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'Sui Generis'



Karnataka Pradesh
Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh

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Brother and Sister Delegates,

You have participated in the open session yesterday. You must be experiencing that today's session is quite different from that of yesterday. You have seen dramas. For performing a drama there is a stage. There is a green room for the actors to undergo their makeup. An actor is a different person on the stage. He may be a king or he may be a servant. He may be a hero or he may be a villain. In accordance with the role he has to play, he assumes different characters. But when the actor returns to the green room he forgets the role he had played on the stage. The king is no more a king, the servant is no more a servant, the hero is no more a hero and the villain is no more a villain. In the green room they talk to each other as members of a single troupe. Similarly yesterday's open session was a different function. In the open session someone was delivering a speech, some one was leading the procession, some other was giving slogans. The whole thing is comparable to the stage in a drama. But today's session is different. Now we are in the green room. Here we belong to one family. Considering ourselves as members of the same family, I am going to talk to you. I will have a heart to heart talk with you while sharing my experiences. I am not delivering a speech, the speech making is over yesterday in the open session.

On my return after the conclusion of yesterday's open session I met some of our friends. They are

not working for the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, they are working in other fields. We were relaxing over a cup of tea. Then, one of them told me "Then-gadiji, you must be very happy".

I asked him "why, I am always happy, when did you see me in a depressed mood".

"Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh is increasing its strength, you must be happy over it" he said.

"How do you know that Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh has increased its strength" I asked him.

He said "the government has declared that you are the second biggest central trade union organisation of the country".

"Were you under the impression that the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh has not grown so far, because the government had not given the certificate? Suppose the government takes a political decision tomorrow and declares that the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh is no more in existence, are we going to wind up our show? Is our growth dependent upon the government certificate? Whether we are existing or not, whether we are big or small, whether we are growing or not, is not dependent upon the government's decision. Is our strength dependent upon how the Government of India views us? That apart, since the government has said that we are the second biggest central trade union organisation, it may not be true, as the Government of India is known to utter falsehood generally" I jovially told him.

Then he said "your general secretary's report has itself stated that the membership has crossed 21 lakhs figure."

The conversation proceeded on these lines. Since the person conversing with me was working in the political field, he seemed to be particular about the numbers and the size. In the political field, the only measure of strength is the numerical strength and the size. After all, in a democracy it is the number that counts. The political parties consider elections as all important. Victory in the elections is dependent upon the number of votes secured. In a democracy, each one has one vote, if he has completed 21 years of age and if the person has a head over his body. In terms of votes all are equal. A wrestler has one vote and a TB patient has also one vote. The great poet Ravindranath Tagore had one vote and a base murderer will have one vote, a great philosopher like Radhakrishnan had one vote and a repeatedly matric failed person has also one vote. In a democracy all are equal because each one has one vote. In a democracy quality is not the criterion. A poet may be highly imaginative and a murderer may be totally cruel. But democracy is oblivious to both. Both are given one vote each. In this respect there is equality in a democracy. One need not bother about the other qualities of the voter. Therefore in politics if you are able to get more votes you are considered as very powerful. Applying the same analogy in the trade union field, our friend, working in the

political field told me that your membership has crossed 21 lakhs therefore you are very strong. The organisation has grown in size therefore the strength must have also grown, it is his logic. Therefore the question arises what is the measure of strength? To assess the strength of an organisation on the basis of its size is equal to considering that a stout person is very strong. Stoutness need not be strength. A person may be stout for various reasons. A person may be going to the gymnasium regularly, performing strenuous exercises and thereby building up strong muscles, whereby his body will grow. There is another person who does not exert himself, always follows sedentary habits and thereby puts on fat. He accrues so much fat that he finds it difficult to move about. If we take stoutness as the criterion for strength, then the person who has built up his body through strenuous exercises and a person who has put on weight due to accumulation of fat through sedentary habits and sluggishness are equally strong. Is that comparison proper? Stoutness cannot be the measure of strength. So also numerical size cannot be the sole measure of strength. Numerical size is important but it should not be the measure of actual strength. If you think that through the numerical size alone we can change the course of history, you are wrong. If you look to the history of the world, you will find that those who changed the course of history never bothered themselves about the numerical strength. So also those who brought about revolutionary changes did not have majority of the people with them at the commencement of the revolutionary change.

Once Mahatma Gandhiji was posed a question, which he replied through a counter question. I am not going to narrate the details but refer to only the relevant part. To the youth who posed the question, Gandhiji asked "have you heard the name of Julius Caesar, who was he?" "I have heard him as the uncrowned king of the Roman Empire and his word was law in the entire Roman Empire", the youth replied.

"What was the strength of his followers"

"May be a few lakhs".

Gandhiji asked "have you heard the name of Jesus Christ"

"Yes, he died on the cross" the youth said.

"How many followers he had?"

"Only a dozen"

Julius Caesar had lakhs of followers whereas Jesus Christ had only twelve. Out of these twelve, one betrayed him, whose name was Judas. Another, disclaimed all knowledge about Jesus Christ before the cock could crow thrice. How many followers are there for Julius Caesar now who had lakhs of followers then? As against this how many followers Jesus Christ has now, who had only ten followers then.

Therefore only numbers cannot be the standard, but there must be other standards, which aspect we must consider.

When great persons started their distinguished work they never bothered about the numbers. There was a great christian saint by name St. Ignatius. Once St. Ignatius was asked as to how many people did he require to change the world. He said "give me twelve men, I will change the world".

Today if a politician were to be asked this question he is bound to say "give me crores of voters if you expect me to change the world". But St. Ignatius said "give me only twelve people".

In our country Guru Govind Singh said "I require only five persons". Guru Govind Singh had to fight the great Mogul Empire which was spread all around. But he said "I require only five persons". By inculcating in them brave qualities "I will make each one of them fight one and a quarter lakh of enemies," he said. "I will make a sparrow to fight against a tiger" such was his confidence. It appears that Guru Govind Singh was totally unaware of the importance of numbers according to the democratic standards prevalent at present. He was not progressive enough to know the standards of democracy and the strength of votes. From this it is evident that those who changed the history of the world never cared for the numerical strength. The strength may increase due to numbers, but number by itself should not be given all the importance.

While India was the first civilised nation in the world, Greece was the civilised nation of Europe. In Greece there was a great philosopher by name

Diogenes. At noon one day, Diogenes went into the market place with a lighted lantern in his hand. In the hot sun he started searching for something with the lantern held high. People were wondering whether the great philosopher had gone mad, as he was pretending to search something, holding the lantern high, during day time in the market place. It aroused the curiosity of the passers by. A crowd collected. One amongst them asked Diogenes as to what he was searching with the lighted lantern during the day time. Diogenes replied "I am searching for a man". The people assembled there told him that they were all men and whom amongst them he wanted? Diogenes said "I am searching for a man with a capital 'M'." He was searching for a man who was genuinely human. The way that these great people thought and the way we human beings think now are poles apart. There is vast difference between the two.

Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh has said right from its inception that number cannot be the sole criterion, for judging the strength. We want the strength of a wrestler and not the stoutness of a sluggish person. If so what is the intrinsic measure of strength. Someone may say, a person will be a powerful leader if he is a good orator. But many of our activists are such that they can hardly deliver a speech. They are very good workers but delivering impressive speeches is out of their bounds. Some think that by delivering an attractive speech, a person becomes very powerful. No doubt, many people enjoy such

speeches, but is anything else achieved by it? What is meant by an impressive speech? It means an entertaining speech. Rhetoric language, interspersed with humour becomes an entertaining speech. There is another type of speech which is very instructive. The third type is that which inspires the audience. A person who hears an inspiring speech will be enthused even to lay down his life for the cause. But an entertaining speech cannot do this. Instead of spending five rupees to go to a movie and spending three hours there, hearing an entertaining speech of a leader without paying anything for it is more profitable. When you can get the entertainment free, why spend five rupees for a movie? But an entertaining speech cannot inspire a person to sacrifice for a cause. A speech should be such as to inspire a person to sacrifice himself in furtherance of an ideal.

There are instances in our own country, wherein a few words have inspired persons to sacrifice themselves for a cause. They were not big speeches. But those very few words have roused the spirit of sacrifice in the individuals. One such instance is that of Maharani Laxmibai of Jhansi. The British Resident tells Maharani Laxmibai that the British have taken over her kingdom. Maharani Laxmibai, from behind the curtain, retorts, "I will not give my Jhansi to anybody". It was not a big speech to be acclaimed. But this single sentence spread like wild fire in the whole kingdom and her subjects took to arms to fight against the British on her

behalf. They laid down their lives fighting on the side of Maharani Laxmibai.

We know that in the Sangha Shiksha Varga held in the year 1940, Parama Poojaniya Dr. Hedgewar said, "I could not serve you in this camp, for which I am sorry". He was ill at that time. It was not a big speech, for it lasted only five or six minutes. His tapasya, his life long devotion and in the face of his ill health, his feeling that he was not able to serve the campmates, inspired hundreds of swayamsevaks to become full time workers. Does any entertaining speech has the capacity to take out so many full time workers? Therefore we have to think what is the source from which inspiration comes and what is the source of inherent strength. We should remember that the source of strength is never an entertaining speech. It is not that the words themselves count, but it is the feeling behind those words that it matters.

In this respect a very good example comes in the life of Khalif Omar. After the death of Prophet Mohammad, Abu Bakr was the first Khalif and Omar was the Khalif thereafter. Khalif Omar as the most righteous person has a distinguished place amongst the Khalifs. An old woman had a grandson, who had a great liking for sweets. But that child's health did not permit the eating of sweets. The Hakeem had told the old woman that his medicine will not have any effect so long as the child does not give up the sweets. So the old woman brought her grandson to the Khalif, Omar.

She told Khalif Omar that the child is eating the sweets against the advice of the Hakeem and therefore he should chastise the child to give up the sweets. She told Khalif Omar that the child would respect his words. Khalif Omar asked the old woman to come after fifteen days. She came after fifteen days and Khalif Omar told the child that it should not eat the sweets as it will impair its health. The child readily agreed. But the old woman was a bit confused. She asked Khalif Omar that if he had only to tell that much, why did he take fifteen days for that which he could have said during the first visit itself. Then Khalif Omar replied that he was also fond of sweets. Therefore before advising the child to give up sweets he wanted to overcome the craving himself and give up sweets. If he had instructed the child to give up the sweets without he himself giving it up, then his words would not have had the desired effect. After giving up the sweets himself, he felt that he had the moral right to advise the child to give up the sweets. Therefore it is important that before advising others, we ourselves should try to bring it in practice in our own life. It is important how we lead our life? How we behave? How is our life style? These things have a great bearing, whereby we gain the moral authority. Some people think that we get the moral authority since we are wedded to the ideals. We are well versed with the ideals of Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh. When we deliver forceful speeches on the ideals of the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, we are applauded by the audience. Therefore we are

idealists. But it is not so. One does not become an idealist by merely either knowing the ideals or propounding them. In the light of those ideals how we have formulated our lives, have we brought those ideals into practice in our own lives decides whether we are idealists or not.

This brings to my mind an incident that took place during the emergency. I will not mention the name of the person. He is my friend. The occasion was when we were underground during the emergency. Escaping from the police, while remaining underground, we had to suffer some inconveniences. One day we met in the morning and when we were taking tea in the afternoon by about 4 O'clock my friend said "Thengadiji, I do not like the type of struggle you want to wage". I asked him, why? He said "this is a dog's life running from place to place, sometimes without food, sometimes without taking a bath, many a time without a proper place to sleep. Instead I will stay at my own place. Let the police come and pick me up and put me behind the bars. At least in the jail, life will be regular as against the dog's life we are leading". I could not tolerate his words. I reminded him "have you forgotten the days when we used to go about on bicycles taken on hire, without having money in our pocket to pay the bicycle hire. We used to return the bicycles through others because we did not have the money to pay the bicycle shop owner towards hire. Thereafter we used to avoid that street itself so that the

bicycle shop owner may not get hold of us to recover the hire charges. This was our condition only some years back. Have we become so sensitive now that you consider this a dog's life?" Then I remembered why this change had come about in my friend's outlook. When a person develops a liking for the comforts of life, he develops an easy going outlook. In such circumstances when testing times come, his idealism will not keep company with him and he will tend to compromise with the circumstances. This is not only my experience but also the experience of the world history.

Shri A K Gopalan was one of the distinguished leaders of the communist movement in India. He has written his autobiography. In it he is very candid. In his autobiography, he has stated that there was a big debate among the communists whether they should accept the parliamentary form of democracy or not? They decided that they should accept the parliamentary form of democracy. It was not because that they hoped that through the parliament they can bring about a revolution in this country. The people have to be prepared for the revolution. For this purpose several platforms are required. One platform is that, of trade union organisations, another is that of Kisan Sabha, the third one is the Students Federation. In addition to these three, parliament will be another platform. "We will utilise the parliament as a forum to rouse the people", with this intention the communists got elected to the parliament. Shri Gopalan has said

that prior to getting elected to the parliament, they were working amongst the beedi workers in Kerala and they were living in the localities inhabited by the beedi workers. They were eating in the utensils of the poor beedi workers and they were sleeping in their thatched mud huts. This was their background. But once they got elected to Parliament and went to Delhi, they were enamoured by the beautiful streets and buildings of Delhi. They started living in the flats of North Avenue and South Avenue allotted to them by the government. They were impressed by the airconditioned halls of the parliament. They started using electric gadgets. They started partaking in the dinners hosted by the ministers, the Prime Minister and the President. They developed a liking to these things. Slowly they started getting a feeling whether there will be a revolution at all in this country? Even if there is a revolution what will be its aftermath? who knows? Therefore it is better to continue to live in Delhi itself, they felt. If they were to return to Kerala, they will have to go back to the dirty localities of the beedi workers, eat in their broken utensils and sleep in mud huts. So, in order to avoid returning to those surroundings, they started hunting reasons to continue their stay in Delhi. They started telling that to be a member of the parliament it is not an easy thing. They had great responsibilities being members of parliament. They had to study a lot to participate in the debates. Hence they had no time to return to their constituencies and look after the work amongst the beedi workers. This way they avoided their return to

their earlier field of work. This led to the link between the workers and the leaders being cut. Gradually the leaders lost their contacts with the workers. The followers were isolated from the leaders. Leaders continued to live in Delhi when the followers remained in the villages, This led to their losing control of the trade unions. But the greatest loss was the change which their attitude underwent, A stage was reached when if someone were to tell them to go back and work amongst the very same beedi workers, they were not inclined to agree.

It can be said that this is a repetition of what had happened to Machhindranath. He was the guru of the yogis. Machhindranath was the preceptor of the yoga philosophy. As was the custom, once begging for alms, Machhindranath reached a kingdom which was ruled by a Queen. He went to the palace to beg for alms. The queen was infatuated by his physical appearance. The queen invited him to stay in her palace. Machhindranath declined stating that he is a yogi and he should not live in a single place, leave alone a palace. The queen teased him whether he is afraid that he may fall a prey to the temptations if he were to live in the palace. Machhindranath was pricked by the teasing. He said "how can I be tempted when I am a confirmed yogi". The queen further taunted him, if he was so confident about his prowess, why is he hesitating to live in the palace. The taunt enticed Machhindranath to agree to live in the palace. What transpired after living in the palace is not known. Gradually

Machhindranath stopped his visits outside the palace. The queen prevented the outsiders from meeting him in the palace. Eventually the disciples had a problem to reach their guru. The absence of Machhindranath being felt, Goraknath started a vigorous search, to find his whereabouts. In the course of the search, Goraknath reached the place wherein Machhindranath was staying in the queen's palace. He asked the local inhabitants whether they had come across the great yogi, Machhindranath. The reply given by the local inhabitants put Goraknath to shame. The people contemptuously said "Oh, you refer to that mendicant, he is in the queen's palace enjoying the pleasures of life. How can he be a yogiraj?". This reply hurt Goraknath. Goraknath said that he will go to the palace to meet Machhindranath so that he can have a talk with him. The local inhabitants told him that he will not be permitted to meet Machhindranath in the palace. They also told him that Machhindranath will not meet him. Goraknath replied that he can go and beg for alms from the palace and nobody can prevent him from doing that. So, Goraknath disguised himself as a beggar and went to the palace to beg for alms. A surprise awaited him there. Machhindranath was sitting on a swing in the palace garden by the side of the queen. This scene was unexpected for Goraknath. Infuriated, Goraknath started beating the drum. The sound emanating from the drum did not appear unusual for the queen, but Machhindranath heard a message of signal in the sound which emanated

from the drum. Machhindranath felt that the sound emanating from the drum was signalling him that Gorakhnath is on the look out for him, and it is time that Machhindranath left the palace. It is said that Machhindranath took the message to his heart and left the palace the same day and joined his disciples. The moral of this story is that to claim that we are seasoned people and we cannot fall a prey to the temptations of life is false. A situation may develop when the disciples will have to drag the leader from the morass around him. Our history is replete with such instances. Therefore, the pertinent question is what is meant by dedication to the ideals? If easy going nature and a liking for the comforts of life take an upper hand, then dedication to the ideals will be relegated to the background. One can remain dedicated to the ideals so long as he is prepared to suffer and struggle for those ideals. One who is sincerely moved by the plight of others alone can remain dedicated to the ideals. The whole equation changes when the dedication to the ideals takes a back seat and the craving for comforts of life takes an upper hand. The change does not come all of a sudden. We have observed several leftists in the trade union field. I have worked with the INTUC people, I have worked in the Communist-led trade unions, I have worked along with the Socialists. I have been a keen observer of the people and their actions. Let us take an ordinary thing like the negotiations to be held with the management on the demands of the workers. The management

invites the leaders for negotiations at the residence of the top boss. I said that the negotiations should be held in the office and not at the residence. My associates in those camps told me "after all what does it matter if the negotiations are held at the office or the residence? We are talking to the same person". I said it makes lot of difference. Then the message came from the management that while coming for negotiations the leaders alone should come without bringing with them the workers of the factory. I said this is an issue involving the service conditions of those workers and their representatives will be accompanying us. In reality it is a trick of the management to sow a seed of suspicion in the minds of the workers regarding the leadership.

One whose dedication to the ideals is weakened, feels elated when the management sits across the table and negotiates with him on equal terms. Such a person thinks that he has risen in eminence and thereby he becomes arrogant in his dealings with his other colleagues. The fact that the management is negotiating only with him gives him a feeling that the management does not care for other unions. He forgets that the management is exclusively negotiating with him for the reason that he has sold himself. Such management is also bound to resist the recognition of a B.M.S. Union. It is because that the management is aware of the fact that the B.M.S. union cannot be purchased.

How does the degeneration sets in, in a leader? Initially one feels "what does it matter if the nego-

tiations are held either at the residence or the office of the management". The second stage is what is wrong in having a cup of tea along with the management. Thereafter, "what is wrong in accepting an invitation to dinner". This way, step by step, the degeneration aggravates, and the example of Machindranath takes place. Then the colleagues will have to remind the leader what Gorakhnath had said. Occasion may also arise when the leader may say "I am happy here, do not take me out of this morass". So the deterioration is complete.

There is one union of the Central Government Employees, I do not want to take its name. Till the year 1958, this union's capacity for struggle was on the rise. In the year 1960 it reached its pinnacle. In that year Guljarilal Nanda brought in the Joint Consultative Machinery (J.C.M.). At that time the B.M.S. did not had the work amongst the Central Government employees. Yet, I had personally known some of the leaders of this union. I advised them not to take part in the Joint Consultative Machinery. They asked me why they should not? I told them that they will not get anything through the J.C.M. The sole purpose for which the J.C.M. was constituted was to enhance the prestige of the Prime Minister in the foreign countries and to give an impression that the Government does everything in consultation with its workers.

"You will not be able to achieve any of your national demands through the J.C.M." I told them. But they tried to convince me that the J.C.M. is on

the lines of Whitley Councils in the Great Britain. In the Whitley Council at every stage administration and the workers' representatives come together and discuss the problems. If no agreement is reached on any issue in such discussions, the issue will be referred to arbitration. The decision of the arbitration will be final and binding on both the parties. It is obligatory on the part of the Government to implement the Arbitration Award forthwith under the provisions of the Whitley Council. But in India under the JCM, the government can keep any decision in cold storage without fearing for any consequences. In spite of this, the Central Government Employees' Union to which I referred earlier, developed an itching for it. They thought that their representative character will be felt once the JCM is constituted. What are the advantages of securing a position in the JCM? Since the leader is occupying a seat in the JCM his position vis a vis the others within the union will go up. They will feel that the government has accorded recognition to him. This position will help him to personally build up a following within the union. A leader who thinks in these terms will become crafty, once he occupies the recognised position. He develops the attitude that thereafter if he increases the membership of his union he will be unnecessarily inviting trouble. Therefore, he will not increase the organisational strength. He will not encourage newcomers in the union. He starts feeling that the new activists will become rivals to him and his leadership will be at stake. When there is recogni-

tion why invite risk to his leadership? Since the recognition is there, his hold over the union should remain for ever. The leadership of the Central Government Employees' Union, to which I referred earlier, underwent the same metamorphosis. Firstly the leadership did not allow any youthful activists to come forward. As and when their meetings with the top administrators and the ministers increased, their fighting capacity was eroded. After all, with the blessings of the ministers so many things could be achieved. Children have to be sent to Moscow for higher education, for which a letter from the minister will help. If one were to fight on behalf of the workers, then neither the children of the leader can aspire for higher education outside India nor the leader himself can prosper. In the circumstances the leader has to be very discerning. On account of recognition being accorded, the leader is entitled to facilities such as free railway pass, better accommodation etc. Thereafter when he goes for the meetings of the Committee, the Government will bear the airfare if he were to travel by air. He can take some others also along with him, whereby he can create an impression amongst his followers that he has become very influential. Thereby his status in their eyes goes up. In case the leader is henpecked at home, it will provide an opportunity to boss over others, elsewhere. After reaching the place of the meeting, the Government bears the expenses of stay at five star hotels and more money for out of pocket expenses is paid than what is spent. As a result the meeting of the Committee becomes a profitable pro-

position. Why hand over the extra gain to the organisation? After all he has exerted himself, such being the case why should the extra gain go to the organisation? The crafty leader starts thinking in these terms. This process is accelerated because there is a well planned conspiracy hatched out by the Governments and managements in every country to corrupt the leaders of the trade unions. This applies not only to India but also to every other country. They try to reduce the militancy of the leader by making him love the comforts of life and develop the line of least resistance.

As air travel, five star comforts and the additional gains from the meetings increase, the leadership gives up the path of struggle. Thereby that union which was a militant one and struggle oriented in the year 1958 and was considered to be one of the very militant unions amongst the Central Government employees lost its character, even though the same leadership continued in the union. At the call of the National Campaign Committee, the industrial workers in India declared their intention to go on a countrywide strike on 19th January, 1982. The Central Government employees were also in a mood to participate in this strike on a sympathetic basis. This union of the Central Government employees withdrew from the struggle and the union leadership stabbed in the back the trade union struggle of the Indian workers, whereby this treachery led to the decrease of the influence of the workers. This treachery was not in the tradition

of the leadership of the Central Government employees. It was as a consequence of the degeneration set in amongst the leaders wedded to the comforts of life. The process was imperceptible. The fall was not felt immediately, as it was not all of a sudden.

I hope that you know simple geometry. In geometry you come across angles. Let us take two angles one at 39 degrees and the other one at 40 degrees. At the commencement of the angle, the difference between the two is only one degree and hence very negligible. But if you draw straight lines from these two angles the difference between the two lines goes on increasing. Similarly when the degeneration sets in it is on very small things. For instance the leader travels by second class and claims the first class fare. After all, the difference is not much but just Rs. 40/-. It does not stop there. As the area between the angle at 39 degrees and another at 40 degrees goes on widening, similarly the tendency also increases. Later on it may be found that the leader has misappropriated the union's funds. Thereafter it may be found that while negotiating the settlement with the management, he has joined hands and taken money from management. Such instances come to light only later. A person who slips a little in the beginning thinking that it does not matter, will not be able to foresee where it will ultimately lead him. One has to be careful at the first step itself so that he may restrain from slipping. His colleagues also should

see that he does not slip. We see in the political parties, trade union organisations and social institutions persons who were once known to be men of integrity having lost their integrity by and by. There are several reasons for it. One reason is that in many organisations there is a dearth of people who can exert their moral authority. It is the good fortune of the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh that it has the moral control which we find lacking in other organisations. There is also another reason. We are idealists. While stating about ourselves, we had said that we do not want to be merely another central trade union organisation just like the other existing organisations. We had said that B. M. S. would be an organisation only of its type. It is true that we want to grow organisationally, we want to increase the membership of our unions. We are recognised as a central trade union organisation by the Government. We want that in various industries our affiliated unions should be recognised. Yet we do not give as much importance to recognition by the management or the Government as is the case with other organisations. Our emphasis is on the recognition by the workers themselves and the recognition accorded by our conscience to our work. For some practical reasons we welcome the recognition by the Government. Even after verification of membership some of our affiliated industrywise federations have not been granted recognition. It is not a matter of great concern. As in other trade unions, our activists do not derive pride in their union being recognised.

They know that there is not much substance in the recognition. Government will recognise you because of your strength. We have said that in accordance with the Indian tradition we want to rouse the power of the people. We want to rouse the power of the workers and thereby build up the strength of the workers to such an extent that the government will be able to function only if the worker permits. If the worker decides to withdraw the recognition given by him to the government, then it should not be possible for the government to function even for a single day. If the BMS comes to the conclusion that the government is not the Indian government in as much as it is not governed by the interests of the people and because of this if the worker decides to withdraw the recognition given by him to the government, then it should not be possible for the government to function even for a day. We will build up such strength wherein we have to decide whether the government has our recognition or not?

In the wake of recognition, sometimes wrong type of people assume the leadership, who collude with the management, thereby causing losses to the workers. Therefore, we must have the capacity to correct such people. What is our goal? When a discussion arose in this respect in the year 1955, we said that we do not want to be just another central trade union organisation just like the other trade union organisations existing at that time. It is our endeavour that, about us it should be said that it is a

central trade union organisation only of its type. We will display a different quality. We will introduce some new ideas. With the expectation to build up the BMS as a central trade union organisation only of its type, we entered the trade union field. In view of this, when we think about the strength, we do not go by the standards of numerical strength and recognition. We do not count our strength on how many lakhs of membership we have? We require the strength of a wrestler. The intrinsic strength does not evolve on the basis of the numerical strength. The intrinsic strength is gained through the dedication to the ideals. Where the activist is a dedicated idealist, five persons can have the strength of five thousand. Where the activist has degenerated and where he is an individualist, arrogant, comfort loving and pleasure minded person, even if there is a membership of five lakhs it amounts to nothing. The basis of the strength of a union is the dedication of an activist to the ideals. We came into this field on account of dedication to the ideals. Our affiliated industrywise federations which are not recognised as at present are bound to be recognised. Therefore, some amongst us may think that they can take advantage of the recognised status and fool others to lead a life of comforts. Sometimes it may happen in the beginning. Some clever people can manage to fool us initially. It is bound to happen in some unions. An activist may project himself stating that he should be sent as a representative and afterwards the degeneration may set in him. But he will not be allowed to continue there-

after, since this is Bharathiya Mazdoor Sangh. With full responsibility, we can state that we are the only organisation of our type. You cannot find the atmosphere of Bharathiya Mazdoor Sangh in any other central trade union organisation. Therefore, shortcomings which you will find in other central trade union organisations you cannot expect to find in the BMS. Efforts have been made from the inception of the BMS to keep out such tendencies. One can fool others with his craftiness for one term. Thereafter, he is bound to get exposed. In other organisations, even after such exposure, crafty persons are able to continue in their positions because other organisations are incapable of eliminating such crafty individuals and replace them with honest people. This is because other organisations work on the basis of the constitution whereas the BMS works on the basis of family concept. Right from its inception, on 23rd July, 1955, we have stressed that constitution shall not be the basis of our working. Our basis shall be the family atmosphere. Within a family one cannot fool the others for a long time, but in an institution based upon a constitution it is possible. Because of the family atmosphere in the BMS there is full rapport between the central leadership and the rank and file of the membership. Unlike the other organisations we do not have an heirarchy. We never consider an office bearer as a very important person. We do not think that as a President or a General Secretary, a person is vested with large powers. For the purpose of arrangement, we have office

bearers, but we think that all are equals. All of them belong to one family and therefore all are equal. Hence the atmosphere in the various units of the BMS is that of a family. The concern which the central leadership of the BMS has, about the office bearers of the various industrial federations, the affiliated unions, about the activists in them, about the nature of such activists, about the shortcomings and qualities of such activists, their strength and weaknesses, about the differences and points of agreement amongst the activists, cannot be found in any other central trade union organisation. I can say with full responsibility that so much knowledge, the central trade union leadership of BMS keeps about its activists, that no other central trade union organisation can keep. In view of this, whenever tendencies leading to degeneration have been noticed, the BMS has taken decisive steps. We should remember that the BMS does not constitute of only saints and sages. When the political field in India is full of crafty persons, We can expect some people to display their cleverness in the BMS also. What has been the fate of such crafty people in the past, in the BMS you all know. While displaying their cleverness, they forgot the fact that their acts are under the surveillance of the central leadership. It was unexpected for them. In other organisations when a person acts craftily, in furtherance of his personal gains, the central leadership will not have the capacity to discipline him. The rank and file also cannot discipline him for the reasons the powers

are concentrated in him. In the past, some crafty people had also joined us. In view of the rapport between the central leadership of the BMS above and the rank and file of the membership below, these crafty people in between were totally exposed and eliminated. This can happen only in the BMS. Therefore, we have stressed that our strength is the dedication towards the ideals of our activists. Hence, where an activist tends to get clever, the need arises for keeping a watch on him and convey his weaknesses from the bottom to the top. You, who are assembled here, I do not consider merely as delegates. You are the heart of the body which consists of 21 lakhs membership of the BMS. It is your responsibility to see that nowhere such degeneration creeps in. I am telling you all this because I consider you as leaders, not in the derogatory political sense, but in the real sense. It is your responsibility as leaders and important activists to see that the organisation functions properly and responsibly. We have the quality, we have the dedication to the ideals. We are very particular about these aspects. We did not enter the trade union field for gaining privileges and facilities for ourselves. We are not for travelling in second class and claim the first class fare for the purpose of pocketing the difference. As BMS activists we are here to sacrifice. To become an activist of the BMS is to extend an invitation to trouble, to place our lives in danger. Knowing these risks we have volunteered ourselves to become activists of the BMS. It is not your aspiration to travel by air for

which you are seeking recognition. Spending from your pocket and depriving your dependents of the essentials, you have volunteered yourselves to work for the BMS. I personally know at least 75% of you who are assembled here. You are responsible for raising the banner of BMS to such heights. You have worked for BMS not with the expectations of the INTUC people that you can become a municipal corporator, a MLA or a M. P. You are dedicated idealists, that is way you have volunteered yourselves to work for the BMS. We have repeatedly told you that if you are very intelligent people then you should not come in the BMS since there is nothing to gain in the BMS. The fact that you came into the BMS knowing fully well that it is a bargain of losses, shows that you are dedicated idealists and also you are capable of correcting the individuals who go astray. In this respect I have full confidence in your capacity. There are various facets of idealism. The fact that you are dedicated idealists presupposes that you are clean handed in you dealings, and you will not care for your personal welfare. Only an idealist can work forgetting his personal welfare. Being idealists we do not look to the BMS as a mere trade union organisation, we have taken it as an instrument of serving not only the workers but also the nation at large. Therefore, so long as the union functions in the interests of the workers and the nation, we will respect such union or federation. Once we come to the conclusion that the union or federation has stopped functioning in the interests of the

workers and the nation, and it has become a den of selfish people working to further their own interests, we will not hesitate to dissolve such unions or federations. In these matters one should not hesitate to act with firmness. We generally say that we have to take all others with us, we must elicit the co-operation of all for building up the organisation. This should not mean that we should be tolerant about self-seeking individuals. Someone may say that how can we be so strict? After all we cannot afford to lose a good speaker, a good writer, a good organiser and a good negotiator. He may have some shortcomings, why not overlook them? When the cow has been yielding milk what is wrong in taking one or two kicks from it?" But such suggestions of compromise cannot be accepted in idealistic organisations. The conditions in organisations outside the BMS is such that even in the degeneration they find some excuse. But what should be our attitude?

We have before us two examples from the Mahabharatha. One example is that of Dhritharashtra. Dhritharashtra was not only blind but also seems to have lost his sense of right and wrong. His children were evil doers. Was Dhritharashtra unaware of what Dharma was? Was he not aware what is right and what is wrong? Yet, he compromised with the evil deeds of his children being overcome by his affection towards them. Because Dhritharashtra felt "my child, right or wrong", he did not correct them and it led to

his descendants being totally wiped out. When Dhritharashtra was told that Bhishma is wounded, Drona is dead, yet he says "Asha Balavathi Rajan", still there are hopes. Karna may win, he cherished the hope. What was lacking in Dhritharashtra was an ideal. He had everything else, but no ideal.

The second example is that of Sri Krishna. The people belonging to the clan of Sri Krishna got corrupted because of the power which they derived from the kingdom which they inherited. The power corrupted them so much that they became threats to the subjects. When Sri Krishna saw it, he came to the conclusion that unless he finishes the people belonging to his clan before his death, it will not be known what havoc they may cause the society. Therefore, Sri Krishna saw to it that his own clan was annihilated before his own death. This is an example of an individual rising above his affection and attachments, which is before us. This should be an example to guide an idealist. Then there is the other example of Dhritharashtra, i.e; "My child right or wrong" Amongst the two which one should an idealist prefer ?

When Bhishma was lying on his bed of arrows, a question was posed to him "you are a moral authority, a great scholar, whereas Sri Krishna is not such a great scholar, you were a moralist throughout your life whereas Sri Krishna was known for his cunningness. You were a confirmed celibate, whereas Sri Krishna had 16,000 wives (they were not wives,

but only women rehabilitated from the prisons of Jarasandha). Being personally great, Oh Bhishma, why do you consider Krishna as greater than you?"

Bhishma replied that in fact, as compared to, Sri Krishna, he was great in many respects but in one respect Sri Krishna was greater than him and this one aspect eclipsed all other qualities in him. Bhishma says that the one quality in which Sri Krishna surpasses him is that while Sri Krishna is above all temptations Bhishma has not been able to overcome the bonds of temptations till then. Because of this he considered Sri Krishna a greater person as compared to him. An idealist can rise above all types of temptations. The idealism of our activists is our real strength. The numerical strength of 21 lakh membership is not our real strength. If only there is idealism with 21 people we can create a following of 21 crores of people. As Guru Govind Singh had said that we will inculcate in each person such qualities that each person will be able to face one and a quarter lakhs of people. In the absence of idealism, just like the stars that shine during a dark night and vanish during day time, we will be nowhere. Before us, we have only one ideal, that is, the prosperity of the exploited, the prosperity of the downtrodden and the prosperity of the poor.

When in this conference we are deliberating on other issues such as increasing the membership, bringing about financial discipline, formulation of

industrial laws etc., we should also deliberate on this aspect. While we are thinking about our problems we should also think about the state of our organisation. Thinking about the organisation should commence with the first person singular, that is, 'I'. How can 'I' be more dedicated to the ideals of BMS and then as we had said in July, 1955, at the very inception of BMS, that we shall not be one amongst several trade union organisations, but will be only one of its type. In this way, we will be able to show to the whole country as to how an organisation should function, who should constitute an organisation, what type of atmosphere should persist in an organisation. We will build up such an organisation which should be an ideal in all these respects to all other organisations working in different fields, whereby others should look towards the Bharathiya Mazdoor Sangh and derive inspiration.



English rendering of the speech delivered in Hindi
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