

CEMENT, MORTAR AND BRICKS

Time and again, we are told in the newspapers and in the T.V. news-bulletins announcements like this: But, it's worth inquiring: “Day by day, our nation, is prospering and progressing”

Have we ever asked ourselves these questions?

How it's done?

At whose cost is done?

For whose benefit is done?

Introduction:

- ✓ *In India and in other developing countries we can see extraordinary advancement in science, technology, industry, communications and the like.*
- ✓ *Yet, it's regrettable that the primary beneficiaries of all these advances, in most cases, are only an influential minority - the higher ups, the wealthy and the most educated*
- ✓ *The saddest thing of it all is that the largest bulk of the population, namely, the dispossessed, the poor, the illiterate - precisely those who numerically constitute the larger part of the 'nation' - are deprived of the benefits of these advances.*
- ✓ *We would like to challenge the higher-ups, the influential to clarify and define what they mean by 'our nation, our people, and our motherland' when they boast of the benefits accruing to the nation from so many technical and scientific advances.*
- ✓ *Do they mean 'We, the elite of the nation, the rich and influential people of the nation' rather than the masses, the dispossess crowds of our nation?*

STORY

The Cabinet, or The Assembly, The Council of Ministers, or 'call it as you like' decides. **'The nation requires more power and irrigation. We need a huge dam'.**

Quickly, the engineers draw the plans, and blue prints. Then, the technicians call in for big wealthy and powerful contractors and tell them: 'To build this mammoth dam we need 30,000 workers'.

Soon the nation supplies these 30,000 workers – men and women -. Then, those 30,000 people – nay, 30,000 destitute brothers and sisters of our motherland - crashed by hard labor and machine built the dam,

I ask: "For whom that was dam built? Who will benefit from the new power supply and irrigation projects?"

They say: 'The nation' 'The people'

And, I question anew:

'What is the nation? Who is the nation?' Who are the people?

Again, our high-ups decide and say: **‘Our nation needs highways and express ways. We have to compete with the developed nations of the world’.**

Again, the engineers draw the plans for the highways and express ways
The contractors say: ‘To build these ultra modern roads, we need 50,000 workers.’
Promptly, the nation supplies the raw material. **Soon those 50,000 men and women, nay 50,000 watched people of our nation are bull-dozed, and the high-ways are built.**

But, I ask again:” “For whom those express ways and high ways were built? Who will benefit from them?’ Who will use them?

They reply: ‘The nation’.’Our people’

But I question again **‘what is the nation? Who are our people?’**

This time, the Government says: **‘We have to build better harbors, ports and jetties. Our nation needs them!’**

The engineers and the contractors set to work. **This times the nation needs 1, 00,000 men and women to erect those mighty structures.**

Again the motherland supplies those 1,00,000 destitute men and women - in fact, they are the true cement, mortar, stones and bricks thrown into the sea to reclaim the land on which the harbors, ports and jetties will be built.

I ask again: For whom those harbors, ports and jetties have been built? Who will benefit from them?’ Who will use them?

They reply: ‘Our nation, of course!’ ‘Our people’

And I ask again:

‘What is the nation?’ Who are or people?’

Next time, will be newer and larger airports, then a 1000 mile pipe lines, later on, atomic plants. The nation needs them! Time and again, the motherland generously supplies the raw materials.

Then, the politicians boast:

‘Dear countrymen, our nation, our motherland can pride itself of possessing some of the finest dams, highways, harbors, jetties, and atomic plants in the world!’

But, again and again, I keep asking the self same question:

‘For whose benefit have we built them? Who will enjoy them?’ Who will use them?

For ever, they keep mouthing the same ‘Of course, for our nation. our people!

For our motherland’

Think my Friends:

1. **Who are our people?’**
2. **What is our nation?’**

3. **Who benefits from the hard labour of the poor**
4. **Whose motherland our country is?**

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. What does constitute a nation? The territory? Or something else? What's this?
2. What is the motherland? Just a minority of the citizens or all of them? Why?
3. In the developing nations of the world, who are those actually building the country in sweat and blood?
4. Whose interests do the planners and builders of the nation most of the times have in view?
5. Could a small learned and rich minority, all by themselves, build the nation? Why?
6. Can a small influential minority boast about 'our motherland, our nation' becoming rich, advanced and prosperous when the majority of the 'nation' lives below the poverty line?
7. What sort of motherland would be the one that condemns most of its children to perpetual poverty and sort of bonded slavery?
8. In all developing countries of the world, you will find in the market more and more Hi-Tech and luxury items. But for whom are they meant?
9. More and more services offered today, but only and fewer people can afford them. Why only few?
10. Whilst there are more goods and specialized services, the numbers of those living under the poverty line is steadily increasing. Why?
11. Explain why the title of this story – cement, mortar and bricks - stands for the poor and illiterate people of the world nations.
12. Can you suggest some remedies to set right this unjust world situation? Which?

IDEAS AND POINTS FOR REFLECTION:

- In our socio-politico-economical set-ups the rich become richer and the poor, poorer. The gap between the HAVES and the HAVE-NOTS is widening.
- It is the poor who actually build the country with the sweat of their brow, yet they are the least benefited. They are being used by an elite of the educated, the wealthy, and the influential minority.
- The educated and influential minority of the country should direct the resources of the land to satisfy the simple and basic needs of the nation – its people – not to produce sophisticated, expensive and luxurious items to satisfy their whims.
- What the crowds, what the people of nation, what the motherland needs is food, simple clothing, shelter, plain medicines, ordinary means of communication not Hi-Tech items, supersonic planes, electronic gadgets, super fast expressways and the like.