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Sadbhavana Digest

Issue #7, November 2021

Contents

Editorial

We welcome you to a journey – to quote Aung San Suu Kyi - 'Discovery of Nehru'. Our guest editors for this issue, Dr Ankush Gupta and Vibhuti Sheopuri have gone through a large number of Nehru's own writings as well as the writings of other authors *about* him, and have classified those along the trinity of thematic elements that bind each issue of Sadbhavana Digest together. Along with those three themes, they have also meticulously tried to balance this issue between 'Nehru -the Leader' and 'Nehru- the Human Being'. A brief overview of the things that have been included-

In the first section, 'How to deal with self?', we start with an excerpt from one of Nehru's letters to his daughter, Indira, giving us a glimpse of him as a sensitive soul, while also addressing pertinent questions about happiness and life. This is followed by an essay by Dr. D. S. Salunke that looks at these letters through a pedagogical perspective. Since this essay in a way covers all of the three themes, we also use it as an introduction to all that follows while also acting as a bridge to our next offering - a piece by Nehru where he addresses himself and contemplates the possibility of him becoming a fascist. It is a reflective piece that every leader must read. Then we move towards the spiritual side of Nehru, with a piece by Ramchandra Guha on Nehru’s spiritual beliefs. This section ends with a beautiful poem by Kaifi Azmi that he wrote about Nehru.

The second section 'How to deal with others?' begins with Nehru's own writing on 'What is Religion?'. The next piece is the famous speech at the 1936 Congress Session at Faizpur in Maharashtra. This was the first Congress session in a rural setting and lakhs of farmers attended it. Nehru discusses Socialism quite openly here, and the piece that follows, analyses his idea of socialism both in theory and in practice.

This brings us to the third and final section - 'How to deal with nature?' Here, we have clubbed together two short pieces from Nehru's autobiography (one about his travels in the North, and another about his travels in the South). This piece is followed by an ecological analysis of the same book (Nehru's autobiography) by S. Keerthi. It's a rich analysis where the author is able to bring in various aspects of his environment loving self. This section ends with the famous Robert Frost poem 'Stopping by woods on a snowy evening'. To punctuate each section, we have used poetry quoted by Nehru himself in his various writings. We have also included links to some videos and podcasts and puppet show!

Part I – How do we deal with the Self?

"The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep."
-Robert Frost

Letter from a Father to a Daughter… No 64
Jawaharlal Nehru

Ahmadnagar Fort Prison,
3rd June,1944

… a child has to be treated as an individual and given every opportunity to grow as an individual. But it is at least equally important to treat him as a social being who can live at peace and cooperation with others. That makes one think of the kind of society itself he will have to live in – a difficult business today when society itself is changing. In any event the cooperative habits and traits have to be developed or else he will find it difficult to fit in anywhere. Usually single children, who have been looked after a great deal, have a hard time when they go out into the world and have to fend for themselves. Bertrand Russell says somewhere that parents are wholly unsuited to bring up their children; they are too intensely interested in them to take a dispassionate view or to treat them normally.

You say you want the child to be happy – of course. But then what is happiness? There is the solid content of a fairly prosperous peasant; there are higher grades of intellectual and emotional happiness. There is the happiness of the person who is drunk or who is under the influence of some drug. I suppose, if you analyse your mind, you will find that happiness is more often negative than positive – an absence of pain & suffering. And yet how is one to be happy if he knows and sees another in pain? A sensitive person will suffer continually on behalf of others. An insensitive person may escape that but at the cost of much that is fine in life. Long ago (probably 140 years ago) Leopardi, the Italian poet, wrote to his sister on the occasion of her marriage: ‘Thou shall have children either cowards or unhappy; choose thou the latter.’ (1) That is perhaps an extreme view but there is some truth in it.

Ultimately, we cannot be really happy till the whole world is happy and that is a large order. Mere avoidance of unhappiness, not easily possible, may itself result in isolation and boredom and a malaise which is worse than definite unhappiness. We are so organically connected with others & with the world that we cannot both live a full life and yet avoid the world’s ills. Escapism does not pay in the long run, quite apart from its moral worth. What then is one to do? That is big question which has been asked almost since human beings began to think. It seems to me that the only thing to aim at is the power or capacity to extract happiness, or perhaps it is better to call it peace and calm, out of unhappiness itself. Not to escape from anything but to face it and yet be above it in a way; not to be overcome by it and to retrain in spite of everything a sense of life and its larger purposes, a feeling of life fulfilment. How to do that is a difficult enough job and each person has to learn for himself and it seems that only life, with all its waywardness and shock, can teach. The most we can do is to prepare the background for it.

Read your books by all means but do not attach too much importance to everything they contain. A story of Li-Po the great Chinese poet comes to my mind. A young man, desiring to become a poet, went to Li-Po and asked him how he was to train himself for the purpose; 'Master, how can I become a poet.' Li-Po said: 'Read all the rules and books and then forget them and observing nature put your feeling in words.' You mention Ethel Mannin's book. She is a likeable person and I am sure what she says has sense in it. But it struck me suddenly – has she any children? I do not know but somehow, I doubt it.

1. *Giacoma Leopardi (1798-1837): author of many lyrics, some patriotic, and a prose work, Little Moral Works.*

There is a passage in one of Gilbert Murray's books which might interest you. He says that we must be 'careful always to seek for truth and not for our own emotional satisfaction, careful not to neglect the real needs of men and women through basing our life on dreams; and remembering above all to walk gently in a world when the lights are dim and the very stars wander'...

Your loving,
Papu

This is my letter No. 64.

Father-Daughter Relationship in Nehru's Letters from a Father to his Daughter: A Pedagogical Perspective

Dr. D. S. Salunke
Assistant Professor, Department of English,
Vinayakrao Patil College, Vaijapur 423701

Introduction:

Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru was a prominent statesman, leader, historian and a writer. In his literary career he produced some of the milestones like A Discovery of India, Glimpses of World History, An Autobiography, Letters from a Father to his Daughter etc. This article attempts an analysis of Letters from a Father to His Daughter from a pedagogical point of view.

Pedagogy is method and practice of teaching especially as an academic subject or theoretical concept. His letters not only encapsulate some of the very important classical and modern pedagogical principles but also formulate Nehru's unique theory of knowledge. In the very first chapter, he states the aim of writing a series of letters. He knows it well that there is a physical distance between them and therefore relies on short accounts from time to time.

> 'When you and I are together, you often ask me things and I try to answer them. Now that you are at Mussoorie and I am in Allahabad we cannot have these talks. I am therefore going to write to you from time to time short accounts of the story of our earth and the many countries, great and small, into which it is divided.' (1)

This aroused a great deal of curiosity in Indira. Significant change occurred in her dealings with the world around. She began to take interest in objects and events around her. She later admitted that the letters aroused a feeling of concern for people and interest in the world around. They taught her to treat nature as a book. She spent hours together studying stones and plants, insects and heavenly bodies.

He refers to the book of nature. According to him this book of nature with all its objects is always open for an avid reader but unfortunately very few pay attention to it. The stories of stones are more interesting than the fairy tales. In fact the principal object of this epistolary teaching learning exercise is story telling. He knew that history especially the early human history is a difficult topic to teach to kids and therefore he presented it through stories. In the letter 'The Early Men' he further elaborates that it is not easy to read this book because one needs a lot of patience.

> ‘And the real way to understand this story is not merely to read about it in other people’s books but to go to the great Book of Nature itself… every little stone that you see lying on the road or on the mountainside may be a little page in nature’s book and may be a able to tell you something if you only know to read it.’ (5)

Nehru understands child psychology very well. Indira was only ten when he started writing her. This is why he describes this business of writing letters as a ‘story’ and he meticulously sustained this spirit of story-telling throughout the 30 letters. He takes into consideration age and background. Before each letter he undertakes a short review of the earlier letter and then moves forward. That’s why the earlier letters are simpler and shorter while the latter ones are elaborate and detailed.

While explaining the principle of ‘waste in reproduction’ which would in strictly scientific language have looked very dry and uninteresting actually looks very vivid and touching due to the inclusion of ‘mother’ into the whole story. According to him the higher animals usually give birth to a few young ones and have some affection for them. He further adds that man being a higher animal, mother and father love and take care of their children.

> ‘The mother rabbit gives birth to a large number of baby rabbits every few months and many of these die. But a higher animal like the elephant only gives birth to one baby and looks after the baby very well.’ (34)

Nehru wanted to impart values to Indira through these letters. He also aims at making Indira understand herself a part of the universe and not a member of one particular country or island. He emerges in these pages as a true Universalist. Therefore, he insists on her the importance of visualization in the process of learning.

> ‘I am afraid I can only tell you very little in these letters of mine. But that little, I hope, will interest you and make you think of the world as a whole, and of other peoples in it as brothers and sisters.’ (2)

He teaches her importance of values like co-living and non-violence. He adds that in the olden times people fought over petty issues, but it is absolutely bad to see the modern civilized people fighting.

> ‘They (ancient people) thought they were better than others who lived in other countries and, very foolishly, they fought with these others. They did not realize, and people do not realize even now, that fighting and killing each other are about the most stupid things that people can do. It does good to nobody.’ (10)

Nehru also wants to impart his daughter the glorious knowledge tradition of ancient people when great civilization prospered on the banks of its rivers. In the Indus valley such a

civilization emerged around 3000 BC. But in the course of his story telling brings to her notice the sad fact that India gradually went under the foreign rule. He also reminds her of a concerted action to make India free from the foreign rule.

> ‘We are not free even in our own country and cannot do what we want. But this was not so always and perhaps if we try hard we make our country free again. So that we may improve the lot of the poor, and make India as pleasant to live in as are some of the countries of Europe today.’ (12)

This book is full of definitions in the simplest possible words. Before giving a definition, Nehru first explains the process so that the definition comes as a natural and logical conclusion. This is why it engages Indira throughout the course of 30 letters.

> ‘The sun and the planets with their satellites form a happy family. This is called the solar system. Solar means belonging to the sun, and the sun being the father of all the planets the whole group is called the solar system.’ (14)

> ‘Astronomers, those people who study the stars, tell us that long, long ago the earth and all the planets were part of the sun.’ (15)

The formation of the Mediterranean Sea is explained through the example of great flood. This was a very important development of the Neolithic Age. There are references about ‘Great Flood’ in the Bible and also in some of the Sanskrit books. Nehru describes it as a disaster. This information is handed down from one generation to another and this is why things stated in the ancient texts like the epics sometimes correlate to some actual historical events.

> ‘It was such a terrible disaster that the few people who managed to escape must have told all about it to their children, and they to their children, and so the story was handed down from generation to generation.’ (45)

It is not at all easy to teach natural history in a story form. Sometimes a writer tends to be more verbiage by means of too many details. But Nehru knows the limits of himself being a teacher and Indira being a student. He maintains such a fine balance that the narrative looks light and entertaining. He often reminds her of some old event or incident from the past. To explain that plants are also living beings he refers her visit to Kew Garden of London. He also talks about Sir Jagdish Bose who, by experiments, showed that plants have a great deal of life. He also reminds her of the ‘lake-dwelling model in the Geneva Museum’ (43)

> ‘If you remember, I showed you some plants- orchids and pitcher plants- actually eat flies.’ (20)

‘You saw many fossils of this kind, big and small, at the South Kensington Museum in London.’ (22)

‘You have seen in the South Kensington Museum in London how birds and animals in winter, and in cold countries where there is a lot of ice, become white like snow.’ (28)

‘Imagine a snake or a lizard one hundred feet long! Do you remember seeing the fossils of these brutes in the museum in London?’ (30)

‘Do you remember going with us to see a professor in Heidelberg in Germany? He showed us a little museum full of fossils and especially an old skull which he kept carefully locked up in a safe.’ (35)

He also knows the impact of visuals. Especially, when it comes to small children, information followed by a picture works a wonder. To illustrate a particular scientific concept, he gives a picture. As a result, the book carries about 55 pictures at all important locations. In his letter ‘Fossils and Ruins’ he explains the importance of pictures.

‘I sent you some picture postcards of fossil fishes to give you some idea of what these fossils were like. Mussoorie, when we met, I showed you pictures of other fossils.’ (140)

He also makes a judicious use of humour in order to entertain his daughter. While explaining to her the process of adaptation and evolution, he cuts a joke.

‘He imagines himself so utterly different from the animals. But it is good to remember that we are cousins of the ape and the monkey, and even now many of us, I am afraid, behave like the monkeys do!’ (31)

Conclusion: These letters display passion for teaching and remarkable friendliness to his daughter. There is no pedantry or sermonizing. Right word is placed in the right place. Most of the ideas developed in Nehru’s latter books were first articulated in these letters. In this sense, this book serves as a prototype A Discovery of India and Glimpses of World History. Nehru appears to be a great teacher through these letters.

References

1. *Nehru, Jawaharlal. Letters from a Father to His Daughter. New Delhi: Puffin Books. 2004. Print.*

Jawaharlal Nehru celebrating his birthday with children

Click here to watch the video

We Want No Caesars

Jawaharlal Nehru

Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India, was born on 14 November 1889—127 years ago—in Allahabad. In 1907, he began studying at the Trinity College, at Cambridge University. Upon graduating in 1910, he moved to London to train as a barrister. Nehru returned to India in 1912 and dove straight into national politics. His tryst with his destiny as a leader of the Indian freedom movement was perhaps set in stone in 1919—when, while travelling on a train, he overheard British Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer boasting about leading the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre of April 1919, in which hundreds of Indians were killed after Dyer ordered troops to open fire on a large crowd in an enclosed area. In the years that followed, he became increasingly involved with the INC and national politics, and, in 1921, was imprisoned for the first time for his participation in the Non-cooperation Movement. (Nehru would be imprisoned eight more times over the next 26 years, before India attained independence.) On 19 December 1929, he was elected the president of the Lahore Session of the Indian National Congress. The INC then adopted purna swaraj—complete independence—as its goal. He was elected president of the Indian National Congress for the fourth time on 6 July 1946, and served for three more terms from 1951 to 1954.

In 1937, Nehru had been elected president of the Indian National Congress for the third time. But he was worried that the Indian people may begin to perceive his and the INC's prominence as Caesarism—akin to the dictatorship of Roman Emperor Julius Caesar, a charismatic authoritarian leader whose rule was characterised by the cult of his personality. Cognisant and cautious of the dangers of his own pride and position, he wrote an essay titled "Rashtrapati," under the pseudonym Chanakya. The essay was published in 1937 in the Modern Review—a Calcutta-based monthly journal founded by Bengali thinker Ramananda Chatterjee in 1907. In it, "Chanakya" describes Nehru as "some triumphant Caesar passing by," who might turn dictator with "a little twist." By writing about himself in this manner, Nehru stressed the importance of questioning the motives of leaders, and checking the power they hold. Patriots, Poets and Prisoners is an anthology of essays published in the Modern Review between 1906 and 1947, that highlights the debates and issues surrounding the Indian freedom movement. Taken from the book, the following is the full text of Nehru's essay.

Rashtrapati Jawaharlal ki Jai. The Rashtrapati looked up as he passed swiftly through the waiting crowds, his hands went up and were joined together in salute, and his pale hard face was lit up by a smile. It was a warm personal smile and the people who saw it responded to it immediately and smiled and cheered in return.

The smile passed away and again the face became stern and sad, impassive in the midst of the emotion that it had roused in the multitude. Almost it seemed that the smile and the gesture accompanying it had little reality behind them; they were just tricks of the trade to gain the goodwill of the crowds whose darling he had become. Was it so?

Watch him again. There is a great procession and tens of thousands of persons surround his car and cheer him in an ecstasy of abandonment. He stands on the seat of the car, balancing himself rather well, straight and seemingly tall, like a god, serene and unmoved by the seething multitude. Suddenly there is that smile again, or even a merry laugh, and the tension seems to break and the crowd laughs with him, not knowing what it is laughing at. He is godlike no longer but a human being claiming kinship and comradeship with the thousands who surround him and the crowd feels happy and friendly and takes him to its heart. But the smile is gone and the pale stern face is there again.

Is all this natural or the carefully thought out trickery of the public man? Perhaps it is both and long habit has become second nature now. The most effective pose is one in which there seems to be least of posing, and Jawaharlal has learnt well to act without the paint and powder of the actor. With his seeming carelessness and insouciance, he performs on the public stage with consummate artistry. Whither is this going to lead him and the country? What is he aiming at with all his apparent want of aim? What lies behind that mask of his, what desires, what will to power, what insatiate longings?

These questions would be interesting in any event, for Jawaharlal is a personality which compels interest and attention. But they have a vital significance for us, for he is bound up with the present in India, and probably the future, and he has the power in him to do great good to India or great injury. We must therefore seek answers to these questions.

For nearly two years now he has been President of the Congress and some people imagine that he is just a camp-follower in the Working Committee of the Congress, suppressed or kept in check by others. And yet steadily and persistently he goes on increasing his personal prestige and influence both with the masses and with all manner of groups and people. He goes to the peasant and the worker, to the zamindar and the capitalist, to the merchant and the peddler, to the Brahmin and the untouchable, to the Muslim, the Sikh, the Christian and the Jew, to all who make up the great variety of Indian life. To all these he speaks in a slightly different language, ever seeking to win them over to his side. With an energy that is astonishing at his age, he has rushed about across this vast land of India, and everywhere he has received the most extraordinary of popular welcomes. From the far north to Cape Comorin he has gone like some triumphant Caesar passing by, leaving a trail of glory and a legend behind him. Is all this for him just a passing fancy which amuses him, or some deep design, or the play of some force which he himself does not know? Is it his will to power, of which he speaks in his autobiography, that is driving him from crowd to crowd and making him whisper to himself:

"I drew these tides of men into my hands
and wrote my will across the sky in stars."

What if the fancy turn? Men like Jawaharlal, with all their capacity for great and good work, are unsafe in democracy. He calls himself a democrat and a socialist, and no doubt he does so in all earnestness, but every psychologist knows that the mind is ultimately a slave to the heart and logic can always be made to fit in with the desires and irrepressible urges of a person. A little twist and Jawaharlal might turn a dictator sweeping aside the paraphernalia of a slow-moving democracy. He might still use the language and slogans of democracy and socialism, but we all know how fascism has fattened on this language and then cast it away as useless lumber.

Jawaharlal is certainly not a fascist, not only by conviction but by temperament. He is far too much of an aristocrat for the crudity and vulgarity of fascism. His very face and voice tell us that:

"Private faces in public places
are better and nicer than
public faces in private places."

The fascist face is a public face and it is not a pleasant face in public or private. Jawaharlal's face as well as his voice are definitely private. There is no mistaking that even in a crowd, and his voice at public meetings is an intimate voice which seems to speak to individuals separately in a matter-of-fact homely way. One wonders as one hears it or sees that sensitive face what lies behind them, what thoughts and desires, what strange complexes and repressions, what passions suppressed and turned to energy, what longings which he dare not acknowledge even to himself. The train of thought holds him in public speech, but at other times his looks betray him, for his mind wanders away to strange fields and fancies, and he forgets for a moment his companion and holds inaudible converse with the creatures of his brain. Does he think of the human contacts he has missed in his life's journey, hard and tempestuous as it has been; does he long for them? Or does he dream of the future of his fashioning and of the conflicts and triumphs that he would fain have? He must know well that there is no resting by the way in the path he has chosen, and even triumph itself means greater burdens. As Lawrence said to the Arabs: "There could be no rest-houses for revolt, no dividend of joy paid out." Joy may not be for him, but something greater than joy may be his, if fate and fortune are kind—the fulfilment of a life purpose.

Jawaharlal cannot become a fascist. And yet he has all the makings of a dictator in him—a vast popularity, a strong will directed to a well-defined purpose, energy, pride, organisational capacity, ability, hardness, and, with all his love of the crowd, an intolerance of others and a certain contempt for the weak and the inefficient. His flashes of temper are well known and even when they are controlled, the curling of the lips betrays him. His

over-mastering desire to get things done, to sweep away what he dislikes and build a new, will hardly brook for long the slow processes of democracy. He may keep the husk but he will see to it that it bends to his will. In normal times he would be just an efficient and successful executive, but in this revolutionary epoch, Caesarism is always at the door, and is it not possible that Jawaharlal might fancy himself as a Caesar?

Therein lies danger for Jawaharlal and for India. For it is not through Caesarism that India will attain freedom, and though she may prosper a little under a benevolent and efficient despotism, she will remain stunted and the day of the emancipation of her people will be delayed.

For two consecutive years Jawaharlal has been President of the Congress and in some ways, he has made himself so indispensable that there are many who suggest that he should be elected for a third term. But a greater disservice to India and even to Jawaharlal can hardly be done. By electing him a third time we shall exalt one man at the cost of the Congress and make the people think in terms of Caesarism. We shall encourage in Jawaharlal the wrong tendencies and increase his conceit and pride. He will become convinced that only he can bear this burden or tackle India's problems. Let us remember that, in spite of his apparent indifference to office, he has managed to hold important offices in the Congress for the last seventeen years. He must imagine that he is indispensable, and no man must be allowed to think so. India cannot afford to have him as President of the Congress for a third year in succession.

There is a personal reason also for this. In spite of his brave talk, Jawaharlal is obviously tired and stale and he will progressively deteriorate if he continues as President. He cannot rest, for he who rides a tiger cannot dismount. But we can at least prevent him from going astray and from mental deterioration under too heavy burdens and responsibilities. We have a right to expect good work from him in the future. Let us not spoil that and spoil him by too much adulation and praise. His conceit is already formidable. It must be checked. We want no Caesars.

This is an excerpt from Patriots, Poets and Prisoners: Selections from Ramananda Chatterjee's The Modern Review 1907-1947, published by HarperCollins India in 2016.

Jawaharlal Nehru's interview with Arnold Michaelis - 1958

Click here to watch the video

Nehru the Spiritualist

Ramchandra Guha[1]

In an important essay published some years ago, Sunil Khilnani argued that 'Nehru was a politician without religious faith, but in possession of the deepest moral sense. He tried to develop a morality without the fall-back of religion, and while having to act under the compulsions of wielding power.'

That Nehru was sceptical of religion is widely believed. Khilnani begins his essay with a letter written by Nehru to Gandhi in 1933, where he stated: 'Religion is not familiar ground for me, and as I have grown older, I have definitely drifted away from it.' He then quotes from Nehru's autobiography, published in 1936, where Nehru said that 'organised religion' filled him 'with horror…almost always it seemed to stand for a blind belief and reaction, dogma and bigotry, superstition and exploitation'.

In most civilizations and cultures, religion has been seen as a source of morality. Nehru was a moral person, but without basing his values in religion. This is how Khilnani sums up Nehru's faith: 'Reason, and the processes of reasoning, are the greatest resources we have through which to create and sustain our moral imagination.'

The conventional understanding of Nehru as indifferent to religion is not untrue. But it is not wholly true either. There were times in his life when he was deeply drawn to religious texts and ideas. One such period was when he was in jail in 1921-2, during the non-co-operation movement.

I recently found two remarkable letters written by Nehru to Gandhi in the early months of 1922. These letters do not appear in the Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, nor have they been quoted by Nehru biographers. A recent collection of Nehru-Gandhi letters published by the Oxford University Press does not contain them either.

These letters may have been overlooked by scholars because they rest not in the Nehru papers in New Delhi but in the Gandhi papers in Ahmedabad. Yet the letters are important, not least because they complicate the received understanding of Nehru's approach to religion.

Both these letters to Gandhi are handwritten; both were sent from the same address, the District Jail in Agra. The first letter is dated 9th January 1922. Here, Nehru mentions what he has been reading in prison—namely, mostly religious books. Thus, he writes: 'I have

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[1] Published in The Telegraph, 15th November 2014

read “Glover’s Jesus of History”—a book of absorbing interest, and have also done a good deal of the Bible in the light thereof. I have begun seriously reading the Ramayan—Tulsi too, and Kabir’s Bhajans and slokas from Bhagavadgita serve as memory exercises whilst I have my morning and evening walks. I have, as you might well imagine, regularly done my prayers, regularly retired at the time appointed by you, and been out of bed at the same hour when, as Nanak says the “Heavens rain nectar”.

Later in the same letter, Nehru remarks: ‘My days are passed among the saints nowadays, and I should love to finish as well as I can my knowledge of the Bible, the Saints (including Christian Saints of course), the Ramayan and the Mahabharat (including of course the Bhagavad Gita). I have some secular literature [with me], no doubt, but that takes frankly, a subordinate place. The memorizing of songs and verses is a grand thing—It puts me in mind of the great times when our men and women lived and moved as men and women and carried the treasures of all their religious and philosophical lore in the impregnable fortresses of their memories.’

The second letter was written four weeks later, on 19th February 1922. Nehru had recently been joined in prison by one ‘Khwaja Saheb’ from Aligarh. ‘It is a privilege to learn Urdu from Khwaja’, writes Nehru to Gandhi: ‘It is such a stately script, almost symbolic of the easy splendours of the Mussalman.’ Apart from teaching Nehru the Urdu script, Khwaja gave him ‘a few couplets from Urdu poets every day, and important verses from the Koran. I in my turn give Khwaja something from the Upanishads and propose to give him something from the Gita’.

Meanwhile, with another fellow prisoner, one Ram Nareshji, Nehru had finished the sections of the Ramayan named Balakand and Ayodhyakand. ‘I hope to finish the rest in about 20 days’, wrote Nehru to Gandhi, ‘as I finished Sundarakand in Naini [jail] and the rest is plain sailing. It is a joy to read [the] Ramayan every morning. When a quiet early hour of the night is selected for reading it, one almost melts in the liquid love of Tulsi. Ramayan is more a spiritual autobiography than a poetic history of Rama’.

There is a poetic quality to Nehru’s own descriptions too. Clearly, he was loving his time with sacred literature. At this time in his life, secular works were taking a ‘subordinate place’ to texts written (and sung) at a time when Indian men and women ‘carried the treasures of all their religious and philosophical lore’.

When these letters were written, Nehru was in his early thirties. He had lately fallen under the spell of Gandhi, whose own faith was both religious as well as eclectic, drawing from several different sources. The three religious thinkers Gandhi most often invoked were the Vaishnava poet Narsinh Mehta, the Jain philosopher Raychandbhai, and the heterodox Christian Leo Tolstoy. It may have been the Mahatma’s influence that made the young

Nehru, in jail, soak himself in the texts and traditions of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Sikhism. However, within a decade of writing these letters to Gandhi, Nehru seems to have left behind his enchantment with religion. Why? During the non-co-operation movement Hindus and Muslims worked shoulder-to-shoulder. But later in the decade the communities began to drift apart, and there were a series of Hindu-Muslim riots in Northern India. Perhaps Nehru now believed that religion was a dangerous and divisive force in Indian politics, and had best be kept out of the discussion.

In the 1930s, Nehru also became influenced by Western socialism. This prided itself on its secular, scientific, ethos, and was implacably opposed to expressions of religious faith. While in jail in 1921-2 Nehru had little time for secular literature—now, that was all he was reading.

The partition riots of 1947 furthered Nehru's distaste for organized religion. The malign activities of the Muslim League on the one side and of hardline Hindu group such as the RSS on the other, convinced him that sectarian identities were a danger to the unity of India. As he put it in a letter to his Chief Ministers in December 1952, the nation must not be allowed to 'go astray in the crooked paths of provincialism, communalism, casteism and all other disruptive and disintegrating tendencies'.

The Nehru of the 1940s and 1950s wished to promote a 'scientific temper' among the Indian masses. Religion, he felt, had absolutely no place in the process of nation-building. India must never become a 'Hindu Pakistan'.

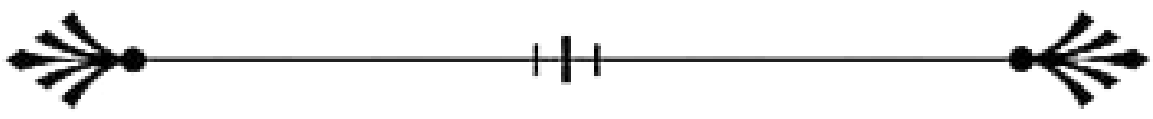
However, as he grew older, Nehru began to see that while it must be kept far away from politics, religious faith could still play a role in an individual's quest for truth and tranquility. In his last years, Nehru often visited my home town, Dehradun. He came partly because he loved the views of the Himalaya and partly to spend time with a spiritual teacher who lived on the road between Dehradun and Rajpur. Her name was Anandmayi Ma. A Bengali Hindu by birth, her faith (like Gandhi's) was ecumenical—she interacted with Muslims, Christians and Parsis as well as Hindus.

Nehru's visits to Anandmayi Ma were kept hidden from the public. But they were spoken about in the Dehradun of my boyhood. Much later, the historian and biographer B. R. Nanda, who knew Nehru well, confirmed to me that towards the end of his life the Prime Minister had regular interactions with Anandmayi Ma. In his youth, Nehru spent some of his time reading about the saints; in his old age, conversing with one of them.

It is notable, however, that Nehru sought out not an accredited head of a famous Hindu temple but a mystic who lived in seclusion. He had no time for Sankaracharyas, but he did,

at least in his last days, have much time for Anandmayi Ma, who—like his long dead mentor, Gandhi—did not believe that any single religion or religious text had a privileged pathway to God.

What the two spoke about in Dehradun is alas not known. But that they met, and quite often, further complicates our understanding of Nehru's faith. He was clearly not always the aggressive atheist some of his admirers, and many of his detractors, have made him out to be. In his twenties and thirties, Nehru was deeply moved by the Gita, by Tulsi's Ramayana, and by some Christian texts as well. In his forties and fifties, when he was at the apex of his own career, Nehru believed that by rationality alone would man understand (if not conquer) the world. Still later, in his seventies, with his health fading and the end visibly near, he turned once more to the consolations of religion.



Poem by Kaifi Azmi

मैं ने तन्हा कभी उस को देखा नहीं
फिर भी जब उस को देखा वो तन्हा मिला
जैसे सहरा में चश्मा कहीं
या समुन्दर में मीनार-ए-नूर
या कोई फ़िक्र-ए-औहाम में
फ़िक्र सदियों अकेली अकेली रही
ज़ेहन सदियों अकेला अकेला मिला

और अकेला अकेला भटकता रहा
हर नए हर पुराने ज़माने में वो
बे-ज़बाँ तीरगी में कभी
और कभी चीख़ती धूप में
चाँदनी में कभी ख़्वाब की
उस की तक़दीर थी इक मुसलसल तलाश
ख़ुद को ढूँडा किया हर फ़साने में वो

बोझ से अपने उस की कमर झुक गई
क़द मगर और कुछ और बढ़ता रहा
ख़ैर-ओ-शर की कोई जंग हो
ज़िंदगी का हो कोई जिहाद
वो हमेशा हुआ सब से पहले शहीद
सब से पहले वो सूली पे चढ़ता रहा

जिन तक़ाज़ों ने उस को दिया था जनम
उन की आग़ोश में फिर समाया न वो
ख़ून में वेद गूँजे हुए
और जबीं पर फ़रोज़ाँ अज़ाँ
और सीने पे रक़्साँ सलीब
बे-झिझक सब के क़ाबू में आया न वो

हाथ में उस के क्या था जो देता हमें
सिर्फ़ इक कील उस कील का इक निशाँ
नश्शा-ए-मय कोई चीज़ है
इक घड़ी दो घड़ी एक रात
और हासिल वही दर्द-ए-सर
उस ने ज़िन्दाँ में लेकिन पिया था जो ज़हर
उठ के सीने से बैठा न इस का धुआँ

- कैफ़ी आज़मी

Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru | Episode 1 |
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Part II – How to Deal with Others?

“Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born,
With nowhere yet to rest my head,
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.
Their faith, my tears, the world deride—
I come to shed them at their side.”
-Matthew Arnold

What is Religion?

Jawaharlal Nehru

Our peaceful and monotonous routine in jail was suddenly upset in the middle of September 1932 by a bombshell News came that Gandhiji had decided to "fast unto death" in disapproval of the separate electorates given by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's communal award to the depressed classes[1]. What a capacity he had to give shocks to people! Suddenly all manner of ideas rushed into my head; all kinds of possibilities and contingencies rose up before me and upset my equilibrium completely. For two days I was in darkness with no light to show the way out, my heart sinking when I thought of some results of Gandhiji's action. The personal aspect was powerful enough, and I thought with anguish that I might not see him again. It was over a year ago that I had seen him last on board ship on the way to England. Was that going to be my last sight of him?

And then I felt annoyed with him for choosing a side issue for his final sacrifice. What would be the result on our freedom movement? Would not the larger issues fade into the background, for the time being at least? And, if he attained his immediate object and got a joint electorate for the depressed classes, would not that result in a reaction and a feeling that something had been achieved and nothing more need be done for a while? And was not his action a recognition, and in part an acceptance, of the communal award and the general scheme of things as sponsored by the Government? Was this consistent with non co-operation and civil disobedience? After so much sacrifice and brave endeavor, was our movement to tail off into something insignificant?

I felt angry with him at his religious and sentimental approach to a political question, and his frequent references to God in connection with it. He even seemed to suggest that God had indicated the very date of the fast. What a terrible example to set! If Bapu died! What would India be like then? And how would her politics run? There seemed to be a dreary and dismal future ahead, and despair seized my heart when I thought of it.

So I thought and thought, while confusion reigned in my head, with anger and hopelessness, and love for him who was the cause of this upheaval. I hardly knew what to do, and I was irritable and short tempered with everybody, most of all with myself.

And then a strange thing happened to me. I had quite an emotional crisis, and at the end of it I felt calmer, and the future seemed not so dark. Bapu had a curious knack of doing the right thing at the psychological moment, and it might be that his action impossible to justify as it was from my point of view would lead, to great results, not only in the narrow field in which it was confined, but in the wider aspects of our national struggle. And, even if Bapu died, our struggle for freedom would go on. So whatever happened, one had to keep ready and fit for it. Having made up my mind to face even Gandhiji's death without flinching, I felt calm and collected and ready to face the world and all it might offer.

Then came news of the tremendous upheaval all over the country, a magic wave of enthusiasm running through Hindu society, and untouchability appeared to be doomed. What a magician, I thought, was this little man sitting in Yeravda Prison, and how well he knew how to pull the strings that move people's hearts!

A provisional decree determining the degree of representation to be held by various Indian groups in the provincial assemblies. It was opposed for many reasons by Indian nationalists, and by Gandhi particularly, because it established a separate electorate for the depressed classes and thus, in his view, widened the cleavage between these classes and other Hindus. Ed.

A telegram from him reached me. It was the first message I had received from him since my conviction, and it did me good to hear from him after that long interval. In this telegram he said:

> During all these days of agony you have been before mind's eye. I am most anxious to know your opinion. You know how I value your opinion. Saw Indu [and] Sarup's children. Indu looked happy and in possession of more flesh. Doing very well. Wire reply. Love.
>
> It was extraordinary, and yet it was characteristic of him, that in the agony of his fast and in the midst of his many preoccupations, he should refer to the visit of my daughter and my sister's children to him, and even mention that Indira had put on flesh! (My sister was also in prison then and all these children were at school in Poona.) He never forgets the seemingly little things in life which really mean so much.

News also came to me just then that some settlement had been reached over the electorate issue. The superintendent of the jail was good enough to allow me to send an answer to Gandhiji, and I sent him the following telegram:

> Your telegram and brief news that some settlement reached filled me with relief and joy. First news of your decision to fast caused mental agony and confusion, but ultimately optimism triumphed and I regained peace of mind. No sacrifice too great for suppressed downtrodden classes. Freedom must be judged by freedom of lowest but feel danger of other issues obscuring only goal. Am unable to judge from religious viewpoint. Danger your methods being exploited by others but how can I presume to ad vise a magician. Love.

A "pact" was signed by various people gathered in Poona; with un usual speed the British Prime Minister accepted it and varied his previous award accordingly, and the fast was broken. I disliked such pacts and agreements greatly, but I welcomed the Poona Pact apart from its contents.

The excitement was over, and we reverted to our jail routine. News of the Harijan movement and of Gandhiji's activities from prison came to us, and I was not very happy about it. There was no doubt that a tremendous push had been given to the movement to end untouchability and raise the unhappy depressed classes, not so much by the pact as by the crusading enthusiasm created all over the country. That was to be welcomed. But it was equally obvious that civil disobedience had suffered. The country's attention had been diverted to other issues, and many Congress workers had turned to the Harijan cause. Probably most of these people wanted an excuse to revert to safer activities which did not involve the risk of jail-going or, worse still, lathee blows and confiscations of property. That was natural, and it was not fair to expect all the thousands of our workers to keep always ready for intense suffering and the break-up and destruction of their homes. But still it was painful to watch this slow decay of our great movement. Civil disobedience was, however, still going on, and occasionally there were mass demonstrations like the Calcutta Congress in March-April 1933. Gandhiji was in Yeravda Prison, but he had been given certain privileges to meet people and issue directions for the Harijan movements. Somehow this took away from the sting of his being in prison. All this depressed me.

Many months later, early in May 1933, Gandhiji began his twenty-one-day fast. The first news of this had again come as a shock to me, but I accepted it as an inevitable occurrence and schooled myself to it. Indeed I was irritated that people should urge him to give it up, after he had made up his mind and declared it to the public. For me the fast was an incomprehensible thing, and, if I had been asked before the decision had been taken, I would certainly have spoken strongly against it. But I attached great value to Gandhiji's word, and it seemed to me wrong for anyone to try to make him break it, in a personal matter which, to him, was of supreme importance. So, unhappy as I was, I put up with it.

A few days before beginning his fast he wrote to me, a typical letter which moved me very much. As he asked for a reply, I sent him the following telegram:

> Your letter. What can I say about matters I do not understand? I feel lost in strange country where you are the only familiar land mark and I try to grope my way in dark but I stumble. Whatever happens my love and thoughts will be with you.

I had struggled against my utter disapproval of his act and my de sire not to hurt him. I felt, however, that I had not sent him a cheerful message, and now that he was bent on undergoing his terrible ordeal, which might even end in his death, I ought to cheer him up as much as I could. Little things make a difference psychologically, and he would have to strain every nerve to survive. I felt also that we should accept whatever happened, even his death, if unhappily it should occur, with a stout heart. So I sent him another telegram:

> Now that you are launched on your great enterprise may I send you again love and greetings and assure you that I feel more clearly now that whatever happens

it is well and whatever happens you win. He survived the fast. On the first day of it he was discharged from prison, and on his advice civil disobedience was suspended for six weeks.

Again I watched the emotional upheaval of the country during the fast, and I wondered more and more if this was the right method in politics. It seemed to be sheer revivalism, and clear thinking had not a ghost of a chance against it. All India, or most of it, stared reverently at the Mahatma and expected him to perform miracle after miracle and put an end to untouchability and get Swaraj and so on and did precious little itself! And Gandhiji did not encourage others to think; his insistence was only on purity and sacrifice. I felt that I was drifting further and further away from him mentally, in spite of my strong emotional attachment to him. Often enough he was guided in his political activities by an unerring instinct. He had the flair for action, but was the way of faith the right way to train a nation ? It might pay for a short while, but in the long run ?

And I could not understand how he could accept, as he seemed to do, the present social order, which was based on violence and conflict. Within me also conflict raged, and I was torn between rival loyalties. I knew that there was trouble ahead for me, when the enforced protection of jail was removed. I felt lonely and homeless; and India, to whom I had given my love and for whom I had labored, seemed a strange and bewildering land to me. Was it my fault that I could not enter into the spirit and ways of thinking of my countrymen? Even with my closest associates I felt that an invisible barrier came between us, and, unhappy at being unable to overcome it, I shrank back into my shell. The old world seemed to envelop them, the old world of past ideologies, hopes, and desires. The new world was yet far distant.

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born,
With nowhere yet to rest his head

India is supposed to be a religious country above everything else; Hindu, Moslem, Sikh, and others take pride in their faiths and testify to their truth by breaking heads. The spectacle of what is called religion, or at any rate organized religion, in India and elsewhere has filled me with horror, and I have frequently condemned it and wished to make a clean sweep of it. Almost always it seems to stand for blind belief and reaction, dogma and bigotry, superstition and exploitation, and the preservation of vested interests. And yet I knew well that there was something else in it, something which supplied a deep inner craving of human beings. How else could it have been the tremen dous power it has been and brought peace and comfort to innumerable tortured souls? Was that peace merely the shelter of blind belief and absence of questioning, the calm that comes from being safe in harbor, protected from the storms of the open sea, or was it something more? In some cases, certainly it was something more.

But organized religion, whatever its past may have been, today is very largely an empty form devoid of real content. It has been filled up by some totally different substance. And, even where something of value still remains, it is enveloped by other and harmful contents.

That seems to have happened in our Eastern religions as well as in the Western. The Church of England is perhaps the most obvious ex ample of a religion which is not a religion in any real sense of the word. Partly that applies to all organized Protestantism, but the Church of England has probably gone further because it has long been a State political department.

Many of its votaries are undoubtedly of the highest character, but it is remarkable how that Church has served the purposes of British imperialism and given both capitalism and imperialism a moral and Christian covering. It has sought to justify, from the highest ethical standards, British predatory policy in Asia and Africa and given that extraordinary and enviable feeling of being always in the right to the English. Whether the Church has helped in producing this attitude of smug rectitude or is itself a product of it, I do not know. Other less favored countries on the continent of Europe and in America often accuse the English of hypocrisy perfide Albion is an old taunt but the accusation is probably the outcome of envy at British success, and certainly no other imperialist Power can afford to throw stones at England, for its own record is equally shady. No nation that is consciously hypocritical could have the reserves of strength that the British have repeatedly shown, and the brand of "religion" which they have adopted has apparently helped them in this by blunting their moral susceptibilities where their own interests were concerned. Other peoples and nations have often behaved far worse than the British have done, but they have never succeeded, quite to the same extent, in making a virtue of what profited them. All of us find it remarkably easy to spot the mote in the other's eye and overlook the beam in our own, but perhaps the British excel at this performance.

Protestantism tried to adapt itself to new conditions and wanted to have the best of both worlds. It succeeded remarkably so far as this world was concerned, but from the religious point of view it fell, as an organized religion, between two stools, and religion gradually gave place to sentimentality and big business. Roman Catholicism escaped this fate, as it stuck on to the old stool, and, so long as that stool holds, it will flourish. Today it seems to be the only living religion, in the restricted sense of the word, in the West. A Roman Catholic friend sent me in prison many books on Catholicism and papal encyclicals, and I read them with interest. Studying them, I realized the hold it had on such large numbers of people. It offered, as Islam and popular Hinduism offer, a safe anchorage from doubt and mental conflict, an assurance of a future life which will make up for the deficiencies of this life.

I am afraid it is impossible for me to seek harborage in this way. I prefer the open sea, with all its storms and tempests. Nor am I greatly interested in the afterlife, in what happens

after death. I find the problems of this life sufficiently absorbing to fill my mind. The traditional Chinese outlook, fundamentally ethical and yet irreligious or tinged with religious skepticism, has an appeal for me, though in its application to life I may not agree.

It is the Tao, the path to be followed and the way of life, that interests me; how to understand life, not to reject it but to accept it, to conform to it, and to improve it. But the usual religious outlook does not concern itself with this world. It seems to me to be the enemy of clear thought, for it is based not only on the acceptance without demur of certain fixed and unalterable theories and dogmas, but also on sentiment and emotion and passion. It is far re moved from what I consider spirituality and things of the spirit, and it deliberately or unconsciously shuts its eyes to reality lest reality may not fit in with preconceived notions. It is narrow and intolerant of other opinions and ideas; it is self-centered and egotistic; and it often allows itself to be exploited by self-seekers and opportunists.

This does not mean that men of religion have not been and are not still often of the highest moral and spiritual type. But it does mean that the religious outlook does not help, and even hinders, the moral and spiritual progress of a people, if morality and spirituality are to be judged by this world's standards, and not by the hereafter. Usually religion becomes an asocial quest for God or the Absolute, and the religious man is concerned far more with his own salvation than with the good of society. The mystic tries to rid himself of self, and in the process usually becomes obsessed with it. Moral standards have no relation to social needs but are based on a highly metaphysical doctrine of sin. And organized religion invariably becomes a vested interest and thus inevitably a reactionary force opposing change and progress.

[2] *In India the Church of England has been almost indistinguishable from the Government. The officially paid (out of Indian revenues) priests and chaplains are the symbols of the imperial power just as the higher services are.*

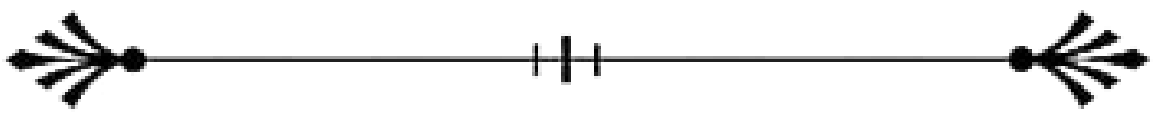
It is well known that the Christian church in the early days did not help the slaves to improve their social status. The slaves became the feudal serfs of the Middle Ages of Europe because of economic conditions. The attitude of the Church, as late as two hundred years ago (in 1727)3 was well exemplified in a letter written by the Bishop of London to the slave owners of the southern colonies of America.

"Christianity" wrote the Bishop, "and the embracing of the gospel does not make the least alteration in Civil property or in any of the duties which belong to civil relations; but in all these respects it continues Persons just in the same State as it found them. The Freedom which Christianity gives is Freedom from the bondage of Sin and Satan and from the Dominion of Men's Lusts and Passions and in ordinate Desires; but as to their outward condition, whatever that was before, whether bond or free, their being baptised and becoming Christians makes no manner of change in them."

No organized religion today will express itself in this outspoken manner, but essentially its attitude to property and the existing social order will be the same.

"No man can live without religion," Gandhiji has written somewhere. "There are some who in the egotism of their reason declare that they have nothing to do with religion. But that is like a man saying that he breathes, but that he has no nose." Again he says: "My devotion to truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means." Perhaps it would have been more correct if he had said that most of these people who want to exclude religion from life and politics mean by that word "religion" something very different from what he means. It is obvious that he is using it in a sense probably moral and ethical more than any other different from that of the critics of religion.

[3]*This letter is quoted in Reinhold Niebuhr's Moral Man and Immoral Society (p. 78), a book which is exceedingly interesting and stimulating.*



Presidential Address to the Indian National Congress at Faizpur

Jawaharlal Nehru

Before we consider the problems that face us, we must give thought to our comrades—those who have left us during these past few months and those who languish year after year, often with no end in prospect, in prison and detention camp. . . To our comrades in prison or in detention we send greeting. Their travail continues and it grows, and only recently we have heard with horror of the suicide of three detenues who found life intolerable for them in the fair province of Bengal whose young men and women in such large numbers live in internment without end. We have an analogy elsewhere, in Nazi Germany, where concentration camps flourish and suicides are not uncommon. . . .

We are all engrossed in India at present in the provincial elections that will take place soon. The Congress has put up over a thousand candidates and this business of election ties us up in many ways, and yet I would ask you as I did at Lucknow to take heed of the terrible and fascinating drama of the world. Our destinies are linked up with it, and our fate, like the fate of every country, will depend on the outcome of the conflicts of rival forces and ideas that are taking place everywhere. Again I would remind you that our problem of national freedom is but a part of this great world problem, and to understand ourselves we must understand others also....

How has fascism grown so rapidly, so that now it threatens to dominate Europe and the world? To understand this, one must seek a clue in British foreign policy. This policy, in spite of its outward variations and frequent hesitations, has been one of consistent support of Nazi Germany. The Anglo-German Naval Treaty threw France into the arms of Italy and led to the rape of Abyssinia. Behind all the talk of sanctions against Italy later on, there was the refusal by the British Government to impose any effective sanction. Even when the United States of America offered to co-operate in imposing the oil sanction, Britain refused, and was content to see the bombing of Ethiopians and the breaking up of the League of Nations system of collective security. True, the British Government always talked in terms of the League and in defence of collective security, but its actions belied its words and were meant to leave the field open to fascist aggression. Nazi Germany took step after step to humiliate the League and upset the European order, and ever the British “National” Government followed meekly in its trail and gave it its whispered blessing. . .

In the world to-day these two great forces strive for mastery—those who labour for democratic and social freedom and those who wish to crush this freedom under imperialism and fascism. In this struggle Britain, though certainly not the mass of the British people, inevitably joins the ranks of reaction. And the struggle to-day is fiercest and

clearest in Spain, and on the outcome of that depends war or peace in the world in the near future, fascist domination or the scorching of fascism and imperialism. That struggle has many lessons for us, and perhaps the most important of these is the failure of the democratic process in resolving basic conflicts and introducing vital changes to bring social and economic conditions in line with world conditions. That failure is not caused by those who desire or work for these changes. They accept the democratic method, but when this method threatens to affect great vested interests and privileged classes, these classes refuse to accept the democratic process and rebel against it. For them democracy means their own domination and the protection of their special interests. When it fails to do this, they have no further use for it and try to break it up. And in their attempt to break it, they do not scruple to use any and every method, to ally themselves with foreign and anti-national forces. Calling themselves nationalists and patriots, they employ mercenary armies of foreigners to kill their own kith and kin and enslave their own people. . .

During the past eight months I have wandered a great deal in this vast land of ours and I have seen again the throbbing agony of India's masses, the call of their eyes for relief from the terrible burdens they carry. That is our problem; all others are secondary and merely lead up to it. To solve that problem we shall have to end the imperialistic control and exploitation of India. But what is this imperialism of to-day? It is not merely the physical possession of one country by another; its roots lie deeper. Modern imperialism is an outgrowth of capitalism and cannot be separated from it.

It is because of this that we cannot understand our problems without understanding the implications of imperialism and socialism. The disease is deep-seated and requires a radical and revolutionary remedy and that remedy is the socialistic structure of society. We do not fight for socialism in India to-day, for we have to go far before we can act in terms of socialism, but socialism comes in here and now to help us understand our problem and point out the path to its solution, and to tell us the real content of the Swaraj to come. With no proper understanding of the problem, our actions are likely to be erratic and purposeless and ineffective.

The Congress stands to-day for full democracy in India and fights for a democratic State, not for socialism. It is anti-imperialist and strives for great changes in our political and economic structure. I hope that the logic of events will lead it to socialism for that seems to me the only remedy for India's ills. But the urgent and vital problem for us to-day is political independence and the establishment of a democratic State. And because of this, the Congress must line up with all the progressive forces of the world and must stand for world peace. . . For us, and we think for the world, the problem of peace cannot be separated from imperialism, and in order to remove the root cause of war, imperialism must go. We believe in the sanctity of treaties but we cannot consider ourselves bound by treaties in the making of which the people of India had no part, unless we accept them in

due course. The problem of maintaining peace cannot be isolated by us, in our present condition, from war resistance. The Congress has already declared that we can be no parties to an imperialist war, and we will not allow the exploitation of India's manpower and resources for such a war. Any such attempt will be resisted by us.

The League of Nations has fallen very low and there are few who take it seriously as an instrument for the preservation of peace. India has no enthusiasm for it whatever and the Indian membership of the League is a farce, for the selection of delegates is made by the British Government. We must work for a real League of Nations, democratically constructed, which would in effect be a League of Peoples. If even the present League, ineffective and powerless as it is, can be used in favour of peace we shall welcome it.

With this international background in view, let us consider our nations problems. The Government of India Act of 1935, the new Constitution stares at us offensively, this new charter of bondage which has beer imposed upon us despite our utter rejection of it, and we are preparing to fight elections under it. Why we have entered into this election contest and how we propose to follow it up has been fully stated in the Election Manifesto of the All-India Congress Committee, and I commend this manifesto for your adoption. We go to the legislatures not to co-operate with the apparatus of British imperialism, but to combat the Act and seek to end it, and to resist in every way British imperialism in its attempt to strengthen its hold on India and its exploitation of the Indian people. That is the basic policy of the Congress and no Congressman, no candidate for election, must forget this. Whatever we do must be within the four corners of this policy. We are not going to the legislatures to pursue the path of constitutionalism or a barren reformism.

There is a certain tendency to compromise over these elections, to seek a majority at any cost. This is a dangerous drift and must be stopped. The elections must be used to rally the masses to the Congress standard, to carry the message of the Congress to the millions of voters and non-voters alike, to press forward the mass struggle. The biggest majority in a legislature will be of little use to us if we have not got this mass movement behind us, and a majority built on compromises with reactionary groups or individuals will defeat the very purpose of the Congress.

With the effort to fight the Act, and as a corollary to it, we have to stress our positive demand for a Constituent Assembly elected under adult suffrage. That is the very corner-stone of Congress policy to-day and our election campaign must be based on it. This Assembly must not be conceived as something emanating from the British Government or as a compromise with British imperialism. If it is to have any reality, it must have the will of the people behind it and the organised strength of the masses to support it, and the power to draw up the constitution of a free India. We have to create that mass support for it through these elections and later through our other activities.

The Working Committee has recommended to this Congress that a convention of all Congress members of all the legislatures, and such other persons as the Committee might wish to add to them, should meet soon after the election to put forward the demand for the Constituent Assembly, and determine how to oppose, by all feasible methods, the introduction of the Federal structure of the Act. Such a Convention, which must include the members of the All-India Congress Committee, should help us greatly in focussing our struggle and giving it proper direction in the legislatures and outside. It will prevent the Congress members of the legislatures from developing provincialism and getting entangled in minor provincial matters. It will give them the right perspective and a sense of all India discipline, and it should help greatly in developing mass activities on a large scale. The idea is full of big possibility and I trust that the Congress will approve of it.

Next to this demand for the Constituent Assembly, our most important task will be to oppose the Federal structure of the Act. Utterly bad as the Act is, there is nothing so bad in it as this Federation and so we must exert ourselves to the utmost to break this, and thus end the Act as a whole. To live not only under British imperialist exploitation but also under Indian feudal control, is something that we are not going to tolerate whatever the consequences. It is an interesting and instructive result of the long period of British rule in India that when, as we are told, it is trying to fade off, it should gather to itself all the reactionary and obscurantist groups in India, and endeavour to hand partial control to the feudal elements.

The development of this federal scheme is worthy of consideration. We are not against the conception of a federation. It is likely that a free India may be a federal India, though in any event there must be a great deal of unitary control. But the present federation that is being thrust upon us is a federation in bondage and under the control, politically and socially, of the most backward elements in the country. . .

Backward Russia, with one mighty jump, has established a Soviet Socialist State and an economic order which has resulted in tremendous progress in all directions. The world has gone on changing and hovers on the brink of yet another vast change. But not so the Indian States; they remain static in this ever-changing panorama, staring at us with the eyes of the early nineteenth century. The old treaties are sacrosanct, treaties made not with the people or their representatives but with their autocratic rulers.

This is a state of affairs which no nation, no people can tolerate. We cannot recognise these old settlements of more than a hundred years ago as permanent and unchanging. The Indian States will have to fit into the scheme of a free India and their peoples must have, as the Congress has declared, the same personal, civil and democratic liberties as those of the rest of India. . .

Having preserved themselves as autocratic units, which are wholly outside the control of the rest of India, the rulers of these States have gained power over other parts of India. To-day we find them talking as if they were independent and laying down conditions for their adherence to the Federation. There is talk even of the abolition of the vice-regal paramountcy, so that these States may remain alone in the whole world, naked and unchecked autocracies, which cannot be tampered with by any constitutional means. A sinister development is the building up of the armies of some of the bigger States on an efficient basis. . .

Our policy is to put an end to the Constitution Act. We are told by people who can think only in terms of action taken in the legislatures, that it is not possible to wreck it, and there are ample provisions and safeguards to enable the Government to carry on despite a hostile majority. We are well aware of these safeguards; they are one of the principal reasons why we reject the Act. We know also that there are second chambers to obstruct us. We can create constitutional crises inside the legislatures, we can have deadlocks, we can obstruct the imperialist machine, but always there is a way out. The Constitution cannot be wrecked by action inside the legislatures only. For that, mass action outside is necessary, and that is why we must always remember that the essence of our freedom struggle lies in mass organisation and mass action.

The policy of the Congress in regard to the legislatures is perfectly clear; only in one matter it still remains undecided—the question of acceptance or not, of office. Probably the decision of this question will be postponed till after the elections. At Lucknow I ventured to tell you that, in my opinion, acceptance of office was a negation of our policy of rejection of the Act; it was further a reversal of the policy we had adopted in 1920 and followed since then. Since Lucknow, the Congress has further clarified its position in the Election Manifesto and declared that we are not going to the legislatures to co-operate in any way with the Act but to combat it. That limits the field of our decision in regard to offices, and those who incline to acceptance of them must demonstrate that this is the way to non-co-operate with the Act, and to end it.

It seems to me that the only logical consequence of the Congress policy, as defined in our resolutions and in the Election Manifesto, is to have nothing to do with office and ministry. Any, deviation from this would mean a reversal of that policy would inevitably mean a kind of partnership with British imperialism in the exploitation of the Indian people, an acquiescence, even though under protest and subject to reservations, in the basic ideas underlying the Act, an association to some extent with British imperialism in the hateful task of the repression of our advanced elements. Office accepted on any other basis is hardly possible, and if it is possible, it will lead almost immediately to deadlock and conflict. That deadlock and impasse does not frighten us; we welcome it. But then we must think in terms of deadlocks and not in terms of carrying on with the office.

There seems to be a fear that if we do not accept office, others will do so, and they will put obstacles in the way of our freedom movement. But if we are in a majority, we can prevent others from misbehaving; we can even prevent the formation of any ministry. If our majority is a doubtful one, then office for us depends on compromises with non-Congress elements, a policy full of danger for our cause, and one which would inevitably lead to our acting in direct opposition to the Congress mandate of rejection of the Act. Whether we are in a majority or in a minority, the real thing will always be the organised mass backing behind us. A majority without that backing can do little in the legislatures, even a militant minority with conscious and organised mass support can make the functioning of the Act very difficult.

We have put the Constituent Assembly in the forefront of our programme, as well as the fight against the federal structure. With what force can we press these two vital points and build up a mass agitation around them if we wobble over the question of office and get entangled in its web? . . .

We have seen the gradual transformation of the Congress from a small upper class body, to one representing the great body of the lower middle classes, and later the masses of this country. As this drift to the masses continued the political rôle of the organisation changed and is changing, for this political rôle is largely determined by the economic roots of the organisation.

We are already and inevitably committed to this mass basis, for without it there is no power or strength in us. We have now to bring that into line with the organisation, so as to give our primary members greater powers of initiative and control, and opportunities for day-to-clay activities. We have, in other words, to democratise the Congress still further.

Another aspect of this problem that has been debated during the past year has been the desirability of affiliating other organisations, of peasants, workers and others, which also aim at the freedom of the Indian people, and thus to make the Congress the widest possible joint front of all the anti-imperialist forces in the country. As it is, the Congress has an extensive direct membership among these groups; probably 75 per cent. of its members come from the peasantry. But, it is argued, that functional representation will give far greater reality to the peasants and workers in the Congress. This proposal has been resisted because of a fear that the Congress might be swamped by new elements; sometimes even politically backward elements. As a matter of fact, although this question is an important one for us, any decision of it will make little difference at present; its chief significance will be as a gesture of goodwill. For there are few well organised workers' or peasants' unions in the country which are likely to profit by Congress affiliation. There is not the least possibility of any swamping, and, in any event, this can easily be avoided. I think that now or later some kind of functional representation in the Congress is inevitable and desirable. It is easy for the Congress to lay down conditions for such affiliation, so as to

prevent bogus and mushroom growths or undesirable organisations from profiting by it. A limit might also be placed on the number of representatives that such affiliated organisations can send. Some such recommendation, I believe, has been made by the United Provinces Provincial Congress Committee.

The real object before us is to build up a powerful joint front of all the anti-imperialist forces in the country. The Congress has indeed been in the past and is to-day, such a united popular front, and inevitably the Congress must be the basis and pivot of united action. The active participation of the organised workers and peasants in such a front would add to its strength and must be welcomed. Co-operation between them and the Congress organisation has been growing and has been a marked feature of the past year. This tendency must be encouraged. The most urgent and vital need of India to-day is this united national front of all forces and elements that are ranged against imperialism. Within the Congress itself most of these forces are represented, and in spite of their diversity and difference in outlook, they have co-operated and worked together for the common good. That is a healthy sign both of the vitality of our great movement and the unity that binds it together. The basis of it is anti-imperialism and independence. Its immediate demand is for a Constituent Assembly leading to a democratic State where political power has been transferred to the mass of the people. An inevitable consequence of this is the withdrawal of the alien army of occupation.

These are the objectives before us, but we cannot ignore the present-day realities and the day-to-day problems of our people. These ever-present realities are the poverty and unemployment of our millions, appalling poverty and an unemployment which has even the middle classes in its grip and grows like a creeping paralysis. The world is full of painful contrasts to-day, but surely nowhere else are these contrasts so astounding as in India.

Imperial Delhi stands, visible symbol of British power, with all its pomp and circumstance and vulgar ostentation and wasteful extravagance; and within a few miles of it are the mud huts of India’s starving peasantry, out of whose meagre earnings these great palaces have been built, huge salaries and allowances paid. The ruler of a State flaunts his palaces and his luxury before his wretched and miserable subjects, and talks of his treaties and his inherent right to autocracy. And the new Act and Constitution have come to us to preserve and perpetuate these contrasts, to make India safe for autocracy and imperialist exploitation.

As I write, a, great railway strike is in progress. For long the world of railway workers has been in ferment because of retrenchment and reduction in wages and against them is the whole power of the State. Some time ago there was a heroic strike in the Ambernath Match Factory near Bombay, owned by a great foreign trust. But behind that trust and supporting it, we saw the apparatus of Government functioning in the most extraordinary way. The

workers in our country have yet to gain elementary rights; they have yet to have an eight-hour day and unemployment insurance and a guaranteed living wage.

But a vaster and more pressing problem is that of the peasantry, for India is essentially a land of the peasants. In recognition of this fact, and to bring the Congress nearer to the peasant masses, we are meeting here to-day at the village of Faizpur and not, as of old, in some great city. The Lucknow Congress laid stress on this land problem and called on the Provincial Committees to frame agrarian programmes. This work is still incomplete for the vastness and intricacy of it has demanded full investigation. But the urgency of the problem calls for immediate solution. Demands for radical reforms in the rent and revenue and the abolition of feudal levies have been made from most of the provinces. The crushing burden of debt on the agricultural classes has led to a widespread cry for a moratorium and a substantial liquidation of debt. In the Punjab Karza (Debt) Committees have grown up to protect the peasantry. All these and many other demands are insistently made and vast gatherings of peasants testify to their inability to carry their present burdens. Yet it is highly doubtful if this problem can be solved piecemeal and without changing completely the land system. That land system cannot endure and an obvious step is to remove the intermediaries between the cultivator and the State. Co-operative or collective farming must follow.

The reform of the land system is tied up with the development of industry, both large-scale and cottage, in order to give work to our scores of millions of unemployed and raise the pitiful standards of our people. That again is connected with so many other things—education, housing, roads and transport, sanitation, medical relief, social services, etc. Industry cannot expand properly because of the economic and financial policy of the Government which, in the name of Imperial Preference, encourages British manufacturers in India and works for the profit of Big Finance in the City of London. The currency ratio continues in spite of persistent Indian protests; gold has been pouring out of India continuously now for five years at a prodigious rate, though all India vehemently opposes this outflow. And the new Act tells us that we may do nothing which the Viceroy or the Governor might consider as an unfair discrimination against British trade or commercial interests. The old order may yield place to the new but British interests are safe and secure.

Only a great planned system for the whole land and dealing with all these various national activities, co-ordinating them, making each serve the larger whole and the interests of the mass of our people, only such a planned system with vision and courage to back it, can find a solution. But planned systems do not flourish under the shadow of monopolies and vested interests and imperialist exploitation. They require the air and soil of political and social freedom.

These are distant goals for us to-day, though the rapid march of events may bring us face to face with them sooner than we imagine. The immediate goal—independence—is nearer

and more definite, and that is why perhaps we escape, to a large extent, that tragic disillusion and hopelessness which affects so many in Europe.

We are apparently weak, not really so. We grow in strength, the Empire of Britain fades away. Because we are politically and economically crushed, our civil liberties taken away, hundreds of our organisations made illegal, thousands of our young men and women always kept in prison or in detention camp, our movements continually watched by hordes of secret servicemen and informers, our spoken word taken down, lest it offend the law of sedition, because of all this and more we are not weaker but stronger, for all this intense repression is the measure of our growing national strength. War and revolution dominate the world and nations arm desperately. If war comes or other great crisis, India's attitude will make a difference. We hold the keys of success in our hands if we but turn them rightly. And it is the increasing realisation of this that has swept away the defeatist mentality of our people.

Meanwhile, the general election claims our attention and absorbs our energy. Here, too, we find official interference, in spite of denial, and significant attempts to prevent secrecy of voting in the case of illiterate voters. The United Provinces have been singled out for this purpose and the system of coloured boxes, which will be used everywhere else, has been ruled out for the U.P. But we shall win in these elections in spite of all the odds—State pressure, vested interest, money.

That will be but a little step in a long journey, and we shall march on, with danger and distress as companions. We have long had these for our fellow travellers and we have grown used to them. And when we have learned how to dominate them, we shall also know how to dominate success.

Nehru's Conception of Socialism

Savya Sachi

In the thirties, in the absence of Panditji, when Gandhiji had drafted a Working Committee resolution on the social and economic objectives of the Congress, purporting to contain the basic elements of socialism—this particular word, of course, Gandhiji never used—Panditji, when he saw it, reacted sharply and wrote to Gandhiji an indignant letter, in which he said:

***"**A strange way of dealing with the subject of socialism is to use the word, which has a clearly defined meaning in the English language, in a totally different sense. For individuals to use words in a sense peculiar to themselves is not helpful in the commerce of ideas. A person who declares himself to be an engine- driver and then adds that his engine is of wood and is drawn by bullocks is misusing the word engine-driver."*

To Nehru's violent accusation that Congress leaders, and impliedly, Gandhiji himself, did not know the meaning of socialism, Gandhiji calmly replied that he had still to come across an unambiguous commonly accepted definition of it.

After Panditji became the Prime Minister, his reply to the same question by Jayaprakash was more or less similar to Gandhiji's reply to him earlier.

This may mean one of two things, that Nehru talked socialism when not in office but gave it up when he became Prime Minister, or that, with Nehru, socialism was a growing thing, and that there was nothing static or dogmatic about his conception of socialism.

The latter is the only acceptable interpretation, taking the man and his life-work as a whole.

NEHRU was above all creed and dogma and he had a profound dislike for things static and hence for ideas which ceased to grow with changing times. This idea of growth and change, that men as well as ideas should continuously grow with the changing environment which shapes them is basic to the understanding of Nehru's mind and actions; Buddha and Buddhism appealed to him because of their emphasis on the principles of change as well as for their agnosticism and reasoned plea for abstaining from violence and hatred.

I

It is not possible to understand Nehru's ideas and actions except in the light of his mental and spiritual make-up, which governed even his views on socialism. If one wants to trace his thoughts and actions to their mainspring, one would not be wrong in saying that this mainspring was his sense of pride and dignity as a man. Anything that was not consistent with his sense of pride and dignity, he instinctively abhorred. This led him to reject

asceticism, accept life and make it richer and fuller; rejection of life or asceticism' implied for him a negation of the dignity of man. That is why with Rabindranath he could find ecstacy "in the midst of thousands of bonds of delight" rather than in Gandhi's austerity. It was again the same sense of pride and dignity of human existence that made him rebel against ideas and institutions that tended to degrade and dehumanise man. To Nehru, it was unmanly to reconcile one's self with injustice that endangered human dignity; ideas and institutions which supported such injustice must be changed and it does not be hove the dignity of man to submit to such wrongs. Thus Nehru became a crusader in the fight against forces which destroyed human dignity and pride. He believed with Chandidas that:

सबार उपरे मानुष सत्य
ताहार उपरे नाई
(Man is true above all,
There is nothing higher)

This explains the fervour with which Nehru threw himself into the independence movement and the fury with which he fought the forces of inertia and ignorance and sought to demolish communal and caste walls, which tended to diminish man by discriminating between man and man. It was to uphold the dignity of man that Nehru became a champion of freedom for the colonial peoples and of world peace, and of the peaceful coexistence of widely differing communities, both at home and abroad.

Even this fight had to be a clean fight, in keeping with the dignity of man. To humiliate or destroy man was hardly in harmony with his lofty conception of human pride and dignity. Nehru often quoted Buddha's doctrine that a real victory is one in which there are neither victors nor vanquished. Since Gandhi's was a fearless fight against wrong in an open, dignified way, his non-violent struggle attracted Nehru. Nehru, however, did not believe in Gandhi's metaphysics of non-violence nor in non-violence as a creed. What appealed to him was the courageous and fearless determination to fight wrong in a manner which ennobled man, Nehru recognized the necessity for and accepted the use of force in collective struggles, but only when other methods failed. His use of force in Hyderabad, Kashmir or Goa was only as a last resort and his decisions were taken only after he felt that there was no other course left open.

Abhorrence of Coercion

The conviction that bad means distort the ends was strengthened in Nehru by his contact with Gandhi and prevented him from resorting to the ruthlessness of either religious fanatics or ideology-dominated individuals and parties. Hatred begets a progeny like itself. Hence he was convinced that methods of social change had to be not only peaceful but had to be devised with a peaceful and equable temper. Such an approach calls for wisdom, born of dispassionate interpretation of experience and ceaseless search: human behaviour and

human relationships as well as social attitudes and beliefs are woven into a very delicate pattern and it requires wisdom to know the methods of changing them. That is why he was against up-setting abruptly the socio-cultural environment of primitive tribes in India. That is also the reason why he sympathised with several socio-religious beliefs and practices in India, though he would have liked to see them change and change quickly. That was also the rationale of his foreign policy of peaceful co-existence and Panchsheel.

This wisdom Nehru gained from his Discovery of India. India's strength in the earlier days lay in a certain dynamic approach to socio-cultural problems, which enabled her to absorb and assimilate a wide variety of cultural forms and weave them into a certain pattern without uprooting strongly held beliefs and convictions of any culture group. This synthetic composite culture and its basic dynamism was what appealed to him and he admired the wisdom of those that made this possible. Nehru was temperamentally not sympathetic to meta-physics or mysticism and he frankly did not understand Gandhi's motivations. But what attracted him was the wisdom, dynamism and fearless courage as well as the "tremendous inner reserves of power" of India's great seers and sages of ancient days as well as men of his generation like Vivekanand, Gandhi and Vinoba. He was convinced that even with science and modern technology, it is not possible to create integrated personalities or social orders, unless the scientific and technological forces are governed by wisdom. In his last few years Nehru often used to repeat Vinoba's saying that in the atomic age, what was needed was a synthesis of "science and spirituality".

II

Consistently with his conception of human dignity and pride, Nehru held that man is his own master and is capable of conquering the forces of nature and mould them to suit his needs, "Man his own prison makes, none else compels"—

अपा हि अपनो नाथो

This Buddhist conception appealed to him. Hence his dislike of religious fetishes and practices, rituals and dogmas which made man a prisoner and a slave of superstitious beliefs by weakening his will. Man through ceaseless efforts has to grow in knowledge and wisdom and shape his own destiny. Science and technology are achievements of man's mind and his attitudes, beliefs and conduct as well as social relationships, institutions and practices have to be in conformity with the knowledge gained through scientific discovery and technological development. To be modern meant to Nehru keeping abreast of the development in knowledge and fashioning society on the basis of this knowledge.
That was why Nehru did not approve of a large number of socio-religious practices and institutions, caste, communal or other such narrow social groupings: these were not in keeping with modern age, and out of harmony with the atomic age as also with the ancient

wisdom of India. He was therefore keen on resolving what he called India's "split personality" and the basic conflict between static and out-of-date forms of social beliefs and practices and modern scientific knowledge. It was at his stubborn insistence that the Hindu Code Bill was passed. Hindu Code has already shaken, as Panikkar has shown, the whole fabric of out-of-date Hindu social beliefs and practices.

Social change and the systematic acquisition of knowledge and pursuit of science and technology are basic to India's development. Hence along with social legislation and public agitation for social reform, Nehru actively supported scientific and technological pursuits. It was largely due to him that several national scientific laboratories as also technological institutes were set up immediately after Independence. It was again because of the value and significance which he attached to scientific research for its own sake and because of its far-reaching repercussions on other aspects of life that he took in his own charge the Department of Atomic Energy from its Inception. His large vision of a dynamic society growing in knowledge and adapting itself to the latest findings of science and technology was responsible for his and the Government's insistence on scientific pursuits. This vision and wisdom cannot be understood in narrow economic terms.

No Merit in Poverty

Nehru was appalled by India's poverty and revolted by it because such poverty was inconsistent with self-respect and dignity of man. It hurt his pride as an Indian. A social system which permits such poverty and tolerates such wide disparities of income and wealth degrades not only the poor but also the rich.

To remove this abysmal poverty and to create a just society, this was the motivation for the Indian Struggle for Independence and he was the only one perhaps along with Gandhi who attached to the problems of poverty and social justice paramount significance. But Gandhi's and Nehru's ways differed. Gandhi's emphasis on the evils of the industrial system and his insistence that these were an integral part of the system, Nehru could never accept. His mind was quite made up by the end of the "thirties on industrialisation based on modern science and technology as the only radical cure for India's economic problems and since industrialisation had to subserve a social purpose, it had to be carried out in a socialist framework. Nehru's debate on industrialisation and socialism with Gandhi went on till Independence and they agreed to differ. In 1945 Gandhi expressed his views on these problems in a letter to Nehru and asked Nehru for his views on them as it was he who would have to bear the responsibility for the task. Nehru politely refused to discuss these issues, as he thought that it was premature to deal with them at that time.

Any way his mind was made up and immediately the situation became normal after Independence, Nehru set up the Planning Commission and by 1955 got the Congress to accept socialism as the objective. He carefully nurtured the planning apparatus and machinery and it was largely due to him that India has succeeded in her planning efforts

much more than any other under-developed country. It is again because of Nehru that socialism has at least been formally accepted by the Indian people and the various policies and measures have come to be judged by this criterion. Gandhi's Saivodaya —a word coined from "Unto This Last" of the Bible—would probably have had a greater appeal to the masses in India; but its association with Gandhi's socio-economic philosophy was enough to make it suspect in Nehru's eyes.

Agriculture Not Neglected

It was again he who gave the impetus to big river valley projects for irrigation and power; this was a grand design and it was taken up immediately after Independence. It was also Nehru who brought the question of land reforms to the fore and pushed the policy of land to the tiller.

Because he pinned his faith in science and technology as the solvent of India's problem of poverty it does not follow that Nehru failed to realise the importance of agriculture and handicrafts in her economic life. That he did, particularly the importance of handicrafts for providing employment. But Nehru had no sympathy for the view that the handicrafts should be supported for their own sake. Khadi to him was a "livery of freedom": it had no other implications for him as it had for Gandhi. Support to and encouragement of handicrafts as provider of employment was to him only a stop-gap policy, till production techniques could be completely modernised. Any social or economic structure that failed to take advantage of science and technology was repugnant to him. If men can produce more, earn more and lead a richer life through the application of science and technology, why should they not do so? Poverty to him was an evil and however much he might detest vulgar ostentation or excessive indulgence, Nehru never accepted Gandhi's principle of restraining wants, nor did he share Gandhi's vision of self-sufficient village republics.

III

What was then the content of Nehru's socialist planning?

At one time Marxism had appealed to him and as a tool of analysis for understanding historical processes, he had used Marxist terminology and analysis in his "Glimpses of World History". Nehru's passion for socialism originated from his desire to wipe out poverty and make the socio-economic system subserve the needs of man in a just and equitable way. This he thought was being done in Russia in 1929 when he visited Moscow and wrote a book praising Russian achievements. Later on his views on Marxism changed; he came to look upon it as too narrow a doctrine, which ignored powerful non-economic factors. And the ruthlessness and violence associated with Marxist revolutions were hardly in harmony with the deep current of humanity which motivated his thought and action. No creed or dogma appealed to him and he did not like even the Marxist dogma, which he

considered imperfect and incompatible with the atomic age. Socialism meant to him a just society which respected human dignity. Hence even the complex of socialism, he felt, has to grow and change with the changing circumstances.

Karachi Congress

In the 1931 Karachi Congress resolution on socialism, which Nehru piloted, the Congress "took a step, a very short step, in a socialistic direction by advocating the nationalisation of key industries and services and also other measures to lessen the burden on the poor and to increase it on the rich" ("Autobiography"). But "this was not socialism at air, Nehru adds, "a capitalistic state could easily accept almost everything contained in that resolution". It was Subhas Bose, however, who gave a concrete content to socialism in terms of economic development in his presidential speech at the Haripura session of the Congress. It was Subhas again who appointed the National Planning Committee to work out the implications of planning. Nehru even till Independence had not given much thought to problems of development, excepting that he favoured planning in the framework of a socialist society.

This was in a, sense a handicap. When the Planning Commission was set up in 1950 no strategy of planning was given to it. As a result, the First Plan became merely a summary statement of all the projects that had already been taken on hand. There was no clear statement even of the broad philosophy of planned development. True, consistent with socialism, the social overheads and some basic industries like steel, etc., were to be developed by the State; but in the Indian situation this task even in a capitalist economy would have devolved on the State in practice. Missing in the Plan was the vital statement of the actual measures to be taken for economic development and for attaining the socialist objective.

What is, indeed, the socialist content of the Plans? Excepting progressive income taxation (which in practice is evaded), the much-publicised but relatively ineffective taxes on wealth, inheritance and gifts, the ineffective and irrationally designed subsidy programme for handicrafts and an ineffective employment policy, there is in fact nothing socialistic about the Plans.

What the Plans Lacked

If education had been made free up to the university level, if concerted measures were taken to employ fully the available labour force, if active and energetic steps were taken to provide credit, marketing facilities and materials to small farmers and viable handicrafts on a really big scale, if land reforms were not sabotaged, if free and adequate medical facilities were rationally organised within the available resources to meet the demands of the poor, if essential goods were distributed equitably at reasonable prices to the poorer sections of the population and if conspicuous consumption of the rich, resulting in misdirection of investment and consequent wastage of some resources, had been suppressed drastically —

if all these had been attempted and pursued with energy, the Plans would have begun to acquire some socialist content.

Socialism, unfortunately, has been a mere slogan and it is being explained away by politicians and civil servants, while still being exploited, as a political slogan, without any policy content.

This state of affairs is partly due to the fact that Nehru did not have enough time to work out the implications of a planned socialist society and therefore he could not give concrete directives to the Planning Commission. Partly, and more importantly, this is due to the fact that Congress politicians and the service personnel of the Government do not seriously believe in this programme and while paying lip service to it, they sabotaged what little socialist content there was in policy measures.

In this situation, what could Nehru have done? If his comrades and the administration did not wholeheartedly support the programme, how could he force them? This was his dilemma. Probably, it was his sensitive temperament which held him back from forcing the pace, and pressing things to the breaking point. Ruthlessness and violence went against his democratic convictions and unlike the Mahatrna, he would not march ahead of his comrades; in trying to keep pace with them, his vision was blurred. The Mahatma could be ruthless when the situation needed it, and drop those who could not stand the test; but then he had learnt to walk alone. Nehru wanted to move forward with others, and could not force their pace beyond a point.

IV

It is given to very very few to attain so much in a life-time as Nehru did, and yet, how many of his dreams did he realise? He had a tryst with destiny and he became a man of destiny. But as with Gandhi, so with him, the results did not satisfy him. But more than for his attainments, Nehru will be remembered and his memory cherished for what Tagore called the "deep current of humanity" in his make-up, which made the person "greater than his deeds and truer than his surroundings". His name will be enshrined along with the galaxy of those great seers and sages, who since the days of the Vedas have tried to shape the destiny of this ancient land.

Such men never die; they are part of the heritage of mankind.

if all these had been attempted and pursued with energy, the Plans would have begun to acquire some socialist content.

Socialism, unfortunately, has been a mere slogan and it is being explained away by politicians and civil servants, while still being exploited, as a political slogan, without any policy content.

This state of affairs is partly due to the fact that Nehru did not have enough time to work out the implications of a planned socialist society and therefore he could not give concrete directives to the Planning Commission. Partly, and more importantly, this is due to the fact that Congress politicians and the service personnel of the Government do not seriously believe in this programme and while paying lip service to it, they sabotaged what little socialist content there was in policy measures.

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Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru | Episode 2 |
A creative Puppet Theater Production

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PODCAST | Kuch Yaadein Kuch Mulaqaatein

[Episode- 1]

[Episode- 2]

[Episode- 3]

Part III – How to Deal with Nature?

"Yea, in my mind these mountains rise,
Their perils dyed with evening's rose;
And still my ghost sits at my eyes
And thirsts for their untroubled snows."
-Walter de la Mare

My Wedding and an Adventure in the Himalayas

Jawaharlal Nehru

My marriage took place in 1916 in the city of Delhi. It was on the Vasanta Panchami day which heralds the coming of spring in India. That summer we spent some months in Kashmir. I left my family in the valley and, together with a cousin of mine, wandered for several weeks in the mountains and went up the Ladakh road. This was my first experience of the narrow and lonely valleys, high up in the world, which lead to the Tibetan plateau. From the top of the Zoji-la Pass we saw the rich verdant mountain sides below us on one side and the bare bleak rock on the other. We went up and up the narrow valley bottom flanked on each side by mountains, with the snow-covered tops gleaming on one side and little glaciers creeping down to meet us. The wind was cold and bitter, but the sun was warm in the daytime, and the air was so clear that often we were misled about the distance of objects, thinking them much nearer than they actually were. The loneliness grew; there were not even trees or vegetation to keep us company only the bare rock and the snow and ice and, sometimes, very welcome flowers. Yet I found a strange satisfaction in these wild and desolate haunts of nature; I was full of energy and a feeling of exaltation.

I had an exciting experience during this visit. At one place on our march beyond the Zoji-la Pass I think it was called Matayan we were told that the cave of Amaranath was only eight miles away. It was true that an enormous mountain all covered with ice and snow lay in between and had to be crossed, but what did that matter? Eight miles seemed so little. In our enthusiasm and inexperience, we decided to make the attempt. So, we left our camp (which was situated at about 11,500 feet altitude) and with a small party went up the mountain. We had a local shepherd for a guide. We crossed and climbed several glaciers, roping ourselves up, and our troubles increased, and breathing became a little difficult. Some of our porters, lightly laden as they were, began to bring up blood. It began to snow, and the glaciers became terribly slippery; we were fagged out, and every step meant a special effort. But still we persisted in our foolhardy attempt. We had left our camp at four in the morning, and after twelve hours" almost continuous climbing we were rewarded by the sight of a huge ice field. This was a magnificent sight, surrounded as it was by snow peaks, like a diadem or an amphitheater of the gods. But fresh snow and mists soon hid the sight from us. I do not know what our altitude was, but I think it must have been about 15,000 to 16,000 feet, as we were considerably higher than the cave of Amarnath. We had now to cross this ice field, a distance probably of half a mile, and then go down on the other side to the cave. We thought that as the climbing was over, our principal difficulties had also been surmounted, and so, very tired but in good humor, we began this stage of the journey. It was a tricky business as there were many crevasses and the fresh snow often

covered a dangerous spot. It was this fresh snow that almost proved to be my undoing, for, as I stepped upon it, it gave way, and down I went into a huge and yawning crevasse. It was a tremendous fissure, and anything that went right down it could be assured of safe keeping and preservation for some geological ages. But the rope held, and I clung to the side of the crevasse and was pulled out. We were shaken up by this, but still we persisted in going on. The crevasses, however, increased in number and width, and we had no equipment or means of crossing some of them. And so, at last we turned back, weary and disappointed, and the cave of Amarnath remained unvisited.

The higher valleys and mountains of Kashmir fascinated me so much that I resolved to come back again soon. I made many a plan and worked out many a tour, and one, the very thought of which filled me with delight, was a visit to Manasarovar, the wonder lake of Tibet, and snow-covered Kailas nearby. That was eighteen years ago, and I am still as far as ever from Kailas and Manasarovar. I have not even been to visit Kashmir again, much as I have longed to, and ever more and more I have got entangled in the coils of politics and public affairs. Instead of going up mountains or crossing the seas, I have to satisfy my wanderlust by coming to prison. But still I plan, for that is a joy that no one can deny even in prison, and besides, what else can one do in prison? And I dream of the day when I shall wander about the Himalayas and cross them to reach that lake and mountain of my desire. But meanwhile the sands of life run on, and youth passes into middle age, and that will give place to something worse, and sometimes I think that I may grow too old to reach Kailas and Manasarovar. But the journey is always worth the making even though the end may not be in sight.

A Southern Holiday

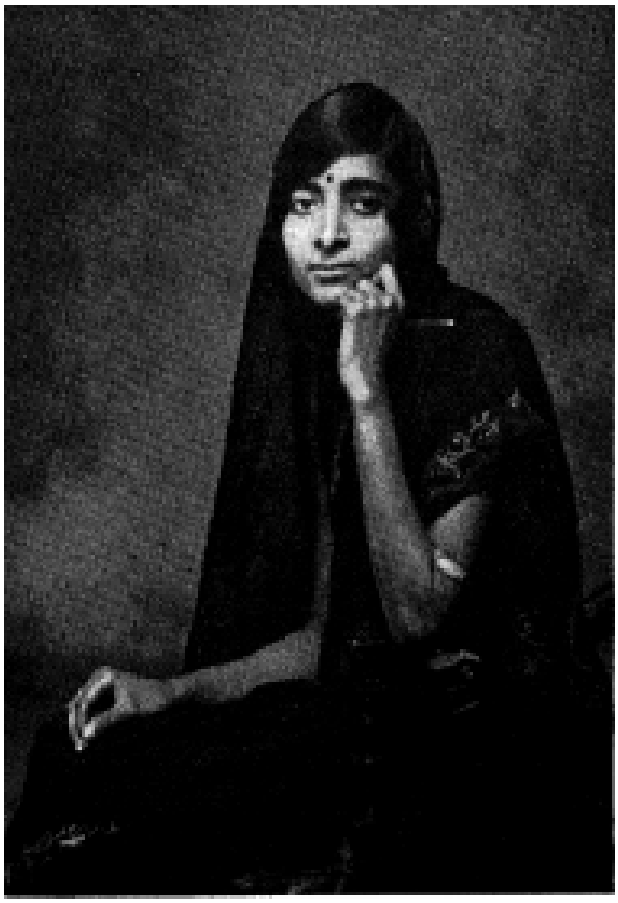
Jawaharlal Nehru

My doctors urged me to take some rest and go for a change, and I decided to spend a month in Ceylon. India, huge as the country is, did not offer a real prospect of change or mental rest, for wherever I might go, I would probably come across political associates and the same problems would pursue me. Ceylon was the nearest place within reach of India, and so to Ceylon we went Kamala, Indira, and I. That was the first holiday I had had since our return from Europe in 1927, the first time since then that my wife and daughter and I holidayed together peacefully with little to distract our attention. There has been no repetition of that experience, and sometimes I wonder if there will be any.

And yet we did not really have much rest in Ceylon, except for two weeks at Nuwara Eliya. We were fairly overwhelmed by the hospitality and friendliness of all classes of people there. It was very pleasant to find all this good will, but it was often embarrassing also. At Nuwara Eliya groups of laborers, tea-garden workers and others, would come daily, walking many miles, bringing gracious gifts with them wild flowers, vegetables, homemade butter. We could not, as a rule, even converse together; we merely looked at each other and smiled. Our little house was full of those precious gifts of theirs, which they had given out of their poverty, and we passed them on to the local hospital and orphanages.

We visited many of the famous sights and historical ruins of the island, and Buddhist monasteries, and the rich tropical forests. At Anuradhapura I liked greatly an old seated statue of the Buddha. A year later, when I was in Dehra Dun Jail, a friend in Ceylon sent me a picture of this statue, and I kept it on my little table in my cell. It became a precious companion for me, and the strong, calm features of Buddha's statue soothed me and gave me strength and helped me to overcome many a period of depression. Buddha has always had a great appeal for me. It is difficult for me to analyze this appeal, but it is not a religious appeal, and I am not interested in the dogmas that have grown up round Buddhism. It is the personality that has drawn me. So also the personality of Christ has attracted me greatly.

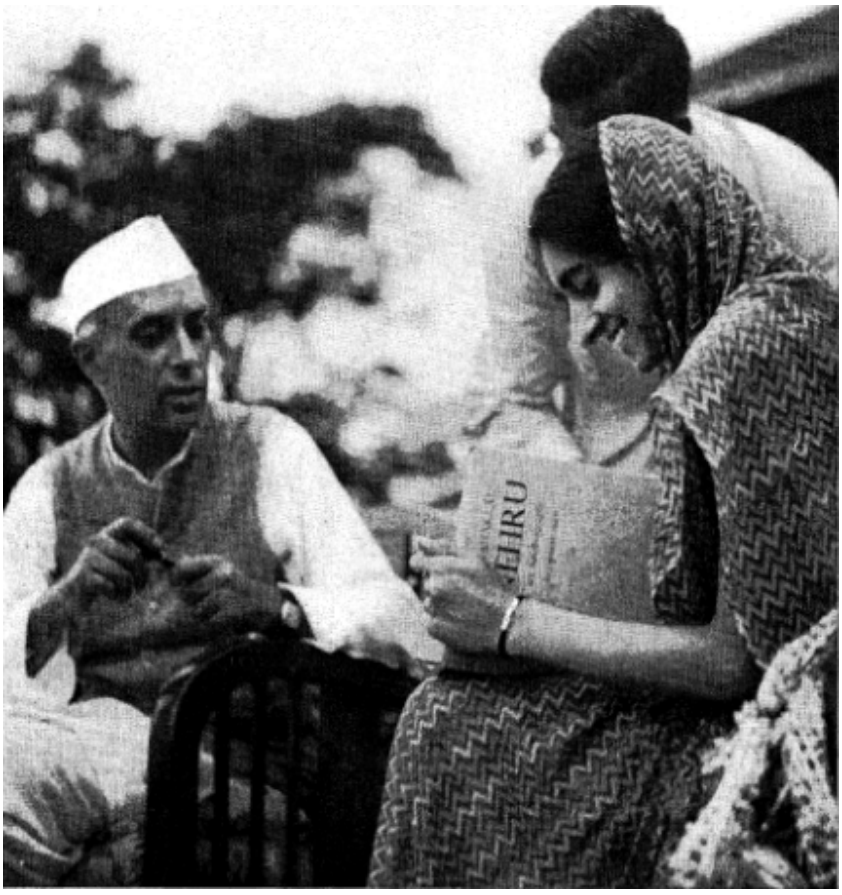
I saw many Buddhist bhikkus (monks) in their monasteries and on the highways, meeting with respect wherever they went. The dominant expression of almost all of them was one of peace and calm, a strange detachment from the cares of the world. They did not have intellectual faces, as a rule, and there was no trace of the fierce conflicts of the mind on their countenances. Life seemed to be for them a smooth flowing river moving slowly to the great ocean. I looked at them with some envy, with just a faint yearning for a haven; but I knew well enough that my lot was a different one, cast in storms and tempests. There was



Kamala, Nehru's wife

to be no haven for me, for the tempests within me were as stormy as those outside. And if perchance I found myself in a safe harbor, protected from the fury of the winds, would I be contented or happy there? to be no haven for me, for the tempests within me were as stormy as those outside. And if perchance I found myself in a safe harbor, protected from the fury of the winds, would I be contented or happy there?

For a little while the harbor was pleasant, and one could lie down and dream and allow the soothing and enervating charm of the tropics to steal over one. Ceylon fitted in with my mood then, and the beauty of the island filled me with delight. Our month of holiday was soon over, and it was with real regret that we bade good-by. So many memories come back to me of the land and her people; they have been pleasant companions during the long, empty days in prison. One little incident lingers in my memory; it was near Jaffna, I think. The teachers and boys of a school stopped our car and said a few words of greeting. The ardent, eager faces of the boys stood out, and then one of their number came to me, shook hands with me, and without question or argument, said: "I will not falter." That bright young face with shining eyes, full of determination, is imprinted in my mind. I do not know who he was; I have lost trace of him. But somehow I have the conviction that he will remain true to his word and will not falter when he has to face life's difficult problems.



From Ceylon we went to south India, right to the southern tip at Cape Comorin. Amazingly peaceful it was there. And then through Travancore, Cochin, Malabar, Mysore, Hyderabad mostly Indian States, some the most progressive of their kind, some the most back ward. Travancore and Cochin educationally far in advance of British India; Mysore probably ahead industrially; Hyderabad almost a per fect feudal relic. We received courtesy and welcome everywhere, both from the people and the authorities; but behind that welcome I could sense the anxiety of the latter lest our visit might lead the people to think dangerously.

In Bangalore, in the Mysore State, I had hoisted at a great gathering a national flag on an enormous iron pole. Not long after my departure this pole was broken up into bits, and the Mysore Government made the display of the flag an offense. This ill-treatment and insult of the flag I had hoisted pained me greatly.

In Travancore even the Congress had been made an unlawful association, and no one can enroll ordinary members for it, although in British India it is now lawful since the withdrawal of civil disobedience. Hyderabad had no necessity for going back or withdrawing facilities, for it had never moved forward at all or given any facility of the kind. Political meetings are unknown in Hyderabad; even social religious gatherings are looked upon with suspicion, and special permission has to be taken for them. There are no newspapers worthy of the name issued there, and, in order to prevent the germs of corruption from coming from outside, a large number of newspapers published in other parts of India are prevented entry.

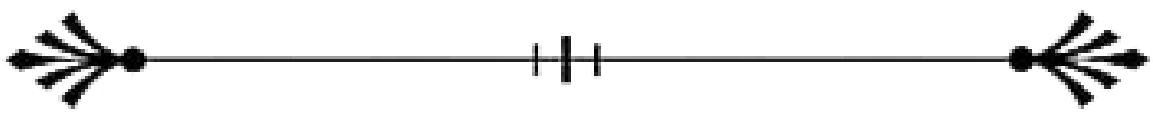
In Cochin we visited the quarter of the "White Jews" as they are called, and saw one of the services in their old tabernacle. The little community is very ancient and very unique. It is dwindling in numbers. The part of Cochin they live in, we were told, resembles ancient Jerusalem. It certainly has an ancient look about it.

We also visited, along the backwaters of Malabar, some of the towns inhabited chiefly by Christians belonging to the Syrian churches. Few people realize that Christianity came to India as early as the first century after Christ, long before Europe turned to it, and established a firm hold in south India. Although these Christians have their religious head in Antioch or somewhere else in Syria, their Christianity is practically indigenous and has few outside contacts.

To my surprise, we also came across a colony of Nestorians in the south; I was told by their bishop that there were ten thousand of them. I had labored under the impression that the Nestorians had long been absorbed, in other sects, and I did not know that they had ever flourished in India. But I was told that at one time they had a fairly large following in India, extending as far north as Benares.

We had gone to Hyderabad especially to pay a visit to Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and her daughters, Padmaja and Leilamani. During our stay with them a small purdanashin gathering of women assembled at their house to meet my wife, and Kamala apparently addressed them. Probably she spoke of women's struggle for freedom against man-made laws and customs (a favorite topic of hers) and urged the women not to be too submissive to their menfolk. There was an interesting sequel to this two or three weeks later, when a distracted husband wrote to Kamala from Hyderabad and said that since her visit to that city his wife had behaved strangely. She would not listen to him and fall in with his wishes, as she used to, but would argue with him and even adopt an aggressive attitude.

Seven weeks after we had sailed from Bombay for Ceylon we were back in that city, and immediately I plunged again into the whirlpool of Congress politics.



The Ecological Consciousness in Jawaharlal Nehru's An Autobiography

S. Keerthy

Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of English,
Anna University, Chennai, India.
E-Mail: keerthys18@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Jawaharlal Nehru (14 Nov, 1889 to 27 May, 1964) is the first Prime Minister of India. After his education in England, in 1912, he returned to India and played a key role in India's politics. As a Prime Minister for seventeen years, he shaped India's future on technology and he can be rightly called India's backbone of industrialization and modernization. Among his other books, An Autobiography is Nehru's outstanding contribution to Indian English Literature. It was written entirely in prison (except for the post-script and certain minor changes) from June 1934 to February 1935. The primary object in writing this book was to occupy Nehru with a definite task, so necessary in the long solitudes of prison life and his 'autobiographical narrative' (Nehru, 2004) clearly reveals Nehru's ideas and policies on India and its environment. Nehru loved nature and liked to be in the natural surroundings. He derived pleasure from Nature and his consciousness on ecology is prominently revealed in his autobiography.

ECOCRITICISM

Ecocriticism is the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together to analyze the environment and brainstorm possible solutions for the correction of the contemporary environmental situation. Ecology is the study of how living things and their environment interact with one another (Conrad, 2011). 'Ecological Consciousness' refers to one's individual awareness on ecology and the ability to experience the feeling of natural things and understanding the concept "Nature". Greg Garrard, in his book Ecocriticism, discusses wilderness, pastoral, animals, pollution and apocalypse (ecocide) as the elements of Ecocriticism. These can be taken into account to analyze Nehru's autobiography to describe his ecological consciousness.

WILDERNESS

'Wilderness' signifies the state of nature uncontaminated by civilization. According to Greg Garrard, wilderness makes one feel safer and healthier in the polluted city life. Nehru derived pleasure in the company of raw nature. He had a special passion towards the Himalayas and he enjoyed to be in the consortium of lonely mountains and peaks. He experienced trekking in the Himalayan peaks, although it was risky. Once when he was

holidaying in the Zoji-la Pass in Kashmir, shortly after his marriage, he stepped on a deceptive snow patch and fell into a crevasse while advancing towards the Amarnath Cave. And, fortunately he was rescued (Nehru, 2004). Also he met with fatal accidents and luckily escaped during his several adventures in different places including Col de Voza and Norway (Frank, 2007). Although he had some bitter experiences, he loved nature as his soul companion.

SECRET INTIMACY

Nehru was imprisoned nine times (due to his active participation in India's freedom struggle) and mostly he spent lonely days in prisons. In Dehra Dun Jail, he had a privilege to walk up and down with a distance of about hundred yards inside the prison walls. This gave him a view of mountains at some distance. He loved these outings and did not give them up even during the monsoon. He loved to walk in ankle-deep water. The sight of the towering Himalayas was an added joy which rejuvenated him. He rejoiced by gazing at the mountains that he loved and 'a secret intimacy' (Nehru, 2004) grew between Nehru and the mountains.

COMPANIONSHIP

In Almora District Jail, Nehru was glad to be in the Almora mountains. He was shifted there in a car. He was exhilarated by the car journey through the winding roads of the mountains in the cold morning air and also by the panoramic view which unfolded on his way. He carefully watched the narrow valley, the peaks hidden in the clouds and the change in the vegetation where the hills were covered by firs and pine trees. When there was a turn in the road, Nehru's eyes expanded to view the hills and valleys with a small river gurgling in the deep below. He gazed hungrily, storing his memory with it, so that he might revive it in his mind when actual sight denied (Nehru, 2004). He felt friendliness and companionship with the mountains near the Almora District Jail. Thus, wilderness made him happy and optimistic.

Nehru was amazed to see the Rhododendrons which made 'blood-red patches' (Nehru, 2004) on the hill-sides. He was keen in watching the ever shape-changing clouds. According to him, the joyous viewing of the clouds made him feel escape from the confinement. The clear sky during the long winter evenings attracted him to look on the stars. He spotted many of them with the help of some charts. During the nights, he would wait for the appearance of the stars and greet them with the satisfaction of seeing 'old acquaintances' (Nehru, 2004).

Thus, Nehru derived companionship, satisfaction and aesthetic sense from the savage nature. Contradictory to his temperament, the agrarian revolution alienated him from wilderness.

PASTORAL

'Pastoral' portrays the country life relating to the farming and grazing of cattle. Pastoral is any literature that describes 'the country with an implicit or explicit contrast to the urban' (Gifford, 2001).

India is basically an agricultural country. In those days, the agrarian structure was characterized by three types of settlements – 'Zamindari', 'Ryotwari' and 'Mahalwari'; in these areas, the absentee landlords were given the right to collect land revenue and they increasingly acquired titles of land; the tenants had hardly any defined rights (Bhalla, 1983). The peasants were ill-treated. Thus, the agrarian movement emerged in most parts of India, especially in the North.

In 1920, Nehru got entangled in the 'kisan (peasant) movement' (Nehru, 2004). He met some peasants and spent three days in the villages, near Jamuna Ghats, far from the railways and the 'pucca' road (Nehru, 2004). People were in miserable rags – semi-naked sons and daughters of India. A new picture of India rose before Nehru – naked, starving, crushed and utterly miserable. He listened to the peasants' innumerable tales of sorrow, their crushing and ever- growing burden of rent, illegal exaction, ejectment from land and mud hut, beating by Zamindar's agents, money-lenders and police.

In 1921, the British Government promised the improvement of the peasants and the agrarian movement came to an end. From then, Nehru had interest on the peasants and their upliftment.

INTEREST IN GARDENING

Nehru's home, 'Anand Bhawan', was surrounded by garden filled with roses. Nehru loved them and he usually havd one of the roses in his coat's pocket. In Naini Central Prison, Nehru and his brother-in-law, Ranjit Pandit, indulged in gardening. Soon the dismal enclosure of their prison was full of flowers and was gay with colour. He even arranged in that narrow, restricted space a 'miniature golf course' (Nehru, 2004).

ANIMALS

Nehru liked to observe animals, especially when he was alone in the prisons. In his home, he had his two pandas – Bhimsa and Pashi, whom he visited every day. On his birthday and other festive occasions, children had the run of his garden to see the pandas (Frank, 2007).

In his solitude life in prisons, he had a close observation of animals, birds and insects who were his companions there.

Prevented from indulging in normal activities, Nehru became more observant of nature's way in Dehra Dun Jail. He watched the animals and insects came that way. He grew more

observant and he noticed all manners of insects living in his cell and in the little yard outside. Then, he realized that the yard was teeming with life.

All the creeping, crawling and flying insects lived their life without interfering with Nehru in any way. He saw no reason why he should interfere with them; but there was a continuous war between him and bed-bugs, mosquitoes and flies. He tolerated wasps and hornets which were hundreds of them in his cell. There had been a 'little tift' (Nehru, 2004) between him and wasp when it stung him unintentionally. Out of anger, he tried to exterminate a lot of them, but they put up a brave fight in defense of their temporary home which contained their eggs. And, therefore, he decided to leave those in peace if they did not interfere with him anymore. Afterwards, he lived surrounded by these wasps and hornets which never attacked him. Nehru and they respected each other.

Nehru used to watch the white ants and other insects. He found out that the lizards carefully avoided preying wasps. He disliked bats that flew soundlessly in the evening dusk which seemed to pass within an inch of one's face. He had a horror of them and called them 'flying-foxes' (Nehru, 2004).

In Lucknow Jail, Nehru used to sit reading almost without moving for considerable periods. There were crowds of squirrels, and sometimes a squirrel would climb up his leg and sit on his knee and have a look round. Then it would look into his eyes and realize that he was not a tree and would scamper. Once, he and his cell-mates reared little squirrels which were orphaned and they used to feed them milk with ink-filler.

LOVE OF BIRDS

The prisons Nehru went to were abounded with pigeons, except the mountain prison of Almora. There were thousands of them and in the evenings the sky would be thick with them. Mynahs were found everywhere. Nehru stated in his autobiography that in Dehra Dun Jail, a pair of mynah nested over his cell door and he used to feed them. The mynahs grew quite tame, and if there was a delay in their morning or evening meal they would sit quite near Nehru and loudly demand their food. It was amusing for Nehru to watch the signs and listen to their impatient cries. In Naini Central Prison, there were thousands of parrots and large number of them lived in the crevices of Nehru's barrack wall. Their courtship and love-making was always a fascinating sight for Nehru. Dehra Dun had a variety of birds including koel and 'Brain-Fever bird' (Nehru, 2004); Nehru could not see most of these birds, he could only hear them. But he used to watch the eagles and the kites gliding in the air, and often a horde of wild duck that would fly over his head. He had a particular interest in observing the birds and their actions. Just like an ornithologist, he explains the minute details about birds in his autobiography.

ANIMAL VISITORS

There was a large colony of monkey in Bareilly Jail and it was always worth watching their buffoonery for Nehru. He had often 'animal visitors' (Nehru, 2004) that were not welcome – including scorpions, snakes and centipedes. He kept particularly a 'black and poisonous-looking scorpion' (Nehru, 2004) in a bottle for sometimes feeding it with flies. Snakes did not fill him with terror although he was afraid of their bite. Centipedes horrified him much more.

In Dehra Dun Jail, he saw a new animal carried by an outsider while he was talking to the jailer. As he already had interest in animals, Nehru was curious to know about it. Later he found out that it was pangolin (ant-eater) after reading the book The Jungle in Sunlight and Shadow by F.W.Champion.

A little kitten made friends with Nehru that belonged to a prison official. When the official was transferred, he took the kitten with him and Nehru missed it dearly. In Dehra Dun jail, a prison official deserted a female dog when he was transferred. The poor thing became a 'homeless wanderer' (Nehru, 2004), living under culvert and usually starving. She used to come to Nehru begging for food. Nehru began to feed her regularly and she gave birth to a litter of puppies. Many of them were taken away but three remained, and Nehru fed them. Among the three, one puppy fell ill with a violent distemper; Nehru nursed it with care. Sometimes he would get up a dozen times in the course of the night to look after her; it survived and Nehru was happy that his nursing had pulled her round.

PET ANIMALS

Nehru came in contact with animals far more in prison that he had done outside. In his autobiography, he shares that the Indians do not approve of animals as household pets. The general philosophy of Indians is non-violence to animals, yet they are often careless and unkind to the animals; even the cow, the favoured animal worshiped by many Hindus, is not treated kindly. But, Nehru treated animals, birds and insects with care and compassion giving them an important place in the environment. For him, men should mutually co-exist with the animals in the environment for ecological balance and he executed this idea throughout his life.

ECOCIDE

During the Vietnam War, a group of scientists coined and propagated the term “ecocide” to denounce the environment destruction (Zierler, 2011). The term is a combination of the words ‘ecology’ and ‘suicide’. ‘Ecocide’ explains about the environmental damage caused to the earth. Because of pollution the environment would undergo ecocide and these results in apocalypse. Although Nehru loved Nature, his policies of industrialization and modernization missed to give importance to ecological balance in India. The First Five Year Plan, actually, disturbed the natural surroundings.

FATHER OF INDIA’S MODERNIZATION

Nehru can be rightly called ‘the Father of India’s modernization’. In his autobiography, Nehru himself stated that he was always attracted towards big machinery and fast travelling. As a Prime-Minister, he initiated ‘heavy engineering and machine-making industries, electric power and scientific research institutes’ (Frank, 2007).

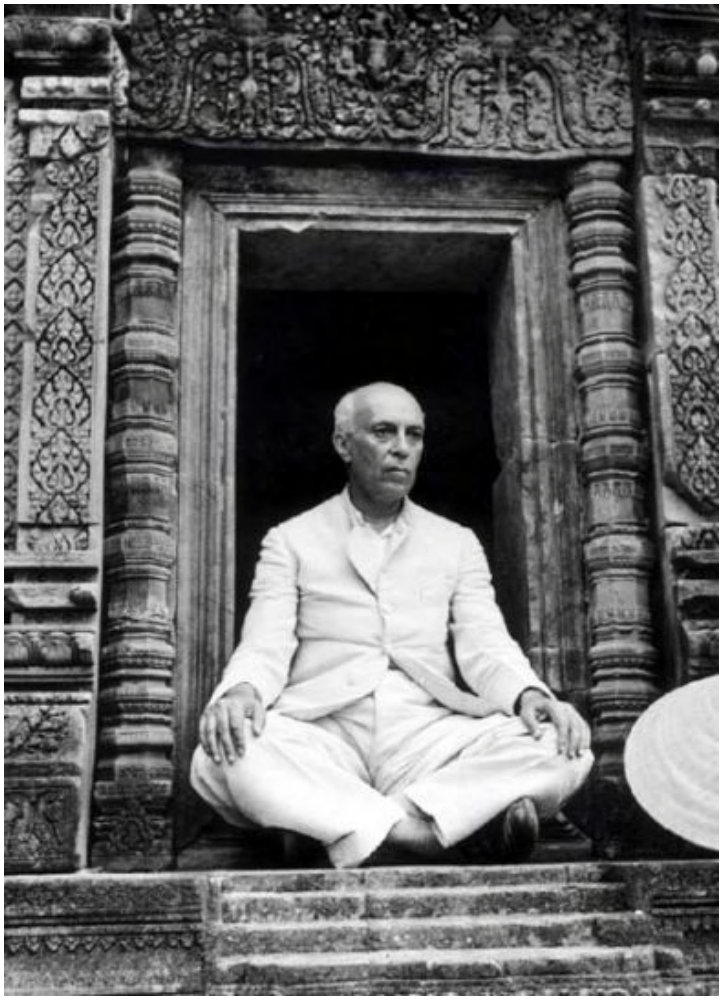
Nehru introduced Five Year Plans in India which led to the construction of huge industries, large dams, railways and roadways, setting up of huge mining projects and so many social development projects. But, slowly, pollution started in India. Pollution is an ecological problem – ‘too much of something is present in the environment, usually in the wrong place’ (Garrard, 2007).

INDUSTRIALIZATION AND ECOLOGY

Forests were depleted in India because of the construction of industries, railways, roadways, dams and mines. Thus, change in the monsoon cycle occurred in India. Since more importance was given to industrialization than ecology, the ecological balance of India was much disturbed and even now we are witnessing it through monsoon change and 'green house effect'. Deforestation occurred greatly in the country and many species of flora and fauna became extinct and most are endangered. Although the results of Five Year Plans and industrialization destroyed the ecological grace in India, Nehru, remained to be a person of ecological consciousness and wished to have a healthy and balanced environment in India.

HARMONY WITH NATURE

Jawaharlal Nehru is a writer of ecological consciousness. Throughout his life, he loved to live amidst wilderness, to promote nature, and to give equal space for animals and other living creatures in the environment. Wilderness gifts Nehru hope and optimistic spirit. It was his intimate and soul companion which not only gave him happiness but also satisfaction. At the same time, he supported pastoral culture where humans can co-exist with nature and other living forms. As far as other living forms are concerned, he was a good observer of animals, birds and insects; and he believed that these are very important constituents of environment, and he also respected them throughout his lifetime.



CONCLUSION

Jawaharlal Nehru remained an ardent lover of nature and had ecological balance. In contrast to his temperament, the ecological condition was not given proper importance in his three Five Year Plans. Actually, the need for integrating environmental factors into the process of planned economic development was officially first voiced during the formulation of the Fourth Five Year Plan from 1969 to 1974 (Centre for Science and Environment, 1982). Though Nehru did not include ecological and environmental factors in his Five Year Plans, An Autobiography reveals his ecological consciousness in which he wishes to live in harmony with nature and to co-exist with the entire flora and fauna.

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Epilogue

Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, had, towards his later years, kept a book close to him. It was even there at his bedside table as he lay dying. The book was of Robert Frost, and on one page featuring the poem “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound’s the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.