

[Note: The “Bhoodan Andolan”, or Land Gift Movement, was a voluntary land reform movement in India started by Archarya Vinoba Bhave in 1951. It was launched in the spirit of the philosophy of Mohandas Gandhi, and asked the rich to simply give some of their land to the poor. A few did so, but often the land was of poor quality, or was “given” only because of fear that it would otherwise be forcefully taken by the poor. And as this article notes, much of the land that was given was “given” in name only, with the rich landlords retaining possession and control in actual fact. –BannedThought.net]

Times of India

Bhoodan farmers ready to emulate Maoists

Abhay Singh, TNN 10 December 2009, 04:46am IST

PATNA: As if things would not have been stranger for the departed Acharya Vinoba Bhave, who launched the Bhoodan Andolan in Bihar in the Fifties after his success in Telangana, even the old diehard flag-bearers of his civil campaign for the distribution of land among the landless donated by big landholders have now begun to speak in the language of the Maoists.

In fact, at the one-day conference of the Bhoodan farmers here on Wednesday, a senior Bhoodan volunteer associated with the Bhoodan Yagna Committee (BYC) narrated that when he went to the Maoist-affected East Champaran district to meet people, who had been given Bhoodan land to know if they got the actual possession land, found that they had become Maoists.

Indeed, speaker after speaker blamed the bureaucracy down to the circle officer for non-possession of the distributed land. They called the system "callous, corrupt and incapable of understanding our situation". Another senior Bhoodan volunteer, Amarnath Bhai, appealed to the Bhoodan farmers to not come to Patna.

"Instead, gherao the office of the CO. Paralyse its functioning. Tell them to redress your grievances and don't quit till it is solved," he said, adding: "Bhoodan farmers believe in peaceful means. But the system and the bureaucracy are pushing them into the Maoist fold."

Other speakers included Tripurari Sharan from Lok Samiti, Ram Chandra Choudhary, Varsha from Madhya Pradesh, Kalpana and senior social activist Ram Sharan from Bhagalpur. BYC chairman Shubhmoorti told Bhoodan farmers to organise, unite, educate their children and also carry on a sustained struggle at the block level to take actual possession of the land given to them. "We at the BYC can only put pressure on the government," he said.

According to BYC, over 6.48 lakh acres had been donated. Of that, 3.84 lakh acres were not

suitable for distribution as they were parts of hills, river basins and ponds. Over 2.53 lakh acres of the total 2.58 lakh acres of arable land had been distributed since 1954-55. As of now, only 4,818 acres remained for distribution.

The fact, however, was that a huge section of farmers had not been given possession of land. Moreover, another chunk of them had also been evicted from their land.

Shubhmoorti said chief minister Nitish Kumar was scheduled to hold a high-level meeting to find ways to ensure that the Bhoodan farmers enjoyed actual possession of land given to them.

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