Chapter - VIII

JP’S RECOMMENDATION FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF INDIAN POLITY
"The past course of my life," says JP, "might well appear to the outsider as a zigzag and tortuous chart of unsteadiness and blind groping. But as I look back I discern in it a uniform line of development." He believed that this line of development was not without any purpose, it was the development in search of freedom. As he said that "The groping undeniably was there, but it was certainly not blind; there were clear beacons of light that remained undimmed and unaltered from the beginning and that led me on to my apparently tortuous path." He was not at all sorry for having made this zigzag journey, for, he believed, that it had made him the surer of the path that he had later on decided to tread. It was, in search of freedom that he treded the paths of Marxism, democratic socialism, Sarvodaya and finally total revolution. All the changes in his path from dialectical materialism to democratic socialism, from democratic socialism to bhoodan, from bhoodan to total revolution, were made for actualizing his one and only dream of developing an India where would live an equalitarian society of good and honest men having fearless decent livelihood. That was JP's politics, economics and sociology, the ideal of life. By his self-analysis JP justified what Swami Vivekananda said: "It is very good to be born in a church, but it is very bad to die there. To make it clearer, it is very good to be born in a certain sect and have its training— it brings out our higher qualities; but in the vast majority of cases we die in that little sect, we never come out or grow." A visionary can change his course for a vision, but must not be an opportunist. And JP was a visionary.

The incidents of different countries including those of his own country always infused newer ideas in his mind. As a result of this, his thought, ideas and ideals were always subject to change and even self-contradictory at times. But he was always careful and firm regarding his values.

There was a spirit of revolution from the childhood in JP's mind. He was an ardent nationalist and leaned towards revolutionary cult. The story of Gandhi's South African satyagraha had fascinated his young heart. While in secondary school, he had defied the authorities to assert his commitment to freedom and had been punished. After completing school, he got enrolled in college. In 1920,
at the call of Gandhi, he joined the non-cooperation movement and gave up his studies. He became depressed when Gandhi suddenly called off the movement. But he was undaunted. He could not be persuaded to return to any college maintained or aided by the Government, even after the non-cooperation movement had subsided.

It was then that freedom became the beacon light of his life and it remained so ever since. 'Freedom, with the passing of the years, transcended the mere freedom of my country and embraced freedom of man everywhere and from every sort of trammel—above all, it meant freedom of the human personality, freedom of the mind, freedom of the spirit. This freedom has become a passion of life and I shall not see it compromised for bread, for power, for security, for prosperity, for the glory of the state or for anything else.'

Although JP accepted the term "revolution"; to him initially it meant only liberation from foreign rule. The full implication of the term became clear to him only when he went to America to pursue his studies. There he realized that in order to make freedom meaningful it has to be expanded to all walks of life. He became a practising and thinking social scientist, keen to find out the correct path for the emancipation of man from slavery, exploitation and misery and for the progressive improvement of their moral conduct.

While studying at the Wisconsin University, JP came in close contact with some Communist students, read the writings of Marx and his followers and became fully a convert to Marxism. In his opinion, he left nothing unread of Marxism that was available in English and with the help of a brilliant student of German he even read some of the untranslated Marxian classics. The pungent writings of M. N. Roy that found their way from Europe completed his conversion to Marxism. It was then that his thoughts on revolution crystallised.

Freedom still remained his unchanging goal, but the Marxian science of revolution seemed to offer a surer and quicker way to it than the Gandhian technique of civil disobedience and non-cooperation. And the thrilling success
of Lenin in Russia, accounts of which JP consumed with unsatiated hunger, seemed to establish beyond doubt the supremacy of the Marxian way to revolution. Marxism provided another beacon of light for him—equality and brotherhood. At that stage he thought of equality in the material sphere only. ‘Freedom was not enough. It must mean freedom for all—even the lowliest—and this freedom must include freedom from exploitation, from hunger, from poverty.’

He, at that time, cared little to make an indepth study of Gandhi’s views on the question of equality which was a part of his quest of freedom. He, at this stage, could not understand that Gandhi had his own conception of social revolution and of the means to achieve it.

Coming back to India, he joined Congress which was the platform for anti-imperialist struggle. But by then freedom or ‘swarāj’ had come to mean much more to him than mere national independence. Free India meant to him socialist India and ‘swarāj’ the rule of the poor and downtrodden. So he felt the need of organizing a socialist party. JP discussed it with other like-minded freedom fighters and thus the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) emerged in 1934 within the folds of Congress, so that the social policy of the Congress might become more definitely socialist and the fight for independence itself might be conducted in a more revolutionary manner. Moreover, farmers and labourers could also be brought into the folds of the national movement giving it a socialist orientation. Both nationalism and socialism would thus be well blended.

JP observed that without a socialist orientation the national movement for freedom could neither be broad-based nor be led to a definite goal. And to widen the scope of the movement consolidation of socialist forces was the prime necessity. From the theoretical point of view this consolidation did not seem to be very difficult because “...owing to the impact of the world crisis and the rise of Fascism, there has been a growing unity in socialist thought; and today more than even before it is possible to say that there is only one type, one theory of Socialism—Marxism.” It was, therefore, not very difficult for the Marxian parties to come closer and work for broadening the basis of the national movement. The
socialists had strong faith in their formulation and they therefore extended the hands of co-operation to the Communists. The Communists in India joined CSP in order to wreck it from within.

This bitter experience led JP to rationalise his Marxism "... the socialist movement in India," JP wrote, "must evolve its own picture of socialism in the light of Marxian thought, of world history since Marx's death and of conditions in this country and our historical background. Marxism is a science of society and a scientific method of social change that includes social revolution. As such, there can be no room for dogmatism or fundamentalism in Marxist thought."7

He also observed that 'even where the people lacked the democratic freedom, a violent revolution must have popular support and the revolutionary government must have the backing of the majority of the people.'8 A social revolution must be allowed full freedom to find its own democratic expression. The people's instinct is always in favour of freedom and democracy and they can never deliberately want to subject themselves to a dictatorship. The Communists, wherever in power, have invariably established a dictatorship which they call 'people's or socialist democracy'. JP thus derived that 'the path to socialism did not pass through dictatorship of any kind.'9

JP dealt with the question of power. He rejected the view that all politics are power politics. "If power is the quintessence of politics, the use of every means may be considered justified to secure it, including means such as lying, scandal-mongering and cheating...."10 JP thus started to come closer to Gandhi. Gandhi was also against power politics. He did not want the constructive workers 'to go into power politics; it would spell ruin. Or else why', Gandhi asked, 'should not I myself have gone into politics and tried to run the government my way. Those who are holding the reins of power today would easily have stepped aside and made room for me, but whilst they are in charge they carry on only according to their own lights.'11

'But I do not want to take power into my hands', Gandhi assured his friends.
'By abjuring power and devoting ourselves to pure, selfless service of the voters we can guide and influence them. It would give us far more real power than we shall have by going into government.'¹²

However, JP was yet to accept Gandhi’s ideals. In his Why Socialism he called Gandhi as a ‘reformist’ and not a ‘revolutionary’. JP wrote:

‘...The struggle between revolution and reform is as old as human misery. Gandhi’s views are essentially what in Socialist history is known as reformism. Its language is Indian but its substance is international. The chief interest of reformism lies in maintaining the established order in society.... Reformism is interested not in securing social justice, but in covering up the ugly fissures of society.’¹³

The Second World War and the post-war years made JP rethink about his old ideas and assessments of Gandhian methodology. Developments in the Communist world had also shaken his conscience. Degradation of democracy in Stalin’s Soviet Russia under the glorified concept of dictatorship of the proletariat, forced collectivisation of agriculture accompanied by liquidation of millions of peasants, the infamous Moscow trials, perpetrating crimes against humanity, the crushing of people’s civil liberties by the new Soviet rulers and proliferation of forced labour camps to stifle the voices of dissent done by those who swore by the name of people raised doubt in JP’s mind as to whether Marxism could be liberated from the dehumanising influences. Inspite of that his belief in the basic principles of Marxism was not shaken and he used Marxism to justify whatever he said. He now tried to distinguish his own ideas from the Communists’. In ‘My Picture of Socialism’ he pleaded for distinction between ‘Democratic Socialism’ and ‘Totalitarian Communism’, for devolution of political power and decentralization of economy and respect for human values. In the General Secretary’s report, presented in the All India Convention of the Socialist Party held at Nasik in Maharashtra in 1948, JP said that the idea of ends justifying the means, is non-ethical for the end power—personal or group power—there is no limit to which means will sink to secure the object. He clearly stated: ‘There were many things
that Mahatma Gandhi taught us. But the greatest thing he taught was that means are ends, that evil means can never lead to good ends and that fair ends require fair means." He stated that "for the achievement of socialism, a strict regard for means is of the highest importance." He emphasised that "all our political work must be inspired by certain ethical values."

JP realised that a pure end can be reached only through pure means. Marxian means cannot lead us to the goal of freedom. He also realised that the theory of class conflict is of no use in establishing democracy or socialism—it can only help in establishing dictatorship. From the experience of Soviet Russia he understood that the end of capitalism does not necessarily result in the establishment of socialism. Though there has been the end of capitalism in Soviet Russia, there was not only denial of "formal" freedom, but also denial of social justice, of equality. There has emerged a new class of bureaucratic rulers, new forms of exploitation. Marxism, therefore, can never be a safe path in establishing social revolution and socialism. Social change can be possible only through democratic means, by the common people.

Socialism is a way of life, an attitude of mind, a certain ethical behaviour. Such a way of life, attitude, behaviour cannot be imposed from above by dictates of the government. Construction of a socialist society is fundamentally construction of a new type of human being. If human reconstruction is the key to socialist reconstruction, and if that is beyond the scope of the state, the emphasis in the socialist movement must change from political action to such work of reconstruction.

Speaking before the Asian Socialist Conference on 6 January 1953, JP said: "Democratic methods mean not only parliamentary methods but a huge mass movement of an unconstitutional but peaceful and non-violent character." He always underlined the importance of mass movement. JP said that a peaceful and non-violent mass movement was as democratic as a parliamentary method. He, however, admitted that it might not strictly be a constitutional method. He said that if we have contact with the people and can stir them to movements of this
nature there is every reason to believe that no power will be able to resist the social force.20

At this stage JP was sure that socialism cannot be reached through any kind of dictatorship. JP felt that the freedom for which he had been struggling throughout his life was possible through a synthesis of democracy and socialism—Democratic socialism. Democratic socialism (Social democracy) argues that socialism to be true to its name can never be commanded upon. It must be democratic and broadly non-violent. To make socialism democratic and non-violent, life needs to be participatory in all walks. As a matter of fact, it is in this way society itself is developed.

As human beings have a goal of life, we must have a philosophy in the form of ideology to lead us to the goal. Since we are always in midst of changes, ideology should be such that it can help us to confront every change, howsoever turbulent it may be. Democratic socialism is the only ideology suitable to the purpose, for it accepts the reality of change and societal diversity. This ideology accepts unity, rather than uniformity as the natural objective of our life.

So socialism is believed to be the ultimate and final development of democracy. One of the mainsprings of the socialist thought is a search for freedom and the fullest possible opportunity for individuals in the society for the utmost possible self-development. Socialism and democracy must exist together. Democracy does not become full unless it is evolved into socialism. JP accepted the new ideology of democratic socialism by abandoning Marxism. "It appears to us that if Marxism is to be applied to conditions in India or conditions anywhere in the world; then the ultimate picture must be of a democratic socialist society. Any other form of society will be a negation of Marxism."21 The nation would be completely democratic in Socialist India. If socialism is to be accepted by all, it would be necessary to hammer into the people that socialism was the most democratic kind of society in which political, social and economic freedoms were assured to the fullest.22 Merely a democratic state is not enough, democratic way of life is necessary. Democratic way of life means the freedom of expression

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and tolerance towards the views of every person. Spiritual development should be given as much importance as the material development in a democratic socialist society. Spiritualism is inherent in human tradition. So an ideal society cannot be built up without spiritualism. The inherent tune of unity which manifests itself in the Indians is the tune of spiritualism. That tune needs to be vibrated in our external life. Then only the character building of human beings would be possible. And unless the reconstruction of human being takes place, the social reconstruction can never be possible.

It is interesting to note that democratic socialism can very well be synchronised with the Vedantic view of ‘unity’. Swami Vivekananda explains that a man is a mixture of materiality or externality and spirituality or internality. ‘Perfection’ (Brahman) is latent in every man and every man is consciously or unconsciously trying to attain perfection. It is not known when he would accomplish it, but the more he blossoms or realises the ‘self’ (Atman) in him the more he advances to ‘unity’. He realises that he shares the same ‘concepts, feeling and sympathy’ with others. Thus the ‘self’ in him is not different from the ‘self’ in others. This unity of the ‘self’ is towards the attainment of ‘Perfection’. The journey would end in unity with the ‘Infinite’ (Paramātman). This is the core point of Advaita philosophy. This religio-philosophical view of life may appear abstract and thereby irrelevant to the politics of democratic socialism, but it gives us a significant insight of life and that is important in the philosophy of democratic socialism. This philosophical abstraction underpins the importance of social solidarity through individual interactions. Philosophical abstraction works behind the formulation of concrete programme of action according to the needs of time.

Eminent social scientist Prof. Anthony Giddens practically agreed with JP when he said in late 1990’s that under a pressing situation [as we are today all over the world] “... social democracy can not only survive, but prosper, on an ideological as well as a practical level. It can only do so, however, if social democrats are prepared to revise their pre-existing views more thoroughly than most have done so far. They need to find a third way.”

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From 1948 onwards, JP constantly stressed in his speeches and writings on the moral and ethical values which the socialist movement must articulate in its praxis. He repeatedly turned to Gandhi and tried to underscore the major areas of agreement between Marx and Gandhi. In 1951 he wrote, "It is true that philosophically Gandhism has a non-secular and religious or supernatural foundation, whereas socialist philosophy is wholly secular and natural or material. But translated in terms of the practices of life, the values are not different: social and economic equality (casteless and classless society); freedom from exploitation; fullest possible freedom and opportunity for self-development; dignity of the human personality, co-operation; society's responsibility for the well-being of each and the responsibility of each towards society." Though his total separation from Marxism was not yet complete, his mind probed deeper and deeper into the problems of individual and social life. He believed that mere institutional changes were not enough. The individual man—the root of society must also be cured. And for this it was necessary to lay emphasis on values and right means.

But as his transformation was not complete he steered the middle course of Democratic Socialism. He realised that in a plural society like India the task of social revolution cannot be left to the politician alone. In 'Ends and Means' he stressed on the peaceful democratic means for social and political transformation. JP's views regarding 'Ends and Means' initiated a new debate in the Socialist Movement in India and ultimately became an integral part of socialist thinking and methodology.

JP examined the moral problems and reexamined his ideological premises again and again. He then wrote his famous article "Incentives to Goodness" in which he finally broke away from Marxism. This short article is supposed to be a very critical landmark in the evolution of JP's philosophical ideas. He was in search of a new philosophy, a philosophy that would provide an incentive to goodness. In this article he wrote that to seek incentive to goodness in personal and public life, this quest could not be limited within the narrow confines of the framework of materialism. He found Marxism lacking on this point. One has to
go beyond it to seek truth, goodness and moral values of life, JP wrote: “For many years I have worshipped at the shrine of the goddess—Dialectical Materialism—which seemed to me intellectually more satisfying than any other philosophy. But while the main quest of philosophy remains unsatisfied, it has become patent to me that materialism of any sort robs man of the means to become truly human. In a material civilisation man has no rational incentive to be good...” He firmly asserted: “I feel convinced, therefore, that man must go beyond the material to find the incentives to goodness. As a corollary, I feel further that the task of social reconstruction cannot succeed under the inspiration of a materialist philosophy.” Thus ideologically his complete separation from Marx took place. An ardent Marxist JP was transformed into a devout Gandhian.

JP now talked of human nature which is basically neutral and “acquires moral tones in accordance with social conditioning”. He underscored the importance of the character of the elite. “It is the philosophy and action of this group of the select that determine the destinies of men. To the extent the elite becomes godless or amoral to that extent evil overtakes the human race.”

He did not, however, mean that all those who believed in materialism were vicious nor that those who were non-materialists were all good. What he meant was that those who went beyond matter would find it difficult to justify non-good. He wrote, “Non-materialism... by rejecting matter as the ultimate reality immediately elevates the individual to a moral plane, and urges him, without reference to any objective outside himself, to endeavour to realize his own true nature and fulfil the purpose of his being.” At the Asian Socialist Conference held at Rangoon in January 1953, JP said, “I am afraid that the commonly accepted philosophy of Marxism, a philosophy accepted by many socialists, including the Stalinists, is based on amorality, a philosophy that does not take into account the question of good or evil, a philosophy that regards this question as relative and relative to such an extent that these considerations can be disregarded, if the immediate purpose were to be served in that manner.”
He also suggested a way out. The possibility of elevating the individual, the group or any other human entity from the so-called “amoralism” was to keep in view the test of immediacy, as propounded by Rammanohar Lohia. The test of immediacy envisages that each action taken must be in conformity with the ultimate ideal or vision contemplated. This was an extension of Mahatma Gandhi’s “one step is enough for me” formula, meaning thereby that “a right step taken was bound to lead to the right end.”

Like Gandhi, following Swami Vivekananda, JP believed in society politics and not in mere party politics. Reference to Vedānta is very much contextual in discussing JP’s ideas because JP was very much influenced by Swami Vivekananda. He said, ‘I am a student of Swamiji’. JP wrote in Prabuddha Bharata, as early as 1952, ‘I consider Swami Vivekananda a leader in every respect,— in religion, culture, economics, sociology,—, all of which ought to be established on the bed-rock of Vedānta, our ancient rational philosophy. If we fail to remember this and to build our nation on the foundations of our historic legacy, then India will not remain India...’ It would not be out of place if we quote the first verse of Isha Upaniṣad: Isha vasyamidam sarvam yatkincha jagatyam jagat; Tena tyaktena bhūnītha ma gridhah kasyasviddhānam— “(All this, whatever moves in this moving world, is enveloped by God. Therefore find your enjoyment in renunciation; do not covet what belongs to others). Here the world, the material world we live in, is not only not rejected, it is sanctified, it is called divine and we are asked to live in this world nobly, that is, we should have a spirit of renunciation and be free from greed and jealousy.” The Upaniṣads enjoin some ethical principles, a morality, and morality implies faith in life in society. This is the eternal tune of Indian life.

Swami Vivekananda, Gandhi and JP strongly believed that social reconstruction and individual reconstruction are complementary. For social change Swami Vivekananda stressed on man-making, Gandhi on non-violent satyagraha and JP on total revolution, which means emancipation of man in society. He held that individual and environment are closely related. Both need to be changed in...
such a way that a congenial social environment is developed for the individuals to behave in a disciplined humane manner. The detachment, self-control, conquest over desires are necessary for us. If we have to serve socialism and create a new society and new man (which is more important), we must make ourselves worthy instruments. Only then shall we succeed.\textsuperscript{37} In India, inspite of the educationally backwardness of our country, the people have certain traditions which probably will induce them or enable them to realise the value of freedom and democracy.

These realizations of JP formed the constituent elements of the Thesis of the Socialist Party and, later on the Thesis of the Praja Socialist Party, approved at the National Convention of the Praja Socialist Party in Gaya in December 1955. The Gaya thesis was the result of a harmony between the Marxian idea of classless society, free from exploitation and the ideal of Gandhian Swaraj. Purity of the means, ahimsa, political and economic decentralization are very important for establishing pure democratic socialism. The Gandhian thought of Panchayati Raj in the Gaya Thesis was taken up as a duty by the socialists. The democratic socialists took up the programme of ethical and cultural revolution along with the economic revolution. This phase of democratic socialism was only transitional. JP himself claimed it to be a "half-way house." Social revolution, according to all modern revolutionaries, means a fundamental change in the socio-economic—political structure of power. It implies that all power, social, economic and political, is seized and wielded directly by the people, who in this context include petty farmers, rural and urban labourers, low-income groups in offices, shops and schools, artisans and even such petty traders as hawkers and street vendors. The people in this sense perhaps constitute 80 percent of the population of this country.\textsuperscript{38}

Different developments in the political field revived in him the search for his quest regarding what incentives could lead man to goodness. The obvious answer to this was that man had to be moral, and so he was attracted by Acharya Vinoba Bhave's land gift movement which essentially addressed itself to the moral in man. In his \textit{Prison Diary}, JP said that, 'before joining Vinobaji I had
assured myself through discussions with him that he was concerned not with the mere distribution of land but with a total transformation of man and society, which I described as a double revolution: social revolution through human revolution.39

After the general election of 1952 when JP plunged whole-heartedly into the Bhoodan movement he conceived it not to be merely a movement for the redistribution of land but as 'the beginning of an all-round human as well as a social revolution'40 a 'revolution by non-violent mass action'. JP in an article entitled 'Jeevandan' published in Janata shortly after the Bodh Gaya Conference maintained that 'Bhoodan is itself an intensely and deeply political movement... it is ... not the politics of parties, elections, parliaments and governments; but politics of the people; not rajniti but lokniti as Vinoba says.'41 It is evident from his address to the Second Asian Socialist Conference held in Bombay in 1956 that his commitment to the Gandhian and post-Gandhian ideology as represented by Vinoba was total.42 He was gradually realising that human freedom cannot be established through the path of party politics. JP announced Jeevandan in a Conference in Bodh Gaya in 1954 which was a decision on his part to withdraw from party and power politics and devote the rest of his life to the Bhoodan and Sarvodaya movement.

To continue to believe in materialist philosophy and yet to expect ethical conduct in political practices were incompatible. So when he formally resigned from the party in 1957, he wrote a letter to his erstwhile comrades now known as From Socialism to Sarvodaya. "My final break with Marxism," JP recorded in this letter, "though not with politics, had come during the three week's fast at Poona in 1952. It was then that a long process of questioning started by the Russian purges came to an end and it became clear that materialism as a philosophical outlook could not provide any basis for ethical conduct and any incentive to goodness."43

He went further and asked if "man and his consciousness and the society... are mere manifestations of matter... I can see no reason why in such a society
anyone should try to be good... What is matter will dissolve into matter after death.\textsuperscript{44} As for those who believed in materialist philosophy and yet made great sacrifices for noble causes, he doubted if their action was consistent with their philosophy.\textsuperscript{45}

He was of the view that it was not possible for science to understand consciousness because it was a subjective experience. He believed that modern science could not resolve the dualism of matter and consciousness completely. "... It is only in the ultimate spiritual experience that this dualism is shed and the seer and the seen become one."\textsuperscript{46} And he concluded that "the root of morality lies in the endeavour of man to realize this unity of existence, or to put it differently, to realize his self."\textsuperscript{47}

However, he repeatedly said that he was not leaving politics. Because Sarvodaya is also politics. Party politics was becoming a barrier in the case of putting the basic principles of socialism into actual practice. Democracy, socialism, freedom would become useless unless people can be initiated to the mantra of renunciation. So he preached partyless democracy and decentralization of power to the grass-root level and tried to apply it in practical life. As for attaining the national freedom, effort by all the communities in society is necessary, similarly united effort from all the communities is necessary for national development and unity. He believed that freedom of the people would be established through Sarvodaya. Because there will be no question of party or power in the politics of Sarvodaya.

JP said, "the same old beacon lights of freedom, equality and brotherhood that had guided the course of my life and brought me to democratic socialism, drew me onwards around this turning of the road."\textsuperscript{48} But his regret was that he did not reach this point in his life's journey when "Gandhiji was in our midst." He said, "However, some years back it became clear to me that socialism as we understand it today cannot take mankind to the sublime goals of freedom, equality, brotherhood and peace. Socialism, no doubt, gives promise to bring mankind closer to those goals than any other competing social philosophy. But I am
persuaded that unless socialism is transformed into sarvodaya, those goals would remain beyond its reach; ..."\(^49\)

He looked forward to the day when the two would merge.

In his letter of resignation from the party, JP emphasised that ‘We may not live to see that consummation ourselves’, ... “but I feel confident that if the world were ever to reach the port of peace and freedom and brotherhood Socialism must eventually merge into Sarvodaya.”\(^50\) Later, he said that sarvodaya is people’s socialism, while the conventional socialism has been almost “state socialism”. He emphasised that “I regard sarvodaya as finer and truer form of social democracy.”\(^51\) His transition from socialism to sarvodaya did not mean that he had seized to be a socialist. He was only adopting a new version of socialism. The goal of his new phase, which he called communitarian, was to recreate human community as “self-governing, self-sufficient, agro-industrial, urbo-rural local communities.”\(^52\)

JP remained associated with the Bhoodan and the Sarvodaya movement for almost two decades. But his differences with Vinoba became prominent. Vinoba’s version of Bhoodan appeared to be negative to him. Bhoodan was the end for Vinoba. But JP’s aim was Sarvodaya— which was much wider than that of Vinoba’s dream. Distribution of land, decentralization of power etc. were inseparable parts of JP’s Sarvodaya. Sarvodaya was the true and improved form of socialism to JP. In order to spread Sarvodaya to each and every person in the society he preached ‘Antyodaya’. The basis of economic development was Gandhi’s concept of Antyodaya. Gandhi said, “I saw clearly that if mankind was to progress and to realize the ideal of equality and brotherhood, it must adopt and act on the principles of ‘unto the last’.”\(^53\) Gandhi’s criterion of self-sufficiency was that the lowest in the land got what they wanted most within the limits of the material resources available.

Man cannot attain true freedom unless the conditions of the people in the society from the grass-root level can be improved. He was anxious to involve the people at the grass-root level in the struggle for freedom; he sought to build a
real people’s organisation. How to create the necessary infrastructure was his main concern now. His interest in peasants’ and workers’ organizations stemmed from this concern.

JP dreamt of a communitarian society conforming to the Indian tradition. He realized that myriad of problems in our multi-dimensional society can never be solved without active participation of the people. So he called for arousing the Lok Śakti (people’s power) and reorganizing it by the panchayati system. JP’s concern with lok-śakti has its roots in the ancient Indian political tradition. Though thinkers of modern India like Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, Gandhi, Jayaprakash Narayan were in favour of accepting the good aspects of the East and the West, they were inspired by the Hindu tradition of political thought, which was pluralist in orientation. The Hindu political thinkers did not confer on the ruler arbitrary and despotic power. The ruler, according to the Hindu political tradition, was an integral part of a highly differentiated and uncentralized social order.

F. W. Thomas has rightly pointed out that in ancient India “although the state was totalitarian in its scope of activities, it did not adopt the totalitarian method in carrying out its function. A great deal of initiative and executive power was left to local assemblies as well as religious and social corporations...”54 The modern Indian thinkers detected the dichotomy between the political civilization of the West and the spiritual and moral civilization of India—the former depending on the state and the latter on the society for guiding the activities of the people. This traditional background of JP’s thought will explain why he relied not on the political process, but on the power of the people (lok-śakti) for ushering in overall changes in society.

JP knew that a country which is in deep slumber cannot be easily awakened. Hence he decided upon the longtime course of total revolution aiming at qualitative change in all walks of Indian life, political, economic, social with people’s interest as the central theme and people’s participation as the driving force.
Fifteen years after JP's *Plea for the Reconstruction of the Indian Polity*, the condition of the polity had deteriorated even further which is indicated by the following extract from his writings in 1973 in his weekly *Everyman's*, which was edited by Ajit Bhattacharjea: 'Politics, at least under a democracy, must know the limits which it must not cross. Otherwise, if there is dishonesty, corruption, manipulation of the masses, naked struggle for personal power and personal gain, there can be no socialism, no welfarism, no government, no public order, no justice, no freedom, no national unity—in short no nation.'

In his address to the National Conference on Voluntary Agencies held in New Delhi in 1969, he said that 'the people are losing hope and they feel that nothing will come out of any Government... Therefore I say, what India needs today on her political agenda is non-violent social revolution,... otherwise, violence will grow.'

However, JP went on to explain that no violent revolution can result in power to the people. This was the primary reason for his opposition to violent methods. This was actually a reiteration of Gandhi's view that violent battles could not ultimately bring power to the people.

In an article published abroad at about the same time JP again asserted that Gandhi's non-violence was 'the only practical alternative to the ineffectiveness of the parliamentary system here and ultimate disappointments of a violent revolution.' It was here he used for the first time the term 'Total Revolution'. As he put it: Gandhi's non-violence was not just a plea for law and order, or a cover for the *status quo*, but a revolutionary philosophy. It is indeed a philosophy of a total revolution...

Referring to the Naxalite movement he observed: "...My Sarvodaya friends and my Gandhian friends will be surprised to read what I publicly say now. I say with a due sense of responsibility that if convinced that there is no deliverance for the people except through violence Jayaprakash Narayan will also take to violence. If the problems of the people cannot be solved democratically I will also take to violence."
The JP movement marked a new chapter in the struggle of the Indian people for the establishment of democracy, human rights and against the status quo. It was the first consciously organized countrywide direct political mass movement and mass action in post-independent India when the masses were mobilised for securing an immediate concrete political objective, in search of a more effective political instrument for the fulfilment of the demand of the common people outside the usual legislative and constitutional modalities of parliamentary opposition in and outside the legislature. The dominant and all-important feature of the movement was organised defiance of law on the part of the masses. There lay its main significance and the revolutionary possibilities it opened up.\textsuperscript{63}

JP saw how the question of means and the role of ethics in politics were important factors in any revolutionary change. JP was in search of a philosophy which could establish a harmony between means and end because it was this harmony which was the surest way of ensuring the role of morality in individual and social affairs. He ultimately resolved the dilemma when he said, "man is both matter and spirit. His life must fulfil both his material and his spiritual needs"\textsuperscript{64} in the first chapter of the book "the Moral-Spiritual Framework." When he accepted this non-duality of "matter and spirit" man was freed from the "material" and could exercise his own "judgment" to shape his own future. It is in this non-duality of "matter and spirit" that we find JP to echo the voice of Swami Vivekananda.

JP felt that the country needs a systemic change which calls for total revolution. As was natural, he ruled out the path of violence for it cannot establish "people's power." This systemic change was to be brought about neither by legislation nor by force from above, but through public education and non-violent struggle by the people from below. He made an attempt to discover a Gandhian alternative of social revolution for social change in total revolution. He, therefore, evolved a scientific philosophy of a non-violent and democratic struggle for social change as injustice, selfishness and inequality have crossed all limits in our society.
JP was convinced that piecemeal reforms of the socio-economic and political system would not be able to bring about any significant change in the lives of the mass of the people and what was required was a radical transformation of the entire social system. That system, according to him, had hardly undergone any change since independence. The total revolution should change the entire life of the people. This total revolution should have the power to bring about an all-round change among the people and the society. JP's aim was social, economic, ethical, spiritual transformation. This struggle began with four objectives, namely eradication of corruption, high prices, unemployment and radical changes in education. None of the evils against which the movement is aimed can be removed without radical change in the whole society. The objectives may appear to be limited in character, but they cannot be achieved without an all-round revolution—political, economic, social, educational, moral and cultural.

JP's theory of 'Total Revolution' is constituted by the elements of different philosophies. Nobody before him thought on this line. A synthesis of all these elements would enrich the revolution and on the other hand, would save it from destruction. 'Revolution' and 'construction'—these two simultaneous steps are needed for total revolution to be successful. JP constantly emphasizes that the future of such a movement primarily depends not so much on what is done or not done by the state, but what is done by the people at large. Jan Sangharsha Samiti and Nava Nirman Samiti were set up as a part of the total revolution to organize protest movements and undertake new constructive programmes. He had a firm belief that the work of total revolution will proceed through construction and destruction. In his theory of total revolution he synthesized Marx's concept of revolution with Gandhi's concept of social change in accordance with the conditions of our country.

By using the word 'total revolution' JP visualised complete revolution—revolution in the social life, in the personal life. It can take different forms depending on the conditions of space and time. But everywhere total revolution means complete transformation of the social human being. In the Indian context,
it means a total change in all spheres—right from the villages to the town. But JP understood from his long experience in politics that the greatest hurdle in the path of change is administration and bureaucracy. He asserted that even the most legalistic and constitutionalist democrat would agree that all this could never be accomplished if the functioning of democracy were restricted to elections, legislation, planning and administrative execution. There must also be people’s direct action. And this action should comprise civil disobedience, peaceful resistance, non-cooperation—satyagraha in its widest sense. ‘One of the unstated implications of such satyagraha would be self-change; that is to say, those wanting a change must also change themselves before launching any kind of action’.66 So what is needed is administrative change. He thought of introducing some basic changes for bringing administration closer to the common people.

JP said that India is a country of villages and small towns and he believed that people’s government will be formed in villages. JP believed that with the total revolution the long cherished desire of Sarvodaya workers of setting up people’s government will take concrete shape in the villages. ‘... The three main aspects of the movement thus are: (1) the creation and organisation of peaceful people’s power, (2) total revolution as the aim of the movement, and (3) building up Gram Swarajya or people’s government from below—a challenge to Sarvodaya workers and an opportunity to work hard for their desired goals.’67

According to JP, total revolution is a combination of seven different types of revolution—social, economic, political, cultural, intellectual, educational, ethical or spiritual revolution. ‘I have been saying that total revolution is a combination of seven revolutions—social, economic, political, cultural, ideological or intellectual, educational and spiritual. This number may be increased or decreased. For instance, the cultural revolution may include educational and ideological revolutions. And if culture is used in an anthropological sense, it can embrace all other revolutions. But what we understand by culture in the context of a primitive society is not generally the same as in the context of a civilized society. Likewise, social revolution in the Marxian context covers economic and political revolutions

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and even more than that. This is how we can reduce the number to less than seven. And we can add to this number by breaking up each of the seven revolutions into different categories. Economic revolution may be split up into industrial, agricultural, technological revolutions, etc. Similarly intellectual revolution may be split up into two—scientific and philosophical. Even spiritual revolution can be viewed as made up of the moral and spiritual, or it can be looked upon as part of the cultural. And so on...68

JP reminded time and again that destruction of the old and simultaneous creation of the new both are included in the word revolution. Thus total revolution means the change of the entire society. "The question is even larger. It is how to bring about a systemic change in society, i.e., how to bring about what I have called a total revolution: revolution in every sphere and aspect of life."69 Gandhi used to say that there must be two steps in a revolution—internal as well as external; and it should start from the internal sphere. JP, too, held the same view.

'However, the total revolution, which is to be brought about by peaceful means, will embrace all aspects of individual and social life. It will, for instance, embrace the caste system, customs and manners, marriage, education, etc. Much of this can be done by education. But there may also be the need of civil disobedience and persuasion and non-cooperation. The economy and polity will have to go through a revolutionary change. In short, society as a whole or in the totality of all its social relations, institutions and processes will have to undergo a change.'70 So JP advised the youth to turn their revolutionary zeal to such tasks as demolition of the present caste system including untouchability, revolutionising the educational system, reverse the process of industrialisation so that it spreads out in the rural areas and thus stop the exploitation of the village by the town and the city and so on.71

The objective of this movement is not merely to change the government but also to change the society and the individual. 'If there were Total Revolution of my concept the individual man would also undergo a revolutionary change. So it
is the totality that undergoes the change including the individual. This is why I have called it total revolution. You can also call it a comprehensive revolution.

In this connection, JP appraisingly mentioned about Gandhi's Comprehensive approach. Gandhi did not rely only upon the economic element; he stressed on the social aspect of change. Marx said, 'Man is the criterion of mankind.' According to Gandhi, 'the centre of human development is man'. So, ultimately Marx and Gandhi both are of the same view. We can be a little more elaborate. Marx said, 'emancipation of man'; Swami Vivekananda said, 'freedom of man' [Mukti]; Gandhi said 'swaraj'.

JP said that there is some difference in the meaning of the terms 'total' and 'comprehensive' but both were almost the same to him. 'A comprehensive revolution can also be total... This is not something that can be achieved in a day or in a year or two. In order to achieve this we shall have to carry on a struggle for a long time, and at the same time carry on constructive and creative activities. The double process of struggle and construction is a necessity in order to achieve total revolution.

JP was convinced that developmental change cannot be rolled from higher to the lower level, but it should be spread upwards starting from the grass-root level. And that would be the true development based on decentralization. 'In the present context a total revolution in India should mean a revolution from the village upwards to the largest urban concentration. There must be a total change in civic life, civic relationships, civic institutions, civic relations and as we go beyond the sphere of civic life we enter larger spheres of the state, of the national life; we have innumerable spheres 'in which the changes will have to be brought about.' JP had come to the conclusion that it can only be "the radical Sarvodaya group", which believe in kranti rather than merely doing good work serving the people, doing constructive work, such as khadi and village industries, basic education and things like that. To all that, he said, must be added a revolutionary programme. All these put together would mean some kind of a revolutionary change.
JP wanted to involve both the government and the revolutionaries in the decentralization of administration and in the constructive programme as part of the process of total revolution. He felt that the Westminster type of government, as has been introduced by our Constitution, has failed to identify the people of the country with the government. Identification of the people with the government was considered inevitable also by Gandhi and Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das. But the Constitution-makers ignored this vital point and only incorporated a provision for introducing Panchayat system in the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution, that too when Gandhi expressed dissatisfaction for ignoring decentralization of powers by the Constitution-makers. Consequently, Panchayat system was not seriously accepted in the governmental process; even where the Panchayat system was introduced it was based on partisan conflict following the national political style. But what was needed was ‘Lokniti’ instead of ‘Rajniti’ because Lokniti alone can generate ‘Lokśakti’ and the polity should be based on ‘Lokśakti-Lokniti’. Disregard for this principle by the Constitution-makers and planting of the alien parliamentary system in an unprepared Indian soil, far from establishing the desired polity, developed a half-roasted political system in the country. JP brought back the issue of ‘Lokśakti-Lokniti’ during the Bihar movement. As a matter of fact it was made the central issue of the movement. He went on moving from village to villages in company with the fellow revolutionaries and inspired the local people to form Loksamitis. These Loksamitis not only undertook the work of village administration and developing village based self-sufficient economic system but also trial of petty legal disputes. The revolutionaries not only started the work of village reconstruction through setting up of small-scale and cottage industries but also dedicated themselves to the restoration of pseudonymous lands. This they did through non-violent satyagraha.76

Apparently student movements in Gujarat and Bihar in the 1970’s initiated the total revolution. But actually total revolution had its germination in the long history of increasing hunger, unemployment, corruption as well as purposeless
education system and rural urban disparities. JP rightly understood that rise in prices of commodities in the interest of the businessmen, corruption and the electoral system are complementary to each other. So he was convinced that short term arrangement like change of government would not bring in any qualitative change in our life. His proposed alternative constitutional system was to build up an organic communitarian system from the village level to the national level. ‘Community’ and self-development and self-regulation of communal life are the distinguishing marks of Indian polity. The grass-root level of the system would assume the maximum power, and the more the structure would go high up the more the power would decrease. This is just the opposite to the present centralized system. Since the communitarian society could not be build up at once attempts should be made for founding the primary level of it as he started doing by forming Loksamitis during the Bihar movement. Side by side the present electoral system should be changed. JP suggested that like the party primaries for selecting candidate at the U.S. Presidential election, there should be popular primaries for selecting specific number of candidates in every constituency and the different political parties would choose their candidates from amongst the successfuls in the primaries. Then the people would elect their final representatives from amongst these party candidates. Not only that JP wanted the introduction of the system of ‘recall’ in case the representatives took anti-people role. JP suggested this because in his opinion, in democracy there is not ‘cretia’ only, but also ‘demos’. He wanted to replace the present politics by Lokniti. A significant feature of JP’s political and social philosophy is his concern for Lok-sakti (power of the people). In his conceptualization lok-sakti means the capacity of the people to resist any wrong or to resist authority when it is abused or to bring about changes in the institutions or to reconstruct small communities.

A new economy is also necessary and for that JP wanted to balance large scale industries by cottage and small scale industries. The economy should have a human touch. The public sector and the private sector should work side by side. In the public sector the workers and the managers should feel that they are
not mere mechanical performer of roles, they have a social responsibility. The private sectors should also be guided by the spirit of social service and responsibility. They would earn profit and produce commodities but the commodities should have a social relevance and the profit should not be earned at the cost of the society. In our epoch of globalization the industrialists in the West are following the principle of 'corporate responsibility'. So to say, it has been the essence of the developed economy. In 1995 the Shell Oil Company planned to dispose off the Brent Spar oil rig by sinking it to the ocean bed. Environmental groups mounted so vigorous protests that consumers in many countries stopped buying Shell petrol. This brought far-reaching changes in the attitude of the company. In 1998 Shell published a substantial report describing its new attitudes towards corporate responsibility. They accepted the responsibility to ensure that their businesses would run in a way that would be ethically acceptable to the rest of the world and said 'We must show we are doing so by providing independently verified assurance.' So JP may be said to have marched ahead of time. JP also proposed the right to work to be a fundamental right in the Constitution because that would be the first step of total revolution against unemployment and poverty; that would pave the way towards Antyodaya.

However, JP did not put forward any formula for total revolution. He only recommended certain principles to be applied according to the demand of the situation.

In the present representative democracy the representatives are at the centre stage and the people who form the base of the structure are ignored. Modern democracy, so to say, cannot be called a popular government because 'majority rule' cannot stand for the 'rule of the people'. Majority is, at its core, the possession of power by fifty one against forty nine and not hundred for hundred. Robert Michels observes that Party based democratic rule reduces democracy into oligarchy. To quote Michels, "...every party organisation represents an oligarchical power grounded upon a democratic basis, we find everywhere electors and elected. Also we find everywhere that the power of the elected leaders over the electing masses is almost unlimited."
Since parliamentary democracy is not in consonance with the Indian social structure and Indian tradition and culture, it, instead of widening the field of freedom, is shrinking it by centralization of power. The political parties could have played a big role in enthusing the people to constructive action. But they are concerned with power only. They all believe, without exception, that it is only the government that can do anything for the people. Therefore, they are busy either with the exercise or enjoyment of power or with the winning of power. Some, no doubt, talk of constructive programmes, but whatever is done is with an eye to elections. The result is that the people are made more inert and dependent.

JP, too, was disappointed by the performance of the political parties in parliamentary democracy. Continuous rivalry for power and conflict as an expression of lust for power, pettyness, electoral corruption etc. for capturing power darkened the future of democracy. The political parties have been states within a state. Without being the leader of the people the political parties became the determinants of the future of the people. They endanger the very existence of democracy because the oligarchical parties are beyond democratic control. However, JP does not blame the parties so much, he rather says; “For my part it is not the party system that is the main culprit, but parliamentary democracy itself which gives its rise.”81 It may be recalled that Swami Vivekananda criticised British parliamentary democracy as a rule by a few powerful people.82

The mere fact that every adult Indian has the right to vote does not widen the base of Indian democracy. The crores of individual and disparate voters are like a heap of particles of sand which can never be a foundation for any structure. ‘The particles must be united to form bricks or encased within concrete moulds to be able to act as foundation stones.’82 Therefore, if stability is to be imparted to our democracy, the base must be broadened and the top layers suitably architected into the basic structure. If the base were strong, there would be little danger of the whole edifice of democracy toppling down at the adventurer’s touch. ‘The durability of a structure— no matter how ambitious— depends on the strength of the foundation and the lower supporting structures.’83
His experience of democracy, both in India and abroad, convinced him that parties and politics had been gradually restricting democracy and from this it was apparent that democracy did not depend upon partisan activities: The real guarantee [of democracy] is the faith of the people in democracy and their strength and capacity to learn it. He refused to accept that democracy exists in the election of representatives at an interval of five years. In his opinion, democracy can be strengthened only by giving more powers to the people. It was during this time JP spoke of the possibility of partyless democracy.

JP was aware that partisan politics could not be discarded forthwith, so he proposed that living aside national politics, political parties should be debarred from participating in the local body elections up to the district level. Village panchayats, local boards, district boards and municipalities should be elected without the participation of the political parties. This would enable the people to directly participate in the democratic process.

JP was also aware that like every system Panchayati Raj or participatory democracy would also not be free from defects. "But it would be more democratic and its faults would be more susceptible to correction precisely because it would be more democratic. Many evils could be removed at the very source if elections to the village Panchayats were to be without contest."84

JP always reminded people that the struggle for total revolution is a long process. "This battle ... is a very long one. Its objective is to bring about not merely a change in power but an all-pervading change in society. Therefore you must prepare yourselves for a long struggle."85 It is an ever-continuing revolution which has no beginning and no end. It will always go on and keep on changing both our personal and social lives. This revolution knows no respite, no halt, certainly not a complete halt. Of course, according to the needs of the situation its form will change, its programme will change, its processes will change. At an opportune moment there may be an emergence of new forces which will push forward the wheels of change. The soldiers of total revolution must keep constantly busy with their programmes of work and wait for such an opportune moment.86
As a matter of fact, JP’s total revolution is meant for revibrating the eternal tune of Indian life. This revolution of reflecting the tune of Indian spirituality in human life would be possible when man would realize his welfare is not divorced from the welfare of society. This unique total revolution is a process of ascending and this ascending is the ascending towards freedom.

The Vedántist in JP said that— Man is a seeker of truth by nature. He gradually proceeds towards truth. He can never reach the ultimate truth but the journey will not end. Therefore sarvodaya is not the ultimate end. Man gradually advances towards freedom and truth. This is also the message of Swami Vivekananda: ‘Atmono mokshartham jagatdhitayacha’ (for the realization of ‘self’ and welfare of the world). This has been called ‘Mukti’. And it is to enjoy this freedom or the ultimate goal of human life that Jayaprakash Narayan called for total revolution. So we have to march forward if we really want to breath in the fresh air of freedom. We should, therefore, enthuse ourselves by the Vedic calling: Charaibeti Charaibeti (Move ahead, move ahead).

Notes and References
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5. Ibid., p. 141.
9. Ibid., p. 147.
10. A Revolutionary’s Quest, op.cit., p. 143.
12. Ibid.
15. Ibid., p. 142.
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19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., p. 8.
21. Ibid., p. 129.
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26. Ibid., p. 149.
27. Referred by Dandavate, Madhu, in the article Change with Continuity in Janata, December 2, 2001, p. 9.
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32. A Revolutionary’s Quest, op.cit., p. 160.
33. Ibid., p. 161.
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38. A Revolutionary’s Quest, op.cit., p. 290.
41. Ibid., p. 128.
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44. Ibid., pp. 192-93.
45. Ibid., p. 193.
46. Ibid., p. 194.
47. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Statement issued in the form of a letter to the members of the PSP while resigning from its membership; later published as a pamphlet. See Revolutionary’s Quest, op.cit., pp. 181-208; Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy, op.cit., pp. 138-74.
51. ‘Back to Mahatma Gandhi’ in Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy, op.cit., p. 182.


58. ‘Revolution : For Power or for People?’ in *A Revolutionary’s Quest*, *op.cit.*, pp. 290-6.


61. Quoted in *A Revolutionary’s Quest*, *op.cit.*, p. liii.


63. The Call, *Organ of the Revolutionary Socialist Party*, Delhi, October 1974, pp. 5-6 and 11.


71. *Ibid*.


73. ‘A Long Battle’ in *A Revolutionary’s Quest*, *op.cit.*, p. 368.

74. *Ibid*.


