

Vinoba Bhave and Mahatma Gandhi

—Interview with Ms. Nirmalbehn at Paunar Ashram, Wardha, India—

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The Sarvodaya¹ movement which Mahatma Gandhi(1869-1948)started was succeeded by Vinoba Bhave (1895-1982).²

I interviewed Ms. Nirmalbehn (1928-) who had been working under Vinoba Bhave at Paunar Ashram, Wardha, India on August 24th in 2006.

We understand from this interview that how Ms. Nirmalbehn was attracted to Mahatma Gandhi when she was young and how she joined Vinoba Bhave's movement.

I think that this is a very important document in order to understand the historical meaning of the movement of Vinoba Bhave and in what sense he succeeded the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi.

I would like to give my thanks to Ms. Machiko Mizusawa, a graduate student of Hirosaki university, who helped me in transcribing the interview.

Nirmalbehn : My mother resembles me. I resemble her.

A. Hayashi : Are you from Pakistan?

Nirmalbehn : Yes, I am from Lahore in Pakistan.

A. Hayashi : How many brothers do you have?

Nirmalbehn : I have two brothers and five sisters. I'm the eldest among five sisters. But one brother is older than I.

A. Hayashi : Did you come to India because of Partition?

Nirmalbehn : Because there were communal disturbances, I came to India. ... We don't think of religion. But communal and political disturbances took place. And they made division and made Pakistan. They wanted all the Hindus to go. There were a lot of slaughters and bloodsheds. I was in a very bad condition. We left Lahore about March or April in 1947 and went to Kashmir. We had a problem of Kashmir later. But that time Kashmir was completely non-communal. There was a very good

integration of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Buddhists. All was one. It was such a good place, a very good place.

A. Hayashi : Did you go from Lahore to Kashmir? Did you discard all your property?

Nirmalbehn : We went to Kashmir for our safety. Everything was lost. We did not bring many things. Everything had gone. Yes. We had to leave everything. We went to Kashmir as a hill station. We thought that we would stay two or three months. And then they will fight and finish and we will go back towards Lahore. It may be in Pakistan or in India, but I never mind. Even in Pakistan we will go back there. But we found that we couldn't go back. Neither by train nor by bus we could go back. If we went back, we would be killed. Therefore in the month of August or September we came over to Delhi by air. By road we couldn't come. Neither by bus nor by train. So by air we had to come to Delhi. We started our life from zero in Delhi. But my brother and sisters were small ones. When my age was 18, I came to India. I was born in 1928. I'm just like your grandmother. Your grandmother must be as old as I. If your grandmother is living, I am of her age. I'm not your mother under grandmother. I'm just like your grandmother. I'm that old by body-machine. But my mind is just like a child. I don't feel very old.

A. Hayashi : You look young.

Nirmalbehn : Do I look young? (laughing) Emotionally I'm just like a child.

A. Hayashi : Gandhi was also like a child like you.

Nirmalbehn : But I want to tell you. When I was at the age of 11 and 12, I came under the influence of Gandhiji's idea because he was leading freedom movement and he said that we would free our country. But we didn't go for war. We will free our country by the forth of truth and non-violence. These are my arms, truth and non-violence. We will not shed a drop of blood of anyone. People may beat us, may hurt us, but we will not hurt them. And he said that in my movement, the child and women could also take part in because we are not to carry guns. Gandhiji's idea came to me by and by, by and by.

My schooling took place in a school which had national feelings. There were a lot of national feelings, love for the country. It was a very wonderful school in which I studied. It was a wonderful very Persian and it was a No.1 school in Lahore, Sarganram Hindu high school. There was a training camp getting teachers training also. Therefore the head of the school was called principal, not headmaster but principal. And the principal was the younger sister of Sarojini

Naidu³. She was a great disciplinarian. She did not marry. Sarojini Naidu married. She was Miss Chattapaddyay.

So the nationalist feelings and the ideas of Gandhi were given to us by them also. In the school and in the whole atmosphere in India it was full of the vibration of Gandhi. Then I was growing, I was living among Muslim people, I was surrounded by Muslim people. And Muslim people were imposing obligations on themselves, there were a lot of restrictions for girls to go out. Muslim women have to put burkas...and there are pardahs...all these things. But Hindu women were also not allowed to go here and there. I did not like all these things. And I decided that I would not marry. Because if I marry, I will be put in a jail ... all restrictions this and that. I want to free my country and I want to work for Gandhi. I like Gandhi's idea and if our mother India is free, I, daughter of mother India, I won't be slaved by anyone. I will also be free. (laughing) These were the ideas I had ... and I did not marry. I wanted to work and live like a free individual, not a slave of anyone, except God. Except that power, I will not be in the control of anyone. (laughing)

I did not get the opportunity of staying with Gandhi living in his ashram at that time. But I was so closely connected with his ideas that inwardly I never felt that I am away from Gandhi. I felt Gandhi is always with me, I felt like that. I did not feel his absence. I felt I am with him. ... all through my life I am inspired by Gandhiji's ideas.

Gandhiji left his body, he is no more, but I was all the time talking to him. When I am alone, whatever problem I have, I talk to Gandhi. And I tell him to solve my problem. So I wanted to leave my home, I didn't want to live in a family atmosphere. I wanted to live in any ashram established by Gandhiji. ... Gandhi had established the trust. Do you know Gandhi's wife Kasturba⁴? When she died some fund was collected. And Gandhi suggested that this fund would be used for the service of women and children of the villages for their education, for their health, and this trust would work for them. And he established the trust. The name of that trust was Kasturba Gandhi Memorial Trust. And there was an institution in India to serve the women and children of the villages. And I decided to join that institution of headquarter at Kasturba gram. We had the headquarter of this trust at Kasturba gram in Indore in Madhya Pradesh. And I decided to join that. Then I got a letter in the miraculous manner ... from those

people five hundred miles away from Dehli, a letter which says that “we are waiting for a sister, a woman like you. You kindly come. Why are you wasting your time in your family? You come to this place, this is your real home.”...such a beautiful letter. And I thought it is due to Gandhiji’s grace that I got this opportunity. So I stayed there for 6 years. I worked there. But then Gandhi’s centenary was to be celebrated all over India. So only 5 years were left, before his completing one hundred years. That means 1964, because he was born in 1869, so 5 years more till 1969, and he will complete one hundred years. So idea came to me that I’m working in Gandhiji’s ashram, but is it OK? Still my question was what type of India Gandhi wanted. And whatever work I’m doing, is it fulfilling his dreams, what he wants for me, because I’m living only for Gandhi. So I wanted to get the answer and I wanted to search what Gandhi wanted for me. So I left that organization, Kasturba trust in 1964.

A. Hayashi : When did you join that?

Nirmalbehn : I joined it in 1958.

A. Hayashi : Were you there for 6 years?

Nirmalbehn : For 6 years. But I left it in 1964, in search of Gandhiji’s work, what Gandhi wants for me, and what happened in that period, I came across Vinoba Bhave in Bihar. And people from different parts of India were going to that place to see him, Vinoba, ...that place was called Pusaroad. And I went there to see him, then women from Assam had also come to consult Vinoba about gram-dan act. They wanted to consult Vinoba, but Vinoba left that subject and he was talking to them and saying that I walked all over India 13 years. Vinoba walked for 13 years and collected 4.2 million acres of land. So what Vinoba was doing was he was showing the path for revolution. But it was a non-violent revolution. Not a violent revolution. He was explaining to people a sun, sky and water, these are the gifts of God. Who made this soil, who made this earth, this is also made by God. Then he was asking people, you say I’m the owner of 10-20 acres, how did you become the owner? Who is the owner? God is the owner. Therefore you must give away some land which is in your land, for the landless. So he collected land and people gave him land. It was a wonderful movement, Gandhiji’s Vinoba’s movement. Gandhi brought us freedom for the country through truth and non-violence and Vinoba showed us the path of total revolution to bring about a revolution in the society through non-violence. Because when we get broken

home, we have to renovate it. Our country was just ruined for so much slavery of so many years. And now we have to leave it. Vinoba showed us the path of revolution, total revolution through non-violence. Therefore he worked for 13 years walking, walking and getting land from the people. All land belongs to God, no one is the owner, this was a slogan. This is a grate story of Vinoba. And people are moved by love. You can read books about Vinoba and you will get an idea what Vinoba has done. Now the garden which was sown by Gandhi, that garden was watered and looked after by Vinoba. Flowering of garden, who did it? Vinoba did. And that is the result of what Gandhi has said. This Gandhi's works will remain until eternity if humanities are there. ... Therefore in order to make Gandhi living for the future generations, who worked? Vinoba worked. ... Some sisters were coming to Vinoba. Vinoba said "I walked all over India for 13 years and I found that women's power was awakened in Assam of India. I want those women to take up a foot march and go round India."

Because Assam is very far north-east and it is a little isolated. All the north-eastern zone is very far from the center. Therefore it is isolated, for women's awakening in India and to give the message of creating a new social order standing on the pillows of truth, love and compassion. We have to lead this society. This society will be standing on the pillows of truth, love and compassion. This new social order will stand on these pillows. And how will this society function? ...These women from Assam should walk all over India for 12 years. He said they should come out from Assam, from smaller part and come to walk all over India for the purpose of giving message to the people. The subject of the walk is emotional integration of humankind, women's awakening and creating a new social order standing on the pillows of truth, love and compassion. So with this message he said the women of Assam should come out. I was sitting there at that time in one corner in Pusaroad. I was sitting there in search of Gandhi's dreams. I was searching what Gandhi wants for me and then Vinoba said this thing to these sisters from Assam. I at once gave my name and I said "In this women's foot march, can you include my name? I like to take up that foot march" and Vinoba accepted that. So I joined that 12 years foot march. I left Kasturba gram in 1964 but in search three years passed, and in 1967 I got this program of 12 years foot march of all over India. It was women's foot march. Deviben also later on joined.

A. Hayashi : Was there Ushabehn⁵?

Nirmalbehn : There was not Ushabehn. Devibehn and I, both of us volunteered to join. But for Assam, Vinoba gave the name of two Assamese women and said that these women should come out. That is Hema Palani, Lakshmi Pukar and myself and Devishwari⁶. So 4 women, Hema Palani, Lakshmi Pukar and myself and Devibehn took up foot march and walked all over India on foot. It was from 25th October 1967 to 25th October 1979 by foot, by 4 members. Two Assamese, their mother tongue was Assamese, my mother tongue was Sindhi. Devibehn's mother tongue was also Sindhi. Two Assamese were from north-east corner Assam and we were from the place which has gone to Pakistan. So the east-west became one. Just see that and we didn't know each other. And we walked from Rameswaram from south India. We went to Sri Lanka also. We went by boat and came back by air. When we touched Sri Lanka, we touched Mannar, from there our walking started and we went up to Colombo. There also we had a foot march for 2 months, 3 months, perhaps, I am forgetting how many months. And then in India from Champaran in Bihar we went to Raxaul. From there we went to Japan also. Not Japan but Nepal. (laughing) My mind is full of Japan because I am talking with you, a Japanese. (laughing) From Raxaul we entered into Nepal. And then I went up to Kathmandu.

A. Hayashi : Did you ask landlord to give up land?

Nirmalbehn : No. No. We were not collecting land. But we were giving the message. That is the reason why we were talking to different types of groups. We were giving the idea and the purpose, that is, emotional integration of humankind that means to look at the point that we are different, we have different religion, caste, creed, nationality and language but basically we are one. The special point of view is that the spirit is one. We are here four but we are one, spiritually we are one. We have this basis of thinking, then of us 60%, 70% problems will be gone.

A. Hayashi : In each village did you deliver the speech?

Nirmalbehn : Yes, in each village. And then we go from one place to the other on the way. I would like to tell you that we were only 4 sisters and walked for 12 years, but many people helped us. Because we had got another set of workers who were called sarvodaya workers. For sarvodaya workers are working in the field. ... Those workers, that is, Gandhi, Vinoba workers are spread. And from the time of Gandhi, so many people worked all over India, so those workers are still there,

some old people have gone or left the world. But some newer people are also coming. So those workers are from place to place. We will write only one letter to one state, we have so many states, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Gujarat, Maharashtra, etc.. Supposing from Gujarat we are coming to Maharashtra, from Maharashtra we are going to Andhra. We will write one letter, post card to Andhra chief sarvodaya worker telling him that we will finish our foot march in Maharashtra, in this district, this is the last camp, we give the name of district, village and we will enter your state. And we will walk for 8 months, 10 months or 1 year whatever period we have decided in your state, so now you can make the program. So we will write only one letter and then that chief sarvodaya worker of that state will call district workers from each district. And then they will plan the route for us and we will carry on our foot march. They will make all the arrangements for us.

(10 minutes interval)

Nirmalbehn : After we get information, we start telling this is good, this is bad, this is big, this is small, this is positive, this is negative, this is favorable, this is unfavorable. In this type of duality the problem starts and it creates the conflict and all that. ... We call it vivek shakti. That means discriminative power, discerning power. Vivek is Hindi. By the power of vivek we can test what is right, what is wrong.

A. Hayashi : Is vivek a power of discretion?

Nirmalbehn : Yes. You can also say it is a power to make out. In our mind we have within us a power which says this is good, this is not good. We have this power within us. This can function right when we have our control over the senses, if our mind is learning right here and there. ... We have to be very clear about the body needs, not their basic body needs. Basic body needs have to be fulfilled. When I feel hungry, I have to eat. When I am thirsty, I have to take water. When I feel cold, I have to put on woolen clothes, isn't it? These are the basic body needs. But above them we go on adding and adding, increasing and increasing our needs. However we should practice to minimize our needs. Basic needs are OK. But you should not go on increasing, go on holding and go on getting more and more. The principle, Gandhi's principle is to take minimum from this world, from this universe and give maximum. Whatever you can give to the world, give

maximum. Giving maximum and taking very little. ... I will give you an example that he took minimum from this world. When someone presented a stone and he was using it two ways. One was a paper weight, he was making it a paper weight and the other was a stone to be used in a bathroom. In the bath room when he washes his feet he uses that stone...Gandhi was in Bangladeshi when communal riots were going on but our Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel, these big leaders were in Delhi to receive the power, sovereignty from England, the British. Gandhi was not in Delhi. Do you know this story?

A. Hayashi : On Independence day?

Nirmalbehn : Yes, on independence day, Gandhi was not in Delhi. He was walking from village to village, village to village...

A. Hayashi : Was he spinning?

Nirmalbehn : No, no. He was consoling the people. Because the riots threaten people ... some people were killing ... all that bloodshed ... so he was going from house to house, village to village, a house door to door to wipe out their tears and telling "I'm your son, you don't worry." He was doing peace work and he wanted to pacify them. He was taking fast also. He was not there to take power. He never thought of it. ... So he had conquered his mind and body. He had controlled these five senses. Supposing I want to get up at 2 o'clock in the morning but that time I'm getting so deep sleep and I don't want to get up. Let me sleep some more time. So I'm in the grip of the comfort of the sleep and I won't get up. But he had conquered those senses. Whatever he wanted to do, he never consulted his body and mind. He was getting from within vivek power. Whatever he wants to do, he can do that. ... No difficulty can put any obstacle for him. No difficulty was like that which he could not overcome. He was so confident and determined person like that. Therefore the persons who want to study Gandhi, they will have to practice themselves to understand Gandhi and they will have to practice themselves the things through which he conquered his body and mind. Whatever he did to conquer his body and mind, the persons who want to understand Gandhi will have to go through this practice also to conquer body and mind and develop very strong will.

Nirmalbehn : ... We are searching for truth at a particular moment, "Which is the right path? Which is a right action that has to be found out?" Supposing my life march is going on...

A. Hayashi : So we should not be disturbed by favorable and unfavorable?

Nirmalbehn : We should not to be disturbed. No. We should not to be disturbed at all by favorable and unfavorable but we have to see what is my duty, swa-dharma. So what is my duty? What is my swa-dharma? What is my duty at the present moment? To align with them or not to align with them. To take up this mission or that mission. So all the time there are questions and questions within and we have to decide. So we have to see at the particular moment what is my duty, what is best for me, what is my truth, at the present moment for me what is the truth. As Gandhi consults a small voice, so I consult a small voice within me, which tells me what I have to do.

A. Hayashi : We have to find out our dharma. We should not be disturbed by favorable and unfavorable.

Nirmalbehn : The more and more you master your body and mind, your thoughts are just, your function is treated justly and you balance your mind. Then you can determine in the right manner. Your vivek shakti, discerning power will give you right answers. You will understand more. Supposing the water is waving like this and you see a face. ...But you are not disturbed by a face and you can see an essence. What is right? What is wrong? What is my swa-dharma? Which is the better truth because ten people are saying the same truth differently..., there is one article here. We are asking what you see, then ten persons will see ten things differently. But what is the truth? So we have to find out the better. Because the complete truth can't be realized with this body and with five senses. Why? Because the truth is infinite. But we can do one thing. We can walk on that path of truth. And we can go to nearer truth step by step, step by step, the things will be opening out for me. Gandhi always said when he didn't know what to do, he prayed to God, Show me only one step. One step is enough for me. Show me one step. So he was praying to open one step....Then he was happy. And when he had come to that step, again there is difficulty, again he will see. Please open one step for me, so step by step this truth was opening for him.

And the thing is that whatever Gandhi said here in India, it would influence all over the world. Gandhi said millions of hearts are the same. ...I was impressed by Gandhiji's ideas, influenced by him at the age of 11 or 12 in India. ... When I went to America in 1989 and met social workers and all that, I found one woman who had become as fat as I am, she was telling me that when I was at the age of

15 or 16, I told my father, Daddy! I will go to India and I will join Gandhi. He said you are so young, why do you want to join Gandhi? Then she was telling that whatever he is doing, he is doing not only for India but also for all the world, he is doing something for the universe and I was impressed by his mission of truth and non-violence. Then her father said that America also needs this type of thing, you study Gandhi more and more remaining in America with this ideas and go to the university here and deliver your talks amongst them. And she said at the age of 16 she delivered her first talk to the university students, in the university in America. She gave her first talk on Gandhi when she was 16 years of age to the university students. And all through her life she was thinking about Gandhi and working for Gandhi.

A. Hayashi : Is she still doing social work?

Nirmalbehn : Now I don't know because when I went to America in 1989, she was also quite old as I.

A. Hayashi : What was she doing that time?

Nirmalbehn : She was doing so many things. And she had given her life for social work for helping the people.

I want to say that Gandhi's way is the only way and Vinoba had given a formula. He said that this is the age of science. But where are we going? Who will show the direction? The direction should be led by spirituality. So there is a formula of science plus spirituality. It is the good of all. We can achieve the good of all ... if we join science with spirituality. And if we join science with violence, we are making use of science to kill people, to explode the aeroplane, to explode this tower. ... So Vinoba said science plus violence is equal to total destruction. But if you join science with spirituality it will bring good of all and this is the work which we have to do. We have to join science with spirituality. It still works here.

A. Hayashi : So Vinoba is not against science?

Nirmalbehn : No, no, no. Gandhi also not, no, no, no. ... The thing is that how we use science. Gandhi was not even against machinery. ... He said I'm not against machinery because this my body-set is a machine. My body-set is a machine. I'm not against machinery. One thing is whatever machines we are using they should help, they should be helping the human beings. But they shouldn't be taking away their jobs. Otherwise all become jobless. ... You need very few people to work a big factory. From where do you get employment? Everybody must have some work to

do. No one should be without work. So he gave an example of a sewing machine. He said this is a wonderful thing. It saves labor and time of the individual. But it does not eliminate you, machinery should not replace human beings. It should not replace human beings. They should come to the help of human beings. So we should have a discerning power to judge to what extent we have to make use of machinery and we have to see that all the people should get the work also because now in the modern age, maximum problem is unemployment in every country. Unemployment is increasing and increasing. So we have to see that we use machinery in a manner that everyone gets employment. Machinery should come to help the individual but not to replace human beings, not replace the person.

Discerning power means which can make out right and wrong. This power will work more if your mind is balanced and you are not emotional. Complex and this and that are full of all negativity and for that person discerning power can not work. If you are full of positive ideas, you are cleared of negative ideas. There is a computer within us. And what happens? This computer is also a wonderful thing within us. Supposing that you get some damage, I at once get an answer. I was thinking about it and an answer has come. Answer has got into my computer. So computer within is a wonderful computer. It can give answers of all the problems. Whatever problem you have, you can ask the answers from your computer. ... So if my computer is positive, it can be a positive material and it will get connected with the universal power and you can get an answer for any question. You need not go in search of guru who will give answers. (laughing) Therefore Gandhi said the small voice within me tells me what I have to do.

A. Hayashi : What attracted you to Vinoba Bhave? What kind of character did he have?

Nirmalbehn : ...There is a book called "Gita Pravachchan". In English we call it "Talks on Gita". He interpreted Gita in the present context, though Gita is a very old Indian Hindu scripture. We give the name Hindu but I don't like this name. This is not Hindu, because this is something Vedanta, the eternal truth. It is a search for eternal truth. It is not limited to any religion. It is not for particular people, no not at all. Anybody can benefit by those things, because it is a search for a truth. Have you studied Gita?

A. Hayashi : I read Bhagavad Gita in a Japanese translation.

Nirmalbehn : Bhagavad Gita is different from Gita Pravachchan. Bhagavad Gita is in Sanscrit.

That is OK. That is the main thing. But the thing is that Vinoba talked about whatever he understood from Gita and whatever he implemented through his own experiences and whatever knowledge and enlightenment he got from Gita. Those are included in “Talks on Gita”. And that book is translated by Yuriko⁷. You saw that book, na?

A. Hayashi : But that can not be got in Japan, she said.

Nirmalbehn : If people understand that, there will be a more demand for that, because that is a basic knowledge. We can apply whatever knowledge which is given there in our life. So Vinoba was the person who had gone to the height, quite high up on spiritual path. Vinoba had the steadfast knowledge and had a mind just completely balanced. He was a swami-yogi. ... He became the observer of life. He was not involved in positive and negative things I mean. So “Talks on Gita” is a type of presenting life of Vinoba. So ... I was asking Gandhi. ... Who is doing the work of Gandhi? Then I came to know this is a person of the greatest height and who is taking up and showing the path of non-violent revolution. Because revolution always means violence but he is telling something about non-violent revolution and giving a blueprint of a new social order, non-violent social order. We have to establish a non-violent social order and he is giving a blueprint of the foundation which had been laid by Gandhi. Gandhi gave the image of non-violent social order. And Vinoba further developed that idea as I told you and he nurtured and watered that garden which was started by Gandhi on the some path. Vinoba made Gandhi immortal in history.

A. Hayashi : What was the real image of Vinoba?

Nirmalbehn : The real image of Vinoba? Vinoba was a very humorous person. Yes. ...

The specialty of Gandhi and Vinoba is that they didn't become gurus. They did not say that we are the teachers. In India this guru tradition is very fundamental. And every individual has some guru in India, na? (laughing) Guru means teacher but teacher of Acharya. Teacher is only a person who teaches, Acharya is a person who practices himself and who has elevated his personality, spirituality. He is elevated, not an ordinary person but a person who has got something of spiritual lines. He has got within himself something. And here in India the tradition is that people search for gurus and they get them. There are many gurus, each one can find out a guru for their purpose, they see that this guru is OK, is a wonderful person. And in Western countries people have

psychologists and this and that but psychology only does not give all answers. We have to go beyond psychology also above the mind. We have to go above the mind. But spiritual things go beyond that. ...Gandhi and Vinoba did not become gurus. They became the friends of people. They made friends. Vinoba says the greatest salvation is friendship. Why friendship? Brother and sister, mother and father and this and that, there are so many human relations. But why do you say that relationship of friendship is the greatest? And Vinoba says because there is no authority working within it. In this relationship there is no authority, there is the only body of pure love. ...And a friend can open his full heart to the other friends. A person can not open his heart in front of the mother or father or elder sister or brother, he may not be able to do that. But to the friends he can say everything. So he can feel the closest. Therefore the greatest relationship is friendship. So they made friends.

Now Vinoba was a person who will make new meanings and will take out new meanings of the words which people generally use, for the world. For example, some people ... , 10, 15, 20 people, they said we will go with you. He said why do you think that we will go with you? All the people, I mean not very young, they daily walk 10 miles, 15 miles, 20 miles, 30 miles and they get tired. But then after that when they sit together, they chitchat laughing and this and that, then they will say, Vinoba! you are a very fantastic person. At the age of 50 when people get retirement, you started foot march. So we also have to do a foot march. At the age of retirement people at lakhs⁸, they don't walk but you are at the age of retirement you have started a foot march. Then ... he smiles. Yes, Vinoba is retired, what is the meaning of retired. Retired means re-tired, new tire put on him. Retired means re plus tired. New tire put on him and he was eating so little. Only curd and honey, very little food. But when he was walking, he was so fast, people had to run with him. People were running, he was only very fast.

He had a burning power, yes. You have heard about Miss Slade? Mirabehn⁹? One of the person who is still living in Sevagram, Dharampal, he was greatly connected with Mirabehn. Mira was in Austria. She, in the last phase of her life, had gone to Austria. And this person Dharampalbhai is living even now and he is doing very important work in Sevagram. He is computerizing all the traditional knowledge of India of different fields, different subjects. He is computerizing to preserve all the knowledge of India. And he has been to London to connect

certain correspondents between Gandhi and the Britishers of that time ... and on his way back he went to Austria to see Mirabehn and Mira asked whether Gandhi left us? And now India, where is it going, where is India going? What is happening in India? Is there anyone? Who is carrying on the work of Gandhi? And Dharampal brother says, yes, there is one person Vinoba Bhave. She said Vinoba Bhave? She said Gandhi was a ball of fire. And Vinoba was so calm and unassuming. He is so calm and so unassuming and so humble a person. And Gandhi, Gandhi was a ball of fire. She said he was a ball of fire. So I (=Dharampal) was surprised that first time someone said that Gandhi was a ball of fire. But later on I read something how he was a ball of fire. The Muslims said that we will carry the sword to kill people, to kill the Britishers and all that. And Gandhi was explaining to them. He said I can also handle a sword, I can also put sword in the body of someone, I can even break the sword into two pieces, do you think I can do? I can do it. But I really want to tell you that this sword will not solve the problem. The problem will not be solved. You should understand this thing. So Gandhi was explaining ... something ... about it. Other people could not talk such a direct talk and could not talk like the way Gandhi talked directly. He was really a ball of fire. No one can do such a big thing without fire. When we face such a big unsurmountable problem, we have to become just like mountains to face that. ... And that power comes by conquering oneself and by the mastery of body and mind. ... Therefore one needs a practice, one needs to practice ourselves. I think this is enough for today, isn't it?

(After an interview we talked about the interesting people who visited this ashram before.)

The subject I talked today is very important. ... I will tell you that this is my diary and some visitors' informations are written here. ... I want to tell you that one boy had come from Israel and he was also a student of Gandhian studies. So it is in this diary the people write something about the name and address and what they are doing and what are their hobbies and all that. Very interesting one, I will tell you one thing These are the one. They are now quite aged, na? They have got children and all that. But they got recently married.

A. Hayashi : Was it the first marriage?

Nirmalbehn : No, no, no. They are Americans. They married so many times. So each one had different children and all that. But now at this age both have married. And they wanted to stay here in one room. But here our system is that brothers stay there and sisters stay this side. They wanted to be in one room. They were very open with me and they said they wanted to be in one room. I said it is the tradition here that brothers stay there and sisters stay this side. But they said we are recently married and we are on honeymoon. I said that you have not selected the right place ... (laughing) because they are all brahmachari¹⁰. This ashram is for that purpose but you have chosen it as a honeymoon place. By the way they had very great ideas. They said that we have taken up a new name. I asked what is that new name? They said LASA, L-A-S-A. I told them that this is the capital of Tibet. They said no, no, no, no. LASA means that L means love, A means all, love all, and SA means serve all. So we don't make our one house at one place and we have a caravan that is our house and we go on moving and moving. And whenever people need our help, we stay there and help them. So this is LASA.

Before I wrote how the Sarvodaya movement was inherited from Mahatma Gandhi to Vinoba Bhave and from Vinoba Bhave to Jayaprakash Narayan (cf. Note 2). I can say it is a leader's point of view. This time I focused on one ordinary person who came under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi very much and had a very close relationship with Vinoba Bhave and deeply involved oneself in the Sarvodaya movement. In either case my purpose is to provide the key to find the true historical meaning of Gandhi.

In Paunar Ashram most of the residents were women because Vinoba attracted many women. I talked with some of them in Paunar Ashram and I had the impression that they were charming. Among them Ms. Nirmalbehn was very impressive especially. She was very merry and had a powerful spirit. We understand the process of how Nirmalbehn was attracted to Mahatma Gandhi when she was young and how she joined Vinoba Bhave's movement from the interview stated above. The life she led is very moving and exciting. She has never met Gandhi but she is influenced by Gandhi very much and has led a Gandhian life. I felt by interviewing her that in India there are still not a few Indian people who have such charming character and generous spirit as Gandhi had. Now India is changing a lot because of globalization and many Indian people are becoming richer, but many social problems are also arising and Gandhi is in the limelight again. I hope this article will be a help to understand more the Sarvodaya

movement led by Gandhi and Vinoba and its historical meaning and will be a help when we think of where India will go in the future.

Notes:

- 1 uplift of all
- 2 The Sarvodaya movement was inherited from Mahatma Gandhi to Vinoba Bhave and from Vinoba Bhave to Jayaprakash Narayan (1902-1979). I wrote about it in two articles. cf. Akira Hayashi, 'The Historical Meaning of the "Total Revolution" Movement in India during 1970s', *Shigaku-Zasshi* 99-4, pp.39-54. Do., 'The Sarvodaya Movement after the Death of Gandhi—The Historical Meaning of the "Total Revolution" Movement" led by J. P. Narayan—', *Grassroots Movements in Asia, Asian Cultural Studies Special Issue No.10, International Christian University*, pp.69-94.
- 3 Sarojini Naidu (1879~1949) was attracted to the ideas of non-violence of Mahatma Gandhi and joined his movement. She was often arrested and put in jail. She joined salt march also and after Gandhi was arrested, she led the non-violent movement towards Dharasana salt works with other leaders. She had a talent for writing poems, too and Gandhi called her 'Indian nightingale'.
- 4 Kasturba (1869-1944) was a wife of Mahatma Gandhi.
- 5 Ushabehn was also a member of Paunar Ashram when I visited there. I interviewed her, too.
- 6 Devishwari is Devibehn.
- 7 Yuriko Ikenoya
- 8 a hundred thousand
- 9 Mirabehn (1892-1983) was a daughter of a British admiral. Her real name was Madeleine Slade. She visited Mahatma Gandhi with an introduction from Romain Rolland in 1925. She had served Gandhi since then. Gandhi named her Mirabehn. She joined the satyagraha movement led by Gandhi, too.
- 10 celibate