

A Survey of Philanthropic Acts by *Samaja* or Society in tandem with the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 in the Perspective of Oneness

Rashmi Verma

Research Scholar, Sri Sathya Sai University for Human Excellence, Kamalapur Taluk, Kalaburagi, Karnataka, India 585313

Email: rashmi.verma@ssslsg.org

Professor Dr. Minakshi Biswal

Director, Sri Sathya Sai University for Human Excellence, Kamalapur Taluk, Kalaburagi, Karnataka, India 585313

Email: minakshi.b@sssuhe.ac.in

Abstract: *The paper investigates the values and views of Samaritan or philanthropic acts by the people at large, referred to herein as Samaja a Hindi synonym for Society, towards those in need, aligning them with the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, within the framework of the philosophical concept of Oneness of Creation.*

These acts of donations or charity are interchangeably referred to here as charitable, philanthropic, giving, or crowdfunding contributions. Information was collected using a survey from 325/330 contributors who supported societal causes through their charitable and philanthropic contributions. To understand the trend, the demographic variables of age, gender, and occupation were assessed for philanthropic acts. The reasons for contribution were cited as many, ranging from religious dictums to being able to feel the pain of others, as a part of their social responsibility, and so on. The main objective of the research was to understand the belief systems and attitudes people have regarding donations, towards social causes. The study attempted to build a theoretical framework around the findings premised on the attainment of sustainable development goals agenda 2030 with a further attempt to align all perspectives within the spiritual foundational principle of the oneness of creation.

Key Words: *Sustainable Development Goals, Philanthropy, Oneness, Charity, Crowdfunding, Contribution of Samaja-Society for social cause.*

1. INTRODUCTION :

1.1 Philanthropic acts by Samaja towards the Sustainable Development Goals. (SDGs)

In the dynamic landscape of our globalised society, or *Samaja*, the pursuit of a more equitable and sustainable future has become a shared responsibility embraced by both individuals and institutions. (Paul, 2017). Communication, service quality, and perceived value are the antecedents of this multidimensional and complicated phenomenon of well-being (Efrat & Gilboa, 2020). This synergy is driven by a collective recognition of the interconnectedness between all aspects of society- social, spiritual, economic, and environmental, necessitates a comprehensive approach to addressing multifaceted challenges, and approaches that transcend borders. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals as perceived by the United Nations stand to balance out inequalities through collaborative frameworks. (Verma & Biswal, 2024). The present work looks into the contribution of society as a large whole to contribute towards those who need it aligning them with the sustainable development goals. It looks into the values that incite generosity or philanthropic behaviour of Samaja towards each other. Cultures, values, and religious doctrines can be the factors stimulating such behaviours.

Feeling oneness with others in pain can be the other. All religious philosophies talk of generous acts of contributing towards social causes through charity or philanthropy in their contexts. All cultures of the world depict 'generosity' (Wiepking, 2020) or philanthropic behaviour towards fellow beings, however, data is random and not structured due to differences in philosophical orientations and connotations of the term as well as the structural documented record of private giving. Philanthropy is defined as 'private giving for public purposes' (Barman, 2017 p. 272). Despite noble intentions, philanthropy's impact remains constrained due to siloed approaches, limited understanding of broader ecosystems, with sparse emphasis on collaborative engagements (Myzk Callias, 2017). However, the imperative to engage in charitable acts has gained notice and momentum with their strategic alignment with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) taking centre stage.

1.2 Philanthropy in the Context of Oneness

Portrayed as a core tenet across all major religions, Philanthropy or Charity is depicted as an expression of emphasising compassion and responsibility toward others. *Zakat* in Islam institutionalised charity through one of the Five Pillars, requiring Muslims to donate a portion of their wealth to help those in need (Esposito, 2002). In Christianity, charity is taken as an expression of love for one's neighbour, with the Bible teaching that giving to others is akin to giving to God (Matthew 25:40, New International Version). In Sanatan Dharma, '*Dāna*', or selfless giving, is seen as an act underscoring the unity of all creation and thereby reinforces the spiritual connection between all beings. It recognizes that every form is a manifestation of the formless God, who resides within everything. (Isavasya Upanishad.1) (Verma & Biswal, 2024) (Rambachan, 2014) (Rg Veda 1-8) (Scift, 2021). Charity or generosity (*Dāna*) is considered the first of the Ten Perfections, in Buddhism, which is believed to purify the mind and cultivate compassion (Harvey, 2013). Judaism too highlights the practice of *Tzedakah*, a moral obligation to give to the less fortunate, taking charity as an act of justice, and not merely kindness (Sacks, 2002). Each religion frames charity as a fundamental practice for individual and societal well-being.

1.3 Philanthropy as an Emerging Trend

Despite its notable contributions to social cause, Philanthropy is often considered relatively 'undeveloped', in many emerging economies. (Wiepking, 2020) India, though, has a long-standing tradition of giving, yet, it does not appear in the top nations that engage in philanthropic activities, for much of this informal giving is not captured in surveys. Despite India being poised to become one of the world's top philanthropic nations, due to its rich cultural heritage of giving, however, due to a lack of documentation and structural approaches, much of India's philanthropic activity remains unrecorded. (Kattumuri, 2013) India has a long-standing tradition of everyday giving and civic involvement. In 2017, Everyday Donors (BWF, n.d.) contributed approximately INR 34,000 crores (USD 5.1 billion) to various causes, including community, religion, disaster relief, and charitable initiatives. (Sattva Consulting, 2019) Contributions to NGOs, including corporate philanthropy, represent only a small portion of Indian philanthropy, with most funding directed toward service delivery. (Shresth, & Verma, 2021) A minimal amount focuses on social transformation. Nonetheless, this landscape is evolving. (Alliance Magazine, 2017) An increased involvement of younger people and substantial contributions from affluent individuals have boosted philanthropy's impact on India's GDP. Notably, the rise of 'retail' giving from the expanding middle class has introduced new, structured dimensions to charitable contributions (Alliance Magazine, 2017).

1.4 Philanthropy in India

In stark contrast to other major social economies like the USA and China, 90% of India's everyday giving is directed towards informal religious and community causes. Only INR 3,500 crores (USD 528 million), or 10%, goes to Social Purpose Organisations (SPOs), which represents a mere 6% of total philanthropic contributions in India. Currently, SPOs raise every day giving funds through at least 12 formal channels, including offline, online, and mixed methods. (Sattva Consulting, 2019) More than 80% of these funds are obtained through traditional telemarketing and face-to-face interactions, though online and mixed channels are steadily increasing. (Sattva Consulting, 2019) Over the past decade, citizen engagement and volunteering have surged in India, presenting opportunities to enhance retail giving through participation. The growing earning capacity of Indian residents and diaspora donors, along with their response to emerging digital giving options and market innovations, suggests that formal charitable everyday giving in India could potentially quadruple to around INR 15,500 crores (USD 2.3 billion) in the next 3 to 5 years, making it a significant

component of overall philanthropic contributions in the country. (Sattva Consulting, 2019) (Shresth & Verma, 2021) The following is a summarised table of philanthropic giving for the mentioned social causes in the given 5 areas, by the rich affluent Indians, 2023. (UHNI: Ultra High Net Worth Individual: HNI: High Net Worth Individuals)

CAUSE	DONATION
EDUCATION	1,547 CR INR
ART CULTURE AND HERITAGE	1,345 CR INR
HEALTH CARE	633 CR INR
ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY	253 CR INR
ECOSYSTEM BUILDING	231 CR INR

EdelGive Hurun India Philanthropy Report 2023. Giving by Affluent individuals or families UHNI or HNI The philanthropic contributions are setting sustainable trends to achieve the SDGs, however, the data collected toward them is fragmented and therefore it becomes a challenge to measure, calculate, and thereby formulate a structural approach. (Mzyk, Callias, et al., 2017)

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The existing literature offers a plethora of studies on philanthropy or Crowdfunding. These aspects however have mostly been examined in terms of statistical values of donations. However, there are almost negligible existing studies that other than establishing a link between the demographics domains of age, income/ salary, and gender; connect the values and perspectives of altruistic behaviours of individuals as a part of society with the motivational attitudes that guide and govern their contributions to a social cause. Taking the demographic domains alongside addressing this gap is the aim of the current paper.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a questionnaire-based survey method circulated online, using the non-probability convenient snowball method of sampling, with a debriefing statement about the purpose, seeking voluntary participation to respond to 15 items ranging from demography to attitude behind any charitable or philanthropic act, the means, and reasons that prompt the same; the areas that were supported, which were then analytically aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. Upholding the ethical aspect further, all the respondents were kept anonymous, with a request to answer forthrightly. Responses were obtained from various categories in income, occupation, gender, and place of domicile. The criteria for inclusion were based on the given factors:

- i) The willingness to participate
- ii) Age range of 18 years to 78 years and more.
- iii) Education at the level of pre- or post-University with a working understanding of the English language.
- iv) Availability of a smartphone or similar equipment to answer questions online

The information came mostly from University level educated, men and women who were mostly financially independent barring a lesser percentage of housewives and students who were financially dependent. Employing a judgment-based non-probability convenient snowball sampling technique, about 330 responses were collected from parts of India, and some other countries like Australia, and the United States of America. Data sorting lent about 325 out of 330 responses to be used for the study. Results were analysed using the JASP which is an open-source analytical tool, supported by the University of Amsterdam, and the Microsoft Excel data analysis tools.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

53 (17.6%) were 18-35 years, 178 (59.14%) were 36-56 years and 70 (23.26%) were 57 - 77 years old. The responses to the question, 'How many have contributed', the answers were recorded as Yes or No. Out of a total of 325 responses, 293 (approx. 90%) were in the affirmative saying yes, to have made a donation or contribution for a social cause. 32 (9.85%) people responded as 'No' for having made any contribution.

The questionnaire categorised the responses in the broader categories of demography in association with giving. The respondents ranged from the age range of less than or equal to 18 and more than or equal to 78 years of age. The income categories varied from less than or equal to ₹20 thousand per month to more than ₹3Lakh p/m of Indian Rupees. This particular income range belongs to generally the challenging backgrounds to a well-to-do comfortable class, concomitant to a lower to upper middle or affluent class in metropolitan cities of India from where about 93% of responses were obtained. The demographic categories ranged from age and gender. The following response data came from some 325 respondents.

4.1 Income Categories and Patterns of Charitable Contributions						
Income ₹/M	Donation Made					Total
	NO	YES				
</=20K	9	38				47
20K-40K	6	28				34
40K-60K	12	46				58
60k-80k	0	20				20
80k-1L	1	35				36
1L-3L	2	84				86
Total	32	293				325

Source: Primary Data

The study investigated the relationship between income capacity and intention to give. The data shows the largest donations, with 84 'Yes' responses from people with monthly incomes ranging from Indian ₹1 to 3 lakhs per month. In comparison, just 44 affirmative responses came from the highest income bracket of ₹3L and above. Furthermore, 112 recorded 'yes' from the least earning categories taken collectively from the first, second-, and third-income groups ranging from less than ₹20K to 60K, which is significantly larger than all the categories and especially the fourth category of ₹60-80K p/m, having just 20 responses. This unusual discovery seemingly undermines a presumptive association between high-income capacity and propensity to give. (Kalitanyi & Bbenkele, 2017)

4.2 Gender Data on Contribution to Social Causes

Gender	Supported any Social Cause?					Total
	NO	YES				
F	22	137				159
M	11	155				166
Total	33	292				325

Source: Primary Data

4.2 Gender and Charitable Contributions

The study investigated the demographic category of gender vis a vis frequency of donation. With 137 (F) females and 155 (M) males, the latter superseded the former in contributing to a social cause, maybe because India is predominantly a patriarchal society where males generally exercise greater freedom in financial management than females. (Lawrence, P. G., & Hensley, C. 2023).

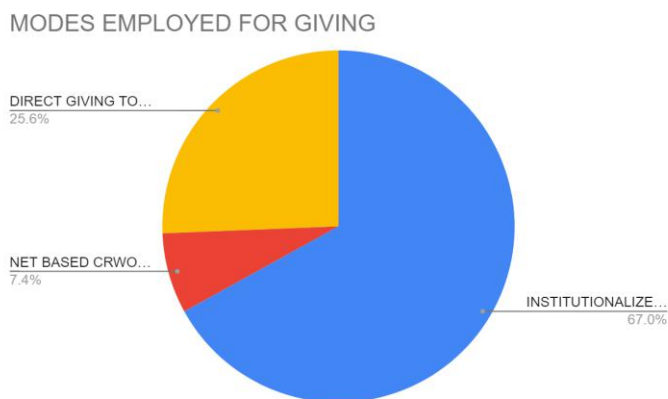
4.3 Age and Charitable Contributions

Age	Made any contribution to a Social Cause?					Total
	No	Yes				
18-35	20	55				75
36-56	5	173				178
57-78+	6	65				71
Total	32	292				325

Source: Primary Data

The subsequent demographic analysis attempted to discern potential associations between age and donation trends. The findings revealed a preponderance of the age bracket of 36 to 56 affirming their commitment to contributing to social causes, with 173 out of 325 participants (53.23%) This proclivity may be attributed to the financial stability commonly associated with individuals in this age range, fostering a greater willingness to share their prosperity with those in need.

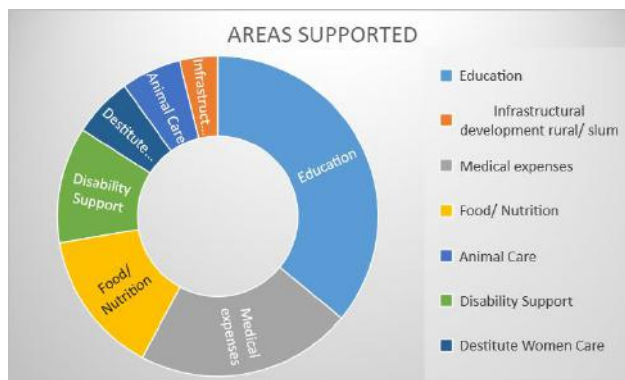
4.4. Agencies Employed while Contributing to a Social Cause



To answer regarding the agency chosen for charitable donations, the respondents mostly chose institutionalised agencies for giving. The reason can be attributed to the latter’s organised structure, transparency, and ability to reach the marginalised communities. NGOs (Non-Government Organisations) provide organised channels to ensure accountability to enable the contributors to build trust in a social cause. (Sundar, 2017). Also, it becomes more consistent to contribute through an agency when the contributions are made for causes that support continuous recurring efforts such as healthcare and education, rather than short-term relief. (Kumar, 2019)

The results depict that the most frequently (67%) used channel for donation was through an agency, be it an NGO or Charitable or Religious institution. Crowdfunding through the net (7.4%) though convenient, still has a long way to go in India in terms of their advocacy to gain the trust of the public. (Shah & Mistry, 2020) Many respondents who reported not to have donated to a social cause, mentioned distrust towards the third agencies. Direct giving to the needy (25.6%) was the second most adopted method for contributing to a social cause. Due to the inadequate reporting and lack of documentation of this type of intangible data, where contributions were made in kind, rather than in cash- this category of philanthropic contributions in India goes unnoticed. (Sattva Consulting, 2019)

4.5 Areas Supported In Their Alignment With The SDGs



Source: Primary Data

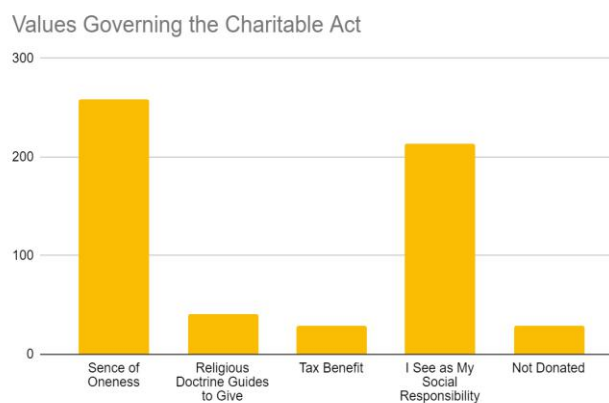
Survey participants were invited to designate the areas they endorsed with their financial or material or professional contributions. Diverse spheres emerged as recipients of philanthropy spanning education, infrastructural development of rural or slum areas, medical expenses, food and nutrition, animal welfare, disability assistance, and care for the

marginalised, including women. Prominent among the cited causes were education, healthcare, and helping individuals with disabilities. This in itself serves as evidence of how philanthropy can prove to be a sustainable model to achieve sustainable development goals in the basic areas of food, health care, and education, among many others.

Based on the survey results, the following areas were supported in their order of preference. The study attempts to make an alignment of the areas supported with suitable corresponding Sustainable Development Goals. (SDGs)

Areas in which contributions were made	Alignment with SDGs
Education for poor children	Goal 4: Quality education
Infrastructural development of rural or slum areas	Goal 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure
Destitute women care	Goal 5: Gender equality
Aged and elderly care	Goal 1: No poverty Goal 2: Zero hunger Goal 3: Good Health and well-being Goal 11: Sustainable Communities Goal 16: Peace and Justice
Medical expenses for poor	Goal 3: Good Health and Well Being
Animal care	Goal 15: Life on Land
Environmental protection	Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation, Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy Goal 13: Climate Action
Food and nutrition	Goal 2: Zero Hunger
School Children's Health	Goal 3: Good Health and well-being
Disability support	Goal 3: Good Health and Well Being Goal 10: Reduced Inequality Goal 16: Peace and Justice
Training and Empowerment	Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

4.6 Values Behind Making a Contribution to a Social Cause



The reasons for contribution or the values behind these charitable acts of giving were cited as their sense of oneness with the destitute, their social responsibility, to be able to feel the pain of others, to aid the government's welfare programmes amongst others, which are all the manifest variables to the latent idea of Oneness, leading to wellness (Tan, 2020). The largest chunk of respondents chose the Oneness factor as the reason for their giving. The next one emerged

as taking philanthropy as their Social Responsibility, followed by the religious doctrines guiding them to undertake charitable acts. The ones who answered 'No' (9.9%) to give donations for societal causes attributed their non-charitable behaviours to reasons like not having enough to give, or not thinking enough about this. Some of them responded so, for not having trust in the mediating crowdfunding agencies. The reasons cited for contributing to a social cause ranged from religious reasons, to feeling the pain of others feeling Oneness with the needy person. It's the people's responsibility also to contribute to a social cause people by expressing their intention of care and sharing. Some expressed the tax benefit that they get, while others see it as a part of their social responsibility. In addition to these, SDGs are also visualised as and when one can relate to the pain of the destitute, needy children or aging population.

5. DISCUSSION

Individuals constituting Samaja or society, are motivated by a deep-seated sense of social responsibility and increasingly view their involvement in charitable causes as a potent means to effect positive change in the lives of their fellow beings. Whether contributing to poverty alleviation initiatives, promoting education, or advocating for environmental conservation, individuals recognise the transformative impact their actions can have on the lives of others. In doing so, they foster a sense of community and interconnectedness that transcends geographical and social boundaries. Philanthropy, by itself, cannot and should not take a leading role in shaping the nation. However, there is hope that Indian ideas of spiritual oneness can lead philanthropy to contribute in building a society that reflects shared aspirations—a society where essential services like healthcare, education, infrastructure, energy, and water are accessible to everyone. In such a society, human potential, leadership, and creativity can flourish toward higher purposes. Additionally, it would be a compassionate society, committed to healing and sustaining the planet for future generations. ((Kattumuri, 2013). The agencies that play as moderators between the needy and providers are the charitable or Non-Government institutions. Many religious doctrines promote charity for social purposes. On one hand, it enhances social cohesion, on the other, it leverages economic conditions of the marginalised. (Bennett & Einolf, 2017). Driven by altruism, donation behaviour is found to be closely linked to intrinsic motivations such as satisfaction that comes with sharing, joy, and a sense of belonging and cohesion within a group or society. (Zhao L. Shneor R., 2020).

The value of diverse perspectives for community outcomes might reach an equilibrium, in green start-up singular efforts. They would have to transition towards shared resources, including social capital and knowledge (Sreenivasan & Suresh, 2022).

6. CONCLUSION

Not only the world across, but Philanthropy is not a new phenomenon in India. Having a history spanning thousands of years, the culture of philanthropy is as old as India itself. The Vedic and philosophical traditions promote the prudent use of wealth for self-improvement, economic engagement, and charitable giving (Dāna). The Rgveda states that whatever is given selflessly as Dāna returns manyfold (Rgveda: 1–8), as the same Brahman or God resides in all. The *Yoga* of the individual soul with the Cosmic Soul emphasises the principles of *Aparigraha* (non-hoarding) and *Asteya* (non-stealing). (Patanjali Yoga Sutra, Vivekananda)- Non-hoarding for the cause of non-stealing. According to the Humanitarian and Spiritual Master Sri Madhusudan Sai (Sri Madhusudan Sai, n.d.), excess wealth or resources should be shared with those in greater need. Hoarding wealth and resources without necessity is equivalent to stealing from the ones whose requirement is greater than the ones who possess it, as it rightfully belongs to the former. This is the *Asteya* in the practical connotation. Since the same God resides in all, the act of withholding undermines the values upholding the concept of shared humanity. Humanity has a universal duty or Dharma, which is rooted in this virtue of seeing oneness in the face of diversity. (Patanjali Yoga Sutra, Vivekananda). (Madhusudan Sai, 2023). This virtue encompasses fostering compassion for others and thereby entailing Individual Social Responsibility (ISR), which involves sharing and caring in the context of coexisting with all living beings, including insects and animals. (Swamy, Nagarajan, & Babu, 2021) (Madhusudan Sai, 2023). If the ISR is embraced as a way of life, societal, institutional, or Corporate Social Responsibility will follow, as a natural result. Nature, in its wholeness of giving to others, embodies the principle of '*Idam-na-mama*' (This is not mine); it is for the collective good.' The ocean, sun, stars, moon, wind, and trees serve to benefit others rather than themselves. (Sharma & Sharma, 2019) (Swamy, Nagarajan, & Babu, 2021) (sanskritslokas.com, 2019). The contribution of collective environmental literacy acknowledges learning as a social process toward healthier, more resilient, and more equitable communities (Bey et al., 2020). By addressing not only economic disparities but also social and environmental issues, the collective efforts of individuals and institutions contribute to the creation of a holistic and inclusive model of development. The comprehensive nature of the charitable endeavours, coupled with their alignment with the SDGs, ensures a more profound and far-reaching impact. This

collaborative determination reflects a commitment to building a sustainable and equitable world that transcends the present moment, extending its benefits to future generations. In essence, the intersection of individual and corporate philanthropy with the SDGs epitomises a shared vision for a harmonious and resilient global community.

7. RELEVANCE AND FUTURE SCOPE

The study attempts to understand the role of society in contributing to social causes. Investigating the values and attitudes behind a philanthropic act can pave the way to stimulating societal contribution in philanthropic domains. No act of humans can be understood or propagated without understanding the values that govern their perspectives and actions. It is in this regard that the findings of the study become of utmost importance leaving scope to further research in the value aspect that governs the cohesion of society members in the context of oneness. It provides a ground where economics goes beyond profits and meets spirituality, completing the whole picture with the motto advocated by the United Nations in the context of the sustainable development goals of- 'Leaving no one behind.'

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