



Decoding social and political philosophy of Jayarakash Narayan: An analysis

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Abstract

Jayaprakash Narayan was one of the most influential social and political thinkers of India. His social and political insights had been inspired and driven by the Gandhian ideology and socialism. Firstly, he was a Marxist, and secondly, he was a Gandhian. Thus, he was a Marxist turned Gandhian socialist. He was a straightforward, courageous, optimistic, determined, goal oriented and dynamic socialist figure of India. He came across different renowned leaders and intellectual figures during his social and political journey. As far as his social and political philosophy is concerned, it was driven by ethics, Gandhism and socialism, and oriented towards the establishment of humane, inclusive, independent, self-reliant, caste free, poverty free and egalitarian society in India. He was an amazing leader, who not only revolutionized but also gave direction to the politics of India. He was an extremely rare and exceptional politician in the history of India as his politics was never driven by the intention of own interest but centered on the benefit of the society. He was against industrialization, centralization of power, communalism, urbanization, privatization, authoritarianism, violence, disparity, tyranny, exploitation, and so on and so forth; and he was the strong supporter of socialism, pluralism, national integration, decentralization of power, nationalization, egalitarian society, non-violence, autonomy, and many more good things.

Keywords: socialism, gandhism, egalitarian society, decentralization, & pluralism

Introduction

Jayaprakash Narayan is known as an Indian independence movement activist, theorist, socialist, and political leader. The 'Total Revolution' led by him made him popular in the contemporary society. He was conferred the Bharat Ratna, the highest civilian award in 1999 in recognition of his social service. He was also honoured with Magsaysay award in 1965 for his worth mentioning contribution towards public service. He was born on 11 October 1902 in Ballia district of United Province, British India (currently known as Uttar Pradesh). He belonged to a Kayastha family. He was the fourth child of Mr. Harsu Dayal and Mrs. Phul Rani Devi. He completed his under-graduation and post-graduation from Ohio State University and University of Wisconsin respectively though his abroad education was full of hardships. He returned from the US as a Marxist in late 1929. He joined Indian National Congress in 1929 and Mahatma Gandhi was his political mentor in the Congress. He got an opportunity to meet Dr. Ram Manohar Lohiya while living in Nasik Jail for civil disobedience against British rule in 1930.

The Congress Socialist Party (CSP) was organized with Acharya Narendra Deva as President and Jayaprakash Narayan as General Secretary. He led to the student movement in Bihar in 1974 that developed into a popular people's movement called as the Bihar Movement. He called for the peaceful Total Revolution during this movement. The Janata Party, a vehicle for the broad spectrum of the opposition to Indira Gandhi was organized under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan. The Janata Party was voted to power and became the first non-Congress party government at the Centre ("Jayaprakash Narayan", 2022).

Jayaprakash Narayan was a Gandhian socialist leader that revolutionized the political course of the country. He was an unparalleled leader in the Indian politics, who never ran

behind the power and pelf. His call for 'Sampoorna Kranti' i.e. Total Revolution driven by his serious concerns to the rampant corruption, unemployment, and gradual deterioration of democratic institutions in the country led to the imposition of Emergency in 1975. It paved the way for realignment of political forces in the country and provided direction to the Indian politics. His call for the total revolution was not limited to the political dimensions as it covered social, educational, economic and cultural dimensions. The underlying objective of his politics was to empower the people and transferring leadership of the country to youth.

He exhibited a saint like indifference from holding public office or joining electoral politics.

He kept himself away from the electoral politics despite of having mass following. He was an ardent supporter of the policy that youngsters should be in the lead role to change the system. He held charismatic influence on the contemporary political scenario of India and consequently many political parties including Bhartiya Jana Sangh, Swatantra Party, Congress and socialists came together to organize the Janata Party. He had a tall stature in the post-independence Indian politics. He was excessively inspired by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. He joined the Indian National Congress (INC) on the invitation of Jawahar Lal Nehru after returning from the USA. He was also a member of Congress Socialist Party (CSP).

He played an active role in the Bhoodan Movement led by Acharya Vinoba Bhave (Naidu, 2018).

Objective of Study

This research study is driven by the following objectives:

- To figure out the social and political philosophy of Jayaprakash Narayan.
- To review the contributions of Jayaprakash Narayan in Indian social and political landscape.

Research Questions

This research article has attempted to address the following questions:

- What was the status of Jayaprakash Narayan in the contemporary Indian political scenario?
- What was the contribution of Jayaprakash Narayan in the Indian freedom movement?
- What was the contribution of Jayaprakash Narayan in Indian social and political space?
- What was the social and political philosophy of Jayaprakash Narayan?

Research Methodology

This article is exploratory cum descriptive by nature. Under this research article, it has been attempted to explore and describe the contributions of Jayaprakash Narayan in social and political domains of India and thereby understanding his underlying philosophy. This study is primarily based on secondary sources of information, which consists of published research journal articles, newspaper articles, magazine articles, etc.

Jayaprakash Narayan's Social and Political Contributions & Philosophies: An Overview

Freedom had been at the core of Mahatma Gandhi's ideology. In his view, hate and fear are the worst enemies of freedom. However, contemporary government is governing the country through hatred and fear. Therefore, freedom for which Gandhiji lived, struggled and died, gets lost from the society. Jayaprakash Narayan infused non-violence into the aggression. The National Emergency was declared on 25th June 1975. The world's largest democracy was shifting to the dictatorship during around seven quarter long National Emergency. Jayaprakash Narayan was the person of high stature in the Indian politics who worked and march, fought and died in pursuit of independence and establishment of freedom in India. It is widely considered that the Indian National Congress (INC) claimed the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi, captured political power and ruled India for a long time. Similarly, it is considered that the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) claimed Jayaprakash legacy, captured political power in 1999, 2014 and 2019, and is currently ruling over country. According to JP, freedom is concerned with freedom of human personality, freedom of mind, and freedom of spirit. In his view, the foundation of Indian democracy lies in self-governance, self-sufficiency, agro-industrial development, and rural communities. The politico-economic institutions are supposed to regulate the distribution of resources for the wellbeing of the community and nation as well. He was against the western pattern of mega industrialization, urbanization and individuation. He was a staunch supporter of agro-based people's economy. He envisaged democratic and decentralized development process. He opined that Hindu communalism was more harmful than other types of communalism. According to him, identification of India as Hindu nation may lead to national disintegration as rest of the communities will probably never accept themselves as second class citizen in the country. Therefore, the RSS should give up its concept of Hindu nation and endorse Indian nationhood that is secular and embraces all communities wholeheartedly. It will be tantamount to the suicide of India if India attempts to suppress the Kashmiri by force (Devasahayam, 2019) ^[10].

Jayaprakash Narayan was a person who at one juncture in the past was as popular as Mahatma Gandhi. He was a revolutionary figure in the history of India. He raised voice against nepotism, exclusionary politics, authoritarianism, and for people's democracy, socialism, participatory rule, social audit of politics, etc. He questioned authority fearlessly and clashed with conventions. He always kept on looking forward to new thoughts and norms that made him raise voice against the status quo loudly and boldly. His this inherent feature made him unfriendly to almost every political party in India. He was a staunch supporter of the establishment of the egalitarian society across India like Mahatma Gandhi. However, he was very much enthusiastic and passionate to the socialism unlike Mahatma Gandhi. He remained the champion of liberty and people's rule till his last breath. He was a man of the people (P., 2022). Jayaprakash is widely known for his contribution to restore democracy in India and fostering the idea to raise voice against tyranny. He played the role of Mahatma Gandhi in the second half of the twentieth century when the youth were grossly disappointed with bad governance, wide spread corruption, poor growth rate, etc. He called for a 'total revolution' i.e. sampoorana kranti while taking a lead role in mobilizing student protest in Bihar. He fought well against the National Emergency of 1975 to restore democracy in the country. He was an ardent advocate of the dictatorship of the proletariat. JP was strong supporter of non-violence, however, he publicly extended support to Naxalites in June 1969. There had been disagreements between JP and Indira Gandhi without hatred until 1970. Their relationship started deteriorating 1970 onwards. He felt terribly betrayed by the insensitive and stupid politics of Janata Parivar that ended his vision of a total revolution (Prakash, 2021) ^[12].

Jawahar Lal Nehru and Jayaprakash Narayan worked closely together for the Congress since 1930s. He was an ardent admirer of Nehru's ideology and working style. However, later he became very critical of Nehru's domestic and foreign policies. He left the Congress party in 1948 because of ever growing differences between them on socialism, economic development and modernity. The Congress Socialist Party's leaders including Jayaprakash Narayan advocated for democratic socialism, empowerment of trade unions and cooperatives in both the rural and urban areas. Jayaprakash Narayan and Dr. Rammanohar Lohiya were strongly against the communism and capitalism (Mansukhani, 2022). Jayaprakash Narayan was the person who led to the mass movement against Indira Gandhi. It was the first widespread anti-corruption movement i.e. total revolution (i.e. Sampoorana Kranti) movement in the history of India. He tried his level best to challenge and uproot the Indian National Congress (INC) party's monopoly on the government as compared to any other person in the past or future of India. Therefore, he was among the persons who were detained during the Emergency as the movement led by him resulted in the imposition of the Emergency in the country. The Janata Party government came to the power after the conclusion of Emergency. Jayaprakash Narayan was overlooked by his own supporters and followers, and his efforts remained unrecognized. He was very much disappointed from the collapse of the Janata Party government within three years. The prominent reason behind the collapse of government was the internal conflict

among the leaders of Janata Party government and an acute shortage of leadership in the government (Gupta, 2018) [3]. Janata Party was formed by bringing together many political parties through the movement led by Jayaprakash Narayan. This newly established party came to power after the success in his movement called as total revolution movement. It was his opinion that the Janata Party government would be considered good if corruption removed completely. As per his personal remark on the ruling government, Janata Party cannot not solve the problem of poverty in India instantly, however, government is expected to take it seriously and practically. The government's topmost priority should be the development of agriculture as India is an agricultural country where agriculture is in a very pathetic condition. There was big distance between people governing the country via Janata Party government and its architect, Jayaprakash Narayan. He aspired to observe the grass root democracy whereby people involvement in the governance is ensured. Grass root democracy and decentralization are directly related to each other. In view of Jayaprakash Narayan, party politics is an integral part of the democracy. He never expected Congress free India rather preferred to corruption free government of India whether be it the government of Janata party or Congress party. JP dreamt of poverty, caste and autocracy free India. Moreover, he wished to observe the equality of status and democracy at the ground level. In his opinion, Indian education system and administrative system should be overhauled to make them compatible with the needs of Indian society (Joshi, 2015) [15].

Jayaprakash Narayan attempted to define nation and nationalism in his writings. He was an advocate of pluralism. The Indian independence movement manifested that there was no scope for the divisive and sectarian nationalism (i.e. Hindu or Muslim) in the Indian nationalism. Hostile and alienating nationalism was antithetical to the ethos of Indian independence struggle. He expected from the RSS that it would abandon the Hindu nation theory and endorse Indian nationhood theory that was secular and inclusive. It is essential to thoroughly understand the concept of Indian nationhood in order to foster national integration. Mohammad Ali Jinnah was supporter of two-nation theory. Indian nationhood was inevitable to get the joint efforts of all communities in order to mobilize the freedom struggle. The RSS was the supporter of Hindu nation agenda. The exclusive party and politics would prove an obstacle on the path of national unity. An all-inclusive Indian nation is inherently quite different from a Hindu nation. Under the Indian nationhood, all citizens of India irrespective of race, religion, language, etc. are considered as sons of the soil. On the other hand, protagonists of Hindu nationhood would consider only Hindus as sons of the soil. The supporters of Hindu nationhood and Muslim nationhood would pose a serious challenge against the unity of India and its pluralistic character ("One Nation, many Indias", 2018).

Bihar politics has a strong and severe implications on the national politics that can be understood by going through the series of political incidents that took place in Bihar beginning from the Bihar student movement of 1970s to the stoppage of Lal Krishna Advani's Ayodhya Rath Yatra (1990) in Samastipur by the then chief minister Lalu Prasad Yadav. The Bihar movement, which is known as the JP movement. This movement was spearheaded by

Jayaprakash Narayan and driven by the prevailing rampant corruption and deteriorating democracy in the country. This movement was converted into the total revolution i.e. Sampoorna Kranti. This movement resulted in the imposition of National Emergency in the country from 1975-1977. The JP's movement led to the National Emergency in the country that resulted in the defeat of the Congress in the sixth Lok Sabha general election after the National Emergency of 1975, and it paved the way for the formation non-Congress government at the national level for the first time in the history of post independent India. Thus, Janata Party government came to power and Morarji Desai became the Prime Minister of India in 1977. The JP movement has personal and emotional connection with many political leaders, who emerged from this movement like Lalu Prasad Yadav, Sharad Yadav, Nitish Kumar, Sushil Kumar Modi, and many more. These leaders are described as the product of JP movement. (Dutt, 2022) [14].

Jayaprakash Narayan and Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS)

There had been a close convergence between Jayaprakash Movement and Hindu nationalist organizations. Jayaprakash Narayan and the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) advocated decentralization; rejected socialism and secularism observing as the Congress ideological imports from the West; and aspired to Gandhi's vision of an indigenous utopia. He was certainly independent of Sangha Pariwar (i.e. RSS). He invited Jyoti Basu to join his movement in 1974 and assured automatic exclusion of RSS members from the movement on the ground of ideological distinctions. Jayaprakash Narayan introduced RSS to his movement as the RSS had well-established organization that JP did not have. Organizations are integral part of the successful movement. Jyoti Basu was convinced and the CPI (M) organized major Jayaprakash rallies in Calcutta. However, the CPI (M) came out of JP's movement observing the dominance and central position of the RSS in the movement. The association of JP with RSS was purpose oriented. However, relationship between the JP Movement and the Hindu nationalists were different. Jayaprakash Narayan's personal relations with RSS leaders proved helpful. The RSS chief, Balasaheb Deoras also backed the JP Movement by issuing statement in support of the movement in December 1974. A statement ("If you are a fascist, then I too am a fascist") was also made by Jayaprakash Narayan while addressing an RSS crowd in response to the RSS chief supporting statement issued earlier. (Jaffrelot & Anil, 2021).

The Bhartiya Jana Sangha, a political wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) converted into the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1984. The BJP's rise from two seats (1984) to 303 seats (2019) in the Lok Sabha has left many people astonished. The fundamental reason behind this charismatic growth of BJP has been reported the general acceptance of its fascist tendencies among majority of Indians. However, Jayaprakash Narayan has been considered the person responsible for the rise of BJP in India. It is believed that had JP not introduced Bhartiya Jana Sangh (currently BJP) into the 1974 movement led by him against Indira Gandhi's autocratic rule and not termed the RSS as "muscle power of the movement", the BJP would not have reached to its today's strong political position in India. The Congress and socialist or communist groups have

considered the introduction of Bhartiya Jana Sangh and its ideological mentor RSS into the JP's movement was the biggest blunder mistake in the history of India. JP's close aides suggested him to stay away from the RSS conclave. But he disrespected the advice issued by his associates by attending the conclave and issuing statement as well. The Bhartiya Jana Sangh merged itself into the Janata Party on the initiative of Jayaprakash Narayan. The widespread implications of JP's movement and the pressure of the Emergency made Bhartiya Jana Sangh to change its strategy. Therefore, Bhartiya Jana Sangh neither used its flag nor fought election strongly on its inherent ideology of Hindutva in the 1977 Lok Sabha election. All Bhartiya Jana Sangh members signed on the Janata Party's membership form and assured to serve for the cause of establishment of a socialist state in India. Jayaprakash Narayan solicited Bhartiya Jana Sangh members for neither wearing saffron caps nor carrying their own flags while participating in the protest demonstration in front of the Parliament under his leadership. These terms had been violated by Bhartiya Jana Sangh members in the upcoming political incidents. He was severely criticized for providing a platform and political space to the RSS. His politics was not driven by desire of acquiring power and position. JP made a major mistake in understanding the intent and nature of the RSS. The RSS had been working on a constant agenda since its introduction. The non-participation of the RSS in the Indian freedom struggle is widely known. This organization was banned by the government of India after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by one of its members named Nathuram Godse. It is worth mentioning to highlight that Jayaprakash Narayan had never been supporter of the RSS communal agenda and politics (Kumar, 2019) ^[9].

Jayaprakash Narayan versus Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar and Dr. Rammanohar Lohiya

Mahatma Gandhi and Jayaprakash Narayan had heavily influenced Indian society and its political thought. The hallmark of their politics was ethics. They were enormously liked by the people but equally disliked by the people in power. Both the Gandhi and JP were strong supporter of values derived from religion and never endorsed communal intolerance. They were part and parcel of the Indian national movement but failed in reforming the well-established power structures in the country. The Janata Party government headed by Morarji Desai took no initiative to implement the vision of Jayaprakash Narayan that was decentralization of governance. He failed to understand the intent and ambitions of his own followers. He seemed to be utopian and impractical in his approach. Therefore, he was capable of being taken for a ride easily. JP died as a disappointed man like Gandhi. His vision to social change and total revolution was ignored by the Janata Party government that came to power through his consistent efforts and support (Singh, 2004) ^[5].

Mahatma Gandhi shifted the trend of violent revolution to non-violent revolution. In his view, good goal can be achieved through good means and bad means cannot be expected to produce good results. A better society is possible only through the practice of non-violence and truth. Therefore, no violent revolution could bring revolution in the society. However, Gandhian ideology of non-violence and truth has potential to bring revolution in the society. Thus, Gandhian ideology is very effective in the process of

social reconstruction. Many leaders and thinkers (including Jayaprakash Narayan) were influenced by Gandhian ideology. Gandhian ideology had immense role in JP's philosophy. Jayaprakash Narayan was an iconic socialist thinker, social activist and freedom fighter. Moreover, he was associated with Bhoodan movement led by Acharya Vinoba Bhave. He led to the 'total revolution' movement to contain the rampant and widespread corruption and to restore democracy in the country. He was a strong follower of Marxism prior to India's independence but he followed Gandhian ideology after the independence of India. Jayaprakash Narayan endorsed Gandhian philosophy of Sarvodaya for the social reconstruction after India's independence. However, as per his opinion, Marxism was better than Gandhian ideology. Communism, democratic socialism and Sarvodaya are different forms of socialism. The Gandhian concept of Gram Swaraj was the foundation of JP's social, economic and political thought. In his opinion, rural development should be the basis of development of the country and power should not be only in the hands of few selected people rather it should be in the hands of all the citizens of the country. He evolved the concept of Gramraj, which means autonomous village republic, not a gram panchayat. Under the concept of Gramraj, every village had to be governed by the respective villagers themselves, not by government agencies. The deep-rooted impact of Gandhian ideology on Jayaprakash Narayan can be explicitly observed from his shift from Marxism to Sarvodaya, from materialism to spiritualism, and from violent revolution to non-violent revolution (Dubey, 2011) ^[13].

Jayaprakash Narayan was a socialist turned Gandhian, who led Bihar student movement in the 1970s. He called for 'Total Revolution' that turned into the JP's movement. This movement culminated in declaration of Internal Emergency on June 25, 1975. He was detained under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) among thousands of people including opposition leaders. Mahatma Gandhi was against the centralization of power rather he strongly preferred decentralization of power.

There had been sharp differences between Gandhi and Ambedkar. Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar was a staunch supporter of centralization of power. Ambedkar played a vital role during the drafting of our constitutional provisions. Therefore, Indian Constitution has been tilted towards centralization of power. Jayaprakash Narayan was the follower of Gandhian ideology and supporter of decentralization of power in post-independence India. He manifested his full trust towards the complete decentralization of power at village level and indirect election at district, state and national level governance. The prevalence of extreme social inequality and economic disparity in the village society was the prominent factor that made Ambedkar against the decentralization of power whereby village had been proposed to award a strong position in the Indian polity. On the one hand, decentralization of power may lead to local dominance whereby central government directions and policies can be overlooked. On the other hand, an effective decentralization of power has potential to restrict the central government from being an authoritarian and autocratic. Gandhi, Ambedkar and JP were against authoritarian rule and preferred individual freedom and civil liberties (Mohan, 2022) ^[16].

According to Jayaprakash Narayan, socialism is not a code of personal conduct but a system of social reconstruction. Widespread and painful existence of inequalities made implementation of socialism inevitable in India. Bad things like poverty, hunger, filth, disease, ignorance, etc. are associated with overwhelming majority whereas good things like comfort, power, prestige, luxury, etc. are associated with just a few. In view of Jayaprakash Narayan, socialization of the means of production is the prominent source of socialism that has potential to eradicate social evils like disproportionate distribution of wealth and exploitation in the society. He was an ardent advocate of the socialist system wherein economic order should be based on state ownership instead of private ownership of the means of production and means of production ought to be under the control of the state. As per his personal observation, socialism in the country is feasible only when power is in the hands of the socialists. The citation of the concept of socialism in Indian history has been nonexistent as Indian social order has never been socialist. Today's neoliberalism has made all the ideologies extinct. However, socialism is still one of the best alternatives. He dreamt of turning India into a socialist country. Ever growing significance of money in politics and promotion of privatization have shaken the foundation of Indian democracy. Therefore, he called for the total revolution i.e. Sampurna Kranti so that the country's sovereignty may not be in the hands of few rich capitalists. The people were looking forward to the freedom from exploitation during the British rule. However, people did not know how to organize themselves. Most of them were illiterate or poorly educated and caste based discrimination was rampant in the country. The communalism was prevalent in the country. Ruthless exploitation of Indians by Indians at the instruction of the British was going on. The zamindari system was at its zenith and zamindars were in no way different from the British rulers. The Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League were quite engaged in customizing the definition of India. Mahatma Gandhi gave the call for to do or die on 9th August 1942. The socialist leaders like Rammanohar Lohiya, Jayaprakash Narayan, Aruna Asaf Ali, etc. responded to Mahatma Gandhi's call. The Congress came to power when India got independence. The socialists were not given due place in the government. The socialist movement in India started declining with the virtual retirement of Jayaprakash Narayan from Indian politics. There had been disagreement between Jayaprakash Narayan and Dr. Rammanohar Lohiya on many social issues. Jayaprakash Narayan was supporter of reservation system on economic basis whereas Lohiya and Ambedkar demanded reservation on the basis of social division (Bharti, 2022) [8].

Conclusion

"My interest is not in the capture of power, but in the control of power by the people."—Lok Nayak Jayaprakash Narayan

This quote is enough to thoroughly understand the social and political philosophy of Jayaprakash Narayan in nutshell. He never took advantage of his political career to earn power, position and pelf. Therefore, he always kept himself away from joining electoral politics and holding public office even after having strong public mandate. His status in Indian political and social struggle was like Mahatma Gandhi. So, he is considered as Gandhi during the second half of the twentieth century. His leadership in Bihar student movement of 1970s proved charismatic and historical that led to the imposition of National Emergency in the country in 1975 that became fundamental reason behind the massive

defeat of the Congress party during the Sixth Lok Sabha election; and thus, it paved the way for the formation of the Janata Party government under the leadership of Morarji Desai. It was maiden incident in the history of post independent India that any non-Congress party had been voted to power. The chief architect behind the formation of Janata Party and Janata Party government was Jayaprakash Narayan. However, collapse of the Janata Party government within three year term was a matter of great concern and deep analysis. His leadership not only made possible to every impossible but prepared and produced many strong and effective leaders for the upcoming India. He preferred to be an ordinary person despite of his position of a kingmaker. This is an important and integral sign of Pradhan Sevak that will keep on reminding every person claiming himself or herself a Pradhan Sevak (Chief Servant) ahead.

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