

Chapter 3

The Imperative of Secular Reforms: Reading Jawaharlal Nehru

3.1: Understanding the main concerns of Nehru's Political Thought

The question is: "What is this universe? From what does it arise? Into what does it go?" And the answer is: "In freedom it rises, in freedom, it rests, and into freedom, it melts away."¹

Jawaharlal Nehru evoked in a common man so many sentiments that were uncommon to the typical Indian consciousness, however, it did represent in essence and character the issues faced by people.² Such a poignant remark befits Nehru's charisma and his bequest for a new India envisioned through countless speeches, writings and doings. It could make a serious researcher analyze his works and experience a reflection of magnanimity and ardent connection towards aspects concerning India's future. Some of his major contributions to Indian tradition using the trope of violence shall be analyzed in detail in the current chapter.

Nehru's fascination for recreating a public space for India is evident as an underlying narrative to all that he emphasizes on as being important for the realization of the freedom of the masses. For Nehru, the onus of organizing society and utilizing its resources must be in order to realize the potential of the new, and the necessity for it to replace the old. Nehru's focus on the following aspects of life and living gives one the vision of India's future that he had envisioned in the form of discovery and a product of wonder. The element of wonder features as an extremely important ingredient in Nehruvian thinking. Perhaps the only person to have provided an understanding of the idea of India that was ideated upon something new for India, around the period of 1947 was Nehru.³ He provides a normative vision of the territorial conception of India, an idea of India.⁴ This idea that he encapsulates through his famous writings, speeches and works, did manage to create a new conception of the political. Nehru alters the basis of the existing political and the basis of the existing set of arguments that defined politics in India, with his vision of the new political.

Nehru's vision of this new political did engage with the need to embrace a sense of the future that had to overcome and see beyond its pasts. The term discovery in 'Discovery of India', signifies such an understanding that the path guiding such a movement from the past towards

the future had to in certain ways ‘tame’ and accept it. This acceptance had its roots in the past with a vision toward the future indicating the need to place this making of the future within what he claimed to be progress for human civilization. Therefore, going back to the past was not a sign of progress. This also formidably manifested in his attitude towards religion, state, nation, and the political at large. A normative vision has been penned by Nehru for India and he attributes an idea to the territoriality of the Indian subcontinent. In this chapter I attempt to explore in some detail what Nehru conceptualized about these entities for the meaning and relevance they had and shall have in his vision for India. In doing so, I would also try and locate the trope of violence in the relationship between religion and state that Nehru proffered. It would be helpful, however, to begin with an understanding of Nehru’s perception of religion and state.

3.1.1: Nehru’s perception of Religion and State:

Religion featured as predominantly a force that had to be rethought and redefined the way it was being practiced and realized in the public space, for Nehru. Nehru emphasized on the need to revamp the religious configurations that had been existing and defining the lives of people. Within the modern political framework of the public and the private domains, religion had to be classified and packaged for better management and functioning. Nehru believed in the State to guide the practise and profession of religion in the public space. The distinction between the public and private characterizes and which goes on to also define the scope of the state does ensure that religion remained within the confines of these distinctly defined spaces, for Nehru. The need to distinctly define and locate religion became rather important for Nehru in the vision he harboured.

The fundamental question that one could ask is what led Nehru to arrive at such a stance on religion. For Nehru, the reigns of social justice must not be handed over to religion, which societies in the Indian subcontinent had already expected religion to do. There is a significant departure from the likes of MK Gandhi, Vinobha Bhave, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, and S. Radhakrishnan, regarding the views on religion and its import in defining the nature of this public space. The ushering in of a new society is bolstered by this fundamental belief and assurance of the lack in religion to contribute to solving instances of violence in society. Religion’s looming absence or the ideal of removing religion from the public space was built on the assumption that it was incapable of countering the many possible instances of violence that could emerge in the space of the political. “We have to get rid of that narrowing religious

outlook, that obsession with the supernatural and metaphysical speculations, that loosening of the mind's discipline in ceremonial and mystical emotionalism, which come in the way of our understanding ourselves and the world".⁵

Religion predominantly for Nehru had been stripped out of its philosophical and metaphysical connotations, especially in the daily practices in the life of man. He, often, in his writings especially in the *Discovery of India*, stresses upon his penchant for philosophical and spiritual concerns which necessarily were not religious. This irreligiosity and want of reason in Nehru get legitimized and bolstered through the references he provides in the works of eminent scholars of repute, within a religion, such as Swami Vivekananda.⁶ In addition to the above meanings attributed to religion, an elaborate account of the same is present in many of his writings where religion is both looked at with utility and purpose or a social function, while also being the harbinger of the cause behind exclusive instances of violence in the functioning of organized religions. Out of the many references indicative of his disconnect from the everyday routineness of religion and its possible virtues in the lives of people, the following quote offers an insight into the mind of Nehru's line of thought.

“The metaphysical aspects of the questions considered in the Upanishads are difficult for me to grasp, but I am impressed by this approach to a problem which has so often been shrouded by dogma and blind belief. It was the philosophical approach and not the religious one. I like the vigour of the thought, the questioning, the rationalistic background. The form is terse, often of question and answer between pupil and teacher, and it has been suggested that the Upanishads were some kind of lecture notes made by the teacher or taken down by his disciples.”⁷

For him, the Upanishads functioned as a reservoir of the understanding that the person was above anything. “There is nothing higher than the person, says the Upanishads.”⁸ The space of religion, here, is used as a potent space by Nehru to legitimize and emphasize upon his original thematic of creating a society of free reasonable people.⁹ However, it is important to comprehend the meaning of religion in Nehruvian thought which exhibits an uncanny semblance of acknowledgment yet dismissal from him. For him, these texts and writings such as the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Shrutis, the Smritis, and the like, which are predominantly given a holy character dealt with the routine mundane elements of our daily lives and living.

What fascinated Nehru was the philosophical rigour they exhibited which did not quite translate into the formation of collective wisdom of people in their daily encounters and engagements dealing with religion.¹⁰ *Dharma* for Nehru was much above religion and was the term that captured the essence of the philosophical and spiritual rigour which bound people's lives.¹¹ It was not rooted in the much later organized representations of religion which took shape in society in the form of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and the like. He writes, "The totalitarian claims made on their behalf did not appeal to me. The outward evidence of the practice of religion that I saw did not encourage me to go to the original sources. Yet I had to drift to these books, for ignorance of them was not a virtue and was often a severe drawback. I knew that some of them had powerfully influenced humanity and anything that could have done so must have some inherent power and virtue in it, some vital source of energy."¹²

However, the institution that Nehru accorded great importance to, in order to steer the society and remove social evils was the State. The institution responsible for social justice was the state, the epicentre of reason, which was not entirely accorded to the society, the community or the private spaces. Such a responsibility might feel like the state being assigned with additional responsibilities which otherwise were left to the society in the ideas envisaged by the likes of Gandhi. It is a misnomer to consider the colonial state to perform these responsibilities as the primary criterion for practicing reason is freedom.

For Nehru, it is the state, where the vision of the new India had to harbour its destiny on, rather than giving importance to decadent things like religion, community, and culture. Even though there is no explicit evidence of Nehru stating it, his emphasis on reason, freedom, and the state perhaps suggests the absence of the former two in the profession and practice of religion. Every religion is exclusive and therefore to expect that religion could become the basis of legitimacy, connecting millions of sensibilities would be a grotesque misconstrual of the scope and nature of religion. Once established, the new state will stand above, and not do away with the existing identities, as the erasure of identifications, histories, memories, and pasts that are attributed to these identities constitute everyone's lives and determine them forever. It becomes a formidably daunting task to even begin to conceptualize the state as the eraser of identities. One cannot forget one's cultural existence, nor perhaps is allowed to forget by society.

When the State that Nehru envisions is created, it shall stand above the people so that the gaze is aligned to the effect of everyone falling under it. The gaze is not reserved for few segments

of the society only and will “stand above the narrow interests of the groups and classes in the society, take an overall view of the matter and in accordance with scientific procedures, plan direct economic processes in order to make enough social wealth to ensure welfare and justice for all”¹³ The composition of this state had to be grounded on an ‘empty’ state of politics.¹⁴ However, for Nehru, this emptiness is neither in the disconnect or stark separation from religion nor in the elimination of the same. It was rooted in a clear relationship between religion and nation-state, where the latter was to be held responsible and accountable for defining the nature of the public space as well as having the ultimate say in configuring the political culture of the nation. He does emphasize resorting to the state to carry out the activity of binding the people together, as opposed to religion binding people on the grounds of unquestionable faith, submission, surrender, fear, or a promise of the future that is glorious.¹⁵

Whether or not it is authentic an inference to claim that religion is spuriously intertwined with that of the psyche of India and Indians, and the former defines the constitution of the latter, according to Nehru, this connect was supposed to be meant for the past of the societies in India. The future that he picturized did not entrust the responsibility of moulding people’s sensibilities in the hands of religion. Religion, being Janus-faced¹⁶, does not function on reason and hence has the potential to tweak the conscience of the masses and legitimize its own position through careful and well-thought-out manipulation of minds.¹⁷ The essence, perhaps, that one could gather from the Nehruvian understanding of religion, is rooted in the lack present in religion to help the society realize its true freedom, within the ambit of its current existence. Thus, freedom in any sense, for Nehru, could not be realized in any religion, organized or otherwise, so far as it catered to the narrow conflicts occurring in the name of religion which Wittgenstein popularly attributes as ‘irreligiousness’ and not being a characteristic of religion, as found in his famous quote, “Religion as madness is a madness springing from irreligiousness.”¹⁸

However, the narratives Nehru subscribed to, also did mark a stark contrast from this aforementioned stance and ensured that religion may be reduced to a role that may help one apply and practice politics on a relatively ethical plane. However, a reduction of religion into the narrow communal hate-based divisive and incisive engagements¹⁹ built on many justifications such as identity, the supremacy of the state, nationalism, sovereignty and integrity of the state, territorial integrity, and the like; was supposed to be eliminated from society. On the occasion of independence,

Nehru announced the need for the Hindus to develop an attitude towards other minorities in the country that had to align with the secular faith which would act as a binding force knitting the diverse elements in society. On one hand, when he announced that he would not allow India to be a Hindu State, on the other hand, he also declared the necessity to steer the state and its history toward secularism. There lies a distinction in both these stands even though it may be seeming to lead towards the same goal of establishing a secular state and upholding the essence of a secularized society. Bhikhu Parekh brings out this dilemma by stating how secularism brought with it an attitude of the majoritarian consciousness that had to be preconceived in any possible engagement with the minorities, thereby substantiating the distinction between the majority and the minorities.²⁰

Many such paradoxes were unearthed both in the intellectual tradition as well as in the site of daily politics, which did reflect in the very design of their spaces in our knowledge systems. The modern influence of the state being supreme to that of society, however well-intentioned, did have to be answerable to the chaos of the everyday lives where religion was predominant. The following segments shall, thus, explore the presence and nature, if any, of the misnomer associated with the Nehruvian conception of the secular nation-state that was involved in his strict adherence to the spirit of secularism and its implications on the present and the future of India.

3.2: The Nehruvian Principle of a Secular Nation-State

The establishment of a secular democracy is...

“an act of faith for all of us, an act of faith above all for the majority community because they will have to show after this that they can behave in a generous, fair and just way. Let us live up to that faith...”²¹

In any event for Nehru, an alliance of religion and politics in the shape of communalism was detrimental to the existence of a legitimate society and provided for the ‘most abnormal kind of the illegitimate brood’.²² There was this looming fear that was characteristic of Nehru’s conception of a society that he imagined for India. For him, practicing politics on an ethical plane did intentionally present the juxtaposition of religion and politics on many levels, which was evident for an entire century through the writings of Gandhi. However, the narrow slippage into the communal elements of this relationship which might crop up in any given instance in

the name of superior morality and moral practice over the others might completely turn the relationship into a communal kind.

This turning in of the religion-politics relationship into questions that raise concerns on the ethical nature of the practice of religion in a manner claiming the lives of people for the sake of the protection of religious identities is crucial to Nehru's thought.²³ This led him to despise religion for claiming to serve ethical ends. In fact, he associated religion with its horrors in this very juxtaposition of the communal elements of religion with the political. The seat of the moral-political dilemma for Nehru is located in creating a scenario that unified the diverse plural elements in society without having to ideally be challenged and threatened by the tensions produced by religion. However, the constitutional recognition of religion as a legitimate basis for defining society, did come across as opening up the spaces of the political and redefining it on the grounds of looking at religion as forming a wide reservoir for the formation of multiple sensibilities. Nehru's focus on the formation of people's sensibilities however lies beyond religion and in the realm of philosophy and spirituality, which cannot be realized through imitation.²⁴ This is presented extensively in his work demanding for the opening up of the political yet closing it with a certain fixed position for religion.

The opening up of the political is carried out at the behest of the dominant moral social inclinations towards religion and this pioneered India towards something that it never witnessed before, by introducing in, what Nehru said, "We shall proceed on secular and national lines"²⁵ Such a statement did set the tone towards building up the idea of non-preferentiality in the treatment of all religions as the basis of this version of the secular. Even though Nehru categorically claims that the secular state being an ideal he had borne in mind is not against the religious, nor the practice and presence of religions in the public space, he was saddened constantly by this lack of Indian society's chances at giving primacy to the secular state than religion. This marked as a failure of societies to adopt and adhere to the inclusive and acceptance-driven understanding of secularism at the political level. Thus, the site of his operations largely catered to the realm of the political only which had to now steer the formation and realization of a new social. The nationalist sentiments, thus, for Nehru induced by the political, created spaces for assimilation and unification which was intrinsic to him developing an inclination towards economic and political nationalism.²⁶

Nehru's emphasis on the new political was symptomatic of the understanding that the old political was heavily reliant upon certain norms that needed drastic changes for the society to herald in the new light of progress and glory. This required the political order to escape its bonds from the religious order. Nehru's new political was built on the fully aware connections between the religious and the political and the role played by the former in the construal of the latter. This deep-rooted presence of religion in the political and its infusion of the two in the creation of public order required a society that was aware of the trials and tribulations involved in allowing for a communal relationship to prosper. Such an enlightened and awakened society of people could not have been formed in the presence of countless possibilities of violent tensions present amongst religions, within the subcontinent that was also in many instances striving towards nationhood. Such a nation that different communities of peoples aspired to form and become a part of ideally would have allowed for the inter-community differences to be forgotten or rather addressed. However, the greater the differences amongst communities and their practices, the greater the chances of the differences coming out and getting projected to show the integrity of the community's core despite tensions present within it.²⁷ These are evident in the inter-religious conflicts getting projected and promoted in historical analyses when the question of the politics of the practice of religion comes into play. However, in nationalist historiography, such dynamics get bracketed and simplified generally as communal tensions, the seeds of which are rooted in history. In reality, it is much more complex than that.

Nehru's engagement with these complexities, involved in understanding the multiple manifestations of religion, was limited to the question of its overt expressions of violence.²⁸ It was then connected to the questions of national integrity, harmony, and progress. For him, religion had to have fixed roles in the lives of people with the functions of serving society by making it more equipped for human reasoning, with the sole commitment to eliminate tensions of the communal kind. For Nehru, one of the most important sources of his faith was rooted in a conception of the morality of the non-religious kind.²⁹ Such a faith, according to him, might go weak at times, as the contents are not always clear and visible. 'The workings of the mind' as Nehru calls it, becomes the foundation in the understanding of the Nehruvian faith, which needed unification of the mind and heart to break down the barriers created possibly due to adherence to religion.³⁰ The aspects of religion that were dealt with and which were found fascinating to Nehru had little to do with political governance and administration of public affairs.

The public space which required a moral/ethical basis for its functioning need not draw from religion and the fixed roles he prescribed for religion did not carry these meanings. He, thus, championed the cause and the presence of non-religious morality which, despite the risk of becoming weak in many instances amidst the larger-than-life presence of religion in the lives of people, was adhered to as an extraordinary decision for the definition of the public space. The fundamental question Nehru perhaps asked was, to what extent could religion produce and create problems for the smooth conduct of the liberal politics of the nation-state? This orientation assumes the positions and nature of religion as fundamentally different from the position it has been assigned to, in the orientation suggested by his contemporaries such as Gandhi, Jinnah, Savarkar, and the like. The pitching of religion against the questions of the nation-state, by default, legitimized the nature, purpose, and role of the nation-state as being superior and central to his normative ideal. Herein, lies the violence of Nehruvian thinking which did not intend to cater to the myriad manifestations of religion, its violence, and its evident practices in society. The nature of the religious whole got juxtaposed within the ambit of a tool that was meant to have fixed roles and serve certain purposes in a manner useful for the masses. Such a configuration of the public adhered to the strict disconnect and divisions between the public and the private and perhaps assigned the liberal notion of 'religion as a private faith' in its practice and presence in politics.³¹

As much as such a conception of the religion-nation-state relationship that was abundantly explained and stressed upon by Nehru in many instances did not exist yet, the political relationship between the two also laid grounds invariably of the nature of nationalism that he subscribed to. The nation for Nehru had to be rooted in this moral concern of the unification of diverse forces to the point that communal discord does not prevail and the society rises to evolved³² ways of thinking, which it already had even before the British stepped into the Indian soil, which will now take them beyond the religious-communal differences to scientific and economic ones, without dismissing off religion as being vicious.³³

There is a departure in Nehru from Karl Marx in the sense that the former does not dismiss religion as being the opium of the masses. There is therefore conjunction of perhaps, Lockean thinking in Nehru, for re-routing the emphasis on the individual person and not on religion or the commune within the domain of nationalism that he is creating as an alternative.³⁴ Such transportation from the existing levels to the higher evolved levels required the solutions to be present in a structural revamping of the political. Nehru's politics, thus, state-induced and laced

with the secular character had to be introduced newly into the culture(s) that had largely seeped into norms decided by religion and were completely unaware of the former.

3.2.1: Nationalism contra religion in Nehru's thought:

“They are nationalistic but this nationalism seeks no dominion over, or interference with, others. They welcome all attempts at world co-operation and the establishment of an international order, but they wonder and suspect if this may not be another device for continuing the old domination.”³⁵

One of the major sites of violation of the freedoms of India and its inhabitants was, according to Nehru, possible to be compensated for, by attributing to the nation-state the stature of an eponymous legitimate power that will steer and introduce robust nationalistic sentiments of togetherness. However, a deeper inquiry into the formation of such friendships is rooted in this fear of domination in the future and perhaps a strong belief in the significant possibility of one. Fraternal bonds³⁶ of this kind cannot seed into the idea of freedom until the national spaces are created in a robust fashion. These national spaces are then thought out for the conceptualization of interpersonal spaces. However, the process of thinking and rethinking of the nature of interpersonal spaces then becomes utterly essential for the need to comprehend the pulse of the social consciousness of the people.

Such a republican notion provided an alternative basis (alternative to the dominant community/religion-centered basis) for the conflict to be understood and captured with the necessary acknowledgment to study such a seeding of spaces happening in the dominant political theorizations of the time. Such an inquiry was something Nehru wished to delve into and he does while he writes about Bharat Mata, however, it is invariably located in the vision he has for the future of India that must be rooted in a society of free peoples. It may further be seen visible in the following statements. The immanent lack in the present is compensated for in the fraternal relations of a nation that is being constructed. The present which is fractured is being changed with the vision towards the future and with hopes in this new ‘nation’. This is again evident in the following statements.

“We have all of us done our best to cure it but have not succeeded except only to a limited extent. The difficulties have been partly due to our inability effectively to tackle the problem of rehabilitation [of refugees] and partly to the continuing evidence

of hostility and barbaric conduct towards the minorities in Pakistan. The result has been that sections of the Hindu community are not in tune with and do not understand Gandhiji's approach to the Muslim problem in India. They resent his approach and think that it is somehow or other inimical to their own interests. And yet any person with vision can see that Gandhiji's approach is not only morally correct but is also essentially practical. Indeed, it is the only possible approach if we think in terms of the nation's good, both from short and long-distance points of view. Any other approach means perpetuating conflict and postponing all notions of national consolidation and progress."³⁷

In subtle yet potent ways, there is an implicit reference to the nation as the unit of the new socio-political unit which couldn't be distrusted given the need to break away from the old traditional communal forms of living. This also connected the question of nationalism and religion and the trust Nehru laid on the former over the latter, due to the rising intolerance in the practices of religion and the growing need to retaliate which in Nehru's words was a 'spiritual malaise'.³⁸ These moral philosophical expressions of calling the event a spiritual malaise, where he bothers about the spiritual and the metaphysical content moulding people's consciousness, do not fall under the ambit of religion for him. The moral reason for Nehru is connected to ensuring freedom for people and for him, it politically is seated in the nation-state.

Even though there is trust attributed to the nation-state and nationalism, the insidious forms of nationalism may be realized and nurtured when community-specific identities, especially the majority, think of themselves as the ruling entity which must govern the state of affairs of the country, posing a sufficient threat to the trust granted to the nation-state here. Such forms of nationalism lead to the narrowing of the minds according to Nehru. His national philosophy clearly catered to the anti-colonial experience which had the potential to unify interests and aspirations. However, beyond that, nationalism ceased to create the need to sustain itself without associating itself at the behest of some form of exclusion, which is later legitimized as well as justified morally on the grounds of securing one's identity as a whole.

Nehru's emphasis on the national philosophy is based on the staunch belief in the understanding that the relation between India and Britain was grounded on 'servitude and oppression,' which denied the Indian memories to grapple with and make sense of the question of past violence meted out upon it.³⁹ India's experience of exploitation and denial of self-

dignity and self-respect was rooted in this imposition of the exploitative practices of the colonizer coupled with a simultaneous acceptance of the same. The relationship between the colonizer and the colonized for Nehru was perhaps similar to that of the master and the slave, a rather simplified notion of exploitation and suffering within a systematic apparatus of hegemonic consciousness. Such an enigmatic relationship between the two did emphasize on the visible discrimination and exploitation with little focus on what led India and Indians to colonize themselves.⁴⁰

In the quote mentioned above, there exists suspicion and doubt on the international character of old forms of hegemony possibly being perpetrated in the name of open-ended internationalism. This is a classic case representing the ways in which Nehru and many of his contemporaries treated nationalism as a better or perhaps a more trustworthy device than say, adherence to religion, in the larger social-political churning. Such an expression of doubt that loomed subtly throughout Nehruvian thinking is suggestive of the anti-colonial response getting dominated by nationalist thought which did not strip itself out of the concerns of a colonized mind seeking emancipation, while also simultaneously legitimizing it.⁴¹

For Nehru, there is a self and the other and the latter lost its glory as the self at some point. It needs to redeem its selfhood and it is conveniently possible by allowing for accommodation or incorporation of others within the ambit of the new political. Therefore, it is a discovery. It is new and there is a certain rupture from the past, the dawning of the pioneer age. However, one understands the rupture on the grounds of an understanding of the past. There is a past that Nehru tries to understand wherein lay the essence of the new future he has discovered and envisioned as part of this schema of the political. The present, however, is rooted in the knowledge and realization of the discovery.

The politics of the self and the other lies in a rooted fixated notion of both, the understanding of which had been sufficiently imposed and institutionalized for centuries in India. And therefore, India had to grapple with this configuration of itself. Whether it tried to understand itself as the other or the self is yet to know. But for Nehru, India must conceptualize itself as the self that steers society on the grounds of universal notions of human freedom. He did not offer an apologetic account of India's past self. This suggested a coming of age for India that was rooted in a new consciousness, which in parts was present in and around the Indian subcontinent but was yet to be fully realized.⁴² Nationalism for Nehru became an expressive

outlet of a sentiment towards India which he contemplated in the rubrics of his mind and his memories from his travels and related experiences. Nationalism, in the context, when it was deemed as narrow-minded and closed to being a legitimate response for Indians, became an important emotion for the likes of Nehru. It was simultaneously also a claim made to inform that India was as progressive a nation as any other western nation, to use nationalism as the socially cohesive and binding force, especially in the midst of a test of endurance. Nehru attributed meanings of progress, togetherness, fraternity, and binding to the emotion of nationalism that could provide new ways of resisting the colonial rule and thereby sustaining and enduring through this “unhappy interludes of India’s long story.”⁴³ However, the epistemic violence in Nehru lies in the absence of emphasis provided to the reasons behind the colonization of the mind.

3.2.2: Nehru’s Secular State: An Ideal?

“Nehru's rejection of the role of religion in human society was not absolute. A dozen years after, his response to Andre Malraux's statement that "life estranged from religion" is "a result of the machine age" - a result of "the intoxication which enables action to ignore the legitimization of life" - deserves to be noted. Nehru's succinct comment was "For how long?"⁴⁴

Needless to say, understanding for Nehru meant thinking and comprehension in terms of rational thought that was the product of the western scientific kind. ‘We seek no dominion over others, and we claim no privileged position over other people. The denial of freedom anywhere must lead to endangering freedom. We need free cooperation of free peoples and no class or group exploits another.’ That the unfreedom which existed within India and was also imposed as a result of the external invasion of the colonial rulers, suggested this lack within the self. It now has an externally conducive environment to rise and awaken itself with a renewed zest to work on its relations within it, especially now with the State as a legitimate public institution that will have to engage in this removal of the state of un-freedom that had gripped the country since centuries. This state of un-freedom is responsible for the creation of the ‘lack’ getting exposed in the event of succumbing to colonial invasions and tyranny.

For Nehru the state was based on the application of reason. He quotes Vivekananda to substantiate his point on this use of reason and its application as the source of inspiration for the conduction of a society. “What we call inspiration is the development of reason. The way to intuition is through reason... No genuine inspiration ever contradicts reason. Where it does,

it is no inspiration..... I will abide by my reason because with all its weakness there is some chance of my getting at truth through it.”⁴⁵ He also condemns the act of giving in to the norms dictated by priests for going completely against the reason that could otherwise be experientially realized. The basis of the Yogas was in this notion of experience through reason.⁴⁶

Taking the argument from here on, one gets a deeper understanding of Nehru’s views on the State when placed in conjunction with the question of its relationship with religion in public space. Some of the concerns one may raise here in the light of Nehru’s adherence to the need for a stricter instrumental separation between religion and state are as follows: How does the idea of instrumental separation of religion and state ensure the inclusive presence of religion and politics from slipping into communalism? How would the instrumental separation be conceptualized? Which institution would be appropriate to legitimize the separation between the two? How could the political thus established, lead the society?

These questions had been raised time and again by various scholars who have explored the problems inherent in these systematic attempts made towards projecting the separation of the religion and nation-state as the ideal that should predominantly define India’s selfhood.⁴⁷ Nehru’s secular politics did hinge upon this adherence to a reason which was not attributed to any religion. Despite the possibility of becoming weak, he strived to keep aside the state from engaging with religion or being ‘interfering with unnecessarily’.⁴⁸

The State with all its fallacies had the potential to steer people’s consciousness which reflected the future of a liberal democratic institutionalized structure and its politics. The politics of such a framework did not take into consideration the inclusion of the state as a problem that could potentially thrive on the sustenance of inequalities and injustices in society. This adherence to the state as being responsible for inducing secularism in society hinges upon the lack of belief in society for initiating changes. This is also one of the major areas from where criticisms against Nehru come from, on account of his views on the state and for assigning only the state with the responsibility of injecting the secular consciousness which otherwise does not exist.⁴⁹ Partly this had to do with the growing disrespect and negativity towards religion based on his engagements with world history and his encounters with the Indian masses in the 1920s and 1930s.⁵⁰ Such a notion of the political is rooted in the need to forcefully disconnect despite the goodness present in the religious. The self, therefore, suffers from this constant dilemma of

breaking out of the religious while also not despising it entirely. Such a self also characterized the nature of the Indian consciousness around the time when thinkers like Nehru were writing and thinking.

Reflecting an ounce of such a self that both despised yet was awestruck by the magnificence of its own existence, Nehru's India did have to deal with this emotion of establishing a growing disconnect from the religious dominance within its cultural roots, while also deeply refurbishing it for the need to ensure a secular socialist politics. Therein lay the paradox of a grander scale which manifested in many forms the dichotomy of a growing religious of the modern society with a state committed to secular and nationalistic emotions. The latter lacked the political vocabulary to ensure the myriad forms and kinds of religious problems that the society was undergoing in its obsession to pin down the solution in a secular polity which required a clear notion of the private and the public.⁵¹ Such a division did have the potential to rip apart the psyche of the masses, which when already seeped in crises involving identity and existence, makes it rather challenging to connive the minds into splitting between the private and the public. Religion(s) was/were an intrinsic aspect of the majority of the lives in both these spaces. Hence, a legitimate disconnect being developed and sanctioned as legal by the state makes it imperative for the state to have the political vocabulary to address the perils that come with the establishment of such 'new' connections.

3.2.3: The Old and the New Political: A Palimpsest

“And the present slips into the past before we are hardly aware of it; today, child of yesterday, yields place to its own offspring tomorrow. Winged victory ends in a welter of blood and mud, and out of the heavy trials of seeming defeat, the spirit emerges with new strength and a wider vision. The weak in spirit yield and are eliminated, but others carry the torch forward and hand it to the standard bearers of tomorrow.”⁵² The old political for Nehru shifted to this new era ushering in the dawn of a new society capable of producing the values of the new people committed to 'freedom' and 'progress'. There is a coalescence of the ideas and events in the historical annals of time that defined Indian experiences for the present and the future where ideas concerning religion have come together to help one understand one's culture, identity, nationhood and the likes. Nehru's contribution toward this end is significant in many ways. His ideas on religion, especially its relation to culture, and nationalism defined the theoretical engagements of his time.⁵³

“India was in my blood and there was much in her that instinctively thrilled me. And yet, I approached her almost as an alien critic, full of dislike for the present as well as for many of the relics of the past that I saw. To some extent, I came to her via the West, and looked at her as a friendly Westerner might have done. I was eager and anxious to change her outlook and appearance and give her the garb of modernity. And yet doubts arose within me. Did I know India? ----- I who presumed to scrap much of her past heritage? There was a great deal that had to be scrapped; but surely India could not have been what she undoubtedly was, and could not have continued a cultured existence for thousands of years, if she had not possessed something very vital and enduring, something that was worthwhile. What was this something?”

Behind the present, the wall,⁵⁴ lay a tangled past and the burdens that the present carried from the obscure and abstract pasts and memories. Such an understanding of the past as being exotic, difficult to comprehend, unique, yet full of ingredients that required to be changed indicated the confusion Nehru expressed towards the composition of India that he was trying to grapple with and make sense of. Not only the beauty, vigour and the life of the present but also the “memoried loveliness of the ages past”⁵⁵, of civilizational glory, of the dynamic progress in the ancient civilizations and the modern elements of systematic ways of living it housed⁵⁶, its contact with the Chinese, the Persians, the Arabs and the like fascinated and constantly changed Nehru’s attitudes towards India’s pasts.

This panoramic view of the Indian pasts was also an exploration of what could constitute an Indian today and tomorrow as well as an attempt to make sense of how such an India endured. This endurance was applauded by Nehru. The conception of India as the entity which harboured the characteristic features of both the self and the other is evident in this understanding of Nehru. He does not bracket India as the self or the other and colonization proved to be one of the many instances where the self of the country was violated. Such a violation, however brutal, did not break the nation’s selfhood according to Nehru, which is evident in the aforementioned quoted passage. What was ‘the something’ that allowed the peoples to endure?

Nehru thus reflected the palimpsest that he used to describe India as in the following famous quote, “She was like some ancient palimpsest on which layer upon layer of thought and reverie had been inscribed, and yet no succeeding layer had completely hidden or erased what had been written previously. All of these existed in our conscious or subconscious selves, though we may not have been aware of them, and they had gone to build up the complex and

mysterious personality of India. That sphinx-like face with its elusive and sometimes mocking smile was to be seen throughout the length and breadth of the land.⁵⁷ The patterns of imperial encounters did base its conquests on moral concerns more than intellectual ones.”⁵⁸ This allows us to expose the political-social, public-private relationship and bring it within the realm of the psychological, which for the first time was elaborated by Ashis Nandy.⁵⁹ The following segment will uncover the presence of violence in the Nehruvian proposition of a political that had to unhinge from the religious.

3.3: Situating Violence in the Imperative of Secular Politics

“The idea of India is against the intense consciousness of the separateness of one’s own people from others, which inevitably leads to ceaseless conflicts”⁶⁰

Any attempt at understanding Nehru in connection to the questions concerning religion and state/ politics, in general, would be ironic to the extent that Nehru himself considered these matters too trivial for a decent and rigorous political churning.⁶¹ However, one could not but resist talking about Nehru’s views on religion and the distaste he developed over the years on matters of religion and its influence over the activity of politics, as had been elaborated before this section. Gandhi’s half-hearted stance on the importance of the state and its lack of integration into the general perspective of politics⁶², was applicable to Nehru’s consistent revulsion he developed and sustained for religion in his schema of the notion of the ideal political. Politics as an activity did incorporate religion sufficiently into the definition of its activities, however, it did not ensure the need to make religion one of the primary concerns of politics and therefore the defining element of the nature of the political.

Religion, during the colonial context in India did become a space with an enormous potential to resist colonial rule and its consciousness, especially for thinkers like Gandhi and Tagore, where religion was not reduced to a modernized and categorized form. Such a version of religion was capable of creating a space that could garner a macro-level mobilization of the masses and conduct movements against its own apologetic nature of conduct for the diversities it possessed.⁶³ However, for Nehru, consistently, throughout his writings in his Autobiography and the Discovery of India, the emphasis on religion diminishes drastically as being one of the fundamental questions that concerned him regarding the practice of politics.

Politics, for Nehru, involved religion but not as one of the central questions. However, unlike Marx, he did not reject the presence of religion and the utilities it served for the people at large in society. There was, however, frequent anger and disconnect he felt towards religion in its efficacy to help individuals resolve issues of prime import in society. Religion was more of an impediment in the society's uprising as it was important for it to focus on economic concerns rather than the religious questions and their relationship with politics and life in general.⁶⁴ There is a violence of the epistemic kind in Nehruvian undertaking of the questions concerning religion and politics and typically the relation between the two for contemporary times and for the future while Nehru was vigorously writing the seminal pieces, *Discovery of India* and *Glimpses of World History*.

A historical account of different civilizations, a quest that Nehru undertook around this time, did reflect his increasing aversion to religion. Along the lines of Etienne Balibar's commentary on the ways in which aversion reverses the meanings of a hateful relationship with anything, (here, religion), and helps one relook at it with a new sense of zest, one must acknowledge Nehru for consistently trying to understand the importance of religion and its triviality and problems that comes with it, in the exasperation he shares while trying to make sense of the religiosity in the configuration of the Indian public space. As much as he wants to base this Indianness on an 'honest' documentation of the public space of the country, he does get clouded by the repercussions of such a task ending up providing more emphasis to religion than required.

This constant dilemma of wanting to keep away from religion but having to deal with it is important to understand the strand of secularism that later on went on to be associated with Nehru, despite his strong and clearer understanding than his contemporaries on the role religion had to play and the position it occupied in an ideal Indian society. Nehru is dismissive of the Hindu-Muslim problem, when he says, "this question does not exist for us"⁶⁵. There is a presence of epistemic violence in such an understanding developed by Nehru when he seeks to bracket the concerns of the masses within the ambit of the economic and the national, as outrunning the archaic questions related to religion and its nature in the public space, when it has been sufficiently established by himself that one cannot strip oneself out of the activity of engaging with religion while trying to make sense of India's pasts and histories.⁶⁶

Nehru's engagement with religion reeked of copious amounts of disconnect from it because of the infusion of emotional and sentimental relations it harboured between the practitioner of politics and politics itself. This, according to Nehru, made things detrimental to the future of Indian societies as it did not adhere necessarily to the rules of science, and hence, of progress. Science, therefore, for Nehru allowed him to understand as being the only rational explanation behind developing the required disconnect from religion, as the former was based on evidence, unlike a sentimental and emotional faith. The emphasis on evidence and reason as the basis of the new equation between the individual and its authority, paved the way toward forming a rational state that is grounded on the only emotion of nationalism. This relationship was grounded in a moral concern too for Nehru, when he admits his aversion to religion being rooted in the horrors of the communal tensions and divisiveness it was capable of creating in the minds of people. His lack of trust in religion did not however convert into lack of trust in people.⁶⁷ The basis of this trust, however, was projected more on the grounds developed by relying upon the telos of science. Nehru's vision was one of the most concrete and less confusing visions he had charted quite systematically for India.⁶⁸

Such a vision conceptualized by Nehru did harbour the essence of a fractured present and the lack which had to be dealt with. Such a period of time in history which Nehru encountered and pioneered through, to create a new age did emphasize upon the import of understanding the past and the present in the light of the future. This vision that he harboured for the future was rooted in the past as much as in the present. His navigation through time is visible in the treatment of the text, *The Discovery of India*. The trajectory that Nehru adopted, perhaps, could be pictured as follows, taking cues from Ashis Nandy's depiction of time representations in the writings of thinkers such as Gandhi and Savarkar.⁶⁹ Gandhi was portrayed as follows in Nandy's analysis, where past is conceived of as altering the present.

“Past as a special case of present → Fractured present (competing pasts) →
Remaking of present including past → New Past”⁷⁰

Future as a special case of present → Fractured Past → Fractured Present →
Remaking of the present including time that has not yet existed (future) →
New Future

There is, however, a movement between the past and the present. And this movement is carried out in order to inform the masses of the trials India's pasts had to undergo which its current

generation must not go through again. Such a conception of India's future required Nehru to look at the past with the intent of creating a new future with a renewed purpose infused in the present. This was the moment of discovery according to Nehru which helped him break loose from the fractured pasts and create ways towards a new future.⁷¹ Even though for Nehru religion did not pose so much of a threat but a nuisance,⁷² the role religion had in the taming of the new political for Nehru was crystal clear as it posed the contemporary activists, scholars, and thinkers of his time with this question of the communal kind and the role religion should have in the formation of the new state for India and its societies.

Nehru's task of manufacturing the new political showed his renewed sense of interest in the question of religion, and the need to define its importance in the lives of Indians. His interest and focus, thus, predominantly lay in the formation of the political and redefining its idea for the people instead of assigning centrality to the religious question.⁷³ Religion for him, featured as the unnecessary ingredient in society which formed a fundamental reservoir for the vast majority of its people and hence, had to be addressed for its nature, content and impact in the shaping of the public space.

However, this aspect of the religious does not feature in Nehru's conception of the vast populace of India or to-be independent India when the categories of the majority and minority come into the picture. These categorizations brought in on the grounds of religion make it irresistible for one to introduce any novel lens while looking at the society's future to be grounded on inclusivity or a universal moral social consciousness. It certainly suggested the task Nehru as an idealist aiming for a convergence of multiple religious' communities and groups within the ambit of an India that he felt lay in the rubbles of our past, with a vision towards the future, was difficult to be achieved.

“The functions of each group or caste were related to the functions of other castes, and the idea was that if each group functioned successfully within its own framework, then society as a whole worked harmoniously. Over and above this, a strong and fairly successful attempt was made to create, a common national bond which would hold all these groups together—the sense of a common culture, common traditions, common heroes and saints, and a common land to the four corners of which people went on pilgrimage. This national bond was of course very different from present-day nationalism; it was weak politically but, socially and culturally, it was strong.

Because of its political lack of cohesiveness, it facilitated foreign 251 conquests; because of its social strength it made recovery easy, as well as assimilation of new elements. It had so many heads that they could not be cut off and they survived conquest and disaster.”⁷⁴

To him, the political emphasis on nationalism as an ideal perhaps became more important to be established without it losing the social and cultural essence it was primarily meant to carry. Such nationalism was rooted in a strong philosophy of inclusivity and accommodation, or as he calls it, tolerance.⁷⁵ There were different kinds of social discordance that crippled the inhabitants of India for centuries. However, these conquests that Nehru mentions above did not entail the need to organize oneself socially every time, as social cohesiveness was already present. Such an organization of what one would conventionally call Indians, of the social kind, was already present according to Nehru, which was yet to attain a political manifestation. Such manifestations thrived as legitimate centers of unity and cohesion, which Nehru aspired for and hoped for in an otherwise communally divided society.⁷⁶

Thus, as is described in the following statements, religion’s looming presence in the lives of people in quite contrasting ways⁷⁷ did not help Nehru comprehend the extent to which his notions on religion in conjunction with the process of enlightenment and his definition of rationality were clouded under a unidimensional understanding of western enlightening rationality, which he had made the harbinger of a rational experience and consciousness.⁷⁸ The primary emphasis even here was not the development of the consciousness of rationality or being open to methods of attaining it, but in the sheer belief in its attainment in the public space through state-imposed rationality. Such a claim not only shifts the focus off the development of a cohesive rational experience and its interactions with other forms of rational experiences for the masses and in turn instills a firm belief in its strict positioning within the western modern institutional structures.

A commitment to the location of rationality or the infusion of rationality into society from the incorporation of western institutional paradigms of thought assumes the absence or the lack of influence religion has in their formations. Also, an assurance towards carrying out such an endeavour of ensuring rational experiences in the society gets diluted in this obsession with eliminating the sources such as religion because of the underlying assumption that religion, which was hitherto present in the formation of most of the institutional structures, now does

not and/or should not allow for one to raise potent questions regarding its importance in the formation of a moral-rational experience in public space. Such assumptions which are confirmed as truths to be believed upon form the basis of the 'scientific' rationality that thinkers such as Nehru planned to introduce into the formation of the new India.⁷⁹ However, the rising power of human reason based on scientific rationality did not ensure or provide enough reasons for religious differences to be addressed. Hence, Nehru extensively indulged the replacement of the religious with the economic and the national, as was mentioned before, in his understanding of the new future that India was to build out of the rubble of its fractured pasts.⁸⁰ Such a society, thus, continues to ground itself on religious differences. The practice of equality as a difference in just recognition of the communities and their identities while merging them all within the framework of nationalism takes away the necessity to address the extent to which the former and the latter must be practiced because the extent gets crystallized into fixed forms. Such fixation of practices then hardly allows for a mass revamping of the same without radically eliminating either religion or state from the face of the public space.

Nehru's endeavour was to discredit the importance of religion in shaping the future consciousness of the public space because of the problems it had the potential to cause in society. In the attempt to shift the legitimate basis from religion to economy and nationhood, Nehru's primary focus apparently fell on people's everyday use and practice of religion, which did cause detriment to the shaping of public order as it caused the need to recognize groups differently on the grounds of religion, politically. The relationship of the state with that of religion was considered unscrupulous by Nehru and he demanded the removal of attributes that should ideally guide the affairs of the state from that of subjective religious moralities to the 'values commonly decided on the grounds of material interests.'⁸¹ This exit of religion from the ambit of the political itself politicizes the space sufficiently, right from deciding to forgo the existing societies of its cultural sensibilities as well as the chance to engage with the turmoil and internal evil practices religion had been harboring for centuries.

The absence of internal churning and reformation takes a backseat when the State is created and presented as the institution that does not have to 'deal with' religion.⁸² The patronizing nature of the State allows for it to intervene when individual citizens develop an aversion to the religious practices governing them, which requires the state to not let religion acquire more primacy than the individual. The weak and feeble-mindedness in individuals⁸³, which Bankim Chandra had attributed in his description of Hindus by calling them fatalistic, had to be

removed from society which could happen if the growing influence of religion was contained by the promotion of scientific temper initiated by the State. However, the impact of religion on the functioning of societies, especially for Indian societies in general did not go unnoticed or misunderstood by Nehru. It was channelized towards the ‘preservation of the country's integrity, its economic and social development, and protection of the constitutional rights of all its citizens’.⁸⁴ Nehru’s insistence on the passing of the Hindu Code Bill had attracted reactions of all kinds. The liberty taken by him in bringing about reforms in the Hindu societies was symptomatic of the psychoanalytic understanding of taking for granted one’s own identity and side-lining the other with a clear indication of the distinctions one bears in mind between the two.

“It was because he and his colleagues were and thought of themselves as Hindus that they both dared take liberties with the Hindus and dared not take them with respect to the Muslims and even the Sikhs. This created a problem. In claiming the rights of a Hindu state, Nehru's government encouraged the Hindu expectation that it will also accept the obligations of such a state including defend and promote their religion and collective interests. It rightly refused to do so, thereby incurring the charges of inconsistency and disingenuity, of behaving in its relations to the Hindus as both a Hindu and a secular state as suited its interests.”⁸⁵

This brings out a potent conversation that was initiated by Ashis Nandy in his works on *Alternative Cosmopolitanism*,⁸⁶ where he marked the importance of understanding the nature of the subject involved in the political relationship between the self and the other. An othered subject contesting against the action and behaviour of the other is taken differently from the self questioning the other and vice versa. Such a dilemma is captured in the above paragraph with Nehru’s absence of an acceptable treatment towards the Hindus not only criticized for being so from the perspective of the State but also from that of being a Hindu himself.

Along with criticisms raised against the nature of the state and its relationship with religions, the relationship between the majoritarian dominant religion of the Hindus and others was studied in terms of being Hindus and Muslims, under the pretext of ‘waiting until the Muslim opinion was ready’.⁸⁷ The following statements were reportedly spoken by Nehru in the context of pushing the Civil Code Bill. “The honorable member is perfectly entitled to his view on the subject. If he or anybody else brings forward a Civil Code Bill, it will have extreme sympathy. But I confess I do not think that at the present moment the time is ripe in India for me to try to

push it through. I want to prepare the ground for it and this kind of thing is one method of preparing the ground.”⁸⁸ This statement is potent enough for one today, to not only get a sense of the relations that were being built between religions as well as within the religions, but also the nature of a secular state and its functioning in India that was initiated by Nehru. The failure, as Bhikhu Parekh elaborated in his account of the implementation of secularism was in the assumption that functioning as a concerned Hindu and as a concerned state meant the same while constantly projecting simultaneously the need to understand both as being different from each other.

The underlying assumption in this conception of secularism also amounts to the reformatory task that the state will be entitled to perform with respect to the practice and realization of religions in society, not only with the intent mentioned above but also with the intent of interfering only when there is a threat to the well-being and existence in society. This intent is particularly based on the complete awareness that society is not at all secular. This is evident in one of the accounts where Nehru mentions that Indian societies are caste-ridden and therefore not secular.⁸⁹ Such an interest in building a legitimate institution out of the State, perhaps loses track of the responsibility of the people from within societies to understand the complexities involved in the practice of different religions in the country.

The movement from a practice of many religions in the pre-colonial period to that of singular religious affiliation during the colonial period which was introduced, did legitimize a political culture in the public space that changed it forever.⁹⁰ The fascination with the question of legitimacy and pinning it down to an institution does take away one’s emphasis from the methods inducing potential cultural violence, especially in the move towards making such a State the harbinger of legitimacy. This state had to flatten the social and economic inequalities in society by making ascribed identities irreverent and irrelevant. Such a step towards reducing the relevance of these ascribed identities loses sight of the well-thought-out rooted production of these identities within the arena of society. As opposed to the imposition of culture from the state which has a history of resistance from society, whether for good or bad, only suggests the need to develop an alternative that was able to capture the psyche of the masses in society. Such possibilities of shaping the political consciousness not just within the bounds of the state but exuding into the society, portray the need to engage with the extent to which, the minds had dealt with and addressed their colonized self.⁹¹ A glaring symptom of this condition is present in the ever-increasing importance accorded to nationalism, despite the doyen of secular-

nationalism, Nehru, suggesting otherwise in many instances. “The economic bond is stronger than even the national one.”⁹² However, the connection between nationalism and religion which was hardly explored by Nehru, when studied to make sense of contemporary times today, becomes imperative.

3.4: Some Concluding Remarks

Jawaharlal Nehru’s understanding of reason as a potent force that reckons the beginning of the new tomorrow delves in a rather unwittingly fastidious fashion into the vision of a future. Such a vision is not rooted in a historical account even though he was fascinated by the same. His imagination, curiosity and memories led him to the quest into the annals of the past with the strong hopeful signs of a future that did not exist in the ingredients with which our pasts had been formed with. This signaled the break from tradition as a necessary factor in Nehru, to embrace this new future. The future is constituted within the aware reasonable individual who is also a devout nationalist committed to living together with fellow beings in harmony.⁹³

There were innumerable kinds of research done on Indian societies on the equation built between religion and state with pre-set notions on the presence of the former as being a source of confusion for the establishment of political order led by the state. The latter becomes associated with a uniform universal order at the behest of the former being associated with representing diversity and hence being a source of confusion. Such an analysis then suffers from the bias of placing political order within multicultural societies as being more challenging and difficult to achieve without needing to engage in the questioning of the goal of establishing a uniform political order. Such biases lead the deliberations towards the need to engage only within the ambit of a political order that has to be perceived as being singular and in favor of the State.

The context in which Nehru thought and wrote acts as a signifier to the understanding of the need to integrate and unite societies together within the ambit of the nation. However, the rise of a nation and nationalism may be attributed to the failed attempts at creating an understanding of a social-political order that could allow enough legitimacy for the State. Nationhood and nationality, thus, get legitimate when steered by the State, thereby subscribing to the bias of providing centrality to the State. The crisis of legitimation gets associated with keeping the

State as the center and herein lies the dangers and challenges for all future community projects that Nehru, as one of the central figures in the Indian freedom struggle aimed to achieve.

When combined with the democratic framework of elections and the parties' aims towards winning them, the need to standardize and establish a strong connection between the parties and people arose over a period of time. It was found that the connect could be established, on the grounds of primordial sentiments and identities associated with them being rooted for, along with that of the party agendas.⁹⁴ Such a growing relevance of religion in the political space only ensured the need to rethink the ways in which religion was conceptualized and treated by thinkers such as Nehru, towards carving a conducive public space that could help integrate as in the Nehruvian project, a robust national economy. However, his views on secularization as T.N. Madan points out, reflected more of the ideals of rationalism and modernity of the western kinds, which did not cater so much to the hard social facts.⁹⁵

There is a paradox present here which was evident and exposed by Ambedkar during the drafting of the Constitution of India much later. Upon asked why he was not in favour of assigning 'secular' as an identity to this state that was being created then, one of the reasons he emphasized upon, was the import of forming a state that interferes in the affairs of the society as a mandatory characteristic for Indian societies. The element of separation from society of the state was not considered ideal by the likes of Ambedkar and for him the secular character was not defined in the separation or the distance.⁹⁶ It was defined in terms of the attitude state practiced towards all religions and, in this sense, removed separation as the defining feature in the relationship between the state and religion. Separation, if any, was channelized through the individual citizen who is affiliated to the State, thereby, creating a space for freedom in individuals as a challenge that was both political as well as moral by nature.

It, thus, perhaps seems important today to give primacy to that rupture between the fractured present and the new future and thus infuse some essence into it by rethinking the role of religion within this connection, hinged upon serious ruminations over the relations religion had built in the past which constituted in our minds a strong sense of close friends and rigid enemies.⁹⁷ With all the aforementioned limitations, Nehru's presence in such kinds of reflections that the society as a whole deserved to have experienced at a time when communal strife was ripe in the country, was commendable given its futuristic vision. However, the question that loomed large was, would this suffice for the chaos India was dealing with or will have to deal with? As

was famously written by Ludwig Wittgenstein, “When you are philosophizing you have to descend into primeval chaos and feel at home there.”⁹⁸ The following chapter on M K Gandhi shall cater to multifarious explorations of the questions we posed for Nehru here.

Notes

¹ Cited in Jawaharlal Nehru, “Upanishads”, *The Discovery of India*, p. 92

² Cited in Ainslee T. Embree, “Nehru’s Understanding of the Social Function of Religion”, p. 165

³ Romila Thapar interview with Karan Thapar on Nehru, <https://youtu.be/x65z6USSfPQ>

⁴ This is a phrase used by Sunil Khilnani in the title of his book, *The Idea of India*

⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, “Ahmadnagar Fort Again”, *The Discovery of India*, pp. 552,553; Cited in T.N. Madan, “Religion and Social Change in India: Some Conceptual Issues”, p. 3

⁶ Nehru refers to Romain Rolland’s account of Swami Vivekananda in his work. This is mentioned in “Through the Ages”, *The Discovery of India*, p. 196

⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, “Upanishads”, *The Discovery of India*, p. 90

⁸ Ibid, p. 90

⁹ Ibid, p. 92

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 73 – 80. A detailed account of the Indianness that is distinct and superimposes the identities grounded on religion is elaborated here. Also, the formation of the Hindu, the Hindi as the people inhabiting the land and its transition to Hinduism as an organized religion with revealed scriptures as its basis, is described at length here.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 74

¹² Ibid, p. 77

¹³ See Ramachandra Guha, “Multiple Agendas of Jawaharlal Nehru”, *Makers of Modern India*, pp. 326 - 340

¹⁴ The empty space of politics in the public space is associated with Claude Lefort’s understanding of the emptiness. Please see Claude Lefort, *Democracy and Political Theory*. This idea is credited to Professor Lajwanti Chatani, Professor of Political Theory, The M.S. University of Baroda, who associated Lefort’s principle with the Nehruvian perception of the

public space and political order, during her teaching of the course on “Theorizing India” – a course at the Masters level in Political Science.

¹⁵ See Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*

¹⁶ See Hent de Vries and Lawrence Sullivan, *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*

¹⁷ This is an underlying position Nehru holds on religion and its impact in the societies in India, which is found in *The Discovery of India* and many speeches he delivered in various occasions such as the one on politics and religion made in the Constituent Assembly Legislative (New Delhi), April 3, 1948.

¹⁸ See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*

¹⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, “Politics and Religion”, *Jawaharlal Nehru’s Speeches: Vol 1(1946-49)*, p. 74

²⁰ See Bhikhu Parekh, “Nehru and the National Philosophy of India”

²¹ *Constituent Assembly Debates, Vol VIII*, Cited in Mohammad Ghouse, “Nehru and Secularism”, *Journal of the Indian Law Institute*, p. 105

²² Jawaharlal Nehru, “Politics and Religion”, *Jawaharlal Nehru’s Speeches: Vol 1(1946-49)*, p. 73

²³ *Ibid*, p. 75

²⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, p. 564

²⁵ This is akin to Gunnar Myrdal’s contribution in his work, *Beyond the Welfare State* where welfare according to him can rely upon a closure attributed to the nature of the state in the notion of planning and within the narratives of nationhood. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Jawaharlal Nehru’s Speeches: Vol 1(1946-49)*, pp. 25 – 28; Also cited in TN Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, p. 244

²⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 244, 247

²⁷ This logic behind this idea may be attributed to political nationalism of Nehru as much as we may attribute religious/cultural nationalism to the erstwhile dominant ideas of Savarkar and the supremacy of religious-social/moral consciousness in society of Gandhi, S. Radhakrishnan and the likes of their thinking. This could have led to nationalism becoming the dominant collective response to the colonial context. See Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* for a detailed explanation of such a line of thought.

²⁸ Jawaharlal Nehru, “Politics and Religion”, *Jawaharlal Nehru’s Speeches: Vol 1(1946-49)*, pp. 73 - 78

²⁹ Sunil Khilnani, “Nehru’s Faith”, p. 4793

³⁰ See Bhikhu Parekh’s explanation in “Nehru and National Philosophy of India”

³¹ See Ashis Nandy, “The Twilight of Certitudes: Secularism, Nationalism and Other Masks of Deculturation”, pp. 166 - 169

³² Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, pp. 505, 507

³³ This makes it important for one to acknowledge the insightful analysis of TN Madan in calling Nehruvian conception as being a mix of Locke and Marx. See, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, p. 242

³⁴ There is a reference to the Lockean idea of the people and their supremacy in the chapter titled, “Bharat Mata” in *The Discovery of India*, where Nehru prods into, in one of his interactions with people, the definition and constitution of Bharat Mata, only to realize and state like a proclamation that each one of us is a Bharat Mata. Therein lies the seeds of a republican order and such an order forming the basis of a democratic society, an analysis of which was made by Lajwanti Chatani, Professor of Political Theory, The M.S. University of Baroda, while teaching the course on “Theorizing India”. See, Jawaharlal Nehru, “Bharat Mata”, *The Discovery of India*, pp. 60 - 61

³⁵ Ibid, pp. 546 - 547

³⁶ The fraternal bonds may be interpreted as being akin to friendship that Nehru aspired for the future of ideal Indian societies rooted in spirituality and civility under the influence of the western ways of living as well as evolving the traditional ways of living into a rational enterprise.

³⁷ Ramachandra Guha, *Makers of Modern India*, p. 332

³⁸ Ibid, p. 332

³⁹ Ananya Vajpeyi, *Righteous Republic: The Political Foundations of Modern India*, p. xiii

⁴⁰ This is an application of Ashis Nandy’s Intimate Enemy thesis where the colonization of the mind is not the site of the study for thinkers such as Nehru, and which in some ways do contribute to the looming absence of the narratives such as what made the other an other, and the self a self.

⁴¹ See Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*

⁴² Romila Thapar interview with Karan Thapar on Nehru, <https://youtu.be/x65z6USSfPQ>

⁴³ Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, p. 44

⁴⁴ T.N. Madan, “Religion and Social Change in India: Some Conceptual Issues”, p. 5

⁴⁵ These are excerpts on Swami Vivekananda which Nehru took from Romaine Rolland’s ‘Life of Vivekananda’ and quoted in *The Discovery of India*, p. 197

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 196

⁴⁷ Ashis Nandy, T.N. Madan, Bhikhu Parekh, and the like have extensively written towards developing alternatives to secularism as an organized outlook institutionally as well as, as a policy.

⁴⁸ See Bhikhu Parekh, “Nehru and the National Philosophy of India” and Sunil Khilnani’s “Nehru’s Faith”

⁴⁹ T.N. Madan and Ashis Nandy have provided an extensively elaborate account on the reasons why their propositions against secularism as the answer to the religion-state relationship is internally flawed and practically impossible to be implemented. See the articles, “The Twilight of Certitudes: Secularism, Nationalism and Other Masks of Deculturation”, “The Anti-Secular Manifesto” by Nandy, and “On Religion”, “Religion and Social Change in India: Some Conceptual Issues” by Madan for their respective accounts.

⁵⁰ T.N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, p. 239

⁵¹ Subrata Mitra, “The Limits of Accommodation: Nehru, Religion and the State in India”, p. 108

⁵² Jawaharlal Nehru, “Ahmadnagar Fort Again”, ‘India’s Dynamic Capacity’, *The Discovery of India*, p. 556

⁵³ Ainslee T. Embree, “Nehru’s Understanding of the Social Function of Religion”, *India International Centre Quarterly*, p. 167

⁵⁴ See Ananya Vajpeyi, “Jawaharlal Nehru: Dharma, the Self’s Aspiration and Artha, the Self’s Purpose” in *Righteous Republic: The Political Foundations of Modern India*

⁵⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, “The Quest”, *The Discovery of India*, p. 42

⁵⁶ Ibid, pp. 41- 42

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 59

⁵⁸ Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*, p. 1

⁵⁹ See Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*

⁶⁰ Rabindranath Tagore in a letter to a friend, 1921. Cited in Ramachandra Guha, *Makers of Modern India*, p. 203

⁶¹ T.N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, pp. 240 - 242

⁶² Bhikhu Parekh, *Gandhi’s Political Philosophy*, p. 204. Also see T N Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds*, p. 236

⁶³ See Llyod I. Rudolph, *Cultural Policy in India*

⁶⁴ Cited in T.N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, p. 240

⁶⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, p. 282

⁶⁶ See Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* and *The Glimpses of World History*

⁶⁷ See, Jawaharlal Nehru, “Bharat Mata”, *The Discovery of India*, pp. 60 – 61. This idea may be credited to Lajwanti Chatani, Professor of Political Theory, The M.S. University of Baroda while teaching the course on “Theorizing India”.

⁶⁸ See Bhikhu Parekh, “Nehru and the National Philosophy of India” and Ananya Vajpeyi, “Jawaharlal Nehru: Dharma, the Self’s Aspiration and Artha, the Self’s Purpose” in *Righteous Republic: The Political Foundations of Modern India*, p. 196

⁶⁹ Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*, pp. 56-57

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 57

⁷¹ See Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*

⁷² T.N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, pp. 239-240

⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 239

⁷⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, p. 252

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 251-253

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 252-253

⁷⁷ Religion is Janus-faced which could source myriad forms of exploitative practices in society as well as mould people’s consciousness catering to moral social needs. See, Hent de Vries, “Introduction” in Hent de Vries and Lawrence Sullivan, *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*

⁷⁸ T.N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, p. 242

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 242-243

⁸⁰ See Bhikhu Parekh, “Nehru and the National Philosophy of India”

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p. 41

⁸² Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, p. 509

⁸³ Bhikhu Parekh, “Nehru and the National Philosophy of India” p. 41

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 42

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 42

⁸⁶ This idea was developed in the following lecture delivered by Ashis Nandy titled, “Alternative Cosmopolitanism: Living with Radical Diversities and the Right to be Oneself”

on February 4, 2016, under the Balvant Parekh Distinguished Lecture Series organized by Balvant Parekh Centre for General Semantics and Other Human Sciences, Vadodara.

⁸⁷ Bhikhu Parekh, “Nehru and the National Philosophy of India” p. 42

⁸⁸ See The Times of India, September 16, 1954

⁸⁹ See Victor Z. Narivelil, “Nehru and the Secular State of India”, p. 61. This is a Master’s Thesis that is available on the link attached, http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses/2302.

⁹⁰ This is developed in reference to the logic behind the census and the uniform religious affiliation developed in it as changing the culture of the public space.

⁹¹ Such arguments were made for the first time by Ashis Nandy in many of his works, “History’s Forgotten Doubles”, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self in Colonialism, On the Edge of Psychology*, among many.

⁹² This is a quote by Jawaharlal Nehru from *The Discovery of India* cited in T.N. Madan’s *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, p. 240

⁹³ Sunil Khilnani and Bhikhu Parekh have captured this nationalistic sentiment in Nehru very well and have explained them as forming an intrinsic part of his political vocabulary.

⁹⁴ Subrata Mitra, “The Limits of Accommodation: Nehru, Religion and the State in India”, p. 110

⁹⁵ TN Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, p. 242

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 243. Refer to endnote number 5 for an explanation of the above point.

⁹⁷ One may refer to Bhikhu Parekh’s criticism of Nehru being torn between the friend and the enemy while dealing with the Hindu-Muslim question, where he himself contributed to the distinction by bearing these clear distinctions of the potential enemies in mind.

⁹⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 1977