

## Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru: Indian Independence Movement

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### Abstracts

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was the first Prime Minister of India was a source inspiration in Indian Politics before and after independence. He appeared as one of the major leaders of the Indian independence movement under the tutelage of Mahatma Gandhi. He is considered to be the architect of the modern Indian nation state: a sovereign, socialist, secular and democratic republic.

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Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was the first Prime Minister of India was a source inspiration in Indian Politics before and after independence. He appeared as one of the major leaders of the Indian independence movement under the tutelage of Mahatma Gandhi. He is considered to be the architect of the modern Indian nation state: a sovereign, socialist, secular and democratic republic. He was also known as Pandit Nehru due to his roots with the Kashmiri Pandit Community while many Indian children knew him as "Uncle Nehru." <sup>1</sup>

Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru was a freedom fighter, historian, political thinkers and above all a successful ruler who continued as Prime Minister till his death. After him, his daughter, Indira Gandhi and her son Rajiv Gandhi became Prime Ministers.<sup>2</sup>

Nehru first met Gandhi in 1916, and that also may be called the beginning of his political career. From 1916 till his visit to Soviet Russia in 1928, he was groping his way into Indian Politics. During this period he had put himself entirely in the hand of Gandhi, who advised him to study Indian

conditions by taking extensive tours to the rural areas of India and established contact with the people in order to know them as they were.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover a turning point came in Nehru's life after his European tour and his visit to Russia in 1927. This was probably the beginning of Nehru's disillusionment with Gandhism. His visit to Soviet Russia had brought about a change in Nehru's Political ideas, but finding Gandhi unsympathetic to all that he had to say about class. Conflict, he, for a time at least decided to go alone.

However, Nehru was with Gandhi during the civil Disobedience Movement (1920-1934). After Gandhi had abruptly withdrawn the movement in 1934 Nehru and Subhas Bose resented the decision. Gandhi himself was a little disappointed and finding circumstance unfavourable, declined to take part in the activities of the congress party. That was the time of crisis in the Party.<sup>4</sup>

However, by 1935 the situation has changed again. People like Bose and Jawahar Lal, Remain Relland tells us, felt " overshadowed by Gandhi's presence He says in

his diary's- This is probably what has happened with Jawahar Lal Nehru" in his ideas he goes a long way, to bring of communism and may be even beyond. But his filial respect for Gandhi makes him timid and uncertain in his action." By this time Nehru had established a socialist coterie in the congress party. From this time onwards it was Nehru Gandhi nexus which determined the march of the independent movement. Nehru was not a Political philosopher but also a man of action. In spite of all this Nehru sponsored the idea of Democratic Socialism, Panchsheel, Policy of non- alignment, concept of welfare state and economic planning in India. Great difficulty in assessing Nehru's Political thoughts remain that he always praised socialism but also support capitalism. He talked of following leftist policy but generally favoured rightest policy. He talked almost democratic rights but always gave encouragement and support to bureaucracy. As such, it is difficult to pass any judgment about him.<sup>5</sup>

Nationalist thought according to him, has lacked the ideological means to make such a challenged. In an insightful attempt to uncover the " apparent paradoxes" of Jawahar Lal Nehru Sudipta Kaviraj gives him credit for his innovativeness in setting up a politically independent bourgeois state and pursuing a relatively independent path of reformist welfares capitalist development.<sup>6</sup> Nehru however, according to Kaviraj, resorted to an' irresponsible' technique of legitimation, namely " a manipulation of the evident appeal of the socialist idea in a poor and illiterate country"<sup>7</sup> Nehru's 'socialism) Kaviraj notes, brought him political success in the electoral

arena but historical failure against such impersonal or " structural problem" of capitalism as poverty, inequality, exploitation. Etc. ' Nehru writes Kaviraj," was a political success and at the same time a historical failure."

Nehru's political success, in other words cannot be said to be without any historical consequence. The Nehruvian ideology of anti- imperialist democratic socialism had indeed server as a guarantee against to selling out of national economic bargaining power" vis-à-vis the advanced nations and the international financial agencies. It has also led to a considerable sharing of the fruits of economic growth with the disadvantaged sections of the Indian society.<sup>8</sup>

Nehru believed in a democracy ,if civil liberties are suppressed," he said, a nation loses all vitality and becomes important for anything substantial" Civil liberties, he believed, consist in our permitting what we do not like, in our putting up with criticism of ourselves." He was a genuine champion on of individual freedom. In the unity of India, he said, to crush a contrary opinion forcibly and allow it no expression because we dislike it, is essentially of the same genus as cracking the skull of an opponent because we disapprove of him."<sup>9</sup>

Nehru preferred parliament any democracy to presidential democracy, because the latter could at times, lapse into authoritarianism. In a parliamentary democracy the ruling party is directly elected by the people, and they have, therefore, no scope to overlook the interests of the people. They have to remain in constant touch with the people and they are in a position to make their

representative aware of their needs and requirements.

Nehru was the Prime Minister of India for about seventeen years and people had sufficient opportunity to judge him from close quarters. Most of the people think that Nehru always acted like a good democrat and never flouted the opinions of his companions in the ruling party. Some people, like Ambedkar had some grudge against him, when Ambedkar resigned from the Nehru Cabinet in 1956, he expressed his displeasure with Nehru, one of the reasons for his resignation, he later said, was Nehru's undemocratic functioning. In the final analysis Democracy meant to Jawahar Lal ' Self- discipline of the community. In one of his speeches he observed as follows:'

You may define democracy in a hundred ways, but surely one of its definitions itself discipline of the community. The less the imposed discipline, the more the self-discipline, the higher is the development of democracy.<sup>10</sup> In a speech delivered in the House of the people on August 2, 1952, He remarked that democracy was essentially a scheme of values and moral slandered in life: In a world, it can be said that while during the days of the national struggle for freedom the political aspects of democracy very naturally received great attention, in the post, independence era the emphasis shifted to its economic content. As years rolled by the began to lay greater stress on the spiritual aspects of democracy. Democracy demands that once a decision has been arrived at in the proper way after full discussion and give and take of argument, it should be willingly accepted by those who do not agree with it. The later have of course

the right to get it altered or amended by proper constitutional means.<sup>11</sup>

Nehru like his father had an element of aristocratic arrogance in him, and he had the tremendous flare for asserting his opinions. Even before the independence, there were occasions when Nehru asserted his convictions and people accepted them. This habit must certainly have continued even after his taking over charge as the Prime Minister of the country. It would be wrong therefore to suggest that he was willfully arrogant or undemocratic during his primeministership.<sup>12</sup> Thus under Jawahar Lal Nehru's lead India chose the road of democratic socialism Nehru declared even in 1929 at Lahore, " I must frankly confess that I am a Socialist and republican ---- India will have to go that way, too, if she seeks to end her poverty and inequality though she may evolve her own methods and may adopt the ideal to the genius of her race. The 68th session of the Indian National congress which met in January 1964, at Bhubneswar also decided to follow the path of democratic socialism for bringing about a welfare state. The significance of India's socialism lies in the fact that it wants gladly to settle down with democracy. To conduct the socialist programme in a democratic set up is one of the greatest achievement of Nehru.

Nehru, though an internationalist was deeply patriotic and nationalistic. This might appear as a paradox, but his political activities prove that he was both at the same time. He did not feel any particular kind of emotional pride in belonging to a country like India, but he considered India as a separate political entity having a common society Indians have lived together, suffered

together and have faced miseries and difficulties together. They are, therefore historically united. They should therefore have the right of self-determination.<sup>13</sup> We have to think of our country as one nation, not because we are against any other country, but because our history and our geographical conditions have compelled us to live together and, if we are destined to live together, we are bound to have love and affection for each other.<sup>14</sup>

As a true nationalist, he wanted India not only to be politically free but also economically free. The Britishers were merely exploiting India. So long as, he said we did not have the power to control our means of production, it would not be possible for us to be free in the real sense of term. For this we should have our needs and requirements. Nehru felt that Indian nationalism cannot be built on the basis of religion or caste. India is a multi-racial

country though internally bound by a strong sense of cultural unity. The people should rise above caste and community, we have to feel that all of us are the children of the same soil, our nationalist ideals, therefore, can be built only on the basis of secularism.<sup>15</sup>

He was dead against Fascism and Nazism. He had absolutely no idea of any kind of racial superiority. He was a nationalist in the sense that (a) he believed in the historical unity of India. (b) he was definite about the fact that the British had no right to rule over India (c) he believed that India could not progress economically unless it attained complete freedom. He understood the problem of India social, economic, racial and communal and he was convinced that these problems could not be solved without complete political independence. It was for these reasons that he thought of India as a separate nation.

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