Chapter II

ROLE OF J.P. IN NATIONAL MOVEMENT
National movement is an important event in the history of India. Fighters, patriots, great scholars, lawyers and responsible citizens participated and sacrificed their life for liberation of this country from British clutches. Jayaprakash Narayan realised his duties and performed well. J.P. is well known as one of the important leaders of India’s struggle for freedom. He was one of the architects of the Congress Socialist Party in 1934 and became a hero during the Quit India Movement. B.N. Ahuja was so much impressed by J.P’s role that he described him as “India’s Revolutionary Number One.”

J.P. returned from the U.S.A. in 1929; his mind was divided over his priorities, academic research on the one hand and participation in the National Struggle for Independence on the other. Thus in February 1930 he wrote to Gandhiji: “I sometimes begin to doubt whether I should spend my time in research when the country is passing through the most critical period. I wonder how long I can resist myself.” But actually he had already expressed his inclination to Gandhiji in an earlier letter. Writing to him, on January 11, 1930, he had expressed his desire. “I have been waiting for your programme of civil-disobedience movement with great curiosity. I hope that I shall be able to dedicate myself to the struggle of the country’s independence.”

Though he was practically a committed Marxist by the time he left the U.S.A., he was convinced that the Communists must join the mainstream of the struggle for national liberation even if it was under the hegemony of the
bourgeoisie. On his way back he met Clemenus Dutt, brother of Rajini Palme Dutt, and other communist leaders in London and discussed with them the issue of India's freedom and revolution. Clemenus Dutt, a godfather of communists, observed that the communists in India should oppose Indian National Congress which represented the bourgeoisie. But J.P., who had read Lenin's famous "Colonial thesis" calling upon the communists in the "Slave" countries to take active part in the national freedom struggle, was not convinced with Dutt's argument. He thus observed:

"The National struggle for freedom cannot be a communist struggle, it cannot be a struggle of classes, but it must be a national struggle of the combination of all the classes, the workers, peasants, the middle class and even a section of the capitalist class against imperialism and, therefore, Lenin had said that it must be the task of the communists to become participants in this struggle, if possible, to become its leaders."  

Later when he joined the movement he was surprised to find that Indian Communists were following the line which Clemenus Dutt advocated. He could not understand the rationality of the fight against the Congress which was struggling for the freedom of the country. Even in America, he was doubtful about the moral integrity of the communists. In an interview, a fellow student, Saul D. Ozer, recalled his experience with J.P. as follows, "I will tell you a very interesting discussion that I had with him. He admitted that though he has very impressed with Marxism, he was very much unimpressed with
communists as he found them.... He told me that the major thing that bothered him was the morality, character, integrity of the Communists. He found them people that he did not like....”5

The second disobedience campaign was started in 1932. Gandhiji, Nehru and other important leaders were put behind the bars. J.P. became the acting General Secretary of the Congress. He organized the underground office and directed the struggle in various parts of the country. Eventually, he was also arrested in Madras on September 7, 1932, and was sent to Nasik Central Jail. The free Press Journal of Bombay reported his arrest in headlines as “Congress Brain arrested.”6 For the cause of national freedom he had to go to jails a number of times. Once when he was imprisoned in Nasik Central Jail he luckily met a number of young Congress leaders M.R. Masani, Achyut Patwardhan, N.C. Goray, Asoka Mehta, M.L. Dantwala, Charles Mascarenhas and C.K. Narayanaswami. They had little to do except discuss politics and get to know each other. The result of all these fervent discussions was the emergence of a new revolutionary party, i.e., the Congress Socialist Party which pledged to infuse the freedom movement with socialist ideals. This party decided to work both within and outside the Congress. Here J.P. made his Marxist influence on the newly formed party.

Thomas A.Rusch observed that there was no doubt that C.S.P* was not a homogenous party of unified elements, and the leadership of C.S.P. was

* C.S.P. - Congress Socialist Party
divided over the question of tactics and doctrine of socialism but they were certainly united so far as the immediate goal of freedom was concerned. The party’s ideology reflected the dual objectives of its existence, “the achievement of independence in the sense of separation from the British empire” and “the establishment of socialist society.” The peasants and industrial workers had to be drawn into the National Movement. The Congress had to woo them, coax them and show them what they had to gain from independence. And once this was accomplished, no force, not even British imperialism, would be capable of resisting. Jayaprakash played a very important role in the formulation of this kind of programme, primarily because he alone had been schooled in both orthodox Marxist and Gandhian technique of peaceful revolution for national freedom and was thus both a socialist and a nationalist. Minoo Masani was a ‘bourgeois democrat’. Acharaya Narendra Dev was looking for a compromise between Marx and the Buddha. Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia was working to find out a synthesis of Gandhi and Marx. Achyut Patwardhan had entered the movement with a spiritual cast of minds. Ashok Mehta, the youngest of them all, had an admiration for Stalin, but somehow also an existentialist. As Jayaprakash was both a socialist and a nationalist, he tried his best to win over both the Communists and the Congressmen for creating a broad socialist front to fight imperialism.

With the formation of the C.S.P., J.P.’s life was devoted to encouraging groups of like-minded radicals throughout the country to set up branches and at the same time organizing and strengthening urban workers’ and peasants’
associations. When the All India Congress Committee passed a resolution at Patna in 1934 agreeing to participate in elections to legislative assemblies the C.S.P. vehemently opposed the resolution and restrained its members from contesting elections. Among the Congressmen, the attraction of ministerial office rapidly obliterated the previous commitment to mass struggle. The C.S.P. remained firm on its stand to emphasise on mass struggle. When in 1936 Nehru nominated J.P. as a member of the Congress Committee J.P. suggested, that the Congress must mobilize a “powerful mass movement”. Among his suggestions for reorganizing the Congress for the big task J.P. emphasised the importance of peasant’s organization as under.

A harassed, oppressed, demoralized peasantry cannot take its just place, in the National revolution. The peasantry must be put on its feet; it must be organized and welded together. With the strength of the peasantry will follow the strength of the National and the fight for freedom.

Reviewing the position of peasantry in India, M.N. Roy found that the capitalist economy had brought under its control almost the entire of agricultural production. The Indian peasantry was subjected to the exploitation of foreign as well as native capital. To Roy, “The secret of misery of the rural population lies in the fact that the agricultural production has been brought completely within the sphere of capitalist exploitation, foreign and native combined. The unrestricted export of food grains, together with the merciless speculation carried on by the native traders, raises the price continually on the
one hand, while, on the other, the lack of employment among an ever-growing section of the rule population creates great scarcity of money. So, even when there is food, the people die of hunger, because they have no money to buy it with."\textsuperscript{9}

When M.N.Roy was in Jail, the C.S.P. was launched. Royists played an important role in the formation of the C.S.P. Many members of the Roy group took part in the activities of the party and held the positions in it. They contributed in shaping the programme and policies of the C.S.P. Substantial parts of the Royists manifesto well incorporated in the C.S.P. programme adopted at Bombay in 1934. J.P. hoped that because of their early association the Royists would merge with the C.S.P But when Roy came out of jail, the events took a different turn. Roy opposed the formation of the left group within the Congress. Form jail, he wrote three letters to the C.S.P. in May 1934, May 1935 and February 1936 respectively and expressed his unwillingness in this regard. In the first letter, he wrote, “The struggle for the leadership of the Congress must take place not under the flag of socialism, but of democratic national revolution. The present political situation demands not the organization of a Socialist Party inside the Congress... but the capture of the congress as such by the radical national revolutionary elements."\textsuperscript{10} In his second letter, he wrote, “To be effective, the left wing of the Congress should free itself from the handicap of operating under the label of the Congress Socialist Party.... My point is that such a party cannot be inside the Congress.
It must be independent of the Congress, although its members will individually remain in the Congress and constitute the driving force behind the left wing."¹¹

In fact, M.N. Roy was pleading for amalgamation of all the leftists into a single political grouping within the Congress and from that base operate in the Congress with the object of freeing it from its ideological, political and organizational deficiencies and convert it into a might mass instrument in the struggle against imperialism. In his third letter to the Executive Committee of the C.S.P., he wrote, "My conviction is that a Marxian Party cannot be otherwise organized in this country."¹² After his coming out of jail, Roy opposed the United Front Policy. In one of its resolution, the C.S.P. declared Roy the disrupter and the sabotager of the United Front. The complete break with the C.S.P. of Roy came when he supported the Congress move of setting up the Congress Ministries in the provinces. The C.S.P. opposed this move. At that time, J.P. wrote, "Perhaps he had come to realize that the congress Socialist Party could not be a plaything in his hands, nor a platform that he could use it to boost his own ego…"¹³

He also emphasised the need to organize the working class and establish a link between the Congress and the two organizations representing the peasants and workers, and to evolve a joint plan of action, meetings, demonstrations, campaigns, etc. However, "For J.P. the question of independence was inter-twined with the problem of economic freedom, particularly in India". In his considered view "if economic issues had to be
solved, the masses should not only capture political power but also retain and use that power to solve them.”

When the Second World War broke out the situation was very critical. The attitude of the communists towards the war was not co-operative. They now described the C.S.P. as a Menshevik Party. The communists characterized the Indian National Congress as an organization of the Indian bourgeoisie and its leadership, as “bourgeois in character.” They also made frantic efforts “to expose and isolate” the leadership from the people. Theirs was the politics of manipulation and manoeuvre and they appeared least concerned with creating a genuine revolutionary force in the country. It was alleged that they derived their inspiration from some external authority. According to Narendra Dev, they seemed more interested in denigrating the leadership than in “building up the fighting front of the people.” They talked about “revolution from within”, about “a United front from below” and about “unity with the rank and file against the leaders.”

J.P. and other socialist’s leaders, on the other hand, believed that the pressure of struggle might release forces that “move and metamorphose the leadership.” A mass struggle, according to them, always threw up new leaders. During the tug-of-war between the forces of the left and the forces in the Congress were totally in disarray after Subhash Chandra Bose was a re-

*Menshevik Party:* It was a party in Russia. It sought to establish communist regime gradually and through the dissemination of education. It was not in favour of any kind of revolutionary means to achieve its ends.
elected Congress President. At this critical juncture Nehru joined the old guard; the communists maintained an enigmatically neutral posture at the Anti-Compromise Conference held in March 1940.

The situation became tense at Tripuri where a resolution was moved by G.B. Pant* asking the President not to form the working committee without consulting Gandhiji. The socialists could not cast their weight with either side as they disapproved of the spirit of internal warfare and did not want to be responsible for breakdown in the Congress. They remained neutral during this period. In spite of his neutrality, J.P. in that situation was trying hard to avoid a split in the Congress. He went to Calcutta after the Tripuri Congress and evolved a compromise formula. Whereas they supported Bose both J.P. and Narendra Dav pleaded that the contest between Bose and Sitaramayya was not a contest efforts, however, the split could not be averted.

From the very beginning J.P.’s desire was that C.S.P. and C.P.I.** Should work unitedly. But the Indian Communists behaved very differently from his expectation. They dubbed C.S.P. as “the left manoeuvre of the bourgeoisie” and its leadership as “Socialist Fascists.” In fact the C.P.I. always acted on the direction of the “Soviet Comintern.’ The Manifesto of the Anti-Imperialist Conference, 1934, copies of International Press Correspondence, an organ of the Comintern, and activities of Philip Spratt, show the directions

* G.B. Pant :- Govind Ballaih Pant
** C.P.I :- Communist Party of India

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outlined for the C.P.I. The IMPRECOR of 9\textsuperscript{th} March 1935 making an assessment of “Problems of Anti-Imperialist Struggle in India” considered that:

The All India Congress Socialist Party, by its very formation demonstrates that left national reformism is obliged to have recourse to new and more cunning methods of action against the growing influence of the Communist Party among the masses.\textsuperscript{19}

The C.P.I. now felt that the struggle against imperialism could not be separated from the struggle against national reformism and as a tactics recommended a broad United Front with the Congress “for really extending and depending the struggle against imperialist oppression, for exposing the tricksters of national reformism.”\textsuperscript{20}

J.P. was taken in by this idea of United Front for he was an ardent supporter of leftist Unity in the country. Perhaps J.P. in the beginning had not understood the nature of C.P.I. That is why despite other hostile attitude shown by the C.P.I. and timely warning given by his socialist colleagues like Ram Manohar Lohia, M.R. Masani, Achyut Patwardhan and Ashok Mehta that his policy would end in “disaster”,\textsuperscript{21} J.P. went on making efforts for a United Front. At last in Ramgarh in 1940 he himself felt a desire to give up “vague” talk of unity with C.P.I. The fault he knew, was not of the Communist Party as such. The very nature of the C.P.I. was such that it could unite only with such a
party which must have relations with the Third International these two parties of different ideologies could not be united.

As for the attitude of the communists towards the war was concerned they called it an imperialist war in the beginning. They did so in view of the Soviet understanding with Hitler against the Allies. They had rolled out the red carpet of Bose at the beginning of the war. After Hitler’s attack on Russia, however, they made him (Bose) their special target of attack. “The Imperialist War” became the “people’s war”, the Allies became their friends.

The Socialists on the other hand, were from the very beginning firm against participation in imperialist wars. Refuting the contention of the communists that it was a “people’s war” Nerendra Dev maintained: “The war of 1914-18 an imperialist war waged to serve imperialist ends... The present war is of the same character. The epoch of imperialism has not ended.” As early as November 11, 1939, the Bombay branch of the C.S.P. organized an “anti-war day” in Bombay. Presiding over the rally, J.P. appealed to the Congress to resist India being drawn into a European War, for, “this war is meant to aggrandise the vested interests of the imperialists. We shall strongly oppose it.”

J.S. Bright making observations on the role of J.P. during World War and comparing him with Netaji said:

J.P. and Netaji will always be remembered as the two most glorious figures of India’s struggle for freedom during the Second World War. Both
made a firm unshakable resolve to turn the situations into an opportunity to strike for India’s liberation.25

On December 31, 1939, as General Secretary of the C.S.P. released a war circular from Lucknow. Addressing a public meeting at Jamshedpur on February 18, 1940, he called upon the people, to take advantage of the war to stop British exploitation of India and to overthrow the British Government, to stop payment of rent and revenue; to establish their own government, to organize a general strike and to stop the Tata Iron and Steel Company from supplying steel for the prosecution of the war. He further observed:

My country is not a party to this war in any manner, for it regards both Germany’s Nazism and British Imperialism as evils and enemies. Great Britain is fighting to perpetuate the Indian empire . . . in the present circumstances, however, India has no alternative but to fight and end British Imperialism. Only in that manner can it contribute to the peace and progress of the world.26

He was arrested and imprisoned for nine months. I have been charged with trying to impede the production of munitions, he said and added “I plead guilty to these charges.” Gandhi was very unhappy over his arrest. Writing an article on the subject in Harijan on 16 March, Gandhi paid a handsome tribute to J.P.:

The arrest of Shri Jayaprakash is unfortunate. He is no ordinary worker. He is an authority on Socialism. It may be said that what he does know of western socialism nobody else in India does. He has forsaken all for the sake of...
the deliverance of this country. His industry is tireless. His capacity for suffering is not to be excelled...27

In Hazaribagh jail, Jayaprakash's political activities continued uninterrupted. He went on as usual, with the studies, and even successfully organized lectures and seminars on political problems of the day. In jail, J.P. kept on writing articles and somehow he managed to smuggle them out and these appeared in the 'Search Light', 'National Herald' and 'Bombay Chronicle'. These articles appeared under the sign 'A Congress Socialist'. In 1939, J.P. published an English weekly called, 'Congress Socialist', from Bombay to propagate the socialism, he organized the kisan and mazdoor bodies. He organized a 'Youth Society', a women's Society and a 'Self-Help Society' as supplementary socialist bodies. He also organized Socialist Book Clubs in the cities. They stirred the people into political awareness and activism. While, he was in jail, he drafted a resolution for the Ramgarh Session of the Indian National Congress, 1940. He requested Gandhiji to place it before the working committee of the Congress at Ramgarh. The draft resolution entitled, 'An Outline Picture of Swaraj,' gives the picture of democratic socialist as envisaged by J.P.28

Immediately after his release from Hazaribagh jail he contacted both Gandhiji and Subhash Chandra Bose and apprised them of his plan of living and working in hiding against the British Imperialism. There was also another purpose of his meeting them. He was still intent on bring bring about a
reapproachment between the two. He strongly wished Subbash would join the
Congress for the sake of having greater strength and unity in the progressive
movement. But his efforts did not prove fruitful. Then he went to Bihar to
uphold and support the peasant movement, led by Swami Sahajanand, in its
struggle against the repressive machinery of the State. From Bihar he travelled
to Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and then to Bombay, where he attended meetings and
contacted important political leaders to organise a powerful revolutionary
movement against the British rule. All this was done by him disguise, but he
could not escape the eyes of the people and was soon arrested.

Jayaprakash was first kept in the Arthur Road Prison in Bombay city
and then sent to the Deoli Camp jail. He kept up his political activities in jail
through political discussion and debates. He could also manage to snatch
sometime everyday to read avidly, a luxury which was often difficult to
indulge in when he was free and fervently active in politics. But this was not
enough for him. He continued his efforts to keep himself in close touch with
the prominent national leaders and his associates to keep his information up-to-
date about the political situation of the country. For that he chose the method of
smuggling letters out of jail. One day, when Prabhawati came to visit J.P., he
tried to smuggle out a packet of letters from jail. But the guard detected the
move and seized the letters. The confiscated letters were closely examined by
the police and were given wide publicity to curb his political activities. On 18th
October., 1941 the contents of one of his confiscated letters were published in
the newspaper with a view to popularising that Jayaprakash had been found out
as the top underground agitator of the country and that he had been plotting to
bring about an armed insurrection in India. This plot against him was
gineered by the British authorities in order to defame him in the eyes of the
public and alienate him from Gandhiji and Congress.

But Gandhiji’s attitude was not one of anger. Instead of feeling unhappy
over Jayaprakash’s belief in the use of violent methods for the cause of national
freedom, he held the British rule responsible for encouraging violent and
revolutionary feeling in the country. Thus Gandhiji observed about J.P.:

“I know that Jayaprakash does not agree with my nonviolent principle,
but he is not to blame for that. He spent many years in America, and was
educated there. It is natural that his thinking be influenced by the doctrines of
foreign movements. But one thing is clear: whatever he has done, has been
completely in the cause of national freedom. Whatever, our disagreements and
differences, I have not for a moment doubted his courage, sacrifice and strength
of purpose. I do not think, a foreign power, that has ruled India for an age
through force and violence, has the right to accuse Jayaprakash of believing in
violence. By publishing his letter, the government has tried to bring him into
disrepute. If they think Jayaprakash is guilty of believing in violence, then the
foremost offender is the government itself.”

At that time, the political situation in India was simmering. The Congress
distrust of the British had increased, and it had become convinced that the
British Government had no attention to recognize India’s independence. In
October 1940, Gandhiji had launched the individual civil disobedience movement. Nearly 30,000 congressmen had courted imprisonment during the years 1940-41. But by the end of 1941, it almost came to an end. From the very beginning, Jayaprakash had doubts about its success. He was of the opinion that the individual civil disobedience could not satisfy the revolutionary spirit of the youth of the country, and his estimates turned out to be true.

In August 1942, “Quit India Movement”, was launched by Gandhiji. J.P. was still in Hazaribagh Central Jail. He was getting restless in prison, for he had to fulfil the historical task for which he had been waiting. In November 1942, on the night of Diwali, he escaped from prison with five comrades by scaling down the prison walls. Onkar Sharad observed that “Mr. Jayaprakash’s flight from the Hazaribagh is an interesting and thrilling episode in the equally thrilling year.” Soon after, he along with certain other congress leaders, launched an underground movement and trained a guerilla brigade. He wrote three letters to the ‘Freedom Fighters’, in January 1943, September 1943, and in August 1946, respectively, and a fourth was addressed to the Americans. Through these letters, he exhorted the people to carry on the struggle to overthrow the British imperialism completely.

Throughout the colonial period, he often advocated “use of arms in the struggle for freedom, contrary to the stand of Gandhiji.” In 1944 he himself acknowledge that he did not believe in Nonviolence. After a few months, J.P. left for Nepal. He organized and trained an ‘Azad Dasta’ (Freedom Brigade)
there. The mission of this organization was to paralyse the machinery of British Government. Finally, he was arrested in a running train in Punjab in September 1943, and in December, he was declared a state prisoner. He was kept in Lahore Fort. Here, he kept a diary and noted in it his jail life. It was later published under the title, *Inside Lahore Fort* in 1959 by the Socialist Book Centre, Madras. Having been arrested in Lahore Fort on September 19, 1943 he was subjected to inhuman tortures to get necessary information. Thus he had to submit to all kinds of brutalities in the Lahore Fort that were perpetrated on him by the police. Dr. Lohia also had to suffer the same type of inhuman treatment there. In January 1945 after 16 months both of them were transferred to Agra jail due to the great anger of the Indian people. Gndhiji was seriously concerned over the imprisonment of Jayaprakash and Dr. Lohia. Gndhiji in the meantime made it clear to the Cabinet Mission that unless both of them were unconditionally released, the negotiations would not start. Due to this both Jayaprakash and Dr. Lohia were released from Agra on 11 April, 1946. The two men were given a heroic welcome by the people. J.P. was recognized as ‘The Heart of India’, ‘The King of the Hearts of the Youth’.

It was a time when the Congress was riven by differences on the issue of strategy towards the war. Another problem was created by the separatist move by Jinnah and the Muslim League. The question of nonviolence had sharpened the differences between Gandhi and Nehru. Gandhi vehemently criticized the growing parliamentary mentality among the Congressmen and was in favour of direct action so long as the war lasted. But J.P.’s solution for all these problems
was mass revolutionary struggle which would sweep away all of those who were in favour of status quo— the league and the conservatives in the Congress, what to talk of Britishers. He was anxious about the central organisation of the party, about party propaganda, and about setting up of underground organizations.

The C.S.P. played a glorious and important role in the struggle that followed “Quit India” movement. In the words of Lakhanpal “1943 is and shall remain one of the most important and unforgettable year in the history of India.”\(^3^0\) It marked according to him the commencement of a new era and a new policy in the struggle for achieving independence. As Thomas A.Rusch observed “The greatest contribution of C.S.P. in the 1942 struggle to the country was the giving to it a new policy and programme.”\(^3^1\) J.P. stood for nothing less than independence. He even criticized the decision of the working committee and remained consistent to the extent of asking his socialist colleagues to boycott the Constituent Assembly if it was elected on limited franchise. He was ready to resort to any method for the cause of freedom. In one of his various letters to fighters for freedom, he emphasised, “It is our last fight for freedom. Our objective can, therefore, be nothing but victory. There can be no half-way house. There is no compromise between the slogans of “Quit India” and of “National Government”... It is a total revolt of the masses that is our objective.”\(^3^2\)
He told his comrades:

The Americans fought their war of Independence for seven years, the Chinese have just entered the seventh year of their war of independence. We have but completed only first year of fighting. . . There are traitors to our country and we must check them out of our way, and march on…  

In spite of the fact Jayaprakash wrote a number of important letters to the freedom fighters and soldiers of the American army, the students, the peasants, the people of Bihar, the movement failed. In August revolution, the labourers were mislead by the communists, and the peasants were badly crushed by the government. After some time, the students also seemed to be disappointed and they started returning to their schools and colleges. The anti-national propaganda by the government agencies has been circulating the impression that the independence movement had started subsiding and was becoming futile. To rebut the false propaganda of the government, Jayaprakash issued a statement in which he attempted to clarify that the August revolution was fully successful. He further maintained that it could not advance partly for the lack of knowledge of the national revolution and partly due to the absence of proper organization of the revolutionary forces in the country. 

He appealed to the people of India that misconceptions must not be created in their minds that the movement was running to seeds. He strongly pleaded that if we looked at the pages of history of revolutionary movements all over the world, we would then be led to the undeniable conclusion that
revolution was no scattered and piecemeal set of happenings. Revolution he argued, was invariably the resultant of a tide in the affairs of man. It was a social transformation a very wide connotation. J.P. recognized that failure was their's as they had not supplied the people with a programme for the next phase.

The politics at that time was marked by strifes and petty jealousies among congressmen. In fact there were at that time two trends in Indian politics. Gandhi was determined to launch a mass movement for the independence of India even without the support of the Congress leaders, J.B. Kripalani, Rajendra Prasad, Vallabhbhai Patel, Narendra Deva and Achyut Patwardhan were among those who were opposed to any compromise or participation in the war. The group led by Nehru was, on the other hand, in favour of keeping the door open for negotiations, with the British Government. Maulana Azad, Bhulabi Desai, G.B. Pant, and Asif Ali belonged to this group.

Another issue which sharpened differences between Nehru and Gandhiji was Gandhi’s insistence on strict adherence to nonviolence. Nehru considered that method as neither “pragmatic nor practicable”. He was ready to adopt violence rather than submit to slavery. Nevertheless, Gandhi was firm in his decision to launch a nonviolent struggle for independence. J.P. at this juncture was certainly inclined towards Gandhiji. He had “no hesitation in admitting that the nonviolence of the brave, if practised on a sufficiently large scale, would make violence necessary . . . .” When J.P. visited Lahore on July 24, 1946,
he said in one of his speeches there that the Congress had taken a wrong line in adopting the constitutional method. . . . "Revolution, he declared, was the only way."37 Addressing the 10th Session of the All India Students Congress at New Delhi, on 29th December, 1946, J.P. assured them. "We are fast moving towards a revolution. This may be several times bigger in intensity than the 1942 revolution."38

Further, outlining the programme for the final struggle he was confident that it would be on the lines of 1942 revolution. "It is not going to be a child's play" he told them, but a fierce and grim fight, much more fierer than the 1857 and 1942 struggles. They would not only have to sacrifice in thousands, but in lakhs. Their slogan should be "Do or die."39

As for the agency of revolution, J.P. kept his faith in the youth and gave a call, as J.S. Bright described that "All college and school students must come out and participate in the fight. All mills, factories and other places must go on strike. No one should go to the jails; but on the other hand arrest the governors, the collectors and all those who sided with the British Government. If, he said, the fight continued for 3 months they could easily defeat the British Government in this country."40

On August 9, 1946, addressing a third letter to the freedom fighters he repeated:

The only manner in which we can wage this struggle is by forgoing mass sanctioned which includes: psychological preparation of the masses for a
struggle, building up of organizations of the masses, such as peasant and labour unions. Volunteer corps, students and youth organizations, village republics, and weaver's cooperatives, and myriad others which would help in different ways to develop the collective strength and consciousness of the people.41

J.P. was, however, emphatic that “The achievement of freedom was not an end in itself. It was only the means to revolutionise society and usher in the age of the common man.”

J.P. was, from the very beginning, sceptical about the efficacy of constitutional methods. According to Thomas A.Rusch, “The socialist were firm on their stand that independence would have to be seized from British by force. It was not in the nature of capitalist countries to part with their power voluntarily.” Some socialists believed that mass nonviolent action was sufficient for the attainment of independence but the majority of them believed that only organized violence on a large scale could lead to the achievement of independence.

But those who insisted on keeping the door open for negotiations with the British, ultimately agreed to the partition of the country. The two socialists in the Congress Working Committee, Jayaprakash and Ram Manohar Lohia were of no consequence at a time when even Gandhi and Abdul Gaffar Khan were left dumb. The partition came as a rude shock to the socialist. A ruder shock was as Lohia described in his Guilty Men of India’s Partition that “the disease of old age and exhaustion had come over this fighting organization of
freedom (Congress) in its moment of greatest distress.” Lohia remained a bitter critic of Nehru throughout his life. Jayaprakash was a little more prudent but could never reconcile to the ways of those who had shown an “opportunist desire for office.” He continued to struggle for ideals dear to his heart.

Jayaprakash Narayan and his Ideas

J.P. was a great philosopher and leader of suppressed people. For the cause of the downtrodden there had been a change in his political thinking from time to time. From Marxism to Gandhism to Sarvodaya of Vinoba Bhave and back to Gandhism was symptomatic of his difficulty in identifying priorities. He knew something of what need to be done. Thus he maintained, “What could people want except the fulfillment of their needs, aspirations and drastic change in the condition of their lives?” Thus clarifying his frequent changes he observed “The key question is how all this can be done. It is in search of an answer to this question that I have journeyed”.

J.P. was quite aware of the big changes in his thought, his priorities and commitments. He was conscious that these shifts could perhaps be described as unsteadiness. During his old age he looked back in a mood of review of the course of his ideas and activities to be sure of the ground of his new commitments. He was confident that people might condemn him for that “fickleness of mind” but he was sure that only through these shifts he would ultimately reach his goal. Thus he observed:
The past course of my life might appear to the outsider as a zig-zag and tortuous chart of unsteadiness and blind groping. But as I look back I discern it in a uniform line of development. The groping undeniably was there, but it was certainly not bling; there were clear beacons of light that remained undimmed and unaltered from the beginning and that led me on to my apparently tortuous path. I, at least am not sorry for having made this zig-zag journey, for, it has made me the surer of the path that I have decided to tread.44

In his two major books, viz., *From socialism to Sarvodaya* and *Evolution Towards Sarvodaya* he had tried to rationalize frequent changes in his ideas. Fell Man, J.P's scholarly biographer also believed, "...yet that behaviour might make sense in a logical scheme dealing with individual motivation as well as adherence to explicit ideologies."

One objective which had always been with him was the freedom of the individual and for that India's free-freedom was only a necessary first step. In his words, "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."45

J.P. recalled that even during the days of his youth when he was an inspired Marxist, "freedom still remained the unchanging goal" and that "the Marxian science of revolution seemed to offer a surer and quicker road than
Gandhiji’s technique of civil disobedience and non-cooperation.” He was convinced that neither constitutionalism nor Gandhi’s passive resistance could bring about a revolution in the country. The October revolution in Soviet Russia was yet green in his mind. “The thrilling success of the great Lenin, accounts of which we consumed with unsatiated hunger, seemed to establish beyond doubt the supremacy of the Marxian way in revolution.”

Coming to grips with the Indian political situation, he realized the primacy of the struggle for national liberation. “But freedom or Swaraj had come by then to mean much more to me than mere national independence. Free India to me meant Socialist India, Swaraj the rule of the poor and down trodden.”

During the thirties he discarded constitutionalism and Gandhian liberal policy and decided with other like minded freedom fighters to form the Congress Socialist Party. Its main objective was to fight for independence in a more revolutionary manner and to make their party policy more socialistic in its programmes. Therefore, while discussing the nature and ideology of C.S.P. in “Meerut Thesis” he had called it a Marxist Party. At this stage he thought Marxian Scientific Socialism was the only solution for India’s problems. Explaining his point he observed that “Socialism was not merely that Rajas and Maharajas should be “blown up to bits” it was something more sensible, more scientific, more civilized than all that.”

J.P. had been disillusioned with communism as practiced in Soviet Russia after the death of Lenin in which the highly centralized character of the
communist regime had reduced the freedom of the individual to a mockery. He was also disgusted with the attitude of the Communists both inside and outside India. These experiences of J.P. with the communists obliged him to re-examine his commitment to the basic principles of Marxist philosophy. He realized that the fundamental difficulty with Marxism was over centralization and statism. He also considered that Marxism as a philosophy of action did not believe in the purity of means and use of violence, his thought was immoral. This led him to his search for an alternate route for the achievement of a just social order. He came to believe that due to different conditions in India, social change could be brought about only through democratic methods. The development of this framework of ideas came to be known as "democratic socialism".49 Explaining the ideal of "democratic socialism", J.P. told his partymen, "I am convinced that there can be no real socialism without the enlargement of our liberty and freedom.... Democratic Socialism must become our life's mission, the philosophy of our life".50

But later he felt that democratic socialism was not suitable because it put more emphasis on statism, overcentralisation and capture of power. That inevitably led to diminution of individual's freedom. Thus he thought that in Gandhi one found the world's greatest technologist in peaceful revolution and that there could be no bitter conception of the ideal society and re-arrangement than that given by Gandhiji. This obviously brought him to Sarvodaya. He discarded all politics. He had become convinced now that party politics could not lead to the achievement of declared goals. In a long letter which he
addressed to his PSP comrades in the form of a book *From Socialism to Sarvodaya* he presented his rationalization as follows:

I decided to withdraw from party-and-power politics not because of disgust or sense of personal frustration, but because it became clear to me that politics could not deliver the goods, the goods being the same old goals of equality, freedom, brotherhood and peace.\(^{51}\)

Emphasizing that his objectives were the same, he 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 onward around this turning of the road." He was feeling sad that he did not reach this point when Gandhiji was alive. He felt confident that goals could never be achieved until socialism transformed into Sarvodaya.

He, however, argued with himself, "But was there an alternative to politics"? Yes, he found in the "Bhoodan movement" a positive and satisfactory answer to his question. Discussing the wider scope of Bhoodan movement he maintained that it was not just a project of receiving land; in fact it was a method of transforming of the minds of the people and enabling them to regard themselves as brothers. In a way it appeared to be a revolution which aimed at purifying the hearts and minds of the people. He thus seemed to adopt a moralistic approach to the solution of various economic and political problems.

From 1934 to 1947 he remained quite active in party-politics. But after independence seeing various party squabbles, strain among socialists, his
failure in general election to form an opposition and his hatred for power politics, he turned his back on ugly politics. He now looked for an ideal arrangement based on self-sufficient village communities. He was keen on keeping the social life free from dirty politics. Therefore, instead of party-politics he talked of partyless democracy which was itself the manifestation of Sarvodaya Samaj and emphasized the need of establishing *Lok Niti* (Politics of the people) instead of *Raj Niti* (Politics of the State and Party). The politics of such a society would be, as he believed, that of service and not of power.⁵²

After arguing with himself that socialism and communism both laid great emphasis on material aspect of socialism and neglected its spiritual aspect, he maintained “The socialist way of life is a way of sharing together the good things that common endeavour may make possible.” The only way to achieve socialism was to keep their wants under control so that a willing sharing may not be difficult. For the achievement of these objectives of socialism he brushed aside the “Statists”, “the democratic socialists and the welfare statists.” The only remedy he could think of was Sarvodaya. Discussing his concept of Sarvodaya he observed that it should not be dismissed as a “crankish creed” rather “it is a concrete programme of basic social revolution.”⁵³ J.P. now put more emphasis on the voluntary endeavour of the people rather then to seek to establish socialism by the use of the power of the state.
Emphasising his main concern with the Political problems of the country he observed in his presidential address to the 13th All India Sarvodaya Sammelan in 1961:

It means, of course, that we do not belong to any political party that we do not and shall not take part directly or indirectly, in any political contest for position or power. But does it also mean that we are not concerned with what is happening in the political field, with the working of our democracy and its various institutions? If democracy were to be in peril, if there were a danger of political chaos, of dictatorship, shall we sit back smugly and twiddle our thumbs on the ground that we have nothing to do with politics? Perhaps it is not understood clearly that our policy not to be involved in party and power politics is meant precisely to enable us to play a more effective and constructive part in moulding to politics of the country.54

The Bhoodan movement which was started in 1951 had reached its “saturation point” by 1958. By this time it had already flowered into Gramdan developed into a programme of Gram Swarajya. But in practice it failed to deliver the goals in terms of revolutionary change in the present social and economic structure. Many Sarvodaya workers who had earlier toiled for years for the success of Bhoodan-Gramdan also realized in the late sixties the poor results of Vinobian technique. The decision of J.P. to go to Murahari in connection with the dearth of two Sarvodayites, where he engaged himself in Gramdan-Gram Swarajya movement at the lowest ebb for six months practically convinced him or the near futility of the Vinobian movement.
Another disastrous result of the Vinobian policy was the decision of Vinobaji to discard Gandhian Satyagraha for bringing a method “crude” and “negative” in nature. And it was here that J.P. felt the need of adopting Gandhian Satyagraha for bringing about social change. He further maintained that under the prevalent conditions where democracy and violence could not meet the situation the only course left open was to go back to Gandhiji. This new realization affected him deeply. It obviously brought a profound change in his attitude to the question for realizing the goals of the movement.

When Minoo Masani who was once his socialist comrade asked J.P. why he had not adopted that course earlier, J.P.’s answer was that the situation was not then ripe for that. When felt that the burning problems like unemployment, rising prices, etc., were becoming more acute and the students and the youth had started feeling disillusioned with the prevailing system as such, he felt that the situation was ripe for a more meaningful political action.

.... So when the distance between the rich and poor has grown so has unemployment grown both of the educated and the uneducated and there has been disappointment, disillusionment and disenchantment with Mrs. Gandhi, the situation was ripe. So this is a situation that was created. All I can take credit for is that I did recognize that revolutionary situation had arisen and something had to be done.55

Thus in the seventies, he again entered politics; not in the conventional party politics but in the organization of people’s power to overthrow authoritarian government and work for total revolution. The Bihar agitation
under J.P. began with four objectives which appeared to be limited in character. He was, however, emphatic that they could not be achieved without all round revolution—"nothing less than a Revolution"—as he proclaimed on June 5, 1974. He defined that total revolution was a combination of seven revolutions, social, economic, political, cultural, ideological, intellectual, educational and spiritual. There number was not fixed and he might well add a few revolutions more.56

Thus J.P. went on evolving his political ideas as he jumped from one phase to another. He had been restless for positive action to solve the problems of Indian Society. His inner urge to reform the diseased society led to frequent changes in his ideas. In this constant quest for the right course of action, he had been likened to Gandhi who described his life as his "Experience with Truth." Fall man discovered in him "a quality, uncommon in a political leader, or earnestness and restlessness in seeking truth" which "calls to mind a similar urgency and zeal in life and thought of Gandhi."57

No doubt J.P. had changed his ideas frequently but he had remained consistent so far as goal of equality, freedom and peace was concerned. He had changed only with regard to the method to achieve that goal.
References


3. Ibid., p. xix.

4. Ibid., p. 130.


12. Ibid., (To the Executive Committee of the Congress Socialist Party), Letter No. 3, p.55.


17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., p.129.

20. Ibid., p. 41


26. Ibid., pp. xxxv-xxvi.


31. Thomas, A Rusch, op. cit., p. 103.


33. Ibid., pp. 31-32.


38. J.S. Bright, op. cit., p. 188.

39. Ibid., pp. 188-90.

40. J.S. Bright, op. cit., pp. 74-75.


44. *From Socialism to Sarvodaya*, p. 9.

45. *From Socialism to Sarvodaya*, p. 10.


49. *From Socialism to Sarvodaya*, p. 19.


51. *From Socialism to Sarvodaya*, p. 32.


