

PANDIT NEHRU’S VISION OF MAKING MODERN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

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Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was the first Prime Minister of Independent India. He had a lion’s share in nation building. He rendered an invaluable service in providing a new vision to the Indian politics. He had tried hard to sow the seeds of democracy and socialism in our country. He is considered as the Pioneer of the Foreign Policy of India. This ambassador of peace had always taken an active lead to establish peace in the world. It is certain that his thought and ideology have created a profound impact upon the politics of India.

On 2nd September, 1946, Pandit Nehru was elected as the Prime Minister of Interim Government of India which had come in power on that day. On 15th August 1947, India became free and Pandit Nehru was elected as the first Prime Minister of Free India. As the Prime Minister of India, Nehru had very efficiently fulfilled his responsibility to establish democratic government and to bring India in the modern age. He had cherished a dream to develop India as the strongest nation in modern era and tried efforts to bring his dream into reality. During his 17 years period, he raised India to an important position among nations of the world. It was sincere work for peaceful coexistence and faith in democratic socialism which made him popular not only in India but throughout the world.

During the 20th century, the progress of science and technology has been much greater than ever before and with each advancing year. Today, scientific progresses are being made by leaps and not by short steps. We owe a debt to individual scientists and technologists who have contributed to this fast progress. Being highly educated Pt. Nehru and his rationalism made him the compelling force and the guiding principle to the Modern India.

Scientific advancement and civilized life existed about 2000 years ago in India and applied science reached quite a high standard but the scientific outlook on life started only about couple of hundreds years ago. The scientific outlook led to a re-appraisal of the importance of the individuals and his social functions which revolutionized political, economic, philosophical and moral thought introducing the idea of the equality of man.

Nehru was essentially a man of science and technology with faith in advancement and achievement. Nehru believed that without science and technology we cannot progress. His passion for science and for the scientific approach to life that he never missed opportunity of imparting his views to others. To quote him:” You know that whenever the chance offers itself. I say something about the importance of science and its off-shoot, technology. I think, we should realize how modern life is an offspring of science and technology. How has agriculture grown in many other countries greatly? It is because of the application of science and technology. If modern life depends so much on science and technology, then we must seize hold of them, understand them and apply them.”

Nehru was the person who gifted with scientific temper .He acknowledged the supreme importance of science and technology for the modernization of Indian society. According to Nehru, one of the most salient features of western civilization was its rational and scientific temper. Nehru was deeply influenced by western modern ideas. Rationalism and scientific temper had great impact on his thinking. Therefore he believed that India must get out of traditional ways of thought and action.

“What is science? He asked and replied that it is the research for truth, truth of the physical world.....truth arrived at by a process of trial and error, by experiment, not taking something for granted until it is proved, and rejecting everything that is disproved or does not fit in with the facts before us. It not only gives us a greater understanding of the world as it is, but creates ultimately a temper, an objective temper , a dispassionate scientific temper which should help us in dealing with other problems. All the problems that come up in Parliament or elsewhere, or whatever they may be, could be dealt with better if we approach them in a scientific frame of mind. It was the scientific temper which he cherished, which he wished to inculcate in the Indian people.

What is the advantage of science?According to Nehru,“Science has developed at an ever-increasing pace since the beginning of the century, so that the gap between the advanced and backward countries has widened more and more. It is only by adopting the most vigorous measures and by putting for ward our utmost effort into the development of science that we can bridge the gap. It is an inherent obligation of a great country like India, with its traditions of scholarship and original thinking and its great cultural heritage, to participate fully in the march of science, which is probably mankind ‘s greatest enterprise today.”

Nehru was a man of the vision. He always looked forward. Once he said, “If man was meant to go back or always took back, he would have had his eyes at the back of his head. His contempt for the static was best brought out when he said,” India must break with much of her past and not allow it to dominate the present. Our lives are encumbered with the dead wood of this past; and that is dead and has served its purpose has to go.”

Nehru was a progressive thinker and emphasized the progress of science and technology. During the long course of human history and civilization, Nehru observed that science has made a tremendous change in the condition of human life .Man secured substantial support from the burden of misery by relevance of science and the scientific approach.He said:

The conquest of the physical world by the mind of man was so remarkable that nature was no longer regarded as something apart or distinct from himself.¹

Science must have a social purpose apart from being an individual’s search for the truth and knowledge. In India,we are facing a number of socio-cultural problems. Some of the prominent are poverty, low literacy, superstition, high population, inequalities, casteism, communalism etc.These problems affect the social and scientific development of India. India faces the problem of chronic poverty. Every year, a good amount of funds is diverted towards poverty alleviation measures, which otherwise would have been utilized for productive activities. India is facing the problem of literacy. The low level of literacy is one of the main causes of several social problems of India. In India, there is gender bias. The women are given secondary status. The education system should create an atmosphere of scientific consciousness in curriculum. Teacher must be trained to develop the interest in science. The leaders of all faiths can play a leading role to develop scientific attitude in the society. In our country like India science must think in terms of the suffering millions.In his *Toward Freedom*, he says that personally I dislike the praise of

poverty and suffering .I do not think they are at all desirable and they ought to be abolished .Nor do I appreciate the ascetic life as a social ideal, though it may suit individuals. I understand and appreciate simplicity, equality, self- control but the mortification of flesh. Even if desirable, the ascetic ideal of the deliberate and voluntary restriction of wants is impracticable for the masses. Instead, hethought, advantage should be taken of the development of science and technology to increase their standards of living. Nehru asserted:

*It was science that could solve these problems of hunger and poverty, of insanitation and illiteracy, of superstitions and deadening custom and tradition, of vast resources running to waste, of rich country inhabited by starving people.*²

Nehru was always in favor of new and creative things. He emphasized that a scientific approach must be accepted as away of life as guiding principle, as a process of thinking. This is the urgent need of the society to build the foundation of modern India. The scientific temper was especially visible in Nehru when he said.-

*We have to build India on a scientific foundation to develop her industries, to change that feudal character of her land system, and bring her agriculture in the line with modern methods to develop the social services which she lacks so utterly today.*³

Pt. Nehru strongly believed that scientific development of nation could be achieved neither by imitation of the past or history nor by its rejection. New system must be developed and incorporated with the old. This was all the essential for India to make a modern nation. India had depended upon the past. According to Nehru:

*She must get out of her obsession with the supernatural and metaphysical speculations. Religious, ceremonial and mystical emotionalism not only crippled the mental discipline in India but also stood in the way of understanding ourselves and the world at large.*⁴

It was mainly Pt.Nehru's efforts that India emerged as a modern nation in mid- twentieth century. He played a heroic role in the development of a scientific Modern India. Nehru had a deep sense of respect for India's history and heritage. He was visibly moved by its past glory and present miserable condition of India. He keenly desired that the Indian citizen release themselves from the shackles of the past. According to him, this was possible only when people tried to imbibe in the highest ethics of the present age scientific spirit. Nehru described in his *Discovery of India* and exposed full of his ideas. He narrated:

*The modern mind, that is to say the better type of the modern mind, is practical and pragmatic, ethical and social altruistic and humanitarian. It is governed by a practical idealism for social betterment...Humanity is its gods and social service its religion.*⁵

Nehru was a multi- faced personality. As a scholar he could reflect far ahead of his surroundings and his thoughts did influence the progressive strength in and outside the country. As a humanist he championed the cause of humanity and committed himself to the ideas of social advancement. Nehru had a clear vision of modern India emerging as an integral part of a free world community. He aspired to build a scientific order based upon the universal values of truth and humanism. To estimate Nehru's place in the Modern India, According to Walter Crocker,

Nehru's achievements may be summarized as under: He was to hold India together. He gave a sense of unity to Indians. The modernization of India. through Three Five Year Plans.

According to V.K.R.V.Rao says,

*Perhaps the greatest contribution of Nehru to India's renovating culture is his emphasis on science and what he calls the scientific temper.*⁶

END NOTES:

1. Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches broadcast, 13 December 1952, *Building New India* (New Delhi: A.I.C.C. 1958)
2. J.S Bright, Ed.*Before and After Independence*, Vol.1& 2 (1922-50)Indian Printing Works. New Delhi.p.292.
3. Ibid. p-293.
4. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* p-633.
5. Ibid. p-680.
6. N.jayapalan, *Indian Political Thinkers*, APD New Delhi.,p-298.