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Some brief extracts from

TOWARD FREEDOM

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

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PATRIOTISM is no longer enough: we want something higher, wider, and nobler.

THIS DESIRE to get away from the mind of man to primitive conditions where mind does not count, seems to me quite incomprehensible. The very thing that is the glory and triumph of man is decried and discouraged, and a physical environment which will oppress the mind and prevent its growth is considered desirable. Present-day civilization is full of evils, but it is also full of good; and it has the capacity in it to rid itself of those evils. To destroy it root and branch is to remove that capacity from it and revert to a dull, sunless and miserable existence.

RESTRAINT is good and is the measure of our culture, but behind that restraint there must be something to restrain and hold back. It has been, and is, man's destiny to control the elements, to ride the thunderbolt, to bring the raging fire and the rushing and tumbling waters to his use, but most difficult of all for him has been to restrain and hold in check the passions that consume him.

PEACE may be the sodden despair of men unable to better themselves.

THE QUESTIONS that a country puts are a measure of that country's political development. Often the failure of that country is due to the fact that it has not put the right question to itself.

I DISLIKE the praise of poverty and suffering. I do not think they are at all desirable, and they ought to be abolished. Nor do I appreciate the ascetic life as a social ideal, though it may suit individuals. I understand and appreciate simplicity, equality, self-control, but not the mortification of the flesh. Just as an athlete requires to train his body, I believe that the mind and habits have also to be trained and brought under control. It would be absurd to expect that a person who is given to too much self-indulgence can endure much suffering or show unusual self-control or behave like a hero when the crisis comes. To be in good moral condition requires at least as much training as to be in good physical condition. But that certainly does not mean asceticism or self-mortification.

I SUPPOSE a test of my fundamental sobriety and sanity is the fact that I hardly know what a bad headache is, nor have I ever been troubled with insomnia. . . . I might add that I have a horror of people who are inescapably and unchangingly sane and sober.

MY ROOTS are still perhaps partly in the nineteenth century, and I have been too much influenced by the humanist liberal tradition to get out of it completely. This bourgeois background follows me about and is naturally a source of irritation to many communists.

MY REPUTATION as a hero is entirely a bogus one; I do not feel at all heroic, and generally the heroic attitude or the dramatic pose in life strikes me as silly. As for romance, I should say that I am the least romantic of individuals. It is true that I have some physical and mental courage, but the background of that is probably pride—personal, group, and national—and a reluctance to be coerced into anything.

FOR ANYONE to say that he or his country will not compromise is, in a sense, a foolish remark, for life is always forcing us to compromise.

UNITY is a good thing, but unity in subjection is hardly a thing to be proud of. The very strength of a despotic government may become a greater burden for a people.

CLASSES that have ceased to play a vital part in society are singularly lacking in wisdom. They gamble for all or nothing, and so they fade away.

THERE are no supermen or philosopher-kings; there are only frail human beings who cannot help thinking that their own personal good or the advancement of their own ideas is identical with the public good.

A LEADER or a man of action in a crisis almost always acts subconsciously and then thinks of the reasons for his action.

A LEADER does not create a mass movement out of nothing, as if by a stroke of the magician's wand. He can take advantage of the conditions themselves when they arise; he can prepare for them, but not create them.

THIS CONTINUOUS effort to suppress one's feelings and behave in public is a bit of a strain, and the usual result is that one puts on a glum and solid look on public occasions.

PERHAPS, even in this world of armed conflict, there is such a thing as the spirit of man, and the spirit of a nation, which is neither ignoble nor weak, and which may not be ignored, save at peril.

WE ARE all moderates or extremists in varying degrees, and for various objects. If we care enough for anything, we are likely to feel strongly about it, to be extremist about it. Otherwise we can afford a gracious tolerance, a philosophical moderation, which really hides to some extent our indifference.

I MUST confess that even today I get on very well with an Englishman, unless he happens to be an official and wants to patronize me, and even then there is no lack of humor in our contacts.

NURTURED from childhood in the widespread belief that the East is a mysterious place, and in its bazaars and narrow lanes secret conspiracies are being continually hatched, the Englishman can seldom think straight on matters relating to these lands of supposed mystery. He never makes an attempt to understand that somewhat obvious and very unmysterious person, the Easterner. He keeps well away from him, gets his ideas about him from tales abounding in spies and secret societies, and then allows his imagination to run riot.

IN SPITE of my hostility to British imperialism and all imperialisms, I have loved much that was England, and I should have liked to keep the silken bonds of the spirit between India and England. Those bonds can only exist in freedom.

I THINK it is true that the average Englishman hates brutality, and I cannot conceive English people openly glorying in and repeating lovingly the word *Brutalität* (or its English equivalent) as the Nazis do. Even when they indulge in the deed, they are a little ashamed of it. But whether we are Germans or English or Indians, I am afraid our veneer of civilized conduct is thin enough, and, when passions are aroused, it rubs off and reveals something that is not good to look at.

I AM a stranger and alien in the West. I cannot be of it. But in my own country also, sometimes, I have an exile's feeling.

I OFTEN wonder if I represent anyone at all, and I am inclined to think that I do not, though many have kindly and friendly feelings toward me. I have become a queer mixture of the East and the West, out of place everywhere, at home nowhere.

CURIOUS how each person judges of the other race, not from the individual with whom he has come in contact, but from others about whom he knows very little or nothing at all.

I HAVE no liking or attraction for the ascetic view of life, the negation of life, the terrified abstention from its joys and sensations.

I PREFER the active virtues to the passive ones, and renunciation and sacrifice for their own sakes have little appeal for me.

THE YEARS I have spent in prison! Sitting alone, wrapped in my thoughts, how many seasons I have seen go by, following each other into oblivion! How many moons I have watched wax and wane, and the pageant of the stars moving along inexorably and majestically! How many yesterdays of my youth lie buried here!

ONE MISSES many things in prison, but perhaps most of all one misses the sound of women's voices and children's laughter. . . . Once I remembered being struck by a new want. I was in the Lucknow District Gaol and I realized suddenly that I had not heard a dog bark for seven or eight months.

AMONG my exercises one pleased me particularly—the *shīrshāsana*, standing on the head with the palms of the hands, fingers interlocked, supporting the back of the head, elbows on the floor, body vertical, upside down. I suppose physically this exercise is very good: I liked it even more for its psychological effect on me. The slightly comic position increased my good humor and made me a little more tolerant of life's vagaries.

WASPS and hornets I tolerated, and there were hundreds of them in my cell. There had been a little tiff between us when, inadvertently I think, a wasp had stung me. In my anger I tried to exterminate the lot, but they put up a brave fight in defense of their temporary home, which probably contained their eggs, and I desisted and decided to leave them in peace if they did not interfere with me any more. For over a year after that I lived in that cell surrounded by these wasps and hornets; they never attacked me, and we respected each other.

I FIND it difficult to grasp the idea of sin.

NOT FOR most of us, unhappily, to sense the mysterious life of nature, to hear her whisper close to our ears, to thrill and quiver at her touch. Those days are gone. But, though we may not see the sublime in nature as we used to, we have sought to find it in the glory and tragedy of humanity, in its mighty dreams and inner tempests, its pangs and failures, its conflicts and misery, and, over all this, its faith in a great destiny and a realization of those dreams.

MOST OF us, I suppose, have lost the old pagan feeling and not gained the new insight.

BUDDHA has always had a great appeal for me. It is difficult for me to analyze this appeal, but it is not a religious appeal, and I am not interested in the dogmas that have grown up round Buddhism. It is the personality that has drawn me. So also the personality of Christ has attracted me greatly.

I LIKED to read the verses—recited every evening in Gandhiji's ashram prayers—which say what a man should be like: Calm of purpose, serene and unmoved, doing his job and not caring overmuch for the result of his action. Not being very calm or detached myself, I suppose, this ideal appealed to me all the more.

I HAVE always felt attracted toward big machinery and fast traveling.

ONE MUST journey through life alone; to rely on others is to invite heartbreak.

I HAVE often yearned for a chance to do some solid, positive, constructive work. Destruction and agitation and nonco-operation are hardly normal activities for human beings. And yet, such is our fate, that we can only reach the land where we can build after passing through the deserts of conflict and destruction. And it may be that most of us will spend our energies and our lives in struggling and panting through those shifting sands, and the building will have to be done by our children or our children's children.

IF I WERE given the chance to go through my life again, with my present knowledge and experience added, I would no doubt try to make many changes in my personal life; I would endeavor to improve in many ways on what I had previously done, but my major decisions in public affairs would remain untouched. Indeed, I could not vary them, for they were stronger than myself, and a force beyond my control drove me to them.

