

Political Ideas of Jayaprakash Narayan and His Contribution to Social Movements in India

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Abstract

Jayaprakash Narayan is one of the few prominent figures in India whose life carries the message of the struggle for freedom and justice. In the post-independence period, carrying out a total revolution in the country without a struggle for power is only "terrorist". He is not a philosopher philosopher, but a political activist. He was a Gandhian Marxist. Jayaprakash Narayan is a born rebel whose mission in life is to fight for freedom and new culture. His revolutionary role has attracted recent attention and he has been widely praised for his freedom-building social theory, the illiberal party Sidaya, and all his revolutions. He was a "staunch socialist" who fearlessly fought against the exploitation of power in India, his capital and home. Jayaprakash's "Shadaya" means a new order, society will be desolate and desolate; It will be politics where Loniti replaces Rajneeti, it will be leadership of the "people". This will ensure not only freedom and equality, but also peace and living forever. . He is a selfless revolutionary born from mother India. Vinoba Bhave said that after Jayaprakash's death, Jayaprakash considered himself only a "Lok-sevak", a servant of the people.

Key words: Jayaprakash Narayan, India, politics, socialist

Introduction

It would be more than apparent from a reading of the life and times of Jayaprakash Narayan that Jayaprakash had chosen not to stagnate in a particular ideological position throughout the course of his public life. On the contrary, responding to his understanding of changing political situations, be it at home or abroad, Jayaprakash had adopted different, if not contradictory, ideological positions. But through all such changes one thing remained almost constant: his abiding concern for the betterment, in all possible dimensions, of the lives of the common Indians. Perhaps this, more than anything else, had given him a prominent place among the pantheon of socialist thinkers in India. This observation prefaces an examination of the political ideas of Jayaprakash, who may hereinafter be referred to as JP, as he was popularly known.

Political ideas of Jayaprakash Narayan

During his lifetime Jayaprakash had been, one time or the other, an ardent nationalist and an admirer of Gandhi; a Marxist who was a critic of the Soviet state; a nonMarxist socialist who had a detailed agenda for reforming the country; a democrat who had lost all faith in political parties; an active supporter of Sarvodaya and Bhoodan movement; and finally, and above all, the initiator and the propagator of the idea of Total Revolution. But it is wellnigh impossible to visit Jayaprakash in all his ideological phases. We would, rather, follow V.P. Varma (Modern Indian Political Thought) in emphasizing on three distinct phases of JP's political ideas, one broadly socialist (1929- 1953), followed by the one upholding the ideas of Sarvodaya and the Reconstruction of Indian

Polity (1954-1973) and, finally, his concept of Total Revolution. To reiterate an earlier observation, his concern for the well-being of the common man and a strong support for an all-round involvement of the people in the political process of the country together formed the link among the three phases.

JP and socialism

The essence of Jayaprakash's socialist ideas can best be found in his 1936 publication of 'Why Socialism?', while elaborations of the same lie scattered throughout the various agenda for political action which he had drawn up or had contributed to in the period between 1929 and 1953. In general, Jayaprakash's socialist ideas were espoused after his return to India and subsequently plunging himself in nationalist struggles. Those ideas represented an amalgam of the basic principles of Marxist thought, which JP had imbibed while abroad, and criticisms or refutations of some of them, sourced from his understanding of the Indian situation as he found it. The latter, in fact, was largely underscored by his attraction towards Gandhian ideas, a result, perhaps, of his early adulation of the person.

Writing about socialism in the publication mentioned above, Jayaprakash made it clear that socialism is not a personal creed or a matter of personal belief; it is, on the other hand, concerned with the reorganization of the whole social and economic life of the society according to socialist principles. Jayaprakash dealt with Marxist ideas about the accumulation of wealth in society by a few and the resulting economic inequality. The abolition of such inequality, according to him, would only be possible by an abolition of the system of private property, and a consequent socialization of the means of production. In fact, a preview of JP's socialist ideas could be first be found in his drawing up of the 15-point programme of the Congress Socialist Party in 1934 through which he outlined a concrete proposal for a socialist transformation of the Indian society.

Life and Contribution

Jaya Prakash Narayan whose name means, "Victory to the light" was born in October 11, 1902 in the remote Bihar village of Sitabdiyara. He was the leader of "Total Revolution", great warrior of Indian Freedom Struggle; Marxist turned socialist Gandhinian, a life-long *Ahinshak* rebel Loknayak. His father Harsu Dayal has boasted about J.P., "My son will be a great man, some day." His father was a petty official in the Canal Department in Bihar and mother was a religious lady. His father had wanted him to be a government officer. But the currents of time guided by the forces of nationalism, socialism and mass movements under the leadership of Gandhi, changed the course of his life.

His School and College Life

At the age of nine J.P. made his first break with the village and was admitted to the 7th class in the collegiate school at Patna. He proved himself to be a meritorious student by getting scholarship in the Secondary School Examination in 1909. After, completing high school education, he joined Patna College as a student of Intermediate Science. He continued to be retiring and intensely studious and by 1918 he had reached the final class. He sat for the 'State Public Matriculation Examination' and was awarded a District merit scholarship to Patna College. During his higher studies he was highly influenced and motivated by the ideas of Gandhi. Gandhiji's successful launching of Satyagraha at South Africa had created sensation in the mind of budding Jayaprakash. But after Gandhiji arrived in national politics in the year 1915, he applied his technique of Satyagraha at Champaran in Bihar.

At Champaran the indigo farmers were exploited by the Britishers. The success of Champaran movement tremendously influenced the patriotic mind of young Jayaprakash who mentally got prepared for the future.

JP then became Swadeshi" (indigenous) in his attitudes, using handmade village shoes instead of the British manufactured ones and cleaning them with Indian mustered oil instead of with British shoe polish. He dressed himself in a Kurta, a home-spun, hand-woven material and an ascetically short dhoti (loose garment). JP at 18 was married to Braj Kishore Prasad's daughter Prabhavati, 14 in October 1920.

Since he had the desire to pursue higher studies in science and then he decided to leave for America. He left his wife Prabhavati became a great disciple of Gandhi. His stay in America brought different experiences and by the

time he came back to India, he was no more a Gandhiji's follower. He studied in the universities of California, Iowa, Chicago and Ohio. Due to financial difficulties he had to earn money by serving as a shoeshine boy, hotel waiter and working in factories. While reading and studying there he came in contact with communist friends he was influenced by Marx and his thoughts and accordingly he joined Ohio University and did his M.A. in Sociology. In 1929 he came to India. By the time he reached India, he was no more a follower of Gandhian doctrine. He had high regards for Gandhi, but lost faith in Gandhism. He had turned to be a Marxist by conviction, a journey from Gandhiji's Passive Resistance to Marx's violent revolution.

Social-Economic Order

Jayaprakash Narayan was a born revolutionary whose mission of life was to fight for both independence and a new socio-economic order. So when India got independence, other leaders got involved in the power tussle he planned for a social revolution to replace the present socio economic order by a new socialist order. He was the one of the 'Committed Socialist' who made a dauntless fight against the forces of exploitation i.e., capitalism and landlordism in India.

In the budding stage of his political mind, he was heavily drawn with 'Marxism Socialism'. He was convinced about dialectical materialism and necessity of class war. But when he came to India, the Current of nationalism was most powerful subsiding the possibility of a communist revolution, but he preferred to join freedom movement. And in 1934, he founded Congress Socialist Party. He opposed Gandhi's social philosophy and argues that it gives an opportunity to the princes to exploit the paupers. He rejected Gandhism as 'timid economic analysis' 'ineffective moralising' and Marxian socialism is the basis of his ideas of socio-economic order.

But in the forties after his imprisonment in special camp jail at Deoli in Rajasthan, he realised the necessity of a democratic polity with moral values. He was drawn towards Gandhism for the latter's emphasis on decentralisation in administration and commitment to certain ethical values in politics.

Socialism

Jayaprakash Narayan viewed socialism in Indian perspective. He viewed "Socialism is a system of social reconstruction. Socialism is not a code of personal conduct; nor is it a hot house growth." It means to change in the socio-economic and political life of the country –where there will be no inequality in possession and no exploitation. It will be a society with balanced growth from all sides.

He said socialism is a system of social organisation which has few objectives that are -:

- Elimination of exploitation and poverty.
- Provision for equal opportunities to all for self-development.
- Full development of material and moral resources of the society.
- Equitable distribution of national wealth.

Socio-economic Construction

Jayaprakash Narayan regarded socialism as a complete theory of socio-economic construction. He said that the inequality in society exists due to the disproportionate control of the means of production. He advocated reduction in revenue, limitation of expenditure and the nationalization of industries.

In the Ramgarh session of the Congress in 1940 he advocated collective ownership and control of large-scale production, and nationalization of the heavy industries, heavy transport, shipping and mining. He made Gandhism the base of his socialism. The village should be made a self-governing and self-sufficient unit. He favored the distribution of land to the tiller, co operative farming, and cancellation of agriculture debt.

Any attempt at establishing new socio-economic order must start with the abolition of private ownership of the means of production and establishing social ownership. That will solve the problem of accumulation of wealth in few hands and eradicate exploitation from the society. He described the process of applying socialism to both agriculture and industry. In the field of establishing 'Socialist Industry', he said, both large and small-scale industry must be democratically managed and controlled and it must be owned by the government.

Hence Jayprakash's socialism in economic sphere includes

- Abolition of landlordism and capitalism.
- Socialization of means of production by abolishing private property rights.
- Cooperative farming run by the gram panchyats.
- Collective farming.
- Large-scale industries owned by the states with workers participation and small-scale industries organized into producer's cooperatives.

Concept of Sarvodaya

Jayaprakash made a voyage from socialism to Sarvodaya in the fifties. The Sarvodaya movement was started by Gandhi in pre-independent India and spearheaded by Vinoba Bhave in the post-independence era. Jayaprakash's Sarvodaya implies a new order in which the society will be class-less and stateless; it will be a political system in which Lokniti will replace rajneeti it will be 'peoples' socialism., which will ensure not only freedom and equality, but also peace and eternity.

The Meaning of Sarvodaya

The Sarvodaya aims to establish a new social order on the basis of truth, love and non-violence. It is highly critical of the State and its government, because both are based on force and coercion. As such, sarvodaya aims towards the creation of a social order free from every form of authority. Its ultimate aim is to establish a stateless society where "the ruler and the ruled will be merged in the individual".

The main features of sarvodaya social order, are as under: -

- No power should be dominant in society; there should only be a discipline of good thought;
- All facilities of the individual to be dedicated to society which must provide the individual for growth and development; and
- The moral, social and economic values of all the callings performed honestly should be the same.

Causes for joining the Sarvodaya Movement:

In 1954, Jayaprakash joined Sarvodaya Movement as a Jeevandani and left power-politics with the determination to dedicate his life to Bhoodan and Sarvodaya movement. He observed that unless socialism is transformed into Sarvodaya, the sublime goals of life such as freedom, equality, brotherhood and peace can't be achieved by the society.

In poor countries like India, it is the task of social reconstruction to raise the living standard of people. But it would not work if an insatiable hunger for material goods becomes the goal of life. There can be no peace in the minds and hearts of men, if this hunger grows at them continuously. That would necessarily set up an uncontrolled competition between individuals, groups and nations. In such a restless society violence and war would be endemic. Equality, freedom, brotherhood and peace would all be in the danger of being submerged in the universal flood of materialism. Therefore, disciplining of bodily appetite is essential for a moral life and growth of human personality. The socialist way of life is the way of sharing common good; the more willingly this sharing is made, the less tension and coercion in society and there is more socialism.

Jayaprakash's Interpretation of Sarvodaya:

Sarvodaya is people's socialism, where there will be more of voluntary participation of the people and non-state form of socialism. The philosophy of Sarvodaya believes in 'inner goodness' of man. But its objective is to establish a small society with ethics and morality. He said that 'self-government, self-management, mutual co-operation and sharing, equality, freedom, brotherhood all could be practiced and developed better if men lived in a small community.

Hence, he concluded that "the form of Sarvodaya society will be such that people will manage their affairs with co-operation, non-conflict, self-discipline and sense of responsibility". Unless man realizes the importance of Satyagraha and non-violence, class-war can't solve the problem. Because class-war will beget hatred amongst brothers in the society.

In economic sphere, Jayaprakash travelled from class-war of Marxism, nationalization of democratic socialism to Bhoodan, trusteeship and Sarvodaya. He was sure that ideals of Bhoodan that is –

- To give surplus land to landless. (Bhoodan).
- Communalization of land. (Gramdan).
- Converting property into what Gandhiji called trusteeship. (Sampattidan).

Provides the real solution to the problem of accumulation and concentration of wealth. He observed that the outward socio-economic change was accompanied by inward human change. He further admitted that Bhoodan was the beginning of all round social and human revolution, human because it aims at changing man along with society.

He discarded party politics and parliamentary democracy and found an alternative in the Gandhian way of Sarvodaya which stood for participatory, non-violent and non-power politics. Sarvodaya ensures a system where all centres of power will be abolished. There will be a system of Gram Raj with complete decentralization, voluntary participation of the masses and without interference of either parties or the state, Lokniti will prevail over Rajniti.

Jayaprakash was relentless crusader for human freedom and democracy. He had made sincere effort to search for new Indian polity where power would really belong to the people. He had raised questions on the efficiency of the present political institutions and processes in India and suggested the measures to make democracy more democratic, efficient, enduring and meaningful. The aim of Jayaprakash is to create and establish a stateless and participatory democracy. Sarvodaya aims at liberty, equality, peace, and fraternity with mass involvement and voluntary participation of people paying less importance on state and government.

Jayaprakash's concept of Participatory Democracy

His concept of participatory and partyless democracy found detailed elaboration in his pamphlet 'swaraj for the people' published in 1961. He said that Indians followed western democracy, where government is based on consent of the people without any participation in it. He wanted and advocated the participation of the people in the polity and governance this would require a thorough-going system of political as well as economic decentralization. He advocated Gandhi's view that as you proceed from the bottom level to the top each higher level should have less and less functions and powers. In such a system people of each level would have fullest opportunity to manage all the political affairs. Such a system of democracy could give the people a stake in the democracy as well as a sensation of Swaraj.

Panchayati Raj System is the foundation of Jayaprakash's views on democracy. Because it will take the govt. to the door step of the people and enable every citizen to participate in it. But he also laid down some conditions, that are –

- Education should be provided to the people.
- Political parties should not interfere in the elections and functioning of Panchayats.
- Real devolution of power and responsibilities to the Panchayats.
- Giving financial autonomy to the local authorities, making civil servants accountable.

On these conditions the structure of participatory democracy has to be built up. And he also viewed political decentralization necessitates economic decentralization. A decentralized economy demands full utilization of local, regional, human and material resources to the satisfaction of local and regional needs. Emphasis should be on small machine, labor intensive economy and village industries.

Conclusion:

By now, it had been more than evident that neither Jayaprakash's politics nor his political ideas were ever guided by any fixed ideological polestar. This was perhaps mainly because he was forever in search of change, till he formulated his concept of Total Revolution. Narayan spent the first 25 years of independence as the patron saint of lost causes: the Praja Socialist Party, the Sarvodaya movement, even self-determination for Kashmir. His most enduring contribution to the life of the Republic was the movement he led to unseat Mrs Gandhi, which provoked

the Emergency. As the eminence grise of the Janata Party, the first non-Congress party to run the central government, he can take credit for catalysing the political forces that set in train the Congress's political decline. Narayan also wrote several books, notably Reconstruction of Indian Polity. He was a crusader and visionary. No doubt critics have assailed him as a man with inconsistencies. Some view him as a Utopian thinker, an ideal dreamer and too liberal internationalist. His ideas on Sarvodaya and participatory democracy may be relevant for simple and small society, but can't be applicable to modern complex society.

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