

**DR. Ashok Kumar Srivastava****Economic Philosophy Of Jai Prakash Narayan**

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Abstract: *Total Revolution is a combination of seven revolutions – social, economic, political, cultural, ideological or intellectual, educational and spiritual. This Revolution will always go on and keep on changing both our personal and social lives. It knows no respite, no halt, certainly not a complete halt. It is a permanent revolution and is expected to move on towards higher and higher goals. The concept of Total Revolution has had both Marxist and Gandhian origins. It is always expected to be total, touching all aspects of life. JP developed his concept of Total Revolution on the basis of a synthesis not merely of Marxist and Gandhian concepts of social revolution but also of the principles of Western Democracy. Ghanshyam Shah rightly said, “JP gave no blue-print of that (alternative) society nor outlined the various stages of the revolution. Instead he gave a long list of proposals; agricultural development, equitable land-ownership, appropriate technology, rural and small industries, political and economic decentralization, no caste etc. He did not spell out how the land was to be so distributed, nor how the social and economic hierarchy was to be abolished. JP is criticised on the ground that he “had no ideology, a blue-print for a new economic and political order which he had outlined in considerable detail much before the Bihar agitation was even conceived of”. R.K. Barik, an another critic of JP, supports the contention that JP had no ideology, by citing JP’s view as reported in the Calcutta daily, Statesman of 16th June 1974. JP is reported to have said, “I do not think ideology helps clarity. I think all ideologies have become old. It is not ideology but science that can answer all the questions. Let scientists and economists sit and chalk out a programme”. But it is incorrect to conclude that JP had no ideology on the basis of such stray comments. In fact JP’s reasoned rejection of parliamentary democracy and his outline of a new Sarvodaya order may definitely be said to constitute an ideology. JP failed to achieve his revolution and that political parties continued to rule where the people should have stepped in, is a different story. One shrewd commentator has pointed out that the reason for this is that some economic classes and vested interests that dominated society before continued to do so even after the exit of Mrs. Gandhi from the political scene following her massive electoral defeat in 1977. But, perhaps the real reason why “Lok-niti” as JP visualised it could not substitute “Raj-niti” was because JP’s Lok-niti was basically an unworkable utopia.*

Key words: Economic Philosophy, Total Revolution, cultural, ideological, intellectual, educational spiritual.

Jayaprakash Narayan (1902-1979), the great Gandhian socialist leader, raised his famous slogan, Sampooran Kranti (Total Revolution), in a speech at a huge rally in Patna on June 5, 1974. (The rally is said to have been seven kilometres long). Two weeks later, the “gist” of this speech made in Hindi appeared in English in Everyman’s, a weekly edited by Jayaprakash Narayan (JP). Earlier in 1974, JP had accepted the leadership of the student movement in Bihar. He had initially wanted to work with the students as an advisor; but they had not listened.

J.P. was having firm belief on Gandhian idea of social reconstruction. Social reconstruction requires non violent method. In Gandhian political economy, any social change must be based on peace generating action oriented programme. Needless to mention that, economy and society cannot function on the basis of violent revolution. J P through his conception of total revolution provoked about non –violent social order. The ultimate aim of any non revolution is to achieve harmonic socio-economic development. Revolution brings changes and changes induce towards establishment of good social order. In his words “I visualize this movement as a total revolution that will bring about fundamental changes in social, economic, and political cultural, education and moral spheres. Gandhian concept of gram swaraj is base of Jayaprakash Narayan’s political and economic philosophy. In his view village swaraj is a reflection of Vinoba’s lok niti and conception of political decentralization. He was against the politicization of village level democracy. He wanted to establish stronger democratic values through bottom up approach of decision making. He worried for poor and last people. He praised Ruskin and Gandhi’s perception towards development of marginalized and excluded person. To him, centralized politics or elite politics lead exclusionary behaviour in political sphere. Inequality and poverty is a result of power politics. He demanded for stronger moral values in political culture of nation. He held view that “It will be lokniti or the people’s politics, not “Rajniti” or the elitist politics. This new politics will not be imposed from the top, but will be built from below. The initiative for it will come not from Delhi but from the villages” (Narayan, 1992)



Jayaprakash Narayan believed that the rural and village development should be the base of development of the Indian economy. He said that Gandhi ji wanted to develop every village as a self dependent agricultural industrial unit. According to him, “Gandhi ji wanted that in the democracy, the power should not be in the hands of some selected people, but the power should be in hands of all people. It is possible only when gramraj will be the base of democracy” (Narayan, 2001) xv In this connection, he also discussed role and structure of panchayati raj in India. He was an active researcher and writer on issues of panchayati raj. He warned villagers about party rivalries and political violence in panchayati raj. He stated that “The representative political institutions ...should be so constituted as to represent not individuals, but their communities; beginning with the primary (or village) community and going outward to embrace wider and wider” . He wanted system of decentralized governance based on Gandhian philosophy. According to him, “I myself hoped that the Panchayati Raj might “flower in to a living instrument of a true kind of people’s democracy, and as such, I gave it my fullest support and cooperation” (Narayan, 1978)xvii . He rejected the idea of parliamentary democracy at bottom level. He gave opinion that “If Panchayat raj is aimed at building “communitarian” society, than participation by political Parties in elections unnecessary. I disagree with view that Panchayat raj is an application of parliamentary democracy to rural areas” (Narayan, 1962).xviii While interpreting the Gandhian idea of swaraj, he seems to be stand with Gandhi’s perception towards democracy. In present scenario when violence is now very common thing during panchayat elections and village level political rivalries, one must remember the wordings and ideology of Lok Nayak.

For proper analysis these seven components may be rearranged in the following manner: (a) cultural, which includes spiritual – moral, ideological, intellectual, and educational; (b) social-economic; and (c) political. Cultural: JP used the term culture in a very comprehensive sense. It connotes individual and group behaviour. At a purely personal or group level, cultural revolution invokes a change in the moral values held by the individual or the group. In any debate of moral values, therefore, ends and means must enter. It is in regard to the ends – means problem that JP, following Gandhi, has been very insistent. As far back as 1950, JP declared: “We eschew the unclean and unscrupulous methods that the communists follow”. Writing on yet another occasion in 1951, he said: “The first aspect of Gandhism that must interest the socialist is its moral and ethical basis, its insistence on values. Russian or Stalinist interpretation of socialist philosophy has reduced it to a Crass Machiavellian code of conduct utterly devoid of any sense of right or wrong, good or evil. The end justifies the means, and when the end is power – personal or group power – there is no limit to the depth to which the means will sink to secure the objectives. A change in regard to the ends – means relationship both in the individual and group life is bound to produce a corresponding change in the belief system, that is, the ideology of either the individual or the group. A new ideological revolution, therefore, is bound to ensure if the organic relationship between ends and means is accepted. As a natural corollary to this, an intellectual revolution cannot be avoided; for the entire ends-and means approach in the context of Gandhian thought must give a new outlook to the individual or the group to view things around them. And this is what JP means by intellectual revolution. The most important variable in the cultural change is education. According to JP, education must be a powerful element of social change and it should be closely linked to national development. It should be biased in favour of the masses rather than in favour of the upper classes. It must create a new kind of awareness among the submerged and weaker sections of our society, so that they feel fully integrated with the society. He had suggested the following changes in the present system:

(i) One-third to one-half of the working time in all educational institutions at all stages should be devoted to active participation in the programmes of social service and national development. \

(ii) A large part of non-formal education should be introduced in the system. Part-time education and correspondence courses must be expanded at the secondary and university stages.

(iii) A large part of our budget on education benefits the upper classes with the result that the masses are left out.

Such an imbalance must be corrected if social justice is to be the objective of our educational policies, with this end in view, three programmes must be given top priority, namely

(i) adult education; (ii) a non-formal education of less than six hours a week to all out-of-school youths in the age-group of 15-26; and lastly (iii) universalisation of elementary education for all children. Turning to secondary education, JP’s scheme envisaged a thorough change in the system. First, higher institutions should not be permitted to proliferate leading to a fall in the standards. Secondly, strict criteria should be laid down regarding recognition, affiliation, and financial assistance to be given to the institutions of higher education. Thirdly, adequate fees should be charged in these institutions while making allowance



for liberal grant of free studentships and scholarships to deserving candidates. Fourthly, the emphasis in higher education should be on quality rather than quantity. Fifthly, the entire slant of education should be towards vocationalisation and diversion of students into work at various stages. And, lastly but most importantly, degrees must be delinked from employment. JP's recommendations seek to lay the foundation of a more viable, meaningful, and purposeful system of education.

Social-Economical- As JP stated, 'social' in the Marxian sense also includes 'economic'. A social revolution, therefore, is basically an economic revolution in the Marxian formulation. Marx's use of the term was justified in the European context. In the Indian context, the term 'social' has a distinctive character. Due to caste divisions, a whole panoply of rituals, hierarchy, modes of inter-caste communication, sense of pollution, marriage norms and practices, social distance, and informal rules of behaviour have grown over thousands of years. JP did not overlook the fact that there lies a thin boundary line between a caste and an economic class. Yet he also recognised the social reality underlying the caste configuration in society. And that reality is that caste is quite an autonomous factor, independent of its economic moorings. The task of Total Revolution in this sense is iconoclastic. It has to break the caste barriers. And, in order to do so, Total Revolution must evolve new norms and practices replacing those based on caste. Inter-caste dining, abolition of dowry system, archaic marriage rules and regulations – all must enter the area of Total Revolution. It is in this sense that the social content of Total Revolution assumes quite an independent dimension. But Total Revolution must go hand in hand with economic revolution. JP only carried Gandhi's thinking further to embrace every detail of economic life. 'Economic relationship', JP recorded in his Prison Diary, "includes technological, industrial, and agricultural revolutions, accompanied by a radical change in the pattern of ownership and management".

The industrial-technological structure of the economy has two major facets, namely (i) the ownership pattern, and (ii) the size of technology. The model of industrial-technological development that he has in mind consists of a number of elements. They are (a) diversified ownership pattern of the self-employed individual, groups of families, registered cooperatives, gram sabhas, block samitis, zilla parishads and only in the end, the state (b) labour – intensive small techniques linked largely with agriculture in place of capital intensive technology with the provision that, where the latter becomes inevitable, it should be placed under State ownership. Such large-scale industries are conceived only as Total Revolution 71 72 Non-Violent Movements after Gandhi feeders to small units so that they do not devour the former as has happened in the wake of technological revolution. In the sphere of agriculture, JP's thinking was very specific. The present agrarian structure, even after different States have passed land-ceiling legislation, remains as unevenly balanced as ever. Except in Kerala and West Bengal, no significant change in the structure of ownership has taken place. JP agitated for "land to the tillers". The primary emphasis in regard to land reform, therefore, is on the ownership of land by those who cultivate it, adequate wages for the landless, poor, and effective implementation of existing laws relating to ceiling, eviction, share-cropping, and homestead land. If the existing laws had been implemented, a new ethos in the countryside would have been created. But it is exactly in relation to putting the laws into operation that all governments of whatever ideological variety, have failed. Political: In the sphere of political revolution JP follows Gandhi. Gandhi visualised power rising from the grassroots and reaching the top which remained nothing more than a coordinating body. Such a view of polity was different from those in practice either in democratic systems or the communist countries. In other words, if power was shared among different echelons of the social structure starting from, say, the village upward, the danger of centralisation could very well be avoided. Centralisation, either of political or of economic power, was what Gandhi dreaded most. He, therefore, laid emphasis on decentralisation.

JP followed the same line of thinking in his approach to the reconstitution of power from the base. His thinking on polity in the present context had two distinctive features. Firstly, he raised substantive issues in regard to the whole polity as is prevalent today; and secondly, pending the reorganisation of the polity along his substantive formulations, he advocated reform in the present political system. His vision of a partyless democracy, reorganisation of the power structure from below, institution of an altogether different mode of election to the new representative bodies and other suggestions fall under the first. In the second category, he visualised reforms in the parliamentary system. In plea for Reconstruction of Indian Polity, JP rejected the western model of democracy on the ground that it did not give full scope to the people to participate in the management of their affairs and is based on an atomised view of society, the state being an inorganic sum of individuals. In its place he pleaded for a model of democracy, based on an integrated concept of society and providing the fullest possible scope to the individual to participate in the management



of his affairs, without the intermediation of political parties. The latter, according to JP, functioned without any control over them by the people or even by their own numbers and were the source of many evils. It was not, however, the party system that was the main culprit, but parliamentary democracy, which lay at its back and which could not work without it. In the context of Total Revolution, the following points need to be stressed. First, JP's approach to the reordering of political power is significant. This led him to conceive of a polity in which the effective levels of power are controlled by people. In order that such a control is possible, he advocates the creation of formal structures at village, block and district levels. Most of the power, in his scheme, rests with these structures.

The structures are governments at their respective levels in the sense that they are independent in their sphere of operation and yet interdependent in relation to other tiers. It was this approach to decentralisation of power that led him to support the panchayati raj system. He believed that it was perfectly feasible to incorporate the different tiers below the State level into the constitutional framework by a bold stroke of amendment, thereby making it a part of the structure of the entire polity. In such a polity, a viable structure is one in which participation of the largest number in the decision-making process is guaranteed. JP made a radical departure from the practice of the panchayati raj. He pleaded for units which would be administratively viable while guaranteeing the participation of the people. This, in essence, meant a process of regrouping from the village upward so that an optimum size crystallises at the respective levels. Secondly, JP has in the past made far-reaching and comprehensive recommendations with a view to reforming the present system of election. He was the first to suggest that in order to prevent defections, which became the order of the day, effective legislative steps should be taken. JP also raised the issue of the corrupting role of money in the entire electoral process. Reform of the electoral system has been one of the very persistent demands which JP went on making on the political system. There are other aspects like the use of administrative machinery, the ways and means of conducting a free and fair election, and a civil code of conduct among political parties about which JP has provided wide-ranging guidelines. JP has drawn our attention to the control of the legislators. He suggested that there should be a clause in our Constitution for the recall of the legislators, that is, the constituents must be vested with the power to recall a member if he does not carry out his duties.

Since Independence, full twenty-eight years now, there has been no real change in the social, economic and political structure of our society. Zamindari is abolished, land reform laws have been passed, untouchability has been legally prohibited, and so on. But the village in most parts of India is still in the grip of the higher castes and the bigger and medium landowners. The small and marginal landowners are the landless, the backward classes and the Harijans - these form the majority in most villages in most states, perhaps in nine-tenths of India. Yet their position continues to be miserable. Harijans are still burnt alive. The Adivasis are still the most backward section, barring the Harijans. And the money-lenders (who include many land-owners and shopkeepers, maybe petty themselves) mercilessly cheat and exploit the Adivasis, who in Bihar call the plainsmen dikku.

The customs, manners, beliefs, superstitions, all these remain much the same for the masses. Even among the classes the change is superficial in most parts.

Put in this way, even the most legalistic and constitutionalist democrat would agree that all this could never be accomplished if the functioning of democracy were restricted to elections, legislation, planning and administrative execution. There must also be people's direct action. This action would almost certainly comprise, among other forms, civil disobedience, peaceful resistance, non-cooperation - in short, satyagraha in its widest sense. One of the unstated implications of such a satyagraha would be self-change: that is to say, those wanting to change must also change themselves before launching any kind of action.

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