

**SARVODAYA IN ACTION AFTER MAHATMA GANDHI BY
ACHARYA VINOBA BHAVE IN POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIA:
AN ANALYTICAL STUDY**

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ABSTRACT

Vinayak Narahari Bhave, popularly known as ‘Acharya Vinoba Bhave’ was a saint, moral tribune, a man of God and solace to millions of Indians. Vinoba Bhave describes ‘Sarvoday’ (Universal wellbeing) as the best religion. In reality, all the religions of the World propose wellbeing, prosperity and happiness of all. Thus ‘Sarvodaya’ incorporates all the religions of the World. Sarvodaya Movement means a way to make an ideal society with truth, love and non-violence. The concept of Sarvodaya was first advocated by Gandhiji as the title of his Gujrati translation of John Ruskin’s “Unto this Last”. Today, Sarvodaya has become a synonym for Gandhian thought. The literary meaning of Sarvodaya is the welfare of all. Sarvodaya is an ideal as well as a movement to uplift all. It is considered as an Indian solution to World problems, Gandhian panacea for socio-economic evils.

As the ardent follower of Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave started to practice Sarvodaya in action for making a Sarvodaya Society in India. To make the Indian Nation based on equality, justice and freedom for all, Vinoba launched Bhoodan, Gramdan, Sampattidan Movements to help landless poor and JP left Socialist Party to support Vinoba’s movement in 1954. It is said that take the name of Vinoba and all the rest is said about Sarvodaya. Samya-yoga is another name for Sarvodaya has come to Vinoba profoundly. His breaths and lives were in the spirit of Samya-yoga to bring a progressive change in society. In the Post-Independence India Vinoba applied Sarvodaya to reconstruct India for the progress of all, especially for the downtrodden people.

This study will focus on the contributions of Vinoba for the Sarvodaya Movement after M.K Gandhi to establish People’s Socialism against power politics. Sarvodaya's idea was an active step to bring a positive social change in India.

Keywords: Sarvodaya, Equality, Justice, Right, Bhoodan, Samya-yoga, Social change.

INTRODUCTION

The national teacher of India, Acharya Vinoba Bhave had been recognized by Mahatma Gandhi as the first individual Satyagrahee for his devotion for truth and selfless service to the people. He was a dedicated participant in the numerous movements and social activities started by Gandhiji. After Mahatma Gandhi, this saint, social reformer and spiritual leader, Vinoba Bhave launched a socio-economic and cultural revolution with the motto of 'Satyagraha', 'Ahimsa' and 'Love' to establish a casteless and classless society with social justice for all in Post-independence India. This celibate leader considered Gandhiji as a guide and philosopher but he never imitated him like a blind follower.

The philosophy of Sarvodaya was Gandhian panacea for Indian problems. In the 20th Century, the political philosophy of Sarvodaya was an important addition to political thought by M.K Gandhi. We never say that Gandhi was the first maker of the Sarvodaya ideology on this planet. Before him, Sarvodaya was followed by many countries or regions in the world. But in Modern history, we must remember the pragmatic role of Mahatmaji for Sarvodaya or good for all. Sarvodaya was found in The Vedic era and also in Western societies.⁽¹⁾ It was found also in the Greek political philosophy indirectly with another name. But the idea of Sarvodaya is practically implemented by M. K Gandhi to establish socio-economic justice and good for all in India. The basis of the Sarvodaya was equality, non-violence, peace, and truth. The main aim of Sarvodaya was to create equal opportunity to progress of all. Gandhiji launched many socio-economic activities to uplift the downtrodden propounding the concept of Sarvodaya. So, he is called the father of Sarvodaya with a non-violent revolution in India. But after Gandhi, some saints, leaders and patriots and social activists followed the Gandhian method of social revolution through truth and Ahimsa because they realized that untruth gains cannot sustain more. JP and Vinoba continued Gandhian ideas to make an ideal society in India with Sarvodaya's actions. Without the elimination of inequalities in society, good of all is not possible. So as the ardent follower of Gandhiji both JP and Vinoba made an effort to establish equality in every sphere of social life. They realized that Sarvodaya was a pragmatic way to effect socialist principles in Indian society, ignoring the western meaning of Socialism.⁽²⁾ Vinoba accepted truth as his goal and non-violence as a means to service of all.

Vinoba Bhave (born Vinayaka Rao Bhave) was born into a pious Chitpavan Brahmin family on 11 September 1895 in a small village called Gagode (present-day Gagode Budruk in Kolaba now in Raigad district of Maharashtra. Vinayaka was the eldest son of Narahari Shambhu Rao and Rukmini Devi. The couple had five children – four sons and one daughter, named Vinayaka (affectionately called Vinya), Balakrishna, Shivaji, and Dattatreya. His father, Narahari Shambhu Rao was a trained weaver with a rationalist modern outlook and worked in Baroda. Vinayaka was

brought up by his grandfather, Shamburao Bhave and was greatly influenced by his mother Rukmini Devi, a religious woman from Karnataka. Vinayak was highly inspired after he realized the Bhagavad Geeta at a very young age.

Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya:

Mahatma Gandhi meant Sarvodaya philosophy as synonyms of the good of all, welfare to all and progress of all. The concept of Sarvodaya was first implemented in action in modern India by M.K Gandhi. The word 'Sarvodaya' is comprised of **Sarva** meaning all and **Udoya** meaning rising that is the rise of all, the welfare of all.⁽³⁾

The word '**Sarvodaya**' was first used by Gandhi in 1908 as the title of Gujarati translation of John Ruskin's "Unto this Last". In Indian political thought, Sarvodaya is a synonym for Gandhian thought. Gandhiji was deeply impressed by Ruskin's book and made him change his life. Gandhian view about the teaching of Unto this Last were-

- a) That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
- b) That a lawyer works has the same value as the barber's works.
- c) That life of labor is the life of worth living.⁽⁴⁾

Sarvodaya principles mean a balanced all-round development of the whole man and similar development of all men. Gandhi said, "It stands for human considerations outweighing all else, whether in the economic, social or political sphere."⁽⁵⁾ To face the problems of the cast, communal evils, economic inequalities, and social discriminations, Gandhiji tried to apply the concept of Sarvodaya. He propounded another concept of partyless democracy and a classless society to prevent socio-economic evils. Sarvodaya focuses on the development of villages.⁽⁶⁾ Gandhi viewed that Sarvodaya is not a mere utopia but it is a guiding philosophy to reconstruct society and individuals. Sarvodaya attempts to meet the challenges of socio-economic discrimination.⁽⁷⁾ He dreamt to make a Sarvodaya society in India based on Love and Non-violence, beyond any exploitation.

Sarvodaya in action by Vinoba Bhave:

Vinoba executed the philosophy of Sarvodaya through non-violent means after Gandhiji. Vinoba advocated that the term Sarvodaya indicates a two-fold meaning. Firstly, Sarvodaya means making happiness for all by removing social dogmas and discriminations and secondly, establishing a new society with equality, divinity, and kindness.⁽⁸⁾ According to Vinoba Bhave, 'The concept of Sarvodaya as preached by the Geeta is to merge oneself in the good of all'.⁽⁹⁾ It attempts boosting the human mind with ethical ideas. The concept of Sarvodaya and Vinoba are

synonyms. Vinoba Bhave considers that Sarvodaya as the “Best dharma”(righteous living) and sarvodayamidam Tirtham (Universal blessing). The core meaning of all religions of the world, propose the well-being, prosperity, and happiness of all human beings. In this way, Sarvodaya connects all the religions of the world. ⁽¹⁰⁾

According to Vinoba Bhave, Sarvodaya is to establish a new society based on truth and non-violence. In this society, everyone will get equal opportunities for their highest development. Indeed, Sarvodaya is a way to implement socialism in society. It was a great gift of Gandhian philosophy. Vinoba tried to eliminate the contemporary ruling system based on exploitation and discrimination. The concept of Sarvodayawas a strong weapon to solve the problems of Indian society. Vinoba stated that the means for Sarvodaya is the strength of masses, contrary to the basses required for violence and punishment. Sarvodaya can establish people's rights with the organization's mass strength from unjust rules.⁽¹¹⁾ For the establishment of Sarvodaya society, Vinoba launched a lot of movement in a non-violent way. After Gandhi’s assassination on 30th January 1948 all eyes were fixed upon on Vinoba to fulfill dreams of Mahatma Gandhi. He proposed the formation of Sarvodaya Samaj to work for Gandhian thought.

Bhoodan Movement:

Vinoba started the Bhoodan movement as the mean of Sarvodaya philosophy for good of all in 1951. He devoted his life to convince the landlords that all should accept that all land belongs to Gopal (God). With this mind, people should donate some part of their land to the landless people.

Vinoba advocated that“ In ancient India, elders conducted sacrifices for the establishment of peace”. To remove the preventing tension in the village, I am unending this Bhoodan sacrifice. For the welfare of the general masses, every individual should take part in this.⁽¹²⁾ On 18th April 1951, Vinoba received 100 acres of donation of land at the village of Pochampalli in Telengana from Ramchandra Reddy, a local landlord. He realized the possibility of a great revolution with love and non-violence. He started every action to change the heart of the people to do something for landless and poor people. In simple, Bhoodan means donation of land with love to those who are landless. The Bhoodan target was to get land and redistribute land among acute poor people.

Vinoba was able to collect 12,200 acres of land as a gift in just 51 days from the starting day. Bhoodan was the pragmatic way to meet the problems of acute poverty and unemployment. During this movement, Vinoba focused that hungry people will not tolerate their suffering anymore; land and wealth must be redistributed.⁽¹³⁾ The cruelties of capitalism can be eliminated by receiving land as a donation from a landlord by a change of heart.

Vinoba walked thousand by thousand miles for looting land by love for the rise of all. Vinoba

realized the power of the Padayatra (March on foot). He walked for 13 years throughout India to bring a socio-economic change for landless and poor people. Vinoba left Panuar on 12th September 1951 and returned on 10th April 1964. He started Toofan Yatra, using a vehicle in Bihar for almost four years. He addressed thousands of meetings and mobilized the people to ignore the barriers of caste, color, class, and religion. From the notorious Chambal Valley, a gang of dacoit surrendered themselves to Vinoba in May 1960. For saint Vinoba, it was a victory of non-violence in Post- Independence India.

Gramdan Movement:

Another step for Sarvodaya in action by Vinoba was the Gramdan movement. This movement means all the landowners of a village should donate their lands to the village community and then the entire village should produce collectively and share the produce among themselves.⁽¹⁴⁾ The whole community will achieve ownership for Gramdan. Mangroth village in Orisha became a first Gramdan village on 30 January 1953. The main purpose of Gramdan was equitable sharing of resources and spiritual development among all. The primary aim was that no one in the village should have an ownership right of land to personally or collectively. "All the lands belong to Gopal or God" was the slogan of this non-violence movement by saint Vinoba. This selfless leader established the inner strength of the masses. It was a divine mission and socio-economic reconstruction in Indian society to promote all.

Vinoba walked village to village appealing for land. But many landowners did not donate their all lands but a part of the land as Gramdan. Some Sarvodaya sacrifices like Sampottidan, Shramdan, and Jeevandan were also continued by Vinoba dedicatedly to bring a change of concise for humanity. Sampottidan was to provide the other means of agricultural productivity like seeds, fertilizers, cattle and so on. Those who do not have land should contribute, but through their hands and legs to help of the leveling of the fields and converting wasteland for farming as Shramdan sacrifice⁽¹⁵⁾.

Saint leader Vinoba said,

"Whatever land, wealth, knowledge and strength we have is from the community. These are not private properties, gifts of God, and therefore should be used for the welfare of the masses. Like the cooperation which we employ in working with a family, we should cooperatively worship nature in the same manner. Sarvodaya could be done with the establishment of humanity and the good of all".

Sarvodaya Programmes:

Satyagrahee Vinoba strongly supported of World Government. Sarvodaya philosophy can apply only in a cooperative society. According to Yogi Vinoba, "The welfare form of Sarvodaya will be evident only the people forget their differences and live together like a family. They share their joy and sorrow. Vinoba contributed a multi-dimensional way to act for Sarvodaya in society. Some of the Sarvodaya programs can be mentioned here: a) eradicating of untouchability b) building communal unity c) development of agriculture d) women education e) development of Khadi and cottage industries f) establishment of trade unions g) care and protection of cows.⁽¹⁶⁾

The welfare of Women:

Social activist Vinoba was the earliest thinker in India, who emphasized on Stree Shakti (women's power). This was in 1954, he started Bramhabidya mandir at Panver. This Ashram was an open platform for women empowerment and education. Traditionally, the seeking of Bramhma had been an activity of men only. Women were kept away from Sadhana. Vinoba set up an ashram for women, who follow Bramhchyarya (celibacy) and try to seek the Ultimate Truth. His women disciples from Brahmbidya mandir have set up 'Maitri Ashram' in Gauhati, Assam. Two of his women disciples continued Padayatra for 13 years in all parts of India to spread Sarvodaya and Bramabidya. He wanted women to realize their power and called this idea "Stree Shakti Jagaran (awakening of women's power) and wanted some women to be second Shankaracharya. He was against the concept of women's Liberation, but women's power to realize and use for self-sufficiency. Vinoba's advocacy for women's progress was highly appreciable. To him, women with character, intelligence and creativity can resist the menfolk from committing anti-social activities.

Vinobaji's views on Party system:

Vinoba was opposed to the party system to dominate over people. To him, in India there were religious, linguistics, caste and other varieties, political parties had added to these. Even within a party, there were many groups. Political parties are busy with to focus on winning elections neglecting people's interests. These parties creating conflicts and tensions to weaken the nation.⁽¹⁷⁾ At the time of elections, political parties ambush the people by saying false promises to save their rights and interests. They motivate the people their destiny lies in the hands of political parties. But the reality is that people are responsible for their welfare themselves.⁽¹⁸⁾ According to Vinoba Bhave, parties are weak internally, they are divorced from morality and ethics. But astate system cannot function well except morality and honesty to its people.

The Bramha Vidya Mandir:

The Brahma Vidya Mandir is one of the ashrams that Vinoba Bhave established. It is a small

community for women that was created for them to become self-sufficient and non-violent in a community. This group cultivates to get their food but uses Gandhi's beliefs about food production. This community, like Gandhi and Bhave, has been influenced greatly by the *Bhagavad-Gita* and that is also used to determine their practices. The community performs prayers as a group every day, reciting from the Isha Upanishad at dawn, the Vishnu Sahasranama at mid-morning, and the *Bhagavad-Gita* in the evening. As of today, there are around 25 women who are members of the community and several men have also been allowed to join the community.⁽¹⁹⁾

Since its founding in 1959, members of Brahma Vidya Mandir (BVM), an intentional community for women in Paunar, Maharashtra, have dealt with the struggle of translating Gandhian values such as self-sufficiency, non-violence, and public-service into specific practices of food production and consumption. The Ashram's existence and the counter-narrative its resident's practice demonstrate how one community debate the practicalities and trade-offs in their application of self-sufficiency, non-violence, and radical democracy to their own social and geographic context. One narrative described by the Ashram and the farmers that work with them is that large-scale agriculture is inevitable, necessary, and the sole possibility of feeding the world. The members rejected the narrative that success in agriculture comes from expensive technology. This Ashram is a small community in India, therefore it does not hold much power in its beliefs and practices. However, India today proudly proclaims its large and growing middle class, and although many see Gandhi as a hero, some reject his views in favor of US-style-consumerism and look for an alternate route in agriculture with technological advancements. The existence of This Mandir provides a counter-narrative on enacting alternate agriculture practices and social practices that were believed by a woman back in the 1960s.⁽²⁰⁾

Abolition of politics (Rajneeti):

Vinoba Bhave had made a strong critique of 'Rajneeti' or power politics to establish justice for all. There was no other way to spiritualize politics than the establishment of Lokniti itself. Therefore it was a time to end power politics or rajneeti. In his Samya Sutra, Vinoba stressed on three principles to free society from the coercive power of the state. Those were- a) freedom from government, b) awareness in the mind of the people about their independence and c) freedom from fear. The science of Swaraj and Lokneeti can empower common people to achieve their rights and justice. He viewed that democracy without Satyagraha would be a failure to set up a society on justice. According to Vinoba, "Man could be free from the government; if he could be awakened about his rights and when he would overcome fear."⁽²¹⁾ So, freedom of fear could be established only through people's power in the state. His concept of Samayayoga was always against capitalism and communism but in favor of Swaraj, Gramswaraj, and Lokneeti. His four principles of Samayayoga were based on treating others equally as one soul in all. They were—

- a) Determining the course and means of our action.
- b) Performance of our duties in the spirit detachment.
- c) Maintaining equanimity and stability of our mind while performing manifold duties.
- d) Treating all human beings as a part of our being.⁽²²⁾

Vinoba opined that Geeta accepted the right of the individual over fruits of his labor but advised him to leave them in the cause of social good and to gain salvation from bondage life. As a result, he held that Samayayoga could bring a radical change in moral, economic, social and political aspects.⁽²³⁾ The most important contribution of Vinobaji was that while putting his concept of equality, he did not speak of vad (conflict) but emphasizes Yoga, following the Indian tradition of synthesis. For him, Samayayoga was a total revolution to establish justice for all equally.

CONCLUSION

Social justice is the pillar of any democratic nation in the Modern World. The main purpose of Sarvodaya (welfare of all) is to establish socio-economic justice and equality. He looted million by million acaras lands by love to redistribute land among landless people. His Bhoodan movement brought a great socio-economic change in Indian society. For Vinoba, the understanding of the Supreme Lord through selfless service to all human beings is a path for Sarvoday samaj. Mahatma Gandhi addressed Vinoba as a Kritiyayugi, an initiator of a golden age through his great deeds. Vinobaji found in Sarvodaya to implement socialist ideas through Sarvodaya with non-violent means. He realized that Gandhian socialism is more useful in India than Marxist socialism. He was a man of action rather than a more thinker and always a truth seeker for a better path for the establishment of equality, brotherhood and the all-round development of all.

Acarya Vinoba wanted to set up people's socialism through Sarvodaya activities for the upliftment of all. Vinoba contributed to women empowerment with equal status in every sphere of life silently. He strongly criticized power politics and corrupted the democratic process in free India. Execution of Gram swaraj must be freedom from government. His ideologies and activities are very relevant to this contemporary crisis in the Indian socio-economic system. He stated, "Human society must be based on mutual co-operation. The basis of the new society will be love. Its objective will be the happiness and prosperity of all."⁽²⁴⁾ In reality, Sarvodaya incorporates all the religions of the world with the aim of equal prosperity and happiness of the human community. In these revolutionary processes of Sarvodaya, the organization of masses' strength must destroy corrupted ruling entities from any type of unjust rule.

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