



PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MAHATMA GANDHI'S SARVODAYA THEORY

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the concept of Sarvodaya ("the welfare of all"), which occupies a central place in the philosophical thought of Mahatma Gandhi. The principles of Sarvodaya are intrinsically linked to non-violence, adherence to truth, social equality, and economic justice. The paper explores the philosophical roots of the Sarvodaya doctrine, the processes of its practical formation, and its correlation with modern concepts of social development. Furthermore, the article analyzes the significance of Sarvodaya in the context of contemporary globalization, ecological challenges, and sustainable development

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948), a great thinker and political leader of the twentieth century, is recognized in human history as a prominent figure who practically implemented the philosophy of non-violent struggle. During the process of liberating India from colonial oppression, he acted not only as a political leader, but also as a social-philosophical theorist. One of the most significant concepts in Gandhi's ideas is the theory of "Sarvodaya." This term, translated from Sanskrit, means "the upliftment of all" or "universal welfare."

The Sarvodaya doctrine holds a central place in Gandhi's socio-philosophical views. According to it, social progress must be based not on the welfare of a particular group or class, but on the common well-being of all humanity. Gandhi developed Sarvodaya not only as a theoretical concept, but also as a practical program of action. This idea played a key role in India's national liberation struggle and later in social reforms after independence.

Main part

The Sarvodaya theory has its roots in ancient Indian philosophy, particularly the Vedas, the *Bhagavad Gita*, as well as Jain and Buddhist teachings. At the same time, Gandhi was influenced by Western thinkers, especially the English writer and social theorist John Ruskin. The foundation of Gandhi's philosophical views is the principle of *ahimsa* (non-violence). Ahimsa is not only a method of political struggle but also a standard that guides a person's entire life philosophy. Sarvodaya is inherently connected to ahimsa: if society is governed without violence, justice and general welfare can be achieved. The second pillar of Sarvodaya is the principle of *satyagraha* (devotion to truth). According to Gandhi, truth and justice can

only be realized through the renunciation of violence. Satyagraha forms the moral basis of the Sarvodaya theory, as it calls society to inner purity, honesty, and mutual trust.

Sarvodaya also encompasses economic equality. Gandhi argued that wealth should be the common property of society. He emphasized that economic activity should be limited to what is necessary. In Gandhi's view, the accumulation of excessive wealth is the root of injustice in society. Therefore, the Sarvodaya theory is based on economic justice. The relevance of the Sarvodaya theory persisted even after Gandhi's death. His followers, Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan, expanded the Sarvodaya movement on a large scale. The Bhoodan Movement, initiated by Vinoba Bhave in 1951, became the most significant practical expression of the Sarvodaya theory. This initiative encouraged wealthy landowners to donate surplus land to the poor. As a result, hundreds of thousands of hectares of land were distributed among impoverished people. The Sarvodaya theory envisioned an ideal society in the form of small, self-sufficient villages. According to the *Gramdan* (village gift) concept, an entire village would convert its land into common property and live based on mutual assistance. Gandhi promoted Sarvodaya in practice using the spinning wheel (*charkha*) as a symbol. According to him, every person should meet their needs through local production. This idea strengthens economic independence and mutual equality.

Sarvodaya is relevant not only to Gandhi's time but also to the present day. The principles of equality and general welfare proposed in Sarvodaya align with modern democratic values. For contemporary social states, the concept of "welfare of all" remains significant.

Gandhi considered the harmony between humans and nature to be important. In today's context of ecological crises, Sarvodaya ideas gain particular significance by promoting the prudent use of natural resources, limiting overconsumption, and adhering to principles of a green economy. The Sarvodaya idea directly aligns with the concept of sustainable development promoted by the UN. Both concepts set economic, social, and ecological sustainability as common goals.

Although the Sarvodaya theory has been highly praised by many scholars, some criticisms exist. Certain researchers consider this theory utopian, as governing an entire society solely on moral principles is challenging. Moreover, in today's industrialized societies, fully implementing Sarvodaya principles is difficult. However, these criticisms do not diminish the idea's value as a universal human principle.

Conclusion

Mahatma Gandhi's Sarvodaya theory has left a profound socio-philosophical mark in human history. It is a concept that combines nonviolent struggle, social justice, universal welfare, and ecological harmony, remaining relevant even today. Sarvodaya aligns with modern theories of social justice, sustainable development, and ecological balance, continuing to serve as a source of inspiration for the 21st century.

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