CHAPTER II

ENTERS PUBLIC LIFE — MEETS GANDHI
In the summer of 1912 Nehru returned to India. His home-coming was a big event. His mother was aglow with excitement. Mrs. Krishna Hutheesing, Nehru's youngest sister, has written, "Mother was unable to conceal her joy and lived in a fever of excitement — she rushed backwards and forwards all day long, seeing that all was in perfect order for the beloved son." The parents did everything in their power to ensure the happiness of their son. Jawaharlal responded with joie de vivre, to the love and tenderness of the reception and also to the comparative security and luxury of home life. During his absence little change had taken place in the family. Another sister was born, Krishna by name, or Betti as she was called. Motilal's practice was lucrative and Anand Bhavan was humming with activity as the social centre of Allahabad. Leading lawyers of the town and journalists gathered there to discuss avidly and share ideas on the political problems of the day.

In 1912 the political situation was comparatively

quiet. India was not fundamentally different from what Nehru had left seven years earlier. The British were still strongly entrenched in the sub-continent and they were the undisputed masters of the situation. Political consciousness among the Indians was confined to the intelligentsia in the urban areas, though the lower classes had been sufficiently roused by Tilak's revolutionary activities and by the anti-partition agitation in Bengal from 1906 to 1910. The Congress had been facing a crisis with a split in the ranks into the Moderates and the Extremists. The Moderates were led by Phirozshah Mehta and Gokhale while the Extremists rallied round the leadership of Tilak. However, after the split at Surat in 1907, the Moderates had gained control of the party machine and were in the ascendency. At this time Congress policies and goals were moderate by any standard. It had no roots among the large masses of the population, and little was done by the Congress leadership to educate the people and derive strength from their support. But more than anything else, the nature of their activity was determined by their firm faith in the British people and their objective of limited self-government within the British empire. The Congress remained a middle class bourgeoisie organisation seeking
gradual political and social reforms under foreign auspices. Under the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909, the British increased Indian representation in the Legislative and Executive Councils and the Moderates consequently had taken a strong pro-British position. Extremists like Tilak were subdued and put into prison while the peasant masses were quiet. The British at this juncture encouraged the formation of the Muslim League as a counterpoise to the predominantly Hindu majority Congress, and the acceptance of separate communal representation for the Hindus and Muslims in the Morley-Minto Reforms further weakened the possibilities of a common joint front against British rule. The British by a clever policy of playing off the Hindus against the Muslims held sway on the Roman principle of divide and rule.

Shortly after his return from England in December 1912, Nehru attended the Bankipore Congress session for the first time. He was disconcerted to see that most of the delegates wore well-pressed trousers and working coats for the occasion. To Nehru, this appeared more a social gathering than a political assembly. It was essentially an English-knowing upper class affair. He did not find the atmosphere to his liking, as he
considered the submissive and loyalist mentality utterly depressing. Nehru felt uneasy and uncertain about the artificial atmosphere. To him, the political world of India was unreal. There was neither energy nor initiative, but only the spectacle of ordinary politicians jostling for office. Fresh from his English experience, he was critical of the 'politics of talk' and put forth the plea for effective action. This situation, dull, insipid and pedestrian, induced in Nehru a feeling of intense frustration.

Nor was his legal practice inspiring. For Nehru the life in the law courts proved equally listless. For eight long years he was to carry on in the legal profession in a desultory fashion giving no indication of his liking for it. Although he would do his work conscientiously, the dull and drab routine did not evoke much response in him. His creative mind could not find a suitable channel of fulfillment and excitement. Nor did he find the company of fellow-lawyers congenial, for their talk did not inspire him. He felt that their intellectual horizon was limited, as they did not evince much interest in anything else than law. The boundaries of their interests were strictly confined to the four
corners of the legal profession. They conformed to a marked and defined pattern. Politically and professionally Nehru was at a dead end. In fact, he felt that he was being "engulfed in a dull routine of pointless and futile existence." In these years Nehru remained a junior to his father, rarely pleaded a case and did not particularly impress his colleagues in the Bar though he had all the equipment, intellectual and legal, to ensure his success. Years later he recalled this phase of his life without any enthusiasm. "There was little that was inviting in that legal past of mine, and at no time have I felt the urge to revert to it." Motilal had great ambitions for Jawaharlal and was keen that the latter should succeed him as dean of the profession. Dr. K.N. Katju was of the opinion that had Nehru chosen to make his career in the legal profession, he would have become a great advocate, joining the ranks of distinguished lawyers in which the Allahabad Bar abounded for nearly a century.

During these years Nehru lived a leisurely life in the homely atmosphere of Anand Bhavan. Like many young educated men of his time he indulged in arm-chair politics. He used to discuss avidly the politics of the day. However, there was little active and sustained interest. When the First World War broke out in August 1914 sympathy in India was divided. While the politically conscious sections of the Indian community showed little real enthusiasm for the Allied cause, the princes strongly rallied to the British. Among the upper middle classes there was some show of vocal support. Like most Indians, Nehru derived vicarious pleasure from news of German victories. Nehru viewed the war with mixed feelings. His attitude was one of ambivalence, for in his heart he rather admired the British, but resented their domination of his native land. For certain things he admired the English people, but for others there was considerable resentment in him. This attraction and repulsion never ceased in his life.

Early Ventures into Politics:

Nehru's early ventures in politics were not spectacular. About this time Nehru was drawn towards the Servants of India Society founded by Gopal Krishna Gokhale in 1905. He had great respect for Gokhale's
serious and earnest approach to politics and public affairs. He was impressed by his sense of dedication and seriousness of purpose. Since Tilak's withdrawal from the Congress in 1907 Gokhale's influence within the organization had increased perceptibly. In spite of Nehru's admiration for the Society, he did not entertain any idea of joining it. Partly the moderate orientation of the Servants of India Society did not suit his temperament and partly because he did not have any intentions of giving up the legal profession just then. Around 1913 he joined the United Provinces Congress organization but remained an inactive member for a number of years. It was in 1915 that he plunged in active politics for the first time, becoming secretary of a fund drive for Indians in South Africa, initiated by Gokhale. It was not until 1915 that he made his first public speech. The occasion for it was to express his opposition to a new Act which curtailed the freedom of the press. Nehru was embarrassed when a lawyer friend of his father publicly kissed him on the dias. This effusive act had a significant meaning for Nehru, as in those days politics was to a large extent confined to public speaking. Till this incident in his life he was shy, reserved and diffident about public speaking. His
inadequacy in Hindi was probably a great barrier to his contact with non-English speaking Indian audiences. Gradually over the years Nehru became a forceful speaker developing an inimitable style with clipped English accent. Also during this period he actively participated in the agitation against the system of indentured labour for Indians in Fiji. However, all these activities were peripheral to his fundamental interest in politics. In fact, politics fascinated him, but in his time there was nothing to stimulate his enthusiasm.

The political events in 1917 genuinely moved Nehru. For the first time Home Rule Leagues were established by Tilak and Mrs Beasant, which was a point of departure from the passive and loyalist outlook of the Congress. The Moderates and Extremists in the Congress, who had bitterly fought each other earlier, now reunited in the common cause. Another event of great political significance was the Lucknow Pact of 1916 that was signed between the Congress and the Muslim League under which a virtual demand for Dominion status was made on the basis of a scheme for the representation of Hindus and Muslims in the various legislatures. While the Congress accepted the principle of separate electorates for Muslims, the Muslim League surrendered the Muslims' privileges.
of voting in both the general and separate electorates. However, the Lucknow Pact did not prove a turning point in the nationalist movement. The Pact was bound to be transitory in nature as it was a creature of circumstances. The ideological differences between the Congress and the Muslim League made them strange bedfellows that were ready to part company at the first opportunity. The Congress had brought about communal unity at the cost of the essential principle of national and democratic life. In the new Muslim approach to politics there was little to promote secularism or a secular Indian community. To Muslims, the prerequisite of unity in politics was the recognition of the community as a separate political entity. The Congress, wedded to unadulterated secularism, had to reckon with an unenviable situation. The Congress had always opposed the creation of separate electorates for Muslims. These concessions were wrong in principle, and separate electorates prevented the educated Muslim middle class from adhering to Indian nationalism. In fact, the concessions turned out to be an easy stepping stone for the partition of the country thirty years later. Ironically enough, Jinnah who was the chief architect of the Lucknow Pact and an ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity then, was to become the chief spokesman of Muslim
separatism. All this, however, was in the womb of the future. In 1916 the coming together of Moderates and Extremists on the one hand and Muslims and Hindus on the other genuinely stirred the hearts of patriotic Indians.

Nehru could hardly have remained indifferent to the Lucknow Pact, as the Congress-League scheme was called, as it was finalised and agreed upon at Anand Bhavan, the first of many important political developments associated with the Nehru family home. To him, the rapprochement between the two major communities was welcome. Nehru was always opposed to the idea of religious influences in politics. Even Gandhi's ardent nationalism, while attracting him a great deal, had in the same measure repelled him because of its religious motivations. Religion could not go hand in hand with politics. Such manifestations, Nehru felt, were reactionary. Nehru was present at the historic Congress session at Lucknow as a member of the Subjects Committee. But the records of this session do not indicate that Nehru addressed the session. He did not play a meaningful role at this session. The Lucknow Congress of 1916 "marks the revival of the National Congress. From that time onwards it grew in strength and importance and, for
the first time in its history, began to be really a national organization of the bourgeoisie or middle class. It had nothing to do with the masses as such, and they were not interested in it till Gandhiji came."

During the war period, the internment of Mrs. Beasant on 16 June, 1917 created a stir in Nehru's mind. This was seen as another link in the chain of conspiracy to stifle Indian political aspirations. These internment orders led to countrywide agitation. Pressure was brought to bear on the Government from all quarters to release her. The Allahabad branch of the League was formed, with Nehru as joint secretary. This meant that politics in the United Provinces was heating up, and undergoing radical transformation. For the first time since his return to India, there was a genuine issue and an atmosphere was created whereby the younger generation could be mobilized for political action. Reason as well as passion was on the side of Nehru when he decided to cast his lot with the nationalists. Nehru enthusiastically participated in the Home Rule agitation.

as Mrs. Beasant was a family friend who had exerted considerable influence on him during his early formative years. Evidence of his concern for Mrs. Beasant's internment is to be found in Nehru's letter of 21 June, 1917 to the editor of The Leader in which he gave a ringing call for firm action instead of mere protest meetings. "Are we going to indulge in mere protests and representations as we have done for so many weary years...?... Ours have been the politics of cowards and opium-eaters long enough and it is time we thought and acted like live men and women, who place the honour and interests of their country above the frowns and smiles of every Tom, Dick and Harry who has I.C.S. attached to his name." 6

From 1914 to 1917 the World War had some impact on Nehru. He earnestly followed and discussed the news on the war fronts. The British in India resorted to forced recruiting in Punjab in order to procure men for the army. Nearly a million men volunteered or were impressed into war service. Nehru remained an uneasy

spectator of these events. At this period he was a nationalist to the core. The instinct for pugnacity was there, but Nehru had not yet formulated his ideas on how to engage the enemy. However, it was clear to him that in the circumstances prevailing in the country, no armed insurrection could succeed. A disarmed and dispirited people groaning under the burden of grinding poverty could not be expected to pool all their energies and resources to do away with foreign rule. Discontent of the people, which manifested in frequent terrorism, was according to Nehru futile. Terrorism gave an excuse for the authorities to pass repressive legislation and to use strong-arm methods. In any case, Nehru was temperamentally inclined to oppose terrorism, especially in the shape of desultory violence, as an instrument of political action.

This did not mean that Nehru was a 'moderate' in his views. At Anand Bhavan there were long and sometimes heated discussions between father and son producing a tense atmosphere. Young Nehru vehemently criticised the weakness of the Moderates and the futility of their tactics. He felt that the Congress was still dominated by men who not only believed in the bona fides
of Britain in the matter of India's political freedom but also in the principle of the inevitability of gradualness. Moderation, according to Nehru, was not a bright and scintillating virtue. It produced dullness. Nehru's criticism of the moderates may appear very harsh and pungent. This criticism should be seen as the reaction of a young man who had returned from England completing his studies and who seemed to be in a hurry to free India from British colonial rule. His criticism of the Moderates did not make him an 'extremist,' but was only a pointer to the fact that his thinking was far ahead of his contemporaries. Motilal by training and temperament was a constitutionalist. He acknowledged that there were severe limitations to constitutional agitation, but he saw no other alternative to it. Nehru was impetuous while Motilal applied the test of ruthless logic and reason. The latter was haunted by the fear that Jawaharlal might take to terrorist ways. Such a course of action would inevitably lead to prison. In his own mind, it was difficult for Motilal to reconcile the ardent nationalism of his son with his own moderate inclinations. Extreme ways did not have any attraction for him. However, his love for his son triumphed, and Motilal rationalised what his reason could not easily accept.
Nehru's love and admiration for his father was remarkable, whom he compared to a Renaissance Prince. To him, he seemed the embodiment of strength, courage and cleverness and inspired him to cherish the hope that one day he too would be like him. Motilal's strength of personality and regal demeanour made a deep impression on Jawaharlal's mind. Motilal was a civil lawyer, endowed with powerful intellect, and coupled with his thoroughness of advocacy, was an inspiring presence in the law courts and the council chambers. Though he was not a born orator, yet his persuasive and logical reasoning made him a compelling speaker. He earned fabulous sums of money and spent them with equal ease on his family and on his lavish hospitality. His charm of manner, profusion of gifts made him a delightful companion and the centre of interest.

Motilal was a pragmatist and a hard-headed realist. He admired British institutions and their way of life. Being himself a moderate, he admired Gokhale whose political wisdom impressed him. Like many of the Moderates, Motilal, who cherished high regard and respect for Mrs. Beasany, who moved by her internment and had been driven to a radical course of action. Motilal's political disillusionment came with the Government's
enactment of the notorious Rowlatt Bills, in complete disregard of Indian opinion. The Amritsar massacre was the final straw, which struck him as a complete negation of British justice. He ultimately decided to cast his lot with Gandhi. This transformation was not sudden; it was gradual and the product of a chain of circumstances. Besides, his loving son had joined the national struggle and Motilal followed him. Thus we find that the relationship between the father and son was very intimate and of a special character.

Viewing the events of the war years in perspective it can be argued that politics was still not the dominant interest of Nehru. It was more in the nature of a diversion. Domestic and professional preoccupations continued to take the lion's share of his activities. Nehru was feeling his way into politics as he was a newcomer to the political arena. This was a period of observation and study of the political currents within the country.

An important event of these years was Nehru's marriage. He was then twenty-six and among the most eligible young bachelors in the small Kashmiri community.
He was handsome, urbane and highly educated. Because of these qualifications, proposals of marriage had come to the Nehru family even while he was studying in England. The parents were very keen to find an ideal girl for their son, but beauty and education were hard to come by in the same person. Motilal finally chose Kamala Kaul, a daughter of a prosperous Delhi businessman. Kamala was tall, slim and healthy at the time of her marriage. The marriage took place in Delhi, in February 1916 with much pomp and splendour. However, to Nehru's misfortune Kamala's appearance of health was to prove tragically deceptive. She was shy, sensitive and high-strung. She was educated in the traditional Hindu manner, as she came from an orthodox Kashmiri Hindu family. From the very beginning there was an intellectual gap between them, but Kamala compensated for this by her courage and devotion to Nehru. It was difficult in the beginning for Kamala to fit into the Westernized atmosphere of the Nehru household, but gradually she succeeded in adjusting herself.

First Meeting With Gandhi:

As Nehru's attraction for politics increased, he began to neglect his legal practice which began to
fade. Yet his involvement in the national movement was incomplete. With the coming of Gandhi on the scene, he plunged fully into the crusade for India's freedom. It was at the Lucknow session of the Congress in December 1916 that Nehru met Gandhi for the first time. Gandhi's work of emancipation in South Africa had evoked the admiration and respect of his countrymen, but yet politically he was an unknown quantity. Clad in dhoti, a long coat and a Kathiawadi turban, he must have appeared a misfit in the company of well-dressed personages in Western style. Neither on Nehru nor on the Congress as a whole did Gandhi make any strong impact. "All of us admired him for his heroic fight in South Africa, but he seemed very distant and different and unpolitical to many of us young men."  

In the first few years after his arrival from South Africa, Gandhi was hovering uncertainly on the periphery of Indian politics. He was grouping his way into the mainstream of Indian politics. His approach to political and social problems was non-conformist. Gandhi with his keen political acumen realised that

there was a wide gap between the urban dominated Congress and the masses. He therefore, turned his attention to the masses in rural areas. Gandhi was launching his first direct lesson in Satyagraha and Civil Disobedience. In 1917 the pitiable conditions of the oppressed labourers in the indigo plantations at Champaran in Bihar attracted Gandhi's attention. The result of his campaign was that the Government itself appointed an official committee of investigation with which Gandhi was associated. The committee gave its report, leading to the Champaran Agrarian Act and the grievances of the indigo planters were largely ameliorated. In July 1918 he led a successful non-violent agrarian campaign in the Khedda district of Gujarat. These two episodes had a dramatic appeal and roused the political consciousness of the rural masses. For the first time the masses began to participate in the political struggle and this was the symbol of the emergence of a new political force.

Until the emergence of Gandhi on the Indian scene the course of the movement was "marked by the ideological conflict between liberalism and extremism and experimentation in the new technique of passive
resistance in contrast to the established method of petitions and prayers. Gandhi emerged as the idealised leader of the masses endowed with the rare capacity of approaching the poor with the mind of the poor. Commenting on the impact of Gandhi on Indian politics, Nehru wrote in ecstatic terms. "And then Gandhi came. He was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breaths; like a beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes; like a whirlwind that upset many things, but most of all the working of people's minds. He did not descend from the top; he seemed to emerge from the millions of India, speaking their language and incessantly drawing attention to them and their appalling condition. Get off the backs of these peasants and workers, he told us, all you who live by their exploitation; get rid of the system that produces this poverty and misery." However, opponents of Gandhi asserted that his movement was undermining orderly Government and that by attracting

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9. The Discovery of India, p. 379.
masses to it, he was sowing the seeds of political instability. But such a charge was not sustainable. Gandhian politics was not politics of anarchy. He was not an incorrigible rebel, delighting in subversion of the prevailing order. On the contrary, all the evidence goes to prove that he was essentially a man of peace and compromise and would have worked amicably with the British government if it had shown an inclination to withdraw from the country, leaving the Indians free to decide their own destiny. Consequently, assertive Indian nationalism under the leadership of Gandhi was the inevitable result of the policy of the British government dictated by imperial necessity.

The emergence of Gandhi on the political scene was an important landmark in the history of India's freedom struggle. This sparsely-clad man with spartan habits gave the impression of being meek and humble, but certainly his politics were not. A man with an immense zest for life, full of confidence and an unusual kind of power, galvanised millions of his countrymen into meaningful action and thus taught them to rid themselves of fear and inertia which had long plagued their lives. Realizing that the main props of British
rule in India were fear, prestige, co-operation, willing or unwilling of the people, Gandhi attacked these foundations. He effected a tremendous psychological revolution among the vast numbers of his countrymen who followed his lead. A wave of feeling and sentiment swept through the country, making a dent in the quiescent tradition of the people. Gandhi was primarily a man of action, who evolved a new technique of action which, though perfectly peaceful, yet did not imply submission to what was considered wrong. Nehru felt the impact of Gandhi's personality and politics.

Though eager for fundamental change in the set-up he saw around him, he did not have a clear vision of the things he wanted except in generalities, as he had not yet come to firm conclusions. In this early phase his mind was still not cast in a positive political mould, and he was hesitant to take a downright stand. Nehru was sensitive and his response to impressions was quick and emotional, and with his penchant for action was keen to join the fray.

Meanwhile, as the First World War drew to a close there was discontent and eager anticipation among
the people. War-time apathy was yielding to a new wave of political consciousness. Political agitation was now concentrated on exacting the maximum concessions from the Government. Though the Montagu-Chelmsford proposals contained pledges of ultimate self-government, they fell far short of the demands made by the Congress. The reforms were inadequate and Gandhi characterized them as 'a whitened sepulchre.'

Initial Glow of Nationalism:

The Rowlatt Bills which appeared in February 1919 involved a drastic curtailment of civil liberties of individuals. They were wrong in principle and unsound in operation. The clear-cut penal recommendations gave power to the judges to try political cases without juries in certain notified areas and provincial governments were armed with special powers of internment. The Rowlatt Bills were a symbol of renewed repression, as wide-ranging powers of preventive detention were vested with the Government. Here was a major casus belli, rendering the general situation uneasy. Nehru's reaction was one of abhorrence. He appreciated the action which Gandhi proposed to initiate to express resentment and opposition of the nation. Nehru's vague nationalism of
his early years at last found a focus and a mooring point. To him action always appealed, and Gandhi's idea of Satyagraha was a novel method which could possibly prove effective. When Nehru first heard of Gandhi's proposal for a Satyagraha Sabha, his reaction was "one of tremendous relief. Here at last was a way out of the tangle, a method of action which was straight and open and possibly effective. I was afire with enthusiasm and wanted to join the Satyagraha Sabha immediately. I hardly thought of the consequences — law-breaking, goal-going etc. — and if I thought of them I did not care."\(^{10}\) Nehru worked earnestly to make the Satyagraha Day a success in the United Provinces. Not only in his own province, but in the rest of the country was there an upsurge of life and activity which exceeded the expectation of the Congress. Firing on unarmed demonstrators occurred in various places and in Punjab crowds retaliated by attacking government establishments and Europeans. On 15th April the situation became tense and martial law was declared in the Punjab, followed by a reign of terror inaugurated by the authorities, culminating in the massacre at Jallianwala

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Bagh under the order of General Dyer. Later, when the full atrocities of the Punjab happenings were revealed, public opinion in India was highly indignant and Indo-British relations reached the lowest point since the 1857 rebellion. Nehru was associated with the enquiry which the Congress was conducting on the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. He heard all the gory details, and he visited too the lane where Indians were required to crawl on all fours as reprisal against an attack on an English woman. Nehru realised that the foreign power could be brutal, callous and unmoral. In this mood of anger and disillusionment, Nehru was brought politically nearer to Gandhi. Nehru began to meet Gandhi frequently. Initially, he was puzzled and perplexed by much of what Gandhi said, as his own way of thinking was on a different plane. Gradually, Gandhi's novel ideas and political insight, his sincerity of purpose and unusual earnestness evoked admiration and respect from Nehru, though as yet he was not fully captivated by the Mahatma.

The Rowlatt Bills and the Amritsar tragedy

11. According to the Hunter Commission of Inquiry, 379 Indians were killed and about 1,200 were wounded.
mark important steps in Nehru's deeper involvement in the nationalist ferment. For the first time he came in personal contact with the darker side of British rule and with the sufferings, privations and humiliating conditions of his own countrymen as a result of British callousness and brutality. The experience was to leave indelible marks on his personality, as he viewed the whole episode as a profound insult to national honour, pride and self-respect. This provoked an instinctive response in him. The behaviour of the British in India violated his sense of justice and liberal idealism which he had imbibed during his long stay in England. Stung to the quick, Nehru plunged into politics with vigour and enthusiasm.

However, Nehru did not plunge into Gandhi's movement immediately, because Motilal was opposed to the idea of non-cooperation at that stage and was horrified at the thought of his son going to prison. Motilal was upset because he was not in the habit of being swept away by new proposals. Nor was he sure that civil disobedience could work. His entire career as a lawyer strongly predisposed him in favour of constitutional methods. Extra-constitutional agitation struck to him
as futile and preposterous. Thus, there were strong reasons, personal as well as political, for Motilal’s opposition to satyagraha and non-cooperation. Often heated discussions took place between father and son and the atmosphere became very tense. According to Krishna Hutheesingh, Motilal "was furious with Jawaharlal for joining Gandhi. Once, in a rage, he ordered [his son] out of the house."12

Nehru admired his father and respected his judgement. He was on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, he had his political convictions, and on the other, his family affections. Hence, he was cautious before he took the plunge into the movement. "For many days there was this mental conflict... and night after night I wondered about alone, tortured in mind and trying to grope my way out."13 Finally, Motilal found that the crisis had assumed serious proportions and he sought

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Gandhi's intervention. At the instance of Gandhi, Jawaharlal was advised to be patient and not to do anything which would upset his father. The cleavage between the father and the son was to last for almost two years. After that Motilal came over completely to his son's side. He wholeheartedly supported Gandhi and Civil Disobedience. Referring to this conversion, many years later, Nehru said that "it was perhaps a triangle, Mr Gandhi, my father and myself; each influencing the other to some extent. But principally, I should imagine, it was Gandhi's amazing capacity to tone down opposition by his friendly approach... Secondly, our closer association... brought out that Gandhi was not only a very big man and a very fine man, but also an effective man... I, Father, was forced to think because of my own reaction. I was his only son. He was much interested in me." For Motilal, this meant giving up of a life of luxury and his roaring practice. It also meant a complete reordering of his life at sixty. Motilal's strong will power combined with singleness of purpose, his devotion to ideals which he cherished, his generosity

which knew no bounds, and his patriarchal concern for the family left a lasting influence on the younger Nehru. From all this, the influence of the father on the son was apparent, but it was also a fact that the son influenced the father to a great extent. Probably the psychoanalytic phenomenon of countertransference worked in their mutual relations. Their love for each other, their occasional conflicts due to difference of outlook on problems, their passionate desire to understand each other's point of view and their eventual community of ideas may be viewed from this wider perspective. In spite of their disagreements in public affairs the deep attachment between father and son was strengthened and purified through the common ordeal of trial and sacrifice.

Nineteen-twenty was the year of preparation, the lull before the storm. A new issue came to the fore,

15. Many years later the depth of Nehru's feelings for his father were best expressed in a letter to his daughter referring to Motilal's death. "Millions have sorrowed for him; but what of us, children of his, flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone! ... We sorrow for him and miss him at every step. And as the days go by the sorrow does not seem to grow less or his absence more tolerable. But, then, I think that he would not have us so... He would like us to go on with the work be left unfinished... For that cause he died. For that cause we will live and strive and, if necessary, die. After all, we are his children and have something of his fire and strength and determination in us." Glimpses of World History, p. 54.
which created a stir among the Muslim masses— the khilafat agitation. The Treaty of Sevre curtailed the temporal powers of the Khalif and the decision of the Allies to dismember the Ottoman Empire, aroused the hostility and anger of the Muslims in India. In their religious emotion the Muslims in India failed to realise that the Khilafat had become a moribund institution having outlived its utility. Moreover, the Ottoman Empire had become unwieldy, and smaller Arab nations were eager to shake off Turkish domination. Nevertheless, the result was the creation of a powerful politico-religious movement. Gandhi made the Khilafat issue his own and by doing so bound the Muslims to the Congress. It was supposed to be an effective banner for Hindu-Muslim unity. "The fact remains that during the Khilafat movement what was achieved was not Hindu-Muslim unity but Pan-Islamic unity, that during the countrywide mobilisation of Hindu support for the Muslim cause, in the name of unity attention was constantly focussed on the points of difference between Hinduism and Islam, and that soon after Kamal Pasha's secular revolution in Turkey undermined the foundations of the Khilafat movement, communal riots broke out all over India on an
unprecedented scale." Nehru did not fully appreciate the support for the Khilafat movement as he believed that it was primarily a religious issue without any political motivations. Gandhi did not make a clear demarcation between politics and religion. Through the techniques of Satyagraha and non-cooperation, he sought to introduce religion into politics. He was not averse to the extravagant use of religious symbolisms. Nehru, as a rationalist endowed with a scientific bent of mind, considered the espousal of religious causes on a political level as smacking with conservatism and medievalism. But Gandhi felt that there was nothing obscurantist in the Khilafat movement which basically involved the Muslim masses.

**Discovers Peasant India:**

Jawaharlal Nehru did not play an important role in these political developments as he was still a newcomer to the political scene. Yet 1920 was a turning point in Nehru's life as also in his growth to maturity. This

was the year that he discovered the peasants by coming in direct contact with them. This landmark in his life was to occur by accident.

Nehru’s mother and wife who were ill were taken by him to Mussourie for recuperation in the hill station. It happened that an Afghan delegation, negotiating with the British after the Afghan war of 1919 was housed in the same hotel. In all fairness to Nehru, he never talked to any of the members of the Afghan delegation but after a month Nehru was asked by the local police not to have any dealings with them. This struck him as unreasonable, as he had no intention of talking with any of the Afghans, but as a matter of principle he refused to obey the order. Thereupon the local authorities formally exterminated him from the Mussourie district. This was the beginning of his conflict with the British. In the next two weeks he had nothing much to do, and as a result he became aware of the problems of the Kisans and their grievances. Visiting the rural areas, Nehru discovered a whole new world. “We found the whole countryside afire with enthusiasm and full of a strange excitement... I was filled with shame and sorrow, shame at my own easy-going and comfortable life and our petty politics of the city which ignored this vast multitude
of semi-naked sons and daughters of India, sorrow at the degradation and overwhelming poverty of India. A new picture of India seemed to rise before me, naked, starving, crushed, and utterly miserable, and their faith in us, casual visitors from the distant city, embarrassed me and filled me with a new responsibility that frightened me." In many respects this was an immense educational experience. The picture of peasants clad in rags, naked and emaciated, suffering from hunger and poverty, was a new and overwhelming experience. The peasants told him of the humiliation and oppression, the cruelty of landlords, the greediness of the money-lenders and frequent ejectments from their lands. He was appalled and was furious at the dumb misery of the credulous peasants. Henceforth, Nehru was to see Indian problems from the point of view of the oppressed peasantry. The deep insight which he got into the nature and meaning of poverty, provided him with the emotional basis for his later attachment to socialism. From that time onwards Nehru's conception of a good society always involved the socio-economic transformation of the conditions in the rural areas. Socialism, to him, was

a potent weapon to eradicate poverty to which he had developed aversion. Also, his sympathy for the underdog can be traced to these days.

The simple people of the rural areas with their simple faith, these forgotten men and women haunted him. The pull of the countryside was great, and Nehru often returned to the villages, talking to the peasants, giving a patient hearing to their grievances and instilling in them the necessary confidence so that they could surmount numerous handicaps. In the process he overcame his shyness and diffidence on the platform, for he could not feel self-conscious before the ignorant and oppressed peasantry. He opened his heart and mind, and spoke with clarity and vigour on the various problems that affected them. He instilled in them courage and taught them to organise themselves, to work in unison and to shed fear so that purposeful results could be gotten. The curse of endless litigation to which the peasants had become habituated, had made them victims of unscrupulous moneylenders. Nehru induced the peasants to settle their disputes out of the courts through the instrumentality of the village panchayats. The response was encouraging and the peasants gained in confidence and strength.
Nehru's discovery of the Kisans spurred him to action on their behalf and occupied much of his leisure time during 1920-21. His reputation as a sincere friend of the peasants began to spread in the interior districts of the United Provinces where serious agrarian agitation continued for more than a year. The sacrifices and sufferings of the peasants were not in vain. No longer could the landlord eject a tenant without any opposition, for the tenants boycotted the landlord. The landlords got frightened and were defensive in the face of the new-found strength of the peasants. The Government, too, hastened tenancy and other legislation to stem the tide of awakening among the rural masses. Slowly economic and political ideas were reaching through the masses and this made them a potent force.

In the course of this new experience, Nehru not only discovered himself, but discovered India. He realised that the impact of the masses on him was electric. They acted on him as a tonic, while he poured into them his impassioned pleas on behalf of them. They in turn gave him strength and sustenance. A sense of communion developed between him and the masses, with mutual regard and respect. He understood the psychology
of the masses and among the jostling and noisy crowd he felt at home. The masses stimulated Nehru, for he saw them not as isolated individuals or as an impersonal unit, but a conglomeration of live and vibrant groups of individuals. Nehru’s passion for social justice and dignity of the individual was eloquent testimony of his genuine humanity. To the masses Nehru symbolised an epitome of renunciation. He represented the idea of renunciation of wealth and of personal sacrifice in order to benefit his fellow-men.

Nehru was seized with a sense of history, given the magnitude of the social, economic and political problems before the country. He had a vision of India, and getting the British out was only the preliminary step. He visualised a modernised and highly industrialised India with an egalitarian society.