Jayaprakash Narayan welcomed 15th August 1947 as the dawn of a new era, but his conscience was in constant revolt against the abuse of this new freedom. In his letters to Nehru, he accused that many Congressmen were pursuing their own happiness rather than caring for the service of the community. Those who had worked as agents of foreign power, he lamented on a number of occasions, were running the administration. He felt that Corruption was rampant everywhere and even went beyond the malpractices that had prevailed in the British regime.

He refused a berth in the Nehru cabinet claiming that the socialists would devote themselves to the task of building the nation. At this point of time, he was facing a major ideological and organizational crisis; was it necessary to remain within the Congress or should the Congress Socialist Party establish a separate identity of its own? The compulsions of pre-British days, when he had considered the Congress as the only party capable of leading the freedom struggle, were over. He was haunted by a very critical question: was it enough to achieve political independence from the British? True freedom, freedom from want, poverty, disease and illiteracy, he believed, was only possible in a socialist state. Hence he could not accept the policies of the Congress Party that held the reigns of power.

J.P.'s criticism of the policies of the Congress party sent ripples of resentment within that party and many senior leaders including Sardar Patel took a tough stand against him and his
followers. In 1948, at the Tamilnad Socialist Convention, he compared the Congress with the Koumintang in China which while being wedded to the democratic and socialist principles of Dr. Sun Yat Sen had failed to put them into practice. The result, he observed, was that the Kuomintang had become corrupt and inefficient. "Though the Congress has not become what the Kuomintang has become in China, I am afraid it is moving in that direction."^1

As the rift between the socialists and the Congress leaders widened, J.P. attended the last conference of the Congress Socialist Party at Nasik in April 1948 where he declared that the Socialist Party was the only party that could play the role of a healthy opposition. The Congress Socialist Party gave way to the Socialist Party and a new Constitution was framed and implemented in 1950. The leading members of the Socialist Party toed the line of democratic socialism (being influenced by the British Labour Party), J.P moved towards a closer appreciation of Gandhiji's moral and social principles. He could not ignore the Socratic idealism in him which inspired him to equate politics with the art of seeking good life. His apathy towards power struggle was beginning to grow and the quest for a new meaning of politics had begun.

J.P. was still involved with trade union activities trying to organize the industrial workers and peasants. The definite break with Marxism and the final renunciation of party politics came in 1951. At that time he was the president of the Post and Telegraph Employees' Federation. A strike, organized by these employees was called off due to an understanding between J.P.
and Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, the then Communications Minister. Minoo Masani recalled that Kidwai backed out of the agreement. J.P. felt that he had let down his own men and he had to do penance for this.

In his fiftieth year, Jayaprakash Narayan decided to undertake his fast at Poona. It was a reaction to what he had observed after years of struggle against foreign rulers; he had grown from Youth to middle age, fighting for free India only to discover that it was free only for the rich and powerful. In Hindu religious belief, a fast is a process of self purification to transcend the senses and find a clearer and more beautiful ultimate reality. It was a method that would enable an individual to rise to a higher plane of thinking. His wife Prabhavati Devi recalled later that it was his 'rebirth'. J.P. emerged from his fast in a state of extreme emotional vulnerability. He had finally abandoned dialectical materialism. He tried to find an application to social affairs of the truth his fast had revealed to him; namely that goodness stems from within man and is not necessarily conditioned by his external environment. His mind had grasped a new and exciting concept but without the peg of political theory, he was a man without a cause, a social revolutionary without a mass movement. This was the period in J.P.'s life when he thought that Vinoba Bhave's concept of 'Bhoodan' and the ideal of Sarvodaya would lead him to the answers he was looking for a long time. As a result, in April, 1954 Jayaprakash Narayan became a 'Jeevandani'. In the Indian context Jeevandan precisely means the renunciation of all personal ambition and possessions,
living on the same level as the people, revealing selfless dedication. In Jayaprakash Narayan’s own Language,

“We wish to better this world while living in it. ...the Jeevandani who dedicates his life to human and social betterment must begin with bettering himself. The Jeevandani is an ordinary mortal with faults and foibles of his fellow men. But he has vowed to devote his life to the remaking of men and society means that he has to begin with remaking himself. Jeevandan thus becomes a spiritual pilgrimage.”

This metamorphosis from the life of a socialist or Marxist revolutionary to a devoted Sarvodaya worker was thus preceded by the Poona fast (1952) aiming at ‘self purification’. It was during this fast that the contradiction in his mind over Marxism and Gandhian philosophy was ultimately resolved. In a letter to Nehru in 1953, he wrote,

“We have all been deeply influenced by Gandhiji. I do not mind saying that I have been rediscovering him lately....I believe he was one of the most vital thinkers of the modern age.”

In 1957, in the form of a letter to the Praja Socialist Party, he declared his intention of leaving the Praja Socialist Party claiming that he was moving towards the ‘politics of Sarvodaya’.

While defending this decision, he wrote an article, entitled Jeevandan, shortly after the Bodh Gaya Conference. J.P. admitted here that his decision to pursue the politics of Sarvodaya was not taken suddenly. He arrived at it after much deliberation over a long period of time. It gradually dawned
upon him that the ideals for which he had struggled for so many years could be achieved through the Gandhian way. It should be noted here that Jayaprakash was firm in his conviction that he had not abandoned his cherished ideals by leaving party politics; he never deviated from what he had stood for so far. He was only rejecting one means and experimenting with another to achieve his aims.

The word 'Sarvodaya', first used by Gandhiji, literally means rise and welfare of all. Gandhiji had borrowed this word from a Jain scripture by Acharya Samantabhadra who lived about 2000 years earlier. The idea of greatest good of all has occurred as a recurrent theme in ancient Hindu philosophy and religious traditions. The ideas expressed include the desire to see happiness in all – may all be happy, may all enjoy wealth, may all come by prosperity and let none have misfortune for his lot. In South Africa, Gandhiji read John Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. He was deeply moved by the ideas expressed in this book. In *An Autobiography*, M.K. Gandhi mentioned the teachings of Ruskin's book as:-

a) The good of an individual is contained in the good of all,

b) The lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's since all have the same right to earn their livelihood,

c) The life of labour, the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicrafts man is the life worth living.
Gandhiji went on to mention that he was aware of the first principle. He had dimly realized the second principle and the third had never occurred to him. And then he decided to reduce these principles to practice. J.P. felt that the greatness of Gandhiji lay in his determination to convert his ideas and principles into practice by taking personal initiative. Later Gandhiji published a Gujarati version of Ruskin’s book and named it ‘Sarvodaya’. For Gandhiji and his followers, Sarvodaya implied a balanced all round development and welfare of an individual as well as similar welfare and development in all men. Sarvodaya symbolized human considerations outweighing all else, whether in economic, social or political sphere.

In several articles published in *Harijan*, Mahatma Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave had portrayed the chief attributes of Sarvodaya and that left an indelible influence on J.P. These attributes include:

A) Love, equality and good of all: The philosophy of Sarvodaya proclaims all round development for all human beings. In Sarvodaya, the institutions of human society and the network of social relationships are based on the principles of Truth and Non-violence. It echoes the idea that only love and cooperation can hold men together in a lasting relationship. As Vinoba Bhave had once observed, “in this unfortunate world of ours we are all fallen, and everyone needs to rise. The rich have fallen long since, and the poor have not risen at all. The result is that both need to be uplifted. We can be satisfied only with the good

124
of one and all, of the high and low, of the intelligent as well as the dull."^9

In his article Gandhi's Concept of Sarvodaya, Jayaprakash Narayan added an important rejoinder to this principle. In the age of socialism and communism, the good of the collectivity is supposed to contain the good of an individual. History, remarked J.P., has always shown that the concrete individual is consistently sacrificed at the altar of an abstraction, namely the collectivity. But Gandhiji's concept of non-violence ensured that the "individual was not to be subjected to any coercion, except moral coercion in the interest of any abstraction....For Gandhiji, the all was not an abstraction incarnated in the Party and the State."^10

B) If society is to be founded on freedom and equality, there should be no distinction between physical and mental labour, dignity of labour must prevail at every sphere of society. The ideal of 'bread labour' demands that each individual must earn his own bread by labouring with his own hands. Allied with bread labour are the principles of limitation of wants and sharing together of land and other forms of property. The theory of trusteeship was developed by Gandhiji for reducing the cleavage between the rich and the poor. The theory of trusteeship and Vinoba Bhave's Bhoodan movement are based on the idea that all land belonged to God and we are all trustees of the wealth. Hence as trustees of the wealth our surplus income must be shared for the good of state and society.
The main features of the economic principles of Sarvodaya as enumerated by Vinoba Bhave include the elimination of property, building a new social order based on voluntary physical labour, non-possession, cooperation and self-reliance. He also emphasized on the importance of developing a feeling of love and affection in the hearts of the land owners to improve the moral atmosphere of the country. He felt that this environment of love and cooperation would remove the ‘class hatred’ between landlords and the landless people.\(^\text{11}\)

C) Sarvodaya calls for self discipline and the value of sacrifice. The contradiction between the desire for self-achievement and the spirit of self-sacrifice can be resolved by the philosophy of ‘Advaita’ which lies at the root of Sarvodaya.\(^\text{12}\) In the philosophy of the Vedanta, the soul or ‘Atman’ is a part of the ultimate reality or ‘Brahman’. Gandhiji wrote, the “the soul is God-head within man.”\(^\text{13}\)

The basic postulates of Advaita philosophy that have influenced the philosophy of Sarvodaya include the idea of identity of Brahman and Atman and Brahman alone is Truth and Real while everything else is ‘Maya’. This concept of non duality of Brahman and Atman and the emphasis on the essential identity of all existence have far reaching social, economic and political ramifications. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, “I believe in the absolute oneness of God and therefore of humanity. What though we may have many bodies? We have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction. But they have the same source. I cannot therefore detach myself
from the wickedest soul nor may I be denied identity with the most virtuous.”14 We are often unaware of this unity of one and all because of ignorance or ‘Avidya’. If this ignorance is dispelled through knowledge, non violence and love, man will not remain alienated from his fellow beings and the spirit of self sacrifice will prevail as the ultimate virtue. Man would realize that the quest for Truth involved knowing the ‘self’ through Non violence or ‘Ahimsa’ for to injure or inflict pain on others is to violate the ‘Atman’ which all men share. Since there is spiritual unity of mankind, self realization consists not in advancing the good of isolated individuals but the good of all. For Gandhiji, it implied love of all; to share the lot of the poorest and the lowliest. As a Jeevandani, Jayaprakash was very clear about the aim of Sarvodaya politics: ideological revolution along with socio-economic changes that would ameliorate the individual internally and transform society at its very basis. He realized that the entire Sarvodaya movement must be supported by positive education that would encourage people to accept new values.

D) Freedom from governmental control and decentralization of power. Sarvodaya echoes the famous principle; that government is best that governs the least. The state is considered to be a child of violence. The state only symbolizes power struggle among the elites where the masses are utilized as pawns in the game. In place of this ruthless state, Sarvodaya workers prefer a decentralized polity. Hence Gandhiji referred to the village as the basic
unit that would constitute a miniature republic. He referred to 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 the last whole becomes one life composed of individuals sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units. Therefore the utmost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its strength from it. In fact in Gandhiji's ideal society, every one was visualized to be his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbours. In his ideal state therefore there is no political power because there is no state.

e) Ethical means to achieve its goals: Sarvodaya aims at integrating the principles of religion with morality and politics. It encourages the spirit of self sacrifice, and it reminds us of our moral obligation towards the down trodden section of our society. Gandhiji believed that individuals have no right to possess anything while millions remain unclothed and unfed. Man must step out of egocentric outlook and look forward to the development of all for moral regeneration of society. The aims of Sarvodaya society would be achieved through persuasion rather than infringing on the freedom of individuals. Persuasion could be brought about not only through reason and discussion but through exemplary self sacrifice and suffering. Gandhiji believed that a sarvodaya worker must combine the methods of persuasion through reasoning, discussion and self suffering. Jayaprakash
Narayan was deeply influenced by this idea of self sacrifice and suffering in the post-Jeevandand period.

F) Social peace and world peace: The spirit of cooperation must transcend the boundary of a country to create a new world order where the larger and smaller states could coexist in peace and without infringing on one another's integrity.

In the 'Bhoodan Movement' Jayaprakash Narayan found an assimilation of all the above qualities. In *Socialism to Sarvodaya* J.P. recalled how he was deeply impressed after his initial interaction with Vinoba Bhave's experiment,

"During Gandhiji's lifetime, in spite of the fact that I was gradually drawing close to him, I could not see how this non-violent technique could bring about a social revolution.....how feudalism and capitalism could be abolished by the same means and a new society created was not at all clear to me...and though I had moved considerably away from Marxism by the end of Gandhiji's life I was not prepared to accept that trusteeship could be a social as distinguished from individual norm of behaviour.....I was in this frame of mind when.....in a remote village of Telengana, Bhoodan was born..."\(^{15}\)

In the district Hamirpur of Uttar Pradesh Vinoba Bhave announced the 'Gramdan' movement. J.P. here mentioned that Vinoba Bhave had a great talent in coining new words. Thus 'dan' in his vocabulary did not mean gift but sharing together of the land of the village by the people of the village. Bhoodan meant distribution of land to the landless while Gramdan signified communalization of land. It became evident to J.P. that
Bhoodan had within it the germ of total agrarian revolution. What appealed to Jayaprakash most was that no force, no violence or compulsion was used to abolish private property in land; ownership was freely surrendered to the community. The outward social change was accompanied by inward human change. During his visit to the village Mangroth, where Gramdan was in progress, Jayaprakash was spellbound by what he saw over there. He wrote,

"What I saw opened a new vista for the future. It was thrilling to visualize the great moral, economic, political and social revolution that would sweep over the country if Mangroth was repeated in every village."\textsuperscript{16}

Gramdan was an indigenous experiment to merge old and new values and ideas. It meant that the village community was surcharged with the value of cooperation and mutual help. In essence Gramdan had three basic requirements: Gram Sabha where all the adult men and women would be members, the land owned by individuals would be transferred to the village community, a central fund called the Gramkosh would be established to collect contributions from the villagers. In other words, private ownership in land would not be abolished by political parties but by people themselves. Jayaprakash Narayan acknowledged the difference between collectivization of land under a socialist state as against community ownership of the Gramdan movement. Vinoba Bhave later added a new item to his program –\textit{Sampattidan}. It was what J.P. believed to be a method for converting of all kinds of proprietorship into what Gandhiji called trusteeship.
J.P. analyzed that the concept of Bhoodan accomplished social revolution through two methods. First, it initiated a mass campaign to persuade men to give up the way of life and reject those ideas that were not beneficial to human society. Thus a revolution in values is set in motion. The old and decadent ideas are replaced by values that can solve contemporary social problems and lay the foundation of radical changes in society. The crowning point of the Sarvodaya method of revolution, J.P. believed, was that in it the 'end and means' become one.

"Other social revolutions failed because those who brought them about used means that were inconsistent with their ends...if the end was a stateless society, the means were the coercive powers of the State itself...."\(^{17}\)

Secondly, the Bhoodan sought to devise a method of self-help and self-government through which individuals and groups would learn to manage their own affairs. Therefore Jayaprakash concluded that the revolution in the sphere of ideas as represented by Bhoodan, Gramdan and Sampattidan and revolution in the outward organization of society through community ownership of land and community self-government constituted a full revolutionary program that was different from revolutions of violence and revolution made by law. Decentralization at the political and economic levels remained the focal point of J.P.’s concept of Sarvodaya.

Jayaprakash Narayan believed that the Bhoodan movement was a valuable political experiment. It aimed at non
party democracy. It invited people having different shades of political opinion to work together for Sarvodaya. It also revealed that there were areas in social life where people could work together ignoring partisan differences. What appealed to J.P. most was the rationale of Bhoodan: there was neither any need to capture state power nor any need to use political parties to achieve its goal. The moving force of the movement was Janshakti (people’s power) and not Dandashakti (state power); Lokniti took precedence over Rajniti.

In his articles entitled *A Plea for Reconstruction of the Indian Polity* and *Swaraj for the People*, he portrayed the outlines of a communitarian and party less democracy where the ideals of Sarvodaya would prevail. Referring to his colleagues in the Sarvodaya movement, J.P. wrote at the outset, “My colleagues in the sarvodaya movement might miss the word ‘sarvodaya’ in this paper. But I hope they will recognize that the goal of this enquiry is nothing but the ultimate good and rise of all.”¹⁸ These two articles constitute the best specimens of his insight into political theory; they also represent his ardent desire to change the Indian society. Jayaprakash Narayan’s political ideas were influenced by the pathos of human life and he wanted to devote himself to the service of the ‘daridranarayan’. A true Jeevandani in spirit, he put his best efforts to depict the outlines of a communitarian and party less democracy in India; this can be considered as his idea of Sarvodaya polity. It must be mentioned that he was very clear in his vision that only democracy could solve the problems faced by Indian society.
"My search here has been for the forms of social life, particularly of political life that would assure the preservation of human values about which there is hardly any dispute in the world today.....On the very portals of democracy, irrespective of its form and structure, are words written that can never be wiped off, without wiping off democracy itself...freedom of conscience, of association, of expression and the Rule of law."19

The method of Sarvodaya encouraged people to adopt new values and way of life in a phased manner. The individuals were encouraged to share their possessions gradually; their pilgrimage and conversion became easy as they shared a small portion of their possession initially. Although directed at the individual, the movement had a mass character as groups and masses of men were sought to be touched by it.

The concept of Sarvodaya and the practice of 'bhoodan' together satisfied the three clear objectives that J.P. had nurtured after he was disillusioned with contemporary socialism and gave up party politics. These objectives were: first, while freedom and equality continued to be his cherished goals, he was looking for an alternative means to achieve them. Now his task was to combine socialism with Sarvodaya. Contrary to what many critics have said, J.P. was not interested in proving the superiority of one ideology over the other. Hence he could write, "Unless socialism is transformed in to Sarvodaya...future generations may have to taste the ashes of socialism."20 In New Dynamics of Social Change J.P. elaborated the reasons why socialism should be combined with Sarvodaya. Socialism could not be equated with the destruction of feudalism or nascent capitalism or with mere economic development. The danger lay
in equating socialism with economic development and in sacrificing socialist values at the altar of economic development. He believed that socialism was a way of life, an attitude of mind and the construction of socialist society was synonymous with the construction of a new type of human being. It was his realization that human welfare was at the centre of all ideology that enabled him to offer a new definition of socialism. He defined socialism as one in which the individual was prepared to voluntarily subordinate his own interest in the larger interest of society.

“Equality, freedom and fellowship can never become realities unless the moral evolution of the individual has been such that he is voluntarily prepared to limit his wants and his freedom in the interest of his fellow human beings.” 21

Western materialism acknowledged the primacy of matter over mind but Sarvodaya by rejecting matter as the ultimate reality, elevated the individual to a moral plane. Sarvodaya inspired man to develop his true self without reference to any objective outside himself. Only when materialism is transcended does individual man come into his own and become an end in himself.” 22 Sarvodaya, with its emphasis on satyagraha, non-violence and the spirit of cooperation satisfied his quest for change in society. He was convinced that socialism (Russian or democratic socialism) could not do away with human misery and suffering in the West; but if socialism and Sarvodaya are combined the cherished results could be finally achieved. Sarvodaya offered the method of peaceful transformation, where the individual will neither be sacrificed at
the altar of society; nor will society be an arithmetical product of self seeking individuals. The part and the whole would exist in perfect harmony. "But I am persuaded that unless socialism is transformed in to Sarvodaya, those goals would remain beyond its reach...."23 He was now ready to dedicate his life to what he called ‘People’s Socialism’.

Jayaprakash Narayan’s second objective was to replace power-centric politics with politics of the people or what he succinctly defined as ‘rajniti’ to be replaced by ‘lokni’—this was the politics of Sarvodaya. This could be achieved if people were empowered through political and economic decentralization. Why was he concerned with the perils of power-politics? J.P. believed that the two major problems that engulfed the modern man and his society were the pursuit of material prosperity and the lust for power. Political parties were the major players in the quagmire of power politics. “I decided to withdraw from party and power politics, not because of disgust or sense of any personal frustration, but became clear to me that politics could not deliver the goods.”24 He was looking forward to a new definition of politics separating it from the vices of power struggle. This could only be achieved by a) letting people manage their own affairs, b) clipping the wings of the modern state and c) removing political parties. Sarvodaya with all its social and economic implications provided the answers he had been looking for; now he was prepared to follow the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi.

J.P.’s third objective was to find an alternative to the modern state. The modern state, he thought, was a ‘Leviathan’
that destroyed freedom. In *Socialism to Sarvodaya*, he lamented that if the bourgeois state had monopolized political power, the socialist state added economic power to it. The democratic socialists had attempted to harness the state through the trade union movement and constitutional checks; but the nexus between the politicians and the bureaucracy reduced all these efforts to mere paper work and freedom of man continued to be threatened. The trade union movement was often monopolized by the organized industrial workers in the cities while the poor in the villages, in the unorganized sectors continued to suffer from exploitation. The small farmers, particularly in India, failed to get the benefits of the policies of the state. The remedy lay in our ability to do without the state. "...the remedy is to create and develop forms of socialist living through the voluntary endeavour of the people rather than seek to establish socialism by the use of the power of the state...to establish people's socialism rather than state socialism. *Sarvodaya* is people's socialism."25

In many of his writings, pertaining to Sarvodaya, Jayaprakash Narayan made it very clear that the aim of Sarvodaya was to establish a free society; this could be achieved through *people's socialism, party less democracy, economic and political decentralization and the moral development of man*. These ideas were intricately woven in the larger concept of Sarvodaya as developed by him.

J.P. now as a Jeevandani, with his objectives fulfilled, wanted to find a new meaning of Socialism in consonance with Sarvodaya. Was he really successful in fulfilling this aim? No
doubt his concept of people’s socialism was an ardent attempt to reduce inequality in the modern state without threatening human freedom. Jayaprakash Narayan did not develop his idea of People’s Socialism as a fully objective scientific theory of the evolution of human society and culture similar to Marx’s Historical Materialism. His ideas at this stage were affected by the Gandhian ideas of Sarvodaya Socialism. His observations in A Plea for Gandhism reveal that his aim was not to intensify social conflicts but to reconcile them. “Socialism wishes to destroy classes by making one class victorious over the other. Gandhism wishes to abolish class by so bringing the classes together that there are no distinctions left.” In People’s Socialism, J.P. found no contradiction between means and ends. If means are just, then there are reasons to believe that they may be inspired by justice and that justice is their aim. The renunciation of violence, whether through the organized power of the state or through individuals and groups should be the first and foremost condition for freedom and peaceful existence.

Equality would be achieved as decentralization and popular control would emerge through Panchayati Raj. The development of Sarvodaya society needed a few strategic changes. Like Gandhiji, he believed that political and economic decentralization, positive and moral education would help in the growth of democratic self consciousness of the people. In his articles A Plea for the Reconstruction of Indian Polity and Swaraj for the People, J.P. had tried to bring to limelight a method for the effective functioning of ‘lok sakti’ (power of the people.). In fact, in most of his articles, written after Independence, J.P. had
penned down his concern for power of the people and till the last days of his life, it continued to be a significant feature of his political and social theory. In order to empower people in the functioning of any political organization, J.P. developed the concept of *self sufficient, self governing agro-industrial* local communities. These units would help the people to participate in the day to day decision making process. Thus *lok sakti* or power of the people symbolizes their ability to take common decisions and to resist any misuse of power or to resist authority when it is abused.

The concept of *lok sakti* has roots in Indian political tradition. "Though thinkers of modern India like Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Tagore, Gandhi and Jayaprakash were in favor of accepting the good and the preferred aspects of the East and the West, they drew their inspiration from the Hindu tradition of political thought which was pluralist in orientation. The Hindu political thinkers did not confer on the ruler the arbitrary and despotic power. The ruler was an integral part of a highly differentiated and uncentralized social order."27 The State was totalitarian but a great deal of initiative lay with local institutions. It was obvious that the state did not apply totalitarian methods in carrying out its function.

Jayaprakash was also a product of this culture and hence he upheld the power of the people over political institutions for social change. Through his idea of decentralization in a Sarvodaya society, J.P sought to empower the people who "are no longer an amorphous mass of human grains but organized in self governing communities to govern themselves."28 By
rejecting Western parliamentary democracy, which promoted an inverted pyramid that stood on its head, J.P. hoped that men would live together in a strong, united and meaningful community. Hence it can be remarked that J.P.'s concept of democracy was an attempt to reduce the power of the centralized state. Since he believed that the decentralized system would operate without political parties, the perils of power politics would be eliminated.

Jayaprakash Narayan believed that truth is never absolute. "Man is ever progressing towards the truth for he is by nature an enquiring being. He will never be able to reach the ultimate truth, but by gradually eliminating the untruth, he will be slowly to approach the truth."29 He had the courage to admit that there were many 'flaws in Sarvodaya thought' that would be removed by future generations. There is no doubt that his concept of Sarvodaya politics demanded a higher level of moral values; but he had faith in man; he rejected the Hobbesian image of man and expressed the hope that man could rise above all selfish desires. The value of his polity can be discerned not so much in its practicability as in its hope and essential morality. "Without vision the people perish and people have to be told in every generation by visionaries like Jayaprakash that man needs to create a society in which all that is essential to him as a man is satisfied."30

Jayaprakash Narayan's concept of lokniti has not lost its relevance in our life today. Sunderlal Bahuguna, the freedom fighter turned environmentalist from Uttaranchal, believes that only lokniti can ensure that people's interest are protected in
our society today. In an interview published in the Hindustan Times, Bahuguna said, “From rajniti we opted for lokniti and are still practicing it...rajniti is for self and lokniti is for the people. Rajniti is the route to Shimla or Delhi while lokniti is to reach out to the people.” In our society today, lokniti is all about creating awareness among people about relevant issues so that they can rise up against the maladies that haunt our society. That indeed is the legacy of J.P.
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1. *Indian Express*, (Madras), March 28, 1948.


5. This letter was published in the form of a booklet entitled *From Socialism to Sarvodaya*, (Kashi: Akhil Bhartiya Sarv Seva Sang, 1958).


