

# Chapter – VI

## Conclusion

### I

The foregoing discussions show that the concepts of social justice and economic equality formed the 'core' of politico-social ideas of all the three makers of modern India, viz. Nehru, Ambedkar and Jayaprakash Narain. In a sense, they had their own perception about Indian society, economy and polity. There might be differences in their attitudes and modes of achieving these goals, but placing them in the broader Indian socio-political perspective, it can be safely concluded that they were primarily guided by one basic objective – the establishment of an egalitarian society, free from artificially created distinctions based on caste, religion or economic condition. In a Memorandum to the National Planning Committee, June 4, 1939, Nehru formulated the aim of planning thus:

“The ideal of the Congress is the establishment of a free and democratic state in India. Such a free democratic state involves an egalitarian society in which equal opportunities are provided for every member for self-expression and self-fulfillment, and an adequate minimum of civilized standard of life is assured to each member so as to make the attainment of this equal opportunity a reality. This should be background or foundation of our plan.”

On Nehru's mental make-up, Michael Brecher, while writing his biography, could state:

“Nehru is by nature an individualist. His power in the Congress, both before and after Independence, rested largely on his personality the adoration of the masses and his acknowledged position as Gandhi’s heir-apparent, never on the organization itself”.<sup>1</sup> Besides this, he could establish his superior position in the administrative setup and could direct the decision-making process in his own way. To quote Brecher: “He wielded power in spite of the machine, which was controlled by Sardar Patel. And as the Prime Minister, he has concentrated authority and decisions in his own hands”.<sup>2</sup> While summing up this position, Brecher could write: “This (Concentration of power) is not because of a love of power, though like all men who have tasted power, he wishes to preserve it, but because of a conviction that he alone can ensure the realization of his social, political and economic goals”.<sup>3</sup>

There had been many issues where Nehru had shown his ability to offer right judgment – be it an issue relating to any policy or ideology. Congress, right from the beginning had to encounter a struggle between the conservatives and the radicals which at times, threatened “to wreck the party”. This position has been beautifully narrated by Brecher when he observes:

“Gandhi knew that Nehru was the one person who could bridge the growing gap between Socialism and Gandhism. As the godfather of the Congress Socialist Party, Nehru was entirely acceptable to the Left. As Gandhi’s favourite son he was tolerated by the Old Guard, most of who were colleagues of at least fifteen years’ standing. Thus he was uniquely suited to the task of reconciliation”.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout his political life, Nehru had shown remarkable degree of the spirit of accommodation and compromise on many issues which were primarily peripheral and not central to his basic philosophy of justice and equity in the society. His primary concerns were mainly two: social justice and economic equality which wanted to achieve through democratic means by waging a relentless war against any kind of socio-economic injustice or exploitation at any level.

One may recall what Nehru had said after the assassination of Gandhi who symbolized all the basic values that mankind should strive for. In a very touchy and emotional speech, Nehru told the nation the immediate consequences of Gandhi's death. In his own words:

“Friends and comrades, the light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness every where .... The light has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong. For the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light ..... that light represented something more than the immediate present, it represented the living, the eternal truths, reminding us of the right path drawing us from error, taking this ancient country to freedom. .... A great disaster is a symbol to us to remember all the big things of life and forget the small things of which we have thought too much. In his death, he has reminded us of the big things of life, to living truth, and if we remember that, then that will be well with India”.<sup>5</sup>

That Nehru had opted for a world free from narrow-mindedness is evident from what he told to the students of Allahabad University:

“I am not alarmed at anything in the world to-day, but at this narrow-mindedness is the human mind in India. This is the most terrible thing”.<sup>6</sup>

Nehru had tried to ensure justice and equity to all men through the democratically constituted governmental structure and practices. He wanted that the democratic government should be capable enough to take up the task with sincerity and honesty. In the words of S. Gopal: “This fair chance of raising a rational, educated and forward looking society based on modernization, industrialization and a scientific temper was made possible by a government that accepted the task, planned for it, and informed the people that they had been sentenced to hard labour striving for it”.<sup>7</sup> He accorded highest priority to culture – culture of values, wisdom, ideals and manners. That is why he could say: “A man of culture does not speak of culture but acts culture and in fact, lives culture”.<sup>8</sup>

Nehru’s firm belief in the power of the people and the great heritage of this nation convinced him, that India could attain the high ideals of justice, freedom, popular participation and national self-reliance. The path was bound to be thorny and long but its commitment is there, nothing would stand in the way. To quote S. Gopal :

“By the end of 1956, Nehru’s long term objectives did not appear beyond attainment. Unbroken growth at home was linked with increasing prestige abroad. Individual freedom, social justice, popular participation, planned development, national self-reliance, a posture of self-respect in international affairs – all high and

noble goals, yet all being steadily achieved under the guidance of the Prime Minister (Nehru), himself brimming with confidence.”<sup>9</sup>

That is why; Nehru put emphasis on the importance of setting “economic programmes in the larger context”. He called for raising the standard of living of the people but not at the cost of the spirit of man, of his creative energy and of his conviction to great national culture and ethos. Social justice was of utmost importance to him but that could not be achieved in a condition of poverty and underdevelopment. To Nehru, the end and the means are always linked up with one another. “Socialism would endure only if the approach were democratic; and there was increasing conflict between the idea of parliamentary government and full-blooded private enterprise. What India required was not merely an economic programme but a recasting of society and a revolution in thought; and if these were to endure they needed to be based on popular acceptance and would take time to achieve”.<sup>10</sup>

## II

Let us begin with an analysis of Dr. Ambedkar as a leader and a maker of modern India. It may not be out of place here to mention that quality of leadership depends on many factors – social and others. In this frame, if one places Dr. Ambedkar, one may draw the conclusion that Ambedkar was destined to be a leader – a fighter against all social evils which he had to confront throughout his life before becoming Dr. B.R. Ambedkar! A visionary and a creative thinker as he was, Ambedkar could easily identify the basic social (including political and economic)

problems and provided, in his own way, the ways and means to solve them.

His understanding of the Indian social system inspired him to wage a relentless struggle against the denial of social justice, economic opportunities and human dignity. Needless to mention, he was all for the establishment of a just and humane social order free from the artificially created barriers based on religion, caste and other considerations. Ambedkar put forth his views in a frank and fearless manner, displeasure and criticism from many of his contemporaries. His conviction was so deep-rooted that he even did not spare the Hindu society which was infested with out-model customs, meaningless rituals and age-old dogmas. In fact, one may find this to be the immediate cause for Ambedkar's plan of action for social transformation.

Any objective and analytical assessment of Ambedkar's ideas should begin with his own perception of 'self-development' of man. This was necessary as it would help a man identify his own position in the society. He believed that only liberal education could eradicate social evils and one may find this assertion when at the age of twenty, he could write:

'Let your mission, therefore, be to educate and preach the idea of education to those at least who are near to and in close contact with you.'

This was, perhaps, the reason why Ambedkar could say that in the strongly regimented social structure of the Hindu society, individuals belonging to the down-trodden segment had very little or no scope to move higher even with the help of education. The

Hindu social structure was equated with a tower with no ladder or window. He believed that the Hindu society consisted of three parts: the Brahmins, the non-Brahmins and the Untouchables. His construction of logic and arguments dealt a serious blow to the orthodox Indian minds and set a stage for the reconstruction of the Indian society in general and that of Hindu society in particular far achieving his desired goal – a just and human society.

With a very searching insight, Professor Upendra Baxi in his paper under the title, 'Emancipation of Justice: Legacy and Vision of Dr. Ambedkar' has tried to conceptualize his basic ideas keeping in mind the different phases of his life as:

- (i) The first Ambedkar – a student who had to face the consequences of evil practices of untouchability;
- (ii) The second Ambedkar – a student-scholar who devoted his entire thought process in constructing his own logic of arguments and conclusions;
- (iii) The third Ambedkar – a militant Ambedkar engaged in drawing attention of the right thinking people to the evils of caste-ridden system and other related issues.
- (iv) The fourth Ambedkar – looking for the reorganization of the Hindu society on two main principles – equality and absence of casteism.
- (v) The fifth Ambedkar – asking for reservation in the legislature and that too challenging the established leadership in the community;

- (vi) The sixth Ambedkar – engaging himself in the tasks like transfer of power, making of India’s Constitution and nation-building.

At this point, one may recall his very critical observation about the plight of the down-trodden people when he said:

“There have been many Mahatmas in India whose sole object was to remove untouchability and to elevate and absorb the Depressed Classes, but everyone of them has failed in this mission. Mahatmas have come, Mahatmas have gone. But the Untouchables have remained Untouchables.”<sup>11</sup>

A brief reference to Ambedkar’s ideas on equality and justice will strengthen the points advanced so far. It may not be an exaggeration to say that his primary aim was to transform ‘apolitical’ masses into a crucial and decisive factor in the political power structure. It has been very correctly observed that while the western liberal education provided him with the weapon for broadening the support base for the cause of the down-trodden, the Indian philosophies gave him the basic foundation of ‘soul-force’. Given the Indian context, Ambedkar was of the strong opinion that religion should be viewed from three perspectives – a) as a social force; b) as a knowledge for the ideal scheme; c) as a set standard for judging the value of the ideal scheme.

While analyzing Ambedkar’s views on society, economy and polity in general terms, it should not be forgotten that his idea of equality and social justice had a specific point of reference – the orthodox Hindu social order. It should be kept in mind that he was

not a theoretician or philosopher in the formal or conventional sense of the term. Being essentially a pragmatist who drew his knowledge from his own experiences, he put forward his ideas on equality and justice which may not, in many ways, match with any kind of accepted views on this subjects – both Indian and western. This appears to be a ‘problematic’ area to some to understand the logic of his construction of arguments for equality and social justice.

The crux of the problem seems to have originated from the fact that Ambedkar cannot be bracketed with any particularism’ – be it Fabian, Gandhian or Marxian. His ideas were essentially his own conditioned by the prevailing social, economic and political order. His method of identifying the roots of social evils and ways to remove them can be considered to be a superb example of what is known as ‘praxis’ – blending of policies and actions.

Ambedkar is better known as the believer of ‘self-respect’ model of man which puts emphasis on education, self-help, self-assertion and self-organization. Apparently on this count, one may find his close approximation with Gandhi although on many issues there had been fundamental differences between them.

Before one concludes, one state be failing in one’s duty if one does not say a few words about Dr. Ambedkar’s legacy to the ‘Dalits’. Ambedkar preferred the term ‘Depressed classes’ as it broadens the scope of the term to include within its fold the whole of the down-trodden segment of the society. He was all making a

good number of institutional as well as legal provisions for the protection of the interests of the oppressed classes. The debates in the Constituent Assembly conclusively prove that he made every effort to accommodate his ideas in the provisions of the Constitution. To him, untouchability is not a religious system but “an economic system which is worse than slavery”. His deep and penetrating insight convinced him that Indian society, in general, suffers from many contradictory and conflictual limitations which, he believed, could be thrown away by an “operative man”, taxing an active and decisive part in the process of social transformation.

It will be very much relevant to quote Professor K. Raghavendra Rao, an eminent political scientist and a great scholar of repute on the way the intellectuals of to-day look upon Dr. Ambedkar in their academic exercises. To quote him:

“We are now taking the trouble of looking at Ambedkar’s theory and thought as an almost ritualistic exercise ..... prompted by the emergence of increasingly aggressive ‘Dalit’ power. This applies to the entire Indian intellectual system – its institutional channels, its prophets and its practioners .... We as a nation should feel ashamed that we have condemned to silence one of the brilliant and concerned voices of modern India. Nevertheless, it is never too late to make amends”.<sup>12.</sup>

### III

Jayaprakash Narayan, a multi dimensional and epoch-making personality, symbolizes the spirit which seeks to establish a society free from want, exploitation, discrimination and

marginalization of people belonging to all sections of the community. Like Gandhi, he believed that the character of a political system was largely determined by wider social and cultural milieu. There is the necessity for improving the quality of national life – both economically and culturally. A man much identify himself as a contributing member to the society he belongs – until and unless, he feels like that he can take effective part in the process of social reconstruction. His emphasis on morality is thus a quality not in abstract theoretical sense but a concrete social and emotional foundation for accelerating the pace of development. This ideal is deeply rooted in fellow-feeling and tolerance and can not be separated from individual freedom and social justice.

That is the reason why Jayaprakash opposed any kind of totalitarianism in which individual freedom is curtailed. For, this, he relied heavily on Gandhian ideal where there would be minimization of governmental and maximization of community initiative. The roots of his belief in Bhoodan Movement and Sarvodaya can be traced here. He sought to establish a social order where individual would not be treated as a small unit isolated from other but an integral part of the process of social regeneration and recreation. He sought justification in his call for 'Total Revolution' as he thought that the system of governance would not change the present position.

One may recall that while as a student, he wrote a thesis under the title 'Social Variation' in which he attempted to employ the principle of natural selection in the study of social change.

Basically he was interested in providing answers to these three very important and interrelated questions:

- a) What is society?
- b) How is it formed and changed?
- c) What are the forces of transition?

His observations were highly appreciated because of his clarity ;of thought and well-conceived construction of logic.

The thesis was developed by Jayaprakash to show that every society has within it self some require some well-thought out plan which would bring about a kind of social revolution both in thought and action. His nationalist thought convinced him that there was the security of forming a brand socialist front to fight the evils of social regimentation and economic injustice.

Jayaprakash withdrew from party-politics because he realised that politics could not obtain the ideals of equality, freedom, brotherhood and peace. That is the reason why he embraced Sarvodaya in place of conventional method of socialism to bring about social and economic revolution. He believed that it was through the non-violent technique of Sarvodaya movement that a social revolution could be brought about.

He also accepted Acharya Vinoba Bhave's "Bhoodan Movement" as he regarded it as the beginning of a programme of converting proprietorship of all property into what Gandhi called trusteeship. To him, this new methodology was not to be applied only in case of land but could be applied to the entire social field. He was thrilled to visualize the great moral, economic, political

and social revolution that would sweep over the country if 'Bhoodan' exercises were repeated in every village.

At one point, Jayaprakash was seen asking a very fundamental question – the question relating to the application of Gandhian philosophy : Could Gandhian philosophy offer a practical method to accomplish the social revolution? He found that in the philosophical as well as practical senses, Gandhi's attempts were not only consistent but also oriented towards solving the basic problems of the society. He realized that many other social revolutions failed those who tried to bring them about used means that were not correctly conceived and had no direct relations with the ends.

To Jayaprakash, the main object of Sarvodaya is to establish real democracy in the country with the cooperation of the people. He had firm faith in the strength of the people and asked them to generate strength to bring about desired changes and solve their problems. That is why he believed that democracy would remain incomplete if political power is not decentralized among the masses. He wrote in his 'Prison Diary' (1977) : "The struggle for freedom was not fought simply for national independence." The establishment of democracy in free India was also an important goal of the struggle. It was in view of this goal that the Constituent Assembly had drawn up a Constitution for democratic India and adopted it on 26 November, 1949, on behalf of the Indian people".

13.

The idea of 'Total Revolution' aims at bringing about a complete change of the existing social and economic structure. It

may be seen as the culmination of his thought and ideas on humanity and socialism. To Jayaprakash, it a philosophy of the moral and spiritual rebirth of the Indian people.

Jayaprakash had a vision of an ideal society in which great human values of equality, freedom, justice and brotherhood would be best realized. For the purpose of achieving this goal, he engaged himself in a continuous search for the ideal type – the ultimate truth. As a social activist, he had always tried to test the validity of his formulations through personal experiences in the given situations and circumstances.

To draw a conclusion, it may be said that there might have been differences in outlook and the way of implementation of their ideas, but Nehru, Ambedkar and Jayaprakash had one common viewpoint – the eradication of social evils and economic injustice and the creation of a society based on egalitarianism and free from all artificially created distinctions between man and man. It may not be out of place here to mention that all these three nation-builders were, in one sense, the children of stream of India's freedom struggle movement. It is quite natural that there had been wide variations in the socio-political environment in which their philosophical frames were shaped. But one may not disagree to suggest that all the three thinkers had wide exposure to western philosophical views – democracy, individual liberty, justice and equality. So it will not be an exaggeration to say that their primary concern was the transformation of Indian social and economic system so as to create a democratic system committed to the establishment of a society free in all sense of the term. Any assessment of these three great epoch making leaders of India

should be made on the basis of these objectives and considerations, by neglecting the differences in their perception or prescriptions which are essentially peripheral and not central in content or spirit.

## Notes and References

1. Michael Brecher, **Nehru – A Political Biography**, OUP, 1959, pp. 201 – 202.
2. **Ibid**, p. 202.
3. **Ibid**, p. 202.
4. **Ibid**, p. 214.
5. **Broadcast, 30, January, 1948, Speeches, Vol. 1946 – 49**, New Delhi, pp. 42 – 44.
6. Sarvepalli Gopal, **Jawaharlal Nehru – A Biography**, OUP, 1989, p. 213.
7. **Ibid**, p. 315.
8. **Ibid**, p. 320.
9. **Ibid**, p. 321.
10. **Ibid**, p. 327.
11. **The Cabinet Mission and the Untouchables**, 1947.
12. K. Raghunandra Rao, **Baba Saheb Ambedkar; History, Society and Polity: An exploration in Indian Theory**.
13. Jayaprakash Narain, **Prison Diary**, 1977.