

CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME

Removal of Untouchability

Gandhi held that untouchability was a blot and curse upon Hinduism. It was an age-old social evil which had to be removed to establish social equality in the society. Gandhi endeavoured to abolish this evil. He started the 'Harijan' newspaper to explain his ideas to people and he travelled throughout the country to raise funds for Harijans. He also accommodated a Harijan family in his Kochrab ashram, thereby courting discontent of ashramites and an economic boycott from the rich. He founded 'Harijan Sevak Sangh' in 1932 after his 'Yeravada Pact Fast'. Its objective was total removal of the taint of untouchability in law as well as in practice from the Hindu Society. Gandhi first expected the members of the Harijan Sevak Sangh to remove the last trace of untouchability from their own hearts. Removal of untouchability was an inevitable and most important task, because without social equality it was not possible to bring Swaraj. He was appalled that the Congress men looked upon it as a mere political necessity, and not as an urgent, indispensable requirement. It was his appeal to every Hindu to make a common cause with them and befriend them in their awful isolation. Gandhi held that if untouchability lived, Hinduism, and with it India would die. Gandhi shook the very foundation of the curse of untouchability in the Hindu society. Though, he could not eliminate it completely, his efforts in this direction lightened the misery and restored the self-confidence of the depressed classes to some extent.

Khadi

Gandhi presented Khadi as a symbol of nationalism, economic freedom, equality and selfreliance. It was his belief that reconstruction of the society and effective Satyagraha against the foreign rule can be possible only through Khadi. Khadi is the core of the constructive activities as recommended by him. He called Khadi the sun of the solar system of the village economy. According to him there could be no Swaraj without universal and voluntary acceptance of Khadi. In his scheme of reconstruction for free India, villages should no longer depend on cities. In the task of village upliftment, he gave first priority to khadi and other village industries. India being a country of agriculture, the farmers spend half the year without work in idleness. So Gandhi thought spinning was the best option for them as productive activity. For Gandhi, spinning wheel was a symbol of identification with the poor. It was intimately related to basic requirements of millions, i.e. food and clothing. He wanted them to be self-reliant. He believed that poverty led to moral degradation. Thus, with Charkha, he wanted to help the unemployed and poor. Many of his tours were proposed to organise and finance the spinning wheel movement. The spinning wheel was at one time the symbol of India's poverty and backwardness. Gandhi turned it into a symbol of self-reliance and non-violence. Khadi enabled him to carry his message of Swadeshi and Swaraj to the people and to establish connection with them.