CHAPTER I

BRIEF LIFE SKETCH OF PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

Jawaharlal Nehru was born on 14 November, 1889. Regarding the backdrop in which the families surname (Nehru) was coined, he wrote in his Autobiography: "A Jagir with a house situated on the banks of a canal had been granted to Raj Kaul and, from the back of this residence, 'Nehru' (from nahar, a canal) came to be attached to his name; Kaul had been the family name; this changed to Kaul Nehru; and in later years, became simply Nehrus". His father Motilal Nehru had earlier moved from Kanpur to Allahabad where he carved out a niche for himself. A lawyer by profession, Motilal, by dint of perseverance, had established himself as a leading lawyer of the town.

Enlightened and educated, Motilal followed a westernized life style. Jawaharlal's mother Swarup Rani, schooled in Indian ethos and values, extended to him, in his own words, “excessive and indiscriminating love” As the male child of prosperous parents, born after 11 years of their marriage, Jawaharlal grew up in opulence. Educated in Persian and Arabic, Motilal wanted his son to go beyond the traditional and classical learning which he had acquired. Naturally, therefore, he wanted his son to have Western education. Private tutors and governesses were, therefore, appointed to give him and his two sisters, Vijayalaxmi and Krishna, instructions at home. Explaining Motilal Nehru's penchant for Western education, B.R. Nanda observes in his biography of Jawaharlal Nehru: “To this decision, Motilal may have been led partly by his aristocratic pride, partly by pro-English prejudices and partly by the consciousness that he could afford the best and most expensive education for his children”. Among the private tutors who left an indelible imprint on Jawaharlal was Ferdinand T. Brooks, a theosophist recommended to Motilal by
Annie Besant. Brooks was a brilliant Youngman of French and Irish extraction who instilled in Jawaharlal a yearning for reading. He read novels of Scott, Dickens and Thackeray, H.G. Wells’ romances, Mark Twain, and the Sherlock Homes stories. Besides literature, Brooks also cultivated in him interest in natural sciences. Within the premises of Anand Bhawan a laboratory was developed for the purpose of conducting scientific experiments. Thus, Jawaharlal had the right exposure in right rime to the domain of knowledge.

Voyage to Britain:

When home tuition was found not enough, Motilal Nehru decided to admit young Nehru, in a public school in England. In 1905, therefore, he took his family to England when Jawaharlal was fifteen and got him admitted at Harrow. He pursued Latin at Harrow. Jawaharlal had an encyclopedic mind and as such his reading interests were wider. He did remarkably well in general knowledge. He also observed the political developments taking place in and around with avid interest. Besides politics, the early growth of aviation fascinated him, for those were the days of Wright Brothers.

While Jawaharlal was in England, freedom struggle was gaining firm ground at home in India. The news of partition of Bengal, the Swadeshi movement and the deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai and S. Ajit Singh greatly stirred his mind. He used to discuss the political developments taking place in India with visiting friends and relatives from India. He found Harrow and its intellectual ambience too narrow for interaction and articulation of his ideas—political or otherwise. So, he left Harrow after two years with his father's permission and joined Trinity College, Cambridge in the beginning of October, 1907 at the age of seventeen. It was at Cambridge that his pent-up zest for intellectual pursuit received greater stimuli. Although he offered science
subjects like chemistry, geology and botany, he also studied economics, history
and literature with keen interest. Among the books that influenced Jawaharlal
politically at “Cambridge was Meredith Townsend's Asia and Europe”. While
studies, games and amusements filled his life at Cambridge, the political
upheavals spearheaded by Balgangadhar Tilak and Aurobindo Ghosh greatly
agitated his mind. During those days, Jawaharlal's political sympathy got more
aligned with the extremists. The Majlis, a society formed by Indian students at
Cambridge, provided the platform for discussions and deliberations about
political developments taking place in India. He attended Majlis quite often
although he seldom spoke there. This was precisely due to his natural 'shyness
and diffidence'.

Like any other ambitious, educated and enlightened Youngman,
Jawaharlal would have found Cambridge a springboard for joining the
covetous civil services. But it seems the prospect of a cozy, comfortable and
secured career under the alien rule did not lure him very much. He ultimately
decided not to appear in the civil services examinations and took up law. Thus,
he joined Inner Temple even before his final Tripos examinations. Law papers
did not take much time and Jawaharlal got through the bar examinations one
after the other, with neither glory nor ignominy', as he himself put it.

Jawaharlal also had a stint at the London School of Economics before
returning to India. During this intervening period of two years before his return
to India he was vaguely attracted towards the Fabian and socialist ideas. On a
visit to Ireland in the summer of 1910, he was impressed by the Sinn Fein
movement. "The parallel in India was, of course, obvious, and Jawaharlal's
visit to Ireland and his understanding of politics seem to have strengthened his
extremist sympathies". Jawaharlal, with a political disposition inclined
towards socialism with a tinge of extremism, came to India in the summer of
1912, at a time when the freedom struggle was caught between the moderates and the extremists.

**Back home in India:**

On his return from England in 1912, Jawaharlal started practicing law at the Allahabad High Court as his father's junior. After having been abroad for seven years, he enjoyed the early months renewing the old contacts. However, the dry and drab demands of the profession gradually made him feel uneasy. Fortunately, the domestic atmosphere was quite congenial. It was against this backdrop that he decided to join Congress to take part in its activities. When special occasions arose, like the agitation against the Fiji indenture system/or Indian workers, or the South African Indian question, he threw himself into it and worked with dedication and zeal. These enthusiastic involvements were flickers of his keen interest in the foreign policy and international relations which later became the sheet-anchor of Congress party's freedom struggle.

While politics and practice kept him busy, in between, he also found time for reading, outing and hunting. On 8 February, 1916, on Vasanta Panchami day which is the precursor of spring in India, Jawaharlal got married to Kamla Kaul, a young girl of seventeen belonging to a Kashmiri middle class Brahmin family. It was an arranged marriage, the bride being chosen by Motilal himself.

**Plunge into Politics:**

Political struggle in India took a militant turn with the release of Lokmanya Tilak. Jawaharlal joined the Home Rule League started by Tilak and Mrs. Annie Besant. He was also introduced to Mahatma Gandhi at the Lucknow Congress held during the Christmas of 1916. He had, however, seen Gandhi earlier at the Bombay session of the Indian National Congress in 1915.
Gandhiji's fight against the obnoxious practice of apartheid in South Africa appealed to him a great deal. Though somewhat bewildered by Gandhi's political philosophy, Jawaharlal was captivated by his personality and earthy political commonsense. He was particularly impressed by the agrarian agitation which Gandhiji led in Bihar in 1917. What appealed to the young Nehru was Gandhi's strength, his rock-like commitment to India's freedom, the way in which he had perfected his character and personality so as to make himself an effective instrument of political change in India".

After World War I, there was greater political expectation towards self-government in India. The rising expectations, however, met with disappointment when the British Government passed the repressive and draconian Rowlatt Bills. This evoked mass protest and demonstrations all over India in the form of Satyagraha at the call of Mahatma Gandhi. The bizarre incidence of Jallianwala Bagh massacre took place at Amritsar in Punjab. All these unfortunate developments agitated Jawaharlal so much that he gave up the profession of law and there was a morphological change in his lifestyle. He became more of a Congress activist. Sacrificing the comforts of life, he became a lieutenant to Gandhiji.

During this period of militant freedom struggle, he also had a stint with journalism. Dissatisfied with the leading moderate newspaper, the Leader of Allahabad, Motilal Nehru had started another daily, the Independent, from Allahabad itself in early 1919. Jawaharlal acted as one of its directors. In February 1920, Jawaharlal participated in the Allahabad district conference at Bahadurganj, and in July he was elected Vice-President of the Allahabad District Congress Committee. He toured the interior parts of Uttar Pradesh which acquainted him with the poverty of rural India. He had experienced the excitement and anguish of political strife. During these years, he went to jail
several times which had a telling effect on him. His life style became austere and his outlook radical.

**In Europe again:**

After the unfortunate Chauri Chaura incident in February 1922, Mahatma Gandhi decided to discontinue the civil disobedience movement. The tempo of the freedom movement relapsed into inertia for a few years. During the impasse he, accompanied by his wife Kamala and their eight year old daughter Indira, sailed from Bombay for Venice in route to Switzerland in March 1926. The basic purpose of going abroad was for the treatment of his wife, whose illness had been diagnosed as tuberculosis. While in Geneva, he led very simple life living in a modest three-room apartment. In spite of very good medical treatment, Kamala Nehru did not improve much during her stay in Switzerland. Money was no constraint as Motilal Nehru was always generous to spend as much as was needed for the treatment of his daughter-in-law.

The indifferent health of his wife greatly disturbed Jawaharlal and he found solace and relief in extensive reading. Geneva, the hub of international politics, greatly fascinated him. It also provided him an opportunity to assess the ongoing political developments in India. With the international and national politics juxtaposed in this perspective, Jawaharlal formulated his own vision of India. These were the years in which the seeds of his world view and political thought were sown which in later years guided the destiny of the nation, both within and in relation with the world outside. During a brief visit to Berlin towards the end of 1926, Jawaharlal learned about the proposed Congress of Oppressed Nationalities at Brussels in February, 1927. The idea immediately attracted him. Jawaharlal was appointed Congress party's
representative to this unusual conclave of radical spokesmen for colonial people and their sympathizers in Latin America and Europe. Regarding the far-reaching impact of Brussels Congress on Nehru, Michael Brecher very cogently writes, "The Brussels Congress proved to be a milestone, in the development of Nehru's political thought, notably his espousal of socialism and a broad international outlook.

It was there that he first came into contact with orthodox communists, left-wing socialists and radical nationalists from Asia and Africa. It was there that the goals of national independence and social reform became lined inexplicably in his conception of future political strategy. If was there, too, that the notion of an Afro-Asian group of nations cooperating with one another was conceived. Indeed, the Bandung Conference in 1955 may be seen as the fruition of an idea which first found emotional expression at Brussels almost thirty years earlier"5.

At Brussels Conference Jawaharlal made his debut before a galaxy of international celebrities such as George Lansbury. Albert Einstein, Romain Rolland and Madame Sun Yat-sen the Congress helped him to understand some of the problems of colonies and dependent countries. Later on when Kamla Nehru's health improved, Jawaharlal, along with his wife paid a short visit to France, England, Germany and Italy. These visits gave him an opportunity to meet many Indian revolutionaries such as Madam Bhikaiji Cama, M.N. Roy, Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, Moulvi Obeidulla and Moulvi Barkatulla. On his last leg of the European tour, Jawaharlal along with his wife, sister Krishna and father, who had arrived in Europe in the summer of that year, landed in Moscow in November 1927. His four-day visit to the Soviet Union left a lasting imprint on his mind. It acquainted him with the working of the Soviets, their Socialist polity and society. He was impressed,
too, by the seeming simplicity of the life of Soviet officials and members of the Communist Party, as contrasted with the large salaries, the material comforts and the ostentation of British officials in Delhi. On a visit to the State Opera House, he was surprised by the casual dress of the audience, consisting mostly of the ordinary workers.

The health of his wife, although not fully recovered, had considerably improved. Naturally therefore he had nothing more to do in Europe. His own physical and mental conditions were perfect after the prolonged holiday. His travels abroad, particularly participation in the Brussels Congress and his subsequent visit to Moscow had convinced him of the need for a socialistic pattern of society for India.

**The Resurgent Nationalism:**

With such disposition, Jawaharlal sailed for India, accompanied by his family, in December 1927. The militancy of the freedom struggle which had mellowed down when he left for Europe had again picked up since the visit of Simon Commission in November 1927. Jawaharlal reached Madras in December 1927 at the most opportune time when the Congress was meeting there. The controversy over complete independence or dominion status for India was given a definite direction by Jawaharlal when he moved on 27 December 1927 at the Madras Congress — the famous resolution that the 'Congress declares the goal of the Indian people to be complete National Independence'. The resolution was indeed revolutionary. At a time when most of the Congress leaders were reconciled to gradualism as a mode of freedom struggle, the clarion call for complete national independence came like a bolt.
Jawaharlal mobilized the youth, the peasantry, and the laborers in order to give a further thrust to the call. In the autumn of 1928, he was elected President of All India Youth Congress. In recognition of his organizational ability, he was reappointed the General Secretary of Congress at the Calcutta Congress in the latter part of December, 1928. Next year in September, he was unanimously elected as the Congress President. Commenting on Jawaharlal's election to the post of Congress Presidency, Mahatma Gandhi said: "In bravery he is not to be surpassed. Who can excel him in the love of the country? And if he has the dash and the rashness of a warrior, he has also the prudence of a statesman. A lover of discipline, he has shown himself to be, capable of rigidly submitting to it even where it was seemed irksome.... He is pure as crystal, he is truthful beyond suspicion. He is a knight sans peur, sans reproached. The nation is safe in his hands".

At the historic Lahore Congress held in late December 1929, the son succeeded the father at the podium. The socialist credo of Jawaharlal was given a public expression at this Congress. But a pragmatic and sober Jawaharlal was not bogged down by his personal predilection. He knew that the objective conditions prevalent in India then, was not congenial to adopt a full socialist programme. He, therefore, reiterated the call for complete freedom from British domain. The resolution for complete national independence was reiterated and passed at the stroke of midnight on 31 December, 1929 at the Lahore Congress. The flag of independence was unfurled on the bank of the Ravi catapulting Jawaharlal to the forefront of national politics. The call for complete national independence created a stir throughout the length and breadth of the country. It fired the salvo of national emancipation from the yoke of foreign rule. It was in this context that Gandhiji decided to launch the Salt Satyagraha, a unique method of civil disobedience.
He thus started the long march to Dandi from his Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad on 12 March, 1930. The long march evoked nationwide upsurge. The spectacle so overwhelmed Jawaharlal that both he and Motilal joined the Mahatma on his march. Speaking about the significance of Dandi March, Jawaharlal said, 'Today the pilgrim marches onward on his long trek.... The fire of a great resolve is in him and surpassing love of his miserable countrymen. And love of truth that scorches and love of freedom mat inspires. And none that passes him can escape the spell, and men of common clay feel the spark of life’.

Motilal Nehru donated his palatial home, Anand Bhawan, to the Congress as a contribution to the cause of the nation. It was renamed Swaraj Bahaman epitomizing the abode of freedom. It was a great saga of sacrifice. The triumph and tragedy of the Nehrus now became interwoven with the trials and tribulations of the freedom struggle chronicling the history and the destiny of the nation. Prison became Jawaharlal's habitat where he spent about four years between 1930 and 1935.

**Detour to Literature:**

The solitude of the prison gave him the opportunity for reflection, introspection and retrospection, besides the abundance of time for reading. His facile pen and agile mind produced some classics such as the Glimpses of World History (1934), Letters from a Father to a Daughter (1929), his Autobiography (1936). Besides, during this period he wrote a number of articles, essays and speeches which were compiled into two collections Recent Essays and Writings (1934) and India and the World (1936). The rich literary output naturally put him in the galaxy of philosopher-statesmen. The royalty that accrued from these publications also sustained him when in financial
difficulties. Commenting on his classical work, Glimpses of World History, Jawaharlal's biographer, Michael Brecher writes: "What makes it original and unique, a marked departure from the standard universal historian, is its Asian-Centered orientation. The lack of balance in historical writing is redressed. Europe and America are placed in the perspective of World history', and the reader is made aware of the fact that the history of non-European peoples is not merely an extension of European culture overseas".

He further adds, 'The Glimpses of World History is a milestone in his developing political outcome, embodying in its purest form his international idealism". The demise of his father Motilal Nehru on 6 February 1931 desolated him. It was a great loss to young Nehru. For, Motilal was not only his father but a constant companion. The void created by his death was filled later on by Mahatma Gandhi.

The Karachi Congress:

Hardly two months after the death of Motilal Nehru, was the Congress convened in Karachi in the last week of March. While the Lahore Congress was significant for declaration of complete national independence, it was at the Karachi Congress (March 1931) that the Socialist credo of Jawaharlal found concrete manifestation in his resolution on fundamental rights. In effect, the resolution was the precursor of the ideals and objectives enshrined in the Constitution of free India and laid the blue-print for a Secular, Socialist and Democratic State. His commitment to socialism was further demonstrated when he extended his support and patronage to the Congress Socialist Party formed in 1934, while he was in jail. His was, however, not a doctrinaire approach. What he believed and categorically formulated was the concept of mixed-economy synthesizing the virtues of capitalism and socialism. The idea
was to curb profit motive and to use the machinery of the State to regulate economic activity. A great personal tragedy befell Jawaharlal when his wife, Kamala, passed away in Switzerland in February 1931. On his way back to India after cremation of Kamala’s body, Jawaharlal sent a cable to his publisher in London, who were bringing out his autobiography, requesting them to dedicate the book "To Kamala who is no more"\textsuperscript{10}.

**Interest in Foreign Affairs:**

Jawaharlal was elected President of the Indian National Congress at its Lucknow session for the year 1936. The challenging task of steering the Congress, reconciling the Left and the Right now fell on his shoulders. He performed this duty with dexterity. During this period he also took keen interest in world affairs. He laid down the goal and objective of foreign policy of Congress Party. As President of the Indian National Congress in 1936-37, he organized a 'Foreign Department' in the party Secretariat to maintain contacts with individuals and parties abroad that were sympathetic to the Indian cause.

In 1937, he paid goodwill visits to Burma and Malay. And in the summer of 1939 he visited Ceylon in an effort to reduce the friction between Indian settlers and the Sinhalese. In 1938, on his way to Europe, he met Nahas Pasha, the leader of Egypt's Wafd Party. The Spanish civil war greatly stirred him. He viewed it as a war between democracy and autocracy and extended his sympathy for the cause of democracy\textsuperscript{11}. In August, 1939 he paid a visit to the Nationalist China, but he had to cut short his visit when World War II broke out.

**Independence and After:**

Turning to the domestic arena, Jawaharlal Nehru anticipated the inevitable consequences of India's involvement in the war. If Britain
recognized its claim to freedom, India would be prepared to extend her support to the war, and "would be a friend and colleague in the World affairs." But if Britain chose the path of continued domination, it was absurd to think that Indian nationalists would support London's lead in foreign policy. It was against this backdrop that the British War Cabinet dispatched the Cripps Mission to India in 1942. The 'Draft Declaration' recognized India's right to convene a Constituent Assembly for framing the Constitution. But the seeds of the divide and rule germane in it agitated the Congress and Jawaharlal Nehru.

Ultimately, the Congress rejected the offer. This precipitated in launching the Quit India Movement on 8 August, 1942. The British government tried to quell the mass upsurge with an iron hand putting the front running leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru behind the bars. This was also Jawaharlal's longest spell in the jail. He was released in June 1945 just when the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, convened a Conference in Simla to break the deadlock. Nehru's pivotal role in these negotiations and later with Lord Mountbatten in 1947 was a feat of great statesmanship. The freedom struggle culminated in India's independence from the clutches of colonialism in the midnight of 14-15 August, 1947.

The herculean task of steering the new born nation of continental proportion now fell on Jawaharlal Nehru. The immediate task before him was to set the house in order. The trauma of transition posed a plethora of problems which he handled impeccably. With the far sight of a statesman he laid the foundation of political, economic and social edifice. He also gave a clear direction to India's role in the comity of nations with the policy of non-alignment and the principles of Panchsheel. These policies paid rich dividends in later years. Jawaharlal Nehru also took great interest in the development of science and technology. As he himself explained it: "Politics led me to
economics and this led me inevitably to science and scientific approach to all our problems and to life itself. It is science alone that would solve the problems of hunger and poverty.”

Two distinguished scientists, Homi Bhabha and Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar, who were also men of great energy, drive and organizational ability, helped him in building the scientific infrastructure by establishing a chain of laboratories under the aegis of Council of Scientific and Industrial Research. In 1958, he piloted through Parliament a 'Science Policy Resolution', pledging the country to foster, promote and sustain cultivation of science and scientific research by all means. Jawaharlal believed in planned economic development. He set up the Planning Commission in 1950, which gave concrete shape to his economic policy. Resources being limited, Jawaharlal's thrust was how to gain maximum benefit out of it avoiding lopsided development. He presided over the Planning Commission and the National Development Council.

In the pursuit of development, he never lost sight of the tribal’s and the backward classes. While he made all the efforts to bring them to the national mainstream, he also sincerely tried to preserve and protect their identity and rich cultural heritage. His patronage for the promotion of art, culture and literature was abundant. Notwithstanding his preoccupation with the national and international affairs, Jawaharlal Nehru always had a soft corner for the children to whom he was affectionately known as 'Chacha Nehru'. He knew well that today's children are tomorrow's citizens. He therefore took keen interest for their mental and physical growth. Nehru's eventful public life spanning a period of over forty years came to an end on 27 May 1964. His death created a void and a vacuum. However, he bequeathed to us a rich legacy which sustains us even today. Although he did a lot for his countrymen and to the world at large, he was never contented. To remind himself of the
unfinished task that lay ahead he had' been keeping a four line stanza from a poem of Robert Frost besides him:

The woods are lovely, dark and deep
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

Although cosmopolitan by instinct and temperament, Nehru's love for his land and the people of his country knew no bounds. He lived with them sharing their weal and woe and wholeheartedly integrated with the national mainstream. He longed that after his death, his mortal remains be intermingled with the land and water of his beloved motherland. His will and Testament eloquently speaks of his total commitment to India and his abiding love and affection for his countrymen to whom he endeared himself so much: "I have received so much love and affection from the Indian people that nothing that I can do can repay even a small fraction of it, and indeed there can be no repayment of so precious a thing as affection.

Many have been admired, some have been revered, but the affection of all classes of Indian people has come to me in such abundant measure that I have been overwhelmed by it. I can only express the hope that in the remaining years I may live, I shall not be unworthy of my people and their affection". In deference to his desire, after his death, his ashes were flown and scattered all over the country including the Himalayas and some were immersed in his beloved river Ganga.
REFERENCES

6. Ibid, p. 117.
7. B.N.Pande, Nehru, Macmillan, 1977, p. 139, citing Tendulkar,
10. Ibid, pp. 163-165.