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RESEARCH ARTICLE

SARVODAYA: THE GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY FOR 21st CENTURY

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Abstract

Since the inception of humanity, we as humans have come a long way in dealing with the socio-economic causes of the human civilization. The modern world has from time to time witnessed various ideas of the same doctrine in forms of experimentations, implementations, success, and failures of all sorts. The research article not only introduces us to the concept of Sarvodaya but also elaborates on the founding principles, inspiration to Gandhi Ji and criticism faced by the movement and Gandhi Ji as well. We in the 21st century find a grave need for Sarvodaya to deal with challenges faced by humanity not only at the local but also at the global level say for instance the Ukraine and Russia issues.

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Introduction:-

Since the inception of humanity, we as humans have come a long way in dealing with the socio-economic causes of the human civilization. The modern world has from time to time witnessed various ideas of the same doctrine in forms of experimentations, implementations, success, and failures of all sorts. The research article not only introduces us to the concept of Sarvodaya but also elaborates on the founding principles, inspiration to Gandhi Ji and criticism faced by the movement and Gandhi Ji as well. We in the 21st century find a grave need for Sarvodaya to deal with challenges faced by humanity not only at the local but also at the global level say for instance the Ukraine and Russia issue.

What is Sarvodaya?

Sarvodaya is committed to everyone's survival and growth. It is a holistic development of all individuals, regardless of their social status, creed, religion, or caste. The literal meaning of Sarvodaya is "Universal Uplift" also called "Progress for all".¹ It was Mohandas Gandhiji who actually for the first time coined the term Sarvodaya taking inspiration from John Ruskin's work on economy in a political state titled "Unto this Last". Although Gandhi ji came up with the term for his own use, the ideology and motive behind the same was to unify the governmental policies during that time and in the coming future to maintain a sustainable growth and equal development plan across all domains of the Indian society.

¹MP Mathai, Mahatma Gandhi's World View, Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, 2000, p.156

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Derivation Of The Concept Of Sarvodaya

Sarvodaya has been a long-drawn concept that sees derivation from multiple sources that influenced Gandhi Ji. Some of which have been discussed below: -

Ancient Inspiration of Sarvodaya

Gandhi Ji's theory of Hind Swaraj consisted of four pillars that formed for its basic principles namely, Swaraj, Non-Violence, Sarvodaya and Swadeshi. The notion of Sarvodaya has been around since ancient civilizations in one or the other form. The ancient Sages and Maharishis advocated universal well-being. They emphasized that if someone wanted to be happy, he should first consider the wellbeing of all others.²

Role of Ruskin's Book in Influencing Gandhi Ji

Ruskin's *Unto this Last* was a book introduced to Gandhi Ji from a friend while he practiced in South Africa in the year 1904. The book itself summarized to three key principles: -

1. The doing good for the world is inherently present in every individual.
2. Each profession has a same honest righteous value of earning a livelihood.
3. Life itself is a prolonged labor, and we are only the tiller of the soil and handicraftsman of the works we do.

Role of Bhagvad Gita

It is believed that the Bhagvad Gita had the most profound influence on the teachings and thinking of Gandhi Ji. Gandhi Ji had a school of thought that it is the Bhagvad Gita that talks about the establishment of Dharma i.e., peace and prosperity for all. Selfless promotion of universal peace and prosperity are one of the inspirations that Gandhi took from this book that he called his "Eternal Mother"

Influence of Buddhism and Jainism

As we can clearly see in his life lessons, Gandhi Ji was a staunch follower of Gautam Buddha and Mahavir Jain in their teachings of Dharma and Ahimsa towards all beings including the non-humans. Sarvodaya too derives the principles of uniformity for all, prosperity, and kindness for all from the teachings of the same.

Contribution of Jesus Christ and his teachings

Jesus Christ himself was the epitome of self-sacrifice in the west that caught the attention of Gandhi. Love for others and practice of forgiving became the founding thought for Sarvodaya.

Derivation from Islam

Islam is a term that signifies "peace." It is a religion of solidarity and harmony. Brotherhood and equality were established by the prophet Mohammad. All of these factors affected Gandhi's decision to start the Sarvodaya movement.

Characteristics Of Sarvodaya

As we witnessed the previous derivations, we can see how Sarvodaya as a movement finds its roots and derivations from not only one but various religious and literary school of thoughts. We can vehemently say that Sarvodaya has been a blend of all characteristics of all religions that particularly focus on universal growth.³

Following are the characteristics of the Sarvodaya movement: -

1. Sarvodaya as a doctrine strives for the betterment of the whole universe.
2. There exists no difference between any man, no matter what.
3. Each person in this world must be respected and given the due credit of their work.
4. Self-sacrifice, non-violence, and tolerance shall be the main pillars of Sarvodaya.
5. Satyagraha shall be used as the ultimate weapon of causing a social change.
6. A person to be a part of the movement of Sarvodaya one must make fraternity, liberty, and equality a part and parcel of their life.
7. Politics shall not be the centre of struggle. Members should prefer **Lokniti** over **Raajniti**.⁴

²R.P. Masani, *The five Gifts*, Part – II, Comet Publications, London, 1957, p.7.

³Dr. Shubhangi Rathi in her article titled "Gandhian Philosophy of Sarvodaya", available at, https://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/gandhi_sarvodaya.html.

⁴J.P Narayan, *The Dual Revolution*, Sarvodaya Pracharalaya, Tanjore, 1959, p.6

Objectives Of The Sarvodaya Movement:-

Objectives of the Sarvodaya movements are based on the holistic development of all individuals and not directed to individualism.

Following are the objectives of the Sarvodaya movement: -

Establish a Democratic Nation

This revolution did not think that the political parties should be in charge of the government. Instead, it was recommended that the ultimate decision would be made by selected Panchayat chiefs. The Sarpanch must be trustworthy individuals chosen by community consensus rather than on a political capitalist basis.

Economic Equality

Gandhi Ji believed that economic equality amongst the population of the nation give the whole nation a sense of financial freedom. The bridge between the rich and poor must be abridged immediately in order to provide an equal pay for the people as per their labor.

Promotion of Self-reliance and Peace

Peace and self-reliance are the key objectives of the Sarvodaya movement which has been evidently reflective in the messages and objectives of Gandhi Ji in his **Civil Disobedience movement in 1930**.⁵

Bhoodan Movement

Started by a Gandhian follower **Vinoba Bhave**, this movement tried to bring equality to the rich and poor wherein the rich of the village was convinced to give a portion of their land to the poor to uplift their cultivation and cattle.⁶

Critical Analysis Of The Sarvodaya Movement

How one should perceive the Sarvodaya movement after vising the objectives of the same is to basically create a religion of oneness that contains within itself people from all walks of life, religion, caste, and creed. The reason for the same has been only one motive, that is to increase the self-sufficiency for the generations to come and a rich economy for our nation.

Further we observe various implications of the movements and how those implications hold value in the current national and global politics.

Economic Implications

As we critically analyze the whole idea of Sarvodaya, we see the approach of Gandhi for an economic growth by enhancing and enriching the common man from the grassroot level. He in his autobiography goes on to say that "**The key to being economically rich is not to multiply the sources to earn, but to reduce your wants.**" Professor V.P Verma too says that the practice of Bhoodan is the one if followed in all sectors of a nation, this could be the path to turn capitalism into Sarvodaya. Danas, Tapas, and bonds of mutual help force all the political and social parties to work together.

Political Implications

Gandhi Ji always wanted a people centered government rather than a political centered power wherein the lowest class have an equal say in the decisions of the nation and also contributes to the economic well-being of the same.⁷ As observed above the government we see Gandhi wanted to establish was of a kind that used non-violent Satyagrahi methods as a way to assert the opinions.

⁵Philosophies at the Sarvodaya Foundation available at, <https://sarvodaya.org/about/philosophy/collected-works-vol-2/countrys-crying-need>

⁶Bondurant, Joan. Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict. (Princeton, 1958) p 156.

⁷J.C.Kumrappa:Economy of Performance; Sarva Seva Sangha Prakashan, Rajghat; Sixth Edition 1997

Philosophical Implications

The philosophical point of view when analyzed in this doctrine points out towards the elimination of any sense of competition and promote the sacred law of morality. There is present a staunch belief that the betterment and improvement of a human being can be achieved only through two ways, Tapasya (self-striving effort) or by closed ones trying to convince a person through peaceful methods such as non-cooperation or disobedience and fasting.

Criticism To Sarvodaya Movement

Sarvodaya movement though aimed towards all goals of human benefits, it had a good number of critics as well that found sense of hypocrisy or impractical approach in the movement.

Following are the common criticisms faced by the movement: -

1. A large portion of the capitalist, Asian and Western School of thoughts have disregarded the whole movement. The reason for the same being that they have found the whole concept of Sarvodaya a “Utopian” land of dreams that is impossible to apply in the real world, especially with the fast-paced life in the 21st century.⁸
2. Sarvodaya by many is seen to be a doctrine that would coerce a particular sect or class of people to forcefully take part in the damage control of things that they might not have even been a part of. What many jurists believe nowadays is that with the fundamental rights of the people, Sarvodaya cannot achieve the contribution it desires to actually bring about a change in the society.
3. Many experts in the subject believe that the goal of Gandhi Ji although is very noble in its true sense, the far-sighted effects of the same are not well calculated. A rise in the number of industries and economic influx would not really keep the expectations and desires of the common people low, on the contrary would increase them.
4. The Marxists have rejected the ideology on the fact that, it is a movement that demands a lot more from the government as well as the citizens. The concept of having very limited wants with de-centralized governments is something that could no go hand in hand.
5. Decentralization of all economic institutions and administrative reforms are too good to hear on paper and are mere academic exercises.

Conclusion And Recent Implementation of Principles Of Sarvodaya In Global Scenario

As one visits the deep analysis of the whole doctrine of Sarvodaya, we get to see that the movement has all the noble causes a good one requires to attract a social support from the nation, but it comes with its own set of drawbacks and challenges. No matter what the criticism maybe about the applicability of the movement, even now we have a lot of scenarios in the global arena of politics that could improve the quality of life of the world and especially in the third-world countries.

Let us now visit three instances of the current world where some aspects or principles of Sarvodaya are applicable and have been applied: -

Need for application in Ukraine-Russian Conflict

One thing that we all know is that the current ongoing situation of the Ukraine-Russia conflict could have been and can still be solved through the principles of non-violence. The whole conflict that started through the instigation of the West and naïve attitude of Russia showcased the sense of insecurity each of the nations have with each other. Had there been some peace, maturity and the basic Gandhian principles been applied by either of the sides, such a big conflict could be averted.

Current Application in “AatmaNirbhar Bharat”

Post 2014 elections we observed that one of the most important motives of Gandhi Ji’s Sarvodaya being implemented in our nation. The AatmaNirbharBharatProgramme has showcased how the nation this time strived to be self-reliant in order to boost our economy and become less dependent on external factors to gained financial stability, the same proved to be helpful and made India one of the top 5 GDPs in the world. With this government scheme going on we get to see the age-old goal of Gandhi while he headed on the Dandi March for self-sustained salt making practices.

⁸Dr. Thomas Joseph in his article “Gandhian Philosophy of Sarvodaya” available at, <https://www.ijsr.net/archive/v6i11/ART20177576.pdf>.

Panchayati Raj System AND Rise of Democracy

The Gram Panchayat Raj system as suggested by Gandhi Ji has again been implemented in the governmental structure and though has been flawed at times but has been running in our democracy since years and years.

On the other hand, India has proved to be the largest and most effective democracy wherein the voices of the lowest people do matter in the parliament of the nation.

Therefore, at the end we can conclude that although there are grave practicality issues in the movement of Sarvodaya, one cannot really question the wider motives. Ideas of the Sarvodaya are quite soaring and difficult to implement in the exact way as Gandhi Ji expects people to. But still, some portions of it need and are being implemented and proving to be a success. Sarvodaya and the principles it has serve as a beacon light for us, pointing us in the correct direction, toward our goal of liberty, harmony, and worldwide fellowship. According to Gandhi, the Kingdom of God may be established on earth if we follow the path of Sarvodaya.

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