

The Nehru Family and its Imprint on Modern India
7th Lecture by Mrs V L Pandit
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Mrs Pandit began her lecture by describing her own position as a member of the Nehru family. This gave her the benefit of a special insight into Nehru's formative years and his early involvement in the politics of Indian Independence. Mrs Pandit continued:

Being his sister, I have shared the same home background and though the difference in our ages of eleven years separated us for long periods while he was at school and university in England, his personality made a deep impact on me. I tried to copy him in everything; it was my ambition to be like him.

As the years passed and our family became involved in the freedom struggle I worked with him and the countless others who formed Gandhi's non-violent army during the years between 1920 and 1974. Nothing cements a relationship so firmly as to share ideals and face a common challenge, and it was during the early beginnings of the movement in 1921-22 that we began to grow closer to each other and I was able to understand something of the conflict in his mind. His final identification with the non-violent movement was reached after a long and bitter inner struggle. In his own autobiography he dismisses it lightly and those who have written about him have not known him well enough to understand one of the most important periods of his life.

I would like to talk to you this evening about the man who later became Prime Minister of India - about the home in which he grew up and of the impact that home made on the social and political patterns of the time. I think it is of some value to know the things that have not been said about this earlier period of Jawaharlal's life, because they are as revealing as his work as Prime Minister, and both together give a more accurate picture of the man.

Motilal Nehru and Gandhi

Our father, Motilal Nehru, had become a legend in his lifetime and all manner of stories, each more heavily embroidered than the last, were circulated about him. His sayings became 'bon mots', his manner of dressing was copied, and to be invited to one of his parties was a much sought after honour. One ridiculous story which, I believe, still persists is that the elder Nehru joined the national struggle after being blackballed in the Allahabad Club because he was an Indian. This is pure fabrication. The facts are that Motilal Nehru's relations with the British were cordial, a friendship between equals. He admired the British. He believed in British justice and British promises. His children were brought up by British governesses and tutors. His home was open to the British governors and officials of the day and he and his family were equally welcome in English homes. One of my early recollections is a visit of the then Governor, Sir Harcourt Butler, when he came to dinner and capped verses in fluent Urdu with my mother. He was known to us as 'Uncle Harcourt' and I played on the lawns of Government House, Allahabad, almost as much as in my own garden at Anand Bhawan.

It is relevant to what I have to describe later that my father was a bon viveur and a lover of beautiful things; on his visits abroad he would buy articles for the home of which my mother strictly disapproved. Once he returned with a set of lovely Bohemian glass with his monogram in gold. This, it seems, was similar to a set bought or said to have been bought, by King Edward VII. My mother was appalled. 'Why do we', she asked 'in this provincial town, need to copy the King of England, and who is going to appreciate it?' My father's reply was typical: 'I use things for my own pleasure.' And so lovely *objet d'art* continued to beautify Anand Bhawan. But there was a more important side to our home than this. From his earliest years, Motilal Nehru was a rebel and an iconoclast. He boldly opposed everything he considered harmful to

development and social progress and which had no merit other than the sanction of time. A voyage to the West did not mean crossing the 'black waters' to him, nor did he do any penance for eating forbidden food. He hated humbug and all forms of hypocrisy and attacked them consistently. At a time when social life was restricted and one lived according to a confining set of rules, the Nehrus were able to break many barriers erected by caste and community.

Gandhiji brought the issue of the suppressed untouchable into the public gaze and made it a national issue, but long years before the coming of Gandhiji, 'untouchable' servants were employed in our family on principle and in order to direct a blow at the caste system which my father considered obnoxious. Few people know today that some of the things that are still being talked about, such as a better deal for the Harijans, were implemented in our home years ago at the beginning of the century. Father destroyed caste restrictions not by talking against them but by his actions. In our home, people of all castes and religions were received and honoured, and servants of all castes and religions were employed and received equal treatment. Living in the then United Provinces we spoke Urdu and some of our closest friends were Muslims. The doors of Anand Bhawan were open to everyone and it was a place of tolerance and goodwill. There is no purdah among Kashmiri Brahmins and the women of the Nehru family, the daughters-in-law, cousins and other, were all concerned with various kinds of work outside the home and later some entered political life and made their mark. Mrs Rameshwari Nehru, the mother of India's present High Commissioner, was an outstanding woman, a literary figure and well known for her social work. She was the first woman appointed to serve on a British committee - the Age of Consent Committee - and made a notable contribution.

This was the home from which Jawaharlal went to England and to which he returned at the end of 1913.

Dinner was the highlight of father's day and he expected the family not only to be present but to take an intelligent interest in events. We were encouraged to express our views and to differ from him when we wished to do so: a rare thing in the early days of the century in any country. When my brother came home his return brought a fuller, gayer life to Anand Bhawan.

Suddenly, the impact of events at Jallianwala Bagh shook India and swiftly on the footsteps of this tragedy the influence of Gandhiji began to be felt in our home. The most meaningful things in life are often not immediately apparent; they do not happen dramatically or suddenly and their real importance is only recognized in the context of history. This was the case with Gandhiji and the Nehru family. My brother has described his coming into political life as a gentle breeze which soon became a whirlwind. There could be no more accurate description. From the moment this gentle breeze began to blow, nothing was quite the same again for the Nehrus or for India. The Rowlatt Bills had come to India and I remember when Gandhiji called for the first 'hartal', closing all places of business and a one-day fast on 16 April 1919, to protest against the Rowlatt Act. It was this protest which led a few days later to the meeting in Amritsar at the Jallianwala Bagh with its ensuing tragedy. The whole family joined in the fast. Father, however, refused to do so, saying he should first be convinced of the relevance of a fast to the ending of British rule in the country. Both the Nehrus were engrossed in 1919 in problems arising out of the firing at Jallianwala Bagh. The British Government had sent out a Commission of Enquiry under the chairmanship of Chief Justice Lord Hunter with three eminent Indians among the members, who had submitted a note of dissent. The Congress appointed its own commission under my father's chairmanship to report to Congress.

The Satyagraha Sabha was started by Gandhiji as a protest against the Rowlatt Act and Jawaharlal was strongly drawn towards it. It was the beginning of what later became the non-violent, non-cooperation movement.

Jawaharlal now gradually made changes in his life-style; his mode of dress was now a dhoti made of rough hand-spun yarn instead of the UP kurta pyjama. He began to tour the villages and get acquainted with the peasants. He simplified his personal habits, giving up many little luxuries which had been taken for granted. He stopped eating meat, and while course followed course at the dinner table Jawaharlal's evening meal was a bowl of milk with a slice of bread. My mother tried to make this austere meal look nicer by serving the milk in a silver bowl, until, in a fit of temper, Jawaharlal said he never wanted to see silver again! There was no longer the interesting talk or battle of wits at dinner which father so enjoyed. The outward conventions continued to be observed because my father was a stern and disciplined character who did not care to let anyone see how much he was suffering at the changes Jawaharlal was bringing into his life, or his fear that his son might completely identify himself with the Gandhi an programme. He himself was the prisoner of his own legal training and practical mind. It was not a question of giving up his legal practice or his comfortable way of life that worried him over-much. It was simply his inability at the time to be convinced of the effectiveness of a non-violent movement as an instrument against the might of Empire. He thought with his head, Jawaharlal thought with his heart.

Conditions in the home were becoming more tense and there is another memory of those far-off days, which is interesting. We were all in the drawing room waiting for dinner to be announced. My brother came in straight from some village outing, dusty and with clothes unchanged. He seemed in good spirits and had a thick piece of twine in his hands. He kept pulling this to and fro round his neck and father asked with some irritation what he was doing. The reply was immediate, the voice gay, a twinkle in the eye, 'I was just wondering what it would feel like to be hanged.' Several things happened simultaneously, dinner was announced, my mother collapsed on the sofa, father marched out of the room, and Kamala, my sister-in-law, and I looked at each other and wondered what we should do. 'Good lord, what a fuss about nothing', said Jawaharlal, 'has this family lost all sense of humour? Let's go and eat ...'

Satyagraha gathered force in 1921 as the time for the visit of the Prince of Wales approached. It was known that those who were protesting against this would be arrested. By this time father had joined Gandhiji with a few reservations regarding non-violence. Earlier he had suggested that since he could not give Gandhiji complete loyalty on all points of the non-violent programme, would it not be better to continue his legal practice, which was still a princely one, and donate the money to the cause? Gandhiji's reply was as one would have expected and almost in the words of Christ. He looked at my father and said with his magnetic smile: 'but it is you I want.' Having thrown in his lot with the freedom struggle, father never looked back, never expressed regret for any of the things that had gone; he looked only forward with grim determination to fight until India was free.

Father was as unlike Gandhiji as it was possible to be, and yet a cordial friendship grew up between these two and they had great regard and respect for each other. My brother in his autobiography has mentioned a foreword that father wrote to a collection of Gandhiji's speeches. Father admired courage almost more than anything else but to him Gandhiji was not a saint: he was a man, and being strong and unbending himself, he admired strength of spirit in Gandhi. My brother has described the two men most beautifully. He said about Gandhi:

It was clear that this little man of poor physique had something of steel in him, something rocklike which did not yield to physical powers, however great they might be. And in spite of his unimpressive features, his loincloth and bare body, there was a royalty and a kingliness in him which compelled a willing obeisance from others. Consciously and deliberately meek and humble, yet he was full of power and authority, and he knew it and

at times he was imperious enough, issuing commands which had to be obeyed. His calm, deep eyes would hold one and gently probe into the depths; his voice, clear and limpid, would purr its way into the heart and evoke an emotional response. Whether his audience consisted of one person or a thousand, the charm and magnetism of the man passed on to it, and each one had a feeling of communion with the speaker. This feeling had little to do with the mind, though the appeal to the mind was not wholly ignored. But mind and reason definitely had second place. This process of 'spellbinding' was not brought about by oratory or the hypnotism of silken phrases. The language was always simple and to the point, and seldom was an unnecessary word used. It was the utter sincerity of the man and his personality that gripped; he gave the impression of tremendous inner reserves of power. Perhaps also it was a tradition that had grown up about him which helped in creating a suitable atmosphere. A stranger, ignorant of this tradition and not in harmony with the surroundings, would probably not have been touched by that spell, or at any rate, not to the same extent. And yet one of the most remarkable things about Gandhiji was, and is, his capacity to win over, or at least to disarm, his opponents.

He then goes on to his own father and this reveals the depth of his feelings for him and the admiration he always tried so hard to restrain:

How different was my father from him! But in him too there were strengths of personality and a measure of kingliness, and the lines of Swinburne he had quoted would apply to him also. In any gathering in which he was present he would inevitably be the centre and the hub. Whatever the place where he sat at table, it would become, as an eminent English judge said later, the head of the table. He was neither meek nor mild, and, again unlike Gandhiji, he seldom spared those who differed from him. Consciously imperious, he evoked great loyalty as well as bitter opposition. It was difficult to feel neutral about him; one had to like him or dislike him. With a broad forehead, tight lips, and a determined chin, he had a marked resemblance to the busts of the Roman emperors in the museums in Italy. Many friends in Italy who saw his photograph with us remarked on this resemblance. In later years especially, when his head was covered with silver hair, there was a magnificence about him and a grand manner, which is sadly absent in this world today. I suppose I am partial to him, but I miss his noble presence in a world full of pettiness and weakness. I look round in vain for the grand manner and splendid strength that was his.

A letter written by my father to an English friend after he had joined Gandhi, from the hills where he was recouping after a bad attack of asthma, reveals the kind of man he was and confirms what I have said earlier about his never looking back or regretting the earlier way of life:

You will be interested to know the kind of life I am leading here. In the good (?) old days, two kitchen establishments, one English and the other Indian, accompanied me to the hills. After Chota Hazri in camp, we would start off for the jungle with a full equipment of rifles, shot guns and ammunition, and on occasions with quite a little army of beaters, and kill such innocent creatures as came in our way till late in the afternoon, lunch and tea being served in the jungle with as much punctilious care as at home. A hearty dinner awaited our return to camp, and after doing full justice to it we slept the sleep of the just! There was nothing to disturb the even tenor of life, except occasional annoyance at a stupid miss which saved the life of some poor beast.

And now—the brass cooker which I recently bought in Delhi has taken the place of the two kitchens, a solitary servant not over-intelligent, that of the old staff, small bags containing rice, dal and spices that of the mule load of provisions; one square meal of rice, dal, vegetables and sometimes khir in the middle of the day, that of breakfast, lunch and dinner a l'anglaise— but there is a lot of fruit and an occasional egg or two when available. The Shikar has given place to long walks and the rifles and guns to books and magazines. I am reading Edwin Arnold's

'Light of Asia'!... When it rains hard, as it is doing now, there is nothing to do but to write silly letters like this! What a fall, my countrymen! But really I have never enjoyed life better.

The freedom struggle

The decades between 1920 and 1947 were difficult ones for all those who followed Gandhiji. The continuity of home life was violently disrupted, families separated, careers were abandoned. The things one had thought of as permanent vanished into nothingness and we were forced to look at life and India from a new angle. There were Nehrus on both sides of the political fence but that big-hearted man Motilal Nehru said to his family: 'Whatever your politics may be, Anand Bhawan is your home'. The elder Nehru's love for and pride in his whole family was an outstanding characteristic. The Nehrus, he seemed to imply without actually saying so, were just a little better than anyone else. He could not conceive of any situation which might break the family up; and we remained united under the most difficult circumstances.

Jawaharlal was now deeply involved and the movement had now drawn great figures from every province in India, for Gandhiji had a magic touch and the smallest of us gained in stature as we worked with him. His leadership not only gave the nation courage—we called it freedom from fear in those days—but opened up a new vision of an India fighting not only for her own freedom but to end all exploitation wherever it existed. We were suddenly identified with the world and it was this part of the fight that Jawaharlal carried on with so much vigour, for all his political beliefs lay in this direction and his dream was of one world in which all men would live in justice and with honour. Through his days in prison this was the theme always present in his mind and through them all. In the brief intervals when he was free his attempts were to bring together well-known men and women who would draw up an economic and social blue-print for India, so that when independence came—it was always when, never if—the people could begin their march forward; the programme was, for the time, wide in its scope, giving special emphasis to the position of women. Gandhiji brought women out of the home to participate in the freedom struggle, but it was Jawaharlal who gave them encouragement and hope for the future and who, after independence, when the first general election was being held, based his stand on complete equality for women.

Political rights had been won because of their participation in the national movement, but economic and social rights lagged far behind and it was Nehru's determined efforts that led to the Act under which women now enjoy these rights. Statutory examples of this effort were the Hindu Code Bill and the Special Marriages Act. I would like to pay a tribute to our men who, in spite of centuries of domination of their women-folk, offered no obstruction to the new laws. Distinguished and experienced men such as Sir B.N. Rau and Dr Ambedkar were among those who put through the appropriate legislation. So we have had no 'woman's lib' in India so far; it may yet come for other reasons!

Jawaharlal was in political opposition to his father on the formation of the Swaraj Party, led by Mr C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru, which in 1924, sought entry into the legislatures to fight from within; and again when the Nehru Committee in 1928 proposed Dominion Status as the basis of the Indian Constitution. I quote from the Nehru Report:

The attainment of dominion status is not viewed as a remote stage of our revolution but as the next immediate step ... It does not mean that any individual Congressman, much less the Congress itself, has given up or toned down the real goal of complete independence.

Jawaharlal bitterly attacked, in open Congress, the Dominion Status ideal and together with Subhash Bose formed the Independence for India League.

When, after much debate, the Congress Party decided to contest the elections under the Act of 1935, the results in the seven out of eleven Provinces of British India where Congress was successful was a personal tribute to Jawaharlal, who campaigned ceaselessly throughout India. The issue, of course, was simple—freedom versus foreign rule—but even so the vast array of men, money and power lined up against Congress was tremendous. This opposition consisted of the traditional vested interests of colonial rule, such as the large landowners, the titled gentry and the communal elements. It was on this occasion that Jawaharlal gave his famous slogan 'on foot to the polling booth', reminding the people that the casting of a vote was a sacred duty to be treated in the way in which people in India of all faiths regard a pilgrimage. The victory was a resounding one and never to be forgotten by anyone who was involved. The simple villager in his gaily decorated bullock cart or on foot, refusing a lift from empty opposition buses, turning away from the delicious smells from the free road-side kitchens set up by the opposition and going to the polling booths with their little bundles of parched rice or gram, singing national songs with tremendous fervour and no sign of the fatigue and hunger they had endured. There were many other leaders who had great influence with the crowds. I do not mention them, only because it would be irrelevant in the context of this talk.

The first Congress Ministries were formed after long and heated discussion within the Party with reference to the powers retained under the Act by the Governors. Eventually, the Congress Chief Ministers took charge with the aim of proving the hollowness of the Act itself. The ministries were small and I was privileged to be included in the U.P. Cabinet where Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant had been elected Chief Minister. It was a proud moment for me but my brother was less proud, which imposed the responsibility of living up to his high expectations. I held the portfolios of Local Government and Health and was the first woman with Cabinet rank in India. The first resolution which all Congress Ministries had to pass was the demand for a Constituent Assembly for India. The privilege of moving this resolution from the Treasury Benches in the U.P. was given to me.

The Congress ministries were pledged to implement some of the more urgent promises made by the Congress Party, such as land reforms. Rural uplift was given high priority and a drive to start adult education and health schemes was started as well as gainful employment for those women who were uneducated.

In this Jawaharlal was specially interested. Later the first bill to give autonomous status to the village was drafted and placed before the U.P. legislature. One outstanding feature of this was a joint electorate of people of all faiths. This caused a great deal of bitterness and much opposition in the U.P. Assembly by the Muslim League, as before this electorates were based on religion and always resented and opposed by Congress for dividing the people. Congress did not stay in office long enough to implement the plans started by the ministries. In 1939, less than two years later, they resigned as a protest at India being made a participant in the war without her consent. But some of the ideas were expanded and included in the new acts after independence; so the earlier work was not entirely wasted.

Use of incarceration

This was a period when Jawaharlal was somewhat less burdened than usual and he had the uncommon quality of being able to detach himself from his problems and enjoy doing something quite different. He might come home from a village meeting dusty and tired, where he had been involved in some agrarian issue which troubled the peasants, but minutes later he would have assembled his small nieces (his daughter was at school in Switzerland) in the library and they would all sing Harrow songs at the tops of their voices. The favourite one was about:

Grandpapa's Grandpapa—who for learning had such an
unquenchable thirst,

That he went off to Harrow,
And was placed in the Lower Lower First!

This sent them all into peals of laughter. On occasions, unfortunately all too few, he would quote from his favourite poets, covering a wide range, a verse here, a line there, and invariably including his favourite

Say I'm lonely, say I'm sad.
Say that health and wealth have missed me,
Say I'm growing old, but add,
Jenny kissed me.

I wish more people were aware of this charming side to his character.

The long period of incarceration in the Ahmadnagar Fort from 1942, after the All India Congress Committee had passed the Quit India Resolution, until 1945, made it possible for Nehru to write his *Discovery of India*. Prison, he used to say to me, was the real university of life and certainly for those of us who, because of the freedom struggle or for other reasons, had missed university, prison was an educative process. There was opportunity to read and think and one was always facing reality. But all of us were not able to make profitable use of our jail terms, though my scholar husband translated a monumental history of Kashmir from the Sanskrit into English while he shared a prison cell with Jawaharlal for several years in Dehra Dun. He undertook this mainly because my brother did not know Sanskrit well and wanted to read this book. The only other translation had been one by Sir Aurel Stein far back in 1900. By 1945 the war had ended in Europe and in far-off San Francisco a new hope for the weary world was emerging. All Indians in and out of jail looked expectantly toward San Francisco.

By 1945 the prisoners of Ahmadnagar Fort had been released. In 1946 an Interim Government had been formed in Delhi and the Congress ministries were back in power in the provinces. One of the first acts of the Interim Government was a decision to send a delegation to the United Nations at Lake Success. An earlier one had been present at San Francisco but, since it was hand-picked by the Viceroy, our Party did not accept it as the authentic voice of India.

One fine morning I was summoned to Delhi to meet Lord Wavell and the Mahatma. It seemed an unlikely combination, but when I met the Viceroy I was informed that both he and Gandhiji wished me to lead the Indian delegation to the United Nations. The reasons given to me were firstly that the new emerging India must be represented by a woman, and secondly, said Gandhiji, India was going to inscribe an item on the U.N. agenda of great importance to us and he wished me to handle the debate. The item was the discrimination against people of Indian origin in the Union of South Africa. It is generally believed that all my political appointments have come through Jawaharlal. This is not entirely correct. Had Lord Wavell and Gandhiji not opened that first door, I might not have been able to move on to the international stage.

Missions abroad

There have been many important and exciting sessions during the three decades of the U.N.'s existence but the drama of the first was tremendous. A woman from backward India, just emerging from colonial rule, had been trusted by her Government and her Party to fight a man with the reputation of Field Marshal Smuts on an issue so vital to the lives of a large section of the human race! It made an impact on the whole Assembly and even the taciturn Mr Molotov and Mr Gromyko looked on me and India with favour and voted for our resolution. Gandhiji had wished the debate on the Indian side to be conducted strictly on Gandhian lines and Jawaharlal had agreed. By this I mean that there was to be no hitting below the belt—no attempt to score points for cheap publicity. 'I don't mind if you lose the Assembly vote', said Gandhiji, before I left, 'but I would not

wish you to say anything to hurt my old friend Smuts personally.' So when the two-thirds vote was finally announced in favour of our Resolution, I immediately went to the Field Marshal and begged forgiveness if I had said anything to offend him. He was kindness itself: 'My child, you have won a hollow victory, he said—'things will get much worse', and so it was, but the reasons lay elsewhere. The colonial powers did not vote with India, nor did the USA, and apartheid, in the course of time, became more firmly established, a stumbling block in the way of world peace and progress, and a denial of human dignity.

Our delegation was composed of some of the biggest names in India, but we were all as delighted as children at this first success. As I got off the plane in Delhi I was just a little nervous, though telegrams of appreciation had been received from the External Affairs Ministry and the Prime Minister. I need not have worried. The Prime Minister was at the airport, face beaming with approval and the warm handshakes with the delegation and the hug he gave me were proof enough of his feelings. I visited Gandhiji later, dreading what he might say, but he was very kind. His usual way of expressing approval to those of whom he was fond was a slap on the cheek and this I received and was content!

In 1947 I was sent as Ambassador to the USSR. This created a new relationship between Jawaharlal and myself. I had been his sister, then his comrade, now he was my boss. My uncritical and adoring attitude towards him inevitably underwent a slight change for we did not always see exactly eye to eye on all matters of foreign policy, though throughout my career it was my constant endeavour to interpret him correctly; and since I was not a trained career diplomat, this required some effort.

Throughout his life, and especially after he became Prime Minister, Jawaharlal never let his personal feelings come in the way of doing the right thing. I once wrote to him about a certain case and suggested he should take serious notice of what had happened. His reply could only have come from a man of complete honesty and with a high sense of justice. After accepting that much of what I had written was correct and there was need for investigation, he wrote, ... 'but you would not, I am sure, wish my love for you to come in the way of a fair decision.'

Nehru's work as Prime Minister is known well enough; his achievements and his failures are still the subject of discussion. People speak mainly of the secular democracy and socialist society he worked to establish; these are indeed basic, but there is much else.

The 1950's were years of great constructive endeavour in which nearly all the things we are harvesting today were begun. The great steel plants, the different kinds of consumer goods that now flood our markets, are symbols of achievement, and are fulfilling a great need. Nehru's consuming anxiety to bring India into the technological age, his constant encouragement to those who have now achieved this end and have put India nearer the developed world, are some of the things he pushed forward, the results of which would have gladdened him.

His best work was always in the realm of human relations, for he was essentially a humanist, one who built but did not destroy. One example is India's decision to stay in the Commonwealth after becoming a Republic. This decision was based on his firmly held belief that it is always better to strengthen relationships rather than break them if it could be done. During the Suez crisis, when tempers were high and Press and Parliament pressed for ending the Commonwealth tie, he took no steps to do so, even though he was as deeply involved emotionally as anyone in the crisis.

The main foreign policy issues of the time were to identify with the principles and purposes of the United Nations and to explain India's policy of non-alignment. This policy, as many here will remember, was not the result of sentiment or any desire for leadership on India's part, but

was purely logical for the period in which it was evolved. Immediately following the war and after the birth of the U.N., the division, of the world had already begun. The containment of communism by America, the creation of NATO on the one hand and the Warsaw Pact on the other, brought into being a situation which almost inevitably forced all member nations of the U.N. to take sides. The growth of tensions was inevitable and there seemed no possibility of easing the arms race in such a situation. As Nehru said again and again in his public speeches, the main objectives of the U.N. would be defeated. One could not 'look at the world with bloodshot eyes and talk of peace'.

The policy of non-alignment began as an attempt to keep clear of the two military blocs, to resist pressure in the U.N. and decide each issue on its merits, thus hoping to restore trust and understanding among nations, bring the two great giants closer to each other and make the road to peace a smooth one. For India, a period of friendship with all nations was essential and peace in the world was a vital necessity. The Herculean task before our Government at home was challenging enough, without being side-tracked by becoming involved in world issues. But the word 'non-alignment' was new and the concept difficult to understand by those who had always thought in terms of black and white. Neutrality, which was the word the Western world chose to use instead of non-alignment, was completely different. India and Nehru were deliberately misinterpreted, especially by the USA. The Secretary of State, Mr Dean Acheson, a remarkably able man but one who knew nothing about Asia or India, seemed to keep a regular count of the number of times 'Nehru's delegation'—with him it was never India's delegation—voted with or against the USA. The specific assurances given by Nehru again and again that if freedom was imperilled he would not remain neutral did not carry any conviction. Nehru was 'red' and non-alignment a dirty word. Had there been less opposition from the West to this concept, and a clearer view of the future, undoubtedly our policy would have helped the world and saved the later appalling loss of life, and the sorrow and bitterness which engulfed most of Asia might well have been avoided.

It might be of interest to recount here a little incident between myself and Mr John Foster Dulles. India was not going along with the Japanese Peace Treaty as drafted by the U.S. I was *en poste* in Washington and after much movement back and forth, the final word came from our Government that India would not sign. I had to convey this news to Mr Dulles and was asked to breakfast as usual. I have known only two men who insisted on inviting people to breakfast for important talks—Nehru and Dulles! I said my piece. Foster Dulles put his head in his hands and was quiet for so long I became alarmed. Finally he looked at me and said with pain, 'I wonder if Mr Nehru realizes I have prayed for this Treaty?' Since my brother was not in the habit of consulting the Almighty on matters of foreign policy, his reply to this was very vivid indeed.

Success or failure?

A Prime Minister by the very nature of his work and responsibilities becomes isolated and lonely. Nehru, who was always the people's man, could not, for obvious reasons, remain as close to the people as he had once been. He realized this and was sometimes intolerant of work which came in the way of more frequent contacts with the masses. In fact he often said that, now that there were no periods of jail in which he could get to terms with himself, what he needed most was the revitalizing contact with the masses. However tired and burdened he might be, a mass meeting restored him like a tonic. Unfortunately as the years passed, this was denied him and often he spoke of feeling stale and out of touch with real things. In 1957 he had wanted to retire from the premiership and devote his time to strengthening the Party. He wrote to me in London and said in case I heard such news I should not resign my post and rush home. As it happens he was not allowed to resign, which was a big mistake. All manner of strings were pulled and

advantage taken of his known habit of bowing to the wish of the majority. It was a wrong decision both for India and for Jawaharlal.

Naturally the question arises: was his life a success? No man completes the tasks he sets himself and all men are largely judged by the things they leave undone; so it is with Nehru, But no one can doubt that it was his vision and his aspirations for the country that laid the foundations of the new India, and it is this spirit and these aspirations that are the true manifestations of his success.

It was no coincidence that Robert Frost's verses written in his own hand were found after his death by his bedside table:

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

He was the kind of man to whom a promise was sacred; success and failure are both fleeting, but the inner qualities he possessed and which guided his life were based on eternal virtues. In an obituary speech in Parliament Mr Hiren Mukerji described Nehru as 'the gentle colossus', and this is what he truly was.