Chapter III

JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN - STATE AND STATELESS SOCIETY
Jayaprakash Narayan was a great philosopher and deep thinker. His philosophy influenced people. J.P. did not worry about the shape and organism of the State. He was mainly concerned with the state as it was in existence. His idea about state did not remain consistent, his views about state evolved with his career and thought process. He changed his thoughts always. As a Marxist, the state to him was a necessary tool and an instrument of power to bring about transformation in the society. But after Independence when he came in touch with power-politics and observing the authoritarian nature of the Soviet State he slowly lost his faith in the State all in all prevasive force. After Independence J.P. advocated setting up of co-operatives and community owned industries in place of State-owned industries to avoid totalitarianism. He completely disgusted with power politics in the late fifties he started raising a question “was there an alternative to politics”? Ultimately, in Mahatama Gandhi, he had found an alternative. He had been wondering earlier whether Gandhian philosophy could be put into practice. The Vinobian technique of bringing about social revolution appeared to provide the answer. Hence he joined the Bhoodan Movement.¹

After embracing the philosophy of Bhoodan, there began a new trend in J.P’s political thinking towards minimizing the importance of the State. After this he began to think that state is not so impartent. It led him to his concept of
Stateless Society. In an article, "Jeevandan" circulated in 1954 at Bodh Gaya Sarvodaya Conference, he announced his decision to devote the rest of his life to the cause of Bhoodan movement. Talking about the wider scope of the movement he observed:

Bhoodan is not a programme of merely collecting and distributing lands. It is rather the first step towards a total Revolution- Social, Political and Economic. It stands for a society which would strive for the good of all and in which every body would be happy...²

Bhoodan was regarded the beginning of an “allround social and human revolution”.³ It was considered a human revolution because it aimed at changing men along with society. In the words of Pyarelal, it was “the spearhead of a nonviolent revolution whose implications reach far and wide.”⁴

While renouncing politics, J.P. made it clear, that he was not leaving politics as such but only power politics and party politics. As far politics of Bhoodan was concerned he was not apologetic. He emphasized instead that movement that aimed so utterly to revolutionise man and society would not but be political. Bhoodan did not wish to create or become a political party in order to capture the state. As against party and power politics it aimed at persuading the people, independently of what the state might do or might not do, to carry out a revolution in their own lives and through that a revolution in the society. It aimed further at creating such conditions in which people might manage their affairs directly without the interference of political parties. Thus the politics of
the Bhoodan movement was not the politics of parties, elections, parliaments and governments, but politics of the people, not Raj niti but Lok niti.\(^5\) It obviously stood for cutting the role and power of the state.

Getting convinced that centralization of power as advocated by democratic socialists was no answer to the needs of a basic change he was attracted to Gandhian concept of decentralization and villagisation. This brought him to Sarvodaya. He refuted the contention of some of the critics that “Sarvodaya is some crankish creed” which talked of a good deal of nonviolence and trusteeship, but was afraid of bringing about fundamental social change. According to him:

It is a concrete programme of basic social revolution... it contains eighty per cent of the immediate programme of the Socialist party, besides sharing the common ideal of classless and casteless society... The ideal, the plan sets out to achieve, is that of a nonviolent, non-exploitative, co-operative society which shall not be based on caste or class and in which there shall be equal opportunity for all. The present “competitive” economy shall be replaced by a social economy based on co-operation.\(^6\)

He was convinced that if our ultimate aim was to reduce the powers of the State to the minimum then such conditions must be created in which people may depend more and more on themselves and less and less on the State. He was doubtful whether the State would ever completely disappear, but the work
In that direction had to begin. "If we accept the idea of a nonviolent democracy, we must begin today to work for it." From this the obvious conclusion was that as soon as antagonistic classes in society were eliminated, it would obviously lead to a "classless" society. But what actually happened in Soviet Russia, was that the State became the most vital instrument of social reconstruction. Lenin observed, "we Marxists are opposed to all and every kind of State. . . (yet) we need revolutionary power, we need the state." Stalin went a step further and said that "unless the capitalist encirclement is liquidated, the state could not wither away." This shifting position from Marx to Lenin and from Lenin to Stalin actually enhanced the importance of State under Socialism.

Thus J.P. accused the Soviet Communists of erecting one of the most regimented states in the world under the grab of a transitional phase. Thus, J.P. discarded the "Russian Picture of Political Organisation" as unacceptable. He cautioned that "It is a common mistake these days to think that there must be a dictatorship of the proletariat in the socialist state." J.P. was totally against the monistic state because it retained the role centre of power in society. He said that "the intermediate associations between the individual and the state should be purposely and deliberately created so that freedom might not be nominal but
real, and democracy might not be only government by consent but also by direct participation.\footnote{10}

J.P's ultimate aim was a Stateless Society, for which a reduction in the functions of State had to be undertaken. "...Both Marxism and Sarvodaya aim at a stateless society- a society free of government. Our quarrel with the Marxists is only this. If you want ultimately the state to wither away, then do not start by creating a totalitarian state. It will be a kind of Himalayan obstacle to the stateless society."\footnote{11}

Search for such an alternative had become evident soon, after he became aware of the totalitarian trends in Soviet Russia. As General Secretary of the Socialist Party, he had observed in 1948... The experience of totalitarian countries whether Fascist or communist has shown that if the state is looked upon as the sole agent of social reconstruction, we get nothing but a regimented society in which the state is all-powerful and popular initiative is extinct and the individual is made a cog in a vast inhuman machine.\footnote{12}

He had further observed that democracy required that the people should depend as little as possible on the State. Both according to Gandhiji and Karl Marx, the highest stage of democracy was that in which the State had withered away. Partly the danger of totalitarian trends and partly the experience of the coercive nature of imperialist State generated among the Indian socialists some sort of repulsion against State as a system of power. The socialists were convinced that if in the post-independence period the state was to function as a
necessary instrument of social reconstruction it must be based upon democratic principles and minimum use of violence. J.P. did not want the state to be developed either on the capitalist or the communist pattern. So during the democratic socialist phase, J.P. was not for the withering away of the State. He pleaded for maintaining State as a permanent institution in human society, but not as a totalitarian state. He was convinced that the State in Socialist India must be fully “Democratic State.” He definitely wanted, however, that the functions and power of the state should be cut down.

It is true that except during the Sarvodaya phase in which he talked about his concept of Stateless Society, in all other phases he never talked about that. During the colonial period all the Indian socialists maintained silence or little interest in the theory of the “withering away of the State.” At that time the situation was such that their main concern was to emphasise the exploitative nature of imperial or capitalist state and the need to capture it as the instrument of political power. So the Indian socialists were for the continued existence of State as a perpetual necessity. J.P. was no exception to that.

In the early phase of his political life, J.P. did not think the individual as an end in himself. He gave equal importance to the society and social good. He believed that the individual perfection could be achieved through the utmost common good. His thinking was that the environment and the society by themselves moulded the individuals as well as social institutions. To him, in the early phase, the society, the social environment and the economic forces were
more important. He thus observed that a change in these institutions would bring about a better society by itself. He thus considered the individual to be of little importance in the context of the social whole. He observed clearly that, "It is the social environment which shapes human behaviour."  

From the very beginning of his political life, J.P. gave top importance to the individual and his status. With regard to the individual's place in society, J.P. held that the true end was the 'individual perfection'. He thus observed:

Individualism has been the prominent motif in our culture only in the sense that the perfection of the individual has been its ideal; never in the sense of narrow, self-seeking individualism, which is the motif in capitalist society. And if individual perfection is the goal, the socialist has not the least difficulty in showing that such perfection can come about only by aiming at the utmost common good.

So far as Roy's thoughts on State are concerned throughout his life he was an ardent believer in individual freedom and sovereignty. Roy believed that any institution, e.g., society, state etc., was not above the individual. Every institution had been created by the individuals for their benefit. Thus society was the sum total of individuals, who compose it. The individuals created the society for the sake of their self-defence and self-improvement. There was no divine factor, responsible in creation of the society. Thus, Roy considered State as a means and individual as an end.
Unlike J.P. who was not bothered about the origin of the state, Roy agreeing with the social contract theory, believed that the society and the state were artificial structure created by men. Regarding the origin of the state, Roy stated that “primitive men created society for purpose of carrying on the business of regulating their affairs and relations. In the beginning, the purpose was mainly to defend themselves against the impact of natural phenomenon and more powerful beasts, and later on, to march ahead on the road to human progress on higher levels. Subsequently, when the original human communities became larger, an increasingly electorate machinery had to be created for carrying on public administration of society which came to be known as State.” Thus, the State came into being as the political organization of society. To Roy, State and Society were means to achieve the individual freedom which was the end. They cannot deprive the individual of his freedom. He said, “A Political Philosophy, which cannot guarantee individual freedom, or cannot think of freedom in that sense, is bound to be misleading. Like J.P. in his earlier phase of political career, regarding his views on the role of state, he was influenced by the Marxian-Leninist interpretation of the State. But after experiencing the role of the Communist State in Soviet Russia, Roy changed his outlook. He realized that individual could not be sub-ordinated to the State.

Roy not only criticized Marxism pro-philosophical and theorical aspects, but also criticized its practice that is communism. He made a distinction between the two. To him, “Marxism is not identical with communism; the one is a philosophy, and as such, a statement of eternal truths; the other is a
political practice.”19 According to Roy, like Fascism, communism is also Collectivism where there is no individual liberty. He wrote, “Both communism and Fascism stand for collectivism. The communist collective ego is the proletariat class; and the Fascist collective ego is the nation. Both sacrifice the individual on the alter of collective ego.”20 In the same work he wrote, “it is now, matter of experience that communist in practice creates a new Status quo, under which the human individual has precious little freedom.” Referring the prevalence of the element of coercion in both the Czalist and the communist Russia, he wrote, “In the practice of communism in USSR, the influence of Hegalian ethics is obvious. There, whatever is, is good, everything done for the defence of the new order is moral; might is right.”21

Being an ardent believer in individual liberty, Roy rejected every system, which ignored the freedom of the individual. He criticized liberalism, socialism, Fascism, Nagism, Nationalism etc., because these systems, more or less denied the freedom of the individual. Being disenchanted with the prevailing system in the world leading to the curtailment of individual liberty, he propounded his new philosophy of ‘Radical Humanism’ in which he gave maximum freedom to the individual. Thus his philosophy of Radicalism is concerned with man, not with nation or with class. He believed that only individual could experience freedom. The position of individual, therefore, he wrote, “Is the measure of the progressive and liberating significance of any collective effort or social organization. The success of any collective endeavour is to be measured by the actual benefit for its constituent units.”22 At another
place, he wrote, “There can be only one measure of the degree of freedom enjoyed by any class or country, and that measure is the actual amount of freedom enjoyed by the individuals composing that country or class.”

To him, “Man is born free” and “Freedom is his birth right.” He criticized every system-economic, social, political etc., which attacked the individual and his liberty. He felt that the social institutions were made by men to exercise their freedom. The institutions are not above creators. He said, “Social institutions and relations must, therefore, contribute to the freedom of the individual and help the realization of his full stature.” He fought for the whole of his life for it. In Roy’s words, “My whole political life, which is nearly forty-seven years old, has been nothing but a tormented soul’s search for freedom.” Roy’s entire philosophy is to satisfy man’s urge for freedom and quest for truth. He was agreed advocate of individual dignity and his liberty. According to one of Roy’s admires, “The master passion of Roy’s life was urge for freedom.” And further, “the freedom was to him an empirical fact; a psychological urge at the root of everyman’s personal being.”

During the Marxist days of youth J.P. totally identified politics with power politics. He believed in State as the necessary coercive apparatus for bringing about Socialism. But after 1947 when he came in touch with power politics, he discarded the theory that all politics was power politics. He cautioned the Congress for depending so much on State action. He observed:
The Congress today has captured the state, but every thinking Congressman will agree that the Congress would completely undermine itself if it depended on the state for every effort at social change and development.25

J.P. realized that mere control by the State over the means of production and distribution could not serve the real purpose of the individual or society. In “My Picture of Socialism,” J.P. was dead set for preventing totalitarian trends:

I desire to prevent the state from acquiring the sole monopoly in industry and employment. The state under socialism threatened, as in Russia, far from withering away, to become an all powerful tyrant maintaining a strangle-hold over the entire body of citizens. This leads totalitarianism of the type we witness in Russia today.26

As against increasing power of the State in the name of economic development and economic justice, J.P. stood for decentralization of power which according to him was possible only through organizing “co-operatives” and small industries and establishing “community ownership”. It was difficult to achieve the objectives of a socialist society without decentralization of political and economic power. There was a gradual shift of emphasis regarding the role of State in society. He now emphasized the need to minimize the dependence on the State and to encourage the process of decentralization of power in it.27 Here J.P. was entirely under the influence of Gandhiji.

The change in his ideas is quite significant as J.P. who was one of the most ardent critics of Gandhian ideas during the Marxist phase had moved
towards Sarvodaya. With the gradual evolution in his ideas he came to appreciate more and more the ideas of individual self-help and voluntary community effort than the coercive apparatus of the State.

Thus in the later phase of his political career, J.P. came to realize the importance of the individual an end in himself. For him, no political philosophy was more important than man, it was only means to an end that is the individual. He declared that man was not just a heap of matter. Being an ethical being, he is a constituent unit of the social system. It is interesting to note here that in this phase he felt that materialism did not provide any incentive for goodness. He recommended adoption of non-material (spiritual) approach, because it "elevates the individual to a moral phase, and urges him, without reference to any objective outside of himself to endeavour to realize his own true nature and fulfil the purpose of his being. This endeavour becomes the powerful motive force that drives him in its natural course to the good and the true. It will be seen as an important corollary of this that only when materialism is transcended does individual man come into his own and become an end in himself."28

Thus, J.P.'s approach to men was spiritual. Here he came under the influence of Gandhiji. He believed in human values-spiritual values. He believed in training of man to make him good inspired by certain ethical values. Therefore, he insisted on going beyond materialism. He said, "I feel convinced, therefore, that man must go beyond the material to find the
incentive to goodness. As a corollary, I feel further that the task of social reconstruction cannot succeed under the inspiration of a materialistic philosophy.” He was against making man subordinate to machine. He further observed that the individual should identify himself with others only then he would advance spiritually. He said, “the more he identifies himself with larger and larger numbers of people the more spiritually advances he is. He thus observed:

He wants to identify himself with his family... he identifies himself next may be with the community... then he may identify himself with his state, may be with his nation, with his country and ultimately with the whole world. This is a spiritual realization. It comes as a result of the fact that the individual see himself in others in essence in spite of temporal differences.29

Thus J.P. maintained that the material values are also important but he believed that material requirements should be satisfied not in isolation but in harmony with spiritual requirements. There should be a synthesis between spiritual and material values.

Marx, Gandhi and J.P. all were ultimately for the extinction of the state as a coercive apparatus but their ideas differed in detail. Engels described that the creation of a “stateless society” was a gradual process that followed the capture of state by proletariat. The proletariat seizes power and turns means of production into state property. But in doing so, it abolishes itself as proletariat abolishes the state as state. When there is class antagonism there is need of the
State, but when it becomes the real representative of the whole of the society it renders itself unnecessary. "The State is not abolished, it dies out."30

The ideal society according to Gandhiji, on the other hand, is a stateless democracy where social life is so developed as to have become self-regulated. In such a society of what he called enlightened anarchy, "Every one is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbor. In the ideal society, therefore, there is no political power because there is no state." Elsewhere he expressed the same thought thus: "Swaraj (self government) of a people means the sum total of the Swaraj of the people." J.P. was of the view that the politics of Sarvodaya had no concern with party and power politics. Rather its aim was to see that all centres of power were abolished, ultimately leading towards "a real withering away of the state."31

Unlike J.P. who felt that ultimately they would wither away in his new concept of Sarvodaya society, M.N. Roy did not believe in the withering away of the State. Thus maintaining the importance of the individual, he realized that individual would not be subordinated to the state. The State would not wither away and it should not be considered as a necessary evil. To him, "The ideal of stateless society is obviously an absurd Utopia."32

He thus wrote, "Here is something worse than a fallacy; it is an absurdity. The state is the political organization of society. It can never disappear unless human society revert to the stage of savagery." Even in Soviet Russia after the establishment of the proletariat dictatorship, for such a long period, there
seemed to be no indication of withering away of the state. Therefore, according to Roy, it was just an Utopia. After its establishment the dictatorship itself became 'vested' interest. No voluntary transfer of power happened. Roy also rejected the Marxian ideal of capturing power through armed insurrection. In the modern age this method has become inadequate. He wrote, “Scientific invention since the day of Marx have vastly increased the military might and coercive strength of the existing states, and have rendered the idea of a minority insurrection impracticable and out of date.”

The State should have limited powers. He said, “The State being the political organization of society, the widest diffusion of power makes coterminous with society.” According to Roy, the functions and responsibilities of the state would be limited so that it could not encroach upon the freedom of the individual. He observed that in the modern political organizations the sovereign individual had been forgotten and the institutions created by the individual, had attained the greater importance. He wrote, “It was completely forgotten that from the primitive lime society was formed, all institutions had been created by man like so many instruments to serve the purpose of his being and becoming. Ultimately, it came to be believed that the creation was of greater importance than the creator, to the extent it was entitled to claim the creator of its first victim.”

In his book *Towards a New Society* (1958) while discussing the role and place of State particularly in relation to the goals of socialists life, J.P. observed
that “that government was the best which governed the least.” But real “human freedom could be fully and wholly realized only in a Stateless Society.” With that end in view he made a strong plea for relying more on the action of the people (Jana Shakti) rather than the power of the State (Danda Shakti).

Bhoodan and Sarvodaya were considered a great mass movement of conversion and the creation of a new climate of thought and values of life. Gandhiji had said: “Even after we have power conversion would have to be our weapon of choice.” Vinoba Bhave and J.P. likewise have been laying utmost stress on the action of the people. Jana Shakti according to J.P. meant first, the growth of consciousness among the people and second development of the capacity to do this. He was convinced, “The more this Jana Shakti develops the narrower would become the sphere of government from above. The more the Jana Shakti develops the less would there be the need for a centralized state and for political parties.”

In the later phase, so far as, the State in Roy’s concept of Radical Democracy or Organized Democracy is concerned, he was also for lessoning the functions of the state. The Radical Democratic State, which Roy wanted to establish, was coterminous with society. The state should take up as little responsibilities in its hands as possible. Like State, there are others institutions in the society through which individuals-having many faceted personality-seek to realize their freedom. According to Roy, the State should create conducive conditions for individual freedom. It should maintain harmony in social relations and co-ordinate the functions of different autonomous institutions.
The only functions that a state should perform, according to him, "to create conditions in which the individual can enjoy widening measure of freedom, to maintain harmony in social relations and to co-ordinate the activities of diverse and autonomous institutions." He believed that there were certain matters, like cultural, moral, educational and even economic, which were to be completely beyond the jurisdiction of the state. The scientific and artistic growth should also be out of the control of the state.

After leaving party and power politics, Raj Niti, J.P. moved towards what Vinoba aptly called Lok Niti. J.P. added, however, that there could be no question of any hostility between Raj Niti and Lok Niti, nor could the two be kept apart as two unmixable castes. (Lok Niti is but the child of Raj Niti). Thus there must be established good relations between the two. He was convinced that "democratic Raj Niti" would not be an obstruction in the way of the Lok Niti. Rather all political parties should be prepared to hand over power to the people like a good father. He was for the establishment of Lok Niti ultimately but he would keep himself in touch with what happened in the sphere of Raj Niti.

J.P. was also convinced that for the achievement of Sarvodaya "purity of means" was an essential ingredient. The Sarvodaya philosophy was based on rejection of the present system of democracy, the method of election and party organizations. It believed in direct democracy and self-reliance of the people and wanted the State to wither away. The march towards a "Free Society" was
possible only when in our day-to-day life; people become self-reliant and learnt the art of co-operation. Centralized power could never take the people towards “Free Society”. If we want to found a society of the “Free and Equals” than we have to create units of self-sufficient and self-reliant villages and learn to take unanimous decisions....

According to J.P.:

One of the basic concepts of Sarvodaya in Gram Swaraj which envisages decentralization of economy and political power to preserve and develop the freedom of the people. Only when power is decentralized and is in hands of the communities can there be a general renewal of self-confidence, and ordinary people everywhere can get some experience of social organization.

In Sarvodaya, government was considered unnecessary, and if it was centralized, an evil. If there had to be a government its activities should be minimal:

The best kind of government is one where it is possible to doubt whether any government exists at all. An ideal government would have no armaments, no police force and no penalties; the people would mange their own affairs, listen readily to advice, and allow themselves to be guided by moral considerations.

According to J.P., in Sarvodaya Society, all the powers of administration and construction would be in the hands of people. He stated, “We have snatch initiative from the hands of politicians, from Parliament and Legislatures and
give it back to the people. This is our job.... If there is any salvation, that salvation has to come from below. Salvation will not come from the legislators.” For a good society, the constituent individuals should also be good. He came to conclusion “Social reconstruction is impossible without human reconstruction. Society cannot be good unless individual men are good, and particularly those men who from the elite of society.”

In Sarvodaya phase also, J.P. placed the individual in the Central position in the reconstruction of Indian polity. To him, “The very foundation of democracy is belief in man—individual man—not as a means but is an end.” In this way he fully believed in man’s worth and dignity, and in his rights and responsibilities.

Thus, analyzing the human nature, J.P. placed the individual in the Central position of his scheme of reconstruction of Indian polity. He believed in the goodness of the individual and in the inherent spirituality in him...while Gandhi’s emphasis was on individual reconstruction, Marx’s emphasis was on social reconstruction. J.P. placed equal emphasis on human as well as social aspects for the reconstruction for a new society. He wanted to change human values through a social revolution.

Gandhiji regarded the State as inhuman. He was emphatic of this view that human and social needs could best be achieved in such a society in which there would be decentralization of power, and of production and control of wealth, and which would be composed of comparatively small autonomous communities. He thus said: “Centralisation as a system in inconsistent with the
nonviolent structure of society," because "centralization cannot be sustained and defended without adequate force." Gandhi was deeply suspicious of the State. Thus he observed, that "The state represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul but the state is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned away from violence to which it owes its very existence."

Like Gandhiji and J.P., Roy also realized that state instead of becoming means had become a hurdle in the unfoldment of the individual. It had grown beyond the individual's reach. He stated, "Today, the state has become an abstraction." In the written constitutions, the state is divided in three branches—the legislative, the executive and the judiciary. If that is all that the state is, then the states must exist only in the capitals and nowhere else. The state, supposed to be the political organization of society as a whole, has come to be completely divorced from the life of society. If you think of society in terms of human beings constituting society, the individual has nothing to do with the state, the political administration of society. It exists only in some central place, far away, beyond the reach and influence of the members of society and from there makes decisions and imposes its decisions and the people have no say in them.

It is well and widely recognized that the structure of our society needed to be changed. Question arises how are we to proceed towards building the Sarvodaya Society? If through State power we cannot build Sarvodaya society,
then J.P. thought the only other alternative was the Gandhian path. J.P. clearly was for decentralization of power and put more emphasis on the voluntary action of people against State power.

There is, however, another important question, i.e., what would be the form and structure of that society in which it would be possible for the people to run their affairs directly and develop all those values of life that characterize a socialist society; co-operation, self-discipline, sense of responsibility. This is a question to which the socialists have paid little attention so far. Even Gandhiji refused to prepare any blueprint of the future. Writing in 1929, he observed:

We do not know our distant goal. It will be determined not by our definition but by our acts voluntary and involuntary. If we are wise, we will take care of the present and the future will take care of itself.\textsuperscript{44}

He repeated again, “I cannot say in advance what the government based wholly on nonviolence will be like.” However, Gandhiji was realistic enough to admit that the completely nonviolent and Stateless Society might never be established because every one in society might not reach the requisite level of moral development. Thus he conceded:

Government cannot succeed in becoming entirely nonviolent because it represents all the people. I do not today conceive of such a golden age. But I do believe in the possibility of a predominantly nonviolent society.\textsuperscript{45}
J.P's answer was, however, elusive:

Self-government, self-management, mutual co-operation and sharing, equality, freedom and brotherhood, all could be practiced and developed far better if men lived in small communities.... It was for this reason that Gandhiji insisted that the Indian village and village self-government (gram raj) were the foundations for his picture of society—a society of equal and free human beings living as brothers in peace.46

It was in his *A Plea for the Reconstruction of Indian Polity* and in *Swaraj for the People* that these ideas were more seriously expounded. These were the outcome of his serious thinking on the problem of reorganization of social order. He felt that it was in the smaller areas or units of power that there would be a greater scope for the individual to play his part without looking for organized political parties. He observed in this connection:

Ancient Indian thought and tradition, social nature of man, social science, ethical and spiritual goals of civilization, the demand of democracy that the citizen should participate in the ordering and running of his life, the need of saving man from alienation from himself and from the fate of robotism, the requirement that the state and other institutions of society be reduced to a human scale, the ideal above all, that man should become the centre of civilization all these points in the same direction, to a communal or communitarian way of life, communitarian ethics and education, communitarian social, economic and political organization.47
He was convinced that the most important thing that was to be done for the achievement of a decentralized polity was to do away with the method of indirect election and to lay the foundation of a society on the basis of the “self-governing, self-sufficient, agro-industrial, urbo-rural, local communities.” The existing villages and townships had to be organized on the pattern of a decentralized society. This would naturally be a plural society in which the units of power would be located at the bottom, and not concentrated in a monolithic State at the top.

In his *Swaraj for the People* also similar ideas were discussed. In this pamphlet, however, he clarified that devolution of power did not necessarily mean a weak centre. It only meant that “The centre has only as much of it as required to discharge its central functions and all the rest is exercised by the lower organs. Here he was trying to present a more viable scheme. He conceded that the State should regulate and legislate for the formation of a Panchayat Raj, but the “day-to-day working should be outside the purview of the state government.” It was becoming clear that what he desired was not the elimination of the state control altogether, but only reducing it to the minimum possible level, so that the working of the communitarian areas like Panchayat Raj were not “subjugated” completely by the State. It was mainly a question of balancing the local centres of power with the central power of the State.

In the two pamphlets which J.P. had written in the sixties J.P. was not for completely vanishing State control but he was for the retention of the same
for central affairs. As for the views of J.P. on the role of State in nation-building were concerned J.P’s solution was modeled on Gandhi’s teachings which “to crate the power of the people alongside the power of the State. Thus, he was preparing to go back to the people at the head of a large band of revolutionary workers, to serve the people, to educate and change them, and help them stand up on their feet, to involve them directly in the process of social change and reconstruction. J.P. was also critical of the welfare state. He believed that the name of welfare the state had assumed larger powers and responsibilities. He thus observed, “In the present world the state not only in its totalitarian form but also in its welfare variety is assuming larger and larger powers and responsibilities. The welfare state, in the name of welfare, threatens as much to enslave man to the state as the totalitarian.” The welfare state had snatched the initiative from the individuals and had retarded development of the individual’s personality.

J.P. also criticized the nation state. He gave the concept of a world community in his communitarian polity. As he proceeded from inner to the outer circles of communal organization, he dreamt that “a day might come when the national communities might federate together to form the world community.” He was a nationalist but did not believe in aggressive version of nationalism. According to him, the world community only could do justice to the suppressed sections of Asian and African humanity. He also held that “A revolutionary at this age and time of history when man is landing on the moon
should have no lesser ideal than to build a world community of human beings; a real human family....” 49

J.P. was also a great advocate of International peace and friendly relations between the countries. In a draft resolution submitted to that Ramgarh Congress of 1940, J.P. advocated for peace, disarmament, amicable settling to the disputes and friendly relations between the countries. He wrote, “The free Indian Nation has work for peace between nations and total rejection of armaments and for the method of peaceful settlement of national disputes through some international authority freely established. It will endeavour particularly to live on the friendly terms with its neighbours whether they may be great power or small nations and shall covet no foreign territory.” His philosophy of Sarvodaya was for “creating the foundations of a peaceful life.” 50

Like Jayaprakash, M.N. Roy also did not believe in National State and he criticized the ideal of Nationalism. Rejecting the ideal of Nationalism, he said, “Nation is a metaphysical concept, yet, human beings, of flesh and blood, must sacrifice everything to make the nation great and glorious. That is the essence of Nationalism. That is, to sacrifice a reality at the altar of a fiction, of an illusion.” He believed that the presence of foreigners would not make a nation slave as the mere presence of only the nationals would not make a nation free. He wrote, “It makes no difference whether the relation of exploitation is between men in the same country or those born different countries.” He pointed out there were many examples in the history wherein the name of nationalism,
people exploited their own country men. According to him, nationalism is a medieval idea. It maintains that nation is more important than the individuals who compose it. Thus, “Nationalism becomes the emotional core round which gathers the ideology of the past, which a progressive movement must aim to change considerably.” Nationalism leads to Fascism and irrationalism. It is totalitarian dogma. His ideal was world State. But he believed that a world state could not be possible as long as nation state existed. He visualized a Cosmopolitan Common Wealth of free men and women.

When, however, he came to the idea of “Total Revolution” J.P. appears to have left the issue of State aside, even though for Total Revolution he put a reliance on people’s action rather than State action. Addressing the All India Youth Conference in Allahabad on 22nd June, 1974, he clarified, “My interest is not in the capture of state but in the control of power by the people. People now have only right left, the right to vote. If that is denied or falsified what remains?”

The aim of the ‘Total Revolution’ was a radical social, economic, political, educational, cultural and ethical change. That was to be brought about by people’s action and this was to be a long drawn-out process. He, therefore, called this movement a “continuing revolution”. During the final J.P. advocated for People’s Government from below against the totalitarian state. He emphasized on the devolution of power reaching to the lowest level, that is, village level. He wanted to achieve the ideals of Gandhi’s Gram Raj and
Vinoba’s *Gram Swaraj* through the establishment of the Janata Governments from the village upwards to the Panchayat and Block levels.54

Later writing in his *Prison Diary*, J.P. appeared to have been convinced that systematic change was impossible of achievement in the prevailing atmosphere except through direct action by the people, civil disobedience, peaceful resistance and non-cooperation led by the youth.55 “The Bihar Movement” he wrote, “draws its strength from the power of the youth and the people, Yuva Shakti (Youth Power) and Jana Shakti (People’s Power) not *dal Shakti* (Party Power).”56 But he was no more so bothered about a Stateless society. He was more concerned about awakening the people to exercise a greater and more effective control over the government.

Towards the end he vainly looked for a revolution through that assortment of enthusiasts, demagogues, hypocrites and clowns called the Janata Party. This only vindicated his earlier belief that “State System was subservient to a variety of forces with their interest entrenched in keeping it a closed shop” which had become “glaringly apparent.”57 But J.P. did not make a serious thinking to identify these “variety of forces.”58 And what was to be done to free the State from the shackles of these “forces”. These “forces” had certainly not disappeared after the Janata Party’s victory.

J.P. felt cheated. That was inevitable. He had strayed into providing shortcuts to an utopian ideal and in the process had also relegated the ideal to a secondary position next to providing an alternative to Congress rule. His focus

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had shifted towards the State power rather than away from it. It was naïve to think that a change of individuals could lead to altering the structure of state power in favour of the people.

Thus J.P. thought and explained about State and Stateless Society various angles.
References


5. Ibid., p. xxvii.


9. Ibid.


15. Ibid., p. 97.

16. Ibid., p.98 (emphasis added).


20. Ibid., p.143.

21. Ibid., p. 45.


35. “Jeevandan” cited in *Socialism Sarvodaya and Democracy*, p. 73.


37. Ibid., pp. 53-54.


40. Ibid.,


53. Ibid.


55. Ibid., Vol 1, p. CXVIII.

56. Ibid., p. CXXXVII.


58. Ibid.