



: I N T R O D U C T I O N :

Nehru was a supremex pragmatist, a man whose faith and convictions could not be confined with in any particular religious or philosophical approach. He had a rational outlook on life. He was a revolutionary who believed in the middle way. To him the concept of the secular state, one of his greatest contribution was not only a way of avoiding the excesses of religious fanaticism; it was an article of faith, a logical consequence of his own rationalism and humanism. He was an intellectual in politics, an agnostic in a religiously impregnated society, but withal a man of faith and works. Nehru's greatest contribution to India, wrote a Western observer from New Delhi a few days after the Prime Minister's death, has been an intellectual one. Throughout his forty four years of political life he tried to create in his countrymen a rational approach to political and to government and even to life itself. In the years prior to Independence, he wrote and preached that Indians must think about their future and themselves in rational and scientific, not in traditional terms. He taught that man is the instrument of his own destiny, and not a toy in the hands of fate. After Independence, once he and others of like mind were in power, Nehru embodied his creed in national institutions.

Nehru was India's supreme nation builder. He sought to build a nation not only in terms of political institutions, but also in terms of mental emancipation and economic and social progress. As President Radhakrishnan said in his address to the nation mourning Nehru's loss : His life and work have had a profound influence on our mental make up, social structure, and intellectual development.... As a maker of modern India his services were unparalleled.

For many years Nehru bestrode modern India like a colossus. Contrary to his own desires no other Indian leader, after Gandhi's assassination, with the possible exception of Vallabhbhai Patel, was able to emerge from the shadow of his dominating personality. This dominance gave outsiders a distorted view of the complexity of the Indian scene, and inside India it may have defeated some of the objectives which he fought to achieve. It was quite apparent, however, that he accepted power not so much quite apparent, however, that he accepted power not so much for himself as for India. Few democratic leaders have wielded such unchallenged power, and few, if any, have used it so wisely. As the New York Times observed an editorial tribute after his death : Lesser leaders have used the love of their people want only, to master their people. But Nehru refused to turn power into despotism. Dictatorship was <sup>within</sup> his grasp; at times

India seemed to be thrusting it upon him. He refused. The insistence upon an India free in Independence was his gift, born out of love, for his country. He sought and received the confidence and support and indeed the affection of the Indian people. As the States man said of him : Nehru has this of the god like in him : he inspired both hope and trust. He used his personal popularity as a means to identify the people of India, whose loyalties and concerns were primarily local ones, based on village, caste, and community, with India as a whole. Though the device of political institutional transfer, to borrow the involved jargon of the political scientist, he persuaded thousands and perhaps millions of Indians to be loyal not only to him but to his beloved India. One of the intriguing questions for the future is the extent to which this transfer device will be operative, and hopefully grow even stronger, now that the symbol of India for the masses of the people has been removed, except in memory. If democracy survives in India, it must have the genuine support of the Indian people, and the dedicated allegiance of leaders who really believe in the democratic way and who will not be tempted to seek authoritarian short cut to political influence and power. If democracy survives in India, it will be Nehru's greatest achievement and his greatest legacy a legacy not only to the people of India but to freedom loving people throughout the world.

Despite all their love for him, the people of India often made Nehru's task more difficult, and his own colleagues and associates, as well as his political opponents, often harassed him in ways which touched his inmost sensitivities. His last years, when his physical powers were visibly failing, must have been unusually lonely and usually sad ones for him, as were Gandhi's last months developments at home and abroad the Chinese attack, the worsening of relations with Pakistan, the worst wave of communal troubles since the partition period, the food crisis and other economic reverses which seemed to jeopardize the entire development effort, and other difficulties which again raised the spectre of economic social, and political failure in crucial sectors of the national life seemed to threaten the objectives to which he had devoted his life. But t he never lost his faith in the Indian people, and in India's capacity to meet the challenges of the present and the future. In a real sense, he gave his life for India, but this was a matter of deliberate choice on his part, a choice he never regretted. By so doing he linked himself to a cause bigger than he was, and thereby gave meaning and significance to his life. Twenty years ago he wrote in the Discovery of India.

My generation has been a troubled one in India and the world. We may carry on for a little while longer, but our day

will be over and we shall give place to others, and they will lead their lives and carry their burdens to the next stage of the journey. How have we played our part in this brief interlude that draws to a close? I do not know. Others of a later age will judge. By what standards do we measure success or failure? That too I do not know. We can make no complaint that life has treated us harshly, for ours has been a willing choice and perhaps life has not been so bad to us after all. For only those can sense life who stand often on the verge of it.... In spite of all the mistakes that we might have made, we have saved ourselves from triviality and an inner shame and cowardice. That, for our individual selves, has been some achievement.

There is no reason to believe that Jawaharlal Nehru ever regretted the dedication of his life to the service of India; and surely India was fortunate to have such a man for its leader during the formative years of nationhood. Thirty five years ago, when he supported Nehru for election as President of the Indian National Congress, Mahatma Gandhi said of him: 'He is as pure as crystal. He is truthful beyond suspicion .... He is a knight sans peur et sans reproche. The nation is safe in his hands.' Gandhi's prescience was justified by the way Nehru performed in his later years, especially after the Mahatma himself was no more. Any criticisms of his work should be placed

in the broader perspective of his manifold contributions to India and to the modern world. Of him it may truly be said, as it was of Sir Christopher Wren : Si monumentum requiris, circumspice ( 'if you seek his monument, look around you ' ) ! Both Wren and Nehru were master builders; but Wren designed buildings, where as Nehru built a nation. Progress was Jawaharlal Nehru's creed. His concept of it was two dimensional : Material welfare or economic development provided one dimension; development of the human personality provided the other. For him the two belonged together and were mutually concomitant.

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