CHAPTER V
SARVODAYA AS AN ALTERNATIVE: SCOPE AND LIMITS

Democracies all over the world have always responded to address the problem of social inequalities in their societies, either by enacting legislation or incorporating equality clauses in their respective constitutions. Contemporary India has been truly the battleground of conflicting ideas and ideals, powers and passions; she is subjected to a cross fire of principles and precepts from varying quarters and the winds of doctrine blow over the length and breadth of the land. The problems that India faces range from the urgent necessities of the hour to the eternal questions of history. India has to win her own identity in the modern World and coin her ancient wisdom in the currency of modern life. Truly, India needs not merely the skills and ingenuity of her scientists, technologists and planners, but also the wisdom and vision of philosophers and prophets. Even the burning question of Indian political and social life cannot finally be solved at the level of mere expediency; to the viable and lasting, they have to be answered in terms of a philosophy and wisdom which India can cherish and call its own.

It has been observed that “Eminent leaders of men fall into two categories; the first category belongs to all those who affect the life and thought of their contemporaries in varying degrees, but whose influence steadily fades away after their death. To the second category, belong those few who combine to influence humanity through their life and message long after their physical non existence. The latter phenomenon bespeaks a type of greatness capable of defying time itself which dissolves everything in its relentless flow. Such
greatness discloses something Universal and abiding in the midst of much that is narrow and fleeting in the ideas and values radiated by the leader by his life and message. Mahatma Gandhi belongs to this second category."

Mahatma Gandhi was undoubtedly one of the most outstanding and dominant figures of the resurgent India. He was a ‘Karma-Yogi’, par excellence. Gandhi, more a man of the means, almost the embodiment of the Indian peasants, represented the ancient Hindu tradition of India, that of renunciation, sacrifice and asceticism.

In fact, Gandhi’s life and thought are so closely interwoven and involved with the practical issues of the day that one is likely to miss the larger background and context. He is so imminently a practical idealist that one might, at times, even forget the idealism on which his practice was based. Perhaps, one could claim to see in Gandhi, the rich tradition and culture of India, the philosophical and the practical, complementing each other and transforming the larger life of the country. The sage of Sevagram has shown us the path to perfection and peace through his philosophy of Sarvodaya.

The present social and political philosophy of Sarvodaya is by common consent an extension and elucidation of Gandhiji’s Sarvodaya philosophy, and its application to the present day problems of the World in general and in India in particular. It is still evolving and pruning its deficiencies when and as they discovered. It preserves all that is valuable in the cultures of the past and accepts all that is valuable in the modern thought and practice.

As described earlier, Sarvodaya is a free and flexible ideology which welcomes and assimilates all that is good in others. It synthesizes the best in Western democracy with the best in communism. It preserves all that is valuable in the cultures of the past and accepts all that is valuable in the modern thought and practice. There is an organic unity in this philosophy. Its philosophical postulates form the basis of its ethical principles, while the ideas

1 Devadoss, T.S., Sarvodaya and the Problem of Political Sovereignty (Madras: University of Madras), 1974, p. 53
of revolution and its process are in consonance with the principle of non-violence. The structure of society as envisaged and the process whereby the present society is to be transformed are fully consistent with its basic ideas.

The world today requires both peace and revolution, and Sarvodaya appears to be the only ideology which gives hope of a peaceful revolution. It is also the only existing philosophy which holds a comprehensive view of the world transcending all barriers that separate man from man, religion from religion and region from region.

In Mahatma’s dream of India, all the people would enjoy the greatest amount of freedom, and live on the principle of each for all and all for each, and where production would be according to the capacity of the individual and distribution according to the needs. Obviously, such a goal is realisable only where individuals are not driven against their will but are bound to each other by cords of love like the members of a family. Gandhi presented the idea of Sarvodaya, i.e. the ‘welfare of all’; in order to found a society where everybody would be equal and the welfare or the upliftment of all will be the ultimate goal. To him, “If we would see our dream of Sarvodaya i.e., true democracy realized we would regard the humblest and lowest Indian as being equally the ruler of India with the tallest in the land. This presupposes that all are pure or will become pure, if they are not. And purity must go hand-in-hand with wisdom. No one would then harbour any distinction between community and community, caste and outcaste. Everybody would regard all as equal with oneself and hold them together in the silken net of love. No one would regard another as untouchable. We would as equal the toiling labourers and the rich capitalist. Everybody would know how to earn an honest living by the sweat of one’s brow and make no distinction between intellectual and physical labour. To hasten this consummation, we would voluntarily turn ourselves into scavengers. No one who has wisdom will ever touch opium, liquor or any intoxicants. Everybody would observe Swadeshi as the rule of life and regard every woman, not being his according to her age, never lust after her in his
heart. He would be ready to lay down his life when occasion demands it, never want to take another’s life.”

After independence the establishment of the democratic government changed the entire context of socio economic and political situations in India. For the Sarvodaya thinkers political freedom brought a new opportunity to work for the transformation of society. To them – as to every true Gandhian – Sarvodaya means self-rule. The problems of the people should, therefore, be handled through the initiative of the people themselves. “True democracy or Swaraj of the masses can never come through untruthful and violent means, for the simple reason that the natural corollary to their use would be to remove all opposition through the suppression or extermination of the antagonist. That does not make for individual freedom. Individual freedom can have the fullest play only under a regime of unadulterated Ahimsa.”

While analysing the present period of time we come across a system which is based on violence instead of peace and non-violence. The clash of interests among different sections of society and among different nations have degenerated the whole system and is working against the efforts to establish a peaceful world order. Gandhi himself stresses that “the state should undoubtedly be secular. Everyone living in it should be entitled to profess his religion without let or hindrance, so long as the citizen obeyed the common law of the land.”

Vinoba points out that there are three ways of bringing about a new social order. The first is the way of massacre of those who have exploited the helpless masses. This violent way is fraught with serious dangers. The doctrine of sword has lost its justification either practical or moral in the modern era. Violence superficially resolves a problem, only to give rise to many more in its place. If the masses take to violence, they would invite dictatorship and military regime. The second alternative is to bring the changed order through law and government action. But in democracy law can be equally tyrannical if

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2 Gandhi, M.K., Harijan, 18-1-48, p. 5
3 Gandhi, M.K., Harijan 27-5-39, p. 2
4 Gandhi, M.K., Harijan 27-8-47, p. 4
it is not based on the willful consent of the people. Beside there is no scope for
individual initiative and freedom in resolving issues through laws. Vinoba
further explains that “he is not against taking legal steps to end social and
economic evils. But in democracy the first thing is the psychological
preparation of the people for the change. Real transformation comes through a
chain of triple change. First there should be the change of heart. secondly this
should lead to the change of the ways of living and as a result, thirdly, social
institutions should assume new form.”\(^5\)

A large section of the Indian society claims that the principles of
'Sarvodaya' may be very relevant today to bring about an egalitarian democratic
society. In place of parliamentary-representative democracy, there will be as
much as possible, participatory democracy ensuring decentralization of political
and economic activities and institutions. The Panchayati Raj institutions
adopted through 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act-1992, have materialized
the concept of 'democratic decentralization' and made democratic system a
participative system in real sense. Under this set up people participate through
their representatives at grass root level. In fact Gandhi's approach to Sarvodaya
claims to provide the maximum participation of people in the administration
and government. In order to further strengthen the grass root institutions of
governance, women were given special privileges by giving 50 per cent
reservation to them in Panchayati raj institutions.

However, in order to materialise such pattern there shall be a system
where there will be no discrimination among different individuals on the basis
of caste, sex, race, religion etc. and each and everybody should took it as a
common cause to fight the practice of untouchability in the society. The
division of society on the basis of caste not only hamperes the unity of society
but also reverse the social developmental process. According to Gandhi
'untouchability is not only a part and parcel of Hinduism, but a plague, which it
is the bowden duty of every Hindu to combat. Every Hindu, therefore, who

\(^5\) Tikekar, Indu B., Integral Revolution An Analytical Study of Gandhian Thought, op. cit., p.41
considers it as a sin, should atone for it by fraternizing with untouchables, associating with them in a spirit of love and service, deeming himself purified by such acts, redressing their grievances, helping them patiently to overcome ignorance and other evils due to the slavery of ages, and inspiring other Hindus to do likewise."

Sarvodaya, therefore, comes as a natural consequence to lift up whoever is neglected. Gandhi further criticized the untouchability that “none can be born untouchable, as all are sparks of one and the same Fire. It is wrong to treat certain human beings as untouchable from birth.”

In this respect, those who are against the reservation policy claim that the idea of Sarvodaya focuses on the society as a whole and guides the people toward the welfare of common people. Now the question is: Can Sarvodaya is an alternative to the present caste based reservation policy? However, such a question needs a fresh look in the changing circumstances. It has to be studied and examined carefully that can Sarvodaya encourage individual to selfless striving to establish a society where work as well as sufficient food, clothing, shelter etc. are guaranteed to the poor and needy as the matter of their right? Similarly, can Sarvodaya provide materialistic benefits to all sections of the society or to the needy? The democratic values of social organisation under Sarvodaya may be different, as a member of social organisation no one can rule another, but every person himself has to regulate his own conduct through self discipline. This includes following the path of truth and non-violence. By following it individual developed moral power and fearlessness. He puts common good in front of Individual good and devotes his or her life for the welfare of others.

However, it must be examined here that the achievement of the interest of all would be possible only when each individual would have at his heart the interest of all. Hence, “greatest happiness of the greatest number” is not an appropriate theory because this principle can never lead to a happy society. It is

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7 Ibid., p. 28
often asked if it were at all possible to achieve the greatest happiness of all. If each other do not think of the happiness of all, the same will never be attained. Welfare of the whole society is possible only when we set that aim before us. The proportion of our achievement of general happiness is altogether a different matter. But whatever the amount of happiness achieved would also be a general shortfall. As our vision would not be partisan, our aim must be happiness of all. In Sarvodaya, “we aim at the happiness of all, not the majority, not the greatest number, not even nearly hundred per cent but absolutely one hundred per cent people. If the aim itself is defective the achievement is bound to be so and social welfare will never be attained. The aim of happiness or welfare of all alone can be truly in the interest of the society and every citizen must have it at his heart. A citizen caring for him is just not the way to secure general social welfare.”

Accordingly, every person under Sarvodaya, follow just and genuine means in order to achieve his goal. Gandhian philosophy gives precedence to means over end. "They say 'means are after all means'. I would say, 'means are after all everything'. ‘As the means so the end’. There is no wall of separation between means and the end. Indeed the creator has given us control (and that too very limited) over means, none over the end. Realization of the goal is in exact proportion to that of the means. This is a proposition that admits no exception.”

In the present time everybody now accepts as commonplace, that national economic prosperity depends, not on the privilege of few but on the welfare of all. Gandhi, therefore, made economic equality an essential feature of his Sarvodaya Society. He was also conscious of the fact the political freedom and democracy would be impossible without equality. This fact is very much visible in present Indian political system. In Indian society the inequality is not only based on economic reason but it is also on social and religious

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9 Gandhi, M.K., Young India, 17-7-24, pp. 4-5
bases. "The economic equality of Gandhiji’s conception means that everybody should have enough for his or her natural needs. By natural needs he meant a balanced diet, sufficient clothing to cover shame and protect oneself from cold, a decent house to live in, adequate medical relief and facilities for education and healthy recreation."10

Therefore, for Gandhi, "Economic equality is the master key to non-violent Independence Working for economic equality means the levelling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of nation’s wealth on the one hand, and the levelling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other. A non-violent system of government is clearly impossibility as long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists. This contrast between the places of New Delhi and the miserable hovels of the poor labouring class nearby cannot last one day in a free India in which the poor will enjoy the same power as the richest in the land."11

The main objective of Sarvodaya is to provide full and integral employment to every member of society, and for this purpose the industrial structure would have to be refashioned to increase production while maximising employment. It is envisaged that this full employment in a Sarvodaya society would be for the most part self employment, and in industries where this is economically and technically impossible, one of cooperative social or mutual employment. Sarvodaya ensures that every member of society receives an optimum of material requisites of well-being essential for the development of his personality and for enabling him to make his creative contribution to the welfare of society.

Sarvodaya, while not believing in the limitless multiplication of wants, does believe that the vital standard of living must be guaranteed to the people to ensure peace, stability, justice, equality and non violence. Therefore the plan would provide for the production of as much of essentials as would be needed

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10 Prasad, K.M., Sarvodaya of Gandhiji (New Delhi: Raj Hans Publications), 1984, P.84
for that standard. Since Sarvodaya aims at regional self sufficiency, the plan would aim at maximising self sufficiency in the elementary needs of man in every village and region, to the extent that considerations of geography and the limitations imposed by the availability of natural resources permit.

Furthermore, it would ensure that techniques and instruments of production are not such as to seek to increase material well-being by adopting a predatory and vendalistic attitude to nature, but are such as to instil reverence for life and keep the needs of the whole of humanity including posterity in mind. Therefore attempts would be made to replenish as far as humanly possible, the natural resources utilised, and to protect and provide for all life that revolves round man and his social, economic and cultural pursuits.

The condition of our country requires anxious consideration. There are violent conflicts everywhere. Terrorism, Naxalism, Caste conflicts separatist movement, regionalism and communalism etc. are major challenges faced by nation. The increasing incidences of violence reflect that the social, economic, religious and political institutions of India are not working as per the requirement or are not changing with the time.

Here, it may be appropriate to explain that the problem of Naxalism is not only a problem of political isolation but it is equally a problem of social deprivation, economic inequality and exploitation. State power or counter violence may not be a required to overcome this problem. It is right that state should manifest its power, in order to maintain the unity and integrity of the country, but the other aspects of the problem should also be kept in mind while tackling such problems of violence. The people of these areas were left far behind in the process of economic development and their integration into the mainstream national development and league was ignored with the time. The Gandhian model of 'Sarvodaya' can be an effective tool in order to solve the problem of common people in such affected areas. Every individual should feel himself as a part of the main system.
In the words of Gandhi, “My idea of society is that while we are born equal, meaning that we have a right to equal opportunity, all have not the same capacity. It is, in the nature of things, impossible. For instance, all cannot have the same height, or colour or degree of intelligence, etc., therefore in the nature of things, some will have more and they will utilize their talents for this purpose. If they utilise their talents kindly, they will be performing the work of the state. Such people exist as trustee, on no other terms. I would allow a man of intellect to earn more; I would not cramp his talent. But the bulk of his greater earning must be used for the goal of the state, just as the income of all earning sons of the father goes to the common family fund.”

However, the fruit of development should be equally distributed among people and the policies which are meant for their upliftment, should be implemented honestly. Gandhi considered that vested economic interests could be the 'greatest obstacle' in the creation of a non-violent, egalitarian, Sarvodaya social order. He wrote on the eve of the Salt Satyagraha in 1930, "The greatest obstacle in the path of non-violence is the presence in our midst of the indigenous interests that have sprung up from British Rule the interests of moneyed men, speculators, scrip holder, landholder, factory owners and the like. All these do not always realize that they are living on the blood of the masses, and when they do, they become as callous as the British principles whose tools and agent they are.”

It has been observed that the same problems were faced by the tribal people from the hands of zamindars, mine owners, industrialist when industrial units were set up in their areas. The emergence of caste sena's in many state further weaken the social unity and divide the society into various groups. The frequent evident clashes between them is hampering the society from inside and strengthening the caste based solidarity and even this could be a big problem.

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12 Gandhi, M.K., Young India, 26-11-31, p. 2
13 Gandhi, M.K., Young India, February 6, 1930, p. 44

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The goal of the Constitution makers was to build up an egalitarian society, look far from the search. Gandhi favoured to create class consciousness among the masses and bring about unity among them, but instead of bloody war, Sarvodaya exhorts them to offer non-violent, non-cooperation with the oppressor, if persuasive methods fail to convert the latter. During an interview in London on the occasion of the 2nd Round Table Conference, Gandhi said "The masses today do not see in the landlords and other profiteers their enemy. But the consciousness of the wrong done to them by these classes has to be created in them. I do not teach the message to regard the capitalists as their enemies, but I teach them that they (the exploiters and the oppressors) were the victims of a system. In such situation the system must be destroyed and not the individual."

The problem of faulty system is prevalent even today. People still faces such problems which they used to face during British rule. The Change in the ruler or after getting Independence, there is not much that has changed in India, as we continued with the same system of governance.

The democratic form of government is considered as the best form of government in present period, but its efforts in levelling the gap between the rich and the poor or ruler or ruled has practically failed. The efforts to make it a government of the people, by the people and for the people have not reached to its conclusion. People though participate in the process of government but in reality the ruling class still consists of a very few per cent of elites and the share of the involvement of masses is very minimal. The government by the people is still a goal to be reached, because there are still more than 40 percent of population which do not use their voting rights in order to elect their representation. The lack of awareness, low level of literacy and lack of basic amenities led people to stay away from democratic process. Even those who use their rights sometime sold it on the line of caste, clan or religion. Lastly, the government is meant to work for the development of people i.e., government

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for the people but in reality it has become a government to work for the
development of a 'chosen few' or the already prosperous section of the society.
The poor and downtrodden sections of the society are still battling to get the
basic requirements of life. People are not getting drinking water, health
facilities, sanitation and food for their livelihood. There are many policies and
programmes, which are specially meant and designed to uplift the poor sections
of society. But as far as the reality is concerned, we still hold the record of
maximum numbers of population living under abject poverty and majority of
them are from the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

It has been seen that the unregulated and corrupt implementation
mechanism of government is one of the major reasons in the failure of this
system. The Gandhian view of ‘Sarvodaya’ i.e., welfare of all seems the only
option with us, in order to inculcate the benefits of development to the last man
or to the lowest level of society. The Gandhian model of "Gram-Swaraj' works
on the pattern of village republic, where people elect their representative on the
basis of adult franchise and where people themselves share responsibilities not
only in rule making but also in their implementation. Such system was adopted
in 1992 by a Constitutional Amendment Act to empower people. The working
of Panchayati Raj Institutions has started showing the desired results. Though
it’s very early to predict their success but the way this system of governance is
evolving can some bring changes in the future democratic process. No doubt, it
would also require a lot of improvements.

The importance and need to follow Gandhian views has become, the
need of the hour because the way religious intolerance is spreading the hatred
among people and the way communal forces are using religion as a tool, in
order to achieve their goals, has brought the various religions on the verge of
clash and conflicts. The increasing incidents of communal violence have again
divided the society on the basis of religion. The seeds of suspicion among
different communities have become a stumbling block in strengthening of
social fabric of society and the nation as a whole.
Now, in the present context religion has become a controversial issue and thus it is no more remain a personal issue of the individual. The politicisation of religion has further degraded the situation. The new policy of government to implement the reservations on the basis of religion for the backward sections among Muslims can again be futile to bring equality in the society. Instead, giving reservation on the basis of religion, efforts should be to provide the needy people the basic facilities, which will enable them to progress in life and can contribute in the nation building process. The criteria for giving benefits should be need based instead of religion or caste based. Such practices will further divide the society and the feeling of communal hatred will further spread.

The Mahatma’s ideology always favours the policy of mutual cooperation and trust among various religions in society. He himself gave equal respect and importance to the teachings of the various religions. He even favoured that politics should be based on religious values. For Gandhi politics bereft of religion is a death trap, which kills soul. For him we should implement the religious teachings of love, cooperation, honesty, helping the needy etc into the politics so that we can contribute in maintaining social and communal harmony and development without interfering into the religious matter of masses. In order to achieve such pattern Gandhi favoured the moral development of the people. According to Gandhi, “Morality is an essential ingredient in all the faiths of the world, but apart from religion, our commonsense indicates the necessity of observing the moral law. Only by observing it we can hope to be happy.”

The importance of duties over rights is another aspect of Sarvodaya. “If all simply insist on right and no duties, there will be utter confusion and chaos. If instead of insisting on rights everyone does his duty, there will immediately be the rule of order established among mankind. If you apply this simple and universal rule to employers and labourers, landlords and tenants, the princes

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15 Kumarppa, Bharathan, Sarvodaya: The Welfare of All, op.cit., p. 7
and their subjects, or the Hindus and the Muslims, you will find that the happiest relations can be established in all walks of life without creating disturbance in and dislocation of life and business which you see in India as in the other parts of the world. It has been experienced that today the people want more rights and privileges in the society from their government. They want more freedom in the public sphere of their life. And on the other hand they pay hardly any attention to perform their duties as a responsible citizen of the country.

Under Sarvodaya system citizens are to perform their duties toward society and work toward the welfare of all. Whereas the caste based reservation policy categories the society into various groups and they use this policy as their rights and even sometime misuse the benefits of policy. The incidents of getting reservation benefits on fake documents are common these days. Peoples are getting fake documents from official machinery by paying bribe. By doing this they not only encourage corruption, but also steel the benefits of a deserving or needy person. The prosperous sections (creamy layer) even among depressed classes are enjoying all benefits whereas those who are in needs of these benefits are unable to get or use them. Even more than six decade after the independence more than 40 per cent population is living below poverty line. Among the lower sections of society, who were exploited from centuries, are still living in to the same conditions. And is not much change occurred into their life even after the reservation policy. A vast majority of people are without proper shelter, without adequate clothing and quite large number are not sure from where their next meal is going to come from. As a sharp contrast we have a tiny minority which possesses much more than it needs and more than what it can use.

Gandhi believed that the problem of poverty and unemployment could be solved by the combination of agriculture and industrialisation. Indian social structure is based on the rural social system with main dependence on

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16 Ibid., p. 6
agriculture. The majority of people in India still live in villages and earn their livelihood from agriculture based work. The population dependency ratio is very high in India and therefore Gandhi favoured the production by the masses over the production by industries. The pattern of production will be based on small scale pattern at village level. It will be a society where the instruments of production will be simplified, so that common masses can apply them, understand them and own them individually or collectively. According to K.G. Mashruwala, “We must think of life as a whole and in all its varied aspects. Then there can be no watertight divisions and consequent clash of interests between agriculture and other industries or occupations. It should be possible for the worker of one occupation to take part in another occupation or have a share in the earning of other occupations. A development on these lines should be aimed at.”

Similarly, too much Industrialisation should also be discouraged to minimise exploitation on the one hand, and developing full employment on the other as industrialisation leads to passive or active exploitation of the villages. It encourages competition. Large scale production requires more marketing. Marketing means profit seeking through an exploitative mechanism. Moreover, industrialisation replaces manpower and hence it adds to unemployment. In a country like India, where millions of labourers in the villages do not get work for even six months in a year, industrialisation will not only increase unemployment but force labourers to migrate to urban areas. This will ruin villages. In order to avoid such a catastrophe, village and cottage industries should be revived as they provide employment to meet the needs of the villagers and facilitate village self-sufficiency. Gandhians are not against machine per se if it meets two aims: self sufficiency and full employment. According to Gandhi, “there would be no objection to villagers using even the modern machines and tools that they could make and could afford to use. Only

18 Ibid., p. 34
they should not be used as a means of exploitation of others.”¹⁹ He further adds, “What I object to, is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call Labour saving machinery. Men go on saving labour, till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die in starvation. I want to save time and labour, not for a reaction of mankind, but for all; I want the concentration of wealth, not in the hands of the few, but in the hands of all. Today machinery merely helps a few to ride on the backs of millions. The impetus behind it all is not the philanthropy to save Labour, but greed. It is against this constitution of things that I am fighting with all my might.”²⁰

The concept of village industries is gaining momentum in contemporary time. Government is promoting ‘Self help groups’ at various levels by providing them assistance through financial and material means. “Some people remark that this is an age of large scale production. What use can it have for our small toy like instruments? I tell them, I am not satisfied with production only on a large scale, or even with production on a larger scale, but only with production on the largest scale. In my judgment, it is only these small instruments which are capable of production on the largest scale because they need millions of people to use them. In your large scale industries you can employ only a million or two million hands. You can feed at the most a million or two million mouths. But these small instruments require hundreds of millions to handle them. They feed countless millions.”²¹

The basic economic unit under Gandhi’s conception of Sarvodaya polity would be the village. He said, "A man is not born to live in isolation but is essentially a social animal independent and inter-dependent. No one can or should ride on another’s back. If we try to work out necessary conditions for such a life, we are forced to the conclusion that the unit of society should be a village or call it a manageable small group of people who would in the ideal, be

²⁰ Gandhi, M.K., Young India 13-11-24, p. 8
²¹ Bhave, Vinoba, Harijan, 26-12-48, p. 4
self- sufficient (in matter of their vital requirements) as a unit and bound together in bonds of mutual co-operation and inter- dependence”.

Thus, the Gandhian ideal of self- sufficiency is the essential requisites of life; however, it does not visualize the creation of water tight compartments. Whereas society in which people are divided on the bases of caste based reservation, such types of cooperation and interdependence cannot be achieved. In such situation where, Communities will be self sufficient, there will be no need to provide any special benefits to any section of society as every hand will get work and can fulfil his daily needs.

In Sarvodaya, village community will also be responsible to provide full and integral employment to every member of the community according to his ability and requirements. In order to provide full employment, the plan will have to be labour intensive rather than capital intensive. The instruments of production will be improved with the time and it will be ensured that unavoidable utilization of natural resources go hand in hand with effort to replenish whatever is utilized, as far as possible. This view of the Mahatma reflects the farsightedness of the great visionary who, so long back put forward his idea of sustainable development, which in contemporary world is not only a national issue but has emerged as the core issue in the whole world.

It has been seen that the general trend in planning today is to lay stress on the utmost development and exploitation of natural resources because of the belief that man’s development is dependent on the development of his environment. Thus planning has come to mean raising the standard of living of the people as much as possible. But the Sarvodaya approach is different. Its primary principle is respect for life, which implies an all-round development of the life and personality of living beings- of the animals as well to the extent they have become part and parcel of human life. Development of natural resources is to be treated only as a means to that end. K. G. Mashruwala writes, “other consideration apart, our national regeneration cannot be achieved merely

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22 As quoted in Prasad, K.M., Sarvodaya of Gandhi, op.cit., p.103

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by heavy economic reconstruction. The moral regeneration of our country on solid foundation is even more important and basic than economic reconstruction. The latter should follow step by step in the wake of the former.\textsuperscript{23} Human and ethical considerations predominate in Sarvodaya over purely economic considerations and its economic planning centres round the four principles of decentralisation, self-sufficiency simplicity of life and cooperation. The aim of Sarvodaya is to remove the impediments that stand in the way of the establishment of an equalitarian, non-exploitative and decentralised economic and political order.

Thus, the Sarvodaya approach to planning is essentially human and democratic. It is human because its first postulate is to provide employment to all. Vinoba says that to give work to a few only in the name of efficiency is not national planning but partial planning. Sarvodaya pays special attention to the sorrow and sufferings of the last man before attending to the wants and requirements of others. It has been said that any plan that seeks to achieve a real betterment of the standard of living of the Indian masses would have to concentrate on the majority of the population that today is living on minimum needs.

The Sarvodaya principles are capable of meeting the greatest challenge of the age. The most urgent need of today is the abolition of human suffering as well as of war. In the modern world the technique of Satyagraha as a method of resisting evil by peaceful means was the distinguishing mark of Gandhi as a pacifist. He does not merely condemn war but suggests a positive way out of slavery and persecution. For him “to succumb to slavery in the name of non resistance to evil was a greater evil than violent resistance to it.”\textsuperscript{24} Violence was a spiritual crime to Gandhi, but cowardice and heedlessness to injustice was even worse than that. And he, who identifies himself with all, could not think of observing passivity in the face of cruel persecution and inhuman

\textsuperscript{23} Kumarappa, Bharatan (ed.), Sarvodaya: The Welfare of All, op. cit., p. 105
\textsuperscript{24} Gandhi, M.K., Young India, 11-10-28, p. 6
suppression of thousands of human beings who are rendered materially and spiritually paupers.

Even Sarvodaya will be very important in 21st Century due to complexity of human behaviour. Sarvodaya by laying stress on the goodness of human nature, unity of mankind, service of man, application of moral principles considered valid for individuals to group life and inter-state relations, the non violent process of change, social and economic equality, economic and political decentralisation, tries to resolve the various kinds of tensions that disturb domestic and international harmony. Sarvodaya is capable of strengthening the forces of love, creativeness and joy of life. Sarvodaya takes a whole view of man and emphasises his spiritual nature. In modern context the concept of Sarvodaya can be interpreted as the awakening of one and all. Thus in addition to the awakening of everyone, it refers to the awakening of the total human spirit and personality. Sarvodaya is also related to achieving the highest level of self realisation in which one sees one’s manifestation in all others. To achieve such society individual need to rise above personal pleasures and sacrifice personal goals for common good. “Sacrifice may be of many kinds. One of them may be Bread Labour. If all laboured for their bread and no more, then there would be no cry of over population, no disease and no such misery as we see around. Such labour will be the highest form of sacrifice. Men will no doubt do many other things either through their bodies or through their minds, but there will be labour of love for the common good. There will then be no rich and no poor, none high and none low, no touchable and no untouchable.”

As a result Sarvodaya society recognises the value of high cultural level of a society. The productive labour and play, productive process and fine arts should unite so far as it is possible. The genius and genuine artists should find a place in Sarvodaya society. But if the whole social atmosphere is to be diffused culturally everyone should get leisure for one’s refinement of taste and

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25 Harijan, 29-6-35, p. 4
development of skills. In the present social order only some chosen few get leisure for their enjoyment. Now the question arises that would a man get leisure for his cultural development or will he be required to work for all the time to satisfy his needs in Sarvodaya society? Gandhi himself believed that “if necessary leisure is available, (and it should be made available though it cannot be made a principle in life) everyone from all ranks and levels of society have a right to it.”

Equal opportunities for self development for all create a classless, casteless and a culturally homo-genius society. The culture of a society does not so much consist of traditional pattern of behaviour or of ways of living as of the sense of fullness of life attained through mutual sharing of life.

Our political, social and economic life has been seized with a malady. The malady of our times perhaps of all times is mad quest for power, whether it is political, social or economic. Service is being given up in quest of personal aggrandizement. Humanity is undergoing almost a phase of moral collapse and ethical nihilism. In the era of the mad rush for power, the significance of Sarvodaya lies in stressing the permanent value of self-abnegation. Sarvodaya is giving expression to a moral principle of cardinal importance because it wants to enshrine the primacy of goodness and character in place of skill of manipulation and self assertion. Sarvodaya appeals to the mind and heart in terms of values and goals. The decadence and corruption, which in fact organized institutional mechanism, can be removed only by the reassertion of moral and spiritual values and their ever growing incorporation in social, political and economic life. Sarvodaya is the only way to solve the problems of unemployment, unequal distribution of wealth, growing corruption in public life etc. The moral collapse and prostration of our world needs the revitalizing notion of ethical idealism and stress on the moral approach to social and economic problems, which Sarvodaya envisages.

The condition of the world today requires anxious consideration. There are violent conflicts everywhere. Though, political unity appears to be growing...
in India. But mental unity is not in evidence to the same extent. The formation
or demand for new or smaller states show that a fissiparous tendency is thus
gaining strength in all directions. There is a race among various political parties
to capture power by using various illegal or unconstitutional means. In such
scenario the problem, instead of being resolved, is getting more and more
complicated.

Sarvodaya philosophy, 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. Sarvodaya
stands for merger of one in all with self-sacrifice and a selfless service.
Gandhi’s Sarvodaya ideals, apart from standing for the meaning of the welfare
of all, imply also 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 Gandhian moral approach to the problems of mankind and a
vision that looks forward to the creation of a welfare state and society.

The idea of Sarvodaya and its principles are still developing and are
taking different shapes and forms according to the demands of changing
circumstances. Gandhi sincerely tried to implement into practice what he
preached. He took the whole Indian nation with him on the march toward
political independence. But the seed of his philosophy are not seen nearby to be
fructified according to his own estimate. Vinoba, Jayaprakash Narayan, etc.,
tried to rebuild the nation on Gandhian lines, and (this process is still going on)
the torch of Gandhian philosophy is still showing right paths to many
individuals. If the vision of new social order is actualised, at least partially, it
will serve as a demonstrative model lesson to the whole world.

Truth, Love and Compassion are, according to Vinoba, the triad that will
save the world in this nuclear age of struggle and sorrow. As a firm believer in
the integral and dynamic capacity of human understanding, he goes on
preaching, to awaken the sleeping humanity. If the millions listen to his call, according to his expectations, they can change the old social order. When common man will be awakened to a new sense of higher value of life leaving behind selfish interests and limited consciousness there will be true human civilisation and culture. Then the arms and armies, kings and political leaders with their parties, caste and their duties, unjust customs based on sex difference – all will lose their respective identities, since they only serve as the blocks on the way to the wellbeing of humanity. To Gandhi, in such a well regulated society, there will be equality, both economic and social. He emphatically maintained that Swaraj could not be attained by the erection of huge factories as they stand for exploitation.27 Under Swaraj everyone gets enough according to one’s requirements.

The above discussion very clearly shows that Gandhi was not very much enthusiastic about reservation. He was against spoon feeding. Rather he wanted to make them self-sufficient so that they could not depend on any outside help. Reservation was not only against his personal belief but also against his whole programme of social reconstruction and regeneration. Expressing his apprehension he said on December 5, 1931, “I could not possibly be a party to such reservations . . . but we are told there must be all these reservations and safeguards. It would not be liberty and responsible government, but it would be all safeguards. Safeguards would eat away the whole of government.”28

Gandhi strongly opposed the demand for the separate representation of the untouchables and had to resort to fast unto death in September 1932 to oppose the Communal Award. He reluctantly agreed not to make reservation of seats an issue of the fast and only insisted that the separate electorates were to be replaced by joint electorates.

He was of the confirmed view that the very purpose of the social justice would be fortified if the reservation was made on caste basis. This should be

27 Kumarappa, Bharatan (ed.), Sarvodaya The Welfare of All, op. cit., p. 61
28 Gandhi, M.K., Young India, 10-12-1931, p. 6
for the weaker sections of the society. To him, weaker sections included people in rural and urban areas leading a life of deprivation irrespective of caste or community. His whole life was devoted to the liberation of those suffering from economic deprivation and social backwardness over the millennia. In his view the backward and weaker sections were not confined to scheduled and backward classes or scheduled tribes only but included the poor and oppressed population of the entire country. If there is a section of people among the scheduled or backward classes, who is economically sound and are not backward in any other sense except their caste, giving the benefit of reservation to them is not at all justified. Rather these privileged few are exploiting their own deprived fellows within their own castes.

Gandhi wanted to fulfil the minimum needs such as food, shelter and clothing to each and every individual. His celebrated talisman was an apt and characteristic expression of his deep devotion for the down trodden. As he puts it in his own inimitable way:

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

His heart used to bleed to see the suffering of the poor people and he did whatever he could do to ameliorate their sufferings. He went to the extent of saying that though he did not wish to have rebirth, but if at all he was to take a birth again, he wish to reborn as a Harijan so that he could have an first hand experience of their lots and sufferings and what it meant to be a Harijan.

Apart from the heartfelt feelings and concern for them the Mahatma had a definite approach towards the upliftment of Harijans. His efforts were to make them self-sufficient and not parasites, so that they could stand on their own feet and compete on equal footings with the other section of the society.
He was not in favour of any kinds of doles, or reservations, for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes as we see today.

Gandhi wanted human race to live like a tree, where twigs, leaves and fruit though are separate from each other, still they do not remain untouchable among themselves. He stressed that Hinduism believes in the unity of entire existence, and oneness of all life, it can have no provision for the differential treatment ant untouchability. He emphasised that “the shortcoming are not inherent to Harijans but they are due to our criminal neglect, even deliberate suppression of these brethren of ours.”

No doubt, there is hardly any society or country in the world which does not have a section as backward and depressed. Even the United States of America, one of the most developed nations has ‘Negros’ and native Indians who are at a disadvantage and are considered as inferior to others in the society. The need of the hour is to think objectively about how social justice can be achieved by all not by making reservations but by introducing special measures as education, gratis and other necessary amenities.

It is high time that the ideal of Sarvodaya be properly understood, examined, appreciated, improved and applied to the problem of reservation that is facing India today. The desired course would be to provide the positive help to the deprived people, along with the responsibility of the state to provide the work to all and fulfilment of basic necessities of everyone irrespective of caste, colour or sex. As a matter of fact, caste based reservations alone will never solve the problem rather would create many more problems in the days to come.

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