

“AN EVALUATION OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU'S IDEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT: FROM FREEDOM FIGHTER TO NATION-BUILDER”

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the ideological growth of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India, tracing his development from a freedom fighter to a nation-builder. Nehru's childhood, tinged as it was with noblesse oblige and exposure to the grand traditions of Western intellect, provided the groundwork for his broad liberal vision. Thus, while passing through the doors of reputed schools like Harrow, Cambridge, and the Inner Temple, he became familiar with a much larger perspective regarding political thought, nationalism, social justice, and subsequent on application to India's freedom movement. The influence of British colonialism was not insignificant while forming Nehru's critique of imperialism, which in turn influenced his vision of a democratic, secular, and socialist India. Being an Indian National Congress member and within the Gandhian movement, he remained highly committed to non-violent resistance and mass mobilization. Being India's very first Prime Minister, his policies of central planning, industrialization, and creating a public sector economy showed his vision for an independent, modern India. Yet, an authoritarian leadership like this was not lost in his democratic approaches and strategies toward national unity. In short, Nehru's ideological journey was part of the making of post-colonial India: forward, social justice, and rebuild a nation that for two centuries had been torn under rule by colonial powers.

Keywords: Jawaharlal Nehru's, Ideological, Freedom Fighter, Nation-BUILDER, Indian Freedom Struggle, India's Foreign Policy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Jawaharlal Nehru was the first Prime Minister of India and an Indian visionary leader whose ideology in developing played a crucial role in shaping the post-independence trajectory of the nation. Born into a privileged class of 1889, his educational life along with later exposure to Western ideas shaped his worldview. However, it is during his growing involvement with the Indian freedom movement that gave his ideas a decidedly Indian context.

Nehru's ideological journey was founded upon firm conviction about the principles of secularism, democracy, and socialism. He thought that all these three principals were mandatory for the future of India. His early association with the Indian National Congress as well as the writings of Mahatma Gandhi imparted a steadfastness to his commitment towards non-violent resistance in the path to independence. However, he was influenced by the intellectual Western tradition, especially the writings of Marx, Engels, and the Fabian socialists. These ideas fueled his vision of a socialist, secular state in which economic progress went hand in hand with social justice.

The period when he was a leader in the Indian National Congress and closely associated with the Gandhian movement marked the gelling of his political thought. Though his opinions differed often from what Gandhi held, he continued to be a staunch nationalist who could move between tradition and modernity. His role during the struggle for independence made him a big name not only within the INC but also within the larger Indian freedom movement as a whole.

With Nehru as the first Prime Minister of India, the ideological change in Nehru became more pronounced in his policy measures aimed at nation-building. He was a strong advocate of central planning, based on his belief that the nation would achieve industrialization only when it had a self-sustaining economy. Therefore, under his leadership, large public sector enterprises and the planning commission became pillars of the Indian economy.

No matter how firm a democrat Nehru was, his style of leadership did cause anxiety about the centralization of power. His ideological framework remained a firm proponent of Indian unity and progress through democratic means. This means that not only will he be remembered as a great political leader but also as one with unyielding ideological obedience - India did indeed become a democratic, secular, and socialist republic, progressing with a focus on unity and development.



Figure 1: Jawaharlal Nehru.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Uma Iyengar's (2007) edited volume *The Oxford India Nehru* is a thematic anthology that explores the life, ideas, and political legacy of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister. It comprises essays by leading scholars analyzing Nehru's vision of India, his leadership during the initial years of independence, and his role in shaping both domestic and foreign policy. This collection addresses Nehru's commitment to democracy, secularism, and socialism, his economic and educational policies, and other important aspects of his life. An essential contribution of this volume is the critical examination of Nehru's personality and the way he philosophically approached governance, influenced greatly by his Western education and socialist ideals. Further insight is derived from analyzing the book with regard to Nehru's relations with the other leaders of his day, and where his impact resonates in the political life of India. The volume, according to scholars, has served to give depth to the understanding of Nehru, moving beyond the popularized images of him in the imagination and offering a scholarly approach toward his political career.

Joshi, P.C. (2007) engaged with the legacies of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru; their contributions to an exercise in forming Indian secularism and challenges that the nation faced in its pursuance of this ideal post-independence. Joshi expands on these reflections in philosophical and practical terms and discusses how the thoughts of Gandhi and Nehru relating to secularism were different yet complementary. Underlying this vision was Sarva Dharma Sambhava, equality of all religions, while Nehru focused more on separation of the institutions of state and religion. Drawing on Joshi's work offers a better understanding of how these tensions played out in the post-independence period and thus came together to form Indian secularism. The article critically examines the ways in which these traditions of secularism were challenged by subsequent political developments in the form of religious communalism. The work of Joshi is an important contribution in understanding the contours of the evolving relationship between religion and politics in post-colonial India, hence providing a critical reflection on the complexities of secularism within the Indian context.

Khilnani, Sunil. (2004) provided an intriguing analysis of how the Indian identity has evolved so far, focusing on ideas and ideals that have had a say in what the nation has become since independence. Khilnani makes reflection his way of exploring the philosophical as well as political foundations of modern India and how such ideas have impacted the country's trajectory. He traces the vision of the founding fathers, particularly Jawaharlal Nehru and how their thoughts on democracy, secularism, and nationhood were implemented in the post-independence context. This book critically examines how a tension in the form of unity and diversity dovetailed so interestingly in order to provide an insight into how India's democratic experiment had to navigate regionalism, communalism, and social inequalities. Khilnani has been widely appreciated by scholars and readers alike for the intellectual depth and readability of his work. His coverage of cultural and political debates that form the very heart of India today, accompanied by an analysis of India's unique national identity, makes *The Idea of India* a key text in understanding complex problems in Indian democracy and the changing definition of nationhood.

Khosla, M. (2014) pointed out that *Letters for a Nation* is an outstanding set of Jawaharlal Nehru's letters to his chief ministers during the crucial years of India's early post-independence period. The letters are a valuable insight into the

political thought, governance style, and his vision for India's development. Nehru's correspondence bears a testament to his commitment towards building a secular, democratic, and modern state. However, the correspondence will also bring forth several pains he experienced during the time while managing India's diverse and complex political landscape. Through these letters, readers gain intimate understanding of the operational challenges of governance, dynamics of federalism, and the reader's growing relationship with the state leaders. It is also important in so far as it depicts personal matters of Nehru, views of integrating princely states, and his economic and social reform measures. Critics have praised this volume for its rare archival value and for understanding the leadership of Nehru and the early years of India's political development. The careful editing and contextualization of letters here make the sources a key resource for any one studying Nehru's tenure or India's early history following independence.

2. NEHRU'S EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION: FORMATIVE INFLUENCES

Jawaharlal Nehru's life during his early years and education was thus very significant in determining his ideological orientation and future as a key figure in India's freedom movement and the country-builder. He was born on November 14, 1889, to a well-settled family in Allahabad. This gentry life led him to pursue higher education in some of the finest institutions of that time. His father, Motilal Nehru, himself a leading lawyer and political leader, nurtured a scholastic environment; exposure to reform ideas, politics, and nationalism early in his life, gave him a world view.

Nehru was privately tutored as a young boy, laying down a very sound foundation in languages and other subjects like history and science. His masters introduced him to European thinkers like John Stuart Mill, Bertrand Russell, and H.G. Wells-whose ideas had considerably molded his liberal, progressive thoughts. Later, Nehru studied at Harrow, one of Britain's most prestigious schools, under more formalized education. It was here that Nehru made contact with the wider world of politics and international affairs, including British influence. All those privileges notwithstanding, Nehru began to feel disillusioned with British colonial rule over India, which would remain at the centre of his political ideology in the years to follow.

After leaving Harrow, Nehru went to Cambridge University where he graduated in Natural Science. His stay at Cambridge broadened his intellectual horizons further and exposed him to socialist as well as nationalist ideologies. He started getting influenced by the works of Marx, Lenin, and many other thinkers of that time toward the reforms of the social and economic milieus of that era. Nehru soon realized the importance of education for fostering national consciousness and began to use it as a tool for India's development and freedom. Most of the ideas that he developed during the Cambridge days related to democracy, nationalism, or social justice evolved from the discussion's characteristic of those years.

Three years later, in 1910, Nehru left for England to train as a lawyer through Inner Temple. Although he was not really fond of the legal profession, this London experience put him amongst cosmopolitans who politically sustained his endeavors toward liberty and equality. It was at this time in England that Nehru first came into contact with nationalism through his interactions with prominent Indian leaders such as Lala Lajpat Rai and Dadabhai Naoroji, who further clarified the injustices under British colonial rule to him.

Living an active political life and exposure to the much larger world of political thought exposed Nehru to these things, which helped him develop a strong sense of social responsibility coupled with deep empathy for the plight of Indian masses. This growing political awareness along with intellectual rigour helped form the foundational elements later used in his leadership as one committed not only to securing India's independence but also towards building a modern, democratic, and inclusive society.

Nehru's early life and education played a great role in opening the way for his ideological development. Exposure to India and the West, he had different packages of political, social, and economic theories that came as hard buildings in helping him to project India's great future. These formative influences really nurtured his belief in democratic values, secularism, and then his faith in ideas concerning education and social reform that would powerfully influence his leadership in the years ahead.

3. THE IMPACT OF BRITISH COLONIALISM ON NEHRU'S IDEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

British colonialism had deep influences on Nehru's ideological development because it not only influenced his perception about the world but also gave him a vision for India to be independent. The combined experience of being an Indian subject to the British and academically exposed to the global thought about politics made Nehru sit and analyze colonialism and its fallout on India. From general dissatisfaction with British hegemony to a profound ideological commitment toward social justice, national independence, and the reorganisation of society on modern democratic lines, he changed his view.

3.1. Early Disillusionment with British Rule

Nehru spent his childhood years dealing with the contradiction of living in a family of privilege under British colonial rule. Politically active from the very beginning, he faced all the social and economic inequality brought about in the Indian subcontinent by the British. India was rich in resources, but systematically drained of wealth, and the British colonial state prioritized the interests of the Empire rather than its Indian subjects' welfare. By the time Nehru was studying in Harrow and Cambridge, he realized how unjust British colonialism was. His exposure to European ideologies of liberty, equality, and fraternity really influenced his perception of British colonialism against himself and his fellow Indians. He perceived the British Empire as an unjust system restraining Indian rights and annihilating economic potential, together with foreign values and governance systems that were introduced, which made him shape his nationalist thoughts.

3.2. Intellectual Awakening and Nationalism

Nehru's experience in England, both academically and intellectually, was haunted by the complexity of colonialism as a power formation to be challenged from moral and economic points of view. That atmosphere engendered him to associate with Indian intelligentsia like Lala Lajpat Rai, who was instrumental in the Home Rule Movement, exposed him to radical ideas for self-rule and independence. Nehru was introduced to socialism and Marxism that criticized imperialism and colonialism. To him, the British Rule was political domination not just in the realm of politics but also an economic subjugation that left India impoverished and a poor economy. Ideas of his formed the basis for his vision of what a post-independence India could be—to be free from imperialist exploitation and build a more equal, socialist society.

3.3. Nehru's Critique of British Colonial Policies

Nehru critically reviewed the way British colonialism was conceptualizing Indian education to create an elite, allowing the vast majority of Indians to remain ignorant and powerless. Nehru believed that colonial education was a tool for the British to continue their rule over the Indians rather than helping the Indian masses to empower themselves. Nehru took up education as a reform agenda post-independence and called for an approach towards education that promoted scientific thought and socio-innovative practices within every Indian. British colonialism molded Nehru's economic policies into forms that placed India's agriculture and industries in a subservient position, ultimately leading to widespread poverty and unemployment. He embraced ideas of the planned economy; he believed that India's post-colonial future should be molded through a state-driven policy of industrialization and self-sufficiency. His experiences of that sort found him championing radical economic reform.

3.4. The Freedom Movement and Nehru's Political Evolution

In the Indian National Congress (INC) and in the freedom struggle, Nehru became increasingly severe on British colonialism in his criticism. Initially spurred by a desire for constitutional, non-violent self-rule, his politics evolved as he watched the ruthless repression of Indian nationalists, especially in the aftermath of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919. These excesses radicalized Nehru even further in taking on the British Empire; they were now an obstacle to India's progress and rejected the idea of British benevolence. By the time he became affiliated with the Non-Cooperation Movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi in the 1920s, Nehru had become a committed nationalist who firmly believed that India's freedom and prosperity could only be realised with the end of British rule and the institution of a new political, economic, and social system.

3.5. Legacy of Colonial Impact on Nehru's Ideology

British colonialism impressed an ideological impact on Nehru—its commitment to doing not only that political independence has been achieved but also the systemic inequities created through colonial rule. Nehru had a vision of future India in which one could eliminate the lags of colonialism in the form of social hierarchies, economic dependency, and Western cultural domination. His idea of India after freedom was underpinned by his faith in modernity, secularism, socialism, and democratic governance—the values he deemed necessary to overcome the colonial legacy.

British colonialism had shaped the intellectual growth of Nehru. The experiences that poured down personally in terms of the mal-practices of colonial rule and his exposure to global political thoughts brought him into 'struggle' to a critique of colonialism that was at the same time intellectually intense and deeply personal. This critique formed the base for his more comprehensive vision of India: which would be not only politically independent but also economically, socially and culturally reinvigorated by the impacts of colonial subjugation.

4. NEHRU AND THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS: A POLITICAL AWAKENING

Jawaharlal Nehru's political awakening went hand in hand with his association with the Indian National Congress (INC), for which, in fact, the Indian freedom struggle held its principal political battleground. The sojourn with the INC was not a transition merely from an apolitical intellectualist into an active and eventually, preeminent political figure; it was, rather, an entry into the mainstream of the Indian independence movement. He developed and learned his political ideology, leadership qualities, and firmed up his idea of post-colonial India through Congress association.

4.1. Early Exposure to Indian Nationalism

The political awareness of Nehru was ignited by his visits to India where it exposed him to the Indian political climate. Among the leaders he met included his father, Motilal Nehru, who called for moderate reforms within the British rule. Jawaharlal admired his father's leadership but increasingly became disillusioned with the stagnating British regime. Nehru gained influence through exposure to leaders such as Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and Bipin Chandra Pal-the more strident arm of Indian nationalism. He developed a certain amount of sympathy for the Indian masses and realized that free India was to be achieved through more activist and radical action, rather than constitutionalism. This was when his career orientation started taking a trend towards more activist and extreme ways in gaining independence.

4.2. The Role of Gandhi and the Ideological Shift

Nehru's political awakening, shaped by the contact with Mahatma Gandhi, was essentially a course of non-violence, civil disobedience, and mass mobilization. The more elite and parliamentary politician became aware that there had to be a comprehensive national Indian movement that integrated the poor in the rural areas and the marginalized. The techniques that shaped Nehru's political transformation were satyagraha and ahimsa. Initially, he mistrusted the non-violent route by Gandhi; however, later he turned out to be a great admirer of the latter's ability to rally people with the appeal of a peaceful route. The INC, under Gandhi, progressed from an organization with moderate intentions to one that demanded unconditional independence or Purna Swaraj. Similarly, this transformation was visible in Nehru when he turned from a constitutionalist into a revolutionary nationalist leader.

4.3. The INC and Nehru's Rise to Leadership

In the 1920s, Nehru joined the Indian National Congress (INC) and was drawn into the Non-Cooperation Movement. At first, he was skeptical, but the passion for attaining Indian independence convinced him that Gandhi's ideal of a mass-based movement could be the way forward. By the mid-1920s, Nehru was one of the leaders of the INC, filling the lacuna between the leadership that accepted only gradual change through constitutional means and the new faction of youths who advocated immediate freedom by employing mass action. Social, political, and economic reforms became the hallmark of his leadership, which suited the current demand of the Congress for complete independence. Nehru's political ideology, Marxist in flavor and socialistic in need, also tilted in favor of the demand of the Congress for complete independence. His growing importance within the Congress was also due to his relationship with the other top leaders who remained conservative and adopted a more militant stance against colonialism.

4.4. The Salt March and Nehru's Leadership

Nehru's political maturity was deeply affected by his participation in the Salt March of 1930 and the Civil Disobedience Movement, which marked a new chapter of resistance against British colonialism. Gandhi's Salt March involved millions of Indians against the British law and indicated his complete induction into the struggle for Indian independence. Nehru emerged as a prominent leader of Congress and appealed to the masses concerning issues of land reforms, poverty, and exploitation. He stirred up the young minds, as a darling champion to an independent modern India. His ideological shift toward socialism was fully realized by providing for reformative economic change, industrialization, and equitable distribution of wealth in the struggle for independence.

4.5. Nehru's Vision for a Free India

Nehru's association with the Indian National Congress was very vital for his vision towards an independent India. He envisioned a radical transformation of Indian society on social and economic lines. His vision of a secular state and democracy would bring an end to the colonial system prevalent then and problems associated with poverty, caste discrimination, and inequality. In his ideal ideological commitment to socialism, Nehru finds himself at the center of his conception of political philosophy in a quest for economic justice in post-colonial India. Independent India would not only be political freedom but social and economic freedom for all citizenry; it would particularly be to the socially and economically disadvantaged groups' advantage. The Indian National Congress became the benchmark of Nehru's political transformation from a constitutionalist to a radical national leader, forming the base for his position as India's first Prime Minister, focused on building a new nation on the premises of democracy, secularism, and social justice.

5. NEHRU'S ROLE IN THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE: A VISION FOR A FREE INDIA

Jawaharlal Nehru played important roles in the Indian freedom movement. One was that of a great leader while the other was that of the visionary with a central role in determining direction and ideologies for the movement. From his early days inside the Indian National Congress (INC) to the pivotal position he played during the crunch moments of freedom, Nehru transformed into one of the most influential characters in the campaign to achieve Indian independence. His target of carrying freedom to India was not merely a political objective but a greater mission in building a new nation on the lines of democracy, secularism, social justice, and modernity. The free India vision Nehru had was very intricately mixed with his political philosophy; he worked hard to make the goals of the freedom struggle coincide with the aspirations he had about a progressive, modern Indian state.

5.1. Early Involvement and Ideological Shift

Nehru's participation in the freedom struggle was, to a great extent, due to his growing understanding of British colonialism and the need for a more radical approach to independence. His early years in England and visits to India exposed him to the political climates and injustices of the British Raj. In fact, Nehru's ideology gradually changed from moderate constitutionalism to full, radical demand for independence. He was politically awakened in the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920 and Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930, which he adopted in the principles of satyagraha and mass mobilization under Gandhi. He became a social and economic reformist; a crusader against land reforms, and for tearing down feudal structures in India.

5.2. The Salt March and the Civil Disobedience Movement

The Salt March and the Civil Disobedience Movement, which Nehru joined as Gandhi initiated it in 1930, is an important landmark of India's freedom struggle. It was a challenge to the British salt-producing monopoly and a repetition of non-violent resistance against British authority. Nehru agreed to the call from Gandhi to defy colonial legislation, and he proved to be one of the central leaders of this movement. His leadership of the Salt March embodied his struggle for India's independence from political colonialism and social and economic inequality. The Civil Disobedience Movement that aimed to challenge unjust colonial laws through non-violent action threw the cause of Indian independence onto the world stage. By identifying with the poor and the down-trodden, especially the rural poor, Nehru demonstrated that he was gathering strength and influence within Congress and the country.

5.3. Nehru's Leadership in the INC and the Role of Mass Mobilization

As the struggle for freedom heated up, a leadership role in the Indian National Congress emerged strongly in Nehru's words. Gandhi's decision to fight the masses gave birth to a new type of political leadership, of which Nehru was the perfect example and personification with great fervor. He was not just a leader speaking for the elite but someone through whom people from all walks of life-whether it was the rural poor, peasants, or workers-had a life line. Nehru, in his vision of India, promised to make the struggles of the oppressed and the marginalized central to the larger script of independence. He called upon the youth to join the movement, and he envisioned an ideal India not only for the realization of political freedom but also for social and economic liberation. In his efforts, Nehru became one of the foremost leaders in the movement for freedom, closely aligned with Gandhi's strategy of non-violent resistance yet with his own unique approach to the movement.

5.4. Nehru's Vision of a Secular and Democratic India

Nehru's vision for India was a secular and democratic country where religion would be separated from politics, with all citizens to enjoy equal rights and equal opportunities. This gave a place for the new independent Indian Constitution. Hence, Nehru's secularism was not just simple political ideology but rather his belief in Indian unity combined with diversity. He realised the fact that various religious, linguistic, and other cultural communities exist and spearheaded policies for their peaceful coexistence. His leadership protected the rights of minorities, promoted tolerance towards religions, and facilitated a plural society. Nehru's democratic ideals highlighted the central government would be powerful, and parliamentary democracy would help to create a platform for expressing people's voices. His vision was of a modern and progressive India, self-reliant, meant to act as a beacon over other post-colonial nations.

5.5. The Quit India Movement and the Struggle for Full Independence

When British authority started to dwindle and Indians started protesting more, Quit India Movement for Nehru became important in 1942. August 1942: Gandhi leads the Quit India movement to withdraw British forces from India. Nehru, one of the leading figures among them, is arrested and confined behind bars but shifted not an inch in his determination to free India. He turned into the symbol of resistance from India and Indian people's unity against the colonialism administration.

5.6. The Legacy of Nehru's Vision

Nehru's concept of India was not just and merely a political liberty but designing a new nation along the lines of justice, equality, and progress. His contribution to the freedom struggle went beyond protest and Congress leadership to the very ideological framework he formulated for postcolonial India. The policies that he enforced, with an emphasis on economic modernization, social justice, and secularism, set the lines on which India stands today. The legacy of Nehru sustains India's democratic ideals and its status as a sovereign, secular, and modern state which does not abide by background, religion, or economic status.

6. CONCLUSION

Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, was motivated by the disillusionment with the British colonial regime and commitment to secularism, socialism, and democracy. He adopted such values as the starting points of post-independence vision for India. The political philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru was profoundly influenced by the Western intellectual traditions such as Marxism and Fabian socialism in which his industrialization policies and state-driven economic growth

policies were shaped. His political leadership of the Indian National Congress (INC) was a turn of fortunes from moderate constitutionalism toward an active, radical nationalism calling for a secular, socialist, and democratic India. The speaker was very vocal about central planning, social justice, and national unity but unquestionably raised cause for much alarm over the concentration of power. All these controversies notwithstanding, it was the ideological tenacity of Nehru that ensured that democratic functioning was set up in modern India and remains a living example of the need to install progressive thinking amidst the practical demands of a nation newly entrusted with independence.

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