

Sangam Books

The Mind of Jawaharlal Nehru

Sarvepalli Gopal was Director of the Historical Division in the Ministry of External Affairs from 1954 to 1966. He is now Professor of Contemporary History at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and Fellow of St. Antony's College, Oxford. He received the Sahitya Akademi award for writing in English in 1976 and was President of the Indian History Congress for 1979.

Dr Gopal is the author of several books including *Jawaharlal Nehru*, a biography of which two volumes have been published so far and is Editor of the *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*.

Presented by
Segment Book Distributors Delhi
22.3.92

Library

The Mind of Jawaharlal Nehru

S. Gopal



Sangam Books

Sangam Books
A Division of
Orient Longman Ltd.

© Orient Longman Ltd. 1980
First published 1980

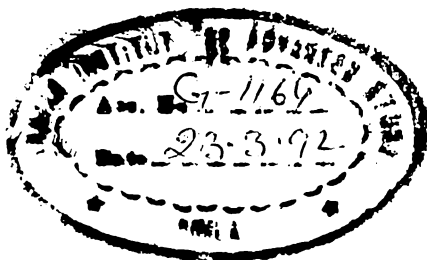
 Library 1145, Shir la



G1164

Published by
Usha Aroor
Orient Longman Ltd.
Madras 600 002

Printed by
Rajsri Printers
156 Avvai Shanmugam Road
Madras 600 086



923.254

N 315 G1

Author's Acknowledgements

This is the text of the Heras Memorial Lectures delivered in Bombay in December 1977. I am grateful to Father John Correia-Afonso and the Heras Society for the invitation to deliver these lectures and to St. Xavier's College for its hospitality during my stay in Bombay.

1

Formative Ideology

The subject I have chosen for these lectures might seem limited and inconsequential. Why talk of the mental development of an individual, that too someone who has been dead for over thirteen years and who, if he has left any mark on this country at all, has left it, as many nowadays claim, for the worse? Such an approach has first to be justified before we get to the substance of our topic.

Individuals do matter in history, not in the old-fashioned sense of changing the course of history, for history is not atomised in an individual; it is not a game of personalities but the interplay of social forces, economic relations and new or hegemonic ideas. However, even Marxist scholars today accept that individuals can be significant and representative figures in history, and some of the most important work of contemporary Marxist historians has been in the field of biography. The question then arises, was Nehru such a significant and representative figure? Deservedly or not, he played a more crucial role than most Indians of his generation. His mind, unusually convoluted and sophisticated, symbolised the thinking of a large number of his educated countrymen at a time when, because of circum-

stances, their thinking mattered more than was normal. The cross-currents and contradictions in Nehru's mind were shared, to a lesser or greater degree, by the many Indians who found in him their spokesman both before and after 1947.

Nehru, then, mattered; but did he matter for the bad? The developments of the two years from 1975 to 1977 have made the name of Nehru almost a dirty word in this country. The *Economic and Political Weekly*, writing at the height of the Emergency, had this to say: 'What one sees is not a departure from the path set by Nehru, but a continuation along the same lines, more purposeful and self-assured, and less encumbered by Hamletian attitudinisations.'¹ Even after the end of the Emergency, this tendency to blame Nehru has continued. We are told from high quarters that he was the wrong choice as prime minister and that his policies have led logically to disaster. In one of the recent books on these two years, Mr C G K Reddy, whose own resistance to authoritarianism has earned him the right to be heard, states, 'It is only now . . . that the country is willing to abandon the myth of Nehru as a great democrat, socialist and adventurer, and has begun to see the vanity, pettiness and the Machiavellian quality of the man.'²

It can, of course, from the other side be argued that the electoral defeat of dictatorship was, in a sense, the posthu-

1. 13 November 1976.

2. *Baroda Dynamite Conspiracy* (Delhi, 1977), p. 12-13.

mous achievement of Nehru, that he had so well educated the Indian people in the rights of citizenship, taught them, through a series of general elections, that the franchise is the ultimate weapon, so firmly rooted the democratic system in India that in 1977, in the crisis of its existence, it had the last laugh—that, in fact, it was the Nehru inheritance that could not be uprooted and that he defeated his enemies from the grave. But it is not my purpose, in these lectures, to get entangled in this debate. I only wish to notice that this debate still continues and that an analysis of the mind, thought and achievement of Nehru is still valid, still immediate and relevant. It is also a topic which, though current, calls for historical treatment for two reasons. Various influences and traditions, prevalent ideas as well as thinking of previous times, came to play on Nehru's responsive intellect. Moreover, Nehru's mind was one which evolved; in fact, it never ceased evolving, and I hope to show that all his analyses and policies were the result of ceaseless shaping, of thought that was never rigid and of continuous development. His was a mind of many layers—over the years it took in much and rarely sloughed off anything. I do not intend to go into all aspects of his various policies or list his diverse achievements. This would be both tedious and impractical. I shall only follow the main strands of his mental development to the extent that they are relevant to his actions and pertinent to our recent history.

The framework of thought, which Nehru formulated for himself over a long stretch of years upto 1947, which

influenced his policies as prime minister and which were accepted by the large number of Indians who followed his lead, had some ambivalences which often became weaknesses. This was because there was no leaning to a ready-made ideology worked out by others and adapted to India, but a putting together of bits and pieces. Looking back today at the ideology of Asian and African nationalism, with the integrated drive of Mao and the clear and sharp ideas of Fanon and Cabral before us, Nehru appears eclectic, contradictory and fumbling. His efforts at formulating a coherent body of thought and practice seem weak, halting, incomplete and, as Nehru himself thought, perhaps circumscribed by his class background. The Mahatma, though he borrowed much from the West, had the advantage of internalising all his ideas and actions in the Indian experience, whereas Nehru was always in a way the outsider. He was always conscious of this, and it was one of the main elements in his deference to Gandhi. Nehru saw himself as an upper-class figure, who cared for the people, whom the people loved but who lacked the common touch such as Gandhi had.

This is where Nehru has suffered from both his own self-criticism and the historian's hindsight. To do him justice, it should be remembered that he was also the pioneer of a new phase of 'third world' nationalism. So long as the national movement in India was the comfortable monopoly—as it was till 1920—of the middle class, there was no need to strive for a well-thought-out philosophy of

action. That class was aware of its own interests and realised, without much close argument, what to demand or to concede, when to resist, where to push. But once Gandhi broke the monopoly of the middle class, effected peasant mobilisation in politics, and made Indian nationalism a heterogeneous social movement, it became Nehru's burden to find for this new phase of nationalism an ideology which would hold the various classes together. Denying himself the easy, because total, answer of Marxism, he worked out a more untidy and complex analysis, and it is worth reminding ourselves that most of the more clear-sighted exponents of nationalist thought in Asia and Africa are, in a sense, standing on Nehru's shoulders.

So it can be argued that the shakiness, hesitations and faltering nature of Nehru's thought are not to be scorned at. But why did he reject Marxism in its completeness? The answer is a compound one, of personality, context and mental attitudes. There is, first of all, the romanticism which was one of the deepest layers of his mind. His emotions had to be stirred and involved before he could react. This explains why it required the massacre of Amritsar to draw him fully into the national movement; and thereafter the emotional commitment was always predominant. In the early twenties, he thrilled in jail-going and hugged the fact of sacrifice. In his diaries and letters of those days, echoes of romantic poetry and precedents drawn from the Italian Risorgimento blend with a complacent absence of reflection. Even in later years, after he had nourished his

intellect to robustness, this streak of romanticism was not submerged. In the late twenties he informed a British official that his only ambition was to be buried in the foundations of free India. At Ahmednagar Fort in 1942, he noted in his diary a sentence of the Buddha, 'I would enter a blazing fire but I would not enter my home with my goal un-attained', and Nehru added that as he came across this sentence by chance, 'a thrill passed through me, almost an electric shock.' The romanticist element is prominent also in *The Discovery of India*. Written in one of the dark periods of Indian nationalism, when Nehru loyally went to prison but doubted if the Congress had taken the right decision, the book is an emotional comprehension of India's past, a stress on her continuous culture, vitality and staying power through all ups and downs. It is a throw-back, however sensitively formulated, to the cultural nationalism of the nineteenth century, and it is this which makes the *Discovery* poor in historical analysis. Soaked in Western culture but wishing to idealise all things and thought Indian, Nehru found a compromise in quoting such Western scholars as approved of and applauded India's past.

As Prime Minister, Nehru remained a romanticist, who was kept going by his faith in the Indian people. Unlike the Mahatma, who was a strong man providing strength to others, Nehru drew strength from popular idolatry. He was no longer, as in the days of the freedom struggle, embarrassed by this affection of the people; he was not so much overcome by a sense of his unworthiness as, forced

by the death of Gandhi to stand on his own feet, seeking support from popular acceptance. He still could not get close to others, either as individuals or in a crowd; but the people of India became a mystique with him. 'My heart,' he wrote in 1955, after watching the civil and military parade on Republic Day in Delhi, 'was filled with pride and joy at the sight of our nation on the march, realising its goals one by one. There was a sense of fulfilment in the air and of confidence in our destiny.'³ This same romanticist sense of affinity with the Indian people, of fellow-travelling with them, gave him self-confidence in his dealings in foreign affairs. 'And if I speak to the great people of the earth, leaders of other nations, who probably are much cleverer than I am, may be more experienced than I am, I am not bowled over by their greatness or by their cleverness. Because my mind is fairly clear and frank and I say what I have to say and I want to be friends with them, but anyhow I am not afraid of what they might do or say.'⁴ This confidence and assurance did not last through the fifties, and the crumbling of Nehru's romanticist images and the weakening of Nehru's policies, interacting on each other, speeded up the damage each wrought on the other. But the involvement with the Indian people and faith in their destiny never totally disappeared. 'I do not despair. Although sometimes I feel a little angry at our own failings and weaknesses, I have faith in our people and in the future

3. Nehru to chief ministers, 26 January 1955. Nehru papers.

4. Address to Congress parliamentary party, 29 May 1956. Tape M-17/C. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.

of India; also in a better-ordered world. It is because of this faith that I carry on as, I presume, most of us carry on. Life would be hollow emptiness without that faith in the future and faith in ourselves to face that future'.⁵ From most other men all this would seem cliché, but Nehru converted platitude into inner conviction.

Such romanticism though persistent, cannot of course be taken in isolation; there was also the ever-widening intellectual outlook. To begin with, Nehru was just one more of the ordinary run of conforming nationalists, an unquestioning follower of the Mahatma. He accepted unquestioningly not only non-cooperation but all the other teachings of Gandhi—*khaddar*, spinning, faith in God—and what made it worse was that, unlike Gandhi, he had at this time little sense of humour. He believed that to enter the national movement with a mathematical mind was to hinder it; it was no time to weigh losses and gains; the existing system was to be destroyed; there was no middle course left. But he combined this lack of reservation in objective with an unqualified adherence to the mildest of methods. There could be no half-measures, he said in the midst of the civil disobedience campaign in 1921, and added that he had discovered no new method of driving the English out of India except *swadeshi*. He did not agree with those who advocated violence; *swaraj* could be won and retained only by the use of *swadeshi* cloth. Finding himself in jail he wrote solemnly, 'Now I understand a

5. To chief ministers, 6 March 1961. Nehru papers.

little what Jesus meant when he asked us to forsake the world and save our soul.’

Involved by accident, in 1920, with the *kisans* of the United Provinces, Nehru had no clear ideas about peasant participation in politics. If this activity was important to him, it was because he found it satisfying psychologically; it gave Nehru the feeling that he was re-Indianising himself and functioning, in a wholly Indian situation. But he had made no study of economic and land problems, and he had no economic ideology to offer. He had as yet no thought of providing a revolutionary dimension to Indian nationalism, and he was certainly not thinking in terms of a peasant revolt. In fact, in the general conflict then going on in the United Provinces between the Government and the *zamindars* on the one hand and the *kisans* on the other, his influence, like that of the Congress, was thrown on the side of moderation, in telling the *kisans* to be quiet and peaceful and to abide by whatever orders the officials might issue. Often, after Nehru had spoken, men got up to confess to looting and other violent crimes, knowing well that this would lead to their arrest. In the early twenties, Nehru glamorised the *kisans* and pictured them as brave men uncontaminated by city life or a textbook education; but he was not deeply moved by their economic wretchedness. He saw in them a sturdy peasantry which would be the backbone of a successful nationalist movement, and he wished to enlist them for the political struggle as it was being waged by the Congress; but he did not encourage

the coordination of these scattered outbursts against local misery and the development of large-scale peasant resistance. He agreed with Gandhi that the *kisans* should pay their rents and devote their full attention to the non-violent struggle for *swaraj*. He even preached *kisan-zamindar* unity; and on the issue of ejection which, more than any other, agitated the *kisans* of the United Provinces, Nehru's comment was a meaningless one, that the ejection of the *kisan* was but a minor part of the major issue of ejection of the British from India.

At this time Nehru had not considered carefully whether economic and social change should be part of, or even parallel to, the political revolution; and he accepted unthinkingly the escapist suggestion that economic issues should not hinder political activity. Peasants were told that, till *swaraj* was attained, they should not complain about their economic disabilities. In the early twenties, Nehru's idea of freedom was purely political—ridding the British of their control over the police, the army and finance. Freedom was spinning, the wearing of handspun cloth, justice, prohibition, removal of untouchability and all such moral virtues; and foreign rule was the opposite of these. There was very little economic connotation. The contrast, for example, with Mao, coming to prominence at about the same time in China, is clear. Mao had had an early anarchist phase; but he had soon moved on from that. He organised peasant associations which, though they did not undertake drastic land reforms, at least attacked the social

domination of the landlords. But it did not strike Nehru and his colleagues in the Congress to take even such initial and unexceptionable steps as setting up village schools and cooperatives and reactivating village *panchayats*—three institutions to which Nehru much later, as prime minister, was to attach much importance—or demanding the minimum redressal of the wrongs of the *kisans*. Nehru did not see that, apart from anything else, this would strengthen the political affiliations of the tenants; but then Nehru's political ideas too were at this time in a narrow groove, and were merely an unformed mixture of anarchism and village government, of the ideas of Gandhi and Bertrand Russell. Nehru at this time was a great believer in devolution and in as little centralisation as possible. *Swaraj* was to him *panchayat raj* and he favoured giving these village councils considerable powers in a free India. He thought at this time that representative institutions and democracy as found in Western countries had proved failures; but orthodox socialism also did not give him much hope, and to him the lesson of the First World War was that an all-powerful state was no lover of individual liberty. Life under socialism would be a joyless and a soulless existence, regulated to the last detail by bureaucratic orders. Bolshevism and fascism were the ways of the West; they seemed to Nehru basically alike and representing different phases of violence and intolerance. For his part, he preferred the Gandhian path, as generally delineated in *Hind Swaraj*. 'The choice for us,' he wrote in 1923, 'is between Lenin and Mussolini on the one side and Gandhi on the other.'

Can there be any doubt as to who represents the soul of India today?'⁶

With self-education, however, which started in the mid-twenties, there came the evolution of a personal voice. The influence, not so much of the British as of the European intellectual tradition grew. First of all, he developed a belief, which stemmed from the eighteenth century, in the perfectibility of man. This comes out most clearly in the *Glimpses of World History*, written in the early thirties. The history of humanity did not strike him as pleasant; yet Nehru thought it possible to see the silver lining of progress right through the long and dismal record of man's selfishness and quarrelsomeness and inhumanity. While in later years this optimism of Nehru was dimmed, it was not wholly erased. 'My own reaction,' he wrote in 1958, 'to events in India or the world is not pessimistic and some faith, which I cannot analyse or explain, fills me with hope for the future. Perhaps this is due to the good fortune that has attended me in a large measure.' Of the philosophy that underlay the *Glimpses* he wrote thirty years later that it was true that ever since he had written that book 'I have been repeatedly disillusioned about many things and even now the outlook is not a promising one. Yet I feel that, in the balance, progressively the good forces in the world will prevail over the evil forces. It is difficult to justify all this by logic. But I still think that it is true.'⁷

6. Presidential Address at U.P. Conference, 17 October 1923. *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 2 (New Delhi 1972), p. 210.

7. To an American correspondent, 17 January 1963. Nehru papers.

This belief in the future strengthened Nehru's hopes of realising in India his vision of a rational, educated and forward-looking society based on modernisation, industrialisation and a scientific temper. The influence of Bertrand Russel is more than ever prominent. It seemed to Nehru practical to take advantage of the experience of the West rather than go through the same stages and to move quickly in bringing a society, whose central fact was backwardness, on a par with Europe and the United States. He thought this could be done mainly by developing the two aspects of science, which to him was the central fact of life: the scientific approach, the calm search for truth, which should permeate all spheres of thought and action and result in the triumph of reason and tolerance and the partnership of science and industry, the application of science to remove poverty and hunger.

This was a facile optimism expecting too much, and such a theory of modernisation was too naive, a credulous belief born of pure reason. Nehru was too much a legatee of the European age of enlightenment to be effective in India. His intellectualism and his total confidence in science having an immediate impact on both mental attitudes and the economic problem ignored the darker aspects of the Indian situation. The belief in perfectibility, and in rapid progress to it, hindered full awareness of the rigidity of tradition, the strength of the forces of resistance and the propensity to violence.

To this faith in human capacity Nehru added what he derived from Britain, its liberalism and nonconformity: an acceptance of civil liberty as an absolute value, to be safeguarded at all cost. This was not a position which Nehru thought necessary to justify or argue about. From 1927 he was an admirer of Soviet achievements, but not of the coercive methods associated with these achievements. If the Soviet system were to be extended to India, it should be without drilling: 'because the costs of such drilling are too great; it is not worthwhile; it is not desirable from many points of view.' In 1936, immediately after a passionate presidential address to the Congress advocating socialism, he established a civil liberties union on non-party lines. After 1947, the organiser of the civil liberties union was not lost in the prime minister. He ensured the precise elaboration in the constitution of the rights of the individual, and the vesting of the courts with full authority to protect those rights. He was reconciled to keeping in preventive detention those whom he regarded as enemies not so much of the state as of society, especially those spreading communal animosity; but even in such cases he insisted that such detention should be for short periods and never longer than necessary. He sanctioned the withdrawal of advertisements from journals and newspapers only in cases of scurrilous writing and not for criticising, however vehemently, Nehru or the government.

The big blot, of course, on this record was the detention of Sheikh Abdullah, for which Nehru bore the ultimate

responsibility. He continuously pressed the Kashmir government to consider Sheikh Abdullah's release but, unwilling to interfere with their policy and order them to do so, he had to live with this failure. To Abdullah himself he virtually apologised for his helplessness. 'We, who are in charge of heavy responsibilities, have to deal with all kinds of forces at work and often they take their own shape. We see in the world today great statesmen, who imagine they are controlling the destinies of a nation, being pushed hither and thither by forces beyond their control. The most that one can do is to endeavour to function according to one's judgement in the allotted sphere.'⁸ And one of his valedictory acts of policy in 1964 was to secure the release of Sheikh Abdullah and seek a settlement with him.

On top of the belief in man and commitment to liberty came a conversion to the Marxist interpretation of history. In this respect Nehru regarded himself as a full-blooded Marxist. He accepted that the class which controls the means of production is the ruling class, and that history is the history of class struggles. One could only understand the past, deal with the present and face the future with confidence, if class conflicts and social struggles were taken into account. Instead of merely condemning British imperialism as alien domination, he tried to comprehend the motives, manner and methods of its functioning. He gave new emphasis to the interlinking of economics and politics,

8. To Sheikh Abdullah, 8 April 1955. Nehru papers.

of capitalism and imperialism, and from the thirties his quarrel was not just with the foreign ruler but with systems.

However, Nehru could never be an unqualified Marxist. For him Marxism was not a logical construction but primarily an intellectual impulse based to a considerable extent on emotional sympathy. It was not so much a rational or even a political approach but an aesthetic reaction to the evils of capitalist society, an abhorrence of its ugliness and squalor. He was more responsive to a writer like William Morris than to the conventional exponents of Marxist thought. Morris was so affected by the degradations and impoverished human relationships which industrial capitalism involved that he moved on to a frontal attack on class exploitation; and Nehru's thinking was on similar lines. Even where British rule was concerned, he was always drawing attention to its vulgarity and the coarsening it involved to both the rulers and the ruled. In 1952, as prime minister, a sight of the hovels in which the workers of Kanpur lived caused him such intensity of shame that he developed a sort of fever. 'I have no need,' he told a meeting of industrialists soon after, 'for any industrialisation which degrades a human being and sullies his honour.'⁹

Then again, while Nehru accepted the Marxist analysis of the past, he was not convinced by the Marxist diagnosis of the future. Because of his commitment to civil liberties,

9. Speech to the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, 29 March, *National Herald*, 30 March 1952.

he rejected the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Marx had written in the early days of industrialisation in Western Europe, when revolutionary violence, which was in the tradition of Europe, appeared to offer the only way to change; but the world, and capitalism, had changed, and Marxism would have to be adapted to new conditions. Nehru was not being unrealistic in this. A development for example, such as Eurocommunism, with its acceptance of political pluralism and its rejection of revolutionary dictatorship, is on parallel lines to Nehru's efforts. Whether such an adaptation can be still regarded as Marxism or has changed it beyond recognition is a matter for debate; for Marx thought that a drastic, forcible reorganisation of society was necessary for socialist transformation. The working class or its leader, the Communist Party, could not simply take hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes. Between capitalist and communist societies there had, according to Marx, to be a period of revolutionary shift: there could not be a peaceful transition. Yet it should be added that Marx himself provided no complete political theory or programme: all his writings were in response to specific episodes and under pressure of immediate events: and he did not rule out the occasional transformation by peaceful methods.

2

Democracy and Socialism

So Nehru had acquired, and maintained throughout his life, a half-liberal, half-Marxist position, though Marxists would say that half-Marxism is no Marxism at all. You cannot have the icing without the cake; it cannot be decorative rather than permeating. But this did not worry Nehru; he did not borrow an ideology but built up an ideology for himself. He saw himself as a libertarian Marxist, and his idea of socialism encompassed at every stage a large and irreducible measure of civil liberty. One could have neither democracy nor socialism without the other; in fact, each thrived on the other. Nehru rejected any mechanical view of human nature and looked forward to a socialist society which, by removing economic and social obstacles and inhibitions, would provide greater scope for individual freedom. But enduring, undistorted socialism could itself only be the result of voluntary and willing effort. It was not inevitable nor could it be imposed. He had no use for the argument that democracy and socialism are contradictory and that democratic socialism is only a facade to cloak a disinclination to alter the status quo. Socialism could only come to India when the country was ready for it and the great majority of the people desired it. It was

not a question of forcing the pace but of winning over opinion. The task was to educate the people so that they would be in a better position to decide when the issues came up. Then perhaps the socialist utopia would be attained, with the support of the vast majority and the least harm to anyone.

Beneath the theorising there was also the compulsion. Given the size, the problems, the developed pluralism, the regional pulls and the conflicting demands of religion and language, the only long-term way in which India could be held together was by democracy. In the abstract, one can think of more authoritarian grips over even large societies; in practice too, it can be argued that the British had, over two hundred years, drawn India together by what was largely executive government. Nehru could have, bearing in mind the legacy of Viceregal rule as well as his own personal standing with the people, thought in terms of avowed one-man rule, justified by plebiscite. But even if this had worked, it could only have worked in his lifetime. Nehru was thinking much further ahead; and, therefore, working against the drive of his own personality and the eager subservience of those around him, he promoted the spirit and nurtured the institutions of a democratic system. He exploited his personal dominance to create such a political atmosphere in the country as would ensure that no one else would be able to dominate Indian politics as he had done. One of Nehru's greatest successes was the preclusion of a successor in any real sense.

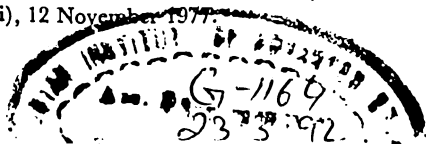
About the type of democracy, there was really little discussion. There was no political planning before 1947 as there had been organised thinking on economic matters. Gandhi had not favoured parliamentary democracy and his mind had run along lines of village administration and trusteeship. Nehru in the thirties had criticised Gandhi in terms of Marx and contended that there was a structural violence in-built into capitalist society, just as he had rejected, from the Gandhian viewpoint, the coercion innate in Marxism. But parliamentary democracy did not appear to him to be inseparable from capitalism and seemed more acceptable than communism and fascism, which in those days appeared as the alternatives. So Nehru made no effort to reverse the trend of constitutional thinking before 1947 or to resist British influence. Like most middle-class Indians of his generation, Nehru had his roots in two countries. It has been suggested that this was in itself a drawback. Mr Malcolm Muggeridge, for example, has argued that Nehru was too British in outlook to achieve anything worthwhile in India. Meeting Nehru a few months before his death, Mr Muggeridge described him as 'a man of echoes and mimicry; the last Viceroy rather than the first leader of a liberated India.'¹⁰ This criticism has not as yet been justified; indeed, all the facts so far point the other way and bear out the validity of Nehru's faith that parliamentary democracy can bear a transplant into a backward and underprivileged society. Ignoring all conventional

10. *The Chronicles of Wasted Time, Part I: The Green Stick* (London 1972), p. 115.

wisdom, Nehru gave adult suffrage to a people, the large majority of whom were illiterate. Professor Raj has asked us to consider that this could have been a way of strengthening conservative elements in Indian society, for it is well-known that peasants usually support the existing state of things, as against the radicalism of the urban poor.¹¹ He has cited the precedent of Louis Bonaparte in France; universal suffrage was then, in Proudhon's words, counter-revolution, and assisted in the overthrow of a republic. This thought, for all I know, might have prevailed in Nehru's subconscious; but what influenced his thinking process was the logical extension of democratic principle. And it worked; the people grew accustomed to political participation, they learnt what a French writer of the eighteenth century regarded as the most dangerous thing, that they had a mind; and Nehru taught them to apply that mind. All his public speeches, both before and after 1947, were part of a sustained programme of adult education. Over the years Nehru helped to transform the political value structure of the Indian people. It was an unseen revolution.

Elections and election campaigning are, of course, not enough; Nehru had also, as part of this democratising, to build up the whole complex of parliamentary institutions. He took seriously his duties as leader of the Lok Sabha and of the Congress party in Parliament, sat regularly through the question-hour and all important discussions, treated

11. 'Contribution of Nehru to Parliamentary Democracy in India', *Mainstream* (Delhi), 12 November 1977.



the presiding officers of the two houses with extreme deference, sustained the excitement of debate with a skilful use of irony and repartee, and developed parliamentary activity as an important sector in the public life of India. The tone of his speeches in Parliament was very different from that which he adopted while addressing public meetings. He still sometimes rambled, but sought to argue rather than teach, to deal with the points raised by critics and to associate the highest legislature in the country with deliberations on policy. Rather than administer by ordinance or decree, he transferred some of his personal command to Parliament by preferring to function through it, and thereby helped the parliamentary system to take root. The only criticism that can be made of him is that in a federal system he should have given effect to proportional representation. It was not that he was blindly following the British system. But, apart from his feeling that in countries where it had been tried proportional representation had resulted in unstable governments, Nehru was sure that it was impractical in India, being too intricate to be understood by the ordinary voter.

Outside Parliament, Nehru also saw to it that no hindrance was placed in the way of a free press and an independent judiciary. On the one occasion when he slipped by publicly criticising a judge who was conducting a commission of inquiry, he quickly sent an apology. But his main problem was the strengthening of democratic government. His theory was faultless. Such government was a

fine art, the achievement of cooperative working in a series of expanding circles so that everyone had a sense of participation. 'The main thing is teamwork of those in the Government and the organisation; secondly, division of responsibility and at the same time close coordination of all activities; thirdly, the building up of cadres of workers with responsibility; fourthly, creating good reactions in the public about the work of the Government and the organisation. Above all, there must be the strengthening of your position, not some kind of a rival of others, but as the undisputed head of responsible colleagues who work as a team, supporting each other and frankly discussing every important matter.'¹² But, especially after the death of Patel, he himself was unable to make cabinet government a reality. He insisted that all important matters should at some stage be brought up in the cabinet; there were numerous cabinet committees and consultation was frequent; but there was deficiency in spirit and animation. All he could do was to establish the postures of collective policy-making in the hope that life could be poured into them after his death.

It was often suggested to him, particularly by Jayaprakash Narayan that his best contribution to democratic functioning would be to function as a national rather than as a party leader. Nehru replied that it was not clear as to what this meant. If in practical terms it implied leaving the Congress he was not prepared to do so. It was not just a

12. To Bakshi Ghulam Mahomed, Chief Minister of Kashmir, 15 August 1956. Nehru papers.

matter of loyalty to the past. The Congress had both a positive and a negative advantage. No other party could rival it in national spread and depth and it could still serve as a cementing mixture. It also had no particular ideology and he was confident that, as before 1947, he could give it gradually an economic orientation. The disadvantage of a party label Nehru sought to overcome by seeking a consensus in favour of his policies even outside the ranks of the Congress. He insisted that his foreign policy was not his brain-child or a party approach but in the best interests of India, to be followed by whichever party was in office; and we see today the result of his foresight, when non-alignment has not gone down with the party ship. In domestic politics he saw himself, if not as the national leader in Jayaprakash's terms, at least as the national appeaser, enclosing various conflicting elements in a broad pattern of agreement. Seeking to add economic sovereignty to political independence and resisting communal reaction and social conservatism—these need not be narrow party doctrines.

However, indispensable to democratic government is the flourishing of an effective opposition. 'I do not want India to be a country in which millions of people say "yes" to one man, I want a strong opposition.'¹⁸ But one cannot create an opposition; the moment the government gives another party a protected position which it has not earned, that party will lose such weight as it carries with the people.

13. Speech at Trivandrum, 2 June, *National Herald*, 3 June 1950.

But Nehru gave every opportunity to the other parties to function, to explain their views, to contest elections in fair conditions and to try to convert people to their own standpoint. It was he alone, among the senior Congress leaders, who made it possible for the Communist party to form the government in Kerala in 1957; and the dismissal of that government two years later caused him much heart-searching. He was particularly friendly with Jayaprakash and the other leaders of the Socialist party and was eager to see it develop as the second, the alternative, party in India. As early as 1948, he wrote to Pant that Jayaprakash is 'apt to go astray very often and act in an irresponsible manner. But he is one of the straightest and finest men I have known and if character counts, as it does, he counts for a great deal. It seems to me a tragedy that a man like him should be thrust, by circumstances, into the wilderness.'¹⁴ He tried to maintain a friendly relationship with the Socialists and sought broad cooperation without compromise of the individuality of either the Congress or the Socialists. In 1955, after the Congress had committed itself to a socialist pattern of society, some Socialist leaders approached him on the ground that there was now no basic principle dividing the two parties. But Nehru declined to recommend their return to the Congress, because he still believed that the Socialists had a role to play as a responsible opposition party; and he was probably also influenced by the desire not to hurt Jayaprakash.

14. 1 July 1948. Nehru papers.

Ruling India democratically also involved inner-party democracy, the art of human management. Holding together the Congress as a coalition of opinion within a broad framework of agreement was one of his chief pre-occupations. While giving the party broadly a leftist orientation he kept both flanks, on left and right, open, so that the party would gain an increasingly wider base, and draw in support from both sides. He allowed the provincial parties to choose their chief ministers and supported them till they lost the confidence of their followers. Power and personality patterns in the states were allowed to resolve themselves.

Decentralisation was, in Nehru's eyes, the foundation of parliamentary democracy; 'it is not good enough to work *for* the people, the only way is to work *with* the people and go ahead, and to give them a sense of working for themselves.'¹⁵ His hopes lay in the community development programme and the national extension service. Nehru saw in these twin programmes the possibility of a great revolutionary change carried out peacefully and without conflict. Local democracy would provide a support to the constitution. Nehru's mind went back to his ideas of the twenties, and he talked once again of the ultimate objective of a cooperative commonwealth. It was only the forward movement of a whole people, a sense of participation not just in political activity but in economic and social development as well, that could justify, and even prevent

15. To B. C. Roy, 25 December 1949. Nehru papers.

from languishing, the parliamentary system in a country like India. Democracy in its fullest sense was the chance given to people to decide for themselves on all basic issues rather than merely securing acquiescence in decisions taken by others. Modernisation can, of course, be imposed from above. Kamal Atatürk achieved it in this manner in Turkey. Even in our own times, democratic decision is not always regarded as a necessary element in the ideals of modernisation. But to Nehru participation was an integral part of modernisation and that which vested it with endurance. It was because the community development programme involved the masses and gave them considerable initiative and responsibility that it evoked in Nehru the crusader's zeal; and it is the relative decline and crumbling of this programme that he would have thought the long-term weakness of the democratic system in India.

However, even if this base of decentralisation had been strong, democracy cannot be sustained in political isolation. In the West, liberal democracy had developed gradually, leading even to the theory that it can endure in its clearest form only in the setting of capitalist industrialisation. So the experiment of establishing democratic institutions in a conservative society and, even worse, a backward society was not only almost a superhuman effort; it could also be regarded as anti-historical. If such democracy was not to be 'premature', it should, as it could not follow social and economic advance, at least be intertwined with it. Democracy, to have a chance of permanence in India, would

necessarily have to be democratic socialism. Today, mainly because of recent events in our country, few in the world hold the patronising view that the poor are only interested in economic issues. But it does not follow that economic issues can be ignored.

From the late twenties, Nehru regarded himself as not only a full-blooded Marxist but also a full-blooded socialist. The world could only escape disaster if it took to socialism; and in India, if independence meant keeping all the vested interests intact, this would not even be the shadow of freedom. But he never defined precisely his concept of socialism. He rejected Gandhi's 'muddled humanitarianism' but did not specify what he wished in its place and how it was to be achieved. His was a radical, principled and emotional rather than an ideological mind. Though he claimed to use the word 'socialism' not in a vague way but in a scientific, economic sense, to him it was always more a tendency than a definable body of doctrine. It was an outlook, a blend of science and humanism, a philosophy of life; and it would have to be adapted to Indian conditions and speak in the language of the country. Particularly as, before 1947, there was no working class leadership or even an elite leadership which could serve as an alternative to the Congress under Gandhi, Nehru was reconciled to proceeding very slowly and was content with making the Congress aware of economic issues. Even the planning committee before 1947 was deliberately unclear in its aim and, under Nehru's guidance, did no more than lay down a broad

trend for expanding the presence of state ownership or control. It was as if Nehru hoped to lead the Congress and the Indian middle classes generally to socialism without their knowing it. But even after 1947 he maintained this pragmatic, undefined approach. When Jayaprakash asked him how he hoped to build socialism with the help of capitalists and expressed his concern at Nehru's proneness to run down all forms of socialist thought and practice, Nehru replied that he did not pretend to be a socialist in any formal sense of the word and surely socialism was not the monopoly of any particular group. In public, Nehru argued that it was a question not of theory but of hard facts, of raising the living standards of the people. The attitude was logically impeccable. The disowning of theory has the advantage of flexibility; but it also carries the danger of robbing policy of any hard core of objective and commitment.

The dangers of pragmatism losing a sense of long-term direction can be seen in Nehru's ideas on economic policy after 1947. At the very start, radical theories of distribution gave place to an emphasis on production, and the importance which Nehru attached to nationalisation diminished. He was prepared for it only if it did not impede production or upset the existing structure. It was no longer a question of holding certain views but of timing, priorities and the manner of implementation. Progress should be gradual, taking into account the availability of trained personnel and with the greatest amount of goodwill. Seeking to

what was clearly a move away from what even Nehru had described as no more than 'a strong tendency towards socialism', he pleaded in 1948 that there was never a clean slate in life, and a sudden and complete upset had to be discarded because it was inconsistent with any intelligent approach. In private Nehru had no doubt that this was the wrong direction, but, for the time being at any rate, felt there was little to be done. Two years later, in 1950, with the institution of the planning commission, Nehru hoped to transfer emphasis from production to distribution and also to stress the expansion of industrial development in the public sector, 'balance the various social forces at work in India, and pay more attention to what might be called the vital forces which will ultimately lead to progress.' In line with this, Nehru secured in 1955 the commitment by the Congress to the building of what was termed, in an odd, half-hearted, phrase, 'the socialistic pattern of society.' The words seem to have been chosen deliberately to indicate that the country was accepting not a rigid or doctrinaire framework of ideology but certain methods of economic and social change. The socialism to which Nehru was pointing was not so much a certain desirable set of social relations as a way of solving social problems. 'I will not rest content,' Nehru had said in 1953, 'unless every man, woman and child in this country has a fair deal and attains a minimum standard of living.' It was as a major step towards this that the Second Five Year Plan was cast on qualitatively different lines from the First. It was meant to effect structural changes in the national economy and

to lead towards a society which gave priority to equality. The ways in which this socialism was to be made possible were very similar to those which Anthony Crosland formulated for Britain a year later. India was striving to move ahead from a low stage of economic backwardness whereas Britain was an advanced capitalist society, and the programme was necessarily very different. But the approach which Nehru favoured was on the lines of British left-wing thinking. The ownership of industry was in itself unimportant, and nothing was gained by nationalising existing industries solely in order to gain control. But it was important for the state to control the strategic points of production. Any discussion on the relative merits of the public and private sectors was unrealistic; for the argument that the private sector was sacrosanct no longer held good, and there was no doubt that the public sector would grow and gradually dominate the scene. But both sectors had their roles in increasing production within the broad limits of general control by the State and could even help by healthy rivalry in keeping each other up to the mark. As technology and monopoly had not in India reached the stage which endangered society as a whole, the steps necessary in Western countries to control monopoly capitalism were not as yet required in India. There was enough time for the public sector to grow both absolutely and relatively, and by stages secure control of the whole economy. So the economic foundations of a socialist society could be gradually laid and, without a major and immediate assault on private enterprise, steps would be initiated to reduce dis-

parities in income and wealth, weaken private monopolies and disperse the concentration of economic power in the hands of a few individuals.

In a sense, this willingness to tolerate the private sector and the attempt to attain socialism through a mixed rather than a wholly state-owned economy reflected Nehru's changing views on the class war. In his early days of left-wing enthusiasm, he had argued that the class struggle could not be shirked. The final aim could only be a classless society; everything that came in its way would have to be removed, gently if possible but forcibly if necessary; and there seemed to him then little doubt that coercion would often be necessary. The democratic method had many triumphs to its credit, but it had not succeeded in resolving any conflict about the basic structure of the state or of society. However, as Nehru mellowed with the years, he saw no reason why this should not be possible. Particularly in India, with the examples of the integration of the princely states and *zamindari* abolition, where well-established systems in favour of a privileged few had been broken up, Nehru was hopeful that class conflict could be resolved through peaceful methods. Western precedents had no bearing on our problems, and India would have to work out her own solutions. A note written on 13 July 1958 has a curious ending: 'In considering these economic aspects of our problems, we have always to remember the basic approach of peaceful means; and perhaps we might also keep in view the old Vedantic ideal of the life force which

is the inner base of everything that exists.' And perhaps in one of the very last things he wrote before he died, on 25 May 1964, he observed that in India it was important to profit by modern technical processes and increase production, 'but in doing so we must not forget that the essential objective to be aimed at is the quality of the individual and the concept of dharma underlying it.'

So there was a gradual change in the nuances of Nehru's understanding of democratic socialism. At the start the emphasis was on socialism, and democracy if possible. But as may be expected, considering the importance he attached to democracy, he was clearly uneasy about this; and then he became happier with the thought that, especially in India, it would be practicable to harmonise democracy and socialism. He was pleased when a journalist wrote in 1955 of 'Nehruism: India's Revolution without Fear'—a socialist revolution by consent, without class war, heretics or victims. The business class, which had been frightened in the years from 1947 to 1952, could by the late fifties breathe more freely. In fact, one had reached the possibility of democracy precluding socialism: Nehru's efforts at revolution by participation and agreement were in danger of being converted by vested interests into a revolution by revisionist methods, thereby reducing it to virtually no revolution at all. So the experiment, unprecedented in world history, has not yet succeeded. The dream which has haunted every forward-looking person, even someone so distant from Marxism as William Beveridge who

summed it up in 1940—‘I would very much like to see communism tried under democratic conditions’,¹⁶ still remains a dream. But its feasibility seems more likely in India than elsewhere, not because the class war is less of a reality or more amenable to reasonable settlements, but because of the very fact of under-development; for in India socialism has to be very different in its basic approach from that known in the West. Here it has to be a rapid movement towards industrialisation rather than the liberation of an industrial proletariat from bureaucratic organisation. So, while the experiment of democratic socialism has not yet succeeded, it has also not yet failed; and the question is still very much with us, as put by the *New Statesman* a year ago: ‘How is it possible to devise a form of government which ensures domestic peace, invites popular participation in conditions of freedom, and also creates conditions for an assault on intolerable poverty?’¹⁷

16. J. Harris, *William Beveridge* (Oxford 1977), p. 366.

17. 8 July 1977.

3

Internationalism

Nehru's ideas on foreign policy were as pragmatic and practical as his socialism. This policy was firmly based on national interests and current realities in the world. Though, especially in the later years, he often expounded the moral virtues of non-alignment and, in his efforts to explain his efforts to his own people, he annoyed other governments by seeming to claim a great deal for India, there was not so much a priggish parading of principle or a messianic universalism as a strengthening of India's position. It was part of the search for self-reliance, required to buttress political independence.

Non-alignment was not a product of Nehru's whims but the expression of the state of mind prevalent among the newly-free countries of Asia after the Second World War. In March 1947, just when the 'cold war' was developing in Europe, Nehru gave expression to this viewpoint at the Asian relations conference: '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 cooperate with all others who are prepared to cooperate with us. We do not intend to be the

playthings of others.’¹⁸ For centuries India and the other countries of Asia had been treated as the outer fringes of the great powers of Europe and America, and though these Asian peoples had no problems or divisive interests among themselves, they had had extraneous conflicts and decisions thrust upon them. They had now no intention of continuing to inherit the problems of other peoples; but they could not, even if they wished, opt out of the world. Since 1945, passivity as a foreign policy has been out of the question for most countries. So Nehru set himself the task of working towards the assertion of certain principles which were not only good in themselves but in India’s interests—anti-colonialism, anti-racism, the concerted move-away from economic under-development, the building of everwidening areas of peace. Even on ‘cold war’ issues India could exercise independence of judgment if her specific interests were not involved; such an attitude would be proper on grounds of principle as well as work to her special advantage. It was ‘not a wise policy to put all your eggs in one basket . . . purely from the point of view of opportunism, if you like, a straightforward, honest policy, an independent policy is the best.’¹⁹

The realistic element in Nehru’s foreign policy stands forth clearly when we look at specific problems. India’s membership of the Commonwealth was not the result of

18. *Asian Relations* (proceedings of the Asian Relations Conference, Delhi 1948) p. 20-27.

19. Speech in Constituent Assembly, 8 March 1948. J. Nehru, *India’s Foreign Policy* (Delhi 1961), p. 35.

Nehru's liking for all things British. Immediately after 1947, the Soviet Union regarded India as still a camp-follower of the West, condemned all the policies of the Government of India and directed the Indian Communist Party to rebellion. Such Soviet antipathy drove India to lean more and more on the Western Powers. At the conference of Commonwealth prime ministers in October 1948, Nehru, while critical of the aggressiveness of the United States, particularly in economic matters, added that the Asian peoples had no sympathy for Soviet expansionism and recommended that publicity be given to this aspect of Soviet policy rather than to criticism of communism as an economic doctrine or a way of life. This, taken with Jinnah's efforts to tease India out of the Commonwealth and India's military weakness and economic dependence, made it worthwhile remaining in the organisation; and it would also relieve India from over-dependence on the United States. In 1949, Nehru does not even seem to have expected the Commonwealth to remain in existence for long; for in reply to Jayaprakash's criticism that membership suggested a lack of self-confidence and an implicit commitment to one of the power blocs, Nehru spoke of the great practical help that India's association would secure for at least two or three years and at very slight cost. The future was free as air, but for the time being membership of the Commonwealth would be useful. 'We are apt,' he warned Jayaprakash,²⁰ 'to be too sure of our stability, internal and

20. 14 May 1949. Nehru papers.

external. Taking that for granted we proceed to endeavour to remodel the world.'

The Commonwealth, of course, has lasted longer than expected; and once India's stability had been assured, the organisation had to be used by India unsentimentally, to further her policies without inhibiting them. Nehru converted it into one of the great junctions of world affairs and harnessed it in support of his China and Korea policies. In the early and mid-fifties, he held the key position in the Commonwealth. But, where major issues were involved, he did not allow it to deflect him from the path he had chosen. Suez is well-known; but a less publicised problem was Africa. To Nehru Africa was a neighbour across the sea and of direct concern to India. So, while he regretted the Mau Mau movement and the recourse to violence in Kenya, he came round to the view that, in the face of British provocation, the Africans had really no alternative to resistance. 'How any decent person who is an African can be a 'loyalist' passes my comprehension.'²¹ Talk of the different races living together, condemnation of terrorism and emphasis on the interests of the Indian communities in Africa were all meaningless in the face of the heavy offensive that the British were mounting against the African people. 'We are all for the multiracial society, but I am getting a little tired of the repetition of this phrase when the African is being kicked, hounded and shot down and the

21. Nehru's note 25 March 1953. Nehru papers.

average Indian prays for safety first.'²² The conviction of Kenyatta was a purely political act which the Africans could not be expected to accept. Nothing that the Africans had done was as bad as the racial domination of the white settlers, and preaching to the African was an impertinence when his house was on fire and he himself in agony and torture. 'I am not interested at present in petty reforms for the Africans; that is a matter for them to decide. I am interested in standing by people who are in great trouble and who have to face tremendous oppression by a powerful Government. I should condemn of course every species of violence and give no quarter to it. But I shall stand by the Africans nevertheless. That is the only way I can serve them and bring them round to what I consider to be the right path.'²³ Public statements on these lines evoked the wrath of the British Government, but Nehru would not shift his position, and when the British continued to object Nehru sent a sharply worded rejection. 'Our Government is not used to being addressed in this way by any Government and I can only conclude that he (the British Commonwealth Secretary) has for the moment forgotten that he is addressing the independent Republic of India. . . It has been our constant endeavour not to embarrass the British Government and we have tried to cooperate with them to the largest possible extent subject to adhering to our own principles and policies. We shall continue to do so, but

22. *Ibid.*

23. Nehru to Apa Pant, Indian commissioner in East Africa, 20 April 1953. Nehru papers.

we are not prepared to change these principles and policies because of any pressure exercised on us by an outside authority.'²⁴ Throughout his years in office, Nehru, despite India's membership of the Commonwealth, did not fail to keep faith with the African people and to press his views on British policy-makers.

Another little-known string of events in 1955 also shows Nehru's matter-of-fact approach as well as the usefulness and the limitations of nonalignment. The Asian-African conference at Bandung in April 1955 was not specifically a conference of nonaligned countries, but those countries which were represented there gained a greater cohesion. Though Nehru was by now severely critical of many aspects of American policy, particularly military aid to Pakistan, he still sought to avoid leaning more in favour of one side in the 'cold war'. He assured the United States of lack of hostility but suggested that the world crisis should be interpreted not in terms of communism or anti-communism but as the consequence of large, dynamic countries inevitably trying to expand in various ways. The approach to world affairs of Dulles was squarely in confrontation with that of Nehru, while the Soviet Union's emphasis on peaceful coexistence led to a convergence of policy with India. Even so, on a visit to the Soviet Union that summer, Nehru was concerned to put forward the case for the United States. When Bulganin and Krushchev accused the United

24. Message to British Government, 25 April 1953.

States of adopting aggressive attitudes, Nehru commented, 'I don't see why a strong man should always go about showing his muscles.' It was a remark seemingly made in agreement with Soviet criticism but, in fact, it had a double edge. Nehru then drew attention to the more hopeful elements in United States policy: the eclipse of McCarthy, the differences between Dulles and Eisenhower and the more conciliatory attitudes of the President, and the general friendliness of the people of the United States. But on leaving the Soviet Union, Nehru saw his task as being that of conveying to the Western Powers his understanding that there had been a real change of outlook in Moscow. The new leaders of the post-Stalin period were keen on coexistence, but they could not be pushed beyond a certain point. So Nehru spoke up for the United States in the Soviet Union, and expounded the Soviet cause in his dealings with Western governments. Although nothing came of the summit conference at Geneva later in the year, all the four Powers agreed that Nehru's interpretation of each side to the other had helped. Credit is not claimed for Nehru for even the temporary lifting of the clouds. Great powers know their own interests and act on them. But Nehru had helped to convey nuances and impressions, to act in the interstices of great power relations and to improve mutual comprehension. As he once said about the role of non-alignment: 'There are no affirmatives and negatives about it. There are fine shades of opinion, hints thrown out, general impressions created without commitments, reactions awaited and so on. If a reaction is favourable, one

takes another step forward. Otherwise one shuts up. . . . What do we try to do? To soften and soothe each side and make it slightly more receptive to the other.'²⁵

A similar sense of realism is to be found, despite general belief, in the formulation of Nehru's China policy. His romanticist fantasies about traditional friendship did not basically impinge on his handling of relations between the two countries. From the twenties Nehru had been of the view that Chinese communism was more nationalist than communist and, when the communists came to power in 1949, the attitude of foreign governments appeared to him crucial in determining in which direction China would develop. Hostility of the Western and other non-communist states would result in correspondingly closer relations between the Soviet Union and China, but a different policy might well lead to loosening of even existing ties between these two countries. So he advocated an attitude of 'cautious friendliness'. The exchanges on Tibet in 1950 left no room for any illusions, and even in Korea he knew that the Chinese government was exploiting his world influence. He made allowances for the Chinese view of the world. 'Chinese psychology, with its background of prolonged suffering, struggle against Japan, and successful communist revolution, is an understandable mixture of bitterness, elation and vaulting confidence to which the traditional xenophobia and present-day isolation from outside

25. Nehru to G. L. Mehta, Indian ambassador at Washington, 1 June 1955. Nehru papers.

contacts have added fear and suspicion of the motives of other powers. For inducing a more balanced and cooperative mentality in Peking, it is essential to understand those psychological factors.'²⁶ But such understanding did not necessarily mean a neglect of India's interests. An attempt would have to be made for friendly relations with China, if only because conflict, or even fear of conflict and preparation for it, would grossly distort India's economy. But Nehru did not assume such friendship; the basic challenge between India and China, as he remarked in 1952,²⁷ ran along the spine of Asia. 'Our attitude towards the Chinese Government, he instructed his ambassador later that year²⁸ 'should always be a combination of friendliness and firmness. If we shew weakness, advantage will be taken of this immediately.' Chinese expansionism had been evident during various periods for about a thousand years, and a new period of such expansionism was, thought Nehru, perhaps imminent. His meetings with Chou-en-lai and other Chinese leaders in 1954 weakened the element of uneasiness in his attitude to that country, and he felt it no longer necessary to answer fully, one way or the other, the question of cooperation or conflict between India and China. For a third position seemed to have emerged, of containment of China through friendship, by the creation of an environment in which China would find it difficult to be hostile. Perhaps Nehru overestimated the importance

26. Nehru to Ernest Bevin, 20 November 1950. Nehru papers.

27. F. Moraes, *Witness to an Era* (Delhi 1973), p. 200-1.

28. Telegram to N. Raghavan, 10 December 1952. Nehru papers.

of India, and India's support, to China's leaders in the long term; and there were also inadequacies in diplomacy and administration which brought his China policy to ruin. But there was no basic flaw in the analysis or the assessment.

In many ways, it is in the evolution of Nehru's policy on the Goa question that one sees the relative strength of various influences of ideas and principles and how, gradually, some prevailed. Before 1947 Nehru, more than any other nationalist leader, had regarded the expulsion of the Portuguese and the merger of Goa with India as part of the freedom struggle. For this purpose, he relied, after becoming prime minister, on local and international pressures. The Government and people of India themselves should not intervene, for economic sanctions might hurt the inhabitants of Goa more than the Portuguese authorities, and military action, though easy, should be on principle avoided as long as possible. The people of India, being mature and not 'children at play', would quietly wait.

Goans settled in India were not stopped from entering Portuguese territory, but all other Indians were discouraged from supporting what should essentially be regarded as a freedom movement within Goa. When the Portuguese shot down some Indian volunteers who sought to cross into Goa, the Government of India did not react to such brutality, nor did they permit the establishment in India of a

provisional government of Goa. 'We have to take not only the right steps,' Nehru told the chief ministers,²⁹ 'but also in the right way. We have also to keep in view our general world policy because we cannot isolate one action from another. I have no doubt that we shall win in Goa. But I am anxious to do so without giving up in the slightest the basic policy that we claim to pursue.'

So it was a policy of inaction and of patience, waiting for the popular movement in Goa to gain strength, for the colonial economy to weaken, for the sympathy of world opinion to prevail. The Government of India were not pacifist but they would only go to war in case of an armed attack. 'If you are under the impression that the Government will take police action or use force to liberate Goa from Portuguese domination, you are entirely mistaken. I am not going to do any such thing.'³⁰ But such commitment to peace and principle was regarded abroad as weakness, and the very belief in Nehru's dedication to international ethics slackened the pressure that foreign Governments were willing to exert on Portugal. Those who had faith in Nehru would not take seriously his assertion that India would not accept indefinitely the continuance of Portuguese rule in Goa. So gradually it became increasingly clear that, because of the adamancy of the Portuguese and the failure of other powers to interfere, the dilemma could

29. 3 September 1954. Nehru papers.

30. Speech at Poona 4 June, *Times of India*, 5 June 1955.

not be resolved by Nehru's methods. It would have either to be broken at the cost of Nehru's principles or the Portuguese left undisturbed in defiance of Nehru's commitments.

In 1957, for the first time, in a letter to Vinoba Bhave commenting on the futility of a peace brigade and the impracticality of reducing the size of the Indian army,³¹ Nehru reckoned reluctantly with the possibility of having to take armed action in Goa. He could not but recognise that his Goa policy was a singular record of failure and the situation, instead of improving, had in many ways deteriorated. There was a total deadlock and India had no policy beyond that of waiting. He still believed that events in the world were working against the Portuguese and that the situation was developing in India's favour; but at the back of his mind was the growing unease that ultimately action would have to be taken by India. When the Portuguese threatened to enforce a right of passage to the enclaves of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Nehru welcomed the prospect as providing an occasion for occupying Goa in retaliation; but the Portuguese took no action. So when, in Nehru's phrase, the cup was full and began to spill over, he sanctioned military action in the national interest and at the expense of his general principles: 'Ultimately,' he wrote to President Kennedy, 'we had to face what might be called the choice between two courses both of which

31. 4 May 1957. Nehru papers.

were undesirable from various points of view. We chose what to our thinking was the lesser evil.³²

I have tried in these lectures to draw attention to the formative influences on Nehru as well as, with experience and growing responsibilities, the slow erosion of old assumptions and the subtle progression of new ideas. I have selected three main groups of concepts and problems, and sought to discern, if possible, the development of his mind, symbolic of a whole generation of thinking Indians and reflected in a nation's policies. Democracy, as adapted to an under-privileged society; socialism, indistinct in outline, but not necessarily, therefore, disadvantageous, and not conceived as a backward and poverty-stricken socialism but linked with production rather than distribution; and finally a nationalism poised on internationalism but not sucked into it before the world had become a fully international community.

It is not possible to categorise Nehru: for he was a Marxist who rejected regimentation, a socialist who was wholly committed to civil liberties, a radical with a preference for nonviolence, and a world citizen who combined his international obligations with a total involvement in India, saw the necessity of self-reliance even in a shrinking world and stressed the need to adapt every ideology to the Indian condition. Above all, he was a leader who believed

32. 29 December 1961. Nehru papers.

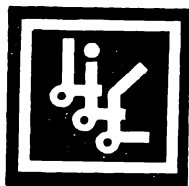
in carrying his people with him even if it slowed down the pace of progress. In 1936, when Krishna Menon wrote from London complaining that Nehru was not forceful enough in securing the acceptance of his views, he replied: 'Try to imagine what the human material is in India. How they think, how they act, what moves them, what does not affect them. It is easy enough to take up a theoretically correct attitude, which has little effect on anybody. We have to do something much more important and difficult and that is to move large numbers of people, to make them act. . . .'³³ Nearly twenty years later, as prime minister, his approach was very similar: 'A leader must always have a sense of the public. He cannot do some things, because he senses they would create difficulties. . . . We have to deal with human beings as individuals and in the mass, and we must know the art of getting into their minds and hearts and not merely imagine that any logical argument must prevail.'³⁴

It is, I think, this compulsive motivation to keep in step with the people of India, and his faith that if he followed this policy he could not go wrong, that explain both Nehru's achievements and his failures. It was said of a general in the last world war that to say that he made mistakes was merely to say that he made war. Nehru too made mistakes;

33. 28 September 1936. *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* Vol. 7 (New Delhi 1975), p. 470.

34. To B.K. Kaula, 29 October 1953, Nehru papers.

but he made them in the process of making the India that we know and have. As for his opponents and those who today have the opportunity to carp and criticise, they function in a world he changed.



Sangam Books

Paperbacks with ambition

The Mahabharata

Shanta Rameshwar Rao

“She saw the shining God of the Sun descending in a blaze of gold. The next minute he was beside her and his eyes looked upon her with love.” One thread from the great epic’s glittering fabric of love, duty and war. A best-selling modern rendition, now in paperback.

Rs. 10.00

India Through the Ages

Sir Jadunath Sarkar

The Sir William Meyer Lectures of Madras University were delivered in 1928 by one of India’s most eminent historians, Sir Jadunath Sarkar. This book is a collection of those six lectures, a survey of the growth of Indian life and thought over the ages. A lucid but authentic documentation of the evolution of the social and cultural pattern of India in which the contribution of the Aryans, the Buddhists, the Muslims and the British have been considered and given their due share of importance.

Rs. 7.50

Tradition and Revolution

J. Krishnamurti

During 1970–71, Krishnamurti held dialogues with groups of people who for many years had listened to him and experimented with his teachings. Thirty of these dialogues make up this book.

Rs. 15.00

Pratidwandi

Sunil Gangopadhyay

In this novel, one finds all the problems facing urban youth given point and cohesion by the central character of Siddhartha, so endearing and believable in his contradictions.

'The presence of the alien in modern literature is legion. Gangopadhyay has skilfully transformed a stock symbol into a thing of passion, intensity and depth.' *Economic Times*, Bombay.

'... a frightening peep into the angered and frenzied sensibility of the youth generation in urban India ...' *The Mail*, Madras.

Rs. 4.00

Hymns of Guru Nanak

Translated by Khushwant Singh

In this matchless translation of some of his finest devotional poems, the fifteenth century founder of the Sikh religion points the way to self-realisation by love, devotion and service to man and God.

Rs. 12.00

Wooden Cow

T. Janakiraman

Was Ammani a 'kept woman' or was she the one who kept the men who pleased her?

In the words of Gopali, the talented singer, who kept her in homely comfort, 'She wants to make love to everyone in this world . . . only she is human, all of us are animals.' Bruce, her Yankee boyfriend who returns after soldiering in Vietnam tells her: 'You might have slept with three hundred people. . . But you are a very, very pure person without dirt, a creature without stain.'

Ammani is an aesthete, an intellectual, a radical, completely amoral . . . She can be bought, but she is not for sale.

Through Janakiraman's toughly poetic, sensuous narrative emerges the Brahmin girl from rural South India, a character few readers will forget.

Rs. 10.00

Indian Dress

Charles Fabri

A unique and pioneering illustrated history, meticulously researched, of Indian male and female dress down the ages.

Rs. 7.00

Surya Namaskars

Apa B. Pant

This book by the distinguished ambassador and diplomat is primarily a practical guide with step-by-step instructions on how the exercises are to be performed. The core discipline of breath control is explained. This is also a book for those interested in understanding the rationale of the exercises.

Rs. 7.00

Listening to Hindustani Music

Chetan Karnani

A different overview of North Indian Classical music . . . replete with evaluations of its living and late exponents and reviews of important LPs.

Rs. 10.00

Mirch Masala

One Hundred Indian Recipes

Surayya Tyahji

Illustrations by Mario

Here are a hundred classics of Indian cooking—Moghlai, many from Hyderabad, and a pick of favourites from all over—with a choice of menus that hunt up well-loved combinations.

'... likely to send most cooks dashing to the nearest saucepan...'
Democratic World, New Delhi

Rs. 6.00

In the Shadow of the Gallows

C. A. Balan

The shadow of the gallows fell on C. A. Balan one cold September night in 1950. He was hunted down and arrested on the charge of a political murder and convicted. This book is a compelling account of the eleven years he spent in jail waiting to be hanged.

A jail diary in retrospect, Balan's story is also a comment on justice, on prisons as he knew them and the dark humanity on both sides of the bars.

Rs. 6.00

Temporary Answers

Jai Nimbkar

You are a widowed woman doctor, childless, young. Your family is conservative, you are not. You want a new life. Yet you have no new rules to live by. And you are falling in love with the wrong man . . . A fascinating first novel set in Poona.

' . . . interesting, readable . . . its characters nicely etched.' *Southern Economist*.

Rs. 4.00

The Legend of Manasa and other Stories

Shanta Rameshwar Rao

The echoing universe of the Gods . . . the underground worlds of the Demons and the Snakes . . . the green, rainswept earth of human beings—all form the cosmic background to these vividly-told stories from ancient Hindu mythology. Lovely goddesses, strong-willed humans powerful demons and yet more powerful gods, act out events of a violent and colourful beauty, in which death and religious devotion are two constant themes.

Rs. 10.00

Indian Ink

H. E. Beal

‘We will settle it this way,’ said Krupasindhu. ‘When I take the young lady to the Sahib you will pay me one thousand rupees. And when you know she is pregnant you will pay me one thousand more. And when the child is born you will pay eight thousand if it is a boy’.

Krupasindhu Mahanty, the Collector’s steno-typist, looked earnestly for ways to serve the Heavenborn Sahibs, the British Raj, and ‘Bharateshwar’, the Emperor in England, and no service was too great for him—provided, of course, that he could make money out of it.

This is the delightful story of how Krupasindhu grew from a shy young apprentice clerk into a most important man, along a path strewn with rewarding ‘services’ to the English Sahibs, and highly profitable ‘acts of kindness’ to worth-while—that is, rich—fellow-Indians. World wars, riots, freedom movements, are all hardly more than murmurs in the background of this tongue-in-cheek tale set in pre-Independence India.

Rs. 12.00

Children of God

Shanta Rameshwar Rao

What is it like to be a Harijan? Through Lakshmi’s eyes we see the wretchedness of this alienated people, the ignorance, misery and oppression; we see the bitterness and frustration of a people denied their humanity; we see Kittu done to death because he dares.

A blazing novel that lays bare the impulsions at the heart of the untouchable community.

Rs. 9.50

Yuganta

Translated from the Marathi

Irawati Karve

“Irawati Karve studies the humanity of the Mahabharata’s great figures—with all their virtues and their equally numerous faults—sought out by an inquirer like her, whose view of life is secular, scientific, anthropological in the widest sense, yet also appreciative of literary values, social problems of the past and present alike, and human needs and responses in her own time and in antiquity as she identifies them. . . .

Seen through her eyes the Mahabharata is more than a work which Hindus look upon as divinely inspired and venerate. It becomes a record of complex humanity and a mirror to all the faces which we ourselves wear.”

, W. Norman Brown

Rs. 7.00

Pawn in the Seventh House

R. G. Rajwade

A life made rich by sensitive reaction to places and people has been distilled into these pages. The author ranges with equal ease over politics, pomp, circumstances—or a flight of parrots. Or the land and men and women of Malwa—colourful, sensuous, ‘narcotic’. Or the Court of Scindias, its rugged history, its latter-day romps and ritual. Or the Suez ‘crisis’ and other upheavals in volatile North Africa. Or the corridors of power in the MEA. Sharp observation blended with apt description lends validity as well as vitality to every page, and the author’s warm personality comes through everywhere.

Rs. 8.50

Sangam Book

A DIVISION OF
ORIENT LONGMAN LIMITED

Registered Office:

3/5 Asaf Ali Road, New Delhi 110 002

Other Offices:

Kamani Marg, Ballard Estate, Bombay 400 038

17 Chittaranjan Avenue, Calcutta 700 072

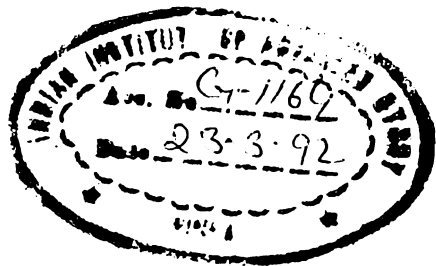
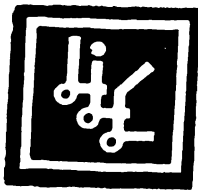
160 Anna Salai, Madras 600 002

1/24 Asaf Ali Road, New Delhi 110 002

80/1 Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bangalore 560 001

3-5-820 Hyderguda, Hyderabad 500 001

S. P. Verma Road, Patna 800 001



For a complete list of titles in Sangam Books
write to the nearest office at the address
cited above.

Fifteen years after the death of Nehru, Sarvepalli Gopal offers an absorbing and perceptive picture of this great personality. He analyses the factors that shaped Nehru's thinking and his ideology, and provides a critical assessment of his work.



Sangam Books



Library

IIAS, Shimla



G1164

Orient Longman

Rs 7.50

ISBN 0 86131 205 8