Nehru and Socialistic Pattern of Society: Relevance

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Nehru had a grand design for India. He looked not just today, but much more was he concerned with the tomorrow. India under the guidance of Jawaharlal Nehru had accepted socialism as her goal. Socialism implies the social or collective ownership of the instruments of production. It means that the control of production and distribution must be in the hands, not of private owners of capital, but of the community itself. In this paper I have present Nehru's views of socialistic pattern of society along with aims, objectives, and relevance of his ideas in today's context.

Keywords: Design, Socialism, Production, Capital, Socialistic Pattern, Community, Relevance.

Introduction

A well dressed man with his red rose tucked on his coat, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru was an embodiment of sacrifice to his credit. He was a dynamic personality and a statesman of world calibre. He had established himself throughout the world as an attractive, brilliant and progressive idealist. He was the prime artificer of modern India and of her socio-economic-political-cultural and religious system of representative parliamentary democracy. Thus, nationalism, socialism and secularism constituted the main pillars of the edifice of democracy that Nehru sought to build. He, being progressive and pragmatic in his outlook had picked up the practical side and accepted the concept of 'mixed economy'. He was the great supporter of globalization and internationalism (**Singh and Srivastava 2003).**

Nehru was very much ahead of his time but, unfortunately, he did not live long to see the implementation of his ideas. The seeds of economic fruits which India is reaping today were sown by none else than Jawaharlal Nehru (**Hussain and Kajipd 1998:410**).

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was for socialism but he knew that little could be done in this direction until political freedom was attained, so Nehru moved more rapidly in this context.

Socialistic Pattern of Society: A view

The new pattern of society was described by the Congress at the Avadi Session in 1955 as the "Socialistic Pattern of Society". Nehru was firm believer in Socialism but he had his love for democracy also socialism demanded the centralization of all the means of production and distribution as vesting the ownership only in the hands of the state to wage the marathon was against poverty and the people have to sacrifice all non-economic values for waging the war successfully.

Nehru did not want the wars like Soviet Union and China so he chose the socialistic pattern which will have the economic ideals of socialism and democratic values of capitalism. The combination of the ideals of socialistic and capitalistic economy resulted in the mixed economy. Nehru, the great visionary, gave this economic system to India which is being followed even today. Nehru had a pragmatic and non-doctrinaire approach to socialistic pattern of society. Economic and social policy has to be shaped from time to time in the light of historical circumstances.

"The picture I have to mind is definitely and absolutely a socialistic pattern of society. I am not using the word in a dogmatic sense at all, but in the sense of meaning largely that the means of production should be socially owned and controlled for the benefit of society as a whole" (**Speeches of Jawaharlal Nehru 1970 : 85).**

This statement is stated by Jawaharlal Nehru write delivering himself before the third meeting of the National Development Council on November 9, 1954. Nehru did not approach this problem in any rigid or doctrinaire way. There is no lack of firmness and rigidity about the ideals aimed at because there must be some fixity, if we want India to progress, if we want

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India to be prosperous and if we want to raise the standards of India, we want a socialist society in India. There is no lack of firmness about that.

The inauguration of the Second Plan in 1956 he related a new era in which creation of a capital goods or producer goods industry rather than the development of prosperous agriculture as the base of our economy, because the aim of Indian Planning. Therefore, the concept of socialistic pattern of society is not conceived in a doctrinaire sense. The slogans of yesterday have little meaning in the present context whether the slogans are capitalistic, socialistic or communistic (**Nehru Jawaharlal, Planning and Development 1956: 28).**

The system evolved by Nehru was consciously directed towards the welfare of common man rather than towards enrichment of the few. According to Nehru, it aims at the establishment of a society whose pattern is only socialistic, nor of a society which is basically socialist, as ordained by orthodox socialist thinkers. To Nehru, socialistic pattern of society is a phrase which means in one word, socialistic. But in Nehru's view, they all are exactly the something without the slightest difference (**Speeches of Jawaharlal Nehru, op.cit., 1970; 1964: 170).**

Further, he was firm in his belief that we can bring about social changes and developments by the pressure of democracy and also by a friendly cooperative approach, rather than the approach of struggle and elimination. The key word pattern is deed, in the governing factor in determining the quantum of socialism to be grafted on Indian economy. A society of this kind does not exist in the world to guide as a precedent such a fluid state of affairs tends to create discord in social thought which in turn retards the growth of emotional integration without which dynamism of spirit and pursuit of any programme for national reconstruction can hardly be possible. He himself observed that much vagueness also comes in the way of effective action. The Indian National Congress had always thought in terms of some socialistic pattern. The principles involved were work for increasing production for raising the standard of living and having progressively fuller employment so as to achieve full employment.

Aims and Objectives of Socialistic Pattern of Society

There is novelty regarding aims and objectives of socialistic pattern of society. It still continued to be a classless and casteless society providing greater facilities to individual's better opportunities for their uplift and getting them out of the acquisitive society, as he observes that we have accepted in India as our objective a socialistic pattern of society. It means not only economic organization but something deeper which involves a way of thinking and living. The acquisitive society, whose chief aim is profit making, not only brings conflict in this train but it opposed to the basic urge of modern man for social justice (**Kissin 1960 :91).**

He, is this context, stated that we have deliberately laid down as our objective a socialist pattern of society. Personally I think that the acquisitive society, which is the base of capitalism, is no longer suited to the present age. We have to evolve a high order more in keeping with modern trends and foundations and involving not so much competition but much greater cooperation (**Mainstream 1973).**

Relevance of Nehru's Ideas in today's context

The relevance of Jawaharlal Nehru remains undiminished today. In fact, his ideas and approach to political, economic and social issues are more relevant now than even in his life-time. It is necessary to state this basic truth and assess the continuing validity and vitality of his approach, because some who unabashedly use his name seek to project him as a pragmatist rather than as the firmly committed socialist that he was. It is the fashion these days to say that socialism is a vague term, that it is a slogan, and that there is no precise definition of what it means. This is essentially the argument of the believers in the status quo, of those who are afraid of radical change that will either hurt their own interests or destroy their pet theories.

It is no doubt true the despite his massive personal popularity and the power at his disposal in the government and in the party, Jawaharlal Nehru could not put into practice many of the ideas he spelt out regarding the radical changes, social and economic, that our society

required. But this must be seen in the background of the dilemma he faced as an honest politician committed to socialism on the one hand and to democracy on the other. Rightly, he saw no contradiction between the two, for, who can deny that true democracy is the only viable basis for genuine socialism and that without advance towards the goal of socialism democracy will be bereft of meaning. Nehru would not discard the democratic processes or bypass the democratic institutions in order to put his ideas into practice.

In our context, with a long history of feudalism, caste hierarchy, religious divergence, multiplicity of languages and customs, in fact of stratification of society in a variety of ways, it has not been easy to correlate tradition and change, to work out a viable compromise between the best of cherished values and the urgency of eliminating social and economic inequalities. Jawaharlal Nehru realized that revolution in our situation had to be by consent and could not be by imposition. He admired the Soviet achievements and accepted the ultimate ideals of Marxism, but he did not make a secret of his reservations about applying the same methods in the case of our country.

In an underdeveloped nation with many layers of development within itself, both vertical and horizontal, and with a variety of vested interests wielding tremendous influence and extremely articulate, the difficulties involved in bringing about radical changes by consent were obvious enough. Yet the alternatives to the democratic system are so risky and unpredictable that he would not lightly discard his faith, even if this meant a visible, often frustrating, slowing down of the process of change, which is the base of capitalism, is no longer suited to the present age. We have to evolve a high order more in keeping with modern trends and foundations.

Socialism, whose essence is the removal of poverty and establishment of equal opportunities if not of equality in the strictest sense, has necessarily to suit the conditions of each country, and Nehru's constant effort was to bring about changes without destroying the fabric of Indian society, even if certain parts of that fabric were to be replaced.

Nehru saw the socialist society as some kind of a cooperative society, in which each individual would give of his best and would find full scope for his own development. The very first step had to be the ending of the profit motive of the acquisitive society to which we are accustomed. The dilemma he faced was the result of his desire to avoid a violent upheaval that could have disastrous consequences for future generations of our people and to take the maximum number of people along with him on the new path. This was no easy task, for the vested interests in the acquisitive society which he wanted to end were entrenched in the party and in the administrative apparatus which had necessarily to be his major instruments. Also, it was these interests which were active during the freedom struggle, and even more in the years of freedom, and they were able to create the illusion of democratic functioning without active participation by the masses of our population who were to gain by the changes Nehru envisaged.

It is possible to find fault with Jawaharlal Nehru for not having made the maximum use of his popularity to force the pace of change, but to do so is to overlook the historical forces that had shaped him and the historical circumstances in which he had to function, apart from his own commitment to the democratic processes as well as to the instruments at his disposal. It is debatable how much more he could have achieved in his life-time, but it is indisputable that he laid firm foundations for the kind of society we want to build in this country. It is for us and for future generations to build on these foundations. Socialism is the inevitable outcome of democracy. Political democracy has no meaning if it does not embrace economic democracy. And economic democracy is nothing but socialism. Monopoly is the enemy of socialism. To that extent it has grown during the last few years, we have drifted away from the goal of socialism.

Hence, we cannot overlook the danger that lies in this pattern of socialism that has so far emerged. Recently a counter-tendency has surfaced. Dr Monmohan Singh, the Finance

Minister of the early nineties, advocated allowing liberal investment of foreign capital in our country. Thus, multi-national business and industry have got off to a brisk start here. It is apprehended that in no distant future the multi-nationals, interested only in profits, but without any national moorings, will create a financial crisis. The pattern is also slowly emerging that under a mixed economy we are suffering from the limitation of socialism without its benefits. Our rights are being slowly curtailed. But in exchange of these, we are not adequately benefited. In the meantime price index is going up.

Hence it seems that certain fundamental steps have to be taken if a genuine socialist pattern is to emerge. Effective association of the working-class with the management in both state-owned and private industries must be achieved. The minimum living wage for the workers must be statutorily determined. Opportunities for employment must expand. Mere abolition of landlordism will make no difference unless the tillers are vested with ownership of land. Workers must be made to feel that the instrument of production, whether land or machinery, will be used in the interest of those who work there. Unless a progressive policy in regard to these matters is taken in band within a few years, socialist pattern for our country may provide to be an illusion.

Conclusion

The only way to maintain democracy and strengthening it is to accord solutions as per the demand of time and space. In this regard, the views and methodology of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru can become more or less ideal for those who have concern for challenges facing Indian democracy. Particularly Nehru's stress upon healthy criticism, according opportunities to opposition, providing a platform for wide discussion on issues, call to observe and resolve problems having national interest supreme, developing a basis for broad outlook, is of utmost importance in the twenty-first century for India and the world in this era of globalization.

The need of the hour is to make a critical analysis of ideas and methodologies of Nehru. Besides, engaging in an open debate on the significance and relevance of his ideas in the current times, thereupon drawing a conclusion on the possibilities of strengthening democracies is required. I am sure, we would, more or less, gain through it for the purpose.

The pattern of socialism that India, under Nehru and to some extent under Indira Gandhi, looked forward to is not to be achieved by the forced liquidation of class interests but by their gradual elimination. This may be by a gradual change of heart such as Acharya Vinoba Bhave contemplated. But failing this, recourse must be had to legislative measures. The actual pace of this movement towards socialism was proposed to be set by the successive Five-Year Plans. The object of these plans was to co-ordinate and controls the economic life of the State so as to achieve the maximum results towards the social welfare of the community. Production will be regulated by the needs of the community; methods of distribution will be developed to bring consumer goods within reach of the greatest number. For this purpose, private profits have to be controlled and the interests of individuals must give way to the interests of the community.

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