

Lancy Lobo and Jayesh Shah, ed. (2018). *The Legacy of Nehru: Appraisal and Analysis*. New Delhi: Manohar, Hardbound, pp. 211, Rs.1045/-.

Let me begin with the structural aspects of the book and then discuss main arguments of specific contributions in each part. The book has twelve chapters presented in 4 parts. The first chapter on Introduction by the editors precedes the rest. The editors have cogently articulated their position that "...this book is not a eulogy ... but an attempt at a critical look at his foreign, defence and economic policy contributions and failures". They have succeeded in making a convincing case for critically reviewing Nehru's vision and legacy along with a brilliant team of well-known intellectuals and social scientists.

Part – I, titled as "Legacy and Vision of Nehru" has two very significant contributions by Subhash Kashyap and Bhikhu Parekh. Kashyap's essay 'The Legacy of Nehru' presents a balance sheet of Nehru's negative and positive legacies. According to him, Nehru's most important legacy is founding democratic institutions and putting blood and flesh in them by himself practicing democratic ideals and abiding by the norms as a devout worshipper. The list of negative legacies or failures of Nehru is long –partition mess, border disputes with China and Pakistan, license raj, corruption, Kashmir issue, electoral

politicization of minorities, failing to understand the need for linguistic re-organization of states as legitimate democratic aspiration and demand; etc. Constitution and Parliament remain as Nehru's outstanding legacies. In the foreign policy area, his legacy of non-alignment, disarmament, nuclear weapon free world, world peace and peaceful coexistence guided Indian national interests for a long period.

The third chapter by Bhikhu Parekh critically examines Nehru's vision of India and brings out various strengths and flaws in it. Nehru tried to unravel the mystery of India's subjugation by Muslim invaders, trading company and British for such a long time. Parekh finds Nehru oscillating between optimism and pessimism regarding India's past and the present. Unlike several other nationalist leaders, Nehru did not take a religious view of Muslim invasions. Nehru's assessment and understanding of India's history may be questioned but not his sincerity to discover it. In order to keep India free, secure and sovereign, Nehru forged a 'national philosophy' or say 'national ideology', which was based on seven 'basic goals' of: (1) national unity, (2) parliamentary democracy, (3) industrialization, (4) socialism, (5) cultivation of scientific temper, (6) secularism, and (7) non-alignment. Each of these seven basic goals is independently discussed at modest length but with utmost clarity, criticality and hence convincing readability. In fact, Parekh's discussion of these seven basic goals is so rich and engaging that it provides an overarching framework capable of holding rest of the contributions in the volume together.

Of the seven basic goals, this review has picked up only three goals of national unity, scientific temper and secularism as more worthy of further discussion than other basic goals which are discussed at length by other contributions. National unity, national integration or call it nation-building, for Nehru it was of the highest centrality and top priority as national independence was thickly linked to it. "You lose one and lose the other too". Thus, national unity can be achieved only if the state was, one, centralized and stood above society and had complete allegiance of its citizens; second, had shared sense of identity, common belonging; and third, territorial integrity. The new state as envisaged in the Constitution served the purpose of centralized authority but it was more on colonial lines than truly federal polity. Nehru was suspicious of the states and hence kept them under iron clutches. Nehru desired citizen loyalty and a sense of common belonging but did precious little. His assumptions of its happening on its own or as byproduct of other initiatives like industrialization were sadly erroneous. This was so because Nehru did not give adequate attention to culture and education – two major vehicles of national integration. As a result, the future citizens of the new republic began growing without much awareness of their past, shared values, common national narrative and common language.

Territorial integrity suffered because of Nehru's ambiguity. He expected colonial legacy to work and come to his service but it did not as China's patience ran out

and waged a war. Internally, he was apprehensive of secessionist tendencies. Though, mercifully the Constitution had foreclosed this option to his relief; yet he took a long time to respond to legitimate demands of states for either statehood or autonomy. However, Nehru was so right in emphasizing on importance of scientific temper as one of the basic national goals. In Parekh's words, "For nearly a millennium, India had been other-worldly, inward looking, victim of superstitions and bizarre beliefs and prey to peddlers of religious dogmas. It needed to modernize its ways of thought and cultivate scientific thinking or temper (p.46)". However, it is nicely pointed out by Parekh that Nehru was not in favor of creating another false god in the name of science or scientific temper as its limits were well-known to him. It is rightly argued that: "Rejecting the exaggerated claims of science did not mean rejecting science itself."

'Secularism' is the sixth basic goal. Nehru wanted to ensure autonomy of state over religion. To him, state was a secular institution, deriving its authority from citizens and not from some divinity. Its job was to serve moral and material interests of citizens and not the welfare of their soul or otherworldly wellbeing. The State should treat all citizens equally irrespective of their religions or religiosity. It should maintain critical distance from all religions. But if need be it has the right to intervene in internal affairs of a religion on the grounds of public order, safety, morality, human rights or decency. Parekh has very well discussed the limitations of Nehru's views of secularism when faced with day to day governance and law-making. Firstly, Nehru's view on public role of religion was narrow and one-sided. Its reformist potential was overlooked by Nehru. Social practices violating rights but having religious sanctions needed secular-positive approach. He failed to set up advisory councils made up of all faith representations at the national and state levels with a more liberal, tolerant outlook and supportive encouragements from the state/government. Secondly, Nehru's celebration of Buddha's 2500th anniversary compromised some elements of his secular state. His objections vis-a-vis Hindu practices and participation by leaders/office-bearers of secular government offended Hindus. He inadvertently gave enough fire power to counters from the majority Hindu community saying that Nehru was unequal in his treatment of minorities and majority communities. Till this day he has remained open to these criticisms. The nation today seems to be paying the price of his "narrow and austere conception of secularism".

Parekh concludes that his stay in office for 17 years as PM ensured that this national philosophy became "unofficially official philosophy of the Indian state" and those who opposed it "appeared reactionary, obscurantist and even anti-national". It guided as well as limited the political imagination and practice and became inescapable point of reference for his successors.

The second part of the book on "Political Legacy of Nehru" has two

contributions, one each by Harihar Bhattacharya and Alok Misra. Bhattacharya examines Nehru's approach to nationhood and nation-building from the standpoint of its contemporary reference. After conducting a thorough assessment of the Nehruvian model, he comments that Nehru overemphasized "diversity claims" as compared to "equality claims". He concludes that because of the centrality accorded to the state, this model ended up creating more inequalities and hence democracy came second. Alok Misra's essay eulogizes and celebrates Nehru's contribution in the making of India's historic Constitution. Misra goes a great length in describing and highlighting Nehru's role and leadership in the Constituent Assembly – specifically in setting up of democratic institutions, designing their structures, stressing social justice and enforcing rule of law.

Three essays in Part-III of the book are devoted to analyzing and appraising Nehru's foreign policy-making. Skand Tayal traces the history of Nehru's exposure and links to foreign policy-making. Its success is described in four major achievements: (i) stabilizing neighborly relations; (ii) insulating India from the fall out of superpower rivalries; (iii) forging balanced foreign ties to achieve India's economic goals; and, (iv) conveying to the world about India's strong belief in moral ethos and world peace. The policy of non-alignment was unique and innovative. It considerably served India's national interests in the post-Nehru period. In his essay, Anand Mavalankar revisits Nehru's world view on non-alignment from the standpoint of its relevance in the twenty first century. He thereby assesses Nehru's legacy in terms of India's role in world affairs. He questions the critics of Nehru's policy on non-alignment as outdated. Major global events were said to have trimmed its relevance. He still has faith in its potential to serve Indian foreign policy objectives and practices. Atri Saha's short contribution delineates philosophical dimensions of Nehru's foreign policy. She credits Nehru for being sensitive to India's socio-economic environment and protecting it from predatory practices of privatization in every sphere. Saha also lists Nehru's failures in foreign policy vis-a-vis several international disputes. Nehru's foreign policy was premised on three philosophical pillars of democracy, nationalism and cosmopolitanism. Atri closes her piece with an optimistic expectation that Nehru's foreign policy has the potential to become relevant once again if it is re-approached objectively and seriously.

Part-IV has four essays on Nehru's economic ideology and socialism. Ranjit Singh Ghuman and Rajeev Sharma's jointly authored essay critically reviews Nehru's economic philosophy – constructed on such core concepts as planning, mixed economy, public sector and agriculture-industry balance. They argue in great details about the role of agriculture in a country like India. Nehru's economic ideas are examined and appraised within a historical context of pre and post-independence period. They conclude that Nehru was a great economic visionary and provided the fundamental ideas in the realm of economic policy

for developing a strong and self-reliant India with social justice as its central focus. Asok Kumar Mukhopadhyay's essay discusses the contribution and legacy of Nehru in the study and practice of public administration. Nehru had realized the importance of people's participation in administrative services through the concept of democratic decentralization. He credits Nehru for inviting internationally reputed American expert Paul Appleby to suggest changes in inherited colonial administrative apparatus and make it suitable for new goals of serving people. Nehru is also credited for founding the Indian Institute of Public Administration in 1954 in New Delhi. He addressed it annually till his death. Mukhopadhyay concludes his essay with a lament that the quality of civil servants and their conduct in public life is degenerated and deteriorated so much. The Government of India, Union Public Service Commission and present generation of administrators and civil servants should revisit Nehru's ideas on ideal civil service.

Nivedita Giri in her essay discusses the four pillars of the Nehruvian model of development (which coincidentally some other contributors too have done), namely, parliamentary democracy, secularism, economic planning and non-alignment. Giri admires Nehru's leadership for giving these four pillars firm rooting. They, however, have received mixed reception from popular, journalistic and academic quarters. The book closes with an outstanding contribution by Ghanshyam Shah. Shah has viewed Nehru essentially as a social democrat. He critiques Nehru's knowledge about Indian society and culture. Shah's essay contains interesting sub-sections as: Nehru's encounter and formation of socialist ideas in pre-independence period; his work as Prime Minister in free India; large scale industrialization; concern for weaker sections; his relationship with party cadre and bureaucracy. Shah too closes his essay by conceding that 'security and stability' being his central objective, he unfortunately ended up reproducing the colonial bureaucratic apparatus and administrative culture of the regal Raj.

All in all, collective reflections on a leader like Nehru's vision, ideas, thought, life, actions, failures and achievements in such a comprehensive range of areas like democracy, socialism, constitution, Parliament, nation-building, industrialization, scientific temper, public administration, foreign policy, planning, world peace, atomic energy and space research is neither a small feat nor a day late. The relevance of Nehruvian ideas must be researched to meet the internal and external challenges that the country is facing today. I complement the authors for first organizing the seminar on this vital theme and later editing and publishing this volume which will serve the interests of popular and academic readers.

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