



PANDIT
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU



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It is not often that a nation is fortunate to be led by a majestic personality who combines in himself a freedom fighter, a politician, a statesman, a philosopher, a universalist and a nation builder. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the architect of modern India and a multi-faceted personality was born on 14 November 1889 in Anand Bhawan at Allahabad. His father, Motilal Nehru, was a leading lawyer of the town. Jawaharlal Nehru's mother Swarup Rani, imparted him with the value of Indian culture and tradition. In 1905, Motilal Nehru took his family to England when Jawaharlal was fifteen years old and got him admitted at Harrow, where he pursued Latin.

Subsequently, he left Harrow and joined Trinity College, Cambridge in the beginning of October 1907. It was at Cambridge that his desire for intellectual pursuit received greater stimuli. While studies, games and amusements filled his life at Cambridge, the political upheavals spearheaded by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Aurobindo Ghose greatly agitated his mind. The news of partition of Bengal, the Swadeshi movement and the deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai and S. Ajit Singh moved him a lot. The *Majlis*, a society formed by Indian students at Cambridge, provided the platform for discussions and deliberations about political developments taking place in India. Young Jawaharlal Nehru also got through the bar examinations one after the other. He also had a stint at the London School of Economics before returning to India.

On his return from England in 1912, Jawaharlal Nehru started practising law at the Allahabad High Court. On 8 February 1916, on *Vasanta Panchmi* day, Jawaharlal Nehru got married to Kamala Kaul. Later, he joined Congress to take part in its activities. When special occasions arose, like the agitation against the Fiji indenture system for Indian workers, or the South African Indian question, he threw himself into it and worked with dedication and zeal. As the political struggle in

India was gaining a firm ground with the release of Lokmanya Tilak, Jawaharlal Nehru joined the Home Rule league started by Tilak and Mrs. Annie Besant.

Gandhiji's fight against the obnoxious practice of apartheid in South Africa appealed him to a great deal. He was particularly impressed by the agrarian agitation which Gandhiji led in Bihar in 1917. After World War I, there was greater political expectation for self-government in India. The rising expectations, however, met with disappointment when the British Government enacted the repressive and draconian Rowlatt Act. This evoked mass protest and demonstrations all over India in the form of *Satyagraha* at the call of Mahatma Gandhi. The bizarre incidence of *Jallianwala Bagh* massacre and such other unfortunate developments agitated Jawaharlal so much that he gave up the profession of law. He became more of a Congress activist, sacrificing the comforts of life and turned himself as a lieutenant of Gandhiji. In July 1920, he was elected Vice-President of the Allahabad District Congress Committee.

During a brief visit to Berlin towards the end of 1926, Jawaharlal Nehru learned about the proposed Congress of Oppressed Nationalities at Brussels in February 1927. At the Brussels Conference, which proved to be a milestone in the development of Nehru's political thought, he made his debut before a galaxy of international celebrities. The Congress helped him to understand some of the problems of colonies and dependent countries. On the last leg of his European tour, Jawaharlal Nehru landed in Moscow in November 1927. His travels abroad, particularly his participation in the Brussels Conference and subsequent visit to Moscow, had convinced him of the need for a socialistic pattern of society for India.

Jawaharlal Nehru reached Madras* in December 1927 when the Congress was meeting there. The controversy over complete independence or dominion status for India was given a definite direction by Jawaharlal Nehru when he moved on 27 December 1927 at the Madras Congress—the famous resolution that the 'Congress declares the goal of the Indian people to be complete National

*Now known as Chennai.

Independence'. At the historic Lahore Congress held in late December 1929, the socialist credo of Jawaharlal Nehru was given a public expression. He, therefore, reiterated the call for complete freedom from British domain. The resolution for complete national independence was reiterated and passed at the stroke of midnight on 31 December 1929 at the Lahore Congress. The call for complete national independence created a stir throughout the length and breadth of the country. It was in this context that Gandhiji launched the *Salt Satyagraha*, a unique method of civil disobedience. Jawaharlal Nehru spent about four years between 1930 and 1935 in prison. The solitude of the prison gave him the opportunity for reflection, introspection and retrospection, besides plenty of time for reading. His facile pen and agile mind produced some classics such as *Letters from a Father to a Daughter* (1929), *Glimpses of World History* (1934) and his *Autobiography* (1936).

While the Lahore Congress was significant for declaration of complete national independence, it was at the Karachi Congress (March 1931) that the socialist credo of Jawaharlal Nehru found concrete manifestation in his resolution on fundamental rights. In effect, the resolution was the precursor of the ideas and objectives 'secular, socialist and democratic State' as enshrined in the Constitution of free India.

The Congress rejected the offer of the Cripps Mission and adopted a resolution on 8 August 1942 for launching of 'Quit India Movement'. The British Government tried to quell the mass upsurge with an iron hand by putting the front ranking leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, behind the bars. This was also Nehru's longest spell in the jail. He was released in June 1945 just when the Viceroy, Lord Wavell convened a Conference in Simla* to break the deadlock. Nehru's pivotal role in these negotiations and later with Lord Mountbatten in 1947 was a feat of great statesmanship. The freedom struggle culminated in India's independence from the clutches of colonialism.

On 15 August 1947 at the stroke of the midnight, Lord Mountbatten, the last British Governor-General and Viceroy of India, entered the Assembly Chamber to

*Now known as Shimla.

address the Legislature and gave a message of greeting and goodwill from the King. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India, rose to move the adoption of the pledge of dedication to the new Dominion of India in an atmosphere surcharged with emotion. In his historic speech which was termed as 'Tryst with Destiny', he observed:

"Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom....."

Herculean task of steering the new-born nation of continental proportion now fell on Jawaharlal Nehru. The transition posed a plethora of problems which he handled impeccably. With the far-sight of a statesman, he laid the foundation of political, economic and social edifice. He also gave a clear direction to India's role in the comity of nations with the policy of non-alignment and principles of *Panchsheel*. Jawaharlal Nehru also took great interest in the development of science and technology. As he himself explained: "Politics led me to economics and this led me inevitably to science and scientific approach to all our problems and to life itself. It is science alone that would solve the problems of hunger and poverty."

Jawaharlal Nehru believed in planned economic development. He initiated planning in India to ameliorate the appalling poverty and unemployment of the masses and to assure an adequate minimum of a civilized standard of life to each citizen so as to make the attainment of equal opportunity a reality. To achieve this desired aim, he introduced community development programmes, river-valley projects and a series of Five Year Plans. Pandit Nehru heralded a new era with the creation of the Planning Commission early in 1950.

Whether it was in the Cabinet, in Parliament, in relation to States, in moulding and educating public opinion, or in projecting the country's economic and social goals abroad, he remained the greatest support and inspiration behind India's planned development. His last meeting with the Planning Commission took place

on 10 May 1964 where he said that he would be glad to give as much time as he needed because he was deeply interested in planning.

Pandit Nehru's patronage for the promotion of art, culture and literature was abundant. He always had a soft corner for children to whom he was affectionately known as '*Chacha Nehru*'. He knew well that today's children are tomorrow's citizens. He, therefore, took keen interest in their over-all development in the society.

On 27 May 1964, Mother India's darling son Jawaharlal Nehru reached his journey's end. He bequeathed to us a rich legacy which sustains us even today. Although cosmopolitan by instinct and temperament, Nehru's love for his land and the people knew no bounds. His will and testament eloquently speak of his total commitment to India and his abiding love and affection for his countrymen. In deference to his desire, his ashes were flown and scattered all over the country including the Himalayas and were also immersed in the holy Ganges.

Paying his tribute to Pandit Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri who succeeded him as the Prime Minister, described him as a rare figure who got the highest recognition. Throughout the world, his name became a symbol of hope and inspiration for people struggling for freedom.

Lord Mountbatten, the last British Governor-General and Viceroy of India described Pandit Nehru as one of the great figures of the History. He was a most magnanimous man and a great fighter for Indian national freedom.

The then Lok Sabha Speaker Sardar Hukam Singh, while paying glowing tributes to Pandit Nehru, said, "Jawaharlal Nehru was an architect of the modern India and the whole of his life was dedicated to the nation and he died as he certainly would have liked to serving the causes he cherished most. In his death, India has lost a great leader and a worthy son of the world, one of its most effective advocates of peace, justice and dignity for man everywhere."