

THE REVOLUTIONARY HUMANISM OF JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN

Varghes Manimala ■

Today, political life has become synonymous with corruption. Everyone seems to justify corruption as a world-wide phenomenon. All the politicians try to encash their service and sacrifice. Patriotism for many has become a sense of egotism lending to self-aggrandisement. But at least for a precious few it is always a mission to cleanse the Aegean stables of corruption, nepotism and bigotry. When occasions present themselves, they come to the forefront to resist evils, and take the side of the oppressed for their liberation. Such people are not deterred by any institution or imprisoned by an ideology. With an open mind they address themselves to the situation. Such a person was Jayaprakash Narayan. At a time when the freedom of India was in peril, anguished by the suffering of the people, Jayaprakash plunged into action at the later stage of his life. A fighter throughout his life and a man of ideology, with experience he had from the freedom struggle Jayaprakash launched a campaign of *Total Revolution*. In this paper our attempt is to delineate the personality and convictions of Jayaprakash Narayan, how he contributed to the growth of a revolutionary ideology in India.

1. The Formative Years

Jayaprakash was born on Oct.11, 1902 in a small village on the border of U.P. and Bihar. He came from a middle class family. After his primary education in the native village he went to Patna for further stud-

■ **Varghes Manimala** is director of Vijnananilayam (College of Philosophy), Janampet, Vijayarai, Eluru, A.P. He specializes in existentialism and Buddhism.

ies. Here he came into contact with the national activities through his association with Saraswati Bhavan, the center of national leaders. Jayaprakash was a good student at school, but loved freedom from his childhood days. Soon after intermediate studies he came into contact with Gandiji, who had return to India from South Africa. Jayaprakash was so much moved by the non-violent movements of Gandhi that he made up his mind to lead a simple life and work for the nation¹. At the early age of eighteen he got married to Prabhavati Devi. The marriage proved to be an advantageous one for him, for, thorough his father-in-law who was a national leader, he came into contact with important political leaders. When Mahatma Gandhi launched the non co-operation movement, Jayaprakash joined it, leaving his studies. Besides Gandhi, Bal Gangadar Tilak, who asked Indians to act fearlessly following the ideals of the Gita², also influenced Jayaprakash greatly.

Jayaprakash left for the USA in 1922 to continue his studies; during his stay in the States his wife stayed with Gandhiji. While in the USA he had to shift from university to university for financial reasons and had to perform all sort of menial works to pay his fees. After his post-graduation he made a deep study of the pros and cons of communism and became a pronounced Marxist. After his return to India he joined the Congress Party and gradually became an acknowledged leader. He plunged himself into relief operation in connection with the devastating earthquake of 1934. He was one of the founders of the Congress Socialist Party along with Narendra Deva, Sampurnanand, Yousuf Meharali, R.M. Lohia, Minoo Masani, Ashok Mehta and Atchyut Patwardhan. Thier aim was to inject marxist activism into the national movement.³ During the Quit India movement he escaped from Hazaribagh jail with a price of ten thousand rupees on his head and

¹ Dr. Bali, *Modern Indian Thought: From Rammohun Roy to Jayaprakash Narayan*, 3rd edn. (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers. 1989), p.237.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 237-238.

³ cf. P Rajeswar Rao, *The Great Indian Patriorts*. Vol.II (New Delhi : Mittal Publications, 1991) , p.36. Also see Sudarshan Kapur, "Satyagraha and Sarvodaya After Gandhi" *Gandhi Marg*, 1995 (Jan-March) , p 414.

Mahatma, he did not celebrate and rejoice at the dawn of freedom on 15th August 1947, since he was opposed to the partition of the country. He rejected facism and communism alike and accepted Gandhian preference for minimum government. He formed the Praja Socialist Party (PSP) and popularised the concept of democratic socialism. He left the PSP in 1957, as principles and policies were more important to him than politics. In course of time he rejected Marxism and sought to build a culture and civilisation based on a group of values which stress human personality. Although he was thought of as a successor to Nehru, and in fact Lal Bahadur Sastri tried to persuade him to take the reigns as Prime Minister, he spurned the offer, for he had no desire to wield power as party leader. His ideal was that of a partyless democracy and his concern was more with values than with votes. Though he changed ideologies, he never changed values.⁴ In spite of the differences he had with Gandhi, he could not help being influenced by the Mahatma. The struggle between their views waxed and waned and did not really end until after Gandhi was dead; and JP finally recognised the final flaw in Marxism - its leaving no room for ethical and moral considerations, the only human motivation being to seek something beyond their individual well-being. If during Gandhi's life time JP had rejected the need for purity of means, he was less sure about it after independence. His faith in Marxism had already been shaken by the way in which the communists had betrayed the nationalist cause by siding with the British during the Quit India movement. JP had slowly begun to move away from the rigid, hate-inducing black and white categories of exploiter and exploited, oppressor and oppressed into which Marxists had divided human beings, leaving no room for persuasion, change of heart, or appeals to conscience.⁵

For various reasons JP was against party democracy. In a multiparty system a party can come to power with a minority support; the people were intensely subjected to manipulative mass media and thus they were often unduly influenced, political parties indulged in half-truth and blatant lies, and thus the real interest of the country was forgotten. There was

⁴ cf. Rajeswar Rao, *Great Indian Patriots*, pp.37-38.

⁵ cf. Aji Bhattacharya, *Jayapraksh Narayan: A Political Biography* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1975), pp. 66-67. Also see Sudarshan, *Satyagraha and Sarvodaya*, p.414.

no proper link between the government and the individual voter, and, finally the election were expensive. Hence he wanted to substitute it with a partyless or participating democracy. To him democracy meant more and more social and economic justice, equal opportunity and industrial democracy, besides political right and people's participation in government⁶

II. Revolution as the Corrective to Corruption

The search for new way became very urgent because of the explosive situation in the country in the early seventies which witness serious erosion and even destruction of the democratic institutions by power-thirsty politicians, a stagnant and inflationary economy, a debased moral system and an irrelevant educational system. This made him call for a *Total Revolution*. JP was convinced that if such a situation with all its greed, self-interest, inhumanity, injustice, exploitation and inequalities was not put an end to through non-violence then violence would erupt.⁷ It would be something like a volcanic eruption sweeping the entire society.

To Jayaprakash the root cause of all the problems that India was facing (in the seventies) was the absence of morality in public life. There was a complete collapse of the moral authority of the country's leadership which was due to the unholy alliance of dishonest and corrupt politicians, officials and businessmen. In a long article in 1973 on *Corruption and Public Morality* he showed how corruption has crossed all limits assuming the proportion of a disease beyond all cure and capable of causing the death of body politic. He held that corruption had an economic aspect too. The scarcity of essential goods and price hike was due to corruption; it affected the efficiency of administration and benefited the privileged few at the cost of the masses.⁸

After parting ways with Congress party JP had a hope in the *bhoodan* movement led by Vinoba Bhave. In it he saw an alternative to Marxism and British model of parliamentary democracy. He said years later about

⁶ cf. *Sebasti L. Raj, Total Revolution: The Final Phase Of Jayaprakash Narayan's Political Philosophy* (Madras: Sayta Nilayam Publications, 1986), p.11.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.14.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.15-16. JP's conviction was that corruption in high places is playing enormous havoc. He wanted to attack it all costs, and therefore he wrote a lot against it. We are not able to quote all his speeches and letters.

this movement, " Vinoba`s movements thus supplied an answer to the question I had long been asking : could Gandhiji`s philosophy offer a practical method to accomplish the social revolutions? In a brilliant extension and development of Gandhiji`s work Vinoba demonstrated that there was such a method⁹." His appeal to the Socialist Party members to join the *bhoodan* movement fell on deaf ears . He launched the movement in Bihar and sought the help of the youth . By 1973 he expressed the firm hope that the youth might play pivotal role in bringing about fundamental social change. He issued appeal to the young people of India urging them to come forward to save the country from the dictatorial ways of its leadership . He was convinced that given the electoral system and the political structure where money could buy office at will , the poor had no chance of gaining a voice in the halls of power. JP poised this vital question to the youth of this country : will our youth continue to look idly on at this strangulation of the democratic process at its very birth? Surely, there cannot be a more important issue which should move the youth to action . Time for the action is here and now. What form their action should take is for the youth themselves to decide. My only recommendation would be that, in keeping with the spirit and substance of democracy, it must be scrupulously peaceful and non-partisan It is time for youth power in India to enter the national arena and play a decisive role in establishing the primacy of the people and securing their victory over the power of money, falsehood and brute force."¹⁰ At the same time JP had made appeal to the members of the Lok Subha to provide correctives whereby the fundamental right of the citizens could be protected.

The students' agitation had begun to spread in Gujarat by Dec. 1973, and by the middle of March 1974 the Gujarat government gave in to the pressure of the students and the Assembly was dissolved. JP may not have had a direct influence on Gujarat movement. Meanwhile the victory

⁹ cf. Bhattacharya, *Jayaprakash Narayan*, pp. 158-159. JP had made a surprising dramatic announcement on April 19, 1954 under the Bodhi tree at Gaya that he had dedicated his life (jeevan dann) to the Sarvodaya movement.

¹⁰ Jayaprakash Narayan (edited with an introduction by Brahmanand) *Towards Total Revolution*, Vol. 4 (Bombay : Popular Prakashan , 1978), pp.44-45. Also see Sudarshan, *Satyagraha and Sarvodaya*, pp. 416-417.

of the Gujarat movement had an encouraging effect on the Bihar movement. The Students' Action Committee had sought to have a negotiated settlement with the government, but their appeal fell on deaf ears. The governments refused to consider the demands of the students and remained adamant on its stance not to "bow down" to the students and open the floodgates of "disorder and chaos." The "mistake of Gujarat, it was decided in Delhi, must not be repeated in Bihar. Moved by frustration, the students decided to gherao the State Assembly in Patna, and the government responded with inordinately repressive measures. Police excesses and the intransigence of the government finally led the students to demand the resignation of the the ministry and the dissolution of the Assembly. Students requested JP to take on the leadership of the movement. He acceded to their request on condition that the movement must be peaceful under all circumstance and that, irrespective of party affiliations, the students must subscribe to the objective of the movement. The students were told that they have to abide by his decisions. JP lent support to the demand of the students for the resignation of the State ministry, a decision which he had deferred earlier.¹¹

Although JP was a staunch *sarvodaya* worker, by June 1974 the differences between him and Bhave came into the open. Bhave did not support the movement. JP came out with a statement: "I feel that would have betrayed my responsibilities as a citizen if I had not fully supported the demand for the resignation of such a ministry, and dissolution of such an Assembly. If the *sarvodaya* philosophy stands in the way of my acting in this manner, I at least repudiate such an interpretation of that philosophy. In fact my understanding of my responsibilities as a sarvodaya worker is that I must raise my voice strongly and act as effectively as possible to condemn and fight against such abuse of democratic power and democratic institutions."¹² JP was attempting to lead a national movement for a revolutionary change in the social, economic and political spheres based on Gandhi's principle of fellowship, self-sufficiency, and decentralization: at the same time, he was operating in the framework of national, electoral politics. The Bihar movement was a unique one in India's his-

¹¹ C. Sudarshan, *Satyagraha and Sarvodaya*, pp. 418- 119

¹² Jayaprakash, *Towards Total Revolution*, p.72.

tory and in the history of nonviolent struggles for justice. Confrontation with the government, especially with Indira Gandhi, became almost inevitable. Although she imprisoned him, she could not deter his spirit; by the imposition of emergency she sought to shut up the spirit of dissent, which was a Himalayan blunder. In the electoral battle that ensued, the Janata party under the leadership of JP swept to power. True to his ideal he kept himself out of power. Internal bickering and ambition, search for power and money brought down the Janata government. Unfortunately the Janata party leaders could not escape the political temptation and corrupting influence of power in spite of their unanimous pledge at the *samadhi* of Mahatma Gandhi after getting the mandate from the people. Partisan politicians were not necessarily interested in social transformation; certainly, not in widening and deepening the scope of *loksakti* in national politics.¹³ Perhaps JP died as a broken-hearted man, as a person whose dreams were unfulfilled. His plight was something like the Greek chorus which could foresee a tragedy but was powerless to prevent it.

III. The Meaning of Total Revolution

Relentless fight against corruption was one of the goals that JP set for his own life. He sought the help of other for it. He gradually discovered that the situation is so hopeless that it almost needs a *sanatio in radice*, a total cleansing. For this he gave the clarion call to *Total Revolution*. His concept of *Total Revolution* was a radical, social economic and cultural remedy to the deteriorating situation. In addressing the people who came to seek the dissolution of the Vidhan Sabbha in Patna he said : " this is a revolution, friends! We are not here merely to see that the Vidhan Sabha is dissolved. That is only one milestone on our journey. But we have a long way to go... After 27 years of freedom the people of this country are wracked by hunger, rising prices, corruption.... oppressed by every kind of injustice ... it is a Total Revolution we want, nothing less!"¹⁴

¹³ Bali, *Modern Indian Thought*, p.253. See also Sudarshan, *Satyagraha and Sarvodaya*, pp.422-423.

¹⁴ Nilima Sinha, "Jayaprakash Narayan" in *Remembering Our Leaders* (New Delhi: Children's Book Trust, 1990), p.170. See also Rajeswar Rao, *Great Indian Patroits*, p.38.

A. Meaning of the Concept

JP has not given a clear definition of Total Revolution. In fact he called upon other social scientists of this country to systematise his ideas about Total Revolution. He says that "it will be the fulfilment of one of my dreams if intellectuals in this country can provide a systematic and a comprehensive content to the concept of Total Revolution."¹⁵ Ajit Bhattacharya describes Total Revolution as "a continuing process inspired by ethical rather than historical or material principles." Two elements, namely, continuity and morality, are stressed here. K. B. Y. Thottappa thinks that total revolution is "a mental and moral evolution, first and last in the individual man, which would as such be writ large in society as well." Sachidanand holds to this position when he says that "Total Revolution should come about by a double process that seeks to change the structure - political, economic and social - while changing the individual intellectually, culturally, morally or spiritually." Also he stresses the role of the people. According to him: "By revolution JP meant basic change in the power structure, both political and economic, and by Total Revolution he meant the transfer of total power to the people." N. G. Goray is of the opinion that JP's concept of Total Revolution is synonymous with the concept of the emancipation of man. A. Appadorai agrees with Goray and says that Total Revolution is to be understood as "an all comprehensive social revolution including elimination of corruption, unemployment, untouchability and out-moded social customs like dowry and so on." Yet another aspect is emphasised by Appadorai, namely, that Total Revolution involves radical changes in the existing structures. It is a complete shake-up in the political, educational and other institutions of the polity. All these must be radically transformed; mere reforms alone will not deliver the goods.¹⁶

The descriptions of Total Revolution given above underline certain important elements of the concept: it is a process and continuous struggle, based primarily on moral principles, while it stresses the internal as well as the external transformation, through peoples' participation.

¹⁵ cf. Sebesti Raj, *Total Revolution*. p.59.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.59-62.

It aims at a genuine democracy with a decentralised power structure, seeking radical changes in the existing structures and to root out all social evils, and all these are to be achieved through non-violence.

Let us briefly look at JP's understanding of Total Revolution. Every social system becomes outdated in course of time and calls for a change. Society may bring about changes either consciously or unconsciously. A distinction is to be made between revolutionary changes and reactionary changes. The former originates from the underprivileged sections of society, i.e., when there is dissatisfaction among these people a revolutionary situation comes into existence and it drives them to the point of revolt. For JP revolution is different from reform; it is identical with transformation. It is a gradual process.

Another important characteristic of revolution according to JP is struggle. It is a dialectical struggle between individual and society, authority and freedom, the elite and masses, property and non-possession, labour and capital. Both social and historical conditions have to be ripened before a revolution can succeed. Hence a revolutionary struggle cannot take place until a given society is ready for it inwardly. Besides struggle, the revolution has also a constructive aspect. When both struggle and construction go hand in hand there is hope for the birth of a new social order. But a revolution for the creation of a new social order can never be pre-planned; it erupts spontaneously like a volcano. Every revolution writes its own text-book. Spontaneity, thus, is another characteristic of revolution.¹⁷

JP had a faint glimpse of Total Revolution even in the year 1942. In his letter to freedom fighters entitled "To All Fighters of Freedom" he spoke about the need for a 'Total Revolt' of the masses as the objective of the struggle. By this he had meant an all-out revolt to attain national independence. Although JP meant by 'Total Revolt' something different from what he would mean by "Total Revolution" later, the similarity of two expressions is very striking. In the mid-fifties, while talking about the *bhoo dan* movement, JP mentioned that it was "the first step towards total

¹⁷ Ibid., pp.63-65.

revolution - social, political and economic." In Total Revolution the emphasis is on the scope of the change envisaged. Total Revolution is not a mere change of governments, but a total transformation of society. JP had framed a People's Charter and submitted it to the Lok Sabha speaker in March 1975. It stated: "When basic principles of public life and good government are allowed to be trampled upon, it is people's duty to protest. We march to serve democracy. We pledge ourselves to a Total Revolution in society which will create a new order of social and economic equality, genuine democracy, new moral values within the Gandhian framework."¹⁸

By the word 'Total' JP means comprehensive. There is no sphere or aspect of the polity that is not touched by this concept. It is an all-embracing revolution which seeks to transform the entire society radically. The Total Revolution should encompass the totality of human relations and social organisations. The notion of 'Total' has also a communitarian aspect. The entire community has to carry on the struggle for Total Revolution. It is not to be achieved through the action of a political party or a select group, but through the active participation of the entire community. Thus we can say that 'Total' indicates comprehensiveness, completeness and communitarianism, and 'Revolution' means a radical change brought about by people through continuous struggle and constructive work. Hence, summing up all these aspects, we can describe Total Revolution as a comprehensive and complete change brought about by the active participation of the entire community through a long process of peaceful struggle and constructive work.

Although JP tried to give an adequate definition of Total Revolution, he was not dogmatic about it. He concedes that it may take on different meanings according to different situations. JP divides the scope of the concept of Total Revolution into seven spheres: political, economic, social, cultural, educational, ideological or intellectual and spiritual.¹⁹ Although revolution as an ideology was persisting in JP throughout his career, towards the final phase of his life the concept of Total Revolution enriched his political philosophy.

¹⁸ cf. Nilima Sinha, "JP" in *Remembering Our Leaders*, pp.170-171. Also Sebasti Raj, *Total Revolution*, pp.66-67.

¹⁹ Sebasti Raj, *Total Revolution*, pp.68-70.

B. Goals, Agents and Method of Total Revolution

Before we positively indicate what are the goals of Total Revolution, it may be useful to mention what it does not aim at. The Total Revolution does not have as its goal the destruction of existing structures, institutions and systems of the society. The assumption of power is not the objective of the Total Revolution; nor does it seek the transfer of power from one group of rulers to a new group or an individual, or to replace the ruling party by the opposition party or parties. Besides all this Total Revolution does not aim at ushering in a partyless democracy.

Then the question arises, what is the aim of Total Revolution? Total Revolution aims at "Changing society in all its aspects. Its goal is the purification of the government and politics. Total Revolution wants to create a new order of social and economic equality, genuine democracy and moral values within the Gandhian framework. We can think of mainly four types of goals for Total Revolution: spiritual regeneration, structural changes, people's power and basic needs.²⁰ Spiritual regeneration is a transformation in the value system and mental attitudes. JP was convinced that unless there is an inner revolution, external changes will not bring about a real transformation. Structural changes call for changes in political, economic, socio-cultural and educational fields. Revolution in the political sphere will mean creation of a new political structure. The new political system will give utmost value to man; man is the end not the means. Through his works- *A plea for the Reconstruction of Indian polity and Swaraj for the People*- JP proposed people's Participation in democracy. The economic system should aim at the welfare of the individual. Revolution in the economic field will mean removal of exploitation, corruption, economic stagnation, controlling prices, scarcity of essential commodities and growing unemployment. Unless changes taken place in the social-cultural fields the revolution is not complete. It should aim at the removal of superstitions, wrong values, unjust human and social relationships. The status of women has to be enhanced and abolition of dowry system, etc., should take place. It should aim at the removal of the caste system and untouchability, the bane of Indian society. A radical

²⁰ cf. *Ibid.*, pp.72-75.

change should place in the existing educational system too. Revolution should aim at empowering people. In every sphere the people should have the final say and decide their own destiny. *Lok sakti* should be the goal and the people have to act as watchdogs to see that democracy and its various institutions function properly. People's power is created so that the basic needs of every individual are taken care of. These basic needs can be grouped under freedom, equality and fraternity (the motto of French Revolution). The transformation of all spheres is the goal of Total Revolution.²¹

C. Agents of Revolution

JP was of the opinion that revolutions are never created by anyone: only historical conditions give birth to them. He says "No leader in history, no matter how great, whether it was Lenin, Mao or Gandhi, made a revolution. Revolutions happen. All that the leader does is to give it direction and control it. Otherwise it dissipates itself and there is a reaction.... All I can take credit for is that I did recognize that a revolutionary situation had arisen and something had to be done."²² JP thinks that agents are required to bring about revolution and he suggests several kinds of agents who may be able to usher in Total Revolution - the masses, revolutionary leadership, youth and students, class organisations, voluntary groups and formal institutions. JP used to stress on *jansakti* during his *bhoodan* movement. People's power is the goal as well as the agent of the Total Revolution. Total Revolution cannot come about unless people become direct masters and acquire the power and guide and guard the guardians. There needs to be a wave of awakening among the people and their total involvement in the movement.

Although the people are the real the ultimate agents of Total Revolution, JP realizes that they need to be inspired to act. They should be educated, awakened, conscientised and guided. Without leadership, a revolutionary movement may result in chaos or the imposition of dictatorship. No leader can create a revolution: "the secret of their leadership lay in

²¹ cf *Ibid.*, pp. 76-86.

²² See Neelima Sinha, "JP" in *Remembering Our Leaders*, p.174.

the fact that they were able to recognize the signs of the times and skillfully exploited the historical opportunities." The leader should not aim at capturing power for himself / herself, since power belongs to the masses. The leadership also endeavours to create new leaders from among the masses. Only then it is possible to sustain such a revolution.²³

JP had great hopes in the youth and the students. During the Bihar movement he had asked the students to sacrifice their studies for a year and dedicate themselves to the cause of Total Revolution. He was convinced that Total Revolution will not be possible without the students' support. JP has offered some reasons for assigning so great a responsibility to youth and students. He had a natural affinity to and great confidence in the youth. JP considered youth as representing the most disinterested section of the community. They are dynamic, zealous, enthusiastic and are ready to sacrifice themselves for a noble cause. He wants them to be the agents and guides of this stupendous task. However, he is aware that, while the youth and students have great enthusiasm, their capacity to preserve and carry on a long-term struggle is doubtful; and also they have their own pit-falls. Yet he assigns them a leading role in the movement for Total Revolution.²⁴

Other agents of Total Revolution include class organisations, voluntary groups and formal institutions. Apart from the youth and the students who will be in the forefront of the movement for Total Revolution, "all those classes who are considered as have-nots in the present society and who have to fight for their economic, political and social rights, would be the main participants." JP wants them to organize themselves primarily to fight against exploitation and tyranny, of which they are the victims. Voluntary groups also have to play a role in bringing about the revolution. Among the formal institutions are included the army, the police, political parties and the state. In a violent revolution the army has big role to play. Since the Total Revolution is a peaceful one there is no special role for the army. But the army should not oblige the ruling class if the latter ventures to use it to suppress a peaceful revolution. He wants

²³ cf. Sebasti Raj, *Total Revolution*. pp. 91-93.

²⁴ cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

the army to remain loyal to the nation, its flag and constitution. Similarly he wants the police also to defy the authorities when illegal orders are issued or when an order goes against their conscience. JP is not very clear as to the exact role of political parties. Although he had spoken about a partyless democracy during the Bihar movement, he had the active backing of the non-communist opposition parties. On the theoretical level he holds that Total Revolution cannot be ushered in by political parties. Usually the state remains an enemy to such a struggle. JP has no faith in the capacity of the state to bring about any radical change in the society on its own. But it can be an agent which co-operates in the revolutionary struggle in some rare situations.²⁵

D. The Methods Of Total Revolution

Since a peaceful revolution is rather unknown, the methods are not easy to suggest; neither did JP offer a clear blue-print for action to bring about Total Revolution. Revolution may be violent or peaceful, depending upon the given conditions of a society. JP is of the view that violence is used only by those who have no faith in the people and in democracy. Violence, instead of leading to a revolution, may cause a reaction and thus bring about a fascist dictatorship, or it may lead to chaos and disintegration of the nation, as history bears witness. In contrast to violent means, JP juxtaposes peaceful means. Since a peaceful revolution works from below, relying on persuasion rather than the use of force, the desired result is much quicker than violent revolution. A violent revolution destroys the society in one sweep and builds up the new order step by step; a peaceful revolution has the capacity to make radical changes and constructive work to go on simultaneously. In India peaceful struggles will be more acceptable to the masses than a violent one. Advocacy of peaceful methods is based on pragmatic considerations, and not on moral grounds.²⁶

The concrete techniques to bring about the Total Revolution can be listed under four heads: awakening, organisation, struggle and construc-

²⁵ cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 96-106

²⁶ cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 105-108

tive work. JP says that the first step towards Total Revolution is the creation of psychological climate of struggle. It can be done only through education, particularly education in democratic values. The education of the masses should ultimately lead to mass movement. This movement should ensure the active participation of all sections of the people, because JP believes that Total Revolution can be achieved "only by a wave of awakening among the people and their total involvement in the movement." Organisation is one of the basic requirements for a revolution. JP pleads for the formation of permanent organs of people's power at all levels, from the village to the constituency, and thence to state level. He wants that people's committees be formed; these committees should serve as the foundation for the building up of the new order. Besides people's committees, he also speaks about *janata sarkars* and *sabhas*. JP proposes three types *sabhas* : *gram sabhas*, *nagar sabhas* and *shram sabhas*. The *gram sabha* will consist of all the adult residents of a village. It is a face-to-face community where direct democracy is possible. Municipal wards in urban areas will be too large for this face-to-face community, and therefore JP suggests neighborhood councils (*nagar sabha*) consisting of about 100 families of the neighborhood. In factories, educational institutions and other work places he suggests communities of work (*shram sabhas*). These bodies should regularly meet and discuss their common problems and evolve co-operative and collective forms of action.²⁷

The formation of *janata sarkars* is another organisational step. It will function at all three levels - the village, panchayat and the block. It will aim at minimum compulsive powers and the maximum feasible service to the people. The structure of the *janata sarkars* will consist of *gram sabha*, *panchayat jana*, and the block level *jana sabha*. JP also proposes people's committees for every village, *panchayat*, urban ward and constituency. He also wants students' committees wherever there is a college or university. The functions of these committees are choosing the candidates for elections to the assembly and parliament and keeping watch over the representatives after the election, fighting against injustice, working for land reforms and a minimum wage to agricultural laborers, look-

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 109-112.

ing after the welfare of the Harijans (dalits) and other backward communities, and serving as agents of radical change in all spheres of life so that Total Revolution may be realised²⁸

JP insists on continuous struggle against all unjust structures through civil disobedience, peaceful resistance and non-co-operation. The concrete items of struggle may take on various forms according to the situations and circumstances, time and need e.g. gheraos, bandhs, referendum, signature campaign, etc. The struggle has to be supplemented with constructive work. Thus the methods of JP are quite enlightening, though very often they may appear to be impractical.

IV. Critical Appraisal

JP has offered a man-centered philosophy of action; for him man is the measure of everything. The welfare of every individual is the ultimate aim of all his thought and action, and he would not do anything that is detrimental to the human being. JP's approach to social change is integral. His emphasis on the moral aspect serves as a corrective to the present-day trend towards excessive materialism, amoralism and corruption in public life, especially in the politics of India. Today corruption has become so deep-rooted in politics and in public life that a corruption-free politician or bureaucrat is a rare exception. JP tried to integrate Marxism and Gandhism, and to a certain extent he succeeded.

JP's spirit of experimentation and learning from experience, and his courage to discard a system or a method when it is found to be irrelevant, are commendable contributions. The concept of Total Revolution is a new approach for building a just social order. JP has not given a rigid blue-print or programme for Total Revolution. He has given only a general framework and has indicated the goals towards which it should move; for the rest he wants the people themselves to decide. This undogmatic and flexible approach given a wide scope for the people's initiative and participation. For these reasons, Total Revolution seems to be a relevant philosophy of social change.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.113-115.

Many critics have strongly attacked JP's notion of Total Revolution. For some of them it is utopian and impractical; some others consider him an inconsistent thinker. Thinkers like N.G. Goray doubt whether Total Revolution is feasible in a country like India where the *karma* theory or fatalism is so deep-rooted. While other people like W.S.Kane opine that, considering that Indian conditions, Total Revolution is a distant goal, but it would be worthwhile to take the steps to achieve it. JP himself was aware of the deficiencies of the movement. We have to unearth the shortcoming of the movements and correct them²⁹. JP's life may appear to be a failure, but it is he, after Gandhi, who kept the tradition of the politician-saint alive and left behind young men and women with new urge and determination to go forward. He was a person who was willing to take risks, and he did take many, becoming a model for us. His whole life was a quest to find the right path towards the twin goals of freedom and equity. With humility, towards the end of his life he added: "And this unsuccessful life will be blessed a hundred times, if for the dear young fellow seekers, it makes the thorny path a bit more easy."³⁰

²⁹ cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 196-200.

³⁰ Neelima Sinha, "JP" in *Remembering our Leaders* p.174. Also see Sudarshan Kapur, *Satyagraha and Sarvodaya*. p.423.