
Jayprakash Narayan's Concept of Total Revolution

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Abstract: *The fact is that Jayaprakash Narayan's idea of change was not limited to political shift and rather than it was aimed at transforming the whole system. However, he was the strongest supporter of democratic means and fundamental rights. It was his credibility someone endowed with fierce selflessness, public spirit, and above all, the desire for empowerment of the masses that brought people in droves to him. They all listened to him in rapt attention. He had left a permanent imprint for his revolutionary role and was much acclaimed for his democratic humanitarian views like socialism, Sarvodaya, party less democracy and total revolution. The clarion call for 'Total Revolution' was the last revolutionary quest of Jayaprakash Narayan. In the post independence era, total revolution was the only indigenous revolution; others have been more in the form of agitation and protest. The present research paper highlights Jayaprakash Narayan's concept of total revolution.*

Keywords: Political Shift, Democracy, Total Revolution, Gandhian Philosophy, Political Corruption, Social Injustice, Indian Society, Sarvodaya.

Introduction: Though a Sarvodaya activist, a revolutionary Jayaprakash could not remain indifferent to the crumbling of Indian polity. Corruption, manipulation, exploitation, social discrimination, unemployment, and the rise of authoritarianism provoked an old guard of freedom movement like Jayaprakash to launch a total revolution in post-independent polity; J.D. Sethi writes appropriately "the old guard of the national movement who assumed power in 1947 betrayed this nation and its revolutionary destiny. Jayaprakash emerged as the symbol and expression of the revolutionary conscience of the nation". A discussion on Jayaprakash's total revolution includes the reasons for total revolution meaning of total revolution and the technique of total revolution.

Actually, Jayprakash Narayan was one among the few luminaries in India, whose life was a message of struggle for freedom and justice. In the post-Independence era he was the only ‘Crusader’ to launch a total revolution in the country without any clamor for power. For the cause of fighting against authoritarianism, corruption and injustice, he had to go to jail even in the last stage of his life. Jayprakash Narayan’s political ideas underwent changes from Marxian socialism to democratic socialism from Democratic Socialism to Sarvodaya, from Sarvodaya to Total Revolution. It is because he was not a doctrinaire. He was more a political activist than a political philosopher. His objective was not to give a new philosophy to the people but to devise a political idea ensuring bread, freedom and justice. So he made stirring effort to solve the problems of humanity with any political ideology which would give the solution. Though his tone was that of a Marx but he believed in the techniques of Gandhi. Truly speaking, he was a Gandhian-Marxist.

What is Total Revolution?

The concept of total revolution is an amalgamation of seven revolutions. However, Jayprakash Narayan has been a well-known revolutionary thinker of Indian National movement, therefore, on 5th June, 1974 addressing a mammoth gathering of five lakh people in Gandhi Maidan at Patna, Jayprakash said “I am putting before you a revolutionary programme. It is a total revolution. We are not here merely to see that the vidhansabha is dissolved. That is only one mile stone in our journey. But, we have a long way to go. Remaining in the jail, he gave a systematic thought to his ideas of revolution. He defined total revolution as a combination of seven revolutions – Social, Economic, Political, Cultural ideological and intellectual, educational and spiritual. This number may be increased or decreased. For instance, Cultural Revolution may include educational and ideological, economic revolution may be split up into industrial agricultural, technological revolution etc. Similarly intellectual revolution may be split up to two – scientific and philosophical.

Likewise, on the other hand, in Marxian sense, social revolution includes

economic and political revolution there by reducing the number. But revolution in political sphere he suggested provision for Lokpal, reducing election expenditure, giving more power to the people and setting up of people's committee to act as watch dog to see that the promises made to the people are fulfilled. Education revolution should include removing illiteracy, to fit the educated to deal with the problems of the country, a thorough overall change in the entire structure of education. Social revolution should remove caste system and dowry system. Efforts should be made by the Youth to bring the Harijans and Adivasis to the main stream. Economic revolution includes curbing price rise and inflation, improvement in agriculture and agricultural labourers, increase in the emoluments of the industrial workers. Moral values and faith in our own culture must be restored in the society. People must be made scientific as well as spiritual. All these changes will envision the emergence of a new social order and genuine democracy in India in the changing political scenario.

What are the Causes of Total Revolution?

Most of the social scientists and intellectuals in India think that Jayaprakash's total revolution can be traced to the socio-economic, education, moral and political maladies existing in Indian society. Since Jayaprakash gave his note on total revolution in his book 'Prison Diary' written during years of his arrest and solitary confinement from 21st July to 4th November, 1975, it is necessary to present here an extract from that book as to why he gave a call for 'total revolution'. Jayaprakash had earlier made it clear to Chandrashekhar, young Turk leader, that his movements' aim was not only to change the government in Bihar but much more than that which he termed as revolution. Since independence, Jayaprakash observed, "Full 28 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 part of India is still in the grip of higher castes and the bigger and the medium land owners...

Harijans are burnt alive. The adivasis are still the most backward section and the money-lenders mercilessly cheat and exploit the adivasis. In spite of nationalisation, there is no element of trait of socialism. People have no place in it except as workers or consumers. There is no economic democracy, which is much talked about. The educational system in spite of several communities and commissioners remains basically what it was during British rule. Class education is designed as an escalator to reach the top. The customs, manners, beliefs, superstitions, all these remain much the same for the masses. Since independence there has been steady decline in political, public and business morality. Population growth goes racing forward. Poverty is also growing; more than 40 percent of people are below poverty line. The bare necessities such as drinking water, man-worthy housing, and medical care are not available. Schools are few and teaching is bad. Even if opposition parties come to power, the situation will not change. Laws will be passed and applied. But will the system, the order of our society change / in spite of the laws pertaining to dahez

(dowry) made by the state governments in Bihar, Bengal and Uttar Pradesh, the system continues. Therefore there is the necessity of a systematic change in the society i.e., a total revolution: revolution in every sphere and aspect of society”.

Techniques of Total Revolution:

Jayaprakash was much impressed with the Gandhian philosophy, therefore, he realised that within the fold of Sarvodaya under Vinoba, total revolution is impossible. Vinoba was hesitant to launch revolution against the government in view of the possibility of Indo-Pak war. Jayaprakash also realised that Vinoba's moral appeals did not bring social or psychological force to the fore and became short-lived. Even during Vinoba's presence, some donors took back their lands what they had given. So Jayaprakash preferred to start total revolution in the same Gandhian model but with some originality. Explaining how the revolution is to take place, he said revolution must be nonviolent and peaceful. It should not be sporadic, but rather gradual (of course not too late). When the situation is ripe in the sense that

the youth students and the intelligentsia are in a state of disaffection, frustration, disillusionment and are alienated from authority, the struggle should start. The struggle may break out in violence or it may take a peaceful form.

Furthermore, he declared that his efforts for the revolution will be more peaceful and he also made it clear that total revolution will need not always assume the form of a confrontation with the government; it may be carried on in cooperation with the government provided that latter is responsive to people's will and is committed to their welfare. Where the government is not committed, people's direct action would almost start through civil disobedience, peaceful resistance, non-cooperation, satyagraha etc. But Jayaprakash made clear like Gandhi that the soldiers of Satyagraha or Civil Disobedience should undergo a process of change. They must be upright, moral and honest. To meet the purpose Sangharsha Samitis should be formed consisting of students at the college level and people at the Panchayat level. If necessary people should form parallel administration and students should boycott classes and

examination as they did in 1920 non-cooperation movement. In other words, it should be revolution by all, for all.

In the changing political scenario Jayaprakash's total revolution idea was mooted long before 1974. Once while addressing the students of Kanpur, he had given his mind to the students to start a movement of Quit India type. So when Gujarat students started the movement and became successful in their demand for assembly dissolution, Jayaprakash met them at Ahmedabad and said dissolution of assembly should not be the objective. It should have a larger objective. No doubt Gujarat movement petered out, but a similar type of movement was organised by the students of Bihar in 1974. But Jayaprakash was invited to lead the movement. In spite of his ill health at the age of seventy-two years he agreed to lead the protest movement because in it he found an opportunity for a total revolution. To spread total revolution to other parts, Jayaprakash extensively toured the country and explained the need for a comprehensive social revolution. To organise the revolution he organised

Chhatra Yuva Sangharsha Vahini consisting of the students and the Youth and 'Janata Sarkar' to act as a parallel government.

Nevertheless, after the declaration of national emergency in India by former Prime Minister of India Smt. Indira Gandhi arrested all the leaders including Jayaprakash Narayan. It may be pointed out here that he had met Mrs. Gandhi personally in 1973 to take care of Indian polity. But she did not pay any heed to it. After his release from Jail in November, 1975, Jayaprakash again involved himself in the process of total revolution. As he observed 'total revolution is permanent revolution. As he observed 'total revolution is permanent revolution. It will always go on and keep on changing both personal and social lives. This revolution knows no respite, no halt, and certainly not complete halt. After election to the parliament was declared, Jayaprakash took initiative to form Janata Party consisting of all opposition parties, Jayaprakash thought, Janata Party would serve the poor and usher in radical social change. When Janata party was voted to power and Indian National Congress was defeated, an

era of authoritarian rule came to an end. It was described as the second independence. But Janata party government failed to carry the message of total revolution. Total revolution failed not because of the ideology of Jayaprakash, but there, was no successor to Jayaprakash to continue the revolution. The spirit of total revolution however still continues.

Conclusion: Thus Jayaprakash Narayan was a successful political activist in India and he opposed the tyranny of contemporary political system in the country. He raised voice against the national emergency and gave the slogan of total revolution which included seven types of changes in the system. He believed that socialism can be brought only by drastic change in existing system. He gave his note on the concept of total revolution in his book 'Prison Diary' during the years of his arrest by the Govt. of India. Being a follower of Gandhian Philosophy he took the path of 'Ahinsa' and opposed all problems of India in a peaceful manner. That is why; he is a well-known political thinker and activist of Indian national movement.

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