

Gandhiji and Sarvodaya

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Genesis

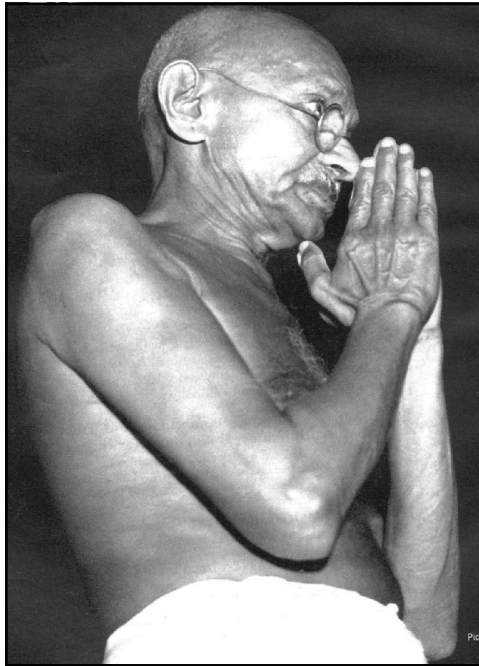
Mahatma Gandhi is the unquestioned 20th century prophet of the world. His great concern for all the oppressed and depressed made him committed to serve these through his motherland.

His immediate task was to release India from the foreign yoke and to safeguard the freedom thus won through the implementation of his constructive programmes. He started a good number of institutions to be manned by his chosen experts in their fields and gave them the perennial message of wiping every tear from every eye. He desired to establish "Sarvodaya Samaj" through granting power to the people at the grassroots so that they could enjoy Gram swaraj for ever. He wanted every individual to contribute to the total welfare of the community through practising his Ekadasa Vratas.

Gandhi was a many splendoured personality - a person who kept the highest

standards of morality in politics; a great political strategist who evolved and practised politics of the capture of state power through a prolonged mass movement, an orthodox religious believer who stood for the social liberation of women, the ending caste oppression and discrimination, and,

in general, application of reason to all aspects of social life; a person who had the vision of a world where all conflicts would be settled without the use of violence. His method of approach is an eye opener for all to go deep into the root of the problem, negotiate with the contending parties and settle the issues amicably with rancour and favour. Thus he proved that he was pragmatic philosopher par excellence, an outstanding example 'Karma Yogi' of this modern era.



Concept of Sarvodaya

The 'Sarvodaya' is the combination of two words 'Sarba' and 'Udaya'. It denotes the meaning uplift of all. Its philosophical ideas devotes the

meaning uplift and development in all aspects in the life of individual. It also gives the meaning 'good of all', service to all and welfare to all, etc. Sarvodaya, as an ideal, seeks to build a new society on the foundation of the old spiritual and moral values of India. Its philosophy is integral and synthetic in character. It takes up the Gandhian synthesis of the ideas of Vedanta, Buddhism, Christianity, Ruskin, Tolstoy, Thoreau and tries to incorporate his ideas at more critical and analytical levels. Besides Gandhism, it has also taken some of its ideas from the socialist philosophy. Thus, Sarvodaya represents a synthesis of Gandhian and socialist philosophy, a synthesis of theoretical abstractions and political and economic generalisations. Vinoba, a true Gandhian and J.P. Narayan, a true socialist are the two main leaders associated with Sarvodaya movement.

The fundamental concept in Sarvodaya philosophy is the primary and ultimateness of the spirit. Gandhiji's main ambition was to realise God. His political, economic and social programme were oriented towards progressive enlargement of the human consciousness through the service of the poor. Gandhiji had since faith in divine being. The overwhelming belief in the supremacy of the spirit provided the first philosophical foundation of the movement of Sarvodaya. J.P. Narayan said, "This movement is based on the principle of change of heart. It is being conducted in the belief that man is amenable to change. That is so because all of us are essentially one fragment of the same almighty father." He further said, "I feel convinced that man must go beyond the material to find the incentive in goodness. As a corollary I further feel that the task of social reconstruction can not succeed under the inspiration of materialistic philosophy."

Feature

- (i) Sarvodaya is a strong ideology for prevention of socio-economic ills of the society.
- (ii) It is based on 'Advaita Vedanta' doctrine. The main aim is to reconcile the systems of egoism and altruism.
- (iii) It stands for creating high moral character in the society. It is only possible by truth, non-violence, self-sacrifice and purity, etc. In short, it stands for the supremacy and absoluteness of moral values. As J.P. Narayan said, "Sarvodaya represents the highest socialist values. It takes a balanced or whole view of life. It is naturally opposed to capitalism and stands for decentralisation of the forces of production."
- (iv) It aims at adopting self-sacrifice for the sake of others. Taking and giving, to others. It is the best principle in Sarvodaya.
- (v) Sarvodaya pleads for self-sufficient village communities. It claims to establish a society of producers. Bhoodan, 'Sampattidan', and 'Gramdan' are some of the basic techniques of Sarvodaya. Bhoodan and Gramdan are techniques of agrarian revolution based on moral forces, sampattidan is a technique of transforming Capitalism into a Sarvodaya society. The two movements of Bhoodan and Gramdan visualise village ownership of land as well as individual cultivation by the villagers. They will promote among the villagers a sense of community, strength, cohesiveness and initiative. The villages will be self-sufficient and self-reliant. It pleads for what may be termed, 'villagisation'. To the philosophy of village reconstruction, it has added the gospel of the ownership of all lands of village in the village community and the erection of decentralised village commonwealth.
- (vi) Truth and non-violence are the two main points of Sarvodaya. If everybody practises these

two principles, the social corruptions and irregularities will be checked.

(vii) It is one non-political ideology. It is rather a socio-religious creed. It stands for self-limitations of human wants.

(viii) It stands for national unity and solidarity. It condemns provincialism and regionalism.

Gandhiji's View :

Gandhiji's Sarvodaya has its roots in the Vedantic concept of spiritual unity of existence and the Gita. The idealism of Sarvodaya is opposed to the concept majoritarianism, concept of class racial struggle and the principle of 'greatest good of the greatest numbers.'

The ethics of idealism of Gandhi is propounded by his philosophy Sarvodaya. Gandhi condemned the state as an organisation of violence and force. Being an apostle of non-violence he was repelled by the coercive character of the state.

Sarvodaya is concerned with Gandhiji's social ideas and ideal of a community. In the words of Gandhiji, it is casteless and classless society.

In the introducing, it can be noted here that to overcome the difficulties of the problems of caste, communal evils, economic inequalities and social divisions, Gandhiji had propounded the philosophy of Sarvodaya. He desired a classless society and partyless democracy.

Freedom, equity, justice and fraternity form the basic part of Sarvodaya. It emphasises upon stateless society. Thus the philosophy of Sarvodaya is hostile to the state. According to Gandhiji for Swaraj, Sarvodaya is necessary.

In Sarvodaya, there is no space of politics of Power. Rather it is the base for politics of cooperation.

Sarvodaya is the realisation of the happiness and elevation of all. There are two techniques for stabilisation of power of the people (i) constant propaganda and publicity and (ii) Decentralisation of power. The aim is to change the heart of the people.

Sarvodaya opposes to the ideas of egoism and 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 on the basis of metaphysical idealism.

Critical Evaluation

(i) Sarvodaya is a theory of ethical justice. It would like to use the external goods for the satisfaction of the human spirit. It would regard them as means and not as an end in themselves. Sarvodaya philosophy opposed to an outlook of life that feels insatiable hunger for material goods. Thus, it may be noted that Sarvodaya philosophy is not negativistic in its approach. It does not negate the importance of material goods; however, it refuses to regard them as the dominant goal of all human endeavour. Thus, whereas socialism is materialistic in its approach, Sarvodaya is spiritual.

(ii) Secondly, whereas the main technique of socialism is nationalisation, that of Sarvodaya is villagisation.

(iii) In the third place, the radical type of socialism i.e. communism believes violence as a proper technique of destroying the existing capitalistic structure. But Sarvodaya has no place for violence in its philosophy and technique. On the contrary, it believes in the nobility and purity of means and holds that only non-violence can

be the foundation of society free from exploitation and injustice. Vinoba and Jayaprakash Narayan mercilessly criticised the totalitarian technique of Russian politics.

(iv) To conclude, Sarvodaya is a philosophy based on moral approach to the problems of mankind. It believes in a regeneration of human heart and mind. That is the main idea behind Vinoba's movements of Gramdan and Sampattidan. It wants to perfect the mechanism of representative democracy by utilising moral idealism. Its approach is not institutional but valuational.

Conclusion

Gandhi propounded the theory of Sarvodaya and applied it in the context of particular time, place and situation. Each age and each problem needs a solution of its own and techniques of its own to resolve the problem. Those who appears to follow in the footprints of Gandhi how to evolve techniques different from the one that Gandhi, evolved. In the words of

Evikson, "Gandhiji's instrument in itself once innovated by one of the rarest of men under specific culture and historical conditions, now exists in the images, impulses and ritualisations of many who have become aware of it by, what we may call ritual diffusion. It now calls for leaders who will renovate it elsewhere, sharing, no doubt, some of the personal or historical motivation of the first leader, the first followers of those first led, but recombining its motivation with totally new elements."

Selected Bibliography :

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A child presenting a photograph of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan to Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Naveen Patnaik on the occasion of Guru Divas Celebration at Bhubaneswar on 5.9.2009.