

Gandhian Concept of ‘Sarvodaya’: A Synoptic Analysis

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Abstract:

Gandhiji's Sarvodaya has its roots in the Vedantic concepts of the spiritual unity of 'existence' and the Gita which is opposed to majoritarianism. Sarvodaya is concerned with Gandhiji's social ideas and ideal of a community. In the words of Gandhiji, it is a casteless & classless society. Sarvodaya is basically formed of freedom, equity, justice and fraternity. It emphasises a stateless society. Thus, the philosophy of Sarvodaya is hostile to authoritarian & absolute. According to Gandhiji for Swaraj, Sarvodaya is necessary. Sarvodaya is a base for political co-operation. There are two techniques for stabilisation of power of the people (i) Constant propaganda & publicity and (ii) Decentralisation of power. The aim is to change the heart of the people. Sarvodaya opposes the ideas of egoism & wealth. There is no scope for class struggle in Sarvodaya. Social good, rationality and communal harmony are basic principles of Sarvodaya. Therefore, Sarvodaya accepts the universalisation of self-government. Thus, the political philosophy of Sarvodaya is a powerful intellectual attempt to build a plan of political and social reconstruction based on metaphysical idealism. Gandhi's view is strongly supported by many other persons like Vinoba Bhave, and J.P. Narayan, who was actively involved in the Sarvodaya movement.

Key Words: Sarvodaya, Swaraj, Universalism, Utilitarianism, Deontology

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I. Introduction:

Om Sarve Bhabantu Sukhinah
Sarve Santu Nir- Aamayaah I
Sarve Bhadrani Pashyantu
Maa Kaschid- Dukha – Bhaag- Bhavet I
Om Shaanthy Shaanthy Shaanthy II

Om, May All become Happy,
May All be free from illness,
May All See what is Auspicious,
May no one suffer,
Om, Peace Peace Peace!

The above hymn of Veda implies that the concept of Sarvodaya (Welfare of all) is not new as it has been taken as a source to formulate different philosophical forms or theories and Sarvodaya is one of them. Sarvodaya is a wider & all-inclusive connotation which refers to the all-round development of society. In a Generic sense, it refers to "well-being for all", "progress for all", or "universal betterment or uplift". Even though it was an old concept, it was systematically analysed by Gandhi. Gandhi derived this concept from the English social thinker John Ruskin's major work "Unto this last", and Gandhi derived three central ideals from Ruskin to develop his notion of sarvodaya:

1. That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
2. That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's in as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.
3. That life of labour, tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman are a life worth living.
4. That people are potentially good.

Gandhiji Paraphrased and translated these ideas and titled them "Sarvodaya". Sarvodaya is one of the four main goals propounded by Mahatma Gandhi in Hind Swaraj. Sarvodaya is an attempt to develop India into a prosperous and normative society, which would be defined by the dignity and respect of labour, socio-economic equality, mutual cooperation, self-sufficiency and individual liberty. It implies that Gandhiji was not only

aiming to free India but to improve its moral-based society. Even his followers managed to carry out these social and ethical activities and promoted these principles which are evidenced by Bhoodan Andolana and Gramdan movements and other voluntary land reform projects. Though they could not be able to take it to a higher level still they could effort for social improvement.

Objectives of the Sarvodaya:

The Sarvodaya movement targeted the establishment of an ideal society where discrimination over race, creed, caste, language and so forth will completely be eliminated to materialise the objective of Sarvodaya. Sarvodaya can be feasible not only through industrial and agricultural developments of the village but also through moral development. Agriculture will be so planned that all the people will have enough to consume. The industry will be conducted on a cottage basis till all the people in the village are gainfully employed. Similarly, certain moral principles must be fostered in society. The fundamental moral principles of Satya, Ahimsa, Asteya, Aparigraha, Brahmacharya, Avaya and faith in God must be spread in society.

Principles of Sarvodaya:

Decentralisation of authority in all the spheres of life as well as in the political and economic atmosphere of the villages is the motto of Sarvodaya. Politics should not believe in the use of power but it must have an axiological appeal to an agency of public service. All people will be imbued with the spirit of love, fraternity, truth, non-violence and self-sacrifice. Society will foster Sarvodaya if these values are practised. There will be no party system & majority rule in Sarvodaya state and society will be free from the evil of the tyranny of the majority. Sarvodaya society is socialist in the true sense of the term. All have the responsibility to the same moral, social and economical values. Sarvodaya society is based on equality and liberty. There is no room in it for unwholesome, competition, exploitation and class –hatred. Sarvodaya stands for the progress of all. All individuals should do individual labour and follow the ideal of non-possession. Then it will be possible to realize the goal of the room each according to his work & to each according to his needs. In Sarvodaya society, there is no private property, the instrument of exploitation and the source of social distinctions and hatred. Similarly, the profit motive will disappear, and rent and interest will go. Sarvodaya Movement is based on Truth, nonviolence & self –denial. Sarvodaya Movement makes a sincere and bold attempt to create the necessary atmosphere to bring to gather such individuals with unwavering faith in the welfare of all. The main principle of the Sarvodaya philosophy as propounded by Gandhiji and subsequently explained by the Pioneers of this movement are as follows: -

1. Sarvodaya reiterates their belief in God & further identifies that belief with faith in the goodness of man and with services, of humanity.
2. It induces the abolition of private ownership and the application of the principle of non-possession to public institutions.
3. Sarvodaya envisages a new humanistic socialist society. In this process of change, the rule of man and the role of the state are complementary. Man will be the centre of society. Society can effect change at the level of the external behaviour of man.
4. Sarvodaya visualises a simple, non-violent and decentralised society. It signifies democracy. The Sarvodaya movement inculcates this democratic awareness among the people.
5. Sarvodaya idea contains the content of egalitarianism. It rests on the principle of true equality and liberty. It stands opposed to the exploitation of any kind.
6. The concept of Sarvodaya views work as an offering to the Lord, further, the principles of equality of all religions find better elucidation in some of the thinkers of Sarvodaya philosophy.
7. In the Sarvodaya programme the standard of life is fundamental. The standard is affected by man's physical, moral, intellectual and spiritual standards and powers.
8. As Sarvodaya stands for the establishment of an integrated cooperative society, it opposes parliamentary democracy and a party system. It is because the party system divides society into various groups.
9. Sarvodaya programme gives a prime place to planning. According to the scheme of Sarvodaya planning must proceed with objects: removal of natural or man-made impediments in the road to the development of man and provision of means, training and guidance for it.

Postulates of Sarvodaya:

- ☞ It is an altruistic principle.
- ☞ It is based on the general good & public good.
- ☞ It is a principle of sociability.
- ☞ It is a moral principle.
- ☞ It enlarges democratic values.

- ☞ It transmits from individual good to the public good.
- ☞ It forces upon dignity & value of labour.
- ☞ It provides absolute freedom to every individual.
- ☞ It is a fundamental principle of the ideal state i.e Ram Rajya.

Features of Sarvodaya:

Sarvodaya is a strong Ideology for the prevention of social-economic ills in society. It is based on the "Vedic" doctrine of the main aim is to reconcile the systems of egoism & altruism. It stands for creating a high moral character in society which is possible through truth, non-violence, self-sacrifice & purity. The best principle in Sarvodaya is "Taking & Giving" to others. It also denotes self-sacrifice & self-suffering for the sake of others. Truth, virtues non-violence, non-stealing, and non-acceptance are the five morals and celibacy of Sarvodaya. If everybody practices these principles, social corruption and irregularities can be minimized. It stands for national unity integrity and solidarity of the society. It condemns provincialism, regionalism, and communalism.

Sources of Sarvodaya:

According to J.P. Narayan the Sarvodaya movement was based on the principle of change of heart. It is being conducted in the belief that man is adaptable to change. He further explained that man must go beyond the material to find the incentive in goodness. The task of social reconstruction cannot succeed under the inspiration of materialistic philosophy. According to J.P. Narayan Sarvodaya represents the highest socialist values. It takes a balanced or whole view of life. It is naturally opposed to capitalism & stands for decentralisation of the forces of production. Vinoba Bhave exaggerated 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. According to Kumarappa, Sarvodaya represents the ideal social order. J.P. Chandra opines that by bringing about a country-wide decentralisation of both political and economic powers, Sarvodaya provides the opportunity for the all-round development of the individual and the society. Dada Dharmadhikari highlighted the distinction between Sarvodaya and western Isms which speaks of three stages in the evolution of humanist thought; first came Darwin with his theory of the principle of the survival of the fittest; next came Huxley with the doctrine 'Live & let Live' and today, 'Sarvodaya' going one step further asserts "Live in order to help others live".

Utilitarianism Vs Sarvodaya:

Utilitarianism theory is applicable to the media as it considers the betterment of society at large. It considers ethics as that which is designed to create the greatest good for the maximum numbers. M.K Gandhi's concept of Sarvodaya talks about the welfare of all and reflects the Utilitarian Theory. However, Gandhi's Sarvodaya was not a utilitarian because he realised that the utilitarian objective of satisfying many people was not a sufficiently ethical model. Gandhi was of an opinion that asked why the well-being of the minority should be of any less value than that of the majority or why the welfare of certain people should be sacrificed. There are many arguments against "consequentialism" and the utilitarian theories of ethics. The utilitarian approach encourages responsible and thoughtful behaviour. Although it is possible to make mistakes in judgement, it is advisable to invest time in considering all the possible outcomes of a certain action, to determine whether the overall good is greater than the negative consequences.

Deontology Vs Sarvodaya:

Immanuel Kant's hypothesis of Moral Philosophy is measured as the deontological theory of ethics for several different aspects. First, Kant holds that for moral action, the right action or even proper action, we should act according to our own duty and onus. Second, Kant claims that an action is said to be good if the motive action or the means of the action is good. Kant's first thesis starts with the premise that the good must be both good in itself, and good without any condition. Something is "good in itself" when it is intrinsically good and is "good without any condition" when the accumulation of that thing never makes a circumstance ethically of poorer quality. Kant then argues that those things that are normally said to be good, such as aptitude, firmness, and contentment, fail to be either intrinsically good or good without condition. Nothing in the world—indeed nothing even beyond the world—can possibly be conceived which could be called good without qualification except '*good will*'. However Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya is not so much akin to the Kantian concept of Deontology, because, from the standpoint of Gandhian Ethics, we should act beyond our duty we should act for the benefit of society. Duty implies limitation or condition, but for social enhancement, one should act without any limitation and without any condition.

Implications of the Sarvodaya movement:

The Sarvodaya movement entails economic, political, philosophical & ethical implications. They are as follows:

a) Economic Implications:

Gandhiji's concept of Sarvodaya aims at the welfare of all. It is founded on the philosophy of limited wants. He fought for an economy free from exploitation and corruption, limitation of human wants, equality & basic needs for all. Prof. V.P. Varma says, "If the Bhoodan and Gramdan are techniques of agrarian revolution based on moral force, Sampattidan is a significant path in the transformation of capitalism into the Sarvodaya Society."

The essential features of the economic philosophy of Sarvodaya as emphasised by Vinobaji constitute the elimination of poverty, forging bonds of mutual help and fellow-feeling between big land-holders and landless ruralities, revival or furtherance of Indian culture based on Yagna, Dana and tapas, giving an opportunity to all political parties to work jointly in rooting out bitterness and self-aggrandisement and helping world peace.

b) Political Implications:

Sarvodaya attaches importance to 'Lokniti' the concept of lokniti signifies self-restraint, self-abnegation, 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 the weakest have the same opportunity as the strongest. The ideal democracy will be a federation of Sarvodaya village communities based on non-violence.

c) Moral Implications:

Sarvodaya aims at the spiritualisation of politics. According to the concept of Sarvodaya, man is essentially good. The 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.

The concept of Sarvodaya was the basis to recapture the spiritual heritage of India, which had thrived in the villages and was used to build the nation. He criticized western civilization not because it was totally corrupt but because it was contrary to the needs of India. Gandhi was convinced that decentralization of powers is the key to a just and equitable society. On a social level, the Harijans, Tribals and members of the lower castes would be given all the rights of equality. For Gandhi Sarvodaya was a concrete manifestation of many spiritual ideas found in many religious traditions.

II. Conclusion:

The Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya also inherited from the cultural heritage of Indian Culture since the early days of recorded history clearly conceived of the welfare of all. Even Kautilya's Arthashastra, a masterpiece of ancient Hindu treatise on diplomacy and statecraft prescribes that the ruler must be just and righteous, his supreme consideration being the welfare of the people. Indians conceived of universal love and universal service in terms of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam and Svadesha Bhubana trayam". The concept of universal brotherhood, universal love and service to the entire creation is contained in the following ideology of Hindu saints and seers. The Bhagavad Gita is also replete with references to the concept of universal welfare or the welfare of all. This is called Loksangraya (Pursue Welfare). Apart from Hindu Scriptures, Buddhism and Jainism served as adjuncts to Hinduism and also lay equal emphasis on the welfare of all. Sarvodaya pleads Communal unity, Removal of Untouchability, Prohibition, Khadi, Other rural industries, Village sanitation, Nai Talim, Adult Education, Uplift of Women, Education in Health and Hygiene, Provincial language, National language, Economic equality, Uplift of Kisans, Uplift of labours, Uplift of Lapers, Uplift of Adivasi, Uplift of students. It is an appeal to around development of Society.

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