

## **The Impact of Gandhian Philosophy on Jaya Prakash Narayan's Ideology: An analysis**

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### **Abstract**

Jaya Prakash's life was devoted to searching for ushering just a social order where there are peace and prosperity for all. He made experiments with Marxist ideology, Democratic socialism, Sarvodaya. Both Gandhi and JP wanted to make an ideal society to welfare all. Jayaprakash Narayan had little regard for Mahatma Gandhi and his theories of non-violence. Even then, Mahatma Gandhi admired JP's self-sacrifice. Some of the statements Gandhi reflects his good character. JP was arrested in J Jamshedpur in March 1940 by the British Government. One charge of trying to impede the production of munitions and other supplies for the war was Produced in D.C's court at Singbun where he pleaded guilty and made a statement in the court justifying his action. Jaya Prakash sent a copy of the statement to Mahatma Gandhi reacted to his arrest in the Harijan on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1940 and published JP's statement in his weekly. In the estimate of Gandhiji, JP was an authority on socialism and not an ordinary worker. Being an authority on socialism he devoted his entire life to establish freedom, equality, and brotherhood in a democratic society. He understood the significance of non-violent means and satyagraha to develop society.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION:**

Mahatma Gandhi is one person who has changed the trend of violent revolution through truth and non-violence. Gandhiji always believed that a good aim is achieved only by good means. The bad means cannot provide us a good result. If we want to make a good society then it is possible only through non-violence and truth. Through violence, we never achieve the aim of a good society. Therefore, we can see all violent revolutions have not achieved the aim of social revolution, but it is possible by Gandhian thought. Gandhian philosophy is very effective in the process of social reconstruction.

The Sarvodaya, non-violence, truth, spiritualism, creative work, and gram swaraj are the main mechanisms of Gandhian thought. The Gandhian thought attracted the attention of many thinkers. One among them was Jayaprakash Narayan. Jayaprakash Narayan used Gandhian thought for social reconstruction after the independence of India. The philosophy of Jayaprakash Narayan is the result of the effect of Gandhian thought on him. Jayaprakash Narayan was a freedom fighter, social worker, and great socialist thinker of India. His ideology changed from time to time in a positive direction. He gave a major contribution to social reconstruction. He was linked with Bhodan, Gramdan movement. <sup>(1)</sup> In 1974, he gave a concept of Total Revolution to change the corrupt, autocratic, and rotten system. <sup>(2)</sup> He was one of those persons who worked on the way of Gandhian thoughts. Before the independence of India, he was influenced by Marxism but after independence, he understood the depth of the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi and accepted it. He tried to complete the dream of Mahatma Gandhi and the aim of Gandhiji's LokSevak Sangh.

### **Socialism to Sarvodaya:**

Sarvodaya means 'universal uplift' or 'progress of all'. The term was first coined by M.K Gandhi as the title of his 1908 translation of John Ruskin's work on political economy, 'unto this last' and Gandhi came to use the term for the ideal of his political philosophy. <sup>(3)</sup> Sarvodaya is the main concept of Gandhian thought. Mahatma Gandhi gave the philosophy of Sarvodaya as a module of development for human society. Jayaprakash Narayan also accepted the Sarvodaya philosophy for social reconstruction after the independence of India. But, before the independence of India, he was a strong follower of Marxism. He believed that Marxism is better than Gandhism. He said, "Freedom remained the unchanging goal, but the Marxism as a science of revolution seemed to offer a sure and quicker road to it than Gandhi's method of civil disobedience and non-cooperation.

The thrilling success of the great Lenin, accounts of which we consumed with unsatiated hunger, seemed to establish beyond doubt the supremacy of the Marxism way to revolution. At the same time, Marxism provided another beacon of light for my equality and brotherhood. Freedom was not enough. It must mean freedom for all even the lowliest and this freedom must include freedom from exploitation, from hunger, from poverty.”<sup>(4)</sup> In this way, in the effect of Marxism, the philosophy of Jayaprakash Narayan was developed. Equality and brotherhood were the base of his philosophy. But after the independence of India when Jayaprakash Narayan understood the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, he believed that socialism could not be established through communism and democratic socialism, it can be established only through Sarvodaya. According to Jayaprakash Narayan, the right objective and right philosophy of socialism are found in Sarvodaya’<sup>(5)</sup>

He said, “I regret that I did not reach this point in my life’s Journey while Gandhiji was still in our midst. However, some years back it became clear to me that socialism, as we understand it today, cannot take mankind to the sublime goals of freedom, equality, brotherhood, and peace. Socialism, no doubt, gives the promise to bring mankind closer to those goals than any other competing social philosophy. But I am persuaded that unless socialism is transformed into Sarvodaya, those goals would remain beyond its reach; and just as we had to taste the ashes of independence, so future generations may have to taste the ashes of socialism.”<sup>(6)</sup>

According to Jayaprakash Narayan, Communism, democratic socialism, and Sarvodaya are the different forms of socialism. Communism is a violent movement and democratic socialism is government action but Sarvodaya is a non-violent movement in which socialism is established by ideological changes in all human beings in society.<sup>(7)</sup> So, Jayaprakash Narayan believed the Sarvodaya philosophy for social reconstruction. In this way, Jayaprakash Narayan, who was a follower of Marxism at any time, was now a spokesperson of Sarvodaya and Gandhian thought.<sup>(8)</sup>

#### **Violent Revolution to Non-Violent Revolution:**

Nonviolence is the pragmatic component of Gandhian thought following the way of Satyagraha. Mahatma Gandhi believed that Ahimsa (non-violence) is an active power. Gandhiji proved it through his non-violent revolution during the National movement. Through his non-violent revolution, Mahatma Gandhi astonished the whole world that truth and non-violence can win against any injustice. He used the concept of non-violence in the political and social sphere to make an ideal society. He proved that non-violent means could be successfully applied in all areas of life and at all levels of society and nation.

#### **The concept of Non-violence:**

Jayaprakash Narayan was one of those people who were influenced by the Gandhian concept of non-violence. He accepted the way of non-violence for social reconstruction such as Bhoodan and gramdan and used non-violent revolution during the emergency period of 1975-1977 to save democratic values. During the freedom movement, Jayaprakash Narayan did not believe strongly in non-violence. He accepted a violent way of revolution for freedom movement and established Azad Dasta which was a group of violent revolutionaries for freedom movement. He said that the discussion on violence and non-violence is meaningless; both are good in the reference of the freedom movement.<sup>(9)</sup> But after independence, when he came in the light of Gandhian thought he believed in the power and needs of non-violence and devoted his life to non-violent revolution for social reconstruction which is called the Sarvodaya movement.<sup>(10)</sup> He gave the credit for the effect of non-violence on him to Gandhiji. Jayaprakash Narayan said, “It is our good luck that Gandhiji was born in our country who gave us a non-violent way. We can overcome any crisis with peace and this credit goes to Gandhiji.”<sup>(11)</sup>

Jayaprakash Narayan believed that a non-violent revolution is always better than a violent revolution in a behavioural sense. JP said that the objectives cannot be completed with violent revolution, through violent revolution the negative results will come.<sup>(12)</sup> He believed that the change in society and the reconstruction of society are possible through non-violence. He said that the change in society is not possible through a violent revolution; it is possible through non-violent revolution such as Sarvodaya.<sup>(13)</sup>

#### **Materialism to Spiritualism**

When Jayaprakash Narayan comes in the effect of Marxism, he believed in materialist philosophy’<sup>(14)</sup> Equality and brotherhood were the main factors of his thoughts. He said, “At the same time, Marxism provided another beacon of light for me; equality and brotherhood freedom were not enough. It must convey freedom for all-even the lowliest and this freedom must include freedom from exploitation from hunger, from poverty.”<sup>(15)</sup>

But after independence, when he believed in Gandhian thought then he moved towards spiritualism. He said, “I believed in materialist philosophy for a long time. But no inspiration is in materialist philosophy to be a good man. It indicates that social reconstruction is not possible through materialist philosophy.”<sup>(16)</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan removed himself from materialist philosophy because he believed that materialism could not achieve the aim of a good society; materialist philosophy cannot give any base for goodness among the people. He said,

“It becomes clear that materialism, as a philosophical outlook, could not provide any basis for ethical conduct and any incentive for goodness.”<sup>(17)</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan found that the inspiration to be a good man and social reconstruction are possible through Sarvodaya and Gandhian thought. He believed that spiritualism is necessary to be a good man.<sup>(18)</sup>

As a result of the effect of Gandhian thought, he believed that spiritualism is the root of morality. He said, “The root of morality lies in the endeavour of man to realize this unity of existence or to put it differently to realize himself. For one who has experienced this unity, the practice of morality becomes as natural and effortless as the drawing of breath.”<sup>(19)</sup>

Jayaprakash Narayan believed that spiritualism is a base of non-violence. Without spiritualism, non-violence cannot exist alone in the heart of a man. According to JP, spiritualism is necessary to have control of science, and therefore, spiritualism is necessary for goodness in society. He understood, “Gandhiji has rightly said that making of a good man is not possible through materialism, it is possible only through spiritualism.”<sup>(20)</sup>

### **Creative Work for Non-Violent Revolution of Social Reconstruction:**

Mahatma Gandhi gave a concept of inventive work to establish a non-violent society, such as khadi. But he wanted that these creative works should be helpful to change the ideology of every person of society towards non-violence. Jayaprakash Narayan accepted this concept of Gandhian thought and participated in the Gramdan and Bhoodan movement. JP said, “The main objective of the creative work of Mahatma Gandhi was to establish a nonviolent society, a violence-free world.”<sup>(21)</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan emphasized advanced creative work which will be more relevant in the present context and effectively complete the aim of a non-violent society. He said, “a special type of creative work is necessary for non-violent revolution because at present the traditional Gandhian work is not completing the objective to establish a non-violent society; it is far away from the main objective of non-violent revolution. The khadi, gramodyaog, Harijan, and tribal service have been just formal work to be self-dependent. The objective of the non-violent revolution and non-violent society is possible through Gramdan and Gramswaraj type of creative work.”<sup>(22)</sup>

### **Gram Swaraj:**

Jayaprakash Narayan played a significant role in the development of democracy in India. He gave the right direction to the politics in India. The political thought of Jayaprakash Narayan was influenced by Gandhian thought. He said, “I believe there is no need for me to add that at no time have I claimed to have made an original contribution to political thought. I am indebted not only to Roy but to many others, most of all to Gandhiji.”<sup>(23)</sup>

The Gandhian concept of Gram swaraj is a base of social, political, and economic thought of Jayaprakash Narayan. Jayaprakash Narayan believed that rural development should be the base of the development of this country. He said that Gandhiji wanted to develop every village as a self-dependent agricultural industrial unit. According to him, “Gandhiji wanted that in the democracy, the power should not be in the hands of some selected people, but the power should be in hands of all people. It is possible only when Gramraj will be the base of democracy.”<sup>(24)</sup>

As a result of the effect of Gandhian thought, Jayaprakash Narayan gave his thought about Gramraj and tried to implement it in his work of social reconstruction. According to him, the Gramraj means autonomous village republic, not a panchayat; this Gramraj will be governed by the villagers, not by government agencies.<sup>(25)</sup>

Jayaprakash Narayan presented a plan about Gramraj which was a dream of Mahatma Gandhi. He said, “In order, therefore, to give a true base to our democracy and to involve actively and continuously, the whole people in its working, it is necessary to go lower down than the panchayat to the people themselves and to constitute the entire adult membership of the village community into a statutory collective body; the gram-sabha. The panchayat should function as an executive of the sabha, which should have the power to set up other committees and teams for specific purposes.”<sup>(26)</sup>

### **Theory of Revolution:**

Gandhi's theory of revolution is more fundamental than that of JP, as it deals with that phenomenon as a continuous human transformation, though as reflected in institutional structures, JP's theory deals only partly with the issue of transformation of man, emphasizing more the process of political transformation - change in the structure of the state. JP seems to be unaware of the fact that this was drifting away from Gandhi.

In the tactical field, too, JP fails to be a Gandhian as he did not accept the Gandhian principle that "minimum is the maximum". By that, we mean that, whatever the phase of development in a revolutionary movement, the basic demands should remain the same. But JP held that "All I mean to emphasize is that when a revolutionary movement is on, its aims should not remain limited to whatever they were at the beginning but, taking advantage of the revolutionary atmosphere, they should be widened to cover as many fields of social life as possible.”<sup>(27)</sup> He cites the example of Sandhi's movement for national independence, which went on enlarging itself. But this was a grave misunderstanding of Gandhi because Gandhi's notion of independence

itself was already comprehensive and multi-dimensional. It was, therefore, not an enlargement of the targets after the movement gathered strength. If our interpretation is correct, then to that extent JP went against the Gandhian frame.

Another foundational principle of Gandhi's theory of revolution is "non-violence". It was a moral principle of action that justified and legitimized the action of a revolutionary. Gandhi was a staunch follower of non-violence, predominantly because nothing was absolute, non-violence was accepted by him as a creed. But in JP there is no such creed of non-violence. He merely found it more practical and adopted it as a policy, rather than a principle.<sup>(28)</sup> Gandhi wrote voluminously about his technique of non-violence whereas JP made no comparable attempt to elaborate non-violence as an ethical value. All the strategies and tactics of Gandhi's revolution derive from the premise of non-violence. JP tended to be carried away by mob sentiments and believed that it would result in the total revolution through youth organizations.<sup>(29)</sup> But he failed in this. Gandhi's understanding and judgment of people seem to have been sounder and more correct than those displayed by JP. While Gandhi turned out disciplined and trained cadres for his revolution, no comparable weeding out process was followed by JP. He welcomed indiscriminately whosoever approached him to participate as a functionary in his revolution.

## II. CONCLUSION

Generally, it can be said that due to the impact of Gandhian thought the ideology of Jayaprakash Narayan had changed from Marxism to Sarvodaya, from materialism to spiritualism, from violent revolution to non-violent revolution. JP gave a vision of creative work to establish a nonviolent society and gram-swaraj. As a result, we can say that the ideology of Jayaprakash Narayan was deeply influenced by Gandhian ideology. The work of Jayaprakash Narayan which was based on Gandhian thought proves that Gandhian thought is more relevant in the present context. JP tried to bring a change to the progress of all following Gandhian thought. JP wanted a non-violent revolution to reconstruct the nation based on freedom, equality, brotherhood, and development for all. JP's activity followed Gandhian philosophy silently to bring socio-economic change in the society in the Post-Independence era of India.

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