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Jayaprakash Narayan

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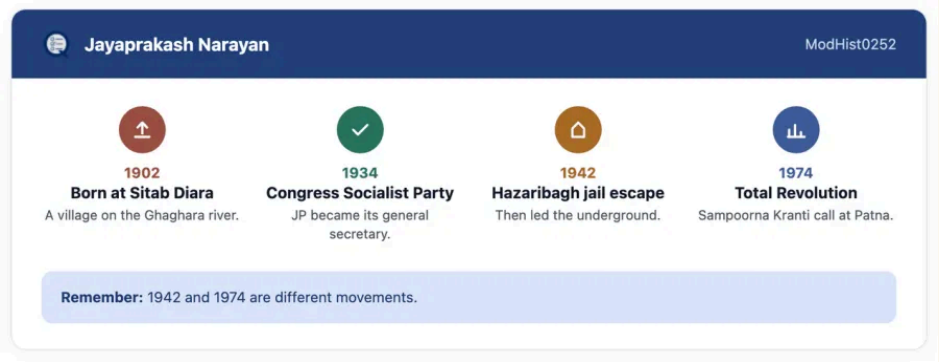
Jayaprakash Narayan

He climbed a jail wall in 1942 and led an underground fight against the British. Thirty-two years later he called for “Total Revolution” against his own government. People gave him the name Lok Nayak, “the people’s leader”.

Jayaprakash Narayan, or JP, never became Prime Minister or President. Yet two great movements, 1942 and 1974, carry his name. Exams love to test the gap between them.



Jayaprakash Narayan on an India Post stamp. Government Open Data Licence (India), via Wikimedia Commons.



Four turning points in the life of Jayaprakash Narayan.

Born. 11 October 1902, Sitab Diara.
1934. General Secretary, Congress Socialist Party.
1942. Escaped Hazaribagh jail.
1974. Called for Total Revolution at Patna.
Honours. Magsaysay Award 1965; Bharat Ratna 1999.
Died. 8 October 1979, Patna.

Sampoorna Kranti: “Total Revolution”, a call for change in every part of life, not only politics.

Sarvodaya: the Gandhian idea of the welfare of all, led after independence by Vinoba Bhave.

Bhoodan: the “land-gift” drive in which owners gave land to the landless.

1 How did he begin?

Jayaprakash Narayan was born on 11 October 1902 in Sitab Diara. This village lies by the Ghaghara river, on the Bihar and Uttar Pradesh border. The river floods often, and those floods marked his childhood.

In 1922 he went to the United States to study. He worked and studied at several universities there, including Wisconsin and Ohio State. In those years he grew close to Marxist ideas.

He returned to India in 1929. He joined the Indian National Congress at Jawaharlal Nehru's invitation. A jail term in 1930, for civil disobedience, put him in Nashik prison. There he met Ram Manohar Lohia, Minoo Masani, Achyut Patwardhan and Asoka Mehta.

These young men shared a dream of a Congress that cared about workers and farmers. In 1934 they formed the Congress Socialist Party inside the Congress. Narendra Dev was its president, and JP was its general secretary.

Why does this matter? The party shows his first big idea. Freedom, he believed, should also bring fairness for the poor.

- Born **11 October 1902** at **Sitab Diara**.
- Studied in the **United States** from **1922**; back in **1929**.
- Jailed at **Nashik** in **1930**; met **Lohia** and others.
- **Congress Socialist Party**, **1934**: **Narendra Dev** president, **JP** general secretary.
- Read about the Congress Socialist Party.

> **Quick check 1.** The 1942 underground fight and the 1974 Total Revolution were the same movement. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

2 What did he do in 1942?

Gandhi launched the Quit India Movement in August 1942. The British arrested the senior leaders at once. JP was jailed at Hazaribagh in Bihar.

In November 1942, on the night of Diwali, he scaled the jail wall. A small group of companions went with him. Yogendra Shukla and Suraj Narayan Singh were among them.

The escape became a legend. Accounts say he was weak and ill that night, and that Shukla helped him on the long walk to Gaya. Treat that detail as a story told by his comrades.

From hiding he helped run an underground movement. He worked with Ram Manohar Lohia and Aruna Asaf Ali. His group built an armed band known as the Azad Dasta.

Why does the escape matter? It made JP a national hero overnight. It also set him apart from leaders who spent the war years in jail.

- Jailed at **Hazaribagh** in the **Quit India** crackdown.
- Escaped in **November 1942**, on **Diwali** night.
- Worked with **Lohia** and **Aruna Asaf Ali** underground.
- Read about the Quit India Movement and Ram Manohar Lohia.

3 Why did he leave party politics?

After independence JP stepped back from party politics for many years. He did not take office under the new government. His mind turned to Gandhi's idea of service.

He joined Vinoba Bhave's Sarvodaya movement. Sarvodaya means the welfare of all. He also supported Bhoodan, in which landowners gave land freely to the landless.

He also headed the railwaymen's federation for a time. Sources give slightly different dates for that post, so quote only the role.

Why does this matter? JP held no office, yet people trusted him more than many ministers. That trust gave his later call its power.

- Moved away from **party politics** after independence.
- Joined **Vinoba Bhave's Sarvodaya** and **Bhoodan**.
- Returned to active politics only in **1974**.
- Read about Sarvodaya.

4 What was Total Revolution?

In February 1974 students of Patna University formed the Bihar Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti. They protested against corruption, joblessness and high prices. They asked JP to guide them.

He agreed, and the Bihar Movement grew far beyond the campus. On 5 June 1974 he spoke at Gandhi Maidan in Patna to a huge crowd. There he called for Sampoorna Kranti, or Total Revolution.

Total Revolution meant change in many parts of life together. It covered politics, society, the economy, culture, ideas, education and the spirit. He wanted it to be non-violent and to push power down to the people.

The movement spread beyond Bihar to other states. Students, workers and opposition parties joined in. The Prime Minister of the time, Indira Gandhi, saw it as a threat to her rule.

Why does this matter? It linked JP's old Gandhian faith to a new, angry generation. It is also the chain that leads to the Emergency of 1975.

- Students formed the **Bihar Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti** in **February 1974**.
- **5 June 1974**, **Gandhi Maidan**, Patna: call for **Sampoorna Kranti**.
- Aim: change in **every part of life**, by **non-violent** means.
- Read about the Allahabad verdict.

> **Quick check 2.** Jayaprakash Narayan was general secretary of the Congress Socialist Party when it formed in 1934. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

5 What happened in the Emergency?

On 25 June 1975 JP addressed a rally of about a lakh people at Ramlila ground in Delhi. He recited a poem by Ramdhari Singh Dinkar. Its line "Singhasan khaali karo ke Janata aati hai" means "Vacate the throne, the people are coming".

The Emergency was declared that same night. The government arrested JP and many opposition leaders. He was held at Chandigarh.

His health broke down in custody. He was released on 12 November 1975. Doctors found kidney failure, and he needed dialysis for the rest of his life.

The Emergency ended in early 1977, and Indira Gandhi called elections. JP guided the opposition to come together as the Janata Party. It won, and it formed the first non-Congress government at the Centre.

He was proposed for President of India in 1977. He did not take up the offer. He never held any office himself, which is a key point for exams.

Why does this matter? The Janata win showed that a united opposition could beat the Congress at the polls. JP was the person who made that union possible.

- Rally at **Ramlila ground**, **25 June 1975**; **Dinkar's** poem.
- Arrested; held at **Chandigarh**; freed **12 November 1975**.
- Needed **kidney dialysis** for the rest of his life.
- Guided the **Janata Party** to power in **1977**.
- Read about the Emergency and the Janata Party.

6 How is he remembered?

JP won the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Public Service in 1965. After his death he received the Bharat Ratna in 1999. These are the two honours exams ask about most.

He died on 8 October 1979 in Patna. His 77th birthday was only three days away. Many Indians still call him Lok Nayak.

He also wrote on politics. In one essay he argued for a political order built from the village up, with less power for parties. This idea of a “partyless” system is often linked to him.

Why does remembrance matter? His life ties together the freedom struggle and the fight for democracy after it. Few leaders stand in both stories.

- **Ramon Magsaysay Award**, **1965**.
- **Bharat Ratna**, **1999**, after his death.
- Died **8 October 1979**, Patna.
- Called **Lok Nayak**, “the people’s leader”.

7 What are the exam traps?

- The **1942** underground fight and the **1974** Total Revolution are **different movements**.
- The Congress Socialist Party began in **1934**; **Narendra Dev** was president, JP general secretary.
- JP led the Janata effort but **never held office** himself.
- Keep the awards straight: **Magsaysay 1965** and **Bharat Ratna 1999**.

Remember: Born 1902, Congress Socialist Party 1934, Hazaribagh escape 1942, Total Revolution 1974, Janata Party 1977, died 1979.

> **Think it through:** Why did a man with no office have such power in 1974?
>
> He had given up power long before and lived simply. People saw that he wanted nothing for himself. So when he spoke against corruption, millions believed him.

Quick check 3. Jayaprakash Narayan became Prime Minister in the Janata government of 1977. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Practice MCQs

1. Jayaprakash Narayan, popularly known as 'JP,' led which 1974-75 movement against Indira Gandhi's government?

A. Chipko Movement

B. Naxalbari Movement

C. Bhoodan Movement

D. Total Revolution (Sampoorna Kranti)

See answer ↓

2. In 1934, Jayaprakash Narayan helped found which organisation within the Congress?

A. Forward Bloc

B. Congress Socialist Party

C. Hindustan Socialist Republican Association

D. Swaraj Party

See answer ↓

3. During the Quit India Movement, Jayaprakash Narayan escaped from which jail, in 1942?

A. Ahmednagar Fort

B. Hazaribagh Central Jail

C. Naini Central Jail

D. Yerwada Jail

See answer ↓

4. On 5 June 1974, at Gandhi Maidan in Patna, Jayaprakash Narayan called for what?

A. Poorna Swadeshi (Complete Self-Reliance)

B. Sampoorna Kranti (Total Revolution)

C. Ahimsa Andolan (Non-Violence Movement)

D. Purna Swaraj (Complete Independence)

See answer ↓

5. After independence, which movements did Jayaprakash Narayan join, before returning to active politics in 1974?

A. The Chipko and Narmada Bachao movements

B. Vinoba Bhave's Sarvodaya and Bhoodan movements

C. The Telangana and Naxalbari movements

D. The Swadeshi and Khadi movements

See answer ↓

6. In which year did Jayaprakash Narayan win the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Public Service?

A. 1957

B. 1965

C. 1999

D. 1975

See answer ↓

7. In which year was Jayaprakash Narayan awarded the Bharat Ratna, after his death?

A. 1965

B. 1999

C. 1989

D. 1977

See answer ↓

8. At the Ramlila ground rally in June 1975, JP recited a poem by which poet?

A. Mahadevi Verma

B. Ramdhari Singh Dinkar

C. Subramania Bharati

D. Harivansh Rai Bachchan

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **D.** Jayaprakash Narayan led the 1974-75 movement that called for 'Sampoorna Kranti,' or Total Revolution. ↑ Q1
2. **B.** In 1934, JP helped found the Congress Socialist Party, and served as its general secretary. ↑ Q2
3. **B.** JP escaped from Hazaribagh Central Jail in 1942, then organised armed resistance against British rule from hiding. ↑ Q3
4. **B.** On 5 June 1974, at Gandhi Maidan in Patna, JP called for 'Sampoorna Kranti,' or Total Revolution, against corruption and misgovernance. ↑ Q4
5. **B.** After independence, Jayaprakash Narayan moved away from active politics and joined Vinoba Bhave's Sarvodaya and Bhoodan movements, which promoted voluntary land redistribution. ↑ Q5
6. **B.** JP won the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1965. He received the Bharat Ratna later, in 1999, after his death. ↑ Q6
7. **B.** The Bharat Ratna came in 1999. He had died in October 1979. ↑ Q7
8. **B.** JP recited Dinkar's poem "Singhasan Khaali Karo Ke Janata Aaati Hai" at the rally. ↑ Q8

Quick-check answers

1. **False.** ↑ 1
2. **True.** ↑ 2
3. **False.** ↑ 3

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