CHAPTER- III

ETHICAL ASPECTS OF NEHRU'S PERSONALITY

Religion has supplied some deeply felt inner needs of human nature. It has produced many fine types of men and women, as well as bigoted, narrow minded and cruel tyrants. It has given a set of values to human life.

Jawaharlal Nehru has occupied a historic place in the annals of National Liberation Movement and World politics in the twentieth century. He is a dynamic personality, a cultured man with an encyclopaedic knowledge, a keen historic insight and a philosophical mind. He is the only leader whose personality stood out as one rallying point for the sentiment and loyalty of every section of the Indian Society. Some kind of ethical approach to life has a strong appeal for him, though it would be difficult for him to justify it logically. He has been attracted by Gandhiji's stress on right means. It is full of difficulty, and perhaps ends and means are not really separable but form together one organic whole. He says, "In a World which thinks almost exclusively of ends and ignores means, this emphasis on means seems
odd and remarkable. How far it has succeeded in India, I cannot say. But there is no
doubt that it has created a deep and abiding impression on the minds of large
numbers of people."¹

He listened to the grown-up talk of his cousins without always understanding
all of it. Often this talk related to the overbearing character and insulting manners
of the English people, as well as Eurasians, towards Indians and how it is the duty of
every Indian to stand up to this and not to tolerate it. He admires his father
tremendously. He says, "He seemed to me the embodiment of strength and courage
and cleverness, far above all the other men I saw, and I treasured the hope that when I
grew up I would be rather like him but feared him also."²

At the age of five or six he noticed one day two fountain pens on Motilal
Nehru's office table. He looked at them with greed. He argued with himself that
father can not require both at the same time. So he helps himself to one of them. Later
he finds that a mighty search is being made for the lost pen. He grew frightened at what
he had done, but he did not confess. The pen was discovered and his guilt proclaimed
to the world. Motilal was very angry and gave him a tremendous thrashing. He rushed
to his mother with pain and mortification. But he did not bear any ill will towards his
father because of that punishment. His admiration and affection for him remained as
strong as ever, fear formed a part of them.
He has become a member of the Theosophical Society at thirteen. F.T. Brooks has left a deep impress upon him in the school. He is very much affected by Russo-Japanese War. A curious incident happened in Harrow. The House-Master suddenly visited their rooms in the middle of the night. He made a thorough search all over the house for a beautiful gold-mounted cane of Paramjit Singh. But he did not succeed. After the Eton and Harrow match, the Cane was discovered in the owner's room. Some had used it at Lord's and then returned it. He has got as a prize one of G.M. Trevelyan's Garibaldi books for his good work at school. When he left Harrow, he felt unhappy and tears came to his eyes. In Cambridge, he did not commit sin. His life was confined to theory about sex. He says,

"Most of us were strongly attracted by sex and I doubt it any of us attached any idea of sin to it. Certainly I did not, there was no religious inhibition. We talked of its being amoral, neither moral nor immoral."³

Some of the noted Indian politicians like Bepin Chandra Pal, Lajpat Rai and G.K. Gokhale visited Indian students at Cambridge. He is impressed by the talk of Lajpat Rai. He left Cambridge after taking his degree in 1910. After completion of his Law he has joined the High Court. But his profession did not fill him with a whole hearted enthusiasm. Then he has joined the Congress and taken part in its occasional meetings.

He is indulged in some diversions like Shikar but he has no special aptitude or inclination for it. He likes the outings and the jungle and cares little for the killing.
Once he killed a bear in Kashmir. This harmless little animal fell down at his feet, wounded to death. It looked up at him with great big eyes full of tears. Those eyes often haunted him since. That’s why he stopped hunting.

He married Kamala in 1916 in the city of Delhi. His relation with Kamala is really appreciable. There is difference in their ages and also in their mental outlook. He hardly realizes that this delicate sensitive girl’s mind is slowly unfolding like a flower and required gentle and careful tending. They are attracted to each other. His presence has comforted her very much.

He is very far from forgetting her, and he comes back to her again and again as to a sure haven. He says,

"If I was away for a number of days the thought of her cooled my mind and I looked forward eagerly to my return home .... and thus enable me to re-charge the exhausted battery of my mind and body?"5

He is not flourishing in Alipore Gaol. It is the reaction of outside events - Kamala's illness and his political worries. He remarks,

"I was beginning to realize that Kamala was again in the grip of her old disease, and I felt helpless and unable to be of any service to her. I knew that my presence by her side would have made a difference."6
They have relied so much on each other, they have so much to do together. It is not easy for his mind to get away from Kamala's illness. He has also a feeling on the courtesy shown by the Government in allowing him to come to his wife. It would not be proper for him to take advantage of that for political purposes. When he has attended to her, her health is little improved. Nehru says,

"My presence by her side might make all the difference between life and death."  

Though they have sometimes quarrelled and grown angry, they keep that vital spark alight.

Jawaharlal Nehru is associated with the works of Mahatma Gandhi, Motilal Nehru and Rabindranath Tagore. He is one of the three great Indians who carried India across the waters and the winds of the world. Gandhi, the political leader of the spirit, Tagore, playwright and Nehru a moderniser of India. He is the man who has carried the spirit and life of India from Indian history into the world history.

In analysing the ethical aspects of Nehru's personality as revealed in *An Autobiography* what strikes one must forcefully are his transparent sincerity, his objectivity and sense of fair play and his capacity for unflinching self-analysis. He himself has set high store by the quality of sincerity in writing. In a letter to his sister Krishna he writes,
"The success of a book ultimately depends on certain immaterial and insubstantial factors which one can not easily measure. Good writing and presentation are, of course, important; the content is even more important, but over and above these, there comes a certain sincerity in writing, combined with restraint, which colours a book and makes it liked."³⁸

This last quality is very much in evidence in An Autobiography. In his preface, Nehru remarks,

"The book was written during a particularly distressing period of my existence ... If the writing had been done under more normal conditions it would have been different and perhaps occasionally more restrained."³⁹

Yet, his unfailing good sense ensures a large measure of objectivity. The Marquess of Lothian complimented Nehru on his "astonishing philosophic detachment and unflinching honesty,"¹⁰ and The Spectator stated that "bitterness and rancour are absent from the book."¹¹

What he admired is the moral and ethical side of the movement and of Satyagraha. He does not give an absolute allegiance to the doctrine of non-violence or accept it forever. But it attracted him more and more and the belief grew upon him. The spiritualisation of politics, using the word not in its narrow religious sense seemed to him a fine idea. Nehru stated:
'A worthy end should have worthy means leading up to it. That seemed not only a good ethical doctrine but sound, practical politics for the means that are not good often defeat the end.'

Gandhi has pleaded for the adoption of the way of non-violence, of peaceful non-co-operation. Nehru has remembered the words of Gandhiji:

"We must look the world in the face with calm and clear eyes even though the eyes of the world are blood-shot today."

In a famous article - The Doctrine of the Sword - Gandhiji had written in 1920. "I believe that non-violence is infinitely superior to violence, forgiveness is more manly than punishment. Forgiveness adorns a soldier, strength does not come from physical capacity but it comes from an indomitable will." Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law, to the strength of the spirit. He suggests to practise non-violence being conscious of India's strength and power. A kind of humanism has appealed to him. The intellectual aspects of Nehru's personality is having faith in science and the scientific outlook. A study of Max and Lenin has produced a powerful effect on his mind. Nehru says,
"I suppose my father and Gandhiji have been the chief personal influences in my life .... My wife influenced me considerably in many ways, though unobtrusively.\textsuperscript{15}

He has been fortunate in another respect also - the possession of family members and friends and comrades, who have helped him to retain a proper perspective and not to lose his mental equilibrium.

Personally, Nehru owes too much to England in his mental make-up ever to feel wholly alien to her. There is a warm place for his enemies in his heart. He wrote in a British prison:

\begin{quote}
Anger and resentment have often filled my mind at various happenings, and yet as I sit here and look deep into my mind and heart, I don't find any anger against England or the English people.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

In those days India faced some paradoxes. Indians have managed to tie ourselves up into a number of knots and it is difficult to get on till Indians untie them. That release will not come emotionally. What is better, Spinoza asked long ago: "Freedom through knowledge and understanding or emotional bondage?" He preferred the former.\textsuperscript{17} W.E. Glad Stone said:

\begin{quote}
"I am sorry to say that if no instructions had been addressed in political crises to the people of this country except to remember to hate violence, to love order, and to
exercise patience, the liberties of this country would never have been attained.\(^{18}\)

Nehru has tried to educate his people in the ways of Democracy. One day he is driving a car. As it is getting late, he has started driving fast and unfortunately a cow is struck by the handle of one of the doors of the car. The cow is injured. There is no one there, yet Jawaharlal has stopped the car and goes near the cow. They have waited for sometime. Meanwhile the owner of the cow has come there. As soon as seeing Nehru, people said that they need not bother; but Jawaharlal has noted the name and address of the owner of the cow. Next morning he has sent about Rs. 30/- to the owner of the cow for its treatment.

He has made a close study of Nazi methods of propaganda since Hitler's rise to power. And he is astonished to find something very similar taking place in India. But there is no condemnation of this from any Muslim League leader. In fact it is condoned. Nehru feels,

I was terribly depressed by these developments and by the general lowering of the standards of public life. Violence, vulgarity, and irresponsibility were on the increase. I write to the leaders of the Moslem League to check this tendency but with no success.\(^{19}\)

The most eminent scientist professor Albert Einstein tells:
The fate of the human race was more than ever dependent on its moral strength to-day. The way to a joyful and happy state is through renunciation and self-limitation everywhere.... I am absolutely convinced that no wealth in the world can help humanity forward, even in the hands of the most devoted worker in the cause. The example of great and pure character is the only thing that can produce fine ideas of noble deeds. Money only appeals to selfishness and always tempts its owners irresistibly to abuse it.20

Politicians thought that Nehru was too honest to be one of them. In this money-mad world, it is difficult to come across men who have genuine contempt for wealth. Nehru is one such individual who is utterly indifferent to money. He believes with A.P. Herbert that money is the 'bane of bliss and source of woe.' Speaking in parliament on April 11, 1955, Nehru said:

"I have no respect for property at all, except for some personal belongings .... The House will forgive me if I say I have no property sense. It is a burden to me to carry property about. In life's journey one should be lightly laden. So I cannot appreciate this tremendous attachment to property."21

He dislikes those who have bragged about wealth. He feels that it is vulgar to be obsessed with the idea of money. He wrote:
"I was not particularly anxious about making both ends met. Almost I looked forward to the time when I would have no money left. Money and possession are useful enough in the modern world, but often they become a burden for one who wants to go on a long journey. It is very difficult for moneyed people to take part in undertakings which involve risks; they are always afraid of losing their goods and chattels.

He is a small eater and takes a balanced diet. He appreciates good dishes, but he does not overeat on that account. He used to think even when he is eating. But he is not a slow eater. He dislikes people wasting food. He often denounced in public speeches the habit of leaving plenty of food in dishes. He said,

"It is wrong to believe that it is aristocratic to leave food in one's plate. It is a crime to waste food."22

He is very particular about his diet and has got irritated when anyone has tried to feed him with all sorts of things or at odd times. His biggest quality is his vast humanity his profound love for the lowly and the lost. He is a most devout lover of mankind. He is a shepherd who most gently and carefully looked after the flock around him. He is a noble specimen of mankind. In personal dealings he is loving and considerate and very human. He is capable of leading a hard life. He says, "one should get used to things and should not long for comforts and more comforts."
Nehru gets angry and feels very unhappy when stories of gross administrative in competence are brought to his notice. He wants the administrative machinery to move smoothly and efficiently. His love of children is well known but this was no ordinary love of children that we all possess to a more or less degree. His love for them is hilarious and cropped out on every occasion. He has a peculiarly tender regards for his old friends and acquaintances. He is instinctively generous. He dislikes the people those who have a habit of wasting time.

Nehru is a good nurse. His colleague said, "The patient feels confident in his presence and the trouble is considerably reduced." He understands things quickly and reacted to situations sharply. He describes khadi as a "livery of freedom". His vision is not limited to India; he sees his country in a world setting. He wants people to be disciplined and have self-respect. He gets irrigated when people have touched his feet.

Nehru is a devoted father of Indhira. He gives remarkable training to his daughter. He is sure that one day Indhira would acquire great eminence and would lead the country. He writes long letters to her with a view to widening her mental horizon. He is basically a very decent person. He loves to be correct in all matters. He hates to loves, even for a moment, if he is not in a position to work actively for the people of India. He is determined to work till the last moment of his life. Indeed, he dies the way he wants to.
He braved, dared, suffered, befriended and succeeded without becoming a cynic. He has saturated the people with the philosophy of secularism and made them rise above the pettiness of communalism and sectarianism. He gives India a modern mind, a modern approach and a modern outlook in the modern age. He is a fighter for peace and he passionately stood for the liberation of man. He is a maker of history and he has made a powerful impact on the people of his generation. He is a symbol of hope and progress and a powerful instrument of historical forces. His nobility of nature and dignity of purpose made him India's most loved leader. "He harmonised the temper of science with the spirit of Art." He is free from fear and his spirit is brave. His writings has mirrored his faith, his ability, his intellectual sensitivity and grace.

He is a dynamic personality, a cultured man with an encyclopaedic knowledge, a keen historic insight and a philosophical mind. He is admired by the life of Asoka. Speaking of him in his outline of History, H.G. Wells says, "Amidst the tens of thousands of names of monarchs .... the name of Asoka shines and shines almost alone, a star." He states that patriotism is no longer enough; we want something higher, wider, and nobler."

He has regarded poverty as an agent of evil in the society and pleads for its abolition. His highest ambition is to bring light and cheer into the homes of the poor. He is apostle of World peace. He told President Kennedy,
"Peace is a passion - not only a passion but something which all of our logic and minds drive us to as essential for our growth." Morarji Desai stated:

"Jawaharlalji fervently desired world peace and opposed all wars." His approach to every problem is broadly human and based on truth and tolerance.

Nehru said: 'Non-alignment is a policy which is nationally profitable for any country.'

As President Radha Krishnan said in his address to the nation mourning Nehru's loss:

'His life and work have had a profound influence on our mental make-up, social structure and intellectual development .... As a maker of modern India his services were unparalleled.'

Mahatma Gandhi said of him:

He is as pure as crystal. He is truthful beyond suspicion ...

... He is a knight .... The nation is safe in his hands.

Gandhi also said, "Nehru shines easily as father, brother, writer, traveller, patriot or internationalist." Nehru was violently opposed to cold war. He said:
'we are not going to participate in a Cold War which I think is worse than a shooting War in many ways.... It does not matter who is right and who is wrong but we shall certainly not join in this exhibition of mutual abuse.'

He says,

"personally I owe too much to England in my mental make-up even to feel wholly alien to her. And do what I will, I cannot get rid of habits of mind and the standards and ways of Judging other countries as well as life generally, which I acquire at school and college in England."  

This objectivity naturally makes for acute self-questioning, and some of the most memorable passages in 'An Autobiography' are those devoted to relentless self-analysis:

"My real conflict lay within me a conflict of ideas, desires and loyalties, of subconscious depths struggling with outer - circumstance, of an inner hunger unsatisfied."  

Towards the end of the book, Nehru remarks, "Perhaps what I have written is not so much an account of what I have been but what I have sometimes wanted to be or imagined myself to be." Objectivity can perhaps go no further.
Man's dearest possession is life, and since it is given to him to live but once, he must so live as not to be reared with the shame of a cowardly and trivial past, so live as not to be tortured for years without purpose, so live that dying he can say:

"All my life and my strength were given to the first cause of the World - the liberation of mankind."  

Nehru says, ‘My body will be reduced to ashes and my breath will join the restless and deathless air but not I and my deeds. O mind remember this always, remember this.’

Nehru always remembered the words of Gandhiji said on that fateful evening of August 8th, 1942:

'We must look the world in the face with calm and clear eyes even though the eyes of the world are blood-shot today.'

He is a mastermind, an apostle of world peace, the author of Panchasheela, the architect of non-alignment. He has got the Bharatha Ratna award and is also called Santidoota. He died on May 27, 1964.

The thoughts and deeds of Jawaharlal Nehru are perhaps the best testimony. That contemporary Indian society is not only the object of cognition, but also the subject of conscious, creation of the best future for mankind. This Ethical approach to life has a strong appeal for him, though it would be difficult for him to
justify it logically. It has created a deep and abiding impression on the mind of large numbers of people. The ethical relations have a definite value in this finite world. So in our lives and in our human relations we have to conform to ethics and live the good life. To that life and to this phenomenal world we can and should apply reason and knowledge and experience.

He believes completely in any government, whatever it may be having stout critics, having an opposition to face. Without criticism people and governments become complacent. It is good to have good will, it is good to have enthusiasm, but it is essential to have training. Gandhiji has managed to draw out the good in another person. The other person may have had plenty of evil in him. But he somehow spotted the good and laid emphasis on that good. He feels a little ashamed when he does something wrong. This applies to nations as well individuals. Nehru quoted the Biblical verse from the Holy Bible. "The person who could not see the beam in his own eye and saw the mote in the other's eye. I am sorry if you think, I am rambling. But this is I might inform you in secret .... I am at least being frank with you." Our country is a large one and our population is considerable. But we have no desire to interfere with any other country. We have no hatreds. We want to be friends with all the world. He is a follower of Ahimsa and truth.
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