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## Jayaprakash Narayan's Vision for Women in the Indian Constitution

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### Abstract

Jayaprakash Narayan (1902-1979) holds a special place among the great leaders of India's freedom struggle. He was not only a freedom fighter but also a socialist thinker, a powerful orator, and a strong supporter of democracy. He proposed the principle of "Total Revolution," which considered women's equality, along with society, politics, economy, education, and morality, essential components of change.

**Keywords:** Great Leaders, Freedom Fighter, Socialist Thinker, Powerful Orator, Total Revolution, Social Transformation, Justice, Equality, Freedom, Holistic Approach, Nation-Building.

### Introduction

Jayaprakash Narayan's vision for women empowerment in India was a crucial part of his call for "Total Revolution", aiming for a fundamental social transformation to create a society based on justice, equality, and freedom. He saw gender equality as paramount to his social campaigns and the achievement of true democracy. JP's vision was not limited to specific schemes but was a holistic approach to transforming society so that women could enjoy equal status, dignity, and opportunities, actively participating in the nation-building process.

Jayaprakash was born on October 11, 1902, in Sitawadiara village, Bihar, now in Uttar Pradesh. He received his early education in Patna. From childhood, he was drawn to moral principles, and the Bhagavad Gita inspired him. While still in college, Jayaprakash joined the Non-Cooperation Movement led by Gandhiji in 1921. In 1922, he married Prabha Devi. In 1922, he went to the United States to study, where he spent eight years. He enrolled at the University of California, Berkeley. In America, he had to earn a living to support his studies. He gained experience in labor by working as a shoe polisher and cleaning households. It was in America that he came under the influence of Marxism and studied the works of M.N. Roy. Upon his return to India, he came under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi and came into contact with Jawaharlal Nehru. He had been inclined towards socialism since his youth. In 1934, with the support of Acharya Narendra Dev and other colleagues, he founded the Congress Socialist Party within the Congress.

He was a prominent figure in India's freedom struggle. In 1942, when Gandhi issued the nonviolent call for "Do or Die," Jayaprakash was imprisoned in Hazaribagh Jail. He escaped from Hazaribagh Central Jail in November 1942 to participate in the Quit India Movement and, while underground, organized and led the freedom movement for approximately 10 months. However, he was re-arrested at Lahore Railway Station on September 18, 1943. He was released in April 1946. In 1946, Gandhi proposed his name for the presidency of the Congress, but the Congress Working Committee rejected his proposal. In 1946, he opposed the Cabinet Mission Plan and this He held the view that the members of the Constituent Assembly of India should be directly elected by the people. He declined the offer of membership of the Constituent Assembly.

After the country's independence, he refused to hold any position in the government. In 1948, he left the Indian National Congress and formed the Bharatiya Socialist Party. This party later took the form of the Praja Socialist Party. In 1953, Jawaharlal Nehru and Jayaprakash Narayan discussed how to establish cooperation between the Congress and the Praja Socialist Party for national reconstruction and development. However, at the Vaitul conference, the socialist leaders rejected the proposal for mutual cooperation.

In fact, as early as 1952, Jayaprakash had been drawn to the Bhoodan and Sarvodaya movements led by Vinoba. He was frustrated by party and power politics. Therefore, in 1954, he resigned from the National Executive of the Praja Socialist Party and severed his ties with party politics. In April 1954, he pledged to dedicate his life to the Sarvodaya movement. Jayaprakash now believed that fundamental change in the system required a change in the mindset and thinking of individuals, and that this could be achieved through the Sarvodaya movement. In 1954, he established an ashram in Shkoder and initiated new programs for the Sarvodaya movement and rural upliftment.

Even while pledging his life for the Sarvodaya movement, he distanced himself from party politics and power politics; there was no change in his attitude towards public life. On August 10, 1970, he was made the president of 'Insani Viradari' and through this organization, he worked to promote communal harmony in national life. During the two years 1970-72, he devoted most of his time and energy to ending the Naxalite insurgency in Muzaffarpur district of Bihar. In early 1972, inspired by Jayaprakash's ideals, 400 bandits of the Chambal Valley surrendered before him.

Jayaprakash remained involved with the Sarvodaya movement for twenty years, from 1954 to 1973. However, perhaps as early as 1970, he began to realize that even Sarvodaya was not sufficient to bring about systemic change. He was pained to see that morality in Indian public life was being severely undermined and the system was crumbling. Therefore, he began to consider bringing about change in the political system and the overall system. In 1974, there was widespread discontent in Gujarat and then in Bihar. In this situation, he led the Student Struggle Committee of Bihar in March 1974. This struggle continued for approximately 15 months. Meanwhile, on June 12, 1975, the Allahabad High Court delivered its verdict, in which Mrs. Gandhi was found guilty of corrupt practices in her Lok Sabha election. In this context, a meeting was called in Delhi on June 23, 1975, with Jayaprakash present, along with opposition leaders from Indian politics. The meeting drafted a program for a massive movement to demand Mrs. Gandhi's resignation. Instead of resigning, Mrs. Gandhi declared a state of

internal emergency on June 26, 1975, and Jayaprakash and other prominent opposition leaders were placed under house arrest. Jayaprakash was released from prison on November 12, 1975, after falling seriously ill.

Elections for the Lok Sabha were announced on January 18, 1977. Jayaprakash stepped forward, playing an active role in the formation of the Janata Party, its election campaign, and the formation of the Janata Party government. Shortly after, he became disappointed with this government as well and openly admitted, "This government, too, has failed to meet the people's aspirations." Jayaprakash's significance lies not in the 1977 power shift, but in the fact that he introduced the people to their own power and, by introducing the ruling class to people's power, forever warned the future ruling class. He had introduced the entire system to people's power; the people, with love and adoration, named him "People's Hero." His health deteriorated while he was in jail in 1975 and he was undergoing treatment since November 1975, but Jayaprakash's health remained a matter of concern and the entire nation was shocked by the sad news of his death on October 8, 1979.

- **Constitutional basis of Women's Rights**

The Indian Constitution empowers women with numerous provisions, including the right to equality (Article 14), freedom from discrimination (Article 15), equal opportunity (Article 16), equal remuneration (Article 39(d)), and maternity protection (Article 42). Jayaprakash Narayan considered these constitutional values not merely legal documents but as a scripture for social change. He repeatedly stated in his speeches in the 1950s

"The test of true democracy is to implement the equality given by the Constitution in every sphere of life."

JP believed that if the concept of equality and justice enshrined in the Constitution was not practically extended to women, the democracy of independent India would remain incomplete.

- **Socialist Vision and Women's Equality**

Jayaprakash Narayan's entire life was based on "socialist humanism." For him, socialism was not merely an economic policy, but a sense of equality in human relations. He said

"Socialism does not mean merely the redistribution of the means of production, but equality of human worth, whether man or woman." (- Jayaprakash Narayan, *Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy*, 1954)

JP's socialist vision saw women's subjugation as a result of social injustice. He believed that economic inequality, lack of property rights, and lack of education were all factors holding women back. Therefore, he saw women's education, employment, and self-reliance as a practical manifestation of the Constitution's "equal opportunity" clause.

- **Total Revolution and Women's Liberation**

Jayaprakash Narayan's "Total Revolution" was not just a call for political power change, but also a message for a cultural and moral renaissance. He said "The aim of total revolution is to bring about change simultaneously within the individual and in the structure of society."

Women's liberation was central to the social dimension of this revolution. JP described practices like dowry, purdah, and child marriage as "social sins" and argued that both democracy and socialism would remain incomplete until women achieved equal status in society. He believed that women's liberation would come not simply through law, but through social awareness and education. He said, "The law can provide equality, but society must learn to live that equality."

- **Political Rights and Participation**

Jayaprakash Narayan linked political democracy with social democracy. He believed that if women were only given the right to vote but were not allowed to participate in decision-making, democracy would be hollow. He supported women's active political participation.

He wrote in "Lokneeti" (1959) that "democracy flourishes only when the voices of every class and gender are heard equally."

JP wanted women to be adequately represented in the Panchayats and Parliament. He considered women's role in local governance a vehicle for real change in society. His ideas later became the ideological inspiration for the Women's Reservation in Panchayati Raj (1993).

- **Social Justice and Women's Self-Reliance**

Jayaprakash Narayan linked the status of women to the broader question of social justice. He viewed "social justice" not only in terms of caste or class, but also in the context of gender-based inequality. He believed that the higher the status of women in society, the more advanced a civilization would be considered. In his article "Social Justice and Equality," JP stated, "No society can be called just unless women are free." (Source: Collected Works of Jayaprakash Narayan, Volume 3, 1964)

According to him, ending discrimination against women is not only a constitutional but also a moral duty.

- **Education and Economic Empowerment**

JP believed that education was the fundamental means of equality for women. He said, "Education is the power that can break every chain of subjugation." He placed special emphasis on women's education in his rural reconstruction and Sarvodaya schemes. In his view, if women were educated and economically self-reliant, they would be able to properly utilize the rights granted by the Constitution. His inspiration was consistent with the Gandhian perspective, where women were considered a "symbol of strength," not weakness.

- **The Confluence of the Constitution and Morality**

JP said that the Constitution survives only when it is supported by the morality of society. He repeatedly warned that constitutional provisions will not be effective unless there is mental equality in society. This view of his was particularly profound in the context of women. "Our problem is not one of law, but of thinking. The feeling of respect and equality for women should come from within us, not from the Constitution." Therefore, he called social change an "inner revolution" that awakens the consciousness of equality in both heart and behavior.

- **Relevance of JP in the Present Context**

Today, as the Indian Parliament has passed 33% reservation for women and millions of women have emerged as public representatives in Panchayats, Jayaprakash Narayan's vision is more relevant than ever. The "inclusive democracy" he envisioned is slowly taking shape. Yet, problems like gender inequality, violence, and discrimination in society demonstrate that JP's "total revolution" remains incomplete. His message reminds us that keeping the ideals of the Constitution alive requires sustained struggle, especially in the area of women's equality.

**Conclusion**

Jai Prakash Narayan lived as the pious individual in the initial 25 years of Independence of red herring: the Praja socialist party, the Sarvodaya movement, even perseverance for Kashmir. His most enduring contribution to the life of the Republic was the movement he led to unseat Mrs. Gandhi, which provoked the emergency. As the eminence grise of the Janata party, the earliest non-Congress party to run the central government, he can take credit for catalysing the political forces that set in train the Congress's political decline. JayPrakash Narayan put down various work peculiarly Reconstruction of Indian Polity. He advocated a kind of Hindu revivalism, though at first, he strongly opposed the version advanced by the Sangh Parivar.

He was honoured with the Bharat Ratna in 1998, after his passing, to recognize his significant public work. Among his other distinctions is the 1965 Magsaysay Award for Public Service. Commonly called Lok Nayak, or "the people's leader," he is commemorated through institutions such as (J P University in Chhapra, Bihar) and two medical centres: (LNJP Hospital in New Delhi and Jai Prabhu Hospital in Patna). The Capital's largest and best equipped trauma Centre the Jai Prakash Narayan Apex trauma Centre of The all India Institute of medical sciences also honours his contributions. He was a crusader and visionary. No doubt, critics have assailed him as a man with inconsistencies. Some view him as a utopian thinker, an ideal dreamer and too liberal internationalist. His ideas on Sarvodaya and participatory democracy may be relevant for simple and small society, but can't be applicable to modern complex society. The principles of socialism, sarvodaya, and total revolution that he upheld highlight the humanitarian vision he pursued. In post independent Indian polity, Jayprakash's call to the people was like that of charmer. He was a self-less dedicated revolutionary that mother India has produced. In the aftermath of JayPrakash's death, Vinoba Bhave stated that he viewed himself only as a servant of the people—a true Lok Sevak. Jayprakash Narayan's vision of Justice ,equality and dignity was a humanistic translation of the fundamental principles. He saw women's equality not merely as a social reform, but as a democratic necessity. His views reflected the believe that no nation can be truly free without the full freedom and participation of women. Thus, jayprakash Narayan's contribution is indelible , not only over the course of history of Indian democracy, but also in the pursuit of women's constitutional rights.

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