

Personal Memories of Jawaharlal Nehru
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Third in a series of Lectures in memory of Jawaharlal Nehru

It is an Honour and a privilege to come here to deliver this lecture. The First Nehru Lecture was given by an Englishman of Indian birth, Lord Butler, who under our Constitution could become naturalised if he had so wished. No, it's no laughing matter; it's not so easy. We have much difficulty because our Constitution says that if either you or your father or your grandfather were born in India, then you are entitled to be an Indian. And he spoke with intimate knowledge of the Nehru family and Panditji himself.

The Second Lecture was by the first Governor-General of India, that is to say the first Head of the Independent Indian State. We never speak of Lord Louis Mountbatten as the last Viceroy of India, who came to perform the obsequies of Empire, but as one who helped to inaugurate India into a new life and - without disrespect - did so by the co-operation of Indians and not least Pandit Nehru. Now so much has been written about the late Prime Minister, perhaps most of it is as it was, but anyway it has gone into what is called history. I believe most of history is what does not happen but still it's what our students learn. Therefore, I have very little that I can say which is new to you and if anyone is expecting any anecdotes or any special news I am afraid I have not any and if I had I would not give it. And, therefore, this will be quite an ordinary effort.

The reason, I am guessing, why Lord Mountbatten asked me to come here, and pressed it on me, is because of my long association with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru over a period of thirty years, involved in public life and in personal relations, starting before Independence when we had the common characteristic of being called 'agitators' - except that I was never called a vagabond, without means of subsistence under the Indian law. (You know Pandit Nehru was once arrested in Calcutta because he had no visible means of subsistence.) Therefore for thirty years, and for the eight years previously, without seeing each other, or at least seeing from a distance, joined in ideas and objectives. These thirty years are years which have enriched my life and I hope, with all humility, made some contribution towards the ideas that Pandit Nehru wanted to put forward. Now it's only because I am of this old vintage and Lord Louis Mountbatten has been particular to tell me that we are the only veterans around. So I am one of the specimens in his antique shop, and that is all there is to it.

The identity of objectives established by Pandit Nehru, and many others, required what is sometimes called 'agitation', but we now call it 'Organisation of Public Opinion' by informing comparatively ignorant humanity about the facts surrounding their living standards. Achievement of that purpose was in itself a tribute to Pandit Nehru.

The Character of Nehru

If I speak to you about Nehru the man, I have said everything about him, because he was not what may be called an upholstered personality, that is to say, he was not a stage personality for Parliament, a stage personality for talking to the British, a stage personality for talking to the magistrate. He spoke as he was, he was a natural person in that way. Most of you have heard it said that Pandit Nehru was a complex character, especially those who do not like him say he is a complex character, a difficult man, a controversial personality. (They always say about me that I am a controversial personality. The real truth is controversy chases me and in a spirit of compromise I meet it half-way!) He was spoken of as a complex personality, he was spoken of as

an enigma, sometimes full of contradictions. There were others who said he vacillated and there were others still who said: Why does he make so many speeches?

Now the real fact of the matter is that he was a complex personality because the world he lived in was complex, and, what is more, the faith that he had in the other people compelled him to take into account everything that was going on around him; and he was not a doctrinaire: he was open to ideas, open to suggestions, and had no hesitation in changing a view if he was convinced about it. He was a man of immense courage - courage to agree and courage to differ. Those who were his critics would say that he was waiting for the time to see how he could jump. Now this apparent contradiction largely arose from his willingness to take into account the various factors that came in. In other words, he recognised this world not as a world revealed by some unknown personality or entity, nor as a world that was monistic, but as a world in which events, ideas and everything else were a confluence of many forces.

For India, to start with, he became very soon the symbol of the hope of our people, and so he remained almost up to the afternoon of the 27th May 1964, when he breathed his last, even though he had not the same strength physically as before. He was a symbol of our hope and also the embodiment of our aspirations. His position really came about not so much because some philosopher or some political scientist, some constitutional lawyer or some Parliamentarian, was saying: 'Here is a remedy, here is a formula for this or that or the other', but because vast numbers of people felt that they had a personal relationship with him.

Pandit Nehru spoke at meetings at great length, and what is more when he was very tired and feeling like nothing on earth, the best way for him to recoup himself was to go and address a public meeting. This is not my invention; it was a fact that he drew inspiration from the people, and the crowds spoke to him as he spoke to them. When he spoke to these vast audiences of a hundred thousand or even half a million, it was not likely they would have understood fully what was being said, but each one felt that he, Nehru, was talking to him.

This capacity to establish that relationship was one of his main features. He also made people feel that to be an Indian was not necessarily an honour, but something which enjoined upon them to adopt an attitude of dignity or patience or courage and also not to carry opposition to people to the extent that you hated them. His main concern in the world, not only towards the end of his life but from the period of his childhood, was the conception of resistance to domination, and it so happened that the British were the dominators. It was not as though he picked them as dominators. There was a psychologist who said: "The chick does not follow the hen, it just follows and the hen is in front". That is all. And so it was not as though he picked on the British as the worst in creation - there were worse creations - but because they happened to be those who were putting the lid on him. He used to say that our country had a situation where all of us, rich or poor, peasant or prince, were foreigners in our own land.

I do not speak in this way because I am speaking in London. There are so many passages in his writings where he said that whatever opposition we had, was to a system, a system basically built upon discrimination between the races on the one hand and the necessity - or perhaps the rather unsupported argument - of economic exploitation on the other. In making himself a symbol of Indian freedom, he was really the exponent of liberation as such and this gospel of liberation works right through and became part of the general political education of the country. He taught that liberation could not be confined to the articles of a constitution as to how many people could vote and how many could not vote. Liberation meant freedom to mould our life, freedom over the

means of production, freedom to end poverty. He spoke of the 560,000 villages in India - that *was* India.

Once somebody said that a certain town was disease - I will not mention the town because I have to go back to India - but India lives in those 560,000 villages. When Lord Mountbatten asked Nehru: 'What is the most important problem of India?' Nehru replied, 'It is the economic problem'. Lord Mountbatten then asked 'Have you got any other problem?' 'Yes' said Nehru, 'I have 360 millions of them' - meaning the people of India.

So he had this desire 'to wash every tear from every eye' (as Gandhiji put it) - that is to say, to remove poverty. India's problem then, as today, is its vast mass poverty where the bulk of our people, according to the United Nations' statistics, live below the level of subsistence. And beating poverty he thought (partly because of the impact of ideas from other places, partly because of his own thinking) was possible only when there was the implementation of distributive justice. That is why you find him not in 1947 or 1949, but in much earlier years, seeking a method for the development of the national movement where the base of it was the people and the people were mobilised to support it. It was explained to them that independence was not for the Viceroy or for a few officials or educated classes or the elite, but was for the masses of the people who would be able to live in conditions of dignity. In this, I think, it is correct to say that the real educators were the people themselves.

As you know, Nehru came to England at the age of fifteen, and then went back after seven years and visited Dehra Dun or somewhere where an Afghan statesman was visiting. The Nehru family was living in the same hotel.

I know very little about the Afghans but, generally speaking, they are straightforward people. I did know Pandit Nehru and he would not have been a part of any conspiracy. But no doubt the Intelligence people thought differently, with the result that persons whom Lord Butler knew were approached and said it was better for him to go away. But he would not go away because that would be submission to an illegal injunction. So he was externed, as they call it in India. (There are various forms of untouchability and this is another one.) So he was sent away and visited the villages in what is now called Uttar Pradesh, then called the United Provinces (which then, as now, were anything but united). He went out to these villages and travelled among peasants, not as any kind of tourist, not as an anthropologist, but living with them; and if you read his autobiography, you will see the beginning of a new awakening of social consciousness, identification with the people. He said: 'I looked into their eyes and they into mine'. That was communication.

Those who say that the vast body of Indian people are illiterate little realise that there is no more politically awake population in the mass than you find in India. (They may not read newspapers, and it's a good thing they do not.) That is why people would come trudging for fifteen to twenty miles to a meeting to hear somebody and then go back and tell people what had happened. Nehru was moved by their suffering, moved by the tale of their grievances and of course saying: 'I will do whatever I can'. But nobody could do much in those days. And that was the beginning of what may be called the involvement of the people. He always spoke of the future of the peasant in India because the peasant is the bulk of our population.

Now this is Pandit Nehru. So far as I know - and I know my limitations - he was a simple person and the very contradiction of the complexities that people speak about as a result of his simplicity. That is to say, a set of facts are before him. He takes them as they are, and other facts come in,

and when the other facts come in, he modifies his ideas - being a very simple and direct person - without any desire to obtain any second-hand information. Even in individual matters, for example, if any person sent an adverse letter about me or somebody else, it was normal that I would be told. There was no way of carrying tales to him, because the person who did so would soon discover the fact had been passed on. Along with this direct approach was his great generosity, not a generosity merely to those who were close to him and were to be supported, but generosity to those who were his opponents. And that is the quality that is carried through in our parliamentary life, which has contributed to some of its developments. He was generous to his opponents because he always had the courage to agree and the courage to differ. Lord Mountbatten mentioned in his Nehru Lecture some of the instances where he had the courage to differ. This democratic approach involved him in very considerable work, and work became part of his nature. He had to set the example.

His Loyalties

He was a person of great dedication and, if I may say so, a person with great loyalty. There are many people who are loyal to superiors but fewer people with loyalty to those below them. Pandit Nehru's loyalties sometimes landed him in difficulties, but he got out of them or he confessed them. And I know of no statesman of his eminence who would freely speak about his own faults, speak of them in Parliament and to everybody. It is said that the purpose of language is to convey your thoughts, except with politicians who use language to hide their thoughts. But in the case of Pandit Nehru, he would tell Parliament about his mistakes or miscalculations or whatever it might be, sometimes with not very pleasant consequences. But he endeared himself to Parliament and his respect for Parliament was such that in spite of all the file work, in spite of all the foreigners or the dignitaries and others he had to see, the greater part of his time was spent on the benches of Parliament even if he did not have to participate in the debates, because he felt that as the Prime Minister of India, particularly in that period, the respect for Parliament, coming from a person of his position, would probably contribute to other people also regarding Parliament in the same way.

The next aspect of his character which, in my submission, is spoken of mistakenly is that he was very vacillating. Of course, if you are prepared to take in new ideas and new factors and to re-evaluate a situation, then you will be vacillating because your views cannot remain fixed. He went through a great deal of mental conflict and those of us who worked with him know that the greatest difficulty, the most disturbed state of mind, was before he came to a final decision of a big matter. When there was a final decision on a big matter then he would say there was no going back.

Now the two great personalities who influenced his life were his father, Pandit Motilal Nehru, and Mahatma Gandhi. Those were two persons from entirely different moulds, of different orientations, of different backgrounds, and very different in the way they did things. Pandit Motilal Nehru was both adviser and advised; that is to say, his son learnt from him and in the later stages, Pandit Motilal Nehru himself said: 'He was my leader'. It was a reciprocal relationship of that character and perhaps some of Panditji's so-called obstinacy might have come from the paternal inhibition - 'do not do this' or 'do not do that'. Similarly, the general compassion, the general desire to find out how someone else felt, might have come from Pandit Motilal Nehru. Ultimately, Jawaharlal's being drawn towards Gandhiji was responsible for his plunge into politics. Contrary to what is usually believed, Nehru was not bowled over by Gandhiji after the latter's return from South Africa.

Nehru and Gandhi

In Gandhiji's autobiography, called *Experiments with Truth*, there is no reference to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru because at that time there was very little relationship, and I would rather think that at that time he felt like most undergraduates or ex-undergraduates who wanted to say, 'he is talking in mystic terms, it does not apply to us'.

At no time in his life, even to the last period, did Nehru totally accept or identify himself with the methods and ways of Gandhiji, except that he shared Gandhi's belief that good ends could not be obtained by bad means. For Gandhiji means were ends. For Panditji means were means, but still they were related to ends and therefore ends would be conditioned by them.

Nehru and his father parted company politically speaking, when Pandit Motilal Nehru became the Leader of the Parliamentary Swaraj Party and his son did not join but went on with Gandhi in non-co-operation. Yet even at that time Nehru did not believe that the Bihar earthquake was the visitation of God for our past sins. He said it was a phenomenon which had hurt a lot of people, and he said so publicly. He had arguments but at the end of everything, in a serious matter, he would say, 'Gandhi is a magician; he knows his intuitions are likely to be right'. Where Pandit Nehru got to a conclusion by a rational approach, by logic, Gandhiji very often would get there through intuition. But it is not true to say that Gandhiji's view was always final.

The 1939-1945 War

As you know, Pandit Nehru was anxious that British policy should change in order to enable Indians to participate in the defeat of fascism and imperialist aggression in the world. I will not go into details of this, but a resolution was passed at some meeting of the Congress where Gandhiji interpreted it to mean that the support that India would give to Britain and the lack of hostility to the British war effort would be of a non-violent character. Not only Panditji but most of the people said: 'You cannot fight a war against Hitler non-violently'. And after a time - I believe it took another year or so - Gandhiji himself gave way on this question and said: 'Let India be free to make her own choice. If the Japanese were to invade India, then there would be resistance by the Indian people, violent or non-violent'. And so it is regarded as one of the instances where Gandhiji had been moved to accept this view in certain circumstances.

The same thing happened in the case of India's resistance to aggression in Kashmir, on which I do not want to elaborate, where the decision was taken by the Prime Minister Nehru himself. As usual, he went to Gandhiji - whether he feared that he might disagree or not made no difference, he always went to Gandhiji to ask what he felt about things - and in this case Gandhiji simply patted him on the back. But, of course, when Gandhiji said, 'You must return large quantities of money to Pakistan', Nehru agreed about that also, because that did not affect the resistance as such.

Gandhiji's mind was very different from that of a person who had been trained to work in laboratories, who believed in technology, who saw that in the modern world one could not go back but must go forward.

For Pandit Motilal Nehru, this struggle between modernity and antediluvianism did not arise. But with Pandit Motilal Nehru's earlier background of what had been called moderation, father and son were in the same struggle together, but largely on account of the health of the father, and on account of the generation gap (as it is now called), their paths lay differently and the greater part of Jawaharlal's public life was spent in agitation or in captivity.

Being in Prison

Now it was at this time that a greater affinity developed with Gandhiji. Gandhiji prescribed the ways a person should conduct himself when in prison. Not a question of saluting a sergeant-major or anything of that kind, but Gandhi said: 'If you do not want to deteriorate, and if you do not want to be reduced to nothing, then you must work'. So, during the whole period of imprisonment, Nehru not only worked hard himself, but saw to it that all those who were with him worked hard also - whether it was in the garden, or whether cooking or working in some other way - whatever it was, they had a full day, they never allowed themselves to be lost in moodiness of any kind. And it must be said to the credit of the British Government that, but for those long periods of imprisonment, monumental works like the *Glimpses of World History*, *Autobiography* and *The Discovery of India* would not have seen the light of day!

Some people regard universities as prisons, but anyway this period enabled us to have these monumental works of great literary quality. Speaking for myself, I am amazed that a person who had no access to libraries, no research staff, nobody to work things out, could produce such works (I am not speaking about myself, because I could not do it even if I had a research staff!) How could he have produced these thousands of historical facts, going back to ancient times, right through Babylon, Syria, to the Romans, to the Greeks, and to the various Empires and the vicissitudes of Indian development, to Europe? The most modern and ancient developments were originally written as letters to his daughter, but in their published form they are complete histories. Some facilities were available for these purposes though not in large quantities.

Pandit Nehru was no philosopher. If you told him that he was, he would say that we were all ignorant - which is probably true. He did not follow a course of conduct out of a text, even in dealing with the problem of the United Nations; he did not say, 'this has been said by John Stuart Mill, or by Karl Max, or by some Prime Minister'. He knew all that, but he went pragmatically about the situation. So what we may describe as his philosophy has to be deduced from what he said and did at different times, and in different contexts.

He often spoke of the dangers of nationalism. For a leader in India at that time to speak about dangers of nationalism was not a very safe exercise, but Nehru had said nationalism had its limitations. And to some of us who worked with him, he said: 'You go and tell them that so long as there is *your own* flag in your own country, you have liberation. But when you fly the flag in a country that belongs to other people, saying what is good for me is good for them, then it becomes something different.' I hope I do not offend anybody by saying these things: times have changed. And this brought him into the position of being a world statesman.

After his return from Great Britain he started telling his co-workers that India was one country in the world, a country among the countries. Soon after he was appointed General Secretary of the Congress, he and his family went out and his first great meeting was what he called 'the gathering of the oppressed' in Brussels, that is to say, a meeting of the representatives of people under colonial Empires. By the standards that Governments judged things, they were not representatives of anybody but themselves. The impact of this large gathering of people had a profound influence upon what he did afterwards and he brought into the Indian movement a conception that India's place - both during her struggle for independence and afterwards - was with the people who still sought liberation. This explains the first part of the declaration of Indian independence, which says: 'The Indian people like every other people, have the inalienable right of freedom'. But - I do not know whether he should have put it otherwise - though he *said* the inalienable right to freedom, in his way of thinking he was not like Rousseau, who said: 'Man is born free and is

everywhere in chains'. Nehru said that man was not born free, but had the capacity to free himself from his chains.

So, really, the contribution Pandit Nehru tried to make to India was to give it as healthy, as consumable, a dose of modernity as possible. But having said that, it is important for students to realise that the whole of his life reflects his struggle between the past, the present and the future. Though he was a great reformer, a revolutionary, the architect of modern India, the past pulled him. He tried to rationalise it by saying that we get inspiration from the past, but unfortunately the past had been laid over by evils of various kinds which he was not able to surmount because of the Western interests involved.

The struggle between the past and present in India has been very largely the explanation of the pace of progress for which Nehru was responsible and also for the very many compromises made. He believed that it was not sufficient to have a good idea if the people did not accept it. And, therefore, while he would not go by the pace of the slowest, he would meet many people more than half-way, provided it did not cut into what he called the principles. Like Abraham Lincoln he said that a principle is not a geometrical term, it is an area in which different ideas can find accommodation. This can be carried too far under the greater weight of political opportunism, but anyway, his nature was such that after he had given consideration to matters of this character and had to reverse the approach, then the people would follow him because of his outstanding capacity to give affection and to receive affection. That affection was universal. That affection was not conditioned either by status in life or whether you were Under-Secretary or Congress Secretary or opponent or anybody else - an Englishman, a German or an American - that affection was universal. In that sense he was a universalist.

One World

During all the time I knew him he was speaking about a world order. The One World seemed remote, but even up to the end of his days he said: 'However long it takes, if the world is to survive, then they have got to learn to live together'. This is now called the doctrine of co-existence. At first the Americans, my colleagues at the United Nations, were very allergic to this word 'co-existence', largely because it was first used by Lenin in 1920. And so we altered it to 'neighbourly relations' or something of that kind. But co-existence became the principal basis of his approach to world order.

Yet he did not take a romantic view, in the sense of going about being a Good Samaritan without any good reason. What he said was: 'If you are a Good Samaritan you should also have the base of self-interest'. Mutuality of interest was another basis of international co-operation. But in all this, in the twentieth century world, he was dominated by the conception that without world peace it was not possible to accomplish anything, and peace to him, as to Gandhiji also, was not the peace of the grave nor the absence of war, but the establishment of equilibrium inside communities and between communities.

Here, it is necessary for us to look back for a minute at the world he came into. The generation of Nehru was deeply and perhaps unhistorically impressed by the defeat of the Russians in the Japanese war. The Russo-Japanese war carried a message and made an impact on every home in India at that time, because it was the first time that the people dominating over Asian people had been defeated. Nobody bothered what it was all about, but anyway the Russo-Japanese war was considered by average Asian people as their own victory. Soon followed the Sun Yat Sen revolution in China. Whatever may have happened in other revolutions afterwards in China, that revolution meant the liberation of the Chinese people from the Manchu Empire and the Celestial

Empire. Only a few centuries before the States around the Yangtse had gathered together in the first peace conference in the world - I believe in the thirteenth century B.C. or something of that kind - and they all went home quarrelling with each other more than when they came in. And then followed the various imperial dynasties and the Sun Yat Sen revolution had a great impact not only on Panditji but on a great part of India.

Then came the First World War in which Turkey joined the German side and the result of this was the liquidation of the Ottoman Empire. The liquidation of the Ottoman Empire ultimately made States out of Lebanon and Syria, which were then part of Palestine. The new kingdom of Iraq came into being, and soon afterwards the British withdrew from Egypt, and so on. It brought liberation to the whole of that part of the world and, though it is not quite accurate some people say that from Constantinople to the Bering Sea there were new people. And then came the liberation movement in India, which fructified in the attainment of independence for India in 1947, and was followed soon after by the liberation of Indonesia, Ceylon, Burma, and all those areas.

It was in that context that Panditji came and hence he is sometimes spoken of as an Asian statesman. And here I want to qualify his position. Panditji often spoke with very strong views about the part that the Asian people should play in this world; but it was all part of the gospel of equalisation. At Bandung, particularly, it was the position taken up by India that while Asia should resuscitate itself, there should be no compartmental nationalism, no compartmental organisation. He said that there should be no Asian world different from any other, and today, of course, it is easier to say that, because we do not know where Asia begins and where it ends. San Francisco is a part of Asia - or is America in Vietnam?

And so this great Asian personality acquired world personality. He had a particular appeal to the youth of the world, whether he saw them face to face or not, because they regarded him as a twentieth century person. It is generally believed - I think with some degree of truth - that the twentieth century is not yet born. English experts say they are afraid of the one that is dead and other that is afraid to be born. It was the world that is afraid to be borne that Panditji was trying to nurse. But he did not always succeed because, as I said, the gravity of the past is much stronger than the effervescence of the present, or the pull towards the future. He always put the view that this world cannot survive in the presence of nuclear energy unless all war is abandoned, and yet he was not a pacifist. And the greater part of India's foreign policy has been directed towards the popularisation of these ideas. He was one of the world's statesmen who from the very beginning said there was only one way to deal with the atom bomb, and that was to end it.

The Goal of Independence

I must say something of the period in which Lord Mountbatten was largely concerned. When the Cabinet Mission came to India, it was not believed that the Independence of India could be established only by the amputation of the country and the creation of two States. I believe the then Viceroy took the view that it would be a tragedy but that it had to happen, and Panditji came to the view that there was no other way. He told me several times that we had to get rid of the Empire and, if it meant cutting, then we had to cut.

I must speak also of the role that personal relationships played in the formulation and the development of policies. If the last Governor-General's relations with Nehru had not been personal in the sense that they could talk to each other without slapping each other's face - if Lord Mountbatten had not assimilated the fact that sometimes Panditji broke into a temper, and vice versa - things might have been very different. This breaking down of the barriers, the breaking of

an Empire, the difficulties of changing the ways of Government, all created human problems. In this last stage of the transition from what was an Empire into an independent India, the feeling that however much they differed, they would not try to cheat each other, that is to say exercise diplomacy.

This personal relationship was not only with Lord Mountbatten. Lady Mountbatten also played an important part in our relations with the people as a whole; and we on the Indian side were able to convince Gandhiji that here were people who had come with honest intentions, and it is no longer a secret that the last viceroy of India was probably the first sovereign to come to India with the powers of a plenipotentiary. So we knew that we were no longer going to be pushed from pillar to post.

Panditji also accepted formulae and things of that character. That is why it was possible, towards the middle of 1947, to go through a period of Dominion Status. Well, Dominion Status is something which builds up feelings of exultation among historians, but dominion is a bad word in India. And, of course, at that time in the history of this country there seems no reason why the Soviet Union should not become a dominion of the British! But all this passed and we came to the reality of trying to find a way without much violence on each side.

I would just say one word about this. There is a difference between the development of democracy in our part of the world and the development of democracy in *this* part of the world. Even our Constitution says that as far as procedure is concerned, if there is no precedent we must follow the example of the British Parliament.

There is one important difference. In Great Britain democracy came after the Industrial Revolution - there was a period of a hundred years before democratic institutions developed under the impact of economic circumstances and the pressures of the people. But in India democracy was immediately established to a greater degree than Great Britain had in 1929, after women's suffrage. This is our problem and that problem confronted Nehru at the time. He also contributed, spoke on many occasions, uttered words which have become historic. But he was really no orator. He never tried any oratorical tricks. He talked to the people and his main conception of electioneering, of public education, was: 'You cannot send three hundred million people to a university - you are finding it difficult to send thirty thousand to the university!'

Speaking to the people was the only means of public education. Nehru spoke to them about the atom bomb, about Lord Mountbatten, about Royalty, about democracy, about Russia, about China, about anything in the world; it was more or less an open public seminar in that way. But there were occasions when he made statements which one can only guess will go down in history. Lincoln in his Gettysburg speech, said: 'The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here'. But Lincoln was proved wrong. And when the Indian Constituent Assembly met, Nehru said in a famous speech which I am going to read:

'Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity.'

‘At the dawn of history India started on her unending quest, and trackless centuries are filled with her striving and the grandeur of her success and her failures. Through good and ill fortune alike she has never lost sight of that quest or forgotten the ideals which gave her strength. We end today a period of ill-fortune and India discovers herself again.’

Nehru’s tribute to a leader

I well remember Nehru’s speech at the time of Gandhiji’s death:-

‘Friends and comrades, the light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere. I do not know what to tell you and how to say it. Our beloved leader, Bapu as we called him, the Father of the Nation, is no more. Perhaps I am wrong to say that. Nevertheless, we will not see him again as we have seen him for these many years. We will not run to him for advice and seek solace from him and that is a terrible blow, not only to me, but to millions and millions in this country. And it is a little difficult to soften the blow by any other advice that I or anyone else can give you.’

‘The light has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong. For the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light. The light that has illumined this country for these many years will illumine this country for many more years, and a thousand years after, that light will still be seen in this country and the world will see it and it will give solace to innumerable hearts. For that light represented something more than the immediate present, it represented the living, the eternal truths, reminding us of the right path, drawing us from error, taking this ancient country to freedom.’

Representing India

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru went to prison occasionally and when the manuscript of his autobiography first came to me, its title was ‘In and Out of Prison’. In this he recalled his speech at his trial in Gorakhpur, where incidentally Mr Amery was born (another Englishman of Indian birth). In his address to the Magistrate Nehru said:-

‘I stand before you, Sir, as an individual being tried for certain offences in certain States. You are a symbol of those States but I am something more than an individual. I, too, am a symbol at the present moment, a symbol of Indian nationalism, resolved to break away from the British Empire’.

‘There are more powerful forces today in the world at large. There are elemental urges for freedom and food and security which are moving vast masses of people, and history even is being moulded by them. It is a small matter to me what happens to me in this trial. Individuals count for little. Seven times I have been tried and convicted by the British authorities and many years of my life lie buried in prison walls - and eight times or a ninth or a few more will make little difference’.

Jawaharlal Nehru concluded his address:-

‘I add that I am happy to be tried at Gorakhpur. The peasantry of Gorakhpur are the poorest and the most long suffering in my province. I am glad that my visit to the Gorakhpur district will serve my people at a later stage’.

I have quoted this because I spoke of his philosophy as a collective compendium of his thoughts. All these things reveal his mind and you will find right through from the times when he thought he would fight sword in hand, by himself, and liberate the country. From that period onwards there

was no change and his life was characterised by the resistance to domination of whatever kind, whether inside the country or elsewhere, coupled with insistence that there should be no personal animosities. Pandit Nehru also is remembered for trying to put in formal language what were to be the aspirations of the people with regard to social development. As early as 1930, in a series of resolutions of the Congress, he foreshadowed what were to become the fundamental rights in our Constitution.

The Commonwealth

This lecture would be regarded as totally incomplete if I did not refer to the fact that there was no pressure from Great Britain, either from Lord Mountbatten as the previous Viceroy, or from Lord Attlee, or from any leader of the Conservative Party, that we should stay in what is called the Commonwealth. It was left to be implemented by the leaders in a long series of conversations. Pandit Nehru held that we should not throw the baby out with the bathwater, and always in his mind was the feeling that India's remaining a member of the Commonwealth would probably help towards erasing the racial difference within the rest of the colonial Empire. This was a thing that weighed in his mind a great deal and he was quite prepared, even when India became a Republic, to enter into a compromise which few English statesmen and fewer Indian statesmen had believed to be possible.

The Constitution was framed and today its Preamble says that:-

We, the People of India, having solemnly Resolved to constitute India into a Sovereign Democratic Republic and to secure to all its citizens:

Justice, social, economic and political;

Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

Equality of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the Nation;

In our Constituent Assembly this twenty-sixth day of November 1949, Do Hereby Adopt, Enact and Give to Ourselves this Constitution so that this ancient land may once again rise to her old and ancient glory.

Nehru tried to mould the national movement of India into a socialist instrument - and history alone can say how far he was romantic, how far he was realistic. The attempt was worthwhile because there is no future for India except in a society which is socially developed, because you cannot have millions and millions of people without the means of survival, without opportunity. In a rich land, like the United States, the United States President has said that one-fifth of their population are beyond the gates of opportunity. If that is so there, it is even more true of us. And I end this by saying that I have taken very good care not to say anything about the post-Nehru period - that is current history - because then you would say I was controversial. We face greater difficulties with the resurgence of Empire, the nostalgic feeling of going East of Suez which is water, and water is neutral. When you put ships upon it they become belligerent.