

The Blue Plaque

Jawaharlal Nehru

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India's first Prime Minister was born into a family with a tradition of opposition to British rule – his father, Motilal Nehru, was a journalist, lawyer and a leading nationalist – but Nehru himself was educated at a British public school, Harrow, and at a British university, Cambridge.

He lived in Elgin Crescent, W11, in the house which now carries a blue plaque, when he was reading for the Bar and a student at the Inner Temple. Admitted to the English Bar in 1912, Nehru returned to India to practise law. In 1919 he was horrified by the Amritsar massacre, in which British troops killed hundreds of unarmed Indian civilians, and he threw himself into nationalist politics.

He joined the Congress party and was imprisoned by the British for the first time in 1921. He was to suffer many years of imprisonment over the next quarter of a century. For most of the early 1930s he was in jail because of his advocacy of civil disobedience as a means of forcing the British to give India its independence and he was again behind bars during the Second World War, following Congress's 1942 call for the British to quit India immediately.

Most of Nehru's extensive writings on politics, history and philosophy were undertaken when he was in prison. Allied with Gandhi, but often representing more radical views than the Mahatma, Nehru was one of the leading figures in the Congress party throughout this period, and he was the obvious choice to become Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs when India gained her independence in 1947.

He remained in power until his death in May 1964, pursuing a policy of industrialisation at home and neutrality abroad. His daughter, Indira Gandhi, and her sons continued his political dynasty.



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