

## Introduction

### I

This book is the effort of the Nehru Studies Centre established in 2005 with the support of University Grants Commission in the Department of Political Science, University of Kerala. It is the first publication by the Centre and we propose to bring out more volumes in future. The goals of the Centre include training students and youth in developing the spirit and ideals of democracy, socialism, secularism, nationalism, equality and social justice—all these were close to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The Centre proposes to promote Nehruvian values and ideals among the future generation of the country. This, in turn, is expected to shape and strengthen nation-building process. During the last four years, the Centre had also conducted three major conferences besides organizing lectures by visiting faculty on themes that are of vital importance to the thinking and practice of Jawaharlal Nehru.

In one of my intellectual encounters abroad, I recall how a colleague from Nigeria commented on the vital democratic space created in India by the great leaders of India's freedom struggle. He said, "Unlike Nigeria, India produced a strong battery of leaders during the freedom movement, trained in Gandhian and Nehruvian values and this impacted positively upon the future generations of your country". He added with a smile, "Like in a good cricket match, if the first four or five batsmen bat very well, the huge score developed by the team will be impregnable and therefore cannot be defeated by the rival team. Your leadership invested so much on nation-building and the foundation of the country therefore became strong. Whereas in Nigeria, our leadership had ditched us quite often and the legacy of freedom movement, however small it was, got fabricated". He was certainly right, and no wonder Nigeria had undergone series of *coup-d' etat* which destroyed the potentialities of shaping a civil society in a young country. Therefore, it is all the more true that among the post-colonial

societies, India holds a pride of place. The relevance and contribution of the leaders of freedom movement – Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhai Patel, C. Rajagopalachari, Acharya Kripalani, Maulana Kalam Azad, Rajendra Prasad, G.B. Pant, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Lal Bahadur Shastri, B.R. Ambedkar and a large set of others – are to be studied which would not only rekindle the spirit of national unity but also enable the public to estimate the values of nation-building process. Indeed, for many western scholars the emergence of a modern India with a complex social and colonial history is really baffling. Certainly, it was not an easy task to unite and integrate the 565 princely states and other areas and regions that were under direct British rule. The ethnic, linguistic, regional, religious and caste divisions in a huge country are major challenges, especially, in a young political system of parliamentary democracy. Not only that India emerged over the years as a plural society but also it could introduce liberal values such as parliamentary democracy, secularism and federalism. Despite the many complex issues awaiting urgent solutions, India could successfully celebrate her electoral democracy. The verdict of the 15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election further vindicates this argument.

In this context it would be interesting if we could research on the multifaceted dimensions of Nehruvian contributions to the development of modern India. Although critics would attack him on many issues like the setback in China policy, issue of Tibet imbroglio in Kashmir, the policy of non-alignment, issues and developments that led to the Partition, failure of public sector in contributing to socio-economic development, we could on the other side point out that the flip sides of many these problems were beyond his control. Declaring himself as the "first servant of the people of India", he set himself as a role model among the politicians of a newly independent country. Again, his refusal to accept Gandhiji's advice to dissolve the Indian National Congress and transform it into a *Lok Sevak Sangh* on the eve of independence was found to be more valid. Indeed, a

political vacuum would have developed, if the Indian National Congress was dissolved in 1947 and consequently India would have faced an anarchic divergent party system with disastrous results. It is understandable that the era of one party dominance is now over and India is rapidly heading towards multi-party system within the framework of coalition politics. This also enabled opposition parties to come up within a reasonable time frame with the essential political experience needed for governance and accountability.

At the domestic front, Nehru's vision had a long standing impact. His perspectives on democratic socialism, state led planning process, establishment of Planning Commission, launching of the mechanism for rural development, initiative for modernizing agriculture and educational system etc. could be seen in the early fifties itself. He declared India's unique commitment to establish a 'socialistic pattern of society' in the Parliament on 21 December, 1954 and followed it up by the AICC resolution at Avadi in early 1955. The mixed economy model was suitable for a developing nation like India and the country was ready to accept the advantages of both capitalism and socialism. Nehru felt that the state should play the crucial role in development and attributed high credentials and role to both the bureaucracy and public sector. He used the traditional idioms to communicate with the masses on emphasizing the utility of modern tools and institutions. He realized the importance of setting up mega industries and usher in industrial growth so as to transform the traditional society into a modern one.

While "agriculture cannot wait", Nehru was particularly sensitive to the cause of industrial development. Indeed, Gandhiji and Nehru differed on the question of industrial development. Gandhiji was against rapid industrialization and instead suggested the growth of cottage industries. Nehru, on the other hand, anticipated the scope for industrial development in shaping the future of the people and the nation. Although Dr. B.R.Ambedkar differed with Nehru on many issues, he appreciated Nehru's

commitment to industrial development and expressed his differences with Gandhiji. As an institution builder Nehru was also able to set up scientific institutions all over the country.

As the first Minister for External Affairs, Nehru was responsible for developing an independent foreign policy for the country. Reviewing the problem of cold war and bi-polar politics, Nehru designed the equidistance concept towards big powers while engaging with them in all possible fronts. Along with Nassar, Sukarno, Tito, Nehru played a crucial role in shaping the policy of Non-Alignment and institutionalized the Non-Aligned Movement. Despite the setback with China, India received the support of USA on many occasions, although American Secretary of State Dallas attacked Non-Alignment as an *immoral force*. Similarly, USSR was India's natural ally on vital sectors. When viewed from contemporary international system, the past policies may look irrelevant but during the cold war era those were very practical and dynamic policies. Unlike Pakistan, India did not join any military camp and could pursue an independent foreign policy. India also contributed to the UN efforts in peace-keeping by sending its forces to many war-torn areas.

Of course, one can understand the critics' view on Nehru's underestimating of Chinese tactics towards India. Hence Nehru shared the blame along with V.K. Krishna Menon on the military setback with China in October 1962. But politically India could convince the UN and the international community that Mac Mohan line constitutes the legitimate international boundary between China and India. Although China rejected this position, and further made claims over some areas in Arunachal Pradesh, the Indian position received more international acceptance. Given the development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, both China and India have emerged as major players at the economic, political and security spheres. China today has a strong military power sophisticated in every sense and India is closely watching China's interests and game plans in South Asia and South East Asia.

It is also not clear as to who would have advised Nehru in taking up the Kashmir problem to the UN Security Council. Again, Nehru ordered the stopping of Indian army's surge towards the Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. The much promised plebiscite on Kashmir has become a non-starter. The Kashmir imbroglio continuous to haunt both India and Pakistan complicating the domestic politics of the two countries.

Another major criticism with regard to the Partition from certain quarters was that if Nehru had yielded to some of the demands of the Muhammad Ali Jinnah, partition of the country would have been avoided. But it was too much an attempt to simplify the historical as well as the unexpected events that led to the division of the sub-continent and the violence that followed. Again, Nehru's firm commitment to secularism and his strong objection to Jinnah's demand for setting up communal electorates, following the Government of India Act 1935, is very much clear before us to analyze the situation.

Undoubtedly, Jawaharlal Nehru would remain a towering personality in Indian socio-political landscape. When one would review the achievements and setbacks, the balance is undoubtedly in favour of Nehru's accomplishments. It is true that Nehru failed on certain areas, aspects and policies. But he played a phenomenal role in providing a strong socio-economic foundation to India's growth and development. This is more visible in the present era of neo-liberal world. He was a statesman, institution-builder, secularist, pacifist, democrat with scientific and humanist values and temperament. As a true democrat he appreciated dissent and yielded to his critics' point of view. He was responsible for taking India to the pride of place among the nations of the world. Being a disciple of Gandhi, peace and moral values prevailed on him tremendously. His own vision and instinct, besides the international exposure he received, influenced his perspectives considerably. Modern India owes a great to this unique nation-builder of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Given the radically altered international system, many of the basic postulates of Nehruvism are receiving heavy challenges. Two major principles, viz Non-Alignment and socialistic pattern of society, with state led planning process, are now at the receiving end. It is a debatable point whether India could continue to stick on to the policies of non-alignment and planned development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The international system in the present century is totally different from that of what we saw in the post World War II era. Many of the principles like balance of power, bipolarism, ideological competition between two super powers, equilibrium in the UN Security Council etc. had radically changed. The present day world witnesses the rise and decline of unipolarism, emergence of multilateralism in global politics, increased role of China, India, European Union, Russia etc, the rise of international terrorism, religious fundamentalism and challenges to national security, environmental degradation and climate change etc. The march of free market capitalism since 1991 and the decline of Communism had fundamentally altered the global system. No country can stay aloof from these developments. It is exactly in this context we can notice the challenges to the traditional principles of non-alignment and centrally planned economic development. Theoretically, both are questionable today.

Nevertheless, one could not ignore the role and major contributions of the Nehruvian state. At least, three generations of Indian population had benefited from it. It had contributed significantly in improving the levels of health, education, food, housing, employment etc. At the same time, it could be incorrect to argue that every section had been benefited from these policies. To be sure, more than one-third of the population was deprived from these developments. Once again, the debate of social justice and inclusive development comes to the forefront. When Gandhiji appealed for 'sarvodaya' and Nehru for 'social justice', they definitely had the idea of inclusive development uppermost in their minds. Hence Gandhian and

Nehruvian values are still relevant but in a different dimension. We need to explore the potentialities of Nehruvian studies in this context.

### **About the Contributors**

1. Dr. Aftal Kamal Pasha is Professor in Gulf Studies of the Centre for West Asian and African Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.
2. Dr. Aparajita Gangopadhyay is Assistant Professor at the Centre for Latin American and International Studies, Goa University, Goa.
3. Dr. P. Arjun Rao is specialist in Public Administration and formerly Consulting Editor of ICFAI Journal of Public Administration.
4. Dr. V. Biju Kumar is Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Meghalaya.
5. Dr. G. Gopa Kumar is Professor and Head, Department of Political Science, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram. He is also Director, UGC-Nehru Studies Centre in the University of Kerala.
6. Mr. L.C. Jain is a social activist, freedom fighter and a former member of the Planning Commission, Government of India.
7. Dr. R.L.M. Patil is formerly Professor and Head, Department of Political Science, University of Bangalore, Bangalore.
8. Dr. Rahul Tripathi is Reader and Head, Department of Political Science, Goa University, Goa.
9. Dr. B. Ramesh Babu was formerly Professor and Head of the Department of Political Science in the University of Bombay. He also served as a Senior Fellow at the Indo-American Centre for International Studies, Hyderabad and Adjunct Professor, ICFAI University, Hyderabad.
10. Dr. K.R. Singh is formerly Professor at the Centre for West Asian and African Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.
11. Dr. Sudhir Jacob George is formerly Professor in the Department of Political Science, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad.
12. Dr. M.J. Vinod is Professor in the Department of Political Science, University of Bangalore, Bangalore.