Vinoba Bhave – the first individual satyagrahi and Bhoodan

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Why in news: 15 November is the death anniversary of Acharya Vinoba Bhave (1895–1982), whom Gandhiji chose as the first individual satyagrahi in 1940 and who began the Bhoodan (land-gift) movement in 1951 to win land for the landless without violence.

Key points

- Life: born on 11 September 1895 at Gagode in Kolaba district (now Raigad), Maharashtra, he joined Gandhiji in 1916 and later made the Paunar ashram near Wardha his base. He died there on 15 November 1982 after voluntarily giving up food and medicine.
- Individual Satyagraha (1940): to protest against India being dragged into the Second World War without the consent of its people, Gandhiji launched a limited, individual satyagraha. Vinoba was the first satyagrahi – he began with a speech at Paunar on 17 October 1940 and was jailed; Jawaharlal Nehru was the second.
- Bhoodan (1951): on 18 April 1951, at Pochampalli village in Nalgonda district (now in Telangana), then torn by peasant unrest, landowner V. Ramachandra Reddy offered about 100 acres for landless Dalit families. Vinoba then walked across India for nearly 13 years asking for land; the idea grew into Gramdan – a whole village holding its land in common.
- Ideas and works: Sarvodaya (the welfare of all), the slogan 'Jai Jagat' (victory to the world, coined in 1957), and 'Talks on the Gita' – his Marathi Gita discourses given in Dhule jail in 1932. He founded the Brahma Vidya Mandir, an ashram run by women, at Paunar.
- Honours and Tamil Nadu link: the first Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership (1958) and the Bharat Ratna, awarded posthumously in 1983. During the Quit India period (1942) he was held in Vellore jail, where he studied the four South Indian languages, including Tamil; his Bhoodan padayatra entered Tamil Nadu in 1956.

In the exam: TNPSC – Individual Satyagraha 1940 (first satyagrahi Vinoba Bhave, second Jawaharlal Nehru), Bhoodan 1951 at Pochampalli, Gramdan and Sarvodaya, Magsaysay (1958) and Bharat Ratna (1983); Gandhian era personalities. UPSC Prelims – modern history and post-independence land reform movements; Mains GS-I (post-independence consolidation, land reforms) and GS-IV (Gandhian ethics – trusteeship, non-violence, voluntary giving).

Questions

1. The Bhoodan movement of Vinoba Bhave began in April 1951 at

A. Pochampalli (now in Telangana)

B. Paunar (Maharashtra)

C. Sevagram (Maharashtra)

D. Bardoli (Gujarat)

2. In the Individual Satyagraha of 1940, Vinoba Bhave was the first satyagrahi. Who was the second?

A. C. Rajagopalachari

B. Jawaharlal Nehru

C. Vallabhbhai Patel

D. Subhas Chandra Bose

Answers with explanations

1. **A) Pochampalli (now in Telangana)** – On 18 April 1951 at Pochampalli, Nalgonda district (now in Telangana), landowner V. Ramachandra Reddy offered about 100 acres for landless families – the first Bhoodan gift. Paunar near Wardha was Vinoba's ashram; Sevagram was Gandhiji's ashram; Bardoli is linked with the 1928 satyagraha led by Vallabhbhai Patel.

2. **B) Jawaharlal Nehru** – Gandhiji chose Vinoba Bhave as the first individual satyagrahi (17 October 1940, Paunar) and Jawaharlal Nehru as the second. The individual satyagraha protested against India being made a party to the Second World War without its consent, while avoiding a mass movement that could embarrass Britain in the war.

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