



Critical view of the Philosophy of Jaya Parkash and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

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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 Singbum 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 Harijanon 16th 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. At the initial stage of our exploration of Jai Prakash Narayan's thoughts and ideas, the answer is no, but this article will examine his thoughts and ideas in the context and framework of Gandhian philosophy.

Keywords: Jaya Prakash's, Gandhi, socialism, thoughts

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi is one person who has changed the trend of violent revolution through truth and nonviolence. 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 Bhoodan, Gramdan movement. (1) In 1974, he gave a concept of Total Revolution to change the corrupt, autocratic, and rotten system.(2)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 Lok Sevak Sangh.

Critical View of The Philosophy of Jaya Parkash

The most comprehensive exposition of J.P.'s ideological position around that time is to be found in his *Why Socialism?* Published by the CSP in 1936. In its first chapter, entitled "The Foundation of Socialism", J.P. asserts that there is "only one type, one theory of Socialism—Marxism." Though he recognizes that there are differences between various groups of socialists on the question of methods and tactics, he emphasises that till then only Communists had vindicated their theory of tactics by their "great and remarkable success in Russia". This is followed by a typically Marxist approach to socialism. Socialism, he points out, is a system of social reconstruction and not a code of personal conduct. It cannot be established by a group of idealists without power. On the other hand, a socialist party in power can establish socialism provided it has either sufficient power of coercion or sufficient popular support to deal with resistance by vested interests. The root cause of inequality of wealth lies in the fact that the gifts of nature as well as instruments of production have been privately appropriated by certain individuals for their own benefit. The way to end inequality, therefore, is to abolish all private ownership of the means of production and to replace it by the ownership of the entire society.

The aims of the socialist movement which needed to be emphasised were not mere overthrow of the capitalist order and establishment of a party dictatorship but the creation of a society of free and equal peoples, a society based on certain values of human and social life, values which could never be sacrificed in the name of theory or the Party line or expediency of any sort. In the noble words of Ignazio Silone: 'On a group of theories one can found a school; but on group of values one can found a culture, a civilisation, a new way of living together among men'. Socialism is not just a school of thought, but a new culture, a new civilisation.

J.P. described the evolution of his political philosophy as one from socialism to Sarvodaya, he did not look upon them as two contrasting ideologies. On the contrary, he took care to point out that the goals of both were the same, only the path of Sarvodaya seemed more likely to lead us to those goals. In this sense he regarded Sarvodaya as a higher form of socialism and keenly looked forward to the day when the two would become one. "We may not live to see that consummation ourselves", he wrote, "but I feel confident that if the world were to reach the port of peace and freedom and brotherhood, socialism must eventually merge into Sarvodaya."

Even persons apparently not having any interest in politics often told him that the country needed his leadership and that he had committed a serious mistake by leaving the political arena. On the other hand, many, including even Nehru, were often upset by his criticisms of Government's policies and actions and accused him of jumping frequently from Bhodan to politics. J.P., however, remained totally unmoved by such complaints and criticisms. All that he did was to explain again and again that he had not given up politics, but only power and party politics.

While he supported the position of Hindi as the official language of India, he deprecated the intolerance and impatience displayed by certain Hindi enthusiasts and commended the policy of the Government of India according to which English was to continue as an associate official language of India as long as the non-Hindi speaking people wanted it.

He also emphasised that it would not be possible to obtain a military solution to the problem in Nagaland "without large-scale extermination of the Naga people"—a totally unthinkable proposition. On the other hand, he explained to the underground Naga leaders the nature of the Indian Union, based on the principles of democracy and autonomy of states, and assured them that after the creation of the State of Nagaland the Naga people were as free to rule over themselves as were the Assamese or the Bengalis or the people of any other state of the India Union. He therefore, advised them not to look at the problem of Nagaland in isolation but to consider it within the context of the problem of Union-State relations as members of the large Indian family. As for Kashmir, he repeatedly urged the leading members of the Government of India not to ignore the people's wishes therein and to start a friendly dialogue with Sheikh Abdullah, who represented the sentiments of the overwhelming majority of the Kashmiri people. On the other hand, with equal frankness and sincerity, he told Sheikh Abdullah

and his leading supporters that no Government of India could agree to a settlement of the Kashmir problem on the basis of de-accession and that if they wanted a negotiated settlement with New Delhi, they must seek it within the framework of the Indian Union.

J.P. also made serious efforts, especially after the fourth general election in 1967, (the first election after the passing away of Nehru) to usher in the politics of consensus at the national level. The election had resulted in the emergence of non-congress coalition governments in a number of states from Punjab to West Bengal, but they were far from stable and were victims of a lot of internal dissensions and floor-crossing by legislators in order to secure power and/or money. The country's democratic political system seemed to be facing a serious threat of instability. J.P., therefore, pleaded for the enactment of a law against defections by legislators from one party to another. At the same time he advanced the view that the system of competitive politics, an essential concomitant of democracy, ought to be supplemented by the politics of consensus. The idea, he took care to explain, was not only to provide for political stability, but also to facilitate rapid economic development and social change by bringing about a consensus among the main political parties on certain basic issues facing the country.

As a result of considerable introspection during the Gandhi centenary year (1969-70), J.P. also began to feel that the method so far adopted in the Bhudan-Gramdan movement was not enough to usher in a social revolution. Persuasion, he began to feel more and more, must be supplemented by struggle. Besides, there was not a new sense of urgency in his utterances. Thus addressing the National Conference of Voluntary Agencies held in New Delhi in 1969, he emphasised that what India needed more than anything else on its political agenda was a non-violent social revolution. "In this Gandhi Centenary Year", he added, "we have to snatch the initiative from the hands of politicians, from Parliament and the legislatures and give it back to the people." He further stressed that if the votaries of non-violence did not stir themselves and start seriously working for a social revolution, people would lose faith in the efficacy of non-violent effort and turn to violence. He went on to affirm, "with a due sense of responsibility", that if he himself became convinced that there was no deliverance of the masses except through violence, he too would not hesitate to take to violence. Needless to add, he was not so convinced. On the contrary he believed that violent revolution would never result in power going to the people. He was, however, no longer prepared to toe the Vinoba line and equate non-violence with only persuasion. In *Face to Face*, a pamphlet published in 1970, in the midst of intensive work in a group of poverty-stricken villages in North Bihar, he, for the first time since joining Vinoba, stressed that Gandhi had championed not only persuasion and constructive work, but also struggle in the shape of 'non-violent non-cooperation or resistance'. At the same time he also drew attention to the fact that Gandhi did not in any way underestimate the role of the state, but only pointed out that it alone could not bring about major social change and that there would be need to create "the power of the people alongside the power of the State."

During this last phase of his life (1977-79) he failed to play any active role in public affairs owing largely to the state of his health; indeed it was a surprise that he remained alive. Yet he never stopped thinking about the problems of the country and continued to offer his suggestions and guidance to all concerned even though unasked. He did not forget, for instance, to write to the leaders of the Janata Party and Government asking them to think of the future and redeem their pledge to the people. His hopes for the future, however, were mainly centred on the youth. He was happiest when talking to the members of the Chhatra Yuva Sangharsha Vahini, a volunteer force of youth and students he had founded in 1975 to work for total revolution.

At the same time he continued with his quest till almost the last breath of his life. What he had said in 1975, while referring to his journey from Marxism to Democratic Socialism to Sarvodaya remained true of him till the very end:

But with Sarvodaya my journey did not end. Sarvodaya itself, as its two most original proponents, Gandhi and Vinoba, have repeatedly pointed out, is a search: search for Truth as they have called it. I dare not aspire to be a seeker after Truth, but I do claim to have searched, and to be searching, for right ways to better the social and human conditions, not in terms of the world society, like Gandhi and Vinoba, but in terms of India.....

Critical View of the Philosophy of Gandhi

Many critics of Gandhian philosophy have tried to point out inconsistencies and contradictions in his thought. Some have even regarded his philosophy as impracticable. For example, Hiren Mukherjee, a great critic of Gandhian thought, has observed thus: "history has shown repeatedly that when projected into a 'social perspective', it tends to become impracticable." Speaking in the same tone Dr. Bhagwan Das once said, "He (Gandhiji) can only show the way to the Truth, and not the Truth itself." We have tried to show that many of these inconsistencies and confusions in regard to Gandhian thought are due to the lack of concentrated study of Gandhian philosophy. We are inclined to hold that much of these inconsistencies, confusions and contradictions in Gandhian thought would disappear if a concentrated and an all-round study of Gandhian philosophy is made.

As a student of Gandhian thought and having studied the different aspects of this life, can with some amount of confidence, that the entire Gandhian philosophy is governed solely by the concept of Truth. It is the key-concept of Gandhiji's life and philosophy. The term Truth is the most comprehensive term in Gandhian thought and literature round which the entire activities of this great personality of modern India revolves. He explains the entire activities of human life, be it social, moral, religious or political, with this key concept and shows mankind its unfathomable beauty manifesting itself unmistakably in all circumstances and at all time. Gandhiji's undaunted faith in Truth made him realize that truth alone is. And it was due to this conviction that he equated truth with God. This self-acting force constitutes the basic unity which manifests itself in multiplicity. Man's growth self-expression etc. require him to know the truth, to hold fast to it, and to practice it in all spheres of life. All his activities are rooted in an entire round his nation of Truth. Hence, truth has been regarded as the basic unity of life.

It is true that Gandhiji lived in an age which is regarded as the age of science and technology. It is the age of nuclear weapons. But Gandhiji did not think that human salvation was possible in and through the use of nuclear weapons. Scientific development, according to him, brought happiness only so far as material prosperity was concerned. As we have held and discussed, his concern was not material prosperity but spiritual prosperity which alone could bring salvation of mankind. Though he was not averse to scientific developments, he was very conscious of their proper use. Because, if they are improperly used, they may lead to the destruction and annihilation of entire human race. Therefore, he stressed and very sincerely advocated the philosophy of satyagraha which, according to him, was a panacea for all human miseries. Satyagraha is thus such a mighty force which cannot be deferred in any circumstances and it can only bring cohesion and unity in human life. Spiritual unity cannot be attained through subversive methods. In order to achieve spirituality Gandhiji adopted and practiced the pure means of non-violence. No society can march along the path of progress and prosperity so long as it uses and method of violence. If we want all-round progress, a satyagrahi should unhesitatingly practice the discipline of non-violence.

It may be stated in this connection that Gandhiji was never pessimistic in his approach to life. He was thoroughly confident of the efficacy of non-violence as a means. He said, "I can only say that my own experience in organizing non-violent action for half a century fills me with hope for the future." Satyagraha based on non-violence, answered some of the deepest urges of man, the urge of love and goodness, the urge of truth and suffering. It also brings to an end the growing inequalities, economic insecurity, fear, hatred, injustice and violence of the modern world. It is no exaggeration to say that none before him, not even Mahavir and Buddha, and demonstrated so thoroughly and so widely the use and implication of non-violence. With great clarity and emphasis, he has explained that non-violence and democracy are intimately related to each other, and they work to gather quite successfully.

His interpretation of non-violence was thus deeper, more comprehensive and positive than that of all other thinkers who had gone before him. The credit of Gandhiji lies not in the fact that he practiced traditional weapon of non-violence but in the fact that he interpreted it in a new way and made a universal application of it. In short, he widened the connotation and the scope of the application of non-violence. It is to mind, our one of the most

important features of Gandhian philosophy of world thought. The philosophy of non-violence has thus grown and been renovated in his hands. He has demonstrated to the world that the progress and survival of mankind very much depend on non-violence. Gandhiji, who is thus regarded as one of the most authoritative exponents of non-violence in the contemporary world, has made an invaluable contribution in the field of morality.

Gandhiji has also made some very significant contribution in the religious and social fields. When we analyze the social aspect of his philosophy, we find one very vital element which he advocated all through his life and which he tried his best to realize. It was to establish a classless and stateless society. In this society, there would not be any consideration of caste, creed and colour. All inequalities would be wiped out from such a society; there would not be any consideration of caste, creed and colour. All inequalities would be wiped out from such a society. The germs of Sarvodaya philosophy lie hidden in this philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. The Sarvodaya gives us a clue to his entire social philosophy. His social philosophy aims at the attainment of both material and spiritual prosperities. A Sarvodaya society, according to Gandhiji, would be an ideal society. It is a self-regulated society in which social harmony would be the main object of life. Gandhiji was of the opinion that a democratic state must acquire the capacity to resist non-violently. Its citizens should learn to resist the misuse of any power by the authorities. Gandhiji did not maintain the establishment of non-violent society as an end in itself. According to him, it is rather the path leading to the goal of attainment of the good of all. A State based on Sarvodaya ideal would not be a sovereign state but a service state. It is a state where the concept of service would predominate.

It may not be out of place to point out in this connection that Gandhiji has his life time did not very much emphasize the philosophy of Sarvodaya though the germs of this philosophy are found scattered hither and thither in his writings and speeches. The concept of Sarvodaya has been worked out in some detail by his able disciples like Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Sri Jaya Prakash Narayan and many others. On the basis of the fundamentals supplied by Gandhiji, they have tried to construct the philosophy of Sarvodaya.

In discussing the religious philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi's we have tried to say that his conception of religion is not separate and apart from his social and moral concepts. There is one common thread running in almost all his ideas and thoughts. To our mind, one of the interesting features of Mahatma Gandhi in the field of religion has been to lay emphasis on mankind. His religion is the religion of man. History gives a clear proof of the fact that many world religions were founded by noble individual souls who had a clear vision of truth. Gandhiji, therefore, is justly regarded as one of the greatest humanists of the world in the present century. His chief merit, as already stated, lies in the fact that he tried to reconcile the old with the new. He accepted the tradition and at the same time laid emphasis on the modern trends in thought. He accepted the traditional God, and at the same time, he emphasized the worship of man. He emphatically pointed out that to worship man is our true religion. With no less emphasis he believed in traditional God. This, to my mind, is a unique combination of the old and the new. It is probably due to this that his philosophy appealed even to the common man.

From what has been explained and said above, it is obvious that in Gandhiji we find a conglomeration of all ideas. He expressed his views on almost all problems of life. He was a greater social reformer no doubt, but greater he seems to be in the field of morality. His conception of religion is also in no way of lesser importance than other aspects of his thought. He attached equal importance to all aspects of human life. He did not keep confined himself only to these three aspects but he touched other important aspects of life such as politics, economics, etc he can, therefore, be safely regarded as a great social reformer, a great moralist, a great politician and, above all a great philanthropist. But, it must be borne in mind that all aspects of his thought are so interlinked that it cannot be possible for anyone to think about any particular aspect in isolation of the other. To know his philosophy, whether social, moral or religious, one has to study his entire thought, because his ideas on any one aspect would not be regarded as complete without reference of the other aspects of his thought. It may, again, be stated here that in trying to bring about a compromise between the old and the new, Gandhiji introduced some progressive measures and at the same time maintained the hierarchy. He was a man of progressive ideas. In fact

he was a great revolutionary. He wanted to revolutionize the entire society by introducing certain progressive measures, for instance, uplift of the Harijans, the removal of untouchability etc. thereby he tried to reorient and revitalize all aspects of human life and culture. He thus advocated the full development of man. And in doing so, he never broke away from the tradition. He tried to bring about a unique combination of the old and the new, between the tradition and the modern trends.

It is thus clear that Gandhiji has reinterpreted the old ideas and has used them in a very wide scale. For him, Gita was like “his mother”. His interpretation of the Gita in terms of non-violence is a unique contribution in the history of thought. He has, in fact, reinterpreted the whole of the Mahabharata. He also demonstrated the efficacy of Ashram life to the volunteer workers for a scintillating new national life. Gandhiji’s interpretation of different moral vows, hartals, fasts, etc., are also his great contributions to the history of social and religious philosophy. His originality lies in this that he imbued them with new meanings and used them as integral parts of Satyagraha for fighting against injustice and evil.

Gandhiji’s idea with regard to swadeshi, which is one of the eleven vows of Ashram life, may also be regarded as original and new. The word “Swadeshi” has a wide connotation according to Gandhiji. It includes not only the idea of wearing home-made clothes; it also involves many economic and social problems.

One very important feature of Gandhian thought is his integral and spiritual outlook and a ceaseless effort to spiritualize all human activities. According to Gandhiji, all problems, whether economic, social, political, communal, or religious, are, at bottom, spiritual, for they are all means for the realization of human salvation. In short, all his ideas are the outcome of his philosophy of life which is essentially spiritualistic in essence. This was his unique approach to life. Again, we find that Gandhiji did not make any distinction between individual and social salvation. There is no clash between the two. In fact individual salvation can be attained in and through social salvation by the pure means of truthfulness, righteousness and non-violence.

We thus come to conclude that Gandhiji’s approach to life, his notions of truth and non-violence are very much in tune with India tradition. Dr. Radhakrishnan, in his introductory note to *All Men Are Brothers*, has remarked, “Gandhiji’s life was rooted in India’s religious tradition with its emphasis on a passionate search for truth, a profound reverence for life the ideal of non-attachment and the readiness to sacrifice all for the knowledge of God. He lived his whole life in the perpetual quest of truth.” Gandhiji himself asserted again and again that he did not advocate any new ideas or principles. But it is almost a convention for the great leaders to say that they have not said anything new. It seems to us that by saying so they only express their modesty. We may, for instance, cite Jesus, who said that he had ‘come to fulfill’ the desires and hopes of the people and not to destroy and replace them by anything new. Even Lord Krishna told Arjuna that what he was telling him (Arjuna) had come down by tradition. Gandhiji also maintained, “I represent no new truth. I endeavour to follow and represent Truth as I know it. I do not claim to throw any new light on the many and old truth.” He further said, “I never claimed to be the one original satyagrahi. What I have claimed is the application of that doctrine on an almost universal scale.”

It may be remembered in this connection that Gandhiji was not a philosopher in the academic sense of the term. Therefore, he has not developed his philosophy on the pattern of any system. He himself did not make any such claim. He said, “There is no such thing as Gandhism and I do not want to leave any sect after me.” he further said, “There is no ism about it.” He believed in human progress and emphasized the cultivation of love, harmony, peace, cooperation, mutual understanding, friendship, and the pursuit of truth etc. he was fully aware of the meaning of human existence.

It is obvious from the facts stated above that Gandhiji was essentially a lover of truth, of knowledge and wisdom. He had a genuine love for truth, unmistakable bias for non-violence, a sincere desire to be a devotee of God, a preference for ascetic and simple life. There was in him a powerful urge for cultivation of ethical conduct and a strong sense of selfless service. He developed and cultivated all these virtues from his very childhood. Thus we can say that Gandhiji’s ideas are the manifestations of the spirit that lay embedded in him.

We can, therefore, safely conclude that it is very difficult to comprehend fully Gandhiji's philosophy of life. It cannot be easily ascertained even with a thorough knowledge of his speeches and writings. Narhari Darikh, one of the earliest and bravest associates of Gandhiji in India, said, "It can be safely said for Bapu that he was far greater in reality than what his speeches and writings which we have with us lead us to imagine. You cannot have through them a perfect vision of his towering personality and his thoughts and cherished ideals." He is not an ordinary man who can be described within limits. There is no finality in his philosophy, his actions are ever in the making, and they always propound new truths. He has always held that he is searching for and experimenting with truth. The science of satyagraha is always in the making. His ideas on other aspects of life also reveal the same truth. His philosophy is the result of his personal spiritual perceptions and quest and his earnest experiments with Truth. He had a world view and a system of integrated thought.

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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