

Nehru's Internal Impact on India as Prime Minister
Thirteenth Lecture - by Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma
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May I say how happy I am to be in your midst today. Places associated with intellectual effervescence and the search for truth do indeed have such a distinctive atmosphere. In the Indian sub-continent visitors to Nalanda or Takshashila—seats of ancient universities over twenty centuries ago—can still sense their uplifting ambience. Those universities were destroyed long back, yet their influence is tangible and can be felt. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Cambridge, with its unbroken existence of more than seven centuries, should be perceived exuding a similar ethos. Returning to Cambridge brings back so many memories, I remember, particularly, the intellectual brilliance of great minds with whom I had the opportunity to interact. It is indeed a pleasure for me to be in Cambridge again.

Jawaharlal Nehru came here from Harrow in October 1907 to read for the Natural Sciences Tripos and has mentioned his association with Cambridge. In his Autobiography, he refers to the three years that he spent here as: 'Three quiet years with little disturbance in them moving slowly like the sluggish Cam. They were pleasant years, with many friends and a gradual widening of the intellectual horizon.'

It was a formative stage in his life and although he returned to the land of the mighty Ganga and plunged into, led, and gave tremendous force to the great flood of events in the Indian sub-continent Nehru retained an emotional link with Cambridge and valued his experience here. A chance remark by him to me about the exhilarating atmosphere of Cambridge University induced my own association with Cambridge.

The centenary of the birth of Jawaharlal Nehru is being celebrated in India and around the world. It is a matter of great satisfaction to me that the centenary is being observed with enthusiasm in the United Kingdom. Indeed, among the important factors that help strengthen friendship between Britain and India is the admiration and respect which the people of our two countries have for Nehru. The Nehru Memorial Lecture affords an excellent way of commemorating his life and work and reinforcing Indo-British friendship. Lord Romsey has asked that I might take as the theme for my address: 'Nehru's Internal Impact as Prime Minister'. He explained that there had been lectures in the past dealing with Nehru's impact on the world and on foreign affairs and his qualities as a world statesman, and advised that I should be as forthright in expressing my views as would enable a fuller understanding of Nehru to be gained. The point was well made.

In speaking on the subject, I should like, however, first to lodge a caveat. My association with Nehru which grew over a period of twenty-eight years, and my involvement in the processes he guided, inevitably make it more difficult not to be subjective. So I am aware, and would forewarn you, that an element of sentiment may seep into my appraisal. However, I am reassured by the thought that Lord Romsey would certainly have provided for such a possibility. It is with these feelings in mind that I decided to detach myself from commitments at home and accept the very thoughtful invitation extended to me to deliver the 1989 Nehru Memorial Lecture. The views expressed by me in the lecture are personal and are not necessarily those of the Government of India.

Ambition to serve

When India achieved Independence in August 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru's being at the helm of affairs constituted an asset of tremendous value. Nehru was uniquely suited to assume that responsibility. Across the length and breadth of the country, India's masses held him in the highest esteem. He was the very symbol of the resurgence of India. For almost thirty years he had laboured for the cause of freedom, had suffered personal hardships and prolonged spells of imprisonment. Nehru had become the principal theoretician of the Congress Party, as well as an

important strategist. His calibre as an administrator had also been tested and proven during the Interim Government when he was Premier. I vividly remember the fascination with which Nehru was regarded by the people. There was more to it than mere adulation; the feeling was closer to entrancement. An extraordinary relationship had evolved and matured over the years between the Indian people and Jawaharlal Nehru—a relationship based on profound faith in each other. At the heart of this almost mystical bond was a sense of identification. The masses sensed in Nehru, and knew within themselves, that in him they had a leader with an exceptional congruence of ethical and moral values, supreme courage, compassion, understanding and devotion. They knew also that this powerful compound of qualities together with Nehru's enormous organisational ability comprised a great force for public good.

On Jawaharlal Nehru's part, similarly, there was a powerful yearning to understand and serve the people. He had travelled extensively throughout India in towns, cities and villages. In his Autobiography he writes:

I was getting into touch with the people of India in their millions ... The excitement of this adventure held me, this physical and emotional communion with vast numbers of people. It was not the feeling of being in a crowd, one among many, and being swayed by the impulses of the crowd. My eyes held those thousands of eyes: we looked at each other, not as strangers meeting for the first time, but with recognition ... a murmur of greeting rose from that assembled multitude and enveloped me in its warm embrace.

This relationship ripened, and was magnified and enriched as the years went by. It was a crucial force-element in India's development.

The Mahatma had called him 'pure as crystal', and also described him as the 'chosen instrument'. In my view three major sets of factors moulded Nehru's personality. First there was the influence of his father Motilal Nehru—an outstanding man of great ability and vision, who arranged that Jawaharlal's upbringing and education heightened his exceptional potential. Although an only son, Jawaharlal was sent to distant Harrow, where he was exposed to the strenuous but foundation-building regime of that eminent public school. Three years at Harrow were followed by another three at Cambridge where he read the Natural Science Tripos. This was a period in which Jawaharlal developed and trained his intellectual abilities to a fine pitch. A command over the English language, sensitive awareness of the forces of history, acquaintance with the temper and mood of scientific enquiry, sense of equality and fairplay, a deep inner reserve of determination and fortitude—all these elements came to form part of his personality.

Second, there was the influence on Nehru arising from his deep study of Indian and world history, of science, law and economics. His remarkable books: *Glimpses of World History*, *An Autobiography*, and *The Discovery of India* are masterly works indicative of encyclopaedic knowledge and profound introspection. The *Glimpses* was completed by January 1934, his *Autobiography* in February 1935 and the *Discovery* by September 1944. They reflect his amazingly incisive and perceptive understanding of social, economic and political forces the world over, and the course of diverse political systems at work in Western society, Fascist states and in Communist Russia.

Third, there was the great and abiding influence on Nehru of Mahatma Gandhi and his emphasis on the supreme importance of ethical and moral values. This influence was augmented by Nehru's experience as a leader of the Indian struggle for freedom.

As a consequence of these three sets of factors Nehru was naturally drawn to commit himself to the great cause of liberating the human spirit. Democracy, secularism and socialism—interconnected ideals — gained his absolute commitment as means to such liberation. In the last few lines of his book *The Discovery of India*, he writes: 'Man's dearest possession is life, and since it is given to him but once, he must 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".'

Task of reconstruction

Anyone knowledgeable about India would be aware of the natural political instinct of the people of India and their acquaintance with diverse political concepts. Poverty and illiteracy have not dulled the typical ability of the masses to exercise political judgement of a remarkable order. This is the product of national experience over thousands of years. Democracy, the republican form of government, awareness of human rights, the need for an egalitarian society, are part of the ancient history, mythological tradition and folklore in India. The notion that liberal thought reached India from the West misses the truth. Inherent in India's national ethos has been a composite philosophy of universal humanism based on moral and ethical values, pluralism and tolerance. During the struggle for freedom, the life-work of great leaders and thinkers invoked and enhanced such awareness in the public mind.

Nehru's own mission in life was in dynamic harmony with powerful and nationwide urges within Indian society. Essentially, Nehru was guiding India's discovery of certain values innate to the national ethos and immanent in the genius of her people. Nehru's impact was, and is, in direct proportion to the ascendance of those values in national life. The restructuring of political, economic and social features of India's national identity was a direct consequence of such a process.

In his eloquent speech in the Constituent Assembly on 14 August 1947, on the eve of the attainment of Independence, Nehru had said: 'Freedom and power bring responsibility . . . The ambition of the greatest man of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye ... as long as there are tears and suffering so long our work will not be over.' The gigantic task of national reconstruction lay before him and the people of the country. An estimate of the dimensions of the task may be gained from an assessment made some years earlier by Nehru of conditions at that time. On 26 January 1930, Nehru, in his element as a revolutionary, described the effects of British rule. He said:

The British Government... based itself on the exploitation of the masses and ruined India economically... Politically, India's status has never been so reduced as under the British regime. Culturally, the system of education has torn us from our moorings, and our training has made us hug the very chains that bind us. Spiritually, compulsory disarmament has made us think that we cannot look after ourselves or put a defence against foreign aggression.

The actual significance and dimensions of Nehru's leadership in India in the task of national reconstruction and treatment of complex social, economic and political problems can be appreciated better when viewed against the background of British policies operating earlier.

Any organised government like any piece of machinery has an intended purpose. Its design and operation are advised by that purpose. It must be admitted that almost continuously through the period of British rule in India, there was expression of enlightened, humanistic opinion in the British Isles stressing the importance of human rights, protesting against domination based on use or threat of force. Experience gained from America was cited as relevant. The Indian uprising in 1857 led to critical studies. From time to time, particularly after 1868 when news about India came in across the telegraph in greater quantum and speed, opinion was voiced frequently against reported instances of exploitation, corruption and cruelty. A telling instance was the wave of shock, horror and introspection that swept the British public following the Hunter Commission of Enquiry into the Jallianwalahbagh massacre in April 1919. (A British General had opened fire on an unarmed crowd of children, women and men in a walled enclosure, wounding and killing over a thousand and had later stated that he would certainly have used machine guns if these had been at hand.)

A vigilant public in Britain, assisted by an alert press and opposition, often expressed sympathy and concern for the people of India. On the other hand there was no dearth of those believing or propagating the idea of the 'white man's burden' in terms of the 'duty to rule and civilize lesser people in distant lands and climes'. Such opinion was supplemented by those who stressed that British rule was essential for the maintenance of peace and good order in India and for the protection of the minority communities from repression by the majority. Indignation was expressed that Indians were not adequately grateful to the British for their rule. In other words, there was distinct belief spread that altruistic purposes accounted for the British presence in India and informed its internal governance.

Whatever the publicly expressed rationale, the inner strategic thought of imperial policymakers was in terms of the perceived requirements of imperial security and of the imperial economic system.

India was a crucially important bulwark in the imperial global security system. British interests in West Asia, British assessments of the potential of another Great Power holding sway in the Asian land mass, the vital importance of strategic sea-lanes traversing the Indian Ocean, considerations of British interest in South East Asia and along the Pacific rim—all these added to India's strategic importance. Simultaneously, India was a major supplier of natural resources, raw materials and semi-finished goods and a major source of exportable manpower. However, India's great size and population, consciousness of India and its ancient values and civilization, the country-wide economy based on self-sufficient villages and traditional excellence in crafts and skills, were countervailing factors. Therefore, the achievement of imperial security and economic objectives was possible only on the basis of very carefully worked strategy, the implementation of which rested with the internal government in India.

Accordingly, the system aimed at counterposing India's numerous religious, regional and economic groups against each other; maintaining a system of Princely States obliged for their existence to British power; retaining a largely Kulak-oriented agrarian structure; adopting fiscal and financial measures to phase out self-sufficient village economies and increase the market for British manufactured goods; developing a port-based economy with rail and road penetration in the hinterland; devising an education system to supply low-level manpower needs; and maintaining a large locally recruited military and police establishment. Over time, the imperial system in India was developed to subserve these purposes more efficiently.

After Independence, the mission of national reconstruction therefore involved nothing less than a total, systematic transformation of the Indian polity. This had to be completely in accordance with values basic to India's ethos. Among the foremost tasks taken in hand was the preparation of a written Constitution of India. Nehru played a stellar, guiding role in this process—ensuring that the real will of the people was accurately expressed through the Constituent Assembly. Thus it was that India resolved to be a socialist, democratic republic, securing to all its citizens justice—social, economic and political, liberty of thought, belief, faith and worship, equality of status and opportunity, promotion of the dignity of the individual and national unity. India opted for the parliamentary form of government based on democratic socialism, secular outlook and zealous safeguarding of human rights.

Constitutional rights

Thousands of years of experience under successive regimes of an autocratic nature had suddenly been overtaken by the coming into being of the world's largest democracy. One might say a political miracle had been wrought. The sceptre had passed to the people, the masses. Nehru had been instrumental in ensuring the introduction of universal adult franchise. Provisions relating to fundamental rights comprise a vital feature of the Constitution. Key human freedoms were grouped under the right to equality, right against exploitation, right to freedom of religion, cultural and educational rights and rights to constitutional remedies. The Constitution also enunciated directive principles of state policy, which, though not enforceable by any court, are fundamental

in the governance of the country and which are to be applied by the state in making laws. These articulate the democratic, egalitarian and progressive aspirations of the people.

The federal structure of India's polity, the system of parliamentary democracy, the legislative, judicial and executive division of state functions, the apolitical, professional nature of the civil service and armed forces, were key features of the Constitution which identified and expressed the popular urge innate to India's rhythm. The subcontinental size of the country, its heterogeneous population, economic characteristics, political ethos, national philosophy and goals, could hardly have been served better.

Although Nehru dismissed the significance of his own contribution, saying he was only one of the humble individuals who had something to do with the Constitution, unquestionably he had been the moving spirit behind the fashioning of the supreme instrument representing the real will of the people of India. The history of the previous two and a half decades bears the stamp of his contributions in promoting the seminal political approaches and ideology eventually expressed by the Constitution. Simultaneous to his intensive involvement in galvanizing the masses in the struggle for freedom, he had been deeply engrossed in formulating constitutional and political philosophy suited to Indian aspirations and had worked steadily to build a countrywide acceptance for it. He had ignited in a whole nation the fire that burned within him and interpreted the nation's spirit to itself.

Secularism, parliamentary democracy, socialism and growth represented intensely held aspirations. The dream to see India free and receiving the bounty of progressive development had sustained India's leadership during the hardships suffered during the struggle for freedom. With the making of Constitutional law wedded to these ideals, an important milestone in national advancement had been reached. But the immensely more important task of achieving practical results remained. The burden of making the system function optimally, of establishing its operational value, was also borne, in the main, under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru.

Building national unity

Deliberate communalization of Indian politics had been an imperial objective for over four decades before Independence. The creation of Pakistan and the trauma of Partition had led to momentous upheavals —tectonic in magnitude. An atmosphere vitiated by violence, destruction and chaos threatened the nascent nation. Nehru's emotional leadership during the tension-filled early months of Independence must be regarded with the highest admiration. He helped bring sanity back by personal example of decisive intervention and effectively controlled a dangerous situation. Peace and tranquillity were established. Gradually but definitively the communal atmosphere was dispelled. Rehabilitation of riot victims was taken up on an intensive scale. As passions subsided in response to firm and sensitive measures, Nehru's leadership helped to evolve and restore the traditional and deeper relations of friendship and amity between different communities and to reassure both the minority and majority communities about the security of their long-term interest in the secular way of life.

Nehru's leadership in the aftermath of the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi provided another instance of the impact of his deep insight into the national psyche. Though benumbed by the assassination, Nehru steeled himself to the tasks at hand. Maintaining a sane and stable national atmosphere was the first requirement. His broadcasts over radio reached millions of hearts all over the country and fortified the country in a period of intense shock, shame and remorse.

Building the emotional unity of India was also facilitated by the major initiative taken by the Central Government for the political integration of India through merger of erstwhile Princely States with the Union of India. This task was accomplished by Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the Union Home Minister in the first couple of years of Independence. Subsequently, by reorganizing Indian States on a linguistic basis Nehru further strengthened conditions of emotional unity within the diversity of India. In subsequent years, the ethos of social integration in

India has asserted itself. The spirit of oneness has deepened and become more extensive. The body politic of India has progressed significantly in neutralizing the old poison of communalism. It is not as if communal friction does not take place. It does, and takes a fearsome toll in terms of death and destruction. But the people of India have learnt that such incidents are the handiwork of a minute number of mischief-mongers whose motivations are entirely irreligious and criminal. It has been realized that in any communal incident it is the poor and the weak that suffer irrespective of their religion, and it is the criminal or the agent saboteur who gains.

Equally, it is now evident to the people that mutual brotherhood permeates all well-meaning people in society and that the common people of India, the masses, are peace-loving, value the rule of law, and respect the nation's age-old traditions of social cohesion and harmony. Such positive development of the social ethos owes much to Nehru's leadership. He had expressed the resolve and hope that: 'India will be a land, as in the past, of many faiths, equally honoured and respected, but of one national outlook... the tolerant nationalism which, believing in itself and the genius of its people takes full part in the establishment of an international order.' Nehru had visualised India's regaining in full measure the ancient ethos of universal humanism wherein the dignity of every human being and his freedom were respected.

There was an obvious organic linkage between secularism and the commitment to democratic ideals. Nehru had a normative impact in the establishment, consolidation and growth of parliamentary democracy. As Congress President in 1936, he had referred to the formation of 'full democracy' as an essential goal. Earlier, in 1931, at the Karachi Session of Congress, Nehru had advocated 'adult franchise' on a 'mass basis'. He said; 'I am a convinced believer in adult franchise for men and women, and, though I realize the difficulties in the way, I am sure that the objections raised to its adoption in India have no great force and are based on the fears of the privileged classes and interests.' The idea of a Constituent Assembly was proposed by him. Its merit was endorsed by Mahatma Gandhi who acknowledged Nehru's 'superior knowledge of the technicalities of democracy'.

Respect for Parliament

The Constitution had created democratic structures at the federal and State levels, and there were directive principles of state policy regarding the promotion of democratic institutions at village level also. By force of personal commitment and seriousness of purpose, Jawaharlal Nehru ensured that these institutions functioned meaningfully and were established firmly. By his approach Nehru helped consolidate the importance of Parliament, the position and dignity of its presiding officers, and its proceedings, rules and conventions. He bent his immense popularity and the powers and prestige of his office as Prime Minister to consolidate and strengthen the institution of Parliamentary democracy. By his exemplary attitude towards matters pertaining to Parliament, Nehru set a perfect model which every subsequent prime ministers could benefit by following.

Government's responsibility to Parliament was firmly established by him. He was particular about attending every sitting during sessions. Questions concerning his departments were invariably answered by him personally. He insisted that replies to questions tabled for answer should be full and informative in nature. It was unthinkable that any evasive or ambiguous reply would be offered by any minister to a question. A similar approach was brought to bear in respect of motions before the House for debate. Nehru would quite often intervene in debates and enrich the scope of discussion. He was meticulous about observing parliamentary etiquette. A moving and illustrative instance occurred in the last year of his life. Despite critical illness he attended every sitting that he could in Parliament. The Presiding Officer, noticing Nehru's condition, asked him not to take the trouble of rising to reply to questions but to speak while seated. But Nehru's punctilious sense of parliamentary decorum was unflinching. Each time, despite pain, he would struggle to force himself to his legs and only then speak.

There were other ways in which Nehru developed sound traditions of parliamentary democracy. His attitude vis à vis criticism provides a telling illustration. He valued criticism and hoped to

gather grains of truth from it. But more than that it was to him a matter of principle—the right to criticism was part and parcel of parliamentary democracy, however stinging the criticism might be—so long as it were based on an honest interpretation of facts. In a speech on 28 January 1957 he said:

The whole parliamentary system of Government is based on criticism... if people were not allowed to speak and criticise Government fully and in the open it would not be parliamentary Government. It would not be proper democracy. I welcome criticism in our Parliament. In fact I welcome criticism from our own party members.

Similarly, regarding the relationship between the majority and the minority, Nehru said: The minority ... has a very important part to play. Naturally the majority by the mere fact that it is the majority must have its way. But a majority that ignores the minority is not functioning in the true spirit of parliamentary democracy.

Nehru treated the Opposition with due consideration, though in his time the Opposition was in tiny minorities in Parliament as well as in the States. It is important to appreciate that he did so not just out of a sense of large-heartedness or magnanimity. That was not the point that weighed with him materially. What really mattered to him was his sense of duty and responsibility to the system of parliamentary democracy.

His sense of responsibility to the system was not confined to concern about his own party or government's position, it included the Opposition as well. Similarly, in connection with the process of elections, Nehru upheld the very highest standards. He insisted that: 'The manner of winning or losing is even more important than the result and that it was better to lose in the right way than to win in the wrong way. If success comes through misconceived effort or wrong means then the value of that success is lost.'

In the matter of fielding candidates he used to reject any suggestion about fielding individuals to match the communal or caste composition of a constituency to gain advantage of local parochial bias. Similarly, in selecting party candidates for election he placed the highest importance on the integrity and reputation of a person and refused to agree to a party ticket being accorded unless he was satisfied in this respect.

The smooth functioning of parliamentary democracy during Nehru's prime ministership induced an unshakeable permanence and strength to the system. Successive general elections for Parliament and for State legislatures were held in a free and impartial manner. Changes of government following elections occurred smoothly, proving the efficacy of the system and the strong roots that it had developed. Nehru also acted energetically to develop parliamentary institutions at village and district level. The process of democratic decentralization was forcefully taken forward under his initiatives and led to an involvement of the masses in the rural areas in day-to-day government at village and district level. In mammoth public meetings of hundreds of thousands of village folk, Nehru would share with them his thinking on a wide variety of national and international issues. He had confidence in the judgement of the Indian public and tried to involve the people in every aspect of modern development. This also helped in giving a wider base and greater stability to parliamentary democracy in India. Nehru used to say that no government can afford to ignore the urges of the common people and that democracy is based on those very urges. The broad thrust of his effort was to create democratic institutions which were ultimately the projection of the people's character, thinking and aims.

Economic content of democracy

Nehru's emphasis on building democratic institutions in India was not an uni-dimensional effort. Repeatedly he had stressed the importance of giving democracy an economic content. He constantly had before him the task of alleviating India's poverty and building a prosperous, egalitarian social order. His orientation towards socialism was determined by liberal thinking and

radicalism combined harmoniously. His presidential address at the Lahore Session in 1929, his speech at the Karachi Session in 1931 (when Congress adopted the resolution on fundamental rights), his Presidential Addresses at Lucknow in 1936, and Faizpur in 1937, gave positive impetus to socialist policy formulation by Congress. But it is very important to appreciate that Nehru's concept of socialism was not of a dogmatic creed. Nehru abhorred the thought of a regimented society and violence to human rights. Nehru was pained by the experience in other parts of the world where adoption of socialism had entailed a curbing of individual rights. He saw socialism as a means of individual human development. He said: 'I hope socialism does not kill or suppress individuality; indeed I am attracted to it because it will release an innumerable number of individuals from economic and cultural bondage.'

Nehru's emphasis on democracy with socialism, based on human rights and moral and ethical values had a significant impact. Among other things, the scope for ingress of Communism in India was distinctly limited. It was Nehru's significant contribution to the history and development of modern political thought that he spelt out and applied the concept of democratic socialism within the parliamentary form of government. Such a system enabled India to build the public sector as a prime mover for industrialization and infra structural growth, balanced regional development, and equitable distribution of wealth. At the same time it afforded freedom for private enterprise and individual talents, desires and energies. The impact of this philosophy was seen in the approach towards the management of national resources to achieve growth with social justice. Such an approach automatically entailed introducing a system of national planning whereby a comprehensive survey of strengths and weaknesses in the economy was undertaken and physical, financial and human resources were scientifically allocated to achieve specific economic goals in the most efficient manner. At that time the combination of socialism, a planned economy and parliamentary democracy was considered incompatible by political thinkers from the capitalist as well as the Communist countries. But it represented a middle path and a harmonious combination best suited to Indian aspirations and requirements. In retrospect, it is evident that the strong basis for India's economic growth in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy was made possible only by integrated national planning by the federal government. The National Planning Committee set up by the Congress in 1938 in which Nehru took a leading role had prepared the ground for such an approach.

Strategy for growth

With the background of clear ideological commitments to growth with social justice, and being aware of the richness of India's natural resources on one hand, and India's poverty on the other, Nehru was seized with the mission to achieve accelerated economic progress. The strategy of growth was formulated by him after considering two major alternatives. The first strategic option was the Consumer Industry Approach which rested on the rationale that initially the effort should be focused on organising assembling industries mainly by using imported materials and financing growth of basic and heavy industry with capital accumulated from aggregate value-added and exports. The advantage in such an approach was that it demanded less initial capital investment and was therefore most suited to India's ways and means position at that time. On the other hand there was the Basic Industries Approach which rested on the rationale that although high investments in building a heavy industrial base would mean a strain on resources in the initial phase, the scientific, technical and industrial capability thus built up would, in the long term, offset the burden of initial high investment and would also help promote self-reliance.

Four key objectives were set:

- 1 A sizeable increase in national income to raise the standard of living in the country;
- 2 Rapid industrialization with special emphasis on development of basic and heavy industries;
- 3 Large expansion of employment opportunities, and
- 4 Reduction of inequalities in income and wealth and a more even distribution of economic power.

These objectives remain unchanged in the economic policy of India. The entire effort of the planning process and the industrial and agricultural strategies in subsequent years have been based on a mission to fulfil these objectives. The growth of the steel, heavy electricals, heavy engineering, machine tools, atomic energy, railways, communications, petro-chemicals, defence production, fertilizers, shipping and automotive sectors of India's economy over the last four decades was made possible by such an overall economic strategy.

Simultaneously, three other important initiatives were undertaken. First, the investment in basic and heavy industrial growth was linked with promotion of medium and small-scale industries, and cottage and village industries. Emphasis was placed also on development of the co-operative sector both for industry and agriculture. This aimed at developing supportive linkages across these sectors, balanced regional growth and revival of the rural economy. Second, the private sector was afforded a wide field of opportunity for industrial enterprise, except in a few strategic sectors. The role assigned to the public sector involved huge investments in long gestation projects on which the immediate return of capital invested was low but which would help build essential economic infrastructure and pioneer growth for balanced regional development. It could not have been possible for the private sector to organise the financial and non-financial resources required for such an effort. The public sector therefore did not have a merely commercial objective in terms of a return of profit over capital invested. There was a strategic objective of developing strong foundations and infrastructure for India's economy and stimulation of synergistic inter-sectoral linkages in the economy. It is noteworthy that progress by India in the capital goods sector and other key sectors would not have been possible without Nehru's lead in these directions.

Development of India's agriculture in terms of quantum of production and productivity also received very high priority. Nehru organised initiatives by the Central and the State Governments for agrarian reform not only to achieve an equitable distribution of wealth but to increase farm efficiency. The need to make India self-sufficient in food production was also a key objective compelled by experience of recurrent famines in earlier decades. (From 1800 to 1900, more than 32 millions died of starvation in India. As many as thirty famines occurred in the ninety years from 1857 to 1947, the Bengal famine of 1943 alone taking a toll of three million lives.) The relationship between agriculture and industry and the potential for agro-industrial development was also stressed. The predominantly agricultural composition of India necessitated development of agriculture for an improved standard of living in the rural areas. In a speech at a meeting of the National Development Council Nehru said: 'Agriculture is more important than anything else because agricultural production sets the tone to all economic progress.'

The building of a new economic society based on agricultural as well as industrial capability required full emphasis on promotion of science and technology, scientific research and development establishments, and an efficacious relationship between government and scientific effort in the country. Nehru took the lead in building scientific establishment and scientific culture in India. Successive Five Year Plans laid emphasis on building up of national laboratories and research institutions. Nehru personally formulated the Government of India's scientific policy. The Scientific Policy Resolution of 1958 sets out key objectives aimed at connecting science and technology with the task of national reconstruction. It paved the way for the growth of pure, applied and educational science and scientific research, training and involvement of scientific and technical personnel for modernizing agriculture, industry and defence. It also recognized the need to give science and scientists a position of prestige in India. The effects of Nehru's priority to scientific advancement for national growth are visible in every sector of India's economy today. In his policy of scientific growth, Nehru stressed however the importance of harnessing the great power of science only for goals of human betterment. He said:

Science and Technology have freed humanity from many burdens and given us this new perspective and great power. This power can be used for the good of all if wisdom governs our actions; but if the world is mad or foolish it can destroy itself just when great advances and triumphs are almost within its grasp.

His effect on the Premiership

To sum up: It is evident that, with Nehru's leadership fully attuned to India's urges and needs, there was a profound and positive change in India. Everything he did was with a long-range perspective: of the national interest and of the good of humankind. The federal structure of India's polity, the system of parliamentary democracy, the legislative, judicial and executive divisions of the civil service and armed forces; the introduction of a planned economy with the public sector having an infrastructural role; the policy of industrialization emphasizing investment in the capital goods sector; a role for the public, private and co-operative sectors as well as village industry; development of science and technology and atomic energy; the reforming of the agrarian system and the powerful co-ordinated thrust for improving agricultural production with the creation of major irrigation and power systems; the priority for developing the youth of the country; the creation of a scientific temper; the strengthening of the cultural traditions and social ethos of the nation—all these diverse and yet interrelated aspects of national life received creative impulses from Nehru. 'Growth and social justice' and 'self-reliance' became important and normative concepts in the strategy for national reconstruction, Nehru and India had advanced significantly in pushing through a second non-violent revolution—following that of 1947.

Nehru's leadership in India's political life during the freedom struggle, and later as Prime Minister, had a salient effect on the position of the Prime Minister. Gradually, and probably against his own wishes, there was a transition from the Cabinet form of government to the prime ministerial form of government. As Sir Ivor Jennings in his book *Cabinet Government* has said about a British Prime Minister:

the Prime Minister's actual authority has tended to increase ... He is, rather, a sun around which planets revolve... he owes his majority to the choice of the electorate. Generally a party obtains office because of a General Election. A General Election is, primarily, an election of a Prime Minister. The wavering voters who decide elections support neither a party nor a policy, they support a leader.

Nehru's long tenure of the position of Prime Minister, combined with his mass popularity and adulation as a hero of the freedom struggle, in effect led to substantial concentration of power in him.

Yet there is no question of autocratic conditions surviving in the polity designed by him. The system of checks and balances devised under Nehru's leadership is so carefully installed that even if only one institutional check remains functional, conditions of disguised dictatorship cannot go unchallenged. Besides, successive elections have proved the maturity and mettle of the Indian electorate. As such, a fail-safe system of parliamentary democracy seems to have been evolved. The impact of such an achievement is incalculable, particularly in the region of India's location.

Twenty-five years have gone by since Nehru passed away. But far from his influence waning, there is in India, and I believe elsewhere also, growing appreciation of the efficacy of the approach adopted by him and his policies in a wide variety of fields. The historical significance of his contribution is only now being adequately understood. The relevance of constitutional and political method devised in his period is being increasingly realized as time passes. The perceptible trends towards parliamentary democracy, peaceful coexistence and humanism in the world reflect the accuracy with which Nehru gauged and applied certain values resurgent not just in India but in all humankind.

It is no wonder that Rabindranath Tagore said about Nehru: 'Through all details, there runs a deep current of humanity which overpasses a tangle of facts and leads us to the person who is greater than his deeds.'

Nehru is now part of the folklore of India with a position second only to Mahatma Gandhi. The two great personalities appear to have been precursors of a higher human civilization still in the making. In the final analysis, Nehru's internal impact on India, and, if I may say so, on the world, may be understood accordingly.