

CHAPTER - 8

Gandhi brought to Indian politics what it had long lacked, namely, depth and an indigenous base. He realized clearly

Relevance of Gandhi in the present stage of India's political and constitutional history:

that the urbanized middle class alone did not provide a sufficient basis for national awakening. The task was to penetrate the masses,

to arouse them from their state of apathy and isolation, to provide them with self-confidence. (1) Gandhi, himself driven by uncommon moral energy, proved remarkably successful in giving to the Congress a new direction, a powerful organizational base, and a mass following.

Gandhi took over the leadership of the national movement and, for over twenty five years, shaped not only the course of India's history, but left an indelible imprint on the thinking of India. The political and social heritage of India bears the stamp of his thinking and leadership. It goes to his credit that he endowed the Indian nationalism with a positive bias for social justice, with a passion for equality, and aroused the conscience of India to the condition of the depressed classes and other underprivileged sections of the community. The emphasis on rural India, and the moral fervour which he imparted to the national movement in respect of the uplift of the untouchables, were also important aspects of the Gandhian movement. (2)

Nevertheless, it has almost become a fashion to lament over the disloyalty of the Congress and free India to Gandhi. It is said every now and then that the 'Mahatma' is being "worshipped but not followed, exalted but betrayed, idolized but

ignored" and that he has become a "Mahatma without disciples" or
(3)
a Father without children" .

It is often asked whether in the political life of India today, during about thirtyone years of independence, Gandhi exercises any considerable influence; whether such influence as he still exercises is a dominating one. The question however, is not the influence that Gandhi exercised in his life time, but how far it is a continuing process in the life of Independent India.

Ever since Gandhi had launched his non-co-operation movement in India, he had also elaborated, side by side, a 'constructive programme' consisting of hand-spinning, khadi, promotion of village industries and crafts, swadeshi, prohibition, promotion of communal harmony, removal of untouchability, basic education, etc. Gandhi attached great importance to this programme. As a matter of fact, social reconstruction on the basis of the principles of truth and non-violence to be brought about through the constructive programme was the primary mission of Gandhi's life. His aim was the building of a new social order in India based on social justice and equality and freedom from all forms of exploitation - what he called "Ramrajya"
(4)
. Gandhi was intensely interested in the struggle for a more just human society. He believed that man has not merely a class essence, but also a
(5)
human essence .

We have already seen in Chapter I that Sarvodaya

of Gandhi's ideal/concept would always remain an ideal which is practically impossible to realize owing to the imperfections of man. But Gandhi's near-ideal, that is, his contemplated predominantly non-violent state, is realizable. While the former sets the destination, the latter is a direction towards the destination. Taking into consideration this clear difference between the ideal and the real, between the unattainable (sarvodaya society) and attainable (ideal state) we can try to assess the aims and objectives of free India as embodied in the Constitution.

I

Article 38 of the Constitution of India states: "the state shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting, as effectively as Sarvodaya: it may, a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life". This declaration, and certain principles of policy to be followed by the state, stated in article 39, taken together, can be said to have made an attempt to lay a foundation or basis for the welfare state in India. The aims and objectives of welfare state are to a certain extent-identical with those of the ideal state of Gandhi's conception.

Again one could say that the socialistic pattern of society as enunciated in the Second Five Year Plan is a more concretised expression of the Directive Principles of State Policy embodied in the Constitution. Essentially, this means

that the primary criterion for determining the lines of advance must not be private profit but social gain, and that the pattern of development and the structure of socio-economic relations should be so planned that they result not only in appreciable increases in national income and employment, but also in greater equality in incomes and wealth. The benefits of economic development must accrue more and more to the relatively less privileged classes of society, and a milieu should be created in which the small man has chances of rising in life. In short, it means the raising of living standards, the enlargement of opportunities for all, the promotion of enterprise among the disadvantaged classes, and the creation of a sense of partnership among all sections of the community ⁽⁶⁾. In that case, it can be said that the objectives and ideals of a socialistic pattern of society can not be different from the aims and objectives of Gandhi's ideal State.

When Gandhi was still alive, it had been decided, in view of the rapidly deteriorating situation in the country and the prevailing confusion in Government policy, that the constructive workers should meet at Wardha towards the end of February, 1948, and prepare a programme embodying the Gandhian principles of national reconstruction to be placed before the country and the Government. The meeting was held later after the death of Gandhi. ⁽⁷⁾ The programme was published in 1950 as the Sarvodaya Plan .

The Sarvodaya movement, based on Gandhi's principles, aims at bringing about a moral regeneration of society which,

according to Gandhi, was even more important than the adoption of democratic institutions⁽⁸⁾. In fact, Sarvodaya is an extension and an application of the Gandhian ideology to the solution of social, political and economic problems facing modern societies. In more precise terms, it is the art and science of mobilising the physical, economic and spiritual resources at the disposal of society in the service of the general good⁽⁹⁾.

Gandhi would have very much liked free India to become a decentralized state and gradually to advance towards his social ideal to the best of her capacity. He would have liked the functions of the state in India gradually to be transferred to voluntary organizations. He would also have liked the sanctions which maintain social cohesion increasingly to become non-coercive. But that did not happen, mainly because the Indian National Congress which had led the resistance movements against the British has failed to evolve genuine non-violence.⁽¹⁰⁾

In the Constituent Assembly too, the Gandhians recognized that to write a constitution, to create a state, was to sacrifice some of Gandhi's ideal. To keep this sacrifice to the minimum, thereby preserving as much of the ideal as possible, they compromised by advocating as minimal a state as possible. 'The state that governs best, governs least', they preached; 'keep government to the minimum, and what you must have, decentralize.'⁽¹¹⁾

However, after his death, Vinoba and other followers of Gandhi have been working to complete the master's work.

Vinoba Bhave made significant contributions both to the theory and practice of Sarvodaya, particularly through his Bhoodan Movement. Today, Sarvodaya stands for a philosophy of life and a programme of action which embraces many aspects of life including the social, economic and political. It aims at a complete transformation of the present social structure through quiet, constructive social work carried on primarily at the village level, with a view to initiating a non-violent revolution and establishing a just social order.

Immediately after Gandhi's death, Sarvodaya Samaj was formed by those who believed in the Gandhian ideas. Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh is another small organisation that came into existence. In it were merged some of the old Gandhian institutions for constructive work. With the inauguration, however, of the Bhoodan Movement by Vinoba in 1951, Sarvodaya not only consolidated for itself the gains of the Gandhian era, but ventured forth into a new and more extensive field of social work, which had deep economic and political significance too (12) .

To Jaya Prakash Narayan, 'Sarvodaya is a higher and truer form of democratic socialism (13) and Bhoodan is a great mass movement of conversion and the creation of a new climate of thought and immediate revolution in the minds of men and their

mutual relationships. It attacks and corrects, here and now, the system of exploitation and inequality. It teaches men to share what they have with their fellowmen' .⁽¹⁴⁾

By its own dynamics, the Bhoodan Movement, between 1952 to 1958, flowered into a Gramdan Movement. Vinoba's appeal for voluntary renunciation of individual ownership of land and for vesting it in the village community, was a radical extension of Gandhi's theory of Trusteeship to landed property.

The next step in the Gramdan Movement is the establishment of Gram Swaraj, that is, complete village self-government. Under this scheme, the villagers are expected to learn to shoulder the responsibility of village administration and village development in every sphere. This, in fact, would be democracy at the grass roots. It is thus obvious that the whole programme of Bhoodan and Gramdan is an attempt to devise ways and means to establish an ideal non-violent social order' .⁽¹⁵⁾

Vinoba's movement thus supplied an answer to the question that Jaya Prakash Narayan had long been asking: Could Gandhi's philosophy offer a practical method to accomplish the social revolution? In a brilliant extension and development of Gandhi's work, Vinoba demonstrated that there was such a method .⁽¹⁶⁾ Then, ultimately, at the Bodh Gaya Sarvodaya Conference (1954) Jaya Prakash Narayan also dedicated his life to the work of Bhoodan and the reconstruction of society on Gandhian lines .⁽¹⁷⁾

Now, in the context of the foregoing facts, it may be concluded that, in this sphere, Gandhi's wishes had not been abandoned. On the contrary, the constructive workers, under the leadership of Vinoba Bhave and Jaya Prakash Narayan, had been endeavouring to live up to the Gandhian message. Through the Akhil Bharat Serva Seva Sangh, they have been trying to materialise Gandhi's wishes and to co-ordinate the work of all the institutions which had been inspired by him. The Bhoodan movement launched by Vinoba Bhave was considered by many, as a new phase in the development of the Gandhian movement. Though its success was limited, nevertheless, through this, Vinoba had taken up the burden which Gandhi had left unfinished — to make the people self-reliant and self-sufficient in the essential needs of life ⁽¹⁸⁾ .

Some state governments, have, in recent years, passed legislation, with a view to facilitating the smooth transfer of ownership of land to the Gramsabha in Gramdan villages ⁽¹⁹⁾ . It has also been the policy of the Central, as well as the State Governments to help reconstruction work in Gramdan villages by making suitable grants and loans ⁽²⁰⁾ . In this connection mention may be made of the recent Urban Land (Ceiling and Regulation) Act ⁽²¹⁾ , 1976.

Mention may also be made of the 20-point economic programme ⁽²²⁾ announced by the then Congress Government of Smt. Indira Gandhi on July 1, 1975; which was regarded by its sponsor as another "step forward in the unceasing quest for a dynamic and

(23)
just society . The then Prime Minister observed, on 13th July, 1975, that the economic programme had three objectives: the establishment of a more egalitarian social order, deterrent action against economic offences of all types, and removal of various constraints on production so as to strengthen the nation's resource-base and enlarge opportunities for employment. For the purpose of certain agricultural reforms and enlargement of social justice, the Government also thought of enacting some new legislations. These programmes remained, by and large, unfulfilled and unrealised, and the change of Government at the Centre, after the Sixth Lok Sabha elections of March, 1977, has thrown these programmes into the backwaters of history. Their impact on the economic life of the nation could not be ascertained, because most of them were not, and could not be, implemented.

Although, from time to time, the Government of India had been declaring that the goal was to build a Socialist State, until the 42nd Amendment Act, there was no mention of the word 'socialist' within the Constitution. Section 2 of this Amendment Act amends the Preamble to the Constitution in such a way that for the words "Sovereign Democratic Republic", the words "Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic are substituted.

Moreover, it was admitted that the establishment of a Socialist State necessitates the supremacy of the Directive Principles over the Fundamental Rights. So long it had been accepted in principle only that the Directive Principles were more

Important because they incorporate the socio-economic rights of the people. Section 4 of the 42nd Amendment Act amends Article 31C and provides that a law enacted on the basis of the Directive Principles of State Policy could not be invalidated even if it violated the Fundamental Rights. The Directive Principles continued, however, to be non-justiciable and non-enforceable, and the anomaly in their character and status was not really resolved.

II

Gandhi, and those who followed his economic preferences, had insisted that the salvation, economic or otherwise, of the country, must be effected at the Panchayati Raj: very base. This seemed to mean the encouragement and protection of cottage and small-scale industries. The political corollary of such a policy might be an attempt to instil new life into bodies of local self-government⁽²⁴⁾. India's emphasis on the village and on what has been called Panchayati Raj is a part of the inheritance of Gandhi.

After persistent efforts made by the lovers of Gandhian ideas, Article 40 of the Constitution had emerged; this is a poor attempt to vindicate Gandhi's concept of village-swaraj or Panchayati Raj (discussed in an earlier chapter).

Gandhi realised that only one freedom had been secured in 1947, that is freedom from colonial rule. The other three freedoms, from hunger, disease and ignorance, still remained

to be tackled. If India was to be a true democracy, the target of development would have to be the village where the majority of the population resided.

It was Gandhi who, for the first time, accepted the full validity of the rural community, and placed it at the very centre of his Constructive Programme. The whole basis of his Constructive Programme was village reconstruction. It was Gandhi's unassailable thesis that the rural community must remain at the very centre of all national planning.

All his life, Gandhi had insisted that real swaraj could only be swaraj for the villages. Cities were anathema to him. Significantly enough, a new programme of rural reconstruction christened "Community Development" was born on October 2, 1952, the birth anniversary of Gandhi (25).

The Community Development Projects and the National Extension Service which had begun to cover the country in a sense represented, the continuity of the forces released by Gandhi in and through the Constructive Programme.

Panchayati Raj was born out of the experience in the working of Community Development Programme for about 6-7 years. Community Development was the object, the purpose; Panchayati Raj was the instrument through which the implementation of the Community Development Programme was visualised.

After Independence, though the political parties which came to power were equally vehement about giving more powers to local bodies, very little was done in practice. The village panchayat institutions were in no position to play any significant role in matters of development and planning which assumed the greatest importance in the life of the citizen after 1947, and therefore, continued their existence more or less under the same laws and conditions as obtained in pre-Independence days till the acceptance of the proposals for 'Democratic Decentralization' made by the Balwantray Mehta Committee in its Report published on 24th November 1957 (26) .

The general idea, taken from the Mehta Committee Report, was for three levels of representative bodies: Gram Panchayat (village), Panchayat Samiti (block) and Zilla Parishad (district). While the Gram Panchayat was to be directly elected, the higher two levels were to consist of members indirectly elected from the tier below, together with co-opted parliamentarians, co-operative movement officials and others (27) .

The recommendations of the Mehta Committee were generally endorsed by the National Development Council and the Central Government requested all the State Governments to consider their implementation. All the State Governments have accepted the policy. Every state is free to have its own legislation and to set up Panchayati Raj institutions of its choice suited to the local genius, conditions, environment and requirements, since it

is a growing concept and there is no finality or rigidity about the pattern or system evolved at any time (28) .

Since Independence, the State Governments have passed numerous legislations (29) to vindicate in a way the Panchayati Raj system. Specially, in the year 1959-62, a widespread enthusiasm on the part of the states all over India was marked to set about a reconstruction of local government.

Panchayati Raj as an agency of the state is closely allied with planned development. The aims and goals of Panchayati Raj are identical with our plans. Panchayati Raj is visualised as an improvement in the process of economic development to utilise local institutions for the execution of plans (30) . The First Five Year Plan appreciated that 'Panchayats have an indispensable role to play in the rural areas. As representing the best interests of all sections of the community, their status is unique; emphasis in due proportion should be placed on panchayats' (31) . And it was hoped that the Second Plan would reach out to millions of people through the net work of Community Projects and National Extension Service (32) . One of the principal tasks in the Third Plan was to ensure the growth and working of Panchayati Raj institutions so as to enable each area to realise its maximum development - potential on the basis of local man-power and other resources, co-operative self-help and community efforts, and effective use of the available resources and personnel.

The total outlay on Community Development in the

first two Plans had been about Rs. 240 crores. The Third Plan had provided for a total outlay of Rs. 294 crores, in addition to about Rs. 23 crores for panchayats ⁽³³⁾. During the Fourth Plan, some significant developments had taken place with respect to enactment and implementation of Panchayati Raj Acts in different states ⁽³⁴⁾. It is proposed in the Draft Fifth Plan that the Community Development and Panchayati Raj institutions would be suitably reoriented and strengthened to become instruments of social and economic changes. It is tentatively visualised that the total public sector outlay for the programmes of Community Development and Panchayats during the Fifth Plan will be Rs. 128 crores ⁽³⁵⁾.

While it is undeniably true that India's great and fundamental reform of Panchayati Raj can be directly traced to the teaching of Gandhi, and is perhaps the most abiding of all the lessons that she has learnt from him, the significant differences between what India has adopted and what he taught are illustrative of the character of Gandhi's influence ⁽³⁶⁾.

In the contents or functions, the Panchayati Raj, as it exists today, appears very different both from the traditional and from the Gandhian points of view.

From the Gandhian point of view, Panchayati Raj will truly come into existence only on the basis of complete decentralization of power, abolition of old forms of inequalities, and establishment of a peaceful social system through mutual understanding and service. The Panchayati Raj as it exists today, will

not perhaps lead us to the Gandhian path. It is mainly used as a political device or as a mechanism through which developmental activities would be implemented.

The Government has found Panchayati Raj a convenient machinery through which it can endeavour to get the ideas transmitted to the villagers to get the Plans, drawn up for them, properly executed. In a Gandhian system, Panchayati Raj would have been used probably in the opposite direction, that is, to inform the political leaders of the country of the direction of politics which they ought to follow, or to inform them of the real requirements and priorities of the village population so that national assessment of real resources and consequent planning could be done from below, rather than imposing them from above, which is the present practice .

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It can not be said that the panchayat system is everywhere running smoothly and in a truly democratic fashion. But it is true that the officials - both regular and Community Development — are now confronted, for the first time, with a co-ordinated network of popular bodies endowed with considerable powers, and protected by political support. This will not at once end administrative tensions, nor will a single body of local government 'servants' be born over night. But already the Panchayat Samitis, where (in most states) power is concentrated — Village Panchayats are mainly agents and Zila Parishads mainly co-ordinators — are feeling this power and exercising it .

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Besides, we should also remember that the Five Year Plans and the panchayati system are still not understood by many sections of the people. How can a whole people co-operate in national reconstruction without a clear knowledge of the aims and methods involved? Something must be done, and done quickly, to make the people understand what is being planned and done. This is the work of mass education or of social education in the widest sense. Such education must precede or at least go hand in hand with actual work being done. It is at this point that our actions are the weakest. Whatever we have done so far, has hardly touched the life of the vast rural community. (39)

III

With the modern concept of a welfare state, social-welfare presupposes a minimum standard of economic wherewithal for maintaining man's physical well-being and a comprehensive net work of protective and constructive services in the social field, such as public health and medical care, labour welfare, social welfare and social education. The underlying concept of such a policy of social security is to build up the resistance of the community against sudden mishaps, and the inevitable hazards and complexities of modern industrial life, and ensure its optimum economic and social well-being. (40)

Some of the important social problems like poverty,

ignorance, over-population and rural backwardness, are of a general nature, and in varying degree, they are influenced by factors like squalor and bad housing, mal-nutrition and physical and mental ill health, neglected childhood, family disorganisation and a low standard of living. For a long time, society remained apathetic to these conditions (41) .

Side by side with the struggle against the imperial rulers, Gandhi attached no less importance to these social ills. It was he who made the greatest impact on social reform and social service by incorporating them as an integral part of the national movement for freedom. The resolution on this subject at the Karachi Congress (1931), which stated unequivocally that opportunities must be equal for all citizens irrespective of caste, community, sex or any other considerations, was a pointer to the fact that India was rapidly aligning herself with modern thinking, and its emphasis was on social justice. When popular ministries were set up in a large number of provinces in 1937, for the first time, there was the recognition that the state had a significant and specific role to play in establishing social services and encouraging social reform (42) . Gandhi emphasized that political work should not be dissociated from social work, that they were not alternatives but were parts of the same programme (43) .

Under article 38 of the Indian Constitution, the state shall strive to secure social, economic and political justice. Article 41 assures to make effective provision

securing the right to work, to education, and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement and in other cases of undeserved want. Article 42 is an assurance for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief. Article 43 aims at securing to all workers, agricultural, industrial or otherwise, work, a living wage, conditions of work ensuring a decent standard of life, and full employment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities.

All these provisions, taken together, can be said to have approximated to the Gandhian ideal in respect of making a comprehensive arrangement of social welfare within the body of the Indian Constitution.

The First Five Year Plan stated that "..... maternity and child health is a service that is kept in the forefront in the planning of health programmes....." The provision made by the various States for maternity and child health work was Rs. 1.35 crores and by the Centre Rs. 53.48 crores ⁽⁴⁴⁾. The Plan felt the need for setting up in each state, and at the centre, permanent wage boards with a tripartite composition to deal comprehensively with all aspects of the questions of wages ⁽⁴⁵⁾. In India, some of the risks to which a worker is exposed have been covered by the Workmen's Compensation Act and the Maternity Benefit Acts of the various State Governments. The Employees' State Insurance Act is a more comprehensive piece of legislation. The scheme framed under this Act was expected to be implemented

throughout the country by July 1954. The Central Legislature also passed the Employees' Provident Fund Act in 1952. Among other Acts, the Factories Act, 1948, the Indian Mines Act, the Plantation Labour Act, 1951, may be mentioned here ⁽⁴⁶⁾. The First Five Year Plan further declared that "... one of the objects of the Plan is to increase employment opportunities and to raise the standard of living ⁽⁴⁷⁾"

The achievement of a socialist pattern of society had been accepted as the objective and economic policy of the Second Plan. This means that the benefits of economic development must accrue more and more to the relatively less privileged classes of society, and there should be a progressive reduction of the concentration of income, wealth and economic power ⁽⁴⁸⁾. With this end in view, the Constitution (Twenty Fifth Amendment) Act, 1971, had inserted a new Article 31C which sought to save laws giving effect to the Directive Principles of State Policy specified in Cl. (b) and Cl. (c) of Article 39 from attack on the ground of infringement of Fundamental Rights contained in Articles 14, 19 and 31. But a more sweeping and far-reaching step in this direction was taken by the Constitution (Forty Second Amendment) Act, 1976, which seeks to widen the scope of the Article 31C so as to cover all the Directive Principles of State Policy. The proviso now reads as follows:- "Notwithstanding anything contained in Article 13, no law giving effect to the policy of the State towards securing (all or any of the principles laid down in Part IV) shall be deemed to be void on the ground that it is inconsistent with, or

takes away or abridges any of the Rights conferred by Article 14, Article 19 or Article 31, and no law containing a declaration that it is for giving effect to such policy shall be called in question in any court on the ground that it does not give effect to such a policy...."

As part of the First Five Year Plan, the Central Government set up a Central Social Welfare Board with the object, especially, of assisting voluntary agencies in organising welfare programmes for women and children and handicapped groups. This Board has, in turn, in collaboration with State Governments, organised State Social Welfare Boards throughout the country. The building up of this organisational network made it possible to embark upon larger programmes of social welfare in the Second Plan. (49) At the end of the Second Plan, there were nearly 4500 maternity and child welfare centres, each serving a population varying between 10,000 and 25,000; one third of these centres were located in urban areas (50) .

It was felt that steps need to be taken to organise a wage census, and also to place the various working class cost-of-living indices on a uniform basis. The Employees' Provident Fund Scheme was proposed to be extended to cover industries and commercial establishments. The Second Plan allotted about Rs. 26 crores for implementing schemes relating to labour (51) . The Planning Commission, on the basis of a study, indicated that "..... the Second Plan will not have any significant impact on the carry-over of unemployment of the earlier period; it will provide

employment opportunities for the new entrants to the labour force and relieve under-employment in agriculture and in village and small industries....."⁽⁵²⁾

In the Third Plan, provisions had been made for welfare programmes involving a total outlay of Rs. 28 crores - Rs. 16 crores at the Centre and Rs. 12 crores in the States. The programmes of the Central Social Welfare Board, including assistance to voluntary organisations and welfare extension projects, envisaged a total outlay of Rs. 12 crores.⁽⁵³⁾ During the Third Plan period, the Employees' State Insurance Scheme was proposed to be extended to all centres where there was concentration of five hundred or more industrial workers. Medical care and treatment would be extended to the families of insured persons in all centres where the Scheme was in operation. The Employees' Provident Fund Scheme would be extended to such industries, which were able to bear the financial burden.⁽⁵⁴⁾ During this Plan, it was proposed to link up the maternity and child-health services associated with primary health units with extended facilities.⁽⁵⁵⁾ It was assumed that this Plan could yield about 14 million additional jobs, about 10.5 million being outside agriculture and about 3.5 million in agriculture.⁽⁵⁶⁾

In December, 1966, the Government of India had set up a National Commission on Labour to study and make recommendations on various aspects of labour including wages, working conditions, welfare, trade union development and labour - management

relations. The Commission submitted its report in August, 1969. The report was under consideration of the Union Government in consultation with the State Governments and the Employees' and the Workers' Organisations (57) .

The Fourth Plan laid considerable emphasis on labour-intensive schemes. The Planning Commission had suggested to the governments of all levels to take effective steps to remove any restrictive policies which inhibit the faster growth of employment and to give employment orientation to the programmes to be taken up under this Plan (58) .

The Draft Fifth Plan had proposed a direct attack on poverty and the need to raise the standard of living of over 22 crore of people, who are below the poverty line, to at least the subsistence level, by providing the basic minimum needs (59) .

The Fifth Plan decided to maximise all avenues of productive employment besides the question of employment-generation in an expanded programme of social services (60) . Special emphasis has been placed in raising the living conditions of the depressed sections through provisions for the National Programme on Minimum Needs which includes a wide spectrum of programmes (61) . In June '74, the All India Congress Committee and the Central Government announced their intention to establish a National Wage Board to decide a National Wage Policy.

But unfortunately, most of the proposed schemes are

still confined within theory, and are pious wishes only. In practice, we find that even after twenty eight years since the Constitution started operating, the condition of ordinary men, especially the poor men of the villages, has not changed. The schemes and measures meant for the industrial labourers proved shockingly inadequate, and the experience in the Plans shows that employment targets could not be achieved because of short-falls in performance in various sectors of the Plan.

Nevertheless, it may be said that although the progress has been slow, the nation has not forsaken the path, nor has it abandoned the Gandhian teachings.

IV

To Gandhi, Khadi represented an ideal of civilisation, a symbol of human necessities being satisfied by men and women individually in villages (62). One of the important items of his Constructive Programme was revival and spread of Khadi and Cottage Industry. It was intended to make the villages self-sufficient.

It is stated in article 43 of the Indian Constitution that "... the state shall endeavour to promote cottage industries on an individual or co-operative basis in rural areas".

Today, the All India Spinners' Association has workers in every state and district who live and work among the

people. Wherever Khadi has spread, the spirit and technique of village service has also spread. In the wake of the Khadi movement came the All India Village Industries movement. This was one step deeper into the village soil.

Thanks to this movement, the organisation and improvement of village industries have now come to stay and are part of the permanent pattern of national planning. The recent setting-up of the All India Khadi and Village Industries Commission by the Government of India shows that the claims of the charka and of village industries are no longer ignored (63).

In the First Plan, an attempt had been made to set out the lines along which development programmes for village and small industries could be undertaken as part of the national Plan.

For carrying out the positive programmes for the promotion of village and small industries, a network of organisations has been brought into existence by the Central Government. These are - (1) The All India Khadi and Village Industries Board, (2) the All India Handi-crafts Board, (3) the Small Scale Industries Board, (4) the Coir Board and (5) the Silk Board (64).

Expenditure on the development of small industries increased during the First Plan through these Boards was Rs. 31.2 crores (65).

The Village and Small Scale Industries Committee recommended for the Second Plan period a total outlay of about

Rs. 260 crores. The financial provision actually made was Rs. 200
(66)
crores .

In the Third Plan, they were expected to make still more rapid progress, and to extend, in larger measure, to small towns and rural areas. A total provision of Rs. 264 crores was made in the public sector. Investment in private sector was estimated at about Rs. 275 crores. It was also proposed to offer Government guarantees for bank loans to small industrialists (67) .

A total outlay of Rs. 850 crores (including public and private sectors) was estimated to be available for the development of small industries under the Fourth Plan (68) .

The broad strategy proposed to be followed in the Fifth Plan envisages a considerable enlargement of the development programmes for providing assistance and facilities in various forms to these industries. For this purpose, a total outlay of about Rs. 611 crores in the public sector is envisaged in the Fifth Plan (69) . The Central and the State Governments at different times passed several legislations (70) in favour of this programme.

Now, so far as Khadi is concerned, it is true that most Congress leaders and important persons even now wear khadi; on formal occasions they even spin. The central and the local governments also give considerable financial and other support for the production and sale of khadi. But all these are 'demonstrative allegiance' to this doctrine of Gandhi. Very few would today like to see any influence of this teaching of Gandhi on India's

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About cottage industry, it can be said that the improvements made so far are not sufficient in view, especially, of the growing unemployment problem of the country. This industry deserves much more attention without further delay so as to arrest the intensity of the said problem.

V

As a means for building up a non-violent, non-exploiting social order, Gandhi gave us his system of education,

Education: known as the Basic or, more popularly, Wardha, system of education. Its technique consists in developing not only the intellectual but also the physical and spiritual faculties of the child through the teaching and practice of a socially useful manual craft .
(72)

Article 45 of the Indian Constitution states: "the state shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years".

The policy followed immediately after Independence, was to start providing five years' primary education for all children of 6 to 11 age group and it was hoped to extend it by one further year when more resources became available .
(73)

"Our experience of basic education", said the First Plan, "is very limited". Even so, as the recent enquiry conducted in regard to its productive aspect by the Ministry of Education shows, wherever the scheme has been given a fair trial, it has yielded encouraging results inspite of serious handicaps. The stage has arrived for a thorough investigation of the obstacles in the way of the full development of the productive capacity of basic education (74) .

For elementary education, the outlays in the First, Second and Third Plans were Rs. 85, 95 and 209 crores, respectively (75) .

During the Third Plan, it was proposed to convert about 57,760 schools into basic schools, to orient the remaining schools to the basic pattern, to remodel all training institutions along basic lines, to establish basic schools in urban areas, and to link up basic education with the development activities of each local community.

By way of preparation for conversion into basic schools, a programme for orienting all existing schools to the basic pattern was initiated during the Second Plan. With a view to completing the process necessary arrangements were proposed to be made during the Third Plan (76) .

Elementary education has been given a very high priority in the Draft Fifth Plan, and the outlays for it are

being stepped up from Rs. 239 crores in the Fourth Plan to Rs. 743 crores in the Fifth Plan .
(77)

The Parliament and the State Legislatures have passed different acts (78) to implement this scheme.

Inspite of all these "..... a more realistic rather than a bookish tendency in school programmes has not been promoted to as great an extent as was initially hoped for.....
(79)

However, the limitations in the way of implementation of this craft-centred education through mother tongue (Wardha-Scheme) must be borne in mind, in view of the rapid industrial advancement of the country. In this context, the efforts made by the Government may be considered as indications towards the fulfilment of Gandhi's wishes as far as practicable.

VI

In India, Harijans and Scheduled Castes and Tribes call the attention of the social workers. This class of Indian citizens has received such unfair treatment throughout the ages in the past that social work must give them the highest place of priority in its programme. The inferior position of these citizens is the result of religious, social and economic subordination to which they had been subjected in the past, and it must be the earnest endeavour of all social workers in India to meet the challenge of this problem

Welfare of the Weaker Sections — Scheduled Castes and Tribes:

quickly and efficiently .

The Preamble to the Constitution lays down the high ideals of social, economic and political justice, equality of status and of opportunity, and the promotion of fraternity among all sections of society. Under article 46, the Constitution has adopted a twin formula — development with "special care" of the educational and economic interests of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes on the one hand, and protection from social injustice and all forms of exploitation on the other. The main object of the Government is to bring these less fortunate sections of society to the level of the rest of the population. Financial assistance to the states for attaining these objectives is assured under article 275.

To afford protection against exploitation, the Constitution arms Governments of States with powers to make special laws for controlling, inter alia, transfers of land and money-lending in the scheduled areas. One of the most important functions of a special department of Social Welfare set up by the Government of India in 1966, is to safeguard the interest and promote the progress of all backward classes in the country. The Director-General of Backward Classes is charged with the duty of looking after all the interests - economic, social, educational and cultural - of the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and other Backward Classes. Under article 338, a Special Officer for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is required to investigate and report periodically to the President on the working of

the safeguards, such as reservation of seats in Parliament and State Legislatures, and reservation of posts in public services. The office of the Special Officer (Commissioner) was recently re-organised in order to render his functions more effective.

Again, according to article 340, the President may, by order, appoint a Commission to investigate the conditions of socially and educationally backward classes, and to make recommendations as to the steps that should be taken to remove such difficulties, and as to the grants that should be made for the purpose by the Union or any State.

Several fact-finding and evaluative bodies were constituted so far by the Government of India. Some of them are: (1) Study Team on Social Welfare and Welfare of Backward Classes appointed by the Committee on Plan Projects (1958-59); (2) Committee on Special Multipurpose Tribal Blocks appointed by the Ministry of Home Affairs (1959-60); (3) Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission appointed under article 339 of the Constitution (1960-61); and (4) Special Working Group on co-operation for Backward Classes (1961-62) ⁽⁸¹⁾ .

In pursuance of the provisions of articles 46 and 275 of the Constitution, funds were provided in the Five Year Plans for schemes for the welfare of Backward classes with a view to helping them to improve their conditions, and with this end in view, the Government of India and the various State Governments have also been implementing special programmes for the welfare of

backward classes during the successive Five Year Plans.

In the programme included in the First Plan, efforts were made to provide for the special needs of the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes and other Backward Classes. A provision of Rs. 39 crores was made in the Plan. Of this, a sum of Rs. 20 crores was provided in the Plans of States, and the balance consisted of central grants amounting to Rs. 15 crores for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes and Rs. 4 crores for the removal of untouchability, and allied schemes for Scheduled Castes and for the rehabilitation and welfare of communities formerly known as Criminal and other Backward Classes (82) .

The problems were proposed to be tackled on a considerably expanded scale during the period of the Second Plan, in which a total provision of Rs. 90 crores had been made for the welfare of Backward Classes. Of this, nearly two thirds would be devoted to programmes for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes and the development of scheduled areas.

As regards the removal of untouchability, besides providing tube wells, mixed dwellings, community centres and measures for publicity and propaganda, special emphasis would be laid on the economic uplift of members of Scheduled Castes. They were to be assisted with allotment of land, training in remunerative arts and crafts, and extension of educational facilities by the grant of scholarships and stipends (83) .

The Third Plan provided an outlay of Rs. 114 crores

for the welfare of Backward Classes. Of this, Rs. 42 crores were intended for schemes of educational development, Rs. 47 crores for economic uplift schemes, and Rs. 25 crores for health, housing and other schemes. (84)

The major programmes for the development of Backward Classes in the Fourth Plan have been in the centrally sponsored sector, and have consisted of post-matric scholarships, girls' hostels, tribal development blocks, co-operation, research and training, improvement in the living and working conditions of those engaged in unclean occupations, coaching and allied schemes, and aid to voluntary agencies. (85) Expenditure on important programmes relating to the welfare of Backward Classes in the Fourth Plan was estimated at Rs. 142.38 crores. (86)

The schemes for the development of Backward Classes in the Fifth Plan will aim at improving the quality of life of these people, and at narrowing the gap between the levels of development of these people and general population. It will be essential to formulate time-bound programmes for the elimination of exploitation of the Backward Classes, and to speed up the process for their economic and social development. (87) A provision of Rs. 255 crores - Rs. 170 crores in the state sector, and Rs. 85 crores in the central sector has been made for programmes in the Fifth Plan. (88) A few acts have also been passed with the aim of removing hindrances in the way of implementing the programme meant for the welfare of the weaker sections. (89)

The major disabilities of the Scheduled Castes stem from the practice of untouchability. Since this practice is the product of deeprooted prejudices handed down through the centuries, it is likely to take some time and call for sustained effort before this evil is totally eradicated. With the raising of the educational and economic standards of these classes, and the improvement of their living and working conditions, the present indications are that it is fast disappearing in the urban areas, and diminishing perceptibly in rural areas. (90)

Article 17 is a great step forward in this direction. The country has now passed the stage of discussing the problem of the origin and sanctity of the institution of untouchability. That the stigma of untouchability should be totally and unreservedly eradicated has now been accepted by the whole country. According to article 17, "untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden". But this being an age-old social vice, has taken roots in the psychology and social structure of certain communities. Its eradication is incomplete so long as it receives a mental recognition, and persists indirectly in some form in the social structure. (91)

In this connection, mention may be made of the recent Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1976, which provides for more severe punishment including mandatory jail sentences for "untouchability offences". The new penal measures are considered necessary because of the ineffectiveness of the existing Untouchability Offences Act of 1955. (92)

Sustained efforts are being made all the time to bring the Scheduled Castes and Tribes to the level of the rest of the people in various other fields ⁽⁹³⁾. The Government of India, both at the Centre and at the States, have demonstrated their goodwill for these classes, and striven hard to fulfil all the obligations imposed on them by the Constitution for their welfare and progress.

India does not claim today that the elimination of discrimination, whether racial or of any other kind, from her diversified, multi-racial, plural society is complete. Many disabilities and harsh practices continue to exist, especially in the rural areas and in pockets of entrenched orthodoxy. But the disapproval of such disabilities by progressive opinion is daily growing sharper and becoming increasingly effective ⁽⁹⁴⁾.

VII

Gandhi and the Congress took up the question of prohibition seriously. In 1920, Congress declared itself in favour of total prohibition. Picketing of liquor shops became one of the important items in the various movements launched by Gandhi from time to time. Prohibition became a part of his 18-point programme for the betterment of living conditions of the people in general ⁽⁹⁵⁾. In his lifetime, the elimination of alcoholic drinks was an important plank in all Congress programmes.

Article 47 of the Indian Constitution states that

"..... the state shall endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption, except for medicinal purposes, of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health."

In March 1956, the Lok Sabha passed the following resolution: "this is of opinion that prohibition should be regarded as an integral part of the Second Five Year Plan, and recommends that the Planning Commission should formulate the necessary programme to bring about nation-wide prohibition speedily and effectively".⁽⁹⁶⁾

The Planning Commission set up a special committee to examine the experience gained regarding measures adopted by State Governments, and to make recommendations for a programme of prohibition on a national basis. The Planning Commission accepted the committee's proposals, and commended to the State Governments a six-point measure to be taken as a first step.⁽⁹⁷⁾ The Parliament and the State Legislatures also passed several legislations to implement this programme.⁽⁹⁸⁾

It is, however, recognised that the objective can not be achieved all at once; and that, taking into consideration - human limitations, social atmosphere of the country, economic condition, public opinion, and so on, it is yet to be considered whether prohibition is practicable, and how and in which manner it can be introduced.⁽⁹⁹⁾

In this respect, Gandhi's teaching virtually has come under eclipse. Prohibition was an idea very dear to him.

So deep was the Congress committed to this policy that its impetus continued for a time even after India became independent. But what is the position now? With some difficulty, the states, in which prohibition was introduced in the first enthusiasm, are carrying on with it even now. There is however no talk now of enforcing it on an all-India scale (100) .

VIII

Gandhi was quite unhappy at the cruelty with which people used to treat the animals, more specially the cow. It was one of the items which arrested his thought and attention and about which he talked and wrote much.

Prevention of Cow Slaughter
and preservation of animals:

It has found expression in article 48 of the Indian Constitution which states that "the State shall endeavour to organise agriculture and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines and shall, in particular, take steps for preserving and improving the breeds, and prohibiting the slaughter, of cows and calves and other milch and draught cattle."

The total Plan outlay on animal husbandry in the First Plan was Rs. 8 crores, and in the Second Plan about Rs. 21 crores. The Third Plan provided about Rs. 54 crores (101) and the outlays included in the Fourth Plan were Rs. 94.06 crores (102) .

The Central and the State Legislatures also enacted many legislations (103) to give this programme a real shape.

So far as prevention of cow-slaughter is concerned, it can be said that Gandhian teaching has failed to produce any significant impact on the public mind. It requires a thorough change in outlook which only legislations can not bring. Formulation of favourable public opinion through proper education can only put an end to this evil practice.

IX

In 1946, when an elected Constituent Assembly was first set up to draft a Constitution for free India, the Congress Party, under Gandhi's leadership, readily accepted the commitment that "its primary duty and fundamental policy was to protect the religious, linguistic, cultural and other rights of the minorities in India so as to ensure for them, in any scheme or government to which the Congress was a party, the widest scope for their development and their participation in the fullest measure in the political, economic and cultural life of the nation".

(104)

Besides, the framers were committed to a democratic state, which implies recognition of the rights of the minorities. Democracy stands for a peaceful method of political change, and as such it stands for the right of the majority, to rule, as well as the right of the minority to try, to convert them. It should be borne in mind that "every case of rule of a minority is a case of undemocratic rules; but not all cases of rule of the majority

are cases of democracy" (105) .

Social justice and equality have been assured to all the citizens of India in and through the Preamble and other operative provisions of the Constitution. These provisions are of great help in bringing the minority and the weaker sections of the community at par with the rest of the population.

The Preamble declares justice, social, economic and political; liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, equality of status and of opportunity, as the objectives of the Democratic Republic of India.

Again, article 38 of the Directive Principles of State Policy assures that "the state shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may, a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life"

Taken together, these provisions set the tune and pattern of justice and equality in the Constitution.

Under article 15(1) the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them."

Article 15(2) further states that no citizen shall, on grounds mentioned above, be subjected to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to - (a) access to shops

public restaurants, hotels and places of public entertainment; or
(b) the use of well, tanks, bathing ghats, roads and places of public resort maintained wholly or partly out of state funds.

Article 16 also prevents the state in the matter of public employment from discriminating between citizens on any one of those grounds.

The state has made attempts to abridge the said fundamental rights of citizen by a process of enlarging the field of reservation to the backward communities. Under article 15(3) 'nothing in this article shall prevent the state from making any special provision for women and children; and under article 15 (4), 'nothing in this article shall prevent the state from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes'. So, too, under article 16(4), 'nothing in that article shall prevent the state from making any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the state, is not adequately represented in the service under the state'. These provisions are conceived to give equal opportunities to all persons in the matter of public employment and generally in all matters connected with the state. At the same time, as there are backward classes of citizens and Scheduled Castes and tribes who can not compete with the more advanced communities in the struggle for existence, power is conferred on the State to give them adventitious aids, so that the chances are equalised between the advan-

ced communities and the backward ones. Otherwise, though our Constitution promises to give equal opportunities to all our citizens, in fact, it will be denying them to the backward communities (106) .

Sometimes, these provisions have been implemented in such a way that communities who are not really backward, have secured all the adventitious aids even at the expense of really backward communities. The Supreme Court in that situation stepped in to correct the imbalance between the fundamental rights and the principles of social justice embodied in the exceptions (107) .

Article 16 of the Constitution provides for equality of opportunity in matters of public employment. But clause 4 preserves the rights of the state to make any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens. This clause has been utilised by some states in such a way that the fundamental right of the citizens to equality of opportunity is in practice abrogated, and also in such a way that the really backward communities were not protected. The Supreme Court, in a series of decisions, struck a right balance between the fundamental right of equality of opportunity to employment and the claims of really backward communities to preferential treatment. Decided cases have laid down certain tests for ascertaining whether a particular class is a backward class or not (108) . It was held that it was necessary to satisfy two conditions to attract clause 4 of article 16, namely, (1) a class of citizens

must be backward socially and educationally, and (2) the said class must not be adequately represented in the service under the state (109) .

The Supreme Court, again in another case, tried to reconcile the individual right of the citizen and the claim of the backward classes to preferential treatment in such a way that the former is not abrogated. In T. Devadasan Vs. Union of India and another, the facts were: A Government of India Resolution reserved certain percentage of vacancies for Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes and adopted the principle of carrying forward into the second and the third year, if all or some of the said vacancies so reserved were not filled up (110) .

The result of such "carrying power" was that, in a particular year, sixty percent of the vacancies were reserved for Scheduled Tribes. The Court set aside that order on the ground that under article 16, each individual citizen has a right to employment, and that, in order to effectuate that right, each year of recruitment must be separately considered (111) .

If a minority in India, minority on the score of its religious profession, was made to feel small on that account, Gandhi could only say that this India was not the India of his dream. In the India for whose fashioning he had worked all his life, every man enjoyed equality of status whatever his religion was. The state was bound to be

Religious and
Educational equality

wholly secular. He went so far as to say that no denominational educational institution should enjoy state patronage. All subjects would thus be equal in the eye of law. What he wished India to do was to assure liberty of religious profession to every single individual .
(112)

Religious freedom and educational freedom are the very soul of the civil liberties in a state. Liberty of conscience, mind and thought is directly involved in these two freedoms. They are the acid tests .
(113)

Secularism in common parlance means that the state is not identified with any religion, but remains neutral, and only intervenes as an umpire in limited spheres of tension where there is threat to public health, order or morality, and where religion involves social reform. India is secular not in the sense that it is an irreligious state or anti-religious state. It is not a denominational state .
(114)

In this connection, we can also refer to the 42nd Amendment Act. The concept of secularism was implicit in the Constitution. The fathers of the Indian Constitution had taken care to base the Indian state on secular principles, even though the word 'secular' did not appear at all in the Constitution. This has been clearly spelt out in the amendments to the Preamble. It was therefore one of the objectives behind amending the Constitution, to spell out expressly the high ideal of secularism.

The Indian state has no official religion and

maintains a benevolent neutrality towards all religions. But at the same time, it reserves to itself the right of legislating about all secular activity associated with religion, as also the right to legislate for social welfare and reform, even though such legislation may interfere with religious beliefs and practices . (115)

Article 25(1) of the Constitution proclaims that subject to public order, morality and health, "all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion". Freedom of conscience, therefore, is expressly recognised as a fundamental right under the Constitution.

Article 25(2) protects existing law or prospective law regulating or restricting any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice or providing for social welfare and reform or the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus.

In addition, the Constitution also provides, subject to the same three limitations, that every religious denomination, or any section thereof, shall have the right to establish and maintain religious and charitable institutions, to manage its own affairs in matters of religion, to own and acquire movable and immovable property, and to administer such property in accordance with law (article 26).

What is considered to be the new constitutional doctrine of secularism of the political state in India, will appear in certain provisions such as in articles 27 and 28 of the Constitution. They provide that no person shall be compelled to pay any taxes, the proceeds of which are specifically appropriated in payment for expenses for the promotion or maintenance of any particular religion or religious denomination. This may be called the state's tax-neutrality in religion. They also provided that no religious instruction should be provided in any educational institution wholly maintained out of state funds, with this exception that an educational institution which is administered by the state but has been established under any endowment or trust requiring that religious instruction shall be imparted in such institution. This represents ideological neutrality in religion combined with respect for any endowment or trust. At the same time, the Constitution insists that no person, attending any educational institution recognised by the state or receiving aid out of the state funds, shall be required to take part in any religious instruction that may be imparted in such institution or to attend any religious worship that may be conducted in such institution or in any premises attached there to unless such person or, if such person is a minor, his guardian has given his consent thereto. This represents the state's non-participation in religious instruction in education .

(116)

In addition to these provisions of the Freedom of Religion, certain Cultural and Educational Rights, recognised as

'Fundamental Rights' under the Constitution, also bear on this question.

Under article 29(2) 'no citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the state or receiving aid out of state funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them'. The state has also made an attempt to abridge the fundamental right of a citizen to admission to educational institutions by a process of enlarging the field of reservation for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (article 15(4) ⁽¹¹⁷⁾).

The case of Balaji v. State of Mysore may be referred to here. The Mysore Government, on the basis of the report of a committee, issued an order making certain reservations for backward classes in the Engineering and Medical Colleges. On the basis of the formula adopted by the committee, the Mysore Government issued an order classifying castes or communities as Backward or More Backward. This order led to two results: (1) The so-called backward castes exhausted sixty nine percent of the seats available for students. (2) Members of a particular caste, though socially, politically and economically acquiring high standard in the state, by reason of their numbers and their adequate representation in the schools, secured a higher quota of admission. (3) A really backward caste, though the members of the entire caste are socially, economically and politically in a backward state, secured only comparatively small proportion of seats.

Brilliant students of other castes, not considered to be Backward Castes, were denied adequate number of seats, as 69% of the seats were reserved for the so-called backward castes. The result was that both the brilliant young students of the higher castes, and many of the students of the really backward castes were denied seats, and students belonging to castes with numerical strength, though they were not really backward, got seats. This result was a travesty of the constitutional provisions designed in the interests of the backward communities. The Supreme Court held that the said Government order was void .

(118)

This was a leading judgement on the subject, which made an attempt to give some guidance to the authorities concerned for making reservations for backward classes in our country, in the matter of admission.

Again, article 30 provides that all minorities based on religion or language shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice and that the state shall not, in granting aid to any educational institutions, discriminate on the ground that it is under the management of the minority based on religion or language. Besides, there are other provisions (article 330 to 342) in the Constitution (discussed in the earlier chapters) which also help in the way of safeguarding the interests of the backward communities.

A few years ago, the Gagendragadkar Commission of Enquiry, in their findings, stated that 'unless the socially and

economically weaker sections of the Indian community, including the Scheduled Castes and the Backward Classes, as well as the members of linguistic and religious minorities residing in all parts of India, feel that the concept of equality of opportunity and justice - political, social and economic - has become a reality in their lives, the tensions and irritations are likely to continue .

(119)

However, it can not be denied that the irritations and tensions are waning day by day. It is a matter of great relief that in this sphere of national life Gandhi's teachings continue to inspire the shaping of ^{the} national policy.

Passionate revolt against the crying injustice was perhaps the most important aspect of his political life and this, he had been able to transmit not only to his followers, but to the people of India as a whole. The sense of social injustice which is one of the characteristics of India even today is undoubtedly a part of what India has inherited from Gandhi .

(120)

Independent India has made no secret of the fact that its policy, as far as possible, is to eliminate glaring inequalities in wealth, through exclusion of private interests from many important spheres of economic activity, by abolishing zaminderies and other forms of landlordism, by placing a ceiling on land holding, etc. This idea of levelling economic differences is, undoubtedly, a part of Gandhian teaching. What India has inherited from Gandhi is thus important and is undoubtedly a

continuing factor .

Therefore, we see that though the Government and the Indian people have often stayed away from Gandhi's message, they are very much alive to the great heritage which they have come to acquire. Gandhi's spirit still lives and perhaps will continue to live in India because it is so much in tune with the thoughts and feelings of the Indian masses, the traditions of this ancient land, and the political culture of this vast country.

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 - (i) Continuance of steps to bring down prices of essential commodities. Streamlined production, procurement and distribution of essential commodities. Strict economy in government expenditure.
 - (ii) Implementation of agricultural land ceiling and speedier distribution of surplus land and compilation of land records.
 - (iii) Stepping up of provision of house sites for landless and weaker sections.

- (iv) Bonded labour, wherever it exists, will be declared illegal.
 - (v) Plan for liquidation of rural indebtedness. Legislation for moratorium on recovery of debt from landless labourers, small farmers and artisans.
 - (vi) Review of laws on minimum agricultural wages.
 - (vii) Five million more hectares to be brought under irrigation. National programme for use of ground water.
 - (viii) An accelerated power programme. Super thermal stations under Central Control.
 - (ix) New development plan for development of handloom sector.
 - (x) Improvement in quality and supply of people's cloth.
 - (xi) Socialisation of urban and urbanisable land. Ceiling on ownership and possession of vacant land and on plinth area of new dwelling units.
 - (xii) Special squads for valuation of conspicuous construction and prevention of tax evasion. Summary trials and deterrent punishment of economic offenders.
 - (xiii) Special legislation for confiscation of smuggler's properties.
 - (xiv) Liberalisation of investment procedures. Action against misuse of import licences.
 - (xv) New schemes for workers' association in industry.
 - (xvi) National permit scheme for road transport.
 - (xvii) Income-Tax relief to middle class-exemption limit placed at Rs. 8,000.
 - (xviii) Essential commodities at controlled prices to students in hostels.
 - (xix) Books and stationery at controlled prices.
 - (xx) New apprenticeship scheme to enlarge employment and training, especially of weaker sections.
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