

Nehru the Idealist and Revolutionary  
Tenth Lecture - by Shri T. N. Kaul 8 December 1983

I readily accepted the invitation of the Nehru Memorial Trust to deliver this lecture because I believe that the importance and relevance of Jawaharlal Nehru's ideas, achievements and failures to Indo-British relations in particular and the world situation in general are even greater today than ever before. So far as India is concerned, no single person except Mahatma Gandhi has had a more abiding and enduring impact on its people in recent history than Jawaharlal Nehru.

#### The Mountbattens

Nehru had few close friends, among whom were the Mountbattens. I should like to take this opportunity of paying a tribute to the memory of Lord and Lady Mountbatten who, perhaps more than any of their predecessors in India rendered sterling service in the transfer of power from British to Indian hands. I wonder sometimes whether the history of the subcontinent would not have taken a different shape, perhaps a better shape if Mountbatten had been the Viceroy of India in 1939 or even 1943 when he was shortlisted for the post but could not be spared. This tempts me to quote Nehru's estimate of one of Mountbatten's wartime predecessors, in his *Discovery of India*:

Heavy of body and slow of mind, solid as a rock and with almost a rock's lack of awareness ... he sought with integrity and honesty of purpose to find a way out of the tangle. But his limitations were too many, his mind worked in the old groove and shrank back from any innovation; his vision was limited by the traditions of the ruling class out of which he came; he saw and heard through the eyes and ears of the civil service.

Mountbatten was quite the opposite of this. The partition of India was a tragedy in many ways, but Mountbatten arrived much too late on the scene to be able to avoid it. Many have blamed Mountbatten for the manner in which he carried out the partition plan as if it were a military campaign. If a Caesarean had to be performed there was no other way of doing it. But for Mountbatten's drive, initiative and imagination, and the co-operation he got from Nehru, Attlee and their colleagues, the body of India might have suffered even greater damage and one of the babies—the smaller one—might have been stillborn. Pakistan should be grateful to Mountbatten for saving it at its very birth.

#### Partition

Many, like Nehru, Azad, Attlee and others, had hoped that the two separated brothers might soon come together in a federation or confederation, but their hopes were belied because of the bloody aftermath of partition. And for that tragedy the responsibilities are widely shared;—by India, Pakistan and Britain which was responsible for fertilizing the seeds of separation through the introduction of 'separate electorates',

Michael Brecher says in his biography of Nehru: 'Nehru also had grave doubts about an artificial and enforced unity. The Mountbatten plan seemed to provide a way out of the tangled web of chaos and frustration; it seemed honourable and effective. Partition was for him the lesser of two evils. But Gandhi was unreconciled though he did not stand in the way of the Congress Party's acceptance of Mountbatten's plan'. Brecher concludes, 'it is ironic that in this situation Gandhi, the great compromiser, acted as the pure revolutionary, while Nehru, the acknowledged revolutionary in the Congress, accepted a compromise solution.'

To my mind, the explanation is not so simple. Nehru and Gandhi were not just disciple and guru. Each influenced the other and when there was disagreement Nehru's logic and reason often gave in to Gandhi's intuitive decision and 'inner voice', especially during the freedom struggle in the twenties, thirties and early forties. Gandhi himself said on 15 January 1942, 'Somebody suggested that Jawaharlal and I were estranged. It will require much more than differences of

opinion to estrange us. We have had differences from the moment we became co-workers, and yet I have said for some years and say now that not Rajaji (Rajagopalachari) but Jawaharlal will be my successor. He says that he does not understand my language, and that he speaks a language foreign to me. This may or may not be true. But language is no bar to a union of hearts. And I know this—that when I am gone he will speak my language.'

These words of Gandhi's were almost prophetic. He knew, understood and appreciated Nehru, perhaps even better than Nehru's father, Motilal. This unique relationship between Gandhi and Nehru is not easy to understand or analyse; it had profound influence on both of them and on the course of India's struggle for freedom. It is important to bear this in mind in studying the evolution of Nehru from a Harrovian, and somewhat of a 'prig (as he once called himself) to a 'cyrenaicist', from a Fabian socialist to a frustrated young intellectual itching for action, searching for a cause to fight for, until he came under the spell of Gandhi in the early twenties. From then on, under Gandhi's guidance, Nehru turned into a man of the masses, working and living with the poor oppressed peasants of Uttar Pradesh, joining Gandhi's civil disobedience movements, in and out of jail, discovering India and his roots in the ancient land of his birth.

Nehru's growth and development

As Chalapathi Rau says in his book *Jawaharlal Nehru* (Builders of Modern India Series): 'Nehru was a composite man, English by education, Muslim by culture and Hindu by birth (as he described himself in his *Autobiography*) but there was no split in his personality. He was a man of moods, keeping his mind clean to react freely, but behind it was an unchanging purpose'. And this purpose was the freedom of India and the whole oppressed humanity, freedom in all its aspects, social, cultural, economic, political and freedom of the individual.

In the Epilogue to his *Autobiography* Nehru says; 'I have become a queer mixture of the East and the West, out of place everywhere, at home nowhere.' But he rediscovered his roots in his *Discovery of India* where he is more Indian than anything else and at the same time at home with the whole world. If indeed there was a true citizen of the world, it was Jawaharlal Nehru, and it is against this background that I shall try briefly to trace his development, as revolutionary, as idealist, a fighter for India's freedom, as administrator, as prime and foreign minister of India, as world statesman, and as human being and man of vision.

This task is not an easy one. Many books have been written on and about Nehru. I have mentioned two. The third, the official biography of Nehru and his 'Selected Works' by Dr S. Gopal, deserve special mention. But, more than anything else, Nehru's own books and writings throw light on his intellectual development and spiritual moorings. I hope one day Mrs Indira Gandhi will have the time to write her reminiscences of her father, for no one was closer to him than she.

As an English poet has said, 'Words like Nature half reveal and half conceal the soul within'. This becomes all the more so when one tries, as I am doing, to speak about the rich and complex personality of Nehru. I would, therefore, venture to suggest that the Nehru Memorial Trust, in collaboration with the Trust in India, may consider producing a film about Nehru, as that would help the younger generations in India and Britain, and elsewhere, to understand better the Indian revolution and the importance of Nehru's ideas for further strengthening the bonds between India, Britain, the Commonwealth and the rest of the world. A film on Nehru would be in pursuance of the aims and objectives of this Trust and go much further than these memorial lectures. Excellent as they may be in their scope and range, they are not wide enough to reach the people at large and the younger generation in particular.

Not violent or doctrinaire

My memory goes back to the late twenties when, as a student, I and thousands like me, were inspired by Nehru's presidential address at the Lahore Congress Session in December 1929. While Gandhi made a dent on our hearts and soul, Nehru's appeal went straight to our innate

urges. He represented the younger generation, Gandhi the older one. Gandhi was the Mahatma, the saintly figure who transformed the Indian National Congress from an upper middle class debating club into a mass organisation, but was ready to compromise for Dominion Status. Nehru on the other hand, represented the fire and impatience of the youth, their urge to march towards complete independence. He converted even the Mahatma to this goal of Purna Swaraj (complete independence) as against Dominion Status. Nehru's leadership was, perhaps, even more effective than Gandhi's in weaning away the young revolutionaries inclined to see in terrorist activities an instrument of liberation, from the path of violence to non-violence. While we revered Gandhi as a saintly father figure, we saw in Nehru an image of our own hopes and aspirations. Nehru's concept of revolution was not narrow, chauvinistic, parochial or dogmatic. He gave a broader and wider perspective to India's struggle for freedom by linking it with struggles elsewhere—in China, Spain, Abyssinia, Palestine and Czechoslovakia.

I recall my first encounter with him, face to face. It was in 1933, when I was a student at the University of Allahabad. I took the visiting British universities debating team to meet him at Anand Bhawan, his home in Allahabad. He gave us an overall view of the world situation—the rising tide of Nazism and Fascism, the struggle for democracy and the urge for freedom among all oppressed peoples—and he put India's own movement toward independence in that context. It left an indelible imprint on my youthful mind.

Nehru was not a doctrinaire revolutionary. While his participation in the International Congress against colonial oppression and imperialism at Brussels in February 1927 had attracted him to Socialism, and his visit to the USSR the same year drew him to the idealistic side of Marxism, his intense feeling of nationalism and proud patriotism based on a broad concept of internationalism and equality, prevented his becoming a camp follower or fellow traveller of this international communist movement. No wonder he criticized the domination of the Brussels League which expelled him soon thereafter. Nehru was not a 'scientific Marxist' as some Russians told me in Moscow in the early Sixties when I was Ambassador there. That is true in the dogmatic parlance of orthodox Marxists. But, Nehru was something more and greater; he was a 'humanist' and his humanism transcended both capitalism and communism. My Soviet friends reluctantly agreed with me.

#### Nehru and Gandhi

Nehru was revolutionary and radical in the context of the Indian National Congress, as compared to most of his co-workers, including his father and even Gandhi. He injected a social and economic content into the Congress programme—emancipation of the peasants and workers, freedom of India as a whole including the princely states, equality of opportunity for all irrespective of caste, colour, creed or sex. He stressed above all the imperative need of the planning process for India's development.

Nehru's contribution to the making of modern India is too versatile to be classified or recounted here. The concept of social justice as the foundation of national development has been an essential part of the Indian national movement for independence since the early 1930s. Nehru was the principal force behind this fusion between the idea of political independence and that of social justice, to be realized through comprehensive economic planning. As chairman of the National Planning Committee of the Indian National Congress, Nehru had stated in 1938; 'The ideal of the Congress is the establishment of a free and democratic state in India. Such a democratic state involves an egalitarian society in which equal opportunities are provided for every member for self-expression and fulfilment, and an adequate minimum civilized standard of life is assured to all members so as to make attainment of this equal opportunity a reality. This should be the background or foundation of our Plan'. Thus when Independence came in 1947 Nehru was ready with the methodology of India's transformation into a modern state. The adoption of the Constitution in 1950 based on universal adult franchise and containing guarantees of fundamental rights, and the setting up of the Planning Commission to formulate Five-Year Plans of national development, were the first essential steps in this direction.

Nehru's views on social justice and national development were not dogmatic. They were essentially practical and scientific, as well as humanitarian. He believed in the scientific method and temper; at the same time he was extremely sensitive to injustice and human suffering. The type of democratic socialism in which Nehru came to believe was for him not an end in itself. It was more a phase in the long process of changing the way of life of an entire people, of radically altering their attitudes to life and work; in short a phase in the process of effecting a new flowering of an old civilization. For him secularism, socialism and tolerance at home, and peaceful coexistence and mutual co-operation in foreign relations were necessary preconditions for the success of this process of transformation. He had an abiding faith in the rationality and creativity of the Indian people and what he set out to do through economic planning was to open up within them the springs of this creativity in thought, and to infuse it with dynamism in action.

He did not agree with Gandhi's theory of 'trusteeship' of land by the landlords or by capitalists of the means of production. Nor did he believe in Gandhi's creed of non-violence as an end in itself, but regarded it only as a means to an end. As he said 'violence is bad but slavery is far worse'. He did not share Gandhi's faith in 'village self-sufficiency' and emphasis on cottage and small-scale industry as against heavy industry. Nehru believed that industrialization was essential for the modernization of India and emphasized in particular, heavy and basic industries, river valley schemes, atomic research and exploration of the farther frontiers of scientific knowledge. Yet, in spite of his revolutionary and radical zeal, Nehru deferred to Gandhi's ideas, which were perhaps closer to the deep-rooted orthodoxy of the Indian peasant at the time. Also Gandhi himself was a revolutionary compared to the liberal and moderate-minded elite of his own generation. And when it became necessary Gandhi was capable of launching mass civil disobedience campaigns. This appealed to Nehru's mind and he acknowledged and accepted Gandhi's leadership.

But he was not a blind follower and did not hesitate to criticize or disagree with Gandhi on many occasions—such as the calling off of the civil disobedience movement when it was at its peak in 1922, or at the time of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in 1931. Not being a doctrinaire revolutionary Nehru was capable of seeing other people's points of view. It often gave rise to conflicts in his mind and he took his time to resolve them. This sometimes created the impression of 'hesitancy' and 'vacillation' on those who did not know him well. But once he had made up his mind no one could shake him, except perhaps Gandhi at times. Gandhi did it in such a gentle and tender way as if he was seeking light from Nehru and not giving it to him. What is more, Gandhi recognized Nehru's world vision and gave him full scope and a free hand in drafting the Congress resolutions on foreign policy and international issues. As Gandhi once jokingly remarked, 'He is our Englishman'—referring to Nehru's skill in drafting resolutions!

Nehru was a man of action, a Karma Yogi, who was happy as long as he was acting in the pursuit of his goals and ideals. This was the 'meaning of life' for him, as he replied to a letter from Will Durant, the American philosopher. He was revolutionary in spirit, did not believe in the status quo, wanted to change India and the world—but in a human way, avoiding violence and bloodshed as far as possible. For him means were important but ends were far more so—unlike Gandhi for whom means were even more important than ends.

Nehru was an idealist in some ways, as Gandhi was in other ways. Both had a streak of the revolutionary, Nehru perhaps more than Gandhi. Gandhi was pragmatic and ready to compromise on details. Nehru combined a sense of realism with his idealism but would not compromise on basic and fundamental principles. They were both a mixture of the revolutionary and the idealist—each in his own way. Gandhi was a devout Hindu in the broadest sense of the term. Nehru did not believe in organized religion but was attracted and influenced by Vedanta philosophy, the Bhagavad-Gita and Buddhism.

Secularism and democracy

It was said of Nehru by his colleagues, 'he is the only nationalist Muslim in India'. Though this is not literally true, there is no doubt that he was a great support and solace to the Muslims, particularly after the partition. Nehru was above any tinge of 'religiosity'. He was not irreligious or anti-religious but he did not believe in the dogma and ritual of religion. He had a streak of paganism as is evident from his testament, where he asked that his ashes be scattered over the mountains, rivers and plains of India. But like Gandhi, he respected the faith and beliefs of others and never tried to impose his own on them.

Nehru was strongly opposed to the social evils of organized Hindu religion such as child marriage, and denial of the rights to divorce and inheritance for women. However, he did not wish to disturb the personal laws of Muslims and confined the Reforms Act to Hindus only. Some liberal Muslims criticized him for this, though they did not themselves canvass support amongst the Muslims for changes in Muslim personal law. Nehru was, perhaps, sensitive to the risk that such a measure for the Muslims might be exploited by fanatical religious elements and made a political issue. From the hindsight of today, it does seem that Nehru showed some weakness in not tackling the social evils of organized Islam, in contrast with his stand on the Hindu Reform Bill, when he even threatened to resign if it was not passed. He was the one man who could have introduced a uniform civil law for all Indians, whatever their religion. But he was a realist and a democrat; 'not a dictator', as he once told me.

Nehru was secular to the core of his heart and mind, but he was also aware of the susceptibilities and sensitivities of others and did not wish to hurt them. That was, perhaps, why he also did not deem it desirable to ban communal and sectarian political parties of various religious denominations, even though he could have done so. He was a democrat by faith and conviction and would not take such a drastic step even when he had the chance to do so at the time of Gandhi's assassination by a fanatic.

#### Nehru as Prime Minister

Many Indians have blamed Nehru for not doing things which he alone could have done to remove some of the ills which still plague the country—such as the politicization of caste, religious and regional feelings; corruption in political parties, tardiness in carrying out land reforms; bureaucratism and red tape, etc. I myself ventured to ask him about this in the mid-fifties. He listened to me patiently, did not flare up (as he sometimes used to) but said in a calm voice: 'Don't you see I have to carry the mass of the people along with me in anything I do? And that they are mostly orthodox, superstitious, conservative, traditional and ridden by narrow feelings of caste, creed and religion? It is no use my giving orders and making declarations. I must carry the bulk of the people with me. In a democracy things move slowly but steadily. I am trying to remove these evils through the democratic process.'

I found Nehru in a communicative mood and ventured to ask him again: 'But, Sir, why do you keep people in positions of power and authority who do not believe in your policies and even sabotage them sometimes?' He smiled and said, 'Young man, those who believe in my policies will always be with me. It is the others I have to use and convert—and they are the majority.' That was Nehru the Prime Minister speaking, and not Nehru the old revolutionary of earlier years. Perhaps, if Britain had parted with power in the later thirties or early forties Nehru might have acted and spoken differently.

I do not wish to indulge in speculation. The fact is that Nehru was kind-hearted and compassionate. He believed in loyalty to those who had been to jail and worked with him in the freedom struggle. He was too tolerant sometimes or, perhaps, democratic to a fault. There is no doubt, however, that Nehru laid the foundations of modern secular parliamentary democracy in India. Whether he could have also built the whole edifice during his lifetime is arguable. Democracy is a dynamic, developing process. The foundations which Nehru laid cannot be, and have not been, shaken in spite of many tremors now and then.

The most conspicuous aspect of contemporary history is the transition from the old world to the new, spanning broadly the first half of our century. When the twentieth century opened, European power in Asia and Africa was at its height. Sixty years later only the vestiges of European domination remained. Never before in human history had so revolutionary a change occurred with such rapidity over such a vast area affecting hundreds of millions of human beings.

The major questions facing the world today are no longer European questions. They are global questions, inextricably tied up with relations between the superpowers and others, between the industrialized and the developing countries, and between the developing countries themselves. Any serious effort to find meaningful and lasting solutions to the major problems of our world must therefore be global, requiring new perspectives and a new scale of values.

Only a few wise persons of the East and the West could foresee the significance of these revolutionary changes and at the same time realize that many of the expectations bound up with the ending of colonialism were extravagant, that political freedom though essential was not a panacea for all problems, and that discarding the yoke of colonialism was only the beginning of the much more arduous task of giving social and economic content to political independence.

Jawaharlal Nehru, with his rare perception of history was among those few. His *Autobiography*, his *Glimpses of World History* and *Discovery of India* are outstanding examples of the new perspectives, values and priorities that are being increasingly recognized as the essential foundations for national action and international relations in the new era. He has written in his *Autobiography* that he worked for independence because 'the nationalist in me cannot tolerate alien domination', but that he worked for it 'even more because for me it is the inevitable step to social and economic change'.

#### Foreign policy

Foreign policy was one field in which Nehru's democratic outlook and his world perspective had a chance to build a conceptual framework and concrete policies which have endured and survived unshaken after his death.

India's foreign policy was not formulated by Nehru overnight. On the eve of Independence, in his famous broadcast to the nation on All India Radio on 7 September 1946, when he was vice-president in the Interim Government, he said:

We shall take full part in international conferences as a free nation, with our own policy, and not as a satellite of another nation. We propose as far as possible to keep away from the power politics of groups, aligned against one another, which have led in the past to world wars and which may lead again to disaster on an even vaster scale. We believe that peace and freedom are indivisible and the denial of freedom anywhere must endanger freedom elsewhere and lead to conflict and war. We are particularly interested in the emancipation of colonial and dependent countries and peoples, and in the recognition in theory and practice of equal opportunities for all races. We seek no domination over others and we claim no privileged position over other people. But we do claim equal and honourable treatment of our people wherever they may go and we cannot accept any discrimination against them.

The world in spite of its rivalries and hatred and minor conflicts moves inevitably towards closer cooperation and the building of a world commonwealth. It is for this ONE WORLD that India will work, a world in which there is free co-operation of free people, and no class or group exploits another.

We are of Asia and the people of Asia are nearer and closer to us than others. India is so situated that she is the pivot of western, southern and south-east Asia ... and the future is bound to see a closer union between India and South-east Asia on the one side and Afghanistan, Iran and the Arab world on the other ... India is on the move as the old order

passes. Too long have we been passive spectators of events, the playthings of others. The initiative comes to our people now and we shall make the history of our choice.

The broadcast is important in itself and even more so because it was the fruit of at least two decades of thought and reflection by Nehru. He was the draftsman of almost all resolutions on international affairs and foreign policy in the Indian National Congress since the late Twenties. But foreign policy was not something that Nehru conjured up like the rope trick. It was deeply rooted in Indian history and geography, her tradition and ethos, her culture and civilization; it was closely related to India's struggle for independence and Gandhi's policy of peace and non-violence. Nehru formulated it and enunciated its basic principles keeping in view all these factors.

The basic elements of this policy flowed from India's spiritual and intellectual inheritance and ideals, tempered by the realities of the world after World War II. These realities were the Cold War, NATO, and the Warsaw Pact, the large number of countries still under colonial domination in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Pacific, the attempt by some great and super-powers to suck these newly independent countries and others aspiring to be independent within their spheres of influence or military alliances, the re-emergence of China, India, Burma, Indonesia, Egypt and other countries as politically independent entities, the dire need of these countries for peace to rebuild their economies and social structure, and last though not the least, the armaments race between the two main power blocs and the acquisition of nuclear weapons by them.

Nehru had an uncanny appreciation of the rivalries of great powers and a perception of their nature ambitions and conflicts. He had said as early as February 1927: 'A victory for the Chinese means the creation of a great Soviet Republic in the East closely allied with Russia and, together with it, gradually dominating the whole of Asia and Europe. This does not mean that the Chinese Republic will be fashioned wholly on the lines laid down by Marx. Even Soviet Russia, owing to the pressure of the peasantry, has had to give up part of its communism, and in China, where the small peasant is the deciding factor, the departure from pure communism will be all the greater.' He went on to say: 'Britain even with the aid of other European countries would be unable to do much injury to the great continental bloc of Russia and China. What is more likely is that England in order to save herself from extinction will become a satellite of the United States ...

... The great problem of the future will be American imperialism even more than British imperialism, or it may be, and all indications point to it, that the two will join together to create a powerful Anglo-Saxon bloc to dominate the world.' (Dr Gopal's biography of Nehru, Vol. 1. p. 104). This shows how sensitive Nehru was to the past and the present and how perceptive he was about the future, which is still in the making.

The Congress had declared in its resolution on foreign policy, as early as 1927, that India could be no party to an imperialist war and in no event should India be made to join any war without the consent of the people being obtained. The All India Congress Committee had declared in 1940: 'The Committee is convinced, and recent world events have demonstrated, that complete disarmament is necessary, and also the establishment of a new and juster political and economic order, if the world is not to destroy itself and revert to barbarism.' Both these resolutions bore the stamp of Nehru's idealism and realism. Nehru said later in 1954: 'A policy must be in keeping with the traditional background and temper of the country. It should be idealistic and realistic. If it is not idealistic it becomes one of sheer opportunism; if it is not realistic then it is likely to be adventurist and wholly ineffective.'

By September 1946, when the Interim Government had been installed, Nehru had a clear vision of independent India's foreign policy. What he said in his broadcast over All India Radio on 7 September 1946 still remains valid. In March 1947, a few months before Independence, Nehru's inaugural address still rings in my ears. He said: 'For too long we of Asia have been petitioners in Western courts and chancelleries. That story must now belong

to the past. We propose to stand on our own feet and to co-operate with all others who are prepared to cooperate with us. We do not intend to be playthings of others.'

These were brave and courageous words spoken sincerely and from the depth of his heart. But Asia is a large continent with different social, political and economic systems and it will take time for the Asian countries to really work together. Although the Asian Relations Conference sowed the seeds for the Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung in 1955, we have still a long way to go before we can translate the concept of Asian consciousness into reality. We in Asia will perhaps have to start in sub-regional groups, as we are beginning to do, and then try to link them regionally and inter-regionally. Another possibility is to cut across these regional and other barriers through the non-aligned movement.

#### Non-alignment

Non-alignment is a much misunderstood term in the West. It was, perhaps, Nehru's greatest contribution to a common consciousness among the newly independent countries of the Third World.

The West, either deliberately or through lack of understanding, has often confused the concept of non-alignment. John Foster Dulles called it 'immoral' while Henry Kissinger, perhaps deliberately, described it as 'neutralism'. This confusion or deliberate misconstruction, though less prevalent now, still persists in the Western media. And this in spite of Nehru's unequivocal declaration in his address to the US Congress as early as October 1949, 'Where freedom is threatened or justice denied, we cannot and shall not be neutral.'

This concept was born amidst the chilling blasts of the Cold War in the mid-Forties, though its origins could be traced to the late twenties and mid-Thirties during India's non-violent struggle for independence. The pronouncements of a political party of a country still struggling for independence do not carry the same weight as those of an independent sovereign government. Even Nehru's declarations as Prime Minister and Minister for External Affairs of India in the late Forties and early Fifties were not taken too seriously at first either in the West or the East.

The West did not like non-alignment and the East at first looked upon it with suspicion as a British ploy to use India against the socialist bloc. Mao Tse Tung had already declared that you had to lean to one side or the other—there was no third path or middle way. Stalin was preoccupied with Europe and America and tended to regard independent India as an appendage of the British Commonwealth. Western hostility and Eastern suspicion did not, however, daunt Nehru. With strong conviction and increasing persistence he, along with Tito, Nasser, Soekarno, U Nu, later Nkrumah and others, propagated this policy. When with the process of decolonization many countries in Asia and Africa achieved independence and joined the non-aligned group, the West had to recognize non-alignment as a valid and viable policy for the newly independent countries. The East had already realized the advantage of befriending this group and supporting its struggle against apartheid in South Africa and colonial domination in Southern Africa and elsewhere.

However, some Western powers still hesitated to support these struggles of the non-aligned group and even tried to wean some of the newly independent countries into their sphere of influence and military alliances like SEATO and CENTO. Nehru and others in the non-aligned group strongly resisted these attempts, because they did not wish to become pawns in the East-West Cold War. CENTO and SEATO had to be wound up and dissolved. Many of the newly independent countries which had joined these military pacts realized that their future lay in the non-aligned group which they have now joined.

The non-aligned movement grew in numbers from 25 at the Belgrade Summit of 1961 to 101 at the New Delhi Summit in 1983. This was because these newly independent countries realized that peace was essential to their security and development, and that non-alignment was the only way to retain their independence of judgement and action in any given situation which they could

evaluate on its merits, as it affected their own national interests and the larger interests of world peace. It was not a policy of neutrality which obliges a country not to take any side, irrespective of the merits of the issue. It was not a policy of equidistance from the two blocs, either. To the extent that a country or group of countries was sympathetic to and supported the interests of a non-aligned country, and the movement against colonialism and racism, the non-aligned countries welcomed it; to the extent that a country opposed these, the non-aligned tried to blunt such hostility and win its support and friendship by all possible means. It was not a case of the non-aligned tilting towards one bloc or the other, but the latter tilting towards the non-aligned.

Lord Palmerston said in the last century: "There are no permanent friends or permanent enemies; there are only permanent interests.' The British should therefore be able to appreciate the extension of this doctrine to the post-World War II period by the newly independent countries which had suffered under colonial domination for a century or more. Fortunately their pursuit of national interest found a broader and less cynical approach in non-alignment. The US should have appreciated this even better, since they themselves had kept aloof from European wars and conflicts for a century after their independence.

The non-aligned also did not accept the doctrine of 'natural alliance' with one bloc or the other. As Nehru repeatedly declared, the non-aligned group was not a third bloc or third force to counter either of the two blocs led by the great and super powers. It was a movement to strengthen and extend the area of peace and freedom, help relax international tensions, soften the impact of the Cold War, accelerate the process of decolonization and national liberation, preserve and strengthen national independence and bring about a more just economic world order through international co-operation and the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means.

The need for, and validity of, non-alignment and its ability to play a positive and constructive role in the thermonuclear world of today is even greater than ever before. Hence its emphasis from the Belgrade to the New Delhi Summit on disarmament in general and nuclear disarmament in particular, under adequate and equal international safeguards and control.

#### The Commonwealth

Nehru was a firm believer in international co-operation. This is shown by his adherence to the concept of the Commonwealth of Nations, even after India declared herself a Republic. Nehru's contribution to the preservation of the Commonwealth is second to none. His decision to continue in the Commonwealth in spite of strong opposition at home, and despite the unsympathetic attitude of the then British Government on such vital issues for India as Kashmir shows Nehru's faith in the Commonwealth idea as an example of international co-operation between different social, political and economic systems, and as a pattern of peaceful and co-operative coexistence between them. Nehru believed that the Commonwealth, because it was not bound by any military alliance, could exercise a positive and constructive influence over world affairs. To my mind, the Commonwealth is an extension of the concept of peaceful coexistence even between countries that may have different views on specific issues and in spite of some being members of military alliances while others are non-aligned. The future of the Commonwealth, in spite of Britain being in NATO and the EEC, need not be dark, provided greater attention is paid to more active co-operation in the economic, technological, scientific, educational and cultural fields.

It is necessary to ensure mutual respect and a spirit of sovereign equality among and between the member countries of the Commonwealth and their citizens. Laws and regulations which violate this spirit can only do harm. I shall not say more on this matter for this is not the proper forum or occasion for it. A hint should be enough for the wise.

#### Peaceful coexistence

Another contribution of Jawaharlal Nehru in the field of foreign policy and international affairs for which he will be remembered was the policy of peaceful coexistence between different social, political and economic systems in the post-World War II period. He had given expression to this long before India became independent and tried to the best of his ability to project this policy in India's relations with all countries of the world and, in particular, with India's neighbours. This policy has gained greater importance and relevance with the development of nuclear weapons and technology. As Nehru put it, 'the world is living in a balance of terror; the only alternative to peaceful co-existence is total mutual destruction.'

In pursuit of the policy Nehru tried to steer clear of any involvement in the Cold War and kept out of military alliances formed in the context of the great power ideological and military rivalry. He even succeeded, to some extent, in acting as a sort of bridge between the two blocs and played a catalytic role in bringing about and maintaining peace in the Korean conflict, in the Suez crisis, in the Indo-China war, and in the Congo crisis, to name only a few.

Nehru tried his level best to develop peaceful and co-operative relations with both Pakistan and China. With Pakistan he did not succeed because the military rulers of Pakistan were not willing to enter into a treaty of non-aggression, peace, co-operation and friendship, which Nehru offered them several times. With China, however, the persistent efforts of Nehru to develop a pattern of peaceful and cooperative friendship bore some fruit in the beginning. I had the honour to negotiate the agreement or Panchsheel, as they are called in India, with Peking, from December 1953 till 29 April 1954 when the agreement was signed in Peking.

As Nehru declared in Parliament soon after the signing of the agreement, these five principles were the most important part of the agreement. He christened them 'Panchsheel' or the five principles (in Sanskrit). The Chinese took up the refrain and reaffirmed them at the time of Premier Chou En-lai's visit to India in July 1954 on his return from the Geneva talks on Indo-China.

I was the only aide of Nehru present at these talks which went on past midnight. I recall Chou En-lai telling Nehru: 'We would like the three States of Indo-China to follow the same policy as that of India, viz non-alignment and peaceful coexistence.' However, we found to our great regret that from 1955 onwards the Chinese started nibbling at our territory without even having the courtesy to inform us that they had claims on it.

Differences between sovereign neighbouring countries about their borders existed through the centuries, but civilized countries try to resolve them through peaceful and diplomatic negotiations and not through force. In spite of India's best efforts to try to localize these conflicts and not allow them to escalate, the Chinese ignored our request to break the problem into bits and discuss them one by one. Instead, as late as April 1960, when Chou En-lai visited New Delhi he wanted to re-open the whole border issue instead of discussing specific points in dispute. The Chinese also rejected India's offer to let the International Court of Justice arbitrate on the issue.

Perhaps because of their isolation and external pressures the Chinese embarked on a massive large-scale invasion of India in September-October 1962. This shocked not only Nehru and the people of India but the whole world; even the Soviet Union, in spite of its communist ideology, expressed sympathy with non-communist India and blamed communist China for resorting to force. The USA and Britain offered India token military equipment to meet the Chinese threat. When the Chinese saw the strong reaction in India and the world-wide sympathy for it they declared a so-called 'unilateral withdrawal' from the Eastern Sector or the North-East Frontier Agency. They had extended their lines of communication too far and could not sustain them. They had got what they wanted by force: i.e. the Aksai Chin area and beyond up to the Karakoram Pass; and they let India retain what India had always had i.e. the North-East Frontier Agency.

India had been militarily unprepared for this invasion. India had not expected China to violate the five principles. The Chinese invasion was perhaps a blessing in disguise because it opened the eyes of India to the need for strengthening her defences and not merely depending on treaties and agreements. As Nehru said in Parliament: 'We were living in an imaginary world of our own creation.' Any other leader and statesman in his position would probably have resigned or given up hope, but Nehru tried to convert this military defeat into a moral victory and united the people of India in their determination to safeguard India's integrity and sovereignty.

I was Acting High Commissioner in London at the time of the Chinese invasion. Nehru, who had come to the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, asked me to go to the Soviet Union as Ambassador of India. I left for New Delhi in the middle of October when the Sino-Indian conflict was at its height. The shock as well as the enthusiasm of the people in India moved me deeply. When I reached the Soviet Union and had my first meeting with Mr Khrushchev the Cuban crisis was at its height. It was a stormy meeting. As Mr Khrushchev explained to me later, the Soviet Union had to be in combat readiness in case the Cuban crisis escalated into a war. He told me: 'The Chinese are our brothers and you are our friends. We cannot take sides'. I replied: 'If my brother hits my friend I shall not silently watch but do something about it.' He smiled and said 'Ah! but the Chinese are not such small brothers; but we shall see what we can do.'

In my second meeting a week later, when the Cuban crisis had subsided, Mr Khrushchev was openly critical of China and friendly towards India. He promised that the Soviet Union would fulfil all its agreements and give India the military equipment which they had agreed to and even try to expedite its delivery. In his address to the Party meeting two weeks later he openly criticized the Chinese leadership and its use of force against India.

If I may be permitted to speak with hindsight, it is a pity that at this critical juncture the USA, which had been giving large-scale sophisticated weaponry to Pakistan since 1954, did not agree to India's request for aircraft, tanks, etc, but only agreed to give some mountain warfare equipment. India did not want foreign troops on its soil. All we had asked for was military equipment to defend our territory against a threat of foreign invasion. If America had at this critical juncture acceded to India's request Indo-American relations would have taken a turn for the better. Instead the Duncan Sandys-Dean Rusk team that visited India in December 1962 tried to pressurize Nehru to concede more than half of the Kashmir valley to Pakistan, and to enter into a joint defence pact with her. The disingenuousness of this joint suggestion was soon exposed when Pakistan and China entered into a so-called 'provisional agreement' under which Pakistan gifted to China over 4000 sq km in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir which they had no right to do. This knocked the bottom out of the Sandys-Rusk proposals, which Mr Nehru rightly rejected.

In spite of all these developments Nehru did not give up his faith in the policy of non-alignment or the five principles of peaceful coexistence. He had no illusions but he had hoped that China might agree to developing peaceful, friendly and co-operative relations with India, both in her own interest and those of peace, security and co-operation in this important region of Asia. Nehru's hopes were belied and he died a much sadder man on the 27 May 1964.

The question 'After Nehru Who and What?' stared all of us in the face. As Nehru had told me two months before his death, when I suggested that he might nominate Lal Bahadur Shastri as his successor: 'It did not help Anthony Eden when he was nominated by Churchill as his successor. In a democracy leaders are thrown up through a natural process by the people.' Nehru was right as later events proved.

#### Nehru's vision

I wish to stress here the wisdom and vision of Jawaharlal Nehru, his statesmanship, and his hope that India, the Commonwealth, and all nations of the world would strive towards the common goal of One World, where each nation and every individual in each nation would enjoy

peace and equality of opportunity, freedom from fear and want. This is all the more important in the thermonuclear age of today, when small wars can easily escalate into a world conflict. The greatest need of mankind is to live together in peace, friendship and co-operation. As Nehru said, 'Peace has been said to be indivisible; so is freedom, so is prosperity now, and so also is disaster in this One World that can no longer split into isolated fragments.'

Nehru appreciated, as few of his contemporaries could, the greatness and the splendour that was India—her ancient wisdom and philosophy, the treasures of her folk art and crafts, her classical music and dance, literature and sculpture. It was this deeply felt pride in India's cultural heritage that influenced his decision to establish, during the first decade of our independence a large number of institutional structures for the preservation and promotion of the various manifestations of our rich tradition. In this task he was fully supported by his friend and colleague of long standing, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, who was the first Education Minister of independent India. As a result, the National Academies of Fine Arts, Performing Arts, and of Letters, with branches in all the Indian States, were established. The National Library, the National Museum, the National Gallery of Modern Art, the National Book Trust and the Handicrafts Board are among the many other institutions that were set up during his primeministership. Nehru was aware of the dangers of cultural development in isolation and of the need for reviving the old ties and forging new links with other cultures all over the world. Hence the establishment of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations which I had the privilege of serving as President some years ago. It has been rightly said that 'the influence of Nehru on Indian renaissance cannot be measured in terms of day-to-day achievements. The whole future of India seems to be in process of being formulated by Nehru.' He was indeed the embodiment of a new and resurgent India pulsating with life and hope, with faith in its destiny in spite of stupendous problems,

Nehru was one of the first to realize that the future greatness of India lay in harmonious fusion of the ancient values of India with all that was best in modern civilization. He recognized the universal of science and technology, and in this universal he saw the answer to the antagonism of the historical realities of his time, whether in the international sphere or in the internal realm of each society. The essential and most revolutionary factor in modern life, he said, is not a particular ideology but technology advance. There was no stopping the process of mechanization, 'for not only is our national and cultural progress bound up with it, but also our freedom itself. He was therefore all in favour of the induction and development of science and technology in India and personally presided over these departments and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research.

However, Nehru's faith in science and technology was not absolute and he was deeply concerned with its effects on the quality of life. This concern led him to ask the question: 'Can we combine the progress of science and technology with the progress of mind and spirit also? We cannot be untrue to science because that represents the basic fact of life today. Still less can we be untrue to those essential principles for which India has stood throughout the ages. Let us then pursue our path to industrial progress with strength and vigour and at the same time remember that material riches without toleration and compassion and wisdom may well turn to dust and ashes.' Nehru wanted to use science and technology not only for economic progress, but even more as an instrument to free the Indian mind from the shackles of prejudice and superstition, and for this reason he emphasized the need of developing among our people a scientific temper.

No discussion of Nehru's personality can be complete without a mention of his immense love for children. Even amidst his preoccupation with matters of State, Nehru always found time whenever an opportunity arose to be with children, to talk with them and even play with them. Writing in *Shankar's Weekly* on 26 December 1950, he said:

I thought of the vast army of children all over the world, outwardly different in many ways, speaking different languages, wearing different kinds of clothes and yet so very like one another. If you bring them together, they play or quarrel. But even their quarrelling is some kind of play.

They do not think of differences amongst themselves, differences of class or caste or colour or status. They are wiser than their fathers and mothers.

His love for children was basically an extension of his humanist ideas and in them he saw the fulfilment of his dreams and vision. Their company reaffirmed his essential faith in human nature and rejuvenated him. Children also instinctively responded to him. Their affection for him found expression in that he was to them Nehru *chacha*. India today celebrates Nehru's birthday as Children's Day.

Nehru was a person of immense intellectual gifts. The three books he wrote in the solitude of his imprisonment (thanks to the British Raj) bear testimony to his potential as a great writer. But Nehru was also a person of genuine social passion and a man of creative action. He used to say that only when men and women become passionately involved with an idea would they really move towards its fulfilment. And Nehru was passionately involved with all that concerned the welfare of mankind, everywhere. His dreams were not for India alone; they were also for the world 'for all the nations and peoples are too closely knit together today for any one of them to imagine it can live apart'. It is this sublimation of political aims that has given Indian democracy flavour. Freedom has meant freedom for all the people, equality has meant equal opportunities for all the people, wherever they may be.

Nehru's courage and magnanimity have become a part of our history. Even such different personalities as Attlee and Churchill, who had a great deal to do with the question of India's independence, but did not see eye to eye on this question, were nevertheless at one in their admiration of these qualities in Nehru. Attlee acknowledged that several years of imprisonment by the British had not soured or embittered Nehru. And Churchill, greeting Nehru after his first visit to the USA, said: I would have liked to be with you and introduce you to American audiences. Do you know what I would have said? I would have said, "Here is a man who has overcome fear and hatred".'