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From the Bhavan's President
Jawaharlal Nehru

**A Model
Parliamentarian**

R. Venkataraman



Jawaharlal saw the need for an economic revolution in India.

That revolution would have to redeem India from the backwardness of its agrarian structure and, in fact, from its dependence on agriculture itself.

Today, over three decades after his passing away, it is difficult to say who overwhelmed whom, Nehru or India. If Nehru could palpably feel the love that the people of India bore for him, the reverse was equally true. The people of India were drawn to him in a manner that was altogether unique. One might, in fact, say that India was in love with him. Gandhi recognised this phenomenon and, a few days

before his assassination wrote to Jawaharlalji.

Gandhiji blessed Jawaharlalji to be the Jewel of India and, in that simple blessing, declared him a Bharat Ratna years before that honour was officially conferred on him.

If his upbringing at Anand Bhawan in Allahabad gave Jawaharlal an anchorage in tradition, his exposure, as a student in England to the bracing winds of Fabian Socialism gave

him a vision of the future. Having gone to England to do his Tripos and to study Law, Jawaharlal found that his real interest was in political economy. Jawaharlal joined the London School of Economics and was drawn to the Fabian socialist ideas. Marxist thoughts as he was himself said, lighted many a corner of his mind.

Nehru saw at once that in India, the Rule of Law meant the law of British Rule. He saw, too, that neither this law nor this rule was doing any good to the millions of his country. The Raj embodied no justice; on this contrary, it masked the deepest injustice.

Motilal Nehru wrote to his son: "Politics are inseparable from law, and economics are the soul of politics." Nehru saw, with clarity and conviction the truth of his father's advice and Harold Laski's maxim that no man can understand law who lacks an intimate acquaintance with economics.

Back in India in 1912, he began his practice of Law. But

quite understandably, this work failed to absorb him. The year 1917 saw the Russian Revolution and 1917 was also the year of the activity for Home Rule, under the leadership of Dr Annie Besant. Expelled from Bombay and then from the Central Provinces, she was finally interned.

Jawaharlal signed as one of the Joint Secretaries of the Home Rule League in U.P., with Motilal Nehru as President. "Home Rule has come and we have but to take it if we stand up like men and falter not", so wrote Nehru, in a letter to The *Leader*. Still in his twenties, Jawaharlal had found a cause. What was required at that stage, was for him to find the ideal medium.

The non-cooperation movement of the Congress under Gandhiji's leadership seemed to him to contain an answer to some of the major challenges of the time. Jawaharlal Nehru accepted the non-violent method, not so much as an all-time principle

but, as the only practical method that was available. Its practice also appeared to suit the national genius.

In 1927, he visited Moscow along with his father and was greeted by Pravda as a "leader of the left wing of the Congress."

Jawaharlalji saw in the Soviet Union a process in operation which, his sense of justice and his sense of history told him, needed to be adapted in India. He was only too aware that there can be no such thing as a replication of a revolution; a revolution must strike roots and grow indigenously.

But then, if history had prepared the soil for a revolution in India, could not the seeds for it be taken from another nursery of proven quality? India's political revolution, was taking shape in the extraordinary hands of Mahatma Gandhi.

And yet, at the same time, more than any other political leader in India, Jawaharlal saw the need for an economic

revolution in India. That revolution would have to redeem India from the backwardness of its agrarian structure and, in fact, from its dependence on agriculture itself. In the Soviet Union he saw the sinews of industrial growth taking shape.

It was on this visit that the concept of Five Year Plans, the famous '*platiletka*' as the Russians called it, caught the imagination of Nehru.

Apart from visiting Soviet Union, Nehru also attended in Brussels, the International Congress against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism as a representative of the Indian National Congress. He met there some of the leading leftists of the world like George Lansbury, Ellen Wilkinson, Fenner Brockway, Harry Pollit, besides a large number of delegates from China, Africa, Mexico and Latin America.

But it is important for us to remember that if Nehru became convinced that the

solution to India's socio-economic problems lay in socialism, it was "not in a vague humanitarian way, but in the scientific economic sense."

Nehru saw that planning was part of socialism. And so it was then that the Congress set up the National Planning Committee with Jawaharlal Nehru as its Chairman. Jawaharlal Nehru included in it--far-sightedly--not just politician, economists, businessmen and industrialists. There were reservations and even criticism at that time.

The words 'Socialism' and 'Planning' were anathema to many and to some even within the Congress Working Committee. But Nehru's scheme of planned development had been launched.

It was at about this time that he wrote: "The argument about success or otherwise of the Five Year Plan is rather a pointless one. Everybody talks of 'planning' now, and of Five Year Plans. The Soviets have

put magic into those words."

India, he realised, had to find its own way to socialism. It was after all, on Indian soil that Gautama, the Buddha, had spoken of the Middle Path. And it was, again, India's great fortune to have had in Gandhiji another *messiah* in our midst, who had sought to balance rights and duties and show equal importance of means and ends.

Could democracy and socialism not blend? Democracy by itself, as a purely political creed could not have served India. Socialism as exemplified by its existing models could not, by itself, have sufficed for India.

But Nehru found Democratic Socialism to be eminently feasible, both as a goal and as a way. The great planner, statistician and economic philosopher P. C. Mahalanobis has, in fact, said: "The Nehru approach to planning may perhaps be called the Middle Way or the Middle Path."

Always interested in scientific research and in the progress of science and technology as such, it was at Nehru's initiative that a large number of national laboratories came into existence to do research in diverse fields.

Nehru was thus the author and architect of Democratic Socialism. Nehru explained the concept of democratic socialism in the following words:

"In the past, democracy has been taken chiefly to mean political democracy, roughly represented by the idea of every person having a vote. It is obvious that a vote by itself does not mean very much to a person who is down and starving. Therefore, political democracy by itself is not enough except that it may be used to obtain a gradually increasing measure of economic democracy."

It was at the historic Avadi Session of the Indian National Congress in 1955, when, after the democratic institutions had stabilised, that the Congress gave itself, formally, the creed of a socialistic pattern of society. It is significant that the decision

that Avadi Session took synchronized with the launching of the Second Plan. Nehru had already oriented the country to the socialist path by enacting the Directive Principles of State Policy at the inception of the Constitution. But it was from Avadi and the Second Plan onwards that a more vigorous utilization of our resources, a rapid industrialization and, most important, an equitable distribution of the resources of the community, became the country's declared charter and course.

The Mixed Economy and a Welfare State emerged thereafter as a challenging concept. Legislation acquired a nation-building dimension and phrases such as 'the commanding heights of the economy' entered not just our political lexicon but, in fact, that of the entire developing world. The setting up

of the Planning Commission, the emergence of the public sector of land ceiling, of regulations on industrial monopoly, of state trading, are all facets of this same policy.

Great changes were taking place at the same time, in the world of science and technology which could not but affect the ways of living and thinking in India. Always interested in scientific research and in the progress of science and technology as such, it was at Nehru's initiative that a large number of national laboratories came into existence to do research in diverse fields. Massive investments were made in atomic energy and exploration of our oil and mineral resources through the public sector.

Nehru always carried the nation with him for all his policies and programmes. He devised the technique of attaining a national consensus on national issues. He tried to obtain a broad-based agreement on basic principles and then proceeded to implement the

agreed proposals. Nehru devised the institution of the National Development Council to secure both national and inter-regional consensus on programmes. This Council represented true federalism in action.

For Nehru, the exploitation of anyone or any section by another was unacceptable. His concern for the women of India reflected this. The national movement had thrown up a number of patriotic women with



Nehruji with Children

dedication and sacrifice into the struggle in spite of the shackles that bound women by customs, inhibitions and social obloquy. Nehru used to insist on the inclusion of women in the State Cabinets and in the Legislatures. The Nehru era saw many women blossom into stalwarts.

The concern Nehru showed for the tribal people demonstrates his approach to the needs of backward regions and of minority communities. Again, Nehru's concern for the religious minorities in India showed the same liberal attitude.

A good socialist had to be a good democrat and a good democrat, necessarily, had to be secular. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Maulana Azad, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, Sheikh Abdullah and Dr. Zakir Hussain were some of those for whom Nehruji had always the highest regard and esteem. They represented, for Nehru, the truth that India has been and is intended to be a secular nation.

A tree, they say, is best measured when it is down. How

right he was, how wise were his various emphases, became, clear on the 27th May, 1964. Speaking shortly after Jawaharlalji had breathed his last, President Radhakrishnan said:

'Our thoughts today go out to him as a great emancipator of the human race, as one who has given all his life and energy to the freeing of men's minds from political bondage, economic slavery, social oppression and cultural stagnation.'

Democrat of democrats, socialist of socialists, Jawaharlal Nehru was a unique phenomenon, an answer to the challenge of our times.

Jawaharlalji was a model Parliamentarian. He liked to carry with him the country and Parliament and all reasonable points of view by painstakingly.

Parliament and all reasonable points of view by painstakingly explaining, justifying and convincing the Opposition in Parliament and in the country. That he had an absolute majority in Parliament made no difference to him in his

earnestness to meet the other point of view.

Simultaneously, Jawaharlal Nehru became a global personality. His devotion to nuclear disarmament and to the elimination of nuclear weapons, combined with his work for decolonization, for the Non-aligned Movement and the ending of apartheid, won him a permanent place among the moulders of world destiny. The chronicler of world history finally became a shaper of world history.

As an English poet once said: "To us he is no more a person now but a whole climate of opinion." Jawaharlal Nehru was a climate of opinion--an opinion that was forward-looking, civilized, and full of hope, that brooked no injustice, no exploitation. He wished to sweep away the cobwebs of superstition and prejudice from our minds and wanted India to take its place among the nations of the world as a civilization that has illumined man's mind in the past and will do so in the future.

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