



# The Nehruvian Perspective on Communalism

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The proposed paper is an attempt to analyse the idea of Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru in the context of communalism. Soon after Independence, India faced a major problem like communal upset in the country. Pt. Nehru, who played an important role during the crisis and created confidence among the affected people. Nehru had realised that the key to peace in tolerance. He well understood that the main causes of conflict between on community. In this paper, we tried to discuss the much-discussed term of communalism and Pt. Nehru, from whom we learnt how to faced and tackled the problem.

Keywords : Independent, Scientific Temper

“A study of the history of the Congress Party shows that communal harmony and national integration have been its long standing objective”.<sup>1</sup> Hence, when India became independent and the responsibility of Prime ministership fell on Nehru, an ardent figure and freedom fighter, it had a singular effect in laying in the foundation of a modern secular India. At the press conference at New Delhi on Oct 12<sup>th</sup> 1947 Nehru declared: “So far as India is concerned we have very clearly stated both as government and otherwise that we cannot think of any state which might be called a communal or religious state. We can only think of secular, non communal, democratic state in which every individual to whatever religion he may belong has equal rights and opportunities.”<sup>2</sup>

Soon after independence, Nehru was confronted with recurrent communal riots in Punjab and Bengal and like Kashmir, Hyderabad and Junagarh. Partition resulted in widespread communal riots in many parts of the country. The communal frenzy reached its climax in Sept 1947 when millions of Hindu refugees arrived in Delhi from Pakistan. Retaliatory activities started against Muslims in different parts of Delhi. To deal with the problem of riots and refugees rehabilitation and emergency committee headed by Lord Mountbatten was constituted. But actually it was Nehru who played an important role during the crisis and created confidence among the affected people.

On another occasion, addressing a public meeting at Delhi on Sept 30<sup>th</sup> 1947, “Nehru made it clear that so long as he was at the helm of affairs, India could never become a Hindu state.”<sup>3</sup>

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Nehru never yielded to communal passion throughout his Prime ministership. In his broadcast on August 19<sup>th</sup>, 1947, he strongly condemned the Punjab riots and threatened firm action against all communal elements. "In the past we have unfortunately trouble on a large scale. They are not going to be tolerated in the future. So far as the government of India is concerned they will deal with any communal outbreak with the greatest firmness. They will treat every Indian on equal basis and try to secure for the him all the rights which he shared with the order."<sup>4</sup>

Speaking at the Azad Memorial Lecture, Nehru made clear about his stand on communalism. He stated, ".....I want the narrow conflicts of today in the name of religion and caste, language or province, to cease and a classless and casteless society to be built up, where every individual has full opportunity to grow according to his worth and ability."<sup>5</sup>

Nehru is usually considered a non-religious if not an irreligious man. But, actually, Nehru was deeply spiritual person who valued and exemplified in his life, most of the basic values which religion advocated through he did not uphold any particular religion and took delight in calling himself a pagan. His opposition was limited to only the formal, dogmatic and sectarian aspect of religion. Being a man of scientific temper he adopted the empirical route to reality. Hence Nehru fought against all prejudices and distrusted all absolute philosophies and dogmas. He "believed in a priesthood which is spread over all lands and religions, which interprets religion in term of 'spiritual' realization of the kingdom of God on earth. He worked for the spread of such a liberal spiritual religion among the people of India."<sup>6</sup>

However, he had a great respect for those people who adhered to certain values, principles and norms of life e.g. Prophet Mohammad (SAW), Christ, Buddha, Mahavir, Nanak, Tagore and Gandhi. Although Gandhiji's ideas were equivalent to Hinduism minus untouchability. But Nehru was attracted towards him. At a time when religion was fading without being replaced by other norms. Gandhiji's non-violent approach seemed to Nehru a more scientific reasonable and practicable proposition.

Thus the concept of secularism as adopted by Nehru, as panacea for communalism was a corollary of his humanistic and liberal view of religion and had its roots in India's traditions, composite culture and scientific outlook.

Nehru tried to give a pragmatic orientation to Indian politics and based political solidarity on concept of secular relationship rather than transcendental nationalism. As Rajni Kothari maintains that "Nehru's role (often unconsciously played) was both to hold groups together under him and to tie them into a competitive web of relationship which would crystallise into more normal channels once his own personal weight was lifted."<sup>7</sup>

Pt. Nehru was well aware that the needs of the hour was to integrate India that state must not discriminate between citizens and it must treat all Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Parsces and Buddhists equally.

Thus, from the very beginning Nehru “adopted the policy that state must not discriminate between citizen and it must treat all Hindu, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsces and Buddhists equally, every Indian citizen had equal claims in the eye of Law”<sup>8</sup> and “Nehru could never think of making a compromise on this issue.”<sup>9</sup>

Nehru had realized that the key to peace is tolerance. He well understood that the man causes of conflict between own community and another was the each regarded truth and virtue to be its exclusive possession and wanted to impose its own ideas and principles on other.

Nehru being a true humanist desired that every community should have perfect freedom within its proper sphere of activity, but simultaneously respect the rights of others to think and act according to their own light in matter with which they are primarily concerned. The principle of co-existence on secularism is Nehru’s gift to India. The services rendered by Nehru as our national leader and Prime Minister with regard to adjustment of relations between individuals and groups are unparalleled in the present age.

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