

In his classic contribution, Gopal wrote that Nehru's first interest in science was initiated by his private tutor F.T. Brooks, who improvised a tiny laboratory for him. At Harrow, Nehru's time was taken up by modern history and politics, and only when he went to Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1907, did science become truly dominant in his studies. He took a Natural Science Tripos with chemistry, geology and botany as his subjects. This period was crucial for his life as it developed in Nehru not only a general interest in science, but a scientific approach to life and to the problems of India.

What Nehru affirmed in England was his concept of a civilised person, the application of reason to human affairs, tolerance for dissenting opinions and a search for truth, all revealed to him by science. This Scientific Temper meant a secular policy towards religion and a fight against bigotry, so prevalent in the masses of the Indian Poor. In addition Nehru accepted the Marxist analysis of the past, but not its prescriptions for the future. The long terms of imprisonment were for Nehru a golden opportunity for wide and intensive reading about science and socialism as advocated in the writings of British progressive scientists like Bertrand Russell, Bernal, Needham, Huxley, Waddington, Hogben and Haldane. They had a far-reaching influence on Nehru at the time, a result never expected by the British Prison authorities.

This prison period laid the foundation for several slogans of his, like 'Science for a free India' and the all-embracing '*Scientific Temper*' which guided all his subsequent actions. When after Independence, Nehru became India's first Prime Minister in August 1947, a position which he retained until his death in May 1964. His first decision on becoming Prime Minister was to assume the Presidency of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, a post he kept all his life. In the same year he established a Ministry of Scientific Research and Natural Resources. From 1947 until his death, to encourage India's younger scientists, he personally, later a dynastic tradition, inaugurated each Session of the Indian Science Congress, the equivalent of the British and the American Associations for the Advancement of Science.

In all these activities Nehru's first priority was always the use of science for the economic and spiritual development of India, through research in industry and agriculture, a search for truth through experiment and a vigorous battle against religious bigotry. Nehru felt that the spread of scientific knowledge should reveal the absurdity of its co-existence with superstition and astrology.

In his brief 17 years, Nehru laid the grand foundations for India's future through science, but as Gopal wrote, Nehru's legacy has yet to be fulfilled. Most unfortunately, as any visitor to the great country of India will notice, bigotry and astrology still flourish.