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**HUMANISM IN MODERN INDIAN THOUGHT
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
THE PHILOSOPHY OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU**

THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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DECLARATION

I, Syamala, K., do hereby declare that this report **HUMANISM IN MODERN INDIAN THOUGHT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU** is original and carried out by me in the Department of Philosophy, University of Calicut. I further declare that this report has not been previously formed the basis for the award of degree in this or any other university.

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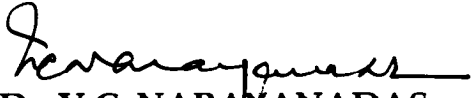
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CERTIFICATE

I, Dr. V.C. Narayanadas, do hereby certify that this written account **HUMANISM IN MODERN INDIAN THOUGHT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU** is a record of bonafide research carried out by **Smt. SYAMALA, K.**, under my supervision and guidance.

Calicut University,
16.10.1998


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Introduction

Syamala K. "Humanism in modern Indian thought with special reference to the philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru" Thesis. Department of Philosophy, University of Calicut, 1998

I n t r o d u c t i o n

We are all aware of the great revolution that has been brought about by the modern science all over the world. Science has achieved astonishing success in discovering the laws of Nature, and technology has provided man with everincreasing power that enables him to overcome his own inherent limitations and to expand the horizons of freedom. But, inspite of all the achievements of science and technology, man has not been able to reduce the amount of evils such as tyranny, social injustice, distrust and rampant violence affecting almost every aspect of human life and relationships. The world today is threatened with extinction through nuclear warfare and beset with serious conflicts between States. More than ever before, the world today is divided and afflicted by formidable evils. In these last years of the twentieth century, humanity is living perhaps, through the most dangerous period in all its history. Man can no longer rest upon secure foundations. We are aware of the emptiness of our life, but we are not able to find a way out of it. The dogmas of traditional religions cannot solve our problems any more.

There is so much knowledge, and yet so much confusion because, we have neglected the deeper human element. The cause of present tension and disorder is the lack of adjustment between science and humanism. They are

complementary to each other and whenever a proper co-ordination is kept between them, life become more pleasurable at the individual and social levels. Science and technology has given us tremendous powers, which if used with wisdom and compassion, can eradicate all evils such as poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and malnutrition. But at the sametime, science has also produced weapons of awesome destructive powers which can wipe out mankind from the face of the earth. The discovery of nuclear energy presents not only great possibilities of human progress but also the risk of immediate and utter destruction. So the preservation of peace becomes the main condition of social progress. This points to the necessity of making use of the powers gained through the advancement of science and technology only for the betterment of mankind. This can be done only by a proper integration of science and humanism, the two complementary aspects of human endeavour for the fulfilment of human aspirations. Propagation of humanism is thus remedy for the present crisis and also the promise for a bright future.

Humanism may be defined as an integrated system of human beings, goals, values and harmonious programme of human fulfilment, individual and collective. It seeks to clarify and enrich man's goals, values and ideals and achieve his full humaneness through bringing him in ever deeper and more intimate kinship and harmony with the surrounding life and society. The

conservation of ancient wisdom and practise of the ancient virtues were the ambitions of the early humanists. To a great extent, contemporary Indian humanism is also a revival of the humanistic spirit of the ancient Indian culture and religion, and it endeavours to integrate the staggering humanity into a single fold on the basis of its belief in universal brotherhood. The modern Indian thinkers looked upon the traditional value system as the foundation to build up a well integrated scientific super structure for the entire human family. This harmony between the spiritual and the scientific temperament, they thought, was capable of solving most of the human problems. Thus these thinkers laboured for the re-awakening of the Indian mind in order to cultivate a genuine humanistic outlook to meet the needs of the time.

We are living in a period when humanism is regarded, if at all, as one of the lesser virtues. Yet, there were a handful of men who were deeply committed to humanism. Pandit Jawarharlal Nehru was one such personality. He was one of the outstanding humanists of this century. Much is already known about Nehru, the great national leader during India's struggle for independence, Nehru the first Prime Minister of India, Nehru the great statesman and world figure. And much has been written about him as one who helped to shape the contemporary history. But this project is an attempt to give accent to his humanistic spirit rather than his political sagacity or

statesmanship. His books and articles contain a distinctive concept of the being of man, his place in the scheme of things, his role and purpose in this world. We find in them reflections on freedom and necessity, on man's duties and responsibility and on ways of realizing lofty humanistic ideals. He regarded humanism as his God and service of mankind his religion. Thus Nehru's philosophy centers around man - his nature, affairs and interests. His infinite faith in man and absolute dedication to serve humanity made him a humanist in its true sense. It is this humanism that made him a socialist, a democrat and a secularist. Again it was because of this attitude that he made all efforts to promote science and technology and to shape the foreign policy of India.

As a humanist and as a believer in universal brotherhood, Nehru hoped that only the policy of dialogue and peaceful co-existence can open new areas of peace and prosperity in the world. From this angle Nehruism has great relevance in the present day national as well as international situation. In a sense, the present work is an attempt to bring out the implications of what P.N. Haksar said, "if the policies of tomorrow are to be freed from the corrosiveness of purely personal ambition and raised to the level of serving great causes - such as liberating men from poverty, disease, hunger, both of body and mind, then Nehru is of relevance. If kindness, magnanimity, gentleness, concern for

others, are the virtues which should inform public life, then Nehru is of relevance. And finally, if the object of man's existence on earth is not pursuit of private profit and personal advancement at the expense of community, then Nehru's vision of socialism combined with democracy at the grass-root level is of relevance. With the passage of time, Nehru will be of great relevance and not merely to my country, but to the world at large."¹

1 P.N. Haksar. '*The Relevance of Jawaharlal Nehru*' in John Grigg, ed. '*Nehru Memorial Lectures 1966-1991*.' [Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992], pp.104-105.

Humanism and Modern Indian Thought

Syamala K. "Humanism in modern Indian thought with special reference to the philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru" Thesis. Department of Philosophy, University of Calicut, 1998

1. Humanism and Modern Indian Thought

There is a yearning in the human heart that is nourished only by philosophy and so man cannot live without it. Functions of philosophy have been varied for various people. Whether it seeks to satisfy the intellectual curiosity of man, or investigates into the character and status of values or suggests a way of life, philosophy remains an essentially human pursuit. Humanism is a world-view of any philosopher who is inclined to see man as the center and the goal of his philosophy. It is an outlook which recognises the value or dignity of man and asserts the centrality of human being. As it is stated by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, "In recognising the central importance of man in the scheme of things - and emphasizing his freedom and individuality, and creative power - his role in shaping and moulding his environment with a view of making a better and happier world, humanism preached the gospel of activism, full of hope and promise for the future of mankind - a philosophy likely to rescue man from the slough of despondency and vivify him with self confidence and faith in his own power as the shaper, not only of his own destiny, but as one who is also destined to play an effective part in the larger field of human welfare and progress."¹ Thus, humanism seeks to enrich man's

¹ Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, 'History of Philosophy - Eastern and Western Vol.II' (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953), p.352.

aims, values, goals and to realize his complete humanness by bringing him in deeper and intimate kinship and harmony with the life and society around him.

Humanism aspires for the upliftment of human beings in all fields - social, cultural, political or economical, and advocates that science and philosophy, art and literature, or anything that man has achieved by rational thinking and intellectual acumen must aim at the well-being of man. Its chief aim is to attain human freedom, joyous life with progress and prosperity without any kind of discrimination among men. It held that the panacea for all the evils lies in spreading the message of international friendship and essential brotherhood of mankind. Thus humanism is an attempt to explore the ways and means to bring about common welfare and progress of mankind through an enrichment of the lives of the individuals.

Genesis and growth of humanism

The word 'humanism' is derived from the latin word 'humanus' which means 'human being'. It means a system of thought concerned with 'human affairs in general. Its tradition is as old as Greek philosophy and the Sophists and Epicureans of Greece were perhaps the first among the humanists in history. Protagoras, a Greek philosopher of the fifth century B.C, is considered as one of the earliest humanists of the West, if not the father of humanism. He

proclaimed that 'Man is the measure of all things.' Though traces of humanistic tradition can be seen in the thoughts of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, the European Renaissance is regarded as representing a golden era of humanist revival.

The thinkers of the period of Renaissance were preoccupied with a serious concern for man and their studies were centered around the problems like the dignity of man, immortality of soul and the unity of truth. It was also an age of free thinking and creativity. The Renaissance saw the rise of humanism that recognised human reason, passion and values. It also asserted the intrinsic worth of man's life and the vastness of his potentialities. Breaking away from the authority of church, the Renaissance thinkers claimed freedom of thought and expression leading to the beginning of a great era of all round development of man. God, who had remained as the most powerful force in the medieval period, yielded place to the sovereignty of man. Man and his world reached the apex of evolution and it resulted in the greatest mental and intellectual revolution European culture has ever witnessed. There were fast developments in the humanistic thinking and it took different shapes such as Marxism, Existentialism, Pragmatism and so on.

The writings of Marx displayed his deeply humanistic outlook. He placed man as the central reality of the Universe and rejected the idea of a

supernatural power or deity. The universe would not possess any value, according to him, without man's presence. He treated human suffering as a serious problem which was in urgent need of solution in order to ensure safety to mankind. Marx considered capitalist system as responsible for man's alienation from his true being. What Marxism offered as a solution was the creation of classless socialist society where everyone would be free to work according to his ability and fulfill all his needs.

Existentialism is a philosophical outlook which regards the existing man as the center of philosophizing. It is an outlook which is passionately concerned about the existential situation of the individual and his problems. It claims itself to be a form of humanism in the sense that it is very much concerned with genuine human values and their realization through an authentic existence of the individuals. All existentialists place man above everything else and attach great importance to the individual freedom and responsibility. The concept of self in existentialism is usually explained in the light of man's freedom and dynamism. Thus while the Marxist humanism treats man as a species, Existentialist thinkers treat him as a distinct individual person. But the main idea that man must remain the supreme being was not belittled. F.C.S. Schiller also supported the saying 'Man is the measure of all things.' His Pragmatic Humanism tries to give us a humanistic interpretation of

Pragmatism. He recognises the dignity and role of man *ad summum*. He provided a solid basis for human volition, conduct and values. He also expressed the necessity of the power of reason to liberate man from his own sensuous nature. Pragmatic Humanism implies the supremacy of human interests which must be served by everything else including nature and its operation without the help of any supra-human agency. According to Schiller, the task of humanism was to raise the intellectual and spiritual status of man, in keeping with the increasing awareness of the universe around him, assimilating all the constructive aspects of science and philosophy. Thus, Existentialism, Marxism and Pragmatism deals with the problems of man and their chief interest centers around man. So they have a common denominator in humanism. We also come across numerous other forms of humanism developed by Western thinkers which includes evolutionary humanism, Religion of Humanity, Democratic Humanism and Scientific Humanism.

Humanism and Indian thought

Humanism was not confined to Western thought. The spirit of humanism was present in the Eastern thought also. It is not difficult to find the traces of humanistic ideas in the ancient Indian thought. The supremacy of man can be seen asserted in a number of instances in the ancient literature. The welfare of mankind was its central theme. The essence of Indian

humanism is '*Ayamatma Brahma*' (I am Brahman) and the prayer consequent to it, *Lokasamasta sukhinobhavantu*. The four Vedas were concerned with the problems of man's day to day life, customs and rituals and they were expressed through the vedic hymns. The central purpose of the Upanishads, the concluding part of Vedic literature, was the upliftment of human life from the level of mere biological existence to a status of self conscious spiritual being. The *Bhagavad Gita* laid down the norm of Indian humanism through its concept of the fusion of the empirical self with the Divine self or *Brahman*. In *Gita*, we see that humanism embraces mankind as a whole, which makes it a gospel of universal humanism.

Charvakas were humanists in the sense that they were thinkers who were exclusively concerned about man's life here and now. They confined their attention to the problems of immediate life. They denied existence of God, Soul, life after death etc. and advocated a hedonistic way of life. Jainas also had firm faith in man and his powers and asserted that man can work out his own way to the final bliss, without any supernatural assistance. According to them, even Gods were to be born as human beings before they can hope to get salvation. They considered man to be the way-in for *moksha* or liberation and prescribed scrupulous adherence to the three fold path of Right faith, Right Knowledge and Right Conduct as the means to attain the goal. Buddhism is

another form of humanism and it believed in the ability of individual to realize human values without supra-human aid. Buddha's only concern was man and his sufferings. The Four Noble Truths with its eight fold path furnish the basis of a genuine form of humanism. Even the idea of *Arhathood* of Buddhism has a distinctive value from the humanistic point of view because it can be realised under ordinary conditions in this very life. The universality of this form of humanism is also evident from the fact that it is open for all human beings, irrespective of caste, creed and sex.

The orthodox systems of the Indian tradition include the systems of Nyaya-Vaisesika, Sankhya-Yoga, Mimamsa and Vedanta. All of them stress the importance of knowledge for the attainment of liberation and recognised perception, inference and testimony as the bases of knowledge. These were considered as simple ways of approach to the central question relating to the nature and destiny of man. These systems gave primary importance to the question of removal of man's sufferings, prescribing a way of life which would lead him to the goal without any necessary involvement of God.

From the above position we can see that humanistic elements were very much present in the ancient Indian thought. But it is only in the modern age that there was a definite awakening of the spirit of humanism in a more explicit and comprehensive manner. In the modern period there was a definite

upsurge of the spirit of humanism in India and as a philosophy it developed into a system based upon the essential dignity of man, and expressing deep concern for his welfare, his all round development and the creation of favourable conditions for a happy social life. An important factor that contributed towards the development of modern Indian humanism was the Western influence on Indian culture and social outlook during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It was this humanistic revival which quickened the process of social change in India.

Renaissance in India did not mean the abandonment of one tradition and return to another, but the discovery of the full meaning and significance of a continuing tradition. So none of the modern Indian thinkers, for the sake of modernity, have departed from the mainsprings of Indian culture and tradition. What we really find in modern Indian humanism is a synthesis of ancient Indian values and modern Western science. The contemporary Indian thought shows a deep appreciation of the problems of human life and the destiny of man, and in this sense all modern Indian thinkers were humanists. Their humanistic ideas originated in the popular struggle against foreign domination, economic exploitation and social evils like caste, untouchability, sati, child marriage, infanticide and forced labour. So, as stated by Sri. Asianand, "modern Indian Renaissance represents not only the converging of the

nationalist mainstream of the pre-independence period but also reflects the total throb of the Indian spirit, the civilisation's soul as personified by a large number of national leaders from Ram Mohan Roy and Sri Rama Krishna to Vinobhave."² A brief look at the ideas of some of the important leaders would substrate this view.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy

The intellectual movement generally known as Indian Renaissance was headed by Ram Mohan Roy. He was the first religious reformer of the nineteenth century and his efforts left a deep impression upon the social, political and religious thinking of his days. His most significant contribution to the beginning of Indian Renaissance was the establishment of an organisation called Brahma Samaj. The principles of this society avoided all rigidity, stressing the importance of universal brotherhood, and the belief in the unity of God. In the social sphere, Ram Mohan Roy opposed all social evils like child marriage, sati, bigamy and discrimination based upon caste. In religious field he criticised dogmas, ceremonies and idol worship. Ram Mohan Roy may be cited as an example of reformist thinking, as one who combined in himself an appreciation of the virtues of tradition as well modernity. He pleaded for

² Sri. Asianand. '1996...Whither India? Whither Mankind?' (New Delhi: Indian Institute of Ecology and Environment, New India Movement, 1996) p.280.

scientific education alongwith oriental studies in India. The central aim of his reformation movement was to bring about the spiritual integration of mankind.

Love of all men irrespective of caste and creed, equality of all regardless of sex were some of the doctrines to which Ram Mohan Roy gave supreme importance. His efforts for the abolition of sati, promotion of widow remarriage and education of women were aimed at the upliftment of women in society. He has to be regarded as a major force in the evolution of modern India because of his championship of the ideals of human liberty and fraternity. He pleaded for scientific orientation of education because he wanted science to be used as an instrument for increasing human happiness and feeling of oneness among the people all over the world. Roy, thus tried to revive the basic doctrines of Hinduism such as love for all men irrespective of caste and creed and equality of all regardless of sex. As a humanist, he believed that mankind can be united only on this basis.

Ram Mohan Roy may be considered as the first leader of modern India who initiated new enlightenment and urge towards a future free from the chains of outworn customs and superstitions. He tried to liberate his countrymen from the shackles of orthodoxy, dead tradition, and blind practices with which Indian social, political and cultural life was rigidly bound. He boldly advocated the use of reason in religious and social practices against

blind loyalty to customs. His attempt at humanizing religion, his rational interpretation of the past and the extension of reason in understanding and solving the social and political problems were the beginning of a continuous movement of modernization in India.

Roy was the torch-bearer of the civilizing and enlightening forces of the West and the preserver of the best creative traditions of India. His broad outlook and education enabled him to combine the knowledge of the East and the West. Modernism, according to Brahmasamaj, should strive to eradicate the walls of distinction between man and man and lead the entire humanity to salvation. This humanistic message embodied in the 'Brahma dharma' was in fact derived from the old Vedanta insight. Roy wanted to evolve a synthetic social philosophy on the basis of Vedanta and Islamic monotheism. He thought that this ideal synthesis of important religions entails a kind of spiritualistic activism, a pantheistic humanism and internationalism. He stood for the unity of entire human race. The movement initiated by Ram Mohan Roy by its emphasis on the wellbeing of man as the sole justification of social and religious institutions and practices made an epoch making step towards the process of humanisation.

The Indian Renaissance movement which started in the nineteenth century and spread to the different parts of India came to a stage of maturity

and fruition in the twentieth century. The most prominent Indian thinkers of this period include Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, M.N. Roy and Jawaharlal Nehru. All these eminent thinkers of modern India dealt with the problem of man's nature and destiny in an integral and comprehensive way. They prescribed unselfish service as the way to attain final destiny. They pointed out that man cannot attain his highest goal until and unless the human society as a whole does not enjoy freedom both in the secular and spiritual spheres of life.

Swami Vivekananda

Among the modern Indian thinkers, Vivekananda served as a link between the Renaissance and the modern period. He was the most effective exponent of the Vedanta in the modern age and developed it into a very strong and inspiring philosophy which impressed every great man of his time as well as the general masses. His single aim was to retrieve Indian society from the apathy and inaction into which it had sunk, and to infuse life, hope and vigour into all sections of community. With a message of love, tolerance, and service to mankind, Vivekananda could infuse a new hope in man. He realized that the crises of India were due to the decline of Vedic religion and the 'Indians' apathy towards the spirit of humanism. So he made up his mind, to re-establish the Vedic - *Upanishadic* tradition in such a way that it proved itself to

be truly relevant to the modern era. His philosophy may be called Neo-Vedanta, which was scientific, humanistic, universal and in tune with the demands of our modern age. Thus his reconstruction of Indian philosophy was an attempt to interpret the doctrine of Advaita as an answer to life's problems.

Vivekananda stood for the universalism of Vedanta, accepting the *upanishadic* teaching that creation represents the sport or *lila* of God. His advaita philosophy recognises the unity of all religions and asserts the basic principles of the divinity of man, and the essential spirituality of life. This truth, he thought, should guide all fields of the socio-political life of the people. His views on society were essentially and practically humanistic and it was based on his tremendous faith in the power of man. This aspect of humanism can be seen in the whole philosophy of Swami Vivekananda. Hence his philosophy may be considered as a form of humanism. He opposed the oppressions on the basis of caste distinctions and the practice of child marriage. He strongly urged for providing opportunities for women in order to enable them utilize their abilities. His philosophy was a message for social action with an emphasis on unselfish service. This was made clear by Dr. Devaraj when he pointed out that "the spiritual humanism of Swami Vivekananda advocates identity of humanity with divinity. It is clear in his utterance that each soul is

potentially divine and the aim is to realise that divinity. It defends the purity of human nature, regards man as God, attacks social, economic and religious evils in the society and inculcates faith and strength in the individual."³

In a fast moving world like ours, Vivekananda stressed the absolute necessity of religion. According to him, religion must ensure the dignity of man and happiness to all the members of the society. Since different religions have the same goal, he stood for the unity or fusion of all religions into one Universal Religion. Instead of withdrawing from the actual struggle of life, such a religion would lead the people in the fight against human suffering. The object and function of religion is nothing but service to man which is as spiritual an act as the realization of God.

The Universal Religion of Swami Vivekananda is based on the extracts of different religious truths freed from dogmas, sacraments, rites and ceremonies. Vedanta, he thought, as the most suitable philosophy to establish harmony between different religions. It alone could become the basis of Universal Religion and it embraces all human beings from the lowest to the highest. Its motto should be universal selfhood. His conception of Universal Religion was based on the belief that God manifests himself through all beings.

³ Dr. P.I. Devaraj. 'Spiritual Humanism of Swami Vivekananda - a new religion to humanity' (Thrissur: Drishya Books, 1997) p.67.

Through this idea, he wanted to raise the dignity of man in the world. He preached tolerance and religious universalism as the motto for all sincere believers in God. He emphasized the practical aspect of religion and asked the people to worship and offer to the poor what they offered to the image of God in the temple. He wanted to convince his fellowmen that genuine religion consisted in the service to mankind. His aim was thus to strengthen the humanistic trend of religion which exalts man as the true abode of divinity.

Swami Vivekananda was against casteism and untouchability. Following the tradition of the social reformers of the Renaissance period, he strongly advocated the elimination of inequalities based upon caste system. Since no society can exist without some sort of social stratification, Vivekananda advised that the present caste system may be maintained only if we could eliminate casteism. The idea underlying the caste system, according to him, should be to evolve every individual of the society to the level of the best human individual. Like other social thinkers before him, Swamiji severely condemned untouchability and considered it as the chief evil of casteism. It was against the essential spirit of Vedanta which preaches equality of all selves. He was against everything that narrows, restricts or separates one man from another. Therefore, he pleaded against untouchability and casteism.

Besides casteism and untouchability, the main evil in Indian society, as diagnosed by Vivekananda was the lower status of women. In the Vedic age, the status of Indian women was no less than that of men. But after that, there was a gradual decline in the status of women in India and at the time of Vivekananda it was no better than the status of untouchables. Therefore he wrote "In India, there are two great evils, trampling on the women and grinding the poor through caste restrictions."⁴ Vivekananda, thus waged a movement for the regeneration of Indian masses, particularly the backward classes including untouchables and women. The aim of his reform movement was to enable the lower groups of society to evolve in to the spiritual level of the higher group.

Like the Renaissance thinkers, Vivekananda considered the individual as the center of society. A nation is great because of the greatness of its individuals. Therefore Vivekananda asked Indians to develop self reliance and self-confidence. Real freedom, according to him, is the spiritual freedom which includes individual as well as social freedom. His attempt was to restore individuality without losing the innate spiritual nature of man and through this to realize the ideals of equality and freedom, in their fullness and perfection.

⁴ Swami Vivekananda. 'The Complete Works. Vol. IV' [Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati Memorial Edition, 1989] p.303.

With the perfection of individuals, society and its individuals are bound to progress. The salvation of the country depends on the strength of the individual and the realization of divinity within him. On the foundation of individual freedom, Vivekananda wanted to reconstruct society towards the realisation of such ideals as love, tolerance and unity. His Chief concern was India and the problems of Indian social system. Perhaps, before Vivekananda no Indian philosopher expressed such a deep concern over the reality of poverty and the necessity of its eradication. In spite of his emphasis on spirituality, he did not disregard the value of national needs. He said "material civilization, nay, even luxury is necessary to create ~~work~~ for the poor. Bread! Bread! I do not believe in a God who cannot give me bread here, giving me eternal bliss in heaven!"⁵ He launched the struggle for the material uplift of the masses with a missionary zeal and religious fervour. The Ramakrishna Mission which resulted from the inspiration of Vivekananda developed into a humanitarian organization with the sole motive of service to mankind and alleviation of human suffering. Vivekananda was successful in cultivating a conviction about the prevailing social injustice and inequity and the urgent necessity of removing them. This was his distinct service.

⁵ Swami Vivekananda. 'The complete works. Vol.IV' [Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, Mayavati, Memorial Edition, 1989] p.313.

Rabindra Nath Tagore

Tagore has been one of the most important humanists that India has ever seen in the sense that he valued man above everything else. He enriched and provided new dimensions to the Renaissance spirit. He gave man the central place in his social thought, in his religion in his poetical works and his educational and economic thought. He accepted the Western definition of humanism which demands that man should be the supreme concern. Faith in the supremacy of man and the concern for the fullness of his individuality constituted the essence of Tagore's humanism. He recognised man as the crown of creation. He goes to the extent of even converting God into human personality and interpreted Him in human terms. Thus we see that he was not satisfied with a mere recognition of man's paramount status in the scheme of things, but defined Reality, Truth and even God in terms of humanity.

Rabindranath Tagore played a significant role in discovering the Indian ethos and attempting a synthesis of the old and the new. An extension of this attempt towards synthesis of the old and the new was building up of a bridge of cultural understanding between the East and West. As it is stated by Dr. S. Pradhakrishnan, "to him (Tagore) progress and reform consist in conserving the ancient ideas and building upon them. Preserving the soul of

the Indian style, we may adopt whatever is good and noble in the West."⁶ The unity of East and West meant the unity of spiritual and scientific knowledge. He wanted this reconciliation for the sake of guiding human race in order to enable them to evolve common culture and universally acceptable ethical standards. Thus we find in Tagore a link between the ancient wisdom of India and the modern civilisation.

The essential humanism of Upanishads formed the basis of Tagore's Religion of Man. His humanism aims at a harmony or unity between man and man, man and nature, man and the Universal Spirit and his religion consisted in realising the universal spirit in man. His religion considered man to be necessary for God as much as God is necessary for man. Thus he tried to establish the essential unity of humanity and divinity. Tagore regarded religion to be an attitude of love, which meant love is the highest form of religion. According to him, worship of God meant loyalty and service to the mankind and believed that service of mankind as the best way to serve God. For God, according to him "is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path-maker is breaking stones. He is with them in the sun and in shower,

⁶ Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. 'The philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore' [London: Macmillan, 1919] p.197.

and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down to the dusty soil"⁷

Tagore had a humanistic approach to social problems also. He was a severe critic of caste system and repeatedly declared that caste system and its attendant practice of untouchability were among the darkest blots of Indian society. While Mahatma Gandhi was the leader of anti-untouchability movement in India, Tagore as a writer and poet exposed the malady in all its details. Through his different literary works he also protested against the evils of child marriage, the *purdah* system, *sati* and other evils which existed in society during his days. He condemned domination of male over female and wanted to give equal status to women in society. Thus Tagore visualised a society based on perfect harmony, and co-operation, and free from exploitation. The society was intended according to Tagore for the perfection of man and for the full realisation of the divine in humanity.

Tagore held that freedom was the pre-condition for life and progress according to him, "real freedom is of the mind and the spirit. It can never come to us from outside. He only has freedom who ideally loves freedom himself and is glad to extend it to others. He who cares to have slaves must

⁷ Sisir Kumar Das *ed.* 'The English Writings of Rabindra Nath Tagore. Vol.I. Song. II. 'Gitanjali'[New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1994] p.46.

chain himself to them: he who build walls to create exclusion for others build walls across his own freedom; he who distrusts freedom in others loses his moral right to it. Sooner or later he is lured into the meshes of physical and moral servility."⁸ Perfect harmony in relationship provides perfect freedom and the arrangement of inter dependence is the origin of freedom. So freedom is not something found outside society but is possible only within society. It should remove the barriers erected by the power of money, organised propaganda and the caste system. According to Tagore, freedom in its true sense is the liberation of the mind of man and the realisation of spiritual unity. This emphasis on human freedom is the basis of Tagore's Religion of Man, humanism and his faith in democracy.

Tagore had firm faith in democratic values. He not only accepted it as the only form of government which can provide freedom to individual, but also practised it as the philosophy of his life in dealing with all people around him.

Tagore also contributed a lot in reviving village industry and infused a spirit of self-reliance among villagers. Besides encouraging cottage industries Tagore made special efforts to encourage agriculture in the villages and laid emphasis on co-operative movement in agriculture. In his opinion, the

⁸ Tagore, Rabindranath, '*Creative Unity*' [Macmillan: London, 1925] p.136.

problems of industrialization can be checked by co-operation and so he made all efforts to improve farming on co-operative basis.

Tagore's political thought may be described as cosmopolitan Universal humanism and he pleaded for internationalism. He was convinced that co-operation and friendship between nations were absolutely necessary for the progress of mankind. He asserted that no nation could solve its own problems unless the problems of humanity as a whole are solved. Pointing out to internationalism as the need of our time, Tagore maintained that for its own safety, each nation should work for universal welfare. It was to meet this end that Tagore established the reputed institution 'Viswabharathi.'

Tagore's message of love and universal brotherhood, and his ideals of Universal Man and one world are expressions of his humanistic attitude. But the uniqueness of his humanism consisted in raising humanity to the level of Ultimate Reality. He firmly held that all human concepts derive their meaning and significance only when they are related to human values. We may agree with R.K. Sinari as he says, "In Tagore India found an artistic genius of international repute, an upholder of the unity of all religious and spiritual values,

a propounder of the East-West fusion under the banner of an encompassing humanism, and a quite revivalist of what is best in human culture."⁹

Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi may be considered as one of the greatest humanists in modern times. He had firm faith in the goodness of man and infused new hope in man through his message of love, tolerance and service to mankind. It was his faith in the goodness of man that formed the basis of his humanism. He was a revolutionary reformer who fought against the social, religious and political evils of his times. As in the case of Vivekananda, Gandhiji was a worshipper of '*Daridranarayana*' (God in the poor masses). While Vivekananda preached Neo-Vedanta for the regeneration of Indian community, Gandhiji presented practical means to actualize the lofty ideals of vedanta. He borrowed considerably from Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity and Islam. The writings of Tolstoy, Ruskin and Thoreau moulded Gandhi's views on non-violence, civil disobedience and bread labour.

Gandhi held that the ultimate aim of man is the realization of God. The only way to find God, according to him is to see Him in His creation. Service of God and service to humanity were therefore one and the same for him. In

⁹ Ramakant. A. Sinari. '*The Structure of Indian Thought* [Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1970] p.250.

his own words "the immediate service of all human beings become a necessary part of the endeavour simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His creations and to be one with it. And this can only be done by service of all. I am part and parcel of the whole and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of the humanity."¹⁰ Gandhi, therefore held that the greatness of man depends on the extent of service he renders to others.

Gandhi was essentially a man of religion. His religion had its basis in truth and non-violence. He considered that all religions were true and had their basis on the same principles of truth and non-violence and that every religion propounds the law of love or *Ahimsa*. So all religions were to be considered as different paths leading towards the same goal. One should, therefore, have the attitude of respect and reverence towards all religions, since a true understanding of one's own religion would reveal the heart of other religions too. The principle of *sarvadharmasamanattva* expounded by him points towards an appreciation of view points of others while adhering to one's own convictions.

Again, Gandhiji identified God with Truth or Reality. Reality or God, according to him, is truth and truth is manifested in non-violence. Man's ideal

¹⁰ Tendulkar, D.G. Mahatma: 'Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi' [Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1954] pp.109-110.

is to achieve God through truth and non-violence For Gandhi, non-violence was the first and last article of his faith. According to him, Truth and Ahimsa are so inter-twined that it is impossible to disentangle and separate them.

Gandhi's humanism had no limitations in respect of race and nationality. The basis of his religion was love and truth and he wanted to create a social order free from class and caste distinction. He considered untouchability as a crime on the basis of these principles and so he wanted to eradicate it. Gandhi, throughout his life, waged war against this evil and for the upliftment of the so called untouchables. Gandhiji wanted every individual to be inwardly transformed in order to bring about a true equality in the economic sphere. He had also firm faith in the equality of men and women. He believed that women can help men to a great extent through giving her infinite love and exhibiting her infinite capacity to suffer.

As Gandhiji was a politician with unshakable religious convictions he was of opinion that politics cannot be separated from religion since according to him both had the same ideal of service to mankind. Through '*Satyagraha*', Gandhiji introduced non-violence to in the field of politics. This meant personal suffering in order to convert the evil-doer. Gandhi insisted that such a method was based on truth and non-violence and he applied this technique quite successfully for the realization of India's freedom. The efficacy of

satyagraha may be debated but we cannot deny the fact that Gandhiji achieved wonderful success through this method in mobilising the rural masses, who had remained untouched by the national movement until his advent as a national leader. Through non-violence, non-co-operation, and civil disobedience he tried to achieve his goals. The idea of civil disobedience was taken from Thoreau. It is a protest against unjust laws. Another instrument of *satyagraha* is non-co-operation. Explaining non-co-operation as a method of political action, Gandhi said, "Non-violent non-co-operation is the method whereby we cultivate fresh public opinion and get it enforced when there is complete freedom of opinion that of the majority must prevail."¹¹ Another significant and novel instrument of political action developed by Gandhi was fasting. This is a weapon which very much depends upon the soul force of the person wielding it. Gandhi could use this weapon for a number of time quite successfully.

The ideal government according to Gandhi was democracy and he advocated a system of '*Panchayati Raj*' with complete decentralization of political power because he believed that only such a democratic set up could provide equal opportunities for all to take part in the affairs of the State. He pleaded for decentralization and wanted to establish political organization of

¹¹ Gandhi, M.K. *Young India* November 24, 1921.

the country on non-violent lines through village communities. In his scheme it was not an ascending order but a horizontal circle whose circumference is ever widening, from individual to community, nation and ultimately to the entire humanity.

Gandhiji's economic theory was also quite humanistic. He wanted the people of India to practise using of indigenous products which would promote indigenous industries. It would lead to more and more self dependence. According to Gandhi, machinery and large scale industrialism, the chief symbol of urban civilization, are not suitable in the Indian context. His antipathy to machinery was due to the fact that it replaced human labour and thereby increased unemployment and poverty. It also promoted the exploitation of the poor by the wealthy. The social and political institutions created by urban civilization cramp the spirit of man. So Gandhi preferred the simple rural civilization with its religion, spirituality and love of nature. It, according to him, would promote real happiness and contentment and increase the capacity for service. Here the individual would be of supreme consideration. The theory of trusteeship developed by Gandhi was also a significant aspect of his humanism.

Like Karl Marx, Gandhi also aimed at a stateless and classless society, but he held that this stage has to be achieved through non-violent revolution.

The Gandhian ideals of economic independence, decentralized democracy and secular polity still continue to exercise considerable influence on Indian society.

M.N. Roy

In modern India, the element of reason and rationalism was recognised and emphasized prominently by such thinkers as Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Swami Vivekananda. But none of them could postulate a comprehensive philosophy for the individual and the society on the sole basis of reason. This task was accomplished by M.N. Roy. In the twentieth century most of the philosophers in the East and the West drew attention to the moral crisis in human society and warned of the danger. Thoughtful persons everywhere realised that the development of atomic power has led humanity to a stage where even its existence is at stake. They pointed out that the human race is passing through a critical stage whose problems require an urgent solution. M.N. Roy analysed the crisis and tried to unravel its reasons. His analysis was based upon reason and experience of the entire human race. Pointing out the failures of past philosophers, M.N. Roy arrived at what he called Radical Humanism, which, according to him, is the only solution for the crises faced by human society.

Before 1940, M.N. Roy adhered to Marx's philosophy whole heartedly.

But later he said the contradictions between Marx's humanism and the collectivist form of organization and practice inherent in Marxism, and sought to reassert the humanist ethos. Roy's reaction to Marxism has to be viewed as the expression of an intense struggle between the humanistic values which he cherished to practice and the practice of Marxism in Russia after the revolution. As it is stated by Dr. Devaraj in one of his articles, "Roy who was a Marxist in his early life became a reformist and ultimately came to the conclusion that Marxist materialism was dogmatic and unscientific . . . It dehumanized humanity according to Roy."¹² His retraction from Marxism does not mean that he did not accept the humanistic elements in Marx's teachings. Roy thought that a Marxism, based on the principle of class struggle was inimical to the cause of freedom. He realized that orthodox Marxists had made Marxism a rigid and dogmatic creed. What was therefore needed was a 'new' philosophy. Roy spent the last years of his life formulating and popularising this 'new' philosophy which he termed 'Radicalism' or 'Radical Humanism'.

Radical Humanism is neither materialism nor idealism but a scientific philosophy with an emphasis upon the freedom of the individual. As a humanist, M.N. Roy did all his political thinking from the point of view of

¹² Devaraj, P.I. 'Secular and material humanism: a comparative study of Jawaharlal Nehru and M.N. Roy' [Radical Humanist. Vol. 62. No.1. April, 1998] pp. 8-9.

human society. He says, "Radicalism thinks in terms neither of nation nor of class; its concern is man; it conceives freedom as the freedom of the individual. Therefore, it can also be called New Humanism, new, because it is humanism enriched, reinforced, and elaborated by scientific knowledge and social experience gained during the centuries of modern civilisation."¹³ Roy's humanism is thus based on the supremacy and dignity of man. It is a doctrine of human sovereignty supported by modern science. Roy proclaimed the primacy of man without resorting to any super-human or super-natural hypothesis.

Roy held that the essence of human existence is the urge for freedom. It was recognised by him as the supreme value from which all other human values were derived. He tells us that "the purpose of all rational human endeavour, individual, as well as collective, is attainment of freedom, in ever increasing measure."¹⁴ Radical Humanism considers equality and liberty as equally necessary. The easiest means of social change, according to it, was to make men and women moral. It laid emphasis upon radical changes in the present set up in order to usher a bright future. Man himself was the revolutionary means to make human beings free.

¹³ Roy, M.N. "New Humanism" A manifesto [Calcutta: Renaissance Publishers, 1961] p.29.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* pp.51-52.

According to Roy, since the individual was to be of supreme importance, his freedom should not be sacrificed in the name of the welfare of the society. Freedom of the society must be the freedom of the totality of individuals. Society is the creation of man, therefore its only proper aim is to help the evolution of the individual. Social relationships should be so co-ordinated that the individual gains maximum freedom for his evolution. The collectivity, according to Roy, is not prior to individuality. Individual was his prior concern. The only purpose of society and State is to make room for maximum liberty to the individual. Explaining liberty as the aim of human life Roy said, "Freedom is the progressive disappearance of all restrictions on the unfolding of the potentialities of individuals as human beings, and not as cogs in the wheels of a mechanised social organism."¹⁵ Thus, according to the third principle of Radical democracy, the freedom of the individual is the only aim of the collectivity, that is, the State. Man is the representative of society and requires social relationship for the development of his capacities.

Roy held that the dignity and freedom of individual were being endangered by dictatorship as well as parliamentary democracy. These two challenges have relegated the individual to a position of insignificance. Arguing against dictatorship, Roy stated that there is no possibility of

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p.17.

achievement of freedom or diminution of State power in it. Planned economy, under political dictatorship disregards individual freedom on the pleas of efficiency, collective effort and social progress. In parliamentary democracy, elections have become an instrument of delegation of the sovereign power of the individuals. Because of parties, politics has become a scramble for power and parties do not appeal to reason of the individuals but to the sentiments of the masses. The adherence to party politics implies the denial of democracy. It is a denial of the political intelligence and creativity of all men, of the sovereignty of the people. Thus both dictatorship and parliamentary democracy do not find place for human values. Roy suggested that a proper form of government can be established only on the basis of human freedom as its aim. For this he offered an alternative in Radical Democracy. In this scheme, every citizen will be informed and consulted in the functioning of the government. This is possible because in it power goes to the people's committees and not to the parties.

On the economic plane, Roy suggested the scheme of co-operative economy. Under this system, co-operatives will be the basic units. It is not based on competition but on co-operation in which on the one hand the producer and the consumer co-operate and on the other hand the relationship between producers are not determined by competition but by co-operation.

Thus this system reduces the national waste to the minimum. It is the only economics on the basis of which co-ordination may be achieved among various producing units and the economic transaction between different nations.

Along with other contemporary Indian thinkers, Roy also accepted the ideal of the unity of the world in spite of diversity. Each nation may be different according to its indigenous circumstances. But an inclination towards internationalism is also necessary. Humanism does not distinguish among human beings on the basis of nationality, race or class. It does not admit any permanent dividing line between different nations. The word^l envisaged by M.N. Roy "will be a spiritual community, not limited by boundaries of National States - capitalist, fascist, communist or of any other kind - which will gradually disappear under the impact of cosmopolitan humanism. That is the radical perspective of the future of mankind."¹⁶ New Humanism of M.N. Roy, therefore, is not only scientific but is also an integral philosophy in which human affairs are considered in the context of the whole cosmos and not just within the context of Nation. Thus we see that this kind of humanistic movement was not only meant for India, but for the whole world. This was explained by Roy in the last principle of Radical Humanism thus: "Radicalism

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p.35.

starts from the dictum that man is the measure of everything' (Protagorus) or 'man is the root of mankind' (Marx), and advocates reconstruction of the world as a Commonwealth' and fraternity of free men, by the collective endeavour of spiritually emancipated moral men."¹⁷

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p.59.

Jawaharlal Nehru's Ideal of Socialism as a Form of Humanism

Syamala K. "Humanism in modern Indian thought with special reference to the philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru" Thesis. Department of Philosophy, University of Calicut, 1998

2. Jawaharlal Nehru's Ideal of Socialism as a Form of Humanism

Historical Survey

The term 'socialism' is derived from the Latin word 'Socius', which signifies a comrade, an ally, or a partner. It connotes equality in rank and status. Socialism is an economic system, a political movement, and a social theory. The socialist doctrine demands State ownership and control of the fundamental means of production and distribution of wealth. The doctrine specifically advocates nationalization of natural resources basic industries, banking, credit facilities and public utilities. Though the basis of socialism is economic, its implementation leads to complete change in political, ethical and technical institutions of society. Socialism symbolises the vision of a new society and believes in co-operation, equality and social justice. Socialists aim for a society based on co-operation and brotherhood, rather than competition and self interest.

There are many varieties of socialism and the term has had a long and complicated history. The idea of collective ownership or common ownership of property dates atleast from the time of ancient Greece. During the Third Century B.C., the Greek philosopher Plato proposed that a ruling class own

everything in common, putting the welfare of the State above all personal desires. As far as it is known, the words 'socialism' and 'socialist' for the first time appeared in print in Italian in 1803. It came into use in Great Britain and France soon after 1825. Soon the word travelled from there to Germany and other European States and also to the United States. The term was first applied to the doctrines of certain writers who were seeking a complete transformation of the economic and moral basis of society by substitution of social for individual control and of social for individualistic forces in the organization of life and work.

During the early 1800's, several writers and reformers criticised industrialism as the cause of great hardship and suffering among working people. Socialism originated in Europe mainly as a reaction to these circumstances, which were the product of the capitalist system itself, an outcome of the Industrial Revolution. The early socialists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries realised these evils and injustices of capitalists and tried in their own way to eradicate them. These socialists were often called Utopians. A German economist and writer Karl Marx disagreed with the Utopian Socialists, and with him socialism entered a new phase. He believed that capitalist system would destroy itself and eventually all countries of the world would adopt of socialist system. To hasten the arrival of socialism, Marx said, the workers

should band together and overthrow by force of revolution, if necessary, the existing governments. This troubled many socialists and they began to doubt the indispensability of revolution and tried to revise the basic tenets of Marxism. They declared that socialism could be best attained by reformist, parliamentary and evolutionary methods. The revisionists came to be known as social democrats. Thus we see that socialism had travelled many paths.

During the later part of the eighteenth century, several socialist political parties were formed in Europe and North America. Between 1890 and 1914, the socialist movement grew strong and socialist parties nearly won control of the government in several countries. The great advance was scored in Great Britain. Many Nations newly emerged in Africa, Asia and Latin America adopted systems that were largely socialist in orientation. China established a communist government, as did Albania and Cuba. Socialism made progress also in India, Burma and Japan. The major impact of socialism today has shifted from the industrialized nations to the under developed countries.

Growth of Socialism in India

The success of the Russian Revolution in 1917 raised high hopes in the minds of socialists everywhere in the world and India was no exception. India could not remain aloof of or immune to the tremors created by the October

Revolution. Turning the pages of history, we find that the essential basis of Indian thought for ages past, fits in with the scientific temper and approach of socialism. It is based on a fearless search for truth, solidarity of man based upon the divinity of every living thing, and on the free and co-operative development of the individual, leading to greater freedom and higher stages of human growth. Thus, we see that India had a rich heritage of socialist thought in its ancient culture. This was further developed by the growth of the national liberation movement which stimulated the quest for a socialist ideal.

The famous Bengali writer, Bankim Chandra Chatterju was the first to recount socialist teaching in his Bengali work '*Samya*' published in 1879. Rabindranath Tagore also wrote about socialistic ideas. According to him, "Socialism seeks to distribute wealth equally among all and thereby reunify society."¹ Probably, the first man in India who called himself a socialist was Swami Vivekananda. In a letter dated November 1st, 1896, Swamiji declared "I am a socialist not because I think it is a perfect system, but because half a loaf is better than no bread. The other systems have been tried, and found wanting. Let this one be tried".² Though these thinkers showed interest in socialism, they could not formulate any practical programme for attaining the goal.

¹ Rabindranath Tagore. '*Sadhana*' (London: Macmillan, 1957) pp.3-4.

² Swami Vivekananda, '*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*', Vol. VI (Calcutta, Advaita Ashram, Mayavathi Memorial Edition, 1989), p.381.

The Russian Revolution against the Czarist autocracy created a greater impression on the Indian patriots as an inspiring example of mass liberation struggle. The down-trodden masses started protesting against exploitation and particularly against colonial enslavement. They mobilised national liberation struggle and at the same time shaped an anti-capitalist tradition in the development of progressive socialistic thought in India. The progressive national leaders were also ready to work upon the main ideas of socialism. Yet another influence was the assimilation of the ideas of nationalism and socialism from England and Germany by the young Indians who went abroad either for training or for education. These factors detracted some radicals from the general programme of the Congress and urged them to pursue a hot line. This resulted in the formation of the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) in 1934, the goal of which was to gain full independence and establishment of a socialist society in India. Socialism according to CSP, was the ultimate destiny of mankind.

The revivalist movement in the country towards the end of the 19th century and beginning of 20th century also gave direction towards the growth of socialist ideology in the country. It criticised the ideologies of Western brand of socialism and tried to expose its unethical basis. Gandhiji's concept of socialism was ethical and was based on the possibility of reforming human nature. Pandit Nehru's conception of socialism had not only a humanitarian base, but also an

economic base. He was attracted towards socialism and tried to give a left slant to Congress even before independence. Thus we see that, socialist thinkers in India have approached socialism not only as a problem of improvement in the environment, but also as a means to reform the human nature.

Jawaharlal Nehru and Socialism

Jawaharlal Nehru was a great socialist with a pragmatic approach. Although he was not the first expounder of socialism in India, his uniqueness lies in the fact that he differed from other socialists, with his non-doctrinaire approach to the socio-economic problems of India. The love for the ideals of socialism and to build India of his dreams on a socialistic basis ran like a thread throughout Jawaharlal Nehru's life and thought. Being a continental polity and society, India had to accommodate its linguistic diversities, ethnic divergence and political pluralities. Nehru clearly perceived that the need was to integrate such diversities and he wanted to make a new State out of the old society. By socialisation and ideological make-up he tried to build such a political system which would take care of all these. He set forth three principles for that and applied them during the seventeen years of his Primeministership. They were Democracy, Socialism and Secularism.

Pandit Nehru evolved his own ideas about socialism and tried to give

them a practical shape. Socialism, for him was a vital creed that he held with all his head and heart. Realising the pathetic position of Indian people Nehru felt that the solution of these problems could be found by adopting socialism as a national goal. He was convinced that there was no other way of ending the mass poverty and sufferings of the Indians except through socialism. He openly acknowledged his faith in socialism and expressed his views at the Lahore session of Congress in December 1929 in these words "I must frankly confess that I am a socialist and a republican and am no believer in kings and princes, or in the order which produces the modern kings of industry, who have greater power over the lives and fortunes of men than even the kings of old, and whose methods are as predatory as those of the old feudal aristocracy India will have to accept socialism if she seeks to end poverty and inequality, though she evolve her own methods".³

Socialism appealed to Nehru as an adequate philosophy of life and he was drawn towards it from his younger days. Regarding the basis of his philosophy it may be said that he developed a deep faith in the ultimate success of socialism as the panacea for human ills. Nehru's line of socialism stemmed from his broad humanitarian outlook to liberate mankind from their miseries.

³ Jawaharlal Nehru, '*Glimpses of World History*' (New Delhi, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1982) p.816.

His socialist ideas cannot be understood save in the context of his deep belief in man and in the dignity of human existence. At the personal level, he explained his attitude with great clarity. In his Autobiography he wrote, "My roots are still perhaps in the nineteenth century, and I have been too much influenced by the humanist liberal tradition to get out of it completely".⁴ Thus, we see that he was a liberal and a democrat, a socialist and an individualist. But most of all, he was a humanist who affirmed his full faith in man.

Before and after independence, the question before the nation and Nehru was how to solve the problems of hunger and poverty, insanitation and illiteracy, superstition and decaying customs and utilizing the vast resources turning waste in a rich country inherited by starving people. Pandit Nehru's concern for these problems led him to socialism. He saw no way of ending the poverty, chronic unemployment and sufferings in India, except through socialism. He held that socialism could save the society from the conflict created by capitalism and modern science. Panditji always talked of socialism and worked for the construction of a really socialist society. He laid emphasis on four important conditions for solving the problems of India through socialism, i.e., raising the standard of life of general masses, providing them better means

⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, '*An Autobiography*' (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1982) p.591.

of life, providing them opportunities for physical, cultural and spiritual development and ending the disparity gradually by non-violent means.

In 1936, when Nehru was the president of the Indian National Congress, he declared "I am convinced that the only key to the solution of world's problems and of India's problems lies in socialism. And when I use these words, I do not use so not in a vague humanitarian way but in the scientific economic sense. Socialism, is however, something even more than an economic doctrine, it is philosophy of life. And as such also it appeals to me. I see no way of ending the poverty, unemployment, the degradation and the subjection of Indian people, except through socialism. Socialism, is thus for me not merely an economic doctrine which I favour, it is a vital creed which I hold with all my head and heart That involves vast and revolutionary changes in our political and social structure Inshort, it means a new civilization, radically different from the present capitalist order".⁵ Thus, Nehru's fascination for socialism was born out of his deep concern for the suffering Indian masses and a strong will to better their lot.

The vague ideas of socialism which Nehru had nurtured during his

⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 7 (New Delhi: Orient Longman Ltd., 1979) p.60.

student days were subsequently revived and sharpened in the light of sweeping social, political and economic changes taking place throughout the world. His belief in socialism traversed a long road right from his student career in Cambridge when he was vaguely attracted to Fabian and Socialistic ideas to the Congress Session of Bhuvaneshwar where he committed the congress as well as the nation to the socialist goal. If in the thirties Nehru believed in scientific socialism, after grappling with administrative problems during his Primeministership he became more practical in his approach. Nehru's revised socialism thus involved two fundamental propositions: the socialist goal of economic democracy was thoroughly valid; and the trend towards a socialistic economic structure with an increasing amount of state ownership over the means of production was desirable.

Socialistic Pattern of Society

In November 1954, Nehru envisaged a socialistic pattern of society as the goal. He defined such a society in the following words: "We mean a society in which there is equality of opportunity and the possibility for everyone to live a good life. Obviously, this cannot be attained unless we produce the wherewithal to have the standards that a good life implies. We have, therefore, to lay great stress on equality, on the removal of disparities, and it has to be remembered always that socialism is not the spreading out of poverty. The essential thing is

that there must be wealth and production".⁶ He thus imagined a classless society with economic justice and equal opportunity for all. The objectives that inspired Nehru to adopt and ventilate socialist ideas were manifold. He considered socialism to be helpful first, in destroying imperialistic hegemony over India. Secondly, in broadening the outlook of those nationalists who thought in the 'narrowest nationalist term', thirdly, in eradicating the poverty and misery of the down-trodden and the 'have-nots' in the society, and finally, in providing a scientific and sociological base for the socio-economic aspirations of society. He had conceded that his interest in socialism was primarily due to his faith that poverty and socio-economic inequalities in society cannot be eradicated without it. Pandit Nehru had portrayed the type of society which he wanted to be established in India thus, "Our final aim can only be a classless society with equal economic justice and opportunity for all, a society organised on a planned basis for the raising of mankind to higher material and cultural levels, to a cultivation of spiritual values, of co-operation, unselfishness, the spirit of service, the desire to do right, goodwill and love - ultimately a world of order".⁷

⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, '*Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches*', Vol. III (March 1953 to Aug 1957) (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1983), p.96.

⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, '*An Autobiography*' (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru MemorialFund, 1982) pp.551-52.

Socialism should grow out of Indian conditions

Along with the clear-cut understanding of the method, theory and programme of scientific socialism, Pandit Nehru had an equally clear understanding that as far as India was concerned, if it was to be built up here, it should grow out of Indian conditions. He wanted to take into account the basic characteristics of India - its society, its people, the political forces and parties. He believed that the closest study of these conditions was also essential. India's own path to the goal of socialism had to be carefully charted, taking the specifics of India and the experience of socialist construction in other countries fully into account. Nehru was very much convinced that if socialism had to take roots in India, it must be adapted to the conditions in India and must be expressed in the language of India. He was prepared to shed off that which was incompatible with the Indian situation and to import only that which was beneficial for India. It was thus an attempt to build socialism in the living situations of India.

Nehru did not favour the application of Marxian theory to the Indian situation. He outrightly rejected Marxian approach to achieve socialism in India. He disfavoured the idea of class-war revolution and dictatorship of proletariat. Nehru had been strongly influenced by Western socialist ideas and was deeply impressed by the efforts of the Soviet Union to bring about total change in the social life by planned methods after Russian Revolution. But he realised that

orthodox Marxism was incapable to understand the Indian masses and their problems. Awareness of the dangers and difficulties involved in following the Soviet path to socialism led Nehru more and more to appreciate the merits of Gandhian path. Panditji evolved his own concept of socialism which was different from the one which Russian people had established in their country under the inspiration of the teachings of Marx. He was emphatic on the need to maintain the Indian character of socialism.

Being an ardent democrat, Nehru believed in peaceful methods to transform society on socialist lines. He was not an uncritical admirer of Marxism. So though Nehru spoke of socialism and of a classless society, he was not a communist. He had complete faith in Gandhi. He totally disliked the communist totalitarian policy of ruthless suppression of political dissent and the whole-sale regimentation. He criticised the working of Soviet system and wrote: "Much in Soviet Russia I dislikes the ruthless suppression of all contrary opinion, the wholesale regimentation, the unnecessary violence (as I thought) in carrying out various policies".⁸ He came under the spell of Gandhi and so sincerely believed that it was possible to eradicate poverty and ensure a minimum standard of life for all without any violence and bloodshed. He considered violence as wholly unscientific, irrational and uncivilised methodology. Though

⁸ Ibid., p.361.

he looked upon classless society as a noble ideal, he did not support violent methods for its realization. He wanted to realize it through peaceful and democratic means. He criticised the Indian communists for not having adapted the ideology of socialism to the peculiar Indian conditions. He admonished them against their blind following of the Western concept. On the other hand, he made his own attempts to adapt the western ideal of socialism to the Indian context with necessary modifications.

Individual freedom and dignity preserved in Socialism

Nehru's basic regard was for individual dignity and freedom, and he was not prepared to sacrifice it for the sake of economic development. The question of providing social justice without sacrificing individual freedom was uppermost in his mind. Hence, the freedom and dignity of individual was well preserved in Nehru's model of socialism. His socialism aimed at ensuring and promoting maximum freedom to the individuals. It appears that the foundation of socialist scheme in Nehru's thought had been laid on the rock belief that man and his individuality must not be surrendered to any kind of social order. The only consideration was that every action of an individual must be in harmony with and conducive to the well-being, health and growth of entire humanity. Its ultimate objective was to achieve individual liberty accompanied by equal

opportunities and equality among people, through the scientific theory of Marxism applied in accordance with the Gandhian techniques.

Thus, we see that Pandit Nehru under the influence of Gandhi, interpreted the Marxian socialism in the light of Gandhian Humanism. His Indian approach to socialism may be considered as a synthesis of the best elements of Western liberalism, symbolised by free elections, individual liberty and the rule of law; Gandhi's teachings, particularly his deep concern for the well-being of the masses and his emphasis on the right means and the desirability of avoiding recourse to violence; and Marxism, particularly its interpretation of history and its objective of a classless society. Nehru thus synthesised liberalism of West, socialism of Communist world and Gandhism of India to deal with the prevailing conditions and problems of his time. Although Nehru never claimed to have made such a synthesis, it can be very easily traced out from his writings and speeches.

Democratic Socialism

In a statement issued to the Press on February 22nd 1939, Nehru clarified his stand with regard to the approach which he wanted to use for establishing a socialist society of his own conception in our country. He said "I have been a convinced socialist and a believer in democracy; and have at the same time

accepted whole heartedly the peaceful technique of non-violent action which Gandhiji has practised so successfully during the past twenty years. I am convinced that strength can come to us from the masses, but that strength either for the struggle, or for the great work of building a new world must be disciplined"⁹ Socialism, he believed, should not be imposed from above with the help of dictatorial government, but must emerge out of a change in the consciousness of the people at large and all peaceful efforts should be made to bring about such a change. Nehru's liberal democratic views convinced him that the brand of socialism which he advocated could only be achieved through democratic process. Revolutionary socialism was not feasible because the human values of a free society had to be preserved. His concept of socialism could be achieved only through a fully democratic process, through the consent of the majority. He honestly believed that it was possible to liquidate poverty and ensure a minimum standard of life for all without any violent overthrow of the existing order. It was Nehru's political conviction that India would have to march gradually in the direction of such a socialism.

Pandit Nehru was a realistic leader and he knew how to move towards the goal. He understood the mind and mood of the nation and followed a

⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Unity of India (Collected Writings 1937-1940)*, (New York: John Day & Co., 1948) p.119.

peaceful and non-violent method to change the centuries old traditions and outdated outlook of the people. He accepted whole-heartedly the peaceful technique of non-violent action which Gandhiji practised. Nehru realised that "the vast changes that socialism envisages cannot be brought about by the sudden enactment of a few laws. But some basic laws are necessary to give the direction of advance and to lay foundation of the structure".¹⁰ This attitude was based on his profound disbelief in violence as a solvent for social evils. He understood well that Indians were peaceful by nature and disliked overturns and sharp reversals. So he repudiated the ideas of violence in changing the social order. He knew that Indian situation and psychology were ill-suited to violence. He had deep faith in the message of peace and non-violence of the philosophies, Buddha and Mahavira, whom he often quoted while he heralded his message of new democracy in India.

Jawaharlal Nehru believed that it was possible to establish socialism by democratic means and thereby allow sufficient freedom for the development of individual. He did not think that socialism and individualism were opposed to each other. His concept of social democracy had no conflict with the personal liberty. Even if State intervention was introduced, it was only in the individual's

¹⁰ Jawaharlal Nehru, '*An Autobiography*' (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial fund, 1982) p.588.

own interest. Individuality was not killed or suppressed, but was well preserved in his model of socialism. He thus based socialism on democracy, dignity of individual and social justice.

Congress made an instrument for the attainment of the goal

Pandit Nehru was convinced that the real solution to India's economic problems lay in socialism. But he had no intention either of forming a new party or group in order to carry out his socialist objective. He was, therefore, determined not only to work for that cause, but also to make the Congress Party an effective instrument for socio-economic change. In all his speeches and writings, Nehru repeatedly stressed the need for '*Swaraj*' and socialism as the joint objectives and firmly believed that India could not have one without the other. He travelled a great deal and addressed many gatherings. Everywhere he spoke on political independence and social freedom. "I wanted to spread," he said, "the ideology of socialism especially among Congress workers and intelligentsia; for these people who were the backbone of the national movement"¹¹

As early as in 1929, the Congress under the influence of Nehru committed itself to the principle of socialism. At his own instance the Congress

¹¹ Ibid., p.182.

took a more definite step by adopting an economic programme at the Karachi session. He constantly kept his pressure on the organization in favour of socialism and consequently, a number of vague socialist resolutions were adopted by the Congress from time to time. As he had occupied a high position in the Congress, he had the advantage of making his influence felt much more than others. Thus he injected socialist philosophy in the programmes of the Congress party while it was still fighting the battle of political liberation.

Nehru combined the fight for national liberation with the fight for socialism in India and sought the unity of the progressive forces all over the world to bring about a victorious end to this two-fold fight. He was of opinion that if socialism had to succeed, it should finally be an international socialism. For him, there was no contradiction between nationalism on the one hand and socialism and internationalism on the other. He thus looked socialism in a wider context and opined that "the world is essentially international to-day, although its political structure lags behind and is narrowly national. For socialism to succeed finally it will have to be international world socialism".¹² Nehru described his objective as the establishment of a socialist order first within the

¹² Jawaharlal Nehru, *Glimpses of World History* (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1982) ;p.905.

national boundaries and eventually in the world as a whole. This indicates the universal outlook of his socialist vision.

Nehru's vigorous campaign for socialism continued for long. Even after independence, the Congress under his undisputed leadership, adopted official resolutions to that effect. He was solely guided by the practical considerations of Indian society and its concrete situation, as it appeared before him. After independence, Nehru's approach to socialism took a concrete step. The Indian constitution contained some socialist flavour in the chapter on Directive Principles of the State policy. In its Preamble, reference was made to equality and justice, both economic and social. This was not very far off from the objectives of socialism and it was considered as a milestone on the road to its achievement.

Socialism and Democracy

As a humanist, Pandit Nehru had a great faith in the people and so for the construction of Indian society on the basis of equality, social justice and security, he tried to evolve a social philosophy. He closely connected socialist system with the idea of political democracy. He wanted socialism to be adopted within the political framework of democracy so that the advantages of individual freedom could be retained along with the socio-economic justice achieved

through socialism. In order to achieve the goal of classless society, he emphasized the need of total transformation of social life through democratic methods. He wanted to remove the evils of capitalism from democracy by adopting socialistic principles. While he provided for the working of political democracy through the constitution and the law, he aimed at making socialism work through policies and actual government administration. Political democracy, for Nehru was only a way to his goal of democratic socialism.

Jawaharlal Nehru thought that both socialism and democracy meant removal of disparities or the establishment of social and economic equality in society. To him, democracy and socialism had to go together since they were mutually reinforcing elements. He strongly believed that democracy and socialism were not contradictory but complementary to one another and held that the brand of socialism he advocated could be achieved only through democratic process. Nehru was aware that socialism could not be separated from democratic values because for the proper development of human personality democratic values were indispensable. So he combined the socialistic philosophy with democratic values and this combination was popularly described as 'democratic socialism'. Socialism, according to Panditji, should follow democratic lines and keep itself away from any kind of authoritarianism. Thus his concept of social democracy did not amount to any

serious infringement of individual freedom and civil liberty. It largely meant for him the addition of economic democracy to political democracy.

In the thirties, Nehru had full faith in scientific socialism. It was only after realising the realities of the context in which he had to work it out, he became a pragmatist. So he opted both socialism and democracy. Democracy meant to him an attempt to the solution of problems by peaceful methods. He believed that civil liberties and democracy were basic to socialism. Democracy was essential for socialism and there can be no real democracy without socialism. Nehru wanted to develop a form of democratic socialism based upon our peculiar cultural and historical traditions, so that we could move forward boldly and rapidly to the new goals. The task before Nehru was to continuously educate the people in the spirit of democratic socialism in order to win them over to that cause. He fully realised that his democratic method would take longer span of time compared with short-cut methods to socialism by imposition, but on the other hand the results of the former would be more enduring. In 1963, at its Bhubaneswar session, the Congress adopted the goal of democratic socialism. It implied three things, i.e., the substitution of co-operation in the place of acquisitiveness, equal opportunities for development of personality for everyone, and the democratic process of peaceful and legitimate methods to achieve these two goals.

Socialism and Secularism

Both secularism and social equality were equally emphasised as the essential ingredients of democratic socialism. Secularism and socialism are two inseparable concepts and so in Nehru's democratic socialism there was no place for religious politics. He was critical of those who approached politics through religion. Nehru was very much disturbed by caste system, communalism and the dogmatic and religious beliefs of the people of India. He held that in a country like India which has many faiths and religions, no real socialism can be built up except on the basis of secularism. So Nehru vehemently criticised casteism and its role in Indian society. He considered it as antagonistic to the principles of equality and social justice and to the growth and development of socialism. Socialism does not merely signify economic changes in the society. It involves fundamental changes in the social structure, in the ways of thinking and in ways of living. Old ideas about privilege on the basis of birth or class or caste or money are discarded in a socialist order and hence class and caste have no place in it. Thus Nehru provided enough space for socialism also in his concept of democratic socialism. He progressed with the aim that all individuals in India should have equal opportunities of growth and equal opportunities for work according to their capacity without regard to their caste and religion. This led him to say that "I look upon it (socialism) as a growing, dynamic conception, as

something which is not rigid, as something which must fit in with the changing conditions of human life and activity in every country".¹³

Mixed economy as an economic policy to achieve Socialism

Pandit Nehru agreed with the Marxists that capitalism made the rich richer and the poor poorer. Economic inequality and the maldistribution of wealth, which capitalism promoted progressively, made it impossible to bring about equality. It also resulted in the increase of exploitation of man by man and group by group. It was necessary, therefore, that economic equality should be aimed at; and in order to achieve this, the control of the means of production by society as a whole, and severe restriction of private property were necessary. To Nehru, the capitalist system did not provide this equality of opportunity. It also failed in proper distribution of wealth. Hence, poverty was appalling and unemployment rampant. In Nehru's political thought, the worst enemy of mankind was poverty. As a socialist, he held that since inequality is the root cause of poverty, its removal would bring about socialism. The objective of our economic policy must be the establishment of an egalitarian society, free from the scourge of exploitation and poverty, and providing full scope for all-round

¹³ Jawaharlal Nehru, '*Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol. III* (March 1953 to August 1957) (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1983) p.52.

development of all its members. Such a society can come about only through the establishment of socialism.

Nehru's socialism as revised in 1955 shunned the idea that there can be no middle path between capitalism and socialism and the world has to choose one or the other. According to him, any method which can deliver good to people could be something between these two ideologies. This something is the middle way or the mixed economy. It is drawn from of the ideals of both the socialistic and the capitalist economies. Nehru's ideal of mixed economy involves the recognition of two main divisions in the country's economy - the public and the private sector. The former includes all the State owned and the State controlled industries while the latter includes all things under the private ownership. He aimed at State control of all those industries which were concerned with defence production and all the basic heavy industries. In regard to the rest, private enterprise was to be permitted. But there should be an adequate control over the private sector. It is expected to accept the broad principles involved in the National Plan and function in unison with the public sector. It must accept the objectives of National Planning Commission and adjust itself with it. The role of private sector is to be guided by social purpose. The public and private sectors were to co-exist and were required to play their part in modernizing the Indian society. Nehru believed that both the public and

the private sectors were indispensable in India's economy. The public sector is essential because Indian private capital is not sufficient to carry out huge projects. The less vital industries would remain in the private sector and this would be advantageous for the economic development of the country. In Nehru's opinion, the private sector performed a definite and important function in the transitional period of our economy. Likewise, the public sector was indispensable in meeting the requirements of the then existing conditions in India. With the elapse of time, the extent of private sector is apt to shrink and that of public sector is bound to grow. The policy of mixed economy enabled the government to start building upon the existing economic structure without a sudden break. Nehru also urged the nature of mixed economy must be flexible and capable of being adapted to the changing conditions.

Mixed economy is the economic system which India still follows and that is one of the most significant contribution of Jawaharlal Nehru. We find that Nehru's approach to the problem of economy was also pragmatic. His concept was based on the realities of the Indian situation and regard for individual dignity and freedom. India, thus under the leadership of Nehru was trying to combine parliamentary democracy, fundamental rights of the individual, private property and private enterprise with a large public sector, planned economic development, social justice and concern for the abolition of mass poverty. The

combination of socialism, a planned economy and parliamentary democracy was considered incompatible by many political thinkers from capitalist as well as the communist countries. But it represented a middle path and a harmonious combination best suited to the Indian aspirations and requirements.

Economic Planning as a method to bring about socialism

Nehru was one of the first man in India to recognise that planned development was the solution to overcome the economic backwardness of India, and cautiously introduced socialism in Indian planning. For bringing about a social change in India, Nehru not only took advantage of his newly propounded idea of mixed economy, but used the weapon of planning to accelerate the economic development of India. He put forward planned economic development for establishing socialistic pattern of society in India. He adopted democratic planning as a method of solving the problems of Indian people. Thus the goal of socialistic pattern of society found expression in the Five Year Plans of our country. Nehru was convinced that it was only through a planned approach on socialistic lines that steady progress can be attained, even though it was to take a considerable period of time.

Industrialization and Socialism

To establish a socialist society, the foremost aim of Nehru was the

removal of poverty with all its attendant evils. This called for rapid economic development. The slow growth of our economy, according to Nehru, was due to our inability to make full use of our manpower and natural resources and this was due to our failure to take sufficient advantage of the advance of science and technology. So Nehru's another major concern was for science, technology and industrialization. As a lover of socialism and with a strong desire to build India of his dreams on a socialistic basis, he pleaded for the industrialization of the country. He wanted to raise the standard of living of the people by providing them with the amenities of modern civilization. This concern was also rooted on the ground realities that existed in India. He wanted to develop a modern society in India, free from traditional superstitions, customs, religious conservatism, dogmatism, casteism, untouchability and other social evils which were major obstacles in the path of socialism.

Land Reforms

Nehru recognised that there could be no real change in a socialist direction in the Indian country side without land reform, ceiling on the land holdings, and distribution of the resultant surplus land to the landless. The abolition of land-lordism in contravention to the 'right to property' which was sanctified by the highest tribunal of the country clearly reflects Nehru's intense desire to extend his concept of socialism to this area. He advocated co-

operative farming and the establishment of service co-operatives. He firmly believed that the service co-operatives and co-operative farming had their important roles in bringing socialism to the villages of India.

Nehru championed the cause of socialism and strove for its enforcement and advancement in the Indian economic programmes through the inclusion of its basic concepts in the Indian planning, the constitution of India and the policies which guided the establishment of major industries. He emphasized that socialism should not be considered as an end in itself but as means to the end of providing greatest good to the largest number in the shortest possible time through persuasion S.B. Gupta makes it clear when he states, "Nehru thus succeeded to a great extent in making socialism a practical slogan to which the nation as a whole responded enthusiastically The three Five Year Plans have succeeded in laying the foundations on which a stable edifice of socialism can be attained. His faith in democratic methods was in itself a contribution to socialism, since it helped in creating a stable polity wherein it was possible to channelise the energy of the nation towards the programme of national reconstruction. Political stability in this country, for which the credit goes to a large extent to Nehru, has been the greatest asset to those at the helm of affairs and enabled them to implement the ideal of socialism. He emphasized the importance of science and technology and laid the firm basis for their growth by

establishing a number of national laboratories which have been doing useful work. He was a modernist and although he had great faith in Gandhian concept and thus encouraged cottage industries and Khadi movement, he worked for the establishment of heavy industries in the public sector. Vast irrigation schemes were part of his attempts to modernize agriculture. Socialism, according to him, had no meaning for the people, if they could not participate actively in planning their own future. Panchayati Raj or democratic decentralization, was for Nehru an essential step in the direction of modernization, without which socialism could remain only an ivory tower concept in India. Above all, his great contribution to the cause of socialism in India was his constant and continuous endeavours in the cause of world peace. His deep involvement in the problems of the world, seemingly even at the expense of national problems, was deliberate because he had realised that peace in the world was essential for the under-developed and developing nations in order to make progress and provide the minimum necessities of life to their citizens."¹⁴ Here we see that to materialise his concept of socialism, Nehru had certain concerns and that concerns were concerns for democracy, planning, science and technology, industrialization, social reconstruction and

¹⁴ See Subodh Bhushan Gupta. *'Nehru's Socialism'* in Verinder Grover ed., *'Jawaharlal Nehru'* (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications, 1992) pp.277-278.

modernization. In the chapters that follow, attempt is made to understand and appreciate these concerns separately.

Thanks to the strategy outlined by Nehru that since then, India has moved in the direction of socialism. Our national leaders and the successors of Nehru has to uphold Nehru's line of socialism to remould India in a quick march forward, so that we will not lag behind other nations. This will also protect our nation from all crises and problems, both national and international.

Jawaharlal Nehru as a Democratic Humanist

Syamala K. "Humanism in modern Indian thought with special reference to the philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru" Thesis. Department of Philosophy, University of Calicut, 1998

3. Jawaharlal Nehru as a Democratic Humanist

Democracy is a specific form of government. The term also refers to the country that has a democratic form of government. The idea of democracy began to develop in Ancient Greece as early as in 600 B.C. The word 'democracy' itself comes from the Greek words 'demos' and 'kratos' which means 'people' and 'rule or authority' respectively. It follows that democracy means rule of people. Hence, as we all know Abraham Lincoln defined it as the 'government of the people, by the people, and for the people'. In the middle ages, Christianity taught that all men were equal before God. This teaching promoted the democratic ideals of equality and brotherhood among men. During the Renaissance period, the emergence of a new spirit of humanism with its emphasis upon individualism hastened the spread of democracy. People began to demand greater freedom in all areas of life. During the 19th century, democracy developed steadily with the result that when kings were retained they had to satisfy with nominal powers. The Industrial revolution brought political changes of great importance. During the second half of 19th century, the working classes demanded and gained greater political rights. New laws gave more and more citizens the right to vote. The freedom of speech, the press, assembly and religion were extended and

enlarged. Of course, modern democracy is different from the ancient direct democracy. The present democracy is representative democracy in which people elect a certain number of fellow citizens to represent them in making decisions which shape the future of the people.

The Indian democracy is a synthesis of European liberalism of the 19th century and the dynamic philosophy of modern Indian leaders who have rediscovered the long forgotten strings of Eastern genius. This process of synthesis between India and the West was a result of the impact of Western learning and culture on Indian thought. Through Western education, the Indians were able to ponder over their past and present, and to discard all what could not stand the test of reason, humanism and liberalism. The newly awakened self-consciousness of India led the leaders of modern India to dream and work for building India into a great nation. The impact of West on Indian political ideas and institutions has been salutary. The traditional political system of India was characterised by 'non-participating obedience' of the people in the political process. The spread of Western education enabled them to have access to the works of men like Edmund Burke and John Stuart Mill whose writings were the sources of liberal democratic ideas. They cultivated a high respect and devotion to the values of liberty, equality and justice and to the system of parliamentary democracy which encouraged people's

participation in the political process. Thus Western liberalism and rationalism, coupled with democratic socialist doctrines, committed the political leaders of modern India to the establishment of a democratic, secular, and socialist state in the sub-continent.

Another significant aspect of the Western contribution to India is to be found in the realm of judicial administration. The British Government introduced a uniform system of justice and law enforcement under the High Courts established by the Crown. This judicial system, together with the civil and criminal procedures and methods of evaluation of evidence, were retained intact by independent India. Thus, we may say that, the foundations for a sound administrative machinery, local self government, independent judiciary and parliamentary structure laid down during the British regime were retained intact by independent India.

Jawaharlal Nehru was the chief architect of India's destiny. He led the country on the path of democracy, secularism, nationalism, and industrialisation. As a humanist, he had an unsurpassable love towards humanity and hate for everything that was inhuman. He considered democracy as the best form of government because he believed that it preserved the highest of human values. So his activities were largely guided by the ideals of democracy. Again, he firmly believed that socialism can be

realised only through democracy. Democracy, like socialism, meant to him the removal of disparities. He always considered socialism as an extension of democracy and wanted to check the drawbacks of socialist planning through the development of democratic techniques. So his social philosophy may be described as 'Democratic socialism'. He fully appreciated democratic values and methods. Nehru's emphasis on the all-sided development of individual in society made him to be a democratic humanist. As a matter of fact, it was his faith in the dignity of man, which led him to lay faith in the democratic system of government. Faith in the people is the essence of his concept of democracy.

India, being diverse in her religious faiths, and languages and with a multiplicity of land systems, was in need of national policies and programmes which would help her to maintain and strengthen her unity, integrity and stability. So Nehru considered that democracy best suited to our conditions and requirements. But he did not want our democratic system to be a replica of the system in some other country. Instead, he wanted the democracy in India to develop features that were essentially Indian. He wanted to have such features which would fit in with the temper of the people and that are acceptable to them. He was not happy with the democratic set up of the West which had lost the element of humanism. A serious weakness of Western democracy, according to Nehru was that political power there became

monopoly of the dominant class. To him, the true democracy must be based on liberty, equality and progress through peaceful methods. These ideals were in no way new. But Nehru pleaded for their unrestricted practice. He remarked "Above all, we believe in liberty, equality, the dignity of individual and the freedom of human spirit. Because of this we are firmly wedded to the democratic way of life."¹

Throughout his life, Nehru stressed the importance of democracy. He had faith in democracy as a way of life and considered it as the basis of social structure. Broadly, democracy emphasized equality of opportunity for all in the political and economic field and freedom for the individual to grow and develop to the best of his potentiality. It also involved a high degree of tolerance. Nehru regarded people as partners in everything. As independent India began to follow the path of democracy, the desire to depend upon the people grew strong in Nehru's mind. He said "One has to find an equilibrium among the various forces at work. In finding this equilibrium in a democratic country, one has to take the vast masses of the people into confidence. One has to produce a sensation in them that they are partners in the vast undertaking of running a nation, partners in government, partners in industry.

¹ *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol.III* [New Delhi Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1983). p.46.

That is the essence of democracy."² Thus he considered that it was essential for people to have a genuine sense of involvement in the making of modern India.

Democracy has been described as a system in which one can find the liberty of the people, the realization of the liberty, equality and sovereignty of the people. It is the rule of people expressing their sovereign will by their votes. Jawaharlal Nehru was quite confident of the fact that democracy cannot work successfully and achieve its aims or ideals without the goodwill and fullest co-operation of the people. He also favoured the principle that all questions should be decided by those who are really involved. He believed that democracy cannot go against the people. Nehru used to say that no government can afford to ignore the urges of the common people and that democracy itself was based on those very urges.

An important thing that Nehru wanted was to make Indian democracy universal. He favoured adult franchise and rejected restricted franchise on the ground that it would boost elitist groups. He was of opinion that there was no obvious correlation between political wisdom and formal education. Long before independence, Nehru had argued against restricted franchise. He

² *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol.III.* [New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1983] p.60.

wanted to have 'the fullest democracy' because he thought that the talk of 'restricted democracy' was outdated. He said that people are now thinking of 'larger and deeper democracy'. In *Discovery of India*, he states, "My experience in this matter confirmed my faith in the widest possible franchise I was prepared to trust that wide electorate far more than an restricted one, based on property qualification or even an educational test. The property qualification was any how bad; as for education it was obviously desirable and necessary. But I have not discovered any special qualities in a literate or slightly educated person which would entitle his opinion to greater respect than that of a sturdy peasant, illiterate but full of a limited kind of common sense."³ So when India became independent universal adult suffrage was at once introduced. Indian democracy thus kept the door opened for all. And from time to time, the Indian electorate has shown that despite lack of formal education, it can act with remarkable wisdom in times of distress and crises. Thus Nehru proved right in his concept that universal franchise can be the basis of real democracy.

The right to vote means a share in the government. This right gives the people a consciousness that they are governing themselves and so they can

³ Jawaharlal Nehru, '*The Discovery of India*' [New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1982] p.65.

exercise a check on the government, and that they are being consulted. This consciousness is potential enough to keep the government in line with public opinion. As Nehru said while addressing the National Council for Training in Vocational Trades at New Delhi on 30th July, 1957 "A government in a democratic society is a reflection of the will of the people and it should continue to be reflection of this all the time."⁴

To Nehru, democracy in practice did not mean the stifling of the voice of minority by a majority through its sheer voting strength. It "means tolerance, tolerance not merely of those who agree with us, but of those who do not agree with us."⁵ The method of democracy, according to him, is discussion, argument, persuasion and a final decision and acceptance of that decision. Tolerance thus signified the willingness to recognise different view-points and to allow the strongest view to prevail. Democracy thus requires us to respect each individual as sacred and never to regard ourselves as the only repositories of ultimate truth. If we have differences, it has to be settled by peaceful methods. Resort to direct action or violence is inconsistent with the spirit of democracy. Gandhiji's influence on Nehru was so great that he considered

⁴ *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol.III* [New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1983] p.111.

⁵ *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol.I* [New Delhi: Publications Division Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1983] p.13.

those believing in violence as enemies of democracy. His faith in peace as a weapon to achieve great objectives was unshakable.

Nehru wanted to establish that democracy and peaceful ways of change were inseparable. He observed that "It is sometimes said that rapid progress cannot take place by peaceful and democratic methods and that authoritarian and coercive methods have to be adopted. I do not accept this proposition. Indeed, in India today any attempt to discard democratic methods would lead to disruption and would thus put an end to any immediate prospect of progress."⁶ He hoped that India which had won her independence by peaceful means can make sufficient progress also through peaceful democratic system.

Parliamentary Democracy

Jawaharlal Nehru believed that the best form of government was that in which popular participation was assured. That was why India adopted a parliamentary democratic form of government when it became free. This system was best suited to the complex and composite culture of India because it would provide opportunity for all individuals in a diversly composed society to express themselves fully. In this system parliament, being elected by the people, is sovereign. Parliamentary democracy involves peaceful methods of

⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru. '*India-Today and Tomorrow*' (Delhi: Indian Council of Cultural Relations, 1960) p.39.

action, peaceful acceptance of decisions taken and attempts to change them through peaceful ways only. The vast majority of measures considered and passed by the parliament are in principle considered and passed by all the people. Nehru said, "If I may say so, the people's representatives tend to function on the basis of a feeling of the general pulse of the people. The latter have got the power to kick out a government, or a member, after a certain period of time, as it is important to keep the government or the parliament in check. Again, there exists a general feeling or awareness in the people that things are being done according to their wishes or in consultation with them; in fact, they have begun to feel that they are governing themselves."⁷ It is, therefore, the duty of democratic government to take its people into confidence and make them feel their presence and participation in its every decision or action. As a convinced democrat, Nehru believed in the direct appeal to the people in the matters of social change. In a way, he was just widening the parliamentary method itself. He believed that democracy can function only if there was of spirit of democracy in the people. So he laid great emphasis on this popular spirit.

Another reason for Nehru's faith in parliamentary democracy was the

⁷ *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol.III* [New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1983] p.60.

possibility of change and progress under that system. The keynote of human history is progress, and parliamentary democracy can best achieve it. Progress invites problems and they in turn require solution. Democracy has to face this. Nehru pointed out that "if there are no problems, that is a sign of death. Only the dead have no problems; the living have problems and they grow by fighting with problems and overcoming them."⁸

Nehru had a normative impact in the establishment, consolidation and growth of parliamentary democracy. In making of India's constitution, his role had been of the visionary, master, architect and builder of the edifice of parliamentary form of government. The constitution had created democratic structures at the federal and state levels, and there were Directive Principles of state policy regarding the promotion of democratic institutions at village level also. The process of democratic decentralization was forcefully taken forward under his initiatives and led to an involvement of the masses in the rural areas in day to day government at village and district levels. He always took care to ascertain that there was proper distribution of power with a view to promote decentralization both in decision-making and implementation. The broad thrust of his effort was to create democratic institutions which are ultimately the projection of people's character, thinking and aims. He had confidence in the

⁸ *Ibid.* p.157.

judgement of the Indian public and tried to involve them in every aspect of modern development. He was thus giving a wider base and greater stability to the parliamentary democracy of India.

The smooth functioning of parliamentary democracy during Nehru's primeministership induced an unshakable permanence and strength to the system. Changes of government following elections occurred smoothly proving the efficacy of the system and the strong roots it had developed. Jawaharlal Nehru, throughout his seventeen years as Prime Minister, enriched the ethos of parliamentary democracy in India by his exemplary attitude towards matters pertaining to Parliament. He was very particular about attending every sitting of the parliament and questions concerning his portfolios were answered by him personally. He was open to correction and was always prepared to modify a previous stand. He was not ruthless in his methods and working and believed in winning over opponents rather than fighting them. Jawaharlal's attitude towards criticism in a parliamentary democracy provides a telling illustration of his democratic spirit. He valued criticism. He hoped to gain grains of truth from it. But more than that it was a matter of principle. The right to criticism was considered by him as a part and parcel of parliamentary democracy - so long as it was based on honest interpretation of facts. Nehru's sense of responsibility to the system was not confined to concern about his

party or government's position, but it included opposition as well. He treated opposition with due consideration, though in his time the opposition was a tiny minority. As unchallenged leader of the nation and of the ruling party enjoying overwhelming majority in the parliament, Nehru never used his strength to steam roll and humble the opposition.

Jawaharlal Nehru did not dominate or seek to dominate members of his cabinet. His colleagues in Government felt free to express their frank opinion on any matter before the Council of Ministers. They had the confidence that Panditji expected them to function in consonance with true democratic spirit. He expected ministers to take decisions within the scope of their powers and responsibility.

The government in a democracy is however a party government. Regarding this Nehru pointed out that, "it is good to have various parties because when there are different approaches to a problem more light is thrown upon it. I do not believe in all people being regimented to think in one way. I want free flow and free exchange and out of that we sometimes find a bit of truth."⁹ He considered that disciplined political parties were indispensable not only for efficient government, but also for representing the masses. He always

⁹ *Ibid.* p.36.

stood for achieving a national consensus by consultation with the various political parties, in the formation of all major policies particularly those concerning with economic and industrial planning. In a country like India, there are a variety of opinions over almost every subject. Since opinions differ, inevitably parties also differ. But for the smooth running of democracy, Nehru advocates, "the democratic method inevitably implies trying to understand the other party's opinion, a certain give-and-take, and a certain adjustment to whatever the final decision might be. If this does not happen, we simply go to pieces."¹⁰ Again in spite of all this, Nehru always insisted that when time comes, people have to rise above party and think of the nation. He added that sometimes they will have to think even of the world at large, of which our nation is a part.

Thus Nehru's concept of parliamentary democracy revolved around certain principles like popular sovereignty through representatives, election by adult franchise, majority rule, responsible political parties and leadership. According to him, parliamentary democracy was apt to be extinct if these vital elements were destroyed.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.31.

Some drawbacks of parliamentary democracy

In spite of all his praise for democracy, Nehru was fully aware of the limitations of this system. One such drawback is election which is an essential and inseparable part of democratic process. Concerning it Nehru wrote, "yet often enough, elections brought out the evil side of man, and it was obvious that they did not always lead to the success of better man."¹¹ But in spite of this comment, Nehru made it clear that such evils were prevalent only where electorates are small, and under the widest possible franchise, which India has chosen, such evils are likely to vanish.

Secondly, though Nehru was proud of India's biggest electorate, he did not hesitate to say that "with all my admiration and love for democracy, I am not prepared to accept the statement the largest number of people are always right."¹² In spite of this, he was determined to build India through democratic methods. Speaking in this regard, he said "we have decided to do so because we feel that democracy offers society something of the highest human values."¹³

¹¹ Jawaharlal Nehru. *'The Discovery of India'* [New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1982] p.65.

¹² *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vo.II* [New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1983] pp.252-53.

¹³ *Ibid.*

Another serious defect is pointed out by Sri. V.M. Tarakunde in his article "Humanist Approach to Politics." It relates to the party system involved in parliamentary democracy. He wrote "parties operate as the means by which power is taken away from the people and concentrated in few hands and in their struggle for power, parties pander to the weaknesses of the people, such as blind faith and their adherence to the evil traditions of casteism and religious communalism."¹⁴

The greatest danger to democracy is war, said Nehru. Because war puts an end to the very values democracy cherishes. Among other drawbacks of democracy Nehru finds wastage of time and energy. But as a working democrat, Nehru proceeds with optimism ignoring these demerits. He looked for new developments so that democracy can keep pace with time. He thus took India along the path of mature system of parliamentary democracy. This peaceful progress on constitutional basis was seen with admiration all over the world.

Nehru more than once pointed out that democracy can function only in a society where equality prevails. Because of his inborn socialist and democratic instinct, he gave special attention to the status of women also. He

¹⁴ See V.M. Tarakunde, '*Humanist approach to politics*' [Radical Humanist Vol.59, No.10 January 1996] pp.4-5.

tried his best to give women a chance for expression. Speaking on the Hindu Code Bill in the Lok Sabha in 1955, he observed, "you cannot have a democracy if you cut off a large chunk of democracy, fifty percent of the people, and put them in a class apart in regard to social privileges and the like."¹⁵ There is no doubt that the enactment of this code, giving equal rights to Hindu men and women in matters of marriage and succession to property was the result largely of Nehru's determination to remove inequality between men and women in India.

Concept of freedom in democracy

Absolute faith in the freedom of man was also a reason which made Nehru a staunch democrat. He believed in the freedom of spirit. In his study of the Indo-Aryan Philosophy, Jawaharlal Nehru saw a kind of metaphysical democracy which formed the background to social existence. In *Discovery of India* he wrote, "He who sees the one spirit in all, and all in the one spirit, henceforth can look with contempt on no creature."¹⁶ He thought that such a philosophy might have affected life and produced an atmosphere of tolerance, reasonableness, acceptance of free thought in the matters of faith and the

¹⁵ *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol.III* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1983] p.45.

¹⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru. '*The Discovery of India*' [New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1982] p.91.

capacity to live and let live, which were the dominant features of Indian culture. Nehru discovered that the sages of the past were attached passionately to this idea of freedom and he wanted to see everything in terms of it. He very often said that this urge of freedom had developed democratic ways of living in the society from time immemorial.

Nehru had visualised India regaining in full measure the ancient ethos of universal humanism wherein the dignity of every human being and his freedom were respected. He believed that Indian society cannot last long without such social virtues and so he insisted that the same freedom of thought and expression should be assured to the individual today, if democracy is to have meaning. It is because of this firm belief that the constitution guaranteed "to all the people of India freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship, vocation, association and action."¹⁷ Thus his concept of individual freedom necessarily implied freedom of speech and expression, of association and all other fields of creative activities. He added that the creative and adventurous spirit of man could grow only in an atmosphere of freedom and responsibility. According to him, the general health of the society was largely

¹⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru. 'Independence and After [New York: John Day & Co., 1950), p.344.

determined by the freedom of its people. Nehru wanted to make a new India where there was freedom and equal opportunity for all people.

As a democrat who believed in the importance of individual, Nehru thought that a democratic State alone will represent a structure of society in which freedom is cherished and in which values can be best realised. One of the reasons for Nehru's fascination for democracy as against authoritarianism was that the former was based on reason while the latter had its basis on dogmatism. Free discussion and inquisitive search for truth, had no place in authoritarianism, but these constituted the very essence of democracy. The authoritarian systems do not permit free growth and development of individuals. Fascism offered man fulfilment, not through his personality or individual self, but through complete and blind obedience to the State. Fascism and Nazism stood for a complete and uncompromising denial of the principles of liberalism and democracy. They based themselves upon the total subordination of the individual. The rights and freedom of man were denied in favour of State. Communism also, according to him, crushes the free spirit of man. Though certain aspects of communism attracted him, his mind revolted against it when the question of basic human values was taken into consideration. He was against the undemocratic features in communism and was irritated by their dictatorial ways and aggressive methods.

The modern democratic State is frequently confronted with the problem of defining the relationship between individual freedom and order in society. Nehru said in this regard that "unless the state is perfect and every individual is perfect, there is always some conflict between the freedom of the individual and the security of the state."¹⁸ Man's freedom and individuality was of foremost importance for him. He did not want individual to be thrown into the rubbish heap of humanity but wanted to be regarded as significant and purposeful. Nehru's cardinal principle was that State existed for the individual and not the other way. He did not want man to be suppressed by State or any other institution. He maintained that the State was only a means to an end and not an end in itself.

Individual freedom is absolutely necessary to the modern democratic State and democracy would cease to exist in its absence. To promote and preserve human values, both society and individual must enjoy freedom. Nehru held that individuals in their separate entity should unite for the welfare of the State, which is nothing but the welfare of the people as a whole. He discarded the concept of 'police state' and stood for a 'socialist state', which alone could serve the cause of the individual in a modern society. Nehru was

¹⁸ *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol.II* [New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1983] p.583.

keen to strike a balance between the security of the state and the freedom of the individual. If the individual seeks protection of law, society also necessitates protection against the selfish and predatory individuals. So Nehru said that no simple formula could be given to draw the line between the freedom of the individual and security and order of the state. It depended on the circumstances. He felt that "in times of war the demarcation should be in favour of State and in peace it should be to the advantage of the individual."¹⁹ Thus, with regard to the place of individual in socialist State, Nehru maintained that individual freedom has got to be correlated with the social structure.

Economic democracy

In the early years of struggle for independence, democracy for Nehru meant the ideal of self rule or responsible government. During the later years, he altered his views on democracy stressing more and more on its economic aspects. He had rightfully recognised that to bring about real democracy, what was required was not only to provide adult suffrage to the people, but to remove economic inequalities. On the other hand, Nehru observed, "political power which the vote was supposed to give was seen to be a shadow with no

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

substance, without economic power....."²⁰ He said that in the past, democracy had taken mainly to mean political democracy and it was roughly represented by the idea of every person having a vote. So he said that "political democracy by itself is not enough except that it may be used to obtain gradually increasing measure of economic democracy."²¹

Jawaharlal Nehru while highlighting the objectives of economic aspects of democracy pointed out that the ultimate goal of this system was to wind up the barrier between the have's and have nots'. Liberty and democracy he thought, had no meaning without economic equality. In his theory of economic democracy, he wanted the good things of life to be made available to more and more people and thus the gross inequalities to be removed. He once remarked, "Political democracy is inevitably going in the direction, everywhere of what might be called economic democracy. It may take different forms, but only in the measure that it solves the economic problems does it succeed even in the political field. If the economic problems are not solved, then the political structure tends to weaken and crack up."²² Thus in

²⁰ Jawaharlal Nehru. '*The Glimpses of World History*' [New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1982] p.259.

²¹ *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol. III* [New Delhi: Publications Division Ministry of Information and Broad Casting, Government of India, 1983], p.138.

²² *Ibid.*

the ultimate analysis, democracy for Nehru implied a mental approach applied to both political and economic problems.

Nehru wanted economic changes through democratic methods. So he sought a system which could realize economic growth and social justice without the sacrifice of freedom and democratic rights of common citizen. He did not want India to imitate the economic model of any other country, but to evolve a system suited to her own requirements. As pointed out by Dr. Harbans Pathak, "from the historical point of view, Nehru understood the 'shell' of Indian system to be capitalistic and its 'essence' feudalistic."²³ Hence Nehru continued to stress the importance of socialism for tackling contemporary economic and social problems. But he did not want to break abruptly with the country's geographical, historical, religious, economic and social background because he firmly believed that future has to be built on the foundations laid in the past and the present. So he finally took a stand in favour of mixed economy, in which he asserted that socialist principles and ideals would prevail generally along with a fair share of capitalism. To him, mixed economy was a

²³ See Dr. Harbans Pathak, '*Jawaharlal Nehru and Economic Planning*' in Dr. V. Bhaskara Rao and Dr. A. Amruth Rao, Ed. '*Nehru and administration*' [Delhi, Ajanta Publications, 1989] p.61.

synthesis of two systems of capitalistic and communist forms of economy. But it was free from their dogmatic approaches and represented a higher form.

Nehru's concept of mixed economy envisaged the simultaneous participation of the public and private sectors in the developmental activities. He very firmly held that such a system of economy alone would be suitable to the Indian conditions because the crucial problem for India was production which could be regulated even without complete nationalization. He aimed at running public enterprises in such a way that on the one hand, there should be adequate checks and protections, and on the other hand enough freedom for the enterprises to work efficiently. He also believed that mixed economy alone possessed flexibility and resilience to assimilate changes in human activity and modes of production made possible by the growth of science and technology.

According to the system of mixed economy as envisaged by Nehru, key sectors of the economy were to be wholly under State control, while the private sector would operate in other spheres. However, private sectors must be so subjected to the control of the State that it would function only within the objectives of national plan. Thus he wanted more and more State control over the private sector so that the mixed economy can sufficiently adapt itself to the changing conditions. He stressed this because he wanted us to move in the direction of democratically planned collectivism. He said "change will have to

be in the direction of a democratically planned collectivism A democratic collectivism need not mean an abolition of private property, but it will mean the public ownership of the basic and major industries. It will mean the co-operative or collective control of the land. In India especially it will be necessary to have, in addition to big industries, co-operatively controlled small and village industries. Such a system of democratic collectivism will need careful and continuous planning and adaptation to the changing needs of the people An equalization of income will not result from all this, but there will be far more equitable sharing and a progressive tendency towards equalization."²⁴ Thus the system, in short, emphasized democratically planned development within the framework of mixed economy with private, public and co-operative sections to achieve the objectives of modernization, growth and social justice.

Economic Planning

Nehru wanted to introduce planning into the economic activities of the Nation. Economic planning was dear to him and the example of planning in Russia enthused him greatly. He was impressed by the development that Soviet Union brought about by planned effort. He felt that we should follow

²⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru. *The Discovery of India* [New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1982] p.522.

the same path if we wanted to get rid of our poverty. Applying planning to a democratic State was a new experiment. But Nehru was eager to give a planned economic content to the democratic structure of Indian Society. For him, democracy and planning were not inconsistent with each other. He asserted, "If anybody is going to tell me that in a democratic structure planning has no meaning, I am not prepared to accept that statement."²⁵ He suggested that in a planned democracy, the system of free market should be subordinated to social ownership of means of production. Planning through democratic means was an indispensable element of his method of social reconstruction. Nehru emphasized that for combining democracy with socialistic planning, it is essential to win the good will and co-operation of the people. He was convinced that planning without democracy was only meaningless as democracy without socialism. So he insisted that socialism and planned development required full co-operation of the people.

Even before the independence, Nehru realized that economic regeneration and progressive modern life could not be achieved without concerted planning. Insistence on planning for socio-economic reconstruction thus became a cardinal feature of his thought. He believed that planning was

²⁵ *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol.III* [New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1983] p.70.

essential for achieving socialist objectives. In 1938 itself congress appointed a National Planning Committee with Nehru as its chairman and he boldly accepted the challenging task. He formulated certain economic policies with the aid and advice of the eminent economists of the country who were on the committee. Its main objectives were: (i) attainment of national self sufficiency and (2) doubling of per capita income within a decade. The statement of objective made by him became a significant document in economic planning in India.

Nehru was deeply attached to the concept of planning as a technique of advancement of productivity. He believed in the inter-dependence of science and planning and considered it as the application of science to the national problems. According to him, planning means "having some conception of the goal we are striving for, of the kind of society we are aiming at, trying to work towards that end harmoniously and peacefully with as few upsets as possible, laying down targets so that on all sectors we may advance simultaneously."²⁶ He often said that the only way to overcome our problems was through the instrumentality of planning. In fact, Nehru wanted his democratic planning to be welfare oriented. He wanted planning to be instrumental in producing

²⁶ Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru Vol.II [New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1984] p.579.

maximum wealth and making such arrangement for its distribution that it reaches all the people. Nehru was of the view that planning had a social purpose as well. It was expected to bring about a new orientation in social outlook. In his own words, planning was meant "to bring about a new social order free from exploitation, poverty, unemployment, and injustice."²⁷

After independence, Nehru emphasized the necessity for a rapid and radical but peaceful socio-economic transition. He adopted planning not as an end, but as a means aiming at the well-being and advancement of the people as a whole, as the opening up of opportunity to all and the growth of freedom and the method of co-operative organisation and action."²⁸ To secure a satisfactory rate of growth and a strong industrial base for the economy, recourse to planning was indispensable. We have only limited resources in terms of materials and skills. To utilise these scarce resources to the best, we had to lay down priorities. Appropriate policies and organisations were also needed for their effective implementation. So Nehru insisted on planned economic development. Talking in simple language to the millions of our

²⁷ *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol.II* [New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1983] p.96.

²⁸ *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol. IV* [new Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broad Casting, Government of India, 1983] pp.134-135.

people throughout the country, he made planning and its concept understandable to them.

Nehru considered planning as a perpetual affair which was apt to go on for generations. Planning, according to him, "consists in having an objective, not only an immediate objective, but a more distant objective. We cannot plan only for tomorrow, we have to plan for years"²⁹ Planning was concerned with both industry and agriculture and it paid adequate attention to a large number of allied things such as transport, health, education and social services.

The Planning Commission drafted three Five Years Plans during Nehru's era. In the first Five Year Plan, top priority was given to the development of agriculture in order to make India self sufficient in food production. A moderate beginning was also made to industrialise India through setting up of key industries. The Second Five Year Plan laid great stress on rapid industrialisation with particular emphasis on the development of basic and heavy industries. Nehru also presided over the processes of formulation of Third Five Year Plan. In it greater stress was laid on agricultural production. There was also stress on heavy and machine building industries. These Five Year Plans, under the dynamic leadership of Nehru, laid strong foundations to

²⁹ *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol.IV* [New Delhi, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and broadcasting, Government of India, 1983] pp.134-135.

the agricultural and industrial development in India. Though planning had come under criticism from time to time, the broad fact remains that it is even now the well established means and mechanism for the social and economic transformation of India.

From the above discussions, we may conclude that the definition of democracy as referred by Nehru from time to time may be classified as: (1) Democracy defined in terms of freedom in which maximum human values can be realised (2) Democracy defined in terms of certain governmental institutions and procedures (3) Democracy defined in terms of a structure of society in which complete economic and social equality will gradually be obtained and (4) Democracy defined in terms of certain attitude and approach to problems on the part of the individual and society. In fact, proper functioning of a truly democratic State involves the application of all these four aspects.

Jawaharlal Nehru was a great visionary and he provided the fundamental ideas in the realm of economic planning for developing strong and self-reliant India with a just social order. These ideas continue to be of great relevance and will remain so in future also.

Jawaharlal Nehru as a Secular Humanist

Syamala K. "Humanism in modern Indian thought with special reference to the philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru" Thesis. Department of Philosophy, University of Calicut, 1998

4. Jawaharlal Nehru as a Secular Humanist

The word 'Secularism' is derived from Latin word 'Saeculum' which means 'of this age' 'related to this world' etc. In the Encyclopedia Americana it is defined as an ethical system founded on the principles of natural morality and independent of revealed religion or supernaturalism. It arose and developed at a period when the relations of science and religion were beginning to be regarded as directly opposed to one another. Secularism held that its principles could be established and sustained by the intellect. It deals with the known world interpreted by experience and neither offers nor forbids any opinion regarding another world. Thus secularism and religion were defined in mutually exclusive terms.

In the West the concept of secularism had its genesis in the conflict between the church and the State in the Middle Ages. This friction was intensified after Martin Luther revolted against Roman Catholicism. Consequently, secularism became popular as a new socio-economic and political ideology in the West. In due course, the goal of secularism as a philosophy became complete separation of the Church from the State. Thus the Western concept of secularism imply an anti-religious attitude. With the Age of Reason, Industrial Revolution and the Creed of Marxism, several national

polities have freed themselves from the theological control and taken road to secularism.

The concept of secularism was not planted in India from the West. The Western concept of secularism implying anti-religious ideology cannot be applied to India because ours is a multi-religious and multi-racial society. Secularism in India does not exclude religion. On the contrary, it promotes peaceful co-existence of all religions. The attitude of 'live and let live' became characteristic of India's ethos and that is responsible for the popularity of all those religious cults and movements in India.

In India, secularism was woven into the fabric of her ancient society. From the dawn of her history, India has given to the world the message of brotherly love and universal compassion. It is because of this ethos of tolerance and culture of secularism that centuries ago, Christians, Jews and Parsis found no difficulty in finding a home in India. The tradition of tolerance was thus found to be existing in India since time immemorial. This is clearly pointed out by Sri Radhey Mohan when he wrote, "India, has never been a theocratic state. In ancient India, the concept of a just state was where the ruler did not discriminate among his subjects following different religious faiths and allowed them complete freedom to lead the kind of life they opted for - religious,

cultural, or any other, with one single provision, that their life style wouldn't impinge on other peoples' way of living."¹

The spirit of India has been one of assimilation of various elements that came into this country. As a result of the historical process, India evolved a composite culture which meant the blending of separate elements into a single whole. Though the fount head of our culture and heritage have been Vedas and Upanishads, they have been further enriched by Sufi and Bhakti Movements. These movements were led by such leaders as Baba Farid, Kabir, Guru Nanak, Tukaram and Mirabai and they gave a tremendous impetus to the bringing of the people of various communities closer. As L.M. Singhvi points out, "The great poets, philosophers, mystics, savants, saints and writers from our hoary past to our own age have together woven, thread by thread, and stitch by stitch, the secularist motifs of responsive tolerance and universal humanism in the tapestry of Indian life and thought. The strength of these motifs is in real sense, the strength of secularism in India..... In these teachings lie the spiritual mainsprings of our secularism as well as social and ideological validation of our secular constitutional arrangements."² It is because of this connection of

¹ See Radhey Mohan. '*A challenge*' in Radhey Mohan, ed. '*Secularism in India: A Challenge*' (New Delhi: National Book Bureau, 1990) p.ii.

² See L.M. Singhvi. '*Secularism: Indegenous and Alien*' in M.M. Sankdher, ed. '*Secularism in India: Dilemmas and Challenges*' (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publication, 1992), pp.43-44.

secularism with ancient spiritualistic tradition of India, that Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and many other thinkers regarded secularism in India as a religious and spiritual doctrine.

With the possible exception of Aurangzeb, the Mughals, who entered and settled in India also adopted secularism as a principle of State policy. During the Mughal period there was an intermingling of Hindu and Islamic civilizations which resulted in a rich cultural fusion. Our composite culture thus represents a vibrant combination of various strands. Secularism, therefore, blossomed out of a composite culture and the people of India are rightly proud of it.

Although the spirit of secularism was undermined during the British rule, it could not be totally defeated, and it found powerful revival during the struggle for independence. During the freedom movement, secularism reappeared and it united the followers of different religious traditions in their fight against the foreign domination. The focus there was on a policy which neither favoured nor discriminated against any religion, but gave all of them full opportunity to develop. The Indian National Movement under the leadership of Gandhiji, Jawaharlal Nehru and many others and under the cultural inspiration of men like Rabindra Nath Tagore and Subramanya Bharati inspired the people. A new consciousness of cultural synthesis and respect for all religions emerged as result

of this. Gandhiji believed that by according an equality of status to all religions, and structuring secular politics on this premise, it would be possible to lay the basis for a cohesive nation hood within Indian society.

Much before independence, Nehru played a heroic role in the development of a secular basis for the Indian polity. As a firm believer in the secular character of the State, he repeatedly affirmed that it must be religiously neutral. He drafted the Karachi Congress Resolution in 1931 which declared that "state shall observe neutrality in regard to all religions."³ It was in this resolution that Nehru's secularism found expression for the first time. According to him, the equality of religions needed to be confined to the private domain and the political domain could best be regulated on the basis of distributive justice wholly unrelated to the religious sensibility of man. Thus the spirit of secularism was enriched during the days of our long freedom movement. The legacy of national movement was to transform India from an ancient civilization to a modern State and its leaders adopted different ways and means to achieve this objective.

It was mainly due to Jawaharlal Nehru's efforts that India emerged as a Secular State. For him, secularism was essentially a social ideal to be promoted

³ Jawaharlal Nehru. '*The Unity of India* (New York: Johnday & Co., 1948), p.466.

in the interest of national unity and progress. Nehru favoured a strong secular base for the state primarily for the maintenance of social stability and religious harmony among diverse groups. It was his firm conviction that a secular state alone could serve a community with diverse religious creeds and faiths. Secularism has been the most effective cementing force in the context of meeting the demands of multi-religious, multi culture, and a multi-lingual society like India. The concept of secularism is also relevant in the process of nation building. Without secularism as a binding force, uniting the citizens of India, we cannot imagine to construct the polity of India in the right perspective.

Secularism as an aspect of modernization

Secularism beside being a pre-requisite to the presentation of the new Nation's integrity is also a necessary aspect of modernization. It was Jawaharlal Nehru's scientific and humanistic outlook that was manifested in his articulation of secularism. He regarded secularism to be essential for making India a modern and democratic society. He believed that this was the only way to make the country stable, strong and united. He was vehemently opposed to the idea of theocratic state, which in his view, was both medieval and anti-democratic in character. "It was given up by the world some centuries ago and

has no place in the mind of modern man."⁴ As far as modern India was concerned, it was impossible to go back to that conception which the world had outlived and that which was completely out of tune with modern outlook. The necessity of the secular state arose also from certain practical considerations. The Government of a country like India with its plurality of religions can function satisfactorily in the modern age only on a secular basis. The progress of a state depends on national unity and solidarity. If special status was given to one particular religion, it would create a feeling of suspicion among the adherents of other faiths and it will inevitably lead to friction and conflicts. Thus, secularism in India was the need of the society and country as a whole. It was essential for peace, unity, integrity and progress.

Jawaharlal Nehru's concept of secularism

Jawaharlal Nehru may be regarded as the architect of Indian Secularism. According to him, a secular state means a state in which the state protect all religions, but does not itself adopt any religion as state religion. It does not mean that the people should give up their religion. So secularism in India is not anti-religions but it gives equal respect for all religions, i.e., not mere tolerance but positive respect. Nehru declared, "we are building a free secular state where

⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru. *'Independence and After'* (New York: Johnday & Co., 1950), p.123.

every religion and belief has full freedom."⁵ This form of secularism which respected the religion of all individuals was designed to ensure the emergence of a strong and cohesive polity in India.

Secularism, for Nehru, stands for the broad, liberal and humanistic outlook which makes it possible for man to rise himself above religion. It is opposed not to religion, but to communalism, fundamentalism and fanaticism. It does not deny religion, but disapproves the tendency of thinking in terms of my religion and your religion. This idea becomes clear in Nehru's statement that "it (secularism) does not obviously mean a state where religion is discouraged. It means freedom of religions and conscience, including freedom of those who have no religion, subject only to their not interfering with each other or with the basic conception of our state..... The word 'secular', however conveys much more to me although that might not be its dictionary meaning. it conveys the idea of social and political equality."⁶ In simple words, Indian secularism means a protection and equal treatment of all religions and absence of State religion. It does not stand for the abolition of religion, but only for the separation of state and religion.

⁵ *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol.I (Sept. 1946 to May 1949)* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information of Broadcasting, Government of India, 1983), p.60.

⁶ S. Gopal, ed. '*Jawaharlal Nehru: An anthology*' (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.327.

Secularism is a philosophy of life and its ideal is progress in human life in the present world irrespective of man's religion, sect, caste, colour and creed. It does not accept anything which makes difference between man and man. Humanism based on reason and not on religious dogmas is the salient feature of secularism. Pt. Nehru's secularism was rooted in his concept of democratic humanism. He subscribed to a secular view of life. Secularism, according to him, was not only a political doctrine but a social one of revolutionary character embracing all religious and communities in India. It contained spiritual elements as well. He stated "..... secular philosophy itself must have some background, some objective other than merely material well-being. It must essentially have a spiritual value and certain standards of behaviour."⁷

The ideal of secular state implies a social structure in which the individual is not subject to the social inequalities imposed by religious sanctions. Religious attitudes may hamper the growth of a free atmosphere, necessary for the building up of a democratic and secular state. So Jawaharlal Nehru was opposed to a theocratic state. He wanted to establish a secular state and society based on justice and equality. He defined it as a state which "protects all religions, but does not favour one at the expense of others and does not itself

⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru: *The Unity of India* (New York: John Day & Co., 1948), p.180.

adopt any religion as the state religion."⁸ What he envisaged was an Indian brotherhood in which the practise of religion should be a personal matter, where a difference of religion would not raise a barrier between man and man. Religion was not debarred from public life but it was dissociated from the state. The spirit of religious tolerance was thus combined with strict neutrality of state to all religions and a clear demarcation of religious and secular spheres with an autonomy of the latter. Thus, Indian secularism as framed by Nehru does not exclude religion, but it promotes peaceful co-existence of all religions.

Nehru was secular to the core of his heart and he stood firmly for it. He constantly worked for its dissemination in the society. He emphasized that no religion should have any privilege and no community should be deprived of its legitimate rights on the basis of religion. Broadcasting from New Delhi on 14th February 1948, Jawaharlal Nehru said "India is a common home to all those who live here, to whatever religion they may belong - they have equal rights and obligations. Ours is a composite nation."⁹ Again on October 22nd 1948, he made it clear that "we are building a free secular state where every religion and belief has full freedom and equal honour, whose every citizen has equal liberty

⁸ See R.C. Gupta, ed. *'Indian freedom movement and thought'* (New Delhi: Sterling publishers, 1983), p.273.

⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru: *'Independence and After'*. (New York: Johnday & Co., 1948), p.123.

and equal opportunity."¹⁰ Thus Nehru wanted each Indian citizen to be recognized by his citizenship rather than by his religious identity. This spirit is evident in the constitution itself since its emphasis is on individual citizenship rather than religious affiliation.

His attitude towards Religion

Nehru was by no means against religion as such, but he was deeply conscious of the harm which it had done to India. According to him religions might cause obstacles in the moral and spiritual progress of a nation. A new India could not be built upon the watery foundations of supernaturalism and orthodoxy, which were the consequences of faith in religion, according to Nehru. Hence he was inclined to establish a secular society based on justice and equality in spite of an intensely religious atmosphere of India. He was hardly attracted by religion except as a cultural force and heritage. He says, "But the usual religious outlook does not concern itself with this world. It seems to me to be the enemy of clear thought, for it is based not only on the acceptance without demur of certain fixed and unalterable theories and dogmas, but also sentiment and emotion and passion. It is far removed from what I consider spiritually and things of the spirit, and it deliberately or unconsciously

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p.40.

shuts its eyes to reality"¹¹ He was definitely against organised religion, since according to him, "organised religion invariably becomes a vested interest and thus inevitably a reactionary force opposing change and progress."¹² It was his considered view that people's involvement with organised religion was the main stumbling block in the way of India's progress.

Nehru opined that religion often comes into conflict with reason. Religion as practised, either deals with matters unrelated to our normal lives and thus adopts an ivory tower attitude, or is allied to certain social usages, which do not fit in with the present age. To him religion seemed "to stand for blind belief and reaction, dogma and bigotry, superstition and exploitation, and the preservation of vested interests."¹³ Focussing light on some of the negative aspects of religion, Nehru pointed out that "religion as I saw it practised, and accepted even by thinking minds, whether it was Hinduism or Islam or Buddhism or Christianity, did not attract me. It seemed to be closely associated with superstitious practices and dogmatic beliefs, and behind it lay a method of approach to life's problems which was certainly not that of science. There was

¹¹ Jawaharlal Nehru: '*An Autobiography*' (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1982), p.377.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Jawaharlal Nehru. '*An Autobiography*' (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1982), p.374.

an element of magic about it, an uncritical, credulousness and a reliance on the supernatural "¹⁴

As essentially a man interested in the present world, Nehru felt that organised religion did not help and even hindered the moral and spiritual progress of people. In *Discovery of India*, he wrote "even if God exists, it may be desirable not to look upto Him or to rely upon Him. Too much dependence on supernatural factors may lead, and has often led, to a loss of self reliance in man and to blunting of his capacity and creative ability."¹⁵ Among the men of religion, Nehru finds "Few of them are interested in trying to make the world a better, a brighter place."¹⁶ He was of opinion that religion, thinking in terms of other world had little conception of human values and social justice. His attitude to religion is thus expressed in his autobiography, "usually religion becomes an a social quest for God or the Absolute and the religious man is concerned for more with his own salvation than with the good of society."¹⁷

In Nehru's Autobiography, we find him lamenting, India is supposed to be

¹⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru. '*The Discovery of India*' (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1982), p.26.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru. '*An Autobiography*' (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1982), p.374.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.377.

a religious country above everything else and Hindu, Moslem, Sikh and others take pride in their faiths and testify to their truths by breaking heads. The spectacle of what is called religion or at any rate organised religion, in India and elsewhere has filled me with horror and I have frequently condemned it and wished to make a clear sweep of it."¹⁸ He found in religion preconceived notions, because of which he thought, it deliberately shut its eyes to reality for the fear that reality might not fit in with its notions. In a letter to Dr. Syed Mohammed he wrote, "Religion as practised in India has become 'the old man of the sea' for us and it has not only broken our backs but stifled and almost killed all originality of thought and mind."¹⁹

Jawaharlal Nehru, however, was not altogether anti-religious. He did not believe in the dogmas and rituals in it and opposed the role of religion as a diversive force. His attitude is made clear in a passage in *Discovery of India* thus, "..... they (religions) have also tried to imprison truth in set forms and dogmas and encouraged ceremonials and practices which soon lose all their original meaning and become a mere routine. While impressing upon man the awe and mystery of the unknown that surrounds him on all sides, they have discouraged him from trying to understand not only unknown but what might

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p.374.

¹⁹ '*Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*' Vol.II (New Delhi: Orient Longman Ltd., 1979), p.242.

come in the way of social effort. Instead of encouraging curiosity and thought, they have preached a philosophy of submission to nature, to established church, to the prevailing social order, and to everything that is Religion, though it has undoubtedly brought comfort to innumerable human beings and stabilised society by its values, has checked the tendency to change and progress inherent in human society”.²⁰

Though Nehru attacked the prevailing practices and dogmas of religion, he did not consider religion as a socially debilitating false ideology. Nehru did realise the immense value of the inner meaning and significance of religion. It was obvious to him that religion had supplied some deeply felt inner need of human nature, and the vast majority of people all over the world could not do without some form of religious belief. It is stated in *Discovery of India* that “Religions have helped greatly in the development of humanity. They have laid down values and standards and have pointed out principles for the guidance of human life.”²¹ For Nehru, the essence of religion was truthfulness, love and not hatred towards others. Religion, according to him, must be an effective medium for human brotherhood and not social alienation. He thus wanted to uphold and humanize the religious values of oneness, fellowship and toleration.

²⁰ Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1982), p.622.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Nehru considered religion as the remedy to the particular unrest felt by man even when he is fully equipped with all the best in his life. There is something beyond the scientific positive knowledge of the day, and no thinking person can ignore it. Since Nehru's academic training was in science, his understanding of scientific method and spirit was first hand and thorough, and there is nothing he loved more than to bring this spirit to the Indian people. This happy synthesis of the essentially scientific with the essentially religious temper is the unique quality of Nehru's secular humanism. It is, therefore, not hostile to religion. He regarded that religion can be accommodated within a secular society. It demands a marginalisation of religion in social and political life and restrict it to one's private life.

An unequivocal acceptance of the fact that all religions are different paths leading to the same goal forms the true foundation for an enlightened secularism. Religion can become a great unifying force in a world torn by suspicion and hatred. Secularism in India, therefore, does not mean that people should forsake their religious heritage. Since India is a mosaic of different religions, cultures and beliefs, it only means that Government of India will not associate itself directly with any religious faith.

Secularism made an aspect of our constitution

In building up of our country, Nehru's main emphasis was on the freeing of our minds from the obsessions of dogmatic religion. Organised religion was found to be challenge to the idea of world community. So Nehru tried to meet this challenge of religion through the force of secularism which he accepted as an article of faith just as it is in the constitution of India. Man being his central concern, Nehru insisted that everyone had freedom of conscience and so, a secular perspective, treating all faiths as eligible for fair survival was imperative. The Indian state is secular in the sense that its constitution guarantees full religious liberty to all individuals and groups and forbids discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion, caste etc. In our constitutional system, all the members of the Indian family are equal citizens, regardless of their religious affiliation. All citizens are also bound by the same duty of loyalty to India, and the same obligations of service to nation. Thus, people in India have a constitutional right to be treated equally and impartially before law and to equal benefit in the state's scheme of development policies.

Evolution of secular tradition in the Indian Constitution may be regarded as Nehru's greatest contribution. Secularism, in the positive sense, is the corner stone of an egalitarian and forward looking society which our constitution purports to establish. It exalts secularism as one of its basic objectives and set

out it in its Preamble. The secular ideal is given due position in Part III of the constitution. The right to freedom of religion in its various aspects is charted in Articles 25 to 28.

Article 25 provides for the right to freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion. To profess a religion means to choose freely and openly one's faith and belief. To practice religion is to perform prescribed religious duties, rites, rituals etc. And to propagate it means to spread and publicise one's religious views for the edification of others. Article 26 provides for every religion freedom to manage its own affairs, establish its own religious as well as educational institutions for imparting religious instruction. Article 27 protects individuals from paying any tax, the proceeds of which are specifically appropriated in payment of expenses for the promotion or maintenance of any particular religion. Article 28 prohibits the giving of religious instruction in any educational institutions wholly maintained out of state funds. Article 16, 17 and 29 ensure equal opportunity in matters of employment and protection against discrimination. So divorce from religion, absence of state religion, tolerance of all religions and equality of rights of citizens can be called as the characteristics of secularism in India. In such a society, the individual would be free to pursue his own cherished values.

Politics and Religion

Secularism, as the Indian constitution envisages it, is an expression of the recognition of the basic freedom of individuals. It excludes the state's interference in the matters of personal faith and philosophy. The tendency to treat communities rather than individuals as the basic unit in socio-political discourse also has to be given up in a secular society. Secularism is thus, a system of social ethics based upon a doctrine that ethical standards and conducts should be determined exclusively with reference to the present life and social well-being, without reference to religion. As noted by Sri Adhi. H. Doctor, "Secularism makes sense only when it is understood as a modernizing principle that seeks to replace religious ethic by contemporary, rational, humanistic ethic. Obviously, implicit in such an understanding of secularism is the separation of religion from politics."²²

Nehru was also against mixing religion with politics. Politicisation of religion was considered by him as a danger to modern secular society. He appealed for unity and said that no amount of economic policies and development project will be of use if the people were divided on religious

²² Adhi. H. Doctor. '*Secularism-A modernizing force*' (The Radical Humanist Vol.59, No.10, January 1996), p.19.

grounds. He was also opposed to the principle of communal electorates which had prevailed before independence. Separate electorates were abolished when our constitution was framed. Communal civil codes, differing widely on many points, posed another problem for the secular state. Jawaharlal Nehru urged the eventual creation of uniform civil code, whereby Hindus, Muslims, Christians and all others would be governed by the same marriage, inheritance and guardianship laws. Political liberty, equality and progress through peaceful means formed Pt. Nehru's basic democratic ideals, as they all aimed at building a free society in which there would be freedom and equal opportunities for all without any consideration of caste, creed and religion.

Comparitive Account of Gandhiji's View Point

Nehru's purely secular approach to politics was in conflict with Gandhiji's religious attitude. Gandhiji was essentially a man of religion. According to him, religion and morality are intimately related. His emphasis upon the role of morality in explaining religion made Gandhiji follow an ethical religion. He looked upon politics as inseperable from ethics and religion. Gandhiji emphasized the importance of service in religion. He could not find any higher way of worshipping God than serving the poor. Thus his conception of religion had nothing to do with dogma, custom or ritual.

Jawaharlal Nehru knew that though Gandhiji's religion was not dogmatic it certainly implied a religious outlook. He felt that, at times Gandhiji's political teachings gave a religious fervour which was against his own idea of not mixing too much religion with politics. On the contrary, Mahatma Gandhi could never think of politics divorced from religion. Again, Nehru did not take religion seriously and did not consider it as indispensable for man. On the other hand, Gandhiji held that no man can live without religion. Jawaharlal Nehru was attracted to the ethical sense that Gandhiji attached to religion and firmly believed that this moral aspect of religion will raise politics to a higher level. But he was not interested in the mystical and metaphysical reasons which Gandhiji often advanced, particularly in favour of his decisions regarding fasts, suspension of civil disobedience movement etc. Thus, though there was a deep personal bond and spiritual unity between Gandhi and Nehru, we cannot ignore the vital ideological differences in their approach to religion.

Four aspects of secularism

Nehru's concept of secularism had four aspects:

- 1) Religious freedom:** It means granting equal status to all religions in India. No religion should be given any special privilege. No community should be deprived of its legitimate rights on the basis of religion. Nehru

remarked, "we are building a free secular state where every religion and belief has full freedom and equal honour, whose every citizen has equal liberty and equal opportunity."²³

- 2) **Neutrality of the state in religious matters:** A secular state means a state not tied to any religion. Nehru wanted the state to follow a policy that promotes the co-existence of religions. The state should not try to infringe upon religious freedom.
- 3) **Secularism in social life:** Nehru regarded secularism as the indispensable feature of modern democratic society. He recognised that Hinduism and Islam had deeply penetrated into Indian social life. At the same time, he also realized that existence of different set of laws governing different religious communities was inconsistent with the ideal of secular society. Hence he tried to devise a uniform civil code for the entire Indian Community. He strongly objected to the intervention of religion in social and political life.
- 4) **An attitude of mind:** Secularism, according to Nehru, meant a certain mental attitude on the part of various communities. India is in dire

²³ Jawaharlal Nehru. *'Independence and After'* (New York: Johnday & Co., 1950), p.36.

necessity of such an attitude because it alone can bring about harmony and develop a feeling of fraternity among various religions. He did not want any religion to challenge the basic conception of the State. Nehru regarded that the realization of the secular ideal largely depended upon the friendly attitude of the majority community towards minorities. He expected minorities also to be tolerant. he thus exhorted both to cultivate broad outlook and not to adopt attitudes which were wrong and detrimental to the integrity and unity of the Nation.

These ideals were in no way new, but Nehru pleaded for their unrestricted growth. He wanted India to have what he termed 'the fullest democracy.' Our Constituent Assembly opted for the secular state, in order to strengthen the foundations of democracy. India is the home of a number of religions of the world. Religious pluralism is the keynote of Indian culture and religious tolerance is the bed rock of Indian secularism. It is based on the belief that all religions are equally good and efficacious pathways leading to perfection or God-realisation.

Secularism and Democracy

The concept of a secular state cannot be separated from its integral relation to a socialist and democratic set up. There is no way to establish a

secular state which is not democratic and socialist at the same time. Secularism is, as Dr. S. Radhakrishnan puts it, an extension of the principle of democracy to religion. In India, we not only have a democratic socio-political set up, but also a democratic approach to religiosity. Secularism and democracy are values accepted and adopted by modern India because both these concepts are based on the principle of equality of every human being, irrespective of caste, colour, creed, religion, race and language.

Challenges to India Secularism

Indian Secularism is confronted with many challenges such as communalism, casteism, regionalism, linguism etc. The opposite category of our secularism is communalism rather than religion. Communalism in our body politic has played a reactionary and disruptive role all along. During the British rule, it disrupted the freedom struggle and today it seeks to undermine all that is the basis of our national life - secularism, democracy and socialism. In the final analysis, communalism is a political reaction that obstructs socio-economic change and progress.

Nehru, as a soldier fighting in the freedom struggle to liberate the country from foreign rule and as the first Prime Minister of independent India who was engaged in an endeavour to reconstruct and transform the socio-economic

structure of the Indian society, fought relentlessly against communalism. He considered it as diametrically opposed to democracy. He believed that Communalism could not only weaken the very fabric of a society, but also threaten its very existence. So he made use of each and every single opportunity to make the people aware of its dangers. Nehru considered communalism as probably more dangerous for future India than an attack from a foreign country. We can meet the attack of a foreign country with all our strength. But the attack of communalism is vicious because it creeps into our mind without our understanding its full consequences. So he condemned the communal organisations which were trying to confuse the peoples' mind in the name of religion and culture.

There can be no compromise on the issue of communalism as it is a threat to Indian nationalism. The declaration of India as a secular state was the best weapon to fight against communalism. It was essential for fostering the ties between the people of different communities in India. The answer to the challenges to Indian secularism and the inconsistencies in it can be found in building up a society based on secular values of life and making social life and institution in the society free from the hold of religion and communalism.

Caste system also constitutes a formidable obstacle to the realization of the ideal of secular state. According to Jawaharlal Nehru, caste has been largely

responsible for weakening India's civilization throughout her long history. The caste system in the early centuries had a certain flexibility. But later "along with the growth of rigidity in the caste system, grew rigidity of mind and the creative energy faded away",²⁴ says Nehru. So he vehemently revolted against caste behaviour patterns. Thus Panditji observed, "In the context of society today, the caste system and much that goes with it are wholly incompatible, reactionary, restrictive and barriers to progress. There can be no equality in status and opportunity within its framework, nor can there be political democracy and much less, economic democracy".²⁵ He condemned caste system as anti-humanist practice, for it suppressed people's dynamism and initiative. He stood against the practice of untouchability because it was against the philosophy of humanism. The constitution which had strong impact of the ideas of Jawaharlal, therefore marks a great step forward with the abolition of untouchability.

It must be noted that secularism in India is a basic aspect of democratic state and its success depends upon the strength and weakness of democracy in India. The challenges to the secularism in India can be eradicated only by building up a fully 'democratic' and 'secular' society. It was assumed by Nehru

²⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1982), p.98.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.257.

that the spread of science and technology and economic development would result in greater secularisation of Indian society. Indian identity should be developed through public education for the protection and promotion of secularism. Its ignorance about the essentials of religion causes sectarian narrowness and religious tensions. Hence education on the fundamentals of all religions is a necessity. It will help us to weld together all Indians into a single unit. This will bring about religious harmony, which is the essence of our secularism. Nehru firmly believed and very often stated that progress can be achieved only by keeping our political and public processes free from religious considerations.

To Jawaharlal Nehru, secularism was a part of his democratic creed, and his broad and liberal humanism and a facet of his socialist faith. The Nehruvian model of secularism may have come under serious strain in the complex process of politico-economic developments, but it has not failed. As Sri. P.N. Haksar has remarked, "if, despite Indian poverty, democratic institutions, and democratic processes continue to survive in India and show extraordinary strength even in the midst of extraordinary difficulties through which we pass from time to time, and we are certainly passing today, it is because of Nehru's insistence on secularism as a guiding principle, not merely of state policy, but of

our thought processes and behaviour patterns".²⁶ Thus we may see that India, inspite of its pluralism, still remains as the largest democratic country in the world because of the great vision of Nehruji who made constant efforts to build up the nation based upon the principles of a sound secular humanism.

²⁶ P.N. Haksar, '*India's foreign policy and its problems*'; (New Delhi: Patriot Publishers, 1989), p.27.

Jawaharlal Nehru as a Scientific Humanist

Syamala K. "Humanism in modern Indian thought with special reference to the philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru" Thesis. Department of Philosophy, University of Calicut, 1998

5. Jawaharlal Nehru as a Scientific Humanist

Jawaharlal Nehru was a leader with great concern for man. The supreme secret of his success was that every cell of his soul was humanism writ large. He urged the people of India to recondition their mind, equipping themselves to face the problems of the present and with a perspective on the future, and openly advocated a modified path for future India. The advancement of science and technology is one of the distinguishing features of our time. Nehru insisted on science because he believed that it was the only way by which we could transform our country. He was convinced that India's progress and prosperity in all fronts lay in the establishment of vast and firm scientific base. He considered science as a method of using various kinds of powers to better the lot of human beings.

Pt. Nehru maintained his faith in a bright future which emerged from his philosophical self analysis, faith in science and faith in man's capacity to march upwards to a better life. This great humanist who was passionately interested in the welfare of man stated that "a living philosophy must answer the problems of today."¹ Scientific Humanism, according to him, was this living philosophy and

¹ Jawaharlal Nehru. *'The Discovery of India'* (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1982) p.31.

he made it the basic faith and creed of his life. Nehru classed the highest ideals of the age under two heads, of humanism and the scientific spirit. "Between these two there has been an apparent conflict but There is a growing synthesis between humanism and the scientific spirit, resulting in a kind of scientific humanism."² Through this synthesis he wanted to free humanism from the abstractness of and influence of religion, and to strengthen it by its union with science.

The relevance of Jawaharlal Nehru lies not only in what he did in the field of political structuring, creation of nation-state in India and his contribution towards national integration, but also in the special attention he paid to the growth and development of science and technology. As the first Prime Minister of free India the greatest responsibility Nehru had to carry on his shoulders was to take India on the path of development and prosperity. He had a deep appreciation and special concern for science and wanted to apply it for human welfare. He saw science as the vehicle of progress which could transform society without any violence and as a great force for the betterment of mankind. "It is the scientific method alone", he insisted, "that offers hope to mankind and

² *Ibid.* p.558.

bring about an end to the agony of the world."³ This clearly shows Nehru's profound belief in the power of science and scientific method.

Nehru realized that we would not progress without the help of science and technology and so he welcomed their revolutionary impact. In *Discovery of India* he noted, "the methods and approach of science have revolutionized human life more than anything else in the long course of history and have opened doors and avenues of further and even more radical change, leading up to the very portals of what has long been considered the unknown"⁴ Science, for Nehru, was an essential and basic component of development and progress. He was convinced that if we wanted to compensate the centuries of backwardness, the only way was to develop science and technology. It was clear that without modernizing our methods of production, we could never produce enough to get rid of our poverty". He observed at a Public meeting in Bangalore in 1962, "Poverty has ceased to be inevitable now, because of

³ *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol.IV (Sept. 1957 to April 1963)* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1983), p.55.

⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, *'The Discovery of India'* (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1987), p.31.

science there is no other way than to modernize India in methods of production. We have to absorb the spirit of science in India."⁵

Nehru was engaged in the difficult task of creating a modern nation state out of a religio-cultural entity called India, So he was eager and anxious to change the outlook of India through the application of scientific methods and thus wanted to give her a garb of modernity. However, despite his modernity, Nehru did not forget the rich, resonant and vibrant spiritual tradition of India. He wanted us to be proud of our ancient heritage and reminded us always that without it we would become rootless. Though he was a modernist, there was also something of the traditionalist in him. "We can never forget the ideals that have moved our race, the dreams of the Indian people through the ages, the wisdom of the ancients, the buoyant energy and love of life and nature of our forefathers, their spirit of curiosity and mental adventure..... We will never forget them or cease to take pride in that noble heritage of ours. If India forgets them, she will no longer remain India"⁶ Nehru was thus one of the first to realise that the future greatness of India lay in the harmonious fusion of the ancient values of India with all that was best in modern civilization. He

⁵ *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol.IV (Sept. 1957-April 1963)* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India), 1983, p.151.

⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru. '*The Discovery of India*'. (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1982), p.509.

emphasized that Indian people should remain attached to their ancient heritage while making advances in the process of modernization through science and technology. According to him, future should be built on the foundations laid in the past.

Though Nehru stood for industrial progress through the application of science and technology, he always insisted that scientific temper should be one of tolerance. In the Inaugral Address at the 44th session of Indian Science Congress in 1957, Nehru said, "The message of Buddha, was a part from its religious significance, a message of tolerance..... It was a message essentially in the scientific spirit. He asked no man to believe anything except what he could prove by experiment and trial. All he asked man was to seek truth and not to accept anything by the word of another even though he might be Buddha. That seems to me the essence of Buddha's message and, of course, tolerance and compassion, and it struck me that the message far from being out of date has a peculiar significance in this world of ours, even today."⁷ Again in the 50th session of the Indian Science Congress he added "And therefore I hope that science as it goes ahead will also encourage tolerance and compassion. Then it comes into line with the thinking of great men of old and the thinking of

⁷ Baldev Singh, ed. *Jawaharlal Nehru on Science: Speeches delivered at the annual sessions of the Indian Science Congress* (New Delhi: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 1986), p.55.

the modern age which, if it is fitted into the thinking of the old age will produce wonderful results."⁸

Jawaharlal Nehru was greatly attracted by the questions regarding man - human nature, human affairs and human interests. His knowledge of science and his search for truth made him retain an unqualified faith in man "God we may deny, but what hope is there for us if we deny man and thus reduce everything to futility?"⁹ asked Nehru in *The Discovery of India*. Thus, he looked at man with almost the same devotion which is associated with faith. The spirit in man attracted Nehru most. This is clearly expressed when he stated "How amazing is this spirit of man! In spite of innumerable failings, man, throughout the ages, has sacrificed his life and all he held dear for an ideal, for truth, for faith, for country and honour. That ideal may change, but that capacity for self-sacrifice continues, and, because of that, much may be forgiven to man, and it is impossible to lose hope for him. In the midst of disaster, he has not lost his dignity or faith in the values he cherished."¹⁰

While advocating the retention of what is best and constructive in India's ancient tradition and culture, Nehru fought against the hegemony of religious

⁸ *Ibid.* p.90.

⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru. '*The Discovery of India*' (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1982), p.468.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.33.

dogma, mysticism and orthodoxy as they were forces causing obstruction to the progress and development of the country. He directed his humanism against the orthodoxies of a modern state, because it attempted to subordinate the individual to vague political beliefs. His humanistic approach to life directed all his thoughts and actions to work for the welfare of the common people. He was well known for his faith in the freedom and welfare of the individual. His faith in a bright future for man emerged from his faith in science and in man's upward march to a better life through it. He made it clear that "Science does answer more and more questions, and help us to understand life, and thus enables us, if we will but take advantage of it, to live a better life, directed to a purpose worth having. It illumines the dark corners of life and makes us face reality instead of the vague confusion of unreason."¹¹ Science, for him, meant an approach to all life's problems. It is to be applied to the problems relating to our family, religion, and everything else. He affirmed, "In the solution of these problems, the way of observation and precise knowledge and deliberate reasoning, according to the method of science, must be followed..... A living philosophy must answer the problems of to-day"¹² Science is the very texture of life today. So Nehru

¹¹ Jawaharlal Nehru: '*Glimpses of World History*' (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1995) p.870.

¹² Jawaharlal Nehru: '*The Discovery of India*' (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1982) p.31.

insisted that if we wanted to solve our problems we should approach them in a scientific and rational way.

Obviously, Panditji was primarily interested in the material welfare of the people, i.e., in the eradication of want and poverty by the application of science. He was convinced that science alone could solve the problems of hunger and poverty, of insanitation and illiteracy, of superstition and deadening customs and traditions. Emphasising the positive role of science, he said in the 46th session of Indian Science Congress, "We have this magnificent and majestic sweep of science advancing onwards. For the first time in human history, mankind has the capacity and power to get rid of physical ills that the humanity suffers from, to bring about a measure of welfare to all the thousands and millions of inhabitants which nobody could dream of previously....."¹³ So for all people of all countries, the application of science has become a necessity.

Science has made great progress in the West and raised the standard of living in some countries to astonishing heights. The material progress of the developed countries has given the developing countries the hope that they can also make quick progress by using the methods of science and technology appropriate to their needs. So Nehru from the very beginning itself recognised

¹³ Baldev Singh, ed: '*Jawaharlal Nehru on Science: Speeches delivered at the Annual Sessions of the Indian Science Congress*' (New Delhi: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 1986), p.68.

the supreme importance of science and technology for the modernization of Indian Society. Nehru's great zeal for science and technology could be seen from his expression that "Whenever chance offers I say something about the importance of science and technology, and we should realise that modern life is an offspring of science and technology."¹⁴ So he insisted that a scientific approach should be accepted as a way of life. According to him, this was absolutely necessary to build the foundation of modern India. He firmly believed that national progress could not be achieved by ancient methods. New patterns must be developed and integrated with the old. He wrote "I am a socialist because I feel that socialism is a scientific approach to world's problems..... Therefore, I would like you to consider the various cultural and other problems and apply the scientific approach to your personal life"¹⁵

Nehru wanted to use science and technology as an instrument to free Indian mind from the shackles of prejudice and superstition and for this reason he emphasized the need of developing among our people a scientific temper. He emphasized the necessity of impressing upon the common man the need for scientific progress, because he knew that ultimately in a democracy, it would be

¹⁴ *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol.I. (Sept. 1946-May 1949)* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1983), p.73-74.

¹⁵ *Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru (I series) Vol.9* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1976), p.616-617.

the public opinion that will prevail. He explicitly stated: "It is the scientific approach, the adventurous and yet critical temper of science, the search for truth and new knowledge, the refusal to accept anything without testing and trial, the capacity to change previous conclusions in the face of new evidence, the reliance on observed fact and not on pre-conceived theory, the hard discipline of the mind - all this is necessary, not merely for the application of science but for itself and the solution of its many problems..... The scientific approach and temper are, or should be, a way of life, a process of thinking, a method of acting and associating with our fellowmen."¹⁶

Nehru saw the social consequences of science rather than the simple application of scientific knowledge to individual problems. This larger view of the impact of science on society he usually referred to as the scientific way of looking at things or 'the scientific temper', which he hoped would permeate all aspects of Indian society. This led him to conclude that "some elementary scientific training..... is essential for all boys and girls. Only thus they can understand and fit into the modern world and develop to some extent at least, the scientific temper."¹⁷ He wanted this training in the scientific attitude and outlook to begin from the stage of primary education itself. That was the only

¹⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru: '*The Discovery of India*' (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1982), p.512.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p.330.

way to purify and strengthen the rational and spiritual heritage of our country. So Nehru felt that science should be an essential part of education. In his address to the golden jubilee session of the Indian Science Congress in Delhi in 1963, he remarked "I do believe that teaching should be oriented more and more towards science, though by that I do not mean that humanities should suffer at all."¹⁸

Panditji wanted science and scientific attitude to be brought to bear on the burning issues of the day. With the inputs he got from the meetings with scientists, he wanted to carry the spirit of true science to the people, who had little or no knowledge about science. This was the true implication of his constant references to the scientific temper. While the people in India had begun to realize the importance of science, he thought that, there were many who do not realize the necessity of scientific research. He wanted scientists to impress upon the common people about it and to make them aware of it. Thus Nehru wanted to draw science and scientists closer to the common people, and also to bring them and their problems closer to the scientists.

Nehru realized that science was not something to be restricted to an elite practicing scientific community, but that it should permeate all levels of society.

¹⁸ Baddev Singh, ed. *Jawaharlal Nehru on Science: Speeches delivered at the Annual Sessions of the Indian Science Congress* (New Delhi: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 1986) p.83.

Jawaharlal Nehru puts this extremely well when he said that, "science is not a matter merely of looking at test tubes and mixing different gases and producing things big or small or gadgets. Science, ultimately is a way of training the minds and the mind's working and their whole life functioning according to the ways and methods of science, of their whole structure, social and other, functioning according to it."¹⁹ This demands a continuing long range programme of developing in all sections of society what Pnditji used to refer to as 'Scientific temper' or 'the popularisation of Science'. He called upon the scientists to create the necessary mental climate and scientific temper essential for the implementation of developent plans. It is from that point of view that Dr. M.G.K. Menon, said, "The process of popularisation of science will not only result in an increasing scientific attitude to life in society at large, and as a result, enable local problems to be identified for which local solutions can be found, as a result which material progress can be made, but also enlarge the base from which the scientific community dervies its own members and strength."²⁰

¹⁹ Baldev Singh, ed, '*Jawaharlal Nehru on Science and Society. A Collection of his writings and speeches*' (New Delhi: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 1988} p.75.

²⁰ See M.G.K. Menon, '*The role of Science and responsibilities of scientists in national development in Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Lectures (1973-1979)*' (Bomaby: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1980), p.123.

The importance Jawaharlal Nehru attached to science and technology was reflected by his participation in the Indian Science Congress. His association with the Indian Science Congress began in 1938 when he sent a message to its silver jubilee session in Calcutta as the Chairman of National Planning Committee. He spoke at fifteen sessions of Indian Science Congress. He utilised these occasions to reflect upon the relationship between science and human development and bridge the gulf between the social, political and economic realities of life and the work carried on by the scientists. In the 40th session of the Indian Science Congress, he enjoined upon Indian Scientists "to help to solve - (1) material problems of food and necessities of life, (2) larger problems of social, economic and psychological and finally (3) bring about a temper of science."²¹ He thus wanted scientists to be concerned about humanity. His stress on 'temper or climate' of science was partly intended to create the necessary environment for industrial and economic development and modernisation. Nehru firmly believed that the scientific outlook would lead to rational decisions and its wider application would lead to the creation of preconditions for socialism. He said, "perhaps it (science) improves our condition of industrial life, but the basic thing that science should do is to teach

²¹ Baldev Singh, ed. *Jawaharlal Nehru on Science: Speeches delivered at the Annual Sessions of the Indian Science Congress*. (New Delhi: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 1986), p.38.

us to think straight, to act straight, and not to be afraid of discarding anything or accepting anything, provided there are sufficient reasons for doing so.....I should like our country to understand and appreciate that idea all the more, because Our country encumbered itself to such an extent in matters of social practice that its growth has hindered and in a hundred ways, even today."²² For changing the hearts, change in the thinking was necessary. Socialism could take roots in a feudal society, he believed, if the thinking was progressive through scientific approach. Nehru's strategy for transforming the Indian Society, thus consisted of two elements - one was spread of 'Scientific temper' among the Indian masses and second was the development of Indian economy through the applications of science and technology.

Nehru was convinced that scientific method and approach alone can revolutionise human life. He visualised that the establishment of a strong industrial base for promotion in the spheres of agriculture and food production in India was possible only through the maximum use of science and modern technology. He thus wanted to give India a modern outlook in every sense of the term through large scale industrialisation and extensive application of science and technology. The objective before science, according to Nehru, must

²² *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol.II (Aug 1949-Feb. 1953) (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Government of India, 1982), p.371-372.*

be to remove the ills of the community. So he regarded science as the spirit of the age which dominated the modern world. He repeatedly stated that the only solution to our problems is through the method and spirit of science. This he made clear in the message he sent on the occasion of the silver Jubilee session of Indian Science Congress in 1938, when he said, "Even more than the present, the future belongs to science and those who make friends with science and seeks its help for the advancement of humanity..... If science is the dominating factor in modern life, then social system and economic structure must fit in with science, or it is doomed."²³

Insistence on science and social reconstruction had been the fundamental feature in Nehru's Outlook. He gave practical shape to his social, political and economic ideals through the application of science and technology in these fields. He realized that achievement of higher living standards and social security depends on our success in securing rapid economic development. This become possible only on full utilisation of science and technology. For Nehru, science was an essential and a basic requirement for the transformation of an economy of scarcity into our of abundance. He remarked, "the technical achievements of science are obvious enough: its capacity to transform an

²³ Baldev Singh, *ed. Jawaharlal Nehru on Science: Speeches delivered at the Annual Sessions of Indian Science Congressl (New Delhi: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 1986) p.1-2.*

economy of scarcity into one of abundance is evident, its invasion of many problems which have so far been the monopoly of philosophy is becoming more pronounced."²⁴ He was convinced that India's progress and prosperity in all fronts lay in the establishment of vast and firm scientific, managerial and technical base. Because of his ceaseless efforts, clear vision and commitment to science and technology, India developed as a major force in social and economic transformation. Nehru visualised that science and technology would be effective instruments to tackle many problems confronting India from time immemorial. So he took many steps to modernise India on scientific lines. In the 47th session of Indian Science Congress, he admitted: "My own main interest in science arises naturally from the social consequences of science than science itself. We have to face major political, economic and in the main, social problems of a growing country and of raising the level of hundreds of millions of our people. It is clear that we cannot solve these problems without taking recourse to science and its application."²⁵ Nehru's strategy for planned economic development was thus characterised by the emphasis on

²⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru: *'The Discovery of India'* (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1982), p.31.

²⁵ Baldev Singh, ed. *'Jawaharlal Nehru on Science: Speeches delivered at the Annual Sessions of Indian Science Congress'* (New Delhi: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 1986) p.73.

industrialisation, modernisation and the opening up of gates for the fresh developments in science and technology.

Nehru possessed a real and substantial commitment to science and modern technology as major forces in the 20th century vital to India's growth and future prosperity. As a mature politician, he realized that economic salvation of millions of India's lay in the development of science and its application to resolve the problems of hunger, ignorance, poverty and unemployment. He insisted that only when those problems were solved, there will be fulfilment for the freedom we have achieved. He felt that "we have to build the structure of our state and our society anew, and we have to build this on scientific, planned lines, if it is to endure. The approach of science is essential as well as specialist and technical knowledge."²⁶

The marriage of science and industry has been approved, since we have already begun to utilise science for the betterment of people. Science has transformed human life and environment mainly through the advance technologies leading to the development of industries of various kinds. "Just as Industrial Revolution of the 18th century led to the Machine Age, the Electrical Revolution is now leading to the Power Age. Electric power, which is used for

²⁶ Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru (I series) Vol.12, (New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1976), p.556-557.

industries, railways and numerous other purposes dominates everything.....
Huge machines are now controlled by one man handling some levers and switches. This results in increasing the production of manufactured goods."²⁷
So Nehru advocated large scale industrialization of the country. He believed that the problems of poverty and unemployment could be solved only by large scale industrial production. He said that all his endeavours were to lead mankind from its age-old state of bare subsistence level to a social level which provides security, material well-being, opportunities for advancement and comfortably life to all. These could be achieved through establishment of mighty projects and heavy industries. These industries are necessary not only for the economic development of India, but also for safeguarding its political independence and strengthening its defence. Without rapid industrialization, India would continue to depend on the advanced countries of the world and would also lack adequate means to defend herself, if attacked.

The wealth and prosperity of a nation depend on effective utilisation of its human and material resources through industrialization. Nehru thought that political independence was a risk to industrially backward countries since economic control would tend to pass on to others. In 1944 he said, "It can

²⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru: '*Glimpses of World History*' (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1995), p.872.

hardly be challenged that, in the context of the modern world, no country can be politically and economically independent, even within the framework of international interdependence, unless it is highly industrialized and has developed its power resources to the utmost. Nor can it achieve or maintain high standards of living and liquidate poverty without the aid of modern technology in almost every sphere of life."²⁸ By rapid industrialisation, he meant the development of basic and heavy industries, extension of railways and transport facilities, enlargement of communication network, enhancement of education and medical services and transformation of rural life through community development programmes.

Jawaharlal Nehru extended adequate encouragement to private industrialists in the country and motivated them to invest heavily in industries like iron and steel, chemicals, fertilizers, petroleum refining, textiles, cement, sugar, paper etc. The gigantic industries of steel and iron, coal, iron refineries and ship-building industries established during Nehru's period have provided a strong industrial base to the country. As a result many new items like machinery for cement, paper industries, urea, phosphate, synthetic fibres, newsprint, dye stiffs etc. were produced for the first time in India. Many Jute, Sugar and Cotton

²⁸ Jawaharlal Nehru: '*The Discovery of India*' (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1982), p.407.

textile mills were modernised and re-equipped. This resulted in the increase in production of various consumer goods. Commenting on the 'Place of Big Machine', once he said, "We cannot keep pace with the modern world unless we utilise the sources of power that are available to the modern world."²⁹ Nehru not only emphasised the immediate and massive employment of science and technology for the purpose of rapid industrialisation, but also appealed to the industrialists to consider industrialisation in the context of appalling poverty of the Indian people, as he wanted the whole of Indian masses to be benefitted through it. He wrote, "The problem of poverty and unemployment, of national defence and of economic regeneration in general cannot be solved without industrialisation. As a step towards such industrialization, a comprehensive scheme of national planning should be formulated. This scheme should provide for the development of the heavy key industries, medium scale industries and cottage industries."³⁰

It would be wrong to conclude that Nehru attached an undue importance to heavy industries. When he talked of industrialization and emphasized heavy industries, he also talked of balancing heavy industries by emphasizing that we

²⁹ *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol.III (March 1953-Aug 1957)* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1983), p.24.

³⁰ Jawaharlal Nehru: '*The Discovery of India*' (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1982), p.396.

must have village and small scale industries. In his scheme of things, there was place for both types of industries. This comes out clearly in his speech in the Parliament on 15th of December 1952. He said "I have no doubt that we cannot raise the people's level of existence without the development of major industries in this country..... We have to develop the village and cottage industry in a big way, at the same time making sure that in trying to develop industry big or small, we do not forget the human factor. We are not merely out to get more money and more production. We ultimately want better human beings."³¹

In his various speeches and addresses Pandit Nehru had emphasised again and again the important place of village and small-scale industries in our economy. In the Presidential Address at the Lucknow Session of Congress he said, "I believe in rapid industrialisation of the country and only thus I think will the standards of the people rise substantially and poverty be combated. Yet I have co-operated whole heartedly in the past with the Khadi programme, and I hope to do so in future because I believe that Khadi and village industries have a definite place in our present economy. They have a social, political and an economic value which is difficult to measure but which is apparent enough to

³¹ *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol.II (Aug 1949-Feb. 1953)*. (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broad casting, Government of India, 1983), p.94.

those who have studied their effects. But I look upon them more as temporary expedients of a transition stage rather than as solutions to our vital problems. That transition stage might be a long one, and in a country like India, village industries might well play an important, though subsidiary, role after the development of industrialism."³² Nehru wanted to change the mental outlook of our people by making them used to more and more modern techniques and methods. He encouraged small factories in rural areas in large numbers. He thought that, through these, we can not only add to our production and lessen unemployment but also change the mentality of our people in favour of industrialization. This paves way to the effective progress of industry in a big way.

Nehru wanted to combine political and economic freedom with his idea of socialism, so that India would be not just politically powerful, but also industrially progressive. He put forward a policy of creative change through economic planning and socialism. For raising the standard of living of the masses, industrialization was necessary and for socialism, equitable distribution was needed. Nehru was of the view that industrialization should come before

³² *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* Vol.7, (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1976), p.182.

socialism, as there should be enough to redistribute. In the absence of this, there would be only miseries and poverty to be distributed.

India is predominantly an agricultural country, and so Nehru felt that unless we give special importance to the agricultural section, we cannot raise the living standards of our people. He was firm on his belief that if our agricultural foundation was not strong, then the industry we seek to build would not have a strong basis either. This was made clear when he stated that, "..... industry is important. But the moment you touch the growth of industry, you come up against a basic problem that industry cannot progress except on a sound agricultural basis. And immediately you are thrown back to agriculture, and agriculture is for any agricultural country like India certainly, the most important thing ultimately. I realise that agriculture by itself will not solve the country's problems..... But agriculture is the basis. if you don't have proper agriculture, then you will not get the surplus from agriculture which can be utilised for production in industry."³³ It is obvious that modern agriculture with high levels of production is based on modern science and technology, for it depends on machinery and giant dams and other steps taken to improve irrigation facilities, introduction of better strains of scientific breeding and an abundant use of

³³ Baldev Singh, ed. *Jawaharlal Nehru on Science: Speeches delivered at the Annual Sessions of Indian Science Congress* (New Delhi: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 1986), p.103.

fertilizers, which are products of chemical industry. Nehru said that agriculture has grown greatly in many other countries because of the application of science and modern techniques.

In Nehru's strategy of planned development, agriculture had high ranking as far as priorities listed in the Third Plan are concerned, because he considered agriculture as the biggest industry in our country. He observed that, "we attach far greater importance to agriculture and food, and matters pertaining to agriculture. If our agricultural foundation is not strong, then the industry we seek to build will not have strong basis either. Apart from that, the situation in the country today is such that if our food front crack up, everything else will crack up too. Therefore, we dare not weaken our food front."³⁴ No doubt, as Dr. A. Amruth Rao and K. Asaiah have said, "If today we are much less dependent on the advanced countries than most of the countries of the third world not merely in the economic field, but also in that of defence supplies, if manufactured goods are occupying an increasing share of our exports to various countries and if we have become self sufficient in food production, it is due to

³⁴ *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol.II (Aug 1949-Feb 1953)* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broad Casting, Government of India, 1983), p.99.

modernisation of agriculture. We owe all this in good measure to the attention paid to the modernisation of our economy during the Nehru Era."³⁵

The developments made through the application of science and technology had to be distributed satisfactorily in the various sectors of economy. Careful planning was necessary for this. The fundamental principles that still guide our planning processes were outlined by Nehru about twenty years prior to independence. Nehru was convinced that science was an important component of all sectors of development. So he started planning with the possibility of science and technology in mind. Thus he clubbed science with planning. Nehru's commitment to the importance of science as an instrument of economic and social transformation began to take concrete form in terms of priorities of Government action. Writing about the work of the National Planning Committee, he observed that "the three fundamental requirements of India, if she is to develop industrially and otherwise are a heavy engineering and machine making industry, scientific research institutes, and electric power. These must be the foundations of all planning, and the National Planning Committee paid the greatest emphasis on them."³⁶ He felt that most careful

³⁵ See, Dr. A. Amruth Rao and K. Asaiah. '*Jawaharlal Nehru and development through science and technology*' in Dr. V. Bhaskara Rao and Dr. A. Amruth Rao, ed '*Nehru and Administration* (Delhi: Ajantha Publications, 1989), p.131.

³⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru: '*The Discovery of India*' (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1982), p.410.

planning was necessary to reap the full benefit of industrialisation. As the objective of planning for him was the removal of poverty and rise in the standard of living of masses, he was always conscious of the ultimate aim, i.e., higher production and greater employment opportunities.

Nehru made it clear again and again that "what is happening today behind the Five Year Plans and other economic programmes in India is the change-over from the traditional into a modern society."³⁷ The building of a new economic society was based on agriculture as well as industrial progress. This in turn required emphasis upon the promotion of science and technology, through scientific research and an adequate relationship between the government and the scientists and their work. Realizing this, Nehru took the lead in building up of a scientific culture in India. Successive Five Year Plans laid emphasis on building up of National Laboratories and Research Institutions. Nehru personally formulated the Government of India's Scientific Policy.

After independence, as the first Prime Minister of free India, Nehru ceaselessly strove for the development of science and technology by setting up of a number of scientific institutions and national laboratories covering a wide spectrum of science. To encourage scientific research and technological

³⁷ *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol.IV (Sept 1957-Apr. 1963)* (New Delhi Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broad casting, Government of India, 1983), p.446.

innovations, he set up twelve national laboratories in various parts of the country to do research in different subjects, such as, agriculture, industry, tropical medicine, nutrition, fuel, drugs, leather, glass and ceramics. These national laboratories, the five Indian Institutes of Technology at various centers, the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research and many other institutions including universities grew up rapidly in Nehru's India.

Nehru had a special fascination for Nuclear Research and so he kept the Department of Atomic Energy under his own charge and established two nuclear research institutes in Bombay and Calcutta, and Atomic Reactors at Trombay and Kota. The nucleus for the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) came into being even before independence with the constitution of a Board of Scientific Research in 1940. But it was with the enthusiastic support of Nehru and the dynamic leadership of S.S. Bhatnagar that so many laboratories of the CSIR came rapidly into existence.

Nehru was very much aware of India's technological lags and backwardness and so he took the above steps in order to achieve self-reliance in the scientific and technological fields. He requested the services of many eminent scientists. He wanted to produce trained scientists and technologists who would guide our country into an increasingly science dominated future through their works in these national laboratories and other technological

institutions. Again to quote Dr. A. Amrutha Rao and K. Asaiah, "If India today is one of the leading countries in the world with third largest reservoir of trained scientific manpower in the world and occupies a place among those countries, which are highly advanced in the use of Atomic power for peaceful purposes, it is largely because of the far-sightedness and able leadership of Nehru."³⁸

The scientific Policy Resolution adopted by the Government of India on 4th of March 1958 at the instance of Jawaharlal Nehru was a major conceptual accomplishment. This reflected the strong faith of the government in the power of science and technology as an instrument for economic and social change and its use for the well being of the society. The policy thus aimed at connecting science and technology with the task of national reconstruction. It paved the way for the growth of scientific research and the involvement of scientific and technical personnel for modernizing agriculture, industry and defence. It also recognised the need to give science and scientists a position of prestige in India.

The Scientific Policy Resolution adopted by the Government of India, 1958 No.131/CF/57 dt. 4 March 1958 says, "The dominating feature of the contemporary world is the cultivation of science on a large scale and its application to meet country's requirements It is the characteristic of the

³⁸ See. Dr. A. Amruth Rao and K. Asaiah, '*Jawaharlal Nehru and development through science and technology*' in Dr. V. Bhaskara Rao and Dr. A. Amruth Rao, ed '*Nehru and Administration*' (New Delhi, Ajantha Publications, 1989), p.131.

present world that the progress towards practical realisation of a welfare state differs widely from country to country in direct relation to the extent of industrialization and the effect and resources applied in the pursuit of science..... Science and technology can make up for deficiencies in raw materials by providing substitutes or indeed, by providing skills which can be exported in return for raw materials..... It is an inherent obligation of a great country like India, with its traditions of scholarship and original thinking and its great cultural heritage, to participate fully in the march of science, which is probably mankind's greatest enterprise today.

The Government of India have accordingly decided that the aims of their scientific Policy will be:

- 1) to foster, promote and sustain, by all appropriate means, the cultivation of science, and scientific research in all its aspects - pure, applied and educational.
- 2) to ensure an adequate supply, within the country, of research scientists of the highest quality, and to recognise their work as an important component of the strength of the nation.
- 3) to encourage and initiate, with all possible speed, programmes for the training of scientific and technical personnel, on a scale adequate to fulfil

the country's need in science and education, agriculture and industry and defence;

- 4) to ensure that creative talent of men and women is encouraged and finds full scope in scientific activity;
- 5) to encourage individual initiative for the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge, and for the discovery of new knowledge, in an atmosphere of academic freedom; and
- 6) in general, to secure for the people of the country all the benefits that can accrue from the acquisition and application of scientific knowledge.

The Government of India have decided to pursue and accomplish these aims by offering good conditions of service to scientists and according them an honoured position, by associating scientists with the formulation of policies, and by taking such other measures as may be deemed necessary from time to time."³⁹

In his policy of scientific growth, Nehru stressed the importance of making use of the achievements in science only for human betterment. Science is essential and without science we cannot go ahead as a nation. But it is not complete by itself. The developments in science have unleashed enormous

³⁹ As Quoted in Vikram Sarabhai: *'Science Policy and National Development* (Delhi: Macmillan, 1974), pp.8-10.

power, but that power can do as much harm as it can do good. As Swami Tattwajnanananda puts it. "It (*science*) has converted knowledge to power by technology, creating in the process an entirely new culture and civilization of world wide dimension. However, with increase in technology, there is an increase in problems of global dimensions. Ecological imbalances, environmental pollution on one side and psychic distortions like crime and inclination to suicide on the other, haunt human civilization".⁴⁰ So today there is a crying need to channelise the powers of science and technology to ensure the very survival of humanity, for, otherwise man will destroy himself by misusing it. It is therefore important that their progress, as it moves forward, should be tempered with wisdom. Hence Nehru kept on warning us that "the fact remains that a good deal of compassion is necessary, not merely scientific discovery and achievement."⁴¹

It is only through science that we can hope to solve our basic problems since it promises enormous good to humanity. It has led to the discovery and use of tremendous powers of nature, which can be used for good or evil. In the

⁴⁰ Swami Tattwajnanananda. '*Technical Education for a better tomorrow*' in *Prabuddha Bharata* Vol.102, Feb. 1997.

⁴¹ Baldev Singh, ed. '*Jawaharlal Nehru on Science: Speeches delivered at the Annual Sessions of Indian Science Congress*' (New Delhi: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 1986), p.64.

Glimpses of World History, Nehru stated, "Science, as we have seen, has brought many good things in its train, but science has also added enormously to the horrors of war"⁴² The immense powers of science can thus be used for construction as well as destruction. So Nehru always stressed the need for the development of the spiritual side of man. In the Indian Science Congress of 1963, Nehru summed up that "without science, there is no future for any society, but even with science unless it is controlled by some spiritual impulses, there is no future. Science must be backed by moral values."⁴³ He was firmly convinced that the two must go together to enable human beings to lead a life of peace and happiness. He believed that human mind is hungry for something deeper in terms of moral and spiritual development, without which all the material advances will be of no value.

To sum up we may say that if science is to be turned away from the courses of destruction, it is necessary to combine the developments of science with ethical and moral values. Nehru recapitulated the teachings of Gandhiji who stressed that 'the means were as important as the ends' and suggested that if science is to be used for peaceful purposes, the mind must be turned in the

⁴² Jawaharlal Nehru: '*Glimpses of World History*' (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1995), p.873-875.

⁴³ Baldev Singh, ed, '*Jawaharlal Nehru on Science: Speeches delivered at the Annual Sessions of Indian Science Congress*' (New Delhi: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, 1986), p.88.

direction of peace. He believed that "the great increase in knowledge does not necessarily make us better or wiser. We must know how to use that knowledge properly before we can fully profit by it."⁴⁴ As pointed out by J.V. Narlikar, "It is here, that we can draw on our rich cultural heritage - or the wisdom of our forefathers over many centuries. I am optimistic that if we are not blinded by traditions and dazzled by science, but keep our eyes open, our country will make a triumphant entry into the year 2001."⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru: '*Glimpses of World History*' (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1995), p.896.

⁴⁵ See, J.V. Narlikar, 'The Role of Scientific Outlook in the Development of Science and Society in 'Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Lectures (1973-1979) (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1980), p.79.

Jawaharlal Nehru's Humanism and International Relations

Syamala K. "Humanism in modern Indian thought with special reference to the philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru" Thesis. Department of Philosophy, University of Calicut, 1998

6. Jawaharlal Nehru's Humanism and International Relations

According to Nehru, the benefits of science and technology should be directed towards improving the quality of life of all people rather than exacerbating the already existing ominous threat of mass annihilation. At the dawn of the present century, Einstein with his rare foresight warned us that the unleashed power of atom would change everything. The global situation with its continuing cold war between strong nations possessing nuclear weapons amounts to a real threat to the survival of the whole human race. Hence Nehru felt that the responsibility to maintain peace on earth is a dire necessity for human survival. The situation created by the possible nuclear confrontation calls for new methods of approach and new forms of relations between different social systems, states and regions. As Sri. P.N. Haksar writes, "the new political thinking we seek is not an appeal to 'class opponents' to renounce their class interests and look at the world through the eyes of their adversaries, nor is it an invitation to the 'Capitalist wolf' to get along with the 'Socialist sheep'. It is, in effect, an appeal to see the reality as it exists in the

world today, and face up to the truth and see things as they are and not as one would like them to be."¹

While reflecting upon the prospect of a Third World War fought with atomic weapons, Jawaharlal Nehru described the atom bomb as a symbol of incarnate evil. So it becomes the duty of everyone to try his utmost to prevent such a horrible catastrophe. The key to India's foreign policy, then lies in her desire to do all that she can to prevent a cold catastrophe. To prevent war from overtaking humanity and to promote the cause of world peace is the aim of India's foreign policy.

The need to apply this new philosophy — the philosophy of peace in international relations — in contrast to confrontational politics has assumed great importance. Confrontationist approach will lead ultimately to nuclear war and thus to complete annihilation of mankind. The policy of dialogue and peaceful co-existence alone can open new vistas for living in peace. The main thrust of peaceful co-existence has to be on creating an international order under which good neighbourliness and co-operation rather than armed force would prevail, and broad exchange of achievements of science, technology and cultural values would be carried out for the good of all nations. The roots of this new

¹ P.N. Haksar, *India's foreign policy and its problems*. (New Delhi: Patriot, 1989) pp.38-39.

political philosophy of peace, for which all democratic forces are working go back to the principles of foreign policy laid down by Nehru. In this context lies the importance of stressing the inherent connection between India's approach to the key problems of world politics and Jawaharlal Nehru's emphasis upon a struggle for international peace in opposition to militarism and colonialism.

Pandit Nehru was the architect and chief executive of India's foreign policy. The corner-stone of India's foreign policy, fashioned by Nehru, is the ideal of peaceful co-existence and friendship with all. Peaceful co-existence of differing, even conflicting philosophies, ideologies or ways of life is not new to India where we have been brought up in the belief that there are more than one ways to truth. The humanity is one family-nay, that all living beings constitute one kindered group is a fundamental teaching of Indian tradition. This is the reason why such great emphasis is laid on the practice of '*ahimsa*'. Though this term has a negative meaning 'non-violence', it has also a positive implication which is 'active love towards all beings'. This glorious ideal of universal love and total peace greatly influenced Jawaharlal Nehru. So India under his leadership came out actively for the preservation of general peace, demanding disarmament and cessation of nuclear tests. The Government of India was determined that she must keep away from military blocks in order to

preserve peace. Hence the policy of independent India towards the rest of the world has been described as the policy of non-alignment.

India's foreign policy, according to Nehru, "is a policy inherent in the past thinking of India, inherent in the whole mental outlook of India, inherent in the conditioning of Indian mind during our struggle for freedom and inherent in the circumstances today".² As a matter of fact, the traces of our foreign policy can be found even in our freedom movement. It was largely owing to Nehru's efforts that even since the mid-twenties the Congress party began to take interest in the international relations. He was the conscience keeper^{of} the Indian National Congress with regard to the world-affairs in general. In his *Discovery of India*, Nehru noted that: "the Congress gradually developed a foreign policy, which was based on the elimination of political and economic imperialism everywhere and on the co-operation of free nations. As early as 1920, a resolution on foreign policy was passed by the Congress in which our desire to co-operate with other nations, and especially to develop friendly relations with all our neighbouring countries was emphasised."³ Ever since, there was no alteration of the basic aspects of our foreign policy. The

² Jawaharlal Nehru: *India's foreign policy (Selected speeches for the period 1946-1961)* [New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1961] p.80

³ Jawaharlal Nehru: *The Discovery of India* (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1982) p.416.

Congress party adopted a resolution, which was in effect its first foreign policy statement, with a declaration that India should not participate in imperialist or any other power-blocks. The guiding principles of our foreign policy such as striving for peace in the world, willingness to work on the basis of peaceful co-existence and friendly co-operation with all nations of the world, aspirations for an equal and just economic order at home and abroad, and unfailing support to all struggles for freedom and human dignity owe their existence and strength to the cultural traditions and freedom movement of the country.

Foreign policy therefore, was not something conceived and shaped by Nehru after independence. It was merely an articulation of India's concern over the international relations, and the values developed out of national interests as perceived during years of freedom struggle. When freedom came these were projected into foreign affairs, and came to be regarded as the foreign policy of the country. What really happened after independence was that the key notions were systematised and actualised by Nehru in the context of the then-existing international relations, so that they could be implemented as the guiding principles of the country's foreign policy. India achieved her independence on 15th of August 1947, after a long non-violent struggle. She had resolved to follow the democratic way and adopt a republican form of Government. Needless to say that the newly liberated country had to face

newly intricate and difficult problems at home. In case of India, these problems became formidable and assumed huge proportions because of the social and religious conditions. Under such circumstances, it was wise and natural on the part of the new government to have decided not to get their country involved in power politics. A nation had to be built almost from a scratch.

The ideological stand point of the Indian National movement was an equal rejection of both Western Capitalism and Soviet Communism as guidelines for India's national development. The Western politico-economic system was rejected because it was believed inevitably to breed exploitation, economic inequality, imperialism and racialism. But the Soviet model of development was also rejected because it was believed to be based on violence and dictatorship which were alien to the ideals of Indian national movement. In a world divided into two powerful blocs with the two different ideologies, both of which were repugnant to nationalist Indian thinking, the only rational strategy for foreign policy could be that of non-alignment.

The policy of non-alignment seems also to be in harmony with India's history as well as geography. Nehru recognised the geographical condition for non-alignment when he said, "I do not say that our country is superior or that we are above passion and prejudice, hatred and fury. But as things are, there

are certain factors which help us. First of all, we are geographically so situated that we are not drawn into controversies with that passionate fury that some other countries are. This is not due to our goodness or badness, but is a matter of geography."⁴

The foreign policy of every nation is shaped by two broad sets of factors- its own ideals and interests, and perceptions and actions of other nations. The task of statesmanship is to create an international climate in which the nation can protect its interest and promote its ideals. India has tried to make her foreign policy a dynamic and flexible instrument for projecting her own views and for safeguarding her own interests. The objectives of India's foreign policy are to promote the cause of peace and international co-operation, as she believes that this would secure not only her own interests but also of the entire international community. It is this policy, which enabled her to promote a more rapid economic growth at home and also, at the same time, to keep here region free from tensions, as far as possible.

It follows that India's foreign policy has been the product of interaction of many and varied factors - the traditional values of Indian society, the commitments of the Indian national movement during the struggle for freedom,

⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru: *India's foreign policy (Selected speeches for the period 1946-1961)* [New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1961] p.73.

the geopolitical situation, the economic needs of society which is in urgent need of a take-off, and the internal political pressures and pulls generated by a democratic system. The main pillars of our foreign policy may be stated as anti-colonialism, non-alignment (which means hostility to none, but a deliberate detachment from competitive power blocs), a determination to judge international issues on their merits and to exercise freedom of action on the basis of such judgement, recognition of Asia and Africa as newly emerging and vital element in world politics, relaxation of international tensions, and emphasis upon disarmament and settlement of disputes without recourse to violence and war.

Nehru hated dictatorship since he was a humanist dedicated to the ideals of equality, liberty and social progress. The foreign policy of Nehru was bedrocked on disarmament and total opposition to imperialism and totalitarianism. He constantly referred to the influence of Gandhian tradition on India's political behaviour, particularly in the international sphere, and on the ideal of On_λ^e World. The logical outcome was a foreign policy which would steer clear of the contemporary power politics and open up a new dimension of international relations. This was precisely the function of non-alignment. India, under Nehru, thus laid the foundation for a universal non-violent order.

Jawaharlal Nehru believed that for the newly independent countries like India, it was necessary to keep out of military entanglements and rivalries between the power blocs and judge every issue on its merits free from the pulls and pressures - military, political and economic - of the so-called great powers. His policy of non-alignment was the only valid policy for India which needed peace more than anything else to develop its social and economic structure after two centuries of colonial domination. Nehru enunciated the basic philosophical foundations of non-alignment in his famous speech on 7th of September, 1946. He said "We shall take full part in international conferences as a free nation with our own policy and not merely as a satellite of another nation. We hope to develop close direct contacts with other nations and to cooperate with them in the furtherance of world peace and freedom. We propose, as far as possible, to keep away from the power politics of groups, aligned against one another, which have led in the past to World Wars and which may again lead to disasters on an even vaster scale. We believe that peace and freedom are indivisible and the denial of freedom anywhere must endanger freedom elsewhere and lead to conflict and war. We are particularly interested in the emancipation of colonial and dependent countries and people, and in the recognition in theory and practice of equal opportunities for all races. We repudiate utterly the Nazi doctrine of racialism whosoever and

Whatever form it may be practised. We seek no domination over others and claim no privileged position over other people. But we do claim equal and honourable treatment of our people wherever they may go, and we cannot accept any discrimination against them. The world inspite of its rivalries and hatreds and inner conflicts, moves inevitably towards closer co-operation and building up of a World Commonwealth. It is for this One World that free India will work, a world in which there is the free co-operation of free people and no class or group exploits another."⁵

Non-alignment, according to Nehru, was not a policy of weakness or expediency, but a policy to enable the newly independent countries which had shaken off the yoke of colonialism and imperialism to live in peace. Just about a year before his death, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote an article in the journal 'Foreign affairs', which includes one of his last reflections on Non-Aligned Movement. He wrote ". . . non-alignment has become a summary description of this policy of friendship towards all nations, uncompromised by adherence to any military pacts . . . Essentially non-alignment is freedom of action which is part of independence . . . non-alignment is now an integral part of the

⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru. *India's foreign policy (selected speeches for the period 1946-1961)* [New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1961) p.80.

international pattern and is widely conceded to be a comprehensible and legitimate policy, particularly for the emergent Afro-Asian states."⁶

The principle of non-alignment stems from the tradition of a country where different religions, races and customs face each other in the same soil. India did not adopt the policy of 'either-or' but the policy of 'this and that.' We have always conceived non-alignment as a positive policy with its trust to end colonialism and racialism, and to safeguard peace by seeking and end to the arms race. Above all, non-alignment meant courage to maintain independence of judgement or, in other words, self-reliance, so that a nation can stay away from power blocs, get on with its national tasks, and eliminate want, disease and ignorance which afflict the greater part of World's population.

One major reason we find in the policy of non-alignment was Nehru's conviction that the division of world into warring camps was a sure way to ensure the outbreak of a major world war. He explained his thinking to the delegates assembled at Belgrade for the first conference of Non-aligned states in 1961. " 'Non-aligned' has a negative meaning. But if we give it a positive connotation, it means nations which object linking up for war purposes, to

⁶ See Jawaharlal Nehru: *Changing India* in Foreign Affairs (New York) April 1963, p.407. As Quoted in P.N. Haksar ed '*Nehru's Vision of peace and security in Nuclear age*' [New Delhi: Patriot Publishers, 1987] p.40.

military blocs, to military alliances and the like. We keep away from such an approach and we want to throw our weight in favour of peace. In effect, therefore, when there is a crisis involving possibility of war, the very fact that we are non-aligned should stir us to feel that more than ever it is up to us to do whatever we can to prevent such a calamity coming down upon us."⁷

Non-alignment implies neither non-involvement nor neutrality. It is an assertion of freedom of judgement and action. It is not a negative policy. But in so far as the military blocs and the cold wars are concerned, the nation would not align itself with either bloc. Denying concerted propaganda that India's policy was at best negative and at worst ambivalent, opportunistic and politically immoral, Nehru asserted that, "when we say that our policy is one of non-alignment, obviously we mean non-alignment with military blocks. It is not a negative policy. It is a positive one, definite one and I hope, a dynamic one. Our foreign policy has thus this positive aspect of peace. The other positive aspects are an enlargement of freedom in the World, replacement of colonialism by free and independent countries, and larger degree of co-operation among nations" ⁸ For Nehru, non-alignment did

⁷ *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol. IV*, [New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and broadcasting, Government of India, 1961] p.361.

⁸ *Jawaharlal Nehru: India's foreign policy (Selected Speeches for the period 1946-1961)* [New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and broadcasting, Government of India, 1961) pp.79-80.

not imply any indifference to the happenings in the world around. On the contrary, he was eager to see india playing her due role in the settlement of international problems. He makes it clear in one of his speeches. "We have proclaimed ourselves during this past year that we will not attach ourselves to any particular group. That has nothing to do with neutrality or passivity on anything else. We have sought to avoid foreign entanglements by not joining one bloc or another. Inevitably, it means we have to plough a lonely furrow. Nonetheless, that is the only honourable and right position for us to take and I am quite sure that by adopting that position, we shall ultimately gain in national and international prestige."⁹

Non-alignment was a declaration of independence, in international affairs and a determination to follow one's own path, without being a hanger on of any great power. Nehru was simply asking for the right of his country to consider each international issue, as it arose, on its merits, instead of tying itself up in advance with other's policies and being conditioned by the wishes and decisions of other countries. Non-alignment reserves and stoutly maintains that India will make its own decisions in her national interests and in conformity with her ideas of what is good in the interest of the world at large.

⁹ *Ibid.* p.9.

The core of non-alignment lay in our efforts to retain independence of thought, judgement and action under the conditions of the military alliances and arrangements of all sorts. The main purpose behind the policy of non-alignment was to enlarge the areas of co-operation and peace which alone could give India her opportunity to concentrate on her own development undistracted by the need to struggle for survival in a wartorn world. Its essence is freedom, both political and economic, and above all, the right to live in peace without fear of war and without interference and interventions from other countries.

India was deeply interested in maintaining peace. At the same time she was not prepared to surrender her sovereign right. She wanted to work for peace independently without aligning herself with one or the other group. Though non-alignment meant that one is not committed to anything, it is not an isolationism instead, it means that a nation does not wish to engage itself in the conflicts for power which the great powers are waging. According to Nehru, non-alignment in actual concrete terms meant a policy of acting according to one's own best judgement. He pleaded that in international relations each country should have independence of judgement so that there is a degree of democratization at the international level.

This was also the clear and specific reason why Nehru chose non-alignment as an instrument for subserving India's national interest. To him, as to many others, it was obvious that India was economically very poor and militarily it was of no consequence, at the time of its independence. Hence the most important task of the Government of India under Nehru was the socio-economic reconstruction of the country, so that the standard of living of the people could be improved. It is this basic motivation and inspiration which led Jawaharlal Nehru to work for world peace. It may be recalled that when India became independent, humanity was reeling under the shock of nuclear weapons which had been used in Heroshima and Nagasaki, in the last phase of the Second World War. It was in this tense situation that Jawaharlal Nehru realised that maintanance of world peace should be the prime task of non-alignment. His thinking, which standsto reason, was that in case of war, even newly independent countries would not remain unaffected. The scarce resources which should be used for development purposes will be used to strengthen military machine. Thus he thought that domestic development and world peace are closely linked. Hence it is in this context that Nehru's constant preoccupation with world peace should be understood.

Peace is the minimum pre-requisite for economic development, not only because a military preparation, which would be adequate for a nations's

security in all contingencies would be in fact beyond its economic capability, but also because, even when it is not directly involved in a war, a war elsewhere would inevitably dislocate its foreign trade, reduce if not eliminate, the inflow of foreign aid, and thus upset the programmes of development. The politico-economic objectives of the foreign aid could be achieved only through a policy of non-alignment, since such a policy alone could ensure the diversification of the sources of aid as well as prevent the exercise of political pressure by one super power. Nehru perceived this logical connection between non-alignment and foreign aid. It was widely thought that this policy would make economic aid available from both socialist and capitalist countries. It would thus enable India to secure economic assistance from the members of both the power blocs, without effecting the country's self respect.

Sri. V.K. Krishna Menon points to the positive side of our foreign policy when he says "It is totally untrue that on account of our foreign policy we have denied ourselves resources - economic and military, which should be otherwise available to us. We have ever since independence procured military equipment from the countries of the Western bloc and later from those of East as well. At no time have we taken the position that non-alignment is a self denying ordinance in this respect. . . . So far as economic aid is concerned, India has received from both the blocs substantial aid. At the height of the

non-alignment controversy, all aid from the West to India was totally devoid of conditions - no strings."¹⁰

Another aspect of Jawaharlal Nehru's non-alignment was that while he wanted economic assistance for India's development, he would not for this purpose, compromise the self-respect or sovereignty. The hall-mark of a sovereign country is that it should have independence of judgement and action. Encroachment on sovereignty could be accepted voluntarily in an independent world only in the interests of world order, but could not be surrendered to a stronger force.

Jawaharlal Nehru strongly believed that country's security is partly assured by its foreign policy. The normal idea is that security is maintained by the army. That is only partly true. It is equally true that a country's security depends upon its policies. A deliberate policy of friendship with other countries goes further in gaining security than almost anything else. From the security point of view, non-alignment alone could be the diplomatic supplement for defence efforts. Rasheeduddin Khan writes about it as follows: "In an epoch of world history, when alignment with blocs and affiliation with ideological poles dominated international transactions, non-alignment emerged

¹⁰ See. V.K. Krishna Menon, '*Progressive Neutralism*' in Paul. F. Power, ed., '*Indias non-alignment policy. strengths and weaknesses*,' (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1967) pp.78-85.

as an assertion of independence in foreign affairs, as a process of diffusion of bloc monoliths, as a symbol of defiance against big power domination, and as a diplomatic innovation in the phase of politics of confrontation and cold war. But its main thrust was to shift focus from status quo to change, from arms race to development, from ragmentation in blocs to an emerging unified world of interdependence and co-existence imbued with the values of peace, equality, justice and humanism."¹¹

The non-aligned movement plays an important role in the international arena due to its anti-imperialist and liberationist character and its contribution to the consolidation of world peace. Nehru gave a call also against colonialism, the cold war and the politics of the blocs. Full elimination of colonialism and peaceful co-existence of states with different social systems are indispensable conditions for the achievement of India's national aims as well as world progress. To the extent that this was realised the foreign policy line of India's non-participation in blocs was transformed into a policy of positive neutrality, of India's active efforts against colonialism and for averting another world war. This policy enabled India to earn ever greater prestige in international arena.

¹¹ See. Rasheeduddin Kahn , *'Nehru's vision of Asia and the world'* in P.K. Haksar, ed., *'Nehru's vision of peace and security in nuclear age'* (New Delhi: Patriot, 1987), pp.7-40.

Nehru played an active and dynamic role in the International Congress against imperialism which was held in 1927 and he came to be recognised as a leading figure in the fight against the forces of colonialism and imperialism. The world-wide phenomenon of imperialism came to be looked upon as an evil, of which British rule in India was just one manifestation. The Indian freedom struggle under Nehru and G^andhiji saw itself as a part of the world wide movement against imperialism and colonialism. Nehru was certainly one of the first and most important leader of a national liberation movement who, apart from the communists, understood the meaning of the rise of fascism and the menace that it caused to democracy. It was he who placed our country on the road to a great anti-imperialist world power.

Already in the pre-war days India's foreign policy was emerging clearly. Nehru makes it plain in the following words: "More and more I came to think that these separate problems, political or economic, in China, Abyssinia, Spain, Central Europe, India or elsewhere, were facets of one and the same world problem. There could be no final solution any of them till this basic problem was solved. . . as peace was said to be indivisible in the present day world, so also freedom was indivisible, and the world could not continue for long part free, part unfree If freedom was to be established in the world not only fascism and nazism had to go but imperialism had to be completely

liquidated.s'¹²

We have always conceived of non-alignment as a positive policy with its thrust to end colonialism and racialism, to safeguard peace, and to seek an end to the arms race. The values cherished by India such as anti-imperialism and anti-racism could be and were actively pursued within the framework of Non-Aligned Movement. That is why within the Non-Aligned Movement, India strongly upheld the right of African countries to be free, and supported the efforts of the developing countries for a New International Economic Order (NIEO). She has been supporting all genuine moves for disarmament, particularly by way of reduction and eventual abolition of all nuclear arms.

Jawaharlal Nehru on September 24th of 1946 delivered a speech in which he said "She (India) will uphold the principle of freedom for dependent people and will oppose racial discrimination wheresoever it may occur. She will work with other peace-loving nations for international co-operation and good will without the exploitation of one nation by another."¹³ Ever since the national Indian Government appeared, its head, Jawaharlal Nehru constantly underlined that the basic features of Indian foreign policy were anti-

¹² Jawaharlal Nehru, *'Autobiography'*. (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1982) p.601.

¹³ Jawaharlal Nehru, *'India's foreign policy (Selected speeches for the period 1946-1961)* [New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and broad casting, Government of India, 1961] p.80.

colonialism, anti-racialism and non-participation in power blocs. As a progressive thinker and humanist Jawaharlal Nehru's mind and heart were filled with the deep disgust at the Nazi ideology, fascism and racism. He was a patriot, a nationalist and his nationalism was part of his internationalism. He looked upon the freedom and independence of India only as a part of the larger concept of freedom and independence of all nations in the world.

Nehru felt that constant effort was necessary to see not only that root causes of conflict such as imperialism and racialism were removed, but also that any crisis situation emerging as a result of the clash between the two super powers was defused as early as possible and not allowed to escalate into a world war. If this was not done, the cold war could any moment develop into a hot war and this in a nuclear age was bound to result in a world-wide catastrophe. The urge to prevent such a catastrophe led Nehru to evolve a style of diplomacy which enabled a militarily weak country like India to play a major role in world politics, thereby enhancing India's prestige in the community of nations as well as contributing substantially to the maintenance of world peace. It is necessary not only to liquidate the remaining vestiges of colonialism but also to create a climate which would assure the developing countries their freedom and sovereignty and the right and opportunity to exploit their natural resources for the progress and welfare of their people.

It is impossible to talk about the peace-loving policy of new India without touching upon the great and decisive role and the activity of Jawaharlal Nehru for the formulation, the gradual establishment and the acceptance of the 'five principles' known as *Panchsheel*, as a basis for the attainment of common peace, friendship and co-operation among the people. Nehru spelt out the implications of non-alignment by the positive doctrine of *Panchsheel*. The five principles of peaceful co-existence call for the self discipline of nations. At the mass meeting dedicated to the Indo-Soviet friendship which took place in Moscow in 1955, Jawaharlal Nehru spoke about *Panchsheel* as follows "It is in recognition of the right of each country to fashion its own destiny that the Indian Government and the People's Government of China agreed to the Five principles to govern their relations with each other. These principles were, Respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; Non-aggression; Non-interference in each other's internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful co-existence."¹⁴

India and China signed the *Panchsheel Declaration* in 1954. The principles represent the approach of tolerance, of non-interference, of living one's life, of learning from other but neither interfering nor being interfered

¹⁴ *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol.III (1953-57)*, [New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1983] p.303.

with. Speaking of the highly humane idea for peaceful co-existence the 'Five-principles', Nehru made it clear that the idea for peaceful co-existence was not a new idea for India, and that it was at the bottom of the very Indian way of life. It is as ancient as Indian thought and culture. "About 2200 years ago", Nehru explains, "Asoka - the great son of India has proclaimed that idea and carved it on the stone slabs that still exist today to communicate his message."¹⁵

Jawaharlal Nehru underlines the great role and significance of '*Panchsheel*' in international relations. "No great truths may be new," he said, "but it is true that an idea like non-interference of any kind - political, economic or ideological, - is an important factor in the world situation today. You make a law and the law gradually influences the whole structure of life in a country, even though some people may not obey it. Even those who do not believe in it gradually come within its scope. The conception of '*Panchsheel*' means that there may be different ways of progress, possibly different outlooks, but that

¹⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru - *Indias foreign policy (Selected speeches for the period 1946-1961)* [Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and broadcasting, Government of India, 1961] p.177.

broadly, the ultimate objective may be the same"16 What he wanted to advocate was a faith in the ultimate objectives.

By 1955 more than thirty countries had accepted the above principles in one form or another. "I have no doubt," said Nehru in 1955, "that these principles of international behaviour, if accepted and acted upon by all countries of the world, would go a long way to put an end to the fears and apprehensions which cast dark shadows^w over the world."¹⁷ It was considered natural that while living in the gradually compressing world of today nations were likely at times come into conflict of one kind or another. But what Nehru wanted was to spread the conception of a peaceful settlement of such disputes.

The universal homage to '*Panchsheel*' is the logical consequence of the fact that power and influence in the world today are effective only to the extent they establish a living nexus with the real aspirations of people and States rather than a means of promoting narrowly conceived notions of national interest. It brings together people in mutual co-operation despite the obvious differences in social and political systems.

¹⁶ *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol.III. (1953-1957)* [Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1983] p.307.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p.303.

We have arrived at a stage in human affairs when the ideal of 'One World' and some kind of world federation seems to be essential. We should work for that ideal and not for any grouping which comes in the way of this larger world group. Nehru was opposed to forming of separate blocs, groups and factions in politics-national and international, hence his continuous word of caution was against building a 'third bloc', 'third force' etc., that tended to divide and fragment. It meant that Nehru did not want to turn non-alignment into an organisation and said that world was not in need of such an organisation. He sought to emphasize the increasing danger of nuclear war and the primacy of peace and peaceful co-existence as the basic challenge of the time. Striving for world peace was certainly the most characteristic feature of non-alignment as conceived of by Nehru. The emergence of India as an important factor in world affairs - a factor of peace and justice - is the result of Nehru's vision of India as a part of the world community.

In the modern world today, the unity and independence of a nation depend as much on its internal strength as on friendly external relations. That is why India has constantly followed a policy of good neighbourliness. Nehru was convinced that the true role of a statesman in this disturbed world lay in the way of lessening tensions and conflicts and bringing about a climate of understanding and mutual accommodation with a view of settling international

differences without resort to the horrors of war. He was a towering world force skillfully inserting the peace will of India between the ranging antagonisms of the great powers of East and West. As a humanist and believer of universal brotherhood, Pt. Nehru showed his anxiety towards East-West rivalry and the destructive capacity of nuclear weapons. He appealed the super powers not to pile up more arms which may lead to annihilation of mankind. He pleaded for peace and peaceful co-existence among the competing powers. The great powers are not yet in harmonious relationship to each other; but with the help of non-aligned world they have learned to exercise a wise restraint.

The essence of non-aligned movement is freedom, both political and economic and above all, the right to live in peace without fear of war and without interference and intervention from other countries. Universal peace, according to Nehru can be attained only when all nations gain their independence and every single country is free to work fruitfully. That is the reason why, peace and freedom, according to him, should be discussed in both their political and economic aspects. "The freedom that we envisage is not confined to this nation or that, or to a particular people, but must spread out over the whole human race. That human freedom cannot be based on the

supremacy of any particular class. It must become the freedom of the common man everywhere and full opportunity for him to develop."¹⁸

Jawaharlal Nehru made efforts to spread the highly humane idea of the peaceful co-existence among the people and the countries in order to bring about a different social order in the international realm. He hoped that the policy of peace if adopted, would weaken the international tensions. He also expressed his hope that the principle of peaceful co-existence among the countries would be accepted on a larger scale. In his first statement on Radio Delhi in September 1946, Jawaharlal Nehru pointed out, "We hope to develop close and direct contact with other nations and to co-operate with them in the furtherance of world peace and freedom."¹⁹ His concept of peace was not a mere absence of war but a positive concept of international understanding and co-operation in all fields. It assumed even greater importance in the thermo-nuclear age of our time.

In emphasizing the need for adopting the right attitude in the relation among nations, Nehru often referred to the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi and explained that his basic approach to world politics in general and Indian

¹⁸ *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches Vol. (1946-'49)* [New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1983] p.303.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p.2.

foreign policy in particular had been profoundly influenced by the Gandhian tradition. Nehru's vision extended far beyond the frontiers of India. His vision was that of one world where different people and nations with their own cultural identities and aspirations could live in peace, friendship and equality. He attached paramount importance to promote understanding, and to the developing and strengthening bilateral co-operation in the political, economic and cultural fields. The conduct of our foreign policy has been directed towards this objective of building bridges of friendship, co-operation and understanding.

It is in pursuance of the policy of non-alignment that India took several steps to strengthen its relations of friendship and co-operation in our external relations. Ofcourse India had given considerable importance to her friendship with the Soviet Union. It was emerged as a very important aspect of our external relations since independence. India and Soviet Union in spite of the differences between their political and economic systems, have sought and developed enduring relationship. India was supported also by a large measure of economic assistance by the United States, especially in times of crises such as food shortage etc.

India has close ties of friendship with Bangladesh and it is our policy to continue and strengthen this friendship. With Afghanistan we have always had

friendly relations. Our co-operation with other countries in the area such as Srilanka, Burma, Nepal and Bhutan has continued to gain strength in recent years. With the countries of South-East Asia, we have been able to establish understanding and friendly relations in the political and economic realm. With Iran and Iraq we have an ever-growing, mutually useful, technical and industrial co-operation, progressing on parallel lines with our political friendship. An effective and sustained diplomatic effort has also been set in motion in the West Asian area to develop further economic contacts with all the countries in the region including Kuwait, Syria, Jordan, the Gulf states and Saudi Arabia.

India believes that as neighbours who share so much of history, tradition and culture there is no rational alternative to friendship and co-operation between India and Pakistan. At the same time, we recognise that as close neighbours, it is not unnatural for problems and difficulties to arise from time to time. What is essential is a commitment and determination to overcome the difficulties in a spirit of friendship, good neighbourliness and mutual recognition of the economic and geographical imperatives of the region as a whole. It was with this version of peace and co-operation in the sub-continent that the Simla Agreement was signed with Pakistan in July 1972. We believe that there are no problems between neighbours which cannot be solved by

understanding and negotiation if there is willingness on both sides.

Thus, our foreign policy moves has given a new dynamism and renewed our self confidence in the conduct of our relation with foreign countries and with international community.

Unfortunately, China did not respond fully to India's efforts at creating an era of peaceful and friendly co-operation between the two countries. It was India's non-alignment policy that was challenged when the Chinese forces penetrated into the country in 1962. The test was all the more severe because China's action struck at the principles of peaceful co-existence and created great confusion among the 'third world' countries as it endangered the very idea of the policy of non-alignment. Instead of honouring the five-principles of peaceful co-existence, China started a process of nibbling at India's territory in the North and embarked on a massive invasion in 1962. This gave a great set back to India's idea of cementing friendship, peace and co-operation between the two largest countries of Asia. Nehru's biographer Chalapathi Rau considers that "the Chinese attack of 1962 was the saddest chapter of Jawaharlal's life."²⁰

²⁰ Chalapathi Rau, *Makers of Modern India: Jawaharlal Nehru*. [New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1990] p.400.

After the Chinese incursion into India, Nehru was severely criticised for India's policy of non-alignment with the blocs. His policy was subjected to triple pressure by the imperialists, the Indian reactionaries and China. But Nehru did not budge. He was firm on the belief that it would be a folly for India to abandon her policy of non-alignment and that any other policy would be disastrous for the country. He did not break diplomatic relations with China and continued his efforts at finding a peaceful solution for the border problem. Thanks to Nehru's policy, the Sino-Indian conflict soon came to an end although relations remained strained for a long time.

One could differ with Nehru's handling a particular problem or crisis, but there is no doubt that, by and large the policies he framed for India's relations with outside world have stood the test of time. The framework of our foreign policy constructed by Nehru has thus proved to be durable despite all pressures, both domestic and foreign, exerted upon it.

In all matters, Nehru felt that humanity is above all nations. The task set to our generation is not the task of merely building up of our nation. It is a question of building up of the whole world. Nehru was a dedicated servant of humanity and touched the conscience of the people. He made them feel responsible for the dignity of man and promotion of peace.

Nehru was essentially a man of peace. A born humanist, Nehru believed that peace was essential for the progress of humanity. He hated war. He worked for the abolition of nuclear weapons which meant death to millions and disease to more. Nuclear war is a condition in which every one loses. The many studies made in various countries and under U.N. auspices are convincing evidence that the use of even a relatively small portion of the nuclear weapons stockpile will instantly kill hundreds of millions of people, destroy immense material and cultural values and cause heavy damage to the productive forces. More likely than not, the survivors will be doomed to slow death from hunger and disease. So today more than ever before the future of humanity depends on the determination of the people to safeguard peace.

Nehru told the Parliament in August 1958, "There is not the shadow of a doubt that if a war is once started, the full panoply of the weapons of the atomic age will reveal itself."²¹ On many occasions Nehru appears to adopt a pessimistic attitude when he thinks of war, but ultimately he emerges as an optimist with the faith in the triumph of peace. Elimination of the threat of war is a victory for mankind. So India under Nehru came out actively for the preservation of general peace, demanding disarmament and cessation of

²¹ Jawaharlal Nehru, *India's foreign policy (Selected speeches for the period 1946-1961)* [New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1961] p.210.

nuclear tests. As observed by Sri Asianand, "In the tightening cold war confrontation between the power blocs and deepening division of the world in First, Second and Third worlds, Nehru became a sought after mediator and ambassador of peace" ²² Thus Nehru appeared in the history as a keen explorer of the ways and means to strengthen peace. Since the nuclear weapons were the greatest threat to the world peace, Nehru gave a call against it. He made sincere efforts to halt the arms race and thus to save the mankind. He proposed in the United Nations complete nuclear disarmament in 1954, as a part of this effort. This was the first such appeal made by any world statesman in that international organisation. Nehru was consumed by the desire to see some concrete progress towards a world rid of nuclear menace.

As a strong believer in world peace Nehru cherished the concept of One World Community. Humanism was brilliantly reflected in his fruitful activity for the cause of peace and friendship between people of different nations. He served the cause of world peace as an outstanding exponent of the policy of non-alignment. Peaceful co-existence, for him, was the practical form of non-alignment. This philosophy of co-existence is the mainstay of world peace today and thus his voice of peace is rung throughout the world. As Justice

²² Sri. Asianand. 1996 . . . *Whither India, Whither Mankind?* [New Delhi: Indian Institute of Ecology and Environment, New India Movement, 1996] p.299.

V.R. Krishna Iyer observes "Independent judgement on issues, a demand for peace and resolute stand against nuclear bombs and a host of spin off benefits from this snow-balling movements came from one man's unquenchable humanism on a global scale to defend mankind against the earth's enemies, whatever their flags, and chart out of prospect of universal prosperity."²³ Thus Nehru turned out to be a healing hope for the rising generations.

The concepts of non-alignment, anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism, working for peace and at the same time working for peaceful co-existence constitute the bases of India's foreign policy. We still keep to these main features though some, amendments were brought in with regard to its operation depending upon the changes in world situation. Hence the foreign policy of India basically remains intact, and inspite of various counter influences it shows a strong tendency to continue in the channels foreseen by Nehru.

Today there is undoubtedly widespread understanding and acceptance of the policy of non-alignment and its relevance and importance. As Rashid^{ee}duddin^h Khan points out. "There is now a greater importance, realization of India's early contribution in providing initial stability and direction to Non-

²³ See. V.R. Krishna Iyer, '*Nehru and Krishna Menon*' (Delhi: Konark, 1993), pp.78-79.

aligned Movement, especially the creative role that the architect of its foreign policy Jawaharlal Nehru, had played as the precursor (1947-1955) progenitor (1955-1961) and pioneer (1961-1964) of the Non-Aligned Movement, thereby committing the largest newly liberated developing country with an active democratic polity and expanding industrial base, to the global task of building a de-colonised world of equals with shared goals for a common future."²⁴

As one looks back over the fifty years of India's independence, one cannot but admire and pay tribute to the vision of Jawaharlal Nehru, the architect of modern India. His policy of peace and peaceful co-existence, of non-alignment and a new just world economic order, his passion for justice and stand against inequality are various facets of his dynamic personality which have stood India in good stead. They have an enduring quality for safeguarding peace, security and stability not only in India, but throughout the world.

²⁴ See Rasheeduddin Khan, '*Nehru's vision of Asia and the world*' in P.N. Haksar, ed., '*Nehru's vision of peace and security in Nuclear age*' [New Delhi: Patriot, 1987] pp.7-40.

CONCLUSION

Syamala K. "Humanism in modern Indian thought with special reference to the philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru" Thesis. Department of Philosophy, University of Calicut, 1998

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 cooperation. 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 institutionalisation 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. Thus he saw that the progress of democracy lay in ensuring not only the rights of individual, but also in rendering social justice, which inevitably involved a refashioning of the society. This synthesis of individual right and social obligation was embodied in his ideal of democratic socialism, which was the only practical means to realise the cherished values of humanism.

To this end, Nehru had also launched great experiments in decentralisation of the powers of the state. He believed that it would provide a solid foundations for edifice of our democracy. Though the Nation had disregarded this policy for a long time after the period of Nehru, later our leaders realized the mistake. So in the current, Five Year Plan (Nineth) attempts are being made to give enough importance to decentralization. *Panchayati Raj* institutions were adopted in the recent planning programmes as a method to achieve decentralization and to make the administration more

effective. Nehru realized that in the light of the vastness of our country cultural diversity among the people and uneven developments of the different groups any form of government other than parliamentary democracy would lead to a disintegration of the nation to different territorial or linguistic groups. So he made all kinds of efforts to strengthen the foundations of democracy in India.

Secularism had been built into the very foundations of our constitution, and this was one of the principles to which Panditji was passionately dedicated. Our constituent Assembly opted for the secular state in order to strengthen its democratic set up. As India was a multi-religions and multi-racial nation, Nehru realized that the strengthening of secular foundation of our polity was of immense importance. He considered all barriers between man and man, based on caste, or color, religion or class as artificial. So he insisted that religion was a matter for the individual and the State should refrain from favouring any particular religious community. The idea of secular state put forward by Nehru implies a social structure in which the individual could transcend the social inequalities imposed by religion. As a humanist, he wanted to recognise the basic freedom of man through secularism and so the Indian Constitution he forbids the States' interference in matters of faith and philosophy. He was also against mixing up of religion with politics. He wanted the "removal of religion from public affairs, the separation of the state

from all faiths (and) the insistence on religion as a personal matter for the individual citizen." for, "Only secularism of this type could be the corner-stone of an egalitarian forward-looking society with religious pluralism."¹ Thus Nehru held that secularism was the only creed that could keep and hold the Indians together and thus make the Nation stable and strong.

As a humanist and a socialist, Pandit Nehru believed in science, in progress, and in modernity. He wanted India to go ahead by shedding off the prejudices and superstitions which held it back. As a humanist, Nehru believed that the supreme task of the age was to lift mankind from its age-old state of bare subsistence to a social level which provided security, material plenty and opportunities of higher life to all. He knew that this aim could be achieved only through science and its application. So he wanted life to be adjusted with modern science and technology, since he saw them as the major forces to bring about change and progress in society. He pleaded for a society which maintains an uninterrupted growth of science and technology. He advocated the importance of promoting it for human welfare. Nehru tried to convert India's mainly agriculturist society into an industrialized society and succeeded to a great extent in creating the required infrastructure for this purpose. His

¹ See. S. Gopal. '*Secularism: a necessary adhesive*' (The Hindu, 15th August 1997) p.69.

contribution in accelerating the pace of modernization in India's predominantly traditional society will always be remembered. But while placing full reliance on the development of science and harnessing scientific knowledge for the eradication of misery and poverty, he was conscious of the limitations of such material progress if it ignored certain essential spiritual values. So he held that people must keep their feet firmly planted in the past. Thus in Nehru, we find a happy combination of a scientist and a modernist who at the same time respected the spiritual traditions of our country.

In his love for the whole of mankind, Pandit Nehru realized the futility of war and strove for peace in the world with all his heart and soul. He understood better than almost many other persons of his generation, the horrible potentialities of nuclear warfare. So time and again he raised the voice of sanity and peace when the world was in danger of being engulfed by a nuclear holocaust. His dream was of a peaceful world in which all nations would co-operate with one another in the task of bettering the condition of human race. He devised the policy of non-alignment, according to which, India while being friendly with all nations, kept away from power blocs. After independence, it was necessary to develop friendly relations with all countries of the world. This, Nehru thought, was the only way for growing powerful. Also he believed that with her policy of non-alignment, India would be able to

influence the big powers of the world and consequently help in decreasing the possibilities of another world war. In the domain of foreign policy, Jawaharlal had evolved from India's age-old principles of non-violence and tolerance, the theory of *'Panchasila'*, which had been accepted by many countries of the world. His concept of non-alignment formed the basis of India's foreign policy and it has stood the test of time and assumed the form of a world-wide movement embracing all the newly liberated countries of the third world. This policy has enabled India to safeguard its sovereignty and independence and at the same time to play an important role in the international politics. It redounds to Nehru's credit that he managed to reconcile idealism with the realistic demands of the situation.

To sum up, we can say that it was a genuine form of humanism that was the main spring of Nehru's policies which served as the foundations of modern India. As a humanist, he affirmed full faith in man and his socialist, secularist and democratic ideas cannot be understood save in the context of his deep belief in man and in the dignity of human existence. His conception of socialism was certainly based upon economic considerations, but it had an important humanitarian dimension also. His fascination for socialism was born out of his deep concern for the suffering masses and a strong desire to better their lot. At the same time Nehru was not prepared to sacrifice individual

freedom for the sake of economic development and his socialism aimed at ensuring and promoting maximum freedom to the individuals. He wanted to achieve it through democratic process rather than a violent revolution. He thus based his socialism on democracy, dignity of individual and social justice. It was Nehru's emphasis upon the all-sided development of individual in relation to the society that made him a democratic humanist. Democracy was considered by him as the best form of government, because, according to him, it alone could preserve the highest human values.

Secularism, for Nehru, meant the broad, liberal and humanistic outlook which makes it possible for man to rise above religion. His secularism was rooted in his democratic humanism as it embraced all religions and communities in India. Man being his central concern, Nehru held that too much dependence on supernatural powers will lead to a loss of self reliance in man. He wanted to uphold and humanize the religious values of oneness, fellowship and tolerance. He condemned caste system and the practice of untouchability because it was against his philosophy of humanism. Thus secularism to Nehru was a part of his democratic creed, his broad liberal humanism and a facet of his socialist faith.

Insistence on science and social reconstruction had been another fundamental feature of Nehru's outlook. He was primarily interested in the

material welfare of the people and wanted to eradicate hunger and poverty through the application of science. It was, according to him, the basic requirement for the transformation of a society of scarcity into one of abundance. But he always stressed the importance of making use of the achievements of science and technology only for human betterment. For this, he found that it was necessary to combine the scientific spirit with humanism and this scientific humanism was the basic faith and creed of his life.

Jawaharlal Nehru made efforts for a speedy materialization of the highly human idea of peaceful co-existence among the nations in the international sphere. His vision was that of one world where different people and nations with their own cultural identities could live in peace, friendship and cooperation. Nehru felt that humanity was above all nations, and held that peace was essential for its growth. He served the cause of world peace as an outstanding exponent of the policy of non-alignment.

Pandit Nehru's theory and practice of socialism, democracy, secularism and non-alignment were not borrowed as such from any other country. He was clear in his mind that India must chart her own distinct path of development without trying to copy either a Capitalist or a Communist model. being a multi-racial and multi-lingual society, India had to accommodate its linguistic diversities, ethnic divergences and political pluralities. This was

clearly perceived by Nehru when he designed and reformed the ideals of socialism, democracy, secularism and the non-alignment policy for India. He held that if these ideals were to be realized in India, they should certainly grow out of Indian conditions. His policies were framed in terms of Indian heritage and its basic structure. They were, to a considerable extent, intrinsically intertwined with Gandhiji's strategies. Though many of these policies outlined by Nehru have been radically redefined during the course of time they have not been rejected. Perhaps his ideology still continues to exert a dominant influence because it was based on the combination of what was best in Eastern as well as Western expressions of a genuine form of humanism. The enduring relevance of Nehru's humanistic approach to the problems of the Nation was made clear by Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, when he said that "In our present climate of contemporary events, I feel that the pure light of wisdom and the true nature of institutions given to us by Jawaharlal Nehru are invaluable elements. I consider them invaluable not only to develop further our system of governance, but more basic: to maintain it intact and preserve its purposefulness."² What is required today is a solemn reaffirmation of the humanistic ideals for which Pandit Nehru stood all through his life. The best tribute to Nehru would be the triumph of the ideals of social progress through

² Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma. *Jawaharlal Nehru (Selected Speeches)* [New Delhi: Prentice Hall, 1989] p.48.

science and technology, peace and international understanding based upon a scientific, secular and democratic form of humanism to which he had dedicated the whole of his life.

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