



Revisiting Philosophical Foundations, Principles, Roles and Relevance of Gandhian Sarvodaya in Twenty First Century India: An Analysis

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ABSTRACT

"Sarvodaya means the rise or welfare of all—it excludes none."

-Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi was not only a pioneering leader of the Indian independence movement but he was also a renowned social activist, reformer, and thinker as well. The truth (i.e., Satya) and non-violence (i.e., Ahimsa) are two inevitable elements of his overall ideology and philosophy. Mahatma Gandhi is widely recognized and regarded for his economic, social and political ideologies and thoughts. His contributions across different spheres of life are very relevant in the contemporary global society. The concept of Sarvodaya is the core of Gandhian ideology and philosophy. This concept has far reaching and overarching implications on social, economic, and political aspects of human beings. It is the Gandhian social philosophy that aims at the establishment of discrimination and disparity free society. It refers to the ideology that is meant with the welfare and wellbeing of all i.e., progress and prosperity of each and every human being existing on the earth. The contemporary society has been struggling with numerous social, economic and political challenges across the world. The Sarvodaya ideology has potential to transform discrimination based and disparity oriented society into an ideal society wherein everyone has equal rights and opportunities to progress and prosper irrespective of caste, creed, community or class to which one belongs. Thus, Gandhian Sarvodaya envisages about the establishment of an egalitarian society across the country. The Gandhian philosophy of Sarvodaya has remedy to all the problems prevailing across Indian society, provided it is implemented properly with commitment and sincerity. The ideology of Antyodaya [i.e., wellbeing of the weaker] introduced by Deen Day Upadhyay is a part of the ideology of Sarvodaya [i.e., welfare of all]. These two ideologies ensure progress, prosperity and wellbeing of marginalized peoples of the society. This article is an attempt to review the philosophy and principles of Sarvodaya, and its role and relevance in the contemporary India society.

Key Words: Mahatma Gandhi, Marginalized, Sarvodaya, Welfare & Wellbeing.

1. INTRODUCTION

Twenty first century is an age of globalization. The new economic policy of globalization aims at transforming the world into a global village. The current scenario of the world is almost similar to what Mahatma Gandhi envisaged in his book Hind Swaraj. Gandhi ji presented four fundamental objectives like Swaraj (i.e., Self-Rule), Non-Violence, Swadesh (i.e., Indigenous), and Sarvodaya (i.e., Universal Uplift) before youths for the establishment of humanity. These are the four prominent pillars of the thesis propounded in Hind Swaraj. According to Mahatma Gandhi, the earth has enough to fulfil everyone's needs, but not for everyone's greed. In the Sarvodaya Society of his imagination, every member will be free from greed and luxurious living style as well; and every member will follow the principle

of simple living and high thinking. An individual having more than proportionate wealth will become a trustee of the excess wealth for the welfare of the economically and socially weaker sections of the society. There would be no scope for machines that concentrate power in a few hands, and make the people unemployed. Therefore, Mahatma Gandhi advised everyone to do some productive physical work in order to at least earn his/her daily breads and thereby minimizing the use of machines in Sarvodaya Society. Leo Tolstoy, a renowned Russian thinker and writer also supported this theory. The Sarvodaya movement aims at the establishment of self-supporting village communities (Rathi, n.d.).

The philosophy of Sarvodaya is Gandhian remedy for all the prevailing problems in India. The political philosophy of Sarvodaya had been a significant contribution of Mahatma Gandhi to the political thought in India. The ideology of Sarvodaya had already been in existence prior to its introduction by Mahatma Gandhi in India. The idea of Sarvodaya was practically implemented by Mahatma Gandhi to ensure socioeconomic justice and good for all in India. Equality, non-violence, peace and truth are cornerstone of Sarvodaya philosophy. The underlying objective of Sarvodaya philosophy was to create equal opportunity for the progress and prosperity of all. Mahatma Gandhi took many initiatives for the development and upliftment of marginalized and weaker sections of the society. Therefore, Mahatma Gandhi is known as proponent of Sarvodaya. The political leader like Jai Prakash Narayan, and social activist like Acharya Vinoba Bhave followed the concept of Sarvodaya to transform the society into an ideal society. The development of village was at the center of Sarvodaya. The concept of Sarvodaya was an important instrument to address the prevailing problems across the Indian society. In view of Vinoba Bhave, Sarvodaya is the power of the common masses. According to Jai Prakash Narayan, Sarvodaya is an instrument to introduce socialist ideology in society, and Gandhian socialism than Marxist socialism in India (Barman, 2020).

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The concept of Sarvodaya introduced by Mahatma Gandhi is a superset of the concept of Antyodaya coined by Deen Dayal Upadhyay. The concept of Antyodaya is concerned with the welfare of marginalized or weaker peoples of the society, whereas Sarvodaya is concerned with the wellbeing of all. Sarvodaya is a social philosophy, and its literal meaning is rise and wellbeing of all. It was none other than Acharya Vinoba Bhave who enabled Gandhian Sarvodaya to reach every corner of the country in the form of Bhodan or Gramdan movement. There is a dire need of the implementation of Sarvodaya theory in the contemporary world. The idea of Sarvodaya emerged as a philosophy that envisions welfare and wellbeing of all. Globalization of Gandhian philosophy is inevitable to make Sarvodaya successful across the world. Antyodaya is just an illusion in the absence of Sarvodaya. Gandhian political order called Sarvodaya includes Swaraj (i.e., Self-Rule), Panchayati Raj, Decentralization, and so on and so forth. Globalization of Sarvodaya followed by the localization of Sarvodaya is must to ensure progress and prosperity of villages (Balaji, n.d.).

Sarvodaya refers to a political ideology of equality and wellbeing of each and every human being existing on the earth. It means advancement or wellbeing of all. Swadeshi (Indigenous) exists in Sarvodaya (wellbeing of all) leading society towards the path of self-reliance. Swadeshi movement had been an integral part of political aspiration of Indians for home rule and the soul of Indian nationalism. John Ruskin was not only a pioneering writer but also a leading social thinker and philanthropist. His literary creation on the principles of political economy titled as 'Unto This Last' had a long-lasting impact on the overall ideology of Mahatma Gandhi (Bartolf et al., n.d.).

Mahatma Gandhi aimed at ending exploitation and setting up new social order through truth and non-violence. Gandhian Sarvodaya movement had ideal of social upliftment, economic emancipation, and moral revival of all. Mahatma Gandhi criticized western civilization on account of obsession for comfort, multiplication of wants, and self-indulgence which could lead to the conflict, greed, and suppression of the marginalized sections by the dominant sections, and eventually encouraging disparity across the society. In view of Mahatma Gandhi, decentralization of power is inevitable for the establishment of just and equitable society. The use of the term 'Sarvodaya' instead of 'Antyodaya' by Mahatma Gandhi was a deliberate decision. This concept of Sarvodaya is deeply rooted in Indian culture since the emergence and evolution of our civilization (Rath, 2010).

Gandhian ideology is still relevant in the contemporary society. In view of Mahatma Gandhi, truth and non-violence are as old as our earth. Modern society is suffering from fundamentalism and racism that lead to miserable violence. There is no scope for violence in Gandhian ideology as a wrong can never be rectified by another wrong. According to Mahatma Gandhi, non-violence is the law of human beings whereas violence is the law of brute. Non-violence is the sign of a person having boldness, bravery, strong will power, and tolerance. Gandhi's religious insights were derived from Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity and Islam. Gandhian ideologies and thoughts will remain relevant for the upcoming generations (Dash, 2019).

Welfare of all and universal upliftment, truth, non-violence, government as an agency of service, absence of exploitation and discrimination, absence of private property, fraternity, insistence on truth, non-possession, independence, social justice, etc. are salient features of Sarvodaya. It is concerned with the establishment of equality across diverse domains of life. Gandhian economics focuses on simplicity, self-sufficiency, decentralization, need based production, and trusteeship. Mahatma Gandhi attempted to establish a new socio-politico-economic order which aimed at integrated wellbeing of all. The doctrine of Sarvodaya is key to all the prevailing problems across the Indian society. Gandhian Sarvodaya has immense potential to produce casteless and classless society that is free from all anthropogenic discriminations and inequalities (Dash, 2022).

The concept of Sarvodaya aims at ensuring growth and survival of everyone. It is concerned with holistic development of every individual regardless of caste, creed, class or community. The Sarvodaya is meant with 'universal uplift or rise', which is also called as 'Progress of all'. The establishment of democratic nation, economic equality, self-reliance and peace are underlying missions of the Sarvodaya movement. The doctrine of Sarvodaya has economic, philosophical, and political implications (Shastri & Gupta, 2022).

The concept of Sarvodaya i.e., Welfare of all, is not a novel idea. It is a multidimensional and an overarching concept, which is concerned with all round development of society. In general sense, it implies wellbeing of all, progress of all, and universal upliftment. This concept emerged from the English social thinker John Ruskin's book 'Unto This Last'. Mahatma Gandhi translated the ideas contained in this book. The translated version of the book was named as Sarvodaya. The introduction of the concept of Sarvodaya by Mahatma Gandhi was driven by the vision of transforming India into a rich and an ideal society. Sarvodaya is one of the four fundamental objectives of the concept of Hind Swaraj introduced by Mahatma Gandhi. The Sarvodaya movement aimed at the establishment of an ideal society that was free from the existing discriminations. The decentralization of authority across the diverse facets of rural life was an inherent objective of Sarvodaya. Sarvodaya is a strong ideology inspired by the elimination of socioeconomic discriminations and disparities in society. The Bhagavad Geeta has multiple references having association with the concept of universal welfare or welfare of all (Mishra & Bishoyi, 2023).

The concept of Sarvodaya was introduced by Mahatma Gandhi, with an underlying vision of establishment of society wherein everyone would observe progress and wellbeing without experiencing any short of discrimination. In view of Mahatma Gandhi, real development benefits everyone, especially marginalized and underprivileged sections. Sarvodaya stresses the significance of spiritual and moral values in governance and social structures. It is not just an economic concept but aims at holistic development of individuals and communities as well. The Sarvodaya movement had deep impact on various social and political movements across the world. This concept encouraged political leaders and social activists to prioritize the well-being of all members while adopting non-violence as an effective instrument of social change. Gandhian Sarvodaya is rooted in the principles of non-violence, truth, selflessness, welfare of all, self-reliance, indigenous (i.e., Swadeshi), decentralization, equal respect for all religions (i.e., Sarva Dharma Sambhava), simple living, and constructive activity. The doctrine of Sarvodaya is very useful in community development, social justice, rural development, establishment of non-violence and peace, cooperative movement, environmental sustainability, empowerment of marginalized and women, welfare of all, etc. The concept of Sarvodaya assumes that wellbeing of the weakest and most vulnerable sections of the society is the only indicator of real progress and prosperity at ground level (Kumar et al., 2024).

Contemporary world has been facing many challenges, including poverty, social unrest, and unemployment. Gandhian Sarvodaya can be helpful in resolving these emerging social, economic and political issues across the world. Gandhian Sarvodaya is not a utopian ideology rather a pragmatic philosophy for the desired social transformation. The concept of Sarvodaya is still relevant in the twenty first century society (Kumari, 2024).

Gandhian philosophy evolved through the vast global and local experiences of Mahatma Gandhi. It denotes ideas reflected through Gandhi's mission, vision and work for Indian independence. Gandhian thoughts were deeply influenced by John Ruskin, Leo Tolstoy, and Henry David Thoreau. Gandhian philosophy is the manifestation of Indian, Eastern, and Western philosophical traditions. Satya (i.e., Truth), Ahimsa (i.e., Non-Violence), Satyagraha (i.e., Insistence on Truth), and Sarvodaya (i.e., Progress of all) are inherent and integral elements of Gandhian Philosophy. It is referred to as practical idealism. According to Mahatma Gandhi, non-violence is the natural law for human beings whereas violence is the law of brutes. According to philosophy, human minds can be categorized into four categories as idealist, materialist, pessimist, and optimist. Mahatma Gandhi was an idealist and optimist person by nature. Gandhian philosophy is still today relevant and impactful in fulfilling the aspirations of the global society (Mishra, 2024).

3. OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

This research article is driven by following objectives:

- To review the underlying philosophy and principles of Gandhian Sarvodaya in contemporary Indian social scenario.
- To analyze the role and relevance of Gandhian Sarvodaya in the contemporary Indian society.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research article is a descriptive cum exploratory study by nature. This study is based on secondary information available in different research journals, magazines, and websites having explicit and implicit linkage with the theme of the research article. It is based on review of selected research articles based on Sarvodaya and Mahatma Gandhi.

4.1 Sarvodaya: Conceptual Overview

According to Mahtam Gandhi, Sarvodaya means welfare of all, good of all, and progress of all. It is combination of two terms-1. Sarva i.e., all, and 2. Udaya i.e., progress or rise. According to Vinoba Bhawe, the fundamental objective of Sarvodaya is to establish a casteless and classless society based non-violence and truth. The philosophy of Sarvodaya is an instrument to implement socialism in society (Barman, 2020). The term 'Sarvodaya' is meant with 'Universal Uplift' or 'Progress of All'. Sarvodaya refers to an agency of service for the common welfare, and it lays emphasis on moral and spiritual values. The underlying ideals of Sarvodaya seem to be impracticable under the current scenario of the society (Rathi, n.d.). The idea of Sarvodaya is driven by the establishment of social harmony, and universal upliftment. Inclusive development, social justice, and wellbeing of all are inherent elements of Sarvodaya. It develops a sense of interconnectedness, shared responsibility, and global sensitivity among citizens of the country. This idea serves as a reminder that progress and development should be uniformly distributed rather than being skewed (Kumar et al., 2024).

Swaraj, Non-Violence, Sarvodaya, and Swadeshi (i.e., Indigenous) were four important pillars of the theory of Hind Swaraj propounded by Mahatma Gandhi (Shastri & Gupta, 2022). Etymologically Sarvodaya means universal uplift or progress of all. It has been derived from Sanskrit words-Sarva (i.e., All), and Udaya (i.e., Rise or Uplift). It is meant with upliftment of all. This term was introduced by Mahatma Gandhi in 1908. It is the foundation of Gandhian ideology. Sarvodaya aimed at all round development of society wherein there was no scope for the existence of any kind of discrimination, exploitation, and inequality (Dash, 2022). Gandhian philosophy is deeply implanted in the idea of Sarvodaya. Sarvodaya is a Sanskrit term which is a combination of two words in itself as-1. Sarva i.e., All, and 2. Udaya i.e., Rise or Progress. Its literal meaning is 'welfare of all or progress of all'. The original source of the emergence of the concept of Sarvodaya was John Ruskin's 'Unto This Last'. This concept was also influenced and inspired by Leo Tolstoy and Henry David Thoreau (Kumari, 2024).

4.2 Sarvodaya: Historical Overview

The history of evolution of the concept of Sarvodaya is as old as our civilization. The saints and sages had advocated universal wellbeing in the past. The Bhagavad Geeta and John Ruskin's 'Unto This Last' had been fundamental sources of the origin of the concept of Sarvodaya. The teachings of Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, and Islam had a very significant impact on the development of the theory of Sarvodaya. This term was coined by Mahatma Gandhi, which was inspired from John Ruskin's book titled as 'Unto This Last'. (Shastri & Gupta, 2022). The concept of Sarvodaya has been deep rooted in Indian philosophical traditions. This concept has been used as 'best wishes to all' in both the Buddhist and Vedantic traditions. Acharya Samanta Bhadra was the first person who used the concept of 'Sarvodaya Tirtha' in the history of Indian Philosophy. Sarvodaya Tirtha means 'the spiritual upliftment of all'. This concept has nominal association with socioeconomic and other aspects of welfare of the common masses. The term 'Sarvodaya' was introduced by Mahatma Gandhi that was deeply implanted in the philosophy of Non-Violence. This concept was evolved in early twentieth century during the Indian independence movement (Kumar et al., 2024). The term 'Sarvodaya' was originally coined by Samanta Bhadra, Jain thinker. However, Mahatma Gandhi linked it to the wellbeing of the masses that was nonexistent in the context when it was used for the first time (Dash, 2022). This term was for the first time introduced by Mahatma Gandhi. It was the core element of his political philosophy. Acharya Vinoba Bhave endorsed this term for the launch of social movement in the post-independence India. The evolution of this concept emerged from the John Ruskin's book 'Unto This Last' (Rathi, n.d.).

The concept of Sarvodaya had been introduced into the Indian political landscape by Mahatma Gandhi. The term 'Sarvodaya' was used for the first time by Mahatma Gandhi as a title of Gujarati translation of the book-'Unto This Last' written by Mr. John Ruskin. Mahatma Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave are synonymous with Sarvodaya. Mahatma Gandhi introduced the concept of Sarvodaya as a mechanism to deal with numerous problems of casteism, communalism, and socioeconomic disparity (Barman, 2020). The concept of Gandhian Sarvodaya surfaced from the Jain scripture written by Acharya Samanta Bhadra. However, John Ruskin's 'Unto This Last' was the main source of Gandhian Sarvodaya which means 'welfare or wellbeing of all'. Bhagavad Geeta, Buddhism, and Jainism are the prominent sources of the emergence of the concept of Sarvodaya as numerous references to the concept of 'welfare of all' are available in these religious scriptures. The universal love and universal welfare are the foundation of Buddhist Philosophy. The underlying ideal of Jainism is welfare of all. The ideals of Sarvodaya have been existing since the Vedic period (Rath, 2010).

5. CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

"Sarvodaya is the essence of all religions-love, service, and equality for all."

-Mahatma Gandhi

It has been rightly stated by Mahatma Gandhi that Sarvodaya is an integral part of diverse religions across the globe. The concept of Sarvodaya is the manifestation of compassion, service, and equal right and opportunity to all. The inherent and underlying objective of Sarvodaya is explicitly visible through the analysis of the term itself. The term 'Sarvodaya' includes two Sanskrit terms in itself as 1. Sarva, and 2. Udaya. The first term implies its association with the whole universe or world, and the second term denotes its fundamental objective that is the indiscriminate progress and prosperity of human beings. Thus, the philosophy of Sarvodaya intends to ensure the progress and prosperity of every human being i.e., welfare and wellbeing of all, irrespective of caste, creed, community, and class. According to this philosophy, progress and prosperity of human beings should not be confined to their anthropogenic identities like race, rank, region, religion, etc. However, in the contemporary world, opportunities and rights of individuals are determined on the basis their castes, creeds, communities, and classes that ascertain the progress and prosperity of individuals. Thus, the current pattern and trend of wellbeing of individuals across the society is very critical and disturbing that demands urgent attention and action. Though prima facie the concept of Sarvodaya seems to be imaginary and impracticable. However, it is not absolutely true as materialization of its core objectives depends upon the interest, sincerity, and will-power of the policymakers, politicians, and the public as well. Sarvodaya is a multidimensional and multifaceted social philosophy that has intensive and extensive implications on society.

Sarvodaya philosophy has social, economic, political, and ethical dimensions. It is essential to understand these dimensions to materialize the underlying objectives of Sarvodaya in true sense. On economic front, Sarvodaya would be feasible when the requirements of products of different areas are fulfilled through goods produced locally using local resources by the local residents of the respective areas, i.e., large scale production has to be restricted, and small-scale production through cottage or local industry has to be encouraged. On social front, Sarvodaya would be feasible when no caste, creed, community and class-based discriminations are observed in the regular social practice. On political front, Sarvodaya would be feasible when every section of the society has equal constitutional rights and opportunities, and proportionate representation in the system without any chance and scope to manage and manipulate constitutional provisions by the dominant ruling section in its favour. On ethical front, Sarvodaya would be feasible when everyone is focusing only on fulfilment of current needs, and none is interested in accumulating resources for the future generations i.e., consumption and wealth generation are current need based.

There are numerous challenges against the contemporary Indian society like adulteration, casteism, communalism, consumerism, corruption, dearness, discrimination, disparity, environmental degradation, hoarding and black marketing, hunger, illiteracy and poor-quality education, inadequate and expensive healthcare, regionalism, religious intolerance, poverty, unemployment, and so on so forth. In view of Mahatma Gandhi, our earth has enough resources to fulfil our needs but not greed. The root cause of all the problems prevailing in our current society is the concentration of power and resources in the hands of a few, and greed, i.e., disproportionate distribution of resources, and unethical desires and expectations of wealthy peoples. Sarvodaya society refers to the society where no discrimination and disparity exist and everyone has equal right and opportunity to progress and prosper. In the contemporary scenario of society, philosophy of Sarvodaya is very relevant and significant as it is the only philosophy through which diverse emerging social issues can be perfectly addressed. However, its proper implementation demands everyone to be disciplined in terms of consumption and earning; religious in terms of thinking, perspective and planning; and ethical in terms of practical behaviour and dealing. The implementation of Sarvodaya ideology and materialization of its underlying objectives seems to be quite impossible. This pattern of thinking is consistent with the modern way of living. Sarvodaya philosophy would not be successful until and unless people change their existing life style and mindset. Implementation of Sarvodaya philosophy and materialization of its ultimate result remind us that nothing is impossible with strong will power and firm determination, and where there is a will, there is a way.

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