

JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN (1902-1979)

Jayaprakash Narayan's life happens to be a life of endless quest for getting suitable ways and means to resolve the socio-economic and political conditions of the toiling masses of the country. Born on 11 October 1902 in a village in Chapra district in Bihar, he appeared to be an unconventional boy even from his early childhood. While in his studies he usually opted for the uncommon subjects defying the prevailing social norms of his time. His studies almost got ruptured in 1921 when under the influential exhortation of Maulana Azad, he made up his mind to quit studies and join the national movement under Gandhi. Sensing JP's growing inclination towards the national movement, his parents motivated him to go abroad for his higher studies in USA. As a student in USA he came in contact with east European left – wing intellectuals and became converted to Marxism. He was also influenced by the writings of M.N. Roy.

On his return to India in 1929, JP joined the national movement with the intention of practising socialism in India. His imprisonment in the wake of the civil disobedience movement at Nasik jail brought him close to the other likeminded nationalists which later on culminated in the formation of the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) in April 1934. However, his passion for Marxism was so strong that in 1936, J.P. Published a booklet 'Why Socialism' arguing that today more than ever before is possible to say that there is only one type, one theory of socialism – Marxism. The Marxist phase of JP's life seemingly continued during the decade of the 1930's after which he drifted to the philosophy of democratic socialism and finally turning out to be sarvodaya in the post independence times.

Total Revolution (Sampurana Kranti) was the last intellectual intervention of Jayaprakash Narayanan in his unending quest to seek and establish such a socio economic and political order in the country which would turn India into a democratic, federal participatory, equitable and prosperous nation in the world. The concept of total revolution was for

the first time evolved by Vionoba Bhava during the 1960's to articulate his desire to the need of a comprehensive movement in the country which would transform all the aspects of life in order to mould a new man to change human life and create a new world. The idea was picked up by JP to call upon the people in 1975 to work for total revolution in order to stem the rot creeping into all aspects of public life and create a whole new world encompassing the basic elements of socio-economic and political order that he had been advocating in the name of Sarvodaya. The context of JP calling for the total revolution was provided by the growing authoritarianism in the functioning of the government machinery headed by Mrs. Indira Gandhi. In fact, his call for sampurna kranti became the rallying cry for the movement against Indira Gandhi's government J.P's concept of total revolution is a holistic one. JP is indebted to Gandhi for developing the doctrine of total revolution. He wrote thus, "Gandhiji's non-violence was not just a plea for law and order, or a cover for the status quo, but a revolutionary philosophy. It is, indeed, a philosophy of total revolution, because it embraces personal and social ethics and values of life as much as economic, political and social institutions and processes.

JP has pointed out that the French revolution started with the mission of realising liberty, equality and fraternity. But it ended in Bonapartism and the humiliations at Waterloo. The Russian revolution started with the mission of redeeming the rights of the proletariat and the other suppressed sections of society. But power has not percolated to the Russian people and the cry of the withering away of the state is now relegated only to the field of antiquarian intellectual dialectics. Hence if the basic aim is to transfer decision-making policy execution and judicial arbitration to the people there has to be change in the technique of revolution. JP, hence, advocates, 'persuasion and conversion – social revolution through human revolution would necessarily postulate a comprehensive programme of radical social construction for total development and welfare.

Jayaprakash Narayan's doctrine of total revolution is a combination of seven revolutions social economic, political, cultural,

ideological or intellectual, educational and spiritual. He was not every rigid regarding the number of these revolutions. He said the seven revolutions could be grouped as per demands of the social structure in a political system. He said, 'for instance, the cultural may include educational and ideological revolutions. And if culture is used in an anthropological sense, it can embrace all other revolutions. He said, 'for instance the cultural may include educational and ideological sense, it can embrace all other revolutions. He said economic revolution may be split up into industrial, agricultural, technological revolutions etc. Similarly intellectual revolutions may be split up into two - scientific and philosophical.

The concept of total revolution became popular in 1974 in the wake of mass movements in Gujarat and Bihar . He was deeply disturbed by the political process of degeneration in the Indian politics. He was deeply moved by the mutilation of democratic process, political corruption and full of moral standards more public life. In a letter to a friend in August 1976, JP defined the character of the total Revolution. He wrote . "Total revolution is a permanent revolution. It will always go on keep on hanging both our personal and social lives. This revolution knows no respite, no halt, certainly not complete halt.

JP's Total revolution involved the developments of peasants, workers, harijans, tribes and all weaker sections of society. He was always interested in empowering and strengthening India's democratic system. He was deeply disturbed by the growth of corruption in the Indian political system. He wrote that 'corruption is eating into the vitals of our political life. It is disturbing development, undermining the administration and making of mockery of all laws and regulations. It is eroding people's faith and exhausting their proverbial patience.'

The concept of total revolution aimed at reversing the tide of the political and economic system of the country ostensibly due to the concentration of political and economic powers in few hands and restoring the sanctity of institutions and procedures in those sheers of life by decentralising such powers in the hands of the masses. In the sphere of political system, JP noted the inherent fallacies of the prevailing

parliamentary system of government as its basic features such as electoral system, party-based political processes and increasing concentration of powers in the hands of the Prime Minister etc, are bound to convert the system into a corrupt, tyrannical and farcical one. Hence, in his conceptualisation of total revolution, JP was firm on reforming the electoral system in such a way that the people can vote in an incorruptible manner and accordance with their free conscience. Moreover in such a system, there would be no place for political parties and the potential concentration of powers in few hands would be effectively curbed.

Like political power, JP was also convinced of the perverse effects of the concentration of economic power in the hands of few in the society. He, therefore, called for total recasting of the economic system of the country as well. JP visualised an economic order for the country where there would be progressive socialisation of the means of resources by way of establishing cooperative societies and voluntary associations to manage the resources with a view to ensure prosperity for all.

JP's call for executing the idea of total Revolution in 1975 was accompanied by some sort of blueprint for the volunteers to carry out the implementation of the scheme of holistic transformation of Indian society. He exhorted the people to rise against the authoritarian and inimical policies and programmes of the government. In its operationalization, however, the idea of total revolution occasionally evoked misplaced perceptions in the minds of its practitioners.

Jayaprakash was a great humanitarian and his doctrine of Total Revolution is not only a system of social and economic reconstruction of the Indian society but it is also a philosophy of moral and spiritual rebirth of the Indian people. Indeed he was the greatest mass leader in Indian history after Gandhiji. He was one of the greatest defenders of democracy in the 20th century. As an intellectual, he will continue to have an abiding place in the domain of the social sciences.

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