

For M.A;Semester-2
Gandhian Philosophy(CC-07)
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GANDHI'S CONCEPT OF SARVODAYA

The concept of Sarvodaya is a significant contribution of Mahatma Gandhi to the socio-political philosophy. Sarvodaya is a Sanskrit term, which is comprised of two words : sarva (all) and udaya (uplift) – meaning 'the uplift of all', 'the welfare of all', 'universal uplift' or 'progress of all'. Gandhi's vision of Sarvodaya is an all-comprehensive vision assuring the total good of every individual: religious, moral, social, political, and economic. He used the word Sarvodaya to describe the principles that he felt should guide us in our efforts to build ourselves, our families, our communities and nations. He had arrived at these principles of a Sarvodaya society on the basis of his studies, his observations and his experiments with truth and non-violence. In the world threatened by poverty, unemployment, racial discrimination, exploitation, ecological destruction, war, and dehumanization, it was Gandhi's ardent desire to establish a new just society free from all social evils and which would ensure the good of all. He proposes Sarvodaya to achieve the integral development of every individual. It is an ideal to be translated into action in order to build up a new world society.

Gandhiji borrowed this concept from John Ruskin's 'Unto This Last'. Ruskin had borrowed it from the Bible. The proper rendering of Unto This Last would be Antyodaya (uplift of the last) rather than Sarvodaya. Sarvodaya seeks the happiness of each and all. Hence it is superior to the utilitarian concept of 'greatest happiness of the greatest number'. Dada Dharmadhikari highlighted the

distinction between Sarvodaya and western concept which speaks of three stages in the evolution of humanist thought; first came Darwin with his advocacy of the principle of the survival of the fittest; next came Huxley with the doctrine 'live and let live' and today, 'Sarvodaya' going one step further asserts 'Live in order to help others live'.

Gandhi summed up the teachings of Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, which he called Sarvodaya, in the following three fundamental principles:

- (a) That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
- (b) That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.
- (c) That a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the craftsman is life worth living.

Through Sarvodaya, Gandhi strives for the establishment of a new, moral, just, non-violent, non-exploitative, non-materialist, non-imperialist, non-racist, non-consumerist, egalitarian, liberated, humane and de-centralised socio-politico-economic order which aims at the integrate welfare of the whole person everywhere. To achieve the welfare of all, the benefits of the nations' progress and prosperity must reach down unto the least and the lowest of the society. The natural and available resources of the world are to be for the total well-being of all human beings for their proper fulfilment as human persons. Sarvodaya aims at the realisation of global welfare and, consequently, a universal brotherhood and friendship in the place of a corrupt and unjust world where only a few enjoy the fruits of the world. The goal of Sarvodaya also includes ultimately the self-realization of every individual. Total self-realization, according to Gandhi, is the god-realization. It is to be achieved through the inner conversion of the individual.

The main features of Sarvodaya are trusteeship, economic equality and networking. The theory of trusteeship, aims at the elimination of exploitation in every shape or form and the establishment of a classless society which offers no privileges by the birth or wealth or talent; promotes mutual cooperation and

above all endeavours to secure the welfare of all without any distinction of race, religion, sex, political affiliation.

According to Gandhi economic equality is the master key to non-violent transformationary independence. Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour.

As far as, Sarvodaya Network is concerned, during his lifetime, Gandhi never allowed Sarvodaya organisations to be formally instituted. His thinking was that once you served people, as 'sevakas,' within the Sarvodaya philosophy there was no need for institutionalization.

The main tenets of the Sarvodaya philosophy as propounded by Gandhiji and subsequently explained by the pioneers of this movement are as follows:

- There is no centralized authority, and there is political and economic atmosphere in the villages.
- Politics will not be the instrument of power but an agency of service and *Rajnity* will yield place to *Loknity*.
- All people will be imbued with the spirit of love, fraternity, truth, non-violence and self-sacrifices. Society will function on the basis on the non-violence.
- There will be no party system and majority rule and society will be free from the evil of the tyranny of the majority.
- The sarvodaya society is socialist in the true sense of the term. All calling will be the same moral, social and economical values. The individual personality has the fullest scope for development.
- The sarvodaya society is based on equality and liberty. There is no room in it for unwholesome some competition, exploitation and class-hatred.
- Sarvodaya stands for the progress of the all. All individual should do individual labour and follow the ideal of non possession. Then it will be possible to realize the goal of: from each according to his work and to each according to his needs.

- There will be no private property, the instrument of exploitation and the source of social distinctions and hatred. Similarly, the profit motive will disappear, rent and interest will go.
- The Sarvodaya Movement is based on Truth, Non-violence and Self-denial.
- The Sarvodaya Movement makes a sincere and bold attempt to create the necessary atmosphere to bring together such individuals with an unwavering faith in the Welfare of All
- The gain to the individual would be small. The development of each quality depends upon every other. If all the qualities are improved a little, then the individual would gain more.

Sarvodaya movement entails economic, political, philosophical and ethical implications. Gandhiji's concept of Sarvodaya aims at welfare of all. It is founded on the philosophy of limited wants. According to him, "Civilization in the real sense of the term consists not in the multiplication but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment and increases capacity for service." Our economy should be based on 'simple living, high thinking'.

Philosophically and ethically, Sarvodaya aims at the spiritualisation of politics. It seeks to replace party strifes, jealousies and competition by the sacred law of cooperative mutuality and dominant altruism. According to the concept of Sarvodaya, man is essentially good. Human character can improve either by Tapasya (self effort) or by appeals made to him by others through such non-violent techniques as Satyagraha, non-cooperation and fasting.

In political arena, Sarvodaya attaches importance to 'lokniti'. The concept of lokniti signifies selfless service to the people, discipline, faith in God and performance of duties with benign motive. Sarvodaya condemns the majority rule, elections, political parties and centralisation of power. Gandhiji wanted a 'Stateless democracy' in which even weakest have the same opportunity as the strongest. The ideal democracy will be a federation of Satyagrahi village communities based on non-violence.

21st century globalized world is beset with many problems including those caused by coronavirus pandemic. All problems cannot be solved alone by scientific discoveries and technological innovations.

After the death of Gandhiji, Acharya Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan have highlighted the essentials of Sarvodaya in their own light. Vinoba Bhave developed Gandhiji's concept of Sarvodaya keeping in view changing socio-economic circumstances. The movement of Bhoodan and Gramdan and his unique method of spreading his message of compassion through padayatra have attracted worldwide attention. J. P. Narayan holds the view that Sarvodaya stands for the sublime goals of freedom, equality, brotherhood and peace. Realization of a rich, total and integrated life is the basic objective of Sarvodaya philosophy.

Anima Bose has referred to the movement's philosophy as "a fuller and richer concept of people's democracy than any we have yet known." Sarvodaya workers associated with Vinoba, J. P. Narayan, undertook various projects aimed at encouraging popular self-organisation during the 1950s and 1960s, including Bhoodan and Gramdan movements. Many groups descended from these networks continue to function locally in India today.

Serious criticisms have been levelled against the concept of Sarvodaya. They include-

- Sarvodaya philosophy has been branded as 'Utopia'.
- Sarvodaya movement views the state as an instrument of coercion. But this is only half-truth. The state especially a democratic state can also serve as an instrument to promote material well-being of the people.
- Gandhian concept of 'simple living and high thinking' has been contested on the ground that sometimes people with simplest of food and practice of austerities nurture all types of sinister desires and activities. In some quarters, in fact, wealth is believed to be an indispensable prerequisite of culture and higher values.
- Critics hold the view that large-scale production and industrialization can raise the standard of living of the people and release human energy for more creative pursuits. Cottage industries may generate employment. At

the same time it may be a failure due to high cost of production and low quality of products.

- Proposals regarding the trusteeship system and complete decentralisation of all economic and political set up are nothing more than academic exercises.
- J. C. Johari rightly observes that the Marxists would scoff at the whole school of Sarvodaya as one belonging to the world of Owenites and Saint Simonians; the collectivists would not endorse the suggestion of a very limited government in view of man's life of minimum wants and liberals would have every reason to doubt the feasibility of an ideal society as conceived by the advocates of the sarvodaya philosophy.

So, lastly we can conclude that Sarvodaya ideals are not practicable. It will be almost impossible to establish a society strictly on the basis of great principles of Mahatma Gandhi and others. Sarvodaya doctrines are soaring and it is doubtful whether they can rest on the earth. The poor record of Panchayat Raj in India bears testimony to the backward condition in which people are. In the highly competitive world, one country can not succeed in having Gramraj. Unless all states in the world accept the Sarvodaya idea, chances of having it in a particular country like India are bleak. As well as, it is difficult to bring a change of the heart in the youth, who is given to selfishness. People donated useless land in response to the Bhoodan. So, need of the present era for youth is 'Think Globally and Act Locally'.

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