
UNIT 6 TOTAL REVOLUTION

Structure

- 6.1 Introduction
 - Aims and Objectives
- 6.2 Concept of Total Revolution
- 6.3 The Component of Total Revolution
- 6.4 Mode of Action
- 6.5 Summary
- 6.6 Terminal Questions
 - Suggested Readings

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The germs of the concept of Total Revolution lie deeply embedded in Gandhi's teachings to which Jayaprakash Narayan, the leader of Total Revolution turned as a result of his disillusionment with what might be called "conventional wisdom of revolution and conventional technique" of change. Infact, Total Revolution is a further extension of Gandhi's thought on socio-economic problems and technique of change in the context of contemporary social, economic and political reality. The journey of Jayaprakash Narayan from Marxism to Gandhism resulted in Total Revolution. Unconventionality was most pronounced in Gandhi's thinking on social and economic arrangement of the society giving him a distinctive revolutionary character. Through Total Revolution, Jayaprakash Narayan tried to build upon it with a greater emphasis on specific components of the whole concept. Jayaprakash Narayan's Total Revolution is a grand vision of individual, state and society. Behind this vision lies an understanding of our entire experience of more than two hundred years of industrial development. It is based upon Gandhi's basic postulates and it envisages non-violent methods of changing society with non-violent techniques. Total Revolution is an all-enveloping process of change in the individual as well as in the society. The primary emphasis is on moral values, decentralisation of economic and political power and insistence on non-violent means to achieve good ends.

Aims and Objectives

After reading this Unit, you would be able understand

- The concept, component and dynamics of change of Total Revolution.
- The mode of action that propelled the movement.

6.2 CONCEPT OF TOTAL REVOLUTION

To understand the word Total Revolution, we have to first of all understand the word "revolution". Revolution as a concept has been defined in a number of ways. George Saweyer, Pettee, Samuel P. Huntington, Sigmund Neumann and Thomas S. Kuhn define revolution as value change. By value change is meant a change in the dominant value of the community at a particular point of time in its temporal dimension.

The most common definitions of revolution have laid emphasis on a structural and institutional transformation in the existing social relationship and institutional bases of the society. The theorists of structural change envisage that a revolution replaces one social structure by another. In a narrow sense (or Marxian tradition) it is specially related to the changes in the economic structure of the society. Economic structure is interpreted to mean the structure of property relations. So a change in social structure is basically a change in the component of the ownership of property. In a broader sense, a change in social structure does mean not only a change in the property relations, i.e., the economic structure of society but also in other aspects of the social structure.

Wilbert E. More defined revolution in terms of institutional change. He perceives revolution as a type of change which “engages a considerable portion of the population and results in change in the structure of government”. The other definitions of revolution include change in the leadership (elite) component of the government, changes brought about by legal/constitutional means, and finally violent acts.

This analysis clearly spells out that any one dimension of change may mean a revolutionary change – be it a change in the dominant values of the community or its social structure, institutional, leadership or elite component, or legal or violent change.

Total Revolution is a further extension of the Gandhian approach to social change. Social change in the Gandhian paradigm is a very comprehensive and inclusive term. According to Gandhi, a partial change in any one component of the social matrix is likely to produce disequilibrium in society. Society, therefore, will tend to move towards a state of constant instability. In order to ensure that the social organisation maintains a steady and dynamic homeostatic state, an all-round change is needed. By an all-round change Gandhi did not mean only a change in the social framework but also a qualitative change in the behavioural-attitudinal-valuational and psyche texture of the individual. Gandhi, like Hegel, believed that revolution begins in the minds of men. But Gandhi enlarged the Hegelian concept. Gandhi’s primary emphasis was that an individual wanting to change the society must first of all change himself. Gandhi’s revolution was evolutionary and a process of purification. Gandhi’s approach was not limited to a change in individual’s lifestyle, thought-structure, and behaviour-pattern only. Thus, together with a revolution in the individual, society must also change. It spans the entire continuum along which values as well as social and institutional structures are ranged. The emphasis is on each one of the elements constituting the continuum. Gandhi talked of changing the society, he conceived of far-reaching and novel changes in the entire social organisation which consisted of the economy, polity, technique of production, personnel system of both the polity and economy, and, above all, the means to be adopted for effecting the change.

Total Revolution, as a concept, was put forward by Jayaprakash Narayan (at times referred to as JP) in the wake of Bihar Movement in Patna on June 5, 1974. In a public meeting at Gandhi Maidan, Jayaprakash Narayan declared that the struggle was not going to be limited to securing the demands of the students, including the resignation of the Minister and the dissolution of the Assembly in Bihar, but would aim at bringing about a Total Revolution or Sampoorana Kranti, which alone could solve the urgent problems of the country and usher in a new society. Actually, it was Karl Marx who had first used this term in the book “The Poverty of Philosophy (1847)” in which he wrote: “... meanwhile, the antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is a struggle of class against class, a struggle which carried to its highest expression is a Total Revolution”.

Total Revolution signifies a radical transformation not merely of our material conditions but also of the moral character of the individuals. The idea was implicit in many of Gandhi's writings and speeches. Vinoba expanded the idea further. As early as 1951, he declared: "My aim is to bring about a three-fold revolution. First, I want a change in people's hearts; secondly, I want to create a change in their lives; and thirdly, I want to change the social structure. In the sixties he spoke in this vein frequently enough to warrant the use of Towards Total Revolution as the title of a book containing his speeches, published in 1968. At least once he also used the term 'Total Revolution'. It has been aptly observed in a recent study that JP's movement for Total Revolution was a 'continuation of the preceding movement for non-violent revolution through Bhoodan and Gramdan'. JP himself justified it remarking on one occasion: "There is hardly any difference between Sarvodaya and Total Revolution. If there is any, then Sarvodaya is the goal and Total Revolution the means. Total Revolution is basic change in all aspects of life. There cannot be Sarvodaya without this".

Without using the term Total Revolution JP himself had been emphasising since the mid-forties, if not earlier, the need for a social revolution which would not merely bring about a change in the structure of society, but also an improvement in the character of the individuals comprising it. After he joined the Bhoodan movement in the fifties he laid particular stress on it. In course of an article published in 1969 he also used the term 'Total Revolution' to describe the objective of the Sarvodaya movement in India. Referring to the Bhoodan and Gramdan programmes he observed: "Gandhi's non-violence was not just a plea for law and order, or a cover for the status quo, but a revolutionary philosophy. It is, indeed, a philosophy of a Total Revolution, because it embraces personal and social ethics and values of life as much as economic, political and social institutions and processes". It is, however, a fact that the term 'Total Revolution' became a recurrent theme of JP's speeches and writings only since 1974 and it is only since then that it has taken its place in Indian political discourse.

Following Gandhi, JP recognised the necessity of change in the individual, the individual who takes upon himself the task of changing society. "One of the unstated implications of satyagraha would be", JP says in his prison Diary, "a self-change, that is to say, those wanting a change must also change themselves before launching any kind of action". In this lies the whole philosophy of JP's Total Revolution. During his "democratic socialist" days, JP had reached the conclusion that no revolution worth the name was possible unless the practitioners of revolution themselves underwent a change in their individual being. Thus the cornerstone of revolution was the changed individual who in turn worked for change in the socio-economic structure of the society.

JP's faith in the change of the individual as the pre-condition for change in the society was a Gandhian approach. Like Gandhi, JP also stressed that individual change cannot be regarded as the be-all and end-all. On the other hand, it is the morally transformed individuals who would activate the process of change. To put it differently, societal change is not to wait until all individuals in the society change. On the contrary, the transformed individual and the social framework are to interact so that it can lead to an all-round change. A process of simultaneous change is therefore the sine qua non of a society expecting a revolution.

JP conceived of a revolutionary in terms of not only commitment to the cause of revolution but also his own lifestyle and attitudinal structure. He was, no doubt, a 'professional' revolutionary, but in him both profession and practice (vichar and aachar)

found a happy blending. He practised what he preached and preached what he practised. Ideas were, therefore, constantly being tested in the crucible of practice, and practice in turn leads to a modification of ideas.

JP's concept of revolution is very comprehensive like that of Gandhi's. It consists of a wide spectrum of variables. It is non-conformist in so far as it departs from the usual meanings attached to revolution.

6.3 THE COMPONENT OF TOTAL REVOLUTION

There are seven components of Total Revolution – social, economic, political, cultural, ideological, intellectual, educational, and spiritual. These numbers may be increased or decreased. JP himself thought that the cultural revolution could include educational and ideological. Similarly, social revolution, according to him, in the Marxian sense can cover economic and political revolutions and even more than that. He also thinks that each of the seven categories can be further split up into sub-categories.

For proper analysis these seven components may be rearranged in the following manner: (a) cultural, which includes spiritual – moral, ideological, intellectual, and educational; (b) social-economic; and (c) political.

Cultural: JP used the term culture in a very comprehensive sense. It connotes individual and group behaviour. At a purely personal or group level, cultural revolution invokes a change in the moral values held by the individual or the group. In any debate of moral values, therefore, ends and means must enter. It is in regard to the ends – means problem that JP, following Gandhi, has been very insistent. As far back as 1950, JP declared: “We eschew the unclean and unscrupulous methods that the communists follow”. Writing on yet another occasion in 1951, he said: “The first aspect of Gandhism that must interest the socialist is its moral and ethical basis, its insistence on values. Russian or Stalinist interpretation of socialist philosophy has reduced it to a Crass Machiavellian code of conduct utterly devoid of any sense of right or wrong, good or evil. The end justifies the means, and when the end is power – personal or group power – there is no limit to the depth to which the means will sink to secure the objectives.

A change in regard to the ends – means relationship both in the individual and group life is bound to produce a corresponding change in the belief system, that is, the ideology of either the individual or the group. A new ideological revolution, therefore, is bound to ensure if the organic relationship between ends and means is accepted. As a natural corollary to this, an intellectual revolution cannot be avoided; for the entire ends-and-means approach in the context of Gandhian thought must give a new outlook to the individual or the group to view things around them. And this is what JP means by intellectual revolution.

The most important variable in the cultural change is education. According to JP, education must be a powerful element of social change and it should be closely linked to national development. It should be biased in favour of the masses rather than in favour of the upper classes. It must create a new kind of awareness among the submerged and weaker sections of our society, so that they feel fully integrated with the society. He had suggested the following changes in the present system:

- (i) One-third to one-half of the working time in all educational institutions at all stages should be devoted to active participation in the programmes of social service and national development.

- (ii) A large part of non-formal education should be introduced in the system. Part-time education and correspondence courses must be expanded at the secondary and university stages.
- (iii) A large part of our budget on education benefits the upper classes with the result that the masses are left out. Such an imbalance must be corrected if social justice is to be the objective of our educational policies, with this end in view, three programmes must be given top priority, namely (i) adult education; (ii) a non-formal education of less than six hours a week to all out-of-school youths in the age-group of 15-26; and lastly (iii) universalisation of elementary education for all children.

Turning to secondary education, JP's scheme envisaged a thorough change in the system. First, higher institutions should not be permitted to proliferate leading to a fall in the standards. Secondly, strict criteria should be laid down regarding recognition, affiliation, and financial assistance to be given to the institutions of higher education. Thirdly, adequate fees should be charged in these institutions while making allowance for liberal grant of free studentships and scholarships to deserving candidates. Fourthly, the emphasis in higher education should be on quality rather than quantity. Fifthly, the entire slant of education should be towards vocationalisation and diversion of students into work at various stages. And, lastly but most importantly, degrees must be delinked from employment. JP's recommendations seek to lay the foundation of a more viable, meaningful, and purposeful system of education.

Social-Economical: As JP stated, 'social' in the Marxian sense also includes 'economic'. A social revolution, therefore, is basically an economic revolution in the Marxian formulation. Marx's use of the term was justified in the European context. In the Indian context, the term 'social' has a distinctive character. Due to caste divisions, a whole panoply of rituals, hierarchy, modes of inter-caste communication, sense of pollution, marriage norms and practices, social distance, and informal rules of behaviour have grown over thousands of years. JP did not overlook the fact that there lies a thin boundary line between a caste and an economic class. Yet he also recognised the social reality underlying the caste configuration in society. And that reality is that caste is quite an autonomous factor, independent of its economic moorings. The task of Total Revolution in this sense is iconoclastic. It has to break the caste barriers. And, in order to do so, Total Revolution must evolve new norms and practices replacing those based on caste. Inter-caste dining, abolition of dowry system, archaic marriage rules and regulations – all must enter the area of Total Revolution. It is in this sense that the social content of Total Revolution assumes quite an independent dimension.

But Total Revolution must go hand in hand with economic revolution. JP only carried Gandhi's thinking further to embrace every detail of economic life. 'Economic relationship', JP recorded in his Prison Diary, "includes technological, industrial, and agricultural revolutions, accompanied by a radical change in the pattern of ownership and management". The industrial-technological structure of the economy has two major facets, namely (i) the ownership pattern, and (ii) the size of technology. The model of industrial-technological development that he has in mind consists of a number of elements. They are (a) diversified ownership pattern of the self-employed individual, groups of families, registered cooperatives, gram sabhas, block samitis, zilla parishads and only in the end, the state (b) labour – intensive small techniques linked largely with agriculture in place of capital intensive technology with the provision that, where the latter becomes inevitable, it should be placed under State ownership. Such large-scale industries are conceived only as

feeders to small units so that they do not devour the former as has happened in the wake of technological revolution.

In the sphere of agriculture, JP's thinking was very specific. The present agrarian structure, even after different States have passed land-ceiling legislation, remains as unevenly balanced as ever. Except in Kerala and West Bengal, no significant change in the structure of ownership has taken place. JP agitated for "land to the tillers". The primary emphasis in regard to land reform, therefore, is on the ownership of land by those who cultivate it, adequate wages for the landless, poor, and effective implementation of existing laws relating to ceiling, eviction, share-cropping, and homestead land. If the existing laws had been implemented, a new ethos in the countryside would have been created. But it is exactly in relation to putting the laws into operation that all governments of whatever ideological variety, have failed.

Political: In the sphere of political revolution JP follows Gandhi. Gandhi visualised power rising from the grassroots and reaching the top which remained nothing more than a coordinating body. Such a view of polity was different from those in practice either in democratic systems or the communist countries. In other words, if power was shared among different echelons of the social structure starting from, say, the village upward, the danger of centralisation could very well be avoided. Centralisation, either of political or of economic power, was what Gandhi dreaded most. He, therefore, laid emphasis on decentralisation.

JP followed the same line of thinking in his approach to the reconstitution of power from the base. His thinking on polity in the present context had two distinctive features. Firstly, he raised substantive issues in regard to the whole polity as is prevalent today; and secondly, pending the reorganisation of the polity along his substantive formulations, he advocated reform in the present political system.

His vision of a partyless democracy, reorganisation of the power structure from below, institution of an altogether different mode of election to the new representative bodies and other suggestions fall under the first. In the second category, he visualised reforms in the parliamentary system.

In plea for Reconstruction of Indian Polity, JP rejected the western model of democracy on the ground that it did not give full scope to the people to participate in the management of their affairs and is based on an atomised view of society, the state being an inorganic sum of individuals. In its place he pleaded for a model of democracy, based on an integrated concept of society and providing the fullest possible scope to the individual to participate in the management of his affairs, without the intermediation of political parties. The latter, according to JP, functioned without any control over them by the people or even by their own numbers and were the source of many evils. It was not, however, the party system that was the main culprit, but parliamentary democracy, which lay at its back and which could not work without it.

In the context of Total Revolution, the following points need to be stressed.

First, JP's approach to the reordering of political power is significant. This led him to conceive of a polity in which the effective levels of power are controlled by people. In order that such a control is possible, he advocates the creation of formal structures at village, block and district levels. Most of the power, in his scheme, rests with these structures. The structures are governments at their respective levels in the sense that they

are independent in their sphere of operation and yet interdependent in relation to other tiers. It was this approach to decentralisation of power that led him to support the panchayati raj system. He believed that it was perfectly feasible to incorporate the different tiers below the State level into the constitutional framework by a bold stroke of amendment, thereby making it a part of the structure of the entire polity.

In such a polity, a viable structure is one in which participation of the largest number in the decision-making process is guaranteed. JP made a radical departure from the practice of the panchayati raj. He pleaded for units which would be administratively viable while guaranteeing the participation of the people. This, in essence, meant a process of regrouping from the village upward so that an optimum size crystallises at the respective levels.

Secondly, JP has in the past made far-reaching and comprehensive recommendations with a view to reforming the present system of election. He was the first to suggest that in order to prevent defections, which became the order of the day, effective legislative steps should be taken. JP also raised the issue of the corrupting role of money in the entire electoral process. Reform of the electoral system has been one of the very persistent demands which JP went on making on the political system. There are other aspects like the use of administrative machinery, the ways and means of conducting a free and fair election, and a civil code of conduct among political parties about which JP has provided wide-ranging guidelines. JP has drawn our attention to the control of the legislators. He suggested that there should be a clause in our Constitution for the recall of the legislators, that is, the constituents must be vested with the power to recall a member if he does not carry out his duties.

6.4 MODE OF ACTION

There are three broad categories of action that JP has underscored. First, it should now be clear to everyone that in JP's scheme, the usual constitutional devices are not adequate. A democratic political system is more likely to degenerate in the interval between two elections which may necessitate the launching of a direct non-violent action. The regime might become corrupt and inefficient. It may increasingly lead to the concentration of power in the hands of one or a few persons, thereby rendering it more and more authoritarian. Its capacity to respond to the needs and aspirations of the people may be eroded over time. In such a situation, JP would not advise people to wait for the next election. On the contrary, he would exhort people to resort to non-violent action. Secondly, JP suggested the formation of people's committees at the grassroots. These people's committees were conceived of as organs of people's power. They had, therefore, a two-fold function. They were supposed to mobilise the energies of the people into constructive channels. It is in this constructive role that JP visualised a healthy inter-action between the power of the people and the state power. In other words, Jan Shakti and Rajya Shakti (People's power and State power) are supposed to supplement each other. Another function that JP suggested for the people's committees is to resist the injustices and tyrannies of the State, individual, or a group of individuals. Nonviolence, as an extra-constitutional weapon, was to be involved. He cautioned against its indiscriminate use. It can be resorted to only when all channels as prescribed under democratic system are blocked and no other course is left open. Thirdly, JP advocated class struggle. According to JP, caste and class largely tend to overlap, both sociologically and economically. Gandhi said that nonviolence can be used as a weapon

to resist every form of injustice and tyranny in a society. Indian society is a stratified society and nonviolence here assumes the form of a struggle between the 'haves' and 'have-nots'. The only difference with the Marxian class-struggle is that by calling upon to resist injustice and tyranny, the appeal is lifted to a moral plane. It is not an appeal to the economic interests of the 'have-nots' but a more poignant appeal to choose between good and evil, justice and injustice, truth and untruth. Gandhi's most original and unconventional contribution to the dynamics of social change lies in this sphere. Nonviolence involves self-suffering. Self-suffering blunts anger and aims at arousing the moral sensibilities in both the parties involved in the dispute. Violence as a dynamics of class-struggle invariably leads to animosity which, if victorious, largely perpetuates itself. It is only in this sense that JP propounded his theory of class struggle. This is one of the many forms of action that JP suggested in order to usher in a Total Revolution.

6.5 SUMMARY

Total Revolution is a combination of seven revolutions – social, economic, political, cultural, ideological or intellectual, educational and spiritual. This Revolution will always go on and keep on changing both our personal and social lives. It knows no respite, no halt, certainly not a complete halt. It is a permanent revolution and is expected to move on towards higher and higher goals. The concept of Total Revolution has had both Marxist and Gandhian origins. It is always expected to be total, touching all aspects of life. JP developed his concept of Total Revolution on the basis of a synthesis not merely of Marxist and Gandhian concepts of social revolution but also of the principles of Western Democracy.

Ghanshyam Shah rightly said, "JP gave no blue-print of that (alternative) society nor outlined the various stages of the revolution. Instead he gave a long list of proposals; agricultural development, equitable land-ownership, appropriate technology, rural and small industries, political and economic decentralization, no caste etc. He did not spell out how the land was to be so distributed, nor how the social and economic hierarchy was to be abolished. JP is criticised on the ground that he "had no ideology, a blue-print for a new economic and political order which he had outlined in considerable detail much before the Bihar agitation was even conceived of". R.K. Barik, an another critic of JP, supports the contention that JP had no ideology, by citing JP's view as reported in the Calcutta daily, Statesman of 16th June 1974. JP is reported to have said, "I do not think ideology helps clarity. I think all ideologies have become old. It is not ideology but science that can answer all the questions. Let scientists and economists sit and chalk out a programme". But it is incorrect to conclude that JP had no ideology on the basis of such stray comments. Infact JP's reasoned rejection of parliamentary democracy and his outline of a new Sarvodaya order may definitely be said to constitute an ideology.

JP failed to achieve his revolution and that political parties continued to rule where the people should have stepped in, is a different story. One shrewd commentator has pointed out that the reason for this is that some economic classes and vested interests that dominated society before continued to do so even after the exit of Mrs. Gandhi from the political scene following her massive electoral defeat in 1977. But, perhaps the real reason why "Lok-niti" as JP visualised it could not substitute "Raj-niti" was because JP's Lok-niti was basically an unworkable utopia.

6.6 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by Total Revolution?
2. What are the main components of Total Revolution?
3. Was Jayaprakash Narayan's Total Revolution an utopian ideal? Analyse it in your own words.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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