

CHAPTER - II

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU : A BACKGROUND

Before we analyse Nehru's ideas on different aspects of Secularism we would make a brief overview of the life and times of Jawaharlal Nehru. This background would help us to give us some clues to understand the context in which Nehru was writing.

When we recall the personality of Jawaharlal Nehru, we do not think of him as a Brahmin (he always resented, whenever some one called him Panditji). He was an Indian free from all distinctions based on caste and birth. He had assimilated and integrated in his personality and character all that was best in the composite Indian culture and discarded all that was irrelevant to modern times. For the past of his country, he had a healthy and undogmatic respect which he revealed in his Discovery of India. He was shrewd to know its significant relation to the present and the future: "The past becomes something that leads upto the present, the moment of action, the future something that flows from it; and all three are inextricably intertwined and interrelated: Past history merged into contemporary history; it became a living reality tied up with sensations of pain and pleasure".¹ He was fascinated by the personalities of the past like Buddha, Shankaracharya, Ashoka, Akbar and Saint Kabir who were symbols of integration and unity and their philosophic contribution was made to Indian history, philosophy and culture.

Nehru's greatest contribution to India in the importance that he had given to science, technology and industrialisation without which progress was impossible. He was fighting against the main currents of socio-cultural life in the country. He was opposed to traditions and superstitions. He believed that the pre-requisite for the successful adherence to secularism in the country which was suffering from the virus of communalism was industrialization and economic development. Being a true 'Renaissance leader', he laid emphasis on the importance of a scientific outlook. The solution to communalism, backwardness and agrarian society which was left behind due to slavery was secularism, democracy, economic planning modernization and socialism. In order to live in the modern world as an independent country, keeping intact the sovereignty, a modern outlook of life, modern techniques of economic development should be employed. Nehru's vision of modern India was : where science and not superstition, where reason and not blind faith, where humanism and not religious bigotry will reign supereme. ²

NEHRU j. A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Nehru's family was originally from Kashmir. His ancestor Raj Kaul gained eminence as a Sanskrit and Persian scholar in Kashmir, during the Mughal period when Farrukhsiar was the Emperor. The family migrated to Delhi at the Emperor's insistence, in 1716. A house (Jagir) was granted to Raj Kaul which was situated on the banks of a canal, and from this fact of

residence 'Nehru' (from nahar, a canal) became attached to his name. The family name Kaul was dropped and it simply became Nehru. The family experienced many vicissitudes and their property vanished. His great grandfather, Lakshmi Narayan Nehru, was the first Vakil (Lawyer) of the Sarkar Company in the court of Delhi. His grandfather, Ganga Dhar Nehru, was kotwal of Delhi before 1857. The family shifted to Agra, and his father Motilal Nehru was born. His grand father was Kashmiri by birth, dressed up like a Moghal nobleman, Moghal court dress with a curved sword in his hand. His father's education was in Persian, Arabic and English. He became a renowned lawyer after winning a gold medal and moved to Allahabad High Court. Nehru was born in Allahabad on 14 November, 1889. Thus the ancestors of Nehru's family were exposed to multi-ethnic and mutli-religious life-style which might have influenced Nehru's secular upbringing.

His education and early training brought him into contact with scientific and technological advancement in the West and he was fascinated by the working of democratic institutions in England. He found a solution for social transformation of backward societies in democracy, individual freedom and the power of science and technology which was an impact of western science and liberalism. His pesonality and mode of thinking was based on western liberalism. He observed: "My roots are still perhaps partly in the nineteenth century, and I have been too much influenced by the humanist liberal tradition to get out of it completely. This bourgeois background follows me about".⁴

B.R.Nanda quotes a Hindu Mahasabha leader as saying that Nehru was "English by Education, Muslim by culture and Hindu by an accident of birth". Nehru has acknowledged his debt to England. The impact of the Muslim culture has been traditionally paramount among Kashmiris. Study of Urdu and Persian was found not only among men but also women. He had many Muslim friends. Though he imbibed the Hindu wisdom of the ages and read Gita, he was not a Hindu in the traditional sense. He glorified India's magnificent past, history, its mountains and rivers, which he considered as the first gods of the Aryans, who settled in the Gangetic plain. He was a true citizen of the world, being too patriotic. He was a secularist in the sense that he transcended parochial considerations and looked from a broad human angle. His secularism was founded in India's extraordinary variegated culture which was a product of unbroken history. Fusion of Greek and Indo-Aryan cultures marked the Guptas. Hindu outlook was broadened by Buddhism which spread in the east. Akbar attempted to marry Hinduism with Islam. British ideas shaped Indian psyche for two centuries. More than religion, Nehru was culture and race oriented. According to him the Muslims were converts belonging to the original Indo-Aryan stock. He elaborates in The Discovery of India : "The fact of subsequent conversion to other faiths did not deprive them of their heritage, just as the Greeks, after their conversion to Christianity did not lose their pride in the mighty achievements of their ancestors, or the Italians in the great days of the Roman Republic and early

empire. If all the people of India had been converted to Islam or Christianity, her cultural heritage would still have remained to inspire them and give them that poise and dignity, which a long record of civilized existence with all its mental struggles with the problems of life gives a people".

Nehru's secularism was founded in its sustenance in unifying and life-giving wisdom of the ages. According to him-. "Some Hindus talk of going back to the Vedas, some Muslims dream of an Islamic theocracy. Idle fancies, for there is no going back to the past, there is no turning back even if this was thought desirable. There is only one-way traffic in Time".⁵

Nehrus's approach to the role religion played in social life is described by him in the following manner: "Religion as I saw it practised, and accepted even by thinking minds, whether it was Hindusim or Islam or Buddhism or Christianity, did not attract me. It seemed to be closely associated with superstitious practices and dogmatic beliefs and behind it lay a method of approach to life's problems which was certainly not that of science. There was an element of magic about it, an empirical credulous-ness, a reliance on the supernatural".⁶

He experienced a sense of desolation and wilderness in the cell of Alipore Jail. He learned painful and hard things in loneliness. He expresses his views that reliance on others is inviting heartbreak, hence one should travel the journey of his

life alone. He accumulated irritation against religion and the religious outlook because it was an enemy to clarity of thought, fixity of purpose and was wholly based on emotion and passion. Presuming to be spiritual, and thinking of some other world, it possessed few conceptions of human values, social values and social justice. With its preconceived notions it deliberately shuts its eyes to reality for fear that it may not fit in with. Although it was based on truth it does not take the trouble to discover it. It talks of peace, yet supports systems and organizations based on violence. In his own words: "it condemned the violence of the sword, but what of the violence that comes quietly and often in peaceful garb and starves and kills,- or, worse still, without doing any outward physical injury outrages the mind and crushes the spirit and breaks the heart" ?

HISTORICAL EVENTS INFLUENCING NEHRU'S IDEA :

In this chapter an attempt has been made to present the formative influences on Nehru's thought, his political ideas in the achievement of social goals. In assessing the multi-dimensional personality of a leader, his contribution to history, society, politics, Indian state, and his role as the Prime Minister should be seen in the light of the total perspective of events. In making an assessment of his contribution to modern India' we should examine the various influences, both of ideas and persons, that moulded and shaped his thought and personality. "Leadership operates under the

complex interaction of social forces - political aspirations, social relationships, economic wants, nationalism and religious beliefs. This factor explains the behavior of different leaders operating differently even in contemporary conditions: . The situational factor is very important in understanding the various actions of a leader. Seeming contradictions in his behaviour can often be resolved only by unravelling the difficult knot of circumstances that ultimately contains all the contending influences in a given situation.⁸

In 1909, Indian nationalists were outraged when the British officials were playing up the differences between Hindus and Muslimism. In a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, Motilal wrote on March 25,1909 that the leaders of both the communities had no love amongst themselves. He explained to his son that the masses of both communities existed as good friends and the tension should not filter to the lower classes. Then nation building would be a thing of the past. Which the Anglo-Indian friends have distinctly scored.⁹ The emergence of the Hindu Mahasabha as a counterblast to Muslim League would weaken the foundation of the Congress.¹⁰

Jawaharlal Nehru, was not only a passionate soul but always active. He felt that Gandhiji had electrified atmosphere by giving a new turn to the Congress and involving the people in the freedom struggle. His basic trait was aversion to communal politics. The moderate school usually consisted of communal

politicians. He had seen that the leaders of Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha were competitive in winning favours from the British government. When Poorna Swaraj, complete independence was the demand of the Congress leaders, the communal leaders were inquisitive of the respective positions their communities would possess in independent India. Nehru entered politics when Congress was an instrument of Indian nationalism under the influences of Tila, Mrs. Beasant and Gandhi.¹¹

The Constitutional Act 1919 which divided India into numerous separate compartments in the legislature was according to Nehru a dangerous proposition. He said "I am afraid I cannot get excited over this communal issue important as it is temporarily. It is after all a side issue and it can have no real importance in the larger scheme of things. I have no fear and my vision of a future India contains no communalism"¹². This beginning of nationalism should be viewed against this cultural background of intellectual ferment, with the westernised elite turning towards liberalism and the conservatives to Hinduism and Islam respectively. The liberal advocates of social and political reform were uncompromising due to their disapproval of traditional culture, which they thought that it was a retrogressive force, submerging the masses in superstition.¹³

For a brief period after the 1916 Lucknow Pact, the relationship between India's Hindus and Muslims was amicable. Upto 1920, as long as Mohammed Ali Jinnah was a member of

Congress tensions were less. After 1923, tensions flared up between the various communal groups and in Jawaharlal Nehru's view, the major goals of Congress were in grave danger of being jeopardized. Especially in North India there was deterioration of Hindu-Muslim relations. The bitterness among the communal leaders at the top, led to the rigid political communal demands. The Muslim political reactionaries helped by the British Government became prominent. The Hindu political reactionaries also succeeded in raising the communal temper of the country. Congress was in a quandary and most of the Congressmen were communists under their national cloak. Due to this Sikhs as a particular communal group loudly voiced their particular demands. According to Gandhi communal problem could only be solved by goodwill and the generosity of the majority group and consented to Muslims demands. British government's policy in India was divide and rule. The Congress blamed the Government and communalist groups for spreading communalism and the latter blamed the Congress.

This problem could not have been solved by market place tactics. The third party is dominant and hands out its gifts to the prize boys of its choice. Our leaders thought within the narrow steel frame of the political freedom only without, considering any social change or economic freedom for the masses. It meant the removal of the financial links which was binding India to London, this inter-connection would have easily changed the social structure. The Indian leaders' outlook was reformist

rather than revolutionary. The then atmosphere was not conducive for solving the communal problem by reformist - methods. The situation demanded revolutionary outlook, planning and revolutionary solutions. Lack of clear ideals and objectives led to the spread of communalism. There was hardly any connection between the day to day sufferings and the fight for swaraj. Instincts of the people were exploited by the communalist in the name of religion. The leaders of the communal groups demanded a handful of jobs to upper middle classes and a special demand for additional seats in the legislatures symbolic of political power merely for patronage. They were motivated by religious passions. Political reactionaries in the guise of communal leaders obstructed political advance. This was the unsavory situation "Muslim communal leaders said the most amazing things and seemed to care not at all for Indian nationalism or Indian freedom; Hindu communal leaders, though always speaking apparently in the name of nationalism, had little to do with it in practice, and incapable of any real action, sought to humble themselves before the Government, and did that too in vain. Both agreed in condemning socialistic and such like "subversive" movement;;, there was a touching unanimity in regard to any proposal affecting vested interests".¹⁴

In mid-twenties a unity conference was held after which the Hindus and Muslims became tolerant and respectful of one another's religious practices and beliefs. Communal tensions further escalated when voting was based on separate electorates.

It was painful for Nehru when the troubles were in his home town Allahabad.¹⁵ In a letter to Dr. Syed Mahmud dated May 24, 1926, Nehru wrote, "I do not attach very much importance to political squabbles, but the communal frenzy is awful to contemplate. We seem to have been caught in a whirlpool of mutual hatred and we go round and round and down and down this abyss. For months or even a year or more we have thought that the situation was so bad that it could not become worse. But it does (grow) worse and heaven knows where it will end. 'No country or people who are slaves to dogma....can progress, and unhappily our country and people have become extraordinarily dogmatic and little minded...Religion as practised in India has become the old man of the sea for us and it has not only broken our backs but stultified and almost killed all originality of thought and mind. I have no patience left with the legitimate and illegitimate offspring of religion'.¹⁶ He personally thought that it was impossible to cooperate with communalists provided the political objective was same. There is no meeting ground between progress and reaction, between those who struggle for freedom and those content with servitude. The political reaction covered with communalism takes advantage of the fear of each others community. Honest communalism was fear and false communalism was political reactions. The British government was supporting the reactionary leaders (Muslims) and ignoring the nationalists. Thus they were rearing communal feeling and simultaneously weakening the national struggle. History shows that this has always been done by rulers. By helping the Britishers, the Muslims were an

addition to their proposed special powers and to show to the world how necessary their continued presence in India was¹⁷.

Nehru opines, "I am convinced that nationalism can only come out of the ideological fusion of Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and other groups in India. That does not and need not mean the extinction of any real culture of any group, but it does mean a common national outlook, to which other matters are subordinated. I do not think that Hindu-Muslim or other unity will become merely by reciting it like a mantra. That it will come, I have no doubt, but it will come from below. Social and economic forces will inevitably bring other problems to the front."¹⁸

Nehru thought that though the Muslim communalist had faith in democracy of Islam, they were afraid in implementing it practically. On the other hand the Hindu communalists verbally believed in nationalism, yet thought in terms of 'Hindu nationalism' only.¹⁹ In his opinion the Hindu Mahasabha was revivalist rather than progressive. Usually verbal warfare occurred between Muslim league and Hindu Mahasabha. The Britishers were giving importance to these communal organizations as against the Congress.²⁰ The fear complex among the Muslim masses should be removed and they should be assured protection which can tone down the feeling of communalism. Hunt for favours from third party, or the ruling power is according to Nehru communalism. He was of the opinion that once the foreign power is deleted, communalism would fall to the ground. Foreign power

and the communalists representing upper class groups preserve their vested interest rather than changing the economic or political structure. The solution of these would upset the social structure. He said that facts and economic forces were more powerful than government and empires.²¹

Nehru's understanding of secularism was a product of personal attitudes, historical circumstances and compulsions of policy. Being conventional believer in his youth, in his middle age he was transformed into a severe critic of organised institutional religion due to the influence of Bertrand Russell and Karl Marx, and the communal riots further reinforced this aversion. He described himself a pagan. He appreciated Upanishads, Gita and Buddhism. In 1958, perceiving the problems facing the world, he concluded, "we should keep in view the old Vedantic ideal of the life-force which is the inner base of everything that exists."²² He wants people to be benefitted by the modern technical process and also says that "the essential objective to be aimed at is the quality of the individual and the concept of dharma underlying it".²³ He believed like Vinoba Bhave that the day of politics and religion has been replaced by science and spirituality which are common to the great religions which lay emphasis on ethics, conduct and hardly on doctrine. "I am not exactly a religious person, although I agree with much that religions have to say".²⁴ Nehru did possess some religious feeling and respect for the beliefs of others provided it would not intrude into their social behaviour.

Keeping in view the religious outlook of Indian nationalism, with the Hindus and Muslims co-operating as two separate communities rather than acting together as Indians, in 1931 at Karachi Congress Nehru incorporated in the resolution on fundamental rights which provided a basis of his secularism. Some of his proposals were freedom of conscience; right to profess and practise any religion subject to public order and morality; guaranteed equality before law irrespective of religion, creed, caste or sex, no discrimination in public employment, in the exercise of trade; and state observing neutrality towards all faith, Nehru thought that Indians were committed to the secular attitude, and that communalism would logically become a non-event. Social and economic strength would further strengthen the national struggle. Hunger, poverty and illiteracy were common problems of most of the Indians. In 1937, when Jinnah in order to consolidate the Muslim League, claimed that Islam was being threatened, Nehru proposed a 'mass contact' movement among the Muslims which failed to gain momentum. With the popular backing of the British, the League reached the climax of partition. It has been observed that Nehru wanted to solve the problem of communalism by assuring a secular future for free Indians, but the then rationale had been impeccable in theory, without any chance of practice in colonial setting. Yet the survey of the country did not mean the death of secularism. Nehru and his contemporary members considered Pakistan as a political necessity and discarded the two-nation theory based on religion. In order to accommodate religious minorities,

secularism became a durable national identity in a multi-religious society.

To Nehru divorce of religion from politics and public life, separation of state from all faiths, religion as a private matter for the individual without any bearing on civil rights and duties, freedom for the profession of diverse forms of religious worship provided they did not conflict with other religions were parts of civilized scientific and rational thinking. Acting other than this was barbarous and medieval to Nehru. In India the ideal attitude is the opportunist policy. In India due to religious pluralism, civil liberties and equal opportunities, only secularism can be the corner-stone of an egalitarian society and a social cement for a democratic community, which is a single channel for social and economically unqualified masses Nehru was prepared to fight a war with Pakistan on political grounds rather than communal grounds especially over the Kashmir issue. India was committed towards the path of secularism. Immediately after independence communal clashes in the post-independent era after the partition came as a shock. Due to Hindu revivalism, Nehru was undergoing a crisis of the spirit because he was aware that the implementation of the phenomenon of secularism was going to be a challenge. Nehru at times wanted to resign. He wrote sadly, "All of us seem to be getting infected with the refugee mentality or, worse, still, the R.S.S. mentality. That is a curious finale to our careers".²⁷

In an ideal secular state there is disestablishment of all religions, where none can enjoy a privileged relationship with the state; and the Government should neither be, nor even thought to be, the agents of any type of religious revival. Nehru as a Prime Minister did not associate himself with any function that had a non-secular tinge. He stressed that the involvement of the Government of India in the 2,500th anniversary celebrations of the Buddha in 1956 was not sponsorship for the promotion of Buddhism, but recognition of Buddha as a great India. Nehru was certain that India would be doomed, unless this outlook changed radically. If India was to survive, the destruction of Hindu communalism and the establishment of secular state and society were inevitable. The communalism of the majority community which had disguised as nationalism was the Indian version of fascism. Bringing religion into politics would mean to ruin both. As a Prime Minister he saw in the Telengana rebellion violent phases of communism and communalism and he perceived that Hindu political resurgence was the primary threat to the modern democratic India. In order to curtail Sikh communalism, he supported Pratap Singh Kairon, despite his weakness, and also made attempts to curb Arya Samaj from interfering in Punjab politics. In Nehru's views, revivalism among the Hindus and the feeling of insecurity among the religious minorities were the greatest danger. He thought that the Hindus should make the Muslims feel at home and not treat the Muslims as second class citizens. The mischiefs of the communal Muslims should be dealt with sternly. He pampers Muslims and

says that after partition the Muslims who were communal were so on the defensive. He expressed his views that their loyalty should not be questioned because it will be a natural growth of circumstances. Winning the Muslims was a problem of social psychology which had to be handled carefully by the majority community. Minorities should be treated as a trust rather than as extraneous elements to be crushed or appeased. The test of success is the feelings of the minorities rather than what the majority thinks. The effective rule of the majority should provide full scope for the minorities which is an important criterion of a working democracy. Whenever there is a sense of grievance from the minorities, it demands a self-examination for the majority. He was unshaken in expressing his view that it was for the Hindus to take initiatives and be generous. He had given some justification for the minorities to be communal; and he found no reason for the majority to be so. "Honest communalism is fear; false communalism is political reactions".²⁸ Rather than remaining staunch fundamentalists Muslims and other minorities ought to become secular.

Christian minorities were the result of the works of Missionaries who visited India under the patronage of the European powers During the British era, Christianity was well knitted with imperialism.²⁹ After 1947 he did not oppose the evangelical work because it would be suppression of Christianity and guaranteed practise and propagation of religion. He pulled up the government of Madhya Pradesh for appearing to be

anti-Christian in 1959, he disapproved the intervening of the Christian clergy in the politics of Kerala in 1962. American missionaries arrived in India after 1947 and their number was doubled. What worried Nehru was that they were advising the local Christians, "quietly or aggressively" to keep aloof from the rest of India. Nehru's chief adviser; Verrier Elwin who was a clergyman spoke of the establishment of a 'Christian Mahasabha'³¹. These foreigners in the guise of missionaries were participating in non-religious and anti-national activity. Nehru's approach to the problems was to deal with the missionary institutions of India and abroad and grant visas only to doctors, nurses and specialists. Nehru justified such action on political grounds and expressed that he did not have any antipathy to their evangelical activity. He reminded President Rajendra Prasad, being a symbol of the secular state, he should not have given the permission of holding a conference and criticizing the missionaries in Rashtrapathi Bhavan.³²

The problem of integrating the Muslims became complicated due to their meagre size and historical circumstances. Nehru's policy was giving special attention to the recruitment of Muslims in adequate numbers to the armed and civil services, particularly the Police and to encourage their employment in the private sector. In 1958 Nehru collected quarterly reports of official recruitment from the respective Chief Ministers. He gave special consideration for Urdu so that the Muslims would feel that even though partition has taken place

the symbols of their community was preserved and they were holding honourable place in India. Thus Nehru was successful in building up a peaceful and co-operative atmosphere between the communities within India so that they lived as equals which was vigorously advocated abroad.

In certain matters Nehrus views did not fit squarely with his promotion of secularism as the basis of equality and democracy. Special treatment of minorities perhaps weakens the secular ideal. On the one hand Nehru condemned caste system as violation of secularism, on the other hand, he encouraged reservations which he considered as a remedy for long-standing injustices. This perpetuated division and confirmed lower status and standards.

One of the obvious aspect of secularism is that in 1948 Nehru made a commitment with the support of the Government to a resolution in the Constituent Assembly for the ban of communal political parties. He argued that the state should not interfere with religions, so also religious organisations should not build up religious grounds for political actions. This resolution was not practically implemented. In 1961, through the Law Ministry he was told that it was difficult to give a clear cut definition of communal parties and any attempt would be an infringement of fundamental rights.

In 1923, keeping in view the rights of the Minorities as Mayor of Allahabad, and guide of the Municipal Board, he rejected the suggestion to prohibit cow-slaughter. In 1947 when Rajendra Prasad wanted to immediately ban cow-slaughter Nehru refused. The issue was considered as a common problem of breeding of quality cattle and was not only a religious but also an economic issue. He took a stand with Gandhi, the compulsory stoppage of cow-slaughter would be a concession to Hindu feeling and hence it should be avoided in a composite country with a composite culture. He had a general concern for animal welfare and he considered the value of a cow, equal to that of a horse. Unlike Gandhi he disclaimed any special sentiment for the cow. Yet he listed the banning of cow-slaughter as one of the Directive Principles of state policy in the constitution. However, he told the Chief Ministers of the respective states that the legislation should be confined to cows and calves and he also suggested measures to protect and improve the quality of the breed.³⁴ He was of the opinion that ban on cow slaughter would lead to killing of the best cattle and protection of the poorest.

Nehru's understanding of secularism has been strengthened due to his liberal cultural upbringing. He wrote "The great majority of the people of the new bourgeoisie were Hindus. This was due to their somewhat better economic condition, as compared to the Muslims, and also to their taking to English education, which was a passport to government service and the professions. The Muslims were generally poorer. Most of

the weavers who had gone to the wall on account of the British destruction of Indian industries, were Muslims. In Bengal, which has the biggest Muslim population of any Indian province, they were poor tenants or small land holders. The landlord was usually a Hindu, and so was the village bania. who was the money-lender and the owner of the village store. The landlord and the bania were thus in a position to oppress the tenant and exploit him, and they took full advantage of this position. It is well to remember this fact, for in this lies the root cause of the tension between Hindu and Muslim".³⁶

Nehru was a critic of Hindu Mahasabha and so was the Hindu Mahasabha of Nehru. Hindu Mahasabha was against the Nehru Liaqat pact of April 8, 1950. In a speech in Nasik on September 1950, Nehru expressed his belief that secularism would provide great relief to the minority groups in India. He was devoted to scientific methodology stressing on rationalism. This evolved his nationalist political ideology laying emphasis on secularist democracy, a counterpoise to medievalism, obscurantism and religious dogmatism. Being a student of Indian thought, he added that secularism did not signify "merely material well being" Hence he wrote: "It must essentially have spiritual values and

certain standards of behaviour, and, when we consider these, we enter immediately into the realm of what has been called religion".³⁸

Unfortunately the flexibility and compromises which Nehru exhibited in dealing with majority opinion as Congress leader regarding economic matters was lacking when he dealt with Muslim League. Though his rationale was different, his attitude towards Muslim League was in conformity with those of the dominant Congress leadership who considered the congress party as the sole representative of the Indian people and discarded aligned groups. Grasping the nature of the communal problem in India, he wrote a letter to his daughter Indira Gandhi in May 1933. In the letter he admitted that different groups, joined the non-co-operation movement led by Gandhi in 1920-22 with different motives. He came to the conclusion that there were three kinds of Nationalism in India: Hindu nationalism, Muslim nationalism and Indian nationalism, and he considered the last one as true nationalism. It was difficult for him to draw a sharp line between Hindu nationalism and Indian nationalism. "The two overlapped, as India is the only home of the Hindus and they formed a majority there. It was thus easier for the Hindus to appear as full blooded nationalists than for the Muslims, although each stood for his own particular brand of nationalism"³⁹. He did not blame the Britishers for creating the Hindu-Muslim problem in India, but they made efforts to keep that problem alive and discouraged rapprochement among the

communities. In his autobiography in 1935, he identified both Hindu and Muslim communalism with political and social reaction.⁴⁰ He conceded that the struggle of the Congress Muslims, organised as the 'Nationalist Muslim Party', in order to combat the communal Muslim leaders had collapsed which was pitiful story.⁴¹

The after effects of the collapse were reflect in the results of provincial legislatures election which were held in 1937. The Congress Party could win seats in North-West Frontier Province where there was Muslim majority in the provinces. Congress emerged as the dominant party in almost all legislatures where Hindus had majority of seats. Throughout India, the total number of Muslim seats in provincial Assemblies were 482. The Congress contested 58 seats and won 26 Muslim League secured 108 and most of the Muslim seats had gone to provincial parties. Though it was not an impressive tally for the League, the Congress also did not exhibit a foothold among the Muslims, except in the North West Frontier Province. The need to win the confidence of the Muslim masses was inevitable for the Congress. The talk of coalition between the Congress and the Muslim League failed to materialise. One of the major causes of this failure as per Nehru's assessment was that the Congress was negotiating with the communalist. Muslim parties could not reach the Muslim masses who were in the need of welfare. According to him, the calks of understanding between Muslims and Hindus represented a medieval mentality which had no place in the modern world.⁴²

In 1937 Nehru considered the Congress-League Coalition Ministry in Uttar Pradesh a myth. It was alleged by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, that the talks of a Congress-League Coalition Ministry failed because of Nehru's insistence on the appointment of only one Minister from the Muslim League, while the latter wanted two of its representatives to be taken in.⁴³ Nehru showed very little interest in the formation of the U.P. Ministry.⁴⁴ Although not the sole decision-maker, the fact is that he played a significant role in his home province in decision-making relating to the formation of a coalition ministry.⁴⁵ He wrote to Govind Ballabh Pant, the then leader of the Congress Party in U.P, when he was interested in a coalition ministry : "I am personally convinced that any kind of pact, a coalition between us and the Muslim League, will be highly injurious. It will mean that we almost lose our right to ask the Muslims to join directly. It will mean many other things also which are equally undesirable".⁴⁶ After serious negotiations Nehru reluctantly absorbed two of the Muslim League's leaders into the Ministry but on conditions which he himself described as "stringent", and intended to secure "the winding up of the Muslim League group in the U.P. and its absorption in the Congress".⁴⁷ The talks failed when the conditions were unacceptable to the League leaders. It was generally accepted that this led the Muslim League leadership towards partition. Nehru considered the failure of the Congress-League Coalition in 1937 as "natural and logical" in the then existing circumstances, and he later on admitted that "the consequences of it on the communal question were unfortunate and

it led to a feeling of grievance and isolation among many Muslims". This led to the first time in history, within a short span of two years, to emerge as a really powerful political organisation. The leaders of the Muslim League were determined to maintain their separate political and cultural identity of Muslims and secure a share in power commensurate with their historical and political importance. Mountbatten plan was the basis for India's partition. Nehru had contributed a lot for this plan and it was legitimately known as Mountbatten - Nehru plan. Being pitted against powerful historical and social forces, Nehru failed to prevent India's partition in 1947. Jawaharlal Nehru as a national leader and Prime Minister shaped and articulated the concept of secularism. Thus India's struggle for independence proceeded with values of equal human worth, brotherhood, state does not identify itself with any one religion but is friendly and protects all religions. The national identity transcends but never negates religious identity. This implies the separation of the rights and duties of a citizen in his public life from adherence, in his private life, to the beliefs and practices of his religion. To Nehru secular state means freedom of religion, conscience, including freedom for those who may have no religion. A caste-ridden society is not exactly secular but that which guarantees social and political equality is an ideal secular society. In India's intellectual heritage, Nehru's large concept of secularism as an equitable and humane social order where persons professing different faiths live in harmony in consonance with, marks a step forward. Nehru's

starting point was not religion but science and rational thought. In his view poverty and ignorance perpetuates injustice and oppression. Through education, economic and social change the disadvantage masses could be . rescued from vulnerability to the exploitation of religious sentiment by vested interests. He stressed the importance of the higher values of life. He defined secular democracy as promoting equal opportunities for a fuller life - a concept that strengthens inter-faith harmony. To him modernity and social change were a spiral movement retaining the roots in the past while aspiring to the future. The creative tension between the inertia of tradition and the thrust of modernisation would be resolved in a higher synthesis, secular and socialist democracy providing the framework for the transformation of an old society.⁴⁹

Jawaharlal Nehru was more than a Prime Minister since he had established a position in the national hierarchy of leadership prior to independence, when the Congress was under the coalition leadership of Gandhi and Nehru. Among his competitors in the Congress hierarchy before independence, none had the support of the masses as Nehru had. After independence he was a natural' choice to lead the country. He assured the masses since the pre-independent era that the mass poverty could be abolished after independence. In his opinion, India would have a number of opportunities after independence. Nehru possessed a national base and legitimacy, due to mass-leader identification. Because of this asset he became the Prime Minister. The masses

were with Nehru since the politics of ballot confirmed it repeatedly. Other leaders of the Congress realized that Nehru was an unchallenged leader of the party as well as the government because he drew great support from the masses. For their political survival, other party and factional leaders accepted Nehru as an umpire in intra-party and inter-state conflicts. Nehru was accepted as an undisputed leader of the masses due to his role in the national movement and he was shrewd in being autonomous from party factions or regional barriers.

Nehru's position was pre-eminent in the Indian political system, because of a decisive and crucial role in normal and emergency situations. Nehru collected individuals he personally wanted in the Council of Ministers. Nehru thought that the talents of stalwarts in the party, like Patel and Azad and also non-party men like C.D.Deshmukh should be utilised in national building. He was dominant in selection of candidates at central and state level. He allotted crucial portfolios to his colleagues who possessed similar ideological persuasions as he. As head of the government, he gathered information about important happenings in the country through a network of intelligence service. Summing up, Nehru is an efficient Prime Minister of the country due to his supraconstitutional position.⁵⁰

CONCLUSION

When religious wars were being fought in Europe, India was tolerant due to its eclectic culture. When we assess Nehru's personality we find that Nehru had imbibed the composite Indian culture. He had struggled to link past to the present and future. He was a staunch believer in democracy which resulted from his western education. The remedy he suggested to erase communalism was secularism. Scientific principle based on reason should dominate over superstition.

Being a Kashmiri Brahmin, under the patronage of Mughals, Nehru family occupied an eminent place due to their literary expertise and law profession. His western education had moulded him into a rational man who believed in the progress of the country through science and technology. He was proud of Indian culture, especially Buddhism due to its widespread influence in the East. He was aware of the drawbacks of religion, at the same time he knew its impact on the minds of people, hence advocated tolerance of all Religions which is the base of Indian secularism.

Nehru being the architect of modern India, his life and work reflect his secular spirit. Being an active member of the Congress he opposed the then prevailing communal parties. He was against separate electorates. He was of the opinion that the communal problem should be solved by mutual consensus. He wanted

the communal leaders to be reformist rather than revolutionary. The communal leaders under the patronage of Britishers became political reactionaries. Nehru's main intention was providing a standard of living for the masses who were in abject poverty. Since the pre-independent era he had sown the seeds of secularism. With the partition of the country secularism became the inevitable basis of the polity to provide security to the masses. Nehru as a Prime Minister worked for the separation of religion and politics, at some moments successful and at some moments failure in practical terms. He worked hard for the establishment of Indian nationalism. Due to his secular approach he succeeded in solving intra party and inter-state conflicts.

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