

Chapter- VII

CONCLUSION

It is well known that the historical literature on Jawaharlal Nehru is not less, rather exhaustive. Nehru was a great political leader and therefore vast number of works have been produced on the political life and activities and other aspects of Nehru's life. Nehru was rather a fascinating figure with a multi-faceted personality and a great national and international figure who has left an indelible mark in the pages of Indian as well as of world history that historians, academicians, social scientists, researchers are interested to write on the varied aspects of Nehru's life. Out of this, however there is an attempt in this dissertation to take up a microscopic study and an interesting side of Nehru's life. In the foregoing pages an attempt has been made to study Jawaharlal Nehru in the light of the influence of women in his life and how his life and various activities were moulded and influenced by them.

Jawaharlal Nehru was a great freedom fighter and a national leader who made a tremendous contribution to the struggle for the independence of the people of India and for achievement of the unity of the Indian nation. So the contribution of Nehru in the struggle for India's independence has been the focus of writings in the historical narratives. Apart from this, Nehru was not only the first Prime Minister of the country, but he was also a nation builder par excellence which also makes him the great statesman of the world. His economic policy, his foreign policy, his close association with the leading personalities of his time in reconstructing the nation was all part of his

nation building activities which also finds place in the historical narratives. But till date the research on the contributions on and by women in different and various capacities in the life of Nehru was utterly neglected or not given sufficient attention to. Under this consideration, the present dissertation seeks to fill up the research gap in the light of the materials both primary and secondary available in various research institutes of India and beyond. Incidentally in course of the work some of the first hand sources have been consulted from the Nehru Memorial Museum Library. It is not only connected with his personal life but is intended to take into account the national history during his time and the post-independent period.

Nehru held certain perception of women which was also moulded by women to a great extent. Nehru firmly believed and stood for equality of sexes and emancipation of women and this was ingrained in his mind right from his early days due to his association with women in his home front and women in general. In contrast to the attitude of women held by Mahatma Gandhi for whom women symbolized the ancient Indian womanhood like Sita, Savitri, Damayanti who were embodiment of purity, grace and chastity, for Nehru Chitrangada symbolized the image of woman and his wife Kamala Nehru served to instill this picture of Chitrangada in his mind. Nehru had a peculiar perception of women and women in a way also had a particular influence on his mind and this influenced his perception of women. Therefore, here this is the research gap which is being reduced by presenting the perception of women by Nehru in the light of the influence of women.

There has been frequent emphasis on Nehru as being a man of exceptional character, integrity and wisdom which is a well known fact. Moreover the combination of the finest values of the traditional culture of India with the modernity of his times was a salient feature of his personality. In imbibing the traditional values and in the making of a well-integrated man who possessed the outstanding attributes of a gentleman and the future leader, Nehru's mother Swarup Rani had a great hand. In this way the research gap is being filled up by the way the work has looked upon Nehru's mother Swarup Rani as being an instrumental force in inculcating these values and qualities in Nehru which contributed in the making of man in Nehru.

Nehru's life, in its various aspects, had indeed been an eventful one. His reputation as a national leader and his contribution to the freedom struggle which forms an important chapter in the history of this nation and his nationalist activities is the focus of discourse in many of the writings on Nehru. But here the study in question has been looked upon from a different perspective. Nehru's role in the national movement is not the focus of study in this dissertation but it has more emphatically emphasized on the role of women in the making of the nationalist in Nehru and how women acted as guiding forces in the course of his participation in the freedom movement. For instance it can be seen in the study how Kamala Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru's wife served as a potent and motivating force in influencing and guiding the nationalist activities of Nehru. When there was a strong opposition from Nehru's family and particularly from his father Motilal Nehru of his desire to join the Gandhian movement, it was Kamala Nehru who stood by his side and influenced him to join the movement. Kamala herself coming under the strong influence of Gandhi took upon the life of self-sacrifice,

simplicity and austerity and in this way was able to inspire Nehru to endure the hardships and sufferings which would come in the course of his participation in the nationalist movement. At one instance in September 1934 when Kamala came to know that on account of her serious illness the government was considering to release Nehru from prison if he agreed to refrain from political activity after his release, Kamala vehemently opposed this and asked Nehru not to yield to the offer. She wanted to see the fulfillment of the nationalist mission of her husband. Similarly foreign women personalities like Lady Mountbatten and Madame Chiang Kai-shek also played a notable role in strengthening the nationalist orientation in Nehru. In this way the study has made a humble attempt to make a survey of the role of women in influencing the life of Nehru and how they contributed towards moulding the nationalist zeal and passion in Nehru and help in the making of a national leader who steered and led the country to the path of freedom.

Not only women, but it can be seen that women were also very attracted by the outstanding multi-faceted personality and leadership charisma of Nehru that it instilled in the minds of the women admiration, respect and adoration for Nehru. Nehru's charismatic appeal was able to draw large number of women in the freedom movement, including his own women family members, and this in turn also served as an inspiration and motivation to Nehru to fight for the nation's cause and never to yield till the goal was achieved. He not only thought of his domestic life, but at the same time inspite of his association with the freedom struggle he was also thinking of his family and that he also took every care to make his family members happy. Whenever he could find any problems, he tried to help and also guide them and in this way stood as a strong pillar of

strength to his family. Nehru's two younger sisters Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and Krishna Hutheesing looked upon their brother as an embodiment of grace, charm and sacrifice. He also had a great hand in the mental growth and development of his daughter Indira Gandhi. Letters which he wrote from prison to his daughter not only sought to educate her but also contributed in the integrated development of the personality of Indira. Not only this, the women in general were also attracted by the charismatic personality of Jawaharlal Nehru and that women like Padmaja Naidu, Mridula Sarabhai, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Purnima Banerjee were attracted by Nehru's 'modern and egalitarian outlook' and they felt more comfortable and easy to approach him for any kinds of problems than any other stalwarts of the national movement. But what makes the work interesting is that it focuses on the helping hands that Nehru received from different women personalities which included both his women family members and other women who were his comrades and worked in close association with him in various circumstances. It is no doubt a fact that he had connections with men both at the national and international level, who also played important role in the life of Nehru and the vice versa. But since this work has looked into the role of women in the life of Nehru, it has discussed the issues of women who were well-reputed personalities and figures of the time.

After independence, Jawaharlal Nehru as the first Prime Minister and head of the state was faced with the herculean task of steering the newly-born Indian nation of continental proportion. At that time India was economically, politically and religiously exhausted and the partition which accompanied independence left the country in crisis and the communal violence and riots constituted a dark chapter in the pages of modern

Indian history. Under such formidable challenges Nehru not only had to set the house in order, but also undertake the task of nation-building, the narrative of which has been the focus of attention amongst the historians, researchers, social scientists and academicians. But this work has tried to reduce the research gap by portraying how women not only moulded, nurtured and influenced the personal and political life of Nehru but also stood by his side in many crucial hours during the freedom struggle and his Premiership by extended their helping hands in the time of crisis so as to join hands for the nation building. At the vital time of reconstructing the nation and under trying circumstances and situation, women rejuvenated the exhausted battery by giving and instilling in him more energy and enthusiasm. It is no doubt true that men too were connected with the activities of Jawaharlal Nehru and also guided him, but since the available literature is lacking in a clear narrative of the role of women in guiding not only the personal life but also the political life and other activities of Nehru in the post-independent period, this work has tried to discuss the influence of well-reputed women like Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, Indira Gandhi, Sarojini Naidu, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Madame Chiang Kai-shek, Lady Mountbatten who were closely associated with Nehru and acted as his comrades in times of crisis extended their helping and soothing hands, particularly at the crisis of nation building and this also served to give inspiration and motivation to help him build up the nation and in all respects.

Moreover in this work, women personalities from elite background have been highlighted. Since Nehru was born in an elite and aristocratic family, so it was obvious that elite women constituted the circle of his friends and comrades and he had to be in touch with them. All the more, these elite women were concerned with the mindset and

psychology of Nehru and at the same time since they had the very perspective of the contemporary age, so naturally from their experiences they had the calibre to built up the mind of Nehru according to the reality and situation.

Therefore, it can be seen that this research work has tried to fill up the research gap by looking into Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India in the light of women personalities who played a significant role in the life and mission of Jawaharlal Nehru and contributed to the making of a nationalist, a statesman par excellence, a visionary and an architect of modern India.