Gandhian philosophy of sarvodaya and its principles

by Dr Shubhangi Rathi\*

21st century is the era of globalization. New economic policy of globalization moves on to make the world a global village. New challenges and problems have emerged before youth. The belief that all emergent problems - ecological, social, economical, political and moral-could be resolved by discoveries and technological innovations persists, filatures in the past notwithstanding. What is happening today is in line with what Gandhi almost predicted in Hind Swaraj as he prepared its manuscript in 1908.Gandhi put forward four main goals before youth for humanity, so as to move towards its destiny. These are Swaraj, Non-violence, Swadeshi and Sarvodaya. These are the main pillars of the thesis he has propounded in the Hind Swaraj. In this paper an attempt is made to focus on Sarvodaya as one of the pillars to bring Hind Swaraj. Objectives of this research paper are to know Gandhian philosophy of Sarvodaya for changing attitude of youth & aware youth for their rights & duties. Primary & secondary resources are used for this paper.

Meaning of Sarvodaya:

Sarvodaya is a term meaning *'Universal Uplift'* or *'Progress of All'*. The term was first coined by Mohandas Gandhi as the title of his 1908 translation of John Ruskin's tract on political economy, *"Unto This Last"*, and Gandhi came to use the term for the ideal of his own political philosophy.1 Later Gandhian, like the Indian nonviolence activist Vinoba Bhave, embraced the term as a name for the social movement in post-independence India which strove to ensure that self-determination and equality reached all strata of India society.

Inspirations from Ruskin's Book:

Gandhi received a copy of Ruskin's "Unto This Last" from a British friend, Mr. Henry Polak, while working as a lawyer in South Africa in 1904. In his *Autobiography*, Gandhi remembers the twenty-four hour train ride to Durban (from when he first read the book, being so in the grip of Ruskin's ideas that he could not sleep at all: "I determined to change my life in accordance with the ideals of the book."2 Gandhi advances the concept of Sarvodaya, which were the based on three basic principles:

* That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
* 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.
* That is a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living.

The first of these I knew. The second I had dimly realized. The third have never occurred to me. *'Unto This Last'* made it clear as daylight for me that the second and third were contained in the first. I arose with the dawn, ready to reduce these principal to practice."3

Simple Living & High Thinking:

Mahatma Gandhi was of the firm view that the earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not for every man's greed. In the Sarvodaya society of his dream, therefore, every member will be free from any greed for limitless acquisition of material wealth and more and more luxurious living and they will follow the motto of simple living and high thinking. Everyone will, thus, get ample opportunity to produce and earn sufficiently through honest work for decent and dignified living. Consequently there will be no problem of unemployment. Of course, obviously, income of different people may be different, depending on their talent, ability and effort. But those who will earn more will use the bulk of their greater earnings for the good of the society as a whole. In such a society, all wealth, including land, will be assumed as common property to be utilized for the welfare of all. If an individual has more than his proportionate portion, he becomes a trustee of the excess wealth for the benefit of the less fortunate members of the society. As regards use of machinery in economic activity, Gandhi said that "If we feel the need of machines, we certainly will have them. But there should be no place for machines that concentrate power in a few hands and turn the masses into mere machine-minders, if, indeed, they do not make them unemployed." In order, therefore, to minimize use of machines in a Sarvodaya society, Gandhi strongly advocated that everyone should do some productive physical work at least to earn his/her daily bread as was also advocated by Leo Tolstoy – the great Russian thinker and writer and everyone should uphold the dignity of labour irrespective of the type of honest labour performed by an individual.4

Objects of Sarvodaya Movement:

The Sarvodaya Movement has as its target the establishment of a whole network of such self-supporting village communities. The family relationships which are confined at present to the blood group will be extended to cover the whole village where distinctions based on race, creed, caste, language and so forth will completely be eliminated. Agriculture will be so planned that all the people will have enough to consume. Industry will be conducted on a cottage basis till all the people in the village are gainfully employed. The needs of the village will be determined by the people of the village themselves, through Village Council, representative of the whole village.

Principles of the Sarvodaya:

* 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 to 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:

Gandhi's ideals have lasted well beyond the achievement of one of his chief projects, Indian independence (Swaraj). His followers in India (notably, Vinoba Bhave) continued working to promote the kind of society that he envisioned, and their efforts have come to be known as the Sarvodaya Movement. 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, Dada Dharmadhikari, Dhirendra Mazumdaar, Shankarrao Deo, K. G. Mashruwala undertook various projects aimed at encouraging popular self-organization during the 1950s and 1960s, including Bhoodan and Gramdan movements. Many groups descended from these networks continue to function locally in India today.5

Agency of Common Welfare:

That Sarvodaya is an agency of Service for Common Welfare Sarvodaya sets its face squarely against the politics of power and exploitation. It lays great emphasis on moral and spiritual values. It seeks to create new social and economical values. The concept of possession yields place to the concept of trusteeship. People will work for the good of all and family feeling will animate the entire community. There will be fullest scope for freedom, fellowship and equality.

The state is to be an agency of power. Gramrajya is a base of non-violence. Sarvodaya stands for good of all and not for the good of any particular individual or class. Bhoodan at the early stage, Gramdan at a later stage and Sampattidan will bring about a change of heart. The rich and poor will give up their ideas of attachment to private property and will strive to work for the good of all.

Conclusion

So, lastly we can conclude that Sarvodaya ideals are not practicable. Though the ideals of sarvodaya will be noble.Nobady can find fault with them, in the actual world. They will be found wanting. It will be almost impossible to establish a society strictly on the basis of great principles by 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. The chances of having it is 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'.

Notes:

1. Bondurant, Joan. Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict. (Princeton, 1958) p 156.
2. Autobiography, part IV, chapter XVII.
3. Ibid.
4. B.K.Gokhale: Political Science ( Theory & Govt. Machinary);Himalaya Publishing House
5. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarvodaya>

Reference Books:

1. M.K.Gandhi: Village Swaraj;Navjivan publishing House,Ahamadabad
2. R. P. Mishra: Rediscovering Gandhi; Volume I: Hind Swaraj-Gandhi's Challenges to modern Civilization;Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi
3. J.C.Kumrappa:Economy of Performance;sarva Seva Sangha Prakashan,Rajghat;sixth Edition 1997
4. .K.Gokhale: Political Science ( Theory & Govt. Machinary); Himalaya Publishing House
5. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarvodaya>
6. [Countires Crying Need, CWMG, Vol 2](http://www.sarvodaya.org/about/philosophy/collected-works-vol-2/countrys-crying-need)

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