

The Pursuit Of Truth

Gandhi maidan is located in the heart of Patna. It is difficult to imagine the city without it. Many decades ago, the call for Sampurna Kranti (total revolution) resonated here with lakhs of people chanting JP Babu Zindabad. A frail old man set out to uphold the ideas and integrity of the Constitution of India.

Our generation was fortunate to have witnessed personalities who made an immense contribution to the evolution of our nation's political life. Gandhi, B.R. Ambedkar, Ram Manohar Lohia, Deendayal Upadhyaya and Jayaprakash Narayan are some of the stars who continue to shine. Gandhi, Ambedkar, Upadhyaya and Lohia matter more today as we strive to create an egalitarian society.

JP, without doubt, deserves a mention in the list of great nation builders and social transformers. He was a part of the cohort that introduced the idea of non-Congressism to the political discourse, even before Independence, by forming the Congress Socialist Party (CSP). He actively participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement and got incarcerated for that. During the Second World War, JP opposed the Congress's move to support the British army, soon after which he was imprisoned. In 1948, he along with some progressive elements in the Congress, left the party and worked relentlessly towards the creation of an anti-Congress platform. In 1952, they formed the Praja Socialist Party. By forming the PSP, he gave voice to the marginalised and offered an alternative political platform. Two years later, he announced that he would devote his life to the Bhoodan Movement, founded by Acharya Vinobha Bhave, for the redistribution of land among the landless.

In 1959, he argued for the reconstruction of Indian polity by suggesting Chaukhamba Raj, consisting of village, district, state and the Centre. From 1959 to 1974, he was a dedicated soldier for social reconstruction and national resurgence as he mentored political activists from across the spectrum.

JP came to India after completing his education at Berkeley, USA. He was an ardent scholar of political ideologies that led him to traverse from "communism to socialism" and from "socialism to Gandhian nationalism" and so on. JP represents strands of both Gandhi and Lohia. The role played by Gandhi during the freedom struggle was similar to the role played by the Loknayak post-Independence. The hero of the freedom movement was Gandhi whereas JP was the hero and harbinger of anti-Congressism. Characteristics that predominantly connect Gandhi and JP were morality, ethics and values. Concepts like "Total Revolution" and "Party-less Democracy" were idioms added to the political lexicon by the Loknayak. Without joining the electoral fray, JP and Gandhi played a phenomenal role in shaping the polity. JP steered the leadership of the anti-Emergency movement on the sole condition that it must remain non-violent. He was visibly irked with the vandalism unleashed by the young and aspiring political activists. The power of truth and morality in Gandhi is broadly reflected in the ethos of JP. The demise of the Congress as a political party was envisioned by Gandhi and the process was initiated by JP.

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In 1977 he was the unanimous choice for the office of prime minister. But he declined and chose

to mentor the cabinet and political parties. Politicians across ideologies and affiliations respected him. The concept of "Antyodaya", as propagated by the founder of Jana Sangh, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, was reflected in the expositions of JP. While Upadhyaya, through the idea of integral humanism explored the third way beyond the conventional prism of "left" and "right", the life of JP reveals a perennial search for solutions to address the needs of common man. One cannot restrict JP's legacy to a particular ideological thought or a political outfit. The ideas of JP transcend the traditional classification of political thought.

Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) is constantly urging political workers to adopt a social activity and pursue it vigorously in public life. Following the footsteps of Gandhi, Lohia and JP is essential to make effective interventions in the political system. The time is appropriate to remember a leader whose life is a message for the present leadership which seeks to build a New India, an equitable social order and a sustainable ecosystem.

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