

# A Research on the Political Thoughts of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru

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**Abstract – Nehru imparted a socialistic vision to the Indian development. Nehru adopted Marxism in the 1930s as a tool for understanding society, social development and the national movement itself. He disagreed, on one basic question at least after 1936, with the contemporary Marxist position. He used Marxism to understand Indian social development even after 1947. It was diluted over the years. He did not see nationalism as inherently a 'bourgeoisie' ideology, though he saw the national movement being dominated at the time by the middle classes. He felt, in the colonial and post-colonial situation that nationalism could be and had to be, articulated and integrated with socialist ideology. Nehru kept his commitment to nationalism, national unity and national independence after 1947. He safeguarded the political independence won in 1947, and he laid the foundations of a democratic and civilian polity, and also carried forward the process of the making of the Indian nation. There is hardly any doubt that Nehru was successful in laying the foundations of an independent economy, otherwise known as mixed economy, through a capitalist economy. Elections, civil liberties and freedom to organize and grass root democracy through institutions such as Panchayat Raj would enable the people to mobilize themselves to exert pressure from below, compelling the political party in power either to make the necessary changes or get swept away. Soviet Union was the only major power to allow India to develop independent capabilities in many spheres of heavy industry, engineering and cutting edge technologies. India's combination of internal political freedom, economic and political independence throughout its existence can be favorably compared with many client states of the United States and the Soviet Union. Democracy was, in his conception, linked to the unity of the country. Democracy would also guarantee that the process of nation-building would be accomplished through social justice and equity. People would use the democratic system to generate political progress to achieve its social objectives. For him, political equality implies universal adult suffrage, organization of a strong democratic polity, political parties, legislatures with a true representative character, public opinion, freedom of the press, electoral reforms, political rights, constitutional safeguards, constitutional methods, faith in constitutional process, legitimization of the constitutional system and lastly secularism. For him, social equality aims for the removal of social discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, gender and natural incapacities. It means equal opportunities to lead a happy life in the social sphere. It also includes elimination of poverty, social stigma and inhuman activities; extension of voting rights to the underprivileged, equal participation without gender inequality, in the political process and receiving equal benefits as the members of a society.**

**Keywords:** Political Thoughts, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Indian Development, Democracy, Political Process, Indian Society, etc.

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the critical contrasts between Jawaharlal Nehru also, other Indian pioneers of his stature comprised in the nearly all inclusive acknowledgment of his authority. Until two years prior his demise, Nehru was the unchallenged preeminent pioneer not just of the Indian masses yet additionally of a greater part of Indian scholarly people. His pre-greatness as the pioneer of resurgent India was natural to the point that, with a couple of special cases, even the

best Indian scholarly people thought of it as a benefit to function as an instrument of his will. Such fame did not come even to Mahatma Gandhi. The last would never strike in the hearts of the informed intellectual elite indistinguishable harmony from he could in those of the regular men. Many acknowledged Gandhi's political administration without in the meantime tolerating the thoughts and values for which he stood. In fact, regardless of his profound situated religiosity it was difficult for a cutting-edge Indian to react to the political and social thoughts which were the sign of Gandhi's idea.

At the other outrageous of the Indian authority stood Manvendra nath Roy, whose penance. in the reason of the Indian Unrest and inflexible support of present-day esteems and. information separated him from all the pioneers of current India. And still, at the end of the day Roy could direction the loyalty of just few learned people and a couple other people who had some way or another prevailing with regards to freeing themselves from the fantasies and taboos of the Hindu custom and Indian patriotism. Jawaharlal Nehru was the main head whose identity emerged as the one arousing point for the slant also, faithfulness of each area of the Indian culture. The base of this one of a kind accomplishment must be looked for in the complex identity of Pandit Nehru. He was a connoisseur, a author, a boss of present day esteems with a profound compassion toward the mistreated and the excluded, and, despite boundless control, withdrew and forlorn in a specific sense.

A significant number of these characteristics were additionally to be found in Roy. But the essential failure of Roy in the politics of power in India shows that these qualities are not by themselves enough to earn a position of successful leadership. A special aspect of Nehru's personality was that, besides the qualities\ mentioned above, it also had some which appealed to the Indian mind. For instance, while an uncompromising spokesman for freedom and democracy, Nehru temperamentally was like the Great Mogul. Rational and pragmatist in public life, on critical occasions Nehru generally allowed his heart to decide for his head. Drawing his titanic energy from the love of the masses, he could never identify himself with the common man or even with his closest associates; till the end, there remained a certain gulf between him and his colleagues and followers.

A lover of discipline and streamlined organization, he was a victim of prolonged intellectual confusion and perpetuated deep contradictions in the public life of the land. An interesting sidelight on this aspect of his personality is provided by a simple incident in his own life. As is well known, Nehru was always critical of superstitions parading in the name of traditional religion. And yet he could, without any feeling of contradiction, advise his sister to have the horoscope of a new-born grandson prepared by a competent astrologer. Similarly, while elucidating his ideas of democratic socialism as the only sensible political philosophy for India, Nehru could refer in tones of admiration to the classical Hindu notion of detachment and identification with the universe as recommended by the philosophy of Vedanta. Jawaharlal Nehru's personality was full of inner contradictions of this type.

Every section of the Indian society was able to see in it, however inadequately articulated, an ideal of its own self. His faults could, therefore, be easily ignored. Even the intellectuals who differed with him sharply -on certain basic issues could feel that he

was one of them, because he could understand the language that they talked. Consequently, even the politics of power in a society which has yet to develop the norms and standards of a modern democracy gained a certain status in the eyes of the Indian people. Also, Nehru's love for the spirit of democracy and the institutions through which it finds expression gave them an indispensable period of comparative stability during the first fifteen years of independent India. This helped parliamentary democracy to strife.

Here considerably deeper roots than in almost any other country that became free after the Second World War. Another important contribution that Nehru made to the building of the Indian nation consists in the development of a tradition of secularism in public life. India faced a unique problem in this respect. While an overwhelming proportion of her people are Hindu, there is also a fairly large number, nearly fifty million, of them who subscribe to Islam.

This large number of Muslims suffered just as the Hindus did a traumatic shock at the very moment of the birth of Independence. The partition of the sub-continent into two sovereign states, India and Pakistan, as the price of freedom left a legacy of frustration, bitterness, and schizophrenic personality. Added to this was the fact that never in the preceding centuries had the Muslims been able to participate in the mainstream of Indian life except when they were in a position of political power. This meant that the problem of integration of the conglomeration of regional and linguistic groups that the Indian people are into a modern democratic polity was aggravated by the presence of an obstinate religious factor.

Obviously, no solution which relied mainly on the unifying force of religion could ever meet the needs of the Indian situation. At the same time, considering the background of the inter-religious relationship in India, it would have been undesirable to adopt here the principle of secularism as understood in the West, especially in the United States of America. The state here could not possibly adopt the position described by Jefferson's picturesque phrase about an impassable wall between the state and the church. Not only could the relations between the two major religious communities of India be left to the process of spontaneous interaction between them; it was also necessary to ensure that within each community the stranglehold of religious tradition and prejudice was steadily relaxed so as to make room for the growth of a free society. The state in such a situation could not, therefore, stand aloof from the sphere of religion.

It had of necessity to concern itself with the operation of religion in interpersonal life and to take such measures as would enable' the citizen to order

it in harmony with the values of freedom and equality for which modernity stands. The Indian state had, therefore, to be what Ved Prakash Luthera calls a jurisdictionalist state. This need not detract from the significance of India's commitment to secularism under the leadership of her first Prime Minister.

As a matter of fact, the secular ideal in India would have been whittled down, if not completely defeated, in the absence of a policy of positive intervention on the part of the state. in the sphere of God. The studies of Indian secularism such as those of D. E. Smith, undertaken from a larger sociological, rather than a linguistic standpoint, have borne out the wisdom of this approach. It is too early yet to assess with any degree of objectivity the achievements of Jawaharlal Nehru as a nation-builder. However, one may with reasonable confidence assert that future historians of the experiment will agree that this was one of the most important.

Contributions that Nehru made to the growth of a modern, secular, and democratic society in India. An equally significant contribution that Nehru made to this task consists in his remarkable efforts to have the idea of planning for freedom accepted by the common people of this country. The Indian mind is essentially asocial. In other words it is not easily given to sustained co-operative effort in the pursuit of secular aims. Without going into a detailed analysis of the Indian tradition which accounts for this trait, one may observe that the Hindu tradition does not recognize as of primary importance the obligation of man to society or to himself except in the context of *kloksha*, the supreme goal of all human endeavour. It, therefore, emphasizes the individual in his spiritual aspect and the Brahman as the source and the ultimate end of the visible world.

This predisposes the Hindu mind to an attitude of indifference to all intermediate, secular institutions like the state in the ordering of his priorities. In a society like this it would be an extremely difficult task to preclude its members to recognize the worthwhileness of planned effort for economic development. The measure of the difficulty becomes a little easy to appreciate when one takes into account the fact that the Indian experience has all along been claimed to be unique in the field of economic planning. Unlike the experiments of the Nazis or the Communists, planning in India seeks to realize economic growth and social justice without the sacrifice of freedom and the democratic rights of the common Citizen.

## REHEMBERING NEHRU

It was in New York in 1949, at a party in a private home in the upper seventies that I first met Jawaharlal Nehru. He had come to America on a visit-I believe his first one. It was partly an official state visit, partly private. The official part had already

taken place and he was now informally visiting New York. Nehru came to America in the wake of cruel tragedies that had followed Indian independence and his assumption of Prime-Ministerial powers. He was one of the most celebrated personages in the world and everyone in America was excited by his visit and wanted to have a look at him. Our hostess-a friend of Nehru's-had invited a small group of intellectuals to meet him but many more people "turned up than she had expected, and when I arrived the two first rooms were crowded with people.

Nehru had come to the party with his daughter and sister. The two ladies in saris sat on a sofa in the foyer surrounded by a cluster of chattering guests. Nehru wore a dark business suit, looked unassuming and a bit perplexed. He stood in the living room, a glass of juice in his left hand, his back turned to a large modern bay-window. As I approached him I watched his face. It was a beautiful face, well cut, well proportioned, with manly yet subtly refined features. It looked distant, brooding-a bit sad and also a bit stern. Yet when a smile came upon it, even the conventional one of a greeting (and it came on slowly, gradually) the face was suddenly lit with the gentle glow of friendship and charm. When my turn came to be introduced, the hostess followed her ritual: 'This, Mr Prime Minister, is with a few words explaining that I was a composer and that I was of Russian origin. And she emphasized the word Russian in the way grocers in New York emphasize the word' imported 'Nehru looked at me with his dark eyes, smiled and said:

- I'm afraid, we will have little to talk, about I am completely ignorant in music. It's a closed book for me.' And the eyes darted at me first ironically then with polite apology. But perhaps we can talk about Russia, about some of its great men'. Then he turned to the oncoming next one in line. A little later Mr Nehru was asked to take his place in an armchair near the bay-window and the whole party flocked to the living room and took up standing, leaning and sitting positions all over the room. The chatter gradually died down. The hostess, sitting at Nehru's feet, announced that the Prime Minister had agreed to say a few words and answer questions. I do not remember the exact words, but I do remember the content of what he said. He spoke of the birth of a nation, the birth of independent India after centuries of foreign rule. He spoke of the anguish and -tragedies that accompany the birthpangs of a nation. He spoke of the ease with which people make, or accept misleading generalizations. 'We, in India the said, have the reputation of being a tolerant people. This, it is often said, is our historic tradition and you see what happened when independence and partition came to us. We gave the world a spectacle

of terrible cruelty, intolerance and injustice. Yet and he paused and looked broodingly downwards, 'yet it would be just as wrong to make a generalization about it. I mean, it would be wrong to say that the Indian people are cruel and intolerant, that they are all religious fanatics. I believe they are just as any other people, and they behaved well or badly depending on circumstances. You can perhaps say that they are ignorant and retarded in their social development but this is not their fault. You see: he continued, 'there has been a great deal of mystification made about India, in the West on the other hand much too little has been known about the true circumstances in which lived for many centuries, the exploitation of our resources, the neglect in which most of our people existed under foreign. All this was said in a quiet, urbane, conversational manner. There was no emphasis, no emotional oratory in his manner of speaking, nor was there any apparent desire of persuasion. It was a terse statement of fact-honest, sincere, yet free from any bitterness or reprove.

### PANDIT JAWARHARLAL NEHRU (1889-1964)

First Prime Minister of India, who worked with Mahatma Gandhi to achieve independence from British rule peacefully?

As a humanist, Nehru considered that his afterlife was not in some mystical heaven or reincarnation but in the practical achievements of a life lived fully with and for his fellow human beings: "Nor am I greatly interested in life after death. I find the problems of this life sufficiently absorbing to fill my mind," he wrote. In his Last Will and Testament he wrote:

"I wish to declare with all earnestness that I do not want any religious ceremonies performed for me after my death. I do not believe in such ceremonies, and to submit to them, even as a matter of form would be hypocrisy and an attempt to delude ourselves and others."

Nehru came from a wealthy Brahmin family, and had a privileged education in England at Harrow School, Cambridge University, and the Inner Temple in London where he studied law. He soon realised how few Indians were able to enjoy an education like this. He devoted his life to improving the conditions of all the Indian people – and to achieving independence from British rule. When Nehru returned to India in 1912 he went into politics as an active member of the Indian National Congress party. Nehru had a liberal, progressive and nationalist outlook.

He became a follower and close associate of Gandhi. Their close relationship was unusual because they were very different in their beliefs. Gandhi was widely

recognised as a holy man. Nehru, on the other hand, rejected religion. He had seen the effects of superstition on the lives of his people and wrote of religion that "...it shuts its eyes to reality." Nehru thought that religion was at the root of the stagnation and lack of progress in his country. The basis of Indian society at that time was unthinking obedience to the authority of sacred books, old customs, and outdated habits.

### NEHRU STUDIES CENTRE

Universities, as institutions of higher learning and research, get authenticated only if they not only disseminate the existing knowledge, but also create new knowledge. They promote critical discourse, secular values and humanism that lead to emancipation of human soul from regimentation of all kinds. Nehru Study Centre of Allahabad University strives to study and promote these values.

The evaluation of great leaders generally passes through three stages. Firstly, they are extolled in the years after their demise. The second stage comes when they are subjected to criticism, fair or unfair. Thereafter follows the stage of balanced judgement. Nehru stands at the point of transition from second to the third stage.

Nehru, the almost mythic figure, had a splendorous and multi-faceted personality. He was an Indian patriot with death-defying courage, fired with a passion for reforming the world. He was an intellectual giant who possessed clear imagination and flawless pen. He laid the foundations of modern India. As a man, as a leader, and as a ruler, he made tremendous contribution towards maintaining international peace and security, and building of the Indian nation. He left a legacy behind him which has been inherited by we Indians (not only by some individuals or a party).

The central pillars of Nehru's programme were Non-alignment, democracy, planning with a moderate socialist orientation, and secularism. For Nehru, the expositor of the policy and pioneer of the movement, non-alignment was a natural policy for India. As a heir, successor and exponent of Gandhi, he had great conviction for peace. By not joining any of the two hostile camps, he wanted to keep himself in a position to exert influence on both the military blocks in favour of moderation. For him it meant keeping India's options open. It enabled him to judge issues on their merits, take independent decisions, and play a role to lessen tensions and preserve peace.

Nehru valued the spirit of free inquiry, free discussion, and rational accommodation. What mattered to him most was the dignity of man and his self-respect. He could never tolerate the erosion of any man's self-respect or violation of his human



dignity. He believed with unswerving intensity in civil liberties as an absolute value and it was only through political democracy that human dignity and self-respect could be established. Democracy became for him an abiding belief and an article of faith.

Inspired by the example of the Soviet Union, Nehru felt that planning was the only way for India to march steadily and fastly on the road to economic progress. He placed emphasis on rendering socio-economic justice in India by achieving economic self-reliance, based on a strong public sector in heavy industry, a regulated private sector and cooperative farming. He strove to push the Congress and the country towards socialism. But his socialism was not an end by itself but a means to the end of doing 'the greatest good to the largest number in the shortest possible time through persuasion'.

Nehru thought that the disparate religions and regions, communities and castes can be held together only by secularizing the politics and creating a sense of security and of belonging among religious minorities in India. He regarded secularism as the basic law of Indian nationhood without which India would not survive as a nation.

One thing for which Nehru can be remembered most is institution building. He was always for the institutionalization of political organizations and procedures. He had profound respect for Parliament as the repository of people's will. He worked very hard to nurture the Congress Party, the judiciary, the civil service etc.

### **ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES TO BE UNDERTAKEN**

The Nehru Studies Centre of the University of Allahabad can play a pivotal role in this area in matters such as:

- (a) Doing research about the Nehru's model of nation-building.
- (b) Defining the parameters of the concept of Secularism, liberal democracy, Non-alignment, and Social Justice laid down by Nehru to enable policy makers to make more effective policies.
- (c) Establishing Inter Linkage with NGO's and academic institutions working in this area to provide better data and greater information to both policy makers and public alike.

### **Activities organized by the Centre**

1. The Nehru Studies Centre organized an oration on 14th Nov.2013. The oration was delivered by Dr Subhash Kashyap, Former Secretary General, Lok Sabha.

2. The Centre organized a seminar on Peace and Social Justice Movements- Ideals and activism on 14-15 Dec.,2013
3. A national seminar was organized on Democracy in India: Emerging Trends on 7-8 March, 2014
4. The Centre is conducting project on:-
  - o Proposal for Research Project On Secularization, Rationalism and Sectarianism in India - Gandhian Pluralism as an Alternative.
  - o Proposal for Research Project On Nehruvian Ideals of Peace & Social Justice - Relevance in the 21st Century.
5. The Centre is going to organize programmers to commemorate the 125th Birth Anniversary of Jawaharlal Nehru, such as-
  - o International seminar
  - o Memorial Lecture
  - o Exhibition on Nehru
  - o Publication of a volume on Nehru
  - o Formation of a committee to organize suitable programme at the University level.

### **NEHRU'S INFATUATION WITH SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM**

Born in an aristocratic family and brought up in aristocratic surroundings and mannerisms Nehru's outlook was entirely bourgeois till 1920. His visit to Europe and Soviet Union in 1926-27 influenced his political thinking profoundly. He was impressed to see the stupendous achievements what Russia had made by adhering to socialism. Nehru was a visionary. He had a vision to establish socialism in India. He had a romantic attachment and fascination about socialism. Nehru accepted socialism as a philosophy of life and had the socialistic pattern of society adopted as the ideal of India by the Indian Parliament.

Nehru is primarily a man of moods and impulses. One may find a strange combination of contradictory qualities in Nehru. However, one would find an ideal of its own self. Nehru wanted a 'mental revolution which would transform India.'

His expression is transparent to his taught. "A study of Marx and Lenin produced a powerful effect on my mind and helped me to see history and current affairs in a new light, observes Nehru.

He says further, "It did not satisfy me completely, nor did it answer all the question in my mind, and, almost unawares, a vague idealist approach would creep into my mind, something rather akin to the Vedanta approach.

He writes further, "while I accepted the fundamentals of the socialist theory, I did not trouble myself about its 'numerous inner controversies.'" Regarding Marxism, Nehru observes, ". I am no expert in it, and, as it happens, even the experts and the pandits differ." Jawaharlal wrote to Indira, "Socialism, I have told you, is of many kinds. There is general agreement, however, that it aims at the control by the State of the means of production that is, land and mines and factories and the like- and the means of distribution, like railways, etc; and also banks and similar institutions. The idea is that individuals should not be allowed to exploit any of these methods or institutions, or the labour of others, to their own personal advantage."<sup>28</sup> He adds, "Having agreed as to the ideal of socialism, the next thing to decide is how one is to achieve it.

About Marxism, Nehru writes, "It IS a way of interpreting history and politics and economics and human life and. human desires. It is a .theory as well as a call to action. It is a philosophy which has something to say about most of the activities of man's life.

Nehru goes on, "Marx looked upon history as a grand process of evaluation by inevitable class struggles. Capitalism was itself producing and increasing the numbers and strength of this class, which would ultimately overwhelm it and establish the classless society and socialism."

He adds, "Marx's theory of history was an ever-changing and advancing society. There is no fixity in it. It was a dynamic conception."<sup>32</sup> Nehru was much fascinated by the Marxist statement of socialism, its scientific premises, its emphasis on economic basis of social relations, its interpretation of history as well as its goal of a classless society.

Nehru maintained that even his fascination for socialism was inspired by his concern for the dignity of individuality because it was likely 'to release innumerable individuals from economic and cultural bondage.' Nehru did not consider socialism as an end in itself but as the only means to the maximisation of democracy. Nehru's prime concern was, "how to combine democracy with socialism, how to maintain individual freedom and initiative and yet have centralized social control and planning of the economics of the people, on the national as well as the international plane."

## CONCLUSION

If Mahatma Gandhi was the pioneer of free India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru may be considered as its

consolidator. Gandhiji won freedom for India upon which Nehru built a magnificent edifice of a modern state determining its character and destiny. As one of the principal architects of India's freedom, as a nation-builder, and as a champion of world peace, his outlook combined all that was noble and true in the culture of India. His humanistic approach enabled Jawaharlal Nehru to transform a civilisation of antiquity into a modern industrial state, envisaging a new social order, secular in outlook and democratic in its political character. As far as the world-at-large was concerned his vision was characterised by the policy of non-alignment and international co-operation. This attitude attracted peace-loving people everywhere. On the other hand, the outstanding facts of his public philosophy were national integration, parliamentary democracy, social emancipation, economic development based on science and technology, secularism and international understanding. Pandit Nehru was deeply committed to the principle of socialism. He was a socialist because he was essentially a humanist. He set socialism as the goal because he believed that it alone can meet the challenges of modern science and technology and fulfil the requirements of a genuine form of humanism. One of his greatest desire was to enhance the living standard of the people. He realized that in a country that was at least two centuries behind times, it was possible only through the application of modern science and technology with an emphasis upon socialism. He was also, more than anyone else, responsible for long-term planning and making the country future-oriented. He believed that an economic revolution was necessary to bring about socialism, i.e., economic condition should be transformed in such a manner that it would bring about the greatest good to the greatest number. He thought economic planning was necessary for this and as the Chairman of the Planning Commission for a number of years from the dawn of independence, he managed to lay foundations of our economic regeneration and to inculcate in the general public an awareness of the importance of modern technology. This approach was based upon a far-sighted view on the basis of his knowledge of trends in the contemporary world, and on his profound understanding of India's problems and needs. The task of making democracy a living force while securing material prosperity to the people was his unique privilege. He held the view that the parliamentary form of democracy was the only means by which we will be able to maintain the unity of our country. So he laid the foundations for democracy in our country and his role in the institutionalization of parliamentary democracy was very significant. But at the same time, Nehru emphasized that in building a democratic polity or in setting the goals of the nation or in dealing with the problems of change, we cannot proceed on the assumption that the nation or the society is a mere aggregate of individuals. The individual, according

to Nehru was also important and his rights must be recognized.

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