

Acharya Vinoba Bhave A Social Reformer

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Introduction - Acharya Vinoba Bhave (Vinayak Narahari Bhave) well knew as a philosopher whose thought and words inspired many peoples in different ways. Millions of the followers from India and around the world know him as a scholar and a man of God. He was a great social reformer, educationist, freedom fighter and follower of Gandhian principles. Chiefly he advocates Human Rights in India and a national teacher. He was born at Kolaba District, Maharashtra on 11th September 1895. His mother Rukmini Devi was a very religious lady so he believed in the supremacy of God. He totally controlled his mind as he was away from 'Desires' and 'Ego'. He always wants to serve the poor peoples of the country. Strongly he advocates for land less peoples. He always strongly believes in universal brotherhood. He said that, "Water, Air and Land are the free gifts of God; it should be distributed in accordance to the need of the peoples".

A report in the newspaper about Gandhi's speech at the newly founded Banaras Hindu University attracted his attention. Once Mahatma Gandhi wrote a letter to him, "I don't know which adjectives I should give to you. I am greatly impressed by your loving nature and strong character". Bhave participated with keen interest in the activities at Gandhi's ashram like e.g. studying, teaching and improving the life of the community. He went to Wardha on 8 April 1921 to take charge of the Ashram as desired by Gandhi. Vinoba Bhave learnt various regional languages and scriptures as a student.

He was an eminent philosopher. The Gita has been translated into the Marathi language by him with the title Geetai (meaning 'Mother Gita' in Marathi). Being an avid follower of Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba upheld his doctrines of non-violence and equality. He worked tirelessly towards eradicating social evils like inequality. Influenced by the examples set by Gandhi; he took up the cause of people who were referred to as Harijans by Gandhi. He adopted the term Sarvodaya from Gandhi which simply means "Progress for all". He established the Brahma Vidya Mandir in 1959, a small community for women, aiming at self-sufficiency on the lines of Mahatma Gandhi's teachings. He took a strong stand on cow slaughter and declared to go

on fast until it was banned in India.

He was chosen by Gandhi as the first individual Satyagrahi in a nonviolent movement in the year 1940 (*Peter: 2001*). After this event, the unknown Vinoba Bhave became known to the whole country. Vinoba is well known for holding Science and Spirituality together in his notion of Sarvodaya. The Sarvodaya movement under him implemented various programs during the 1950s, the chief among which is the Bhoodan Movement. He set up a number of Ashrams to promote a simple way of life, devoid of luxuries that took away one's focus from the Divine. After independence he started social reform movements such as Bhoodan Movement and Sarvodaya Movement. He also made some notorious dacoits of Chambal surrender. In 1970, he announced his decision to stay at one place. He observed a year of silence from December 25, 1974 to December 25, 1975. In 1976, he undertook a fast to stop the slaughter of cows. His spiritual pursuits intensified as he withdrew from the activities. He died on November 15, 1982 after refusing food and medicine few days earlier. He was posthumously honored with the Bharat Ratna in 1984 (www.mkgandhi.org).

Vinoba was greatly influenced by the Bhagvad Gita and his thoughts and efforts were based upon the doctrines of the Holy Book. He set up a number of Ashrams to promote a simple way of life, devoid of luxuries that took away one's focus from the Divine. He established the Brahma Vidya Mandir in 1959, a small community for women, aiming at self-sufficiency on the lines of Mahatma Gandhi's teachings. He took a strong stand on cow slaughter and declared to go on fast until it was banned in India. Vinoba was arrested several times during the 1920s and 1930s and served a five-year jail sentence in the 1940s for leading non-violent resistance to British rule. The jails for Vinoba had become the places of reading and writing. He wrote Ishavasyavritti and Sthitaprajna Darshan in jail. He also learnt four South Indian languages and created the script of Lok Nagari at Vellore jail. In the jails, he gave a series of talks on Bhagavad Gita in Marathi, to his fellow prisoners. Bhave participated in the nationwide civil disobedience periodically conducted against the British, and

was imprisoned with other nationalists (Kumarappa: 1954). Despite these many activities, he was not well known to the public. He gained national prominence when Gandhi chose him as the first participant in a new nonviolent campaign in 1940. Bhave also participated in the Quit India Movement. Vinoba observed the life of the average Indian living in a village and tried to find solutions for the problems he faced with a firm spiritual foundation. This formed the core of his Sarvodaya movement.

On 18 April 1951, (www.mkgandhi.org) Bhave started his land donation movement at Pochampally of Nalgonda district Telangana, (Claude) the Bhoodan Movement. He took donated land from landowner Indians and gave it away to the poor and landless, for them to cultivate. Then after 1954, he started to ask for donations from whole villages in a programme he called Gramdan. He got more than 1000 villages by way of donations. Out of these, he obtained 175 donated villages in Tamil Nadu alone. Noted Gandhian and an atheist Lavanam was the interpreter for Bhave during his land reform movement in Andhra Pradesh and parts of Orissa (*Markshep.com*). Another example of this is the Bhoodan (land gift) movement started at Pochampally on 18 April 1951, after interacting with 80 Harijan families. He walked all across India asking people with land to consider him as one of their sons and so give him one sixth of their land. He took donated land from land owners and gave it away to the poor and landless, for them to cultivate. Then after 1954, he started to ask for donations of whole villages in a programme he called Gramdan. He got more than 1000 villages by way of donation. Out of these, he obtained 175 donated villages in Tamil Nadu alone. Noted Gandhian and atheist Lavanam was the interpreter of Vinoba Bhave during his land reform movement in Andhra Pradesh and parts of Orissa Vinoba said, "I have walked all over India for 13 years. In the backdrop of enduring perpetuity of my life's work, I have established 6 ashrams. Non-violence and compassion being a hallmark of his philosophy, he also campaigned against the slaughtering of cows. The Brahma Vidya Mandir is one of the ashrams that Bhave created. It is a small community for women that was created in order for them to become self-sufficient and non-violent in a community. This group farms to get their own food, but uses Gandhi's beliefs about food production, which include sustainability and social justice, as a guide. Since its founding in 1959, members of Brahma Vidya Mandir (BVM), an international community for women in Paunar, Maharashtra, have dealt with the struggle of translating Gandian values such as self-sufficiency, non-violence, and public-service into specific practices of food production and consumption.

Vinoba Bhave worked tirelessly towards eradicating social evils like inequality. Influenced by the examples set by Gandhi, he took up the cause of people that his guru lovingly referred to as Harijans. It was his aim to establish the kind of society that Gandhi had envisioned in an

Independent India. He adopted the term Sarvodaya from Gandhi which simply means "Progress for All". The Sarvodaya movement under him implemented various programs during the 1950s, the chief among which is the Bhoodan Movement.

In the 20th Century, a frail man named Vinoba Narahar Bhave walked about Seventy thousand kilometers for fourteen years in India and received around forty-two lakh acres (Seventeen lakh hectares) of land in a donation for landless farmers. It was a miracle of compassion and love in the history of mankind. Vinoba gave a new dictum to the world. Vinoba expressed that, we are in the era when service to all human beings should be considered service to God. Vinoba's vision is that the days of Politics will be over. People will share all other God's resources like air, water and land. All narrow boundaries of nationhood, caste, creed will dissolve and the world will be a family.

Vinoba Bhave has adopted the elements of Basic Education propounded by Mahatma Gandhi and accordingly he has expressed his views regarding education. He has talked of two phases of education. The first aims at the inner education of a man and the second speak for the outward education. By inner education, he means that education makes man's soul strong and his notions regarding external education are consistent with the present school education. But the truth is that Vinoba wants the combination of both aspects. He is also in favor of making students self-dependent so that students should not only enter the realm of knowledge but they should also acquire the capability to meet the needs of life. Thus the educational philosophy of Vinoba advocates such ability in man by which he might adjust himself according to the currents of time and country.

Main Features of Bhoodan Movement: The meaning of word Bhoodan is donation of land to the landless peoples of the Nation.

As implied by the name, in this movement, landlords voluntarily give up land to be distributed to landless laborers, who would then cultivate the land.

1. This is aimed at reducing the gap between the rich and the poor. Here, the land donors are not given any compensation.
2. This was initiated by Vinoba Bhave in Pochampally.
3. This movement went on for 13 years during which time Bhave travelled all over India. He collected 4.4 million acres of land to be distributed to landless farmers.
4. In 1954, he started the Gramdan movement which involved the voluntary donation of whole villages.
5. These movements attracted worldwide admiration for being stellar examples of voluntary social justice.

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