The author has described how the word Sarvodaya came into being. In fact, the reading of John Ruskin’s book, *Unto this Last* not only made a deep impact on Gandhiji’s life, but it turned out to be a very important turning event of his life. He was so impressed by the book and its thoughts that he started changing his style of life from the very next day. He published a brief summary of this book in Gujarati and named it as *Sarvodaya*. The author of this article has translated it as “welfare of all”. Another version more popular is “good of all.” This word did not have great currency when Gandhiji was alive.

Sometime after his death, the mantle of leadership of the Gandhian fraternity fell on late Acharya Vinoba Bhave. It was he who found that if Gandhiji’s entire philosophy is to be described in one word, then Sarvodaya was the most appropriate word. Later on, he also conceived the idea of a loose fraternity of believers in truth and non-violence as Sarvodaya Samaj. When Shri Jayaprakash Narayan joined the Gandhian fraternity, he was also greatly instrumental in popularizing the expression, Sarvodaya, i.e., “Good of all.”

A former policeman who rose to the post of Director General of Police, Assam, Shri Changkakoti was attracted to Gandhian thought and the Sarvodaya ideal right from his student days. On his retirement from active service, he has also gradually engaged himself in various activities of public well-being. He is at present heading the Go-Seva Samity of Assam which is a Gandhian organization of long standing. Shri Changkakoti’s article gains importance as it is an article written by an ex-policeman. And secondly, because he is a very serious and keen student of Gandhian thought. In his own humble way, he also keeps himself engaged in Gandhian activities of different kinds.

*Ishani* came across this article in the popular daily, *The Assam Tribune*, and found it interesting. The readers of *Ishani* are familiar with Shri Changkakoti as we have published his other articles also in the past. We are happy to get another opportunity to reproduce his latest article, which he has created in a style which will be easily understood by any person concerned with healthy changes in our society.
Mahatma Gandhi never claimed to have been a highly learned person. But out of the few books which he studied, the book which instantly gave shape to his philosophy of life is John Ruskin’s *Unto this Last*. As explained in this book, he felt convinced that the good of the individual is contained in the good of all and a votary of *Ahimsa* cannot subscribe to the utilitarian formula of the greatest good of the greatest number. “He will strive for the greatest good of all and die in the attempt to realize the idea”. After Gandhi translated Ruskin’s *Unto this Last* into Gujarati, naming it *Sarvodaya* (The Welfare of all), the term *Sarvodaya* came to represent a particular social order which attains greatest good of all its members and which is pervaded by all round peace and contentment.

Mahatma Gandhi dreamt of transforming India into such a *Ramrajya* after liberation of the country from the yoke of British rule. But, unfortunately, soon after India’s independence, the life of the Father of our Nation was cruelly ended by an assassin’s bullet. Though, therefore, Gandhi could not provide required guidance and leadership step by step to bring about such an ideal social order in India, it is apparent from what he had spoken and written during his lifetime on the subject, that he wanted India to be composed of a large number of self-governing and self-reliant small communities or villages. In such a structure “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 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, never aggressive
in their arrogance, but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units”.

The apprehension that the self-reliant and self-governing primary communities may not be able to hold together and the unity and integrity of the country will be in jeopardy, has been sought to be dispelled by Late Jay Prakash Narayan- a renowned freedom fighter and a convert from Marxian Socialism to an ardent Advocate of Sarvodaya, in the following words. “There is no reason to suppose why self-governing small communities will be hostile to one another or isolationists or selfish in their inter-relationship. If the internal life of a community is laid on sound foundations, its external life cannot but be equally sound.” He further clarified that “In a Sarvodaya world society the present Nation-States have no place. The Sarvodaya view is a world view, and the individual standing at the Centre of Gandhi’s oceanic circles is a world citizen.” It is obvious that Nation-States and state power will not wither away and will have to continue to protect the Nations from external aggression and to resolve disputes and conflicts among the small or big communities till all the Nations and all the communities start functioning strictly in accordance with Sarvodaya ideology, thereby eliminating every scope for hostility and conflict among them. Gandhi, himself, has also acknowledged that “the ideal is never fully realized in life. Hence the classical statement of Thoreau that the Government is best which governs the least”.

Mahatma Gandhi was of the firm view that the earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s needs, but not for every man’s greed. In the Sarvodaya society of his dream, therefore, every member will be free from any greed for limitless acquisition of material wealth and more and more luxurious living and they will follow the motto of simple living and high thinking. Everyone will, thus, get ample opportunity to produce and earn sufficiently through honest work for decent and dignified living. Consequently there will be no problem of unemployment. Of course, obviously, income of different people may be different, depending on their talent, ability and effort. But those who will earn more, will use the bulk of their greater earnings for the good of the society as a whole. In such a society, all wealth, including land, will be assumed as common property to be utilized for the welfare of all. If an individual has more than his proportionate portion, he becomes a
trustee of the excess wealth for the benefit of the less fortunate members of the society. As regards use of machinery in economic activity, Gandhi said that “If we feel the need of machines, we certainly will have them. But there should be no place for machines that concentrate power in a few hands and turn the masses into mere machine-minders, if, indeed, they do not make them unemployed.” In order, therefore, to minimize use of machines in a Sarvodaya society, Gandhi strongly advocated that everyone should do some productive physical work at least to earn his/her daily bread as was also advocated by Leo Tolstoy - the great Russian thinker and writer and everyone should uphold the dignity of labour irrespective of the type of honest labour performed by an individual.

It is evident that for realization of Sarvodaya social order, which is, no doubt, desirable for permanent peace, happiness and for prevention of further environmental degradation, what should happen first is the moral elevation of people in a mass scale, so that thoughts and actions of men are governed by truth, universal love, urge to even sacrifice one’s life for the good of others, respect for all religions, adherence to pure means in one’s activities and such other noble qualities. Study of human history since the ancient times, does not, however, encourage one to hold the view that such a change of heart will take place even in the distant future. This is why perhaps, Lord Krishna proclaimed in the Gita that He would descend on Earth from time to time to protect the virtuous people, to annihilate the evil doer and to re-establish the rule of dharma in the world.

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