

The fire raging in my heart

Vinoba

Had God provided a window to everyone's heart, you would have observed the fire raging in my heart. The *status quo* is totally intolerable and unacceptable. These days I am always laughing; I keep laughing simply because it is unbecoming to cry, although the situation is such as would make one cry. I am deeply pained to see injustice everywhere.

The *status quo*, as I said, cannot be tolerated even for a single minute. The people on the lower rungs of the social hierarchy are being ground down in the extreme. They are being exploited mercilessly without any respite. The violence being done to them is absolutely unbearable. If things go on like this we will have to witness tremendous upheavals and all of us will be engulfed in a bloody revolution. To me, such an eventuality will be painful; but it will be less painful than the *status quo*. However I shall not live to see such an eventuality. It is the Lord (the creator) who takes the form of Rudra (the destroyer). What can I do if He wills to take that form ?

There is little concern for the poor, they have neither food and shelter nor employment and still nobody is bothered, how can such situation be allowed to continue ? When I see the condition of the poor in village after village, my heart cries out in anguish. While eating every morsel of food I am reminded of their faces.

This is what drives me to go on walking. People ask me, 'Don't you get tired ?' In old age it is natural to get tired. The body does seek rest, as is its wont. But still I do not get tired as I am witnessing the havoc; I am realising that if the people do not help each other, if they do not volunteer to make the poor and the labourers part of their families, the catastrophe that will overtake will be beyond imagination. That is why I am walking from village to village without rest to alert the people, even though my voice is weak. How can I sit still when the fire is raging all round ? What the Lord wills will happen; only the performance of my duty is in my hands. I can only exert myself as best as I can. What else can I do ?

We will have to strike at the root of the present system. We will have to work for the radical transformation of the social structure. Of course, there are several types of worthwhile work, but the time now is not for ordinary service, relief and welfare. The time calls for undiluted concentration on total revolution. We will have to transform radically the present relationships in the society. We will have to change the present values in the society; and we will have to stroke the fire within for this purpose. Ravindranath Thakur, the Poet Laureate, has sung, '*Yugantare vahnisnane --*' We will have to be ready for baptism by fire so that the

new age could dawn.

This propels me to go from village to village, from house to house and shake up the people. The poor lack not only land, but the voice as well. I have become the voice of those voiceless. I do not ask for alms; I demand their right. I do not accept the theory of percolation. That theory calls for increase in production and wealth and contends that the benefits accrued would eventually reach the lower levels through percolation. If someone is drowning in a river, he has to be rescued immediately. That just cannot be postponed. Despite all sorts of programmes the poor are still bereft of basic necessities of life. How can such situation be allowed to continue ? I would judge every programme by the touchstone of how and how much it benefits the poor. We have to bring the spark of divine light in their vacant eyes. It would be possible only when we become compassionate and are able to do something for them.

This is what Gandhiji too had said. He showed us the path of non-violent revolution, of revolution by love. I have striven to follow his path to the best of my ability, without slackening even for a moment. The indwelling Self is witness to this fact.

Revolutions are not made at leisure. "Hundred years' war" is famous in history. Five generations fought that war. Revolution too demands such ceaseless struggle.

Only those who have revolutionary spirit and an attitude of detachment would hold on in the movement of total social transformation. Lack of either would make them leave the field. If revolutionary spirit is there but the attitude of detachment is lacking they would not be able to break the shackles of the present social system. They would remain disgruntled, would go on cursing the social system, but would not have the patience to hold on in the work. Spirit of detachment alone would give them inner strength. On the other hand, lack of revolutionary spirit would take them, sooner or later, to purely individual spiritual pursuit. Therefore, revolutionary spirit and the attitude of detachment - both are needed. Our movement is basically spiritual in essence. Seeing the Self in all and all in the Self - We want the world to be permeated with this feeling.

I make an impassioned appeal to workers and *sadhaks* (those engaged in spiritual quest) to join in this task, tearing themselves away from attachment to home and family and everything.