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NEHRU





An Illustrious Life

The great statesman and world leader, Jawaharlal Nehru (14 November 1889 - 27 May 1964) was the first (and to date the longest-serving) Prime Minister of India, from 1947 until 1964. A leading figure in the Indian independence movement, Nehru was elected by the Congress Party to assume office as independent India's first Prime Minister, and re-elected when the Congress Party won India's first general election in 1952. As one of the founders of the Non-aligned Movement, he was also an important figure in the international politics of the post-war era. He is frequently referred to as Pandit Nehru ("pandit" being a Sanskrit and Hindi honorific meaning "scholar" or "teacher") and, specifically in India, as Panditji (with "-ji" being a suffix to the honorific).

The son of a wealthy Indian barrister and politician, Motilal Nehru, Nehru became a leader of the left wing of the Indian National Congress when still fairly young. Rising to become Congress President, under the mentorship of Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru was a charismatic and radical leader, advocating complete independence from the British Empire. In the long struggle for Indian independence, in which he was a key player, Nehru was eventually recognised as Gandhi's political heir. Throughout his life, Nehru was also an advocate for Fabian socialism and the

public sector as the means by which long-standing challenges of economic development could be addressed by poorer nations.

Family Background

Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, had a strong and influential lineage. Born on the 14th of November, 1889 at Allahabad, Jawaharlal Nehru was the eldest child of Motilal Nehru and Swarup Rani. His family was from Kashmiri heritage and belonged to a high Hindu caste. They were Saraswat Brahmins, who were revered greatly in Allahabad in those days. Originally part of the Kashmiri Pandit community, the Nehrus had to shift to what was called United Provinces. But the family gelled well with the people there and Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal's father, started practicing law in Allahabad. He was also a highly influential man, both socially as well as politically. He was a learned scholar too. He excelled in several languages that included Persian, Urdu, Arabic, English and many more.

Jawaharlal Nehru and his entire family lived in a large house called 'Anand Bhawan' in Allahabad. The house is still there. Motilal Nehru was a successful man, who was also well known in the society. He was a barrister by profession and won several accolades for his legal works from different spheres. All these brought him lot of name and fame. As a result, he could give his children the best of everything in life. Jawaharlal Nehru was his only son, while he also had two beautiful daughters named Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and Krishna Pandit. No discrimination was made between the son and daughters in the family. All of them were provided quality education and privileges. All the children were brought amidst immense luxury and comfort. With a swimming pool and a tennis court in the house premises, Jawaharlal Nehru led a lavish life.

Motilal Nehru never compromised on the education and other facilities that are required to make a happy upbringing for children. He emphasised on English and western education for his children. Jawaharlal Nehru received his initial education at home under an English governess. Hindi and Sanskrit were also taught to the children at the Nehru House. Training was also provided to converse in English fluently. Apart from formal education, various

English mannerisms and customs were also taught to Jawaharlal Nehru in his childhood days. The dresses that were adorned by the Nehru family also reflected English style. After some formal education at home, Jawaharlal Nehru also went to a local convent school in Allahabad. At the age of fifteen, he went to England to study at Harrow.

The illustrious family of the Nehrus had a deep impact on the life and childhood of Jawaharlal Nehru. At home, his mother practiced several staunch Hindu customs and even tried to influence young Nehru by them. But she was not much successful in it. Motilal was not a very strong follower of religion, but he was not an absolute atheist too. Motilal Nehru was concerned about very minute details regarding his son. He corresponded with his son, even when he was abroad and enquired about every small detail regarding his stay, studies and all the other curricular activities. Even after coming back from abroad, Jawaharlal Nehru began a firm and solid career with the help of his father. He attained instant fame and glory in his profession and made himself and his family proud.

Motilal Nehru was an active member of the Indian National Congress, which had also influenced and helped in shaping the political life of Jawaharlal Nehru. Motilal Nehru shared extremely good and cordial relation with the British officials. He had a strong belief on British justice and British promises. Several incidents have been cited when Motilal Nehru had been in support of the British officers. His home was also open to various British officers. British officers also respected him and his family and welcomed them to their homes. As a result of this intermingling, Jawaharlal Nehru and his two sisters also got opportunities to have a glimpse of British lifestyle. Some of the British officers could also fluently speak Urdu and Hindi.

Motilal Nehru was a stylish man and he loved to live life luxuriously. He was a follower of beauty and beautiful things. He had the passion of collecting various beautiful articles from various parts of India as well as from foreign countries. He had made a huge collection of artifacts that were considered as masterpieces and rare articles. One of the most important facts that were seen in the family of Jawaharlal Nehru was that, there were no class

restrictions or class distinctions. People of all castes and religions were accepted and welcomed in 'Anand Bhawan'. There were many servants in the Nehru household, who belonged to different castes and religions. The doors of 'Anand Bhawan' remained open for all people irrespective of differences in caste and religion.

Another important part of the family of Jawaharlal Nehru was the active participation of his two sisters, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and Krishna Pandit in various matters of the family as well as in politics. They supported him and he had a great influence on their lives. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit mentioned in one of her lectures about the childhood they had spent together. She also emphasised on the influence that Jawaharlal Nehru had on her political career and personal life.

Jawaharlal Nehru did not have a blissful married life. He was married at a young age in the year 1916. When he was at Harrow, Motilal Nehru and his wife decided to find a perfect match for Jawaharlal Nehru. They started their search and found Kamala Kaul, a girl from a middle-class Kashmiri Brahmin family in 1912. She was a thirteen year old girl, well-educated at home and knew Hindu and Urdu. They waited till 1916, when Kamala attained the age of seventeen years. Kamala was finally married to Jawaharlal Nehru in February, 1916.

The initial years of marriage were not very happy for Kamala as Nehru was then basking in glory and paid little importance to the home front. Kamala Nehru was a strong woman and she endured all this without any protest. She also had to endure several blunt remarks from her husband's relatives regarding her inferior social origins. But she did not retaliate to any of these. She began to involve herself in the Indian freedom struggle and even went to the prison. This event also helped her to come closer to her husband. Jawaharlal Nehru and Kamala Nehru also had a beautiful daughter in 1917, who was called Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi. Kamala Nehru also gave birth to a pre-matured baby boy, who died in 1924. After that she underwent a miscarriage after three years.

Kamala Nehru could not bear this trauma and fell seriously ill. She was diagnosed of tuberculosis and underwent treatment

in various hospitals in the country as well as abroad. It was during this time that Jawaharlal Nehru realised his love and passion for her. He used to visit her regularly and even took her abroad for treatment. They also spent few days in Switzerland. Finally she breathed her last in 1936.

To summarise, it has been observed that childhood of Jawaharlal Nehru had a great influence on the later life of this great Indian personality. Though he was brought up amidst immense luxury and glory, it did not restrict him from mingling with general masses and feeling their pulse. His family also had a great influence on his social and political career.

Education

Jawaharlal Nehru was educated in Britain at the independent boy's school, Harrow School and Trinity College, Cambridge. During his time in Britain, Nehru was known as Joe Nehru.

Life and Career

Nehru was given the singular honour of raising the flag of independent India in New Delhi on 15 August 1947, the day India gained Independence. Nehru's appreciation of the virtues of parliamentary democracy, secularism and liberalism, coupled with his concerns for the poor and underprivileged, are recognised to have guided him in formulating policies that influence India to this day. They also reflect the socialist origins of his worldview. His long tenure was instrumental in shaping the traditions and structures of independent India. He is sometimes referred to as the "Architect of Modern India". His daughter, Indira Gandhi, and grandson, Rajiv Gandhi, also served as Prime Ministers of India.

Gita Sahgal — a writer and journalist who addresses issues of feminism, fundamentalism, and racism, director of prize-winning documentary films, and human rights activist — is his grand-niece.

Successor to Gandhi

On 15 January 1941 Gandhiji said, "Some say Pandit Nehru and I were estranged. It will require much more than difference

of opinion to estrange us. We had differences from the time we became co-workers and yet I have said for some years and say now that not Rajaji (Chakravarti Rajagopalachari) but Nehru will be my successor."

Towards Freedom

Written in 1936, it ran nine editions in the first year alone. "Towards Freedom" is also known as "An Autobiography."

India's first Prime Minister

Nehru and his colleagues had been released as the British Cabinet Mission arrived to propose plans for transfer of power. Once elected, Nehru headed an interim government, which was impaired by outbreaks of communal violence and political disorder, and the opposition of the Muslim League led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who were demanding a separate Muslim state of Pakistan. After failed bids to form coalitions, Nehru reluctantly supported the partition of India, according to a plan released by the British on 3 June 1947. He took office as the Prime Minister of India on 15 August, and delivered his inaugural address titled "A Tryst With Destiny":

"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. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity."

However, this period was marked with intense communal violence. This violence swept across the Punjab region, Delhi, Bengal and other parts of India. Nehru conducted joint tours with Pakistani leaders to encourage peace and calm angry and disillusioned refugees. Nehru would work with Maulana Azad and other Muslim leaders to safeguard and encourage Muslims

to remain in India. The violence of the time deeply affected Nehru, who called for a ceasefire and UN intervention to stop the Indo-Pak War of 1947. Fearing communal reprisals, Nehru also hesitated in supporting the annexation of Hyderabad State.

In the years following independence, Nehru frequently turned to his daughter Indira to look after him and manage his personal affairs. Under his leadership, the Congress won an overwhelming majority in the elections of 1952. Indira moved into Nehru's official residence to attend to him and became his constant companion in his travels across India and the world. Indira would virtually become Nehru's chief of staff.

Economic Policies

Nehru presided over the introduction of a modified, Indian version of state planning and control over the economy. Creating the Planning commission of India, Nehru drew up the first Five-Year Plan in 1951, which charted the government's investments in industries and agriculture. Increasing business and income taxes, Nehru envisaged a mixed economy in which the government would manage strategic industries such as mining, electricity and heavy industries, serving public interest and a check to private enterprise. Nehru pursued land redistribution and launched programmes to build irrigation canals, dams and spread the use of fertilizers to increase agricultural production. He also pioneered a series of community development programmes aimed at spreading diverse cottage industries and increasing efficiency into rural India. While encouraging the construction of large dams (which Nehru called the "new temples of India"), irrigation works and the generation of hydroelectricity, Nehru also launched India's programme to harness nuclear energy.

For most of Nehru's term as Prime Minister, India would continue to face serious food shortages despite progress and increases in agricultural production. Nehru's industrial policies, summarised in the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956, encouraged the growth of diverse manufacturing and heavy industries, yet state planning, controls and regulations began to impair productivity, quality and profitability. Although the Indian economy enjoyed a steady rate of growth, chronic unemployment amidst widespread poverty continued to plague the population.

Education and Social Reforms

Jawaharlal Nehru was a passionate advocate of education for India's children and youth, believing it essential for India's future progress. His government oversaw the establishment of many institutions of higher learning, including the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, the Indian Institutes of Technology and the Indian Institutes of Management. Nehru also outlined a commitment in his five-year plans to guarantee free and compulsory primary education to all of India's children. For this purpose, Nehru oversaw the creation of mass village enrolment programmes and the construction of thousands of schools. Nehru also launched initiatives such as the provision of free milk and meals to children in order to fight malnutrition. Adult education centres, vocational and technical schools were also organised for adults, especially in the rural areas.

Under Nehru, the Indian Parliament enacted many changes to Hindu law to criminalise caste discrimination and increase the legal rights and social freedoms of women. A system of reservations in government services and educational institutions was created to eradicate the social inequalities and disadvantages faced by peoples of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Nehru also championed secularism and religious harmony, increasing the representation of minorities in government.

National Security and Foreign Policy

Nehru led newly independent India from 1947 to 1964, during its first years of freedom from British rule. Both the United States and the Union Soviet Socialist Republic competed to make India an ally throughout the Cold War.

On the international scene, Nehru was a champion of pacifism and a strong supporter of the United Nations. He pioneered the policy of non-alignment and co-founded the Non-aligned Movement of nations professing neutrality between the rival blocs of nations led by the US and the USSR. Recognising the People's Republic of China soon after its founding (while most of the Western bloc continued relations with the Republic of China), Nehru argued for its inclusion in the United Nations and refused to brand the Chinese as the aggressors in their conflict with Korea.

He sought to establish warm and friendly relations with China despite the invasion of Tibet in 1950, and hoped to act as an intermediary to bridge the gulf and tensions between the communist states and the Western bloc.

Meanwhile, Nehru had promised in 1948 to hold a plebiscite in Kashmir under the auspices of the UN but, as Pakistan failed to pull back troops in accordance with the UN resolution and as Nehru grew increasingly wary of the UN, he declined to hold a plebiscite in 1953. He ordered the arrest of the Kashmiri politician Sheikh Abdullah, whom he had previously supported but now suspected of harbouring separatist ambitions; Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad replaced him.

His policy of pacifism and appeasement with respect to China also came unravelled when China annexed Aksai Chin, the region of Kashmir adjoining Tibet in 1962 that led to the Sino-Indian war.

Nehru was hailed by many for working to defuse global tensions and the threat of nuclear weapons. He commissioned the first study of the human effects of nuclear explosions, and campaigned ceaselessly for the abolition of what he called "these frightful engines of destruction." He also had pragmatic reasons for promoting denuclearisation, fearing that a nuclear arms race would lead to over-militarisation that would be unaffordable for developing countries such as his own.

In 1956 he had criticised the joint invasion of the Suez Canal by the British, French and Israelis. Suspicion and distrust cooled relations between India and the US, which suspected Nehru of tacitly supporting the Soviet Union. Accepting the arbitration of the UK and World Bank, Nehru signed the Indus Water Treaty in 1960 with Pakistani ruler Ayyub Khan to resolve long-standing disputes about sharing the resources of the major rivers of the Punjab region.

Last Days and Demise

Nehru had led the Congress to a major victory in the 1957 elections, but his government was facing rising problems and criticism. Disillusioned by intra-party corruption and bickering, Nehru contemplated resigning but continued to serve. The election of his daughter Indira as Congress President in 1959 aroused

criticism for alleged nepotism, although actually Nehru had disapproved of her election, partly because he considered it smacked of "dynastism"; he said, indeed it was "wholly undemocratic and an undesirable thing", and refused her a position in his Cabinet. Indira herself was at loggerheads with her father over policy; most notably, she used his oft-stated personal deference to the Congress Working Committee to push through the dismissal of the Communist Party of India government in the state of Kerala, over his own objections. Nehru began to be frequently embarrassed by her ruthlessness and disregard for parliamentary tradition, and was "hurt" by what he saw as an assertiveness with no purpose other than to stake out an identity independent of her father.

Although the Panchsheel (Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence) was the basis of the 1954 Sino-Indian treaty over Tibet, in later years, Nehru's foreign policy suffered through increasing Chinese antagonism over border disputes and Nehru's decision to grant asylum to the Dalai Lama. After years of failed negotiations, Nehru authorised the Indian Army to annex Goa from Portugal in 1961. While increasing his popularity, Nehru received criticism for opting for military action.

In the 1962 elections, Nehru led the Congress to victory yet with a diminished majority. Opposition parties ranging from the right-wing Bharatiya Jana Sangh and Swatantra Party, socialists and the Communist Party of India performed well.

In a matter of months, the border disputes with China turned into open conflict. Nehru assumed that as former victims of imperialism (India being a colony itself) they shared a sense of solidarity, as expressed in the phrase "Hindi-Chini bhai bhai" (Indians and Chinese are brothers). He was dedicated to the ideals of brotherhood and solidarity among developing nations. Nehru, credulously, did not believe that one fellow Socialist country would attack another; and in any event, he felt secure behind the impregnable wall of ice that is the Himalayas. Both proved to be severe miscalculations of China's intentions and military capabilities. Following reports of his intention to confront Chinese occupation of the disputed areas—summarised in a memorable statement that he had asked the Army to "throw them (Chinese) out" — China launched a pre-emptive attack.

In a matter of days, a Chinese invasion of northeastern India exposed the weaknesses of India's military as Chinese forces came as far as Assam. Widely criticised for his government's insufficient attention to defence, Nehru was forced to sack the defence minister Krishna Menon and seek US military aid. Nehru's health began declining steadily, and he was forced to spend months recuperating in Kashmir through 1963. Some historians attribute this dramatic decline to his surprise and chagrin over the invasion of India by the Chinese, which he perceived as a betrayal of trust. Upon his return from Kashmir in May 1964, Nehru suffered a stroke and later a heart attack. He died in the early hours of 27 May 1964. Nehru was cremated in accordance with Hindu rites at the Shantivana on the banks of the Yamuna River, witnessed by hundreds of thousands of mourners who had flocked into the streets of Delhi and the cremation grounds.

The Legacy

As India's first Prime minister and external affairs minister, Jawaharlal Nehru played a major role in shaping modern India's government and political culture along with sound foreign policy. He is praised for creating a system providing universal primary education, reaching children in the farthest corners of rural India. Nehru's education policy is also credited for the development of world-class educational institutions such as the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Indian Institutes of Technology, and the Indian Institutes of Management.

"Nehru was a great man... Nehru gave to Indians an image of themselves that I don't think others might have succeeded in doing." — Sir Isaiah Berlin

Nehru is credited for establishing a widespread system of affirmative action to provide equal opportunities and rights for India's ethnic groups, minorities, women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Nehru's passion for egalitarianism meant that he put the state to work to try and end widespread practices of discrimination against women and depressed classes, though with limited success in his lifetime.

Nevertheless, Nehru's stance as a unfailing nationalist led him to also implement policies which stressed commonality among

Indians while still appreciating regional diversities. This proved particularly important as post-Independence differences surfaced since British withdrawal from the subcontinent prompted regional leaders to no longer relate to one another as allies against a common adversary. While differences of culture and, especially, language threatened the unity of the new nation, Nehru established programmes such as the National Book Trust and the National Literary Academy which promoted the translation of regional literatures between languages and also organised the transfer of materials between regions. In pursuit of a single, unified India, Nehru warned, "Integrate or perish."

Commemoration

In his lifetime, Jawaharlal Nehru enjoyed an iconic status in India and was widely admired across the world for his idealism and statesmanship. His birthday, 14 November, is celebrated in India as Baal Divas (Children's Day) in recognition of his lifelong passion and work for the welfare, education and development of children and young people. Children across India remember him as Chacha Nehru (Uncle Nehru). Nehru remains a popular symbol of the Congress party which frequently celebrates his memory. Congress leaders and activists often emulate his style of clothing, especially the Gandhi cap, and his mannerisms. Nehru's ideals and policies continue to shape the Congress party's manifesto and core political philosophy. An emotional attachment to his legacy was instrumental in the rise of his daughter Indira to leadership of the Congress party and the national government.

Many documentaries about Nehru's life have been produced. He has also been portrayed in fictionalised films. The canonical performance is probably that of Roshan Seth, who played him three times: in Richard Attenborough's 1982 film *Gandhi*, Shyam Benegal's 1988 television series *Bharat Ek Khoj*, based on Nehru's *The Discovery of India*, and in a 2007 TV film entitled *The Last Days of the Raj*. In Ketan Mehta's film *Sardar*, Nehru was portrayed by Benjamin Gilani. Nehru's personal preference for the sherwani ensured that it continues to be considered formal wear in North India today; aside from lending his name to a kind of cap, the Nehru jacket is named in his honour due to his preference for that style.

Numerous public institutions and memorials across India are dedicated to Nehru's memory. The Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi is among the most prestigious universities in India. The Jawaharlal Nehru Port near the city of Mumbai is a modern port and dock designed to handle a huge cargo and traffic load. Nehru's residence in Delhi is preserved as the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. The Nehru family homes at Anand Bhavan and Swaraj Bhavan are also preserved to commemorate Nehru and his family's legacy.

Writings

Nehru was a prolific writer in English and wrote a number of books, such as *The Discovery of India*, *Glimpses of World History*, and his autobiography, *Towards Freedom*.

