THE ETHICS OF THE NATION - STATE : A STUDY OF NEHRU'S *THE DISCOVERY OF INDIA*

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To all anti-Nehruvians

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled **"The Ethics of the Nation - State : A Study of Nehru's** *The Discovery of India"*, submitted by Manash Bhattacharjee is in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of this University. This dissertation has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University and is his own work.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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INTRODUCTION

This work provides an argument for Nehru's ethical understanding of nationalism and the nation-state. It is part descriptive and part normative. In this manner it will imitate Nehru's principal work discussed here, *The Discovery of India,* which is also part descriptive and part prescriptive. There is a programmatic approach in *The Discovery* where, alongwith a descriptive analysis of India's history, there is a thrust towards a normative understanding of cultural, political and social issues. This work will not analyse Nehru in a biographical manner, as a political figure, or his policies in office. Its primary interest is to place Nehru's understanding of nationalism in the context of the history of ideas. It however won't place his ideas in any chronological manner. The work aims not at a chronological but a theoretical coherence in the unfolding of Nehru's key ideas as highlighted in his most important works and speeches. This work will not be a critical analysis of Nehru's ethical ideas, but will present a sympathetic analysis of his ethical conception of the nation-state. It will establish that Nehru's concept of the nation-state is an ethical one.

In the first chapter, a framework of Nehru's approach is presented. He made a hybrid approach of his general endeavour towards discovering India's past: a Romantic subjectivism and Critical

Idealism. His Romantic subjectivist approach is about how he involved himself emotionally with the diverse cultures of India in a synthesizing spirit. 'Some kind of a dream of unity has occupied,' Nehru wrote, 'the mind of India since the dawn of civilization.[1] Such a dream of a Romantic kind, occupied Nehru's mind too. An anti-traditionalist, Nehru however identified himself with the diverse religio-culture traditions of India as well as with European culture. Like a Romantic, he was both inside and outside his culture, thus celebrating the capacity of individualist imagination. But Nehru did not propose the Romantic yearning of a return to nature. His sense of integration was an 'inward turn'[2] to use Charles Taylor's term, which is a process to interiorize the experience of unity (across space and time). This is the subjectivist turn in Nehru's Romanticism.

Nehru's parallel approach was an idealist reconstruction of India's history where he lay emphasis on those values which had a historical precedent with regard to the present. On occasions he would interpret certain concepts according to the present needs of a critical

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1.   Nehru, Jahawaharlal, *The Discovery of India,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund,1964,p.103.

2.   Taylor, Charles, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity,* Combridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989,p.461.

understanding of those concepts. He would show how certain interpretations were not desirable vis-a-vis those which are attached to norms of ethical guidance and relationships. This made him represent things in an ideal manner and present it as ethically desirable. Sometimes, he would give descriptive justification for his interpretation, thus trying to show that his conclusions were derived from historical realities.

Within this hybrid approach Nehru tackled the issue of culture and his socio-political concerns with two different set of ideals. In the first case he put forward an understanding of culture which may be called Synthetic Universalist. It is an idea of universalism which is based on the premise of a non-coercive sharing of cultural values, where the unique growth of each culture would take place amidst a universalist thrust of cultural give-and-take. It is a concept which attaches significance to the relational aspect of culture and treats it as a value while also holding that values themselves are diverse and cross-cultural. So, no single culture can claim to have self-sufficient values.

In the second case, Nehru, argued for a Democratic Collectivist approach which can also be called a liberal socialist one. Nehru held democracy as the most valuable political principle through which the ideals of liberty and equality can be met. Democratic collectivism may be simply defined as the approach which tries to reconcile democratic freedom with collectivist responsibilities. Democratic freedom, with the liberal principle of individual autonomy and basic political rights, would form the precondition to a more socio-economic equalization programme.

There is an overall normativity in this whole conceptual Nehruvian framework which links up his various positions. It will be shown that this normative approach moves towards an ethical argument of nationalist principles.

The second chapter is an analysis of the ethical concept of Nehru's nationalist argument. The reasons behind Nehru's consideration of political and cultural values as against other choices, are shown. What makes Nehru's argument ethical is primarily discussed. What his argument attempts to be as an antidote to, is also pointed out.

Nehru's quest for the discovery of India was a unique moment in the history of Indian political thought. It was an attempt at direct history, both factual and imaginative, by a participant. This work of discovery however cannot be said to be a merely historical one. Its genre includes politics, sociology and ethics. Nehru's idealist reconstruction of India's history provided his descriptive narrative with a strong prescriptive component. In his absorption of whatever he wanted from the past, Nehru tried to subject it all to the test of its present relevance in order to find out 'whether all possibilities of human experience had been exhausted by the philosophies of the past',[3] according to Mulk Raj Anand. Though, in a political sense, it was a nationalist's anxious response regarding the anxieties of India's unity and of a shared Indianness, Nehru's programmatic approach was veered towards a normative understanding of the cultural, political and socio-economic questions involved in the construction of a nationalist discourse. For Nehru, it was important to recover values from history in a way which is rational and which is in tune with the present

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3.   Anand, Mulk Raj, *Self-Actualization In The Writings of Nehru,* Sheila Dikshit, (ed.), et al, Jawaharlal Nehru: Centenary Volume, Delhi Oxford University Press, Oxford New York, 1989,p.11.

consciousness. He was aware of 'this conflict between the critical outlook and nationalist tradition'.[4] For Nehru, the critical outlook or temper was the temper of a free man. It was the temper of the scientific approach. But just as Nehru thought that traditions had to be 'adopted and transformed to meet near conditions and ways of thought' by which of course he meant scientific and critical rationality, he was also aware that the very progress of science, unconnected with and isolated from moral discipline and ethical considerations, will lead to the concentration of power.[5] He clarified that for him the scientific approach meant, a way of life, a process of thinking, a method of acting and associating with our fellowmen.[6] So, for him, the 'scientific spirit' has to reconcile with 'humanism.[7] In his absorption of whatever he wanted from the past and subject it all to the relevance of critical thought, Nehru emerged as a modern man, and in the words of Mulk Raj Anand, became 'one the few experimentalists of our age'.[8]

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4.   Nehru, Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India,* Oxford University Press, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1964,p.103.

5.   Ibid.,p.33.

6.   Ibid.,p.512.

7.   Ibid.,p.512.

8.   Anand, Mulk Raj, *Intellect In Action, in A Study of Nehru,* (ed.), Rafiq Zakaria, A Times of India Publication,1959,p.11.

Indians had always lacked 'a sense of the importance of history', according to Jitendranath Mohanty, 'where history 'as a significant process of achieving new values that were not achieved before',[9] was denied. Nehru intervened this history of denial with a strong endorsement of objective participation. 'Indians,' Nehru wrote, 'are peculiarly liable to accept tradition and report as history, uncritically and without sufficient examination'.[10] He was interested in a more critical faculty, a weighing of evidence, a refusal to accept tradition merely because it is tradition'.[11] His endeavour at writing a 'living history' of his people was 'an organic attempt to emerge into the confrontation of the relities of the human predicament in the here and the now',[12] according to Anand.

At a crucial juncture of his country's historical status, Nehru asked himself with a frank modesty the overwhelming question, 'Do I

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9.   Mohanty, Jitendranath, *Reason and Tradition in Indian Thought: An Essay on the Nature of Indian Philosophical Thinking,* Clarendon Press, Oxford,1992,pp.189-190.

10.   Nehru, Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India,* Oxford University Press, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund,1964,p.104.

11.   Ibid.,pp.102-102.

12.   Anand, Mulk Raj, *Intellect In Action, in A Study of Nehru,* (ed.), Rafiq Zakaria, A Times of India Publication,1959,p.11.

know India?'[13] and proceeded to find out. He approached his task by responding with a typically modern manner of self-discovery, with its detached mode of self-reflection. In Nehru's case, the sense of critical detachment was however balanced by his passion of engagement. Inspite of the philosophical and cultural conflicts Nehru faced in this attempt at a new self-awareness of himself and his country, the feeling of responsibility and belongingness, coupled with his own sense of having recovered the past he had set out to know, saved him from any tragic inner-discord which may haunt such modern enterprises. His books in fact, as Mulk Raj points out, 'were important manifestoes for future action'.[14]

Nehru approached the task of discovering India, in his own admission, 'almost as an alien critic' who looked at India 'as a friendly westerner might have done.'[15] Educated at Harrow and Cambridge, Nehru developed close links with European culture and in the words of

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13.   Nehru, Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India*, Oxford University Press, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund,1964,p.104.

14.   Anand, Mulk Raj, *Intellect In Action*, in *A Study of Nehru*, (ed.), Rafiq Zakaria, A Times of India Publication,1959,p.353.

15.   Nehru, Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India*, Oxford University Press, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund,1964,p.104.

Octiavio Paz, 'he drew inspiration from the rebellious and heterodox thought of the West'.[16] Nehru's other lineage is traced by Paz back to his ancestors who 'had frequented the Mogul court and had absorbed Persian and Arabic heritage' and to his family tradition from which 'he had a vein of heterodoxy vis-a-vis Hindu traditionalism'.[17] So, by 'heritage, alongwith his critical relation with Europe which 'was based on the heterodox tradition of the West itself', Nehru, even by 'education and own choice,' according to Paz, 'belonged to a double "anti-tradition".[18]

Nehru had written in his autobiography how he 'was accused by some leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha' of his 'ignorance of Hindu sentiments' because of his 'defective education and general background of 'Persian' culture'.[19] It made him say: 'What culture I possess, or whether I possess any at all, is a little difficult for me to say.[20] It

16. Paz, Octavio, *Nehru: Man of Two Cultures & One World,* Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO, New Delhi,1967,pp.15-16.

17. Ibid.,pp.15-16.

18. Ibid.,pp.15-16.

19. Nehru, Jawaharlal, *An Autobiography,* Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, Oxford University Press, 1980,p.169.

20. Ibid.,p.169.

highlights Nehru's self-recognition of being the cultural nomad of modernity whom Zygmunt Bauman calls the 'Parvenu; *arriveste;* someone already in, but not quite of the place. Someone reminding the older tenants of the past which they want to forget and the future they would rather wish away'.[21] Parvenus are people, says Bauman, whose identities are made,'[22] Though, Nehru was an exceptional parvenu in the sense that he was both the 'other-directed' and 'self directed'. For, as Bauman says, the 'other directed' parvenus are' asked to prove the legality of their presence by being self-directed.[23] The same accusation was put on Nehru too. But Nehru's relational self-identity could not be bounded by any traditional self-directedness. He belonged to many cultures and none. It made his identity plural and universal at the same time. This made Nehru realize how cultures can be inclusivist systems within religions and act as a normative link between different belief-systems. Culture makes the divisions created by religious faith spurious by illuminating the points of convergences between them. It shows that the religious other is also part of the

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21.   Bauman, Zygmunt, *Parvenu and Pariah: heroes and victims of modernity,* (ed.), Irving Velody, *The Politics of Postmodernity*, Cambridge University Press, 1998,p.24.

22.   Ibid.,p.25.

23.   Ibid.,p.26.

cultural self. Nehru regarded this relational phenomenon as a value. Religions are self-referential but cultures are open-ended and therefore addresses the other as part of its universalist mode of thought. Nehru's universalist notion, besides the Enlightenment idea of the universality of reason, springs from this understanding. This made Nehru attach a positive connotation to the cultural definition of the nation. He made culture rather than religion the fundamental aspect which defines a nation. The synthetic aspect of culture would, Nehru felt, make 'every nation and individual, grow out of the narrow grooves of thought and action.[24] The assumptions behind this understanding of self-enclosed communities, being 'narrow' are well illuminated by Bauman who says how such communities would suffer from 'mixophobia' and 'tolerance of difference may well be wedded to the flat refusal of solidarity,' which will result in a 'monologic discourse, rather than giving way to a dialogic one.[25] For Nehru, the issue of culture was coupled with the issue of socio-economic change. In this regard, Nehru held liberty and equality as his twin ideal. Formal liberty in the form of political democracy was to him the

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24. Nehru, Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India*, Oxford Unviersity Press, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1964, p.519.

25. Bauman, Zygmunt, *Parvenu and Pariah: heroes and victims of modernity*, (ed.), Irving Velody, *The Politics of Postmodernity*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p.24.

precondition of a more equitable, social democracy. Without formal liberties, the freedom to voice one's rights and opinions, the state won't belong to the people. Such regimentation would result in a non-participatory, non-deliberative form of governance which would become anti-thetical to the value to liberty, both of the individual and the group, which Nehru held dear. For him, this would go against the very goal of the equality principle. Because Nehru felt that only the best means can best bring out the desired end. Just as he held synthesis between cultures as the best way to achieve universality of culture, he held the granting of basic, formal freedom as the best means to achieve a more substantive, social freedom. For Nehru hence, means are crucial values in themselves, which would best ensure the ends he had in view. Nehru's conception of cultural and political values are the parts of his overall view of the nation-state. He was not merely engaged in building up a politically feasible nation-state in an instrumentalist manner. He wanted to address what Benedict Anderson calls the 'philosophical poverty'[26] of nationalism by formulating a 'living philosophy' of the nation as an ethical entity. To him, the nation could be justified and defended only as an ethical entity. So he tried to

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26.   Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities,* Versro, London, 1983,p.5.

formulate an ideal nation-state which stands for certain political and cultural values. There would be values which the nation state as a political and cultural context would generate alongwith those values of society which would be addressed by the nation-state. Nehru wrote a nationalist history of India where he tried to draw a cultural continuity through, what Ernst Renan calls, 'a series of convergent facts'[27] which resulted in the 'peculiar spirit,' of India's cultural ethos. He however held that cultures are ethical entities. For like Renan, Nehru too believed 'the fundamental principle that man is a reasonable and moral being before he is cooped up in such and such a language, before he is a member of such and such a race, before he belongs to such and such a culture.[28]

The political principles of the nation-state would have to address the ideals of human freedom and the march towards social equality. Historically disadvantaged groups and individuals would be given certain special rights to safeguard and promote themselves vis-a-vis others so that the imbalances in society could be rectified. These

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27. Renan, Ernst, *What is a Nation?*, (ed.), Homi Bhabha, *Narrating the Nation,* London, Routeledge,1990,p12.

28. Ibid.,p.17.

special provisions would however have to be worked out under the general, libertarian principles of democracy. For Nehru, democracy is the principal political value par excellence through which the ideals of liberty and equality could both be as certained without abandoning either.

CHAPTER-I

A HYBRID APPROACH TO ETHICS

ROMANTIC SUBJECTIVISM

Nehru's quest for *The Discovery of India* was a self-confessed obsession. It was an attempt to connect 'the vital links'[1] between the past and the present. It brought Nehru a Romantic awareness of his sense of belonging with his cultural heritage. He betrayed this awareness on many occasions despite his constant efforts to rationally examine that heritage. In this manner, Nehru sought to combine, or rather, in Keeping with his intention, to 'synthesize'[2] the two conflictual, heterodoxical traditions of Western modernity: Romanticism and Enlightenment rationality. This desire to synthesize emotion and reason is itself Romantic. Nehru's knowledge about India's past produced in him feelings of both 'pride' and 'shame'.[3] This showed his sense of emotional attachment with India. 'We are only ashamed', wrote Isaiah Berlin, 'of people we are akin to'.[4]

Nehru entered the past like a romantic traveler. He 'journeyed through India in the company of mighty travelers from China and Western and Central Asia who came in the remote past and left records

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1.   Nehru, Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India*, Oxford University Press, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1964,p.20.

3.   Ibid.,p.49.

4.   Tamir, Yael, *Liberal Nationalism*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1993,p.98.

5.   Nehru, Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India*, Oxford University Press, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1964,p.50.

of their travels.[5]   He 'wandered over the   Himalayas, which are connected with old myth and legend'.[6] He 'visited old monuments and ruins and ancient sculptures and frescoes... where every stone told its story of India's past'.[7]   At Sarnath, he could 'almost see the Buddha preaching his first sermon'.[8] And 'Ashoka's pillars of stone with their inscriptions ' would 'speak' to him.   At FatehpurSikri he visualized 'Akbar, forgetful of his empire, seated holding converse and debate with the learned of all faiths'.[9]

In this manner, Nehru peeped into the history of his varied legacy. It was in his own admission, an 'emotional experience'.[10] Though impressed by India's 'tremendous diversity', Nehru was anxious to draw out that 'essential unity'[11] of India.   This Romantic drive for unity across space (geography) and time (history) was a constant presence in Nehru's endeavour to link up the present with the past.

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6.   Ibid.,p.51.

7̸.   Ibid.,p.51.

8.   Ibid.,p.52.

9̸.   Ibid.,p.52.

1̸0.   Ibid.,p.59.

11̸.   Ibid.,p.59.

12.   Ibid.,p.21.

Nehru wrote about his 'psychological moment of action'.[12] It was 'not action divorced from thought, but rather following from it'.[13] It was 'an intensity of action' where the 'past becomes something that leads up to the present...(and) the future something that flows from it'.[14] This desire for synthesis between thought and action and the realization of being in the midst of times is Romantic in nature.

Nehru also echoed the Romantic spirit of being both inside and outside one's own culture. The nature of Nehru's attachment with his culture has been noted above. The modern processes Nehru desired were not to be super-imposed from outside' but rather a dynamic product which would issue from 'the cultural background of the people'.[15] This shows Nehru's sensitivity and optimism regarding cultural capacity. Yet he approached his culture partly like an 'alien critic'.[16] This made him, like a typically modern person, a part insider and part outsider to his own culture. This helped Nehru recognize and

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13.   Ibid.,p.22.

14.   Ibid.,p.23.

15.   Ibid.,p.518.

16.   Ibid.,p.50.

17.   Tamir, Yael, *Liberal Nationalism,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1993,p.90.

celebrate the human imagination which allows individuals to stand outside their cultures while also insisting that moral thought be based on experience from cultural life.

Since Romanticism is partly about the links between a person and his roots, by itself it stands outside the normative sphere. But Nehru maintains a 'normative diversity'[17] (Yael Tamir) in his inclusivist imagination of the nation where he links his heritage with Hindu, Islamic and Buddhist civilizations.

Nehru's Romanticism however does not turn towards the original Romantic yearning for nature and unadorned emotions. In fact, Nehru believed there was no going back to nature. He tried to achieve his integration of the past with the present in two ways: by drawing an emotional attachment with the past through a desire for unity across space and time (geography and history), and an intellectual engagement to find clues in order to re-shape the desired relationship between the past and the present. The psychological direction in this case as a whole is 'a retrieval of experience or interiority'.[18] This kind of search, according to Charles Taylor, 'for immediate unity, whether

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18.   Taylor, Charles, *Sources of The Self: The Making of Modern Identity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989,p.461.

19.   Ibid.,p.472.

through the celebration of our own power or through a merging in the depths, can be called subjectivist.[19] Taylor takes the example of Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot to mention the subjectivist notion which holds that 'we can recapture the past, or, rather, make the great moments and achievements of other times come alive again in our to bring the long dead back to speech.[20] In Proust's case (and Nehru, interestingly, quoted Proust in his epigraph of *The Discovery of India*) Taylor mentions how '(t)he recovery of the past stops the wasting of time.'[21] Nehrus subjectivism is similar in his belief that not to understand the past and 'feel it as something living within us is not to understand the present'.[22]

CRITICAL IDEALISM

At another level of objective understanding, Nehru was a Critical Idealist. His attitude towards the past is like a lover's, but with a lack of veneration for the beloved object. The true recovery of the past, for Nehru, had to break away from the 'static,' 'self absorbed' aspect of

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19. Ibid.,p.465.

21 20. Ibid.,p.464.

22. Nehru, Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India,* Oxford University Press, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund,1964,p.21.

23. Ibid.,p.506.

an Indian civilization 'inclined to narcissism'.[23] The 'security of the past has to synthesize with the 'progress' of the present. And the present for Nehru meant the 'critical temper of science'[24] as a new way of thought through which the authority of traditions has to be reconciled with human freedom. To achieve this, Nehru took an idealist approach towards India's cultural traditions. According to the Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary, Idealism is 'the tendency to represent things in an ideal form, or as they might or should be rather than as they are, with emphasis on values'. Nehru's understanding of Hinduism was 'in the widest sense of Indian culture'.[25] It was an inclusivist definition based on the examples of cultural synthesis between the religions of India. Nehru admired the fact that instead of the caste system, Hinduism has a 'wonderful assimilative power' which could absorb foreign races and culture.[26] He however clearly identified caste as a system which not only 'led to the suppression of centain groups, but to a separation of theoretical and scholastic learning from craftsmanship and a divorce of philosophy from actual life and its problems'.[27] Nehru felt that this 'aristocratic

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24. Ibid.,p.512.

25. Ibid.,p.74.

26. Ibid.,p.74.

27. Ibid.,p.520.

28. Ibid.,p.520.

approach' of the caste system based on traditionalism has to give way 'to modern conditions and the democratic ideal'.[28] In India, Nehru felt, 'we must aim at equality'.[29] It meant 'equal opportunities for all and no political economic, or social barrier in the way of any individual or group'.[30] Thus Nehru wanted to replace the exploitative structures of traditional Indian society with modern liberal and socialist values. In his account of the history of Indian civilization, Nehru contrasted what to him were positive values with those aspects which had to be abandoned. He tried to highlight ideal notions of facts and concepts in keeping with his sense of values. He pointed out, for example, how the Indus valley civilization was 'a predominantly secular civilization and the religious element, though present, did not dominate the scene'.[31] This fact was 'of the utmost significance'[32] to Nehru. He also never failed to point out those instances where a cultural synthesis took place whether between Arayans and the Dravidians or between Hindus and Muslims. He hailed these instances as a proof of India's astonishing inclusive capacity.[33] Writing on

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29.   Ibid.,p.521.

30.   Ibid.,p.521.

31.   Ibid.,p.70.

32.   Ibid.,p.70.

33.   Ibid.,p.73.

34.   Ibid.,p.74.
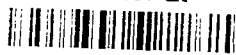
Hinduism, Nehru explained the word 'Dharma' from the old 'inclusive' term for religion in India, 'Arya dhrma', as 'an ethical concept which includes the moral code, righteousness, and the whole range of man's duties and responsibilities'.[34] So as an ethical concept, *Arya dharma* to Nehru 'would include all the faiths (vedic and non-vedic) that originated in India.[35] Though 'Buddhism and Jainism', Nehru further wrote, 'were certainly not Hinduism or even the vedic dharma... they arose in India and were integral parts of Indian life, culture and philosophy'.[36] Hence, Nehru concluded that it would be 'entirely misleading to refer to Indian culture as Hindu culture.[37] To him, Hinduism was a part of Indian culture.

Nehru regarded the founders of religions' as 'astonishing individuals but could only regard them as human beings' as examples of the growth of the mind and spirit of man and not as an agent to convey a message'.[38] Nehru's broad, critical idealist position with regard to India self image and present predicament is best summed up in these words: 'A country under foreign domination seeks escape from

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35. Ibid.,p.74.

36. Ibid.,p.75.

37 36. Ibid.,p.75.

38. Ibid.,p.78.

39 38. Ibid.,p.81.

the present in dreams of a vanished age, and finds consolation in visions of past greatness. That is a foolish and dangerous pastime.. An equally questionable practice for us in India is to imagine that we are still spiritually great though we have come down in the world in other respect. Spiritual or any other greatness cannot be founded on lack of freedom and opportunity, or on starvation and misery.[39]

SYNTHETIC UNIVERSALISM:

There was to Nehru 'a special heritage for those of us in India', yet one which is 'not an exclusive one, for none is exclusive and all are common to the race of man'.[40] For Nehru, the distinct is not relative. It is unique and universal at the same time. This idea of universality works at two levels in Nehru's case. One, the historical borrowings and synthesis between cultures. Two, the Enlighinment idea of the universality of reason. The former for Nehru forms the historico-cultural basis for the justification of borrowing modern categories of knowledge from the West. This borrowing for him however did not mean imitation. 'It should be equally obvioius' Nehru wrote 'that there can be no real cultural or spiritual growth based on

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40 39.   Ibid.,p.36.

41 40.   Ibid.,p.564.

initiation. Such imitation can only be confined to a small number which cuts itself off from the masses and the springs of national life. True culture derives its inspiration from every corner of the world but it is home-grown and has to be based on the wide mass of the people'.[41] Though Nehru felt India should go to foreign countries in search of the present' and 'play our part in this coming internationalism', he was quick to add that 'a real internationalism, is not something in the air without roots or anchorage. It has to grow out of national cultures and can only flourish today on a basis of freedom and equality and true internationalism'.[42] In fact Nehru lblieved that '(t)he bitter conflict between science and religion which shook up Europe in the nineteenth century would have no reality in India' as the essential ideals of Indian culture are broad-based and can be adopted to almost any environment.[43] Nehru's optimism came from the examples of synthesis he found in India's cultural history. The 'first great cultural synthesis and fusion' Nehru found 'took place between the incoming Arayans and the Dravidians'.[44] It was '(t)he astonishing inclusive capacity of Hinduism 'to absorb foreign races and culture

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42. Ibid.,p.565.

43. Ibid.,p.518.

44. Ibid.,p.73.

45,44. Ibid.,p.74.

which Nehru regarded as a possible reason for India to have 'retained her vitality and rejuvenated herself from time to time'.[45] For this reason, Nehru found it correct to define Hinduism 'in the widest sense of Indian culture'.[46]

In his study of the old links between India and Iran, Nehru found that the 'vedic religion had much in common with Zoroastrianism, and vedic Sanskrit and the old Pahalvi, the language of the Avesta, closely resemble each other.[47] In India's links with Greece, Nehru discovers the 'interesting' possibility that 'image worship came to India from Greece' as the vedic religion and early Buddhism were opposed to all forms of idol and image worship until 'Greek artistic influence in Afghanistan and round about the frontier was strong and gradually it had its way'.[48] The examples of such influences from abroad and the synthesis which took place both between Indian and foreign cultures and those heterogenous faiths which had entered Indian soil made Nehru regard it as a historico-cultural value. His desire of India needing to learn the spirit of the age' from the West which represented

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46.   Ibid.,p.74.

47 46.   Ibid.,p.146.

48.   Ibid.,p.156.

49 48.   Ibid.,p.558.

the ideals of 'humanism and the scientific spirit'[49] was a question of adding new historical values in the spirit of India's progress vis-a-vis the West and adding a new layer to the 'ancient palimpsest'.[50] According to Nehru '(o)ur approach to knowledge in the past was a synthetic one' and '(w)e have now to lay greater stress on the synthetic aspect and make the whole world our field of study'.[51] Humanism and the scientific spirit became the context under which the universalist culture of modernity would be established through a synthetic relationship with national cultures. By this, national culture by themselves too would become universal inspite of their distinctions. In other words, for Nehru a Synthetic form Universalism was an integral value of the ideal nations-state for its own self-development and for the sake of its harmonious relationship with other countries.

DEMOCRATIC COLLECTIVISM:

Nehru pointed out quite early in *The Discovery* that his main concerns 'remain problems of individual and social life, of harmonious living, of a proper balancing of an individual's innner and outer life, of

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50 49.   Ibid.,p.59.

51 50.   Ibid.,p.519.

52 51.   Ibid.,p.31.

an adjustment of the relations between individuals and between groups'.[52] Though he 'had no doubt that the Soviet Revolution had advanced human society by a great leap' yet he asserted of being 'too much of an individualist and believer in personal freedom to like overmuch regimentation', and further on again felt 'that in a complex social structure individual freedom had to be limited, and perhaps the only way to read personal freedom was through some such limitation in the social sphere'.[53] The tension in Nehru's choice between liberal individualism and socialist collectivism was spelt early in this fashion. But inspite of his final endorsement in the above passage of the limiting of individual freedom for the sake of a collective scheme of society, Nehru ultimately desired to ground the latter in the former. In fact, though Nehru had written in his autobiography that his historic sense was provided for him by the Marxist conception of history, Mulk Raj Anand has pointed out how in *The Discovery*, Nehru 'does not apply the Marxist yardstick of history consistently anymore'.[54] Its true that the complex cultural understanding of Nehru in *The Discovery* is very different from a Marxist understanding. Only in the cases of

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53. Ibid.,p.29.

54. Anand, Mulk Raj, *Intellect In Action*, in *A Study of Nehru*, (ed.), Rafiq Zakaria, A Times of India Publication, 1959,p.352.

55. Nehru, Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India*, Oxford University Press, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1964,p.400.

looking at the caste structure and the communal problem did Nehru endorse the economic factor as a key one, though reconciled with democracy.

In fact, even regarding the caste issue, Nehru pointed out the need for individual freedom within the group. Besides the issue of economic development, Nehru thought that an individualism reconciled with universalism within caste groups would also help in breaking the caste structure.

The idea of the planning committee was of course an economic issue but Nehru's thrust for co-operative planning was 'to be attempted in the context of democratic freedom'.[55] His original tension noted above can be well captured in this passage: 'Planning, though inevitably bringing about a great deal of control and co-ordination and interfering in some measure with individual freedom, would as a matter of fact, in the context of India today, lead to a vast increase of freedom... If we adhered to the democratic state structure and encouraged co-operative enterprises, many of the dangers of regimentation and concentration of power might be avoided'.[56] Nehru

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56. Ibid.,p.400.

57 56. Ibid.,p.522.

thus settled for a democratically planned collectivism, and explained that it 'need not mean an abolition of private property, but will mean the public ownership of the basic and major industries. Further on, he added that '(a)s far as possible there should be freedom to choose one's occupation. An equalization of income will no result from all this, but there will be far more equitable sharing and a progressive tendency towards equalization'.[57]

Nehru's bias towards a democratically based socialism with some regard for the autonomy of the individual as against a purely Marxist or Communist doctrine is clearly elucidated in his speech for the Azad Memorial lecture: 'Marx was primarily moved by the ghastly conditions that prevailed in the early days of industrialization in Western Europe. At that time there was no truly democratic structure of the state, and changes could hardly be made constitutionally. Hence, revolutionary violence offered the only way to change. Marxism therefore, inevitably thought in terms of a violent revolution. Since then, however, political democracy has spread bringing with it the possibility of peaceful change.. The democratic structure of the state, organized labour and, above all, the urge for social justice as well as scientific and technological progress, have brought about this

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58. Nehru, Jawaharlal, *India Today and tomorrow*, *Azad Memorial Lectures*, 1959, Indian Council for Cultural Relations, 1960,p.13.

transformation'.[58]   In the same speech Nehru pointed out that today
'the Welfare State and even a classless society are not the ideals of
socialism only, but also accepted by capitalist countries, even though
the approach is different'. He questioned 'why toleration should also
not grow up between rival economic and social theories'.[59]   Sunil
Khilnani therefore rightly points out that '(i)n contrast to present day
instrumentalist attitudes to democracy, which puzzle over whether or
not democracy is conducive to economic growth, Nehru assumed that
democracy is a value in itself'.[60]   According to Nehru's biographer S.
Gopal, Nehru 'was a libertarian Marxist whose idea of socialism
encompassed at every stage a large and irreducible measure of civil
liberty. A belief in democracy was the core of his socialist attitude. He
looked forward to a socialist society which by removing economic and
social inhibitions and obstacles would provide greater scope for
individuality.[61]

59,58.   Ibid.,p.27.

60,59.   Khilnani, Sunil, *The Idea of India*, Penguin India, 1997,p.78.

61,60.   Gopal Sarvepalli, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography (Abridged Edition)*, Delhi Oxford
University Press, Oxford New York, 1989,p.11.

62-61.   Nehru, Jawaharlal, *India Today and Tomorrow*, Azad Memorial Lectures, 1959, Indian
Council for Cultural Relations, 1960,p.7.

TOWARDS AN ETHICS

Nehru understood the historical moment he was in as one of 'tumult' and 'confusion', where he said 'we stand facing both ways, forward to the future and backwards towards the past, being pulled in both directions'.[62] He was convinced that this tension could be solved only within modernity what he called 'the spirit of the age'. And Nehru's thinking was sophisticated enough to understand that there are no simple solutions. To situate the problems regarding culture and the socio-economic in the nation-state needed a particular approach. To Nehru, the nation-state was both partly generative and partly derivative with regard to values. As the former, the nations-state would propagate a common cultural ethos among diverse contentions of the notions of the good and follow the policy of political neutrality in matters of religion and distributive justice. As the latter, the nations-state would stand for values according to the needs of the society and its vision. For Nehru, the 'spirit of the age' demanded a new vision of man-kind which would address the needs of society in a particular manner. But this vision to Nehru was itself linked to those elements of the past which could serve as the right guidelines towards

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63 62.   Nehru, Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India*, Oxford University Press,1964,p.75.

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the project of the present. But as we shall see, it was only regarding the cultural question that Nehru sought the suggestions from the past. With regard to socio-economic problems, Nehru found the necessity of the socialist idea of egalitrianism to be quintessential for the progress of the masses. He was optimistic that this thrust towards an egalitarian society would solve many religio-cultural problems as well.

As has been shown, Nehru's idea of culture made him argue for a synthetic universalist approach. He knew that any nation-state would have to solve the cultural question and in India's case it was particularly a difficult problem to address and solve.   He was convinced that any religious definition of the nation-state had to be avoided.   The Indian nation doesn't belong to the members of any single religious community, particularly the majority Hindu community, and hence the state should be impartial and neutral in religious matters. In fact he argued for special safeguards for the minority communities so that their concern for equal social opportunities could be met.

Besides state policy, the issue of religion and culture as the essential ingredient of national ethos was seen by Nehru as the key to communal harmony and to the formulation of a 'new morality' which

would integrate 'the wisdom of the ages' with 'the true spiritual values of today.'[63]

Nehru defined Hinduism in terms of 'Indian culture',[64] a culture which also is partly Islamic, partly Buddhist, Jainist, etc. Nehru's interesting idea is that it is India as a nation which characterises its religions and not the other way round. The national culture so conceived is thus a syntheses of the diverse religious cultures where strict religious distinctions are overlapped by a consensual endeavour. Nehru equated strict religious nationalism with communalism. "You may well have described Hindu communalism as Hindu nationalism and Muslim communalism as Muslim nationalism and you would have been correct,'[65] Nehru explained. Religion to Nehru cannot form the basis of national culture. Under this approach, religion is seen to be the private business of a community which shares with other communities the privilege of belonging for a nation. This belonging, in India's case, has happened over historical periods where each community has

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63.   Wolpert Stanley, *Nehru: A Tryst with Destiny*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1996,p.477.

64.   Nehru, Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India*, 1964, Oxford University Press,p.62.

65.   Ibid.,p.62.

managed to leave its cultural imprints on the other, thereby engaged in a synthetic process. Nehru highlights this particular aspect of how within the geo-cultural boundaries of India, different religions had come to grow and meet, and how inspite of conflicts, did not manage for keep away from evolving a shared culture.

It is based on such an understanding of a shared culture that Nehru believed upon an essential 'unity of India'. He asserted that a country with a long cultural background and a common outlook on life develops a spirit that is peculiar to it and that is impressed on all its children, however much they may differ among themselves. That Nehru tried to forge the notion of this shared cultural unity with the context of the nation can be seen in this passage from *The Discovery* where he tries to make a comparative distinction between India's 'peculiar' spirit which gives it a distinctive national identity vis-a-vis the world outside it: 'The essential unity of that (national') group becomes apparent when it is compared to another national group, though often the differences between the two adjoining groups fade out or intermingle near frontiers, and modern development are tending to produce a certain uniformity every where. In ancient and medieval times, the idea of the modern nation was non-existent and feudal,

religious, racial or cultural bonds had more importance. Yet I think that at almost any time in recorded history an Indian would have felt more or less at home in any part of India, and he would have felt as a stranger and alien in any other country. He would certainly have felt less of a stranger in countries which had partly adopted his culture or religion. Those who professed a religion of non-Indian origin or, coming to India, settled down there, became distinctly Indian in the course of a few generation, such as Christians, Jews, Parsees, Muslims. Indian converts to some of these religions never ceased to be Indians on account of a change of other faith. They were looked upon in other countries as Indians and foreigners, even though there might have been a community of faith between them'.[66]

This is an exceptional passage which more or less explains Nehru's understanding of national identity. It is an identity which gets its true definition from the idea that inspired every religious community in India to practice 'the widest tolerance of belief and custom' and where disruptive tendencies always resulted in an attempt to find a

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[67][66].   Ibid.,p.257.

synthesis'.[67] There is a cultural (and not religious) distinction which makes a particular identity Indian and hence the conclusion Nehru draws that an Indian culture by definition doesn't fall under any religious boundary. The conceptual understanding is that religions are / can be national in character which makes them lose their intra-distinctions and forge a supra-religious, cultural identity. The nation state is then both the cause as well as the product of this identity. The "imagined community" of the nations is then, in the Nehruvian sense, the imagination based on a common idea and ethos of a shared cultural identity which also becomes a political identity. In this manner, culture becomes a political question and Nehru's understanding was that the self growth of cultures towards a new understanding of its own value (or its good of synthetic universalism) has to take into account the modern problems which are political and socio-economic. In this regard, the political and socio-economic aspects already in cultures had to be understood. Nehru identified the principle problem of Hinduism in the caste system. How the caste system had built its social structures based on a exploitative hierarchy of social relations. According to Nehru, 'the ultimate weakness and

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68 67. Ibid.,p.257.

failing of the caste system and the Indian social structure were that they degraded a mass of human beings and gave them no opportunities to get out of that condition-educationally, culturally, or economically'.[68] And further on, Nehru plainly asserts that, '(i)n the context of society today, the caste system and much that goes with it are totally incompatible, reactionary, restrictive and barriers to progress. There can be no equality in status and opportunity within its framework, nor can there be political democracy and much less economic democracy'.[69] The ills of the community for Nehru are linked with the issue of political and socio-economic progress. Because the problems are not merely cultural, but also socio-economic. Like Nehru says about the Indian Muslims that their 'incapacity to march with the changing times and adopt themselves culturally and otherwise to a new environment was not of course due to any innate failing. It derived from certain historical causes, from the delay in the development of a new industrial middle class, and the excessively feudal background of the Moslems, which blocked up awareness of

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68. Ibid.,p.390.

69. Nehru, Jawaharlal, *An Autobiography*, Jawharalal Nehru Memorial Fund, Oxford University Press, 1980,p.379.

development and prevented the release of talent'.[70] Nehru's general belief in the relationship between culture a spiritual growth and the improvement of socio-economic an national conditions can be best summed up in these words he wrote in the Autobiography: 'But for large groups and nations a certain measure of external development is essential before the inner evoluaiton can take place... A class that is downtrodden and exploited can never progress inwardly. Thus even for inner development external freedom and a suitable environment becomes necessary'.[71] Though Nehru said this in the context of India's' being a subject country which, until it gains political independence, cannot make it grow culturally, this statement can well be taken as Nehru's overall philosophy.

Nehru on the one hand tried to foster all material changes through culture while on the other he tried to argue for cultural progress through material changes is society. It is a mutually complementary idea of progress where both culture and materialism would help and improve each other's character. Sometimes it appears

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70. Ibid.,p.470.

71. Nehru, Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India*, Oxford University Press, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund,1964,p.50.

that though Nehru made culture the constitutive part of social change, he wished to subsume culture by the material change occuring in the modern world out of scientific and industrial revolutions. This ambivalence can be seen in these words of Nehru: 'The real struggle today in India is not between Hindu culture and Muslim culture but between these two and the conquring scientific culture of modern civilization... I have no doubt, personally, that all efforts, Hindu or Muslim, to oppose modern scientific and industiral civilization were doomed to failure and I shall watch this failure without regret.[72] There is here a strong, dismissive attitude towards religious cultures. It seems here that Nehru wished the traditional Indian cultures to consciously eliminate their own ethos and embrace the modern culture of science and industry.

But this ambivalence which appears on surface does not actually contradict Nehru's mutually complimentary approach of cultural and material changes. What Nehru was truly against was regarding the self-enclosed religious cultures where conservative and narcissistic impulses neither allowed the growth of new ways of thinking nor

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73. Ibid.,p.512.

allowed the abolition of power structures within social hierarchies. For Nehru, the spirit of the age is linked with the 'scientific approach, the adventurous yet critical temper of science, the search for truth and new knowledge, the refusal to accept anything without testing and trial, the capacity to change previous conclusions in the face of new evidence'.[73] This is of course straight out of the Kantian idea of Enlightenment. But Nehru's scientific approach is, as he clarifies, 'not merely for the application of science but for life itself and the submission of its many problems'.[74] He therefore links 'the scientific spirit' with 'humanism'. 'The scientific approach', Nehru says, 'is a way of thinking, method of acting and associating with our fellow men. It is the temper of a free man'.[75] The libertarian argument is at the basis of Nehru's ethical defense of the scientific spirit. It is a spirit aimed at the freedom of a human being from the superstructure built around culture and the dogma of religion. It is the Kantian spirit. But Nehru manages to integrate the Marxist spirit in his idea of the spirit of the age when he also points out that, 'the spirit of the age is in favour

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74-73.   Ibid.,p.512.

75 74.   Ibid.,p.521.

76.   Nehru, Jawaharlal *An Autobiography*, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, Oxford University Press, 1980,p.72.

of equality'. Further on he clarifies that this egalitarian argument is however more of a liberal socialist kind than a communist one: 'But it does mean equal opportunities for all and no political economic or social barriers in the way of any individual or group'. With this understanding in mind Nehru for example agree to safeguard the 'special interests of minorities by giving them protection, vis-a-vis the powerful majority community. But the aims of special provision would be in tandem with democratic values like the rights of the individuals as well as the group. Since the problem of a particular community are not only religious in nature in Nehru's understanding, so the socio-economic disparities would also be issues which the communities have to address within themselves vis-a-vis the state principles. And also within communal groups the question of individual rights are also important for Nehru. Merely communal problems are religious in nature and according to Nehru these arise out of the vested interests which he identifies as 'really a dispute among upper class people for a division of the spoils of office or of representation in a legislature'. Nehru was totally averse to the religious element in politics. 'Much that the moulvies and Maulanas and Swamis and the like said in their public addresses seemed to me', Nehru wrote in the Autobiography, 'most unfortunate. Their history and sociology and economics

appeared to me all wrong, and the religious twist that was given to everything prevented all clear thinking'. As with regard to the question of culture whose ethical principle Nehru tried to derive by trying to bring culture out of a strictly religious definition, and with regard to the relationship between culture and the political sphere, Nehru discouraged religious intentions behind political principles linked to the question of the community. Nehru felt that the growth of a dynamic culture which would welcome the values of the spirit of the age would depend on the flexible capacity of Indian culture. This culture, which though essentially rooted in religion, have historically been seen to have involved a synthetic approach towards other faiths besides ones own. This aspect of culture was most crucial to Nehru as it transcended the dogmatic regions of religion and allowed a 'peculiar spirit' of commonality to grow between different faiths. So Nehru in a way makes a distinction between religion and culture, and makes culture rather than religion the fundamental aspect which defines a nation. Since he found religions to be self-directed, he situated the ethical principle of synthetic universalism in culture. The goal for Nehru was the harmony between faiths and their common willingness to progress, which could only happen if culture develop both internally and in relation to each other. This twin process of self-growth and

synthesis was Nehru's recommendation for cultures of the modern age. Its an ends-based or goal based notions of ethics, where the best possible means is emphasized.

The self-growth of cultures however was linked to material progress as well, for Nehru. And material progress meant political principles of democracy and distributive justice. It meant the breaking down of traditional social hierarchier, freedom to individuals, special treatment to minorities and other weaker sections of the society and the provision of equal opportunities for all. As cultures are social groups, the ethos of culture have to reconcile with the issues regarding social realities, and so those changes towards the betterment of social inequalities between and within cultural groups have to become a part of the changing ethos of those cultures. This was Nehru's understanding. In this regard, Nehru's idea of democratic collectivism is the key principle. He regarded individual freedom and civil liberties to be as crucial as values as the drive for equality and social justice. He did not think that one was necessarily anti-thetical to the other. Democracy was to him of fundamental value which was well capable of addressing the tension between individual freedom and the question of equality and collective right. To Nehru, the suppression of one value in the service of the other would ultimately result in the caricaturing of

the very value one would hold over the other. If the freedom of the individual is allowed to exist without any sense of social responsibilities then the very notion of individual freedom would lose its direction, its value. In the same manner, if for the sake of gaining equality one indulges in too much regimentation, then the very growth of human personality and the possibility of having the maximum libertarian scope would be thwarted. For Nehru, the spirit of individual liberty and the spirit of equality weren't isolated from the need to foster social progress which is possible only by starting from a standpoint, a principle, which gives both the space to co-exist in the first place. Since the spirit behind both the principles are crucial, one has to grant both the autonomy to exist as possibilities. It is only together that the ethicality of the principles which stand for individual liberty and equality is complete. So the favoring of any one at the serious cost of the other would affect the ethics of the principle as a whole. Nehru, in his insistence upon giving both the question of individual liberty and the question of egalitarianism their due weightage can be said to follow such a principle. This principle in Nehru case is the principle of democracy. It was the fundamental principle which he felt addressed the twin issues in question in the most equitable manner. Nehru wasn't bothered about the imperfections of the system. Rather,

he bothered himself in upholding an imperfect system which however guaranteed the possibility of two core political values: liberty and equality. Nehru believed in the principle of liberty through equality but also made liberty the precondition of any project of equality.

CHAPTER-II

ETHICAL IMPERATIVES

From the discussion in the previous chapter it appears that Nehru's ethical understanding was based on a means-ends approach, where means are not treated as instrumental values but important values in themselves. It is to say that only a particular kind of right action is going to produce the right result. Through the right kind of means, the end value would be easily obtained. Both in the case of Nehru's understanding of culture and his political and socio-economic principles, there is a normative thrust towards a particular goal which is dependent of certain "core" values which act as means to that goal. The ethicality of the nation-state is derived from both its ability to create values, as well as its ability to derive values from the socio-cultural arena. So the nation-state becomes the context under which values are formed and transmitted accordingly. We shall now draw out the distinctive ethical component of Nehru's argument with regard to his cultural and political ideals and link them to his overall view of the nation-state.

Nehru put forth the views of Indian identity being a common cultural identity which transcended respective religious identities. He

held it as a crucial formation of identity with regard to the tendency of various religious identities to conflict with each other. So he presented this pan-Indian common cultural identity as an objective good, as everyone had a reason to pursue it. It is the conception of a shared ideal. This identity is also of a political nature and forms the common identity of a political community. However, within this shared ideal of a political community, the private moralities of varoius cultural communities are made to exist in the respective private spheres of the community, thus recognizing the heterogeneity of the cultural sources of values. Yet these private spheres of cultures too are not regarded as self enclosed in any manner and the common objectives of social change would affect these internal cultural spheres from outside and which can, or rather has to be, adopted from within. There is both a national as well as universal thrust in Nehru's objective goals which however is based on the recognition of the plurality, not only of cultures within the nation, but of different national cultures as well. So it is a universality based on plurality. In this regard, the desire for synthesis between cultures which makes the plural come together as a universal community is regarded as a value by Nehru.

For Nehru, the thrust for unity and universality was also based on scientific and industrial progress which were in turn required to be based on the twin notions of the good, viz, liberty and equality. But just as Nehru was aware of the inability of religions to synthesize, and the problems of cultural synthesis if based on imitation or/and not progressing internally, he was also aware of the problems of industrial progress with regard to the desired goal of progress and universalism. 'There is something lacking in this progress', Nehru wrote in *The Discovery*, 'which can neither produce harmony between nations nor within the spirit of man. Perhaps more synthesis and a little humility towards the wisdom of the past, which, after all, is the accumulated experience of the human race, would help us gain a new perspective and greater harmony'.[1] Further, he added that '(t)he value of human personality diminishes in a mechanical society. The individual loses himself and tends to become an instrument in a complex set-up'.[2] He

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1.   Nehru, Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India,* Oxford University Press, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1964,p.519.

2.   Nehru, Jawaharlal, *India Today and Tomorrow, Azad Memorial Lectures,* 1959, Indian Council for Cultural Relations, 1960,p.22.

wanted to build 'integrated personalities' who will 'develop, in addition to our own national backgrounds and cultures, an appreciation of others and a capacity to understand and cooperate with the people of other countries'.[3] This echoes what Michael Walzer calls 'reiterative universalism' which Yael Tamir explains, is 'an attempt to re-create the particularity of each nation, but also reflects the aspiration to join the "family of nations, the international drama of status equals, to find its appropriate identity and part". To Tamir this 'implies a moral lesson, since it is "a moral act to recognize otherness in this way"; it teaches modesty and suggests that there is something to be learned from others'.[4] So we find in Nehru the desire to integrate the idea of progress with the idea of cultural wholeness which shows his affinity towards both the movements of modernity, viz., the Enlightenment and Romanticism. Nehru then had a double prescription for identities: synthesis and wholeness, through which a universalism will be achieved by recognizing the other as a crucial presence for the development of the self.

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3.   Ibid.,p.519.

4.   Tamir, Yael, *Liberal Nationalism*, Princeton University Press, Princeton New Jersey, 1993,pp.90-91.

Nehru's political goals of liberty and equality emphasized in ethical terms a good which would direct the need for rights. The rights regarding economic opportunities and social freedom, whether they be of the individuals or the group, are rights which have a prior notion of the good. This notion of the good is Nehru's goal based approach of social change. It may be pointed out however that for Nehru, the rights are a crucial guarantor of the realization of the good. In other words, it is the guaranteeing of these rights which makes the good defensible. For example, Nehru held equality as a social ideal which he pointed out, could come not only when 'equal opportunities be given to all' but also when 'special opportunities for educational, economic and cultural growth.. be given to backward groups so as to enable them to catch up to those who are ahead of them'.[5] To take another example, though Nehru was in favour of the nationalization of industry he was convinced that '(e)ven a complete nationalization.. of industry unaccompanied by political democracy will lead only to a different kind of exploitation, for while industry will then belong to the state, the state itself will not belong to the people'.[6]

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5.   Nehru, Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India,* Oxford University Press, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1964,p.521.

6.   Ibid.,p.502.

In the case of culture, Nehru conceived of neutrality as a political principle of the state in two ways: with regard to various religious groups the state would remain neutral regarding their internal notions of the good and would have nothing to do about any religious principles in the matter of state policy. But with regard to certain socio-cultural and economic matters, the state would follow a justice-based principle of neutrality where minority groups would be given special provisions according to their positions of disadvantage. This is of course the Rawlsian sense of justice. Nehru extended this to all economically backward groups, irrespective of religion, and also to individuals vis-a-vis their own groups. 'The communal problem', Nehru wrote, '.. was one of adjusting the claims of the minorities and giving them sufficient protection from majority action'.[7] He reiterated that '(r)eligion, culture, language, the fundamental right of the individual and the group, were all to be protected and assured by basic constitutional provisions'.[8] He advocated the removal of 'all invidious social and customary barriers which came in the way of the full development of the individual as well as any group'.[9]

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7.   Ibid.,pp.381-382.

8.   Ibid.,p.382.

9.   Ibid.,p.383.

Nehru's conception of the nation-state creates values which are
not always derivative, in the sense that they are not always values
springing from internal perceptions of society and its problems. The
nation is also guided by principles which cater to its own objectified
reality and whose values transcend particularistic notions. These
values are regarding the common good. It is a kind of integrative
ideal. In a social sense, for example, it tries to identify progress with
'the spirit of the age' which, according to Nehru, 'means a realization
of the fact that the backwardness or degradation of any group is not
due to inherent failings in it, but principally to lack of opportunities and
long suppression of other groups. It should mean an understanding of
the modern world wherein real progress and advance, whether national
or international, have become very much a joint affair and a backward
group pulls others back'.[10] The understanding here is that economic
backwardness also means cultural backwardness. 'Spiritual or any
other greatness', Nehru wrote, 'cannot be founded on lack of freedom

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10.   Ibid.,521.

and opportunity, or on starvation and misery'.[11] It is a materialist

conception of culture, echoed in almost similer words by Walter

Benjamin: 'The class struggle, which is always present to a historian

in-fluenced by Marx, is a fight for the crude and material things

without which no refined and spiritual things could exist'.[12] Like

Benjamin, Nehru made the sprititual accountable to the material. Or,

one may say, he made the material pass its judgment on the spiritual

vis-a-vis their mutual conditions. In this sense, Nehru was a

materialist. For but this materilalism was aimed at establishing

equality, though also coupled with the precondition of the liberty

principle. It was primarily aimed at an ethical reconciliation him

cultures are, or should be, ethical entities. The great advantages of

China over other counties, according to Nehru, were because the

country had 'based its culture less on religion and more on morality

and ethics'.[13] Nehru's idea of ethics or morality, like a true modern,

was of a dynamic kind. 'I realized,' he wrote, 'that the moral

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11.   Ibid.,p.81,

12.   Benjamin, Walter, *Illuminations,* Fontana Press, 1970,1973,p.246.

13.   Nehru, Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India,* Oxford University Press, Jawaharlal Nehru
       Memorial Fund, 1964,p.518.

approach is a changing one and depends upon the growing mind and an advancing civilization'.[14] In the same vein, Nehru believed that '(t)raditions have to be accepted to a large extent and adopted and transformed to meet new conditions and ways of thought and at the same time new traditions have to be built up'.[15] The new ideals Nehru mentioned were 'the international ideal and the proletarian ideal'[16] which in the Nehruvian sense means the cultural goal of synthetic universalism and the political and socio-economic goal of democratic collectivism. Since Nehru regarded them as a mutually complimentary goal of the nation-state, both were meant to be a part of cultural changes.

For Nehru, despite the exploitative regime of colonialism, Western modernity had brought two valuable gifts: democracy and the possibility of non-coercive universality. Political democracy would grant formal freedom to engage and participate in voicing one's rights

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14.   Ibid.,p.29.

15.   Ibid.,p.53.

16.   Ibid.,p.53.

and opinions in the public sphere. It is the precondition of the progress towards a more equitable, social democracy. A democratic nation-state would form a political community which would be guaranteed certain rights and a platform to solve disputes. The state would be neutral in the sense of imparting justice. This is a key aspect of liberal democracy Nehru adhered to. This neutrality would ensure as much freedom for individuals as for groups. Nehru's ideal regarding the values of the state also had an objective good around which these rights of individuals and groups would be ensured. It is the idea of distributive justice which is regarding the proper distribution of wealth and giving special status to economically backward and culturally threatened groups. This would bring in the element of moral duty on the part of both individuals and groups. This sense of duty establishes a moral relationship between members of a political community which is socio-culturally heterogenous. It enjoins rights with certain duties, thereby establishing an important normative relationship between different rights harmonized by a sense of duty. It shows how one's rights need to be looked at through other's rights and one's own duties in the same manner. Democracy serves as the higher order value; the

mutually agreed upon objective value; which works as the guiding principle. The duties and rights of a political community however does not disturb the private moralities of cultural communities (as long as they don't become a political issue), thus maintaining the principle of the heterogeneity of substantive morality regarding the private sphere of cultural communities. Neutrality of a secular democratic state as Nehru saw (yet did not use the term 'secular' as Akeel Bilgrami reminds us)' is neutral in its position while being directed by the ideals of justice. In a plural society where the idea of the good differs, a nation-state arbitrates through a neutral posture the disagreements regarding different issues between groups and individuals thereby ensuring what Isaiah Berlin called "negative" freedom and which Charles Larmore says is a 'political ideal'.[17] Nehru's conception of neutrality as propagated by the nation-state then is a political ideal, but one which has social consequences as it is based on a positive thrust towards imparting justice in an equitable manner. As he was willing to give special provisions to minorities and backward groups it shows that

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17.   Larmore, Charles, *Patterns of Moral Caomplexity*, Combridge Unviersity Press, Cambridge, 1987,p.45.

he had a minority/majority framework wherein the relative position of advantage and disadvantage were taken into account . In this the autonomy and freedom of the individual was also emphasized. One may call it a libertarian socialist position. Nehru's understanding seems to be that the principle of promoting equality is possible only through an equalization programme which takes different levels and instances of social in equalities into account. It is geared towards favouring those in to disadvantageous position. It distinguishes between a formal equality and substantive equality and hence carries the Nehruvian idea of establishing a social democracy through political democracy by trying to give special opportunities and rights to marginal social groups and individuals while maintaining basic equal rights and civil liberties for all members of society.

With regard to culture, Nehru argued for a synthetic approach between diverse cultures in a nation-state, which would also aim for a universalist reconciliation between cultures. Just as Nehru argued for an Enlightenment-rationalist approach towards his political ideal based on rational principales of political and social justice, he took the

position of a Romantic and secular culturalist where he desired the inter-mingling of cultures in a non-religious manner. The nation-state becomes a crucial context here since, as David Miller points out, '(n)ationality.. can be an inclusive, over-arching identity that incorporates sub-groups with distinctive religious and cultural traits'. To put the argument other way round, Miller points out that 'a plural society that has distinct cultural groups but lacks such an over-arching identity is unlikely to have sufficient mutual trust to be a liberal one'.[18] The nation then becomes the context where Tamir's ideal of an impartial political community looks after the politico-cultural matters of various religio-cultural groups. Universality in this sense is achieved through what Sunil Khilnani calls; talking of the Nehruvian conception of cultural mutuality; 'interconnected differences'.[19] Universality is also about the borrowing of cultural values as Nehru endorsed. In the context of British colonial domination, Nehru was prepared to borrow political and cultural values from the British and the West in general,

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18.   Canovan, Margarete, *Nationhood Azad Political Theory*, Edward Publishing Company, 1996,p.121.

19.   Khilnani, Sunil, *The Idea of India*, Penguin India, 1997,p,172.

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inspite of the reality of Imperialist subjugation. Nehru 'saw the opposition between East and West' according to Octavio Paz, 'as the clash between two historical realities'. To Paz, 'for Nehru, the clash between different cultures was rather fictitious; the real thing was the historical opposition'.[20] Therefore Paz concluded: 'Contrary to the anthropologists and historians who postulate the multiplicity of cultures, Nehru affirmed the unity of thought and the universality of science, art and technology. In this universality, he saw the answer to the antagonism of the historical worlds, whether in the international sphere or in the internal realm of each society'.[21]

So Nehru's understanding seems to have been that it is possible to absorb cultural values even in the midst of historical opposition between countries. To put it in another fashion, historical oppositions cannot necessarily come in the way of choosing cultural values. The understanding seems to be that values not only have an intrinsic worth

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20. Paz,Octavio, *Nehru: Man of Two Cultures and One World Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO,* New Delhi, 1967,p.13

21. Ibid.,p.14.

which can be cross-cultural and/or trans-national, but also that they manage to get assimilated in a desired fashion both through and against the nature of the power discourse of historical confrontation. Which mean one may say that the recognition and acceptance of political and cultural values by a subject country can take place or can be considered outside the intentions or representations of the colonial discourse of power. The subject judges those values internally, from within, which makes it an authentic 'social act' (in the sense Charles Taylor uses it),[22] and hence makes such borrowings part of an authentic nationalist discourse.

The nation, as Benedict Anderson has told us, is an 'imagined community',[23] which, according to Ernst Gellner, is invented and constructed as such by the nationalist elite.[24] Yet, as Miroslav Hroch has said: 'Intellectuals can 'invent' national communities only if certain objective preconditions for the formation of a nation already exits'.

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22. Mentioned by Sudipto Kaviraj in a private discussion.

23. Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities,* Verso, London, 1983,p.6.

24. Ernst Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism,* Oxford, 1983.

As Hroch further points out, though (i)ndividual discoveries   of

national sentiment do not explain why such discoveries recurred in so

many countries', these reasons 'may be verbalized' though 'below the

level of 'high politics' they are unverbalized![25]   National

consciousness in India began in the middle-classes though peasant

classes also responded with a more localized consciousness.   The

anti-colonial struggle posed itself as a counter movement. It witnessed

the caricature of both the self and the other under the contaminated

atmosphere of colonial domination.   The double self-conscious

perception of the self and the other with regard to each other and their

unequal relationship, fostered both narcissistic and sadistic

psychological impulses.   The self became in such circumstances an

'intimate enemy'[26] as Ashis Nandy memorably coined. Exaggerations

about the self and the other was made under the English domination in

India by both the colonizers and the colonized. In the midst of such a

situation, Nehru bravely attempted a rather un-selfconscious discovery

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25.   Hroch, Miroslav, *From National Movement to the Fully-Formed NationL: The Nation-Building Process of Europe,* (ed.), Balakrishnan, Gopal, Mapping the Nation, Verso, London, New York, 1996,p.79.

26.   Nandy, Ashis, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism,* Penguin, India.

of both the self and the other. He put both to the test of values which he felt were crucial if one had to get out of the mentality of both the dominator as well as the dominated, and re-establish the particularistic concerns of one's own nation and the general concerns of all humanity. For isolation was no longer possible or desirable as Nehru understood. Colonialism taught him that racial or ethnocentric ideas of the nation-state were bound to be fascistic, and hence the nation-state could only be justified as an ethical entity.

The national principle was attractive to Nehru only in the sense that it made differences possible to unite and create a characteristic which transcends particularisms and becomes a broader definition of civilization.

Nehru took the example of scientific rationality and industrialism as two categories which had universalist justifications. The values of rational thinking which could subvert traditionalist modes of social relations by allowing people to think freely on questions which relations which affected their lives would help in creating new social

values and subverting old social structures. Industrial progress based on scientific technology would improve the mechanics of production and foster economic growth which would improve people's lives. For Nehru, social freedom had to reflect freedom of thought. Freedom and equality in social relationships whether of groups or individuals were the most important ideals for Nehru and his critique of traditionalism was based on the absence of these two values in traditional societies.

The ideal of 'harmony' between cultures would have to take place, for Nehru, simultaneously with the harmony of material or socio-economic relations both within and across societies. Freedom and equal treatment were both preconditions, both in the case of the social arena as well as the principles of state. Cultures to Nehru had a relational significance and not merely ideational or ideological. To counter the ills of culture one had to bring in modern ideas which would evaluate the social and intellectual aspects of culture and re-define them according to the new consciousness. Nehru was aware of not only the contradictions of the philosophy and social structure of the past but also the paradoxes of modernity. He wanted to modernize

culture but also culture modernity, and in both cases the relationship between culture and technology had to be mediated through ethical considerations which would help culture to progress alongwith the ideals of the present and would also make technology serve human purposes without the anxieties of excessive materialism.

CONCLUSION

My thesis has established Nehru's ethical concept of the nation-state. I have divided Nehru's ethical principles in two ways: the cultural principles and the socio-economic principles. I have shown how Nehru fuses the two principles together to argue for an integrated approach towards making the nation-state an entity guided by ethical principles. Hence I would point out the crux of Nehru's argument regarding what maks the nation-state an ethical entity.

For Nehru the cultural ideal was a universal harmony between cultural systems. But cultures were contextualized in particular nations, with their own particular histories. A history which gave national cultures their distinctive traits. So any universalism had to base itself on this fundamental plurality of cultures both itself on this fundamental plurality of cultures both within and among nations. But cultures were also tied to particular religions with their specific, exclusivist belief-systems. It tended to make religious differences irredeemable and unconquerable. And since nations too are tied to religions, a nation based on religious principles would become as exclusivist. For Nehru, inspite of historical differences and of power

relations, nations had to figure out a co-operational and relational link between them in order to confront and avoid the attempt at domination.

There seemed to Nehru 'no alternative between world conquest and world association'.[1] Just as Nehru had discovered the historical synthesis between cultures and held it as a valuable mode of human interaction, he was desirous of national states developing through mutual interaction. For Nehru, cultures intermingle inspite of their belonging to particular religions. It told him that the synthetic capacity of cultures which made them open to sharing cultural values from elsewhere was an extra-religious capacity. So the entity of culture stretched beyond its being a component part of religion. Nehru thus wanted cultures to become a part of national identity rather than to become component parts of religions. The nation-state becomes the ground where cultures would flourish under a relational normativity among themselves, both within the national boundary as a distinctive mode of national ethos, while also becoming a part of the association

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1.   Nehru, Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India*, Oxford University Press, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1964,p.540.

between nation-states. Hence it was cultural identity which Nehru sought as a common national identity. This cultural identity by transcending the divisive form of religious identities would form an integrative ideal in the national context. This common cultural identity thus functions as a common good of a shared politico-cultural and national identity. It becomes the associative principle of a shared ideal and forms the crucial basis of harmony which Nehru held as an ideal goal of human culture. This cultural definition of the nation-state thus acts as the ethical principle for Nehru.

With regard to the socio-economic issue, Nehru regarded the establishment of political democracy as a preconditional value of progressing towards a more equitable social democracy. Since Nehru's ideal of harmony regarding culture was also linked with the socio-economic issue as Nehru's materialist conception of culture (the conception that spiritual progress depend on material progress) meant that cultures have to progress as socio-economic groups to foster the ideals of human freedom and equality. Besides the basic political of human freedom granted to individuals and groups in the manner of

libertarian rights, Nehru was sensitive to the relative positions of socio-economically disadvantaged groups vis-a-vis the majority and economically well-off groups. So with regard to minority groups and other socio-economically backward groups; Nehru's ethical principle of the common good as a need to be fostered by the nations-state, was a justice-based neutrality where special provisions were recommended to cater to the historically disadvantaged groups in the context of their status as marginal national groups. This justice-based neutrality would act as the political ideal of the nation-state which would foster the social ideal of the equalization of all culturally marginalized and socio-economically backward groups.

Hence the principle of a common national identity and justice-based neutrality are ethical principles which the nation-state creates while deriving such principles as harmony, liberty and equality from the values as regarded by society to foster its well-being. So Nehru's ethical conception of the nation-state is both generative and derivative with regard to ethical principles in these ways.

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