
UNIT 12 ANTYODAYA TO SARVODAYA

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12.1 INTRODUCTION

People in the West generally hold that the duty of man is to promote happiness of the majority of mankind and happiness is supposed to mean only physical happiness and economic prosperity. If the laws of morality are broken in the pursuit of happiness, it does not matter very much. Again, as the object sought to be attained is happiness of the minority, they do not think that there is any harm if this is secured by sacrificing the interest of others. The consequences of this line of thinking are all too plain. This exclusive search for the physical and economic well-being in disregard of morality is contrary to divine law, as some wise men in the West have shown. One of them was John Ruskin who contended in "Unto this Last" that man can be happy only if he obeyed the moral law (Ruskin, 1940, p.12).

Gandhi was so much fascinated by "Unto this Last" that he paraphrased it and later translated this paraphrase into Gujarati and named it "Sarvodaya". The Mahatma recorded in his autobiography three teachings of this booklet (1) "that the good of 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 and, (3) that a life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living. The first of these I knew, 'he further stressed, "The second I had dimly realized. The third has never occurred to me". "Unto this Last" made it as clear as day light for me that the second and third were contained in the first. I arose to the dawn ready to reduce these principles to practice" (Gandhi, 1927, p. 273).

This is how the word "sarvodaya" came to be used. But now it is a generic name given to the nonviolent order which the Mahatma aimed at. This philosophy was propounded by him, and later Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan tried to translate it into action. Gandhi did not originally coin sarvodaya. Even before him, the idea of sarvodaya was found in religious books-Vedas, Upanishads, The Ramayan, The Gita, The Quran and many others. It was also preached by Indian and Western saints as well as philosophers. But Gandhi gave to these age-old principles and ideals an extended meaning and application.

Aims and Objectives

After studying this Unit, you should be able to understand

- The meaning and genesis of Sarvodaya.
- The proper rendering of 'Unto this Last' would be Antyodaya (uplift of the last) rather than sarvodaya.

12.2 SARVODAYA: MEANING AND GENESIS

The word 'Sarvodaya' is of Sanskrit in origin which is comprised of 'Sarva' meaning all and 'Udaya' meaning rising. The etymological meaning of Sarvodaya is the rising of all. This 'all' includes all living beings. In other words, sarvodaya means welfare of all. It is not something which one man or set of men can gain or enjoy to the exclusion of others. It implies the participation of all kinds of people irrespective of class, caste, creed and religion. It also stands for the total blossoming of all the faculties – physical, mental and spiritual of the human being. It is an activity in which all may partake and it amounts to a full realisation of the human faculties of the human soul.

According to Vinoba Bhave, the term Sarvodaya commands a two-fold meaning. Firstly, sarvodaya means making all happy by removing suffering and poverty with the help of scientific knowledge. Secondly, establishing a world state full with divinity, kindness and equality, Sarvodaya aims not at the rise of the few or the many, or for that matter the rise of the greatest number; it is not utilitarianism, which stands for the greatest good of the greatest number. It contains the germ of minority and majority. Contrary to utilitarianism, Sarvodaya stands for the good of one and all, of the high and the low, of the strong and the weak, the intelligent as well as the dull. As against the *laissez faire* theory, that is the survival of the fittest, sarvodaya believes in the survival and development of all. To Vinoba, "The idea of sarvodaya, as preached by the Gita is to merge oneself in the good of all" (Harijan, 13.02.1949).

Apart from connoting the welfare of all, sarvodaya commands two more meanings: firstly, the universal welfare and secondly, the integrated development of all. Sarvodaya rejects all those theories, which stand for the joy of a few. It advocates the welfare of all, irrespective of class, caste, colour, race, region or religion. The philosophy of sarvodaya makes the attempt of reorienting human mind for reconstructing human society. All must progress together without collision of interest. Interpreting the purport of Sarvodaya, Dada Dharmadhikari said: "Sarvodaya is a term with a wider connotation since it conceives of assimilation of all and not only of many or most" (Dharmaadhikari, 1960, p.18). Sarvodaya is a philosophy, which provides checks against the imperfections of human mind and soul.

12.3 ANTYODAYA OR UPLIFT OF THE LAST

Vinoba, writing in the Harijan, expressed the view that 'proper rendering of Unto This Last would be Antyodaya (Uplift of the Last) rather than Sarvodaya'. But he added that because Gandhi had preached that in working towards Sarvodaya it was necessary to begin with the last and lowest. This is one of the key ideas of Sarvodaya, though it has to be admitted that much remains to be done about its socio-economic methodology. It is well-known how current theories and practices of growth, whether in the West or the East, bypass this question and assume that the benefits of development would in due time percolate down, to use Vinoba's expressive term, to the last and lowest (Harijan, 10.04.1949). In contrast to this view, Antyodaya preached that the development should begin from the lowest and would in new course cover one and all.

12.4 PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SARVODAYA

The fundamental notion in the sarvodaya philosophy is the primacy and ultimateness of the Spirit. Gandhi's dominant concern was with the realisation of God as all-pervasive Truth. His political, economic and social endeavours and programmes were oriented towards progressive enlargement of the moral consciousness through the service of the *daridranarayana* and the consequent, intimate and intuitive realisation of the primordial divine spirit. The belief in the all-governing majesty of the Spirit imparts to man the compassionate ethical incentive to share in the pain and anguish of all creatures because all are the manifestations of the same supreme truth. Gandhi had sincere, unquestioning and deep faith in the divine being. He wanted to realise God through selfless, dedicated, social and political service.

The movement of sarvodaya is an attempt at the reinforcement of these abiding and significant values. One of the most distressing phenomena of modern times is the worship of worldly success. Success has come to be measured in terms of achievement, bank balance and efficiency. It is computed in numbers and expressed through mathematical figures, long charts, diagrams, histograms, polygons and cubes of statistics. But in the craze for success, power and strength, there is a silent repudiation of the perennial significance of the human spirit. But Gandhi would have refused to barter the human soul for external success. The latter is temporary and ephemeral. It may have only superficial glamour. But the continuing vitality of civilisations and cultures is built by the human spirit which is oriented to the realisation of a noble and decent existence for all. Our political, social and economic life has been seized with a malady. The malady of our times-perhaps of all times, is the mad quest for power. Sovereignty is preferred to co-operative activity and suffering. Service is being given up in quest of personal aggrandisement. Humanity is, thus, undergoing almost a phase of moral collapse and ethical nihilism. In an era of the mad rush for power, the significance of sarvodaya lies in stressing the permanent value of self-abnegation. It wants to replace party strifes, jealousies and competition by the sacred law of competition by the sacred law of co-operative mutuality and dominant altruism. Party struggles have corrupted and perverted political life. In its stress on the replacement of majority voting by unanimity in the village panchayats, sarvodaya is giving expression to moral principles of cardinal importance because it wants to enshrine the primacy of goodness and character in place of the skill of manipulation and self-assertion. Sarvodaya appeals to the mind and heart in terms of values and goals. The decadence and corruption which infect organised institutional mechanisms can be removed only by the reassertion of moral and spiritual values and their ever-growing incorporation in

social, political and economic life. That is perhaps the only way to the salvation of India and the world.

12.5 SOCIALISM AND SARVODAYA

Sarvodaya stands for the emancipation, the uplift and the elevation of all. It traces its theoretical roots in the Vedic and Vedantic teaching that from a higher standpoint all living beings are participants in our portions (amsa) of a super-material reality. Hence the good of all living beings which necessarily implies the good of all humanity has to be positively fostered. It repudiates, therefore, the limited gospel of the greatest good of the greatest number. It aims to serve the good of all and not merely of the numerical majority. It is, certainly, not opposed to the concept of social and economic equality. All beings are reflections or manifestations of a supreme spiritual ultimate; hence, all have to be provided the opportunity for their greatest development and perfection. In socialism, the stress is on material and vital perfection attained through the devising of a socio-economic structure which eliminates wasteful competition and private appropriation. In the theory of sarvodaya also, there is no negation of political and economic satisfactions and requirements. It will not be correct to characterise sarvodaya as negativistic in its approach. It does not negate the importance of material commodities. It would refuse, however, to regard them as the dominant goal of all human endeavours. Like Aristotle, sarvodaya would like to use the external goods for the satisfaction of the human spirit. It would regard them as means and not as ends in themselves. But there is in sarvodaya, an all-dominating moral and spiritual approach. Economic amenities have to be oriented to serve the needs of the human spirit and it is wrong to cramp the free movement of the spirit by suffocating it with the all-governing dominance of the sinews of production. Sarvodaya, however, is not merely a theory of ethical justice. It is emphatic in its quest also for distributive social and economic justice. In its acceptance of the concept that all forms of wealth belong to society, sarvodaya has shown its radical and even revolutionary character.

12.6 SELF-REALISATION THROUGH SERVICE

Gandhi's Sarvodaya concept, a social ethic for the welfare of all, is a unique reaction against the barriers of a Hindu social system, in which functional cooperation and ritual separation coincide. The ritual purity of the upper castes depends upon specific relations with lower castes, who thereby become impure. Gandhi tried to break this circle of depending origination of purity and untouchability and was proud to be his own sweeper. Cleaning a toilet, removing one's own "night soil" was for him not a symbolic gesture to 'raise the image of "Harijans", but an essential part of his own struggle for self-realisation. "Service unto this last" and true self-realisation were interdependent.

Gandhi never made a secret of the fact that this quest for self-realisation was the driving force behind all his activities. He declared openly, "I am a humble seeker after Truth. I am impatient to realize myself, to attain Moksha in this very existence. My national service is part of my training for freeing my soul from the bondage of flesh. Thus considered, my service may be regarded as purely selfish. For me, the road to salvation lies through incessant toil in the service of my country and there through of humanity. I want to identify myself with everything that lives. So, my patriotism is for me a stage in my journey to the Land of Eternal Freedom and Peace" (Young India, 3.4.1924).

Even more revealing is the answer that Gandhi gave to a Polish engineer who came to

see him on a rainy day in August 1936. He asked why Gandhi had retreated to a humble hut in a Gujarati village and whether his aim was simply humanitarian, just to serve the villagers as best as he could. Gandhi's answer put in a nutshell his "this-worldly asceticism" as the true driving force of his life.

"I am here to serve no one else but myself", Gandhi replied, "to find my own self-realization through the service of these village folk. Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities, political, social and religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavour simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all. And this cannot be done except through one's country. I am a part and parcel of the whole, and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of humanity. My countrymen are my nearest neighbours. They have become so helpless, resourceless and inert that I must concentrate on serving them. If I could persuade myself that I should find Him in a Himalayan cave, I would proceed there immediately. But I know that I cannot find Him apart from humanity" (Tendulkar, IV, p.88).

For a realistic interpretation of the Gandhian Sarvodaya concept and its present relevance as an attempt to build a non-violent social order, we must bear in mind its specific socio-cultural and socio-individual background.

12.7 THE ECONOMICS OF SARVODAYA

Sarvodaya's ethics of love, conversion and heightened goodwill are derived from its metaphysical idealism. But to the Vedic and Vedantic conceptions of the supreme existence of a spiritual ultimate from which the universe and mankind derive their being and value, sarvodaya adds almost a communistic approach to wealth.

From the metaphysical arguments for theism, Vinoba Bhave has deduced several economic implications. If God is the supreme Existent and men are only temporary sojourners on this earth, then everything belongs to God. Thus Vinoba put forward a divine theory of land ownership. God is the supreme owner and hence, individuals subjected to ultimate death should not claim personal ownership over land. Vinoba further said that all the great saints in this country have taught that land should not be kept under personal or private ownership. Modern sarvodaya also extends the connotation of the rather individualistic and moralistic Gandhian conception of 'trusteeship'. Although, sarvodaya has its roots in the Gandhian thought which is primarily individualistic, in the context of the grave social and economic crises of the present day world, it has advanced towards the concept of a radically equalitarian social and economic structure. It does not seem correct to interpret the famous verse of the Ishopanishad- tena tyaktena bhunjithah, as teaching the ownership of all wealth by society. This verse accepts the individualist concept of property and simultaneously inculcates a spirit of non-attachment. It may be pointed out that the social ownership of wealth is a concept foreign to ancient Hindu political thought.

Sarvodaya pleads for, (a) the repudiation of the proprietary possession or malkiyat of the non-producers, (b) the establishment of the proprietary possession or malkiyat of the producers, and (c) the neutralisation or the negation of ownership. It hopes to establish a society of producers or labourers. Bhoodan and Sampattidan are regarded as steps towards the realisation of that kind of society.

Some of the basic techniques of sarvodaya are Bhoodan, Sampattidan and Gramdan. One great economic advantage that has been claimed for Bhoodan is that it effectuates the redistribution of land without the payment of any compensations. The land-holders are asked to keep only that portion which is essential for their requirements and surrender the rest to the community. The protagonists of Bhoodan believe in the social origin of all wealth and hence they interpret this surrender by the land-holders as an act of giving to the community what really belongs to it. If 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. For the realisation of Sampattidan, man is, at first, to utilise, one-sixth of his wealth for the sake of society. Jayaprakash Narayan says:

'The next step is that of 'Full Trusteeship'. Under 'Trusteeship' commercial and industrial enterprises would belong to the society and there would be no employer and employee. The management and labour would have joint responsibility to run them not for themselves but for the good of the society as a whole' (Narayan, 1956, p.18).

12.8 PHILOSOPHICAL ANARCHISM

Sarvodaya accepts the sacrosanct character of the human spirit. It is, hence, emphatic on the inculcation of the value of freedom, equality, justice and fraternity. It, therefore, is opposed to the state machine. The state is not the terrestrial reflection of the merciful divine being but is a soulless mechanical instrument to effectuate the will of those who have the manipulating skill, dash, cunning and capacity to control the governmental structure. In tracing the evolution of the state, Vinoba Bhave says:

"In the early stage it was unrestrained violence that held the faith. Gradually man learnt to curb and limit his violence and the institution called the state came into existence. The formation of the state did limit violence up to a degree. The advent of the apparatus of government created a new kind of law' and order. Even Vedas had said that coercive power of the state was personification of Dharma. But gradually the state grew stronger, became more and more powerful till it became an all-powerful state with the power of destroying the whole world with its military might based on nuclear weapons" (Vinoba, 1956, p.7).

In most cases, the state does operate with the methods of intimidation, coercion, persecution and organised violence. Hence Gandhi was thoroughly opposed to the state. He pleaded for Swarajya- the inner rule of man over himself. He wanted that the Swarajya should be based on the moral sovereignty of the people. But while Gandhi believed in the spiritualisation of politics, Vinoba stands almost for the nullification of politics.

Sarvodaya aims to replace thoroughly the manipulative politics of power by the participant politics of co-operation. It emphasizes mutualistic activities spontaneously engaged in by the people. According to Vinoba Bhave, there are ten criteria of an ideal polity:

- (i) International Fraternity.
- (ii) The conscious, spontaneous (as far as possible) and hearty co-operation of all the inhabitants of the country.
- (iii) The identity of the good of the capable minority and the general majority.

- (iv) The orientation towards the universal and equal development of all.
- (v) The widest dispersion of political sovereignty.
- (vi) The least amount of government.
- (vii) The easiest availability of tantra or justice (?) (Sulabhatama tantra).
- (viii) The least possible expenditure.
- (ix) The lowest degree of external protection.
- (x) The universal, uninterrupted and neutral or objective spread of knowledge (Vinoba, 1953, p.25).

12.9 POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF SARVODAYA

12.9.1 Repudiation of the Marxist Theory of Class Struggle

The fundamental theme of sarvodaya is the realisation of the happiness and elevation of all. At the political level, **this** has two significant implications. They are, **first**, the repudiation of the theory of class struggle, and **second**, the safeguarding of the interests and rights of the minority. The concept of class struggle is based on the acceptance of the existence of divergent and even antithetical interests in the social structure. Sarvodaya, on the other hand, starts with the **notion** of the community as a reality almost sui generis and it holds that the aim of social and political efforts is not to serve the disproportionate interests of the dominant classes but to maximise the good of the entire community. Sarvodayism attacks the repugnant and perverse consequences of egoism and the lust for power and wealth. Hence, it stresses the necessity of disinterested service. Service, dedication, and the realisation of **common** good are its techniques and formula and it is opposed to the Marxist theory of class struggle which favours utilisation of violence. Once it is accepted that violence has to be renounced as a basis of organised social existence, there is no place for the advocacy of the disruptionist theory of the struggle of mutually opposed classes. Sarvodaya, hence, pleads for the replacement of the concept of class struggle by the more rational and organic theory of social good and harmony. This social harmony is to be realised not by **mere** verbal profession. It is to be experienced in daily conduct. There has to be deliberate extension of good feelings. The aim is not the forcible expropriation of the wealth of the rich but the conscious and spontaneous practice of 'sharing' the goods one has ready at hand. In this way, there can be an overpowering accentuation of the ideal **of** sharing and almost a mass moral revolution oriented to the effectuation of a peaceful social reconstruction can be brought about. The aim of this revolution is not to **seize** power but to bring about a change in one's outlook and hierarchy of values. The propensity to accumulate has to give place to the propensity to share.

But the repudiation of the concept of class-struggle and the acceptance of the ideal of social harmony do not **mean** the perpetuation of the present status quo with landlords and big farmers on one side **and** small farmers and agricultural labourers on the other, and the exploitation of the **latter** by the former. In his earlier days of political leadership, Gandhi was in favour of retaining the Zamindars but, later on, his views underwent a radical transformation **and** he talked endlessly about a social structure rid of all class stratification. Sarvodaya **contemplates** not the retention of the system of exploitation and coercion but it wants to **bring** about a regime of absolute social equality and the maximum of economic equality **too**. On the plane of social idealism, sarvodaya and communism

both accept social equality. But the vital difference is found in the profound attachment of sarvodaya to the ethics and techniques of non-violence. Sarvodaya contemplates a regime of equality and justice to be brought about by the dynamic transforming power of love and non-violence.

12.9.2 The Repudiation of the Concept of Majoritarianism

The second implication from the sarvodayist conception of the organic reality of the community is the repudiation of the element of superior virtue supposed to be contained in the judgement of a majority of heads. If the community is an organic structure and if all the individual members of it are bearers of moral and cultural values, then there is no place for jeopardising the lives and interests of even the lowest and the humblest. From the superficial standpoint of having got oneself registered in the list of the component members of a specific group or having paid the requisite fees for membership of a particular party, one may be in a majority or a minority. But if truth is the supreme canon and if the opinion, wish and aspiration of every one member is precious, then, in that case, one has to work on the basis of consensus and not of majority. There has to be discussion and debate and through the dialectics of argument and counter-argument some fundamental areas of mutual goodwill emerge. This and not the numerical counting of heads is the genuine method of social action. Hence, according to sarvodaya, the concept of majoritarianism has to be replaced by the concept of consensus. Sarvodaya is not satisfied with the various safeguards of proportional representation that have been devised to protect the interests of the minority. It adheres, rather, to the Gandhian concept that the superficial numerical criteria of many and few have to be replaced by a fundamental adherence to the good of the community. Sometimes it is said that different types of parties and associations grow in response to the diversity of social interests. But sarvodaya implies that this mechanical conception of plurality of social interests has to be replaced by the moral conception of the homogeneity of the fundamental interests of the society. Thus sarvodaya aims to replace the concept of majoritarianism by the concept of fundamental consensus.

12.10 SUMMARY

The philosophy of Antyodaya to Sarvodaya, based on the insights and experiences of Gandhi, is a reassertion of the valuation and moral approach to the problems of mankind, which has been a part of ancient Indian culture for ages. Vinoba Bhave rightly said, "Sarvodaya stands for not only making all happy by eliminating suffering from all but also for the bringing of a world state based on equality." For Gandhi, sarvodaya stands for the merger of one in all with self-sacrifice and a selfless service. His sarvodaya ideal, apart from standing for the meaning of the welfare of all, implies the meaning of the universal welfare and integrated development of all. As a universal ideal, it aims at not only fulfilling the minimum material needs but also developing the ethico-spiritual aspects of all people. The great contribution of sarvodaya in the present century lies in the reassertion of the Gandhian moral approach to the problems of mankind.

12.11 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the meaning and genesis of Sarvodaya.
2. 'Proper rendering of 'Unto this Last' would be Antyodaya (uplift of the last) rather than sarvodaya'. Comment.

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