
UNIT 12 SARVODAYA

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12.1 INTRODUCTION

“I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much for you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubt and yourself melting away”.

(The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, vol. 89, p. 125)

These words of Mahatma Gandhi depict his outlook towards the plight of the poor and weaker sections of the society and his philosophy of sarvodaya, aimed at universal welfare.

The rule of the European colonial masters brought in a totally new phenomenon, as it witnessed the shifting of the political and economic decision-making power in the hands of the rulers, thousands of miles far away, resulting in the violations of the political, economic and socio-cultural rights of the Indians. The Indian society remained divided in the name of class, caste, creed, sect and the majority suffered silently under the domination of the native higher castes and elites on the one hand and the alien colonisers on the other. The caste system had reduced and relegated a majority of the Hindu society as untouchables, ignorant, hapless and helpless. The lower castes and the womenfolk lived a life of misery. At the advent of the Europeans, India was in higher status economically and it remained a manufacturing country, enjoying markets and commercial contacts far and wide including Africa, South East Asia and Far East and also the European markets.

The British imposed heavy taxes upon the Indian products so that they could not compete with the British manufactured goods. Not only did the Indian producers lose their home market but also every sector of production suffered. As Tilak wrote in *Kesari* on January 28, 1896: "Surely India is treated as a vast pasture reserved solely for the Europeans to feed upon." The British reversed the fortunes of India by systematically draining its wealth to Britain. The Indian agriculture, handicrafts and cottage industries were suppressed and the farmers were required to grow cash crops like cotton and indigo, which were in demand for the English industries as raw materials. This has seriously affected the native food production and resulted in periodical occurrence of famines and food shortages that ravaged the country during the second half of the 19th century. Nearly 29 million people died during famines from 1854 to 1901, while bubonic plague took a heavy toll of life in 1896. The famine in 1899 left people with poverty, starvation, disease and death.

The leaders of the freedom movement had to face the challenges of overcoming massive poverty and inequality perpetuated by the oppressive colonial politico-economic system and the reactionary social system simultaneously. The Gandhian answer to this challenge was Sarvodaya, which aimed at the establishment of an ideal politico-social and economic structure that would strive to achieve the welfare of all.

Aims and Objectives

After studying the unit, you will be able to understand :

- The philosophy of sarvodaya and its political and socio-economic dimensions.
- Sarvodaya as an attempt to achieve a silent, non-violent revolution
- The Gandhian idea of Sarvodaya and communitarian ownership and welfare.
- The Environmental dimension of Sarvodaya.

12.2 CONCEPT OF SARVODAYA

The ideal and objective of Sarvodaya is implied in the word itself- *sarva* (all) and *udaya* (uplift) - uplift/wellbeing of all- universal welfare. This ideal is to be achieved by unceasing service to humanity. Sarvodaya as the welfare of all represents the ideal social order

based on all-embracing love. No individual or group is to be suppressed, exploited and hounded. All are to be equal members of this social order, all sharing in the produce of their labour, the strong protecting the weak and functioning as their trustees and protectors, each promoting the welfare of all, according to their abilities and through all the means at their disposal. Sarvodaya is the peaceful and non-violent way of achieving social justice.

Sarvodaya is founded on the assurance of meeting basic essential needs and freedoms, physical and moral, of the humblest Antyodaya (individual last in the line). It was pervasive, though often enough implicit, strategy for realising fundamental changes to the socio-economic and political status. This is a strategy of appealing to a reasonable and realistic vision of an alternative and humanly superior pattern of life: a pattern in which sarvodaya (uplift/welfare of all, especially of the poorest) would be the guiding principle.

The word sarvodaya epitomises Gandhi's whole social philosophy, which is aimed at the attainment of mental prosperity (*Abhyudaya*) and spiritual realisation (*Nishreyasa*). Sarvodaya, for Gandhi, was an altruistic ethic of self-realisation. *Satya* (truth) and *swaraj* (freedom) as the ultimate aim of one's self-realisation can only grow in an atmosphere of *ahimsa* (non-violence). Such an atmosphere will prevail only in a society where equal share is given "even unto this last".

Gandhi felt very strongly that the best foundation on which societies should be built were the qualities of Truth, Love and Compassion in both our personal and public lives. The theory of trusteeship, elimination of exploitation in every shape or form; a classless society which offers no privileges by the birth or wealth or talent; mutual cooperation being the driving force of motivation and behaviour; and above all, securing the welfare of all without any distinction of race, religion, sex, political affiliation. These may be said to be the hallmark of the Sarvodaya society envisioned by the Mahatma.

The most predominant characteristics of the sarvodaya ideal are human values, individual development that is always consistent with the development of society; promotion of altruism to the highest degree; integration of the individual with society; lifting the whole human society to the highest level of existence, where love and fair play will have the most crucial roles to play.

Sarvodaya, therefore, is inclusive, experimental, holistic, ever-evolving and based on fundamental Gandhian premises of Truth and Non-violence. It is suffused with the spirit of optimism, participation and creativity. Under the label of sarvodaya, Gandhi presented flexible heuristic principles for designing a good place for humans to live: a simpler, more egalitarian life where the welfare of all would have priority and would be taken care of.

Sarvodaya- the rising of all- welfare of each and every human being implies liberation from all that make one not fully human. Sarvodaya is both an ideal-vision and a praxis-action programme for the welfare of all. These two functions of sarvodaya are complementary – as an ideal it sets sublime goals and inspires people to engage in an action programme to achieve the goals. Sarvodaya cannot be seen in isolation from other views of Gandhi; rather its significance becomes all the more clear when it is viewed in the whole spectrum of Gandhi's vision, his world-view. Sarvodaya occupies the central place in Gandhi's worldview or philosophy of life.

The way of life that Gandhi practised in the ashrams he had founded in South Africa and later in India was known as 'Sarvodaya' - the well being of all. The aim of these

Ashrams was plain living and high thinking, where the well-being of all men could be secured. Through this ideal, Gandhi envisioned the rise of whole of India, which in turn, can become a light to the other nations of the world. The Gandhian social ideal encompassed the dignity of labour, an equitable distribution of wealth, communal self-sufficiency and individual freedom.

12.3 SOURCES OF THE IDEA OF SARVODAYA

Gandhi coined the term sarvodaya in order to articulate his vision of Indian society and the way he wanted to transform and totally reconstruct it in accordance with his vision, imagination and prescription. Gandhi 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 Nonviolence'.

Sarvodaya was a concrete manifestation of spiritual ideas found in many religious traditions. It seems that Gandhi borrowed the concept of sarvodaya from a Jain scripture authored by Acharya Samantabhadra, where the expression sarvodayam is used to mean the well-being of all. Regarding the conceptualisation of Sarvodaya, Gandhi admits his indebtedness to certain other sources:

- a) Tenets of major religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, and Christianity.
- b) Religious and philosophical texts such as Bhagavad Gita and the Gospels.
- c) Writings of Tolstoy and Thoreau
- d) John Ruskin's 'Unto This Last'.

Ruskin's work impressed and influenced Gandhi in a very big way. As Gandhi construed it, Ruskin's outlook on political-economic life extended from three central tenets:

- 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 a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the craftsman is the life worth living.

Gandhi mentions in his Autobiography: "The first of these I knew. The second, I had dimly realized. The third had 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 principles to practice".

In 1908, Gandhi rendered a paraphrased translation of Ruskin's book into Gujarati. He entitled the book Sarvodaya - "the uplift of all", "the welfare of all". Most appropriate rendering of 'Unto This Last' would be antyodaya (uplift of the last and the least) rather than sarvodaya (uplift of all). However, Gandhi has used sarvodaya, since it implies antyodaya as well and is more comprehensive. Again, sarvodaya would very much begin with antyodaya, the lowest of the low and the poorest of the poor. It is rightly averred that antyodaya is the very soul of sarvodaya since it gives priority of service to the most deprived in the society.

The emphasis of Ruskin's essay, as interpreted by Gandhi, is certainly that the ideal society is one in which there is concern for the welfare of all: 'unto this last', that is the neediest or the poorest of the poor. Like Ruskin, Gandhi too believed sincerely that the socio-economic organisation that ensures the well-being of all is the only one worth striving for. As such, for Gandhi, Ruskin's *Unto This Last* was the main source of inspiration for the formulation of sarvodaya. Ruskin's book crystallized his amorphous conceptions of the economic and ethical foundations of sarvodaya social order (K.M. Prasad, *Sarvodaya of Gandhi*, New Delhi, Raj Hans Publications, 1971, p. 3).

12.4 BASIC COMPONENTS OF GANDHIAN SARVODAYA

Gandhi formulated his economic ideas and principles in the context of his ideal socio-economic order: a non-violent, non-exploitative, humanistic and egalitarian society- a sarvodaya socio-economic order. The basic components of Gandhian sarvodaya include swadeshi, bread-labour, aparigraha or non-possession, trusteeship, non-exploitation and samabhava (sense of equality).

12.4.1 Swadeshi

Swadeshi literally means "belonging to one's own country". It also means reliance on our own strength. Swadeshi is that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote. For Gandhi swadeshi is not a narrow concept of using indigenous goods and despising foreign materials, but is a way to display genuine love and devotion for the nation and its culture and is a constant struggle to promote the economic interests of the fellow countrymen, especially when it is threatened by alien competition. Swadeshi is the basis of the "moral economics" advocated by Gandhi for India. The promotion of Ayurveda system and nature cure were also part of swadeshi, as practised by Gandhi. Swadeshi is intended to bring about a revolutionary change in the Indian outlook, perception, and socio-economic structure.

12.4.2 Bread labour/Living wage

Labour denotes both mental and physical labour and Gandhi had no preference for the former at the cost of the bread labour- the physical labour. He believed that obedience to law of Bread Labour will bring about a silent revolution in the structure of society. An individual is entitled only to a 'living wage' that is enough for a decent living against the service that he/she renders to the society and nothing more.

12.4.3 Aparigraha or non-possession

For Gandhi, the doctrine of *aparigraha* or non-possession means that everyone has to limit one's own possession to what is needed by one and spend the rest for the welfare of others. He considered this as a desirable, nonviolent method of reducing inequality of income distribution and maldistribution of wealth and in that sense, non-possession in practice means "possession by all". Non-possession is another form of non-violence, since possession involves and leads to violence for the sake of protection and promotion of one's own possession.

12.4.4 Trusteeship

Trusteeship is the theory closely linked to the concept of Sarvodaya, with its fundamental objective to establish non-violent and non-exploitative property relationships. Possession and private property are sources of violence, and in contradiction with the Divine reality

that all wealth belongs to all people. Gandhi recognised that the concept of ownership would not wither away easily, nor would the wealthy be easily persuaded to share their wealth. Therefore a compromise was to encourage the wealthy to hold their wealth in trust, to use for themselves only what was necessary and to allow the remainder to be utilised for the benefit of the whole society. The concept of trusteeship is based on the principle of non-possession of means of production and economic equality. Trusteeship is its natural corollary and is “sarvodaya extended to the firm”. The concept of trusteeship is born out of Gandhi’s profound belief in the goodness of human beings. Its appeal was to the higher/better sense of the landlords and the industrialists. Trusteeship is based on the noble idea that “what belongs to me is the right to an honourable livelihood, no better than enjoyed by millions of others. The rest of my wealth belongs to the community and must be used for the welfare of the community”.

12.4.5 Non-exploitation

Exploitation lies at the root of all socio-economic problems and as such, the removal of exploitation is a basic requisite for sarvodaya. There can be no living harmony between nations, races, communities, classes and castes unless the main cause- exploitation of the weak by the strong - is removed. Only a non-exploitative society can be ‘sarvodaya’ society.

12.4.6 Samabhava (sense of equality)

In Gandhi’s grand vision of sarvodaya society, socio-economic equality occupies a central place and it is both “an essential principle and indispensable condition”. He advocated equality not between the equals, but equality between the prince and peasant, wealthy and poor, strong and weak, landlord and landless and literate and illiterate. It is not equality in physical sense, which is unnatural and difficult to achieve, but in a moral sense. For Gandhi, the equality means providing equal preference and opportunity. When there is redistribution of land, we shall have full employment and an equitable redistribution of national dividend and thus we shall attain *Arthik Samata* (Economic Equality), which in turn will gradually lead to samabhava.

12.5 SARVODAYA: POLITICO-SOCIAL FRAMEWORK

12.5.1 Swaraj-Sarvodaya Democracy

For Gandhi swaraj means freedom for the meanest of our countrymen. They should be freed not only from the English colonial yoke but from every other yoke whatsoever. He opined that mere form of political self-government cannot satisfy the essentially democratic concept of swaraj. By swaraj he meant the government by the consent of the people and by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. The swaraj as envisioned by Gandhi does not recognise race or religious distinctions or to be the monopoly of the few, but to be for all including “the maimed, the blind, the starving toiling millions”. Again, for Gandhi, swaraj was quite a comprehensive vision. His goal was to empower the people- not an abstract concept but the toiling people in the fields and factories, the suffering humanity, the dumb millions – to secure their political and socio-economic rights. In that sense, swaraj is sarvodaya democracy –of the masses and for the masses. Sarvodaya democracy of Gandhi had to be worked out dedicatedly from bottom up by the people of every village rather than imposed by few people from top down.

Poorna (complete) swaraj precludes all possibility of the swaraj being more for some one

than for the other, being partial to some or prejudicial to others. Swaraj is not poorna until all the ordinary/basic amenities of life are guaranteed to all. On the other hand, poorna swaraj also meant freedom from political, social and economic bondages/restraints imposed by the then existing political and economic order.

Gandhi also, like Thoreau, held the view that democracy can be realised only in a stateless society and that government is best which governs the least. Gandhi preferred society of “enlightened anarchy” to a coercive state and he was for the evolution of an ideal non-violent State which will be an ordered anarchy. For him, the ideal democracy is sarvodaya democracy in which every individual enjoyed control over himself and over his destiny.

12.5.2 Sarvodaya and Ramarajya

Swaraj is a step to Ramarajya – a reign of righteousness and justice on earth, a true democracy in which the meanest citizen could be sure of swift justice without an elaborate (so causing inordinate delay) and costly (so not reachable to all) procedure. A gradual growth in the understanding of Ramarajya can be observed in Gandhi’s writings. In 1937 he described it as sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority. In 1946 he wrote that Ramarajya is independence – political, economic and moral – and by next year he emphasised: “... there can be no Ramarajya in the present state of iniquitous inequalities in which a few roll in riches and the masses do not get even enough to eat”. Ramarajya, for Gandhi, is a dreamland, in which “inequalities based on possession and non-possession, colour, race or creed or sex vanish. In it, land and state belong to the people and justice is prompt, perfect and cheap. Such a state must be based on Truth and Non-violence, and must consist of prosperous, happy and self-contained villages and village communities.”

Ultimately, the goal of sarvodaya became Ramarajya (Kingdom of God) and this kingdom was to be attained on earth and had to be created and nurtured with sarvodaya beliefs and practices. Ramarajya was to be Gandhi’s favourite name for his vision of a new social order where every individual becomes “a full-blooded, fully-developed member of society”. In a nutshell, Ramarajya is the ideal polity as envisioned by Gandhi for India and for the world.

12.5.3 Sarvodaya Samaj (Society)

Gandhi’s Sarvodaya is based on a total - social, economic, political, moral, religious and spiritual - view of life of human society comprising individual as well as groups, the culmination of which is a liberated society, a sarvodaya samaj. Since sarvodaya stood for the welfare of all, commitment to all kinds of sacrifices, including one’s own life, for the welfare of all others was at the core of sarvodaya. For Gandhi, Sarvodaya represented an Ideal Social Order, ideal for human social order in which the individual was supreme but as a unit of the society. Sarvodaya envisages a non-violent, egalitarian, decentralised, people-oriented, sustainable and a flourishing social order.

Gandhi argued that if the Indian society is reformed, colonial rule would automatically cease to exist. On one hand, Gandhi tried to resist oppressions of all kinds and from all sources, both domestic as well as external, and on the other, tried to reconstruct Indian society on the basis of his vision. For him, the end result would be good and would happen automatically if correct and effective means were employed as per his vision/plan. This would be a sure, forward step in human civilisation, what Gandhi called the ‘swaraj’ society, to be attained in the future.

12.5.4 Sarvodaya and Communism

Gandhian philosophy, particularly in the Sarvodaya ideal, does contain many socialist sentiments. The difference between Communism and Gandhian Sarvodaya is not in the ends but in the means. Gandhi himself more than once declared that he was a Communist *minus* the violence that a Communist is ready for. Again, he claimed that he did not propagate Samyawad (the theory or ideology of Communism) but Samyadharm (the practice or duty of equality). Gandhian sarvodaya tried to achieve through non-violent methods the changes in the social and economic order which the Communists wanted to effect through violence. What Gandhi tried to achieve through transforming human heart, the Communists attempted to accomplish by rolling their head. Communists generally believed that the evils of the capitalist system could not be banished by wishing a change of hearts and minds of the owners of property. On the other hand, Gandhian sarvodaya believed not in the programme of 'seizure of land' but in transformation of relationships ending in the 'peaceful transfer of land'.

Sarvodaya stands for non-violent socialism and all members of society are equal – none low, none high – and all are on the same level. A non-violent society of Gandhi's vision is non-exploitative and egalitarian, not only equal in rights and opportunities but also in the sense that there is no exploiter and exploited. He believed that such a horizontal structure is a necessary condition for self-realisation in liberating both exploiter and exploited from the shackles of an exploitative structure.

12.6 SARVODAYA IN PRACTICE

Sarvodaya ideal, based on the swadeshi strategy, is closely linked to the economic reconstruction strategy aimed at village-oriented, people-oriented economy. Consequently village regeneration became a major aspect of Gandhi's vision of India. Gandhi tried to achieve it through constructive programme targeting every sphere of human activity at the village setting.

12.6.1 Constructive Programme

The sarvodaya ideal of Gandhi acquired a coherence of thought and action in 1920, when he introduced a fourfold constructive programme in his ashram environment. To decentralise the constructive programme, several ashrams were established in different parts of India predominantly in rural areas. Gandhi initiated several activities under the umbrella of constructive programme. From the 1920s, he shifted the emphasis of his work from Satyagraha (nonviolent resistance) to constructive schemes- an embodiment of sarvodaya - for the welfare of all. The Constructive Programme is "a positive aspect of Satyagraha in action, and is the concomitant of resistance action". This programme of sharing resources, education, rural industry, in particular weaving, and improvement of the position of the untouchables stems from his philosophy of Sarvodaya.

Initially in 1941, Gandhi listed some fourteen items and later in 1945, he devised eighteen fold constructive programme and set up a number of organisations to work it out. He intended to knit together a fellowship of millions and inculcate the pattern of non-violent conduct into their thought and action through the following steps: communal unity, removal of untouchability, prohibition of alcohol, promotion of khadi and other rural industries, village sanitation, *nai talim* (basic education), adult education, uplift of women, education in health and hygiene, propagation of *rashtra bhasha* (national language), *swabhasha-prem* (love of one's language), uplift of labour, uplift of students, service of backward

tribes, and treatment of lepers. They are merely illustrative, not exhaustive and as such can be changed according to the varying needs, contexts, traditions and the socio-economic and political requirements of the people concerned. The constructive programme of Gandhi was basically “village-oriented” and aimed at village uplift. Gandhi sincerely believed that if carried out in the right direction and with earnestness, the constructive programme would result in the ideal sarvodaya samaj, devoid of any discrimination based on sex, wealth, education and so on. It would provide a common experience and would result in a democratic common endeavour, thereby bridging the gap between the classes and the masses.

12.6.2 Application of Sarvodaya to People-Oriented Economics

Gandhi’s economy is village-oriented and his constructive programme is geared towards village reconstruction and he considered khadi as the lead industry. In khadi Gandhi saw “the revival of the entire economic, social and cultural life of the villages which constitute our country”. Through khadi and village industries, Gandhi expected to lay the foundations of a non-violent economic and social order which would bring peace and happiness to all, leading to the uplifting of the rural masses. Khadi and village industries are not an end in itself but a means for the all-round socio-economic development of rural India. Gandhi intended to link agriculture and industry by making village industries agro-based as an effective way for meaningful development of agrarian societies. He believed that unless industries in rural areas are linked with the primary occupation of the vast mass of the people— agriculture, they would make little impact on the lives of the people.

Gandhi believed that industrialisation has been planned to destroy the villages and village crafts; instead it should sub-serve the village and their crafts. Gandhian solution to industrialisation and its evil effects is the reconstruction of rural economy with an emphasis on the primacy of agriculture and the supplementary and complementary importance of cottage industries. By the revival and rejuvenation of the village economy, Gandhi wanted to rejuvenate and restore the simplicity of village life and to establish decentralised, self-sufficient, self-reliant and autonomous communities. He advocated “production by the masses” instead of “mass production”. Such Gandhian alternative may be qualified as “appropriate technology”, “intermediate technology” or “holistic technology”, which could be adopted by the village homes. Gandhi advocated “the technology of production by the masses”, which was named by Schumacher as “intermediate technology”, which make use of the best of modern knowledge and experience, is conducive to decentralisation, compatible with the laws of ecology, calculative in its use of scarce resources, and designed to serve the people instead of making them the servants of machines.

The basis of village sarvodaya is the principle of sharing of the natural resources and means of production among all the members of the community towards the welfare of all. Gandhi worked towards the resuscitation of the village through the revival of its handicrafts and industries utilising the resources available locally to satisfy the basic needs of the rural masses.

12.7 POST-GANDHIAN PHASE

From March 11 to 14, 1948, a month and a half after Gandhi’s assassination, his followers gathered in Sevagram in order to continue his work in the spirit of his philosophy of Sarvodaya. It was decided to form a rather loosely structured fellowship of *lok sevaks* (servants of people) known as the *Sarvodaya Samaj* (Sarvodaya Society),

that was further strengthened by the founding of the *Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh* (All India Association for the Service of All). In December 1949, two hundred constructive workers met in Wardha and endorsed the programme which was published on January 30, 1950 as the Sarvodaya Plan. It was a concrete programme of basic social revolution and the first attempt to picture concretely a new social order.

Considering India's overwhelming poverty and dire economic conditions, the sarvodaya leaders too felt strongly about the plight of the landless people exploited by their landlords and chalked out a plan which would prove mutually beneficial acceptable to the land owners and beneficial to the landless masses.

Bhoodan Movement

In this context, Vinoba Bhave (1895-1982), a close associate and faithful follower of Gandhi, organised the Bhoodan movement ("gift of land"). Sarvodaya workers associated with Vinoba, J. P. Narayan, Dada Dharmadhikari, Dharendra Mazumdar, Shankarrao Deo and K. G. Mashruwala who undertook various projects aimed at encouraging popular activities during the 1950s and 1960s, including Bhoodan and Gramdan movements. Vinoba traveled 25,000 miles on foot, persuading 700,000 landowners to give up 8 million hectares. Bhoodan movement is a bloodless revolution unprecedented in the annals of world history, not a mere movement for equitable distribution of land but a further step towards establishing a sarvodaya society. Gramdan, along the lines of Bhoodan, and more radical in its tone and tenor, proved harder to promote than Bhoodan. However, by 1964, some 6,807 of India's 550,000 villages had accepted this concept and by 1971, more than 168,000 or roughly 30 per cent of the Indian villages had been pledged to Gramdan. For Vinoba, these epitomised gramswarajya, a new polity, economy and society, that would bring about a rural communitarian society characterised by harmonious relations between the individual and the group and participatory democracy.

Sampoorna Kranti

Jayaprakash Narayan (JP) was another notable sarvodaya leader who initiated Total Revolution. JP maintained on one occasion: "There is hardly any difference between sarvodaya and Total Revolution. If there is any, then sarvodaya is the goal and Total Revolution the means. Total Revolution is basic change in all aspects of life. There cannot be sarvodaya without this." To be precise, Total Revolution is a further extension of Gandhi's thought on socio-economic problems and technique of change in the context of the modern social reality. Rampant corruption in the Indian polity and economic life goaded JP to call for a mass movement. He appealed to the youth to revolt against the existing system and to be the harbingers of change. In spite of being termed as a failure, the mass movement he generated brought about a massive positive change in the systemic structure.

12.8 ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION OF SARVODAYA

Sarvodaya implies an all-round material as well as spiritual development of each and every individual and is concerned with a continued healthy environment to ensure the holistic development of man. Since the human is organically linked with the whole ecosystem and its healthy functioning, there is a need to extend the concept of Sarvodaya to the whole of sentient and non-sentient being in the universe. Again, Gandhi's sarvodaya-utopian mode of holistic discourse has an innate ecological dimension. Perhaps, for the present day ecologically-disturbed world, Gandhian Sarvodaya ideal might be the panacea.

The concepts of environmental conservation, sustainability and survival are inherent in the Gandhian ideology. His emphasis on small-scale industry, which promotes “production by the masses in stead of mass production” was in tune with man-nature co-relationship as it is less energy-intensive and consequently less-polluting. He advocated sustainable development and appropriate technology to achieve rural development. The simple life style that Gandhi preached and practised had a great bearing on nature and its preservation. His insights into eco-spirituality and eco-villages contribute immensely to living in harmony with nature.

Gandhi preferred people-centred, need-based economy to machine-centred, greed-fulfilling economy. Gandhi’s sarvodaya vision has deep environmental implications. He reiterated the eternal bond of mankind co-existing with nature and advocated that people should not use more than their share of the resources and the consumption should be based on need satisfaction rather than greed promotion. In a world of vanishing environmental ethics, there is a strong and urgent need for evolving ‘eco-centric’ ethic and consciousness and thus, Gandhian ideals may come in handy in this regard. His exemplary way of life in his ashrams consist of “voluntary simplicity” or “ecological living” that serve as a source of insight and inspiration.

12.9 SARVODAYA AS A REALISTIC UTOPIAN IDEAL

Gandhian Sarvodaya is not a mechanistic or deterministic manual but an ideal for humankind, for individual and social relationships and for human-ecological relationships in varied and changing circumstances. It enunciates principles and sets the direction, approaches and guidelines. It encourages us to be ever hopeful for building up a better human being, a better society and a better world. Sarvodaya or universal welfare was the logical corollary of Gandhi’s fundamental premises about human perfectibility and the mature fruit of his repeated experiments with political action and social reforms. Gandhian concept of ahimsa (non-violence), with satya (truth) as the common goal, enabled him to develop the doctrine of sarvodaya or non-violent socialism.

Thomas Vettickal maintains that Gandhian sarvodaya has the potential to be a utopian ideal and the factor that makes it a realistic utopia is the presence of provisionality, open-endedness, untiring hope in the future, and creativity. In Gandhi’s sarvodaya there is “creative expectation”, a “hope which sets about criticizing and transforming the present because it opens towards the universal future of the kingdom (of God)”. The Sarvodaya ideal of Gandhi stems from an undying hope in the better future of India: utopian economy that is people-oriented and which promotes appropriate technology; social and communal life that is village-based, theology and spirituality that is indigenous and a sustainable eco-system that is in harmony with nature. Gandhi initiated a process that can be realized and is open to immense possibilities (*Ibid.*, p.76).

Sarvodaya society is liberated from both external and internal oppressors and suppressors in society. Gandhi’s sarvodaya economics is more of an action programme than abstract theory and principle, aimed at offering an alternative to the existing condition towards achieving a better future. It is a constant ideal towards which we are directed with the hope of attaining the cherished goal. Sarvodaya is a significant and revolutionary contribution of Gandhi and his worthy disciples to contemporary political thought. Sarvodaya ideal keeps its appeal to many as it can be easily realised and its openness to future possibilities.

12.10 SARVODAYA NETWORK

During his lifetime, Gandhi never allowed sarvodaya organisations to be formally instituted. His thinking was that once you served people, as 'sevaks', within the Sarvodaya philosophy there was no need to institutionalise. But since his demise, Vinoba gave sarvodaya an organisational structure, divided into national, state and local levels. Many groups, descended from these networks, continue to function locally in India today. At present, Sarvodaya organisations have been established (some 40 of them) world-wide genuinely helping people towards building new societies from the 'grass-roots' up. These are now being connected into a Sarvodaya network with headquarters in Bangalore, India.

12.11 SUMMARY

Sarvodaya is the application of the principle of nonviolence in the transformation of societies: from their present forms which are mostly exploitative and disfavour the most disadvantaged, toward more balanced, inclusive and equalitarian forms in which could be enshrined the principle of Social Justice for All. Gandhi's vision embraced a holistic approach to life. Gandhian Sarvodaya remains his major and distinctive contribution to India, a vision that looks forward to the creation of an ideal society, a sarvodaya society that is nonviolent and peaceful, non-exploitative and equalitarian in nature as well as structure. Gandhian Sarvodaya vision as well as action has high contemporary relevance. The neo-liberal market forces in the present day globalised world are exploiting the poor and marginalised; thousands of farmers committing suicide in different parts of India; and Special Economic Zones are being created and fertile lands being taken away from the hands of the poor peasant community and handed over to corporate houses in the name of industrialisation and economic growth. Depleting natural resources like water, which remained communitarian so far, are being allowed to be commercialised. The gap between the rich and poor within the country and rich and poor countries are getting widened day by day. The ideal of the sarvodaya- non-exploitation and equality – needs to be taken as a guiding spirit to do away with this disparity, which may eventually lead to crises and calamity. As such, the sarvodaya ideal is more relevant today than ever before.

12.12 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Describe the concept of 'sarvodaya' and bring out its political, socio-economic and spiritual dimensions.
2. Analyse the contemporary relevance of Sarvodaya. Is it a realistic utopia?
3. Write short notes on the following:
 - a) Sarvodaya samaj
 - b) Ruskin's Unto This Last
 - c) Ramarajya
 - d) Ecological dimension of Sarvodaya

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