PT. JAWAHARLAL NEHRU'S VIEWS ON INDIAN DEMOCRACY

Dr. Wale Nagesh Gurappa , Assistant Professor, Department of English
Balasaheb Desai College, Patan. Dist. Satara-415206
Mb: 7588838343, mr.ngwale@gmail.com

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

ABSTRACT:

Pt. Nehru was the first prime minister and founder of modern India. His name is obviously associated with the restructuring of Indian society in all walks of life. After Mahatma Gandhi, he is recognized as the popular leader during the freedom movement and progressive policy maker of independent India. The present paper explores Jawaharlal Nehru's views on Indian Democracy. It attempts to highlight, in brief, Nehru's contribution to the development of Indian democracy. Apart from being a great leader, he was a prolific writer and an eloquent speaker. In his more than thirty five years of political career, he has expressed his thoughts on divergent topics in his writings and speeches.

His idea of democracy was based on several streams of thought from the east and the west and the Gandhi's conception of democracy. Being aware of the diverse religion, culture and language of the country, he categorically argued that the framework of democracy should incorporate secularism, socialism and social justice. He wanted to create a strong institutional foundation for the overall development of all sections of Indian society. It is really a difficult task to understand the mind of this powerful leader and take a review of his outstanding contributions to the overall development to the country.

He is always remembered as the inculcator of parliamentary democracy, strong follower of free economic policy, father of independent foreign policy and champion of secularism and scientific temper. The foundations of several national institutions were laid during his tenure for the reconstruction of modern India.

Keywords: Pt. Nehru, progressive policy maker, democracy, secularism, social justice

PT. JAWAHARLAL NEHRU'S VIEWS ON INDIAN DEMOCRACY :

Pt. Nehru was the first prime minister and founder of modern India. His name is obviously associated with the restructuring of Indian society in all walks of life. After Mahatma Gandhi, he is recognized as the popular leader during the freedom movement and the progressive policy maker of independent India. The present paper explores Jawaharlal Nehru's views on Indian Democracy. It attempts to highlight, in brief, Nehru's contribution to the development of Indian democracy. Apart from being a great leader, he was a prolific writer and an eloquent speaker. In his more than thirty five years of political career, he has expressed his thoughts on divergent topics in his writings and speeches.

To Nehru, 'India is a curious mixture of an amazing diversity and abiding unity.' (Gopal 238) Different elements went on to shape his mental make up. In this context, Ram Reddy rightly quotes B. R. Nanda in his research article: "Nehru was himself a curious and a fascinating mixture of diversity influences and streams of thought from the east and the west. He was influenced by the idealist tradition of the Indian renaissance and the national movement, especially by Gandhi and persistently endeavoured to combine idealism with realism." (1) His book, 'Discovery of India' reveals the impact of scholars such as, the Buddha, Ashoka, Marx, and Lenin on his perceptive mind. He was fond of reading the books of history and science. He developed scientific temper and strongly thought that 'scientific approach to problems would liberate India from economic misery and social injustice.'(Reddy 2)

His idea of democracy was based on the different ideologies and the Gandhi's conception of democracy. Being aware of the diverse religion, culture and language of the country, he categorically

argued that the framework of democracy should incorporate secularism, socialism and social justice. He wanted to create a strong institutional foundation for the overall development of all sections of Indian society. It is, in fact, a challenging task to understand the mind of this powerful leader and take a review of his outstanding contributions to the overall development to the country.

Pt. Nehru appeared on the political horizon in 1916 at Congress Session in Lucknow. Right from his active participation in politics till the last minute, he constantly upheld the concept of democracy at national and international levels. During his stay in England from 1905 to 1912, he observed that the British people were in favour of liberalism. He was also greatly influenced by the philosophy of liberalism which is the second form of democracy. Individual freedom is regarded as an integral part of liberalism and democracy. In fact, one cannot think of the existence of democracy without individual freedom. While emphasizing the importance of individual freedom in his book, 'Unity of India', Nehru rightly observes: "Civil liberty is not merely for us an airy doctrine or a pious wish, but something which we consider essential for the orderly development and progress of a nation. It is the civilized approach to a problem on which people differ, the non-violent way of dealing with it." (qtd. in Rajurkar 13) If we consider the resolutions put forth by Nehru in various conferences of Congress, we'll notice that those resolutions were clear indicators as to what direction free India should move along.It would be worthwhile to mention, in brief, one of significant and historic resolutions. It was drafted by Nehru and presented by Gandhi in the Congress Session held at Karachi in 1931. It is known as 'Resolution on Fundamental Rights and Economic Programme.' It contains the discussion on fundamental rights which would be granted to the Indians under the democracy based on the principle of secularism. And its reflection is clearly visible in the Indian Constitution. This clearly shows how keen Nehru was for the formation of democratic system in the country.

Before independence, there were, more or less, six hundred princely states in India. Most of them were extremely backward and there was total absence of individual freedom in the states. And feudal system was in practice in almost all the states. Up to 1938, the policy of congress was not to interfere in the affairs of the states. Without hurting the rulers, Gandhi wanted to motivate them to bring about proper changes in their ways of administration. However Nehru's stand was contrary to this policy. Though close disciple of Gandhi, Nehru had courage enough to disagree with him on many issues. He strongly believed that people in the states should develop political awareness and ask for good governance based on democratic principles. Therefore he made sincere efforts to bring about reformation in this regard from 1930; and by his inspiration, 'All India States Peoples Conference' came into existence and of which he wasthechairman for many years. At that time the term, 'congress'itself was the name of a particular ideology which was closely associated with Indian freedom movement. The congress had promised to follow democratic system after winning freedom. Nehru, therefore, thought that feudalism in the princely states was a big barrier in the path of fulfillment of the promise given to the people of India.He had a lion's share in creating democratic ambience in the princely states.

One more remarkable thing that Nehru did was to put forward the resolution regarding the abolition of feudalism in the congress conference held at Lucknow in 1936. The resolution was unanimously sanctioned. The landlords were tyrants who tortured people physically and mentally. There was no check on their erratic ways of administration. In democratic socialist framework feudalism had no place. After coming to power, Nehru took firm steps to abolish feudalism. It was due to him that India could create its own image as a country which is stronglycommitted to democracy showing total protest against dictatorship and imperialism. He was also against Fascism and Nazism as their tenets were in contradiction with democracy. In 1930s and 1940s, he was under the impact of socialism; andduring this period, he used to express his thought that the democracy based on capitalism in not the democracy in the true sense of the term.But later as he noticed

drasticchanges in the nature of capitalism, he accepted the fact that democracy and capitalism can live together. Most of the Asian countries which hadadopted democratic system remained no longer democratic with the passage of time. However, in India, democracy lay deeply rooted and grew stronger and for this credit goes to Nehru. He visited various countries and carefully observed the governing principles prevalent in them. Finally he arrived at the conclusion that the democratic system is the most appropriate in the country like India. During the freedom movement, he categorically expressed his views on colonialism and imperialism.Very often he would remark that freedom struggle of India was a part of the protest against colonialism and imperialism. He called upon the countries under foreign rule to extend their cooperation to the freedom movement of India.

Nehru's charismatic leadership will have to be considered a great phenomenal event for India. As the prime minister of India, Nehru carried out various strategiesto keep India on the path of progress. He knew well that India could make advancement in all walks of life only on the strong foundation of democracy.The foundations of several national institutions were laid during his tenure for the reconstruction of modern India. He launched several enterprising plans for the betterment of the people. The setting up of the Planning Commission and the launching of the community development were prominent features in national development. He also took initiativein starting the important institutions such as University Grants Commission, the Defence Science Organization and the Atomic Energy Commission for the development of education, science and technology.Nehru was convinced that many of our long standing problems would be solved with the help of modern technology. He also gave encouragement to industry and agriculture. The launching of Panchayati Raj encouraged people to take active participation in the process of nation building.Taking into consideration philosophic tradition of India, right directions shown by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru rightly acknowledged that democracy was the only appropriate form of government useful in India.

He had an abiding faith in the democratic principles. He strongly felt that democratic principles alone would establish peace in the world. "A strong and stable democracy on the lines drawn by the great architect, Jawaharlal Nehru, would ensure world peace and better future for mankind." (Reddy 6) Indiawill remember him as the inculcator of parliamentary democracy, strong advocate of free economic policy, father of independent foreign policy and champion of secularism and scientific temper.

Works Cited:

Gopal, S. (Ed.) Jawaharlal Nehru-An Anthology. Delhi: OUP, 1983.

Rajurkar, N. G. "Nehru vaBhartiyaLokshahi." SamajPrabodhanPatrika, No. 208, October-
Decemer, 2014.

Reddy, G. Ram.*Jawaharlal Nehru: Architect of Indian Democracy*, A research article presented
in a seminar held at Nehru Study Centre, National P.G. College, Lucknow, February 2, 2012.