

# GANDHI'S VIEW OF SARVODAYA IN REFERENCE TO ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF ASSAMESE WOMEN: A CRITICAL INTERPRETATION

**Dr. Hitesh Ch. Kalita**

*HOD & Associate Professor in Philosophy  
MNC Balika Mahavidyalaya, Nalbari, Assam, India*

## ABSTRACT

*The study on 'Gandhi's view of sarvodaya in reference to economic empowerment of Assamese women: a critical evaluation' is briefly stated how to develop Assamese women with the help of Gandhi's sarvodaya. Sarvodaya is meant all round development. Sarvodaya was originated by Gandhi and developed by Vinoba and Jaiprakash Narayan, which means 'uplift and welfare of all'. Gandhi popularized it in practical attitude. Sarvodaya plays an important role to place balance in place of imbalance economy. The term 'empowerment' denotes capacities and capabilities. The concept of sarvodaya may be implemented in the same area of Assam for acquiring their economic empowerment.*

## INTRODUCTION

Gandhi was actually neither an academically philosopher nor an exponent. But was a statesman, a reformer to advocate the peaceful all round development of all human being. Gandhi Got this spirit from Snell's Principles of Equality and the Gita.

## METHOD

I took descriptive, analytical and rational method to attain the goal of this work. To get it has been taken secondary data. All these data are collected from book, journal, internet and empirical aspects.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To study Gandhi's concept of sarvodaya.
2. To study the fundamental cause of Assamese women from economic outlook.
3. Need for economic empowerment of Assamese women.
4. Economic empowerment of Assamese women through the means of sarvodaya.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION: ASSAMESE WOMEN THROUGH SARVODAYA

Gandhi's this concept of sarvodaya plays an important role to place balance in place of imbalance economy. The main concept and meaning of empowerment and sarvodaya is actually synonymous. In support of it, sarvodaya was used in place of empowerment by Gandhi.

Gandhi's economic empowerment ideas were in a sense a logical corollary of his political as well as moral principles such as Swaraj, Sarvodaya, Truth and Non-violence and the like. Later on he realized that Sarvodaya is the guiding principles of all principles. Sarvodaya is the good of all. "This principle originated out of his reading of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* which held that the good of individual contained in the good of all. It was Gandhi's desire that the good should percolate even to the last of the socio-economic ladder-the poorest of the poor."<sup>1</sup>

The term 'empowerment' denotes capacities and efficiencies without which no one can develop own potentiality to realize the origin, inherent nature of the best self. The equal status opportunity, freedom to use potentialities, development of own personalities, participation in the process of decision making in all aspects specially political, economic and social outlook may be the main aspects of the empowerment of women in Assam. The Constitution of India grants equality to women and also empowers State in favour of women. Women's empowerment was included as a separate subject in the Fifth(1974-78), Sixth(1980-85), Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Plan. Yet, it is observed and known to all that maximum women of Assam are still not economically empowered due to their ignorance which is the main cause. So they are still exploited and dominated by men of Assam. Dominated individuals never get freedom. In view of it the important question that how can they think up to develop own personality without freedom of empowerment day to day life. That is why against it the concept of sarvodaya may be implemented in the same area of Assam for acquiring their economic empowerment.

According to UNDP, "Economic empowerment of women comprises economic opportunities (e.g. expanding employment and entrepreneurship, promoting decent and productive work, improving access to finance); legal status and rights (e.g. improving women's property, inheritance and legal rights) and voice, inclusion and participation in decision-making (e.g. developing mechanisms to enhance women's involvement in decision making bodies)"<sup>2</sup> The equal status opportunity, freedom to use potentialities, participation in the process of decision making in all aspects specially political, economic and social outlook may be the main aspects of the women empowerment. Economic empowerment of women is simply sufficient free economy to develop their total personality The Constitution of India gives an equal dignity not only to Assamese women but also to all Indian people with that of men and women. Yet, the real situation of the maximum Assamese women from the economic empowerment in view of their total development or upliftment is very poor. They are not getting to have access to income and resources, authority to use, equal status to all aspects, proper education and health awareness, freedom to actualize own capacities, etc. It is known as well as needless to say that they are still dominated by men, rich, capitalist and urban people of Assam and India. Their inefficiency is also one of the causes for the same outlook. In view of it the important question that how can they think to develop own personality without freedom of empowerment day to day life. That is why against it the concept of sarvodaya may be implemented in Assam for acquiring economic empowerment of Assamese women.

Although both man and woman are indispensably related, yet the status of women in Assam is weaker and inferior than men. There is a common concept that some women of the

communities in Assam have been enjoying empowerment. Women in matrilineal community of Meghalaya-the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos have been enjoying inheritance rights. But they have actually not the exclusive owner of the property. Even the Jaintia women have to be consented by her brother and mother in case of decision making. Mizo women have no inheritance rights over parental property. Manipuri society is also highly patriarchal. Literacy is one of the important measures for the economic empowerment. But in Assam, 2011 women literacy rate is 67.27 per cent where male literacy rate is 78.81 per cent. In view of it also Assamese women are not empowered.

Gandhi's economic ideas are of his political and moral principles such as Swaraj, Sarvodaya, Truth and Non-violence and the like. Later on he took sarvodaya as the most important principle as a means for total development. It was influenced by Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. It held that the good of individual contains the good of all. By nature all human beings are equal and there should not be any economic discrimination. This concept never comes from outside but comes from within. It is humanistic spirit within mankind. With the goal of sarvodaya Gandhi wanted for economic development of the country. If each and every individual of Assam performs own action in support of this principle then Assamese women will not be deprived. The sarvodaya economy includes-

- a) Full attention to all especially cultivators and labourers.
- b) Proper education for all.
- c) Economic equality and harmony of all classes need to be established.
- d) Its main purpose and aim is that each and everybody should get chance to perform action for own uplift. Simply its motto is 'karma is dharma'.

Gandhi's sarvodaya view of Village Republic may be used to economically develop Assamese women. Village Republic means self-contained villages. He actually wanted to use this system of Republic in favour of them who are not self-contained. This meant that each individual would produce its own requirements-food, clothing and other things-and never depend on other persons for own economic needs. Assam is a very large area and so, it is impossible for the centralized form of government to keep sustained important in all sections such as villages, women etc. All weaker sections including women should be self-contained with respect to regular necessities of life. Then total development of Assam will be possible. This system deliberately pre-supposes co-operation of every individual, "in this structure composed of innumerable villages.... Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the ready individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals.....the outermost circumstance will not wield power to crush the inner circle, but will give strength to all within and derive its strength from it"<sup>3</sup>

Gandhi's view of swaraj and trusteeship against the capitalist form of exploitation may be used in favour of Assamese women. Against the personal interest of the capitalist production he wanted to popularize self-sufficiency, self-rule as well as the benefit of the society. Physical or mental talent or wealth of person has to be performed as a trust for the interest of the society.

Trustees may get remuneration for the work done through common interest of workers and the state. The manager should be associated with skill, expert and neutral quality. The rich should be the trustees of the society by sharing their surplus wealth with the poverty and underprivileged persons.

Moreover, Gandhi did not believe in the capitalist and utilitarian outlook of 'the greatest good of the greatest number' but believed, "the only real dignified human doctrine is the greatest good of all."<sup>4</sup> Every individual should understand the other view of sarvodaya that the end of all activities is the upliftment of everybody. If we implement this principle in Assam then Assamese women may be automatically empowered.

Sarvodaya view of oneness will be the main basis to develop Assamese women. It should be taught to all corners of the state. It believes that there is an essential unity or oneness behind everybody. Who can realize his own pure self he realizes oneness of all people. Then he automatically becomes non-violent. Then he will help by sharing their surplus wealth with the poor and underprivileged. It is known that a perfect realization of oneness is not possible in this world, but true spiritual life consists not in attaining the ideal, but in constantly striving and willing for it. Every man of a panchayat has a bond of love for every other. They can only feel that every land belongs to everybody. In support of it Gandhi said, "Real socialism has been handed down to us by our ancestors who taught, All land belongs to Gopal, where then is the boundary line?' Man is the maker of that line and he can therefore unmake it. Gopal literally means shepherd; it also means God. In modern language it means the state, i.e. the people."<sup>5</sup>

His principle of sarvodaya - the good of all originated out of his reading of Ruskin's *Unto this Last* which held that the good of individual contained in the good of all. It is found that Assamese women may not be developed without developing rural area of Assam. Maximum of women of the same area are not empowered. It is found that there is no proper panchayat system in the rural area of Assam for getting equal opportunities. It is possible only in the proper panchayat system through which actual attention can be given to every neglected individual of the rural area. Actually this system does not neglect or overlook any one person either in rural or urban area. This system is the system of perfect democracy because this would ensure complete individual liberty and will develop individual initiative. In such a system no one can afford to have any surplus wealth or power. It will naturally remain no scope for exploitation of any kind. In this connection Gandhi refers, "the relation between the state and the individual is one of co-operation and non-co-operation; it is co-operation with the laws of the state so long as the state seeks to move along moral lines, but it is non-co-operation with the laws of the state if the laws are against the rules of ethics"<sup>6</sup>

Gandhi's sarvodaya-based economic idea is associated with the principles such as swaraj, sarvodaya, truth and non-violence. It is clear that the rural and urban area of Assam must implement swaraj (self-rule or decision making), truth and non-violence in place of violence, exploitation etc. for the empowerment of the same neglected area. Gandhi knew that complete economic equality would be unattainable ideal, because it becomes difference for the capacities and talents of different men. So, economic basis must be based on morality, love and trust.

Moreover, sarvodaya view of economic empowerment is mainly based on Indian Ethical view of purusartha, namely dharma (knowledge), artha (wealth), kama (action) and mukti (salvation). In view of it Assam including women may be empowered through the use of the purusartha, love, trust and morality.

Gandhi's 'bread labour' principle of sarvodaya may be one of the important ways to empower Assam. He propounded this principle as a measure of forcing everybody to physically work and to earn his living livelihood. He tried to implement it to discourage the parasitic living by some individuals of the same related place. J.D.Sethi, a renowned Gandhian economist, states the principle of bread labour as follows: "Bread-labour in simple terms implied that amount of physical labour, given the arts of production and the society determined necessities, which is required from each person to produce these necessities. That much labour time must be spent by everybody in physical labour. Anyone who does not work with his hands or other limbs runs the risk of being a parasite. Even the greatest thinker, poet or philosopher is likely to be misled by his own ideas and plagues of sophistication if he is not involved in some physical action."<sup>7</sup>

In effect, Gandhi was putting forth the view point that every individual must do physical labour to satisfy his most essential needs and at the same none had the right to accumulate property or wealth more than what he needed at any given point of time<sup>8</sup>. It may do complete equality between capitalists and the labourers and the rich and the poor in the related area.

Sarvodaya is against too much of industrialization. It poisons the very spirit of man. It makes man mechanical. He knew that men can't be empowered without performing actions. According to the principle every individual of the rural Assam should get opportunity to perform action in place of much more industrialization.

## CONCLUSION

1. Both formal and spiritual educations are properly much more necessary for Assamese women.
2. The government should also take all initiatives to infrastructural development including in education system, games and all life-based duties.
3. Seminar and workshop and vocational trainings are more necessary to develop the same.

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