

Comprehensive analysis of Bentham's Utilitarianism & Concept of Sarvodaya

¹Dr. Gaurav Agarwal, ²Dr. Mamta Pareek

¹Professor, Poddar International College, Jaipur, dr_gaurav@poddarinstitute.org

²Associate Professor, Poddar International College, Jaipur, mamta.pareek@poddarinstitute.org

Abstract

This research paper is providing a comprehensive & comparative study of Utilitarianism & Sarvodaya. Both the ideologies establish as democratic ideologies but there is a big difference between democratic parameters and characteristics of utilitarianism. We found utilitarianism is not a core democratic ideology as this does not follow the very core principles of the common good and the equality of democracy. Comparatively, Sarvodaya is based on equality. Sarvodaya seems to have the welfare of all means as it is basically rooted in Sanskrit term Sarv and Udaya with 'Gun Sandhi', which stands for uplift or welfare for all. It shows its bonding with the pure democratic characteristics widely accepted. The founder of utilitarianism is Jeremy Bentham and his brilliant student John Stuart Mill amended and updated this theory. The beginning utilitarianism was initially not related to social morality, but later on, amendments established its relations with social morality.

The basic concept of utilitarianism stands for a high level of happiness and pleasure as Bentham believes that human nature is derived only by pleasure and pain. But, here it does not force to distribute this happiness and pleasure equally to everyone. The basic idea here goes with 'maximum pleasure for maximum people'. If we want to understand the instruments of this maximum pleasure, utilitarianism goes with the result or the consequences of an act rather than the instruments or the good or bad ways it is achieved, so this emphasises end over means.

Sarvodaya here means upliftment of all classes of society, And on a bigger scale, it refers to Universal upliftment or progress. It is originally a Upanishadic Idea of 'Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah:' means all sentient beings being happy and at peace. The Sarvodaya term was first coined by Mahatma Gandhi After reading Ruskin Bond's 'unto this last'. After that, it was highlighted as Gandhian socialism.

After this Gandhi used this term for his political-philosophical ideas. Later many Gandhian thinkers like Vinoba Bhave, Jai Prakash Narayan embraced "Sarvodaya" as a name of Social Movement in Post Independent India.

Utilitarianism and Sarvodaya both ideas are emphasising the pleasure/upliftment of humans. But according to comprehensive analysis utilitarianism has an emphasis on the happiness of Maximum numbers, whether Sarvodaya's object is to work for every person's happiness in the society.

Keywords: Sarvodaya, Utilitarianism, Gandhi, Bentham, J.S.Mill.

I. INTRODUCTION

Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is an ethical doctrine pioneered by Jeremy Bentham and J.S. Mill. It is defined as the doctrine of ethics which advocates that actions are right if they are useful for the benefit of the majority and that an action is right so far as it promotes happiness. Utilitarian ideas are

fundamental to modern ethical theory and remain firmly ensconced in contemporary intellectual life. A person ought to act so as to maximize happiness or pleasure and to minimize unhappiness or pain.

"it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong."

This popular theory is based on "The Greatest happiness principle." Means "Maximum Pleasure for maximum Peoples." Bentham adopted this quote from Priestley and Hachesan). This theory suggests that morality or ethics is determined by consequential principles. The actions are right if they are useful to the majority of people.

Happiness = pleasure, and the absence of pain

Unhappiness = pain, and the absence of pleasure

Happiness is the only thing that has intrinsic value

"pleasure, and freedom from pain, are the only things desirable as ends...all desirable things are desirable either for the pleasure inherent in themselves or as means to the promotion of pleasure and the prevention of pain."

The theory of utilitarianism was founded by Jeremy Bentham in the 18th century and was altered by his brilliant pupil John Stuart Mill in the 19th century. Utilitarianism is related to morality. Morality that gives us a high level of happiness and pleasure and along with it, it diminishes painful things and unhappiness, which means utilitarianism is purely related to enhancement of goodness. It means that what makes life better, easy to consider good, and what makes life worse, harmful, or painful is a kind of evil in his utilitarian theory.

Before Jeremy Bentham these theories were known as a general term of Hedonism. The British scholar, philosopher, jurist, and social reformer Jeremy Bentham revived and spreaded this idea. In this sense, it was not basically an original idea of J. Bentham. But, The systematic and organised idea of the utilitarian state is purely grounded by Jeremy Bentham. Consequently, Bentham is considered the founder of modern utilitarianism. He defined in his 'Fragment' as the "fundamental axiom" of his philosophy that "it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong."

Bentham further states that Mankind is under two sovereign masters - Pleasure and Pain. The great asset we should be looking for is happiness. Actions, where the results increase happiness or decrease pain, are good. They have

the ability for utility. The quantity of happiness it might be produced by an action, we can evaluate the possible consequences by applying several values like intensity, duration, certainty or uncertainty, propinquity or remoteness, fecundity, purity, and extent.

The action which provides pleasure and happiness is accepted as utility so utility is the degree to which an act produced pleasure. There are two types of utilitarianism ethics.

A. Act- An action is right if and only if it produces the greatest balance of pleasure over pain for the greatest number.

B. Rule- an action is right if and only if it conforms to a set of rules the general acceptance of which would produce the greatest balance of pleasure over pain for the greatest number.

According to Jeremy Bentham whatever does not maximize happiness for maximum people is considered morally wrong. Here, the parameter of morality is related to right and good things. So, this principle is related to the happiness and satisfaction of a person in goods and services. The main focus and strength of utilitarianism stand to minimise pain and maximise happiness and finally to make an individual's life better. It is also easy to say that the principles of utilitarianism seems fair and widely accepted.

But this debate based on the principle of Bahujaan Hitay Bahujaan Sukhay has also become the target of criticism of scholars due to its definite limitations. The idea of maximum happiness for maximum people is not bad at all. But if attention is paid to its ethical aspects, then its implementation raises many fundamental and ethical questions and problems in itself. Before looking at its applications, we should also recognize that Bentham's disciple John Stuart Mill has made a substantial effort to defend these limitations based on the wider good, however, its ethical limitations do raise some questions.

Application of Utilitarian Theory

If you can use 80 soldiers as a decoy in war and thereby attack an enemy force and kill several hundred enemy soldiers, that is a morally good choice even though the 80 might be lost.

If lying or stealing will bring about more happiness and/or reduce pain, Act utilitarianism says we should lie and steal in those cases.

According to the above analysis, Utilitarianism lacks certain parameters of Ethical Conventions. Because conventions bound human acts. Bentham does not support any type of conventional pressure on acts related to happiness. It stands for no traditional obligation on human happiness in Bentham's utilitarianism. He classified Pleasure & Pain in the ordinary & the complicated category. Bentham described 14- General Pleasures and 12- General Pains. Bentham invented an Instrument for a measurement called "Felicific Calculus", It measures pleasure (Happiness) & Pain (Unhappiness). The measurement standards were Speed, Distance, Duration, Certainty, Purity, Expansion & Capacity to originate the Pleasure.

Bentham specified the sources of pleasure & pain by religion, politics, policy & materialistic means. He importantly explains that there is no difference in different pleasures qualitatively. Pleasure is quantitatively bigger or small but not qualitatively.

As per essential elements of Utilitarianism, an action is right or wrong determined solely by its consequences. The value of the consequences of an action is assessed in terms of the amount of happiness or well-being caused. In assessing the total happiness caused to a number of people, equal amounts of happiness are to have equal value, and as every person has the same value so no one's happiness has greater value than that of another's.

Comprehensive Analysis of Utilitarianism

English philosophers John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) and Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) were the leading proponents of what is now called 'classic utilitarianism'.

Basically, Utilitarians were social reformers because they supported suffrage for women and those without property. Utilitarians also wanted the abolition of slavery. Utilitarians argued that criminals ought to be reformed and not merely punished. Even Bentham spoke out against cruelty to animals. Mill was a strong supporter of meritocracy. Proponents emphasized that utilitarianism was an egalitarian doctrine.

Beyond these ideological aspects, Bentham's utilitarianism theory could mean that if 10 people would be happy watching a man being eaten by a wild dog it would be a morally good

thing for the 10 men to kidnap someone and throw the man into a cage of wild hungry dogs or in living example It can also appear to support the enjoyment of Arab sheikhs by tying children upon camels in camel races, as many Arabs enjoy at the cost of the lives of those few abducted children.

The weakness of utilitarianism is that pleasure and satisfaction cannot be absolute objectives in every person's life. This theory diminishes Sacrifice for other noble human characteristics. It drags human characteristics to the exact level of animal behaviour, although there are cases where animals have shown different characteristics in history. Especially dog lovers can find an ample amount of stories of sacrifice and love even between the human and animal.

According to the basic concept of utilitarianism is about the high level of happiness and pleasure and it's not necessary that happiness and pleasure are equally for all. It has the basic idea of "maximum pleasure for maximum people.". Utilitarianism is deeply related to enhancing goodness and pleasure. Basically, according to utilitarianism, the result or the consequences of an act is the real measure of action whether it is good or bad so this theory emphasises End over Means.

Concept of Sarvodaya

The objective of Sarvodaya for the welfare of all that how one can contribute his or her share to the good of humanity. it is the wider vision for development. The concept of Sarvodaya is a vital contribution to Socio-political philosophy. The vision of Sarvodaya is not Originated independently but in a deeper sense, It is a modern announcement of old Upanishadic and all humanitarian ideas. it is an all-comprehensive version assuring the total good of every individual belonging to any religious, moral, social-political, and economic class or society.

M.G. Gandhi uses the word Sarvodaya to describe the principles that he felt should guide us in our efforts to build ourselves, our families, our communities, and our nations. He had arrived at these principles of a Sarvodaya society on the basis of his study, observations, and experiments with truth and nonviolence. Gandhi analyses that the world is threatened by poverty, unemployment, racial discrimination, exploitation, ecological distractions, war, and as

a solution to all these problems Gandhi wanted to establish a new and free society that ensures good and upliftment for all. He proposed Sarvodaya to achieve the integral development of every individual.

Sarvodaya is a Sanskrit word derived from two words –

Sarva + Udaya

Sarva means all which includes every kind of living being, Udaya means rise, uplift, prosperity, affluence, etc. The literal meaning of Sarvodaya is the welfare of all or upliftment/progress of all classes of society. This term was first coined by Mahatma Gandhi, that's why it's addressed as Gandhian Socialism also.

The ultimate objective of Sarvodaya is the total well-being of all or the greatest good of all. By welfare of all, Gandhi discusses the sum total of all-around development including religious, moral, political, social, and all economic standards. By this concept, Gandhi really means universal upliftment for all men and women and not just the welfare or greatest happiness of the greatest number. Sarvodaya is the name Gandhi gives to the new society embracing the betterment of the entire humankind and the world at large it is a society directed towards the integral welfare of all living beings based on proven and old spiritual and moral values of Indian heritage and those found elsewhere.

Foundation of Sarvodaya

The Foundation of Sarvodaya lies in 'simple living and high thinking' Motto. Mahatma Gandhi used the term Sarvodaya as the title of his 1908's translation of John Ruskin's tract on political economy, 'Unto This Last'. Gandhi came to use the term for the ideal of his own political philosophy. Later Gandhians, like the Indian nonviolence activist Vinoba Bhave, embraced the term as a name for the social movement in post-independence India which strove to ensure that self-determination and equality reached all strata of Indian society.

Objective of Sarvodaya

The fundamental objective of Sarvodaya is the greatest good of all living beings. Gandhi aims at the transformation of society in which everybody contributes his or her own maximum share for the peace and harmony of the world, as

a consequence of integral growth. It includes the spiritual, moral, political, social, and economic welfare of every individual and the welfare of all is visualised. It emphasises the all-round development of all without any discrimination of caste, creed, sex or religion. Gandhi wanted to establish a welfare state in India based on Sarvodaya ideology which he called Ram Rajya. Each individual including the sick and the invalid fulfills his or her duties according to his or her capacity. There will be a healthy community assuring the integral welfare of all beings by providing sufficient opportunities to every individual for their personal initiatives and capacities. Sarvodaya aims at the total and integral development of every individual in human society.

Three basic principles of Sarvodaya are:

- The good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
- All have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.
- This is a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living.

Gandhi said– “Human must lead a disciplined life along with truth and nonviolence.”

Principles of Sarvodaya

- Villages of India should be self-sufficient
- No centralized authority
- Political and economic awareness in the village
- Politics will not be the instrument of power but an agency of service and politics (Rajniti) should be replaced with people-policy (Lokniti).
- Trusteeship - Rich people should voluntarily donate their wealth for the betterment of society.
- Economic Equality
- Sarvodaya network
- Philosophical Anarchism
- Party less Democracy
- Decentralisation “Ramrajya”

- Spirit of love, Fraternity, Truth, Non-Violence, and Self-sacrifices.
- Individual personality should have the fullest scope for development.
- No Private Property
- Against immoral activity like competition, exploitation, class hatred.
- Development of Cottage Industries
- Promotion of Swadeshi goods
- Embracing Khadi (charkha weave local cotton-clothing)
- Promotion of women in Business Environment

Comparison of both the ideologies

The utilitarianism doctrine has been criticised that people can have different notions of pleasure in different socio-economic contexts. Bentham has only concentrated on Pleasure, purely a materialistic theory. He misses the place for Mental happiness. This seems nondemocratic because If a judge can prevent riots, that will cause many deaths only by convicting an innocent person of a crime and imposing a severe punishment on that person, act utilitarianism implies that the judge should convict and punish the innocent person.

Sarvodaya is not a supporter of utilitarianism which aims at the greatest happiness to the greatest number. Sarvodaya aims the integral liberation of every individual it stands for and the well-being of the whole individual body and soul. The goal of Sarvodaya is not the suppression or liquidation of an individual or a group but the triumph of the truth. It is not the victory of an individual over another individual or even a group over other. The main principle behind it is the good of the individual is contained in the good of all. Gandhi's liberated society defends the stands for the rights and the dignity of every human while rejecting the principle of the greatest good of the greatest number it upholds the maximum welfare of every individual on the basis of sharing goods and services regardless of one's own contribution to the resources. The progress of the village should be accessible to every individual and no individual or a group will be left out or suppressed in the Sarvodaya Society.

Vinoba Bhave says, "Sarvodaya stands for not only making all happy by eliminating suffering from all but also for bringing a world state based on equality."

The goal of Sarvodaya includes ultimately the self-realization of every individual. According to Gandhi total self-realization is to be achieved through the inner conversion of the individual and a life based on the twin principles of truth and nonviolence, within the family, the village, the state, the nation, and the world as a whole. It emphasises all humanity and all spheres of life. The liberation of one and all including even the animal and plant life is aimed at in Sarvodaya. The entire world is seen as an organism.

Evaluation

Governance is not a zero-sum game and one must be cautious to not overlook those who are outside the purview of the utilitarian policies.

These policies benefit the majority, thus the repeated emphasis on utility may lead to alienation of the deprived section. "The greatest amount of good for the greatest number" is a good approach to governance but inclusivity is equally important. As we can not predict the future, it is difficult to know with certainty whether the consequences of our actions will be good or bad.

Bentham's pleasure-pain theory has been criticized as mechanical, uninspiring, and unequal. His theory lacked originality and was full of prejudices and speculation. He was very much confused and contradictory in his own theoretical adventures. Prof. Carlyle has branded Benthamism as the "Pig Philosophy" just to remind us that hedonism of the kind is not very satisfactory; happiness is much more than pleasure. Bentham's theory has been demanded its materialism and for its neglect of the moral sense. What Bentham wanted to do was to establish a standard of right or wrong, good and evil related to calculable values. His psychological appreciation of human nature was inadequate. Many factors, besides pleasure and pain, motivate individual and communal action. Bentham distinguished pleasures and pains quantitatively rather than qualitatively. But pleasures and pains differ both quantitatively and qualitatively. Bentham's doctrine of pleasure-pain theory stands for the greatest number. But there is no logical connection between the happiness of the greatest number

and is considered independent of state legislation and state action. Bentham believes that pleasures and pains could be arithmetically calculated with the help of an apparatus known as “Felicific calculus”. However, modern researches in experimental psychology show that the felicific calculus of pleasures with which Bentham supplied us turns out to have no practical significance at all. He provides no scale of values with which to measure the various factors and no way of determining the relative importance of the factors he lists. How actually could we measure the fecundity or purity of a pleasure?

The biggest drawback of Sarvodaya is that not all people are as moral as others. This theory seems hard to be in practice in real life.

Sarvodaya is a concept that is rich in insight and ideology however many consider it as utopian as many of the things are not very easy to put into practice Sarvodaya empathetically pleads for small communities but it has some practical difficulties in modern civilisation, for instance, If you want the country to be strong and able to protest itself against the deprivation of the imperialistic powers or neighbours, we have to industrialise. It is true that the growth of factionalism and partisanship is one of the greatest evils of democracy but it does not seem possible to abolish different parties. In governance and in society it seems better to abolish partisanship and not parties.

Conclusion

According to utilitarianism end is important not means. It is challenged in various philosophical streams. According to a famous quotation from Swami Ramkrishna Paramhansa, “one cannot obtain the Aroma of Yagya by burning kerosene.” Gandhi in Sarvodaya says “Means are as important as ends”.

Therefore, the theory of utilitarianism though useful in the formulation of certain policies for the welfare of a large number of people but can not be treated as the end. A government or a civil servant should be cautious of both- means and ends using the highest amount of intelligence.

The principle of utilitarianism can be employed to formulate better policies and inform

decisions, as the priority of the government is to maximize benefits from programs and policies and at the same time minimise the losses and damages.

Mill amends and argues that we must consider the quality of happiness, not merely the quantity. For example, someone might be finding happiness with the plate of rice and others may find happiness watching a movie or a play. The quality of happiness is greater with the latter. Mill says “It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied, better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied and if the fool or the pig are of a different opinion it is because they only know their own side of the question the other party to the comparison knows both sides.”

Mill modified the utilitarian theory and add morality, but still, it is a non-democratic ideology. The second side Sarvodaya is basically a better democratic idea and related to the welfare of all.

The basic principle of Sarvodaya is that all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work. According to this Ideology, 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 the limitless acquisition of material wealth and more and more luxurious living and they will follow the motto of “Simple living and high thinking.”

Utilitarianism and Sarvodaya both ideas are emphasizing the pleasure/upliftment of humans. But according to comprehensive analysis utilitarianism has an emphasis on the happiness of Maximum numbers, whether Sarvodaya's object is to make every person happy in society.

Reference

- [1] Vrihadaranyak Upanishad
- [2] Mill, J.S. Chapter -2, Utilitarianism 1863
- [3] Kavungal, Devis. The philosophical foundation of Mahatma Gandhi's vision of Sarvodaya, Dharma Ram publication, and Ruhailaya publication Bangalore 2000
- [4] Narayanasamy S. The Sarvodaya movement: Gandhi and approach to peace and nonviolence. New Delhi Mittal publications 2003

- [5] Verma, Vishwanath Prasad. Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi and Sarvodaya. Agra Lakshmi Narayana Agarwal 1965
- [6] Mishra, Anil Dutta. Gandhism after Gandhi. New Delhi Mittal Publications, 1999