Chapter -3

Sarvodaya Concept vs. ICDS

The book 'Unto This Last' written by John Ruskin profoundly influenced Gandhi and it brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation in his life. According to Gandhi the teachings of 'Unto This Last' are:

(1) "That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all

(2) That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barbers is as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.

(3) That a life of labour, i.e., that the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraft man is the life worth living."

The above ideas deeply touched Gandhi and he visualised a social order and the gist of this is that the goodness of every individual leads to the goodness of all. In this social order every individual has an equal right to work, earn and to live. This social order is known as Sarvodaya.

The term 'Sarvodaya' comes from the Sanskrit roots 'Sarva' (all) and 'Udaya' (rising). This means the all-round well being of all says Devadoss. In fact Mahatma Gandhi had a greater and wider perspective extending it to the all round well-being and of the whole individual including all living beings and the whole creation.

"Udaya' which means 'rising' or 'reaching ones aim'. It implies all-round well being or perfection. An integrated spiritual outlook and ceaseless endeavour to convert every human activity in to a means for spiritual elevation, is the key to the life and teachings of Gandhi. While it is an undeniable fact that

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24 Gandhi MK - Sarvodaya - Navajeevan Publishing House Ahamedabad 1954, pp. 3 & 4
spiritual perfection is the goal, it should be recognized that the necessities of existence should be made available to every one. According to Gandhi, non-violence implies social, economic and political non-exploitation of sentient creatures for the benefit of others. Gandhiji refers to this by saying that a non-violent activity is such as involves no exploitation.  

Thus, Sarvodaya means Welfare and Prosperity of all. According to Gandhi it represents the ideal social order and its basis is all-embracing love.

To facilitate Sarvodaya people must be duty bound and not insisting on rights for establishing the happiest relations in all walks of life. Abiding Moral Laws is also an essential ingredient for achieving Sarvodaya. According to Ruskin men can be happy only if they observe the moral law.

"Gandhi was of the opinion that Sarvodaya can be attained only when selfless individuals have fallen in line to reform and reconstruct a society that does not takes its weapon of steel rather takes into kindliest consideration the needs of other prior to his own. For this, Gandhiji prescribed certain views for those individuals who would bear the yoke with him. For building a Sarvodaya Society in India, Gandhiji gave 18 fold programme. They are:

(1) Communal unity
(2) Removal of untouchability
(3) Prohibition
(4) Khadi
(5) Other rural Industries
(6) Village sanitation
(7) Nai Talim
(8) Adult Education

25 Devadoss - Saryodaya and the Problem of Political Soverignity - University of Madras, 1974, p. 108
Sarvodaya pleads for the replacement of the concept of class struggle by the more rational theory of social goods and harmony. This social harmony is to be realized not by mere verbal profession. It is to be experienced in daily conduct. Gandhiji often said that he who had no belief in the constructive programme has no concrete feeling for the starving Millions.\footnote{Gandhi M.K. -Saryodaya-Navajeevan Publishing House Ahamedabad,1954,p.6}

In order to ensure the welfare of all, money is needed. This money must be legitimately earned in tune with moral and spiritual considerations. The money earned without these considerations leads to animality. According to the concept of Sarvodaya when man becomes materialistic or money minded he does not care for any thing good or bad it leads to social imbalance. Thus Sarvodaya is a philosophy which provides checks against these imperfections of human mind and soul. It endeavours to put man on the tract which may lead him to real social happiness.

Gandhi said that "Our first duty is that we should not be a burden on our society, i.e., we should be self-sufficient. That itself is a service. After
becoming self-sufficient we shall use our spare time for the service of others. If all become self-sufficient no one will have any difficulty. In that case no one will be required to undertake service of others. But we have not yet reached that stage and therefore, we have to think of social service. Even if we succeed in realizing complete self-sufficiency, man being a social animal we shall have to accept service in some form or other. That is man is as much dependent on others as he is dependent on himself."^{28}

Gandhiji said "self-giving, self-control and self-suffering are prime requisites" for realizing Sarvodaya. It also requires great self-discipline and training and development of soul-force."^{29} Gandhiji was of the opinion that for achieving Sarvodaya the best and effective means is spiritual through the technique of Satyagraha or clinging to the Truth and Non-Violence at the cost of untold suffering for oneself and even death."^{30}

"Indian Philosophy is foresighted, progressive, overdeveloping, ever-evolving and giving rise to new ideals which aim at the highest goal, sunnumbonum or well-being of all." Its cherished goal is that "May all be at ease, may all be sinless; may all experience happiness; may none experience suffering."^{31}

Hence the aim of Sarvodaya Social order is one and the same object of Indian Philosophy. This is precisely because it aims at the well-being of all.

Gandhiji's prime/supreme consideration is the individual. According to him, man being rooted in truth, his growth and self-

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^{28} Pandey - Gandhi Sarvodaya and Organisations - Chugh Publications, 1988, pp. 24, 25 & 26
^{30} Panday - Gandhian Sarvodaya and Organisations Chugh Publications, 1988, p. 443
^{31} Devadoss - Sarvodaya and the problem of Political Sovereignty - University of Madras, 1974, p. 23.
expression require him to be a true Satyagrahi. "Non-violence has come to men and will remain declared Gandhi, it is the communication of peace on earth."

The greatest truth being the unity of all life, self-expression consists in striving after the welfare of all which is the essence of Sarvodaya ideology. This was his life mission. To achieve this, he advocated pure means. The sum and substance of the teachings of Gandhi is to be found in two words; spirituality (siva) and service (seva). The goal of man is spiritual freedom. In order to attain the goal man must lose his ego in devoted service to all beings, i.e., to seek the welfare of all.

Freedom is the essence of the soul of man. It is obscured by ignorance (avidya) and its trail of evil. When ignorance is dispelled through wisdom of the nature of Brahman, one gains release even though the physical body may continue to appear for a while.

Sarvodaya is indeed an attempt to develop Gandhian ideas regarding decentralization and villagism. Gandhi visualized a stateless society and repudiated the authority of the state at every level and in every form. He was convinced that more institutional structures will not suffice for the concrete realization of rights and hence he postulated the ideal of Ramarajya, which means the Kingdom of love, justice and righteousness. Gandhi believed in the sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority. If freedom is the desired object, then Sarvodaya wants people to take to heart the famous dictum 'that Government is the best which governs the least'. It is the stress on the power and strength of the people, which is the must significant contribution of Gandhian thought to the world political thought.32

32 T.M.P. Mahadevan, Outlines of Hinduism, Op cit, p. 321
Gandhiji believed like Ruskin that the Socio-economic organization that guarantees the well-being of all the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak, is the only one worth striving for, what is good for all must also be good for each and everyone individually. 'Gandhiji's modification of the concept from, the Welfare of the least antyodaya) to 'welfare of all' (sarvodaya) is profoundly significant.

Sarvodaya is a creative synthesis of individual happiness and social good. It is indeed considered as the integrated social philosophy which redeems 'the reform of the individual as the reform of the society'. It is a dynamic process and so it consists in the development of more and more perfect forms. Sarvodaya is a pursuit after varnasrama dharmas which covers all aspects of life. The Gandhian ideology of sarvodaya refuses to be satisfied with the progress and well-being only of a class or a nation. It advocates the good or, and the emancipation of all living beings.

The overall transformation of the entire race of mankind at all levels of human existence is the goal of Sarvodaya ideology.

There was no division in Gandhiji's mind between individual and social salvation. In fact, individual salvation lay only in the endeavour to social salvation through means pure, righteous, truthful and non-violent. His identification with the-poorest of the poor and the humblest of the humble was the corollary to his intense and earnest endeavour for social salvation at all levels and in all fields. Gandhiji observes: "The Swaraj of my dream is the poor man’s swaraj. The necessities of life should be enjoyed by you in common with
those enjoyed by the princes and the monied-man ..... I have not the slightest
doubt that Swaraj is not Purna-Swarai until these amenities are guaranteed to
you under it." 33

The word 'Swaraj' is to connote 'one who rules himself' and is therefore
spiritually free. The spiritual tradition of 'Swaraj' can be further explained
by the assertion of the "Bhagavad Gita, that one should lift oneself by one’s
own efforts (atmana) and should not degrade oneself." 34

S.K. Maitra commenting on this basic ideal observes: "Hindu morality
primarily aimed at the autonomy of the individuals, i.e., at making himself
sufficient and self dependent and free from all external bonds, physical and
social." 35

Gandhiji was imbued with this tradition of spiritual Swaraj, but he
applied it to secular condition in a unique way. His social and economic
objective of Sarvodaya, the good of all, was the outcome of his spiritual
outlook in life. His ethics, his broad based religion outlook his humanism, his
ideas about decentralised economy and diffusion of political power are all
based on his philosophy of life indicated above. It must be remembered that
Gandhi looked upon own life as a spiritual adventure and would not tolerate
any compartmental outlook of his different activities. It was his inner spiritual
development which reflected itself in all his actions. Spirituality meant the
experience of identity with the truth of life and existence, with the creator and
his creation. Identity means love which must express itself in selfless service
and sacrifice for the uplift of all. 36

33 Devados – Sarvodaya and the Problem of Political Sovereignty. University of Madras, 1974, p. 63 &
64
34 Young India 26-3-1931, p. 46
35 Bhagavad Gita, VI, 5
36 S.K Maitra The Ethics of the Hindus, 11 Ed., p. 8
In sum, it can be said that the concept 'Sarvodaya' epitomises Gandhi's whole social-philosophy, which aims at the attainment of both material prosperity and spiritual realisations. Gandhi said over-indulgence of some individuals lead to the violation of natural law. According to Gandhi "I for one daily realize this truth from experience, that Nature provides for the needs of every living creature from movement to movement and I also see that, voluntarily or involuntarily, knowingly or unknowingly, we violate this great law every moment of our lives. All of us can see that, in consequence of our doing so, on the one hand large numbers suffer through over-indulgence and, on the other, countless people suffer through want. Our endeavour, therefore, is to save mankind from the calamity of widespread starvation. On the one hand, and on the other, destruction of food grains by the American millionaires through a false understanding of economic laws. It is true that, of course, that it is impossible at present to live in perfect conformity with this natural law. But that need not worry us."37

According to Gandhi, when a person in choosing a life career which would make the greatest contribution to society, the vital consideration is not so much the choice of one or another profession as the achieving of self-realisation. In facing the problem of a career, a man should emphasise, above all else, the spiritual aspects of life. With this uppermost in his thoughts, he should test his own potentialities, discover how he can best meet the peculiar needs of the local community in which he finds himself, and apply himself to meeting those needs to the utmost of his ability."38

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37 Devadoss - Satvodaya and the Problem of Political Sovereignty, University of Madras 1974, p. 23