

# Sarvodaya Movement: Developing A Macro Perspective From Grassroots Collective Actions

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## Abstract

The present study is intended to throw light on the various subtle aspects of the Sarvodaya programme for social transformation in rural India and assess the actual revolutionary potential of the movement. It aims at exploring the extent to which Sarvodaya movement has succeeded in fulfilling its objectives for establishing a new social order based on '**collective actions**' and '**moral values**' that tend to minimize inequities in the system. This requires a detailed study of the welfare activities done by the various gramsabhas for the benefit of commons, and the landless. This investigation also focusses on the processes which might lead to the emergence of a collective conscience among the rural peasantry. An inquiry into the functioning of various institutions and voluntary organizations striving to contribute to the collective welfare while highlighting the actual strength of their membership and the frequency of participation, enables us to measure the extent of 'social mobilization' and 'collective unity' in different villages. The rural communities, in the course of the implementation of Sarvodaya programme, might be characterized by a more effective polity based on political awakening of the electorate and 'secularization' of the attitude of traditional leaders. Therefore, a detailed investigation has been made into the changing pattern of leadership in the villages for assessing its capability to provide 'linkage' between various strata of the rural community. We have tried to trace shifting trends in the social position of traditionally dominant caste groups which might, under the influence of Sarvodaya, yield to relatively backward castes, thereby encouraging their free and effective participation in the decision making. Finally, as Sarvodaya programme of work is aimed at generating certain institutional in-built mechanisms for co-ordinating all the strata of the rural community in an effective network of functional interdependence, the study involves a careful analysis of those newly generated institutional frameworks and value-systems which might account for the manner in which conflict avoidance and tension management is ensured. This is particularly significant in view of Sarvodaya's objective of avoiding recourse to police and courts for the solution of disputes.

Two arguments were put forward in support of the Association for Sarva Seva Farms (ASSEFA), a Sarvodaya organization of repute. First, the structure of ASSEFA was not fettered by various administrative and financial procedures, rules and regulations, etc, and, therefore, the programmes launched by them run in a flexible manner. Second, it was more conversant with the prevailing conditions of the area and modes as well as

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attitudes of the people, therefore, it is easier to enlist the co-operation of the commons in the areas. The author, however, draws attention towards the role of ASSEFA engaged in a variety of social work in Khaira Block of Jamui District, Bihar (India) in support of these arguments. However, the author further observes that the two basic questions facing the ASSEFA these days are the social challenges it is confronted with, and its own stability and governance.

**Key Words:** *Social Network, Sarvodaya, Collective Actions, India.*

## **SARVODAYA<sup>3</sup> MOVEMENT: DEVELOPING A MACRO PERSPECTIVE FROM GRASSROOTS COLLECTIVE ACTIONS**

The present paper is organized in the following way. After the introduction, Gandhi's concept of Sarvodaya is analysed in its philosophical foundations and certain nomological axioms. Methodological issues of individualism and collectivism are also discussed in this section. The third section analyses the different phases in the evolution of Sarvodaya movement in India in their historical perspective. The next section analyses a few case studies of the Sarvodaya organizations and their working with the commons. The fourth section examines the role of the Association of Sarva Seva Farms (ASSEFA), engaged in a variety of social and economic programmes in Khaira Block of Jamui District, Bihar (India), in transforming the society based on Sarvodaya ideology in their empirical perspectives, and the last section makes some concluding observations.

### **SECTION - I**

#### **Introduction**

The poor millions of world have something tangible to contribute for world peace and prosperity. In this, the rich and the poor have both to share – poor, their problems and struggles and the rich, their resources and knowhow. Sarvodaya's endeavour is to create an universal solidarity between the **haves** and the **have-nots**, offering in the process an opportunity for learning and understanding through acts of justice and sharing.

Social Scientists paid little attention to the empirical study of the multi-dimensional impact of Sarvodaya movement in the areas where it was launched. In fact, most of the studies (Bhave & Narayan 1967, Desai 1968, Alavi 1969, Ostergaard & Melville 1971, Narayan 1971, Prasad 1972, Bandyopadhyay 1973, Oommen 1973, Singh 1973, Prasad 1986, Prasad 1998) which have so far been conducted in the states, such as Andhra, Orissa and Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Rajasthan, Karnataka suffer from mainly two drawbacks: they either entail sweeping generalizations based on 'peripheral' investigations in these areas or consist of ideologically based analyses which call into question the wrongly reckoned potentialities of Gramdan as a genuine revolutionary alternative to Naxalism.

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<sup>3</sup> Sarvodaya, generally translated as 'welfare of all', was a philosophy made popular by Mahatma Gandhi. He derived the essence and meaning of this world from Ruskin's book, 'Unto this Lat', three basic ideas: the dignity of human labour; individual good is contained in the good of all, and service to society by the one's labour and profession. Sarvodaya is a logical culmination of the constructive programmes that promises 'peace and prosperity' to all. Sarvodaya believes that everything in the world is owned by the community. Consequently, there is no room for individual property or private ownership. Gandhian extends the meaning of Sarvodaya from its narrow bounds (micro) to universal (macro) scope.

Many controversies have in recent years cropped up around the Sarvodaya movement. In some quarters serious scepticism has been expressed with regard to the revolutionary potentials of the movement visualizing essentially 'a change from below;' in others, the 'partial success' of the movement is considered as merely 'sporadic effects of its charismatic leaders, which have tended to dwindle away; still in others, it is suspected to be 'a camouflaged counter-revolution' of bourgeoisie which is not only biased in favour of the rural rich but also designed in collaboration with the administration to suppress the rural poor. This study is a modest empirical endeavour to explore the facts as well as the impact of Sarvodaya programme for social transformation. Free from any 'ideological bias', the study intends to appropriately assess the actual 'revolutionary' potential of the Sarvodaya movement.

## **SECTION - II**

### **Philosophical and Socio-Economic-Psychological Foundations of Sarvodaya**

The concept of sarvodaya, is derived from scriptures. One of the Hindu scriptures declares, 'let there be happiness and good health for all' (sarve sukhino bhavantu, sarve santu niramaya). Gandhi's idea of sarvodaya was much influenced by Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, which says that the good of the individual is contained in the good of the society. Considering the universe in this perspective, sarvodaya stands for the welfare of all, and not just the welfare of a few. Gandhi believes that the gospel of service, sarvodaya, is the basis of all other gospels like the gospel of work (karma), gospel of knowledge (jnana) and the gospel of devotion (bhakti) which are essential to realize God or truth (Gandhi, 1927, 25 October).

It was Gandhi who laid the foundation of 'Sarvodaya Samaj' (A society for the Welfare of All). Acharya Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan and many Gandhians joined hands with him in this movement. The integration of individual and society at the collective level is a type of unique methodological specificity of Sarvodaya. Gandhi writes: "Welfare of the country is certainly included in the welfare of the world, and individual welfare is included in the welfare of the country. On the other hand, individual welfare should include the welfare of the world" (Gandhi, 1934, 22 March).

### **Methodological Individualism and Collectivism in Sarvodaya System**

In Gandhian Political Economy (GPE), the development and welfare of individual as a person has remained the central focus. As Gandhi says, 'a man should have full opportunity to develop himself' (Gandhi, 1947, 31 July). He asserts that it is the individual who is the ultimate unit (Gandhi, 1946, 28 July). From these two critical statements, it can well be construed that he was referring to what is known as methodological individualism. It should, however, be noted that his concept is diametrically different from the one used in neoclassical economics, which delimits the concept to the study of economic man who sells in the dearest market and buys in the cheapest market, and always maximizes his utility or profit (Ghosh, 2006). In this connection, Gandhi refers to four important nomological axioms, such as, truth, ahimsa (non-violence), anasakti (no desire for worldly possession) and Sarvodaya (welfare of all).

Sarvodaya philosophy emphasises individual action: "The revolution takes place as a result of individuals beginning here and now to live the values of the new society.

Through co-operative effort the people proceed to create new institutions and new forms of social life” (Gupta, 1972).

In economic sphere, Sarvodaya believes that every thing in the world is owned by the community. There is no room for individual property or private ownership. A critical feature of Sarvodaya economy is the concept of Dan (gift). The people are to be trained in sacrificing their possessions for the sake of others. Sarvodaya economy is not directed towards profit making, but service. Sarvodaya believes in the spirit of renunciation (Daniel, 1961).

The duty of policy-makers is to make sure that the contemplated policy will benefit the poor. Gandhi makes the message clear to the policy-makers in the following passage: “I will give you a talisman. Whenever your 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 of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions?.....Then you will find your doubts and yourself melting away” (Narayan, 1956).

These principles can be applied at both micro and macro levels involving individuals, institutions and society.

### **SECTION – III**

#### **Sarvodaya Movement: The Fundamental Basis of Bhoodan<sup>4</sup>**

Sarvodaya and Bhoodan are integrally related. Bhoodan is indeed a concrete manifestation of Sarvodaya. Like many other constructive programmes many of which were started by Mahatma Gandhi, Bhoodan remains one of the most important constructive programmes under Sarvodaya. Three distinct phases are discerned in the evolution of Sarvodaya –Bhoodan Movement in India.

#### **Receiving the Land Gifts: The First Phase of Bhoodan Movement (1951-1968)**

The first bhoodan was made on 18 April 1951 at Pochampalli village near Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh, India when a local landlord, Ramchandra Reddy, donated 100 acres of land to be redistributed to the landless in the village – the first gift of land received. Bhoodan was a non-violent, persuasive constructive programme for social transformation. Vinoba’s dream was to collect 50 million acres of land. Through Bhoodan, Vinoba begged land for the commons or the poor of the country.

Gradually, Vinoba began to apply Sarvodaya ideals to Bhoodan. He wanted to moral regeneration of the whole nation through Bhoodan movement. He marched from village to village carrying his moral revolution to the people. In 1952, Vinoba added a new concept to his movement. It was called Gramdan<sup>5</sup> (village gift). In 1953, he emphasized

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<sup>4</sup> The **Bhoodan** (land gift) movement was one of the greatest socio-political movements of independent India. Acharya Vinoba Bhave (1895-1982), one of Gandhi’s foremost disciples, launched the bhoodan movement as a non-violent alternative solution to the problem of inequity in land ownership.

<sup>5</sup> **Gramdan Movement:** In 1952, Vinoba added the Gramdan (village gift) concept to his movement. The movement was an extension of Bhoodan to the entire village community. Gramdan is an expression of the

the idea of Shramdan (gift of labour) along with Bhoodan –Gramdan. The seven-fold objectives were laid down in support of the Sarvodaya-Bhoodan-Gramdan Movement. There were: (1) Elimination of poverty, (2) awakening the feeling of love and affection in landlords, (3) strengthening the society by eliminating division, (4) building a new social order based on unbureaucratic labour, non-possession, cooperative, and self-reliance, (5) distribution of donated lands (gift lands) to the commons, and landless, (6) construction of village infrastructure through *Shramdan* (dignity of labour), and (7) helping world peace.

In 1953, during the Sarvodaya conference, Jayaprakesh Narayan, one of the outstanding Marxists and an influential exponent of socialism, decided to join Sarvodaya-Bhoodan-Gramdan Movement. And, in 1954 he offered his life to the Sarvodaya movement. In 1956, both Vinoba and Jayaprakesh Narayan were greatly distressed by the outbreak of violence and growing tension among the landlords and landless caused violent riots in Bihar (India).

About 42 lakh acres of Bhoodan land donated throughout the country, nearly 13 lakh acres have been distributed. While some more land may be distributed, it is inevitable that a substantial proportion of the remaining land will remain undistributed because this land was of very poor quality and will not easily lend itself to economic crop husbandry.

After the Bhoodan lands were received and some distributed to the landless, it was found that in most cases, the commons or the poor could not benefit from the given land. Common reasons for these were: the land was not irrigated and usually required some reclamation and leveling. Moreover, to start cultivation required inputs such as bullocks, implements, seeds and fertilizers. The beneficiaries were landless or owners of very small holdings before receiving the Bhoodan land. They were too weak and poor even to contribute their labour to their own farms. Thus, Bhoodan lands remained unproductive. By the late fifties, attempts were made by Sarvodaya organizations to provide inputs to Bhoodan beneficiaries so they could undertake cultivation. In some places, Bhoodan cooperatives were formed and loans were obtained from the Government for reclamation and irrigation purposes. Other Sarvodaya groups asked some donor agencies to fund specific projects. However, these efforts, which continued into the sixties, were unsuccessful. Among the reasons were the lack of expertise and technical support and inadequate finance. The Sarvodaya groups were heavily dependent on the implementing agency's presence and crumbled as soon as they were left to stand alone. This showed the importance not only of bringing resources physically, but also improving the skills, confidence, cohesion and self-managing abilities of the Bhoodan farmers.

From 1951, when Vinoba launched the Bhoodan (land-gift) movement till about 1968, when the land gifts virtually came to an end, the movement collected from landowners in various parts of the country over four million acres for redistribution to the landless. Through about one-third of this land was distributed to the landless, most of the Bhoodan allottees could not cultivate the land because they did not have the resources or means to do so. For all practical purposes they remained landless wage earners (Impression, 1987).

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concept of trusteeship of landed property. While on his Pad Yatra in North India, he requested that a village should become a Gramdan village. Consequently, the village land was to be owned collectively, not individually. The title deeds were to be transferred to the Gramsabha (village assembly), composed of village adults. The assembly could give one twentieth of the land for redistribution. They were encouraged to contribute one day's income per month to a Gram Kosh (village fund).

## **Shaping the Sarvodaya Vision: The Second Phase of Bhoodan Movement (1969 - 1982)**

In 1969, a new organization was born in the state of Tamilnadu, which held a great promise for the Bhoodan Movement and for Sarvodaya. It was a **co-operative venture** to develop the Bhoodan land under Sarvodaya ideals. It was called "Sarva Seva Farms."<sup>6</sup> The architect of this scheme was Mr. Giovanni Ermiglia, a representation with Tamilnadu Sarvodaya Mandal, and many constructive workers, the work of Sarve Seva Farms was started in the state of Tamilnadu. The primary goal of this infant organization was to distribute the land obtained under Bhoodan among the poor and the Scheduled Castes. Moreover, it was deemed necessary to apply wholistic approach to their development, instead of merely handing over the land to them. It was a unique experiment in putting to test, in concrete situations, the Sarvodaya ideology as preached by Gandhi, Vinoba and Jayaprakash Narayan (Ibid).

ASSEFA, the new organization of Sarvodaya, its immediate goals were: (1) To engage in reclamation and cultivation of Bhoodan, Gramdan, ceiling surplus land, and waste land for rehabilitation of the backward and poor in the rural areas of India, (2) To provide necessary implements for these projects, (3) To carry out the reclamation process in such a way to recover the agricultural capital, and to reinvest it in further reclamation work, (4) To help start small 'agro-industries' for the benefit of the rural poor, (5) To train the rural poor farmers in modern techniques of management, and (6) To provide employment to those engaged in the projects and encouraging them in co-operation, collective responsibility, and reciprocal assistance (Ibid).

The longterm objective of ASSEFA was to establish Gram Swaraj – village republics. Characteristically Gram Swaraj should promote a society which can establish self-rule, create a non-exploitative system for managing its own affairs and lead itself to self reliance.

ASSEFA has been working in the remote areas, where it identify the needs of the local community through participatory approach, develop an intervention action plan and implement comprehensive development programmes with the local community participation. Currently, ASSEFA supports nearly 3,25,000 poor families inhabited in 4228 villages in 74 blocks 23 districts across seven states – Bihar, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Tmil Nadu of India.

This macro vision was built into the mission of ASSEFA in its day-to-day working and due importance was assigned to peoples participation through peoples structures namely Gram Sabha (village assembly), Women Forums, Youth Forums and such other structures at the grassroots which were decision-making bodies and are created, sustained and nurtured by the community during the implementation of projects.

In the initial days, the single programme approach of ASSEFA of developing Bhoodan lands and establishing Sarva Seva Farms was largely quantitative. While this quantitative approach continues and are manifested with the integration of other programme areas of livestock development, village industries, community health and education to the basic agriculture development, the shift is towards the social transformation of the society.

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<sup>6</sup> Association for Sarva Seva Farms (ASSEFA) is an all India base network of small grassroots voluntary organizations working within the framework of Sarvodaya (welfare of all) movement, aiming for development, the group takes its root to the second phase of non-violent Bhoodan-Gramdan movement of Acharya Vinoba Bhave.

With the help of an Italian NGO, a tract of 70 acres with 35 families was developed. The allottees were paid the going wage by the Italian NGO and were able to reclaim 70 acres, and dig five wells. By 1982, 478 acres of total barren and uncultivated land, most of it poor quality, has been brought into intensive cultivation. The total investment per acre has been estimated at about \$500 per acre.

### **Shift Towards Qualitative Change: Slow and Stagnation Phase of Sarvodaya Movement (1983 onwards)**

After death of many outstanding and steward Sarvodaya leaders like Mahatma Gandhi (1948); Jayaprakash Narayan (1979); and Acharya Vinoba Bhave (1982); Sarvodaya Movement particularly Bhoodan-Gramdan (land gifts) movement virtually came to an end. Not only Vinoba, the movement's charismatic leaders, but thousands of Sarvodaya workers, walked for over 60,000 kilometers in 31 years, talked to people and listened to their woes. At the end of the second phase (1982), it was a national movement throbbing with activity. The total amount of Bhoodan land donated reached 4.2 million acres and allotted these lands to commons either belonging to tribal groups, poor farmers and weaker sections, covering nine states of India. The wholistic vision that the movement was adopted for the uplift of the commons or poors was indeed praiseworthy. The third phase of Sarvodaya movement, although it is halting and low, must see that it would become the legacy of the commons people. Some case studies are being projected in the next section of this paper.

## **SECTION - IV**

### **Case studies of 'Collective Actions' Due to Sarvodaya Movement**

#### **Case I: Sammanway<sup>7</sup> Ashram, Bodh Gaya (Bihar)**

We discuss the changes taking place in the life-ways (material-ways) and liberation of mind-ways (thought-ways) of the *Musahars*<sup>8</sup> after the interventions of developmental programmes for them.

The Bodh Gaya *Math* was the biggest landholder in the Gaya District, Bihar, India. Established in 1590, this Math gradually acquired around 10,000 acres of land. For the purpose of cultivation and management of these huge landholdings, the Math established *Kutcheharies* in the villages where the Math land was located. The Mahant, known as *Mahant Sarkar* by the people, manages the land cultivated and makes payment to the Kamias (or attached Musahar labourers), which was traditionally fixed. Thousands of Musahar families around the Math were subjected to slavery and inhuman treatment. They were eating something similar to saw dust. That was flour ground from rotten paddy; this was distributed to the Musahars as wages by the Math. In other parts of the

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<sup>7</sup> Samanwaya Ashram, a Gandhian voluntary agency, has been engaged in the betterment of the Musahars in Bodh Gaya, Bihar, since 1954. The Ashram essentially aims at evolving a synthesis of the teachings of all religions and an integration of the life of the Musahars through the Sarvodaya-Bhoodan and Gramdan Movement. Acharya Vinoba Bhave started his Bhoodan (land gift) movement in 1951. In Bihar, he secured more than one lakh acres of land for distribution among the landless.

<sup>8</sup> The Musahars or rat-eaters are one of the lowest divisions of the Dalits, and are, therefore, placed at the bottom of the social and economic scale. Most of them were bonded labourers and were given tracts of barren lands ranging from 0.5-3 acres under Bhoodan and Gramdan Schemes. Placed at the lower rungs of the social and ritual ladder, they have largely remained socially, politically and economically backward.

country, the bran of the rice is fed to cattle, but here, for the Musahars, the outer husk of rotten paddy is ground and given as food to them.

After the interventions of Samanway Ashram and the Chatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini<sup>9</sup>, the Musahars refused to work on the lands of the Math. At several places, the Math land remained fallow and barren. Musahars organized themselves under the banner of the Vahini and started a non-violent struggle against the Bodh Gaya Math. Finally, on November 14, 1987, 35,000 acres of land (including the surplus ceiling land of the Bodh Gaya Math Estate) and the Gair Mazarua (Aam) land of the Government of Bihar was distributed among the Musahars, the landless, and the poor of the area (Saxena, 1987: 8). Till date, the allottees continue to be in effective possession of the land given to them. Thus, a new era dawned in the lives of the Musahars.

Today, they are no longer afraid of the red turbaned musclemen and other officials and can talk to them boldly. The Musahar women have also started taking an active part in the processions organized by the Vahini. Not only do the Musahars not allow themselves to be cheated or exploited by moneylenders, government officials, contractors and even the Mahant, they resist atrocities committed on them in their daily life. They have also started taking an active part in election campaigns.

### **Case II: Rural reconstruction in Sarvodaya Ashram, Sokhodeora**

In April 1954, Jayaprakash Narayan decided to launch his ideas of rural reconstruction in the field. The area selected was in the Kawakol police station in Gaya district (now in Nawada District of Bihar). J.P. had realized that the Bhoodan movement should not be confined only to getting and distributing land among the rural poor. It was indeed only the first step towards a non-violent revolution whose ultimate aim was Sarvodaya. It was therefore, necessary to help the peasants in building up the new economic order. Agricultural development, livestock development, village industries, educational programmes and promotion of self-dependence had to be conducted with the help of new local people trained for the purpose.

The work was started at Sokhodeora with the putting up of the Ashram. The population comprised largely of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes who were settled on Bhoodan lands in new villages like Gandhidham and Jayanagar Karturbagram. The land was all barren and rocky and with hard work and faith in their ability to change the land and their life, things began to change. People showed their readiness to adopt new ideas without losing their anchor in their own social values. A number of landless labourers who were lowly serfs of their feudal masters by the dint of hard labour have emerged as proud landowners and painstaking master craftsmen. The barren rocky terrain is now covered with lush green crops. A number of wells, pumping sets and small dams, new agricultural techniques and fertilizers have raised the agricultural productivity fourfold. This has not

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<sup>9</sup> During the 1970s, Jayaprakash Narayan's Sarvodaya Movement (upliftment of all) grew out of which was formed the youth movement called the *Chhatra Yuva Sangarsh Vahini*, which was very active in Bihar till 1990s. The Vahini were deeply involved in the struggle of the landless poor in the area around Bodh Gaya. They redistributed some of the vast tracts of land controlled by the Bodh Gaya Math. It became a well-known and well-documented struggle for social justice by non-violent means, despite the brutality used against the landless poor. The Vahini got people to work together in groups, and brought the women forward for non-violent resistance. Many of Musahars of Bodh Gaya region were involved in the struggle for social justice.



only brought economic betterment but a new confidence and dignity among the beneficiaries Adivasis. The opposition of the caste Hindus to the new life style of the Scheduled Castes has been blunted. A large number of children are going to school. The Khadi and village industries training-cum-production centre has proved to be boon to the area. Through J.P.'s personal efforts, a number of foreign experts in agriculture and village industries not only visited the area but stayed in it for long periods to give training to the people. In the field of health provision has been made for both preventive and curative aspects. For the eradication of leprosy, a hospital has been started at Kapasia. A number of cooperative societies, some multipurpose and other craft based were also started. Steps were also taken to organize and train the village youth as Gram Seva Dal. The All India Khadi and Village Commission constituted this area into as an intensive area for all round development. Spinning, weaving, leather works, and a number of other crafts have provided gainful employment to the villagers and made available the people things of their daily need. Considerable number of rural domain has been trained as artisans and given technical and financial assistance to set up their own trades. Gram Sabha have been established in a number of villages. Distribution of land collected through Bhoodan has been done in the neighbouring villages. Gram Kosh has been created in many villages.

### **Case III: Musahari Interlude: Alternative to Naxalism**

The Mushari Block, which is adjacent to Muzaffarpur town in Bihar, India, was in the grip of Naxalite violence around 1970s. In that district the gramdan campaign had been rapidly losing its momentum. The condition of the villages was very miserable. Jayaprakash Narayan one of the leading Gandhians of international repute, found that even after more than two decades of independence and government efforts to ameliorate the situation in the countryside 'what ultimately met the eye are utter poverty, misery, inequality, exploitation, backwardness, stagnation and loss of hope'. The socio-economic reality in the village was ugly and distressing in the extreme. Even the existing laws concerning homestead, share cropping, land ceiling, minimum wages and money lending were not implemented efficiently. The main reason for this was that the village community was not organized and run democratically. There have been no change in people's attitudes and values of life. The result was that the balance of power in the community continued to be tilted in favour of the rural elite who had built up oppressive structures. The institutions and processes of democracy were found to be woefully lacking. In such a state of affairs it was no wonder that frustration and anger had turned the people towards violence.

At this point of time J.P. wanted to try Gandhian methods for meeting the challenge. Constructive work was to be stepped up. Conversion by gentle persuasion was the method adopted but when the situation so required, non-violent non-cooperation or resistance might be resorted to. Bhoodan, gramdan and ultimately gramswaraj were the paths to this non-violent change in the village. Though this a voluntary process of individual and social change was initiated leading to community self-government or gramswaraj. It involves attitudinal and value changes as well as changes in socio-economic and personal relations.

More specifically J.P.'s programme related to the implementation of gramdan pledges obtained earlier, such as the establishment of Gramsabha in each village, redistribution of one twentieth of land covered by Gramdan, setting up of 'Gramkosh' and organization of the Gram Shanti Sena. Efforts were also to be made to secure legal confirmation of

gramdan through government agencies. Stress was laid on distributing undistributed Bhoodan lands along with correcting mistakes discovered in respect of previously distributed land, to see that every Scheduled Castes received the *homestead parcha*, to look into the problem of the landless labourers with a view to solving them, and to take up specific cases of injustice and oppression brought up by people for redressal (Narayan, 1980).

The programme was to be implemented by door to door visit to the houses of landless people and taking up and ventilating the question of wages. J.P. used to camp in each village for a number of days trying to meet people and help in the solution of their problems. It was his resolve to stay in that area for as long as traces of violence did not disappear. It was intended to make the Gramdan movement intensive and deep going. He was, however, clear in his mind that Gramdan will only prepare the necessary socio-psychological climate for direct democracy of the village to function properly. The Gramsabhas will have to gain both strength and moral resources to resolve conflicts in the community and to prevent injustice to the weaker section. The Gramkosh was to be collected regularly and utilized for the purposes laid down. The Sabhas will have to learn to prepare their own plans for development, to husband their own resources for their execution and to obtain help from government and credit institutions.

## SECTION - V

### The Present Study: Sarva Seva Farm, Khaira<sup>10</sup> Block, Bihar (India)

ASSEFA has been working in Khaira Block for nearly thirty-five years. Depending upon the needs of the communities, multi-facet development programmes were implemented. Based on the learning programmes and strategies are refined time to time to serve the local communities efficiently. ASSEFA in its evolution process took up integrated

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<sup>10</sup> The origin of the name Khaira is traced to 'Khair' (katha), which abounded in the dense forest area in the olden days. The Khaira block was inaugurated on 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 1964. It attained stage II on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1970, and is at present in post stage II. Khaira block extends from 24° 40' N to 24° 55' N latitude and 86° 0' E to 20' E longitude. It is bounded by Kawakol block of Nawada district and Tisri block of Giridih district in the west, Jamui and Sikandara block of Jamui district in the north, Sono and Tisri blocks of Jamui and Giridih districts respectively in the south and Lakshmipur and Jhajha blocks of Jamui district in the east. Buses, taxis, trucks, jeeps, horse-carts, motor cycles, etc. ply from Jamui to Khaira and Khaira to Kawakol via Bishanpur, Garhi, Harni and Ropabel Panchayats, etc. The block is spread over an area of 433.20 sq. km and has a population of 177008 persons (2001). It has 94 inhabited and eight uninhabited villages. There is no town in the block. The nearest town is Jamui, the headquarters of the district, nine km away from Khaira block. The nearest railway station is Jamui (ER), 16 km. from Khaira. The block has 10 *Halkas*, and 22 *panchayats*. Physiographically, the block may be divided into three tracts, viz. hilly and forest area, plateau and upland area, and the plains. The area under forests is 39,762 acres. The forests are of tropical type.

Nearly 17.63 per cent of the total population is accounted for by the scheduled castes. The block has also a small size of scheduled tribe population (2.86 per cent). Overall 37 per cent of the total population in the block is literate. It may be noted here the Khaira is a poor, hilly and deficit block of the State of Bihar. It is a *zero industrial belt* and drought prone area. The socio-economic survey of households has revealed that 93 per cent of the population is below the poverty line. About 76 per cent of the population belongs to the socially handicapped segments. And, the unemployment rate in terms of year long employment to the adult population is as high as 60 per cent (2001). These farmers are involved in rain-fed cultivation, income from the land does not meet the family needs. The areas, by and large, are covered by Maoists Communist Centre (M.C.C). However, there are many among the Sarvodayas and social activists who still believe that change will come only through the non-violent order.

development since 1987, with the support of Inter-Church Cooperation Organization (ICCO) Netherland. During the initial stage of intervention, the local people were brought together under Community Based Organizations (CBOs) like gram sabha and activity groups. These people were made them to participate in the development process including identifying, planning, implementing and monitoring the development programmes.

Suitable socio-economic programmes were introduced to enhance the economic and social progress of the local community. Under the economical programmes, support was extended for crop inputs, improving irrigation facilities, animal husbandry and non-farm activities. To ensure such support to the community for a long period surplus income from the economical activities were mobilized by the community as village common revolving funds. Nidhi Foundation was established in each village manage the funds at the village level. Nidhi Foundations are federated at the block level. To manage the entire village common revolving funds, Sarva Jana Seva Kosh was established. Recently, the entire structure is being reorganized to enhance the efficiency of the credit operation with the professional support of BASIX.

Under social programme, education to rural children and health care to women have been implemented. Education programme has been carried out intensively in Garhi and Anandpuri areas, with the support of **Aide et Action**, where school facilities are limited. At present, it benefits about 6200 tribal children. Under the health programme, the local communities are linked with the local primary health centers and availing the government special health care programme, in addition, regular camps are arranged for specific ailment such as eye care, leprosy, etc. Special focus is being given to women under the development programme as part of empowering women.

### Procedure and Methodology

After some preliminary discussions with the Sarvodaya workers and twice visits of Khaira Block, three separate questionnaires, keeping in view the objectives of the Sarvodaya movement, were prepared for conducting surveys from sociological, economic, and social-psychological angles. This report is based on the survey.

It was considered neither feasible nor necessary to contact the whole population. Hence seven villages were randomly selected out of the list of 67 (8525 households) Sarvodaya villages provided by ASSEFA Jamui. Later on, two more villages were added at the instance of the B.D.O, Khaira. For the purposes of comparison, two control villages – one big with mixed castes and one small consisting of low castes and Muslims – were also included. Thus, the survey was conducted in nine villages with 889 households. It was decided to interview 25 percent of all househeads of the sampled villages so as to include all donors and donees of land and the members of the Gram Sabhas. The procedure adopted was to contact every fourth househead, starting from one end of a village. The villages, their total number of households, and the number of interviewees are given below:

**Table 1. Sampled Villages and their Households Under Study**

Sarvodaya Village	Households	
	Total	Interviewed
1. Darima	127	32
2. Goli	140	35
3. Rajan	131	33

4. Harodih	103	26
5. Aktarwa (Tribal village)	66	17
6. Sokho I & II	276	70
7. Kapla (Tribal village)	46	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>889</b>	<b>225</b>

In Sarvodaya villages 25.64 per cent of the households were interviewed. In total 26 percent of the households were interviewed.

## Results

### Granting Parchas

Sarvodaya movement has a number of such programmes. One of them was to get the Privileged Persons Homestead Tenancy Act, 1948, implemented, which required that every privileged (landless) person should have legal authority on his homestead. Before the Sarvodaya movement, only 50 per cent were reported to have *parchas* and some of them were reported to be evicted from their homestead despite *parchas* they had with them. We were told during our village trips and group interviews that almost all of them have now got *parchas* and there was absolutely no case of eviction. But similar was the situation in the control villages. To the extent that the Sarvodaya movement has helped this awareness to grow by protecting the poor against tyranny, the credit must go to the movement.

### Distribution of Land

Another important programme of the movement was to get the donations of 1/20 of landowner's land and to get them distributed among the landless. Our survey revealed that 12.40 per cent of the respondents have donated land to 15.30 per cent of the respondents. The total land donated was 10.53 to 13.78 acres (as reported by donees and donors, respectively).

### Gross Exploitation

In summary, the process of exploitation is predominantly one-way which is aimed towards the landless labourers; and the extent of exploitation is lesser in Sarvodaya villages as compared to the Control villages. Because these villages are located nearby, the credit for this change goes to the Sarvodaya movement.

Despite the finding that the gross level of exploitation has gone down due to the Sarvodaya movement, the Gram Sabha was not considered to be a very effective defense against such exploitation.

### Social Distance

Apart from the economic objectives, the Sarvodaya movement has also got social objectives which may or may not have economic implications. For example, the social distance among high and low caste people was one of the issues under consideration. A significant majority thus reported that the social distance in the Sarvodaya as well as

Control villages has decreased. Similarly, overwhelming majority of villagers (97.54%) in Sarvodaya as well as Control (61.70%) villages reported that high and low caste people sit on the same mat during meetings, etc. The difference between the two is again reflective of the impact of the Sarvodaya movement.

### **Gambling and Alcoholism**

One glaring problem of Khaira is the rampant gambling and large scale alcoholism. The Sarvodaya movement naturally directed its attention to the problem. One of the main tasks assigned to the Gram Sabha was to control these two evils which were hurting the poor much more than the rich. Let us see how things stand.

### **Tension Management and Sarvodaya Orientation**

The emerging Sarvodaya polity seems to be the culmination of a process of change in the pattern of agrarian relations, which widens the scope for **collective action** characterized by unity, confidence, and consensus. The study reveals that in the two villages out of seven sampled villages, where exploitation persist. However, we found that in many sampled villages, socio-economic conditions were yet not ripe for the free growth and functioning of the Sarvodaya polity. Community life in these villages continued to be characterized by **factionalism** and **conflict**, which affected the Gramsabha's endeavour to attain the Sarvodaya goals.

## **SECTION - VI**

### **Concluding Remarks**

Our findings reveal that in the Khaira Block a number of changes have occurred. Gross and crude exploitation has decreased with increasing political awareness in people. Social distance has decreased too. There has been some restraint on the growing trends in gambling and alcoholism. The landless labourers have got *Parchas* of their homesteads and they are no longer evicted from their homesteads. Credit for these changes may go to the Sarvodaya movement – although the brief spell of Naxalite movement may have been one of the factors for some of these changes.

Yet, these changes are far from being radical and, revolutionary consequently, have failed in restructuring either the **village economy** or the minds of people. At best they have provided some relief to the system. What the movement needs is, in order to become a mass movement, to incorporate those who really need a radical change and restructuring, viz., the landless people.

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