wrong, good or evil. The end justifies the means, and when the end is power – personal or group power – there is no limit to the depth to which the means will sink to secure the objectives."

A change in regard to the ends – means relationship both in the individual and group life is bound to produce a corresponding change in the belief system, that is, the ideology of either the individual or the group. A new ideological revolution, therefore, is bound to ensure if the organic relationship between ends and means is accepted. As a natural corollary to this, an intellectual revolution cannot be avoided; for the entire ends-and-means approach in the context of Gandhian thought must give a new outlook to the individual or the group to view things around them. And this is what JP means by intellectual revolution.

The most important variable in the cultural change is education. According to JP, education must be a powerful element of social change and it should be closely linked to national development. It should be biased in favour of the masses rather than in favour of the upper classes. It must create a new kind of awareness among the submerged and weaker sections of our society, so that they feel fully integrated with the society. He had suggested the following changes in the present system:

- (i) One-third to one-half of the working time in all educational institutions at all stages should be devoted to active participation in the programmes of social service and national development.

- (ii) A large part of non-formal education should be introduced in the system. Part-time education and correspondence courses must be expanded at the secondary and university stages.
- (iii) A large part of our budget on education benefits the upper classes with the result that the masses are left out. Such an imbalance must be corrected if social justice is to be the objective of our educational policies, with this end in view, three programmes must be given top priority, namely (i) adult education; (ii) a non-formal education of less than six hours a week to all out-of-school youths in the age-group of 15-26; and lastly (iii) universalisation of elementary education for all children.

Turning to secondary education, JP's scheme envisaged a thorough change in the system. First, higher institutions should not be permitted to proliferate leading to a fall in the standards. Secondly, strict criteria should be laid down regarding recognition, affiliation, and financial assistance to be given to the institutions of higher education. Thirdly, adequate fees should be charged in these institutions while making allowance for liberal grant of free studentships and scholarships to deserving candidates. Fourthly, the emphasis in higher education should be on quality rather than quantity. Fifthly, the entire slant of education should be towards vocationalisation and diversion of students into work at various stages. And, lastly but most importantly, degrees must be delinked from employment. JP's recommendations seek to lay the foundation of a more viable, meaningful, and purposeful system of education.

Social-Economical: As JP stated, 'social' in the Marxian sense also includes 'economic'. A social revolution, therefore, is basically an economic revolution in the Marxian formulation. Marx's use of the term was justified in the European context. In the Indian context, the term 'social' has a distinctive character. Due to caste divisions, a whole panoply of rituals, hierarchy, modes of inter-caste communication, sense of pollution, marriage norms and practices, social distance, and informal rules of behaviour have grown over thousands of years. JP did not overlook the fact that there lies a thin boundary line between a caste and an economic class. Yet he also recognised the social reality underlying the caste configuration in society. And that reality is that caste is quite an autonomous factor, independent of its economic moorings. The task of Total Revolution in this sense is iconoclastic. It has to break the caste barriers. And, in order to do so, Total Revolution must evolve new norms and practices replacing those based on caste. Inter-caste dining, abolition of dowry system, archaic marriage rules and regulations – all must enter the area of Total Revolution. It is in this sense that the social content of Total Revolution assumes quite an independent dimension.

But Total Revolution must go hand in hand with economic revolution. JP only carried Gandhi's thinking further to embrace every detail of economic life. 'Economic relationship', JP recorded in his Prison Diary, "includes technological, industrial, and agricultural revolutions, accompanied by a radical change in the pattern of ownership and management". The industrial-technological structure of the economy has two major facets, namely (i) the ownership pattern, and (ii) the size of technology. The model of industrial-technological development that he has in mind consists of a number of elements. They are (a) diversified ownership pattern of the self-employed individual, groups of families, registered cooperatives, gram sabhas, block samitis, zilla parishads and only in the end, the state (b) labour – intensive small techniques linked largely with agriculture in place of capital intensive technology with the provision that, where the latter becomes inevitable, it should be placed under State ownership. Such large-scale industries are conceived only as

feeders to small units so that they do not devour the former as has happened in the wake of technological revolution.

In the sphere of agriculture, JP's thinking was very specific. The present agrarian structure, even after different States have passed land-ceiling legislation, remains as unevenly balanced as ever. Except in Kerala and West Bengal, no significant change in the structure of ownership has taken place. JP agitated for "land to the tillers". The primary emphasis in regard to land reform, therefore, is on the ownership of land by those who cultivate it, adequate wages for the landless, poor, and effective implementation of existing laws relating to ceiling, eviction, share-cropping, and homestead land. If the existing laws had been implemented, a new ethos in the countryside would have been created. But it is exactly in relation to putting the laws into operation that all governments of whatever ideological variety, have failed.

Political: In the sphere of political revolution JP follows Gandhi. Gandhi visualised power rising from the grassroots and reaching the top which remained nothing more than a coordinating body. Such a view of polity was different from those in practice either in democratic systems or the communist countries. In other words, if power was shared among different echelons of the social structure starting from, say, the village upward, the danger of centralisation could very well be avoided. Centralisation, either of political or of economic power, was what Gandhi dreaded most. He, therefore, laid emphasis on decentralisation.

JP followed the same line of thinking in his approach to the reconstitution of power from the base. His thinking on polity in the present context had two distinctive features. Firstly, he raised substantive issues in regard to the whole polity as is prevalent today; and secondly, pending the reorganisation of the polity along his substantive formulations, he advocated reform in the present political system.

His vision of a partyless democracy, reorganisation of the power structure from below, institution of an altogether different mode of election to the new representative bodies and other suggestions fall under the first. In the second category, he visualised reforms in the parliamentary system.

In plea for Reconstruction of Indian Polity, JP rejected the western model of democracy on the ground that it did not give full scope to the people to participate in the management of their affairs and is based on an atomised view of society, the state being an inorganic sum of individuals. In its place he pleaded for a model of democracy, based on an integrated concept of society and providing the fullest possible scope to the individual to participate in the management of his affairs, without the intermediation of political parties. The latter, according to JP, functioned without any control over them by the people or even by their own numbers and were the source of many evils. It was not, however, the party system that was the main culprit, but parliamentary democracy, which lay at its back and which could not work without it.

In the context of Total Revolution, the following points need to be stressed.

First, JP's approach to the reordering of political power is significant. This led him to conceive of a polity in which the effective levels of power are controlled by people. In order that such a control is possible, he advocates the creation of formal structures at village, block and district levels. Most of the power, in his scheme, rests with these structures. The structures are governments at their respective levels in the sense that they

are independent in their sphere of operation and yet interdependent in relation to other tiers. It was this approach to decentralisation of power that led him to support the panchayati raj system. He believed that it was perfectly feasible to incorporate the different tiers below the State level into the constitutional framework by a bold stroke of amendment, thereby making it a part of the structure of the entire polity.

In such a polity, a viable structure is one in which participation of the largest number in the decision-making process is guaranteed. JP made a radical departure from the practice of the panchayati raj. He pleaded for units which would be administratively viable while guaranteeing the participation of the people. This, in essence, meant a process of regrouping from the village upward so that an optimum size crystallises at the respective levels.

Secondly, JP has in the past made far-reaching and comprehensive recommendations with a view to reforming the present system of election. He was the first to suggest that in order to prevent defections, which became the order of the day, effective legislative steps should be taken. JP also raised the issue of the corrupting role of money in the entire electoral process. Reform of the electoral system has been one of the very persistent demands which JP went on making on the political system. There are other aspects like the use of administrative machinery, the ways and means of conducting a free and fair election, and a civil code of conduct among political parties about which JP has provided wide-ranging guidelines. JP has drawn our attention to the control of the legislators. He suggested that there should be a clause in our Constitution for the recall of the legislators, that is, the constituents must be vested with the power to recall a member if he does not carry out his duties.

6.4 MODE OF ACTION

There are three broad categories of action that JP has underscored. First, it should now be clear to everyone that in JP's scheme, the usual constitutional devices are not adequate. A democratic political system is more likely to degenerate in the interval between two elections which may necessitate the launching of a direct non-violent action. The regime might become corrupt and inefficient. It may increasingly lead to the concentration of power in the hands of one or a few persons, thereby rendering it more and more authoritarian. Its capacity to respond to the needs and aspirations of the people may be eroded over time. In such a situation, JP would not advise people to wait for the next election. On the contrary, he would exhort people to resort to non-violent action. Secondly, JP suggested the formation of people's committees at the grassroots. These people's committees were conceived of as organs of people's power. They had, therefore, a two-fold function. They were supposed to mobilise the energies of the people into constructive channels. It is in this constructive role that JP visualised a healthy inter-action between the power of the people and the state power. In other words, Jan Shakti and Rajya Shakti (People's power and State power) are supposed to supplement each other. Another function that JP suggested for the people's committees is to resist the injustices and tyrannies of the State, individual, or a group of individuals. Nonviolence, as an extra-constitutional weapon, was to be involved. He cautioned against its indiscriminate use. It can be resorted to only when all channels as prescribed under democratic system are blocked and no other course is left open. Thirdly, JP advocated class struggle. According to JP, caste and class largely tend to overlap, both sociologically and economically. Gandhi said that nonviolence can be used as a weapon

to resist every form of injustice and tyranny in a society. Indian society is a stratified society and nonviolence here assumes the form of a struggle between the 'haves' and 'have-nots'. The only difference with the Marxian class-struggle is that by calling upon to resist injustice and tyranny, the appeal is lifted to a moral plane. It is not an appeal to the economic interests of the 'have-nots' but a more poignant appeal to choose between good and evil, justice and injustice, truth and untruth. Gandhi's most original and unconventional contribution to the dynamics of social change lies in this sphere. Nonviolence involves self-suffering. Self-suffering blunts anger and aims at arousing the moral sensibilities in both the parties involved in the dispute. Violence as a dynamics of class-struggle invariably leads to animosity which, if victorious, largely perpetuates itself. It is only in this sense that JP propounded his theory of class struggle. This is one of the many forms of action that JP suggested in order to usher in a Total Revolution.

6.5 SUMMARY

Total Revolution is a combination of seven revolutions – social, economic, political, cultural, ideological or intellectual, educational and spiritual. This Revolution will always go on and keep on changing both our personal and social lives. It knows no respite, no halt, certainly not a complete halt. It is a permanent revolution and is expected to move on towards higher and higher goals. The concept of Total Revolution has had both Marxist and Gandhian origins. It is always expected to be total, touching all aspects of life. JP developed his concept of Total Revolution on the basis of a synthesis not merely of Marxist and Gandhian concepts of social revolution but also of the principles of Western Democracy.

Ghanshyam Shah rightly said, "JP gave no blue-print of that (alternative) society nor outlined the various stages of the revolution. Instead he gave a long list of proposals; agricultural development, equitable land-ownership, appropriate technology, rural and small industries, political and economic decentralization, no caste etc. He did not spell out how the land was to be so distributed, nor how the social and economic hierarchy was to be abolished. JP is criticised on the ground that he "had no ideology, a blue-print for a new economic and political order which he had outlined in considerable detail much before the Bihar agitation was even conceived of". R.K. Barik, an another critic of JP, supports the contention that JP had no ideology, by citing JP's view as reported in the Calcutta daily, Statesman of 16th June 1974. JP is reported to have said, "I do not think ideology helps clarity. I think all ideologies have become old. It is not ideology but science that can answer all the questions. Let scientists and economists sit and chalk out a programme". But it is incorrect to conclude that JP had no ideology on the basis of such stray comments. Infact JP's reasoned rejection of parliamentary democracy and his outline of a new Sarvodaya order may definitely be said to constitute an ideology.

JP failed to achieve his revolution and that political parties continued to rule where the people should have stepped in, is a different story. One shrewd commentator has pointed out that the reason for this is that some economic classes and vested interests that dominated society before continued to do so even after the exit of Mrs. Gandhi from the political scene following her massive electoral defeat in 1977. But, perhaps the real reason why "Lok-niti" as JP visualised it could not substitute "Raj-niti" was because JP's Lok-niti was basically an unworkable utopia.

6.6 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by Total Revolution?
2. What are the main components of Total Revolution?
3. Was Jayaprakash Narayan's Total Revolution an utopian ideal? Analyse it in your own words.

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UNIT 7 PROHIBITION MOVEMENTS

Structure

- 7.1 Introduction
 - Aims and Objectives
- 7.2 Prohibition: Concept and Evolution
 - 7.2.1 Definitions
 - 7.2.2 Prohibition in History
 - 7.2.3 International Movement to Temperance Movement
 - 7.2.4 Prohibition as Political Demand
- 7.3 Gandhi and Kumarappa
 - 7.3.1 Gandhi on Prohibition
 - 7.3.2 Kumarappa: Why Prohibition?
- 7.4 Effects of Alcohol Consumption: Research Findings
 - 7.4.1 Alcohol and Social Interaction
 - 7.4.2 Alcohol-related Social Costs
 - 7.4.3 Alcohol and Crime
 - 7.4.4 Measurement of Social Costs
- 7.5 Tax Levies and Social Costs of Liquor Addiction
- 7.6 Indian Scenario
 - 7.6.1 Anti-Arrack Movement in Andhra Pradesh
 - 7.6.2 Participating Organisations
 - 7.6.3 Campaigns and Communications
- 7.7 Discussion and Conclusion
- 7.8 Summary
- 7.9 Terminal Questions
- Suggested Readings

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Historically prohibition has occupied an important place in the agenda of Gandhians in India, neo-puritans in the West and many religious groups across the world. Gandhi's commitment to prohibition was total and derived from his personal experiences within India and abroad and his deep reflections about the condition of the Indian masses. There have been efforts by advocates of prohibition to push prohibition into the agenda of mainstream political parties and even to get legislation passed. However, all such efforts were short-lived. In the contemporary scenario, one of the main concerns of policy makers, in India in particular, is to maximise revenue from liquor production and sale, even at the point of neglecting the public health concerns of morbidity and mortality. We will look into these and several other related issues in detail in this Unit.

Aims and Objectives

After reading this Unit, you would be able to understand

- The meanings of the terms prohibition and temperance.
- The evolution of anti-liquor movements and attempts at prohibition.
- Gandhi's views on various aspects of prohibition.
- The problems and issues associated with prohibition and liquor addiction.

7.2 PROHIBITION: CONCEPT AND EVOLUTION

7.2.1 Definitions

The term prohibition refers to legal prevention of the manufacture, sale or transportation of the alcoholic beverages with the aim of obtaining total abstinence through legal means. Another term used in this context is temperance. It refers to the goal of promoting moderation in the consumption of intoxicating liquor, or more often total abstinence on a voluntary basis. The terms prohibition and temperance are used interchangeably in this Unit.

7.2.2 Prohibition in History

Prohibition and temperance have had an overlapping history in many countries. Some attempts at prohibition were made in Aztec society, ancient China, feudal Japan, the Polynesian islands, Iceland, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Russia, Canada and India. But only a few Muslim countries were able to sustain prohibition. At one time in the past, liquor was deified in India. However, it became less and less respectable due to the influence of Buddhism. Intoxicating liquors were almost given up, except perhaps by the lowest stratum of the society. Most countries that have introduced prohibition had withdrawn the measure.

The anti-liquor movement in the West is nearly two-centuries old. The religious revivalism of the first quarter of the 18th century led to a wave of movements for state and local prohibition in the western countries. An abstinence pledge was introduced by churches in the United States as early as 1800. The earliest temperance organisations were founded in Saratoga, New York, in 1808, and in Massachusetts, in 1813. The movement spread rapidly and led to the emergence of about 6,000 local temperance organisations in various states of USA. The earliest European temperance organisations were formed in Ireland, in 1829. It became a movement and spread to Scotland and Britain and also to Canada, South American Countries, Australia, Japan, India, South and West Africa. The church played a catalytic role in the movement. The chief objectives of the temperance movement consisted of education and lobbying for legislation on prohibition in various countries. Besides combining moral and political action on an international scale, the movement attracted the support and involvement of women's groups.

One of the landmarks in the internationalisation of the movement was the organisation of the World Prohibition Conference in London, in 1909. It was instrumental in the formation of the International Prohibition Confederation, embracing the United States, the European countries and a few other industrialised countries of the world.

7.2.3 Prohibition as a Political Demand

With the spread of temperance movement in the second quarter of the 19th Century, political pressures were exerted by supporters of prohibition on various state governments in USA to introduce legal prohibitions. Massachusetts introduced some regulations with regard to the sale of liquor, in 1838, while the State of Maine in 1846 enacted the first prohibition law. The Prohibition Party, founded in 1869, in USA, provided a direct political platform for those clamouring for legislation on prohibition across the country. The Anti-Saloon League, founded in 1906, also galvanised support for legislation in favour of prohibition. During the First World War, a temporary war-time Prohibition Act was passed by the US Congress with the intent to save grain for use as food.

Following the First World War, by 1920, prohibition was in effect in 33 states, covering nearly two-thirds of the country's population. The US Congress passed the National Prohibition Act, in 1919, providing enforcement guidelines. However, later Federal Government wavered in its support to prohibition enforcement. Consequently, the illegal manufacturing and sale of liquor went on in USA on a large scale. Prohibition was enforced wherever the local population was in favour of it; elsewhere, the illegal sale of liquor became quite common and the supporters of prohibition got disenchanted with these developments. In 1933, the National Prohibition Act was repealed.

Northern Europe too aimed at the prevention of alcoholism. Finland experimented with the prohibition law during 1919-1933, but it exempted the drinking of beer. Sweden experimented with a system of liquor ration cards with the objective of limiting the consumption of liquor by individuals. Japan has introduced prohibition regulations, which prevent the drinker from harming himself or others. New Zealand had strong anti-liquor movements for over a century, backed by the Methodist and Presbyterian churches and women's groups. They also brought in legislations relating to restrictions of liquor consumption. Due to these measures, the liquor consumption in New Zealand is said to have steadily fallen by 22 percent during the last quarter of the 20th century.

In most countries of the world, where legislation on liquor consumption was liberalised or prohibition was lifted, a number of policy and regulatory measures have been introduced. They include the levy of taxes and duties on production/sale of liquor; prescription of a minimum age for drinking; restrictions on the sale of liquor on specified days and hours; controls on liquor advertising; laws designed to reduce the incidence of drunken driving and violent behaviour of addicts, particularly at home. Higher duties on liquor, which were originally conceived as a disincentive to consumption, have now become an important source to raise revenues for the state.

7.3 GANDHI AND KUMARAPPA

Mahatma Gandhi and Bharatan Kumarappa were the most articulate and fervent advocates for the introduction of prohibition in India. Not only do they summon arguments, but also pin them to the cultural and socio-economic context of India. For them, prohibition also represents a moral awakening of India.

7.3.1 Gandhi on Prohibition

Prohibition has a pride of place in the Gandhian vision of the world. To Gandhi "drink is more a disease than a vice" (Young India, 6-7-1921, p. 210). "I would hold drink to be more damnable than thieving and perhaps even prostitution." (M.K. Gandhi,

Prohibition At Any Cost, p. 10). Gandhi recalls that many empires were destroyed through the drink habit of their rulers. This monstrous evil was undoubtedly one of the contributory factors in the fall of the Roman Empire (Young India, 11-4-1929, p. 115). Gandhi cites the case of his eldest son who became an addict despite the fact that he was intelligent, brave, patriotic and capable of sacrifice.

Drink and drugs sap the moral well-being of those who are given to the habit. Only those women who have drunkards as their husbands know what have the drink evil works in homes that once were orderly and peace-giving. (M.K. Gandhi, *Young India*, 10-4-1930, p. 21.)

“Liquor ... is an invention of the devil. Liquor not only robs the drinkers of their money, but also of their reason”, asserts Gandhi. He further observes that when they are in a conscious state, most addicts are ashamed of their habit. Gandhi narrates the harrowing experiences of drunkards in South Africa, Britain and other countries and how they led lives without grace. The situation is equally pathetic in India, he observes, from princes and rich people to labourers who are addicts.

Gandhi became a staunch opponent of alcohol because of the bitter episodes associated with alcoholics. “In a nutshell, alcohol ruins one physically, morally, intellectually and economically.” (M.K. Gandhi, *Key to Health*, pp. 35-36, Education, 1956). Gandhi states:

“If I was appointed dictator for one hour for all India, the first thing I would do would be to close without compensation all the liquor shops, destroy all the toddy palms...” (Prohibition At Any Cost, 1960, p. 9). To him total prohibition is prohibition of sale of intoxicating drinks and drugs, except under medical prescription by a medical practitioner licensed for the purpose and to be purchasable only at government depots maintained for this purpose.

While recommending legislation in favour of prohibition, he attempts to demolish the arguments against it based on accrual of revenue. Gandhi attacks the argument connected with loss of revenue in the following words:

Revenue from liquor is a form of extremely degrading taxation. All taxation to be healthy must return ten-fold to the tax-payer in the form of necessary services. Excise makes people pay for their own corruption, moral, mental and physical. It falls like a dead-weight on those who are least likely to bear it. The loss of revenue is only apparent. Removal of the degrading tax enables the drinker, i.e., the tax-payer to earn and spend better... it means a substantial economic gain to the nation. (*Harijan*, 31-7-1937, p. 196.)

To compensate for loss of revenue due to prohibition, Gandhi suggested exploration of alternative sources of income, as also cutting down defence expenditure. When governments talk of the revenue deficits, they are driven by the ‘bania’ spirit, Gandhi observes. According to Gandhi nothing short of total prohibition can save the people from the drink evil. The policy should begin by preventing any new shop from being licensed; closing some that cause nuisance to the public; and licenses that lapse should not be renewed. He rules out partial prohibition since innumerable human beings cannot be kept under discipline. Gandhi made a fervent plea to congressmen in authority in provinces to have the courage and resolute determination to impose total prohibition, both on moral and pragmatic grounds. Prohibition, he observes, adds to the moral and material strength by bringing a new life to millions. “Our freedom will be the freedom of slaves if we continue

to be victims of the drink and drug habit.” (Prohibition At Any Cost, p. 15). He cites the success of the Salem experiment in the erstwhile Madras Presidency in support of his contention for total prohibition.

Illicit distillation would weaken the chances of prohibition, Gandhi argues, and that its prevention would not cost more than the control of other crimes. No soft and easy-going policy can tackle this tremendous evil, he observes. Drink should be made a heavily punishable offence backed by the enforcement of tough measures. Stringent penal action against those who manufacture liquor and those who are addicts to it would have salutary results, he notes. The people, especially the poor, would not think of liquor if it is not within their reach.

Gandhi opts for supplementing legislation on prohibition with the constructive programme initiated by him. Indeed, he made abolition of drink an integral part of the constructive programme. Gandhi also gave a clarion call that the articulate public, especially voluntary organisations, with the support of women and students, should consider temperance as the greatest moral movement and launch comprehensive educational campaigns against liquor. The causes behind the drink habit in areas prone to heavy consumption of liquor should be carefully analysed and dealt with. In their crusade against liquor the voluntary organisations and prominent individuals should undertake peaceful, silent and educative picketing with the object of establishing personal rapport with the addicts and they should make every conceivable effort to educate them to give up liquor and to convert the liquor traders to move into other trades to earn money. Gandhi concludes that mere voluntary effort at education will be doomed to failure if it is not preceded by total prohibition. Legislation and voluntary effort, in his view, should play mutually supportive roles. By implementing the series of pro-active and punishment-centric measures suggested by him, Gandhi felt that we could create a win-win situation for the society as well as the victims of the drink habit (Prohibition At Any Cost).

Though Gandhi was passionate about his opposition to intoxicating drinks, he was sensitive to the fact that people of various cultures differ considerably in their attitudes toward drinking as well as the response patterns of the lawmakers toward anti-liquor legislation. Some cultures may show high acceptance of drinking as a social custom with the norm of moderation. Referring to the American experiment, Gandhi does not think of the experiment as a failure. It would be far easier to have prohibition in India because it is only a small minority that drinks. Moreover, drinking is generally considered disresponsible in the Indian culture.

7.3.2 Kumarappa: Why Prohibition?

Bharatan Kumarappa was one of the most articulate exponents of Gandhian ideals on prohibition. He published a collection of essays in his book, **Why Prohibition?**

Kumarappa addresses the issue of individual freedom in relation to intoxicant drinks. He argues persuasively that prohibition be conceived in India primarily in the interest of the poor. The suffering experienced by the male addict's wife, children and other dependents should be a matter of social concern, more so when the man earns a pittance, hardly sufficient to meet the basic needs of himself and his family. Thus the man's drinking habit leaves his dependents practically destitute. The ill-treatment meted out to family members due to intoxication has an anti-social dimension. Under the influence of liquor, the human being is enslaved. Considering drink as an anti-social habit, the state has to intervene and

curb the freedom of the individual. Kumarappa also cites the examples of many western countries imposing restrictions on individual freedom in the case of narcotic drugs. Alcohol is also a narcotic. The western countries have been unable to deal with drink by law because it has become entrenched in social customs, whereas in India only a small minority are liquor addicts, and “where public opinion is definitely against it, it should be possible to prohibit liquor just as easily as drugs in the West”. He draws our attention to the fact that both Hinduism and Islam, major religions of India, ban drink.

When drink is sold freely in the open market, non-addicts are attracted to it, thereby spreading the drink evil. Prohibition is, therefore, concerned not merely with the drink addict, but also with the non-drinker, observes Kumarappa. Citing Prof. Edwin Lemert of the University of California, Kumarappa notes that excessive drinking is like other forms of criminal behaviour (eg. sexual immorality, disturbance to peace, destruction of property, misuse of credit, etc.) which run counter to the normal expectations of a sober community.

Hence, the state has to legislate against drink and protect by law the interests of the average citizen and the non-drinker. According to Kumarappa educative propaganda against drink is without question very essential; this is after all the permanent non-violent way of dealing with the problem. Propaganda must be carried on with or without prohibition.

Public opinion in the West is predominantly in favour of moderate drinking rather than for total abstinence. Kumarappa argues that the regular moderate drinker is worse off than the one who gets drunk once in a while, but does not drink regularly. More over, all alcohol addicts start off as moderate drinkers. Therefore, if liquor is an evil, there is no point in permitting moderate drinking. One has to ban drinking of liquor altogether, both moderate and excessive, for the two go together and are inseparable.

Both Gandhi and Kumarappa were of the firm view that one of the reasons why men drink is economic. Amelioration of the socio-economic conditions coupled with provision of social amenities like clubs, playgrounds, parks and other recreation and entertainment facilities would help to wean away from liquor those with idle time, the labourers in particular.

Kumarappa considers liquor taxation as unjust and iniquitous. It helps the contractors who bid for licences and who are encouraged to sell the maximum. Also much of the liquor revenue is collected from the poor. The government could impose or increase other taxes which will be spread out evenly among all strata of society. Prohibition should not be given up on the ground of obtaining revenue. Kumarappa musters statistics to show that the period of prohibition registered a big spurt in savings, investments consumption and public health indices besides improvement in production efficiency. He observes that the costs of enforcement and loss of liquor revenue is outweighed by the gains to the consumer in multiple ways. It means better living conditions, better health and education to the consumer and greater efficiency for the economy. On the debit side of liquor are immorality, crime, family squabbles, hungry children and broken homes.

Social legislations like prohibition cannot succeed without public cooperation, notes Kumarappa. He states: “... prohibition will remain a dead letter so long as the people do nothing about it...” An evil like prohibition cannot be wiped off by mere legislation.

7.4 EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION: RESEARCH FINDINGS

There have been many scientific studies, especially in the western countries about the impact of alcohol on social interaction, social costs, and the relationship between liquor addiction and various types of crime. This section summarises some of these research findings.

7.4.1 Alcohol and Social Interaction

Liquor connects and disconnects people. It affects the processes of social interaction in manifold ways. The sign of intoxication on gait, speech, eye movements, and facial expressions often lead to negative responses from others in the interaction process. Interaction may also be disrupted by 'rude' behaviour. Even the drinker's positive feelings, expressed through excessive or indiscriminate affectionate behaviour may produce negative reactions in some social contexts. The effects of alcohol are manifold. It acts as a 'social attractor' by bringing people into each other's company or proximity. It may also incite obnoxious and provocative behaviour in interaction situations, which would often lead to aggression, escalating into conflict and physical violence. Conversely, drinking could be used as an excuse for deviant behaviour or claiming lack of responsibility. Offenders often claim that they use drink in order to steady their nerves. In this sense, alcohol gives an impetus to risk-taking and rebellious behaviour as in the case of vandalism or property thefts (house break-in or car theft) or deviant behaviour (spouse abuse or rape). A recent example is the war crimes committed in former Yugoslavia (now Serbia) attributed to the influence of alcohol.

7.4.2 Alcohol-related Social Costs

The social cost of alcohol has been a subject of extensive investigation and rigorous research by a number of social scientists in the West. The greatest alcohol-related costs to society are due to mortality and morbidity and lost productivity due to death and ill-health. Recent studies carried out in the United States, Australia and United Kingdom estimate that over 80 percent mortality and morbidity costs induced by alcohol are borne by society. By comparison, the share of total costs attributed to alcohol-related crimes is less than 10 percent. Although the extent/degree of involvement of alcohol in crime and violence seem to differ between countries, there have been no doubts about the potential social costs of alcohol. But the share of these crimes in money terms is considerable. Overall, it is admitted that the intangible costs of alcohol-related crimes to victims of rape, robberies, assaults and murders are enormous. Both property crimes and crimes against person cause fear in large segments of society, and the pain, suffering and trauma associated with them negatively affect the quality of life of the victims. For many families the consequences are hard to bear. It also leads to criminal behaviour and undermines the consensual normative foundation which any society needs in order to function.

7.4.3 Alcohol and Crime

Evidently, a high level of relationship exists between liquor addiction and the propensity to commit crime. US studies place the proportion in the share of murders in which either the offender or the victim had been drinking is about 65 percent. The figure is much higher (80 percent) for Greenland. Studies on family violence and child abuse also show high levels of alcohol involvement in several countries. In the United States, which is at

the median, alcohol accounts for about 50 percent of the robberies and rapes. The highest share of drinking is shown by arsonists.

Traffic offences are a major segment of the alcohol-related crimes. Alcohol affects the judgmental capabilities and risk-taking tendencies of those behind the wheel, releasing their aggressions and feelings of power.

The evidence of a statistical association between alcohol consumption and the incidence of criminal behaviour is compelling. However, many studies point out to the issue of under-reporting of minor crimes, and rape, the latter due to the stigma felt by the victim or the influence executed by the perpetrator of the crime.

7.5 TAX LEVIES AND SOCIAL COSTS OF LIQUOR ADDICTION

Neo-puritans argue that consumers of liquor do not bear the full costs of their unhealthy choices, but impose costs on the rest of society. To meet the burden of these 'social costs' or the alleged spillover harms from drink addiction government intervention through heavy taxes and levies/license fee on vendors is sought to be justified.

As William Shughart puts it: "The mix of social cost economics and neo-Puritan political correctness is a potent brew, as deliberating as it is addictive" (1995, p.2).

Short of banning consumption of liquor outright, high excise levies and other duties on politically incorrect behaviour, it is argued, would raise liquor price, which discourages consumption. Moreover, the incorrigible individuals who continue to buy liquor at the higher prices are thereby forced to help pay for the costs they allegedly impose on society.

But 'selective' excise levies are selective only on taxing products like liquor; they are indiscriminate in taxing consumers. Individual consumers who drink in moderate quantities face the same marginal tax rate as those who drink excessively. The vast majority of moderate or responsible drinkers, for example, are punished to pay for the external costs generated by a small minority of binge drinkers.

Consequently, public policy toward illicit liquor has been locked into a regulatory cycle of tax and taboo. Moral indignation leads to prohibition which provides satisfaction to those involved in anti-liquor movements and monetary benefits to the bootleggers, the latter shifting transactions to the underground economy, the widespread disobedience of law, besides the shrinking tax base, which invite calls for repeal of the prohibition law, and the cycle begins anew. Thus the tension between prohibition and tax maximisation is an enduring theme in most countries of the world.

Effects of price increase on alcohol consumption and its consequences

This section analyses the effects of price increases on alcohol consumption and its adverse consequences. Researchers report that alcohol use and abuse are sensitive to price. Studies by Grossman and his colleagues (1998) and others found consistent evidence that increases in the price of alcohol significantly reduced alcohol consumption, especially among youth and other young adults. A subset of heavy drinkers – the upper 5 percent – appears to be unresponsive to price increase. Further, adult addicts are found to be less sensitive to price increase.

Several studies also focus on the incidence of alcohol-related problems. In the United States fatal motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of people below the age of 35, and alcohol is involved in more than one-half of these fatal crashes. Besides minimum drinking age restrictions and stricter laws, heavy penalties for drunk-driving would have contributed to a reduction in fatalities by 8 to 12.5 percent.

Researchers also report that price increase of alcohol might reduce adverse health effects. For example, more than 20,000 deaths take place annually in USA, due to the effects of alcohol consumption on liver cirrhosis. A 10 percent increase in the price of alcohol would reduce liver cirrhosis mortality by 8.3 to 12.8 percent. The increases in the price of alcoholic beverages would reduce various death rates related to motor vehicle crashes, homicides, suicides, cancers or deaths from drowning, falls, and other injuries besides sexually transmitted diseases. Increased prices of alcohol would significantly reduce the rates of child abuse, spouse abuse and other violent domestic crimes. Analysts on prohibition conclude that policies, in addition to tax increases, must be pursued to curtail alcohol consumption or its abuse.

7.6 INDIAN SCENARIO

Gandhi's views on prohibition found an echo in the Indian Constitution. One of its Directive Principles (Article 47) envisages that the State would pursue prohibition as a policy. While many other Directive Principles found their way into concrete policies of the Union and state governments, prohibition did not find favour with them. The erstwhile Madras Presidency/State, under the stewardship of C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji), introduced prohibition but was given up subsequently.

As of now Gujarat is the lone prohibition state in India. A debate has been going on in this State as to whether this land of Gandhi must stick steadfastly to its decades-old policy of total prohibition or whether it is time to review in view of the substantial loss of revenue, the flourishing of illicit liquor and the tragic deaths of many of its victims. Time and again, there are suggestions from various quarters to find ways to relax prohibition.

Haryana and Andhra Pradesh, the two states that experimented with prohibition gave it up due not only to financial reasons but also because they were unable to control illicit distillation and bootlegging. Haryana made several attempts at prohibition, but it finally gave it up. Women's organisations that had spearheaded the campaign for the ban on liquor themselves supported the lifting of prohibition because they found that men, denied their drink through legitimate channels, took to illicit liquor. This resulted in a spate of spurious liquor tragedies. Andhra Pradesh introduced partial prohibition in 1994 through a ban on illicit liquor. It was preceded by protracted agitation and a major social movement for prohibition.

7.6.1 Case Study: Anti-arrack / liquor movement in Andhra Pradesh

The anti-arrack / liquor movement started in Dubagunta, a remote village in Nellore (now Potti Sriramulu–Nellore district) of the State, through Rosamma, an elderly woman who was inspired by the lessons of the adult education programme. Protests by women of the village spread to neighbouring villages. It was a revolt against familiar happenings of liquor addicts, spending women's wages, selling away household goods, and indulging in drunken brawls and domestic violence of various sorts. Information about protests spread through word of mouth and through established social networks. Spontaneous actions by women

in many communities in other districts also occurred, breaking the pre-existing social norms i.e., patriarchy and non-participation of women in the public domain.

7.6.2 Participating Organisations

Though the anti-arrack agitation in Andhra Pradesh was built on the initiative and participation of women, a multitude of organisations which involved in the anti-arrack movement helped to mobilise women across the State. The participating organisations supported women to sustain the struggle for a ban on liquor and arrack. The organisations ranged from national, regional, grassroots women's units and issue-based informal groups to political parties with different ideological orientations, priorities and political motivations. They came together to fight against liquor/arrack, the habit as well as State policy. It was considered necessary first to change the policy of the State in favour of a ban on arrack and liquor.

In the initial stages of agitation, many women were *lathi* charged and some were arrested by police. They were threatened by the arrack and liquor contractors, few women activists were beaten up by hooligans employed by the arrack contractors. Women overcame many such hurdles thanks to the support from the print media and the opposition political parties and their front organisations.

Endowed with cadres and resources, the participating organisations played an important role in building the anti-arrack movement to a crescendo, thereby converting an emotion-ridden movement by disparate *ad hoc* groups at the grassroots into a broad-based movement. With this, the movement gained unprecedented momentum. It soon became a political movement, sending shock-waves to the political establishment. The latter, which reacted with police action in the initial stages, was forced to give in, change its earlier stand and come up with a time-bound programme in favour of prohibition.

The societal support came in various forms. An association was formed against liquor/arrack as *Sara Vyathireka Karyacharana Samiti*, organising dharnas and protests demanding prohibition, picketing liquor shops and burning of liquor sachets and destroying liquor bottles. There were many spontaneous actions such as villagers or slum dwellers, imposing fines on drunken persons. As a result of the intensity of the agitation, some contractors and traders voluntarily closed their liquor business and liquor shops.

7.6.3 Campaigns and Communications

The symbolic realm is important for carrying the message across various heterogeneous segments of the society. Besides formal meetings and a sustained campaign in the print media, demonstrations, strikes, rallies, dharnas, poster campaigns, distribution of pamphlets, writing letters, stories and articles in newspapers and periodicals and submission of memoranda to government functionaries occurred almost every day. Alternate ways to send messages were invented. Spilling or burning of arrack sachets at public places, preventing the movement of arrack vehicles into the villages, burning of arrack shops and stopping arrack auctions of government became an almost everyday occurrence. Traditional media were effectively employed to communicate the ill-effects of arrack and liquor. Street plays, skits, *burrakathas*, puppet shows, singing of traditional songs, backed by the music of drums, etc., were organised on a large scale.

The print media played an important role as a catalyst in the prohibition movement. The largest circulated vernacular daily, *Eenadu*, gave maximum publicity and coverage in reporting events regarding the anti-arrack agitation. Other Telugu newspapers too joined

the mission. One of the important reasons for the quick spread of the anti-arrack agitation was the wide coverage, communication and reports of the movement in the vernacular print media. Word spread quickly and more innovative forms of protests followed. In some villages, many men, hitherto arrack addicts, went one step ahead and took an oath not to drink arrack, or not to allow arrack sales in the villages concerned.

The anti-arrack movement (1993-1994) of Andhra was a roaring success for a number of reasons. It centred on a simple and transparent issue i.e., prohibition, which could be understood by all. Women from the lower strata participated in large numbers. The movement gained momentum and sustained because of support from the vernacular media and a large number of voluntary organisations and political groups. The movement gained strength as it was able to manage the available resources (people, material, ideas and organisation) effectively. Once the movement gained popularity and received a bandwagon effect, it became explosive and unstoppable, diluting resistance from those in authority.

7.7 CURRENT SCENARIO

Notwithstanding the assessment of Gandhi that only a small minority drink, the proportion of those who drink in India had multiplied several times during the last eight decades. Today liquor is different things to different sets of people: A benign vice for the affluent, an acceptable leisure activity for the middle class, and a veritable curse for the poor. For cash-starved states, saddled with populist programmes, revenue from liquor is the new mantra of political correctness. Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh hold a monopoly in the sale of liquor to retail outlets, running it as a state enterprise.

While there has been a steady increase in the production and consumption of liquor manufactured in the organised sector, a much larger proportion consists of 'country liquor', a brew made up of local farm produce, illicit alcohol and harmful chemicals. The low cost of the spurious liquor, coupled with its 'speedy kick' attracts the poor. A profitable cottage industry of spurious liquor thrives in India thanks to improper regulation, often aided by corruption. From Gujarat in the West to Tamil Nadu in down South and Assam in the North-East spurious liquor disasters have been chronicled frequently, with pathetic stories of mortalities and blindness. Each disaster is followed by a sudden spurt of regulatory activity not to speak of rhetoric laced with homilies by those in authority. The problem itself remains serious and chronic.

7.8 DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

- One of the critical pieces of the puzzle of prohibition in the current Indian scenario is loss of a sizeable chunk of revenue to the state governments. Protagonists of prohibition contend that practising meaningful austerity and downsizing of the government, cutting defence expenditure, etc., would make up for the loss of revenue and further, the Union Government may compensate, at least partially, the state governments opting for prohibition.

As one analyst observes:

Extreme policies of prohibition and the current permissive strategies are both counter-productive. There is a need for a nuanced approach integrating both the regulation of alcohol production and sale on one hand while rigorously enforcing public health regulations on the other. The goal of sustainable and effective alcohol policy can only

be achieved by coordinated action by multiple stakeholders ... While complete prohibition has been shown to be a failure, the current permissiveness without the enforcement of regulations also represents a lack of responsibility... (K.S. Jacob, "Alcohol politics, policies and public health", *The Hindu*, 2nd November, 2009, p. 10.)

- The very nature of alcohol is such that the potential for misuse is always present. It leaves scope for chronic public health problems in a country like India. Government has to evolve rational policies for interventions based on public health approaches that would have a great deal of impact on alcohol-related morbidity and mortality.
- In the western countries there are a number of campaigns involving behavioural counselling to help people understand the health problems due to excessive liquor consumption. Such campaigns, if launched in India, would help people to make individual choices about their lifestyles.
- A mandatory code for alcohol retailing and implementation of tough measures, which would curb irresponsible ways of expanding retail outlets, popularly known as belt shops, would reduce the risks associated with liquor consumption, by restricting new entrants and by preventing excessive consumption by habitual drinkers. It is also necessary to prevent the location of liquor shops in the proximity of religious and educational institutions.
- There are many laws in the statute books of state governments with regard to illicit distillation and sale of spurious liquor. Their effective implementation calls for commitment on the part of those in authority.
- Expansion of the number of dry days, covering pay days and festival days besides public holidays, and restriction of hours of retail liquor outlets would help to reduce liquor consumption.
- Rigorous enforcement of the anti-liquor laws during the week prior to each election and nabbing those who are drunk during election campaigns would curb liquor consumption, and also contribute to healthy political campaigning.
- There has been considerable research of a rigorous nature in the western countries about estimates of the social cost to the nation of the consumption of alcohol and how this cost should be treated to taxes and duties by the government. India is lagging far behind in such endeavours, which would provide inputs for rational public policy making.
- In many states in India, women's groups have been demanding devolution of power to local bodies in controlling access to liquor, licensing of vendors, and provision of treatment services to alcoholics. If this demand is conceded, communities will have the right to decide whether to have or not to have liquor/ arrack shops, regulate the days and hours of retail liquor shops. Communities may also decide various issues relating to liquor through referenda in the specific areas. A related suggestion is on community participatory approaches: government regulation be supplemented by community-based participatory approaches, especially through women's self-help groups, in dealing with alcohol misuse.

7.9 SUMMARY

Prohibition is defined as total abstinence from alcoholic drinks through legal means and temperance as abstinence from liquor on a voluntary basis. Although there were attempts at prohibition in the ancient and medieval periods, the anti-liquor movements in the modern era are less than two centuries old. Most of the countries that have introduced prohibition had also withdrawn the measure. They have introduced a string of policy and regulatory measures, the most important of them being taxes on the production and sale of liquor. Though the manifest function of liquor taxation is to discourage consumption its latent function is to raise revenues.

Prohibition has an important place in Gandhi's vision of India. He felt that alcoholism is an unmitigated evil and when it becomes a habit multiple pathological consequences follow. Gandhi suggested a three-pronged approach in dealing with the problem of drink: Take legal steps against illicit distillation and follow them up with effective enforcement through a special agency; provision for punishment of those who are found drunk in streets or other public places with a substantial fine, and imprisonment in case of repeaters; and finally, propagation by voluntary organisations, especially led by women, in slums and in areas inhabited by labour with a view to wean the addicts away from the habit. Bharathan Kumarappa elaborates the basic ideas of Gandhi with regard to the effects of the drink habit of men on their families; the importance of public cooperation in sustaining prohibition; and differentiation of the Indian context from that of the West.

The case study on anti-liquor movement in Andhra Pradesh describes the efforts at grassroots from women of the lowest social stratum, the victims of liquor addiction of their men folk, in initiating the movement and how it was sustained by voluntary organisations, political outfits and the print media. The movement was able to force the political regime to change its liquor policy and to come up with a time-frame for the introduction of prohibition.

7.10 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Define the terms Prohibition and Temperance. Trace the evolution of prohibition movements.
2. State Gandhi's views on liquor taxation.
3. How does Kumarappa analyse the Indian situation with regard to anti-liquor legislation? Compare his views with that of Gandhi's.
4. What are the problems related to measurement of social costs of alcohol addiction?
5. Outline the major concerns of liquor policy and public health related issues in contemporary India.

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UNIT 8 FARMERS' MOVEMENT

Structure

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8.1 INTRODUCTION

India has a long history of peasant or farmers' movement, dating back to the colonial period when farmers in different parts of India revolted against Zamindars, landlords, British colonial masters or powers including feudal lords. These movements were the results of severe exploitation, oppression, loss of rights over land, imposition of new taxes, and new agrarian relations of the peasants with the Colonial state or the feudal lords. Most of the struggles that the peasants resorted to were either carried as part of nationalist struggle or independent of it. Some of the important struggles of farmers or peasants during the British period were : Bhil Revolt (1822,1823,1837-60), Deccan Peasant Revolt (1875), Mopilla Revolt (1921), The Muslhi Satyagraha (1921-24), Struggle of Warlis (1945), Birsa Munda revolt Nagar Peasant Uprising(1830-33). In this context, three important struggles that Gandhi led require our special attention. They were: Champaran (1918-19); Bardoli (1925) and Kheda(1918). In the first struggle, the primary issue was opposing the Tinkathia System imposed on the Indigo cultivators of Champaran by the colonial powers. In the second and third struggle, opposing the rent payable to the government at the time of distress was the major issue. All these struggles had one impact: it brought the peasants to the nationalist movement.

Aims and Objectives

After reading this Unit, you would be able to understand:

- the post-independence farmers' movement in India
- those farmers' movement influenced by Gandhi or Gandhian ideology
- to what extent the New Farmers' Movement adhered to the Gandhian principles
- the contributions of New Farmers' Movement in the overall Indian context.

8.2 FARMERS' MOVEMENT AFTER INDEPENDENCE

It was obvious that with the termination of colonial rule, the character and nature of the peasant or farmers' movement underwent sea change. The Post-independent India saw broadly two kinds of peasant or farmers' struggles in the recent past.

- Peasant movements led by Marxist and Socialists- such as Telangana Movement (1946-51), Tebagma movement (1946-1949), Kagodu Satyagraha (1951), Naxalbari Movement (1967) and Lalgadh movement (2009).
- Farmers' movement led by rich farmers in Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Punjab and Gujarat.

One of the problems that the scholars faced while detailing farmers' movement is the conceptualisation. How to distinguish "peasants from farmers"? Is peasant a suitable analytical category in the post-independence period? In fact, the concept of "peasant" is now increasingly being replaced by "farmers" for the simple reason that the development paradigm initiated during the post-independence period has created a new category called 'Market Oriented' farmers. The peasant is simply defined as a social category, who lives in subsistence level and desist from market competition. On the contrary, the farmer involves in market competition and tries to be autonomous while dealing with production, distribution and cropping pattern issues. Infact the introduction of green revolution, new technology, government subsidies etc has created such a category in recent past. These categories are also called "rich farmers". The struggle that these farmers resorted to in recent years has been conceptualised as 'New Farmers' Movement'. The latter movement comes closer to Gandhian movement of yesteryears. This is because of the fact that the strategies that they resorted to, methodologies that they adopted, the politics that they played, the analysis that they made including the conceptualising of some of their struggles, had the bearing of Gandhian Movement. Even some of organisations in New Farmers' Movement such as the one in Karnataka vouched for Gandhism openly. Others such as Shektari Sanghathana of Maharashtra did not accept or adhere to Gandhism in total.

8.3 NEW FARMERS' MOVEMENT

8.3.1 The Beginning

The beginning of the New Farmers' Movement in general is seen from the decade of 1980s. However, its genesis requires to be stretched back to the earlier decade of 1970s. This was the decade when farmers of green revolution area began to rally around political parties and leaders. One such leader who organised the farmers under political party was Chaudhury Charan Singh, the former Prime Minister of India. He organised few rallies raising such issues as parity in prices between industrial and agricultural commodities; allowing import of agricultural input from abroad, reducing the protection given to industry, due representation of farmers in different boards and committees, subsidies to electricity, water fertilizer, seeds, reducing the income disparity between the urban and rural people, establishing Kisan Banks as well as agricultural polytechnics etc.

During the same decade, farmers in Punjab organised struggles under Khetkari Zamindari Union. In 1974, the word Zamindari was dropped from the organisation. Incidentally, the same Union became part of Bharatiya Kisan Union during the next decade. However, till the end of 1970s, its demands varied between increasing revenue tax and defective

tractors. Some of the most important struggles that were carried till the beginning of 1980s were:

- Anti-Single Food Zone, 1972
- Struggle against Power Tariff, 1975
- Struggle against increasing water rates, increasing commercial tax, 1975
- Agitation against defective tractors, 1977
- Diesel morcha, 1979

However one should not overlook the contribution of Narayana Swamy Naidu of Tamil Nadu who, during the same decade of 1970s, organised farmers in Tamil Nadu under the banner of Tamiliga Vyavasaigal Sangam. In fact he was the one who later on advocated farmers to wear Green Towels as symbols of peasant identity. Nonetheless his organisation during the decade of 1970s carried following agitations:

- Agitation against power tariff, 1970 and 1972
- Agitation against agricultural tax, land tax, cess, debt relief etc, 1974
- Agitation for remunerative prices, subsidies to agriculture, 1979
- Agitation for milk prices, 1980

The 1980s saw the beginning of what is called New Farmers' Movement in different parts of India. The reasons were: terms of trade going against the agriculture, declining purchasing power, un-remunerative prices, agriculture becoming losing proposition, increase in input prices, declining per capita income from agriculture etc.

It all began in Maharashtra when Shetkari Sanghathana under Sharad Joshi, a former employee of UN turned farmer, began agitating in village called Chakan in Pune for remunerative prices for agricultural commodities, particularly for onion. This one point agenda of remunerative prices began to be enacted by farmers in other states of India. In Karnataka, it was started by farmers of Navalgund and Navilgund demanding abolition of betterment levy in Command Area. This helped in the formation of an organisation called Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha. Prof. Nanjundaswamy, a Professor of Law, became its ideologue and undisputed leader.

In Uttar Pradesh, the movement started much late in 1986. It was spearheaded by Mahendra Singh Tikait a peasant by profession. His organisation is called Bharatiya Kisan Union. His movement started from a small village called Sisoli and Shamli in Meerut District in Uttar Pradesh.

8.3.2 Major Struggles of New Farmers' Movement

The Uttar Pradesh movement under Mahendra Singh Tikait organised many rallies, agitations as well as struggles. Some of the major well known struggles are as follows:

- Struggle against Power Tariff, 1986
- Meerut Struggle, 1988
- Agitation for Payment of Arrears, 2007
- Sit-in Dharna at Jantar Mantar, 2008

On the contrary, Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha also organised series of agitations over the years. Some of the major struggles were:

- Road Block agitation of 1981 and 1991
- Rail and Rasta Roko of 1982, 1992 (remunerative prices)
- Jail Bhara Agitation of 1982
- Long March of 1982,1983,1984
- Agitation for Prohibition
- Squatting inside Vidhan Soudha ,1983
- Agitation against Social Forestry
- Agitation against Procumbent Policy, 1985
- Rally of 1989

Similarly Shetkari Sanghathana of Maharashtra also carried couple of struggles. However, many of them centred on the single agenda of demanding remunerative prices. Some of the important struggles are as follows:

- Nasik Agitation of 1980
- Nippani Agitation of 1981
- Rail and Rasta Roko agitation of 1981,1986
- Pandharpur Rally of 1983
- Agitation against Rajiv Vastra, 1985-87

Except for the Maharashtra movement, in other movements, more than remunerative prices the other issues received focus. The list of demands would cover each and every issue of farmers. Many a time the demands of the farmers' movement would include such issues as remunerative prices, writing off loans, anti-government policy of procurement, levy policy, liberalisation etc.

Other than these economic issues, the farmers' movement also focused on social issues. In this respect the experiment done by the Karnataka Farmers' Movement under Raitha Sangha and Maharashtra movement under Shetkari Sanghathana are noteworthy. Both tried to address the issues of gender or women by organising massive rallies. The Maharashtra movement attempted to give women the property rights under the programme called "Lakshmi Mukhti". the Karnataka movement, on the contrary, organised a massive rally in Haliyal in 1983 for the purpose of shifting property relations at the rural side. Further, the Karnataka movement organised thousands of simple, inter-caste marriages etc. In fact women's issues were interwoven in its various struggles too. For example, in its anti-social forestry, prohibition struggle, women's issues were prominent. All these bring one question to the fore: is it possible to confine the farmers' movement to locality or are they part of global struggles too?

8.3.3 Debate about Newness of New Farmers' Movement

There has been a debate about “Newness” of the new farmers’ movement. Some of the experts working on farmers’ movement argue that these movements cannot be called “new” for the simple reason that they re-enact the same old strategies, old ideas and old agenda. The protagonists of New argue on the following grounds:

- That these farmers’ movements do not believe in romanticising their life style or social life.
- These movements believe in the principle of going beyond locality. It is nothing but going beyond nation/nationality to internationalism
- They believe in united or undifferentiated struggle. They refuse to divide the social categories on the basis of economic position. This is the reason why they refuse to call their movement as rich peasant movement. For them, all the social categories are poor. This is argued on the basis that the successive governments have adopted biased policies against the farmers as well as agriculture. The net consequence is the increasing poverty in the countryside. This is the reason why the farmers’ movement argued that the “debt of the farmer” is nothing but artificial creation of the government. Hence they declared “Kharja Mukti”.
- The farmers’ movement believed in the single point agenda of analysing the backwardness from the perspective of remunerative prices. They believe that the remunerative prices to the agricultural commodities, if given, will have a filter-down effect. It would remove the rural poverty and backwardness.
- Gail Omvedt, who has substantially worked on the peasant movement, argues that “the farmer’s movement believed in the new form of exploitation. Unlike the traditional movements these movements believed and argued that the exploitation is rooted in the larger market system. The market does not necessarily lie within its own locality rather might be outside the realm of rural areas- it might be global market or the national market” (Gail Omvedt,1998).

Incidentally the Maharashtra movement distinguished itself as New Farmers’ Movement with the following five characteristics:

- The movement is economic;
- The movement believes in secularism;
- It believes as well as resorts to constitutional means such as agitations and dharna. Infact the Maharashtra movement added new dimension to agitational politics. It introduced new strategies such as *Gav Bhandi*.
- It refused to glorify neither the pastoral agrarian pattern nor “has any nostalgic attachment to an idealized romantic view of the village life before the advent of industrialisation” (Sharad Joshi, 1986, p.312).
- The farmers’ movement believed in having a distinct worldview. This is called “positive liberalism”. In fact this has been contested by other movements such as the one in Karnataka. For the latter case, it was nothing but supporting and continuing the domination of western world and western capitalism on the Third World.

In fact, not all the farmers' movements claim that theirs is part of New Farmers' Movement. The Karnataka movement, under Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha, calls itself as "Village movement" and develops the argument centering around village issues. While Maharashtra movement claims itself as New Farmers' movement, however, it has the problem of identifying peasant categories – it is strange that its discourse on *shetkari* also covers such categories as rural artisans as well as agricultural labourers.

8.3.4 Movements beyond Local to Global

One of the unique features of farmers' movements is that they moved from local to global. When globalisation was making serious inroads, some of the organisations went to support or oppose globalisation for various reasons. Those who opposed globalisation, particularly Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha, Bharatiya Kisan Union of Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, argued that globalisation would destroy the identities of peasantry, introduce western hegemony, destroy cultural life style, take away the right to produce, distribute and exchange agricultural commodities etc. On the contrary those who supported globalisation saw in globalisation an answer to rural backwardness, agricultural prosperity, and capitalist development.

Incidentally, the differences among different organisations emerged much before the decade of 1990s when globalisation was making serious inroads. The differences are much to do with the issues of approaching liberalisation and also globalisation. The Maharashtra movement, led by Sharad Joshi, in fact, was the one who supported liberalisation.

On the contrary, the farmers' organisations of Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab have been vehemently opposing the globalisation. The Raitha Sangha of Karnataka and BKU of Uttar Pradesh took out Caravan in European Continent during 1999. They protested in front of biotech company Cargill in Netherlands. During the same decade, the Karnataka movement burnt genetically modified BT cotton crops. This was part of what is called "Cremate Monsanto" campaign by the KRRS. The campaign used the following slogan, "Stop Genetic Engineering," "No Patents on Life", "Cremate Monsanto", "Bury the WTO", etc. It is here that its attacks centred on three principles: principle of opposing neo-liberal globalisation as a whole, World Trade Organisation regime and the principle of opposing global power structure embedded in G8 and NATO.

The Raitha Sangha of Karnataka also attacked an outlet of Kentucky Fried Chickens in Bangalore and destroyed the godown of Cargill Company in Bellary. Even though these attacks were symbolic, they conveyed the larger message of opposing globalisation.

This does not mean that each and every farmer's movement opposing globalisation joined every anti-globalisation forum at the global level. In fact, they do differ in this matter too. This became apparent many a time. Karnataka, as well as BKU of Uttar Pradesh, never became a part of World Social Forum- a conglomeration of thousands of civil society groups consistently opposing and critiquing the globalisation. During 2004, when the World Social Forum was organised in Mumbai, the Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh movement formed what is called Mumbai Resistance -2004 on the ground that the World Social Forum was not representing the "genuine anti-globalisation or anti-imperialist resistance". They were joined by other BKU units of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and others. This sustained anti-imperialist opposition reflected in the continued association with La via Campesina and Peoples' Global Action at the global level.

8.3.5 Ideology of the Farmers' Movement

Apparently the farmers' movement did not believe in single ideology as such. This is because of the fundamental differences among themselves about addressing the issues of farmers.

The Karnataka farmers' movement claimed itself as Gandhian but few of its arguments come closer to the argument of Dependency theory. It argues that the present day retarded development of the Third World is largely due to the colonisation of the Third World by the former colonial countries. This colonisation is once again being pursued, even after the independence by way of cheap goods, dumping secretive technology, patent regimes, imposing restrictions on the agricultural production, developing weak capitalism, urban biased policies etc. Similar arguments have been voiced in the arguments of the Uttar Pradesh and other farmers' movements.

However, what distinguished the Maharashtra movement under Shetkari Sangathana from other movements is the "novelty of idiom and its capacity to articulation". Its ideology is apparent in its argument of "Bharat versus India" divide- they are the "native and traditional nomenclature of the country". Sharad Joshi argues that "India corresponds to that notional entity that has inherited from the British the mantle of economic, social, cultural educational exploitation; on the contrary "Bharat" is that notional entity which is subject to exploitation a second time even after the termination of the external colonial regime. In brief, the black rulers have replaced the white rulers (Sharad Joshi, 1986, p.213). This is called a new agrarian thinking in the recent past.

8.3.6 Party Politics and Division among Farmers' Movement

In fact, the division within the farmer's movement was not a new one; there were many issues that divided the farmer's movement when it was at its peak at the all India level. One such issue was retaining the "non-political" character of the movement. The Punjab movement under Punjab Bharatiya Kisan Union initially believed that interest of the farmers would be best served by remaining non-political. This non-political stance had a different meaning: disassociating from the electoral politics, keeping distance from parties upholding agitational politics etc. However this process of remaining non-political underwent transformation, for the reason that the farmers' movement increasingly began to believe that remaining non-political would not benefit the farmers nor the movement.

In fact Narayana Swamy Naidu of Tamiluga Vyavasaigal Sangam was one of the firsts to form a political party. In 1982 he formed what is called Toilers' and Farmers' Party, much against the principles of Bharatiya Kisan Union. His party contested the election, but was unable to make any dent in the electoral politics.

This was followed by other movements too. The Maharashtra movement, under Shetkari Sanghathan, believed in contesting the election as well as negotiating with different political parties. This is the reason why the Maharashtra movement founded Swatantra Bharat Party in 1994. This party aimed at abolishing License permit raj and minimal government intervention. Earlier it associated itself with such political parties as BJP and Shiv Sena.

The Karnataka movement too made efforts to participate in the election. In 1984 it did try to enter into political domain through what is called Voters' Forum. During the same decade it formed Kannada Desha and contested the assembly election, but in vain. Unlike the Maharashtra movement, it desisted from associating with different political parties;

rather it believed in forming larger coalition of social movements. Of late, it has merged its party with a new political outfit party called Sarvodaya Party.

Uttar Pradesh is a different story altogether. Unlike Maharashtra, it initially believed in retaining the movement as a “non-political” one. However, in due course, it changed its strategy- except that it desisted from forming any political party of its own. This is where the differences among farmers movement can be discernible. The Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka movements believed in shifting their politics from pressure groups to electoral politics; on the contrary, the Uttar Pradesh movement still believes in remaining a pressure group, a characteristic of the farmers’ movement.

The 1990s saw the vertical split in the farmers’ movement. The split has much to do with the way the farmers’ movement addressed the issues of globalisation and liberalisation. One such movement which supported globalisation was Shetkari Sanghathana of Maharashtra. The Maharashtra movement, under Sharad Joshi, was vehement in supporting globalisation. Its support to globalisation nonetheless can be located in the beginning of its critique about the state intervention. In fact, right from the beginning, the Maharashtra movement was consistently opposing any form of state intervention in the economy. Therefore it conceptualised its movement as a movement against “Statism”. Further it argued that freeing the economy will not only help farmers to take care of themselves but also ensure the prosperity of the nation.

Further, the division is apparent when the Maharashtra movement advocated the principle of free economy vis-a-vis the state controlled economy. It believed that the state intervention in the economic development has come in the way of capital accumulation in the agriculture. They further argued that the expropriation of the agriculture by the state has rendered the agriculture uneconomical and that poverty is the result of such intervention. This is the reason why it advocated and supported the dismantling of state intervention.

In fact the Maharashtra movement, under Shetkari Sangha, has believed that the present stage is a stage of entrepreneurism. This is neither the stage of capitalism nor socialism. Such division among the farmers’ movement has reduced its capacity to address the issues of farmers vehemently. This has further weakened the movement both from within and without.

8.3.7 Social Bases of the Farmers’ Movement

The Farmers’ movements are often criticised for their class bias. It is often argued that the New Farmers’ movement is highly biased towards market-oriented farmers than those who are living in the subsistence economy. All through their struggles, these movements have raised such issues which have helped either the rich farmers or the middle farmers. For example, their argument in favour of writing off loans, remunerative prices, declaring agriculture as an industry, abolition of tractor loans etc ultimately helped the big or the rich/middle peasantry or the farmers. Even the movements have not addressed the issues beyond irrigated areas. The issues of non-irrigated areas have received scant focus in their discourse. This is the reason why the farmers’ movement began to lose its appeal in the years to come. The movement encompassing different categories of farmers, however, lost its vitality or appeal in due course. This is the reason why it is stated that its social bases are confined to rich and middle peasants including the farmers of commercial cropping and also market-oriented farmers.

Secondly, there are criticisms that movements never become the movements of or for all caste groups. In Karnataka, the Raitha Sangha largely became the movement of two dominant castes- the Lingayats and Vokkaligas. In Maharashtra, it did become a movement of Maratha Kunbis. However, it tried to encompass Dalits, Other Backward Castes, artisan castes, and others. However, their proportion was less when compared to Kunbi Marathas. On the contrary, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh movements became movement of Jats. In Tamil Nadu, it is argued that its membership derived from such castes as Naidus, Goundars, Tewars, Vanniyars and Nadaars. However, the representation from dalits, Muslims, etc. is minimal. In Gujarat, under Khedut Samaj, the movement was largely dominated by Pattidars, although others such as OBCs are also its support bases but in less number. This wide range of social bases has literally made the farmers' movement confine to their agitational politics or to their locality. Therefore it has become difficult to organise the farmers' movement at an all India level.

8.3.8 Gandhism in Farmers' Movement

There has been a debate whether to analyse these movements as Gandhian or not. In other words, to what extent the New Farmers' Movement may be treated as Gandhian Movement? What are the characteristics that make them to vouch for Gandhism?

Infact, the Karnataka movement, under Raitha Sangha, is very vehement in advocating that it is a Gandhian movement despite the fact that in its analysis, the arguments of and about Third World or the arguments of Marx, Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg's internal colonialism are apparent. Hence it argues that its final objective is the realisation of "village republic". This is nothing but a "form of social, political and economic organisation based on direct democracy". In this democracy "affairs affecting several communities are decided upon through process of consultation involving all affected" (Nanjundaswamy, 1998). This is apparent in its organisational level or from the grass roots level to the top level.

These principles are apparent in different struggles. During the time of destroying Cargill seeds as part of global resistance and also as part of People's Global Action, it advocated the Gandhian principle of non-violence as the strategy or action. It looked at the issues of non-violence as respecting all the living-beings including police, the people who work for Multinationals and also non-genetically modified living beings. Interestingly it viewed the destruction of the property of MNCs, godowns etc as part of non-violence. Nonetheless, the Gandhian approach is further apparent in its decentralised campaign against globalisation, and reclaiming the natural resources etc.

Interestingly, while arguing for alternatives, the Karnataka farmers' movement advocated "Khadi Curtain" which means "Establishing equal relationship between India and western capitalism that would replace current – and unequal- forms of exploitation" (Muzaffar Assadi, 1994, p.321).

Nonetheless, Gandhism is also apparent in the adoption of different strategies that the Raitha Sangha adopted over the years. These are evident in such struggles as long marches, bandh, hartal, fasting, withholding taxes etc. Incidentally, it also added some new techniques- these can be called the post-Gandhian techniques- adopted to bring the system to listen to the farmers. These techniques are: "Continuous Laughing" before the Vidhan Soudha, "Prohibiting the entry of bureaucracy" to the village at all times. In the latter case, the farmers themselves decided the timing of the entry of the bureaucrats to the villages. In fact this tactics was later adopted in Maharashtra too. This is called "Gav Bhandi" in Maharashtra.

Interestingly, Sharad Joshi of Shetkari Sanghathana claims that he is neither Marxist nor Gandhian. His approach is principally to correct the anomalies in these two ideologies. In fact he may be called half Gandhian and a half Marxist. This is because he accepts certain arguments of Marx for his theoretical formulations such as materialist approach, capitalist accumulation, internal colonialism etc. Meanwhile he is opposed to the surplus value, or the theory of revolution advocated by Marx. Therefore he thinks that Gandhi and Marx are inadequate. His theory of "Bharat versus India" is nothing but independent system of thought neither advocating Marxism nor Gandhism. Nonetheless, he appreciated the Gandhian method of non-violence for its practical value but not as a principle. Infact, Shetkari Sanghathana uses militaristic language, which is incompatible with Gandhian movement such as Rana Niti, Fauzi, Senapati etc.

The Bharatiya Kisan Union of Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, and the Khedut Samaj of Gujarat are no different from the Karnataka movement. They have been using the language of Gandhism. Most of the strategies they adopt such as long marches, dharnas, fasting etc are largely borrowed from the Gandhian movement. They even believed in the Gandhian principles of simple living, decentralisation etc.

8.4 SUMMARY

The New Farmers' movement emerged at a time when agriculture was undergoing tremendous crisis. It emerged when terms of trade were going against agriculture, income from agriculture was dwindling, input prices were going beyond the reach of farmers etc. It started in Maharashtra under Shetkari Sanghatana when it demanded remunerative prices to onion. It was later on followed by Karnataka under the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha, Bharatiya Kisan Union in Uttar Pradesh etc. Although they started almost simultaneously, the differences among the farmers' organisations checkmated the movements into becoming a big force in Indian politics.

Despite differences the new farmers' movement did bring about a paradigm shift in the discourse, analysis and perception about farmers in India. It made the policy makers to address the deep rooted crisis of agriculture as well as agrarian classes in India. It has also helped the farmers to be a part of international movement against such issues as globalisation, imperialism and capitalism.

Nonetheless they have not been effective in bringing radical transformation in the country side. This is because of the fact that the movements, from the very beginning, were unable to overcome the internal conflicts as well as contradictions. Secondly, they did not carry any radical agenda from within- for example they never bothered to demand radical land reforms, nor were they concerned about the atrocities perpetrated on marginal classes including the Dalits in the country side. Since the movements, from the very beginning, were identified with rich or market-oriented farmers, the other categories received scant focus in their politics. This is the reason why they have been losing their social bases. Further, their operational areas are confined to those localities wherein the classes of rich or market-oriented farmers have come to stay. This has further reduced their areas of operation.

Whatever may be the weakness, one should not over look the fact that the New Farmers' Movement has given new meaning to the study of farmers' movement in India. Despite the differences, one can say that they reflect Gandhism although not all the organisations vouch for Gandhism.

8.5 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the peasant movements during the nationalist movement.
2. Explain the importance and significance of Gandhi-led movements.
3. Discuss the debate on New Farmers' Movement in India.
4. Explain the reasons for the division among farmers' movement in India.
5. "New Farmers' Movement is neither totally Gandhian nor totally radical". Analyse.
6. Write short notes on the following:
 - (a) Ideology of Farmers' Movement
 - (b) Globalisation and the Farmers' Movement
 - (c) Major Struggles of New Farmers' Movement

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