The Sarvodaya Path
to
a New Century

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THE SARVODAYA PATH TO A NEW CENTURY

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The Sarvodaya Movement celebrates its fiftieth anniversary on December 7, 2008. This publication serves to evaluate its past and to consider the local and global challenges it faces in the future and plans to meet them.

The members of the three Buddhist nikayas, and Hindu, Christian, Catholic and Islam religious leaders supported Sarvodaya from its beginnings with their counsel and blessings and gave the movement its spiritual strength. We respectfully request their support in the future too.

We further appeal for the concerted support of civil society activists, academics, professionals, artists, the media, the student community, Sarvodaya functionaries, rural, semi urban, urban and estate communities and also of the international community that has accepted the Sarvodaya philosophy.

DR. A. T. ARIYARATNE
President
Lanka Jatika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya (Inc.)
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The Sarvodaya Movement has completed fifty years. All those who actively participated in the Movement from its beginnings and gave it their blessings have reason to rejoice. About that there can be no doubt. A magnanimous thought born in the mind of one human being fifty years ago was transformed into action and developed into what is today a dynamic national people’s movement. This did not happen by mere chance. Several factors contributed to the life and mission of Sarvodaya. The first and chief among them was that the Sarvodaya philosophy transcended race, religion, caste, tribe, party politics, the North and South, narrow local and foreign walls and boundaries and found its habitation and acceptance in any place, in any environment, at any time. The appeal of the Sarvodaya aims and objectives and their potential for human development, their transparency, flexibility, and respect for the laws of Nature are other influences. This is not all.

The Movement made its presence felt among rural, semi-urban, urban, and plantation communities in communion with their aspirations and an understanding of their spiritual, moral, cultural, socio-economic and political concerns and challenges. The Movement helped them to organize themselves through self-reliance and participation as a community, raise their community consciousness and foster their personality development. With the introduction of an
A simple sustainable life style of an unspoilt generation was assailed by a global development myth as the people were drawn into hot pursuit of an economic mirage.

idea, a science, appropriate technology and methods, and an organizational structure, the community was taught to take their destiny in their own hands. The people gathered round the Sarvodaya idea. Their love, respect and trust that flowed in ample measure contributed to the Sarvodaya odyssey.

We can be proud of Sarvodaya’s past. There is no question whatever about that but the people expect from Sarvodaya in the years to come a service multiplied several fold. Sarvodaya can in no way disregard this popular aspiration.

**Popular Aspirations**

The deleterious repercussions of the open economy of the late seventies and its evils engulfed Sri Lankan society. A simple sustainable life style of an unspoilt generation was assailed by a global development myth as the people were drawn into hot pursuit of an economic mirage. They have failed to fulfil their aspirations and lost their bearings. Personal self-interest has grown, social inequalities have widened, and disparities in the distribution of wealth have intensified. The laws of Nature have been blatantly violated and the norms of civilized human behavior thrown to the winds. The environment has been despoiled and the globe made uninhabitable. Politicians have disowned their responsibility to serve the people; political survival and self-interest have taken centre stage; competition, hate, violence, vile language,
and destructive behaviour have become the order of the day; social inequalities have grown beyond belief. Also, poverty, threats to health, illiteracy, oppression, disunity, power struggles, violence, terrorism, and economic exploitation have raised their ugly head.

These are threats to human life, which successive governments elected on the basis of party politics have failed to solve. The people understand the current malaise and they are analyzing it in terms of their personal experience. They have lost faith in the party political system. They have turned cynical and no longer expect the government to fulfil their aspirations or to foster the spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic, and political development of the nation. There is a felt need among the people for national integration, religious amity and peace. They desire to live without fear and in dignity.

In order to overcome the bane of divisive party politics, its shortcomings and evils, the distresses caused by an unsuitable economic system and the problems and crises that beset Sri Lankan society, the support of the venerable Sangha, other religious leaders, academics and civil society activists, politicians who love the country and of the people is needed. The only national movement that has the strength and ability to mobilize the people to change this decadent social and economic system and bring together all Sri Lankans as one people is Sarvodaya.
Solving the major problems that people face requires winning the people's trust and their cooperation and using past experience in accordance with the Sarvodaya philosophy leading to a non-violent revolution that empowers the people.

social and economic system and bring together all Sri Lankans as one people is Sarvodaya. The Sarvodaya Movement cannot and will not forsake its duty by the people. The Movement has to move forward beyond its fifty years to fulfil the people's aspirations through its continuing leadership role.

**Fulfilling Popular Aspirations: the Sarvodaya Way**

During the past fifty years the rural poor in 15,000 villages oppressed by social injustices were uplifted through Sarvodaya's educational and welfare programmes. Through these programmes, Sarvodaya evolved into a people's movement based on self-reliance, self-financing and self-help.

Voluntary service and the active participation of the people constitute Sarvodaya's strength. Sarvodaya reached all sectors of society in this way. Solving the major problems that people face requires winning the people's trust and their cooperation and using past experience in accordance with the Sarvodaya philosophy leading to a non-violent revolution that empowers the people. This is the need of the times. As Sarvodaya reaches a milestone, its fiftieth anniversary, the Movement resolves to continue to play a leading role in fulfilling the aspirations of the people.
Consciousness is the way an individual thinks, his beliefs, faith, customs, attitudes, likes and dislikes, personal opinions and vision, all of which form the spirit of an individual. The key factor influencing personal behaviour is consciousness. The individual's socialization process that takes place from birth to death and what he imbibes from society impacts his consciousness. The social contribution of the family, school, religion and culture towards the development of consciousness is immense. Inter-personal relations have a major impact on consciousness. Thus, deciding what things a person does and the strength to do them is derived from consciousness. Personal consciousness develops into community consciousness, community consciousness leads to social consciousness, and social consciousness leads to national consciousness, and national consciousness leads to global consciousness.
Any community needs self-awareness and self-motivation to achieve emancipation. However, many people in the community do not possess such awareness. Thus, it is essential that they be self-motivated to make a collective effort in order to reach self-emancipation. This awareness process is known as community awareness. What should the community become aware of?

A community should understand how the whole of society acts and behaves. They should have an understanding of their country, its history and evolution, its people and its spiritual, moral and cultural norms and values, its economic foundation and political evolution, social relations, religion and its role. They should also have a clear understanding of its problems and challenges and their causes. Without such knowledge a community cannot follow a development path. Without such knowledge a community will adopt a fatalistic attitude and blame karma and destiny for their lot in life.

An educated community understands its problems and challenges and analyses the factors -social, economic and political- that caused them. They thus feel a real need within themselves to solve them, and for this purpose they need to organize themselves and rise as a force.
It is the Sarvodaya experience that all development efforts must have a spiritual foundation. Accordingly, community consciousness too must be founded on a spiritual base. The community can be awakened by raising community consciousness. The best tool for this is community education whereby a self-motivated community will be ready to meet future challenges. Sarvodaya Development Education programmes will be launched throughout the country with the objective of raising the spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political consciousness of the community. The structural foundation will be laid for such programmes and Sarvodaya Institute of Higher Learning (SIHL) will be established with branches at district level for the education of rural communities, youth groups, women, farmers, workers, and professionals. Steps will be taken to go beyond the village level to the national level. The services of intellectuals, academics, doctors, engineers, lawyers, accountants, managers, religious leaders, and civil society activists will be mobilized to educate the community at large through discourses on various themes. Going beyond knowledge bereft of skills and imparting an education with a direct bearing on life and personality development will contribute to the creation of a new society through people power. This is Sarvodaya’s vision for education.

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Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural society. For centuries Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, Malays and Burghers have co-existed in peace and amity while being mindful of their ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic identities. The "divide and rule" policy of the colonial powers placed obstacles in the way of Sri Lanka's national unity to some extent, and sadly, waves of neo-colonialism reinforced such divisive policies. Myopic political programmes and practices stood in the way of national integration until extreme violence reared its ugly head. Nevertheless, mercifully the vast majority of Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims detest divisions on ethnic lines. Their aspiration is to live in a spirit of peace, unity and brotherhood while preserving their ethnic identities. This is a lesson that Sarvodaya has abundantly learnt through its fifty years of work among the different races in the country.
Sarvodaya has the capacity to give leadership in efforts to rid the minds of the people of racial myths and unfounded fears. Sarvodaya has won the trust and confidence of all ethnic groups in the task of national integration and therefore expects to undertake work in this direction on a broad based and accelerated scale in the years to come.

The loss of life and property due to the war, violence against women, robbery and crime are matters that rankle the conscience of the people. Children’s minds are warped by the experience of war. Their education has been disrupted. They have been recruited to engage in violence. Mothers have been turned into widows, children into orphans and youths into disabled. There must be an end to the culture of war. This war has been dragging on for over thirty years. People’s minds must be cleansed of fear, doubt and mistrust. They must begin to accept the concept that “We are all Sri Lankans.” Sarvodaya will continue to give leadership for broad-based, island-wide, people-centred programmes designed to achieve this end.

Sarvodaya programmes of relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction are already in operation in the North and East. These programmes will be expanded and accelerated in the years that lie ahead.
Youth form an active and sensitive element of society. They are capable of both positive and negative behaviour. Today’s youth are by and large a misled group suffering from the lack of a correct social example and from being victims of exploitation by various elements such as politicians, the media, and multi national corporations. They have been cheated into embracing wrong values. They cannot be blamed for their condition; it is the societal forces that are to blame. Those who mislead youth into anti-social behaviour do not want to see them forming a right vision. They are afraid of the positive force that youth can become under proper guidance.

There is a dire need to guide youth so that they can follow the correct path through a true understanding of the objective reality around them. Sarvodaya plans to offer our youth space to fulfil their aspirations through active
participatory programmes based on spiritual values and cultural norms. Environmental protection, national integration, peaceful co-existence, disaster relief, crisis resolution, participation in a new culture of good governance, the arts and literature and cultural enrichment will be some of the elements of this new Sarvodaya programme for youth being planned in conjunction with the Sarvodaya Santhi Sena Movement.
BUILDING EXEMPLARY FAMILY UNITS, A GOOD GENERATION OF CHILDREN AND A PROSPEROUS NATION THROUGH THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

The role of women in national development cannot be overemphasized. Women constitute 51% of our population. Sarvodaya will continue to work at village and national level to address the problems faced by women and to enlist their support in the nurturing of wholesome families. We also recognize the gender inequities that exist in our society.

Marriage and family life are under threat. The socialization process of children is being handed over to special institutions; the parent-child relationship is being weakened; families and family relations are crumbling; and child abuse, domestic and gender-based violence are rampant.

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Nation building through gender sensitive approaches, building exemplary families, facilitating the child’s socialization process and promoting the welfare and well being of mothers will continue as a Sarvodaya function along new paths and at an accelerated pace. In this task the Sarvodaya Women’s Movement will continue to play a key role.
Social welfare programmes are essential for social development. However, they should be a tool of community development; they should not make the community permanently dependent on them. No matter how developed society is, there will always be groups of people in need of welfare. The poor shall always be with us. From its very beginning Sarvodaya has incorporated welfare programmes in its development projects.

Orphans, abandoned children, and destitute children are being cared for by Sarvodaya Suwa Setha in association with the Department of Probation and Child Care, the Department of Social Services and the Ministry of Justice. Sarvodaya has also in operation a programme to care for teenage mothers who have been victims of sexual abuse and violence. Sarvodaya will also launch programmes for the care of people with special needs.

No matter how developed society is, there will always be groups of people in need of welfare.
Sri Lanka is facing an ageing population, which presents a major social challenge. Sarvodaya will care for senior citizens and promote their physical, mental and spiritual well being while also making use of their experience and skills for the good of society.

Rehabilitation programmes for alcoholics and drug addicts and legal aid services for those oppressed by legal issues, and creating community awareness relating to the law are matters already being attended to and their scope will be broadened. Further action will be taken to educate the community on issues relating to alcoholism and drug addiction, social misdemeanours, and crime. In this connection, Sarvodaya Suwa Setha, Sarvodaya Vishva Nikethan, Sarvodaya Samodaya and the Sarvodaya Legal Services Movement will provide leadership. The on-going community health and child development programmes will be continued with new implementation methodologies.
Imperialism, neo colonialism, industrialization, modernization, urbanization and globalization have all led to a capitalist consumerist culture. Self-interest and the consumerist craze have in turn destroyed natural resources while global warming, the pollution of the atmosphere, water pollution, noise pollution, and waste and exploitation of resources have assumed frightening proportions. Some species of microorganisms, flora and fauna are facing extinction.

Inappropriate development theories and raising production through the use of inappropriate technology, insecticides and agro chemicals have combined to destroy the natural fertility of the soil. Food grown in the soil has become tasteless and poisonous. Consuming such products affects health. Undernourishment exposes people to all kinds of disease and illness.
Environmental despoliation has destroyed the water cycle; food scarcities have caused malnutrition; the depletion of fossil fuels is leading to a major power crisis; droughts and floods, tornados and tsunamis and such natural disasters are frequent. Nature has proved that man’s ability to control everything is a myth.

Sarvodaya is creating public awareness of this debacle. Pupils and teachers are being enthused for caring for the environment. People’s participatory programmes are underway to combat large scale environmental degradation caused by certain individuals, organizations, institutions and multinationals. Sarvodaya will provide leadership for the creation of a National Environment Movement by bringing under one umbrella all dedicated environmental agencies. Sarvodaya will minimize the use of insecticides and agrochemicals. Sarvodaya will also take steps to popularize the use of organic fertilizer and alternative sources of energy.

Sarvodaya will further strengthen its activities on disaster risk reduction and management.
An economy is the strategic foundation for supplying the needs of a community. Sri Lanka’s agricultural economy was fashioned according to the country’s environment, climate, weather and geological features. This system was completely ignored. It is not possible to completely forget this foundation and create self-sufficiency based on a money economy that gives prominence to the production of goods and services without regard for spiritual, cultural, consciousness and political factors.

When a country’s economy fails to supply its people’s basic needs, poverty and unrest follow. Income disparities widen. A few enjoy “the good things of life”; they lay exclusive claim to resources and capital as they crave for luxuries and material comforts. As a result, the gap between the rich and the poor widens, nourishing unwholesome emotions such as hate in the minds of the poor. This hate takes deep root in society.
and even spreads at an international level. Global inequalities and global exploitation increase. A capitalist economy based on profit maximization by multinationals forcibly transplanted on native soil gives rise to unmanageable economic issues while unsustainable life styles pull the whole country into an economic morass. The poor become poorer and the rich richer. Resources are wasted and future generations are bound to suffer from a lack of resources, leading to social problems.

If this problem is to be solved, spiritual and moral values must be integrated into the economy. Capitalist theories formulated in the West are characterized by narrowness and selfishness. With the emphasis on the mass production of industrial goods, man’s basic needs remain unfulfilled. Plenty of examples of this can be gleaned from our past.

An environment friendly sustainable economic system that protects micro-organisms, flora and fauna and uses a combination of modern science and appropriate technology is not difficult to establish. Sarvodaya has shown the way through its new economic vision: a system without poverty and without affluence through the economic empowerment of the people. The Sarvodaya economic philosophy permits no exploitation of man by man, no environmental
degradation, and no denial of basic human needs. It removes social inequalities and uses resources equitably for the common good. It is based on Sri Lanka’s cultural heritage, on local resources and appropriate technology whereby the village is not subservient to the town, and is not dependent on external aid and not subservient to multinational corporations, and the global financial institutions. It is a system that saves resources for the use of future generations. Sarvodaya Economic Enterprises Development Service (SEEDS) has launched economic projects on these lines at village level. According to the SEEDS plan, every village has built centres for economic development using the human wealth of the villages, local financial and natural resources, technology, and entrepreneurship. All this raises the level of production and makes the village self-sufficient. Every village will be connected to each other through a horizontal network and a unified national economic plan for the whole country.

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EMPOWERING CIVIL SOCIETY AS A NATIONAL FORCE

Sri Lanka's civil society can play a major role in creating a new society. Sarvodaya will enlist the support of civil society organizations, community leaders, religious leaders, university academics, artistes, writers, media persons, environmentalists, and subject specialists in the task of changing the social, economic, and political structure of the country based on spiritual, moral and cultural values. These civil society activists will provide guidance to the government and the public in finding solutions to the social, economic, political and environmental crises confronting the country and raise public awareness of the darker side of globalization. Sarvodaya will build alliances with national and international civic movements which believe in non-violent social transformation.
EMPOWERING THE VILLAGE
BY STRENGTHENING
ITS ORGANIZATIONAL
STRUCTURE

The Sarvodaya Shramadana Societies in the villages are already expanding their membership, identifying village problems, analyzing and solving them, deciding on alternative courses of action, preparing plans for implementing them, obtaining the required resources, sharing responsibilities, and conducting follow up and evaluation programmes. For executing this onerous task in the villages, the legal powers invested in the Sarvodaya Shramadana Societies are inadequate at present. Therefore, in order to give the Societies a wide range of powers their constitutions will be revised and the training of leaders and members of the Societies will continue at an accelerated pace. Inter-society relationships will be developed and their experiences shared through a horizontal network of societies. The spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political development of the villages will be achieved by the villagers themselves, and for this purpose the requisite powers will be invested in them so that the
villages will be transformed into village republics. The Sarvodaya village republics programme, Gram Swaraj, is already in operation in 3000 villages and Sarvodaya economic programmes are underway in 5000 villages. These programmes will be expanded in the remaining 7000 villages where the Sarvodaya Movement is active so that as many as 15,000 villages will be elevated to the status of village republics. To this end, creating public awareness and strengthening the village structures will be done through a horizontal network of village republics with power decentralized to the village level in an undivided, united country where human needs are fulfilled and fundamental human rights are enjoyed in a prosperous nation.

Sarvodaya strongly believes in the union of spirituality and science to build a just society. In building Village Republics *Dharma* and Communication Technology will be the two sources that will bring consciousness and physical contact...
GOOD GOVERNANCE THROUGH THE EMPOWERMENT OF PEOPLE AND A NEW POLITICAL CULTURE

We are not interested in either safeguarding a government or destroying it. Our belief is in a governance system that empowers the village. Our aim is to build a new society by empowering the village and eliminating the social inequalities that divide the nation. Sarvodaya believes that party politics disables and weakens the people and that the party political system should be drastically overhauled. The politician’s primary objective is to remain in power or capture power if he does not enjoy it. Or else, why would anybody enter politics?

Power is embedded in society; power controls the social structures. This has happened throughout human history. In primitive societies food, sleep, reproduction and safety were the main human needs. The father provided protection for the family. A strong, intelligent, experienced adult whom everybody accepted protected the tribe. Similarly, community governance was vested in a person selected by consensus.
This system of governance evolved into tribal, republican, monarchical, authoritarian, democratic, socialist and other forms of governments. To maintain strong and continuous social structures, power-centred government systems came into being. In democracy, ultimate power is said to reside with the people. Democratic party politics and parliamentary democracy should use the power that ultimately rests with the people for the prosperity of the community, for the protection of freedom and human rights, and for good governance.

However, this democratic ideal does not work that way in practice. The people hand over their sovereign power to their representatives in the hopes that they will ensure good governance, peace, and freedom. The environment needed to fulfill these human aspirations is not available. People desire to rise against the people’s representatives who fail to fulfill their aspirations but the people have not the power to do so. A system for achieving such popular aspirations does not exist in party politics. The people are reduced to a state of helplessness. Their survival in society, their identity and their freedom cannot be ensured. Power is concentrated in the hands of a minority and to retain this power they use money, intimidation and violence. Thus power is misused and the balance of power too is destroyed.
Social justice, social equality, fair play and human rights crumble. Injustice, doubt, fear and uncertainty engulf the whole of society. Unity, cooperation, and peace have fled. Hate, ill will and revenge are on the increase. Corruption and violence have grown. A national policy and a plan for coordinated development are absent. True development is possible only on the basis of a national vision, a national feeling and a real felt need to build the country. But these requirements are lacking among many political leaders.

The majority of people understand this problem but lack the power or the motivation to change the system. They remain victims of the prevailing system. In the task of creating a real need among the people to change this situation and of creating awareness and introducing a new system of governance Sarvodaya will lead the way. To educate the community regarding this and to create a broad based mass of public opinion a programme of public discourse and discussion from village level to national level is the Sarvodaya plan for the future. Sarvodaya will facilitate people to take their lives and their destiny in their hands; it will create confidence and faith in the community. Democratic power will move down to the grass roots and a system of consensual political structures will be set up at village level through the Grama Swarajya (village republics) programme. This will lead
By strengthening the village structures to create the right environment for good governance the land will enter a new path of development. To village empowerment and village self-sufficiency thus creating a new political ideology and culture for the country.

By empowering the village alone it is not possible to change the prevailing political system. For this to happen, a broad public awareness and a mass of public opinion from grassroots to national level are needed. Sarvodaya will provide the leadership for this purpose.

Educating the people on the UN Convention on Human Rights and on their rights as well as duties will be part of Sarvodaya’s future mission.

An environment will be created where people can live in dignity without being subservient to any external pressure or influence and make decisions in accordance with their conscience. The background will be prepared for them to analyze political realities and to determine what they need on the basis of a collective consciousness. By strengthening the village structures to create the right environment for good governance the land will enter a new path of development.

Public support and guidance will be sought for this task. Sarvodaya will build the structures needed for this purpose at village, district, provincial and national level. While Sarvodaya will play a catalyst role in this regard, it will be the people themselves who will take over leadership.
CONCLUSION

Fifty years is a long time in the growth and development of a vibrant people’s movement in this country. As we move on into the next phase, Sarvodaya dedicates itself anew to spread its vision, policies and procedures both within Sri Lanka and also the global community, and in the face of many problems to bring into being a new society based on spiritual, moral and cultural values. As the entire global community remains entangled in a web of confusion and mired in conflicts, the Sarvodaya Movement seeks to provide solutions for them and thus be a lasting heritage of future generations.