

Vedanta and Vinoba: Some Political Implications

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IN the beginning of his book, *Revolutionary Sarvodaya*, Acharya Vinoba Bhave says:

Sarvodaya means that the good of all resides in the good of one. That there could be interests of one person which are against the interests of another is inconceivable. Similarly, there could be no interests of one community, class or country which could be against the interests of any other community, class or country. *The idea of opposition of interests is itself wrong.*¹

Such an assertion, which for Vinoba has the logical status of a pre-supposition,² probably seems absurd to most of us who have been reared and geared to proceed from the opposite assumption. It must, however, be admitted that "any notion of 'the natural disharmony of interests' is, despite appearances, no more empirical than its opposite".³ To be able to proceed with an exploration of the religious framework of Vinoba Bhave, accordingly, his view that "the good of all is contained in the good of each"⁴ needs to be accepted as a 'given'.

The religious significance of this 'given', moreover, may be understood more clearly as it becomes apparent how it reflects "the Idealistic tradition of the Vedanta".⁵

Vinoba's ideal of *sāmya yoga*, or reverence for all life, makes no distinction between man and man and even sees no ultimate difference in the spirit of man and other animals.⁶ Not only do all men belong to one human family by virtue of the One God being in each person, but also man is viewed as but one manifestation of "that God (who) is

¹Vinoba Bhave, *Revolutionary Sarvodaya* (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1964), p. 2.

²Geoffrey Ostergaard and Melville Currell, *The Gentle Anarchists* (Oxford University Press, London, 1971), p. 44 footnote.

³*Ibid.*

⁴Vinoba Bhave, *Democratic Values and the Practice of Citizenship* (Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, Kashi, 1962), p. 17.

⁵Indu Tikekar, *Integral Revolution: An Analytical Study of Gandhian Thought* (Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, Varanasi, 1970), p. 124.

⁶Vinoba Bhave, quoted by Suresh Ram, *Vinoba and His Mission* (Bhargava Bhushan Press, Varanasi, 1962), p. 471.

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present in all the forms of creation".⁷

Man, however, is unique, in that his mind alone has the capacity to reflect upon his being. As will be discussed later, it is the crucial prerogative of the mind to will attitudes which may either impede spiritual progress or overcome the illusion of separation which allows for final self-realization (*moksha*) to occur. The idea of opposition of interests is itself wrong, therefore, because the *only* true interest (*moksha*) is common to all persons.

The idealism of Vinoba Bhave nowhere shines brighter than when he observes how "it is the eye of the beholder that determines the shape of the world".⁸ Although he recognizes that one's 'eye' is affected by one's material environment and hence that one's attitudes are in a dialectical relationship with the world of sense reality, ultimately, for Vinoba, sense reality can be transcended and one's material environment changed for the better only by 'right thought'.⁹ 'Right thought', according to Vinoba's faith, is dependent upon one's *bhavana* (mental attitude) which has 'the power to transform all things'.¹⁰ Will, as manifested in mental attitude, becomes an indispensable factor in overcoming 'false notions of what constitutes our interest'¹¹ and in promoting growth towards the goal of *moksha*.

It is in this context, for example, that religious conflicts are considered to be due to *maya* (illusion, false perception). Vinoba notes how 'the growth of dogmas and rigid institutions around religions'¹² has produced much division, but holds that "all religions believe in love, compassion, affection and peace—and in this respect they have a common belief".¹³ This 'common belief', interpreted through Vinoba's Vedanta *bhavana*, is taken to be the essence of *each* religion *and, all* religions, accordingly, are considered to be 'essentially' the *same*.¹⁴ Thus *maya* is dispelled, at least in part, as one's 'eye' sees that "there can never be opposition between two religions".¹⁵ Cultivation and internalization of this mental attitude, moreover, will, in the opinion of Vinoba, tend to reduce the level of conflict in the realm of material reality.

⁷Vinoba Bhave, *Talks on the Gita* (Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, Varanasi, 1970), p. 131.

⁸Vinoba Bhave, *Talks on the Gita*, p. 109.

⁹Vinoba Bhave, *Bhoo dan Yajna* (Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1953), p. 130.

¹⁰Vinoba Bhave, *Talks on the Gita*, p. 108.

¹¹Vinoba Bhave, *Democratic Values and the Practice of Citizenship*, p. 18.

¹²Vinoba Bhave, *Christ The Love Incarnate* (Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, Varanasi, 1964), p. 39.

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

¹⁴Vinoba Bhave, *Revolutionary Sarvodaya*, p. 35.

¹⁵Vinoba Bhave, *Random Reflections* (Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, Varanasi, 1971), p. 55.

All conflicts in this world, according to Vinoba, have their beginnings in 'wrong' attitudes. According to Vinoba, 'obsession with the flesh is the source of all fear' and 'it is because of fear that tyranny becomes possible.' When people fall into 'the whirlpool of beautifying the body'¹⁶ and seek to merely gratify their sensual desires and whims, 'conflicts' arise and the more physically strong and mentally clever will tend to exploit others for their own ends. Those others, moreover, will tend to endure the exploitation due to the fear by which they are ruled.

The way to overcome the *maya* which leads to fear and conflict, according to Vinoba, is to understand the truth of the *Bhagavad Gita's* thirteenth chapter: *Tat tvam asi* which means "You are indeed the Self, you are not the body, 'You are the Self'".¹⁷ As interpreted by Vinoba, this means that the Self or *Atman* in every person is "altogether distinct from the body, separate, entirely beautiful, bright, holy, and free of imperfection".¹⁸ As one's bhavana is refocussed from 'I am the body' to 'I am the Self' devotion to God (*Atman*) allows one to be free of 'attachment to the body and consequent fear'.¹⁹

'Real freedom', in this context, consists in wilfully surrendering to the Self who then 'guides us all from within'.²⁰ While such a freedom, in the spiritual realm, consists in attaining to the ideal of *moksha*, in the political realm it is manifest in the transcending of fear with regard to what others might do to one's 'body'. A basis is thereby laid from which revolutionary ideas and actions may proceed.

All that has been said above, however, ought not to be taken to mean that the body should be mortified intentionally. While one must, according to Vinoba, see that "I am not this mortal body . . . I am the spirit that never dies,"²¹ one must also realize that "the body has been given to me for the sake of the Self".²² The body is like one's 'clothes'²³ or a 'machine'²⁴ which needs to be well used as an 'instrument'²⁵ in the service of God's will. It needs to be treated well, in other words, since it is a prerequisite for doing one's duty.²⁶ This duty, called 'svadharma', consists of two parts according to Acharya Vinoba Bhave: the 'dharma', which changes, and the 'natural duties' which never change.²⁷

To interpret 'dharma' as changeable is highly revolutionary in the context of the traditional caste system in India. In that system, one's dharma tends to be identified with the occupation into which one is merely born, by caste. Vinoba, however, holds that "the idea of asso-

¹⁶Vinoba Bhave, *Talks on the Gita*, p. 166.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 166.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 163.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 169.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 13.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 167.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 8.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 165.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 14.

²⁶For Vinoba, as for Gandhi, God's Will is to do one's duty.

²⁷Vinoba Bhave, *Talks on the Gita*, p. 245. (Note how, to use Lannoy's terminology, Vinoba tends to equate svadharma with sanatana dharma and leaves little scope for caste dharma).

ciating birth in poverty or prosperity with previous life is totally absurd."²⁸ "True vocation",²⁹ for him, is thrown open to change as he argues that "as the course of one's life changes through thinking and experience, one's old dharma drops off and a new dharma comes in its place."³⁰

There are, however, duties which are natural and unchanging, for example:

The service of the parents to whom I was born, the service of the neighbours amongst whom I find myself—these duties come to me naturally My other obligations are matters of everyday experience. I feel hungry, I feel thirsty. So, to give food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty becomes my duty by nature.³¹

While the concept of *karma yoga*, later to be discussed, will explain much of why such duties are 'natural', there is, I believe, an additional rationale: a categorical imperative. Vinoba tells us that

the criterion which is employed in the science of ethics for determining whether from the point of view of morals a principle is right or wrong, and whether from a practical point of view it is advantageous or disadvantageous, is to extend it to apply to all men and see what the result is.³²

Since, as has been mentioned, the body "is given to us as a means, an instrument"³³ to be used in God's service, it is obligatory for each person to respect the 'bodies' of all others and, hence, to be concerned about the physical well-being of others just as one 'cherishes' one's own.

One should not, at this point, assume that Vinoba believes that man is simply 'good' by nature. For Vinoba "none but God is wholly free from blemish . . . none too is an embodiment of absolute evil."³⁴ Man, accordingly, has the potential for evil as well as goodness in so far as the mind chooses to dwell upon the body or the Self.

In fact, for Vinoba, 'change always goes on in man'³⁵ because the attractions of the body and the desire of the soul to realize itself are in constant tension. It is in this context that he observes how "the Gita uses the allegory of war" and maintains that "the real battle is only within ourselves"³⁶. Full self-realization (moksha), accordingly,

²⁸Vinoba Bhawe, quoted by Suresh Ram, *Vinoba and His Mission*, p. 243.

²⁹Vinoba Bhawe, *Talks on the Gita*, p. 8.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 7.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 185.

³²Vinoba Bhawe, *Swaraj Sastra* (Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, Kashi, 1959), p. 83.

³³*Ibid.*, p. 163.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁵Vinoba Bhawe, *Bhoodan* . . . , p. 131.

³⁶Vinoba Bhawe, *Talks on the Gita*, p. 208.

becomes an *ideal* to be approached as one progressively abandons the bhavana of 'I am the body'.

Individual swaraj (self-rule) becomes, in this framework, an important prerequisite to moksha. Rule of the Self over the body, to reiterate, is attained to as the mind is able to separate the two³⁷ and one's bhavana becomes 'I am the Self'. For this to be able to occur one must successfully overcome the three 'gunas'. These 'qualities of nature' are assumed present in all forms of life³⁸ and are, for Vinoba, represented in man primarily by laziness (*tamas*)³⁹, personal ambition (*rajas*)⁴⁰, and knowledge (*sattva*)⁴¹. They may also be conceived of as being represented in one's instincts, emotions, and intellect, respectively.⁴²

To overcome *tamas*, according to Vinoba, is essential for the maintenance of a healthy body which, as has been shown, is a prerequisite for doing one's svadharma. He appeals to 'experience' in observing that "just as the mind is influenced by bodily sickness, so also good health has a bearing on mind".⁴³ In addition, from Vinoba's perspective, the *tamas*-dominated person manifests the 'I am the body' bhavana by either expecting or demanding of others such services which one would be unwilling to perform for oneself.

Vinoba concludes, in this context, that *tamas* can be overcome by the performance of bodily labour. This cure, naturally, has great social significance in so far as he applies his categorical imperative—extending this individual good to all members of society. Seeing how many people are entrapped by *tamas* due to their exploitation of the labour of others, for example, Vinoba consistently argues that it is in the spiritual interests of the rich to work with their hands.

If one has not, however, overcome *rajas*, one will be subject to emotional judgement generally, and personal ego fulfillment in particular. Where the ego is strong, one is considered likely to suffer from 'unsteadiness of purpose'⁴⁴ by tending to overextend oneself in one's activities, so as to do a little well (a violation of dharma). In the very least one will tend to perpetuate the bhavana of 'separateness which is, of course, a spiritual barrier.

To live 'within the limits of svadharma' is the major step to take towards destroying the *rajasic* element. This means that one must

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 128.

³⁸See Alain Danielou, *Hindu Polytheism* (Pantheon Books, New York, 1964), pp. 21-62 for an elaboration.

³⁹Vinoba Bhave, *Talks on the Gita*, p. 177.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 186.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 187.

⁴²L. A. Varma, "Rituals of Worship", *The Cultural Heritage of India* (The Ramakrishna Mission, Calcutta, 1956), Volume IV, p. 454.

⁴³Vinoba, *Talks on the Gita*, p. 179.

⁴⁴Vinoba Bhave, *Talks on the Gita*, p. 187.

confine one's actions and service to one's immediate surroundings at first.⁴⁵ After one's parents and neighbours are well taken care of, the sphere of one's svadharma is allowed to legitimately grow. Such a focus on the 'nearest' is considered to be good combat against the ego's belief in its own capacity to 'change the world'. Humility is fostered.

Egoism and its consequent attachment to 'fruits', Vinoba tells us, is 'conquered by constancy in *sattva*'.⁴⁶ *Sattva*, which is the intellect, reason, or faculty allowing us to accumulate knowledge, unlike *rajas* and *tamas*, should be wounded, but not killed. It is the means by which we may discover how similar we are to other beings and how little, as ego-centered individuals, we can do in this world. Eventually, according to Vinoba, one may become so 'constant' in *sattva* that, rather than being destroyed, this element is transcended.

One way to transcend *sattva*, and hence, achieve victory over egoism, is to so live that "*sattva* becomes so much our nature that we would cease to be proud of it".⁴⁷

While Vinoba holds that individual *swaraj* (self-rule) can be achieved by "straight and simple *bhakti*",⁴⁸ the key to understanding the political relevance of this is to realize that the object of the loving devotion is not, for Vinoba, some historical incarnation or other abstract principle or entity, but mankind today. His *bhavana* of *bhakti* teaches that "one should look upon all men and women as so many images of God".⁴⁹

Directing one's loving devotion, or *bhakti*, to society is quite consistent with Vinoba's Vedanta framework. According to his *sarvodaya* metaphysical perspective, we may recall, conflicts between individuals and/or groups are due to false *bhavanas* as to what constitutes 'true interest'. Since each individual's 'true interest' is to attain *moksha* and since the goal of a group of individuals (even a society) is, similarly, for its members to attain *moksha*, then the basic oneness of life's goals "removes the possibility of conflict between the good of the individual and that of society".⁵⁰ To pursue individual self-realization, involving, as it must for Vinoba, the recognition that this individual good is the good of all *and* each, becomes impossible within the absence of a progressive identification with and loving devotion to all members of society (Society).⁵¹

Vinoba's admonition to be devoted to 'Society' is easier to understand

⁴⁵In the political realm, this is called the principle of *Swadeshi*—a term used in a similar way by Gandhi.

⁴⁶Vinoba Bhawe, *Talks on the Gita*, p. 190.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 189.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 102.

⁴⁹Vinoba Bhawe, *Revolutionary Sarvodaya*, p. 19.

⁵⁰Vinoba Bhawe, *Talks on the Gita*, p. 256.

⁵¹For Vinoba, "man is a social being", vide his *Swaraj Sastra*, p. 53.

as one grasps the place which karma yoga holds in his framework. Like a Christian who believes 'faith' and 'works' to be inseparable, so also Vinoba tells us that *Bhakti yoga* must be coupled with *Karma yoga* in order to be real. Bhakti, or loving devotion, is the disposition to 'serve' while karma, or action, is "the actual service".⁵²

According to Vinoba, let us remember, "man is an animal who can use his body as a tool for self-realization".⁵³ It is now apparent that the body becomes such a 'tool' not only as the bhavana of bhakti is developed and one comes to see the 'I am the Self' in all people, but also in so far as bhakti is manifested in active service to others (Society). It is in this context that we are told: "a devotee of God relishes karma yoga, the philosophy of action with non-attachment [because] that action to him is form of worship".⁵⁴

This 'form of worship', it should be recognized, reflects an interdependency between the karma yogin performing service in a bhavana of bhakti and those in society to whom such service is being done. Most obviously, without other 'living beings' to be of service to, the individual seeker of swaraj could not "learn to see God in every living being".⁵⁵ To fail to serve others, beginning with those nearest to one, would, in addition, be an invitation for the rajasic element to become more dominant. The unchanging duties included in one's svadharma, in this context, may well be seen to serve the practical function of preserving the very 'other' who is prerequisite for one's own moksha.

On the other hand, without such activity as karma yogins might provide, the needs of the rest of society might not be met. As discussed earlier, the bhavana of 'I am the body' is recognized, by Vinoba, to be more likely as the body's needs are not satisfied. The actions of the karma yogin, therefore, become truly of service only in so far as they are conducive to the Self of others being realized by those others. Accordingly, the activity of Vinoba's seeker after Truth must be concerned with providing the material necessities of life to others, beginning with those most in need.

It should be recognized that Vinoba's plea for individuals to take the responsibility of service upon themselves often exudes an air of emergency. For example, he observes: "Unless the existing social order, which is based upon inequality, strife and conflict, is replaced by one founded on the principles of equality and mutual cooperation, there can be no salvation for mankind."⁵⁶

Undoubtedly reflecting his concern about the potential effects of a

⁵²Vinoba Bhave, *Random Reflections*, p. 78.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁵⁶Vinoba Bhave, *Bhoo dan Yajna*, p. 19.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 17.

unclear holocaust,⁵⁷ Vinoba admits that his concern for what may be called 'collective swaraj'⁵⁸ has grown. Clearly, as we have seen, the 'survival of mankind' is, for Vinoba, a prerequisite for the salvation (or *moksha*) of the individual. A collective movement of individuals exemplifying self-rule (swaraj), in this context, apparently becomes necessary if anyone is to attain *moksha*. Collective *moksha* (salvation for mankind) thus seems to have become (if it wasn't before) inseparably connected to the possibility of individual *moksha*.

This perspective has prompted Vinoba to conduct expanded experiments of collective action as represented in the Bhoodan and Gramdan movements where the *bhavana* that *sampatti sab Raghupati ki hai* (all wealth, including land, belongs to God).⁵⁹

The sarvodaya ideal of the 'all-round well-being or good of all' is judged to *require*, in this context, the means of ahimsa (love or non-violence). The 'great teachers', Vinoba observes, essentially agreed that "we reap what we sow, as is the desire so is the fruit".⁶⁰ This Law of Karma, which is a crucial presupposition for Vinoba, recognizes that "it is possible to be nonviolent in externals, and yet be filled with violence"⁶¹ which, as a 'quality of the mind', will impede the realization of the spiritual oneness of all Life. To be spiritually as well as 'externally' beneficial, therefore, nonviolence must be present—both in one's *bhavana* and in one's actions.

By organizing individuals and promulgating his ideal of karma yoga on a mass scale, Vinoba hopes to create what he calls *swatantra loka shakti*, or 'the self-reliant power of the people'. Collective 'self-reliance', however, is perceived as encouraging collective swaraj (self-rule) only in so far as the means employed are conducive to attaining *moksha*. The 'power of the people', accordingly, is opposed to violence or even asserting "pressure by the threat of violence".⁶² That the life and integrity of any opponent *must* be respected means, for Vinoba, that even for the materially oppressed "to resort to cruelty for freeing (themselves) from the blame of cowardly behaviour is like flying from the

⁵⁷Vinoba believes that the 'path of violence' has reached a dead end and that basic changes in *bhavana* are now imperative. See his *Democratic Values*, pp. 144-8; *Gramdan for Gram Swaraj*, p. 64; and *Sarvodaya and Communism*, p. 24.

⁵⁸Vinoba Bhavé, quoted by Suresh Ram, *Vinoba and His Mission*, p. 316.

⁵⁹Tulsidas, interpreted by Vinoba, quoted by Suresh Ram, *Vinoba and His Mission*, p. 418. ('Bhoodan' means 'Land-Gift', while 'Gramdan' means 'Village-Gift' when ownership is surrendered to a village as a whole.)

⁶⁰Vinoba Bhavé, *Talks on the Gita*, p. 27.

⁶¹*Ibid*, p. 39.

⁶²Vinoba Bhavé, *Sarvodaya and Communism*, p. 19. (Vinoba seems much less willing to use any kind of coercion than Gandhi. Vinoba tends to equate violence with coercion. See Indu Tikekar, *Integral Revolution*, pp. 12-13, 221.)

frying pan into the fire".⁶³ Perhaps Vinoba's purist attitude regarding 'means' may seem less harsh as we see how he considers nonviolence to be not only intrinsically good but also eminently practical from an instrumental perspective. Class welfare, Vinoba argues, "as a process of revolution based on violence . . . can only result in counter-revolution"⁶⁴ for at least two reasons. First, it alienates potential allies within the opponents' class whose physical destruction, along with the others, is a loss of a well-educated and entrepreneurial resource which could be of great service to society.⁶⁵ Secondly, if we want a concern for human life to be increased (and, ideally, even our opponent to improve in this regard) we cannot do so by the use of physical force, which only heightens the body sense. By threatening another's life, Vinoba maintains, we tend to destroy any consciousness that person has of the common bonds extant, and remove the possibility of rational communication since the atmosphere becomes charged with fear. Central to Vinoba's adherence to nonviolence, of course, is his faith that "what the world appears to us to be depends on the vision we have of it".⁶⁶ Hence, the *bhavana* (mental attitude) that another individual or class of people are 'enemies' tends to make them appear to be enemies because that is what we draw out of them. Treated like enemies they will tend to act like enemies, thus reaffirming the *bhavana*. To break this 'vicious circle', Vinoba advocates, in his *bhavana* of *bhakti*, that one refuse to act like an enemy even if another considers one as such. This *bhavana*, he claims, can make "the undeserving deserving and the evil good"⁶⁷ since, through non-retaliation, the conception of one as an 'enemy' is more difficult to sustain.

While Vinoba holds that such "thought-force has no limitations", nevertheless, he accepts the necessity of suffering and believes in man's capacity to endure it. Indeed, he tells us that nothing is impossible for the soul and that unless attachment to the body is put away, true love does not emerge. 'True love', for Vinoba, becomes manifest in even loving one's 'enemy' with a Christ-like readiness to lay down one's life (body) rather than to do harm to another. The ideal, therefore, which is set for his karma yogins doing service in a *bhavana* of *bhakti*, is that of Jesus who is quoted as having said: "Thy will be done, Lord, forgive them for they know not what they do."

⁶³Vinoba Bhave, *Revolutionary Sarvodaya*, p. 48. (Here Vinoba would seem to disagree with Gandhi's opinion that 'violence is better than cowardice. Thus, he is closer to many 'Western' pacifist perspectives.)

⁶⁴Vinoba Bhave, *Gramdan for Gramswaraj*, p. 28.

⁶⁵Both Vinoba and Gandhi want the rich to consider themselves as 'trustees'. Thus they encourage such people to share their blessings, to give up their *bhavana* of 'private property', giving all to Society.

⁶⁶Vinoba Bhave, *Talks on the Gita*, p. 69.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, p. 109.

Vinoba's adherence to nonviolence, while clearly consistent with the rest of his religious framework, remains very unpersuasive to many. The eminent Indian Communist leader, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, for example, agrees with Adi H. Doctor's opinion that Vinoba's approach "can have little attraction for the atheist"⁶⁸ due to its emphasis on God. For all his use of orthodox terminology, however, Vinoba explicitly holds that "God manifests himself both in the *astika* (theist) and in the *nastika* (atheist)".⁶⁹ Describing the 'cardinal religion of man' as 'humaneness', Vinoba emphasizes: The only thing that is a must for a Sarvodaya worker is that he (or she) believe in the indivisible and harmonious character of human good and in the nonviolent means to attain it.⁷⁰

Whether or not Vinoba's response to the 'emphasis on God' complaint is deemed adequate, it must be admitted that to require a belief in a 'common good' and in the Law of Karma would certainly limit the appeal of any movement today. The paucity of volunteers, even in India, however, cannot be a conclusive criterion with which to pass judgement upon the potential of the sarvodaya bhavana. After all, Vinoba hardly predicts that the masses of the people, taught for centuries that a willingness to act violently is the only viable means of 'self-defence', will be converted wholesale to the alternative of non-retaliation.

Indeed, Namboodiripad and Doctor are indicative of the majority *bhavana* of 'I am the body' when they assert that "Self-sacrifice is . . . anti-biological".⁷¹ They neglect to realize that the 'good' traditional (violent) soldier, no less than the nonviolent karma yogin, may be called upon to be willing to die for the 'self-preservation' of society. There is, in fact, no guarantee of individual survival regardless of the approach to action used, although, from a psychological viewpoint, many 'experts' agree that a nonviolent approach may even be preferable.⁷²

Certainly, a crucial obstacle to the promotion of radical change is fear. Vinoba's conceptualization of attaining swaraj through doing one's svadharma in a bhavana of bhakti, we have seen, successfully provides a context within which individuals can overcome fear. In the process of conquering fear, moreover, the progressive internalization of the conviction that 'I am the Self' becomes manifest in an active devo-

⁶⁸A. H. Doctor, *Sarvodaya: A Political and Economic Study* (Asia Publishing House, London, 1967), p. 169.

⁶⁹Vinoba Bhave, quoted by Suresh Ram, *Vinoba and His Mission*, p. 170.

⁷⁰Vinoba Bhave, paraphrased by Indu Tikekar, *Integral Revolution*, p. 147.

⁷¹A.H. Doctor, *Sarvodaya*, p. 171.

⁷²See, for example, the writings by Carl Jung, Jerome Frank, Eric Fromm, and Erik Erickson.

tion to the whole society. While the fundamental interdependence of man is accepted, the need to promote a greater mutual respect is seen.

A greater mutual respect is imperative today, according to Vinoba, because "science has perforce made us citizens of one world".⁷³ Due to man's rapidly advancing technological capabilities, particularly in the realm of nuclear warfare, he concludes that "we are sitting on the edge of a volcano".⁷⁴ If the analysis of Vinoba Bhave is correct—that a now interdependent world is threatening itself with the practical possibility of annihilation—perhaps the idealism of Vinoba's sarvodaya approach is realistically important. Providing a hope that "an age is what we make it to be",⁷⁵ such an outlook as Vinoba is promoting may well be an important means by which an often inhumane world may be saved from itself.

Whether the 'human family' is a pre-existent reality which needs to be comprehended or a myth which is an instrumental necessity for modern survival is a matter of faith. If, in either case, one agrees with Vinoba that it is a new value-orientation which needs to be brought into the consciousness of the masses, the means to this end might well prove to be crucially important. Certainly, if the Law of Karma is true, compassion, sharing, and sacrifice—in short, nonviolence—will be an instrumental necessity. Even if the 'how' is not clear and only the 'philosophy' fully understood, perhaps the individualist emphasis on the Sarvodaya approach may prove to be highly relevant in the present situation of moral degeneration. □

⁷³Vinoba Bhave, *Revolutionary Sarvodaya*, p. 3.

⁷⁴Vinoba Bhave, *Gramdan for Gramswaraj*, p. 58.

⁷⁵Vinoba Bhave, quoted by Suresh Ram, *Vinoba and His Mission*, p. 86.