



THE HINDU CENTRE

for

Politics and Public Policy

Jayaprakash Narayan: An Idealist Betrayed



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Jayaprakash Narayan addressing a public meeting at Sitabdiara during a visit to his village on November 5, 1977. Photo: The Hindu Archives.

The imposition of the Emergency in June 1975 by Indira Gandhi led to a general uprising across the country under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan, popularly known as JP. It also brought together strange bedfellows—the socialists and the Jan Sangh, the political face of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). In this personal epitaph on Jayaprakash Narayan, former civil servant M.G. Devasahayam, who was "the only person who had unrestricted access" to the late JP when he was prisoner during the Emergency, explains how the JP movement fizzled out due to what he terms the "betrayal of the RSS".

Prelude

The 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi commenced on October 2, 2018 with all solemnity and is being celebrated across the country. October 2 has become an iconic date known to even kindergarten kids.

October 11 is the 116th birth anniversary of Jayaprakash Narayan, popularly known as JP. If Mahatma Gandhi is the architect of India's first freedom in 1947, which was extinguished by Congress supremo Indira Gandhi on 25/26 June, 1975, it was JP who got us our second freedom after defeating Emergency in 1977. While Gandhiji won it from a tottering alien rule, JP had to take on and defeat the might of an entrenched domestic despot with vast resources and armed with draconian Emergency powers, reminiscent of Stalinist regime. In gratitude, common people called him the Second Mahatma.

On this historic occasion, the Congress Party convening at Wardha Ashram, from where Gandhiji launched the Quit India Movement in 1942, passed this resolution:

“Today, a new freedom struggle is the urgent need of the hour—a massive movement to combat the forces of divisiveness and prejudice, to confront the Modi government whose politics is the politics of threat and intimidation, the politics of polarisation and divisiveness, the politics of crushing debate and dissent, the politics of imposing an artificial uniformity in a nation of extraordinary diversity, the politics of hate and vendetta, the politics of subverting all Constitutional values, principles, and practices, the politics of lies, deceit, fraud, and subterfuge.”

Though this reflects the mood of the nation, the Congress party calling for a ‘third freedom struggle’ sounds hypocritical!

The first and second Mahatmas were born on the same month 34 years apart. But while even after 70 years of his passing away Gandhiji's memory is riding like a colossus, JP's memory has virtually vanished within a shorter period of 40 years after his death in 1979. Loathed by the Congress party whom he brought down from power, and betrayed by the RSS-owned Jan Sangh-turned-BJP whom he brought to power in their earlier avatar, JP stands forlorn and forgotten.

This is the story of the great deceit by the RSS-led Sangh Parivar, which he unwittingly facilitated in capturing political power. Over the years, this outfit has not only betrayed JP but also painted him with a saffron hue, branding him as fascist as they are. The dictionary defines fascism as “a political philosophy, movement, or regime (such as that of the Fascisti) that exalts nation and often race above the individual and that stands for a centralised autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition.” Freedom is just the opposite and JP epitomised it.

As his end was nearing, he opened his heart out to me at his humble abode in Patna stating as to how the RSS had conspired to finish off the Janata Party and the government and bring India back on the fascist route!

At the height of the Emergency era when Indira Gandhi taunted the nation saying that ‘food is more important than freedom’, the Sarvodaya leader had thundered:

“Freedom became one of the beacon lights of my life and it has remained so ever since.....Above all, it meant freedom of the human personality, freedom of the mind, freedom of the spirit. This freedom has become a passion of my life and I shall not see it compromised for food, for security, for prosperity, for the glory of the state or for anything else.”

Can a man with such passion and commitment to freedom ever be a fascist? This question needs to be raised and answered. Otherwise JP’s soul will never rest in peace. I have to do this and for the purpose I need to establish my credentials. To start with, I have seen JP from the closest of quarters and at the most adverse of times during the Emergency when he was my prisoner in Chandigarh where I was the District Magistrate. As his custodian, I was the only person who had unrestricted access to him.

And so, we had spent several hours in deep conversation, with JP revealing to me many aspects critical to the country’s history and politics, past and contemporary. At that time, he shared with me the compulsions under which he associated the RSS-owned Jan Sangh in the JP Movement and the political outfit (Janata Party) he put together to defeat Indira Gandhi in the 1977 elections. Later, as his end was

nearing, he opened his heart out to me at his humble abode (Kadam Kuan) in Patna stating as to how the RSS had conspired to finish off the Janata Party and the government and bring India back on the fascist route!

What is more, this is what JP wrote about me to the then Union Home Minister (Ch. Charan Singh) and Haryana Chief Minister (Ch. Devi Lal) on 03-11-1977 in chaste Hindi: *“Jab mein Chandigarh mein nazarband tha, Sri Devasahayam ne apne kanoone kartavyon aur maryadon ka palan karthe hue mere saath atyanth hi soujanya ka bartav kiya tha. Unke anek krupayen us samay mere upar hue the jiske liye unka sadaa aabhari rahoonga. Is vyaktikath prasangh ko agar chod bhi den to mere upar deputy commissioner ke nate unke sarkari aachar-vichar ka gambir asar muj par hua tha. Vah ek kattar deshbakht, drud-prathiksh aur sampith adhikari hain.”*

[When I was a prisoner in Chandigarh, Sri Devasahayam, while strictly adhering to his official duties and responsibilities, dealt with me in an extremely humane manner. For his many acts of kindness towards me, I shall ever be grateful. Even leaving aside this personal affection, I was deeply impressed by his exemplary qualities of administration and governance. He is a deeply patriotic, strong-willed and dedicated officer.]

Besides, I also had an equation with Chandra Shekhar, Janata Party President and later Prime Minister, since he was also my prisoner for about a month in Chandigarh during the Emergency before being shifted to Patiala Jail. He was the one tasked by JP to sever the links between the fascist RSS and Janata Party within six months of coming to power.

JP-The Quintessential Rebel

During the freedom struggle, JP was the frontline foot soldier of Mahatma Gandhi. He never sought power and did not enjoy it even for a day. Well before Indira Gandhi was anywhere near politics, JP had been offered the posts of Union cabinet minister, prime minister and President of India in quick succession and he turned down each one of them. Though considered the natural successor to Nehru as prime minister, JP chose to withdraw from power politics to engage in the more enduring struggle against poverty, social evils and violence. JP was an iconoclast

with compassion and a product of the Magadha legacy which "not only produced relentless fighters and exterminators of kings" but "hearkened at the same time to the devout teachings of Vardhamana Mahavira and Gautama Buddha".

The man who could have become India's second Prime Minister, and possibly finished off the Nehru-Indira dynasty rule for ever, unwittingly became its perpetrator by declining to take

office. Instead, he became, after

Mahatma Gandhi, the second

redeemer of the nation, freeing the

country from the shackles of a

home-brewed dictatorship, which was imposed by an unprincipled Indira Gandhi.

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Jayaprakash Narayan was born on October 11, 1902, in Sitabdiara, a village on the border of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Whenever the Ganga changed course, JP's ancestral house has been shown alternately in Bihar and UP. He became a natural leader among the village boys. JP was married to Prabhavati, daughter of lawyer and nationalist Brij Kishore Prasad, in October 1920. Prabhavati was very independent-minded and, on Gandhiji's invitation, went to stay at his ashram while JP continued his studies. Because of Prabhavati's vow of celibacy while JP was away in the USA, and his honouring the same on return, the couple did not have any children and, therefore, had no immediate family.

As he grew up and cut his teeth in public life, JP wanted to overhaul the entire Indian society. For him, the political system had to be responsive to the aspirations

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of the poorest of the poor; the glaring inequalities that our economic system breeds had to end; the educational system should be geared to the needs

of the nation; the canker of corruption in India's political and administrative system had to be eradicated; the various social ills that afflict our country had to end. This, in simplistic and pragmatic terms, is what JP meant by "Total

Revolution". The kind of sweeping reforms JP had in mind appear like a utopian abstraction, but nobody can contest their fundamental desirability. Evidently, the initiative for such a revolution has to come from society as a whole, not just the government.

JP was a dreamer and an idealist to a fault. It was Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's fiery oratory and his call to "lift up to the skies like leaves before a storm" that drew JP to the freedom movement. Jayaprakash took the Maulana's words to heart and left Patna College with just 20 days remaining for his examinations. He joined the Bihar Vidyapeeth, a college run by the Congress. After exhausting the courses at the Vidyapeeth, Jayaprakash decided to go to America to pursue his studies. To pay for his education, Jayaprakash picked grapes, packed fruits, washed dishes, worked as a mechanic, sold lotions and accepted teaching jobs. All these jobs gave Jayaprakash insights into the problems of the working class.

JP's sojourn in America for seven years at the prestigious universities of Berkeley, Iowa, and Wisconsin only increased his passion for freedom. He was a student of Professor Edward Ross, the father of sociology, and, while at Wisconsin, was introduced to Karl Marx's *Das Capital*. His Ohio professor observed in the young man "germs of leadership" and "aggressiveness of thought". When he returned to India in November 1929, he was "a mature young man with an enquiring mind, original in his thinking, and with the fierce, idealistic desire to devote himself to serve society". And he fully involved himself in the freedom struggle.

In February 1940, JP was arrested for speaking against Indian participation in the Second World War and sent to the Deoli detention camp in Rajasthan. He was again arrested in 1942 for participating in the Quit India Movement. In November 1942, Diwali night, JP, along with five others, escaped from the high-security Hazaribagh jail by scaling a 17-foot-high wall while the guards remained distracted by the festivities. A reward of Rs. 10,000 was offered for JP's capture, dead or alive. This electrified a languishing Quit India Movement eventually leading to independence. But JP had to pay a very heavy price for this. After nearly one year of hunt he was arrested in Amritsar on September 18, 1943 while on his way to Rawalpindi to meet Frontier Gandhi, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan. He was taken to Lahore Fort, notorious as a "torture chamber". Sixteen months of mental and

physical torture followed. JP was put in solitary confinement for the first month. Then came interrogations, physical torture, and humiliation. He was released on April 12, 1946.

A.P. Sinha, a jail-mate and close friend whom JP tried to persuade to join the Hazaribagh escapade, had this exhortation to make to the latter prior to the escape:

“J.P., I am sorry I cannot make the break with you. I want to come for the love of you and keep you company and support you. But my health is poor and I’m not sure I could be effective. I’m too deeply Gandhian. All I’ll do is to hide myself. I’m only used to attending political meetings and passing resolutions. I would not be able to give you the help you need. Let me help to cover your getaway. You have got the passion that can make people’s spirits soar up. You can inspire them to self-sacrifices, to accept sufferings. You are a great national leader.”

Independence finally came on August 15, 1947. Within a year Gandhiji was assassinated. The Socialists lost to the Congress in the 1952 elections. Nehru invited JP to join the Cabinet. When Nehru could give no assurances on the implementation of JP's 14-point plan to reform the Constitution, the administration, and the judicial system, nationalise the banks, redistribute land to the landless, revive swadeshi, and setup cooperatives, he refused the offer.

On the attainment of independence, when people scrambled for loaves of office, JP stood apart, concentrating his efforts on leading the Congress Party towards the socialist path. Those were the

years when some of the finest intellectuals-turned-activists in the national movement, like Narendra

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Dev, Yusuf Meherally, Achyut Patwardhan, and Rammanohar Lohia joined hands with him, or more correctly, spurred him on in the new endeavour. He politely turned down Pandit Nehru’s repeated invitations to join his cabinet. Instead, he turned his attention to the trade unions he led. With the help of the unions, he was able to get many facilities for the workers, such as minimum wage, pension, medical relief and housing subsidy. Seeing the totalitarian ways and bloody purges unleashed in Soviet Russia, JP turned away from Communism.

From Swarajya to Revolution

He decided to dedicate himself totally to Mahatma Gandhi's ideal of 'sampoorna swarajya' and pursue his efforts towards 'people's participatory governance' and corruption-free, value-based public life. In 1954, he blended himself with Vinoba Bhave's Sarvodaya movement. He gave up his landed property and withdrew from all political activity to devote the rest of his life to the movement. He set up an 'ashram' in poor and backward Hazaribagh, trying to give Gandhian concepts a new dimension by using modern technology to uplift the villages. Even Prime Minister Nehru's suggestion in the late Fifties that JP could be his successor did not lure him back to politics.

JP believed that every village should be like a small republic—politically independent and capable of taking its own decisions. It was a marriage of Gandhian-Indian concepts and modern Western democracy. His thoughtful, well-researched and brilliant book, *The Reconstruction of Indian Polity*, won him the Ramon Magsaysay Award. He was involved in the resolution of the Naxal and Naga issues and was also a key person in acquiring the surrender of dacoits in the Chambal Valley. On April 15, 1973, Prabhavati died of cancer, leaving Jayaprakash alone and devastated.

This man who had turned a recluse refusing positions of high power and authority returned to active politics in 1974 at the ripe age of 72 when student unrest against

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corruption, unemployment, and high inflation spread like wild fire, threatening to turn violent and go

beyond control. In the face of terror and repression unleashed on the students by the governments of Bihar and Gujarat, JP took charge and thus was born the 'JP Movement' that shook corrupt and authoritarian governments to their very foundation.

As part of the Movement, on April 8, 1974, JP led a silent procession at Patna. The procession was lathi-charged and this created a mass upsurge against corruption and autocratic rule. On June 5, 1974, riding the crest of a popular upheaval against

all that was rotten in governance and public life, JP declared at a massive rally in Patna:

"This is a revolution, friends! We are not here merely to see the Vidhan Sabha dissolved. That is only one milestone on our journey. But we have a long way to go... After 27 years of freedom, 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!"

When, on June 12, 1975, the Allahabad High Court held Prime Minister Indira Gandhi guilty on charge of corrupt practices in the election, JP advised her to resign until her name was cleared by the Supreme Court. Instead, she clamped the Emergency on the nation. JP was the first to be arrested under the Defence of India Rules.

JP and India's Second Freedom

India's first freedom achieved on the midnight of 14/15th August 1947, ended on the midnight of 25/26th June 1975, when the then President of India signed a crisp four-line proclamation virtually on command from the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi:

"In exercise of the powers conferred by clause (1) of Article 352 of the Constitution, I, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, President of India, by this Proclamation declare that a grave emergency exists whereby the security of India is threatened by internal disturbances."

This extinction of freedom in the country brought about an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation between Indira Gandhi, the self-appointed dictator, and Jayaprakash Narayan, popularly known as JP, the congenital democrat. While the former was the epitome of power and pelf, the later abjured all desire for power, but wielded immense moral authority. By the time the confrontation ended in March 1977, JP had won with India regaining its Freedom.

Acknowledging this, veteran journalist Kuldeep Nayyar said in his 24th JP Memorial Lecture:

“He wasn't built to be a hero: slight of figure, racked by illness, battle-worn. Yet, he proved to be the outstanding hero who won us the second freedom in 1977, 30 years after the first one.”

Freedom has been India's path ever since Independence, a path chosen by the founding fathers of our Republic under extremely trying circumstances. Despite all trials and tribulations and its many imperfections, India today is being lauded as the largest democracy on earth practicing freedom, however imperfect it may be. For JP, considered among the greatest revolutionaries of the last century, Freedom has always been a passion.

In the dying moments of the 2nd millennium, standing on the ramparts of the Lincoln Memorial at Washington DC, US President Bill Clinton declared:

“The story of 20th century is the triumph of freedom. We must never forget the meaning of the 20th century or the gifts of those who worked and marched, who fought and died for the triumph of Freedom”.

JP had ‘worked and marched, fought and died for the triumph of freedom’ in a country wherein live one-sixth of the human race. And he did it not once, but twice—as a fiery fighter for freedom from alien rule under Gandhiji's leadership and later winning it back from a native ‘durbar’ under his own stewardship. Elsewhere in the world, such a man would be celebrated with gratitude. But here in this ‘Republic of Jumlas’ and land of ‘cash-and-crime politics’, he is near-totally forgotten.

During the 20 months of active Emergency spanning 1975, 1976 and 1977, people moved in hushed silence, stunned and traumatised by the draconian goings on. Across the nation, groveling academicians, advocates, and accountants vied with each other to sing paeans of glory to the Emergency rulers, some signing pledges of loyalty and servitude in blood! The bulk of the civil service crawled when asked to bend. Higher judiciary was willing to decree that under Emergency regime citizens did not even have the ‘right to life’. Politicians of all hue and colour, barring honourable exceptions, lay supine and prostrate. There was gloom all

around and it looked as if everything was over and the world's largest democracy was slowly but surely drifting into dictatorship.

But through this all, one single soul, one lonely spirit continued to stir in anguish and agony, for the first few months in captivity at Chandigarh, later attached to a dialysis machine at Bombay's Jaslok Hospital, and then a spartan house at Patna. Yet, this defiant, indomitable spirit in the person of Jayaprakash Narayan dared the might of Indira's dictatorship and defeated it thereby restoring freedom and democracy to India. This he did despite being in the frailest of health and living on borrowed time.

All nations, most of all India, need an icon to which they can cleave when times are bad, which can unite them across barriers of caste, creed, clan and language. The mid-Seventies were bad days and through the draconian and repressive regime of National Emergency and the 'era of discipline' positioned against 'anarchy and chaos', Mrs. Gandhi was building herself up as that icon.

If she had succeeded, she would have got a clear mandate in any ensuing election, since majority would have voted for her instead of opting for a vacuum. When firmly in saddle, with Emergency endorsed by the people, the 'iconship' would have passed on to Sanjay Gandhi who was waiting in the wings. With age in his favour and his known dislike for the democratic process, India would have drifted from 'direct democracy' to 'directed democracy', a euphemism for dictatorship. An alternative icon was needed to prevent this tragedy from happening and JP with his towering personality and his aura as the hero of 'Quit India Movement' eminently filled the bill.

JP's emergence as an alternate icon to take the nation back to Freedom and democracy was not an easy task. The Sarvodaya leader was out of circulation and public view for several years before he surfaced in 1974 to lead an uprising, which mostly involved the Youth. Mainly students spearheaded this uprising, popularly known as the "JP Movement". Outlining its *raison d'etre*, JP wrote:

“The movement was started with certain specific demands. The chief among them were: removal of corruption, curb on inflation, solving the problem of unemployment, and basic changes in the system of education”.

Emphasising on the movement’s main thrust, JP said, “We have always raised our voice against corruption. Prevention of corruption was the main aim of our movement.” These were indeed genuine and unassailable demands and should have received positive response from any Government run on democratic principles. Instead, a power drunk ruling coterie chose to respond brutally with harsh repressive measures resulting in the strengthening and spreading of the JP movement.

The Allahabad High Court judgement of June 12, 1975 unseating Mrs. Gandhi from Parliament for ‘corrupt practices’ gave a big fillip to the Movement, which was poised to sweep the country. But before it could gain momentum, Mrs. Gandhi struck and in one swift move declared Emergency and incarcerated all leaders who commanded public following.

On top of the list was ‘enemy-number-one-of-the-state’ Jayaprakash Narayan. By this time, JP had come to symbolise the conscience of the nation and uncompromising opposition to corruption and despotism which had become the hallmarks of Congress party and governments. By locking up an ailing JP in confinement, the ruling coterie thought they could break his body and spirit and thereby eliminate the only hurdle they had in enjoying uninterrupted and unfettered power.

What ‘man proposes God disposes’. In this case it was a woman proposing to be the icon of 750 million people and the unquestioned leader of the vast sub-continent of India for years to come and then pass it on to her progeny. Using the Emergency as a whip to ‘discipline the nation’ and building her up as “Indira is India”, she would have eminently succeeded with individuals and institutions collapsing one by one and falling by the wayside. Barring sporadic murmurs of dissent, she had no opposition whatsoever and all roads were clear as far as eyes could see. But God has his own way of disposing.

During the initial days of the Emergency, within the confines of the yet to be commissioned intensive care ward of Chandigarh's Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGI), JP was a haggard and 'defeated' individual who felt that all hopes were gone and freedom in India stood extinguished. He had also mentally reconciled himself to die in confinement 'as a prisoner of Indira Gandhi'. But the Almighty and the Ultimate Arbiter had other ideas. He wanted this man, who once symbolised all that was fiery in India's Freedom struggle and all that was noble in pursuing a cause, to resurge, rise again and re-emerge as the nation's hope and the alternate icon to lead the people back to freedom and democracy. As the then District Collector & Magistrate of Chandigarh and custodian of JP-in-Jail, I had the privilege of witnessing this history-in-the-making first hand.

What a marvelous experience!

When I received 'prisoner JP' at the tarmac of Chandigarh Air Force base on the night of July 1, 1975, Emergency was only a few days old. JP had been taken into custody by the District Magistrate, Delhi on 25/26 June night, moved around nearby areas of Haryana and Delhi's All-India Institute of Medical Sciences, and was being brought to Chandigarh for safe custody and medical care. To me at that time, JP was an enigma as well as a mystery. My memory of him as the 'Quit India Movement' hero of the Forties was hazy and the perception of his recent campaign for 'total revolution' was rather confusing.

During the 22 weeks JP was in my custody, I did come to know him very intimately. And having understood the nobility of his struggle and the intensity of his commitment, I partook in all matters concerning him and the State, shared his intimate thoughts and feelings, discussed political events and happenings, played 'Devil's Advocate', participated in brainstorming and strategy sessions, took charge of his mental and psychological well-being, initiated the reconciliation process between him and the Prime Minister, and succeeded in reviving his faith in himself and his people which he was on the verge of losing.

"My world lies in shambles all around me. I am afraid I shall not see it put together again in my lifetime. May be my nephews and nieces will see that. May be". These

opening words of ‘JP’s Prison Diary-1975s’ first entry dated 21 July—a full three weeks after his arrival in Chandigarh—amply describe a sense of defeatism and extremely fragile state of JP’s mind and spirit during the initial days. Then he started taking stock of things and did some hard soul searching, introspection and evaluation of events leading to the imposition of Emergency and its aftermath. This intense ‘solo-brainstorming’ led JP to believe that the ‘intellectuals’ who had egged him on saying ‘JP you are the only hope of the nation’ and whom he counted upon as bulwarks of democracy had buckled and had deserted him.

This deep mental hurt was the main cause for some disturbing developments later, including his conclusion that at least for the foreseeable future, democracy in the country was dead. And even when ‘it was put together after a long time’ he will not be there to see it. So, over a period of several days, he drafted a ‘letter of farewell’ to Mrs. Indira Gandhi pouring out his heart in anguish, pleading with her to mend ways and “reconciling to die a prisoner under her regime”. This letter—indeed an epistle—sent on July 21, 1975 to the Prime Minister caused quite a ripple along the corridors of power.

A couple of weeks later on Sunday, August 10, 1975, I had permitted JP’s brother-in-law S. N. Prasad an interview for one hour. Around noon, the Jail

Superintendent delivered to me a letter from JP addressed to the Prime Minister conveying his decision ‘to go on

fast until death’ unless the

Emergency was revoked and all

prisoners released within two

weeks. JP had authorised Prasad

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to announce this to the outside world. Considering the grave implications this could bring forth, I took upon myself the task of dissuading JP from this disastrous move, but did not make any headway even after two hours of highly surcharged nail-splitting verbal duel. JP refused to relent and said that his decision was irrevocable because in his opinion Mrs. Gandhi will only bring more destructive measures now that ‘intellectuals’ had totally buckled and there was no resistance whatsoever. I contested it vehemently and eventually succeeded in persuading JP to give up the idea of fast.

Sensing the distress of JP, I initiated the process of political dialogue and reconciliation, which I have been thinking about for some time. I got working on this, quietly putting this thought in the mind of JP, and increasingly getting positive response. My efforts culminated in a warm gesture by way of a letter from JP to PM on September 17 expressing hope of an early end to the Emergency. In response to this, at the behest of Mrs. Gandhi, Sheikh Abdullah issued a positive statement setting the ball rolling on reconciliation.

JP responded to Sheikh Abdullah through a letter which *inter alia* said:

“However, in spite of all that has happened and is happening, I am prepared to seek the path of conciliation. I shall, therefore, be much obliged if you kindly see me as soon as possible so that I could discuss this matter with you. I being the villain of the piece, the arch-conspirator, culprit number one, a return to true normalcy, not the false one established by repression and terror, can only be brought about with my co-operation. I am herewith offering you my full co-operation”.

This letter was delivered at Delhi on September 24 forenoon and the response from PM’s Office, particularly P.N. Dhar, Principal Secretary to PM, was swift. A special emissary (Sugatha Das Gupta, Director, Gandhi Institute of Studies, Varanasi, of which JP was the Chairman) arrived on the 25th morning to initiate efforts for a political dialogue between the PM and JP. There were some more visits by Das Gupta and the preliminary work on reconciliation was going apace.

As hope for the success of reconciliation efforts and restoration of democracy was rising, certain mysterious and intriguing things happened culminating in the whole process being sabotaged by Sanjay Gandhi and his cronies. JP’s letter to Sheikh Abdullah was never delivered but was returned through Das Gupta during one of his visits. Certain other disturbing events followed.

Mysteriously in early November 1975, JP’s health started deteriorating fast and from doctor’s hedgy replies about his health, I suspected that something was amiss. As later events proved, JP’s kidney was getting irrevocably damaged! Under the circumstances, I was convinced that it would be unsafe to keep JP in Chandigarh any longer and he should get to a place where his ailment could be diagnosed correctly and treated properly.

This conviction led me to initiate silent and swift steps to launch a multi-pronged assault through PMO emissary Das Gupta, JP's brother Rajeshwar Prasad, Chandigarh Chief Commissioner/Union Home Secretary and my personal channel to the PMO with the same message content—"If JP dies in Jail"—to create a crisis mindset in Delhi so that JP could be released immediately.

This worked admirably resulting in a flurry of activities leading to JP's release on 'unconditional parole' on November 12, by an order served on him by the Chief Secretary and District Magistrate of Delhi who flew into Chandigarh by a special BSF aircraft. This was followed by high intensity drama in the next few days when the panicked 'Delhi Durbar' made desperate efforts to retain JP in Chandigarh. However, I prevailed upon the PGI to discharge JP and commandeered seats in the Indian Airlines flight to take JP to Delhi en route to Bombay Jaslok Hospital!

As he departed from Chandigarh on November 16, I saw him off at the airport wishing him well and requesting him to look after his health. JP's reply still rings in my ears: "Devasahayam, you are like a son I never had. My health is not important. The health of the nation and democracy is. I will defeat 'that woman' and have them restored." And then the aircraft departed.

I came back home feeling completely drained but relieved. The last words of JP showed that the fire was back in him and the transition of the 'Lok Nayak' from a defeated individual to a defiant icon was complete. I was confident that with this new spirit he would fulfill his pledge of returning India to freedom and democracy.

Fourteen months later, emboldened by the reports of 'success' of Emergency regime and the perception that opposition to her rule was crumbling and JP, the only mass all-India leader was sick and demoralised, Indira Gandhi called for the

Despite being tied down to dialysis machine twice a week, JP put into effect the political blueprint for a "Janata Parivar" with one flag and one symbol.

Sixth General Election to Parliament in January 1977. And in his inimitable style, JP went into action despite being tied down to dialysis machine twice a week. Without wasting any time, he

put into effect the political blueprint he had worked out while in detention and refined later and put together a "Janata Parivar" with one flag and one symbol.

Due largely to his untiring efforts, immediately after coming out of jails, the opposition leaders announced the coming-together of Congress (O), Jan Sangh, Bharatiya Lok Dal and Socialists under the Janata Party umbrella. Congress was dealt a body-blow by the sudden defection of Jagjivan Ram, H.N. Bahuguna and Nandini Sathpathy who formed the Congress for Democracy and, along with the DMK in Tamil Nadu and the Akali Dal in Punjab, forged a common front with the Janata Party in order to give a straight fight to Congress and its allies in the election held in March 1977.

The Emergency and its excesses were the major issues of the election campaign. JP created a public upsurge by touring the country intensively and addressing mammoth gatherings. At several places where he could not go, large crowds intently listened to JP's speech through pre-recorded tapes. His message was simple and straight—if you want autocracy and corruption, vote Congress; if you want democracy and honesty, vote Janata.

With the popular upsurge thus created, the Janata Parivar captured 345 parliamentary seats with the Congress and its allies far behind with 189. The Congress was virtually wiped out in North India with the party winning only two out of 234 constituencies in seven states. Both Indira Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi were defeated. Indeed, JP lived up to his promise of redeeming India's freedom and I was happy that I had a small part to play.

Why JP brought RSS into the Janata Parivar

While under detention in Chandigarh, JP was making his own plans for the elections as and when it took place and the ways and means to remove the Congress from power. He was of the firm conviction that unless a viable and working political alternative to the Congress emerged and sustained, the ruling party would continue to revel in the 'There is no alternative' (TINA) syndrome and an Emergency kind of situation would get repeated. JP planned to devote whatever life was left in him to accomplish this mission of uniting the Opposition.

This was the main subject of discussion when JP and I met frequently in the month of October 1975. During our interaction, JP used to analyse the chances of the Opposition in the event of elections as per schedule in February/March 1976. As of

now, they were a divided house, he said. Would the trials and tribulations of the Emergency unite them, he wondered. Would a single, viable Opposition be formed? Once elections were announced and he was released, he would go all out and do his best to defeat Indira at the hustings, he said. He hoped the people wouldn't be fooled again. "This lady must be defeated. She has ruined the country enough," JP used to fume.

I played the devil's advocate. Was she not the hope of the minority—both linguistic and religious—and their champion? I also pointed out that minorities were the majority in this country. Would it not be very difficult to defeat her at the polls, I queried. The Jan Sangh had a communal image and non-Hindus did not feel comfortable with them

About the composition of the united party JP had only a broad framework in mind and details were to be thrashed out.

because of the RSS. Most non-Hindi-speaking people were suspicious about the Jan Sangh because of their linguistic fanaticism. Congress (O) was a divided house, and their leader, Morarji Desai, was a suspect in South Indian eyes because of his perceived pro-Hindi views. His role prior to and during the 1965 anti-Hindi agitation had antagonised the Tamil population. His rift with Kamaraj had led to the DMK coming to power. Because of the above reasons, South India would vote en bloc for Indira. This was particularly so since the Emergency, its harshness, and perceived excesses were no issues in the South, because these were not felt in that part of the country.

About the composition of the united party JP was contemplating to take on the Congress (I), he had only a broad framework in mind and details were to be thrashed out when the party would actually take shape. The framework would have Congress (O) with the socialist faction of Congress and the Bharatiya Lok Dal as core components. The RSS-backed Jan Sangh would provide the cadre base, which was essential for facing elections at short notice. Parties like the DMK in Tamil Nadu and the Shromani Akali Dal in Punjab would provide the much-needed regional base.

I was astonished and pointed out that JP's views on several occasions had been sharply critical of the Jan Sangh and its communal hue. I specifically quoted his article in a journal way back in 1968: "When, following Gandhiji's murder, the

RSS was under a shadow, there were many protestations made about its being entirely a cultural organisation. But apparently emboldened by the timidity of the secular forces, it has thrown its veil away and has emerged as the real force behind, and controller of, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. The secular protestations of the Jana Sangh will never be taken seriously unless it cuts the bonds that tie it so firmly to the RSS machine. Nor can the RSS be treated as a cultural organisation as long as it remains the mentor and effective manipulator of a political party.”

I asked JP that despite such a categorical disapproval, how he could associate with this ‘communal organisation’ in his fight against the Emergency rule and its eventual overthrow. JP was candid in describing the causes, criteria, and compulsions leading to the decision to associate the Jan Sangh with the united opposition party. The main reasons were two. One was JP’s unwillingness to opt for the alternative of associating with the Communists, the other cadre-based party, since according to him, “Communists were professional collaborators. They collaborated with the British and must now be collaborating with the Emergency coterie.” Indeed, they were!



Balasaheb Deoras, Sarsanghchalak of the RSS, in conversation with Jayaprakash Narayan at the latter's residence on November 1, 1977. Photo: The Hindu Archives

The second was the solemn pledge taken by top RSS and Jan Sangh leaders—Balasaheb Deoras, RSS Sarsanghchalak; AB Vajpayee, previous President, Jan Sangh; LK Advani, then President of Jan Sangh—in his presence to totally give up communal politics in the event of coming to power at the Centre. They had also categorically assured him that within a short period of coming to power, the Jan Sangh will merge with the parent party (yet to be formed) and they will terminate the ‘dual-membership’—RSS and Jan Sangh—making the former a purely cultural organisation. They also assured JP that if any hurdle came up for this, they would not even hesitate to wind up the RSS. And JP, being a man of his words, had no reason to doubt the honour and integrity of these senior leaders.

JP was clear that the monolithic and servile Congress Party had to be defeated if democracy was to be revived in the country. There was finality in the voice of JP when he said: “These parties merging and providing a viable alternative is the only hope for our democracy.” And I thought it prudent to leave it there.

The Great Betrayal: Dual membership gave birth to the BJP

In 2005, as BJP was celebrating its silver jubilee, its president LK Advani openly admitted that the party would not have been born in 1980 had the Janata Party not raised the issue of dual membership in the manner they did. "The Janata Party parliamentary board put forward the excuse of our dual membership as they thought that they would not be able to progress if we stayed with them," Advani said after releasing a book on 25 years of the BJP.

According to him, the rationale behind the birth of the BJP lay in the fact that the party opposed a ban on its ties with the RSS, which was sought to be imposed by the Janata Party leaders. RSS sahasarkaryavah, Madandas Devi, who presided over the function, put it more bluntly when he said: "The BJP stands on the backdrop of the Jan Sangh and the Jan Sangh stood on the backdrop of the RSS."

Flashback to post-Emergency. After a delay of one-year, Indira Gandhi made the election announcement on January 18, 1977. When opposition leaders sought JP's support for the forthcoming election, he insisted that all opposition parties form a united front. Accordingly, the Janata party was officially launched on January 23, 1977 when the Janata Morcha, Charan Singh's Bharatiya Lok Dal, the Swatantra

Party, Socialist Party of India of Raj Narain and George Fernandes, and the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) joined together, dissolving their separate identities. The merger of all party organisations was to be completed after the election. Although the political ideologies of Janata constituents were diverse and conflicting, the party was able to unite under the over-arching leadership of JP, who had been seen as the ideological mentor of the anti-Emergency movement and now the Janata party.

Morarji Desai was elected the first party chairman. Ramakrishna Hegde became the party general secretary, and Jana Sangh politician Lal Krishna Advani became the party spokesperson. After the Janata victory in March and elevation of Morarji Desai as Prime Minister, JP appointed his close confidante Chandra Shekhar as the Party president with a clear mandate to enforce the solemn undertaking of Jan Sangh merging with Janata Party and ending of RSS-Jan Sangh 'dual-membership' within six months as agreed upon.

True to his nature, Chandra Shekhar went about his talk in all seriousness. During those days the land-based telephone system was managed by Department of Telecom and the Subscriber Trunk Dialing (STD) between cities was very porous and cross-talk was common. I used to call Chandra Shekhar once in a while to keep in touch. During one such call, I could hear a conversation between him and Raj Narain, the clownish socialist who had defeated Indira Gandhi at the hustings. When I heard the word RSS repeatedly, I got interested and listened to the entire conversation that lasted for about 15 minutes. It was all about the Jan Sangh/RSS U-turn on the 'dual membership' issue. The conversation was in Hindi and both of them used abusive language and choicest epithets about the RSS. They ended the conversation with a mutual understanding to force the issue. Accordingly, soon thereafter, the Janata Parliamentary Board (JPB) passed a resolution barring Janata functionaries from their day-to-day activities in RSS.

With a tradition of lies and double deals, it was obvious that the Sangh parivar was

That was the end of the 'dual-membership' issue and merger of Janata Parivar as a single entity.

never keen on keeping the promise and was waiting for an excuse. It came in the form of the JPB resolution. The situation was manipulated by the

Jan Sangh hardliners and the RSS Pratinidhi Sabha refused to ratify the proposal when presented by Balasaheb Deoras. That was the end of the 'dual-membership' issue and merger of Janata Parivar as a single entity. Said a saddened Janata Party president, Chandra Shekhar: "I did expect that Deoras would fulfil his promise. But I'm not surprised at the recent stand taken by the RSS. However, I fail to understand it."

Vijay Kumar Malhotra of the Jan Sangh, who was president of the Delhi Janata Party, tried to rationalise this perfidy when he said: "We are proud of our association with the RSS. We can't accept a decision on our association with the RSS from the Janata Party which makes the RSS appear as something undesirable. But if the RSS itself had decided to bar us, it would have been a different matter." Morarji Desai tried some patch-up but failed.

Nanaji Deshmukh, former RSS political commissar of the Jan Sangh and the one closest to JP, tried to apply some balm: "The Jan Sangh would do nothing to wreck the party unless we are compelled." But it appeared that the point of no return had been reached. Malhotra pulled the curtains down when he said: "To me it seems the time has come for a parting of ways. There is no other option. But it should be done in such a way that there is no bad blood so that we can have at least an honest coalition in the future."

RSS—A Reality Check

This is what RSS claims itself to be in its website: "A unique phenomenon in the history of Bharat in the twentieth century is the birth and unceasing growth of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. The Sangh's sphere of influence has been spreading far and wide, not only inside Bharat but also abroad, like the radiance of a many-splendoured diamond. Sangh-inspired institutions and movements today form a strong presence in social, cultural, educational, labour, developmental, political and other fields of nationalist endeavour. Sangh-initiated movements—be they social-reformist or anti-secessionist—evoke a ready response and approbation from the common multitudes as well as from vast numbers of the elite of different shades. It has increasingly been recognised that the Sangh is not a mere reaction to one or another social or political aberration. It represents a corpus of thought and

action firmly rooted in genuine nationalism and in the age-old tradition of this country.”

Indeed, RSS has grown phenomenally during the past five decades. Its swayamsewaks now hold the top four constitutional posts of President, Vice President, Prime Minister, and Lok Sabha speaker. They occupy 20 Raj Bhawans as Governors, some of whom actively participate and manage shakhas!

Eighteen of them are chief ministers. Half the Union Cabinet comprises RSS members. The political initiation of over 1,000 MLAs and 250 MPs has been through the RSS. About a million Indians daily attend the over 55,000 shakhas across the country. Its 500-odd frontal organisations manage colleges, schools, media, hospitals, and tribal and Dalit NGOs. Ten thousand full-time pracharaks are active in politics, culture, and various think tanks at home and abroad.

Despite such impressive achievements and claims, there is a sense of guilt among the RSS brass and it feels isolated. To undo this, RSS chief Dr Mohanrao Bhagwat organised the “Bhavishya Ka Bharat” (India of the Future) talk-show to over 1,000 prominent citizens from across the national spectrum at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, from September 17 to 19, 2018. The idea was to start a meaningful dialogue between the powerful and the hopeful. Bhagwat took an array of questions and responded to them with aplomb. He made it a point to emphasise that RSS is the “most democratic organisation” with a past in the freedom struggle and a desire to work for society while shunning all publicity.

Bhagwat also came out with several sweeping statements on Hindutva, Ram Mandir dispute, mob lynchings, women empowerment, and religious conversions which were in sharp contrast with the actions of the Sangh parivar on the ground indicating callous hypocrisy! Here are few instances:

Mohan Bhagwat said, “We want a Hindu Rashtra but that does not mean we don’t want Muslims in it.” In 2017, RSS leader Kundan Chandrawat boasted of killing 2,000 Muslims in Gujarat and said, “Have you forgotten Godhra? You killed 56, we sent 2,000 to the graveyard. We—this same Hindu community—shoved [their corpses] underground.”

On Mob lynchings, he said: “Why just cows, taking law into one's own hand, violence, destroying property for any reason are totally unacceptable.” In 2015, the RSS chief called the lynching of Mohammed Akhlaq in Dadri a “small episode” that cannot damage “Hindu culture”. After another Muslim man, Rakbar Khan, was lynched in Alwar over suspicion of cow slaughter, RSS leader Indresh Kumar remarked that lynchings would stop if people stopped eating cow meat and protected them instead.

On conversions, Mohan Bhagwat said, “If all religions are equal, then what is the need for conversion?” And he added, “Gods cannot be sold in markets or forcefully worshipped, hence forceful conversions must stop.” In 2014, according to India Today, an offshoot of the RSS claimed to have converted at least 57 Muslim families into Hinduism at a ‘*Purkhon ki ghar vapsi*’ ceremony in Uttar Pradesh's Agra district. In Jharkhand, the RSS claimed to have 53 families in their so-called “Christianity-free block campaign”.

On gender equality, Mohan Bhagwat said, “Women are also coming out in the field and working equally with men and they must do that. So, we need to ensure they are secure. Hence, empowerment of both men and women are needed.” The sarsanghchhalak himself has been in the eye of a storm for his controversial remarks on women and rape. In 2013, he blamed western culture for incidents of crimes against women.

On the RSS’ role during freedom struggle, Mohan Bhagwat went ballistic and said: “When the Congress passed the resolution for Purna Swaraj [complete independence], Doctor Saheb [Hegdewar] issued a circular asking all [RSS] shakhas to march past with the tricolour.”

RSS and the Freedom Struggles

All pretensions notwithstanding, it is open secret that the RSS is averse to the concept of freedom as expounded by JP. But the ideologues of the RSS clan are working overtime to create a narrative of the latter's participation in India's anti-colonial freedom struggle. This project got impetus after the electoral victory in 2014 of RSS/BJP which was celebrated as the return of the Hindu rule after 1,000 years. But there is overwhelming evidence to the contrary and a lot has been

written and spoken on the subject. The fact is that the RSS did not participate in the first freedom struggle and, in fact, had colluded with the British in perpetuating the colonial rule!

What we should be concerned with now is the role played by the RSS in the second freedom struggle—the JP Movement, the Emergency and after. The fact is that the Emergency rendered the Jana Sangh, the BJP's predecessor, respectable and paved the way for it to enter the mainstream of Indian politics. Indeed, RSS literature describes the Emergency as the "second freedom struggle", with the Sangh at the head of it. The struggle of others in opposing the Emergency, in this account, was a mere indulgence on the part of the Sangh; it was the RSS that saved democracy, it said. The role of peoples' movements is erased here; the Sangh itself is the people, instead.

The reality is that the RSS and its flock in the BJP have no locus standi to make such claims about Emergency, because its own leaders groveled before the Congress dispensation to win reprieves from jail terms and have the ban lifted on their organisation.

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's imposition of the Emergency was no mere mistake; it was a sin, a constitutional crime committed for purely personal reasons, namely, to nullify the judgment of the Allahabad High Court on June 12, 1975, declaring her election to the Lok Sabha to be void. She put her political opponents behind bars; imposed press censorship; suspended the fundamental rights; extended the life of the Lok Sabha; rushed through Parliament the 42nd Constitutional amendment to undermine our democracy; attempted to give herself immunity from criminal proceedings; nullified the High Court judgment; and even made serious moves to discard the Constitution itself by convening a Constituent Assembly to establish a presidential system.

But, in his correspondence with Indira Gandhi during the Emergency, the RSS boss, Balasaheb Deoras, never

But, in his correspondence with Indira Gandhi during the Emergency Balasaheb Deoras, never criticised those sordid moves.

criticised those sordid moves or called for a return to the democratic order. Instead,

on his advice and instructions, his men from the RSS gave unconditional undertakings to get out of prison. The government prepared a standard form which RSS detenus happily signed. Some of them did not wait for the form. They gave unqualified undertakings in their own language, if only to get out.

The Government's draft "pro-forma undertaking" read thus:

"I, Shri..... Detenu Class I prisoner agree on affidavit that in case of my release I shall not do anything which is detrimental to internal security and public peace. Similarly, I shall not do anything which would hamper the distribution of essential goods. So also, I shall not participate in any illegal activities. I shall not indulge in any activities which is prejudicial to the present emergency."

The RSS men did not opt for prison. They were thrown into prison. The Emergency was declared on June 25, 1975. Deoras was arrested and put into prison on June 30. The RSS was banned, along with 23 other bodies, on July 4. The RSS' initial response was to wait and watch. Then they decided to compromise. Accordingly, Deoras began shooting letters to Indira Gandhi, SB Chavan, Chief Minister of Maharashtra, and the "Sarkari Sant" Vinoba Bhave. These letters, along with letters by others, were placed on the table of the Maharashtra Assembly by Chavan.

The very first para of Deoras' first letter to Indira Gandhi, dated August 22, 1975, read: "I have heard the speech you delivered on August 15, 1975, from the Red Fort, Delhi on A.I.R. The speech was balanced and befitting to the occasion and has prompted me to write this letter to you." Unctuous and false, as ever.

"The aim of the RSS is to unify and organise Hindu society..... There are people who allege that RSS is a communal organisation. This also is a baseless charge.

Deoras' letter read: "In the light of the democratic right of freedom to organise, I beseech you to rescind the ban imposed upon the RSS."

Although at present the activities of the Sangh are confined to the Hindu society, the Sangh never preaches anything against any non-Hindu. It is absolutely wrong that the Sangh is

anti-Muslim. We don't even use an improper word regarding Islam, Mohammad,

Kuran, Christianity, Christ or the Bible.” M.S. Golwalkar’s books *We or Our Nationhood Defined* and *Bunch of Thoughts* expose the falsity of the denial.

The concluding para of Deoras’ letter read: “I request you to please reconsider the case of the Sangh without any prejudice. In the light of the democratic right of freedom to organise, I beseech you to rescind the ban imposed upon the RSS.” And no more. Not a word about lifting the Emergency or releasing others from prisons.

This letter, indeed, the entire correspondence, was conducted behind the back of the members of the Lok Sangarsh Samiti, with whom the RSS and its pointsman, Nanaji Deshmukh, were associated. They were all stabbed in the back by the RSS’ cowardly betrayal. Indira Gandhi ignored him and his letters. Deoras’ first letter to S.B. Chavan, dated July 15, 1975, said: “The Sangh has done nothing against the government or society even remotely. There is no place for such things in the Sangh’s programme. The Sangh is engaged only in social and cultural activities.”

Former Intelligence Bureau (IB) chief TV Rajeswar has claimed that the RSS had supported the Emergency and the then Sangh chief Balasaheb Deoras had tried to establish contact with Indira Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi.

I am myself privy to such surrenders and apologies. RSS activists detained in Chandigarh were only a handful and all of them except one gave apology letters requesting for pardon and release. Needless to say, these requests were rejected. When I told JP that many RSS/Jan Sangh activists detained under MISA were tendering unconditional apology and were resigning from their party in order to get released, he just called them traitors.

As against the letters of surrender by ‘RSS-nationalists’ to the Emergency regime, this is a brief extract from the letter JP wrote from jail to Indira Gandhi on 21 July, 1975:

“... You know I am an old man. My life’s work is done. And after Prabha’s going I have nothing and no one to live for... I have given all my life, after finishing education, to the country and asked for nothing in return. So, I shall be content to die a prisoner under your regime...”

Would you listen to the advise of such a man? Please do not destroy the foundation that the Fathers of the Nation, including your own noble father, had laid down. There is nothing but strife and suffering along the path that you have taken. You inherited a great tradition, noble values and a great democracy. Do not leave behind a miserable wreck of all that. It would take long time to put that all together again. For it would be put together again I have no doubt. A people who fought British imperialism and humbled it cannot accept the indignity and shame of totalitarianism.

The spirit of man can never be vanquished, no matter how deeply suppressed. In establishing your personal dictatorship, you have buried it deep. But it will rise from the grave...”

While 73-year old JP in poor health himself was defying the Emergency and struggling to make India free refusing to even ask for parole, a bulk of the RSS ‘sevaks’ were prostrating and surrendering before the Imperial Indira. There were also reports that some top brasses of RSS were in cohort with Sanjay Gandhi, the real Emergency master trying to run a fascist state! Such an entity whom JP called ‘traitors’ claim that they fought the Emergency and were the ones to win India’s Second Freedom! What a nerve?

What is Fascism?

This is the dictionary definition of fascism: “a political philosophy, movement, or regime (such as that of the Fascisti) that exalts nation and often race above the individual and that stands for a centralised autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition.”

In his original article, “Fascism Anyone?” Laurence Britt comes out with a 14-point list describing fascism in different dimensions:

1. Powerful and Continuing Nationalism

Fascist regimes tend to make constant use of patriotic mottos, slogans, symbols, songs, and other paraphernalia. Flags are seen everywhere, as are flag symbols on clothing and in public displays.

2. Disdain for the Recognition of Human Rights

Because of fear of enemies and the need for security, the people in fascist regimes are persuaded that human rights can be ignored in certain special cases. The people tend to look the other way or even approve of torture, summary executions, assassinations, long incarcerations of prisoners etc.

3. Identification of Enemies/Scapegoats as a Unifying Cause

The people are rallied into a unifying patriotic frenzy over the need to eliminate a perceived common threat or foe: racial, ethnic, or religious minorities, liberals, communists, socialists, terrorists etc.

4. Supremacy of the Military

Soldiers and military service are glamourised. Even when there are widespread domestic problems, the military is given a disproportionate amount of government funding.

5. Rampant Sexism

The governments of fascist nations tend to be almost exclusively male-dominated. Under fascist regimes, traditional gender roles are made more rigid. Maintenance of a patriarchal status quo is the norm.

6. Controlled Mass Media

Sometimes the media is directly controlled by the government, but in other cases, the media is indirectly controlled by government regulation, or sympathetic media spokespeople and executives. Censorship of the media is very common.

7. Obsession with National Security

Fear is used as a motivational tool by the government over the masses.

8. Religion and Government are Intertwined

Governments in fascist nations tend to use the most common religion in the nation as a tool to manipulate public opinion. Religious rhetoric and terminology are common from government leaders, even if sometimes the major tenets of the religion are diametrically opposed to the government's policies or actions.

9. Corporate Power is Protected

The industrial and business aristocracy of a fascist nation often are the ones who put the government leaders into power, creating a mutually beneficial business/government relationship and power elite.

10. Labor Power is Suppressed

Because the organising power of labor is often the only real threat to a fascist government, labor unions are either eliminated, or are severely suppressed.

11. Disdain for Intellectuals, Centers of Education, and the Arts

Fascist nations tend to promote and tolerate open hostility to higher education, and academia. It is not uncommon for professors and other academics to be censored or even arrested. Free expression in the arts is openly attacked, and governments often refuse to fund the arts.

12. Obsession with Crime and Punishment

Under fascist regimes, the police are given almost limitless power to enforce laws. The people are often willing to overlook police abuses and even forego civil liberties in the name of patriotism.

13. Rampant Cronyism and Corruption

Fascist regimes almost always are governed by groups of friends and associates who appoint each other to government positions and use governmental power and authority to protect their friends from accountability. It is not uncommon in fascist regimes for national resources and even treasures to be appropriated or even outright stolen by government leaders.

14. Fraudulent Elections

Sometimes elections in fascist nations are a complete sham. Other times elections are manipulated by smear campaigns against or even assassination of opposition candidates, use of legislation to control voting numbers or political district boundaries, and manipulation of the media. Fascist nations also typically use their judiciaries to manipulate or control elections.

Does the RSS miss even one of these points? The ‘Saffron Summit’ neither addressed nor resolved even one of this point to prove that it is not fascist. On the other hand, freedom is just the antithesis of all that fascism stands for.

Is JP a Fascist?

Anyone interested in the recent history of the Jan Sangh-turned-BJP’s rise to power should know that they used JP to the full, sucked the blood out of him and not only abandoned him but betrayed him. What is worse, Sanghis portray him as their patriarch and a fascist. As proof they quote JP’s words—“if you are fascist, then I too am a fascist” at a Jan Sangh-RSS rally! Every time I hear people berate JP in my presence blaming him for the rise of Sanghis and the horror that is India today, I shiver in anguish because I know it is not true.

JP has pronounced himself on various aspects which rings truer today:

On Freedom

“Freedom became one of the beacon lights of my life and it has remained so ever since.....Above all it meant freedom of the human personality, freedom of the mind, freedom of the spirit. This freedom has become a passion of my life and I shall not see it compromised for food, for security, for prosperity, for the glory of the state or for anything else”.

On Communalism

"Although almost every religious community had its own brand of communalism, Hindu communalism was more pernicious than the others because Hindu communalism can easily masquerade as Indian nationalism and denounce all opposition to it as being anti-national”.

On the RSS

“Some like the RSS might do it openly by identifying the Indian nation with Hindu Rashtra, others might do it more subtly,” he said. “But in every case, such identification is pregnant with national disintegration, because members of other communities can never accept the position of second-class citizens. Such a situation, therefore, has in it the seeds of perpetual conflict and ultimate disruption.”

India is not Hindu: JP

“... Those who attempt to equate India with Hindus and Indian history with Hindu history are only detracting from the greatness of India and the glory of Indian history and civilization. Such person, paradoxical though this may seem, are in reality the enemies of Hinduism itself and the Hindus. Not only do they degrade the noble religion and destroy its catholicity and spirit of tolerance and harmony, but they also weaken and sunder the fabric of the nation, of which Hindus form such a vast majority.”

On Cow Slaughter

“I do not think that Hinduism has ever thought that the life of any animal, no matter how sacred, is more sacred than human life. All life is sacred, but the most sacred of all is human life.” He then contextualized the emergence of the cow as a sacred animal: “The Hindu concept that a cow’s life is inviolate is the outcome not of any primitive taboo, because beef was a common food of Hindu society at one time, but of the gradual moral and spiritual development of the Indian people in which non-Vedic Hindu religions such as Jainism and Buddhism perhaps took the lead. In course of time, respect for human life grew and non-violence came to be more and more emphasised in human relations”.

Calling such a man a fascist?

Governance by Fear—Fascist Style

Under the Emergency onslaught, India’s institutions and instruments of democratic governance—the Legislative, the Judiciary, and the Executive—were running in panic. Individuals were moving in hushed silence traumatised by what was going

on. The irony is that today, even without a formal proclamation of the Emergency under the RSS rule, institutions and individuals are running in panic. Parliament passes harsh laws as Money Bills; the Reserve Bank ‘demonetises’ currency throwing people on the streets; ‘voluntary’ Aadhaar is being rammed down people’s throats through executive diktats; rapes, lynchings, and killings take place with abandon; political rallies are held to rationalise these gruesome crimes; and predatory, nature-killing ‘development’ projects are being pushed through state terror; those who oppose these are branded as extremists and anti-nationals and draconian laws, including sedition and National Security Act, are invoked against them; power is centralised and institutions of democratic governance are trivialised.

Let us take a closer look at the declared Emergency of June 1975 and the undeclared Emergency prevailing in the country in the past few years. There was no lynching of Muslims, killings or assaults on Dalits, communal riots, political killings, Hindutva majoritarianism, targeted killing of left liberal intellectuals and journalists, political rally in support of gruesome rape, cow vigilantes roaming the streets attacking and killing animal traders and meat eaters with impunity during the Emergency as it is happening now.

There was no fear of majority community among minority communities. There were no hate crimes against fellow citizens.

There were also no religion-based senas, dals, vahinis of goons, louts, and street lumpens harassing, extorting, assaulting, and killing defenceless citizens. There was no arms training to young innocent girls and boys in parks and institutions. There was no fear of majority community among minority communities. There were no hate crimes against fellow citizens, no pub attacks or private kitchen searches for beef, no restrictions on food and clothes of citizens, no moral policing in parks and public places, no forcible closure of NGOs, no fellow citizen was declared extremist or anti-national or asked to go to Pakistan or Europe.

Though the character and contents are different, there is a common thread between the Emergency and the situation at present—‘Governance by Fear’. The only difference is that the method adopted then was ‘Jhatka’ (single chop) and now it is

‘Halal’ (slow killing). The effect on freedom and liberty is the same, probably a shade worse now!

In order to concentrate political and administrative power in few hands, the instruments of public service are either demolished or made to self-destruct in order snatch them away from the people and hand them over to a small coterie of oligarchs who own over 75 per cent of India’s wealth today. In recent years, well-orchestrated communal hatred and polarisation agenda has been unleashed to strengthen the hold of these oligarchs on India’s economy and polity.

‘Development’ has become a farce to hand over massive amount of public money to private individuals through predatory ‘infrastructure’ projects while starving the critical agriculture and social sectors. This has made India the most non-inclusive and inequitable country in the world only next to Russia! Most of the mainstream media owned or controlled by the oligarchs have turned mercenary and are singing the paeans of those who are systematically devastating the Republic and the institutions of people’s power.

‘Fear’ seems to be the overarching tool of governance. In the past few years, ‘demonetisation’, Aadhaar, and, to some extent, GST have been used to ‘terrorise’ the common man and make him run around like headless chicken by destabilising his life and livelihood. ‘Liberalisation and privatisation’ have turned educational institutions into windowless fortress preventing young minds from blossoming into fruitful citizens and future leaders.

Never before in recent history has the politics of hate, intolerance, division, and exclusion been so dominant and the poisonous ideology which informs it gone so

Violence has been given social and political sanction by those in power and perpetrators of violence have been felicitated.

deep into the body politic. Never before has hate been directed with such calculated intent against minority communities, adivasis, dalits, and

women; hate which is nursed, aided, and abetted by those in power. It is cruel in the extreme and it spares no one, not even innocent women and children. Violence has been given social and political sanction by those in power and perpetrators of

violence have been felicitated and serenaded while victims have been punished and harassed.

Never before have the coercive instruments of state power been used with such impunity to silence those who dare to raise their voice on behalf of the oppressed. Notions of majoritarian supremacy couched in the language of cultural nationalism have found renewed support and a gigantic Goebbelsian propaganda and disinformation machinery with seemingly unlimited resources has been used to distort our understanding of history and negate our pluralistic and syncretic heritage. Institutions of higher learning that stand for nurturing the spirit of enquiry have been forced to promote a hyper nationalist agenda which treats doubt and dissidence as anti-national. Intolerance has been made acceptable and communal and caste hatred normalised and given legitimacy. This, in turn, is used to justify vigilante violence. Perversity rules.

Never before have constitutional freedoms guaranteed to citizens come under such a sustained attack from the very people expected to protect them. Institutions of democracy and governance have been weakened and checks and balances removed to clear the passage for the march of bigotry, prejudice, and intolerance. The media has been suborned or emasculated so that dissent can be silenced even before it is articulated. In the life of our nation, in post-independence India, this is possibly our bleakest moment.

The challenge posed by the RSS is deep, dangerous, and disastrous: it challenges the very idea of India, the swadharma of the Republic and the cornerstone of our Constitution—“to promote among people fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation.” Such a fascist outfit calls itself nationalist and patriotic. What a travesty?

Betrayal most Foul—JP in Tears

JP was treated as the patriarch of the Janata Parivar, even though he was six years younger than Morarji Desai, the country's first non-Congress prime minister. JP was also the same age as Charan Singh and six years older than the other claimant in the bitter struggle for the prime ministerial position, Jagjivan Ram. JP remained revered as the grand old man of the Janata Party because he took himself out of the

race for positions and power and became its conscience keeper. There is another reason why today's governing leaders of the RSS-BJP must hold JP in high regard and venerate him: they owe the party's inclusion in the mainstream and subsequent capturing of power pan-India to him. But what has been happening is just the opposite.

The Janata Party government collapsed in mid-1979 due to intrigues and betrayal indulged in by the RSS and the Jan Sangh and other elements who were part of the Morarji Desai government. Shortly

after this, I visited JP in his Kadam Kuan residence at Patna. He was on dialysis but made me sit beside him.

He told me as to how the RSS/Jan Sangh was responsible for the 'destruction' of the Janata Party put together as an alternative to the Congress party.

That he had taken Janata's collapse to

heart was evident when he said with tears welling in his eyes, "Devasahayam, I have failed yet again." Then he opened up and told me as to how the RSS/Jan Sangh was responsible for the 'destruction' of the Janata Party which he had laboriously put together as an alternative to the Congress party so that a healthy democracy could be sustained in the country.

He then narrated the beginning of the JP Movement and the ideals it represented. Since the Movement was almost entirely spearheaded by unorganised youth, he had to take the help of cadre-based entities like the RSS and rely on them. For instance, he declared after Lok Sangharsh Samiti's formation that Nanaji Deshmukh was to be handed its leadership in the event of his arrest. It didn't cross his mind that Deshmukh's appointment would provide undue advantage to the RSS in leveraging the agitation. So deep was JP's faith in the 'words of honour' by the Jan Sangh-RSS leadership.

The RSS took full advantage of this and spread their tentacles. The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the student wing of the RSS, was used to penetrate the student movement through the Lok Sangharsh Samiti route. When the Janata Party was in power at the Centre, the RSS was making secret attempts to establish a hold on the party and implement its divisive agenda in the country. In this direction, the Jan Sangh was conducting parallel meetings and discussions. The RSS is an organisation which is expert at scheming against others. Therefore,

it was difficult to face them from within. It is no wonder that the founders of the Janata Party thought that instead of handing over their party to the RSS, it was better to dissolve it.

JP was extremely anguished with the Sanghis portraying him as their patriarch and a fascist. For this, they used an innocuous statement made by him at a Jan Sangh-RSS rally out of context. He was aware of the sinister conspiracies and intrigues indulged in by the RSS and Sanjay Gandhi to destabilise the Morarji Desai Government and demolish the Janata Party.

The intermediary used for the purpose was Kapil Mohan, head of the Mohan Meakin Group (Solan-Himachal Pradesh based), best known for its assorted liquor—whiskies, beer, and rum. He had actively abetted in the conspiracy hatched by Raj Narain and Sanjay Gandhi to topple the government, which was losing its equilibrium due to its inherent ideological contradictions.

It was at Kapil Mohan's New Delhi residence that Raj Narain and Sanjay Gandhi held more than a dozen meetings over lavishly hosted lunches and high teas. The Mohan family was extremely close to Indira Gandhi and, simultaneously, to Raj Narain, Nanaji Deshmukh, and Atal Behari Vajpayee. Shortly after Indira Gandhi lost power in 1977, she summoned Kapil Mohan to her house and expressed concern regarding the safety of her younger son, Sanjay Gandhi. Consequently, Sanjay was surreptitiously shifted to Summerhall, the Mohan Meakin guest house in Solan, where he stayed for nearly a month in the company of Kapil's nephew Anil Bali.

The industrialist was again summoned by Indira Gandhi to be briefed about the highly egoistic personalities of Morarji Desai, Jagjivan Ram and Charan Singh and told him to work on ways and means of creating a wedge in the government. Raj Narain, who was the Health Minister and a frequent visitor to the Mohan residence, was selected as the man who could execute the near impossible task. He was chosen because of his closeness to Charan Singh who nursed ambitions to become the Prime Minister. Shanta Kumar, the RSS-Jan Sangh Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh, was at hand to facilitate.

Several meetings between Raj Narain and Sanjay Gandhi followed in the presence of Kapil Mohan. As part of the strategy, Raj Narain was asked to rake up the ‘dual-membership’ issue and demand that erstwhile members of the Jana Sangh should sever links with the RSS. At his instance, Charan Singh quickly raised this bogey, asking for the removal of Jan Sangh-RSS members from the Desai government. The boat began to rock and Indira Gandhi goaded Charan Singh to take over as PM, promising him outside support.

Charan Singh finally took over as the PM but could not garner sufficient numbers to face Parliament and resigned within weeks. Election followed in 1980 and Indira Gandhi returned to power. Kapil Mohan also played a significant role in softening the RSS towards the Congress, resulting in Balasaheb Deoras extending his organisation’s covert support to the Congress in the 1980 parliamentary polls “in the interest of the nation”.

Janata Party did not recover from this body-blow and faded away, except for a few sparks here and there! JP was inconsolable when he narrated the account of this

Janata Party did not recover from this body-blow. JP was inconsolable when he narrated the account of this ‘betrayal most foul’.

‘betrayal most foul’. The hard-boiled revolutionary, who was a foot-soldier for the Mahatma in his fight for first freedom and who almost single-

handedly won India’s second freedom, was a sad man when he died of a broken heart weeks later on October 8, 1979, with a sinking sense that he has ‘failed the nation again’!

An unreleased ‘telefilm’ and unpublished Biography

JP passed away in October 1979 and the Congress returned to power in January 1980. Despite being a crucial chapter of India’s post-Independence history, the JP Movement and the Emergency have been blacked-out from school-texts, books, forums, media and other avenues. The BJP, with its own self-promotion agenda, was disinterested in perpetuating the memory of JP and, in fact, has been suppressing it. Even during JP’s birth centenary year (2002-03), when the BJP was in power at the centre, the government did practically nothing to commemorate or

celebrate. It was only some followers/associates of JP, including me, who convened at Wardha Ashram and tried to do what we could.

The callousness of the Vajpayee Government to JP's birth centenary can best be explained by two instances. One was the utterly indifferent attitude of Yashwant Sinha, the then Union Finance Minister, whom I personally knew. We had been colleagues in the IAS and we worked together during the 1982 Asian Games, him as Chairman, Delhi Transport Corporation, and myself as Chief of Haryana Roadways. Being from Bihar, he claimed very close proximity to JP and left the IAS in 1984 to join the Janata Party to carry on the 'unfinished tasks of JP'. I, too, left the IAS in 1985 and associated myself with the fledgling Janata Party in Tamil Nadu. We formed into a small group and moved with Chandra Shekar who became Prime Minister for a short period. When both of them came to Chennai few months later, they had breakfast with me at my house. Sometime in mid-Nineties Yashwant defected to the BJP and became its spokesperson. Since then his ascendancy was rapid.

Sometime in 2002, when I called him with a view to discuss the JP Centenary celebrations he kept on avoiding me. Since I kept persisting, he agreed to meet me for a few minutes at his imposing office in the North Block. The moment I took up the subject, his facial expression changed and showed total disinterest. Obviously, he was under direction from the BJP or the RSS not to entertain the matter, even from a 'friend'. I did not want to embarrass him and quickly left without even touching the cup of tea placed before me.

The second instance was the deliberate disaster in the making of a telefilm on JP titled 'Loknayak'. The assignment was given to the famous director-producer Prakash Jha sometime in late 2003 just as the Centenary year concluded. Jha assembled a team and worked on it fast and interviewed several people closely associated with JP, including me, at Bombay. He had also lined up a near look-alike to play the role of JP. By the time he completed and submitted the film, it was March 2004 which was election time. The BJP lost, the Congress won and 'Loknayak' went into limbo.

It surfaced again in October 2004, scheduled for telecast on the 11th of the month to coincide with JP's 102nd birth anniversary. It was pulled out at the last minute by Prasar Bharati Corporation on the orders of its Congress bosses. As the film was commissioned by the Government, it does not require a certification by the Censor Board. Yet Jha had obtained one to put a date on the film. Incidentally, the film was cleared by the Censor Board on October 28 without cuts, prompting the I&B Ministry to question its wisdom.

At the review held at the behest of I&B Ministry, censors came down heavily and directed Jha to chop off everything that was critical of the Emergency and the roles played by Indira and Sanjay Gandhi, particularly vis-a-vis JP. Jha was asked to remove most of the audio-references

to Indira Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi if he wanted the film to be telecast.

Out went almost all my statements and bytes. What is strange, Jha was asked to provide a counterpoint on

the "need to impose Emergency"! Jha initially put up some resistance and then buckled. And so, a pathetic looking 'Loknayak', brutally torn and bruised, was finally telecast in December 2004. It was virtually an apology for the Emergency with JP looking weak and meek. My blood boiled when I saw the telefilm.

Ironically, it was Atal Behari Vajpayee who had paid the most poignant tribute to JP way back in 1978: "JP was not merely the name of one person; it symbolised humanity. When one remembered Mr. Narayan, two pictures came to one's mind. One was reminded of Bhishmapitamah lying on a bed of arrows. There was only one difference between Bhishmapitamah and Mr. Narayan; while the former fought for the Kauravas, the latter fought for Justice. The second picture was one of Christ on the Cross and Mr. Narayan's life reminded one of Christ's sacrifices." As it turned out, this was rank hypocrisy.

Another peculiar case keeps rankling me. This is about the final volume of JP's Biography. Sometime in 2012 when Vitasta published my Book "JP Movement, Emergency and India's Second Freedom", I came in touch with Prof. Bimal Prasad, formerly of JNU, who was a friend and biographer of JP and had authored several

At the review held at the behest of I&B Ministry, censors came down heavily and directed Jha to remove most of the audio-references to Indira Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi if he wanted the film to be telecast.

books on the subject. After reading my book and the revelations contained therein, he started with renewed vigour on the final volume of JP's Biography in which the Emergency, particularly the days he spent in Chandigarh, and post-Emergency era would form the major part. He was extremely interested in the contents of my book and whenever I went to Delhi (which was at least twice a month) we used to interact for several hours either at the India International Centre where I stayed or at his cabin in Nehru Memorial Library.

One of the central themes of these interactions was the unfortunate branding of JP as a fascist and patron of the RSS and the feeling of total betrayal JP felt during his last days. I shared with him my conversations with JP on the subject in Chandigarh as well as in Bombay and Patna where I used to visit him during Emergency and after. Prof. Prasad also recollected his own interactions with JP wherein he had expressed deep anguish as to how the Jan Sangh and the RSS had betrayed him, the Janata Party, and democracy itself. He said that these conversations and revelations would form an important part of the final volume of JP's biography.

As days progressed, Prof. Prasad felt that he was ageing (getting at 90) and must complete the volume before death overtook him. Around the third quarter of 2015, he told me that he has completed the manuscript and one of his sons has undertaken the responsibility of reading and refining it for publication. He passed away in November 2015.

Sometime in June 2016, I remembered what Prof. Prasad had said and looked for the son he had referred to. It turned out to be Mr. Jayant Prasad who had retired from the Indian Foreign Service in 2014 and re-employed by the present government as Director General, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, under the Ministry of Defence. I immediately contacted him and met him at his office. He confirmed that he had received the manuscript from his father the editing of which was almost complete and that the book would be published by all means before the end of 2016.

When that did not happen, I reminded him again and he promised publication by mid-2017. Then it was December 2017 which also did not materialize. In fact, I had persuaded two of JP's nephews—Kumar Prashant, Director, Gandhi Peace

Foundation, New Delhi, and Prem Varma of Ranchi—to take up this matter with Jayant Prasad. This, too, did not seem to have worked. In the event, I gave up thinking that Jayant Prasad, being on a post-retirement sinecure with government, may be under pressure not to publish the biography, the contents of which would not be palatable to the powers-that-be. Probably this is true, because even now as we reach the end of 2018, there is no trace of the book. I wonder whether what Prof Bimal Prasad wanted to write has died with him.

In Memoriam

There is a saying that the saddest thing about betrayal is that it never comes from one's enemies, but only from friends. For JP, it came from his 'friends' and 'followers' whom he had brought to the mainstream from wilderness and facing political extinction. For these worthies, there is couplet in the Tamil classic 'Thirukkural' written by the legendary Thiruvalluvar: "*Ennandri Kondraarkkum Uyvundaam Uyvillai Seynnandri Kondra Makarku.*" Translated, it would mean: "Those who have lost their virtue may yet have salvation; but there is no salvation for those who are ungrateful." And JP was the victim of such ungratefulness and betrayal.

The betrayal has continued till this day and the present government at the Centre headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has proclaimed JP as his icon, is acting totally opposite to everything JP lived and died for—freedom, liberty, civil rights, communal harmony, power to the people, decentralised democracy, and democratic governance.

But then the battles continue—"For when the One Great Scorer comes to score against your name, He writes not that you won or lost, but how you played the game!" God as my witness, I dare say that JP might have lost the game, but he played fair and brave to the best of his capacity thereby enriching the nation and redeeming its democracy and freedom. Let us never ever forget the struggles and

sacrifices of this great son of India. Indeed, JP has proved Leo Tolstoy's famous dictum: "It is by those who have suffered that the world has been advanced."

For JP, there cannot be a better epitaph than the one written by his ageing Australian friends Allan & Wendy Scarfe in their book 'Remembering Jayaprakash': "We have written this memoir to share the privilege of knowing Jayaprakash, to bring alive the warm, charming, gentle, sweet man we knew.... Not everyone's personal life matches the nobility of his ideas. But Jayaprakash's did.... His ideas were creative, compassionate, original and powerful. But the man in his courage, integrity and humanity was greater still."

Such a man deserves our tribute in the manner of Rudyard Kipling in the Poem Recessional-1897"

"The tumult and the shouting dies;

The Captains and the Kings depart:

Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,

An, humble and a contrite heart.

Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,

Lest we forget—lest we forget!"

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