



Jawaharlal Nehru and his role in Nation Building

Dr. Reena

Assistant Professor

Department of Political Science, Vaish College, Bhiwani 127021 Haryana

Corresponding Author email- ashureena1142@gmail.com

Abstract

Jawaharlal Nehru was born on 14th November 1889 in Allahabad (now Prayagraj). His father's name was Motilal Nehru who was a good lawyer. His father was very rich because of which Nehru got the best education. At an early age, he was sent abroad for studies. He studied in two universities of England namely Harrow and Cambridge. He completed his degree in the year 1910. Since Nehru was an average guy in his studies he was not much interested in law. He had an interest in politics. Though he later became a lawyer and practiced law in Allahabad High Court. At the age of 24, he got married to Smt. Kamla Devi. They gave birth to a daughter who was named Indira. Jawaharlal Nehru was the first Prime Minister of India. He was a leader, politician, and writer too. Since he always India to become a successful country, he always worked day and night for the betterment of the country. Jawaharlal Nehru was a man of great vision. Most importantly he gave the slogan 'Aaram Haram Hai'. Jawaharlal Nehru was a man of peace but he saw how Britishers treated Indians. Due to which he decided to join the freedom movement. He had a love for his country because of which he shook hands with Mahatma Gandhi (Bapu). As a result, he joined the Non-Cooperation. In his freedom struggle, he had to face many challenges. He even went to jail many times. However, his love for the country did not get any less. He fought a great fight which results in Independence. India got its Independence on 15th August 1947. Because of Jawaharlal Nehru's efforts, he was elected as the first prime minister of India. He was a great leader of great vision in nation building contribution.

Introduction

Jawaharlal Nehru was son of eminent lawyer politician Motilal Nehru and he was born in the midst of wealth. Motilal was a great admirer of English and he provided all kinds home teaching in English to his son. In 1905 young Nehru was sent to Harrow for education. In 1907 Nehru joined Trinity College at Cambridge and in 1910 he obtained a degree in Natural Sciences. He was called to the bar in 1912.

Nehru returned to India at the age of twenty-three and he was a queer mixture of the East and the West. He joined Allahabad bar and in 1913 he became a member of the United Province Congress. Of course, in England he had joined the Fabian Socialist Group. In 1917 he was elected Secretary of Allahabad Home Rule League and also a member of All India Congress Committee. During the agitation against Rowlatt Act in 1919 he met Gandhi and was attracted towards him. By that time he was leading a leisurely life amidst plenty. He was not aware of the Socio-economic conditions of the then British India. In 1920 he visited some U.P. villages and was shocked to see the sub-human conditions of living of the village peasants. He called the then picture of India as naked, starving and utterly miserable.

During the non-cooperation movement, he was arrested. For the first time the movement gave him a sense of freedom. In 1922 he was again arrested and had a jail term of about nine months. In 1923 he became a general secretary *Prof. Surya Narayan Misra* of the Congress and also he was elected as Chairman of Allahabad Municipality. In 1929 Nehru was elected President of AICC. Under Nehru's leadership the party passed the 'Independence Resolution' at Lahore on 31st December, 1929. He also took the 'Independence Oath' on 26 January, 1930. Nehru became the President of AICC in 1936, 1937, 1946 and 1951. He participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930 but was very critical of the Round Table Conference of 1931 which was attended by Gandhi. He wrote- We saw the pitiful and absolutely inadequate attempts to scratch the surface of national and economic problems at the conference. He was again arrested in 1932 and jailed for two years during struggle for independence of India.

Nehru-Gandhi Relation

Though Nehru was drawn towards Gandhi and his approach towards the freedom struggle yet Nehru differed from Gandhi on Various issues. The most prominent was related to economics.

Gandhi looked to be backward on matters of economics yet Nehru was with him because Gandhi was more radical on political matters. The pastime of both was different. Nehru spoke on science, economic and Socialism. But Gandhi was more concerned with truth, God and religion. Though Nehru had many differences with Gandhi, he regarded him as man for the masses and considered Gandhi as progressive in political as distinct from social and economic matters. He also welcomed the Gandhian method of peaceful resistance as the most civilized form of warfare. He also liked the Gandhian doctrine that the end could not be separated from the means. In fact, Nehru was bridge between Gandhites and Socialists because of the seminal Nehru headed the interim government set up in September, 1946 prior to transfer of power. He became independent India's first Prime Minister. While the new Constitution of India was in the process of making several questions were raised. In 1930s Nehru was in favour of Soviet democracy as against the British model. There was also the question of government based upon a network of Panchayats. A visible support for British Parliamentary system was also observed. The Assembly envisaged the establishment of a centralised political democracy based on universal adult suffrage.

Contributions of Gandhi over the means-end concept

Nehru believed in Parliamentary democracy. But to him democracy was not only a form of government, it was a way of life, a way of solving problems by argument, discussion and persuasion. Democracy involves tolerance and restraint. According to Nehru, "You may define democracy in a hundred ways but surely one of the definitions is self-discipline of community. The less of the imposed discipline the more the self-discipline, the higher is the development of democracy". This statement of Nehru caused awkward situation when the 'Preventive Detention Act' was introduced. He observed – The Act is required to meet the situational exigencies. The act had to be passed because of the lack of self-discipline. He further stated that agitational approach or taking resort to direct action weaken the democratic structure. It was under the able leadership of Nehru India's journey of electoral democracy commenced in 1952 with 173 million voters being asked to give their consent. It was a stupendous task. Nehru led Country's democratic process in the first three general elections with exemplary conduct and massive popular support. The second and third general elections held in 1957 and 1962 were repeat

performances. He was at the helm of one-party dominant era in India. Even prominent political scientist Rajni Kothari interpreted the electoral performance and party system in Nehru's India as 'Congress system'. He thus laid the foundation of world's largest electoral democracy with the provision of universal adult suffrage.

From the days of national movement, he provided the glimpse of making of a great leader. He thought and spoke clearly on the action and interaction between nationalism and internationalism during the movement. He discovered India only after making glimpses on world history. He was earliest to recognise that India was an essential part of the world. His views on Fascism, Imperialism and Communism testified to that. He identified fascism as a greater danger than western European imperialism. He named the Second World War as peoples war against fascism.

Role in religion

Nehru wrote clearly on the role of religion and other traditions in public life. He was a student of History and was aware of the strength of religious traditions. But as an exponent of rationalism he rebelled against superstition, faith and other aspects of religion. He opined that communal and other questions are connected to economic problems. His realistic understanding of religious traditions and their role paved the way for adopting a secular mode which later made tremendous impact on Indian society and polity. He was very much concerned with the problems of national unity and of linguistic and cultural groups. During the national movement he was not fully aware of the intrinsic merits and demerits of these ideas. Neither Gandhi nor Stalin was fully understood by him. But after studying their ideas he developed a new approach – Cosmopolitan approach – to find a way between. Apart from Gandhi he was the only leader of the nationalist era who was concerned with the problem of economic growth. This haunted him till independence. The first problem he faced after freedom was the issue of nation-building. The immediate challenges were the post-partition problems, the rise of Hindu Communalism and the role of Indian Communists who questioned the very basis of Indian political structure. The agitation for linguistic states was more dangerous than the economic issues. He gave emphasis to the development of national consensus as it was essential for India's unity and progress. He pleaded that conciliation and negotiation are the best methods to arrive at the solution. He had no illusions on the capacity of the State. He wanted politics and not administration to be in command.

Role in economy

Nehru's greatest contribution was to introduce planning in the capitalist society. He wanted the state to control the commanding heights of economy. He had some unbaked socialist ideas with regard to public sector. In his approach he could come in contact with both national and international economists. One researcher has opined that one of the weaknesses of Nehru was that he could not comprehend the important role of social revolution in regard to economic development. Nehru was a great admirer of the role of science and technology in the nation-building process and economic reconstruction of the postcolonial society. In this area he did not agree with Gandhi. He was responsible for installation of national laboratories and cosmopolitan centres. Yet the success was limited. India is a land of villages. His approach could not help the villages and villagers. But one cannot deny his contribution to this area.

He believed that social and economic transformation is feasible within the frame work of parliamentary system even in post-colonial backward economies. In this field he was ahead of many socialist leaders in the world.

Role in International relations

Nehru developed a perspective on international relations and worked out a feasible foreign policy with the objective of preserving India's national interest. His failure in 1962 was the only dark spot, or else he had phenomenal success in uniting the undeveloped and postcolonial states and made the voiceless full of assertive statements and opinion. He was father of the policy of equidistance and promoter of the cult of non-alignment. He urged to end war for all times since the nuclear weapon can destroy the human civilization. His intellectual thrust towards modernisation of Indian society was praiseworthy. It was evident during his unqualified stand on Hindu Code Bill.

Nehru was not an original thinker on many socio-political ideas. But his views on these areas had an international approval. He never suggested for any socio-political upheaval. His views on Nationalism, Internationalism Democracy, Fascism, Communism and Gandhism were well taken by the posterity. His most significant contribution was that he rejected all the dogmas connected with religion, fascism, communism and anti-communism.

Nehru's role in overcoming these challenges

- **Consolidation of the nation:** Nehru took a firm stance against the possible division of India into smaller principalities. He established the State Reorganization Committee to fulfil regional aspirations of the people which would lower the chances of them wanting to cede from the nation. This way he strengthened the unity.
- **Rehabilitation of refugees:** Refugees from Pakistan were given shelter and attempts were made to reduce communalism. It was mainly due to JawaharLal Nehru's efforts that India emerged as a secular state in the mid-twentieth century. Much before independence, he played a heroic role in the development of a secular basis for Indian polity. This helped in building the narrative of 'Unity in Diversity'.
- **Welfare state:** Nehru was a practical idealist and believed that socialism and democracy were not contradictory but complementary to each other. He wanted to build a welfare state for the equitable distribution of wealth.
- **Planning Commission:** Nehru, a pragmatic socialist understood the importance of the welfare state in a country which does not have sufficient infrastructure, established a planning commission for long term planning of social schemes.
- **Non-Allignment Policy (NAM):** Nehru, being the Foreign Minister, did not want to join either of the power blocs. Also, he did not want India to remain aloof from world politics. Therefore, Nehru's visionary approach to establish NAM with other third world countries proved to be an ideal foreign policy approach.

Conclusion

Nehru's contribution to India can never be truly evaluated. Despite facing daunting tasks, he was successful in maintaining and strengthening the nation. Carrying the traditions of the national movement, he nurtured the newly born nation, India. Nehru had a very powerful pen. He could communicate as effectively as any established writer. His autobiography stands as testimony to this. Nehru's unusual ability to think, reflect and contemplate vigorously, effectively and intensively was second to none. He is not with us for the last 'fifty years. But the impact of

Nehruvian strategy on economic planning based on equity and social justice continue to be the focal theme of the nation-building process in India.

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