CHAPTER III

JP AND THE DYNAMICS OF SARVOTAYA
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In this chapter we will be looking into the circumstances which led JP to accept the theory and practice of Sarvodaya. In this discussion we shall also probe into some of the reasons which led JP to abandon his commitment to Socialism.

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Introduction and Background

It is our contention that there was always an evolution in the thought process of great individuals in the course of their public life. Such a development in the thought process of an individual like JP was an indication of an intellectual mind that analysed seriously various ideas in relation to their relevance and utility to the people in the society. JP's espousal of Sarvodaya was a result of his firm belief in Gandhian philosophy of the greatest good of all through non-violence and its relevance for the conditions in India. The ethical basis of Sarvodaya appealed to him as he had completed one part of his intellectual journey into doctrinaire Marxian
Socialism with its emphasis on revolutionary violence to the milder brand of Socialism within the framework of parliamentary democracy as represented by the Praja Socialist Party.

JP was a pragmatic individual to whom concepts and theories had relevance only in the context of their utility for the society at large. The objective of Sarvodaya was to foster fundamental change in the social, economic and political spheres through moral means which provided the only way out to the monumental problems of India. JP was aware that India was a multi-lingual, multi-religious and a multi-communal country with people having varied interests. The only solution for such a conglomeration of diverse interests was to fashion an ideology which could be acceptable to all sections of the population. JP thought that the people of India were so deeply under the influence of Gandhian thought and practice that they would accept the gospel of Sarvodaya as a matter of course.

It may be, therefore, argued that JP's conversion to Sarvodaya was probably due to the impact of the objective conditions prevailing at the time in the Indian society. Or it could also be the result of contingent circumstances which had a decisive role in moulding the thought and action of individuals. This threw up the question whether great men like JP and their thoughts and actions were conditioned by the ongoing realities in the society or through their dynamism and creative individuality they moulded the environment in conformity with their own vision of the society. By definition, great men were usually trail blazers who gave a new orientation and substance to human societies in which they lived through their incisive analysis of the conditions prevailing in the society. They formulated theories and sought to apply such theories to bring about the desired change. Such individuals were usually charismatic leaders with mass appeal. From this perspective it may be said that JP's thought process was not entirely shaped by the environment in which he lived but he seized the initiative and shaped the environment according to his own conception of the hopes and aspirations of the Indian people. We have taken the position that JP's thought was the result of the impact of the objective
reality of the socio-economic and political milieu in India, but at the same time he tried to shape the environment in the direction of his choice. Thus, JP was very much the product of his times and yet he was not because he sought to give or change the society in India in the direction which he wanted it to move and develop.

From a psycho-analytical consideration, JP took up the cause of Sarvodaya to satisfy his ego drive. He was eager to prove to the people of India that as a mass leader his objective was to improve their socio-economic conditions. The identification with the interests of the masses gave him a sense of fulfilment in terms of the mission of his life. JP was averse to occupying any position of formal power and authority, but as a substitute mechanism he was keen to wield power through the impact of his ideas and the force of his personality on the masses. There was no doubt that he could command the support and allegiance of large masses of people as a moral force seeking the betterment of the society rather than serving his own ends. There was no doubt that JP as a leader tried to push India to higher levels of development through his personal example of patriotism, integrity and compassion for the downtrodden people. He was one of those young leaders whose Western
training made him highly conscious of the immense gaps in the level of economic development between the advanced countries of the West and an underdeveloped country like India.

We shall now discuss how JP moved away from his commitment to Socialism by switching his faith to the Sarvodaya philosophy. It may be pointed out here that JP found a number of inadequacies or contradictions in the ideology of Socialism. He was aware that attempts at a socialist reconstruction of society were bound to fail because Socialism had evolved differently in different parts of the world. In many instances it was not a genuine brand of Socialism but mostly it was State Capitalism. Moreover, if Socialism was directed only towards shaping the environment in which individual man lived, then in that case the individual would be neglected and sacrificed without a genuine success at social reconstruction. The social, economic and political environment may be controlled and manipulated, but in the process if the individual was swamped the purpose would be defeated.2 This one-sided effort by socialists to change the society while ignoring

the individual could only lead to a partial reconstruction of a new social order. Such an effort at social engineering would not achieve its goals. He felt that the goal of Socialism, namely, the building up of a stateless and classless society was noble but the practice of Socialism contradicted these ideals. Judged from the 'test of immediacy' there was lack of harmony between what the socialists were doing now with what they intended to do in the future.

JP also found fault with the socialists because they could not develop a satisfactory political framework to construct a socialist society. He found the Russian model of political organisation defective and unacceptable. In fact, he was in favour of a liberal political socialist system which could play a progressive role in transforming 'Socialism into people's rule at the lowest level.' JP was also disillusioned with a highly centralised economic structure which was in vogue in most of the socialist countries. He suggested root and branch solutions to this problem through a process of decentralisation of economic power from the top to the bottom up to the village level. He believed that in a predominantly agricultural country like India there were millions of peasant
proprietors who could become the torch bearers of the socialist movement only if economic power was transferred to the village community. Along with a decentralised economic structure JP was also in favour of a decentralised political system. He suggested that there must be a peaceful peoples' movement against the coercive powers of the State, vested interests like the capitalists and other exploiters, then only Socialism could be achieved with certain degree of success. In this respect he commended the Bhoodan movement which was based on the idea of equitable redistribution of land as an innovative technique of great significance.

From the above analysis it would become clear that JP found the Socialism of the West in its classical sense thoroughly inadequate to suit the internal conditions in India. Through his critique of Socialism he brilliantly expounded its theoretical, methodological and practical dimensions. This set him in search of a new ideology to tackle the emerging problems of a populous developing country like India. He found the solution in the philosophy of Sarvodaya. However, it shall be our task to delineate and explain JP's transition from his belief in Socialism to his espousal of Sarvodaya.
JP through a long process of reexamination, re-evaluation and critical enquiry of the CSP, Socialist party and Marxian Socialism came to the conclusion that there was a need for a new philosophy to suit Indian conditions. It was also evident to him that Indian socialists had to do their own 'thinking, experimenting, innovating' rather than blindly accept Western Socialism or Russian Communism. Such a belief on his part led him in the direction of Gandhian social reconstruction and regeneration as indicated by Bhoodan, Gramdan and Gram Raj movements. By 1954 JP affirmed his faith in the concept of Jeevandan leading to his complete withdrawal from party and power politics. He made a firm resolution to devote his future life to the Sarvodaya movement.

The exalted concepts of freedom and equality which had inspired him earlier in his life now guided him towards the path of Sarvodaya. By now JP was persuaded to realize that the distortions in social resources were of such a magnitude that the goals of freedom, equality, justice, etc., would remain as utopian values or objectives without much chance of success in this direction. It was true

that the socialist creed appeared to be an ideology which more than any other philosophy had a chance of securing equality, justice and brotherhood. But JP also realised that in the context of India these objectives could be achieved only if Socialism was transformed into Sarvodaya. In this phase of his life, JP was questioning the very foundations of Marxian Socialism. His earlier enthusiasm for the materialist creed of the socialists now gave way to a philosophical approach that attached primary importance to ethical considerations under the influence of Gandhian thought. JP was of the opinion that philosophical materialists may not make sacrifices for noble causes. This clearly brought out a contradiction in the philosophy of Marxian Socialism because there was a gap between their action and their ideology. JP suggested a way out of this difficulty by arguing that it would be better to assume that human beings do not have free choice and that their actions were conditioned and determined by an inexorable process. According to this viewpoint it would mean that human beings were mere mechanical entities like the robots at the end of the line. However, he knew very well that the entire thrust of Marxian Socialism was based on the assumption of determinism of human beings. What we find here was that JP tried to grapple with the
wide ranging and sometimes bitter controversy between free will and determinism. At this stage in his intellectual journey he was very much in favour of the doctrine of free will as against a deterministic view of human beings.

JP even took umbrage with the Marxist position on issues of matter and consciousness. He took issue with the Marxian position which treated these two aspects as belonging to the same reality. The Marxists did not recognise that one had an objective reality and the other led to subjective realisation. The failure to recognise the subtle but very important distinction between the attributes of matter and consciousness amounted to the denial of the role of ethics. In view of such a prognosis by the Marxists JP felt that they were not scrupulous about the means while the end became the be-all and end-all of their philosophy.

JP also looked with disfavour the approach of Socialism towards social upliftment and economic development. This Western creed lay great emphasis on rapid increase of material production. This ever growing drive towards a material civilization has led to ruthless
competition between various nations of the world. In this struggle for survival and prosperity, only the fittest survived resulting in weaker nations of the world going to the wall under the crushing burden of the stronger nations in the world. Such a process in due course may lead to tension and war between different nations of the world. The exalted values of freedom, equality, brotherhood and justice would be swamped in an ocean of materialism. The only solution for this problem was to see that human beings attached much value to simple life with simple wants. Self-control and self-discipline would certainly create the conditions for a moral life in human beings. These pervasive issues led JP to examine the twin concepts of Socialism and Sarvodaya. JP finally came to the conclusion that the party system and power politics had out-lived their utility and in their place non-party and non-power politics or Rajniti or Lokniti were preferred. JP's renunciation of party and power-politics was not the result of a hasty decision. On the contrary, JP had given deep thought to various shades of socialist philosophy and had come to realise that only Sarvodaya could achieve freedom and equality.
JP's renunciation of power-politics led him to the Gandhian path of Sarvodaya. The Gandhian model was a definite alternative to party power politics. Gandhi had demonstrated that through Satyagraha and non-violence society could be changed and restructured, though he did not live long after independence to work out the practical aspects of his programme. JP himself looked with great apprehension the improper functioning of the party system. Such aspects as corruption, struggle for power, caucus rule deeply disturbed him. "Be that as it may, the questions raised by politics kept humming in my head, leaving me dissatisfied and urging me to seek an alternative. The party system, with the corroding and corrupting struggle for power inherent in it, disturbed me more and more. I saw how parties backed by finance, organisation and the means of propaganda could impose themselves on the people; how people's rule became in effect party rule; how party rule in turn became the rule of caucus or coterie; how democracy was reduced to mere casting of votes; how even this right of vote was restricted severely by the system of powerful parties setting up their candidates from whom alone, for all practical purposes, the voters had to make their choice; how even this limited choice was made unreal by the fact that the issues posed before
the electorate were by and large incomprehensible to it.\textsuperscript{4} JP's disenchantment with the power-politics of the party system made him more willing to accept the idea of decentralisation of power. Through a programme of self-rule and self-management under \textit{Gram Swaraj}, a non-partisan approach could be developed.

Another important issue that led JP towards \textit{Sarvodaya} was the role of the modern State in regulating human society. The modern bourgeoisie State had monopoly of political and economic power. In spite of many checks and balances in a democratic society and apparent decentralisation and devolution of power, the State was a Leviathan which possessed power to curtail the freedom of human beings. Hence, he believed in Gandhi's dictum that that government was the best which governed the least. He emphasised the building up of internal and external discipline among the people so that they could run their affairs without any interference by the State. As a former socialist, he argued in favour of collective voluntary action by the people to bring about freedom and equality.

as against dependence on the State for this purpose.
The basic tenet of Sarvodaya was to establish a just
order of society through collective action by the people
acting with a measure of responsibility.

JP also devoted his attention to the nature of
society in which the collectivity of individuals would
have to run their affairs. The values of cooperation,
equality, freedom, self-government and self-management
were expected to become the motivating forces of a
Sarvodaya society. JP was of the opinion that human
society had become highly complex because of the processes
of rapid modernisation and industrialisation. The development
of joint urban centres of civilization had created socio­
economic relationships that were at best impersonal,
jejune and non-life giving. It was JP's considered
opinion that only small communities like the villages
could bring about peace, harmony, freedom and equality
through the Sarvodaya philosophy. These compact, self­
reliant and self-governing communities had the power
within them to achieve a balanced development of the
material and spiritual life of the people. Sarvodaya
depended primarily on the efforts of people in small
communities. This idea was derived by JP from Gandhi
who had a grand conception of village communities. "In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at least the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never, aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.

"Therefore the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it. I may be taunted with the retort that this is all utopian and therefore not worth a single thought. If Euclid's point, though incapable of being drawn by human agency, has an imperishable value, my picture has its own for mankind to live. Let India live for this true picture though never realizable in its completeness. We must have a proper picture of what we want before we can have something approaching it. If there ever is to be a republic of every village in India, then I claim verity for my picture.
in which the last is equal to the first, i.e., in other words, no one is to be first and none the last.

"True democracy cannot be worked by twenty men sitting at the Centre. It has to be worked from below by the people of every village." 5

JP even while he thought that the social life in small communities would be very conducive for the promotion of the ideals of Sarvodaya, had certain reservations about the efficacy of Sarvodaya in the villages. He was of the opinion that small communities like the villages, just because they were small in size, would not necessarily be transformed into Sarvodaya communities. If the programme of inculcating the Sarvodaya philosophy in every village of India was so simple, then by now every village would have been covered under this programme. It was necessary to inspire men and women to wholeheartedly accept the philosophy of Sarvodaya in thought, word and deed. There must be an outward and inward harmony in the acceptance of the ideals of this movement. There was also the question whether these village communities saturated with the

Sarvodaya ideal would be in a position to act in a concerted manner. In the face of evidence about the village communities in the past it could be argued that they would hold together in a spirit of meaningful inter-relationship and mutual cooperation. In terms of the dynamics of Sarvodaya, JP accepted wholeheartedly the functional relevance of Gandhi's theory of trusteeship. The idea that the wealthy class in society should hold their wealth as the trustees of the entire society appeared to provide a moral basis of redistribution of property for the removal of inequality. The Bhoodan movement owed its philosophical justification to the theory of trusteeship as expounded by Gandhi. JP regarded the question of redistribution of land as a major economic reform before the country and hence he was one of the most vocal votary of the Bhoodan movement. As the Bhoodan movement began to gather momentum it took new forms like Gramdan and Sampattidan and Gram Swaraj. JP regarded these developments as a definite indication of a major socio-economic revolution represented by community ownership of land and community self-government. His conversion from Rajniti to Lokniti synchronised with his conversion from Socialism to Sarvodaya.
The Nature and Substance of Sarvodaya

We shall now make an indepth analysis of the nature, substance and relevance of Sarvodaya and also critically analyse whether it could prove as a potent instrument in the socio-economic transformation of India.

JP's conversion to Sarvodaya began in 1954 at the Bodha Gaya Sarvodaya Conference. In a note to JP, Vinoba Bhave, the originator of the Bhoodan movement wrote as follows: "In response to your call for Jeevandan, I offer my humble life for the attainment of a non-violent revolution based on Bhoodan Yagna and sustained by village industries."

This influenced JP who henceforth dedicated his life to rural development by emphasising Khadi, basic education, religion and moral regeneration of the rural population. Such a conception involved a definite vision of the Bhoodan movement as an integral part of the

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Sarvodaya philosophy in all its implications and comprehensiveness.

JP did not regard the Bhoodan movement as merely a measure to initiate agrarian reform in the lives of the rural population in India. To perceptive observers of the Indian scene it was a very important movement with the objective of bringing about an all inclusive social and human revolution. This revolution emphasised two important elements, namely, the human being and the society. It was a human revolution in the sense that it sought to radically transform the individual in the desired direction. It was also a social revolution because fundamental changes were a necessity in the society as

7. The concept of Sarvodaya was derived from a Jain holy scripture (सर्वोदयम सर्वोदय जीवन जीवनम् अभिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज भिज

("May all be happy. May all enjoy wealth. May all come by prosperity. Let none have misfortune for his lot.") Vasant Nargolkar in Introduction to Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Revolutionary Sarvodaya (Philosophy for the Remaking of Man), (Bombay, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1964), p. vii.
large. Through the technique of non-violent revolution basic changes were expected to be brought about in the Indian society.

JP never believed that Bhoodan was only an instrument for preparing the conditions for effective legislation by the State. On the other hand, he emphasised the need to create the appropriate mental climate for conversion in favour of Bhoodan. Through effective persuasion, individuals could be persuaded to accept the philosophy and objectives of the Bhoodan movement. This required the creation of new social values, which could effectively change the society and the individual. JP was of the opinion that legislation could change the society while it could not change the individual if he did not want to change. From a moral consideration no amount of coercion would make an individual virtuous, but through faith in conversion the individual could be transformed to accept a particular point of view. Bhoodan is thus a great mass movement of conversion and the creation of a new climate of thought and values of life. It brings about a living and immediate revolution in the minds of men and their mutual relationships. It attacks
and corrects here and now the system of exploitation and inequality. It teaches men to share what they have with their fellowmen."

This innovative process was primarily directed to ameliorate the socio-economic conditions of the population in the agrarian sector. One may ask the question as to why it was directed primarily towards the agricultural sector, initially at least, to the exclusion of other fields of human endeavour. We may advance the argument that the vast millions of India have always depended for sustenance on the production from the land. The Bhooman movement was expected to touch the lives of the people living in rural areas in a predominantly agricultural country. Even from the point of view of practical considerations it was felt that this innovative economic idea and a new social ethic could be put across to the people through the medium of land than through the medium of any other property. The philosophical justification was provided by JP by arguing that land was a gift of nature.

and that it belonged to the community as such and any wealth generated from it could be regarded as a social product arising out of harmonious social cooperation.

JP did not believe that Bhoodan was the be-all end-all of a constructive programme of action, rather a stepping stone to extend the idea of sharing into other fields like Sampattidan at the opportune time. "The fundamental principle on which this movement operates is that land, and for that matter any property, does not belong to the individual. The land is a gift of nature and other forms of wealth are products of society. And therefore, no one is entitled to land or wealth to an extent more than what is necessary for his own needs. Any one who keeps more than he needs deprives of others of their right and thus commits a social sin. One’s needs shall be measured in consonance with the needs of other members of society." 9

Thus, the theoretical foundations of the Bhoodan movement were built on two fundamental assumptions: 1. Everything that the individual possessed like property, income, knowledge was a property of God or society at large. The communal ownership of property for achievement of

common good seemed to be implied by this assumption.

2. Given man's psychological propensities it was possible through a proper approach to convert man from the path of evil to the path of virtuousness. The second assumption implied that man was maleable and that human capacity for evil must be substituted by human capacity for good.

The "Bhoodan experiment was a major movement whose aim was to create non-party democracy. It was unique in the sense that the people would be coming into their own without political parties. In such a dispensation political parties would operate only in the transitional phase and hence they would not act as barriers to the eventual evolution of Sarvodaya. This viewpoint was based on the assumption that there could be different political viewpoints but yet all forces in the society would work together to evolve a new political system. "The Bhoodan movement, among other things, is making a valuable political experiment. It aims ultimately to create a non-party democracy. The present is a transitional phase in which various parties exist. The movement, therefore, invites members of every party to come and work together for Sarvodaya. In this it has two ends in view. First, it
does not want parties and party membership to become a barrier to an advance towards Sarvodaya. Second, it wishes to teach that it is possible, holding different political views, to work together in spheres where no partisan differences exist. This working together and common experience might help, in the context of the direct revolutionary and creative movement to evolve a new political system.  

JP however was unhappy over the attitude of some individuals towards the Bhoodan movement. He felt that it was indeed very unfortunate that many participants in this movement regarded it as an activity that could be taken up during spare time or at leisure. Actually, Bhoodan was a non-violent revolutionary movement with the potential to produce radical socio-economic changes. It was expected to provide life and substance to the activities of large masses of the population living a life of hunger, degradation and penury. Even political leaders and legislators looked upon it as a well intentioned movement which by itself could not achieve much success without

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their support through appropriate legislation. This condescending attitude on the part of these functionaries was not conducive for the proper development of the movement. However, JP did not believe that the success of the Bhoodan movement depended upon active help by the State through legislation. He forcefully argued that the success of the Bhoodan movement would largely depend on the power of the people to achieve a peaceful revolution than on the power of the government. The prima mobile of such a movement would be Jana shakti and not Dandeshekti where the people would take the initiative and the government would only give its seal of approval through legislation. This provided a definite understanding of the political theory of the Bhoodan movement. Its rationale was based on the assumption that there was no need to capture the State to subserve its ends. Nor was there any need to use political parties to capture State power. On the contrary, Bhoodan as a movement aimed at persuading people without coercion from the State, to fundamentally alter their own lives and in the process usher in a non-violent revolution in the society. In essence, it hoped to create the talent and the conditions in which people were the masters of their own destiny without any interference from outside agencies like political parties and parliament.
Thus, it may be said that the Bhoodan movement aimed to create a classless and stateless society with freedom and equality for all. This did not mean that Bhoodan had nothing to do with politics in the country. It certainly could not stand by itself in splendid isolation from the moving currents of national politics since in many respects it was a political movement. It may be argued that a movement which had the objective of ushering in fundamental social, economic and political changes could not be non-political in its manifestations. However, this movement had nothing to do with political parties, elections, parliaments and governments though it was concerned with and about people. Lokniti took precedence over Rajniti. This underlying idea of Bhoodan was not new, since it was as old as the hills. In every society of the world prophets and sages have preached a similar philosophy of enduring relevance. JP very rightly drew inspiration from Vinoba for his understanding of the Bhoodan movement. "What Vinoba has done is to discover a means of applying them in a revolutionary manner, not only to individual life, but to the life of society as a whole."11 Vinoba was pragmatic

enough to realise the significance of the impact of modern science and industry on traditional feudal values which necessitated the emergence of a new society in accordance with the realities and 'the demand of the age'. To him the demand of the age was for the equality of all without the distinction of caste, creed or community. He held the view that the present age was not of the kings or zamindars of the past but of the common people whose voice would reign supreme. The objective of the complete annihilation of old feudal order through violent means was anathema to JP and Vinoba. They wanted to raise the standard of the masses by reconstructing human and social values by application of spiritual ideas like service, sacrifice, cooperation, truth, non-violence, persuasion and transformation of heart. Such a rebuilding of the society on the basis of spiritual values by bridging the gap between the old and new values was in harmony with true Sarvodaya spirit. Bhoodan was a spiritual and moral movement to bring about a radical transformation in human and social values essentially concentrating on the endemic land problem.  

Bhoodan was a compound of two words, namely bhoomi and dan which meant the gift of land. However, it must be understood that dan was not used merely to mean charity in the Sarvodaya movement. The word was used in its classical Vedic interpretation of danam sam vibhagan. In this phrase the word dan is used to mean equitable distribution as used by the ancient spiritual leaders. Land in this sense was "the direct gift of God" and "all wealth even though we may acquire with our individual effort and skill, is not for us alone, but has been granted to us by God for all of us ...." From a wider ideological perspective all other similar activities, such as Sampatidan (Gift of wealth), Shramdan (Gift of labour), Buddhidan (Gift of knowledge), etc. are an extension or elaboration of the original idea of Bhoodan. In a sense dan represented the instinct of voluntary sacrifice which constituted an integral aspect of the Bhoodan movement. The crusade of the land gifts movement


was expected to psychologically transform human beings - especially the wealthy class - to voluntarily sacrifice their land and all other forms of wealth for equitable distribution among all members of the society since individual possessions belonged to society as a whole. It opted for the good of all by forcefully representing the idea that one could serve oneself best by serving others. Herein came the idea that the development of the individual personality must be in harmony with social good. In this sense the Bhoolahan movement which was primarily agricultural in import and significance constituted the first step towards a Sarvodaya social order. Donation or dan in this particular context involved an "acceptance of Sarvodaya ideology by the donor, that is, agreeing with a view of just and equitable distribution of wealth." 16

JP's overall philosophy involved the creation of a non-exploitative society in which everyone had enough food and clothing, a place to live, education for the children and an adequate health service as fundamental prerequisites. In his earlier Marxist phase, JP was a firm believer in the technique of class struggle between the haves and have nots.

for achieving an equitable distribution of wealth in society. But in the 1950s he was deeply impressed by the Bhooman experiment of Vinoba Bhave wherein property in the form of land was voluntarily distributed between have and have-nots without any class-conflict. Having witnessed this novel experiment of voluntary sacrifice on a grand scale, JP became convinced that a socialist order could be created on the basis of equitable distribution in society by dedicating himself completely to the Bhooman movement.

In the modern period the socialists as well as democrats were keen to establish an equalitarian society. Socialism was based on the assumption that every human being had equal rights to the material possessions of the society. On the other hand, democracy was based on the assumption that economic inequality could be reduced through the ideal of a welfare State. The socialists were very clear in their mind that State coercion was necessary for the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Western democrats also envisaged the use of State power through enactment of laws by the representatives of the people. But, it was very significant to know that the Bhooman movement was an important first
step in the eventual growth and establishment of a Sarvodaya social order, which did not envisage the use of coercive power of the State. The philosophy of the movement was based on the premise that human beings had the capacity to sacrifice and were capable of being persuaded to accept certain deprivation for the sake of common good. The philosophy underlying the Bhoodan movement was concerned with the perennial problem of unequal land holdings, a man made phenomenon and the solution of this problem also depended upon human beings through a fundamental change in their mental outlook in respect of personal possessions. Once such a psychological attitude became an internalised value with the people of the country, the use of State power would be of no consequence or meaningless in such a context. JP had a very optimistic conception of human nature since he believed that human beings were capable of doing good. He said that "man is so created that it is possible through the proper approach to convert him and change his heart and wean him from wrong doing." JP's belief in the technique of conversion was "based on faith in possibility of improving man ..."

Bhoodan is thus a great mass movement of conversion and creation of a new climate of thought and values of life."\textsuperscript{18} Danda shakti was to be substituted by Jana shakti, coercion by persuasion and individual good by common good which also included the good of the individual.

One got the impression that JP did not have a very sound understanding of human nature. In fact, he took a very optimistic view of the human capacity for doing constructive things. He laid stress on sacrifice, compassion, tolerance, etc., in human beings. But, unfortunately he took a one sided view of human nature by ignoring its negative manifestations. The land gift movement was based on the principle of non-possession but from a historical perspective it can be asserted that the instinct of possession of property has remained with human beings ever since they first came on this planet. The greed of human beings for material possession was of an endemic nature which in the long run made the non-Statist approach of the Bhoodan movement a colossal failure. In a country

\textsuperscript{18.} Jayaprakash Narayan, Jeevandan, 1st and 2nd Instalment, articles by JP, File No. 12, JP Papers, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi. Also see D.P. Hoffman, India's Social Miracle, (California, Naturegraph Company, 1961).
like India land hunger was a pressing problem with too many people dependent upon an inadequate land area. Such a situation made it very difficult for people to part with their lands in a voluntary manner. Hence, it was not surprising that the Bhoodan movement which began dramatically in the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh initially proved a success with big land owners donating lands on an impressive scale. After the initial euphoria, the Bhoodan movement ran into trouble eventually coming to a grinding halt with the death of JP and Vinoba Bhave. Under pressure of circumstances many zamindars donated useless or fallow lands or lands of inferior quality which were unfit for human cultivation. In many other instances the lands gifted were under litigation which undermined the very purpose of the donation of such lands. For these reasons the land gift movement turned out to be a failure.

It may be argued that the Bhoodan movement did not succeed in achieving its objectives because of a number of reasons. In the first place, it has, in recent years, lacked a highly dedicated and dynamic leadership at the top. With the death of the leading lights of the movement it has virtually remained a movement without effective leadership which could have given it a sense of purpose.
and direction. In the second place, the rank and file participants in the movement seem to lack the elan to persevere with their constructive work until the objectives were fully achieved. They seem to lack proper guidance, training and motivation to reinvigorate the movement by encompassing within its fold the vast millions of India. In the third place, the Bhoodan movement lacked a well developed ideology which could appeal to the masses. After all, it was a cardinal principle of a movement that it must have a powerful socio-economic and political ideology which could sustain it through stresses and strains from the beginning till the end. In the absence of an ideology the movement could not develop a mass character with mass participation. In the fourth place, the Bhoodan movement lacked an effective organisation which could be responsible for planning, organising and energizing the volunteers, etc. with a view to achieve its objectives. An organisation can provide substance and dynamism to a movement by giving concreteness to the ideology and objectives which it was supposed to achieve. JP was of the opinion that no organisation in the formal sense was necessary to spread the message of Bhoodan into the rural areas where the majority of population lived in India. He emphasised the power of the masses to voluntarily and
spontaneously participate in the movement in a spirit of brotherhood, fraternity and harmony. It may be pointed out here that JP was too simplistic in his belief that a vast predominantly illiterate population would spontaneously participate in the movement in a spirit of sacrifice for the welfare of the society at large. In the case of a backward pre-modern society it would be too much to expect the higher values of life like compassion, generosity and shared concern for the underprivileged population. It was also not correct on JP's part to expect the wealthy landlords or the capitalists to share their surplus wealth or property with the lumpen proletariat. Given the division of a traditional society into classes like the rich and the poor, the privileged and the underprivileged, there would always be a tendency for the vested interests to perpetuate their own selfish interests rather than share their wealth with relatively deprived sections of the society. For all these above reasons the Bhoodan movement could not strike a deep emotional chord in the minds of the people.

The Gramdan movement was a further refinement on the original idea of the Bhoodan movement. The justification and the philosophy underlying the Gramdan movement was
basically the same as that of the Bhoodan movement, though in many respects it involved a higher strategy and instrumentality to achieve mass welfare through mass participation. This was not merely a haphazard attempt at distributing land among the landless. This, in fact, was an attempt to raise man higher materially and spiritually through sharing with fellow beings. The central idea was that everything in this world including the land in the village and the village itself was the gift of God. All human beings were children of God and as such they had an equal share in the property and wealth generated in the society. The emphasis in the Gramdan movement was such as to enable the people to make sincere attempts at solving their problems through their own honest efforts. From this consideration the good or welfare of the people rested in their own hands and not in the leaders of political parties. The obvious conclusion of such a line of argument was that human beings had to develop certain intrinsic strength of their own without being dependent on other external forces. The idea was that in a participatory democracy the citizens had the immense responsibility of developing a high level of political consciousness to defend their liberty. A strong viable democracy was
possible only if the people at the grass roots level develop their innate strength which could be called as *Lok shakti* which constituted an important aspect of *Gramdan.*

JP frequently put forth the view that it was easier to construct modern industries like steel plants, etc. with economic aid and technical assistance from the advanced countries of the West. But it was a herculean task to achieve the all-round development in every village community. The establishment of small scale and cottage industries, training in modern practices of agriculture, public health and sanitation, etc. required extraordinary official and non-official participation. The development of *Panchayat raj* institutions and the community development programmes in the villages could be possible only through *Gramdan.* This was because *Gramdan* was expected to bring a change in the mental outlook of the people in the villages by altering the shape and content of social and economic relationships. *Gramdan,* in such a socio-economic and

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political environment could provide a key to change the psychology of the people in the villages.

JP envisaged the eradication of corruption through Gramdan. In a Gramdan village the organisation of the people through collective living and community spirit would prove a potent weapon to prevent corruption of any magnitude. The people of the village would come into their own to purify the socio-economic and political life of the community in the village.

Gramdan was an indigenous experiment whose purpose was to have planned social change through a non-violent social revolution based on the ancient Hindu values of equality, freedom, non-violence, service, etc. Here we find the old and the new were fused together to produce a harmonious result. Gramdan meant that the village community was surcharged with the values of cooperation and mutual help. The village was only a physical symbol and could be regarded as a basic unit of society characterised by face to face inter-personal relationship. The justification for the Gramdan experiment was based on the assumption that small groups and communities provided the fullest expression to a certain system of values because of the simplicity of
village life. This should not lead one to believe that JP was idealizing village life, under the Gramdan system. This indeed was a mistaken notion which has prevailed among a number of scholars who should have known better. JP did not envisage or applaud village life as it is today. On the other hand, he wanted an ideal village inhabited by intelligent human beings.

In essence, Gramdan had four basic requirements which constituted its basic foundations. In the first place, there would be a body called as the Gram Sabha (Village Assembly) made up of every adult, male or female, in the village. Such an all inclusive Gram Sabha would create a sense of involvement and participation on the part of every individual in the village. In the second place, all the land owned by different individuals in the village would be transferred to the village community or Gram Sabha. This particular measure was supposed to substitute private ownership of land with community ownership of land. The emphasis would shift from the particular individual to the welfare of the village community as a whole. This step was also expected to remove class-consciousness among the village community by obliterating disparities in property, wealth, etc. In the third place, there was the
stipulation that all land holders would donate one twentieth of their land to the village assembly for the amelioration of the landless in the village. This measure was supposed to remove the feeling of deprivation because of economic distrust by conferring on the landless some kind of property rights. In the fourth place, a central fund called the Gram Kosh or village fund was established in which the land holders regularly offered one fortieth of their produce while the salaried people or wage earners contributed one day's earning or one thirtieth of their income on a yearly basis.

JP was of the opinion that in a Democracy it would almost be impossible for a political party government to abolish private ownership of land through legislation. Historically the political philosophies of Democracy and Liberalism have revolved around the concept of private property. In fact, private property constituted a bedrock of all democratic political institutions. Hence, JP was quite right when he argued that in a Democracy it would be almost impossible to abolish private property through comprehensive legislative measures. In a Democracy popular sovereignty was vested with the people.
and they would not permit any legislation that abolished private property. But JP held the view that if the Gramdan movement become a fait accompli in a majority of the villages in a country then there would be no opposition to the abolition of land ownership through legislation. In such a context, Gramdan was only a mechanism through which private ownership could be converted into community ownership without the opposition of the sovereign people. In other words, JP was trying to argue that private ownership of land should not be abolished by political parties or by law but by people themselves through their own volition.

JP was pragmatic enough to recognise the fundamental difference between collectivisation of land by law under a communist or socialist State as against community ownership under the Gramdan movement. Obviously, there was a clear cut difference between the Sino-Coviet model of collective farming under totalitarian systems as against Gramdan through community ownership of land under a system of Democracy. He saw a world of difference between a totalitarian State and the Gram Sabha. The Gram Sabha belonged to the village itself while a totalitarian State was something part of the external environment. JP wanted
people to exercise their rightful power in a Democracy rather than look upon the government to solve their problems. He wanted to reverse the process by making the government people-minded rather than people always being government-minded. He also wanted the people to control the government rather than the government controlling the people in a democratic set up. Democratic framework and independence of the people could survive only if the people in the villages who constituted the bastion of Democracy were strong, vibrant and conscious of their capacity to control the Centre or the State.

JP was also confident that Gramdan villages would be able to maintain law and order among themselves. He commended the Shanti Sena organisation which could prove as a substitute for the intervention of police in internal affairs of the villages. Through the Shanti Sena antagonism and disturbances between the people would be removed through peaceful means.

JP held the view that the future of India was dependent upon the villages as self-contained small communities. The people in such small communities would live simple and ordinary life with minimum of wants and
maximum of happiness. According to him industrial
civilizations had become highly impersonalised creating
the seeds of ceaseless conflict, violence and war. He
very rightly argued that "human society has so grown that
we have the complex industrial civilizations of today,
with great human forests that are called cities, with
economic and social relationships that are utterly
impersonal and non-life giving, with modes of work that
are irksome and bereft of joy and opportunities of
creativity and that have the sole criterion of productivity
and efficiency to recommend them. Science has shrunk the
whole world into a neighbourhood, but man has created a
civilisation that has turned even neighbours into strangers.
Such a complex and top heavy society cannot but be a haven
for bureaucrats, managers, technocrats, statist. Such a
society cannot be a home for brothers to live together as
brothers ...... I submit that in such a society the very
breath of socialism would be hard to draw. Self-government,
self-management, mutual cooperation and sharing, equality,
freedom, brotherhood - all could be practised and developed
for better if man lived in small communities."20 The
population living in small communities would produce goods.

20. Ibid., p. 40.
and services for local people in small scale cottage and village industries. Instead of centralised large scale production there would be decentralised small scale units engaged in functional production. This kind of production would be in tune with the simple life of the villagers. Therefore, it may be said that a harmonious blending of nature and culture was possible only in small scale village communities.

Through the Gramdan movement JP visualised a new agrarian order based on Gram Swaraj or village self-government. In such a setting the people in the village would constitute the self-governing unit with full power to regulate their lives in accordance with the accepted norms of civilised rural communities. In every village under the Gram Swaraj system every individual would have full freedom to enrich his personality in consonance with his talents and needs. Here for the first time we see the full operation of Democracy at the grassroots level. The coercive apparatus of the State would have no role to play, while decisions under Gram Swaraj would be taken on a collective basis in the best interest of the people in the village. Here innovative change would take place
with the consent of the people and not through revolutionary violence or by laws made by the State.

"The revolution in ideas as represented by Bhoodan, Sampattidan and Gramdan and the revolution in the outward organisation of society represented by community ownership of land and community self-government together constitute a full revolutionary programme that is different both from revolutions of violence and revolutions made by law." 21

After having discussed the two major components of Sarvodaya, namely, Bhoodan and Gramdan, we now move on to analyse the concept of Sarvodaya. Sarvodaya was a dynamic social movement that was continuously growing but at the same time it was confronted with new problems and situations. Its basic aim was to usher in a new order of society through ethical means. Sarvodaya was based on the principle of unity, innate discipline for enrichment of human personality and a wholesome outlook that took a synthetic view of life, producing a moral man in a moral society. In such a social order every individual would

21. Ibid., p. 51.
possess land only as a trustee since the land would be collectively owned by the village under the Gramdan movement. Servodaya sought to transform the society through willing cooperation of individuals rather than through the use of coercion through the creation of a proper atmosphere.

The basic unit in the Servodaya system was a village. Every village was expected to be self-contained in terms of its social, economic and political needs. The means of production would be geared to the economic ability of the villager who would be the owner also. In the Servodaya society everyone would have a chance to be fruitfully and creatively employed by performing tasks in different fields of human endeavour. Since every village was supposed to be self-sufficient it would have its own arrangement of industries, land distribution, marketing, education, etc. It may, however, be pointed out that self-sufficiency of every village did not mean that each village and its people led an isolated existence. On the contrary, there would be a number of areas where cooperation among different villages was an imperative necessity. In an age when the world has shrunk in size the principles of inter-
dependence was a pressing reality. If villages remained isolated from the mainstream of national life they would continue to remain as dens of superstition, backwardness and tradition. Hence, a spirit of mutual cooperation was an important element in making the village as the basic unit for fostering rapid socio-economic regeneration.

The *Sarvodaya* order did not imply that it was opposed to machinery and industrialisation *per se*. It was true that in a *Sarvodaya* society production would be geared to meet the requirements of the simple people through small scale village and cottage industries rather than machine production on a massive scale. Whatever it may be, the basic criterion used to judge the acceptance or rejection of a machine would be whether such an instrument served the interest of man.

The eventual aim of the *Sarvodaya* society was to establish the *Samye Yoga Samaj* where the distinction between classes and the masses and the hierarchical gradation of classes would be totally absent, leading to the creation of a society saturated by ethical values. Further, in such a society discrimination against the opposite sex would not be permitted under any circumstances. Men and women would
have to bend their energies together for the socio-economic upliftment of the village.

The *Gram Swaraj* would be based on the system of *Panchayat* which would be annually elected by the adult villagers through democratic means. The *Panchayat* would attempt to discover the common mind of the people rather than impose its will on the community. In many respects it lacked the powers of the legislature, judiciary and executive though it was expected to play a similar role.

*Sarvodaya* was based on the principle of decentralisation and devolution of power and authority. It proceeded on the assumption that concentration or centralisation of power led to tyranny and anarchy in the society. It was quite likely that the fundamental rights of the individuals would be adversely affected since the State would have the temptation to use the enormous powers at its command. Hence, the *Sarvodaya* order visualised a scheme of parcelling out power to different layers of society. Power would flow from the bottom and percolate to the top rather than the other way round. Normally, power must be derived from the vast majority of the
population rather than a concentration of power at the top through control of the levers of the government. There can be legitimacy of power at the top only if it was exercised with the consent of those who constituted the vast majority of the population. In our view power must originate at the bottom of the pyramid and move upwards so that it was exercised in the best interests of the entire society. It was in this sense the Sarvodaya movement was of major significance since it reestablished the proper flow of power from the base of the pyramid to the apex of the pyramid. The significance of this corrective process cannot be under-estimated because of the simple fact that even in under-developed countries the political leadership which had a charismatic hold on the masses imposed its will on the vast majority of the population. In such an unnatural process power originated at the top and freely flowed down along a particular hierarchy thereby curbing the initiative of the common men and women who do not have any say in the creation of public opinion for power. Sarvodaya sought to reverse this unnatural process by vesting power with the sovereign people through decentralisation.
In the political order legislation through representative bodies would be replaced by Jana shakti. The people themselves knowing what was good for themselves would decide for themselves, in consonance with the commonly accepted will of the people. Since the Sarvodaya society would be saturated by non-violence, the use of force by the society in internal or international affairs would be ruled out. Instead of the conventional armed forces the Shanti Sena, i.e., peace army would be constituted to protect the State. This was only made up of soldiers trained in the art of non-violence and who would be prepared to sacrifice their lives in the cause of Sarvodaya. However, one thing has to be kept in mind that it was possible to maintain internal security through non-violent means, but it would be difficult to maintain international peace through the use of non-violence. The machinations of war mongering States may provoke a conflict with a peaceful country with a view to subjugate it. Under such circumstances the Shanti Sena with its emphasis on non-violence would be of no consequence whatsoever. The only alternative in such cases would be to meet force with counter force to protect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the nation. It may, therefore, be asserted that for the maintenance of internal peace the
Shanti Sena may prove useful but for the maintenance of external peace the Shanti Sena would almost certainly have limited utility and therefore only a well-trained well equipped modern army can protect the sovereignty of the nation.

Hence, in the political field the aim of Sarvodaya was to achieve a condition of 'enlightened anarchy', in which every form of State authority would be absent in governing the lives of the individuals. The Sarvodaya society would be a Stateless society in which the distinction between the rulers and the ruled would be completely eliminated as the individual would come into his own. It may be pointed out here that Anarchism and Communism also prescribed the eventual withering away of the State. Both these ideologies assumed that the State was an instrument of coercion and therefore the individuals must be freed from the rapacious activities of the State. But JP has said that while anarchists and communists talk of eventual withering away of the State, Sarvodaya in theory and practice was in favour of the immediate abolition of the institution of State. He has argued in this vein because without a State-free society the realisation of the cherished goals of the human
society would not be possible, given the potential of the State for exercise of power through coercion. Therefore, JP viewed with great concern and misgivings the increasing power of the State—Totalitarian or Welfare. He said that the Welfare State in the name of promoting the welfare of human beings sought to enslave human beings to the State just as it was the case with the Totalitarian State. It was only the sovereign people who could put a halt to this creeping paralysis.22

Sarvodaya has been recommended as a panacea to combating the evils of elections and the party system. It was a well known fact that elections provide an important means to power hungry politicians to use unfair means to achieve their nefarious ends. Corruption and money power debase the social fabric of the society. Moral values are discarded in favour of expediency by the politicians. The values of a liberal and free society get completely distorted by frequent elections to representative bodies. There was a tendency on the part of the politicians to come out successfully at the hustings by using all sorts of devious means. Hence it was not surprising that elections did not reflect the legitimate will of the

people who were supposed to be sovereign in the exercise of their right to vote. In addition to this aspect of the problem, the political parties also function in a manner not conducive to the development of a healthy welfare State. Political parties were captured by a power hungry coterie of individuals who used them as platforms to serve their vested interests. Opportunism, corruption and nepotism were rampant in the functioning of the political party system. JP visualised two ways of removing these deleterious consequences. Firstly, the citizen must be enabled to develop into a honest and moral citizen conscious of his rights and responsibilities in a free society. He must be taught not merely to read but also to reflect and think about various aspects in public affairs in a systematic and organised manner. The individual should also be made to realise that his own future as well as the future of a free society in which he lived depended upon the performance of his role as a good citizen in a satisfactory manner. Further, he should also be made to realise that he was not a mere cog in the wheel of the society but that he was a thinking and acting individual constituting an intrinsic part of the society. Secondly, the politicians who contested for elections must be made to understand their duties and responsibilities so that they behaved as humble servants of the people carrying out their will rather than as a breed of citizens above
the ordinary men and women in the society. The political parties must choose candidates of impeccable integrity and honesty on the basis of properly determined norms. Political parties should function not as different political parties professing diametrically opposed ideologies but must combine to form a common front of responsible citizens. JP visualised these measures only as interim solutions to urgent problems, while he felt that the long term solution was to abolish all political parties and to rely upon the individual's ability to rule himself.

The Sarvodaya movement can be represented as a particular approach of development of society as against other approaches like the Welfare State, capitalist or communist variety. The basic postulate of the Sarvodaya theory was that all national life should be organised into small communities such as the villages and small market towns. Only in such societies the flow of politics could be local or regional or vital since they were essentially concerned with the organisation of the local socio-economic and political life. In such an atmosphere there could be real political and economic freedom with full matching responsibility. Smaller the unit of organisation greater
would be the effectiveness in providing for the welfare of the people. Social conflicts and other tensions could be resolved without much difficulty in these small homogenous units since there was informal relationship between the members in such a community.

The Sarvodaya philosophy proceeded on the assumption that every nation should aim at self-sufficiency as far as possible. Modern conflicts between nations were the result of economic inequality between the rich and poor nations of the world. It is argued that the village which constituted the basic unit in Sarvodaya philosophy must be self-sufficient and self-contained in terms of its economic and other needs. Once this was assured the nation as a whole would also become self-sufficient and there would be no reason for it to depend upon other nations for markets, raw materials, technical know-how, etc. The foundations of the prosperity of the nation can be laid only through self-contained village communities.

The Sarvodaya philosophy would not be averse to making use of science and technology for the development of small industrial units in small communities. Such a step could help in developing creative opportunity, responsibility and cooperation among individuals by
enabling them to put their native talents to practical use. Science would become the harbinger of a new vitality in small village communities. A new generation of thinking and producing individuals would be created as powerful instruments of socio-economic change in the rural areas. The foundation of a Sarvodaya society would be based on a system of education that emphasised certain primordial values like hard work, physical labour, meditation, worship, etc., as important ingredients of the art of simple but meaningful living.

In effect, Sarvodaya theory was centred around the belief that human beings have the capacity to do good provided the necessary environmental conditions were created for the flowering of their personalities. Its basic thrust was to improve the quality of life of the individuals. It has argued in favour of small communities functioning within the framework of overall decentralisation. Centralisation of power led to many abuses causing stresses and strains in society. Hence, Sarvodaya emphasised planning from below, self-sufficiency, simplicity of life, self-control and self-regulation through individual effort, voluntary cooperation and sharing and the primacy of social action as against State and bureaucratic action. Thus, a
close perusal of the literature on Sarvodaya has clearly demonstrated the moral significance of its concepts, activities and techniques. Great emphasis was laid on such aspects as 'gifts', 'sacrifice', 'pilgrimage', 'non-violence', 'pursuit of truth', 'self realisation', etc. These values seem to have been derived from Hinduism, which has constituted the fundamental basis of the movement. The use of religious idioms or symbols for expressing Sarvodaya ideas was the result of deep personal convictions on the part of JP and others who had a specific or definite understanding of the communication process in the villages of India enabling them to spread the message of Sarvodaya to the masses in the rural areas.

There are some scholars who trace the origin of the term Sarvodaya to Jain scriptures almost two thousand years ago. The word sarva occurred in the Gita as well as the Vedic texts which implied the value of service to others by living an austere life. The central idea in Sarvodaya was concerned with the transformation of the individual centred ethic of the Indian tradition into a society oriented approach which was expoused by Western thought.
Sarvodaya sought to establish a 'non-violent', 'non-exploitative', 'co-operative' society based on the principle of equality of all without the distinction of caste and class. The economy would not be governed by Western laws of competition but it would be transformed into a social economy based on mutual cooperation. Absentee landlordism would be abolished and ownership of land would be vested in the tiller himself in conformity with laws and regulations laid down by the society. There would be rational redistribution of land wherein surplus land would be transferred to the landless in the villages. Fallow and unproductive land would be pooled into cooperative and collective farms on the basis of the collective ownership of land. Since all land would be collectively owned cultivation on individual farms would be in consonance with the collective interest of the people.  

23 The Sarvodaya approach to social development, was based on the philosophy of the greatest good of all as against Benthamite philosophy with its emphasis on the greatest good of the greatest number. "Sarvodaya, the welfare of all, is a classless society based on the

destruction of the classes but not on the destruction of the individuals who constitute the classes, a system of production that does not fail to make use of science and technology for creating an economy of abundance but does not in the process either kill individual initiative or freedom for development or create a psychology of ceaseless striving for more and more of material goods, a system of distribution that will ensure a reasonable minimum income for all, and while not aiming at a universal equality of an arithmetical kind, will nevertheless ensure that all private property or talent beyond the minimum will be used as a trust for the public good and not for individual aggrandisement, a social order where all will work but there is no inequality, either in status or in opportunity for any individual, and a political system where change is the result of persuasion, differences are resolved by discussion, and conflicts by love and recognition of mutuality of interest and a life spent in dedication to God and cultivation of the spirit."24

A critical evaluation of JP’s conception of Sarvodaya has drawn us into the discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the movement. On the credit side of the balance sheet we may point out that decentralisation of economic and political power was a major plank in JP’s programme of Sarvodaya. This emphasis on a very important aspect of power could turn out to be of crucial significance for building up of a new and futuristic society in India. Concentration of economic and political power has in the past led to abuse of power causing untold hardship to millions of people. It has also led to a creation of a privileged class which has appropriated for itself a major share of the wealth generated in the society. The growth of the capitalist class can be traced to such concentration of economic and political power. The Sarvodaya movement has laid emphasis on devesting the vested interests of the society through decentralisation and devolution of economic power from the top to the bottom layers of the society. The result of such a process would be wholesome and may possibly lead to the creation of an equalitarian society. JP was a firm believer in the concept of people's power. He always emphasised that the Sarvodaya movement must
enable the people to participate at the grass roots level with a prominent role in the decision-making process. This was based on the assumption that the people constituted the most crucial segment of the Sarvodaya movement. The popularisation of the concept of Lakshakti by JP was an important aspect of the Sarvodaya movement.

JP always attached the greatest importance to the establishment of a decentralised polity through Gram Sabhas and Gram Swaraj. The idea here was to make the Gram Sabhas as powerful units of a participatory and successful democracy. In this context it may be stated that the people were enabled to have direct control over the representatives. This could prove to be a replica of democracy through popular participation in self-governance on the Swiss model.

JP also made an attempt to develop local or regional leadership through the Sarvodaya movement. This aspect of the programme was meant to lay the foundations of a multi-level leadership to bring about a socio-economic transformation of the Indian society through peaceful means. Through such a process of non-violence, cooperation and
mutual help, progress was to be achieved in a satisfactory manner.

Through the instrumentality of the Shanti Sena, JP hoped to keep the people of the villages free from police interference and litigation. It did not require much explanation to assert that the rural population in India was very much litigation-minded mostly on issues pertaining to land disputes. This endemic problem has created social tension in the rural communities. The Shanti Sena could resolve these disputes through persuasion and good offices.

The debit side or the weaknesses of the Sarvodaya movement can be best exemplified by the Musaheri block experiment in the district of Muzzafarpur in the early 1970s.25 This region was semi-feudal in its social and economic set up. The exploitation of landless agricultural workers suffering from abject poverty and agricultural

stagnation was a common feature of this area. Sarvodaya workers made an attempt to spread the message of Gramdan and Gram Swaraj. The strategy was to generate an atmosphere in which social and economic justice could be secured by elimination of exploitation of the weaker sections of the population and freedom for landless labourers from serfdom. In such task the Gram Sabha, Gram Kosh and Shanti Sena were expected to play crucial roles.

The operation of the Gram Kosh was not altogether satisfactory. It was true that regular contribution of kind or cash to the kosh was obligatory on the part of all the members. For the landed gentry and the few prosperous agriculturists this was not a very difficult proposition. Hence, daily agricultural labourers, landless labourers and Harijans found it almost impossible to make regular payments in cash or kind to the Gram Kosh. Especially in the lean season these categories of the rural poor were unable to make any contribution to the Gram Kosh but in fact they were forced to borrow from the Gram Kosh. The experience has shown that the institution of Gram Kosh has not proved very successful in improving the economic conditions of the people in rural areas.
In respect of the Shanti Sena it may be said that most of the villages in Musahari block did not operate in an efficient manner. Probably this was due to illiteracy and lack of adequate training of the Sainikas. Obviously, the Gram Sabhas were unable to provide sufficient financial and other inputs into a viable training programme for the Sainikas. Another additional complication was in respect of the caste composition of Sainikas who mostly belonged to the Harijan community or backward classes. With such a caste background the Sainikas faced immense difficulties in dealing with problems of law and order and litigation among the influential and dominant members of the caste-groups.

The Gram Sabhas in this block were expected to be the principal instruments for realising the objectives of Servodaya. They were expected to emerge as a 'coherent collectivity' to replace the old and traditional agrarian order. But in reality the Gram Sabhas in this block failed to generate collective unity among the members because of lack of enthusiasm, apathy and ignorance. There could be

other additional factors responsible for the plight of Gram Sabhas. Such factors could be lack of understanding and incomplete exposure of the Gramdan populations to the principles and ideals of Sarvodaya. Yet another reason could be the separation and discrimination practised by the dominant castes against the Harijans and other vulnerable sections in the decision-making process.

The only redeeming feature in this block was that the Gramdan villages indicated a change in the leadership pattern. The undemocratic and imposed leadership of the traditional dominant classes was gradually yielding place to a more democratic and collective leadership.

On the whole, it may be stated that the Musahari experiment clearly demonstrated a wide gap between the ideas and ideals of the Sarvodaya movement and pervasive social realities. Factors such as factionalism, exploitation, favouritism and discrimination in decision-making, inadequate donations, definitely established the fact that the process of internalisation of Sarvodaya
values was still a distant goal. Many shady dealings and fraud in the donation of the land has made short work of the whole spirit of the Sarvodaya movement. What was required at this juncture was a redifinition of some of the ideals which lacked a realistic vision about human conditions and human nature. It would be very difficult to sustain people's enthusiasm with stereo-typed programmes which do not make much impact on the socio-economic life of the people. It may also be pointed out that the Sarvodaya movement tried to achieve too much too soon characterised by diffusion rather than concentration of efforts in certain selected areas. There was a dichotomy between precept and practice which watered down the effectiveness of the Sarvodaya movement. The tendency to boost the statistics to claim a success which was not there certainly impaired the quality of the Sarvodaya movement. The Sarvodaya movement aroused high expectations among the people but such expectations could not be fulfilled in the absence of a dedicated cadre of workers loyal to the objectives of Sarvodaya. JP through his first-hand experience of the Musahari block was aware of all these difficulties and drawbacks in the Sarvodaya movement. He identified each one of these defects and
concentrated his abundant energies on removing these defects through appropriate solutions. He realised that it was a stupendous task to energise large masses of people involved in Bhoomiel, Gramdan and Gram Swaran movement in a short time. He felt that the message of Sarvodaya would be carried to the masses over a period of time provided there was all round cooperation of the people.