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# MY DAYS WITH NEHRU

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

*Reminiscences of the Nehru Age* (Vikas, 1978)

*To Priya (now three) and Kavitha (now six)  
the two lively children who dodged  
their parents to play with me  
in Delhi and refuse to  
forget me even after  
a year and more  
of my leav-  
ing them*

# MY DAYS WITH NEHRU

M O MATHAI

L. C. SECTION



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## *Prologue*

This book is in fulfilment of my promise contained in the first. I continue to be guided by the philosophy contained in the preface to my first book. No historic person has escaped the closest scrutiny of history. In an open society governed by elected representatives, people have the right to know all about those who govern them. Only the old people of both the sexes cling to the absurdity of making the senseless distinction between the public figure whom history may claim and the private person in whom history has no right.

I wanted to include in the present book the chapter "SHE" which was withdrawn from the first. I was fully aware that the publication of the chapter would have exposed me to criticism from people with old-world ideas; but I was prepared to face it. However, it occurred to me that it would gravely embarrass the other person involved who is still alive; and I happen to know that the other person does not possess the "couldn't-care-less" attitude which I have.

"The Story of a Film" is a new chapter I wrote for the second book. It contains sensational stuff. The film covers the happening in the Dwaraka Suite of Rashtrapati Bhawan in the afternoon of a day in 1966 and was taken by a senior member of the government's Intelligence Service well-known to me (now retired). The person involved should thank the stars that the film, by a quirk of fate, fell into my safe hands. I am not including the chapter in this book for the reasons mentioned in the preceding paragraph. The publication of the chapter might also cause international repercussions harmful to the country now.

The central figure, I mean the other person, in both the chapters is the same.

Having made some allowance to hoary conventions, I would like to state that history shall not be denied for ever what is its due. I have made arrangements to have the contents of the two chapters made public after the life-time of the person involved. The only drawback is that the present generation is denied the opportunity to draw some lessons from the contents of the two chapters. That, however, cannot be helped.

*Reviews Reviewed*

Originally it was my intention to write and leave a record of my experiences to be published only after my lifetime. During the early part of the emergency I received authentic information that the numerous steel filing cabinets containing valuable archives I painstakingly built up from 1946 onwards at considerable personal expense and kept in the old Prime Minister's House, now called Teen Murti House, were broken open under Indira's personal instructions and made available to an unauthorised person who was asked to destroy certain categories of documents and papers which were considered inconvenient. This inexcusable act of vandalism had its impact on me. Then I had reliable information that my residence was going to be searched in order to take away such papers and documents as were still in my personal possession. This information was conveyed to me privately in good time by two officers of the government Intelligence Service who knew me personally. In fact they helped me to remove the documents, papers and other material to safety. Eventually it dawned on Indira that I was not the person to take this sort of thing lying down and that ultimately she would be the sufferer. So, in her own interest, she came to the conclusion that discretion was the better part of valour and called off her foolish venture.

These two incidents made me change my mind. Thus I decided to accelerate my writing work and to publish the book as early as possible. I finished the work at the end of September 1977.

When I made my decision, I knew that I would be treading on the toes of many people: that my book would be sensational in parts and generally controversial; and that I would be inviting hostile criticism from some newspaper reviewers. I decided to take the risk and face the consequences, instead of looking down on people from the safety of remote elysium.

One criticism is that "the dead tell no tales; and there is plenty in the way of fulsome revelation about men and women who have no rebuttal." This is a fallacious argument. The four greatest historic figures, on whom most books have been written, are the following, in the order mentioned:

Jesus Christ, Napoleon Bonaparte, William Shakespeare, Oliver Cromwell.

Most of the books, if not all, on these historic men were written after their death. Is it the argument that these books should not have been written because "the dead tell no tales and they have no rebuttal?" How absurd!

An interesting biography of Catherine the Great, written long years after her death, has revealed to the world that not a single child of hers was legitimate and that, after the age of 60, one of her earliest lovers, Prince Potemkin, selected a young boy of 20 to be her lover, and Catherine accepted him after mating him with one of her ladies-in-waiting to make sure that he was not suffering from any undesirable disease. Where Catherine was concerned, "mother-hood was a certainty, but father-hood was an act of faith." This remarkable woman, who ruled Russia for 34 years, had innumerable lovers; but she was never dominated by any one of them. It was she who governed Russia, not her favourites. Incidentally, all her lovers were Russians even though she was of German stock.

A recent book on the Bonaparte family has stated "Eliza, the elder of the two sisters of Napoleon, sitting in Italy as the Queen of Naples, made a fortune by selling marble busts of Napoleon and finally she and her husband Murat betrayed him. She went to the extent of sleeping with the Austrian Foreign Minister Prince Meternich in a desperate attempt to safeguard her position after the fall of Napoleon. Jerome sold his 20-year-old daughter for several million Francs to a Russian sadist. The story of her nightly woes ultimately reached the Czar who intervened successfully to rescue her. Pauline, the nymphomaniac and the most likeable of the Bonaparte clan, changed lovers as often as she changed clothes. She always suffered from low blood circulation resulting in perpetual cold feet. In order to keep her toes warm she used to tuck them under the bare breasts of one of her boxum ladies-in-waiting.

Can any reviewer say that the two books mentioned above should not have been written because the persons concerned "had no rebuttal?" How ridiculous! I hope our women politicians will not go on deputation to Prime Minister Morarji Desai "protesting against the desecration of illustrious women's memory" and behave like a bunch of agitated crows.

Voltaire has said "to the dead one owes nothing but the truth." Indians, fortunately, have never been used to ancestor-worship.

In all vital persons sex is a pronounced factor. This was true of Gandhi, Nehru, Julius Caesar, Cleopatra, Napoleon, Madame de Stael, Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Lizst, Catherine the Great, Stalin, Hitler, Ramsay Macdonald, Lloyd George—to name a few. The only significant exception I can think of was Winston Churchill. I knew two persons who were born eunuchs, two who were man-made eunuchs, and one a self-made eunuch. They were the most disgusting "men" I had the misfortune to come across. To women they were



abominable. Women's attitude to them was one of extreme contempt—the same as that of a mare towards a gelding. But one should not ignore the fact that it was the obscure Chinese eunuch Tsai Lun, who invented paper about the turn of the first century AD.

The great historian Lord Acton's maxim "what is concealed is not worth preserving" has great relevance. Any attempt at artificial investing of irrelevant "virtues" in a person and trying to perpetuate it by subtle propaganda is a fraud on history and will not stand the test of time.

One scribe has used the expression "being untrue to one's salt" (*namak haram*) about me. If the truth were to be told, I was as much indebted to Nehru as he was to me. I didn't want a government job from him at any time. In fact I refused one for a whole year in 1946 and stayed out of government.

The justification for certain disclosures in my book is contained in the Preface. Nehru never came down in my estimation even by a millimetre because of his fondness for women. It would have been unnatural if it were otherwise. Nehru did not belong to a religious order which imposed celibacy. And I was never a mid-Victorian prude.

A journalist-reviewer in the *Times of India* has asked a relevant question as to how Nehru managed after I left government in 1959. All except him know that it was not much of a management. It was a sorry spectacle of slow but steady deterioration, both mental and physical, and final collapse of the man I knew. I would like the reviewer to find out how many public statements of Nehru during this period had to be "clarified" by the officials of the External Affairs Ministry.

Arthur M. Schlessinger Jr, Special Assistant to President Kennedy, and a distinguished historian, has referred to Nehru and his visit to the United States in November 1961 in his book *A Thousand Days*. Here are some extracts:

Nehru's strength was failing, and he retained control more by momentum of the past than by mastery of the present . . . He was briefly gay with Mrs Kennedy. But when the talk turned to Vietnam during the luncheon, he fell into remote silence. It was heavy going, then and later . . . The private meetings between the President and the Prime Minister were no better. Nehru was terribly passive, and at times Kennedy was hard put to keep the conversation going . . . It was, the President said later, like trying to grab something in your hand, only to have it turn out to be just fog. It

was all sad: this man had done so much for Indian independence; but he had stayed around too long, and now it is all going bit by bit. To Galbraith he once remarked that Lincoln was fortunate; Nehru, by contrast, much less so . . . The following spring, reminiscing about the meeting, Kennedy described it to me as 'a disaster; the worst Head of State visit I have had'. It was certainly a disappointment, and Kennedy's vision of India had been much larger before the visit than it would ever be again. Nehru was obviously on the decline; his country, the President now decided, would be increasingly preoccupied with its own problems and turn more and more into itself. Though Kennedy retained his belief in the necessity of helping India achieve its economic goals, he rather gave up hope, after seeing Nehru, that India would be in the next years a great affirmative force in the world or even in South Asia.

Ambassador Galbraith has described Nehru's speech at the UN General Assembly in New York on 10 November 1961, as a "performance that was far from distinguished." And Galbraith was an admirer of Nehru.

When the India-China border situation was in an uneasy state in 1962, Nehru said something at the airport in Delhi on the eve of his departure for Ceylon, which surprised me beyond measure. Many did not like Nehru leaving the capital at that juncture. In reply to a correspondent's question about the Chinese menace, Nehru said "I have ordered the army to throw them out." It was obvious that this was the language of a man speaking from a position of weakness. I have information to indicate that this provocative statement of Nehru was the immediate reason for the Chinese crossing the Himalayas into the plains of Assam. The Chinese obviously had no purpose except to gain a psychological advantage. It was also the same statement of Nehru which provoked Chou En lai to say later that Nehru was the most arrogant man he had met.

I have never suffered from over-humility; and I am vain enough to assert that if I were with Nehru officially, the deal with the United States about the installation and partial use of a high-power radio transmitter in eastern India by the Voice of America, would have been nipped in the bud at the initial proposal stage. It was a bewildered man, ill-advised by incompetent and unimaginative officials, who allowed this deal, which would have compromised our sovereignty, to be entertained and almost finalized. If I were with Nehru, Kamaraj Plan would have been limited to Kamaraj and not allowed to assume diabolic significance. If I were with Nehru, no permission would have

been given to place a nuclear power-pack of Nanda Devi as I would have considered the venture an exercise in futility insofar as India was concerned. There is no need to dwell any more on this subject.

A lawyer-journalist reviewer, who writes as if, by some divine dispensation, he is the custodian of the morals of mankind, has given an excerpt from Nehru's press conference of 7 February 1959: "Question: The editor of a Bombay weekly has said that India got the entire Bhilai steel plant because of a private conversation between Mr Mathai and Mr Menshikov. Mr Nehru: I do not know. I have not heard of it." What Nehru said is true; he was only expressing his ignorance. I would suggest that the reviewer might find out from Menshikov who is still alive. *The Bombay Weekly* editor R.K. Karanjia continues to be a much better informed person than this reviewer on many matters.

The lawyer-journalist reviewer has questioned my statement that Nehru kept my letter of resignation pending for six days. If he had the patience, the reviewer could have found out from Appendix III in my book that my letter was dated 12 January 1959, and was published on 17 January 1959. During this intervening period the letter in original was with Nehru. During the period 12 January 1959, to the date of the acceptance of the resignation Nehru had told Morarji Desai that he was not going to accept the resignation. The reviewer can check up with Morarji Desai if he likes. My resignation was accepted after the publication of my letter and that too after I insisted on being set free. If the reviewer had consulted any newspaper, he could have easily verified the correctness of my statement and avoided the most irresponsible and astounding assertion that my resignation was submitted in a huff and instantly accepted! On 18 January 1959, I sent to Nehru a personal letter informing him that under no circumstances was I prepared to continue. I gave him freedom to make public my refusal to continue if he was keen to avoid the impression that he had accepted my resignation because of extraneous pressure. Before midnight he replied:

Personal

PRIME MINISTER'S HOUSE  
NEW DELHI

18. 1. 1959

My dear Mother,

I have your letter of today's date.

I think you are right in what you say.

In view of what has happened it is right for you to offer your resignation and I have to agree to it.

Yours affly  
Jawaharlal Nehru

The acceptance of my resignation was announced in the morning papers of 19 January 1959.

The lawyer-journalist reviewer has classified me as anti-Russian and pro-Israeli. Obviously the man has bats in his belfry, just as Aruna Asaf Ali had in 1947 when she called Nehru the Kerensky of India and made the most profound prediction that he would not last long. That was when the woman was having a brief honeymoon with the Communist Party of India. The rulers of Russia under the Stalinist regime also had bats in their belfry when they called Nehru the running dog of imperialism. John Foster Dulles suffered from the same malady when he violently criticized Nehru and described non-alignment as immoral. Bhupesh Gupta suffers from the same disease when he calls everyone except himself a foreign agent. Recently I met a prominent member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) who also had nothing but bats in his belfry. He went into a vituperative harangue against Nikita Khrushchev, for whom I always had a soft corner. He blurted out all the abusive epithets in the CPM jargon. When he had let off enough steam, I asked him to cool down and tell me in one brief sentence why he hated Khrushchev so much. He replied "Khrushchev was pro-Russian." But in this galaxy of infan-

tile minds, I have no hesitation in according the pride of place to the lawyer-journalist reviewer.

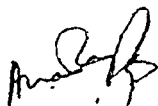
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~~SECRET~~  
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Only

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I understand that the local American Embassy has circulated to a few newspaper men the following item:

"The Soviet 'Diplomatic Dictionary' published at the end of 1950 under Andrei Vishinsky's editorship describes Nehru as one who 'tried to involve India in the orbit of the Anglo-American Bloc' and charges his Government with being 'frightened of the growth of the democratic movement' in India, as well as with having 'given serious aid to the English rulers in the struggle against the national liberation movement in Malaya'."



(A.R. Vyas)

Dy. Principal Information Officer  
6.11.54.

Sri M.O. Mathai,  
Prime Minister's House.

Pis 4/ Ms. 46/11/54/6/AR/11 dt. 6.11.54

Told MR Vyas that nothing circulated  
to newspaper men need be marked SECRET

M. Mathai  
6/11/54

In the mean time I shall give some home-work to the lawyer-journalist reviewer. Apart from Soviet Ambassador Menshikov, I personally liked Malcolm Macdonald, the British High Commissioner, and Ellsworth Bunker, the American Ambassador. I considered both of them as imaginative persons endowed with vision and sincerity and were devoid of pomposity. Both were non-career diplomats. These two sent a private message to me through Secretary-General N.R. Pillai suggesting an informal meeting. They had indicated that the

subject to be discussed was Kashmir. The meeting of the four took place in Malcolm Macdonald's house. Detailed maps of India and Pakistan showing the State of Jammu and Kashmir were at hand. The two diplomats had several talks earlier on the subject. At the outset N.R. Pillai told them that he was not representing the government and that he would only be a silent observer. I said "you all know that I represent nothing and nobody and so I shall speak without inhibition."

The diplomats said that the Kashmir question was a difficult one made more difficult by the cold war atmosphere at the UN. They were of the view that the UN would never be able to solve the Kashmir problem. They said that insofar as India was concerned, wisdom lay in forgetting, for the present, the political aspect of the Kashmir question by concentrating on removing from the minds of the Pakistanis their apprehensions about uninterrupted supply of water from the rivers flowing from Jammu and Kashmir. They advocated an agreement on this and registering it with the UN. I said that the most appropriate thing would be to take up all the rivers of the "Land of the Five Rivers" and hammer out a comprehensive treaty under international auspices; and added that the prospect of achieving this would be brighter in Nehru's life-time. Both the diplomats welcomed the idea; and Ellsworth Bunker said that it was possible to bring the World Bank into the picture. This was the beginning of the Indus Water Treaty. Both the diplomats worked hard on their governments like a pair of beavers until the project took shape.

The two diplomats made a prediction: "If you are patient and leave the Kashmir question alone, within 50 years the atmosphere in India and Pakistan will change and both countries will reconcile themselves to drawing up a permanent international boundary along the line of actual control with adjustments dictated by facts of geography." I said "I doubt if India will agree to give up the sparsely populated Gilgit area which is of strategic importance to a large country."

Ellsworth Bunker, Malcolm Macdonald, and N.R. Pillai are still alive and it is open to the lawyer-journalist reviewer to verify from them.

A young journalist published a review of my book in the magazine *Femina* dated December 30, 1977—January 22, 1978. In the midst of numerous factual errors and some rather foolish statements, he correctly assessed something in me—male chauvinism. Yes, I share the view of John Keats "the opinion I have of the generality of women—who appear to me as children to whom I would rather give a sugar plum than my time—forms a barrier against matrimony which I re-

joice in." One of the things I hate most is to go shopping with a woman. I do not think I can ever sleep in a room at night if there is a woman in it. I cannot bear the thought of sharing a bathroom with a woman. I also share the view of a wisecrack who said about women "You cannot live with them, and you cannot live without them." When Madame de Stael once asked Napoleon "What is the most desirable quality you expect in a woman?" he replied "capacity to produce a number of children." Madame de Stael, who started with having a crush on Napoleon, promptly reported to Josephine, Napoleon's statement, in an attempt to create trouble between the two. When a similar question was put to Kemal Ataturk, while he was in high spirits after "imbibing," by one of his cronies, the old soldier replied in one word "availability." I share Napoleon's opinion, as expressed to Marie Walewaska, "I was a fool to expect understanding from a woman." However, I realise that without women the world will come to an end.

To receive innumerable letters from a variety of people, who have actually read my book, was a refreshing experience for me. Only three of them were critical. Those who expressed themselves approvingly include several educationists, historians, retired judges, and a host of others including prominent journalists, lawyers and some MPs and other legislators who are not obscurantists. Practically all of them deprecated the practice of investing politicians with divinity. One wrote that it is absurd to accuse politicians of being the repository of all virtues, personal or political. He added that politicians should be treated as ordinary mortals; and that if any politician has to be elevated as a *rishi*, let him not be put on a pedestal higher than *Vishwamitra*.

I totally reject the pontifications of ignorant politicians, some not very profound journalists and other hysterical women; and stand resolutely by what is contained in the preface to my first book and in this prologue.

In spite of the ignorant, prejudiced, and unenlightened critics, a well-known non-official organization has included my book in the "suggested readings, on India, for compulsories and *Viva Voce*" for young people who appear for the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), and other Central Services examination. Over 30,000 candidates sit for the initial written examination annually. Other authors in the list include Dr S. Radhakrishnan, K.M. Panikkar, E.M. Forster, Aldous Huxley, V.S. Naipaul, and Arthur Koestler.

Also, in spite of the critics, my book has been translated into the major languages of India.

*Madras*

M.O. MATHAI



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## 1 Shradha Mata

In my book, *Reminiscences of the Nehru Age*, I had mentioned "Shradha Mata" was an assumed name. I was under the impression that she was living in Jaipur as a normal person under a normal name. If I had known the correct position, I would have disguised her and saved her from personal embarrassment. I am sorry about having put her in a position where she has to resort to the inalienable right to denials and concoctions.

The editor of the fortnightly magazine *India Today* took the trouble of sending a team of his editorial staff to Jaipur to investigate and interview the woman in the suffron robe and burdened with a *rudraksha mala* of two strings of oversized beads. Incidentally I must confess that experience has led me to view all *rudraksha malas* with extreme suspicion. The results of their investigations and an interview with her were published in its issue dated 16-28 February 1978. After reading what appeared in *India Today*, I was much impressed by Shradha Mata's consummate skill in taking the editor and the two members of his investigating staff for a ride.

The *Deccan Herald*, a daily newspaper of Bangalore in its issue, dated 15 February 1978, published a lengthy report by its correspondent P. Frederick Ignatius. Since it has considerable relevance, I am quoting it below in full by courtesy of *Deccan Herald*:

BANGALORE, Feb. 14—

*Deccan Herald* is in a position to contradict some of Mr. M. O. Mathai's assertions regarding Jawaharlal Nehru and Shradha Matha in respect of her sojourn in Bangalore.

In the chapter on "Nehru and his Women" in his book *Reminiscences of the Nehru Era*, Mr. Mathai claims that a young woman from the North came to a convent in the city, gave birth to a boy and left the child behind. Mr. Mathai also says, "I made discreet enquiries repeatedly about the boy, but failed to get a clue about his whereabouts. Convents in such matters are extremely tight-lipped and secretive. Had I succeeded in locating the boy, I would have adopted him. He must have grown up as a Catholic Christian blissfully ignorant of who his father was."

The facts are that a woman calling herself Shraddha Matha did come to Bangalore in mid-May 1949 and did give birth to a child in a Roman Catholic hospital a fortnight later. But the child was still-born.

Shraddha Matha did not stay in a convent either. She stayed in a house in Benson Town. She left behind affectionate letters from Jawaharlal Nehru addressed to "Shraddha Matha "

These letters reached Mr. Nehru, not through a convent, but through a noted Hindi scholar and Professor of English, Dr. Karamchand Wade of Cox Town. He got possession of the letters in a curious way which will be described later. Mr. Mathai writes in his book: "In November 1949 a convent in Bangalore sent a decent looking person to Delhi with a bundle of letters. He (the bearer of the letters) said that a young woman from northern India had arrived at the convent a few months ago and had given birth to a baby boy. She refused to divulge any particulars about herself. She left the convent as soon as she was well enough to move out but left the child behind."

The facts are that the young woman was looked after by Dr. (Mrs) Ezekiel and her husband and was taken to a hospital on May 30, where she was delivered of a still-born baby, the same night. She was taken home to her place in Benson Town on June 9 and left the City for Delhi on June 19.

"She however forgot to take with her a small bundle in which among other things letters in Hindi were found," says Mr. Mathai and continues, "The Mother Superior, who was a foreigner, had the letters examined and was told that they were from the Prime Minister. The person who brought the letters surrendered them. But declined to give his name or the name of the convent or the name of the Mother Superior. Nehru was told of the facts. He tore off the letters without any emotion reflected in his face. He showed no interest in the child then or latter."

That is not the way Dr. Karamchand Wade, who is now 85, recalls what happened. According to him Mr. Nehru was all candour and graciousness, took the letters and gave Dr. Karamchand a photostat copy of one of the letters as a keepsake and autographed a copy of his *Discovery of India* and presented to Dr. Karamchand.

Dr. Karamchand asserts categorically that Mr. Mathai was not present anywhere on the scene when he handed over the letters. He also says that Nehru asked him in future to write to him care of Mr. Upadhyaya, one of his Secretaries.

How did Dr. Karamchand get hold of the letters? He practically bought them from a man who appeared dramatically at his house in mid-August 1949.

The man introduced himself as Mr. Ezekiel, a partner in a firm of timber merchants doing business on Wheeler Road in Cox Town a short distance away from Dr. Karamchand's house.

Mr. Ezekiel said that he had come to know that Dr. Karamchand Wade was a noted Hindi scholar. He said he wanted Dr. Wade's in help deciphering some letters written in a north Indian language and handed over a bundle of letters.

Dr. Karamchand took one look at the first letter, sent from the Government House, Lucknow, on 2 March 1948, and was convinced that it was from Jawaharlal Nehru.

Pleading that his wife was more proficient in Hindi than himself Dr. Karamchand took the letters inside his house and had consultations with his wife. Both of them agreed that they must somehow keep the letters and send them on to Pandit Nehru.

Returning to Mr. Ezekiel, Dr. Karamchand asked him as to how he had got hold of the letters. Mr. Ezekiel then produced a letter (now in Dr. Karamchand's possession) which had been addressed to "Shradha Mathajee, C/o. Mr. Asutosh Lahiri, G.S.H.M.S., New Delhi." The letter had been returned by the post office to the sender, Dr. (Mrs.) Ezekiel.

According to Mr. Ezekiel, the woman to whom the letter has been addressed had come to a hospital near the cantonment Railway Station on 15 May 1949. She was pregnant. But as she persistently refused to divulge her name or any particulars about herself for the Hospital Register, she was discharged three days later.

Dr. (Mrs.) Ezekiel, who was working in the hospital, took pity on her and took her first to her own house and later set her up in a rented house in Benson Town. She later took her to a Roman Catholic Hospital in the Civil Station for examination on the day she was discharged from Dr. Ezekiel's hospital. She also took the young woman to the hospital again a week later, but the pains proved false. She was taken to the hospital for antenatal examination on May 24.

On May 30, Dr. Ezekiel examined the young woman and rushed her to hospital in a taxi (the number of which was taken by the Ezekiels for accounting purposes as they kept custody of the young women's money). A still-born baby was born the same night. She was taken home from the hospital on June 9 and she flew to Delhi on June 19, after borrowing her air fare from the Ezekiels. She had left a bundle of letters behind.

Before she left, the young woman had promised to send Rs. 600 to Dr. Ezekiel who had mortgaged her jewels to raise the money for air fare and for her expenses incurred on her account.

In her letter to "Shraddha Mathajee," Dr. Ezekiel says I haven't paid Mrs. Hall yet "you have to pay Rs. 10 for rations, Rs. 1-8-0 for the dhobi and Rs. 50 for house rent" and "I am a poor soul with three children, from where will I get the money to redeem all my gold things which I had mortgaged for the amount to pay for your return back."

After going on for two pages and assuring "Mathajee" that the money that had been given to the Ezekiels would be accounted for till "the last half anna" the letter ends with, "Don't be afraid, I'll never let out your secrets even if my wife is threatened. I'm very much worried about your silence. After you left, many letters, came addressed to you. I got them all with me."

When this letter had been returned to Dr. Ezekiel by the Post Office, Mr. Ezekiel sought out Dr. Karamchand to find out whether there was a clue to the identity and address of the woman who called herself, Shraddha Matha, especially as Dr. Ezekiel had found her repeatedly reading one or other letter from the bundle of letters.

Realising the importance of the letters, Dr. Karamchand gave Mr. Ezekiel Rs. 600 saying that he did not want the Ezekiels to have a poor opinion of his compatriot from the North, or to be out of pocket on her account after doing a charitable deed.

Dr. Karamchand then wrote to Mr. A. Vithal Pai, principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, whom he had known while serving the Government College at Kumbakonam while Mr. Pai had been a Sub-Collector, regarding the letters in his possession.

Mr. A.V. Pai wrote back to "Dear Karamchand," saying other things: "It is of course possible that misleading and plausible interpretations might be put on one or two chits that you may have seen . . . but the Prime Minister himself is not worried about improper or malicious use being made of them. I shall however wait to see the letters when you send them to me."

Mr. Pai also said in his letter that neither he nor the Prime Minister thought that Dr. Karamchand should put himself to the trouble and expense of going over to Delhi for handing the letters over. He suggested that the letters be sent by registered insured cover to his residential address.

Dr. Karamchand wrote again expressing apprehension about the letters and the personal damage they might possibly cause to the Prime Minister if they fell into wrong hands. He quoted one of the letters verbatim (Hindi into Romanised script) in which Pandit Nehru had stated that he might be able to see Shraddha Matha after 10 P.M.

Mr. Pai in reply said among other things: "It may well be that the letter quoted . . . was written by the Prime Minister; but no one need

put any malicious interpretation on it. Evidently you are not aware of the tempo at which the Prime Minister works. He works till 1.30 A.M. or 2 in the morning every night and it is not unusual for him to grant interviews to people after 10 P.M. You will notice that the letter you quote was written from the Lucknow Government House on the date of the death of Srimathi Sarojini Naidu.

“Upadhyaji, who is mentioned in the letter, is one of the Secretaries and so far as I can make out it is possible that the Prime Minister did see her for a few minutes late that evening. The importance we attach to your letter is not because of any interpretation that can be placed in the message that you quote, but on the fact what you say shows up the woman in a very bad light.”

Dr. Karamchand then resolved that it was his duty to take letters himself to Delhi and hand them over to Jawaharlal Nehru in person. He flew to Delhi on September 14 and handed the letters over the next day.

According to Dr. Karamchand, Mr. Nehru didn't say a word about the letters: “He just smiled and thanked me and gave a photostat copy of one of them for a keep-sake. Then he got up, picked a copy of *Discovery of India* and inscribed it for me.”

The book and the photostat copy of the letters are Dr. Karamchand's most valued possessions. He has kept the entire correspondence relating to his brush with history.

Shradha Mata has lost all credibility when she made the absurd and astounding assertion, “Nehru asked me many times to be Vice-President, but I always refused. I was not going to sit in Parliament.” I do not think that Nehru suffered from temporary insanity at any time to implore a young female like Shradha Mata repeatedly to be gracious enough to become Vice-President. Any further attempt on my part at contradicting her is redundant. Nevertheless, I shall make some observations to set the record straight.

I notice that Shradha Mata often refers to herself in the third person especially when referring to Nehru and herself. The only other persons of comparable importance in history who resorted to this practice are Charles de Gaulle and Kautilya!

She says that Nehru had seen her pictures and had questioned Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee, who became her disciple, why thousands of people were running to have a glimpse of her; and that Nehru influenced Mookerjee to bring her to Delhi; and so she came, says she. This is pure concoction. Nehru and Mookerjee were unfriendly to

each other throughout and it is unthinkable that Nehru would enlist his assistance in a matter like this.

Other concoctions are that she was fasting unto death on the question of the name of India being changed to Bharat and that Nehru went to her residence to persuade her to break the fast. There was no need for anyone to fast on this non-issue. The matter was vaguely raised in an informal manner by Rajendra Prasad and some others and was disposed off quietly. Nehru never visited her at her residence or in a park at any time either for hours at a time, as she has claimed, or even for minutes. She has never talked to Nehru on the telephone. Yet another concoction is her claim that her connection with Nehru lasted till 1958. It was only for a pitifully short period—from some time in 1948 to the spring of 1949. After that Nehru never met her; neither did he have any correspondence with her. The few brief letters (in Hindi) Nehru wrote to her were in reply to hers and were never sent by post—always by messenger.

It is pretty obvious that Shradha Mata suffers from hallucinations.

A sentence in the report of *India Today*, “but the most important in the list of her admirers and chelas was the then Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru” only evoked a derisive smile in me. And, the editorial comment, “one resurrected legend from the past was that of a mysterious tantric spiritual, Shradha Mata, who had once held an inexplicable sway over the late Prime Minister of India” can only emanate from a person of unmitigated ignorance. Nehru never chased women; it was always women who chased him. I repeat what I wrote in my previous book that no woman ever influenced Nehru in matters of state or, for that matter, in any important matter.

Some time after Dr. S. Radhakrishnan became Vice-President, Shradha Mata met him and made a request that she be given some facilities to go abroad to spread “Indian Culture.” In all innocence Radhakrishnan mentioned the matter to Nehru in a casual way. I happened to be present in Nehru’s study in the Prime Minister’s House at that time. Nehru sternly discouraged him. That was the end of Radhakrishnan being in her formidable list of “chelas” headed by Mahatma Gandhi!

Now to the report in the *Deccan Herald*. Dr. Karamchand Wade has been described as a noted Hindi scholar. Why such a scholar should seek his wife’s assistance to read the simple brief Hindi letters is beyond my comprehension.

It was from the article in the *Deccan Herald* dated 15 February 1978, that I first heard of the name “Dr Karamchand Wade.” At no

time did the Prime Minister mention the name to me. He had no formal appointment with the Prime Minister; Vithal Pai just took him in. I have written in my first book that the person who came to Delhi with a bundle of letters declined to give me his name or that of the Convent or that of the Mother Superior. It was without the knowledge of Vithal Pai that the nameless person met me twice during the two days after he met Nehru. At the first meeting he raised the question, in a round about way, of the possibility of his receiving a suitable diplomatic assignment. He was well educated and looked a very presentable person. I thought normally he could be as good an ambassador as many of our then-existing ones; but the circumstances were singularly unpropitious. I neither encouraged him nor discouraged him. In the course of the conversation, which was probing in so far as I was concerned, the nameless person admitted that he had not delivered to Nehru all the letters. On a somewhat stern demand from me, he placed on my table the remaining letters and solemnly assured me that none other existed.

The nameless person had told me that Shradha Mata was in a Roman Catholic Convent and not in a Roman Catholic Hospital as he later conveyed to the correspondent of the *Deccan Herald*. He also told me that she gave birth to a healthy baby-boy, and not a still-born child as he later conveyed to the correspondent of the *Deccan Herald*.

Before the nameless person left my office, we had arranged for another meeting the next day. In the meantime I appraised Nehru of what happened at the nameless person's meeting with me and gave him the rest of the Hindi letters. Nehru agreed with me that he should be adequately compensated for his travelling and all other incidental expenses. This was done at my second meeting with him the next day.

I cannot understand how Nehru could possibly have given Dr Karamchand Wade at their only meeting a photostat copy of one of his letters to Shradha Mata. Did Nehru have the time to go to a photographic establishment to have the letter photostated? Or, had Dr. Wade done the mischief in Bangalore before coming to Delhi? Or, is Dr Wade's memory failing him at the age of 85?

Since Dr Karamchand has spoken to the press, I have no option but to make every thing public. I am sorry if I am embarrassing him.

The discovery of the editorial staff of *India Today* that as early as 1932 (when Shradha Mata was only 19) Nehru's photograph was in the *pooja* room of this devotee of *Shakti*, and perhaps she was worshipping Nehru as a *Devta*; and Dr (Mrs) Ezakiel's discovery that Shradha Mata was repeatedly reading one or the other letter "from



the bundle" at Bangalore are not irrelevant in assessing her emotional feelings towards Nehru.

I neither worship living *Devtas* nor *Devis*. The only person in history who worshipped a living *Devi* was Marshall Louis Alexandre Berthier, the famous Chief of Staff of Napoleon. The *Devi* was the beautiful Madame de Visconti, his Italian mistress. To compensate for her physical absence, Berthier erected an altar to her in his tent in the desert sands of Egypt. Every morning and evening Berthier knelt in front of Madame de Visconti's portrait at the altar. I am practical enough to observe that it is not seldom that, like the cassock, the suffron robe covers a multitude of sins.

Shradha Mata of her younger days reminds me of some lines in Hilaire Belloc's *On Lady Poltagrue, a Public Peril*:

The Devil, having nothing else to do,  
Went off to tempt my Lady Poltagrue.  
My Lady, tempted by a private whim,  
To his extreme annoyance, tempted him.

I see no reason to amend anything I have written in my previous book about this so-called tantric spiritual. "What is written has been written."

## 2 *Of Animals and Children, Flowers and Plants*

Apart from his attraction for mountains, love of animals and children as well as flowers, plants and trees was one of Nehru's pronounced qualities. His love of children was totally different from that of professional politicians of the West for whom patting and kissing children in public is a vote-catching gimmick. To all normal people children are a joy to watch and to play with. Nehru saw in their innocent faces and sparkling eyes the future of India. He was convinced that no amount of money spent on children and their mothers was too much, and that it was a sound investment for the future. He was deeply interested in any scheme designed to benefit children and women, more especially the provision of mid-day meal for the underprivileged school children.

Nehru was responsible for Indian schools introducing knapsack which would hang on the backs of children instead of the front or the sides. He wanted children not to be stooping but to be erect while walking with a load of books on their backs. Nehru was interested in almost everything. He retained the curiosity of a child throughout his life. When he heard that the extraordinarily good and motherly American woman, who was the wife of the American Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, had devised some simple contraption, which would be of help to sweepers, he promptly invited her to tea on a Sunday afternoon at the Prime Minister's House. The elderly woman came in style in a huge Cadillac with a long-handled broom. She held the theory that the backs of sweepers in Delhi, particularly women, were bent because they had been using short brooms all their lives. Nehru tried the broom outside the Prime Minister's House. He later asked the Delhi Municipal Corporation and the New Delhi Municipal Committee to introduce the long-handled broom and supply them to all the sweepers. The Ambassador's wife said she felt amply rewarded and made the comment "nothing moves in Delhi unless the Prime Minister takes interest." The book *Ugly American*, which created a sensation in the United States and elsewhere, makes a reference to this without mentioning names of individuals or the country.

Nehru was somewhat rough with children, of course, in a playful mood. He believed in the toughening process for children and young

people. He disapproved of Indira's scheme of herding little school children to shout "Chacha Nehru" on his birthdays. Indira was responsible for declaring 14 November (Nehru's birthday) as Children's Day in India. That is one of the good and appropriate things she has done.

While Rajiv and Sanjay were little children, Indira acquired a sheep dog from Kashmir and named him "Sona." He was no good for the children as he spent all his time wandering as a hefty stray dog looking for fights. He, however, never failed to come to the house exactly on time for his daily meal. He committed the mistake of his life by biting the hand of Lady Mountbatten as she tried to fondle him. That was the end of Sona. At Nehru's instance, Indira sent Sona to the vet, without the knowledge of the children, to be put out.

Then Indira's aunt Krishna Hutheesing, sent a golden retriever puppy (female) for the children from the litter of her favourite dog. The little puppy was named Lassie. She grew up as a lanky and extremely intelligent dog. She had the peculiar capacity to draw out the children to play with her.

Rajmata Saroj Devi of Nabha gave me a golden retriever (male). Indira named him "Simba" after a dog of that name she had as a little girl. Simba grew up too much attached to me and refused to go up to Lassie and the children except while I was away in office. He was not destined to stay long in the Prime Minister's House. One morning he jumped on U Nu, Prime Minister of Burma, while passing through the corridor, in front of my study, to his bedroom in the Prime Minister's House where he was staying as a guest. The same day I despatched Simba to a doctor in Faridabad who had an eye on him for a couple of months.

Soon Lassie met with a sad fate. Early one morning the sweeper, unknown to anyone, took her out of the grounds of the Prime Minister's House to his own quarters where he had to attend to some personal work. On returning to the Prime Minister's House, Lassie was run over by a truck at the gate and killed. The children were desolate. Every one in the house from the Prime Minister downwards was sad and attended Lassie's burial.

I bought a golden retriever puppy (female) from a breeder in Hoshiarpur in 1955. Indira was not well when the puppy came. So the puppy had to remain with me for a couple of weeks. She wouldn't sleep at night except on my bed. And I was not used to frequent turning and tossing during sleep. So sound sleep was denied to me for two weeks. I had to put up with it. When Indira got well,

she took over the puppy and gave it a Russian name—Pepita Nichivo. She was called Pepi for short.

Soon a friend in Simla popularly known as “Kutha Maharaj” sent me a fluffy male golden retriever puppy. He looked beautiful and adorable. It so happened that Indira was unwell when he also arrived. So I had to put up with the new puppy sleeping on my bed for a couple of weeks. We all thought that the new puppy would ultimately be a mate for Pepi. But Pepi turned hostile the moment she saw the puppy and bit him. Once she bit the puppy in the presence of Nehru who got angry with me for not making Pepi friendly with Puppy. I said I knew nothing about animal training. “The important thing is: have you tried?” asked Nehru.

The next day was a Sunday. That afternoon I spent in my bedroom with Pepi and puppy, trying hard to make them friends. Puppy was willing and eager, but Pepi was difficult. Then my tea came. I gave a biscuit to Pepi and none to puppy. I gave Pepi another biscuit and ignored puppy even though he mewed and yelled. I continued to fondle Pepi at the expense of puppy. Thus Pepi understood that puppy was neither taking away her food nor my affection from her. She then quietly approached puppy and licked him on his face. Just at that time Nehru came to my room and was pleased at what he saw. He took both of them out on the lawn to play.

Indira named puppy “Madhu.” Pepi and Madhu became famous as Nehru’s dogs, and two of the most photographed ones.

Pepi and Madhu liked nothing better than being taken out for hunting squirrels. On Sunday afternoons the children and I used to take them out for the hunt. Once a squirrel ran and climbed a small tree. The children shook the tree and the squirrel jumped. Pepi made no mistake and ran away to the middle of the big central lawn with the squirrel in her mouth. She did not harm the squirrel and just wanted to play with it. She did so for some time. And lo! a kite swooped down and carried off the squirrel. Pepi was in a rage and continued to bark at the sky. Ever since then she would bark fiercely at any large flying bird including the crow.

As Madhu grew up, it was discovered that he was a eunuch. But I have never seen a golden retriever so golden, so handsome and so big as Madhu. Indeed he looked leonine. Whenever Indira and I happened to be beyond the hearing distance of others, I used to call Madhu “Krishna” (Menon), and she used to call him “Feroze” (Gandhi). Madhu used to get rashes all over his body in summer. So he was usually sent to Raja Bhadri, Lieutenant Governor of Himachal Pradesh, at Simla for summer. Bhadri was a lover of dogs and

he had several. He told me that in Simla Madhu and a huge Alsatian fought over a bitch. Madhu killed the Alsatian and mated the bitch with no result forthcoming.

Pepi, after the age of three, was mated with S.K. Patil's golden retriever. Pepi got her first and only litter in January 1959. Patil's golden retriever later fought with an Alsatian at India Gate over a bitch—always the eternal triangle. Both Patil's dog and the Alsatian died in the fight. Patil had the first pick from Pepi's litter.

After Indira moved to No. 1 Safdarjung Road, I saw Pepi and Madhu only once. They took my one hand each in their mouths, then fell on their backs and cried. I felt immeasurably sad, and had them quietly taken away. They were old then.

In the chapter "Rajiv and Sanjay" I have also referred to the two horses *Bijli* and *Timbuctu*.

In the early fifties someone from Sikkim gave Nehru a beautiful male "Lesser Panda" (Himalayan cat bear). A little later a female panda was acquired. The male was named "Bhimsa" and the female "Tashi"—both Sikkimese names. A photograph of Nehru with Bhimsa appeared in my first book. Bhimsa was a playful extrovert eager to show off; but Tashi was shy, retiring and lady-like. They spent about six months of the year in Delhi in a specially constructed enclosure enveloping half of a grown-up tree, and the summer and rainy season in Naini Tal where some of the animals from the Lucknow Zoo were transferred for the summer. Every morning, after breakfast, Nehru used to feed Bhimsa and Tashi and play with them. They were fed on milk with Quaker oats or rice, bamboo leaves, berries, fruits and sometimes a little honey. Nehru was somewhat rough with them. I once told him that they need not be put through the toughening process. He shut me up by saying that I did not know a thing about dealing with animals. I smiled and told him that the first thing needed was patience.

One morning, after Nehru played with the pandas, Bhimsa escaped. In the afternoon he was located at the top of the tallest tree in the sprawling estate surrounding the Prime Minister's House. The police attempt at rescuing him was so clumsy that it only frightened and infuriated the animal. When I returned from office in the evening, the "rescue operation" with sticks and poles, net and beating of tin was still on. I asked every one to withdraw and go away. I brought milk in the bowl Bhimsa was used to and some bamboo leaves. Bhimsa watched these and me. I put them down and retreated to some distance away. Bhimsa, who was hungry by then, quietly came down and finished the food. Then he looked at me without suspicion

and slowly walked back to his enclosure to join Tashi.

Nehru got indisposed one day—a rare occurrence—and had to be confined to his bed-room. That morning he could neither feed the pandas nor play with them. At tea-time I locked up the dogs and went out to the enclosure of the pandas. Tashi wanted to be left alone; but Bhimsa came out at my calling him and followed me into the house, climbed the steps to go upstairs and on to Nehru's bed-room through the long corridor. Bhimsa examined the room and scrutinized everything in it thoroughly. By that time I had handed over to Nehru a small bunch of bamboo branches with leaves. Bhimsa went up to Nehru, who was sitting up in a chair, and rubbed Nehru's leg with his body. As he fed Bhimsa with the bamboo leaves, Nehru asked me: "How did you manage to bring him up all the way?" I said: "Patience, and not being rough with him!" He smiled and was very pleased that Bhimsa came. I took Bhimsa back to his enclosure and fondled him on the way. Then I went up and released the dogs. Pepi smelled me, sniffed and ran to Bhimsa's enclosure and angrily barked at the pandas.

Bhimsa and Tashi became indirectly responsible for generating hostility in Sanjay towards me lasting for several weeks. Before breakfast on 1 April I rang up Sanjay on the internal telephone system and told him that Tashi had given birth to two baby pandas and that Bhimsa was guarding them. Off he ran outside in great excitement only to meet with disappointment. He got furious and came racing calling me names. As he exhausted all the naughty words in his vocabulary, I told him: "You are no better than the Kerala bumpkin boy who, when told that an ox had given birth to a calf, ran out to see the calf." He did not like the story either. By then it was breakfast-time, and he went up in a rage. At the breakfast table he bitterly complained against me to "Mummie" and "Nana"; but they pointed out to him that 1 April was All Fools Day and explained to him its background. Sanjay also complained about the story of the ox, the calf and the Kerala bumpkin boy.

Nehru was presented with several tiger and leopard cubs caught by villagers mostly in Madhya Pradesh. They were either abandoned by their mothers or orphaned by cruel poachers. These cubs were invariably kept in enclosure in the grounds of the Prime Minister's House until they were about six months old and then given away to the New Delhi Zoo. Nehru would put on gloves and play with them whenever he could find time.

Nikita Khrushchev sent to Nehru, as a gift, a strikingly handsome horse—a young black stallion. I was very frisky. Nehru was anxious

to ride the horse; but we contrived to prevent it as the horse happened to be an uncontrollable one. The horse was handed over to the army for its stud farm. The King of Saudi Arabia presented two beautiful grey Arab mares. I have never seen such elegant animals. These too were handed over to the army.

President Rajendra Prasad told the Prime Minister that he would like to keep an elephant in the Rashtrapati Bhavan estate. Nehru cautioned against it though he did not object. The President managed to get an elephant and asked his body-guard to look after it. The elephant did not take much time to come into musth. It started creating terror and havoc in the entire estate. Ultimately the animal had to be shot dead.

Nehru followed the example of Aurangzeb and sent many elephants to zoos all over the world for the benefit of children.

A goose and a gander were kept in the grounds of the Prime Minister's House for some time. They became a menace as they started biting innocent children and women who came to the house. They had to be disposed of.

Sanjay wanted to rear some ducks. So we bought some duck's eggs and a brooding hen to incubate the eggs. When the eggs were hatched and the ducklings came out, both the hen and Sanjay put on an air of triumph. For some days the hen and the ducklings were not let out. Then one day the hen proudly walked out into the grounds where the ducklings saw the lily pond. Immediately they made a beeline for the pond and enjoyed themselves to the utter dismay and consternation of the hen and the delight of Sanjay. All the cackling of the hen warning of danger of drowning in the pond had no effect on the ducklings. I explained to Sanjay that the hen and the crow were unsuspecting foolish birds; the ducks cheated the hen and the cuckoo cheated the crow. I did not, of course, tell Sanjay what Bernard Shaw said in this connection: "A bachelor is either a hermit or a cuckoo." I thought that Shaw should have applied it to spinsters also.

Sanjay loved to listen to stories. As a little boy he offered to give me all his pocket-money if I told him one story a day. I tried to oblige him; but often I ran out of stories and I let him keep his pocket-money. Sanjay was fascinated by the story of a naughty boy who made a brooding hen sit on a dozen white round stones of the size of eggs. The boy had collected the stones from a river bed. The hen sat on the stones for 25 days and nothing happened. She grew suspicious, got out and fiercely pecked at the stones, made a lot

of angry noises and ran away. Sanjay made me repeat this story to him three times.

In London someone gave Nehru a Begonia plant in a small pot from a green-house. In the plane, while returning to India he would frequently ask: "Has that plant been watered?" On arrival in Delhi it was transferred to a larger pot and kept in the shade. Sometimes in the midst of something important he would remember the Begonia and ask me: "Has that plant been watered?" I had to tell him that it was replanted in a larger pot with fresh manure, was regularly watered and, true to its reputation, it had grown putting on coloured leaves of 'elephant's ears and angel's wings.' I assured him that I was having a look at the plant almost daily. But I never heard the last about the plant until one day I brought in the pot with the plant full of pink flowers.

As was my practice wherever I stayed, I planted a large number of flowering trees and shrubs as well as fruit trees in the Prime Minister's House estate, including three choice date palms from Saudi Arabia which that country seldom allowed to be exported. Nehru liked phalsa juice. So I planted a large area with phalsa which did very well and yielded masses of succulent berries. The flowering trees I planted included not only several scarlet-coloured Flame of the Forest, which Indira was fond of, but also two yellow-flowering Dhak (flame of the forest) which I got from Shantiniketan, besides some shrubs from Kerala such as the wild-growing ixora. I even tried to grow a couple of coconut trees, but they could not survive the dry heat and the cold winter.

In the Prime Minister's House estate I developed a rose garden of my own. I got plants from England, Germany, Poland, France and Italy and some excellent Indian varieties. Nehru was a man who hated wasting anything. He used to put into a cigarette tin what came out of his electric shaving machine every day. He would hand over to me the tin when it was full and ask me to use it as manure for roses. I used to apply it to those plants which produced perfect buds. I wanted to grow banksia rose, but Dr B.P. Pal, the agriculture scientist and noted rosarian, discouraged me. He said it won't survive the Delhi summer. However I did not give up. Some years later I brought a few cuttings from Almora. Two of them germinated but only one survived. I planted it at the foot of a Jacaranda tree at No. 2 President's Estate where it flourished and flowered every spring. It must be still there. From it I reproduced a plant and gave it to my good friend Billy Badhwar who is a keen gardner, a naturalist and a conservationist. Whenever the name of Dr B.P. Pal occurs to me I



invariably remember Professor Harold Laski's essay on "the limitation of the expert."

A story was given currency about Nehru and the rose by Nehru's sister Krishna Hutheesing. She wrote a nasty piece on Nehru in the American magazine *Ladies' Home Journal*. Among other things she mentioned three points: (1) office coarsened Nehru, (2) Nehru was over-fond of puddings, and (3) wearing of the rose in the button-hole of his *achkan* became a practice after a beautiful young woman started sending him a rose daily. I had items (2) and (3) contradicted by Vincent Sheean, the noted author and esteemed contributor of the *Ladies Home Journal* which published it prominently in the form of a letter to the editor. Vincent Sheean had quoted me as his authority. Krishna Hutheesing was furious. She wrote to me the nastiest letter I have ever seen. I tore it off and put it into the waste paper basket, and sent her a three-word reply "Go to Hell." She threatened to forward it to Nehru. I again replied, "Go to Hell." Wisdom dawned on her at last and she did not carry out her threat. I wished she had.

Nehru was never overfond of puddings. In fact he did not care for them. I cannot think of anything more absurd than Krishna Hutheesing's assertion that office coarsened Nehru. He was too sensitive and refined a person to be coarsened. And what is more, he was bigger than any office he held.

The beautiful young woman Krishna Hutheesing had in mind was Mridula Sarabhai who was far from beautiful. Nor did Mridula know the difference between a cabbage and a rose.

Nehru liked long-pointed rose buds for his button-hole. A number of them were placed on his dressing table every morning by the *mafi* in a small vase for him to choose. He changed the buds generally three times daily. There is no romance attached to the rose in so far as Nehru was concerned. The rose in India, indeed everywhere, is beautiful and Nehru was a lover of beauty.

I had expected Congressmen in the Indian Parliament to start a "Red Rose League," as the British Conservative MPs started the "Primrose League" almost immediately after the death of Disraeli whose favourite flower was the primrose. To India Nehru meant infinitely more than what Disraeli meant to Britian. But it is futile to expect imagination from Indian politicians or to associate them with anything beautiful.

### 3 *Stranglehold of Astrology*

Ever since man appeared on earth, he had been fascinated and overawed by the universe with its stars and planets and other "heavenly bodies." Astrology is the ancient "art" or "science" of divining the fate and future of human beings from indications given by the positions of stars and other heavenly bodies. The study of astrology and the belief in it, as part of astronomy, is found in a developed form among the ancient Babylonians and Assyrians. Starting with the belief that man's life and happiness are largely dependent upon the phenomena in the heavens, that the fertility of the soil is dependent on the sun shining in the heavens, as well as upon the rains that come from heaven, that on the other hand the mischief and damage done by storms and floods, to both of which the valley of the Euphrates was almost regularly subject, were to be traced to the heavens, the conclusion was drawn in ancient Babylon and Assyria that all great Gods had their seats in the heavens. Astrology spread from Babylon to Greece about the middle of the 4th century B.C., and reached Rome before the beginning of the Christian era. In India and China astronomy and astrology largely reflect Greek theories and speculations; and similarly, with the introduction of Greek culture into Europe, both astronomy and astrology were actively cultivated in the region of the Nile during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Astrology was further developed by the Arabs from the 7th to the 13th century, and in Europe the 14th and 15th centuries astrologers were dominating influences at court.

In China palmistry is said to have existed 3,000 years before Christ, and in Greek literature it is treated even in the most ancient writings as well-known belief. Now it is practised in nearly all parts of China. It is also extensively practised in India. It is probably from their original Indian home that the traditional fortune telling of the gipsies has been derived.

It was in India that Cheiro perfected his trade as an astrologer-palmist.

Louis XIII of France had an astrologer who was an avaricious man. He had committed several crimes in the pursuit of money. He wielded considerable influence on the King. Cardinal Richelieu dis-

liked the astrologer and wanted to eliminate him from access to the court. He built up a formidable case against the astrologer and submitted the file to the King recommending his execution. The King sent for the astrologer and told him: "You have predicted many things most of which have come true; but you have not made any prediction about your own death." The astrologer was intrigued. He said: "Your Majesty, I have predicted my death, but I felt it prudent not to tell anyone." "Why so," the King asked. The astrologer said: "Your Majesty, my death will occur a week before your Majesty's." The King fell into deep thought. Recovering, the King said: "I have before me a file from my government listing your crimes and misdeeds and asking for your execution; I give you a last chance. Any repetition will earn you life-imprisonment." The King returned the file to Cardinal Richelieu intimating that the last warning had been administered to the offender. Then the King hastened to send for his Chamberlain and instructed him to look after the astrologer's comforts with great care and ordered that food and wine from his own table should be served to the astrologer.

In modern times no people are under the influence of astrology and palmistry as the Indians from the villages to the nation's capital. *Muhoortam* (auspicious time) is invariably determined by pandits and astrologers for every marriage or important ceremony. Before a marriage is decided, the horoscopes of the boy and girl are examined by astrologers and pandits to determine compatibility as is done in regard to "blood groups" in several Western countries. In some parts of India no one will get out of his house during *Rahu-Kaalam* which extends to 90 minutes daily during day-time.

Early in the fifties Dr Sampurnanand, who was a remarkable character in many ways, wrote to Nehru about astrology suggesting that he should stop making fun of it publicly. Nehru replied to say that he did not wish to ridicule astrology but that it was a dangerous thing for people to condition their minds on the basis of astrological predictions.

Two men, who were abject slaves to astrology, palmistry and even black-magic, were President Rajendra Prasad and Minister Gulzarilal Nanda. Rajendra Prasad's favourite astrologers predicted emphatically that he would step down from the Presidency and become the Prime Minister. Barkis was willing but peggatty did not oblige. Nanda, who wasted much time on *havans* and *pujas* and other futilities, was told by his astrologers that he would become the Prime Minister. In a sense the prediction came true when he acted as the Prime Minister for a few days, each time twice—after the death of Nehru and after the death of Lal Bahadur. At the time of the formal election of the leader

of the Congress Party in Parliament after the death of Nehru, Acting Prime Minister Nanda made a momentous announcement to a small group of friends: "I am going to sacrifice myself." This came as a great disappointment to most Congress MPs as they felt they were deprived of an opportunity to sacrifice him.

Most ministers and members of Parliament subjected themselves to the influence of astrologers and fortune-tellers in varying degrees. The astrologers and other fortune-tellers had their field day on several occasions when harvesting was plentiful—the time of distributing party tickets, election time, the time of formation of governments, and reshuffles of government—apart from the never-ending continuous process. Government officials were not immune from the influence of astrology. Apart from astrologers and other fortune-tellers, there exists in at least three places—Madras, Meerut and Hoshiarpur—Nadis containing a large number of significant horoscopes and their readings inscribed on very old palmyrah leaves which are frequently consulted by believers.

T.T. Krishnamachari was somewhat of an amateur astrologer; the great scientist, Dr K S. Krishnan, who was soft-spoken, erudite, cultured and a delightful person, whom I knew well and admired, was a believer in astrology even though he never went to an astrologer for predictions about himself. His interest was largely intellectual. To the end he had an inquiring mind.

During the time of the Chinese aggression, astrologers and soothsayers were working overtime. All kinds of rumours were set afloat about the government and the fate of Nehru. At that time there appeared on the scene a weird man from Bihar with his black magic. Rajendra Prasad used to be one of his customers. This time he was brought to Delhi in great secrecy by another Bihari who had retired as the Governor of a state and was staying in Delhi where he possessed a house. The late Maharaja Yadavendra Singh of Patiala became the patron of the weird man with the help of the former Governor. One item of black-magic was that a pencil would get up in the dark and write answers to questions. Most of the questions happened to be about Nehru and the answers were to suit the predilections of the questioners. After one sitting the Maharaja, who always had foolish political ambitions which, he thought, could be achieved in an under hand manner and with the help of money, decided to invite a carefully selected group of top army brass and expose them to this black-magic. I received authentic information about it. I went to Nehru and suggested that Home Minister Lal Bahadur might be asked to get rid of the black-magic man from Delhi at once. I disclosed to him the

source of my information. Nehru sent for Lal Bahadur and, in my presence, conveyed the information to him. Lal Bahadur had to act swiftly, and he did. At the appointed time Maharaja Yadvendra Singh, his army friends and the former Governor could find no trace of the black-magic man. Little did they know at that time that their man was in a train, under police escort, bound for Patna with instructions to keep off Delhi for six months.

Indira always believed in astrology. One evening in the mid-fifties Nehru left office rather early and drove straight to Maulana Azad's house where he told me that I might go home and send back the car for him within half an hour. When I arrived in the Prime Minister's House, Indira happened to be downstairs. Noticing that I had arrived alone, she stopped the car. She looked somewhat agitated and told me—"The whole day I had been worried about what Papu's horoscope says—that one of his legs will be disabled. I am troubled about the possibility of a minor car accident. Your being with him is a comfort for me. Now you have left him and come back. I wish you would go back to him." Without any argument I left and waited in the Maulana's house. Nehru was annoyed at my wasting time waiting for him. On the drive back to the Prime Minister's house, I had to tell him the reason why he found me in the Maulana's house. He asked me: "Why did you listen to her bilge? You should have laughed it away." Incidentally, the prediction proved right. One of Nehru's legs was disabled, and he had to drag on one foot; but it was not due to any accident but the result of a stroke.

On 6 August 1967, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit wrote to me from Dehra Dun enclosing a newspaper clipping containing a report of some predictions about Indira by the amateur astrologer K.G. Datta. The predictions were inferences drawn from the interaction of the personal horoscopes of the "dramatis personae." They were:

(1) V.V. Giri would emerge as India's man of the people to win the election for Presidentship.

(2) Indira Gandhi would endure several threats to her position for the next 18 months (from August 1967) and would remain at the helm of affairs till May 1982.

(3) Friction within the political structure would cause it to disintegrate during the next 12 months (from August 1967). Many heads of those above 55 years would roll before stability is finally attained.

The prediction about Indira being at the helm of affairs till May

1982 disturbed Vijaya Lakshmi. Considerable credence was attached to this prediction because K.G. Datta had, in November 1961, correctly predicted the fall of the Labour Government in Britain, landslides in Chile, and bloodshed in NEFA; he had also foretold Nehru's death "before 30 May 1964" and also Lal Bahadur's death. Vijaya Lakshmi must have heaved a sigh of relief in March/April 1977 at Datta's prediction going wrong about Indira. Astrologers have the peculiar capacity to unsettle people temporarily. Sometimes they give the credulous temporary hope too.

In 1963 a Tamil Christian, known to me personally, met Indira in New Delhi. He, like Cheiro, is an astrologer-palmist. He was in Ceylon for some time and had correctly predicted the assassination of Prime Minister Solomon West Ridgeway Dias Bandarnaike. This prediction was known to several people. Immediately after the assassination, he feared for his life and managed to leave Ceylon. The Madras friend, who renounced his religion, but not the booze, and reverted to Hinduism for the sake of his trade, showed me the note book in which the impression of Indira's autograph at the bottom of the page. His prediction was that within three years Indira would be the Prime Minister. From then on the astrologer-palmist was a frequent visitor to Delhi. He soon got on to L.N. Mishra who was a pathetic victim of any astrologer who passed by. Gradually the astrologer-palmist began to wield considerable influence over Mishra who would bend low to touch his feet. And the astrologer-palmist became a contact man for several businessmen and was constantly in Delhi living in expensive hotels and imbibing more than was good for him. The astrologer-palmist had a roaring time financially until the death of Mishra. He also kept in touch with Indira.

In the spring of 1970, egged on by L.N. Mishra and Dinesh Singh, Indira frantically sent for the astrologer-palmist from Madras. On arrival in Delhi, he saw everyone perturbed at reports of several astrologers who had predicted dire things for Indira and had given publicity for them. The astrologer-palmist consulted his note book and gave a bold prediction that Indira would remain firmly in power till 1977. Mishra and Dinesh Singh called several newsmen to meet the astrologer-palmist who broke the good news to them. The prediction was prominently published by newspapers all over India. I saw it in the *Hindustan Times* and the *Statesman* in New Delhi in their issues of 10 May 1970. The stock of the astrologer-palmist rose sky-high with those "who mattered" in Delhi. And his income through various sources also went up beyond his expectations. It did not take long for him to build a large house in Madras and to set up a printing press

for his son. He deserved all these because of his successive predictions about Indira both of which came true.

Indira's long-distance contact with the Madras astrologer-palmist was Maragatham Chandrashekhar. She was the first Special Envoy of the Prime Minister.

The marriage of the astrologer-palmist's daughter took place in Madras in May 1972. At the functions Indira was represented by the ubiquitous Yashpal Kapoor. The Governor of Madras and his Cabinet were dutifully present. The same evening Indira landed at the Meenambakkam airport where she greeted the newly married couple and gave the astrologer-palmist a present of Rs 10,000. L.N. Mishra sent a much bigger amount.

The astrologer-palmist accompanied Indira twice to the ancient Devi Temple at Kanya Kumari. It was at his instance that Indira sent through L.N. Mishra a golden crown studded with precious stones for the Devi at the Kanya Kumari Temple. The astrologer-palmist is a devotee of the Kanya Kumari Temple and also the Tirupati Temple which has also been visited by Indira more than once.

During the Emergency the astrologer-palmist lost touch with Indira. Her entourage put him off whenever he tried to see her. He was to discover later that an astrologer called Shastri had appeared on the scene.

After the death of Mishra the stars of the astrologer-palmist were not on the "ascendant." Businessmen slowly deserted him. Once he was arrested in Madras by the police on a complaint from a Delhi hotel for non-payment of bills. What happened was that the businessman concerned refused to pay the bills because the astrologer-palmist failed to fulfill his promise of getting his business done.

The last time the astrologer-palmist met Indira was in April 1977 after her defeat at the elections. He found her shattered and desolate. She complained that he had not seen her for a long time. He explained to her that her staff had thwarted his many attempts to meet her. She said that what had happened was totally unexpected and that nobody had predicted it. He reminded her of his prediction in 1970 that she would be Prime Minister till 1977 and showed her the relevant newspaper clippings. She asked him to visit the house at 12 Willingdon Crescent, to which she was going to shift, and do some *puja* and say some prayers in the room in which she was going to stay. He did it dutifully and returned to Madras.

Now the astrologer-palmist sits in Madras complaining that Indira discarded him and took the advice of the astrologer called Shastri and ordered election. According to the Madras astrologer-palmist, Shastri,

who is a hoax, assured Indira that she would get 350 seats in Parliament. The astrologer palmist chants two things now: (1) *Vinasa Kalay Viparita Budhi*, and (2) "when God decides to destroy a woman, He first makes her mad."

Wearing of *rudraksha mala* and visiting the temples by Indira were a part of her faith in astrology. When she said some time ago publicly that she was wearing the *rudraksha mala* on the advice of V.K. Krishna Menon, I could not help laughing. Any way she had lost credibility in 1958 in so far as I am concerned. Apart from that, I doubt if Krishna Menon knew what a *rudraksha mala* was. He was to a very large extent a de-nationalized person.

Cicero, Savonarola and La Fontaine were pronounced opponents of astrology. In England Jonathan Swift, the British satirist, is credited with having given the death-blow to astrology. In January 1708 Swift, under the name of Isaac Bickerstaff, issued a solemn prediction that the notorious almanac maker John Partridge would die at 11 P.M. on 29 March, and on 30 March he published a letter confirming this prophecy. Partridge's fatuous denial and reply to Bickerstaff elicited Swift's amusing "Vindication of Isaac Bickerstaff Esq" in 1709. The episode left a permanent trace in literature, for, when in 1709, Steels was to start the *Tatler*, it occurred to him that he could secure the public ear in no surer way than by adopting the same of "Bickerstaff" associated with the most amusing hoaxes ever perpetrated against the quackery of astrologers.

In spite of Jonathan Swift, astrology lingered and later flourished in Great Britain. The great poet Lord Byron (1788-1824) was a believer in omens and astrology. While he was a young boy, an English soothsayer by the name of Mrs Williams had predicted that he would die after completing 36 years of age. And that is exactly what happened. A British "learned journal" published that in 1968 there were 5,000 astrologers in England and that their number was increasing year by year. In 1968 some of the top ones in England were earning as much as 30,000 pounds a year. Much progress must have occurred since 1968.

*Time* magazine dated 21 March 1969 published an article about astrology in the United States. There were then 10,000 full-time and 175,000 part-time astrologers in the United States. Like almost everything else in the United States, astrology was being computerized. A company called Time Pattern Research Institute Inc had programmed a computer to turn out 10,000-word horoscope readings in two minutes; it expected to be doing 10,000 such readings in June 1969. Carrol Richter, the doyen of America's professional astrologers, had



a byline that was carried by 306 newspapers each week-day into some 30 million American homes. His annual earnings were well into six figures in dollars. Since the *Time* magazine wrote in 1969, further strides must have taken place in the United States in the realm of astrology.

Many Americans and other westerners believed that India was a land of astrology and of snakes. *Time* magazine and some British journals have enlightened them about astrology. In so far as snakes are concerned, Armand Denis, the noted naturalist, has stated in his fascinating book *On Safari*: "The United States are a snake collector's paradise and there are probably more snakes per square mile in New York state than in any tropical area of the world."

An interesting astrologer lived in Switzerland early in the present century. One day a middle aged man, with a long face full of worries, approached this astrologer. The astrologer looked at his chart and palm and told the man that he had financial worries, health problems and family troubles; and that these would continue till the age of fifty. The man was nearly 49 and was quite prepared to go through his ordeal for a little more than a year. In great expectation he asked the astrologer the question, "and after that?" The astrologer coolly replied: "After that you will get used to it."

#### 4 *A Visit to the Soviet Union*

After the din and dust surrounding my resignation from the government was over in May 1959 I went abroad spending six weeks in the Soviet Union in two instalments, on my way to Europe and London and on my way back to India. On both occasions I stayed at our embassy in Moscow as the personal guest of Ambassador K.P.S. Menon and his remarkable wife whom I always called "Amma" (mother). For purely personal reasons of my own, I did not accompany Nehru on his visit to the Soviet Union. In a sense I preferred a private visit to a conducted one. KPS arranged for me to visit several places in and around Moscow. I also visited Yesnaya Polyana (the place where Tolstoy lived), Kiev and Leningrad.

During the first leg of my stay in Moscow, the British Labour Party leader Hugh Gaitskell and Aneurin (Nye) Bevan were there on official invitation. Before leaving Delhi, I had received a communication from Nye to say that he would like to come to lunch with me at the embassy in Moscow and had expressed a preference for light Indian food not highly spiced. Soon after his arrival in Moscow, Nye rang me up and fixed the date for the lunch. The day before the lunch, KPS fell ill and had to go to a nursing home. As it invariably happens with this long-married couple, so terribly devoted to each other, Amma also developed some ailment, real or imagined, and went with KPS to the nursing home. The only other sophisticated couple, married for so long and still so terribly in love with each other, I have come across, were Sir Lewis Casson and Dame Sybil Thorndike.

Nye was late for lunch. He said that Khrushchev was in high spirits and kept on talking. He said that after the launching of the *Sputnik*, Khrushchev was obsessed with the power and grandeur of the Soviet Union and kept on saying that the future lay with the Soviet Union and not with the United States. Nye also told me about his visit to a school specially arranged by the Soviet authorities at his request. He had brought with him a young naturalized British citizen of Polish origin who knew Russian very well. Nye had always felt that it was unwise to depend on Soviet interpreters. So he and his interpreter descended on the school with which they were very impressed—about the teachers who were all women, the curriculum, and amenities of

various kinds. He asked the teacher of a class of about 30 students if he could ask them some questions individually. The teacher agreed. With the help of the interpreter, he started asking his questions—what the name of the father was and what his job was. Nye discovered that it was an exclusive school for the new elite, not a “neighbourhood school” for all. All the students were the children of people high up in the party hierarchy or of top technical and business executives of government industrial and commercial undertakings. Not a worker’s child was there.

At Yasnaya Polyana I was deeply impressed by the simple mound of earth beautifully grassed over the place where Tolstoy was buried—the grave of his horse nearby. This simple monument fits in eloquently with the style of living during the last phase of Tolstoy’s life. I came away with the thought of how much money we in India waste on monuments of no particular artistic value. In some ways I am an admirer of Nana Fadnavis. He was a munificent patron of art but a very discriminating one. I wish we had one like him now in India to deal with the monstrosities that are put up and regarded as works of art. For example, there is a statue of Asaf Ali recently put up in Delhi. It is so small that Asaf Ali, in his *achkan*, looks like a doll-like girl in frock.

On Nana Fadnavis’ evening drive in a horse-drawn carriage, a man threw himself before the carriage and narrowly escaped being hooved to death. Nana Fadnavis questioned him. He said he had perfected an art after 12 years of hard work. He had to spend another year by going from pillar to post to obtain an audience with Nana Fadnavis in order to show him what he had perfected. The virtual ruler of the Marathas promptly allowed him an audience. Fifteen minutes before the appointed time, the “artist” arrived with a small silk screen on a stand, a tiny bowl of raw rice and an empty bowl. The screen had a small hole in the centre. He arranged the screen placing the empty bowl in front of it in such a way that he could not see it. He sat with the bowl of raw rice six feet away. Nana Fadnavis arrived with his retinue and gave the signal to the “artist” to demonstrate. He took the rice grains from the bowl and threw them effortlessly one by one; each went through the tiny hole in the screen and landed in the empty bowl. When the demonstration was over, the whole audience rose and applauded. They felt certain that Nana Fadnavis would bestow on the “artist” a *jagir* in recognition. Nana Fadnavis got up and ordered, “take him away and give him a bowl of cooked rice; a man who wasted 13 years of his precious life on this futility deserves nothing better.”

If ever I get a chance to come face to face with the Almighty, I would like to ask him why he tortured two of the world's greatest and noblest men—Socrates and Tolstoy—with selfish nagging wives. Confucious deserved what his wife did to him—she left him because he was such an inconsiderate, insufferable, and demanding dandy.

Before leaving for the Soviet Union, I had heard that “tips” had been abolished in that country as a decadent burgoise practice and that Moscow was the cheapest capital in the world for a hair-cut (equivalent to one rupee while it was Rs 1½ in any of the hair-cutting saloons in New Delhi). During the first leg of my stay in Moscow, KPS Menon's Personal Secretary took me out for a hair-cut. Much to his dislike, I insisted on walking to a tall multi-storeyed building, not far away from the embassy, the ground floor of which was a hair-cutting saloon and the upper portions were residential flats in one of which premier ballerina Ulanova lived. After the hair-cut I saw KPS Menon's Secretary handing over to the Russian hair-cutter of the “Public Sector Enterprise” the equivalent of a little more than five rupees. I was furious; but I kept my cool. While walking back, I questioned the young man. He told me: “Sir, you are here for a few weeks; I am going to be here for another two years. Unless I tipped the hair-cutter, the next time I come here, he will ignore me, and make me come several times and finally the embassy may have to enlist the assistance of the Protocol Divison of the Soviet Foreign Office before I can get a hair-cut!” Abolition of tips in the Soviet Union amounts to no more than the constitutional abolition of untouchability in India. They are all in the minds of men. The acquisitive instinct in man can never be blotted out completely. I do hope that India will never nationalize the barber trade.

KPS told me that long-playing records were very cheap in Moscow and that I might buy a set of records of the music of *Swan Lake* by the famous Bolshoi Theatre conductor; and he lent me the money for it. Alfred Gonsalves, the First Secretary of the embassy, who knew Russian very well, took me to GUM, Moscow's new department store which compares favourably with any in western Europe, England, or the United States, except in its contents. GUM was opened with great fanfare on the day Beria was shot, to divert people's attention.

At a particular counter at the GUM I noticed a couple of suspicious characters coming and going and whispering to the salesman. I asked Alfred about it. He told me: “Many products are in short supply. When stocks of such products arrive, the management displays, for public information, bill-boards, about such arrivals. There is a rush

for buying and several people succeed. Then there will be an announcement that stocks have been sold out. Smart chaps will linger on, approach the salesman when there is nobody around, place a few rubles under the counter and get away with the stuff." Corruption started when man appeared on earth and it will last until life is extinguished in the planet. Corruption, like diabetes, can never be cured: it can only be controlled.

Alfred Gonsalves also took me for a short ride in the Metro. Moscow Metro is famous for its lavish splendour and cleanliness. He told me a story about how Russians react to inconvenient questions. A group of American engineers visited the much-advertised fabulous Moscow Metro soon after its construction was complete and were vastly impressed by the extravagant use of marble and decor. They anxiously waited for the train; but none came as the service had not actually started. In their impatience the Americans tauntingly asked their Russian counterparts: "But, where are the trains?" The Russians were annoyed and asked the Americans a counter-question: "How about the Negro question?" The American were dumb-founded.

I visited an "Open Market" in Moscow where peasants, mostly women, who had taken advantage of Khrushchev's policy of relaxation by allowing them a limited area to cultivate their own vegetables and fruits and rear chicken, pigs etc. and sell them wherever they liked, brought their produce to sell to whoever was prepared to pay the maximum. The lively haggling which was going on reminded me of a varitable fish market—which I do not decry.

I visited a state farm and a collective farm and listened to all the lectures interspersed with statistics mostly expressed in terms of percentages which I view with suspicion. When somebody tells me that production of natural rubber in the Soviet Union rose by 2,000 per cent in 1959 since the "Great October Revolution," I would like to know what exactly was the production of natural rubber before the "Great October Revolution." Was it five pounds crudely extracted and processed from a single tree in a botanical garden in the extreme south of the Soviet Union? There is some truth in the saying: "There are three kinds of lies in the world—the lie; the black lie; and statistics"! Only a scientist with great mental integrity can correctly employ and properly interpret statistics.

While I visited the state farm and the collective farm, I contemplated on the background of these institutions in historical perspective. And what Winston Churchill wrote in his famous book, *The Second World War—Volume IV (The Hinge of Fate)* came forcibly to my mind. I quote below the relevant extract from the book:

*Moscow, 15th August 1942*

*Dinner to Winston Churchill at the Kremlin by Marshal Joseph Stalin*

It is now past midnight, and Cadogan had not appeared with the draft of the communique.

"Tell me," I asked, "have the stresses of this war been as bad to you personally as carrying through the policy of the collective farms?"

This subject immediately roused the Marshal.

"Oh, no," he said, "the Collective Farm Policy was a terrible struggle."

"I thought you would have found it bad," said I, "because you were not dealing with a few score thousands of aristocrats or big landowners, but with millions of small men."

"Ten millions," he said, holding up his hands, "It was fearful. Four years it lasted. It was absolutely necessary for Russia, if we were to avoid periodic famines, to plough the land with tractors. We must mechanise our agriculture. When we gave tractors to our peasants, they were all spoiled in a few months. Only Collective Farms with workshops could handle tractors. We took the greatest trouble to explain it to the peasants. It was no use arguing with them. After you have said all you can to a peasant he says he must go home and consult his wife, and he must consult his herder." This last was a new expression to me in this connection.

"After he has talked it over with them he always answers that he does not want the Collective Farm and he would rather do without the tractors."

"These were what you call Kulaks?"

"Yes," he said, but did not repeat the word. After a pause, "it was all very bad and difficult—but necessary."

"What happened?" I asked.

"Oh, well," he said, "many of them agreed to come in with us. Some of them were given land of their own to cultivate in the province of Tomsk or the province of Irkutsk or farther north, but the great bulk were very unpopular and were wiped out by their labourers."

There was a considerable pause. Then, "Not only have we vastly increased the food supply, but we have improved the quality of the grain beyond all measure. All kinds of grain used to be grown. Now no one is allowed to sow any but the standard Soviet

grain from one end of our country to the other. If they do, they are severely dealt with. This means another large increase in the food supply."

I record as they come back to me these memories, and the strong impression I sustained at the moment of millions of men and women being blotted out or displaced for ever. A generation would no doubt come to whom their miseries were unknown, but it would be sure of having 'more to eat and bless Stalin's name. I did not repeat Burke's dictum "if we cannot have reform without injustice, I will not have reform." With the World War going on all round us it seemed vain to moralise aloud.

Later Stalin was to tell Winston Churchill that the death of single individual evoked great sorrow and immeasurable pathos; but the death of a million was a matter of statistics. This is more or less the maxim which guided Sidney Webb in his writings on Soviet Union. He explained away the liquidations by reducing them to percentages of the total population.

The slavish practice of some "progressive" politicians in India calling people possessing a few acres of land "Kulaks" cannot be too strongly deprecated. Will the "progressives," if there are any in the Indira Congress, brand Indira as a Kulak because she has five acres of agricultural land?

Russia had been prone to famines throughout its history. For example in the Great Famine of 1601-03 millions of people perished. There was the spectacle, during this period, of people in Moscow and elsewhere eating grass during summer and hay in the winter, and parents killing and cooking many of their children. In 1610 Russia was plagued by famine and disease and, coupled with external threats, the country was on the point of national disintegration.

There is no doubt that considerable progress has been achieved in the Soviet Union in food production, but not to the extent of comfortable self-sufficiency in spite of Khrushchev's flamboyant programme of "Conquest of Virgin Lands." Even now the Soviet Union is obliged to periodically import from the United States and Canada millions of tons of foodgrains. It is perhaps inevitable because vast regions of the country are unsuitable for farming and still substantial regions have only brief spells free from severe winter conditions. From this point of view India is placed in an advantageous position.

On 22 March 1973 Dr S. Pavlov, leader of a group of six Soviet scientists, historians and transport experts, on completion of a fortnight's tour of India, told newsmen in New Delhi that against a

per capita consumption, of 200 to 250 kilograms of grain per year, the Soviet Union was producing about 700 kilograms per capita per year. He added that whatever grain the Soviet Union imported from other countries was to carry out its commitment to "Socialist countries."

Obviously the "Socialist countries" in this particular context do not include China, Albania and Yugoslavia. That means only the small countries of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, German Democratic Republic and Poland are involved. According to Dr Pavlov's statement, the Soviet Union produces three times the foodgrains needed for its own population—which means it can spare for the "Socialist countries" two-thirds of its foodgrain production. Considering the total population of all these small "Socialist countries," one is entitled to ask "why imports at all?" Dr Pavlov has under-estimated the intelligence of his Indian readers.

Alfred Gonsalves took a daughter of KPS, the elder sister of the wife of KPS (Mrs Candeth), and me to Leningrad. We saw the usual sights including a visit to the *Hermitage*, originally the winter Palace of the Tsars but now a magnificent art gallery. In the morning of our return to Moscow from Leningrad I discovered that we had over an hour to spare. The two ladies and Alfred agreed to my suggestion to visit the small Pushkin museum in the city (where Pushkin lived), before leaving for the airport. We called a taxi whose driver told us that he knew only the large Pushkin museum some considerable distance away and not the small one. At our suggestion he asked another taxi driver the way. That individual came to us and said that he knew the way but that he would not tell the other driver. So we had to take his taxi to visit the museum and later to proceed to the airport. I told Alfred that the *tongawala* in Old Delhi would not behave in the way the Russian driver did, and that he would have gladly helped another *tongawala*. I asked Alfred the reason for the strange behaviour of a driver who belonged to a nationalized taxi services. Alfred said: "The answer is simple; if a taxi driver does more than a certain minimum mileage a month, he gets a bonus. So it is the acquisitive instinct in man." "From each according to his capacity to each according to his need" remains a slogan in the Soviet Union.

Apart from a law court and a school, I was taken to the Public Library by Alfred. I had heard that after the Library of Congress in Washington, the Moscow Public Library was the largest in the world. I wondered about and reached the Indian section. I asked for poet Kumaran Asaan's *Karuna* in Malayalam. Within a matter of minutes the girl at the counter produced the book with a pleasant



smile. She told me: "I have also got the complete works of this great poet who died young, how sad!" I told her that Kumaran Assan and Vallathol were my favourite poets in Malayalam. Thereupon she promptly brought down a few books by Vallathol. Before leaving I thanked her and told her that I hoped that some day she would be included in one of the Soviet cultural delegations to India so that, apart from other things, she could have an opportunity of visiting the land of the two great poets we briefly discussed. She was an unusual girl to work at a library counter.

I visited the Museum of Religion in Moscow about which I had heard a great deal before. I came away with the impression that as an instrument of propaganda it is a waste of effort.

Certain parts of Moscow, out of the beaten track I managed to visit, were as shabby as the shabbiest part of Old Delhi. Housing shortage was more than acute in Moscow. Congestion was near to suffocation. But the hopeful aspect was that housing construction was going on at tremendous pace and on a large scale. But, unlike in Delhi and other metropolitan cities of India, rents were not only not murderous but well within the paying capacity of the people. In fact housing is subsidized and the benefit goes to all. Cooking gas was almost free.

Bread was cheap; but prices of shoes and overcoats were inordinately high. Indian-made shoes are sold in Moscow at more than ten times what it cost the Soviet government to buy from the Indian market. I saw more than one person in Moscow walking about with a contraption made of hay on their feet. I could not help seeing a few beggars in Moscow and its outskirts. The craze for foreign stuff among the people was as strong and wide-spread as in India. I mention these not to belittle the achievements of the Soviet Union but to indicate the necessity of having a balanced mind.

Black caviar (I dislike pink caviar as much as pink champagne) was prohibitively costly in Moscow. It is a foreign exchange earner for the Soviet Union and a much sought-after delicacy by the westerners. The meagre supply of Russian black caviar, required by the Indian embassy for its entertainment, is bought from a duty-free firm in Denmark where the stuff is not costly. So is the case of scotch whisky required by foreign diplomatic mission in London. Because of heavy excise duty, scotch whisky is infinitely cheaper with the duty-free firm in Copenhagen than in London.

My visit to Moscow in 1959 coincided with the retirement, later in the year, of the incomparable premier Ballerina Ulanova, the world's greatest living exponent of the art. I was fortunate to see her on the

stage of Bolshoi Theatre in one of her last performances—in the ballet “Gazelle.” Whenever Ulanova was dancing, her ex-husband would invariably be sitting wide-mouthed in one of the front rows.

I did not fail to visit Lenin’s Mausoleum in the Red Square stretching the length of the Kremlin’s massive east wall. There lay the bodies of Lenin and Stalin side by side—their faces remarkably serene with no trace of the turbulence they engineered and lived through. Determination was writ large on the face of Stalin who led his people to victory in the Second World War. I think it was a year after my visit to the Soviet Union that Stalin’s body was removed from the Mausoleum by Khrushchev unceremoniously and buried in some corner of the Kremlin grounds. Opinions can vary on this act of Khrushchev. Ever since man has existed as a self-conscious social creature 30,000 years ago or less, he yearned to be remembered after his life-time. In the middle of the present century an old semiliterate Englishman, living in London, walked about the streets always with his pockets bulging out with a copy of Plato’s *Republic* and a copy of Shakespeare’s *Four Great Tragedies*. When a friend asked him why he was carrying these books, which he had never read, he replied “the chances are that I will die as a result of a bus knocking me down. Then there will be an item in the obituary column of the *Times* mentioning my scholarly interests.”

Incidentally, the name “Red Square” has nothing to do with the Bolshevik Revolution. The great square bore that name from the time the “Third Rome” was built. “Red” in the Russian language also means “beautiful” and it was from that meaning that Moscow’s main square derived its name. The theologians of the Russian orthodox church produced the doctrine of the “Third Rome.” It held the first Rome had fallen into heresy, and, as punishment, had been overthrown by barbarians. The second Rome, Byzantium, had also become heretical in acknowledging the supremacy of the Pope at the Council of Florence in 1438—and consequently had been overrun by the Turks. However, although “two Romes have fallen, a third stands, and a fourth there shall not be.” The “Third Rome” was Moscow, the capital of the last truly Christian nation on earth, and the residence of a Tsar who in his power was “similar to God in Heaven.”

Flanked by the towers of the Kremlin with its onion-shaped domes, the great square was an impressive open space and, after Ivan the Terrible built the magnificent St Basil’s Cathedral in the 16th century to commemorate his victories over the Tartars, it became more beautiful still. Its long, broad promenade, which separated the political and

mercantile centres of the city, served Moscow much as the forum served ancient Rome.

Khrushchev has done one thing which marks him out as a man not endowed with a sense of history. The changing of the name of Stalin-grad into something nobody can remember was a barbaric act of vandalism. No other name in the Second World War, or perhaps in history, has epitomised so completely human valour, endurance, determination, faith and triumph. I do hope that one day the Soviet people will compel their government to reinvest the city with its illustrious name to adorn for ever the pages of the history of a heroic people. The Soviet Union is not unused to re-writing history. Even the British have done it. The *Oxford History of India* by Vincet A. Smith, which was standard textbook prescribed for college students in India, has described the Taj Mahal as "a barbaric ostentation completely devoid of artistic merit." I find that the third edition of the book by the arrogant and ignorant ICS official (issued in 1958) has been drastically revised and re-written by sensible men such as Dr A.L. Basham, Dr J.B. Harrison, Sir Mortimer Wheeler and Dr Percival Spear. In the revised edition references to Taj Mahal are "inimitable Taj," "unrivalled monument" and "the unique beauty of the architectural masterpiece."

It is well known that the Soviet Union has consistently supported the freedom movements among subject peoples. But the Soviet Union's intervention in the Spanish Civil War in support of the Republican cause was not all that *nishkama Karmam* as it was made out to be. General Alexander Orlov of the Soviet Intelligence Service (NKVD) arrived in Madrid on 16 September 1936, about two months before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, to head a large Soviet mission of intelligence and military experts. For two years he was the Chief Soviet Adviser to the Republican government on intelligence, counter-intelligence and guerilla warfare. Before Madrid fell, the Republican government had kept in an ammunition dump cave about 725 tons of gold—the treasure of an ancient nation accumulated through the centuries.

The Republican government was uncomfortable about keeping the treasure in a cave and of its falling into Franco's laps. About that time Orlov received a direct code cable from Stalin signed in his code name "Ivan Vasilyevich" making him responsible for managing to get the gold out of Spain and transporting it to Moscow. Orlov easily managed to convince the Spanish Republican Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and Finance Minister about the advisability of transferring the gold reserves to the Soviet Union for "safe keeping." Orlov despatched the

gold by ship to Odessa. When the treasure reached Moscow, Stalin threw a lavish party for the top NKVD brass. At the party Stalin said "they will never see their gold again just as they do not see their own ears." The transaction represents the biggest single act of plunder in history.

Franco learnt about the missing gold as soon as he took Madrid; but not a word was said about it by his government for almost 18 years. The Spanish currency, already weak, would have surely collapsed if it had become known that the national coffers were nearly empty. The Spanish official silence was broken in December 1956, soon after the death of Negrin who was the Spanish Republican Prime Minister just before Franco's victory. In his papers a receipt from the Soviet government was discovered. A few months later a typically ironic article in the official paper *Pravda* (which in the Russian language means "Truth"! ) admitted that some 500 tons of gold had indeed been received in 1936 and a receipt issued by the Soviet government. The gold, it went on, was to guarantee payment for Soviet planes, arms and other goods delivered to the Spanish Republic. Not only had all been spent, but a balance of 50 million was owed to Soviet Russia!

After a stay of three weeks in the Soviet Union, I left for Geneva and London via Prague. I travelled in a Russian aeroflot jet. Leaving Moscow at 10.30 A.M. I arrived in Prague at 10 A.M. This reminded me of a story relating to the time difference between the Philippines and the United States—which is almost 24 hours. The Counsellor of the American Embassy in Manila sent a cable to the State Department in Washington stating "deeply regret to report that His Excellency the Ambassador died tomorrow."

I returned to Moscow from London via Geneva and Prague where I spent a couple of days. Prague appealed to me as a gracious city where I did not witness any outward signs of the rigours of a communist regime even though the city was lacking in gaiety. I spent another three weeks in the Soviet Union before finally returning to India.

Alfred Gonsalves was a delightful companion. He struck me as a young man of considerable promise in the Foreign Service. He was one of the very few young men in the Foreign Service, I have come across, who did not have any grouse about his salary, allowances and perquisites. He was interested in more serious and substantial matters. I understand he is now the Indian Ambassador in Tanzania.

Before returning to India from the Soviet Union the impression I gathered was that the major cause of the phenomenal advance of the Soviet Union was the immense natural resources of that vast country and not communism. I asked myself, in the unlikely event of the small

enterprising country Denmark coming under communist regime, what would be the result. It would only result in sharp deterioration of the high standard of life in that country. What will be the result if communism takes over in a small country like Ceylon with little known natural resources? I doubt if the production of coconut or rubber or tea or tobacco will register any substantial increase. Communism, since the days of Marx, has become largely out of date. India's future depends on its vast natural resources, its scientists, engineers, technical manpower and reasonably stable and competent governments dedicated to the welfare of the people—and not on communism which, in certain circumstances, can be a reactionary force.

Another strong impression I gathered in the Soviet Union in 1959 was that the process of relaxation would continue. The spirit of man cannot remain suppressed for long. Rigours and rigidities would slowly disappear and this great country, now a territorially contented nation, if left alone, would gradually give up the idea of exporting revolutions, and settle down ultimately, as France did after the Revolution, as a said country, with liberal institutions established but without giving up certain basic gains of the "Great October Revolution."

I have always held the view that among the events of real revolutionary significance in the history of mankind, the French Revolution and the Russian Revolution are not of major importance. On the fertile delta of the Tigris and Euphrates, some time in the fourth millennium B.C., an unknown Sumerian produced what must surely be man's greatest single technological achievement. He made the wheel—the greatest of all revolutions.

More than any Indian Ambassador, KPS had the longest tenure at one post abroad—Moscow. He and his wife are endowed with the rare capacity to make friends and to retain friendship. During the tenure of KPS Indo-Soviet relations steadily developed, and economic and commercial ties, which were practically non-existent before, grew to a remarkable extent. KPS possessed the one quality which was needed most in Moscow—flexibility of mind. His wife, Amma, who has deep roots in the right type of Indian traditions, but with a modern mind, was a great asset to him. There was, however, a complaint against KPS—that he was a little too much identified with everything Russian. In fact some people look upon KPS and his wife as a pair of brown Russians, more especially because of their unflinching annual pilgrimages to the Soviet Union.

From Moscow I travelled to Delhi in the Russian aeroflot jet. For breakfast I was served beef steak. I have no religious or other objec-

tions of eating almost anything; but I cannot bear the thought of eating beef for breakfast. I had no choice. The attitude of the flight crew was "take it or leave it." So I left it, and went without breakfast. For the rest of the journey I felt proud of Air India and blessed J.R.D. Tata for once.

## 5 *A Political Impropriety Set Right*

Some time in August 1958 Mrs Tara Cherian, Mayor of Madras, came to see me with a problem confronting her husband, Dr P.V. Cherian, the noted ear-nose and throat surgeon, who was elected as Chairman of Madras Legislative Council in 1952. He was re-elected as a member of the Council in 1958 for another period of six years. Propriety demanded that, as he was re-elected to the council as a member, he should be re-elected as its chairman. But Chief Minister Kamaraj, who lacked finesse throughout his life, entertained other ideas. He wanted a man called Allapichai as the chairman and made no secret of his intentions. Kamaraj should have thought about this matter earlier and told Dr Cherian of his intentions so that Dr Cherian could have, on his own volition, bowed out and ceased to be a member of the Council. Having made him a member again, it would have been an insult to the office Dr Cherian held if he were not re-elected as the Chairman. Mrs Cherian was naturally exercised over the matter. I assured her that at the appropriate time the Prime Minister and the Congress President would give earnest consideration to the matter.

The Prime Minister spoke to Congress President U.N. Dhebar on the subject. The Congress President pointed out the impropriety to Chief Minister Kamaraj who gave the impression that he agreed. I informed Mrs Cherian about the developments. But Kamaraj proved unpredictable and till almost two days before the party meeting on 9 September 1958, stuck to his man Allapichai.

On 5 September 1958 Mrs Tara Cherian wrote to me a frantic letter reading as follows:

MAYOR OF MADRAS

Mrs. P.V. Cherian  
(Personal and Confidential)

RIPON BUILDINGS MADRAS  
(Res) 5 Victoria Crescent,  
Madras-8, 5-9-1958.

Dear Mr. Mathai,

I thank you very much for your letter. I thought everything was going on alright till I heard this morning, when I went to meet

the delegates of the 10th International Agriculture Economists Conference, who arrived from Mysore, that there is going to be a different trend. Mr Bhaktavatsalam, Home Minister, was with me to receive the delegates and he told me that two days ago he had a talk with the Chief Minister here, and, in the course of the conversation, the Chief Minister made it very clear to him [Mr. Bakta-vatsalam] that he was for Allapichai. They have fixed the Congress Legislature Party meeting on 9 September and the executive to meet earlier to decide about the chairmanship. My husband also seemed to have talked with the Finance Minister, and although his inclination is towards my husband, yet he made it clear that the Chief Minister is fully backing the other man. Sorry to give you all this worry, but if anything is to happen at this juncture (only a few more days are left), it should be done immediately as he has fixed the party meeting to the last hour, and if any decision were taken it will become irrevocable. May I therefore request you kindly to put in your last effort to see that Panditji sends his directive to the Chief Minister here (Dhebarbahai is not in Delhi). I leave it completely to you to do whatever you feel is the best, and I know you will do it. As the last resort I feel that instructions should be sent to the Chief Minister to do the right thing, otherwise it will be too late.

I hope you don't mind my troubling you. With our kind regards,

Yours sincerely,  
Sd./- Tara Cherian

Shri M.O. Mathai,  
Prime Minister's House,  
New Delhi.

On the same day Dr Cherian also wrote to me on the subject. This letter is quoted on the next page.

On 7 September 1958, U.S. Malliah, MP, a friend of Kamaraj, telephoned to the latter at my instance. Malliah told Kamaraj in no uncertain terms that the Prime Minister would not like him to commit the impropriety in the case of Dr Cherian. That settled the matter.

A very prominent Congress MLA from Madras wrote a letter to the Prime Minister on 10 September 1958, the day after the party



DR. P. V. CHERIAN, M.L.C.  
 GENERAL SECRETARY, CONGRESS PARTY

PHONE 1231,  
 5, VICTORIA ERECTORY,  
 TROMBAY, BOMBAY-4

5-9-1958.

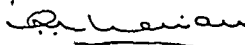
My dear Mr. Matthal,

My wife has already written to you. From what I gather they have created a very distressing situation for me. I had a talk with Mr. C. Subramaniam and R. Venkataraman today. C. Subramaniam was definite that the C.M. is working in the direction of Allapichai. Venkataraman also spoke on the same lines. The meeting of the Congress Party to decide on the candidate will take place at 6 P.M. on the 9th. At 5-30 P.M. they have an Executive Committee meeting. I am sure the C.M. will insist on Allapichai's nomination.

We were most happy and jubilant when we received your letter a few days ago saying that Kamraj had agreed to my nomination. I do not know what has happened after that. I do hope something will be done from Delhi to effectively see that I am nominated.

We are sorry to give you this trouble, but you will appreciate how difficult the situation has become. We shall be grateful for all your help. Thanking you and with best regards,

Yours sincerely,



Shri N.O. Matthal,  
 Special Asst. to the P.M. of India.

meeting at which Dr Cherian's name was approved. I quote the letter on p. 40.

I will be failing in my duty as a Congressman if I do not bring to your notice the reactions and the depth of feeling in the party, to the nomination of Dr P.V. Cherian as the Congress party's nominee, for the Chairmanship of the Legislative Council.

Our Leader Shri K. Kamaraj explained at the party meeting yesterday that it is the desire of both you and the Congress President that a convention might be established that the Chairmen of the Legislative Councils and Speakers of Assemblies may be continued in the same office if they should be re-elected to these bodies. While we concede that a convention of this sort may be

good and desirable if strong Partymen are elected to these posts, thrusting an unwanted candidate with a veiled directive is a serious blow to democratic principles and traditions. Dr Cherian, in the first instance, is not a Congressman in the accepted sense of the term. He was brought in as Chairman in the year 1952 by Rajaji more as an expedient and to get the support of Independents like Dr A. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar and others in opposition.

During the British period Dr Cherian and his wife Mrs Cherian were their ardent supporters and admirers. As Principal of the Medical College in the year 1942 he expelled a number of students who participated in the 1942 movement. During those days any one clad in Khadar was a provocation to him. He is devoid of any national feelings. He is essentially an opportunist making the best of the Government in power.

His accidental election in 1952 under the peculiar circumstances then existing has now placed him in an advantage over all Congressmen. The veiled direction of the High Command asking the Party to re-elect him has put all the members of the Party in an embarrassing position. I may tell you, sir, that at the Party meeting yesterday, not a single member was for Dr Cherian. It was unanimous wish that he should go. The Chief Minister explained that we must respect the wishes of the Prime Minister in this matter, in spite of what we may personally feel about it. All that I can say is what has happened is not good for our Party or for the State. Several Congressmen who toil night and day for the Party are beginning to wonder whether it is not all in vain.

Few politicians speak the whole truth; and Kamaraj was no exception. Kamaraj failed to inform the party of the mistakes he had committed and gave the wrong impression that the Prime Minister was thrusting Dr Cherian on the party. Kamaraj could have avoided problems for himself and others if he had dealt with Dr Cherian as the P.M. dealt with Ananthasayanam Ayyangar, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, who was privately advised in advance not to seek re-election to the Lok Sabha. In fact it was Ananthasayanam Ayyangar himself who formally announced his intention not to seek re-election to the Lok Sabha. Later he was sent as the Governor of Bihar.

On 11 September 1958, Mrs Cherian wrote to me. I quote the letter on next page.

MRS. P. V. CHERIAN

RIPON BUILDINGS,  
MADRAS.

(Personal)

(Res) 5 Victoria Crescent,  
Madras-8, 11-9-1958.

My dear Mr. Matthai,

I cannot adequately express my very sincere thanks to you for all what you have done. I feel <sup>that</sup> had it not been for the timely help given by you and the people at the top in Delhi it would not have been possible for my husband to get re-elected. It was a most anxious time and we were kept in suspense till the last minute. Anyway as you told me the "let us wait and see" policy of yours had done it! You must have seen from the papers that my husband <sup>was</sup> the only <sup>proposed</sup> name, and ~~therefore~~ <sup>selected</sup> after the Party had selected him ~~he~~ was unanimously and he was installed in the Chair this morning at 10 A.M. I am writing to you first. Once again a "very big Thank You" and believe me my husband and I are very grateful to you for all that you have done. With our very kind regards,

*I am fully aware of the shade work that has been put behind the scene! Inc*

Yours sincerely,

*Sara Chari*

Shri M.O. Matthai,  
Special Asst. to the Prime Minister,  
Prime Minister's House,  
New Delhi.

On the same day Dr P.V. Cherman also wrote to me. The letter is quoted on the next page.

I am glad Dr and Mrs Cherman prospered thereafter. At the instance of President Radhakrishnan, Dr Cherman was appointed Governor of Maharashtra towards the latter part of 1964 in succession to Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit who gave up the governorship as she did not like to continue as "the organ grinder's monkey." She joined active politics again.

The Cherman episode in Madras earned me the permanent displeasure of Kamaraj. But it did not bother me.

DR. P. V. CHERIAN



FORT ST. GEORGE  
MADRAS

September 11, 1958.

My dear Mr. Matthai,

I am very happy to inform you that this morning I have been unanimously elected Chairman for a period of six years - that is coterminous with my present term of membership of the Legislative Council. I am again expressing to you my heartfelt and sincere thanks for all your help in this connection. I shall embrace the earliest opportunity to come to Delhi when I shall certainly call on you.

With our best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

(P. V. Cherian)

Shri M.O. Matthai,  
Special Assistant to the Prime Minister,  
New Delhi.

## 6 *Nehru's Mail*

The biggest price a celebrity has to pay is to receive a terrific amount of mail daily.

Next to Americans, Indians are the greatest letter writers. Indians are next to none in writing anonymous letters.

I had issued standing instructions to the mail staff to put in the waste paper basket all anonymous letters except any about me which was rare. I did not think it was proper for me to suppress anonymous letters about me. I invariably put them up before the Prime Minister.

I have recollection of having suppressed only one letter. It was from C. Rajagopalachari. Rajaji, after relinquishing all offices, had turned bitter, formed the Swatantra Party, and started criticizing and advising the Prime Minister publicly. On the resignation of T.T. Krishnamachari from the Cabinet following the storm over the "Mundhra affair," Rajaji wrote from Madras gloating over the exit of one of his early antipathies, and recommending K. Santhnam as the new Finance Minister. I thought Rajaji had forfeited his claim to offer private advice unsolicited. In any event the letter would have only irritated the Prime Minister; and there was not ghost of a chance of Santhanam being considered. About ten days later I did mention the matter to the Prime Minister who laughed it off.

I had also issued standing instructions to the mail staff to collect stamps from all letters, Indian and foreign, and keep them country-wise.

A substantial part of the foreign mail came from the United States. Numerous children wrote and asked Nehru for autographs, autographed photographs as well as stamps. Nehru was particular about obliging them. Occasionally an interesting or amusing letter from a child was put up to the Prime Minister who loved to send a personal reply.

Innumerable Indian children also wrote and asked the Prime Minister for autographs, autographed photographs and postage stamps. Some of them sent leaves from their autograph books and some sent whole books. Nehru was generous with his time for these children; and all their requests were attended to. Many Indian and American children sent their pocket-money to Nehru when they heard of floods

and other natural calamities in India.

One day a letter from Lebanon addressed to "Bandit Nehru" was received through post at the Prime Minister's Secretariat in 1949. It read:

To.

Bandit Nehru,

Dear Sir,

I am sorry to disturb you with this letter, but I am fond in keeping world's personalities' Signatures.

I'll be much Obliged if you will accept to do a small favour with a very humble Chap and supply him with Your signature on your favourable book "Look at India"

Waiting Your lovely Answer  
I remain Sir,

Farouk Ghirib.

12/4/49

Farouk Ghirib  
Chief Accountant, Pjuleh  
I. O. P. C.  
P. O. Box, 150,  
Tripoli:-  
Lebanon

In the early years in office Nehru received a vast number of letters on two subjects:

(1) *Black-marketers*. Soon after his release from prison in 1945 Nehru referred feelingly to the death of millions during the Bengal

famine and said that black-marketers and others who make profit on the misery of people should be hanged from the nearest lamp post. Several letters asked for the names and addresses of those hanged on lamp-posts. The only answer which could be sent was:

(a) information is being collected.

(b) addresses are c/o Hell.

In fact no replies were sent.

(2) *Banning of Harmonium*. Some time in the thirties Nehru, in one of his public speeches, had said that in independent India the harmonium should be banned. Thousands of letter-writers wanted to know why it had not been done for two years after he became the Prime Minister.

Nehru was informed of the receipt of such letters and that no individual replies were sent. It was thought that in one of his public speeches he might refer to them. Nehru chose to ignore them. Black-marketers and the harmonium have survived and will continue to survive.

On controversial issues coming up for decisions or legislation, the Prime Minister's offices at the Secretariat and the Prime Minister's house would be flooded with telegrams and letters from the common people. They were not put up to Nehru; but they were classified and a short note was placed before the Prime Minister indicating the total number of telegrams and letters received, the number "for" and the number "against." Nehru was interested in this information and sometimes he would even predict what the percentage would be "for" and what it would be "against."

This reminded me later of an episode in President Truman's life. On the evening of 5 December 1950, President Truman's young daughter Margaret gave the final concert of her 1950 tour at Constitution Hall in Washington. Earlier in the day the President's boyhood friend, who had become his Press Secretary, died. Apart from that, the President was harrassed by reports of developments in Korea. The next day at 5 A.M. the President arose to grapple with the Korea problem. He picked up the *Washington Post* and read a savage review of Margaret's performance by the paper's music critic Paul Hume. "She is flat a good deal of the time," he wrote, "she cannot sing with anything approaching professional finish. . . . She communicates almost nothing of the music she presents." The President was aware of that during the intermission of Margaret's concert the previous evening. The music critic for the *Times-Herald* had gone back-stage and congratulated Margaret. In Paul Hume's review Truman saw red in what seemed to be more malice than judgment. He sat down and

wrote Paul Hume a very angry letter in long hand. He told Hume that he sounded like "a frustrated man that never made a success, an eight-ulcer man on a four-ulcer job and all four ulcers working." Hume published the letter and the uproar was vast. Truman never felt the slightest remorse about sending the letter. He always insisted he had the right to be two persons—the President of the United States; and Harry S. Truman, father of Margaret and husband of Bess. "It was Harry S. Truman, the human being, who wrote that note," he said.

Truman was annoyed to find that all his aides thought that sending of that letter of Paul Hume was a mistake. They felt that it damaged his image as President and would only add to his political difficulties. "Wait till the mail comes in," Truman said, "I will make you a bet that 80 per cent of it will be on my side of the argument." A week later, after the staff meeting, the President ordered every one to follow him, and they marched to the mail room. The clerks had stacked the thousands of "Hume" letters in piles and made up a chart showing the percentages for and against the President. Slightly over 80 per cent favoured the President's defence of his daughter. Most of the letter-writers were mothers who said they understood exactly how the President felt and would have expected their husbands to defend their daughters the same way. "The trouble with you guys is," the President said to the staff as he strode back to work, "you don't understand human nature."

In the meantime one of Truman's aides succeeded in persuading Paul Hume to return the letter to the white House. Paul Hume felt foolish soon after because he received from an avid American "Collector" an offer of \$ 150,000 for the original letter.

When the Union Finance Minister stopped all imports of foreign cosmetics because of foreign exchange shortage, the sophisticated women of India were up in arms. In New Delhi, groups of hysterical women came to the Prime Minister's house in the mornings looking fierce. Indira's sympathies were understandably with them. She told me that it was not the question of craze for foreign stuff; nothing worthwhile was manufactured in India then; "*Shringar*" (beautification) had been important for Indian women from time immemorial. I asked her what was the percentage of Indian women who beautified themselves with foreign stuff? This question annoyed her. She punished me for it by not speaking to me for a week. A group of women waylaid the Prime Minister in front of the Ministry of External Affairs. Some were wailing. As he strode to the office he asked me: "Why can't somebody manufacture the stuff in India?"

The Prime Minister's offices at the Secretariat and the house were



flooded with telegrams and letters from women all over India. Many abused the Finance Minister for persecuting and torturing women. Some described him as worse than Manu. Indeed the Finance Minister had disturbed a veritable hornet's nest. I watched, with amusement, from a safe distance, the demonstration of women's power.

I sent for K.A.D. Naoroji, the local Director of Tatas in New Delhi. Kish, as he was called, hailed from a distinguished family and was a delightful man with a robust sense of humour. He was the grandson of Dadabhai Naoroji, one of the early Presidents of the Indian National Congress. Kish, the dear and most likeable man, came to see me. I told him that it was perhaps ironic that he and I, two bachelors, were going to discuss women's problems. I asked him: "Can't the Tatas go into the cosmetic business in a big way and manufacture in India the whole range of the stuff—everything that women needed?" I said that the Tatas could expect all the assistance from the government for this project. He said that this could be done and that his Chairman, J.R.D. Tata, was likely to take personal interest in it. He sent a telex message to J.R.D. Tata in Bombay. The next day Kish rang up to say that the Tatas would undertake the project on a priority basis; but he wanted my assistance in removing bureaucratic delays. I reported to the Prime Minister. He was pleased and asked me to write to the Commerce and Industry Ministry on his behalf. Accordingly I wrote to the Secretary of the Ministry and sent a copy to Kish authorizing him to show it to anyone who delayed matters. I also spoke to the Minister of Commerce and Industry and the Finance Minister and told Kish about it. I had told him that he might report to me whenever there was any bottleneck. He never had to report, for there was no bottleneck in this case. This was the beginning of LAKME, a new company in the Tata group initially with French collaboration. If George Fernandes wants to break up large industrial groups under business families, he will do well to consult Indian women about the future of LAKME because they are the ultimate owners of LAKME though not in the financial sense.

While we were in London in 1948, a member of the small staff from the Indian High Commission attached to the Prime Minister reported to me that a middle-aged English woman had arrived at the hotel (*Claridges*) requesting a meeting with someone connected with Prime Minister Nehru. She was shown in. She introduced herself as Margaret Cholmondeley. She had come with a letter written to her by a man called Ramamritham (Rao Saheb), an Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs. The letter was in reply to a communication she had addressed to the Prime Minister on Kashmir. It was the

practice in the Prime Minister's Secretariat to pass on such letters of a general nature to the External Affairs Ministry for appropriate replies. She had a serious complaint about that letter because she was addressed as "Mr. Margaret Cholmondeley." She had a further complaint that the name "Ramamritham" was too much of a mouthful. I was somewhat annoyed and mumbled to myself "as if hers is not." I told her that Ramamritham was an old man who had never travelled abroad; so he could not distinguish female names from male ones. I asked her if she could say whether "Lakshmikanthamma Reddy" was a male or female name. She said "No." I told her that almost all Indian names had meanings and they sounded musical to Indians. I asked her: "If I call you Miss Chumley won't you be agreeably surprised?" She said: "You are the first Indian who has pronounced my name correctly." I told her that "we in Indian are used to phonetic languages. We pronounce according to the spelling. English is an illogical language though a sublime one and some of your names are baffling to foreigners. I happen to know personally a Lord Cholmondeley in London who has a valet called Bottomley who created complications by changing the pronunciation to Bumley. But for this knowledge, I would not have been able to pronounce your name correctly." Then I told her how an Indian name helped in the escape of three Indians from Germany after Hitler had seized power. Mr A.C.N. Nambiar was informed by his German friends that Hitler's S.S. were after him and two other Indians and that they should hasten to escape to Switzerland. Nambiar took the advice, collected the two Indians and left Berlin. As they came within a few yards of the Swiss border, an S.S. Captain arrived from nowhere and stopped them. He lined them up; took out a note-book and started asking questions in English. First came a Bengali who was a voluble and argumentative individual.

S.S. Captain:	Name?
Bengali:	Basu
S.S. Captain:	Christian Name?
Basu:	There is no such thing in India
S.S. Captain (shouting):	Christian Name?
Basu:	Tarapada
S.S. Captain:	Catholic or Protestant?
Basu:	There is no such thing in India
S.S. Captain (furious):	Catholic or Protestant?
Basu:	Protestant.

Next came A.C.N. Nambiar who knew German well.

- S.S. Captain: Name?  
 Nambiar: Nambiar  
 S.S. Captain: Christian Name?  
 Nambiar: Arathil Candeth Narayanan  
 S.S. Captain: Catholic or Protestant?  
 Nambiar: Catholic  
 Bengali (intervening): He is no Catholic  
 S.S. Captain: (angry): Do you know the punishment for lying?  
 Nambiar: I shall explain. If you look at the map of Europe you will see all the northern countries are predominantly Protestant, and the southern countries are predominantly Catholic. This is the result of the Reformation. India also had Reformation. Mr Basu comes from northern India, that is how he is a Protestant; I come from the south of India, that is why I am a Catholic.  
 S.S. Captain (impressed): You must be a Brahmana  
 Nambiar: Yes (actually he is a non-Brahmin!)  
 Last came the Telugu Brahmin who was smart.  
 S.S. Captain: Name?  
 Telugu Brahmin: Prathivadibhayankaram Thiruventakshwarayya Pantulu Garu.

The S.S. Captain was flabbergasted. He looked around and made sure that no S.S. man was spying on him. Then he said: "Go, I will never be able to write this." All the three walked over to the safety of Switzerland.

I also told her how an Indian name created temporary estrangement between a husband and wife. The story relates to Alladi Krishnaswami Aiyar, the renowned lawyer of Madras. On the day he was knighted by the British Government in India, the lawyer told his wife in Tamil, "Nee Lady Alladi." This lent itself to two meanings. The lawyer meant "you are Lady Alladi." The wife understood only the other meaning "you are no lady." The immediate result can be imagined.

I had to agree with Margaret Cholmondeley that in the Foreign Office people should know better about foreign countries, but that our names could not be changed. I also told her that the British had to unlearn many things and learn new things. I reminded her that it was

only recently that an Englishman returned from a visit to Egypt and made the revelation that the Mediterranean Sea was south of the African continent because he saw that the Nile was flowing into the Mediterranean at Alexandria. He could not conceive of any river flowing other than to the South because he was used to the Thames flowing South! I also told her that we in India did no longer use expressions like Middle East, Near East, and Far East. You invented those names while you thought that London was the centre of the world. It will no longer be the case. Before long London will become a city where international statesmen change planes. In India we now use terms like West Asia, Southeast Asia and East Asia. Margaret Cholmondeley said: "There will always be an England." I told her: "That is what the poet has said. There will always be a Peru also." She asked me if she could come the next day for another talk. I made my excuses; and she left. I thought I had humoured her enough and more.

An Italian countess from Milan wrote to Nehru periodically. She commended his policy of peace, nonalignment, and peaceful coexistence. In her letters she never gave her address. She started experiments with animals in peaceful coexistence. She achieved some result and sent to Nehru a photograph of herself, a dog, a cat, a rat, a mongoose and a snake—all playing together.

Sometimes mail could create embarrassments and disappointments. Suhrawardy, the revolutionary who lived in England and Europe for long until after independence, had a bad experience in the late twenties soon after he arrived in Rome. An important Italian paper announced his arrival in the Eternal City with a write-up about him highlighting the episode of his arrest in Moscow and subsequent release. It is a fact that Suhrawardy was in Moscow living with a beautiful Russian countess, who was a widow. Of all the good things in the world, Suhrawardy loved women and Indian food the most. On the day of the attempt on Lenin's life, Suhrawardy's countess got indisposed. Suhrawardy, who knew the Russian language well, decided to go to a drug store to buy some medicines despite the advice of the countess to the contrary. Roads were empty, all shops were closed, and police vehicles were plying all over picking up suspected anarchists. He knew a drug-store and knocked at the door which was opened and he was admitted in. There he was advised about the danger of being found loitering on the main roads. He got the medicines and the kindly shop-keeper let him out into a lane through the back-door. Soon a police-van picked up Suhrawardy and dumped him into a hall where anarchists were detained. That night the anarchists

in the hall held a meeting. Half way through, a young woman anarchist got up with a loaded revolver and made an impassioned speech. Pointing the revolver in all directions, she said: "Comrades, prepare yourselves to die tonight; it is by giving up our lives that anarchism will live." People were terrified of the revolver in the hands of a hysterical woman. At last some one got up and said: "Let us hear what our Indian comrade has to say. There was a chorus of the demand. Suhrawardy, who knew nothing of anarchism, got up and made a little speech which he wound up by the peroration "Indian anarchists firmly believe that we must live so that anarchism will not die." Everyone applauded in which the woman with the revolver was drowned. All rose and shouted "long live Indian anarchism." The Soviet police soon found out that Suhrawardy had nothing to do with anarchism; and they released him.

The publicity in the Italian paper brought good tidings to Suhrawardy. Through the mail came an invitation from an Italian countess living in a villa on the outskirts of Rome. And what was equally exciting, the countess had offered Indian food. Suhrawardy conjured up a beautiful young Italian countess resembling Lord Byron's mistress Madame Gluccioli as well as *Kababs* and spiced meat preparations.

At the appointed time Suhrawardy arrived at the villa where he was met by a footman in resplendent livery and taken to the countess who happened to be an old woman in her eighties. Suhrawardy's enthusiasm collapsed. They sat down sipping fruit juice. The countess, who knew English, started talking about the four *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. He had to spend one whole uncomfortable hour discussing old scriptures about which he knew nothing. He somehow managed to answer some elementary questions. To his relief, dinner was announced. The countess said: "Let us sit down on the floor in Indian style and take our food." The food consisted of rice and milk and fresh fruits in season! Suhrawardy's heart sank. After dinner there was more discussion on spiritual subjects. When he completed submitting himself to this torture, the old countess suggested his spending the night in the villa as the last bus to Rome had left. Suhrawardy was so worked up that he wanted to shock the countess. He told her "I know a prostitute in the nearby village, and I have promised to sleep with her tonight." After shocking the countess, Suhrawardy walked all the way back to his hotel in Rome.

I should not go on and on and make this chapter a mini *Panchatantra*.

7 Dr Syud Hossain

After Syud Hossain eloped with Swarup Nehru (later Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit) and returned, he was advised by friends and foes to leave the country. He quietly left for the United States and lived there continuously for over 25 years. There he belonged to a group of Indians who did what they could for the cause of India's freedom.

In 1945, while Vijaya Lakshmi's husband was no longer alive, she left for the United States and spent a considerable time in that

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THINKING COMING INDIA TO HELP TOWARD HINDU MUSLIM UNITY

ON BASIS CLARIFICATION FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES STOP COULD RUN FOR CENTRAL

ELECTION AS MUSLIM NATIONALIST IF NECESSARY STOP PLEASE CABLE YOUR OPINION

REGARDING USEFULNESS FEASIBILITY SUCH COURSE =

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country, returning to India in January 1946. This gave Syud Hossain the opportunity to renew his relationship with Vijaya Lakshmi who was then only forty-five. During this period Gandhi received letters from several Indians in the United States complaining that Syud Hossain was following Vijaya Lakshmi every where like her shadow.

Early in September 1945 Nehru received cable from Syud Hossain (see page 53):

Nehru consulted Asaf Ali and others. He did not fail to consult Gandhi on the subject. The shrewd advice of Gandhi was designed to prevent the gossip mill from working overtime impairing Vijaya Lakshmi's usefulness. Nehru sent the following reply to Syud Hossain:

Cable

1945

DLT Syud Hossain Portland Building  
1129 Vermont Road Avenue Washington  
G. S. A.

Your cable have consulted Asaf Ali other friends  
stop no chance running for central election owing  
technical difficulty, absence name from electoral  
~~rolls~~ registers stop your return India ~~coastally~~  
helpful especially in Bengal if stay long though  
results inevitably slow in present conditions and your long  
~~posts~~ absence stop difficult say where your usefulness  
greater stop Gandhiji thinks you ~~it~~ can do  
more important work in America >

I think it was in January 1947 that Syud Hossain came back. That was a time when the communal situation was bad in India, particularly in Delhi. Nehru was then staying at 17 York Road. Syud Hossain established himself in *Hotel Imperial*. Vijaya Lakshmi did not fail to come from Lucknow to spend as much time as possible in Delhi during this period.

Syud Hossain, a short, thin and fair man, would come to 17 York Road, every morning wearing rimless glasses and with a curved flat flask of cognac (brandy) tucked into his hip-pocket. Periodically he would take out the flask and have a gulp. Fancy drinking cognac in the morning!

The presence of Syud Hossain at the *Hotel Imperial* and Vijaya Lakshmi spending much time with him there became known to refugees with revenge in their blood-shot eyes— both Hindus and Sikhs. This created problems for the much harrassed police. They, however, made discreet arrangements for the protection of Syud Hossain and Vijaya Lakshmi.

The embarrassing situation was not prolonged as Syud Hossain was appointed as Ambassador to Egypt.

After Syud Hossain got settled in Cairo, Vijaya Lakshmi told Secretary-Generel Girja Shankar Bajpai of her wish to break journey in Cairo on her way to New York to attend the UN General Assembly. Bajpai consulted the Prime Minister who said that she should go straight to New York. She, however managed to halt in Cairo. The PTI man there was prevailed upon to send out a message that the halt was due to engine trouble of the *Air India* plane. Later it was discovered that the “engine trouble” did not affect any other passenger.

Syud Hossain did not last long in Cairo. Death put an end to an unhappy and tortured life. Government did not fail to build a suitable mausoleum for him in Cairo.



## 8 *Subhas Chandra Bose (1897-1945)*

Eight years younger than Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose was undoubtedly a bright star in the Indian firmament in the first half of the present century. As dedicated as Nehru and as egoistic as V. K. Krishna Menon, Bose was a complicated person, a born fighter and a born loser. As early as 1929 Bose held the view that Gandhi's personality would triumph over Nehru's personal views.

Due to his burning zeal for national freedom and his single-mindedness of purpose, Bose developed a one-track mind. To him the enemy of his enemy was automatically his friend. He did not subscribe to the view that the devil one knew was preferably to the devil one knew not. That explains his refusal to say anything against Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Japan which had an inglorious imperialist record. While Nehru refused to meet Mussolini, Bose was ready and eager to co-operate with him, Hitler and militarist Japan. In spite of his long stay in Europe as an exile and otherwise, Bose's understanding of international affairs remained astonishingly poor, or perhaps he did not want to understand anything which was not in line with his pre-conceived notions. While his dedication to the country was total, Bose had on commitment to anything wider than nationalism—not even to socialism.

Bose ridiculed Nehru of practising "sentimental politics." Once he described Nehru as the supporter of all lost causes such as China and Spain.

For his re-election as President of the Indian National Congress in 1939 Bose went to the extent of inducing Rabindranath Tagore to lobby for him. Bose was never assailed by thoughts of "means and ends." In fact he did not have such thoughts. Bose's approach to Tagore was repugnant to Nehru. After his re-election in the teeth of Gandhi's opposition, Bose felt that he was on the crest of a wave. He hastily proclaimed a confrontation between the "Right" and the "Left." He grossly under-estimated the indispensability and the inherent strength of Gandhi in the situation that prevailed in India at that time. Bose's judgment and sense of timing left much to be desired. This ultimately led to Bose's resignation from the Congress Presidency. He got himself isolated and ostracised, and formed a new party—

the Forward Bloc. Bose, who had earlier accused Nehru of lacking "revolutionary perspective" and stamina to establish an organization and form cadres, proved himself no better. Bose eventually reduced himself as a symbol of Bengal, and ultimately exiled himself from the country.

About the circumstances which led to the resignation of Bose from the Presidentship of the Congress at Tripuri, Professor Hiren Mookerjee, in his book *The Gentle Colossuse*, has recorded that history might have been different and brighter if Nehru and Bose had, at this stage, together led left-wing forces. I do not know if it would have been brighter; but certainly it would have been different—the national cause would have been weakened at a crucial stage and the British would have been the gainers in the process.

When the Second World War was declared, Nehru happened to be in China. A little before that Gandhi visited Madras. As I was in Madras then, I attended the public meeting at the Marina beach. The crowd was large. Soon after the declaration of the war, Bose came to Madras and addressed a public meeting at the same place. It was known earlier that Bose would be attacking Gandhi and the Old Guard as well as Nehru. I attended the meeting which was much larger than the one addressed by Gandhi. Some time later Nehru also came. I attended his meeting too which was held at the same beach. The attendance at Nehru's meeting was infinitely larger than the previous two meetings. Nehru had always been the most popular national leader in the south—more popular than Gandhi himself.

Subhas Chandra Bose was free from communalism and obscurantism. He was a truly liberated person who possessed many of the qualities needed in a great leader of a vast country with its infinite variety, religious and linguistic. Bose was an ardent admirer of that great son of India Swami Vivekananda. In a letter written early in 1932 to a journalist friend Bose said of Swami Vivekananda thus:

Swamiji was entirely free from the slightest trace of what you may call spiritual cant. He could not stand even the sight of it. To the Pseudo-religious he would say "salvation will come through football and not through the Gita." Though a Vedantin he was a great devotee of the Lord Buddha. One day he was speaking so enthusiastically of the Buddha that somebody said "Swamiji, are you a Buddhist?" At once his emotions bubbled forth and in a choked voice he said "What? I a Buddhist! I am the servant of the servants of the Buddha.!

Similarly he was one day lecturing about Jesus Christ when

somebody put a question. At once he grew grave and serious and in sonorous notes said: "If I had been present at the time of Jesus of Nazareth, I would have washed his feet not with my tears but with my heart's blood!"

Soon after Bose arrived in Berlin during the war, he enquired about the whereabouts of A.C.N. Nambiar whom he had known earlier in Europe as a revolutionary. Bose discovered that Nambiar escaped from Czechoslovakia when the Nazis occupied that country and stayed in Paris until about the surrender of France. Then he moved to an area under the control of "Vichy" France close to the Spanish border. At the request of Bose the Nazi authorities sent an S.S. Captain to Nambiar with a letter from Bose requesting him to visit Berlin for a talk with him. Reluctantly Nambiar went. Bose narrated to him the circumstances under which he escaped from India. He made it clear that his only aim was the freedom of India. He said that whatever happened, the British Empire in India was finished. If the allies won, then Nehru would be there in India, and he would make a good Prime Minister; if the axis powers won, he (Bose) would be there. Bose considered himself and Nehru as two peas in the same pod. He asked Nambiar to work with him. Nambiar explained to Bose that he had a horror of the Nazi regime and all it stood for and expressed his unwillingness to stay in Germany. Bose ultimately persuaded a reluctant Nambiar to stay and help him.

Several years after the end of World War II, Nambiar came across a man called Scarpa who was the Italian Consul-General in India in the thirties. He was a very active person and knew several national leaders, including Sarojini Naidu, personally. Padmaja, whose name is pronounced in northern India as Padam Jha!, also knew Scarpa very well. Before the outbreak of the war Scarpa was back in Italy. During the war he was an adviser in the Italian Foreign Office. Scarpa told Nambiar about the existence of a letter from Bose to the Italian Foreign Minister Count Ciano endorsing the Italian conquest of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) and its right to hold it. Nambiar showed scepticism as he did not think that Bose could have gone to that extent. The next time Scarpa met Nambiar in Geneva. The former had brought Bose's letter in original and showed it to him. The letter must be still in the archives of the Italian Foreign Office.

During the spring of 1942 Nehru declared that the Congress would continue its policy of non-embarrassment to the British and that war production should not be impeded. On 8 April 1942, Nehru said in a speech in Delhi: "Some people say Jawaharlal is a fool. He is unneces-

sarily antagonising the Japanese and the Germans. The Japanese will wreak vengeance on him when they come to this country. It is wiser for him to keep silent if he cannot actually speak well of the Japanese. I want to tell those who give me this advice that Jawaharlal is not the man who will keep quiet when he ought to speak. On the other hand, I can only reject such advice, which is essentially based on fear, with contempt.”

At a press conference in Delhi on 12 April 1942, Nehru went to the extent of declaring that he would even oppose Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian troops he had assembled from the prisoners of war with the Japanese because Nehru considered this army as on more than “a dummy force under Japanese control.”

At this stage both Maulana Azad and Gandhi restrained Nehru. At the meetings of the Congress Working Committee that followed Nehru rejected two drafts of a resolution by Gandhi. Ultimately it was Nehru’s draft which was adopted.

At a press conference on 12 April 1942, Nehru said “it is a hateful notion that after five years of war, China should be defeated; it is a hateful notion that Russia, which represents certain human values, which means a great deal to human civilization, should be defeated. But, ultimately, naturally I have to judge every question from the Indian view-point. If India perishes, I must say—selfishly if you like to call it—it does not do me any good if other nations survived.”

Early in June 1942 Nehru told the U.P. Congress Committee: “Personally I am so sick of slavery that I am even prepared to take the risk of anarchy.” Nehru was moving nearer to Gandhi in the crisis which culminated in the *Quit India* movement of 1942.

When the news of Subhas Chandra Bose’ death in an aircraft accident in 1945 reached him, Nehru paid tribute to his comrade in the freedom struggle with tears rolling down his cheeks.

The twenty thousand and odd officers and men of Subhas Bose’s Indian National Army found themselves as prisoners of war again—this time under the British who held them guilty of treason in having broken their oath and gone over to the enemy. The Government of India decided to stage a public trial of three INA officers—a senseless decision of an alien government which was about to disappear. To the British they were traitors, but to the people of India they were the opposite of traitors. The British soon discovered that the country was deeply stirred; that all the major political parties, including the Muslim League, were ranged on the side of the INA; and, what was worse, the lower ranks of serving soldiers were so touched as to pose a threat to the stability of the Indian Army. Nehru’s attitude towards

the INA was one of human sympathy. The most unsympathetic and uncompromisingly hostile body of men towards the INA comprised the senior Indian officers of the Indian army from Cariappa downwards. This led Nehru to conclude that at no time was it possible to reinduct and reintegrate the officers and men of the INA in the regular Indian army.

Nehru organized the defence of the INA personnel and raised funds for their relief and rehabilitation. Part of these funds was ear-marked for Bose's daughter and her Austrian mother. After the national government came into existence the INA men were paid such pension and other benefits as were due to them for the period of their service in the Indian army.

Events have proved the correctness of Nehru's assessments and the wisdom of his stand on national and international issues from 1937 onwards. Subhas Chandra Bose emerged, no doubt, as a great patriot with indomitable courage; but he was destined to fail. As in the case of the lives of many illustrious men there was an element of tragedy in the destiny of Bose. Future generations will remember Subhas Chandra Bose as India's tragic hero of the twentieth century.

## 9 *Rajiv and Sanjay*

Of all the illusions of Indira, the one about her children is the most pathetic. A little before the declaration of the emergency in 1975 she spoke, with pride, of her achievements in bringing up her two children, Rajiv and Sanjay, as serious-minded and dedicated young men.

Towards the end of 1945 my picture of Rajiv is that of a cry-baby crawling on all fours. I have never come across a child who could cry so much and so perpetually as little Rajiv did. Sanjay was not in this world when I joined Nehru. Sanjay was born in New Delhi at the Willingdon Nursing Home and Hospital at 9.27 a.m. Indian Standard Time on 14 December 1946 with *Makara Lagna* and *Simha Rasi*. I give these details for the benefit of astrologers who are bound to pursue him.

Rajiv was a sensitive child more dependent on the mother than Sanjay who was an extrovert. Both were very lovable children. They would come to me often with their little problems and quarrels. Panditji had noted that the children were invariably with me whenever he strayed into my study in the Prime Minister's House. Once, when the Prime Minister asked Indira at the breakfast table to accompany him on a somewhat lengthy tour in India, she tried to excuse herself by saying that the children would miss her. He promptly said, in the presence of the guests, "they will miss only Mac; I have noticed that they are always with him." Indira was understandably annoyed; but ultimately she went with her father because she was, in her own way, devoted to him. Before she left on that tour, she told me what her father had told her at the breakfast table in the presence of guests about the children's attachment to me. She hoped that I would keep it up when she is away. During her absence I went out of my way to take the kids to India Gate one evening to buy balloons and ice cream and the next day to Okhla for fishing. The third day I took them for swimming in the Rashtrapati Bhavan swimming pool.

The children found out that I did not care for apples and that I kept whatever apples that came to me with my meals in the top drawer of my writing desk. They would walk away with them during my absence.

As a child it was Rajiv's ambition to be a pilot. Later he changed his

mind and wanted to be a scientist. As a little boy Rajiv liked nothing better than a mechanical toy plane, which could be made to fly, as a birthday present.

Indira tried hard to make the children call me "Uncle Mac," but failed. They preferred to call me "Mr Mathai."

Rajiv and Sanjay were sent to a private kindergarden school in New Delhi run by a Hungarian woman married to a Punjabi. The first look at her evoked revulsion in me. I told Indira that the teacher looked like an amazon and that she might be a vampire. But Indira was taken in by her. The teacher became a constant visitor. After some time the children were withdrawn from the kindergarden and sent to Welham Preparatory School in Dehra Dun. But the Hungarian woman teacher continued to be a frequent visitor to Indira. One day, while Indira was alone in her room, the Hungarian woman asked her for some favour which Indira could not do. The woman got wild and physically attacked Indira using her fists. She was a big-built woman. Indira was so taken unawares that she did not know what to do. At last she shouted for the servants who dragged the amazon out of the room. In the evening I found Indira's face badly swollen. She told me the whole story. This was the end of the Hungarian woman teacher's visits to the Prime Minister's house.

While Rajiv and Sanjay were little children, I told Indira of the danger of the kids being spoilt by staying in a big house with numerous servants and other facilities, and the likelihood of their growing up with wrong ideas and values and taking many things for granted. However, she could do little about it. The children grew up as rather self-centred boys with little thought or consideration for others. They grew up in an atmosphere which instilled in them the wrong idea that the rest of the world was made for them. To say "thank you" did not come naturally to them. They developed no family feelings or family ties.

While Rajiv and Sanjay were small, Nehru bought for them a pony which was named "Bijli." She was a nice light-framed filly good with the children. When the children grew up, I bought a medium-sized black horse from Gwalior. He was a "black beauty" and was named "Timbuktu." With the arrival of "Timbuktu," "Bijli" was presented to the President's Body Guard for the use of little children. Rajiv and Sanjay were happy with "Timbuktu" and Nehru also occasionally rode that horse.

One summer day I took Rajiv and Sanjay for a swim in the Rashtrapati Bhavan Swimming Pool. Rajiv knew a little swimming while Sanjay wanted me to teach him. I told him that I would do

so exactly as my father taught me swimming while I was a little boy of his size. I said, "I will take you in my arms and throw you a little distance away where the water is deep. From that distance you use your hands and feet and move towards me with confidence. Don't be afraid, I am here to protect you." I threw him; he got a fright and went down like a stone. I had to dive and rescue him. Some water got into his lungs. He was very angry and started crying and threatening to report to "mummie." When he quietened down, I asked him: "What can mummie do to me?" He said, "She will beat you." I asked him: "Suppose I beat her?" He said with vehemance: "I will kick you and bite you." I said: "Good; you are right; you should always defend mummie and never put yourself in a position where mummie has to defend you." After this talk Sanjay decided not to report to "mummie" about the swimming episode.

Sanjay used to give me advance intimation about what I should give him on his birthdays. He wanted only money. I told him that this was a sensible practice which Bernard Shaw had adopted and that I would follow it. Then I explained to him who Bernard Shaw was.

One day, while I was in my study dictating to a PA, Sanjay came and quietly sat in my lap. As I finished dictation, he asked the PA what his name was. He replied "Goel." Quick came the reply: "I do not like you because you lay your eggs in other birds' nests!" ("Goel" sounds like Koel which is the Hindi word for cuckoo)

Once, while the Prime Minister was out of Delhi, Sanjay wanted me to take him alone to India Gate to buy a large hydrogen balloon, a kite and, incidentally, a Coca Cola or an ice cream. So we drove to India Gate. On the way Sanjay saw a Sikh taxi-driver negotiating a "round-about" at break-neck speed in front of our car. Sanjay got annoyed, stuck his neck out and yelled "Bara Baje" (twelve o' clock). I gave him a slap and scolded him. Little did I know then that the brat, when he grew up, was to marry the daughter of a "Bara Baje"!

After breakfast one morning, while Rajiv, Sanjay and I were watching the coloured fishes in the two large tanks I had set up for the kids, the Prime Minister quietly came from behind, caught hold of Sanjay, threw him up in the air and then held him. The Prime Minister asked him: "Sanjay, where would you like to live? Delhi, Allahabad, or Lucknow?" Quick came the most appropriate reply: "Nana, I would like to live where you are." The Prime Minister was immensely pleased. I did not fail to pat Sanjay on the back. As a child, Sanjay was incredibly cute.

One day at lunch Padmaja Naidu made a feeble attempt to make Sanjay a "vegetarian." She told him how cruel and wicked it was to



kill chicken and sheep. He promptly silenced Padmaja by saying: "I don't kill them; I eat only dead chicken and mutton!"

On a Sunday afternoon I took Rajiv and Sanjay to Okhla for fishing. Ambassador A.C.N. Nambiar (Uncle Nanu for the children) also came with us. I had provided the children with improvised fishing outfits. Rajiv got a medium-sized fish. Then there was a big pull on Sanjay's rod. He was excited and managed to land one; but it happened to be a small tortoise. He was deeply disappointed. In disgust he threw the tortoise back into the water after extricating it from the hook. We stayed on in the hope that Sanjay would get a fish; but he was unlucky. It was getting late and I told the boys that it was time to go home. Sanjay whispered into my ears that he would like me to buy a fish from the fisherman around so that he could take it home. I bought one which was slightly bigger than the fish caught by Rajiv. Sanjay asked Rajiv not to tell anyone that his fish was bought from a fisherman. I told Rajiv not to spoil Sanjay's fun for one day. Both the boys arrived home and showed "mummie" their respective catches. Rajiv kept his promise for a little while. But, when the Prime Minister appeared for dinner, Rajiv could not contain himself any longer. He said: "Nana, Sajay caught only a tortoise; the fish he brought home is one which Mr Mathai bought for him from a fisherman." Sanjay was lived with rage, but he could do little in the presence of the grandfather except to say that he would have caught a fish if uncle Nanu had not thrown stones frequently into the river

From Welham both the boys went to Doon School. Rajiv completed his course and passed the senior cambride examination. He was sent to England where he managed to pass the entrance examination to Cambridge. At Cambridge the authorities found that Rajiv hadn't got it in him to make the grade. So he was "sent down." Then he managed to get admission to the Imperial College, London. from where also he was "sent down." Crest-fallen, he returned to India. His ambition of becoming a scientist was dashed to the ground So he had to revert to his childhood love—to become a pilot. And a pilot he is now. The only success he had in England was to find an Italian wife. As I take leave of Rajiv in this chapter, past memories crowd in on me. I wish him well and safety in flying.

Sanjay did not complete his Senior Cambridge in Dehra Dun. With tuition and other stuffings he managed to pass it in Delhi.

The last book Nehru read was *My Life and Work* by Henry Ford. I had acquired it from an old second-hand book-shop and found it fascinating. I knew Nehru would like the book; so I lent it to him in October 1963. On 14 October 1963 he wrote to me:



No. 436-PHO/63

New Delhi,  
October 14, 1963

My dear Mathai,

Some time ago, you were good enough to send me Henry Ford's book: "My Life and Work". Owing to heavy work I was unable to give much time to it, but I have read a little more than half of it. I hope to finish it fairly soon.

Thank you for sending it to me. I have enjoyed reading it.

Yours ally

Jawaharlal Nehru

Shri M.O. Mathai,  
2 Willingdon Crescent,  
NEW DELHI.

I learn't later that he was keeping the book by his side in his bedroom. After his death I tried to retrieve the book. But it had disappeared from the room. I was told later that the book was with Sanjay. I never got back the book. So, in a sense, I am responsible for Sanjay's dream of a small car, the dismal failure of *Maruti*, and the enormity of the losses the project had inflicted on innumerable people including prospective distributors. Little Sanjay did not have the intelligence to realize that conditions under which Henry Ford laboured in his backyard as a mechanic for evolving a car were totally different from what they are now and that they cannot be reproduced.

After Indira joined the government headed by Lal Bahadur, Sanjay was sent to England to work in a *Rolls Royce* factory with a view to pursuing his dream of becoming a Henry Ford. Before he left, I rang up Indira and asked her to send the boy to me. I was then staying at No. 2 President's Estate. Sanjay came the next evening and spent some time with me and we later went to a restaurant for a tandoori

chicken dinner. I discovered that Indira had done little to equip the the boy for the English winter. I gave him my heavy overcoat, a fine leather jacket, gloves, socks, ties, vests and several other items of European clothing. That is the last time I met him. Neither Rajiv nor Sanjay possesses warmth of human feelings. Nor were they trained to foster normal human relationships.

It turned out that after one year's apprenticeship with *Rolls Royce*, Sanjay's performance deteriorated. His performance was considered unsatisfactory by the company. So the representatives of *Rolls Royce* visited the Indian High Commissioner in London and suggested that any further time spent by Sanjay with the company would be mutually unprofitable. Soon after, *Rolls Royce* terminated the apprenticeship. So he had to return; but care was taken to give wide publicity in India that Sanjay was returning as he felt that *Rolls Royce* had nothing more to teach him! He started, as Henry Ford did, as a mechanic in some hole in a wall in Old Delhi with hoodlums and a character called Arjan Das. Any mechanic can make a contraption of an engine, buy parts from the market, put them together and call it a car which could move. And that exactly is what Sanjay produced. To organize a modern assembly line is a different matter. That is what the boy never learned. And that is what unscrupulous industrialists knew but never told the boy, and continued to pour in money not on sound business considerations but for considerations of long-range schemings. *Maruti* was a blunder bound to flop.

Then came the emergency. Sanjay, who hasn't the making of a politician in him, was launched into politics by the mother who had developed dynastic ambitions. She did not realize that somebody would quote Carlyle and say of Sanjay: "Politics is the last refuge of the scoundrel." And Sanjay was groomed for dynastic succession, and many goofs who were cabinet ministers and chief ministers and other important functionaries vied with each other to parade the boy before the public at government expense as the saviour and future ruler of India. For example, Sanjay's visits to different parts of Uttar Pradesh from 26 June 1975 to 22 March 1977, cost the state government Rs 20.49 lakhs. This was subsequently disclosed in the State Vidhan Sabha. For Sanjay's visit to Kothagudam in Andhra Pradesh, the government-owned Singareni Collieries spent Rs 5.5 lakhs. The collieries had spent only Rs 10,000 during President Rajendra Prasad's visit to the same place. These were admitted before the Vimadlal Commission of Enquiry.

Indira informally arranged that Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh in particular shall be Sanjay's jagir. And

the *jagirdar* performed miracles and perpetrated inhuman atrocities on the people. As Justice M.C. Chagla said: "It was a war on the people" by Indira, and Sanjay was the principal perpetrator of crimes. If Indira and Sanjay were not thrown out by the electorate in March 1977, India might have had in Sanjay its own sadist and maniac like Ivan the Terrible.

Little wonder that Justice J.C. Shah described Sanjay's role as the "single greatest act of excess committed during the emergency." Justice Shah observed: "Here was a young man who literally amused himself with demolishing residential, commercial and industrial buildings in locality after locality without having the slightest realization of the miseries he was heaping on the helpless population."

I have often wondered whether the people of India, after the emergency, are missing Sanjay and the bearded Dhirendra, the so-called Brahmachari, on the TV.

At the time of writing, it looks obvious that for Sanjay the future is unknown and full of perils. I feel sad that such a fate should have come to him. All I can wish him is courage and fortitude to go through whatever fate and circumstances have in store for him. The memory of Sanjay that will abide with me is that of a lively and delightful little boy the like of whom I have not seen anywhere.

An absurd story has gained currency that Sanjay once slapped his mother. This is totally unbelievable in so far as I am concerned. Only fools will believe such stories. This reminds me of a story of the opposite type about mythical Parvati and her two children Kartikeya and Ganesh. Both the boys were fascinated by the necklace Parvati was wearing and asked for it. Parvati did not want to show partiality. So she said: "Whoever goes round the universe and comes back to me first will get it." The dashing Kartikeya at once flew on his peacock; Ganesh, with his little mouse, went round the mother and claimed the necklace. Parvati was surprised and asked Ganesh to explain. Ganesh confidently said: "For me you are the universe; none else exists." Parvati promptly gave the necklace to him. The love, respect, and devotion to the mother are as strong in Sanjay as in Ganesh; and that is the case with Rajiv also.

## 10 *Dr Sampurnanand and Basic Thinking*

Dr Sampurnanand had the look of a person who had walked out of the pages of our *shastras*. He was well versed in Indian history and in all aspects of our ancient culture. Himself a non-Brahmin, he passionately believed that he was a Brahmin by accomplishment and that in ancient times no one was a Brahmin by the mere accident of birth and that caste was interchangeable. With his long hair and all the external markings of Brahminism, he looked a fierce Brahmin. He was not an obscurantist. Sometimes he has reminded me of Napoleon Bonaparte who once described himself as "Corsican by birth, French by adoption, and emperor by achievement."

Dr Sampurnanand was a typical example of Plato's conception of the scholar in politics. Nehru once told me that Sampurnanand was a person whose intellect was so razor-sharp that a slight tilt could make him mad. I have heard several junior colleagues of Dr Sampurnanand, such as Lal Bahadur and Dr B. V. Keskar, speak in great veneration of Dr Sampurnanand. He succeeded Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant as the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh when the latter joined the Union Cabinet. But the "Brahmin by achievement" did not have the infinite patience and capacity to suffer fools which the "Brahmin by birth" possessed in abundance. Apart from all aspects of India's hoary past, including astrology, Dr Sampurnanand had an abiding interest in books on scientific fiction. He always kept a few of these books by his side in the Chief Minister's office. It was not uncommon for him to open one of them and go on reading while someone, who came by appointment, was sitting in front of him feeling exasperated. Dr Sampurnanand's Chief Ministership did not last very long. He was quietly shifted from Uttar Pradesh and sent as Governor of Rajasthan where he had ample time and opportunities to explore its annals and antiquities.

Early in 1957, while he was still Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, he attended the meetings of the Congress Working Committee in New Delhi. He asked for an informal meeting of interested members of the Congress Working Committee to discuss basic questions. Nehru liked the idea, and more than one meeting took place at the Prime Minis-

ter's House. Dr Sampurnanand, apart from Nehru, was an active participant.

The discussion covered many topics such as meaning of life, religion, rationalism, science, communism, fascism, socialism, capitalism, welfare state, Vendantic life force, moral and spiritual disciplines, violence, class conflict, means and ends, nationalism and planning.

After these informal meetings Dr Sampurnanand requested Nehru to prepare a note on the discussions for the benefit of a wider circle of Congressmen. The note, written early in 1957, is reproduced below in full:

We have many grave internal problems to face. But even a consideration of these internal problems inevitably leads to a wider range of thought. Unless we have some clarity of vision or, at any rate, are clear as to the questions posed to us, we shall not get out of the confusion that afflicts the world today. I do not pretend to have that clarity of thinking or to have any answer to our major questions. All I can say, in all humility, is that I am constantly thinking about these questions. In a sense, I might say that I rather envy those who have got fixed ideas and, therefore, need not take the trouble to look deeper into the problems of today. Whether it is from the point of view of some religion or ideology, they are not troubled with the mental conflicts which are always the accompaniment of the great ages of transition.

And yet, even though it may be more comfortable to have fixed ideas and be complacent, surely that is not to be commended, and that can only lead to stagnation and decay. The basic fact of today is the tremendous pace of change in human life. In my own life, I have seen amazing changes, and I am sure that in the course of the life of the next generation these changes will be even greater if humanity is not overwhelmed and annihilated by an atomic war.

Nothing is so remarkable as the progressive conquest of understanding of the physical world by the mind of man today, and this process is continuing at a terrific pace. Man need no longer be a victim of external circumstances, at any rate, to a very large extent. While there has been this conquest of external conditions, there is at the same time the strange spectacle of a lack of moral fibre and of self-control in man as a whole. Conquering the physical world, he fails to conquer himself.

This is the tragic paradox of this atomic and sputnik age. The fact that nuclear tests continue, even though it is well recognized that they are very harmful in the present and in the future, the fact

that all kinds of weapons of mass destruction are being produced and piled up, even though it is universally recognized that their use may well exterminate the human race, brings out this paradox with startling clarity. Science is advancing far beyond the comprehension of a very great part of the human race, and posing problems which most of us are incapable of understanding, much less of solving. Hence the inner conflict and tumult of our times. On the one side, there is this great and overpowering progress in science and technology and of their manifold consequences; on the other, a certain mental exhaustion of civilization itself.

Religion comes into conflict with rationalism. The disciplines of religion and social usage fade away without giving place to other disciplines, moral or spiritual. Religion, as practised, either deals with matters rather unrelated to our normal lives and thus adopts an ivory tower attitude, or is allied to certain social usages which do not fit in with the present age. Rationalism, on the other hand, with all its virtues, somehow appears to deal with the surface of things, without uncovering the inner core. Science itself has arrived at a stage when vast new possibilities and mysteries loom ahead. Matter and energy and spirit seem to overlap.

In the ancient days, life was simpler and more in contact with nature. Now it becomes more and more complex, and more hurried, without time for reflection or even for questioning. Scientific development have produced an enormous surplus of power and energy which are often used for wrong purposes.

The old question still faces us, as it has faced humanity for ages past; what is the meaning of life? The old days of faith do not appear to be adequate, unless they can answer the questions of today. In a changing world, living should be a continuous adjustment to these changes and happenings. It is the lack of this adjustment that creates conflicts.

The old civilizations, with the many virtues that they possess have obviously proved inadequate. The new western civilization, with all its triumphs and achievements and also with its atomic bombs, also appears inadequate and, therefore, a feeling grows that there is something wrong with our civilization. Indeed, essentially our problems are those of civilization itself. Religion gave a certain moral and spiritual discipline; it also tried to perpetuate superstition and social usages. Indeed, those superstitions and social usages enmeshed and overwhelmed the real spirit of religion. Disillusionment followed. Communism comes in the wake of this disillusionment and offers some kind of faith and some kind of discipline. To

some extent it fills a vacuum. It succeeds in some measure by giving a content to man's life. But in spite of its apparent success, it fails; partly because of its rigidity, but even more so, because it ignores certain essential needs of human nature. There is much talk in communism of the contradictions of capitalist society, and there is truth in that analysis. But we see the growing contradictions within the rigid framework of communism itself. Its suppression of individual freedom brings about powerful reactions. Its contempt for what might be called the moral and spiritual side of life, not only ignores something that is basic in man, but also deprives human behaviour of standards and values. Its unfortunate association with violence encourages a certain evil tendency in human beings.

I have the greatest admiration for many of the achievements of the Soviet Union. Among these great achievements is the value attached to the child and the common man. Their systems of education and health are probably the best in the world. But, it is said, and rightly, that there is suppression of individual freedom there. And yet the spread of education in all its forms is itself a tremendous, liberating force which ultimately will not tolerate that suppression of freedom. This again is another contradiction. Unfortunately communism became too closely associated with the necessity for violence, and thus the idea which it placed before the world became a tainted one. Means distorted ends. We see here the powerful influence of wrong means and methods.

Communism charges the capitalist structure of society with being based on violence and class conflict. I think this is essentially correct, though that capitalist structure itself has undergone and is continuously undergoing a change because of democratic and other struggles and inequality. The question is how to get rid of this and have a classless society with equal opportunities for all. Can this be achieved through methods of violence, or can it be possible to bring about those changes through peaceful methods? Communism has definitely allied itself to the approach of violence. Even if it does not indulge normally in physical violence, its language is of violence, its thought is violent, and it does not seek to change by persuasion or peaceful democratic pressures, but by coercion and, indeed, by destruction and extermination. Fascism has all these evil aspects of violence and extermination in their grossest forms and, at the same time, has no acceptable ideal.

This is completely opposed to the peaceful approach which Gandhiji taught us. Communists as well as anti-communists seem to imagine that a principle can only be stoutly defended by language



of violence, and by condemning those who do not accept it. For both of them there are no shades, there is only black and white. That is the old approach of the bigoted aspects of some religions. It is not the approach of tolerance, of feeling that perhaps others might have some share of the truth also. Speaking for myself, I find this approach wholly unscientific, unreasonable, and uncivilized, whether it is applied in the realm of religion, or economic theory, or anything else. I prefer the old pagan approach of tolerance, apart from its religious aspects. But whatever we may think about it, we have arrived at a stage in the modern world when an attempt at forcible imposition of ideas on any large section of people is bound ultimately to fail. In present circumstances, this will lead to war and tremendous destruction. There will be no victory, only defeat for everyone. Even this we have seen in the last year or two, that it is not easy for even great powers to reintroduce colonial control over territories which have recently become independent. This was exemplified by the Suez incident in 1956. Also what happened in Hungary demonstrated that the desire for national freedom is stronger even than any ideology, and cannot ultimately be suppressed. What happened in Hungary was not essentially a conflict between communism and anti-communism. It represented nationalism striving for freedom from foreign control.

Thus, violence cannot possibly lead today to a solution of any major problem because violence has become much too terrible and destructive. The moral approach to this question has now been powerfully reinforced by the practical aspect.

If the society we aim at cannot be brought about by big-scale violence, will small-scale violence help? Surely not, partly because it produces an atmosphere of conflict and of disruption. It is absurd to imagine that out of conflict the socially progressive forces are bound to win. In Germany, both the Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party were kept away by Hitler. This may well happen in other countries too. In India, any appeal to violence is particularly dangerous because of its inherent disruptive character. We have too many fissiparous tendencies for us to take risks. But all these are relatively minor considerations. The basic thing, I believe, is that wrong means will not lead to right results, and that is no longer merely an ethical doctrine but a practical proposition.

Some of us have been discussing this general background and, more especially, conditions in India. It is often said that there is a sense of frustration and depression in India and the old buoyancy of spirit is not to be found at a time when enthusiasm and hard work

are most needed. This is not merely in evidence in our country, it is in a sense a world phenomenon. An old and valued colleague said that this is due to our not having a philosophy of life, and indeed the world also is suffering from this lack of a philosophical approach. In our efforts to ensure the material prosperity of the country, we have not paid any attention to the spiritual element in human nature. Therefore, in order to give the individual and the nation a sense of purpose, something to live for and, if necessary to die for, we have to revive some philosophy of life and give, in the wider sense of the word, a spiritual background to our thinking. We talk of a Welfare State and of democracy and of socialism. They are good concepts, but they hardly convey a clear and unambiguous meaning. This was the argument, and then the question arose as to what our ultimate objective would be. Democracy and socialism are means to an end, not the end itself. We talk of the good of society. Is this something apart from the transcending the good of the individuals composing it? If the individual is ignored and sacrificed for what is considered the good of the society, is that the right objective to have?

It was agreed that the individual should not be so sacrificed and, indeed, that real social progress will come only when opportunity is given to the individual to develop, provided the individual is not a selected group but comprises the whole community. The touchstone, therefore, should be how far any political or social theory enables the individual to rise above his petty self and thus think in terms of the good of all. The law of life should not be competition or acquisitiveness, but co-operation, the good of each contributing to the good of all. In such a society the emphasis will be on duties, not on rights; the rights will follow the performance of the duties. We have to give a new direction to education and evolve a new type of humanity.

The argument led to the old *Vedantic* conception that everything, whether sentient or insentient, finds a place in the organic whole, that everything has a spark of what might be called the divine impulse, or that the basic energy or life force pervades the universe. This leads to metaphysical regions which tends to take us away from the problems of life which face us. I suppose that any line of thought, sufficiently pursued, leads us in some measure to metaphysics. Even science today is almost on the verge of all manner of imponderables. I do not propose to discuss these metaphysical aspects, but this very argument indicates how the mind searches for something basic underlying the physical world. If

we really believe in this all-pervading concept of the principle of life, it might help us to get rid of some of our narrowness of race, caste, or class, and make us more tolerant and understanding in our approaches to life's problems.

But obviously, it does not solve any of these problems, and in a sense, we remain where we were. In India we talk of the welfare state and socialism. In a sense, every country, whether it is capitalist, socialist or communist, accepts the ideal of the welfare state. Capitalism, in a few countries at least, has achieved this common welfare to a very large extent, though it has far from solved its own problems, and there is a basic lack of something vital. Democracy allied to capitalism has undoubtedly toned down many of its evils, and, in fact, is different now from what it was a generation or two ago. In industrially advanced countries, there has been a continuous and steady upward trend of economic development. Even the terrible losses of the World War have not prevented this trend in so far as these highly developed countries are concerned. Further, this economic development has spread, though in varying degrees, to all classes. This does not apply to countries which are not industrially developed. Indeed, in those countries the struggle for development is very difficult and sometimes, in spite of efforts, not only do economic inequalities remain, but tend to become worse. Normally speaking, it may be said that the forces of a capitalist society, if left unchecked, tend to make the rich richer and the poor poorer, and thus increase the gap between them. This applies to countries as well as groups, or regions, or classes within the countries. Various democratic processes interfere with these normal trends. Capitalism itself has, therefore, developed some socialistic features even though its major aspects remain.

Socialism, of course, deliberately wants to interfere with the normal processes and thus not only adds to the productive forces, but lessens inequalities. But, what is socialism? It is difficult to give a precise answer and there are innumerable definitions of it. Some people probably think of socialism vaguely just as something which does good and which aims at equality. That does not take us very far. Socialism is basically a different approach from that of capitalism, though I think it is true that the wide gap between them tends to lessen because many of the ideas of socialism are gradually incorporated even in the capitalist structure. Socialism is after all not only a way of life, but a certain scientific approach to social and economic problems. If socialism is introduced in a backward and under-developed country, it does not suddenly make it any less

backward. In fact, we then have a backward and poverty stricken socialism.

Unfortunately, many of the political aspects of communism have tended to distort our vision of socialism. Also the technique of struggle evolved by communism has given violence a predominant part. Socialism should, therefore, be considered apart from these political elements or the inevitability of violence. It tells us that the general character of social, political, and intellectual life in a society is governed by its productive resources. As those productive resources change and develop, so the life and thinking of the community changes.

Imperialism or colonialism suppressed and suppresses the progressive social force. Inevitably it aligns itself with certain privileged groups or classes because it is interested in preserving the social and economic *status quo*. Even after a country has become independent, it may continue to be economically dependent on other countries. This kind of thing is euphemistically called having close cultural and economic ties.

We discuss sometimes the self-sufficiency of the village. This should not be mixed up with that idea of decentralization though it may be a part of it. While decentralization is, I think, desirable to the largest possible extent, if it leads to old and rather primitive methods of production, then it simply means that we do not utilize modern methods which have brought great material advance to some countries of the West. That is, we remain poor and, what is more, tend to become poorer because of the pressure of an increasing population. I do not see any way out of our vicious circle of poverty except by utilizing the new sources of power which science has placed at our disposal. Being poor, we have no surplus to invest and we sink lower and lower.

We have to break through this barrier by profiting by the new source of power and modern techniques. But, in doing so, we should not forget the basic human element and the fact that our objective is individual improvement and the lessening of inequalities, and we must not forget the ethical and spiritual aspects of life which are ultimately the basis of culture and civilization and which have given some meaning to life.

It has to be remembered that it is not by some magic adoption of socialist or capitalist method that poverty suddenly leads to riches. The only way is through hard work and increasing the productivity of the nation and organizing an equitable distribution of its products. It is a lengthy and difficult process. In a poorly developed country,

the capitalist method offers no chance. It is only through a planned approach on socialistic lines that steady progress can be attained though even that will take time. As this process continues, the texture of our life and thinking gradually changes.

Planning is essential for this because otherwise we waste our resources, which are very limited. Planning does not mean a mere collection of projects, or schemes, but a thought-out approach of how to strengthen the base and pace of progress so that the community advances on all fronts. In India we have a terrific problem of extreme poverty in certain large regions, apart from the general poverty in the country. We have always a difficult choice before us; whether to concentrate on production by itself in selected and favourable areas, and thus for the moment rather ignoring the poor areas, or try to develop the backward areas at the same time, so as to lessen the inequalities between regions. A balance has to be struck and an integrated national plan evolved. That national plan need not and indeed should not have rigidity. It need not be based on any dogma, but should rather take the existing facts into consideration. It may, and I think in present day India, it should encourage private enterprise in many fields, though even that private enterprise must necessarily fit in with the national plan and have such controls as are considered necessary.

Land reforms have a peculiar significance because without them, more especially in a highly congested country like India, there can be no radical improvement in productivity in agriculture. But the main object of land reforms is a deeper one. They are meant to break up the old class structure of a society that is stagnant.

We want social security, but we have to recognize that social security only comes when a certain stage of development has been reached. Otherwise, we shall have neither social security nor any development.

It is clear that in the final analysis, it is the quality of the human being that counts. It is man that builds up the wealth of a nation as well as its cultural progress. Hence education and health are of high importance so as to produce that quality in the human beings. We have to suffer here also from the lack of resources, but still we have always to remember that it is right education and good health that will give the foundation for economic as well as cultural and spiritual progress.

A national plan has thus both a short-term objective and a long-term one. The long-term objective gives a true perspective. Without it short-term planning is of little avail and will lead us into blind

alleys. Planning will thus always be perspective planning and hard in view of the physical achievements for which we strive. In other words, it has to be physical planning, though it is obviously limited and conditioned by financial resources and economic conditions.

The problems that India faces are to some extent common to other countries, but there are new problems for which we have not got parallels or historical precedents elsewhere. What has happened in the past in the industrially advanced countries has little bearing on us today. As a matter of fact, the countries that are advanced today were economically better off than India is today, in terms of *per capita* income, before their industrialization began. Western economics, therefore, though helpful, has little bearing on our present-day problems. So also is Marxist economics which is in many ways out of date, even though it throws considerable light on economic processes. We have thus to do our own thinking, profiting by the example of others, but essentially trying to find a path for ourselves suited to our own conditions.

In considering these economic aspect 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.

*Sd/- J. Nehru*

## 11 *The Nehru Clan and a Brigadier*

In 1950 one Mrs Kala Madan of Allahabad, a near relative of Indira, came to stay in the Prime Minister's House. This elderly woman was an agreeable person and a good sport. Her family had extensive landed properties in UP and other parts of northern India, some of which was under dispute. Her eldest son was in the army as a Lieutenant Colonel and serving as the Military Attache in Cairo at that time. The second son was young and not very bright. Mrs Madan was developing a farm in UP Terai for the second son. She needed money for it.

With very rare exceptions Indira had no use for any relatives on her father's side. One such exception was B.K. Nehru; the other was Mrs Kala Madan. Indira had deep-seated hostility towards Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and her daughters. In fact this hostility was mutual. In the family circle her goodwill was generally limited to those related to her mother.

Indira used to tell me that in spite of the fact that Motilal Nehru was a benevolent patriarch of the Nehru clan, they shied away from him and especially her father and herself during the days of the freedom struggle. I told her that Peter, one of the disciples of Christ, denied him thrice when Christ was in trouble, saying for the third time, "I know not the man." But very soon Peter repented, went out and wept bitterly. She replied that the members of the Nehru clan were calculating people. I also told Indira the story of a man whom the great German Chancellor Prince Bismarck had helped. After Bismarck, "the old pilot," was unceremoniously "dropped" by Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1890, he went on a holiday to Italy. There he came across the man who had prospered as a result of his help while he was in power. Both happened to be taking a walk in Rome. The man crossed the road six times to avoid Bismarck. That was human nature perhaps at its worst. When a great Bengali personality was told that a particular man was inimical to him, he expressed surprise and commented: "But I do not remember to have done any good to him!"

When Nehru became the Prime Minister, relatives were all over "Jawahar Bhai" and "Indu." Nehru was too big a man to nurse

petty grievances, but Indira could not shed her coldness and kept her distance. Members of the Nehru clan began to treat the Prime Minister's House, the official residence in New Delhi, as a convenient Rest House. Sometimes they came in numbers and quarrelled with the staff for cars to roam about. Each one thought that he or she should have a separate car. I had to tell the Prime Minister that these people were not entitled to government transport and, in any event, there were not many cars available. He asked me to tell the staff to let them know that they had to hire taxis. The Prime Minister, of course, paid for their food expenses personally—which itself was burden enough.

While Jairamdas Daulatram was Minister of Food and Agriculture, Nehru took personal interest in developing and exploiting underground water resources in Rajasthan. The Jam Saheb of Navanagar sent a water diviner popularly known as "Paani Maharaj." By striking the ground with a stick, he could correctly predict where underground water was available. The report on Paani Maharaj's experiments was encouraging. Jairamdas Daulatram, in consultation with the Rajasthan government, set up a Rajasthan Underground Water Board in the Union Ministry of Agriculture. At the instance of the Prime Minister, Jairamdas Daulatram put Kailas Nath Kaul in charge of it. Kaul was Kamala Nehru's brother. He was supposed to spend most of his time in Rajasthan and work with Paani Maharaj in close consultation with the Rajasthan government. A decent man but woefully lacking in executive and administrative ability, he had some training in the Kew Gardens in England and was later in charge of a botanical garden in UP. The work in Rajasthan went on for about a year in a hap-hazard manner. Neither Daulatram nor any one else in the Union Agriculture Ministry was enthusiastic about Kaul's work. Ultimately Paani Maharaj felt disgusted and left. The Jam Saheb complained to the Prime Minister who got annoyed. He sent for Kaul and gave him a dressing down. Kaul blamed it all on the apathy of the Rajasthan government and the Government of India. Nehru told him that he had no use for men who had excuses for their failures. Kaul's appointment was terminated and Rajasthan Underground Water Board was wound up.

Kaul lay low for some time and later came up with a scheme for reclaiming land rendered unfit for cultivation due to excessive salt. He said there were millions of acres of such land in India with an unusually large percentage in UP. As a cat, which had fallen in hot water, is suspicious of cold water, Nehru refused to be impressed. He asked Kaul to send him an estimate for a pilot scheme of reclaiming two



acres of such land near about his botanical garden in UP. Kaul sent the estimate. Money was sent to him for this purpose with instructions to keep the UP Agriculture Department in the picture so that it can take the responsibility for reclamation operations on a large scale. Nothing more was heard about this project. All the millions of acres, which Kaul surveyed in his imagination, must still be lying barren in UP and elsewhere.

There was another character by the name of P.N. Kathju who was also a very decent individual. He was a chemistry lecturer in a College in Agra and was married to the younger sister of Kamala Nehru. Indira was attached to this aunt. Kathju was a confused man who never knew what he wanted to do in life. Neither did he know how to stick on to one thing and do sustained work. He remained an unstable rolling stone throughout his adult life.

When Congress accepted office in the provinces under the Government of India Act 1935, Nehru sent Kathju to Dr Syed Mahmud in Patna where he was a minister. Kathju was appointed as an Adviser in the Department of Industries in the Government of Bihar. There is nothing on record to indicate that he was instrumental in developing any industry in Bihar or having done any other useful work. He did not remain there for long. He came away full of complaints against the rest of the world. Progressively he became cantankerous.

When Nehru became Prime Minister, Kathju was at a loose end. Indira was anxious to see that something was done for Kathju. Nehru remained unmoved. At last he relented and spoke to Dr Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar who was then the Director-General of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). He set up a branch of the salt research institute in Jaipur and put Kathju in charge of it. After some time in Jaipur Kathju developed more interest in politics than in salt. Ultimately he left salt and joined politics and succeeded in getting elected to the Rajya Sabha for a six-year term. His contribution in Parliament consisted of a few questions concerning "irregularities" in the CSIR.

It was the exhibitionist and pushing socialite wife of a member of the Nehru clan belonging to the Indian Civil Service who inspired Shankar the cartoonist to start a cartoon "Mem Saheb." Shankar, dragging M. Chalapathi Rau with him, had to go from one *dobhie ghat* to another in Delhi to draw the faces of two donkeys—one male and the other female. Shankar achieved remarkable success in investing the faces of the two donkeys the unmistakable likenesses of the husband and wife. People looked forward to seeing this cartoon every week in *Shankar's Weekly*.

I started this chapter with Mrs Kala Madan who came to stay in the Prime Minister's House in 1950. Indira was very keen to help Mrs Madan, and she spoke to me about it I told her that she knew very well that her father believed in the maxim "neither a borrower nor a lender be" and that, in any event, personally he was not flush with money. I asked Indira to find out what was the immediate minimum need of Mrs Madan. Indira asked Mrs Madan and later told me that Mrs Madan needed a minimum of Rs 5,000 immediately. I asked Indira why Mrs Madan's grown-up bachelor son, who was then the Military Attache in Cairo, could not send her the sum. She said "Nanna" Madan believed in living well and forgetting others in the process. I finally told Indira that I could not take up this matter with the Prime Minister but that I myself was prepared to give this sum to Mrs Madan as a loan. The next morning Mrs Madan met me and said that because of her urgent need she would gratefully accept the loan from me. She assured me that either she or her son would repay the loan. I did not put any time limit.

As I began this chapter with Mrs Kala Madan, I shall end it with her son. His name is Narendra Nath Madan who retired from the army some years ago as a Brigadier. When I met him in Cairo soon after I gave the loan to his mother, he told me that his mother had informed him of the loan and that it would be repaid without much delay. I forgot all about it.

A month before I left Delhi for good in 1977, I remembered it. So I wrote to him on 30 September 1977 a letter reading as follows:

You will recollect that over 25 years ago I gave a loan of Rs 5,000 to your mother. Some time after that you promised to repay the debt. I did not want to remind you while your financial position was not affluent.

I am leaving Delhi for good on 29 October as I have no capacity to pay murderous rent in Delhi. There is considerable expenditure involved in this shift.

If you ask any banker, he will tell you that in 25 years Rs 5,000 if invested in a bank, would have multiplied to Rs 30,000. Considering the value of the rupee at the time of making the loan, the present value would be Rs 20,000. However, I do not wish to fleece you. I suggest that you give me Rs 10,000 which I shall consider as full re-paymant of the loan. I believe you are now very affluent.

Sd./- M.O. Mathai

On 27 October 1977, Brigadier Madan replied to me as follows:

Brigadier N.N.Madan,  
E-14/9 Vasant Vihar,  
New Delhi-57,  
27.10.1977.

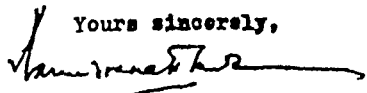
Dear Mr Mathai,

Your letter of 30th September, 1977. I would have got in touch with you much earlier; unfortunately, I have been away from Delhi for nearly a month and a half, except for a couple of very short visits. As a result, most of my mail has been following me around the countryside. When I returned a couple of days ago, I found your letter awaiting me.

Yes, I remember my mother having borrowed the money from you. In fact I was made aware of it within a few months of her having done so and I also remember her telling me that she would look after it herself, as some other people were involved in this transaction. Thereafter, since the matter never came up during the course of these many years, I naturally got the impression that the problem had been solved. Its a pity that you did not remind me of this fact, earlier. If you check on your source of information, I have been affluent enough for over 20 years to have paid back this debt of my mother's. And atleast 10 years ago she could have done it herself.

Please let me know your future address and the name fo your Bankers so that I can send you a draft for the amount concerned. Although my mother expired nearly three years ago, I have net been able to trace any paper that might have given me an idea of what the terms and conditions of the loan were.

Yours sincerely,



I wrote to Brigadier Madan on 28 October giving him my Madras address and the other particulars he had asked for. On the

27 December 1977, I reminded him from Madras. He chose not to reply. I wrote again, but no reply.

Brigadier Madan is too old to learn the meaning of the dictum "life is to give, not to take."

## 12 *I Cause Nehru's Resignation*

In July 1948 the Nizam of Hyderabad sent a letter to King George VI by ordinary post. In view of the trouble that was brewing in Hyderabad about accession to the Indian Union, an over-zealous customs officer intercepted the letter and opened it. Government instructed the Indian High Commissioner in London to explain the circumstances of the regrettable incident to Buckingham Palace. The High Commissioner received a letter dated 29 July 1948 from the Private Secretary to the King reading as follows:

The King has now given consideration to your letter to me of July 25th setting out the circumstances in which an envelope containing a letter addressed to his Majesty by the Nizam of Hyderabad was opened by a Customs Officer in Delhi.

The King accepts assurance given in your letter that no discourtesy to His Majesty was intended; he trusts, however, that the Prime Minister will take such steps as he may think fit to ensure that correspondence addressed to His Majesty is not so treated in the future.

Close on the heels of this, a similar incident occurred—this time involving a letter from King George VI addressed to the Nizam of Hyderabad. On 6 August 1948 a sealed cover was received from Governor-General C. Rajagopalachari addressed to the Prime Minister. As the cover was being delivered to me by an ADC to the Governor-General, the Prime Minister walked into my study. I opened the cover in which there were two smaller sealed envelopes. One I opened and, before I could glance through the papers, Nehru, in his impatience, snatched away the papers from me and began to read them. In the meantime I opened the second envelope also thinking that too was addressed to the Prime Minister. By that time Nehru had learnt that the second envelope, which I had just opened, was a communication from the King addressed to the Nizam. Nehru was stunned and asked me in a low tone: "What have you done?" He was visibly upset and quietly walked away. If I had the opportunity to glance through the contents of the first envelop, I would have learn't

that the second envelope was not to be opened. But it was not to be. The first envelope contained a letter from the Governor-General asking the Prime Minister to forward the second envelope (the King's communication) to the Nizam expeditiously. The Governor-General had enclosed with his letter, for the information of the Prime Minister, a copy of the King's communication to the Nizam dated 29 July 1948 which read as follows:

Your Exalted Highness,

I have received your Exalted Highness's letter of July 4th, with which you enclosed a copy of a letter addressed to my Prime Minister in the United Kingdom.

I continue to watch with interest and concern the course of the negotiations which have been in progress between my Government in the Dominion of India and the Government of Hyderabad regarding the relationship of Hyderabad to the Union of India, and it is my earnest hope and prayer that a peaceful solution of the difficulties which have arisen may be found.

I have also received your Exalted Highness's second letter, dated July 19th; you may rest assured that this letter also will have my close attention.

I sign myself your sincere friend,  
George R.

To General His Exalted Highness

Asaf Jah Muzaffar-ul-Mulk Wal Mamalik,  
Nizam-ul-Mulk Nizam-ud-Daula,  
Nawab Sir Mir Usman Ali Khan, Bahadur,  
Fateh Jung, G.C.S.I., G.B.E.  
Nizam of Hyderabad and Berar.

Even though the King's letter was an innocuous and routine acknowledgment and not of any urgency, the inadvertent opening of it caused extreme embarrassment to the Prime Minister.

Nehru at first thought of sending to the Nizam the King's letter with the opened envelope and apologizing to the Nizam for the inadvertent mistake; but the Governor-General advised against it. The Prime Minister accepted the Governor-General's suggestion that the communication be sent back to the King explaining the circumstances and requesting that it be put in a new envelope and returned for despatch to the Nizam.

Both the Governor-General and the Prime Minister sent "Humble Duty Submissions" to the King explaining the circumstances and con-

veying profound regrets and apologies. Nehru also sent a private message to Lord Mountbatten asking him to convey to the King informally his readiness to resign on account of the lapse. These were dated 7 August 1948.

All such communications were sent through Sardar Balwant Singh Puri, Secretary-General of the Indian Red Cross Society, who was proceeding to London for other work. He delivered them to High Commissioner Krishna Menon. The King happened to be at Balmoral



BALMORAL CASTLE

12th August, 1948

PERSONAL AND SECRET

My dear Prime Minister,

The King has directed me to thank you for your note of August 7th and for sending him such a clear statement about the accident that befell His Majesty's letter to the Nizam.

The King, who is sincerely sorry that so much trouble should have been given to so many busy people, fully accepts the explanation that you give of this unlucky mischance, which, as I said to His Majesty yesterday, is one that has afflicted many a private secretary in the past, including myself!

I now send you back the letter to the Nizam, in its original form but in a new envelope, sealed by The King. His Majesty would be grateful if you would arrange to have it transmitted to His Exalted Highness as soon as possible, and trusts it may have no further misadventures.

We are all looking forward to seeing you in London when the Conference of Prime Ministers assembles in October.

Yours sincerely,

The Prime Minister of India

*Declassified.  
It is no longer secret.  
The Hyderabad problem  
was solved on 24th November 1949.  
The Nizam is now Raj Ranjith.  
M.M. Madani  
27th January 1950.*

Castle then. Krishna Menon decided to fly to Scotland to deliver the communications at Balmoral. Lord Mountbatten advised against disturbing the King on his holiday. On the advice of Lord Mountbatten, the communications, along with a private letter from Lord Mountbatten addressed to the King, were delivered at Buckingham Palace on the evening of 9 August. They were sent by the special air-mail from Buckingham Palace to Balmoral and the papers were in the hands of the King shortly after 10 A.M. on 10 August.

On 12 August 1948 the Right Hon'ble Sir Alan Lascelles, PC, KCVO, CB, CMG, Private Secretary to King George VI, wrote to the Prime Minister see page 86.



### 13 *Nehru and Industrialists*

The one and only Indian Industrialist, with whom Nehru was personally friendly before independence was J.R.D. Tata. They were on terms of calling each other by first names. This personal relationship between the two and Nehru's initial good opinion of the House of Tatas were primarily due to J.R.D. Tata's life-long passionate interest in aviation, the readiness with which he started the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research with a view to providing research facilities to the promising young scientist Homi J. Bhabha before independence, and the contribution of the House of Tatas towards the promotion of science and medical research in India.

After Nehru entered government, J.R.D. Tata was correct and always observed proprieties in dealing with Nehru. For example, he never discussed with the Prime Minister any problem confronting the business House of Tatas. His dealings were confined to overall policies governing aviation and broad policies affecting industrial development and production.

It was on Nehru's personal initiative that J.R.D. Tata was included several times in the Indian delegation to the United Nations General Assembly in the early years of independence.

The relationship suffered a set-back when Indian internal airways were nationalized by Rafi Ahmed Kidwai. J.R.D. Tata was bitterly opposed to it.

The relationship was soured by two happenings:

(1) On his return from a mission to the Federal Republic of Germany early in the fifties, Asok K. Chanda, Secretary in the Ministry of Production, personally reported to the Prime Minister that he ran into heavy weather with the German consortium for the proposed Rourkela Steel Plant because the Tatas, at a very high level, had succeeded in misleading the Germans about the need for a separate steel plant for India. As a result, the whole concept of the Rourkela Steel Plant had to be changed. German financial participation was dispensed with and ultimately the German consortium came in only as suppliers and contractors. Nehru was annoyed and upset by this episode. The relations between the Prime Minister and J.R.D. Tata were strained beyond repair.

(2) K.M. Mathulla, a chartered accountant who was controller of Accounts of the Tata Iron and Steel Company Limited (TISCO), disclosed to the Union Finance Ministry a large-scale tax evasion by TISCO. This led to Mathulla's services being terminated by TISCO. The Tatas found it prudent to desist from going to court about reassessment of tax and ultimately had to enter into a compromise arrangement with the government whereby a sum of Rs 75 lakhs was paid to the government in settlement of the tax evasion. The Ministry of Production in the union government employed Mathulla as a Joint Secretary and put him in charge of steel. This infuriated J.R.D. Tata further. When a separate Ministry of Steel was created with T.T. Krishnamachari as Minister, Mathulla was transferred and appointed as Managing Director of Hindustan Machine Tools (HMT) which was in doldrums at that time. When I first heard of Mathulla's employment in the Ministry of production, I had told the secretary of that ministry that he should not be allowed to claim his very substantial "reward" from the Finance Ministry for his disclosure of tax evasion by TISCO, as long as he was connected with the government. I do not know if and when Mathulla drew the "reward" to which he was entitled. In Bangalore Mathulla earned the reputation of having served HMT and himself very well.

About this time, when Nehru was full of Rourkela Steel Plant episode, T.T. Krishnamachari walked into my room in Parliament House and, as he finished his business with me, said he had something to say to the Prime Minister. So we both went in. Nehru started talking about the Rourkela Steel Plant episode and about the attempt by some Parsi businessmen to smuggle substantial amounts out of India in foreign exchange as a prelude to migrating from the country. He ended up by saying: "Whatever may be the faults of the Marwaris, they are emotionally attached to this land; they want to die here; and they want their ashes to be immersed in the Ganga."

Nehru once told me of a revolting experience he had at a Parsi book-shop in Bombay. At that time he was a well-known person who would collect a crowd whenever he went. He arrived at the book-shop and told the Parsi salesman at the counter what books he wished to buy. Instead of speaking to him politely and directing him to the appropriate counter, the man made a coarse "Yke" sound and showed his thumb in the direction of the counter to go to. Nehru commented to me: "Some of these Parsis should be sent to Lucknow to learn manners from *ekkawallahs* who are known for their innate cultured behaviour." He was full of praise for the manners of the common people of Lucknow.

With the generality of businessmen and industrialists, both Indian and foreign, Nehru was not at home. He liked to avoid their calculations, crudities and coarseness. To him, socially they were "outcastes." The same was the case with the average run of Trade Union leaders. Nobody could persuade Nehru to give a reception to members of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry on the Indian National Trade Union Congress during their annual sessions in New Delhi. One of the words Nehru disliked most was "lucrative." The nearest word he would suffer himself to use was "profitable." Nehru's sensitiveness and definement, with all their implications, led some people to refer to his "lofty aloofness."

## 14 *The Scientific Trio*

Sir Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar, Prof P.C. Mahalanobis and Dr Homi J. Bhabha were the scientists who played a prominent part in the fulfilment of Nehru's cherished desire to rapidly develop science and technology as instruments of economic development and social change in a tradition-bound society. Nehru was anxious to sweep the cobwebs of superstition and obscurantism. He laid great stress in developing the scientific temper in the country.

All the three men were Fellows of the Royal Society, Dr Bhabha being the youngest of them.

Realising the importance of their work, Nehru was indulgent to them. The senior ICS officials mentally disapproved of Nehru spending so much time on them. These civil servants invented the bogey that the three scientists were exercising undue influence on the Prime Minister. In the initial stages they behaved towards these scientists as if they were heads of "attached offices" and would not treat them as anything more than Joint Secretaries. Naturally this produced reaction in the scientists. It took considerable time for ICS secretaries to the Government of India to come to the painful conclusion that they were no longer the rulers of India dealing directly with the Viceroy over the heads of the dummy members of the Viceroy's Executive Council. Right from the beginning the three scientists received such consideration and courtesy from the Prime Minister, who was also in charge of scientific research, that they felt content that government, for the first time, attached more importance to their work than that of the bureaucrats. Gradually the emoluments and official position of scientists and technical men such as engineers, medical men and others were enhanced.

Nehru did not come into direct touch with the work of Sir C.V. Raman, Dr M.N. Saha, the Indian Council for Medical Research and the Indian Council for Agriculture Research. Dr Saha was perpetually at logger-heads with Dr Bhatnagar and Dr Bhabha. He was on the verge of retiring from active scientific work. Progressively he grew cantankerous and strayed into politics for which he always had a penchant, while Sir C.V. Raman observed his loftily aloofness. The one Nehru personally liked most in the scientific community was Sir K.S. Krishnan who was soft-spoken, dignified and retiring. Undoubtedly he

was the most wholesome man among the scientists.

When the question of including a distinguished scientist in the first list of Presidential nominees to the Rajya Sabha arose, Nehru informally consulted several prominent people in the scientific community. He was anxious to have the most acceptable and the least controversial person. All except Dr M.N. Saha opted for Prof Satyendra Nath Bose. Dr Saha's stand reminded me of the attitude of the Cardinals in the election of the Pope in ancient times. In the first ballot each Cardinal received one vote—his own. In spite of Dr Saha, Prof S.N. Bose was nominated by the President, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, as a member of the Rajya Sabha.

### *Dr S.S. Bhatnagar*

He made his mark as a scientist for his research in Chemistry before the second World War. During the war the British appointed him as the Director-General of the newly constituted Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). From then on he functioned as a scientific administrator. It was in this capacity that Nehru came to know him.

Dr Bhatnagar was a restless person bubbling with nervous energy. Endowed with considerable organizing ability, he had great capacity to get industrialists interested in the work he was doing and in raising substantial donations to start new laboratories. He was primarily responsible for establishing a chain of important national laboratories and institutes such as physical, chemical, electro-chemical, metallurgical, building research, road research, leather research, salt research, food research, drug research, and innumerable others.

Dr Bhatnagar disliked ICS officials so much that he persuaded himself that the original devil was an ICS man. He asked for and received the status and emoluments of an ICS Secretary to the Government of India. In fact he became Secretary in two successive Ministries in addition to his own charge as Director-General, CSIR. The two senior ICS Officers Dr Bhatnagar could not stand the sight of were S.A. Venkataraman and H.M. Patel. Sometimes Dr Bhatnagar carried his vendetta against the ICS too far. More than once I had to caution him against carrying flippant tales to the Prime Minister against individual ICS men.

Suavity was not one of Dr Bhatnagar's many virtues. He used to irritate the Prime Minister far too often. But he was an honest man who fearlessly spoke to the PM. It was when he needlessly strayed into

regions beyond his sphere of activity that he became insufferable. But he meant well.

Early in 1952 a young man by the name of M. Santappa came to see me in Delhi on his way to Andhra Pradesh from England. After graduating from Madras University and undergoing the M.Sc. course at the Banares Hindu University, he went to England in 1947 for further studies. In 1948 he took a diploma in Plastic technology from the City and Guilds Institute, London. In 1949 he took the Ph. D in Organic Chemistry in London. In 1951 he took the Ph. D. in Physical Chemistry in Manchester. I was impressed by the young man with the double Ph. D. My admiration for him grew when I learn't that he was a Harijan.

I spoke to Dr Bhatnagar and asked him if the CSIR could profitably utilize the services of Dr Santappa. When Dr Santappa met Dr Bhatnagar subsequently, he offered him a post which Dr Santappa considered a routine one. He declined to accept it and went home. Later, when I met Dr Bhatnagar, I asked him why he let Dr Santappa go away. He told me that he did not get the impression that I was keen about Dr Santappa. I was annoyed and told him that his attitude was all wrong; that he should employ an individual not because a third person was keen but solely because of his worth; and that I disliked recommending people and would only bring worth-while people to the notice of those concerned. Here was a Harijan with a brilliant record and it should have occurred to you that you should go out of your way to recognise his merit and make use of his service." Dr Bhatnagar further annoyed me by saying that he would write to Dr Santappa offering him a better position. I told him "don't, if you do anything of the kind I shall ask Dr Santappa to reject it with contempt. He is a bright young man and I have no doubt that he will find his level without your help."

Soon after I shifted to Madras in November 1977, I came across Dr Santappa by chance. I was happy to learn that since 1973 he has been Director, Central Leather Research Institute (CLRI), Madras, a premier scientific Institute of CSIR, and Honorary Professor of Physical Chemistry, University of Madras.

He joined the Madras University in 1952 as Reader and Head of the Department of Physical Chemistry. From 1958-65 he was University Professor of Physical Chemistry; and in 1966 he was promoted to Senior Professor and Head of the Department of Physical Chemistry, University of Madras. He has been guiding research at the doctoral level for many years. So far 35 scientists under his training have obtained Ph. D degrees and 12 are now under training.

Apart from research contributions on various aspects of chemistry,

Dr Santappa has published scientific papers in over 200 journals of international reputation and standing. His research results now form part of standard books on these subjects. He has won numerous academic awards and honours and fellowships of distinguished bodies.

He had been actively connected with seven universities as member of senates and syndicates; with the University Grants Commission as a member; several Boards, Boards of Studies, Planning Committees and Boards of Education under the Union Ministry of Education and Social Welfare and the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India; as Member and many other government bodies connected with all aspects of leather and livestock as chairman, director or member.

As Director of CLRI for the past five years, Dr Santappa has acquired considerable administrative experience. Having been born in 1923, he is now past 55. I do hope that the Government of India will continue to make use of his services as long as he is physically fit. A government committed to special treatment to Harijans and other weaker sections of the population should seek out distinguished people like Dr Santappa and place them in appropriate positions. Government should not take cover under the false plea that suitable men are not available among the Harijans. Government should honestly follow the injunction with the built-in promise: "Seek, and Ye Shall Find."

Dr Santappa took over his new appointment as Vice-Chancellor of the Sri Venkateswara University in Andhra Pradesh on 17 January 1979. I hope this is not the end for him. I also hope he will keep up his research work.

Dr Bhatnagar was a man who did not have much attachment to money. Much of the royalties he received on his books and from earlier research were gifted by him to government to provide awards to creative scientists.

### *P.C. Mahalanobis*

He was a regular member of the Indian Educational Service (IES) which the ICS considered as "inferior." Mahalanobis knew the art of cultivating the right people. He came into contact with Nehru in the National Planning Committee constituted by the Indian National Congress at Nehru's instance during the Presidentship of Subhas Chandra Bose in 1938. Ever since then he stuck to Nehru. By 1938 Mahalanobis had registered the Indian Statistical Institute Society and started operations in a modest way.

Early in 1946, soon after I joined Nehru in Allahabad, Mahalanobis

took under his wings a young man, Pitambar Pant, who had done secretarial work for Nehru for about three months. He was given some training at the Indian Statistical Institute in Calcutta and later at New York for further training. For Mahalanobis, Pitambar Pant was an investment inasmuch as he (Nehru) was concerned. In subsequent years Mahalanobis and Pant developed a relationship of scratching each other's back and singing each other's praise to Nehru. Before Nehru, Mahalanobis invested Pant with qualities he did not possess. This relationship was used effectively by Mahalanobis to create the impression among others that he was very close to Nehru. Incidentally, Mahalanobis was not the only person who indulged in this practice.

It was since Independence that Mahalanobis and the Indian Statistical Institute prospered spectacularly. Without any difficulty the Indian Statistical Institute received all the money it asked for. Finance Minister C.D. Deshmukh, in particular, was over-indulgent to Mahalanobis and his Institute and protected them from attacks by civil servants. He turned Nelson's eye to allegations of irregularities.

Soon after the Dominion government came into existence in 1947 Mahalanobis became a man of consequence in the capital, two senior Bengali ICS officers spread the rumour that Mahalanobis was caught in corruption, while in service, by the British and that he escaped by the skin of his teeth with minor punishment. I must frankly admit that Bengalis are as good as Malayalis at gunning for each other.

After Pitambar Pant returned from New York, Mahalanobis suggested that he might be given a suitable appointment in the government and asked to deal with the statistical aspect of refugee relief and rehabilitation. There was difficulty in absorbing Pant in a regular government post; so he was appointed as Private Secretary to the Minister of State for Relief and Rehabilitation.

It was on the recommendations contained in a detailed paper prepared by Pitambar Pant that the union cabinet decided to abolish the cumbersome British practice by introducing the decimal system in currency and coinage and the metric system in weights and measures.

In the meantime Mahalanobis got himself appointed as the Honorary Statistical Adviser to the Cabinet. For some time Mahalanobis had been trying to get an official house allotted to him in New Delhi. His unpopularity with the bureaucracy was that they successfully put obstacles in his way in spite of the Prime Minister speaking to the Minister for Works and Housing. At last Mahalanobis discovered that the two-storeyed house in King Georges avenue vacated by K.P.S. Menon on his appointment as Ambassador in Moscow remained unoccupied. He approached the Estate office and was promptly told that it had been



allotted to N.R. Pillai, the new Secretary-General of the External Affairs Ministry. In his desperation Mahalanobis again went to Nehru with his tale of woe. Nehru called me and said in angry tones in the presence of Mahalanobis that he had been trying to get a house allotted to Mahalanobis for months and nothing had happened. He asked me to find out if something could be done quickly. I rang up the Secretary of the Works and Housing Ministry and asked him to give me a list of four-bed-roomed houses lying vacant in New Delhi. I told him that one such was urgently needed for a person who had the status of a Minister of State. Later in the day he rang back to say that there was only one which was vacant and that it was a good one with extensive grounds. Had he known that the person I wanted help was Mahalanobis, there would have been no vacant house. I asked him to allot the vacant house to N.R. Pillai and cancel his other allotment in King Georges Avenue which should be allotted to Mahalanobis. He issued immediate orders accordingly to the Estate Office. In the mean time I persuaded N.R. Pillai to accept the new allotment which was actually a better one. Pillai, who is a very fair minded person, told me that normally he would never go out of his way to help Mahalanobis. I informed Mahalanobis about the allotment and asked him to let me know if any hitch developed. Mahalanobis had the house reallocated to the Indian Statistical Institute Society so that he did not have to pay rent personally. Three days later Mahalanobis, accompanied by Pitambar Pant, came to thank me. As he was about to leave he said "you and I should work together." This annoyed me. I told him "I love to do that, but the trouble is that I have in my plate more than what I can manage."

Pitambar Pant was selected to IAS by the U.P.S.C. in the Home Ministry's recruitment of over-age candidates. After Mahalanobis was appointed as *de facto* Member of the Planning Commission, Pant was taken into the Perspective Planning Division directly under the charge of Mahalanobis. Pant thrived there and, under the Indira regime, was pitch-forked as a Member of the Planning Commission from the level of a junior Joint Secretary. As he had to resign from the IAS to be a Member of the Planning Commission, he extracted an undertaking from the government that in case he ceased to be a member, he would be provided with a government job commensurate with his seniority in the IAS until he reached the retirement age of 58 and that his pension and other retirement benefits would be protected. When C. Subramaniam became Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, he had no use for Pant who, in the absence of Mahalanobis from the scene, was hunted out to the Department of Science and Technology and put in charge of "Environment." Pant was a firm believer in astrology. An

astrologer had told him that he would not live beyond the age of 50. Most astrological predictions of an unfavourable nature tend to come true; and the one about Pant proved to be an exception.

Indian Statistical Institute which Mahalanobis built up as an organization of considerable size and international reputation was owned by a society in which none but Mahalanobis counted. All others were rubber stamps for him. For a number of years after retirement K.P.S. Menon, in spite of advice from some of his friends and well-wishers, allowed himself to be installed as chairman of the society and to be a decorative rubber stamp. The society received large annual maintenance grants from the Government of India and generous fees for specific work the Institute carried out for the government. In addition the society received directly from the Ford Foundation substantial grants in rupees and in dollars to be spent at the discretion of Mahalanobis. It was from the Ford Foundation grants that Mahalanobis paid for the travelling and other expenses of his wife whom he took with him on all his foreign and internal travels.

The house in Barrackpore belonging to Mrs Mahalanobis was taken by the Indian Statistical Institute Society on a generous rental for the residence of Mahalanobis. The society spent a substantial amount for the extensive repairs, renovations and additions to the house in addition to payment of rental to Mrs Mahalanobis. The Indian Statistical Institute also paid Mahalanobis a salary of Rs 3,000 per month. In addition Mahalanobis received his pension from government for his services in the IES. After the death of Mahalanobis his residence was converted into the library of the Indian Statistical Institute and rent continues to be paid to Mrs Mahalanobis who also enjoys free quarters there.

The ISI Society, at the instance of Mahalanobis, leased about 250 acres of land in Giridhi (Bihar) belonging to his close relatives without executing proper formal agreement. Large sums were spent by the society on developing the property. The relatives are now demanding either the return of the land or the price at current market rate having no regard to the larger sums already spent by the society on development.

One need not make heavy weather of these cases of elasticity in financial matters considering the significant contributions made by Mahalanobis to the cause of statistical science in India. He built up a first-rate institution in India, trained a large number of first-class men in this field and put India in the forefront of nations in the realm of statistics. The National Sample Survey is an innovation introduced and built up by Mahalanobis even though it is now a fullfledged govern-

ment organization with no administrative connection with the ISI.

None in India has questioned the eminence of Mahalanobis in the field of statistics. His eminence is recognised internationally. But many in the Planning Commission and other organs of the Government of India did not believe that Mahalanobis possessed the scientific detachment so necessary for the correct interpretation of statistics. It was because of this that some called Mahalanobis "Mahabaloney." Mahalanobis had definite ideological predilections undesirable in a genuine scientist.

Opinions might vary about the contribution of Mahalanobis to Planning. When one wishes to build a noble edifice one does not look for a carpenter first; one sends for an architect. It is the architect's job to employ good carpenters. In the planning process Mahalanobis was by no means an architect.

*Dr H.J. Bhabha*

Much before Nehru entered government he had known Homi Bhabha as a young scientist working at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research. Bhabha had diverse interests. He was a painter and a connoisseur of music and Indian classical dancing.

Bhabha turned his attention to nuclear science at the earliest opportunity. With the advent of the national government Bhabha received from Nehru all the encouragement he needed. The Department of Atomic Energy and the Atomic Energy Commission were created. Bhabha was named the Secretary of the Department and the Chairman of the Commission with the status and emoluments higher than those of a Secretary to the Government of India but Bhabha did not take advantage of the enhanced salary. He preferred to draw a lower salary.

When the activities of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research got expanded requiring substantially more funds which the Tatas could not afford to spend, government decided to take over the institution. Dr Bhatnagar made government take-over conditional on dropping "TATA" from the name of the Institute. Dr Bhabha, who grew up with the Institute, fought a battle royal and ultimately Nehru upheld Bhabha's stand.

Bhabha had vision and foresight and capacity to think big. He clearly foresaw before any one else the importance of developing nuclear energy for India. With the full backing of Nehru, Bhabha proceeded with the work with zeal and determination and produced a fine organization with dedicated people in the process.

In 1957 I asked Dr Bhabha how soon the Atomic Energy Commission could produce an atomic bomb if the government gave the green signal. He replied "three years for the atom bomb and five years for the hydrogen bomb." He added "I hope India will never make the bomb because it is an instrument of terror and mass destruction and that in any event, since several nations have it, for India the military value is doubtful. It can only create in us Big Power chauvinism." He said he was not particularly worried about the cost involved. His mind was full of peaceful uses of nuclear energy—known and some yet unknown—for diverse needs.

Dr Bhabha was unanimously elected as the Chairman of the International Conference on peaceful uses of nuclear energy at Geneva.

A cruel fate cut short an illustrious life and deprived India of the services of a dedicated and remarkable man. He died in an air crash over Mont Blanc in the Alps.

## 15 *How oily was Oil*

In the chapter "Two Weather-Beaten Ministers" in my first book, I had mentioned about the unorthodox appointment of K.K. Sahni early in 1956 in the Government of India to deal with all aspects of oil. Sahni contributed not only to a reduction in the petroleum product prices, which was mopped up by the government and not passed on to the consumer, but was closely associated with the formulation of government's subsequent oil policy. It was at my instance that Sahni resigned from Burmah Shell in 1956 at considerable personal sacrifice, and Nehru took the initiative in dealing with the Chairman of the Union Public Service Commission to induct him into the government. Nehru took keen interest on Sahni's work until he left the government at the end of 1961.

In view of the importance of petroleum in both peace and war, the government by the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1948 decided to develop a viable petroleum industry under state control. It was, however, made clear that the state did not propose to take over existing units in the private sector but their future development would be under state control. Even so the first major phase of development of indigenous refining capacity in the post-1948 period was left in fact to the private sector. The three refineries, two at Bombay and one at Visakhapatnam came on stream between 1954 and 1957.

The initial reluctance of Foreign Oil companies to establish refineries in India underwent a change in 1951 when Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in Iran was nationalized and there was disruption of supplies. India obtained 70 per cent of her requirements from Iran. As this source of supply was no longer available, the oil companies were incurring higher transport cost on petroleum products and they were, therefore, more inclined to diversify the location of their refineries and build them in importing countries like India.

The Ministry of Natural Resources under K.D. Malaviya also allowed Foreign Private Investment in the field of oil exploration. The government entered into an agreement with the Standard Vacuum Oil Company in 1954—government holding 25 per cent and Standard Vacuum 75 per cent, for exploration activities covering a concession area of 10,000 square miles in West Bengal. This agreement granted

majority equity share and complete control of management to Standard Vacuum and if losses were incurred Standard Vacuum could deduct its share from its marketing income for income-tax purposes.

Standard Vacuum drilled 10 unsuccessful wells before abandoning the project in 1961. The Government of India lost Rs 18.4 million plus loss of income-tax due to the deduction from its marketing income of Standard Vacuum's share of losses.

As a result of the aforesaid agreements during the period 1948, as many as 55 foreign oil companies operating in India controlled oil exploration, oil refining, imports and distribution of petroleum products.

The government's agreement to the setting up of completely foreign owned refineries and exploration and its commitment of total non-interference with the working of these concerns were in sharp conflict with the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1948 under which the petroleum industry was to be developed in the state sector. Perhaps this attitude was dictated by the highly capital intensive and skilled nature of petroleum industry and considered foreign private investment was in the national interest.

Because of its total ignorance about the working and ramifications of oil industry, the government did not fully appreciate the consequences of the terms on which it had agreed to invite foreign private capital into oil industry. Gradually thereafter it began to be worried about the effect on the country's balance of payment by allowing foreign companies to hold all the equity, and the dividend remittances were imposing an additional burden.

Sahni had been on a fact-finding-cum-study-trip to Europe and America and he came back convinced that the government could and should enter the oil industry covering all facets and by early 1956 the government's attitude began to change and this was reflected in the New Industrial Policy Resolution adopted in 1956. The resolution classified oil in the first category whose future development would be the exclusive responsibility of the state.

The period after the Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956 was characterized by two developments:

(1) Foreign Private Investment had to relinquish complete control and ownership and accept minority or equal equity interest in joint ventures with the government. The government's role in oil exploration and production, refining, imports and distribution of petroleum products increased progressively.

(2) Secondly the independence of the foreign oil companies in

pursuing their own pricing policies was curtailed by state intervention.

The Oil Industry in a report submitted in 1952 to the government had said that there would be an annual loss to the companies of Rs 20 million if crude oil were to be refined in India. Therefore, in its anxiety to get the oil companies to set up refineries and exploration programmes in India, the Government of India, in utter folly, literally conceded whatever terms were asked for.

Sahni was able to demonstrate to the government the unfavourable clauses in the agreements covering refinery and exploration. He obtained a copy of M.V. Kellogs and Company's feasibility study for a refinery in Latin America, which clearly revealed that payout for a refinery on the basis of import parity price is less than two years and therefore there was no need to give concessions some of which are mentioned.

By allowing the oil refineries to import crude oil from the source of their choice, India had surrendered whatever margin of manoeuvrability which otherwise she might have had in buying crude oil at competitive prices. The crude supply clause caused considerable strain on India's balance of payment during the period 1958-69 when the prices paid for crude oil were higher than those prevailing in the world market. An official of the World Bank has estimated the excess cost to India of crude oil imported was about \$ 75 million during the aforesaid period as India was denied the benefit of prevalent discounts.

Further, the refinery agreements allowed the companies to price their domestically refined products at levels higher than those at which the same products would otherwise have been imported. Unfortunately the Government of India was not fully versed in the intricacies of the cost elements which enter into pricing and additionally gave oil companies the benefit of duty protection for oil production in India for a period of ten years from the commencement of full scale refinery operation or until 31 December 1965, which ever was earlier and the difference between the customs duty and excise duty thus benefited the oil companies as a duty protection for their refineries in India.

The oil companies were aware of the cabinet's unhappiness over the refinery agreements and under indirect pressure from the government, and in their enlightened self-interest gave up duty protection in stages starting from 1 October 1956 through January 1959, and the government was thus able to save about Rs 70 crores against the total benefit of Rs 85 crores which would have accrued to the three oil

companies. The oil companies did not agree to refund the duty protection which they had already enjoyed. It is relevant to mention that the cost of the three refineries was actually below Rs 50 crores whereas the companies were given duty protection alone of Rs 85 crores.

Remittance clause was another unfavourable one. When Sahni approached in 1956 the Ministry of Finance/Reserve Bank of India for details of remittances by oil companies, detailed figures were not available as figures were inclusive of vegetable oil and other non-mineral oils and as the remittances in India did not give a correct picture of currency liability they had to be adjusted on the basis of data supplied by the Bank of England. However, this procedure was revised to provide details of remittances covering all phases of petroleum including dividend, salaries, expenses on overseas establishments etc.

In any appraisal of the refinery agreements, the main point to be considered is their timing in assessing these agreements—it must be asked if India could have secured any better terms from these companies at the time. As for the refinery Agreements of early fifties the oil companies dominated the world petroleum industry and the Indian government knew little about the oil industry. What is really incomprehensible and inexcusable are the refinery agreements with Phillips Petroleum Company at Cochin, National Iranian Oil Company at Madras and with a French Company at Haldiya.

As for the Cochin Refinery deal, Phillips Petroleum and Duncan Brothers had submitted a proposal to the Petroleum Ministry when Sahni was Joint Secretary. It was examined and the proposal was turned down with the approval of the Prime Minister much to the disappointment of the Minister of State K.D. Malaviya. However, the proposal was cleared by the government on terms, which were even more unfavourable to the government, than the initial proposal within a year of the exit of Sahni from the ministry at the end of 1961. It is odd that Malaviya, who had by that time become Cabinet Minister, S.S. Khera, Secretary Petroleum had become Cabinet Secretary and K.R. Damle, Petroleum Secretary who was earlier Chairman of the first Price Enquiry Committee—all of whom should have known better, should have approved of the subsequent proposal. Those who believe there must have been considerations other than the national interest in this melancholy transaction cannot be blamed.

Phillips Petroleum Company was guaranteed a process margin of \$ 1.35 per barrel for a period of ten years from 1969 and \$ 1.30 per barrel for the next five years. These figures took into account a delivery



cost of imported crude of \$ 1.94 per barrel and the then current refinery prices based on import parity. It should be noted that the terms of the Cochin Refinery agreement were even worse than the terms of agreements made in the fifties. The margin allowed was very high compared with that of the foreign refineries in India. As compared with the process margin of \$ 1.35 per barrel allowed to Phillips Petroleum, the process margins at Burmah Shell, ESSO and Caltex refineries were \$ 1.24 per barrel, \$ 1.02 per barrel and \$ 0.97 per barrel respectively. The excess amount paid relates to the refining capacity of 2.5 million tons per annum or 17,500,000 barrels per annum. Readers can calculate the loss to India in this indefensible transaction.

For its minority shareholding Phillips Petroleum were appointed agents for Cochin Refinery with the right to arrange for supplies of imported crude and transport of the crude and the construction work for the Cochin Refinery on a turn key basis. Phillips Petroleum were to provide technical services to the refinery for which they were to receive in foreign exchange \$ 5.65 million and a further Rs. 23.60 million in India.

A well informed person, once connected with the Petroleum Industry, pointed out in giving evidence before the Estimates Committee: "This margin is not obtainable by them even in their own country or by any refinery anywhere in the world."

Lok Sabha Estimates Committee (1967-8) in their 50th report, Petroleum and Petroleum Products page 130-2 has stressed that: "The government have not been vigilant enough in weighing the advantages and disadvantages of the various clauses in this agreement and the technical fees payable to the foreign collaborators in the Cochin Refinery was unduly high and was causing a strain on balance of payment."

The Secretary of the Petroleum Ministry told the Estimates Committee: "It is really a foreign exchange benefit. Phillips help to bring to us three to four million dollars of foreign exchange. Besides they help by bringing \$ 19 to 20 million of loan for financing the refinery."

It is indeed ironic that the Secretary of the Ministry should have made this statement because ENI credit \$ 100 million which was concluded by Sahni earlier, was available to the Indian government for setting up 100 per cent public owned refineries. Technical know-how was readily available from consultants, contractors and builders of refineries who not only set up the plant but also arranged for start up and to train Indians to take over the unit. Glut of crude oil had developed in the world crude oil market and alternative sources of

crude oil supplies from the independents and state oil companies had emerged.

The excessive process margin guaranteed to Phillips was criticized in Parliament; and in 1969 government succeeded in modifying the agreement but the modifications still provided Phillips Petroleum a 10 per cent annual return on its shareholding in dollars which will give a net after-tax dividend to Phillips of not less than the rupee equivalent of \$ 388,270.24. If in any particular year this average net dividend is not achieved the government is to make up to the requisite extent.

The 1969 modifications contains extraordinary incentives and concessions to Phillips in guaranteeing a 10 per cent return on its shareholding in dollars regardless of any increase in processing cost, free of income tax, variations in the dollar/rupee exchange rate or variations in the ex-refinery prices.

According to the Department of Justice US government, a Federal Grand Jury at Tulsa, USA on 2 September 1976 indicted the Phillips Petroleum Company as well as its present President and Chief Executive Officer and two former Presidents and Chief Executive Officers on charges of conspiracy to defraud the United States by impeding the Internal Revenue Services in determining and collecting taxes of the corporation. The indictment charged that substantial sums of money amounting to approximately \$ three million were generated by confidential transactions and concealed as deposits in Swiss bank accounts.

The Company had also received technical services fee of \$ 440,000 per annum from Cochin Refinery Limited which were transmitted to the Panama subsidiary, where they were available for confidential disbursements to certain foreign entities.

Specifically the indictment charged that funds from Swiss accounts and the technical service fee transmitted to the Panama subsidiary were both used to make concealed and confidential disbursements to certain foreign entities, who assisted in obtaining the Cochin Refinery contract.

The indictment charged all the defendants and it carries a maximum penalty on conviction of a \$ 10,000 fine for the corporation and a \$ 10,000 fine and five years in prison for an individual.

The judgement of the Federal Grand Jury reveals how slush funds were built up in Switzerland and Panama to the tune of around nine million dollars and utilized for under-the-counter payments to Indians, and the comments of the Estimates Committee raise a vital issue as to who were responsible for such an agreement. It is no use blaming the multi-national oil companies as they are not here for our health but to make profits, and it is for the Government of India itself to protect its

interests. The names of the indicted could be obtained by the Indian government from the Justice Department in Washington and the government should hold an enquiry into the conduct of the people concerned both at the official and political level.

As for Madras Refinery, the government again committed the mistake of tying up the supply of crude at a price which has turned out to be very unfavourable for the country. They obtained sour Darius crude which had a high sulphur content and at the time there were no buyers for it. This was based on the advice of a foreign oil expert whom the ministry had engaged, and this prevented a very substantial downward adjustment in the price of crude oil when substantial discounts were offered on posted prices. The Government of India asked the National Iranian Oil Company to reduce its price but the company refused.

As for Haldiya there was no justification in setting it up. The capacity of Barauni Refinery could have been increased and the government could have made full use of the product pipeline which they had laid from Barauni to Calcutta. When Haldiya refinery comes on stream what purpose will the product pipeline serve—except that about Rs 50 crores will be written off? A commission was appointed to examine the working of the pipeline and its alignment but no action has been taken on the commission's report submitted to the government some three years back.

The setting up of refinery at Haldiya and a second refinery in Assam are typical examples where the petroleum ministers have used their good offices to set up refineries in their respective states even though there were no economic and/or technical justification for its construction.

The government is setting up a further refinery at Mathura and the pipeline is being laid from Salaya to Mathura and also a spur taken to the Koyali refinery. The government and Indian Oil Corporation were fully aware of the Bombay High oil prospects and it would have been cheaper and saved the country hundreds of crores of rupees by expanding the capacities of the two existing refineries in Bombay, which by then had become 100 per cent government-owned and also its own Koyali refinery. To take the Bombay High crude oil in tankers to Salaya and then to pump it through the pipeline to Mathura and Koyali can never be an economic proposition. The danger, which is real, to the Taj Mahal could also have been averted.

Sahni's study tour in early 1956 gave him a much needed opportunity to build up contacts with well known oil-world personalities particularly men connected with public sector organizations. Sahni met

Mr Enrico Mattei, President of ENI; Monsieur Blancart, Director General of Petroleum in Paris who later became Minister of Aviation in General De Gaulle's government; Mr Bermudes, Director General, Pemex, Mexico and Mr Gunnar Myrdal, Secretary General of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva.

Mattei helped in building the crude pipeline from Naharkatiya to Barauni at a very competitive rate and also provided a line of credit of \$ 100 million for public sector projects for oil covering exploration, refining, lubricating plants, petro-chemical units, pipelines etc. It is indeed regrettable that this credit was not used fully. Instead a refinery at Cochin and lubricant manufacturing and blending units at Bombay and Calcutta were set up in collaboration with private sector oil companies—such are the ways of working of our socialist ministers and the secretaries of “strong” views about Public Sector.

Monsieur Blancart and Monsieur Navare, President of Institute France De Petroleum assisted in setting up an Indian Petroleum Institute—here again our institute has very little to show as for training of personnel and research, whereas the Institute France De Petrole has done magnificent work in these respects.

Bermudes gave a very clear picture of his company from pre-nationalization days and post nationalization period. A senior Secretary of the Indian Government Dr S.S. Bhatnagar, who visited Mexico in 1954 had reported that the oil industry was nationalized in Mexico in 1946 and its production of crude oil in 1954 was one-thirtieth of its production prior to the expropriation, whereas Sahni's report mentioned Pemex had produced 30 million tons in 1955 which was the highest level recorded since 1926 when the industry, which was expropriated in 1938, was in the hands of foreign companies, and they were producing crude at the maximum level. I recalled Dr Bhatnagar's report, so Sahni was asked to recheck his figures. Pemex Officials confirmed to our ambassador in Mexico that the figures quoted by Sahni were correct. The earlier report of Dr Bhatnagar really baffled both Nehru and me. Perhaps he did not approve of nationalization of oil.

Gunnar Myrdal and his colleagues spoke about their findings and gave Sahni a copy of their report “price of oil in Western Europe.” The conclusions drawn in this report had given rise to a number of difficulties and complex issues, some of them of a very controversial nature. The report was subsequently withdrawn by the United Nations Secretariat. Nevertheless it had the desired salutary effect in reducing petroleum product prices in Europe.

Sahni's report indicated that the faults in the government were basically due to a deeply entrenched system of diversified control on

Upto 1949, prices were based on Gulf of Mexico plus ocean freight to India. After the publication of the ECC's report (price of oil in western Europe) the FOB price of Gulf of Mexico was transplanted at Abadan. Prior to the VSA procedure the oil companies' marketing charges and profit came out of the CIF price and there was no additional charge. Under the VSA the oil companies were assured of a fixed margin of 10 per cent on CIF cost and also post CIF cost—as a result the oil companies had no incentive to economise.

It is instructive to compare the behaviour of the oil companies' unit costs of marketing and distribution from 1951/56 (the VSA period) and 1958/63 (the post VSA period). These reveal that upto 1957 an increasing volume of sales was accompanied by increasing unit cost of marketing and distribution but that the reverse was the case from 1958 to 1963. It is obvious that during the VSA period the companies showed no concern about economy in cost. Increase in the companies' unit cost took place at a time of overall stable prices as judged by the general wholesale price index which (with the 1952/53 as a base year) was 125 in 1951 but fell to 102.7 by 1956. But as against the fall of 22.3 per cent in the price index during 1951-1956; the unit cost of the foreign oil companies rose by 39 per cent. Conversely during 1958-63 when the general wholesale price index rose by about 21.5 per cent the unit cost of foreign oil marketing companies fell by 23 per cent.

Sahni recommended a price reduction of about Rs 20 crores on the then sales of around five million tons in the country. A Chief Cost Accounts Officer was appointed, and under Sahni's direction, he arrived at an average annual reduction of Rs 195.35 million in the gross profit of the oil companies. The oil companies naturally objected to it and under pressure from the Ministry of Finance, the adhoc reduction was fixed at Rs 120 million per year. Sahni was not satisfied and an Oil Price Enquiry Committee was appointed in 1959 under the Chairmanship of K.R. Damle.

The Damle Committee found that there was further scope of lowering the prices of the products sold in India and found that the import cost of products given by the companies did not take into account the discounts, that were available internationally. Unfortunately the committee also recommended a profit of 12 per cent on capital employed. The saving which would result from the committee's recommendation were estimated at Rs 137.8 million per annum.

Sahni expressed dis-satisfaction which the Damle Committee's report as the end result was only marginally above the adhoc figure fixed by the Finance Ministry. Sahni refused to recommend the

acceptance by the ministry of this report—which did not go down well with the steel frame at the centre.

By 1955 imports of crude oil and deficit petroleum products were costing Rs 845 million annually and with the ever increasing demand for petroleum products India's balance of payment position began to deteriorate sharply. The government therefore had to consider ways of reducing foreign exchange expenditure on imports. In accordance with Sahní's suggestions, the government began to implement the following alternative ways to reduce foreign exchange expenditure:

*To find oil in India so as to replace imported Oil:* In accordance with the government's policy it was decided to entrust further oil exploration to a government agency. With the assistance of the USSR government by way of credit and technical assistance a petroleum cell in the Geological Survey of India was set up in 1955 which subsequently became a Directorate and in 1959 an Independent Statutory Commission. The Oil and Natural Gas Commission was made responsible for oil exploration throughout the country in areas other than those leased to Oil India Limited and Assam Oil Company.

The first major find of the commission was the Cambay gas field which was followed by the discovery of the Ankleshwar oil field. Other significant discoveries reported by the ONGC include fields at Kalol, Lakwa and Sibsagar.

The ONGC have met with success in offshore exploration which was undertaken on an ownership-contract basis with a US company by purchase of a platform from Japan. Substantial reserves have been established and the Bombay High field is capable of supplying 12 million tons of oil per year. Competent experts are of the view that it is unfortunate that the Planning Commission has restricted the ONGC to extract only nine million tons of oil per year from 1981-82 onwards from Bombay High. These experts even say that the reserves can steadily sustain, in accordance with established extraction practices, production of 14-15 million tons per annum.

In order to conserve the dwindling foreign exchange reserves, the government during 1959 invited parties to assist in oil exploration in the country. It published its plans for oil exploration in the country and invited parties to participate in exploration on mutually acceptable terms.

Burmah Oil Company, applied for further concession area in Assam. As a result a supplementary agreement was concluded in 1961. Oil India was entrusted with an additional 1800 square miles of area for exploration and Burmah Oil agreed to the government's equity share in Oil India to be raised from 33.1/3 per cent to 50 per cent.

During the negotiations an impasse was reached in respect of crude availability to Assam Oil Company at reduced price and the quantum of return on their investment. Sahni further demanded a bonus payment from Oil India to the government for the concession in a promising area. Burmah Oil negotiator went to the UK for consultations and returned within a few days of Sahni proceeding on leave towards the end of May 1961. Khera took over the negotiations and an accord was reached. The government agreed to a price for crude supplied to Assam Oil Company which was one-fifth of the price charged to the public sector refineries—between 1960-70 the average price charged to Assam Oil Company was Rs 17.6 as against Rs 105.32 for public sector refineries. Further the crude oil produced by Oil India was to be priced in such a way that a minimum return (after payment of all taxes including tax payment on dividend) at between nine and 13 per cent per annum on the paid up share capital was guaranteed from 1962 onwards irrespective of the offtake of crude by the Indian government refineries and without providing an import parity price as ceiling. During negotiations Burmah Oil had indicated a price of Rs 48 per ton for crude oil delivered at Barauni but after Sahni's absence on leave they charged the Indian refineries as much as Rs 126.44 per ton in 1962. Thus the government had to make compensatory payments to oil India during 1962-67 when the actual offtake of crude oil fell short of expectations.

On return from leave on 3rd July 1961 Sahni refused to sign the supplementary agreement of 1961 on behalf of the government. A summary record was prepared of the negotiations and it revealed that the aforesaid decisions were taken during Sahni's absence on leave. Naturally the Minister of State K.D. Malaviya and the Secretary S.S. Khera were much concerned about this revelation and even pressurised the Financial Adviser A. V. Venkateshwaran to say that Sahni had approved of the aforesaid clauses. Venkateshwaran refused to do so. Thereafter two record notes on loose sheets appeared mysteriously on the file which were not there before. Sahni then demanded an enquiry into the sudden appearance of these documents but the government did not agree to investigate.

The Lok Sabha in its 51st Report of the Estimates Committee to the Fourth Lok Sabha; Oil India Limited (1967-68) page 55; in 1967-70 Annual Reports of Oil India Ltd., has been very critical of the government's action.

*Reducing the price paid by foreign oil companies on crude oil and petroleum products imported from abroad:* The government during 1957-61 had obtained an adhoc reduction of Rs 120 million per

annum on product prices. During 1957-60 discounts of 20 to 25 cents off posted prices were considered routine in oil industry circles but the oil companies took shelter under the clause in the refineries agreement which permitted them to obtain crude oil from their own source and they could get no discounts.

In 1960 the USSR offered crude oil at a discounted price to us. The government then pressed the foreign oil companies either to accept the USSR crude oil for processing in their refineries or to reduce their prices. During 1961-65, world market prices for lighter crude were 30 to 45 cents per barrel below posted prices and for medium and heavy crude 30 cents a barrel as against posted prices, whereas India had to be content with a discount of 19 cents per barrel granted in 1960 and further discount of two cents a barrel in 1962.

*Increase in the indigenous refinery capacities:* In 1957 the government established Indian Refineries Limited to set up two refineries at Gauhati and Barauni and a further refinery at Koyali.

Oil Companies were also pressurized to import tailored crude oil to maximize production of deficit petroleum products.

*To build up lubricating oil manufacturing units and blending units in the country:* Some units have been set up in the country but we still have to import. The government should take immediate action to step up production in the country.

*Use of Indian flag tankers for coastal as well as import of crude oil from Persian Gulf:* The government established Western India Shipping Company in 1959 with the main object of acquiring tankers. It was subsequently merged with Eastern Shipping Company to form the Shipping Corporation of India. Initially the progress was not as fast as was expected owing to Stanvac having agreed to charter a vessel from Great Eastern shipping Company in which Minister K.D. Malaviya's son-in-law Vasant Seth, had substantial interest. The price paid for the second hand vessel was much higher than initially indicated and secondly the vessel itself did not give satisfactory service to the charterers. The government was much concerned about this. As a result K.D. Malaviya got cold feet and requested the officials in the ministry not to send any papers connected with tankers to him but should be sent to the Cabinet Minister Swaran Singh. However, when the government-owned Western India Shipping Company was almost ready to acquire a tanker, K.D. Malaviya butted in and agreed to Dr Teja being given permission to acquire a tanker in his private sector company instead of the government owned Western India shipping Company.

*Import of crude oil and petroleum products on barter basis and/or*



*Rupee payment:* The government did not agree to bilateral agreements with the countries in the Persian Gulf area. However, we were able to obtain supplies from the USSR on a concessional basis and against rupee payment. The government established in 1958 Indian oil Company to market petroleum products produced from the public sector refineries and also to import deficit petroleum products from abroad. This company was subsequently merged with Indian Refineries Ltd. to form Indian Oil Corporation.

*Steps were also undertaken to cut down the consumption of petroleum products so as to reduce imports:* not much economy was achieved. The Indian Institute for Petroleum was entrusted with the research for a more efficient kerosene lantern. Proposals for town gas distribution were examined. Steps were also taken to start the use of gobar gas plants in the country-side.

The World Bank had expressed unhappiness over Indian Government's oil policy to do everything in the government sector and were desirous that India should enlist the help of foreign oil companies for exploration, setting up of refineries, lubricating oil plants etc. The World Bank suggested Walter Levy, an independent oil expert, as a consultant to visit India. Levy spent three weeks in 1959 within the Ministry of Petroleum and also saw the public sector projects and had discussions with the oil companies operating in India. He was fully satisfied and endorsed our policy. His two recommendations were firstly to prevail on foreign oil companies to use tailored crude for maximizing production of deficit products in the country and to step up ONGC's drilling activities.

Despite the severe handicap which India faced on account of foreign exchange shortage and lack of know-how in oil technology considerable progress was made on the oil front. Unfortunately Sahni's association was brought to a sudden end. Sahni's refusal to sign Oil India's supplementary agreement of 1961; his demand for an enquiry into the appearance on government file of two mysterious documents; refusal to recommend Damle Committee's Oil Policy proposals and refusal to promote Phillips Petroleum and Duncan Brothers proposal for a refinery at Cochin perhaps led to K.D. Malaviya and S.S. Khera in October 1961 to abolish, as a measure of economy, the post of Joint Secretary in the Ministry and to post Sahni to a project. Sahni had signed his contract of service for three years with the government on 27 May 1961. He rejected with contempt the offer of an equivalent post in a government corporation and resigned. Within a few months of the acceptance of his resignation the same two persons recreated the post of Joint Secretary and posted a pliable

and an ignorant ICS official.

The working of the ICS league is inscrutable. An ICS officer who failed in the setting up of the Gauhati Refinery, was kicked up to the position of Chairman, Hindustan Steel Limited. In Sahni's case, Khera gave the following evidence before the Takru Commission in reply to a question from the Counsel for the Ministry of Petroleum and Chemicals:

Q. It is alleged against you Mr. Khera; If I may put it, that it was with some motivation that you got rid of Mr. Sahni.

A. Nothing could be more false or mischievous than to make that sort of allegation. I had a high regard for Mr. Sahni's qualities and his general attitude in oil policies. I believe much of his view coincided with mine and I think my views were somewhat stronger than the views of Mr. Sahni. They also coincided to a very large extent to the views of the Minister-in-charge of the Ministry and therefore, I would have no hesitation in saying that such an allegation or imputation would be false, frivolous and mischievous.

The lapses as referred to earlier do not appear to confirm Khera's contention that his views were somewhat stronger than the views of Sahni as far as the Public Sector was concerned.

Sahni in his letter of resignation to the Prime Minister mentioned that the association of experienced people in the Boards of the Public Sector ventures was very desirable. Indian Oil Company is a typical example where the Board is composed of politicians and bureaucrats with no oil experience, with the result that its performance leaves a lot to be desired. Sahni further mentioned "I remain convinced that the oil job at the headquarters of a government cannot be adequately discharged by any normal civil servant. Had it been otherwise the Government of India would not have sanctioned extra ocean freight amounting to about Rs. seven crores per annum to foreign oil companies in India following the Suez crisis. Even Pakistan refused to consider such a demand from these oil companies. The most important result of Khera's letter terminating my appointment is that the foreign oil companies in India, who had been after my blood ever since I joined government, were jubilant over their success."

To break the hold of the oil companies in the country was a difficult task indeed. Sahni with support from me and with the blessings and backing of Nehru succeeded despite the severe opposition of the vested interest within the government and outside it and the tremendous pressure of the all powerful oil companies who had brain-washed

the politicians and officials and convinced the people at large that oil was a risky business and the prospect of finding oil in India was negligible, very capital intensive and Indians were not capable of imbibing oil techniques.

Sahni recommended our oil policy must be sufficiently comprehensive to hasten the development of our indigenous oil resources, build up our refining capacity atleast in line with our requirements—projected for both short and long time periods, and to ensure, through efficient and up-to-date distribution throughout India, adequate and uninterrupted supplies at economic prices.

The Indian Oil Corporation Limited has grown in size, with the current annual sales of about Rs 3,000 crores but the profitability is low and the cumulative reserves and surplus are negligible as compared with public sector enterprises in other countries and with the oil prices having increased five fold from 1972 to date. The private sector companies, both refining and marketing, have been nationalized and even today they continue to operate in the manner as before. There is no move to nationalize their distribution system and economize, whereas on the other hand the refiners' process margin recently has been increased from Rs 17 to Rs 50 per ton.

Experts are concerned that the delay on part of the government to undertake a gas fractionation plant at the Uran terminal will result in enormous national loss. In June 1977 the ONGC had indicated to the World Bank that engineering consultants for the terminal at Uran had been selected, whereas in reality no consultants had been appointed even as late as the end of October 1978.

The process I helped to initiate with Sahni early in 1956 to eliminate exploitation by foreign oil companies was, ironically enough, completed by the oil-producing Arabs, Iranians and others successfully exploiting the exploiters. This exploitation of the exploiters has also landed innocent countries, including India, in trouble. Like Euro-communism and Euro-dollar, Petro-dollar has become a fact of life. Perhaps in the future petro-communism will also emerge.

#### Notes:

*Burmah Oil Company* was a blue chip share on the London market. It started with producing and refining oil in Burmah which was followed up with the oil-find in Assam where production and refining were handled by *Assam Oil Company* which is a wholly-owned subsidiary company of the *Burmah Oil Company*. In Assam, oil was actually discovered by oil marks on an elephant's paws whilst carrying timber. This is very similar to our own experience in Cambay where we found oil for the first time. Our drill was spudding in at a village called "Teelwah"—(Teel means oil). This village had a perennial flame of gas for many centuries.

Burmah Oil Company also had a 25 per cent stake in British Petroleum. With their interests in Burmah having been nationalized and their influence in Assam considerably reduced, Burmah Oil Company started diversifying and acquired oil interests in the United States, and organized a shipping terminal in West Indies and went for tankers including vessels for LNG (Liquid Natural Gas). All these were expensive enterprises and they found that they were too extended and went bankrupt almost overnight some four years back. Their one Pound share was quoted around five Pounds and overnight slid down to 30 pence.

A Greek by name Kulukundas took them for a ride. The same Greek had come to Sahni with Dharma Teja for setting up a tanker company in India. His proposition was a fantastic one and Sahni more or less told him to go out by the door through which he and Teja had come in. Teja then mentioned that he had Prime Minister Nehru's blessings for their proposal; but, when Sahni asked his PA to connect him to the Prime Minister's office to obtain the Prime Minister's confirmation, Teja got cold feet and told him not to telephone but to seek the Prime Minister's guidance when he met him next. Teja never saw Sahni again.

The British Government came to the assistance of the Burmah Oil Company by providing a bank guarantee to prevent the Company from going into liquidation. For this the British Government acquired their 25 per cent share in British Petroleum for a song.

During the last year the Burmah Oil Company have reduced losses from shipping and with income from Indonesian Liquid Natural Gas operations and an initial contribution from the Thistle Oil fields in the North Sea having shown about three million Pounds profits in the first half of 1978 which compared with the loss of 1.3 million Pounds in the corresponding period of the previous year. They have also recently sold their Cooper Basin interest in Australia.

Assam Oil Company still carries on with its depleting oil-field and an outmoded refinery. Discussions are going on with the Government of India with a view to government taking over these assets and also Burmah Oil Company's 50 per cent share-holding in Oil India Ltd.

*Oil India Ltd* was established in 1958 with the Government of India taking one-third share-holding and the Burmah Oil Company the remaining. In 1961 the Government's share-holding was stepped up to 50 per cent. Oil India's agreement benefitted the Burmah Oil Company very substantially and it also enabled them to go in for diversification elsewhere.

*British Petroleum* is one of the "seven sisters." The British government had a 40 per cent share-holding in British petroleum; and now they have a majority share-holding with the acquisition of Burmah Oil Company's holding. It was Winston Churchill who insisted on the British government taking 40 per cent share-holding in the company just before the outbreak of the First World War. His decision proved to be a financial asset to the British government. British Petroleum has advanced a great deal. They have substantial interest in the North Sea Forties Field and also in the Alaska oil fields. They have taken over a substantial share-holding in Sohio, a major "independent" in America. Their sales revenue for a year are over 10 billion Pounds and their pre-tax income is about two billion Pounds a year.

## 16 *Nehru and Administration*

A statesman need not necessarily be a good administrator. A combination of the two is devoutly to be wished, but how rarely does this occur! Neither Winston Churchill nor Nehru were good administrators. But unlike the Prime Minister in the United Kingdom, Nehru saddled himself with more than one portfolio—External Affairs and Atomic Energy and Scientific Research—on a permanent basis.

External Affairs, not so much Atomic Energy and Scientific Research, needed a great deal of administrative attention. Nehru had neither the aptitude, the patience, the inclination nor the temperament for the drudgery of attention to details. In fact he was a man whose policies could be largely defeated at the level of details by scheming men. Nehru's choice of junior ministers directly under him left much to be desired. In any event, having been for so long his own secretary during his long career as a political leader, Nehru never learned to delegate. With only one exception, the junior ministers under Nehru were the most neglected and disgruntled ones in the whole government. The one exception was Dr Syud Mahmud who, I believe, was older than Nehru—in any event very much dilapidated. He was a dear old man in whom there was no guile and was not keen on loading himself with work. After his appointment, I made a list of old men who were junior ministers who, in my view, should either be President or nothing. I gave the list to the Prime Minister and asked "What is the purpose of such appointments?" and commented that they had passed the age of learning and being trained for the future. He agreed, but said that in ministry-making he had to have a variety of considerations especially because of the vastness and infinite variety of the country. About Dr Syud Mohmud, he said that he had to be recognised in some way in spite of a political lapse and, as a minister, the only suitable place for him was to be under him; in fact he was not likely to agree to work under anyone else.

One day S.K. Patil asked me privately why the Prime Minister was not encouraging any one or a group of colleagues to come up. I replied that he might as well reconcile himself to the fact that nothing would grow under a banyan tree. The same evening Patil blurted it out in Bombay as his own statement.

I have come across the members of all the Services known by many names—All India Services, Superior Services, the Secretary of State Services—Comprising the Indian Civil Service (ICS), Indian Educational Service (IES), Indian Audit and Accounts Service (IA & AS), Indian Political Service, Indian Forest Service (IFS), Indian Medical Service (IMS), and Indian Police (IP). Barring the Indian Medical Service (IMS), I found nothing superior about any of them. There was nothing political about the Indian political service which was composed of some carefully-selected British ICS Officers who served as residents in the various Indian states, with K.P.S. Menon thrown in, and some army duds. Members of the Indian Political Service, apart from serving in the residencies in Indian states, were also posted in Tibet and Sikkim and in the tribal areas of North-West Frontier Province. K.P.S. Menon did well in getting out of the Political Department because he had no scope for advancement in it. He could never hope to be a Resident in an Indian state. Members of the Indian Civil Service (ICS) were the most arrogant and perhaps the most ignorant compared to other services which they considered as inferior.

An ancient Greek philosopher went round Athens in daylight with a torch to find an honest man, but failed. The same would have been the fate if one looked for a versatile man in the "Superior Services." But one could find many "yes men" and "no men" among them. It was rarely that one could come across any one who was interested in any thing outside the files he had to deal with. And yet many of these men were bright young people when they got into the services through competitive examination. When a man opts for security many things in him die. Security has a deadening effect and is a killer of personality. Those who opt for security are not the ones who would take the world forward. They are condemned to security, a reasonably comfortable life, a good wife if lucky, a house at the fag end of the career, and purposeless idleness with an inadequate pension—always thinking and talking of the past.

With Independence India had to develop a new service—the Indian Foreign Service. To begin with, people in different age groups were needed to fill the cadre. Girja Shankar Bajpai, Secretary-General of the External Affairs Ministry, told the Prime Minister that the Union Public Service Commission was unsuitable to select persons for the diplomatic service. He recommended the setting up of a Special Selection Board for the purpose. Without much thought Nehru agreed. The Special Selection Board consisted of Lala Sir Shri Ram as Chairman, the Foreign Secretary; the Commonwealth Secretary, and the Commerce Secretary as members. Most people knew that Bajpai was

indebted to Lala Shri Ram who always prized any recognition by any government of the day. He was a self-made man living like a hermit in his old age. He was fit enough to be Chairman of a Committee on Cotton Yarn but singularly unsuitable to head a Board to select personnel for the diplomatic service. But he had to be accommodated because, unknown to the Prime Minister, Bajpai's indebtedness had to be redeemed.

The fruits of labour of the Special Selection Board left much to be desired. All the members of the Board had their own favourites and candidates. Bajpai, though not a member of the Board, functioned through Lala Shri Ram. Many people with the right connections and some who did not have the minimum educational qualifications entered the foreign service through the back-door. Leilamani Naidu, the second daughter of Sarojini Naidu, was also taken in. Unlike Ranbir Singh and Mohommad Yunus, she had ample educational qualifications and teaching experience, but was thoroughly temperamental and patently unsuitable for any diplomatic work. She had to be kept in the External Affairs Ministry throughout her term in the Foreign Service as a lame duck.

A mini special Selection Board was constituted in London with Prof. Harold Laski, Girja Shanker Bajpai and Krishna Menon as members. It was through this Selection Board that P.N. Haksar and four or five members of Krishna Menon's personal staff, including Kamala Jaspal, found their way into the Foreign Service.

The selection of the first batch of young persons to fill the annual quota for the Foreign Service was done by the Union Public Service Commission. Before the time for the selection for the second year's quota came, Bajpai complained to the Prime Minister about the "utter unsuitability" of the UPSC for selecting personnel for the diplomatic service and recommended the revival of the Special Selection Board. I was horrified at the effrontery of Bajpai and wanted to prevent a repetition of favouritism and nepotism. I told the Prime Minister that the first batch of young people selected for the Indian Foreign Service by UPSC were then probationers at the Ministry of External Affairs and suggested his meeting them individually and gather some impressions about them. He did not have the patience. He asked me to interview them individually and convey my impression to him. I met each one of them and informed the Prime Minister that man for man they were superior to any selected by the Special Selection Board. I also told him about the well-founded criticism of the functioning of the Special Selection Board in the past. The Prime Minister rejected Bajpai's pro-

posal. Thus the *ad hoc* Special Selection Board was given the burial never to be revived again.

The man closely connected with administration, the longest in External Affairs Ministry right from its inception till almost about the death of Nehru, with a spell abroad as Ambassador in Bonn and a very brief spell in Moscow, was a blue-eyed boy of Bajpai—Subimal Dutt. He was a hard-working man, as inflexible as an iron rod. He was born to be a desk-man devoid of the qualities of what might be called a "field man." His Mongolian features and short stature prompted junior officers to refer to him as General Tojo. He lacked personality and was almost a recluse. He was not endowed with superficial social graces and hardly knew how to entertain. How he managed as Ambassador in Bonn was a wonder to many. The loss of his wife and his only son made him desolate and he sent an urgent and earnest appeal to the Prime Minister to withdraw him from Moscow and to give him a light assignment in Delhi. He was appointed as Secretary to the President. On his return from Moscow he told me that he would soon be retiring and that it was his intention to renounce the world and join the Ramakrishna Mission. I could not believe that an ICS official had the capacity for renunciation and came to the conclusion that he was suffering from momentary depression. He retired in the normal course; soon thereafter became Vigilance Officer in the West Bengal government; then came over to Delhi as Vigilance Commissioner; and subsequently went to Dacca as India's first High Commissioner in Bangladesh. He had the distinction of achieving the most difficult thing—"renouncing the renunciation." Of Dutt it can be said that he was a typical official who sat so long behind a desk, that wood entered his soul.

Soon after the Special Selection Board completed its task of wholesale recruitment of personnel for the Foreign Service, K.R. Narayanan came to see me with a letter of introduction from Prof. Harold Laski addressed to the Prime Minister. He is a "*Pulayan*" just above the "*Pariashi*" community which is the lowest among the outcastes in India. He comes from a place which is only about ten miles from my home in Travancore (Kerala). He was a good student and earned a Tata scholarship to go to England for studies at the London School of Economics and Political Science. After completion of his studies he came to Delhi in the hope of seeing the Prime Minister. Krishna Menon had advised him to come straight to me and to avoid any official in the External Affairs Ministry. So he came to me. In his letter Laski had written that Narayanan was a young man of intellectual distinction. Narayanan was over-age to appear for the UPSC examination.



He was anxious to get gainful employment as soon as possible. I tried to persuade him to join the Delhi School of Economics and take interest in public affairs. I looked upon him as a better edition of Jagjivan Ram in the public life of the future. He, however, explained to me the need for a well-paid job with security so that he could render some financial assistance to his parents and other members of the family. He expressed a preference for the Foreign Service. I knew an immediate interview with the Prime Minister would lead him nowhere. So I asked Narayanan to wait in Delhi for four or five days and assured him that I would send for him.

On the way home from the office that day I showed the Prime Minister Laski's letter and told him what transpired at Narayanan's meeting with me. I said that in a case like this, rules should be broken to accommodate the young man the like of whom it was difficult to find among the Scheduled Castes. Knowing his distaste for sponsoring individuals, I told him that, if he had no objection, I would like to see Home Minister Sardar Patel to request him to treat it as a special case and ask Mr Hejmadi, Chairman of the UPSC, to arrange for the commission to interview Narayanan and select him for the Foreign Service if found suitable. The Prime Minister readily agreed. The next day I met Sardar Patel who was most helpful and understanding. He read Prof Laski's letter. He told me "you leave the matter to me; I shall send you a message soon." To my suggestion that he might see Narayanan he said "it is not necessary; you have spoken to me and I have seen Laski's letter, that is enough." I reported the matter to the Prime Minister and also arranged for Narayanan to see him. After seeing Narayanan, the Prime Minister spoke to the Secretary-General Girja Shanker Bajpai and handed over to him Laski's letter. Bajpai met Narayanan and forwarded the letter to the Foreign Secretary with the cynical remark that if Narayanan had intellectual distinction, he had succeeded in hiding it from him. In the meantime I received a message from Sardar Patel to say that Hegmadi had suggested, as a special case, that a committee consisting of the Foreign Secretary, Commonwealth Secretary and the Commerce Secretary might interview Narayanan and make a recommendation to the UPSC which would accept it. That is now Narayanan got into the Foreign Service and chose security in preference to a life of uncertainty and adventure.

Some years later Narayanan came to see me again. He was then a First Secretary at our Embassy in Burma. He came to know a Burmese girl in Rangoon and they decided to get married. A member of the Foreign Service has to obtain formal permission from the External Affairs Ministry to marry a foreign woman and, along with the appli-

cation for permission, has to submit a formal letter of resignation from the Foreign Service, Narayanan was perturbed because the Foreign Secretary happened to be S. Dutt who had a reputation of being rigid and unhelpful in such matters. Narayanan was worried about the possibility of the resignation being accepted. He told me that it was impossible to find a suitable bride, with adequate education, from his own community and, because of the strong caste prejudices in India, it was difficult to find a suitable match from any other community. I told him not to worry and advised him to put in his application and resignation. I also told him that it would be undesirable to give any one the impression that he had met me because it might offend the officials concerned. He left after I told him not to have sleepless nights over the matter. I spoke to Dutt about Narayanan and told him that it was a very deserving case and that I would not like to be placed in a position of having to speak to the Prime Minister about it. Dutt was noncommittal; but I was not bothered because the final decision lay elsewhere. Some days later Dutt sent the file about Narayanan to the PM recommending permission for the young man to marry the Burmese girl.

Narayanan's case is yet another condemnation of the barbarous and irrational inbuilt prejudices which corrode our social fabric. Only wolves equal Indians in caste consciousness. They have a social ceremonial and caste system. It took 33 pages in a scientific journal to describe all the ceremonial attitudes and symbolic gestures of a pack of wolves. The attitude of the head, the ears, the bristling of certain portions of the fur, the wrinkling of the brow, the degree to which the teeth are bared and, above all, the way the tail is held are strictly prescribed. If a low-ranking wolf approaches the big chief with her tail in the air, she is just as likely, as not, to be put to death. Her tail must stay under her belly as though it were glued there. A middle-class wolf may let her tail hang down freely in the presence of the chief, but woe unto her if, through ignorance or delusions of grandeur, she lifts it above the horizontal.

With all his handicaps, Narayanan has progressed in the Service and has recently retired as the Indian Ambassador to the People's Republic of China. Since then he has been appointed as the Vice-Chancellor of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

At about the same time Captain Narendra Singh, who used to be ADC to Lord Mountbatten, and was later taken into the Foreign Service, came to see me with his tale of matrimonial woe. He belonged to a minor princely family and was married to a girl from another minor princely clan. Immediately after the marriage, which was an

arranged one, the girl ran away and refused to live with the husband. Narendra Singh said that the girl's brother, who was in the Foreign Service, was prepared to testify to the veracity of his statements. I told Narendra Singh that I did not wish to constitute myself as a marriage counselling Bureau and asked him to see the Foreign Secretary Subimal Dutt. He said "I have seen General Tojo, who, being incurably rigid, sounded very unhelpful." The girl he wanted to marry was a European. I asked him why he could not find a nice Indian girl. He explained that he was out of India and had no opportunity to get to know any Indian girls and that he dreaded another arranged marriage. I asked him to leave the matter to "General Tojo" and to God. The next day I had a word with Dutt. It seemed that God worked, for within a few days the file about Narendra Singh came to the Prime Minister from Dutt reluctantly recommending that permission for the marriage might be given.

During the first half of 1956 De Mello Kamath, member of the Foreign Service, came to see me in great distress. He said he had been dismissed from service for certain financial transactions which took place while he was Consul-General in Saigon. The situation in Vietnam during that period was abnormal, unsettled and fluid. What type of transactions took place will be clear from Foreign Secretary Subimal Dutt's note dated 1 June 1956 which is quoted in full later in this chapter. He said a great injustice had been done to him because he had done nothing which his predecessor A.N. Mehta (Ashok Mehta who later married Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit's eldest daughter Chandralekha) had not done. The only difference, according to him, was that in his case a substantial part of the money which came to him remained in his bank account in India while in the case of A.N. Mehta what accrued was cleverly spent on the acquisition of substantial items like expensive American and German movie and still cameras, movie projector, other photographic equipment, radiogram, record player, music records, deep freeze, frigidaire, car, and other foreign household goods.

A little later Chandralekha and Ashok Mehta came wailing to see me in the Prime Minister's House. The enquiry officer had completed the evidence relating to A.N. Mehta's case. Both Chandralekha and Ashok were jittery. Mehta had his say. I told him that I had no doubt that his case would be linked with that of De Mello Kamath which would be reviewed.

The next day I spoke to Subimal Dutt about the two cases, I told him that it appeared to me that the External Affairs Ministry should be in the dock and not the two officers; the whole thing was a sad

commentary on the incompetence and laxity on the part of the External Affairs Ministry. Not only these two people but several Indian ambassadors and others in East Asia, Southeast Asia and some in East European countries had misbehaved even worse. Dutt said that the Union Public Service Commission had already disposed of the case of De Mello Kamath. I said that the UPSC will have to be given additional facts about the melancholy role of the External Affairs Ministry in this sorry business to enable that body to review the position; and that in any event the case of the De Mello Kamath and A.N. Mehta must be linked; and that I shall see to it that the Prime Minister does not deal with this matter as A.N. Mehta is married to his niece, and consequently the Finance Minister will be asked to deal with it. I added that the Prime Minister had given a free hand to the officials in the administration of the Ministry of External Affairs and its far-flung missions abroad, and that the ministry had not covered itself with glory. Dutt realised that I meant business. He got busy. Ultimately De Mello Kamath's dismissal was revoked and he was reinstated and posted as India's Commissioner in Hong Kong. A.N. Mehta escaped with the mild punishment of having been conveyed government's displeasure. I reproduce below, in full, Foreign Secretary S. Dutt's note dated 1 June 1965, entitled "Proceedings against Shri A.N. Mehta" a signed copy of which he sent to me. The Foreign Secretary note throws light on the whole situation and the sorry state of administration in the Ministry of External Affairs.

*Proceedings Against Shri A.N. Mehta*

"I have given careful, prolonged and anxious consideration to the facts of this case. This is not only because the charges on the face of them are serious but also because they concern a young officer, with an extremely good record of service, in relation to certain transactions which took place eight to nine years ago. I could have disposed of these proceedings earlier but similar proceedings have been drawn up against some other persons who also served in Indo-China at or about the time Shri A.N. Mehta was employed there and I wanted to see whether any facts have transpired in course of the inquiries against these other persons which would be relevant to the present proceedings. This explains the delay in passing final orders in the present case.

2. I have carefully gone through the report of the Inquiring officer. This is a clear and, on the whole, concise document and has dealt with all facts of the case fairly and impartially. I have also



MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
NEW DELHI.

Personal.

My dear Sir

referred  
papers.

to

have may be  
I see the records

Yours  
S. D. D.

carefully considered Shri A.N. Mehta's explanation contained in his letter of January 31, 1956, addressed to the Inquiring Officer and record of the long oral statement made by him on February 21, 1956, before the Inquiring Officer.

3. I agree with the finding of the Inquiring Officer on Charge No. 1 for the reasons mentioned by him. It is true that the practice of obtaining local currency in Indo-china against rupee drafts issued in India was irregular, but the inquiring officer has given full reasons why he considers that no *mala fide* intention was involved and that had it not been for this procedure which government had officially sanctioned at Chungking for the Indian Agency-General and later for the Indian embassy at Nanking, Shri Mehta and his staff could not have made both ends meet in Indo-China. Conditions in Indo-China were not dissimilar from those in Chungking and were certainly worse, if anything, than those in Nanking. The allowance sanctioned by government were admittedly inadequate; for months the officer (Shri Mehta) was without his pay and allowances; there was no definite guidance from Headquarters either about accounting procedure or as to how he could have lived on the

allowances sanctioned somewhat belatedly by government. In the circumstances I do not think that it lies in government to find fault with the officer. And, as I shall show in the subsequent paragraphs, the officer had not made any illegal gain by resort to the transactions which form the subject of Charge No. 1. For all these reasons, I acquit Shri A.N. Mehta of Charge No. 1.

4. Charge No. 2 is more difficult. It consists of two parts: (a) that Shri Mehta introduced an irregular practice of claiming room rent for hotel accommodation and house rent for staff in pay bills in Indian rupees; and (b) that by selling rupee cheques in India against the amount thus drawn as house rent, he secured more piastres locally than the liability incurred by him on hotel or house rent.

5. Part (a) of this charge cannot be sustained. As I have said earlier, no definite guidance was given to the Officer about the accounting procedure. Here was a young man whose only experience of civil work was limited to the period from May 1943 to January 1945 when he served in the Indian Agency-General in Chungking. The Officer was sent off to Indo-China without any definite instruction about accounting procedure and with no accounting assistance. In fact I can say from personal experience that the accounting rules and procedure had to be developed in the new Ministry of External Affairs over a period of years and at the time Shri Mehta proceeded to Saigon (in December 1946) there was hardly any regular accounting procedure. It is not surprising, therefore, that he should have introduced a practice which he saw followed at Chungking. And I cannot reject as entirely irrelevant his contention that at no time was any exception taken to this procedure of drawing house rent in pay bill.

6. Part (b) of this charge remains to be dealt with. The Inquiring Officer has come to the conclusion that by issuing rupee cheques in India against the amount drawn as house rent and acquiring piastres from the local Indians in Saigon, Shri Mehta got into possession of more piastres than he had to pay as house rent. The circumstances in which rupee cheques were drawn against his rupee account in India on his pay bill have been dealt with by the Inquiring Officer in full in dealing with Charge No. 1. These have been referred to briefly above. The question, therefore, is whether by acquiring piastres locally against the amount in rupees drawn in India on account of house rent Shri Mehta made illegal profit. In order to satisfy myself on this point, I have looked into Shri Mehta's bank accounts in India. I find that during the period November 1946 to January 1949, i.e. two years and nine months,

Shri Mehta's bank accounts in India (maintained in the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China, Bombay, and in the Bank of Baroda, Bombay) show a net credit balance of Rs. 3,273. All his remittances from Indo-China consisted of his pay and house rent. The average monthly saving comes to Rs. 104. This cannot be said to be an unusually large saving for a bachelor. I am satisfied that Shri Mehta did not resort to the procedure, which has formed the subject of charge No. 2, against him in order to defraud government or to make illicit gain. All the same, it should have occurred to him that since the house rent was being incurred locally in piastres, it was not proper to secure a large amount of piastres by resort to the practice of drawing it in rupees in pay bill. Shri Mehta should not, therefore, have adopted this procedure even though no objection had been taken by audit. The question, however, is what action should be taken against Shri Mehta for having adopted this practice. In deciding on this, I have got to take into account the following facts:

(i) As already stated, a very junior officer was sent at short notice to a disturbed country without any definite instruction as to how he was to maintain accounts or to draw his pay and allowances.

(ii) His allowances were admittedly inadequate to the high cost of living prevailing in Indo-China where the official value of the piastre had no relation to its real value. Under similar conditions in Chungking, where only the officer had previous experience of civil work, government had formally sanctioned the practices which he followed in Saigon.

(iii) No proper accounting or other rules had been laid down by Government for offices abroad; conditions of service in countries abroad for Indian personnel had not been properly fixed; the officer was left to his own resources on inadequate allowances to discharge his functions as government of India's representative under difficult conditions in a disturbed country.

(iv) Similar practices were followed by the more established Embassies and Missions in Indo-China.

(v) Government themselves had sanctioned resort to the practice to obtaining currency locally from Indian merchants against rupee cheques given to them from Government accounts in India, for meeting certain Government obligations.

7. Having regard to the circumstances mentioned above and particularly to the fact that Shri Mehta's record of service since he left Indo-China has been extremely satisfactory, I consider that it

would not be fair to inflict any severe punishment on him for what happened in extraordinary circumstances eight/nine years ago. I have therefore, come to the conclusion that the ends of justice will be met by conveying government's displeasure to Shri Mehta for having drawn his house rent in pay bill in India and for acquiring against this amount a large amount in local currency than he had to pay as house rent in Saigon.

(S. Dutt)"

I know the case of a senior career ambassador who managed to import four flamboyant cadillac cars, purchased abroad at diplomatic concessional prices, into India free of duty in eight years and sold at fantastic prices to some Maharajas who enjoyed tax-free privy purses. I know another career ambassador who took his mother-in-law from India to South America as a "servant" at government expense. I knew a "public man" from Kashmir, who was included in the Indian delegation to the UN for the Kashmir meet in Geneva under the late N. Gopaldaswami Ayyangar, drawing 100 Swiss Francs from the entertainment account every day for a prostitute. He proposed and, under Indira regime, became an ambassador and a cabinet minister.

At the Ministry of External Affairs I learn't the lesson that it is unwise to leave administration wholly to "administrators."<sup>4</sup> The administration of the External Affairs Ministry and its missions abroad under Nehru was nothing short of lousy. The Air India offices abroad were better and more useful than many of India's missions abroad.

The Ford Foundation in India produced an American called Applebee as an expert on "administration." It involved no expenditure on the part of the Government of India. The Ford Foundation paid all his travelling and for his stay here. Nehru spent much time on Applebee and his reports. I did not find his reports of any great value. Applebee, obviously encouraged by some civil servants in India, started espousing their cause and extolling individuals to the Prime Minister. I cautioned the Prime Minister against this and also said that there was much to learn from America but not in administration. I also told him that British administration within the British Isles (not in India) was far superior to the American and we have much to learn from the British system.

Lenin almost had a measure of contempt for administration which, he thought, consisted of filing clerks and cooks. Immediately after the "Great October Revolution," the principal lieutenants of Lenin asked him "where do we go from here?" Lenin, who had hardly given any consideration to the subject of administration, thought for a moment



and said "start with nationalization of all banks and then feel your way about."

I do not blame Nehru too much for his lack of interest in administration for, in our own life-time there existed a hard-working British ICS official in India who wrote the Fundamental Rules and found the document so involved and confusing that he had to sit and write the Supplementary Rules, and then went insane. But for the insanity he might have gone on and on and produced a modern *Panchatantra*. In the administration of modern India the Fundamental Rules and Supplementary Rules continue to be as important and pervasive as the Napoleonic Code does in modern France.

## 17 *Nehru and Security Arrangements*

Nothing caused more irritation and annoyance to Nehru than his security arrangements. It was a running battle with the police and Intelligence. It started in 1946, intensified itself during the period of the partition upheaval, reached the peak after the assassination of Gandhi, and was stabilised at that extravagantly fantastic level. A graph of it will compare well with price rise. Prices tend to shoot up and often the peak level eventually becomes "normal" and people will get used to it. The only exception took place in Germany under the early part of the Third Reich while Dr Hjalmar Schacht, the "financial wizard," was Minister of National Economy (1934-37). Chancellor Adolph Hitler directed Schacht to provide unlimited funds for armament manufacture. Schacht protested saying that the economic consequences would be disastrous and that uncontrollable inflation with the inevitable runaway prices would prevail. Hitler was unmoved. He reiterated his demand saying "inflation and the rest of it need not be your worries, my S.S. will look after them." Now there is a second exception—in the Soviet Union and the group of "socialist" countries where regimentation rules the roost.

Nehru soon found that his car was preceded by a pilot car full of plain-clothed policemen armed with revolvers, and followed by an escort car fitted with radio and full of uniformed policemen with rifles and sten guns. Police lined both sides of the road and traffic was stopped causing great inconvenience to the public. The first day Nehru noticed these, he was furious. On our way to office he stopped the car at Vijay Chowk and got out of it. At his instance I summoned the pilot car which served no purpose except to raise dust. The pilot car was asked to go off the road. On reaching his office, Nehru sent for the Director of the Intelligence Bureau and told him that the pilot car should be dispensed with; that there should be no police lining the route and that traffic should not be stopped. He said that lining of the route prior to his passing through was only giving advance notice to possible evil-doers; and that an element of surprise was the essence of security. As a concession, he allowed a police motor cycle rider in place of the pilot car.

Nehru soon discovered that the practice of route-lining was conti-

ning with plain-clothed policemen instead of uniformed ones. So he decided to apply the "break-through" principle. Without giving any notice to the security staff, he would go from his office in the evenings to Maulana Azad's residence or to Pandit Pant's residence before returning to the Prime Minister's House—thus throwing the police arrangements into disarray. I also used to help in this. While the Flame of the Forest was in bloom in March, I would sometimes arrange for Nehru's car to make a detour and drive over the ridge with the jungle on either side, cut across the road leading to Karol Bagh and proceed to the Secretariat via the Birla Temple. It was on one of these unscheduled drives that Nehru spotted and admired a site with a magnificent view. Later he was to choose this site on the hump of the ridge for the Buddha Jayanti Memorial Tower which, when completed, will put Qutab Minar in the shade. He took keen interest in the development of 12 parks in the sprawling adjoining area which is a boon to the people of Delhi and an attraction for visitors.

While the gul mohar was in bloom exhibiting its resplendent colour in May, I would arrange for Nehru to give the slip to the police and go from the Secretariat in the evening, take a round of the inner circle of Connaught Place where gul mohars abound, and then drive on to the Prime Minister's House. Apart from having a change from the routine, Nehru took mischievous delight in playing pranks on the police.

In the early years of independence, while foreign diplomatic missions were few in New Delhi, it was Nehru's practice to accept invitations to small dinner parties by ambassadors and High Commissioners and also attend their receptions. Reports reached Nehru that the police invaded their kitchens in advance and also supervised the cooking. This annoyed Nehru beyond measure. Shouting at the Intelligence and the police produced no results. Gradually Nehru gave up the practice of accepting invitations to meals outside.

It was not the practice to give Nehru any eatables—sweets, fruits and other items—received from outside except those sent by well-known people. Even for the latter category the police suggested that they should be tasted by others first. I told the police that they should send their own food-tasters after insuring them heavily, for, I said, I intended to poison some of them occasionally. I heard no more about food-tasting.

The police wanted one of their own men to sit outside the Prime Minister's offices in the Secretariat, Parliament House, and the Prime Minister's House. I agreed to it on condition that I selected them personally and that they were dressed as chaprasis. They were allowed to

have revolvers concealed on their persons. This encouraged the Intelligence Chief B.N. Mullick so much that he asked me to let him post a security guard outside the Prime Minister's bedroom. I knew what reaction Nehru would have to this. I told Mullick the story of an English woman who sent, for publication, an article to the Editor of the London Times under the title "Why do I live?." The Editor found the article stupid beyond words and returned it with a brief covering letter in which he wrote "I shall attempt to answer the question posed in the title of your article. The answer is because you sent it by post!" I told Mullick that it was safer to send a note to the Prime Minister than raising the matter personally with him. Mullick never sent the note!

Nehru did not follow Gandhi's practice of allowing a crowd hovering around him or behind screens while meeting people. Nehru normally did not like to have any member of his staff to hang around while giving interview to people because he did not wish to inhibit his interviewers. I can recollect only one instance of a security official being present at a Nehru-interview. Nehru needlessly decided to give an interview to a man well-known for his criminal propensities. I forget his name. I asked K.F. Rustomji, DIG, CID, in the Intelligence Bureau to be present at the interview with this unpredictable and irresponsible character. I had earlier told Nehru that I had asked Rustomji to be present.

No security officials accompanied Nehru on his foreign tours for the simple reason that they would not be of any particular use. Neither was the barbarous practice of hijacking planes prevalent then.

The most embarrassing moments of foreign tours were in New York which normally is a place where every one is in an insane hurry and is running around like chicken with their heads cut off. In the medley of never-ending traffic, screechers blow their sirens to clear traffic for the passage of the motor-cades of foreign dignitaries who are invited guests. On the sound of the sirens, cars on the roads have to move sideways to clear the way so that the VIP motor-cades can speed their way breaking all traffic rules. It is not pleasant to see the annoyed faces of the New Yorkers in their cars nor to hear all the four-letter words and other words of abuse hurled at the VIPs. I happen to know a young New York girl several times a multi-millionaires and the only child of multi-multi-millionairess widow. Neither the mother nor the daughter kept cars because of parking problems. They always used taxis whose drivers were known to them personally.

The intelligence Bureau was worried about too many Muslim servants in the government hospitality organization running the Prime

Minister's House. They were subjected to strict investigations. As a result, the Intelligence wanted several of them to be transferred from the Prime Minister's House. When I looked into the matter, it was found that the reason in almost all the cases was that some of their near relatives had migrated to Pakistan. I told the Intelligence people that they did not migrate on their own but were driven out, and added that the Prime Minister would be safer with the Muslim servants than with the non-Muslims. I asked them "was it a Muslim who killed Mahatma Gandhi?" There was no answer. I said "all the Muslim servants will stay." I mentioned the matter to the Prime Minister who approved.

In India Nehru travelled mostly by air because: He wanted to save time; He wanted to do some reading and paper work in the aircraft; He liked air travel; Above all he wanted to avoid the embarrassingly elaborate and clumsy security arrangements.

The elaborate arrangements for public meetings were clumsy. Far too many security personnel were used. The inner cordon was filled by plain-clothed policemen. The arrangements were needlessly expensive. But it must be said in defence of the Intelligence and the police that Nehru was not an easy person to manage from the security point of view. He would often break through police arrangements. Moreover, wherever he went, Nehru created commotions. There was always the popular upsurge. I had always felt that Nehru's safety did not lie with the police but was in the keeping of fate and destiny.

For some time in the early years of office Nehru's driver was Des Raj from the North-West Frontier. He was the man who drove Nehru and Dr Khan Sahib on the Frontier tour during which the tribals fired at Nehru and party at Malakand. Des Raj showed cool courage in the crisis. After partition he and his family migrated to India. He came to see me in Nehru's house at 17, York Road in New Delhi. I had no hesitation in employing him straight away and putting him on Nehru's duty. After a year, Des Raj had to be put on duty for guests. So a man called Rana Singh, a Gharwali, working in some government department, was brought in as Nehru's driver. Soon special investigation on him started. After about a year the Intelligence Bureau reported that Rana Singh was an army deserter and recommended his dismissal from government service. A reference to the Army Headquarters revealed that Rana Singh deserted in 1942 soon after the "Quit India" movement was launched. The matter was mentioned to Nehru who would, on no account, agree to Rana Singh's dismissal from service more especially because he was already in government service before being transferred to the Prime Minister's Secretariat. I asked the Intelligence

people if Rana Singh was a security risk. They said that, since Rana Singh was an army deserter, it was reasonable to presume that he was an unreliable person. I agreed that unreliability and security would go ill together. So Rana Singh was quietly transferred after ensuring that no further action would be taken against him.

On 12 March 1955 rickshaw-puller Baburao Laxman Kohali, who was some sort of a political thinker, made an attempt on Nehru's life with a knife in Nagpur. Baburao Laxman Kohali was of the firm view that "the Congress government was ruling by majority and hence was lacking in wisdom." He was exercised over this and wanted to remove the root cause of the Congress majority. The District and Sessions Judge of Nagpur, on 28 July 1955 sentenced the "political thinker" to undergo six years' rigorous imprisonment under Section 307, Indian Penal Code, for "attempting to cause the death of Prime Minister Nehru on 12 March 1955."

One morning in 1958 Nehru, who was in a good mood at breakfast, told me that he was unlikely to live beyond 74 years of age. I commented "you must have been listening to Punya Dev Sharma too much." He said he had calculated it all by himself by taking the average of lives of males in the family. Punya Dev Sharma was a good old social worker of the Punjab and a keen student of astrology. Providence preserved Nehru who died after completing 74 years, 6 months, and 13 days.

## 18 *Agriculture and Community Development*

Ever since the Bengal famine in the early forties, the food situation in India had been precarious till 1972. The Interim Government, which came into being on 2 September 1946 was saddled with a serious food situation. Nehru made frantic efforts to get foodgrains from Indonesia, Thailand, Burma and from wherever possible. The large Sterling balance had to be frittered away mostly on food imports. Even though the deficit in India's food requirements was only .0 per cent of the country's total production, from 1946 to 1972 we had to import 93,247,000 tons of foodgrains valued at Rs 4,827 crores (Rs 4,827,58,00,000 C & F to be exact). The largest imports were in 1966 and 1967 as indicated below:

	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Cost C &amp; F</i>
1966	10,358,000 Tons	Rs 523,13,00,000
1967	8,672,000 Tons	532,16,00,000

Nehru was naturally worried about the severe strain caused by continuous foodgrain imports. He made innumerable radio broadcasts on the subject, and more than once hinted at stoppage of imports. But his choice of Food and Agriculture Ministers was far from happy. Rajendra Prasad was more interested in pinjarapoles (cow ashrams) than anything else. Jairamdas Daulatram, who rightly belonged to a pinjarapole, was wrongly appointed Minister of Food and Agriculture. Rafi Ahmed Kidwai was lucky in the short term, but circumstances conspired against him in the matter of finding a lasting solution. K.M. Munshi and Ajit Prasad Jain were birds of passage. Nehru further complicated the situation by bringing in a man as Food Production Commissioner in the Food and Agriculture Ministry during the tenure of Jairamdas Daulatram, thus creating a fifth wheel in the coach. This experiment had to be given up.

Like a drowning man clutching at a straw, Nehru found a ray of hope in Lala Shri Ram, a self-made old recluse, who preached a new gospel: "concentrate on subsidiary foods like sweet potato and change people's food habits." Nehru took up the gospel which he tried to popularise by making more radio broadcasts.

Lala Sir Shri Ram was a successful businessman who built up the DCM Group of industries, handed over the enterprise to his sons and nephews, and adopted the life of a hermit. I once asked the old man how he proposed to change the age-old food habits of the people. He made a long speech during which he pointed out that Indians ate more cereals than any other people in the world. That must change, he said, and added, "Look at the Chinese and the Japanese. They have no inhibitions about eating almost anything. Their intake of cereals is limited because they eat subsidiary foods." I told him that much of their subsidiary foods comprised beef, ham and pork, other meat, fish and such things as snakes, snails, rats, frogs, crabs, tortoises, whales, sharks, sea-weeds and innumerable other items which Indians would shun. I suggested that he might become the President of the Beef and Ham Club of India—a position K.M. Panikkar held and was now vacant on Panikkar's departure from India as Ambassador to China. I told him that Swami Vivekananda, Vinoba Bhave, Suniti Kumar Chatterji, K.M. Munshi and Avinash Chandra held the view that in Vedic times Hindus consumed beef; the learned scholar Raja Rajendralal Mitra had written a chapter "Beef in Ancient India" in his highly esteemed book *Indo-Aryans*," and the author had quoted copiously from scriptures to show that beef was not only eaten but considered a delicacy.

I suggested to the old man that in his mission to propagate subsidiary foods, he might include in the list not only sweet potato but all the items which the Chinese and the Japanese ate. I told him that thereby he would be doing a great service to the country and help in improving the cattle population in the process by considerable reduction in numbers. He frankly admitted that cows were looked after well and treated humanely in beef-eating countries while in India, where we shouted "*Gow Mata*," they were terribly famished and treated with cruelty. He also said that it was a shame that India, with the largest cattle population in the world, had the lowest yield of milk, and milk powder had to be imported from beef-eating countries. Like most Lalas, however, he felt that if he openly aired his views, he would have to face hostile demonstrations by obscurantists.

A new set-up for subsidiary foods was created in the Ministry of Food and Agriculture and Lala Shri Ram became the Honorary Adviser. It too ended up as a futility.

Nehru realised very early and clearly that even for improvement of agriculture and rural development, it was absolutely essential to develop basic industries. Hence his emphasis on industrial development. For example it was the development of oil industry that helped



to produce fertilisers on a large scale. Electricity, railways, all kinds of transport industries, engineering industries, coal and metallurgical industries, and even aircraft industry, nuclear research and space research are important for agriculture and rural development. Agriculture and industry have become terribly inter-dependent. Neither can grow without the other. One can trace a cotton seed, an oil seed, a sugarcane sapling or a jute sapling step by step to heavy industry.

Nehru also realised that India, with its size and geographical position, should rapidly extricate itself from undue dependence on foreign countries and become self-reliant in the matter of defence equipment and supplies. This could never have been achieved without laying stress on basic heavy industries and creating an adequate industrial infra-structure.

### *Charan Singh*

Jats are brave soldiers and excellent farmers, but poor politicians. Charan Singh is no exception. As a Minister and Chief Minister of UP, Charan Singh had a great deal to do with agriculture and allied subjects.

At a meeting in Mussoorie in the early fifties in connection with Community Development Programme, Nehru spoke at length about the food situation in the country. His main theme was that the deficit in food production was only 10 per cent of India's requirements and this could be made up if an all-out effort was made. He emphasised the importance of compost manure and other improvizations. Nehru implied that state governments were not enterprising enough. Charan Singh spoke frankly without fear of displeasing Nehru. He said that food production could not be increased without substantial addition of inputs which meant considerable additional outlay in terms of funds. He added that the practice of making compost manure came to us from the time of *Rama* and *Sita* and that there was hardly any scope for making more in agriculture areas.

At Nagpur Charan Singh opposed the Congress Resolution of Co-operative and Joint farming. Most people at the session were aware that the Indian peasantry was so conservative that it was impossible to implement that resolution. It has all along remained on paper. Land reforms were never implemented honestly except in Kerala and Kashmir. Charan Singh's own state, Uttar Pradesh, is perhaps the worst in this matter, which is an indication that Charan Singh is biased in favour of the relatively well-to-do farmers.

Charan Singh's economic ideas seem to be astoundingly antediluvian. Only an enemy of agriculture and rural development in the modern age will advocate abolition of heavy and big industry. Allocation of more funds for agriculture and rural development is a different matter. Poor farmers and landless agricultural labourers do not seem to enter into Charan Singh's thinking. Rightly or wrongly Charan Singh has created an impression that he is anti-Harijan. This is a matter of serious consequence for a politician of Charan Singh's standing. The Kissan Sammelan, which Charan Singh's uncertain follower Raj Narain has organized, seems to be a forum for the relatively well-to-do farmers.

Gandhi would have taken us to mythical *Rama Rajya* whatever that might mean. But, left to himself, Charan Singh, with his incurable primitive outlook, would love to make cave-men of us all.

When Charan Singh broke away from the Congress and managed to become the Chief Minister of UP someone told me that Charan Singh was the number one defector in history. I contradicted him and said that the number one defector was Angel Gabriel and Charan Singh was only a close second. Angel Gabriel was very close to Adam and to the Patriarch of the Jews—Abraham. Prophet Mohammed received his first revelation through Angel Gabriel in 609 A.D. In 630 A.D. Mohammed conquered Mecca. Then the House of God (Jehovah), said to have been originally built by Adam and reconstructed by Abraham around 2,000 B.C., was restored to Allah.

It would have been amusing to see Charan Singh piloting the controversial anti-defection Bill in Parliament. I wonder if Parliament would have been successful in defining defection precisely. The United Nations General Assembly tried for years to define aggression, and went on postponing it. During the prolonged discussion only a Latin American delegate spoke sense. He said "Gentlemen, aggression is like a beautiful woman. When she enters a drawing room, we gasp. It is impossible to describe her; but we know she is there. She will remain eternally indefinable." If Charan Singh succeeded in getting the anti-defection Bill through Parliament, his achievement would have ranked with that of Jean Jacques Rousseau in a different field. Because of his poverty, Rousseau left his numerous children, soon after they were born, one after the other in a basket in front of the gate of a convent in Paris to be looked after as orphans by the nuns. Later he wrote a book "On the Care and Upbringing of Children which was so brilliant that it remains a French classic of its kind even today. Rousseau believed in the theory it is not necessary to be a cook to enjoy good food.

It might be mentioned that two of the greatest Prime Ministers of Great Britain would, according to the Indian attempt at definition, be dubbed as defectors. Gladstone, popularly known as the Grand Old Man, started his political career as a Tory and later switched over to the Liberal Party. He retired as the Liberal Prime Minister at the age of 85—a record Morarji Desai is trying to equal if not surpass. Winston Churchill started his political life as a Tory, crossed the floor over to the Opposition, and latter returned to the fold—which prompted Clement Attlee to make the only quotable quip in his life “it is the only instance, in history, of a rat returning to a sinking ship.” I should not be unfair to Attlee. He coined the undying phrase “wars begin in the minds of men” in the inspiring preamble to the UNESCO charter.”

India has unutilized more agricultural potential in terms of land, water, sun and energy than any other country of its size. Its cropped land is 140 million hectares—the same as in the United States. It's area under irrigation is larger than that of China, but the potential for extending irrigation is even higher. In 1950 the area under irrigation in India was 21.65 million hectares. By the time the Janata party came to power in 1977, the irrigated area was more than double. Apart from this, the rate of accrual potential on major and medium irrigation schemes already undertaken has been 1.47 million hectares per year.

In 1952-53 the production of nitrogenous and phosphatic fertilisers in India was a mere 60,505 metric tons. By the time the Janata party came into power in 1977 the annual production of these fertilisers had crossed the two million metric ton mark. If the capacity of ongoing fertiliser factories were to be added, India was on the sure road to self-sufficiency in fertilisers.

Foodgrains (including pulses) production increased from 63.18 million on metric tons in 1951 to 121.03 million metric tons before the Janata came to power. Oil seeds production increased during the same period from 5.52 million metric tons to 9.91 million metric tons and sugarcane (in terms of gur) production rose during the same period from 5.4 million metric tons to 15.84 million metric tons.

Cotton production during the same period rose from 3.66 million bales to 5.78 million bales while jute and mesta production during the same period rose from 4.78 million bales to 7.09 million bales.

The population of India, which was 361 million in 1951 rose to 625 million by the time the Janata came to power in 1977. This gives an indication of the crushing burden the planners had to contend with.

During the Second World War, Nehru happened to come across one Albert Meyer, an American engineer, who was greatly interested in improving village life in India. He advocated changes without destroying the desirable aspects of Indian traditions. Soon after his release from prison in 1945 Nehru spoke to Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant and said he would like Albert Meyer to be given an opportunity to start his experiment as a pilot project in UP. He put Albert Meyer in touch with Pant. After Pant resumed office as Chief Minister, Albert Meyer, in consultation with Pant, chose Etah as the location for his project. Nehru took keen interest in Meyer's work and gave him all the encouragement. Nehru looked upon this experiment as a prelude to something big which was to be launched for the benefit of villagers among whom started his political career and whom he never forgot.

*S.K. Dey*

S.K. Dey, who hails from Sylhet (now in Bangladesh), is an engineer by training who took his engineering degree in the United States. At the time of partition he was having a lucrative position in Bombay. He was deeply moved by the largest migration in human history which took place in northern India and the miseries wrought in its wake. With hardly any thought for his wife and four small children, Dey resigned and came to Delhi. After a talk with K.C. Neogy, Minister for Rehabilitation, Dey headed for Kurukshetra where large numbers of refugees were living in temporary camps under insanitary conditions. He harangued the refugees about the shame of living on doles and asked for volunteers, who had faith in themselves and in the future, to march with him to the unknown. The response was more than Dey expected. He marched with a large number to a place called Nilokheri. There all able-bodied men and women were provided with work to build a township for themselves. Dey's slogan was "muscles can do it." He established foundries, workshops and industrial training centres and helped in starting small-scale industries. The refugees were allotted agricultural land according to their entitlements. Nilokheri soon became a symbol of hard work lifting people above abject dependence on doles and charity, as well as the triumph of robust faith over *karmic* fatalism or *kismet*.

When the sharpness of the refugee problem was blunted, Nehru revived his interest in the community development programme started as an experiment in Etah by Albert Meyer. He wanted to combine it with certain aspects of S.K. Dey's work in Nilokheri. He knew it

was a programme to be implemented by the states, but he wanted central direction and coordination to be available to the states to bring about some uniformity. While he was considering several names for a suitable person to be put in charge of the programme at the centre, I suggested S.K. Dey. Nehru liked Dey's enthusiasm and dedication. However, he asked me "will he get along with officials?" I told him that if he considered S.K. Dey as a suitable person for the job, then it was for the officials to get along with him. Ultimately Nehru created the Department of Community Development and put S.K. Dey in charge as Administrator. Dey worked on one-rupee-a-year "salary" but he was given a free furnished house with free electricity and water supply, and a chauffeur-driven car.

Dey did not spare himself and worked with demonical energy. Nehru lent him all the support he needed.

Soon after S.K. Dey's appointment was announced, the late P.T. Punnoose, a communist MP from Kerala, raised an angry protest in Parliament for appointing an American to the post. Punnoose was new to northern India and did not know that Dey was a Bengali.

The Community Development Blocks were started as an ideal area development multi-purpose package programme. In course of time, rather too soon, the programme was severely diluted to meet political demands to cover the entire country without adequate resources in money, trained manpower, and inputs required for production. Consequently the great hopes generated among people could not be fulfilled. This resulted in great disappointment. Coordination by the Block Development Officer became difficult because the various departments at state government headquarters wanted to exercise direct control of their Block-level staff.

The National Extension Service, however, has come to stay. It has greatly contributed to the increased agricultural production. The NES has been effective not only in the field of agriculture, but also in animal husbandry and minor irrigation. The Block is viable as a unit of planning insofar as it relates to agriculture, animal husbandry and allied subjects as well as in social services, but not where industrial development is concerned.

In the mid-fifties S.K. Dey told me privately that he had come to the end of his financial resources, but still did not wish to become a government servant on a regular salary basis. I mentioned this matter to the Prime Minister and said that the only solution was to make S.K. Dey a Minister. Nehru did not hesitate to appoint him as a Minister of State and asked him to continue his work. Subsequently he was elected to the Rajya Sabha from Delhi.

Panchayatiraj is an offshoot of the community development programme. Nehru realised that many mistakes would be committed in the early stages of Panchayatiraj. He said "let them make a million mistakes; that is the only way to learn." When he spoke of "mistakes" he meant "honest mistakes." Panchayatiraj did not work satisfactorily except for a limited extent in Gujarat and Maharashtra. The reasons were: (1) Lack of political will. The state government did not want to decentralize power to the Panchayatiraj institutions. (2) Panchayatiraj institutions did not fail to misuse power. Dishonesty and corruption became widespread. It is the age-old principle "an institution will rise or fall to the level of the people who work it."

S.K. Dey successfully contested election to the Lok Sabha in the 1961/62 general elections. After Nehru's death the Community Development Ministry was tagged on to the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, and S.K. Dey was appointed Minister of State in independent charge of Mines and Metals. In the 1966/67 general elections contrived to deny Dey the Congress ticket for re-election to the Lok Sabha.

The committee comprising Asoka Mehta, E.M.S. Namboodiripad and S.K. Dey, among others, who reviewed the Panchayatiraj system, has reiterated its faith in it and has made some valuable suggestions.

As of 31 March 1977 there were 5,028 Community Development Blocks in the country covering 390 Districts. The total Block-level staff was 1,15,491 as detailed below:

Block Development Officers	4,777
Gram Sevaks	65,450
Extension Officers (Agriculture)	6,096
Extension Officers (Animal Husbandry)	5,046
Extension Officers (Industry)	695
Extension Officers (Cooperation)	4,208
Extension Officers (Education)	1,810
Extension Officers (Panchayats)	4,435
Gram Sevikas	6,004
Mukhya Sevikas	1,527
Overseers	4,961
Progress Assistants	2,765
Medical Officers	7,717
Average C.D. Block staff strength per District is 296.	

Thus the Janata government inherited the infrastructure necessary for rapid rural development.

Early in 1959 the late Dr Boshi Sen, the agricultural scientist of

Almora and an early collaborator of the illustrious Sir Jagdish Chandra Bose, received a communication from Prime Minister Nehru asking if he could help in starting an agricultural pilot project in the bleak and inhospitable Ladakh; popularly known as the "High Altitude Desert" on an experimental basis. I was then staying in Dr Boshi Sen's house, having resigned from the government. Dr Sen was the first man, in India to hybridise maize (corn). He consulted me on Nehru's letter. On my advice he informed the Prime Minister that he would be happy to undertake the task provided it was under the auspices of the army because it was known that most civilian departments were slow-moving and wooden and their "grow more food" was all on files. The army accepted it and Dr Sen sent one of his best young men to Leh in Ladakh to organize the project. He himself could not go as the doctors prohibited him from going to that height at his advanced age.

Having ascertained that 96 per cent of the area in Ladakh was barren. Dr Sen asked his man in Ladakh to concentrate on experiments in growing wheat, barley, vegetables and fodder. He laid stress on fodder as that would eventually help in livestock development.

Ladakh has now over 45,000 acres of land under agriculture. All these are irrigated by local technique. Modern irrigation facilities are now being extended there. It was Dr Sen who first grew wheat in Ladakh in the early sixties. Now wheat is grown over an area of 9,328 acres. With an improved variety, which is rust-resistant, the yield is as much as 13 quintals per acre maturing in 135 days—which excels the dwarf varieties which have revolutionized wheat cultivation in the plains.

Remarkable improvement has taken place in the cultivation of barley which has been the staple food of the people of Ladakh for ages. A new disease-resistant variety maturing in 90 days and yielding as much as 16 quintals per acre is now under cultivation. Ladakh has now 26,429 acres of land under barley.

Vegetables are also grown on a fairly large scale. In the mid-sixties Dr Sen showed me an incredible monstersize potato grown by his man in Ladakh.

As a result of experiments at the agriculture farm at Leh in Ladakh, the European variety of lucerne grass proved to yield six times more than Ladakh alfalfa and mature in four months and yield three crops of hay. The gross income from an acre could be Rs 6,500 per year compared to Rs 1,000 from local varieties. At present fodder is grown in a area covering 9,165 acres. In the eastern parts, where

the winter is harsh and summer short, a variety of oats from Finland was tried in 1975-76 and found promising.

Considerable progress has been made in agriculture in the lower altitude of Ladakh—9,000 feet to 10,500 feet. It has been discovered that two crops are possible in this area. Government has schemes to bring the vast culturable waste lands in Ladakh under cultivation and under perennial pastures by providing irrigation facilities.

Five years before the Janata came to power, India had succeeded in shaking off the terrible burden of the stigma as a nation with a begging bowl.

It has become a fashion for many in the Janata party to say that the Congress did precious little in 30 years for the benefit of the people. When even men like Morarji Desai, Charan Singh, Jagjivan Ram, Biju Patnaik and some of the Janata party Chief Ministers, who were prominent Congressmen and important Congress ministers, join this absurd chorus in varying degrees, the people have every right to doubt their capacity to do any good now or in the future. Those who harp on the past and are not obsessed with the present are cowardly demagogues who will lose the future.

The Janata government formed early in 1977 inherited tremendous assets from its predecessor in terms of:

- (1) Unprecedented surplus foodgrain stocks.
- (2) Comfortable foreign exchange reserves.
- (3) Near self-sufficiency in fertiliser production.
- (4) An-expanding irrigation system.
- (5) Great strides in scientific research including outstanding results achieved by the Indian Council for Agricultural Research and its affiliates as well as by the Agricultural Universities.
- (6) An infra-structure relating to Community Development, National Extension Service and Panchayatiraj.
- (7) A rapidly growing wide industrial base.
- (8) A vast scientific and technical manpower—the third largest in the world.

All these are the fruits of the labours of Jawaharlal Nehru in laying the sure foundations for a self-generating and self-reliant economy. These cannot be reversed no matter what people like Charan Singh might wish.

With further rapid extension of irrigation potential, India is destined to be free from the vagaries of the weather gods to a large extent and emerge as one of the largest producers of agricultural commodities in the world. The planners in India will do well to give early thought to the paradox of starvation amidst plenty. The alter-



native will be violent revolution. People will no longer be willing to fall dead without protest, as they did so pathetically during the Bengal famine early in the forties, especially when they are aware that our warehouses are bulging with food.

It is a great pity that the principal casualty of the emergency has been the Family Planning programme. Unless the Janata government shakes off its pusillanimity and gives a mighty push to this programme, which is a compelling necessity, all the benefits of planning will be gobbled up by the population explosion. Adding an "Australia" every year to our population is the surest way to condemn the present and future generations to eternal poverty and want.

## 19 *Some Disjointed Facts*

In my first book I have written about Nehru's sensitivity to his surroundings. When Nehru visited Czechoslovakia in 1938, accompanied by Indira, A.C.N. Nambiar was with him. In fact Nambiar was living in Czechoslovakia then, and he knew the Czech language fairly well. In the train to Prague, Nehru, Indira and Nambiar occupied the corner of a compartment with two chairs on either side and a table in the middle. A group of four Czech MPs were also in the compartment. One of them went to Nambiar, whispered something and returned to his seat. Nehru asked Nambiar what the man said. Nambiar-told him "he and his fellow MPs wanted to exchange places with us." Nehru asked "What did you tell him?" Nambiar said "I told them no." Nehru was visibly annoyed and told Nambiar "can't you see that they are terribly exercised over the situation in the country and they want to sit in a quiet corner and discuss important matters? Go and tell them that they can move over here." Nambiar said "I shall tell them; but I am under no illusion that these fellows are tormented by extreme anxiety and patriotic fervour." Soon after the four MPs were seated comfortably, they started a game of Bridge! Nehru looked at Nambiar in some embarrassment and smiled.

Having been used to an atmosphere of Hindustani (a mixture of Hindi and Urdu), Nehru disapproved of any attempt at artificially Sanskritizing Hindi. He was also annoyed by the *shudh* Hindi employed by All India Radio. The fact that even in those places in the north, where Muslims were numerically insignificant, the language was different from that in Lucknow and Allahabad did not register much with Nehru. I once told him that, while artificial twist to any language was unhealthy, when the south woke up to Hindi, the language that would emerge would be highly sanskritized; even the Muslims of Kerala did not know a word of Urdu; and that eventual Sanskritization and progressive use of words from the so-called *Dravidian* languages in Hindi would be a natural development.

Because of his family tradition and background, in Nehru's thinking "minorities" meant mostly Muslims. There would, of course, never exist a government at the centre without Muslims in the cabinet. A Sikh has always found a seat in the central cabinet, but not a Christian

even though the Christians constitute the second largest minority in India next only to the Muslims. For example there was no Christian in the union cabinet for 20 years—1957 to 1977. A prominent Sikh leader once told me that unless the Christians carry *kirpans*, they would be ignored. He added “look at the Scheduled Castes and Tribes; despite Gandhi and the Constitution, their lot remains very much a part of our so-called ancient culture and the mythical *Rama Rajya*. There is a deep-rooted sense of equality among the Muslims. I can think of nothing more exclusive than Hindu society which indulges in self-deception by double thinking. Perhaps the position of the scheduled castes and tribes will alter radically only as a result of a violent change.”

In my first book I have referred to Shiv Dutt Upadhyaya and Hari Lal. Upadhyaya, now in his 80th year and in indifferent health, joined Motilal Nehru as a young man and continued with Jawaharlal Nehru. He was not of much use in the modern secretarial sense; but he had other desirable qualities. Hari also served Motilal Nehru and continued with Nehru as his valet till the end of his days about four years before Nehru's death. Hari was a Harijan. Before independence he was for a term an MLA in UP. That was the period when Nehru said that people would vote for Congress even if a lamp post was put up as a candidate. Hari created a minor sensation in London when, on my insistence, Nehru took him there on one of his visits. Hari's photograph appeared in several English newspapers with the caption “Jeeves in London.” I arranged with a Hindi-speaking employee of India House to take Hari round and show him the sights of London. On the eve of our departure from London, Hari told me that he never wanted to visit England again. I asked him why. He hesitated and finally told me, in strict confidence, of what he saw in Hyde Park in broad daylight. He asked me not to tell any one. So I shall not write about it!

Nehru's treatment of these old employees left much to be desired. In my first book I have mentioned how, by my intervention, the lapse was redressed somewhat. When Nehru entered the Interim government in 1946 Upadhyaya shared a cottage with Dwarak Nath Kachru in the grounds of 17 York Road, where Nehru lived. Upadhyaya and Kachru never got on well. Upadhyaya and Hari were never in the good books of Nehru's two sisters. Neither of them was prepared to be doormats to the two sisters who possessed the unfortunate oriental habit of treating household employees as personal serfs. Upadhyaya is one year older than Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit.

Vijaya Lakshmi repeatedly spoke to Nehru and impressed on him

that Upadhyaya would not fit into the new scheme of things and that he would be more of an embarrassment than help. She suggested that Upadhyaya and family should be sent away to Allahabad to look after Anand Bhawan. Nehru hesitated. After some time Indira also lent support to what Vijay Lakshmi had said. Ultimately Nehru suggested to Upadhyaya that he might shift to Allahabad with his family. He went with extreme reluctance and with a heavy heart. The snapping of the long association was too much for Upadhyaya. He felt unhappy and miserable in Allahabad and, without Nehru's knowledge or permission, returned to Delhi. He arranged with a Congress MP to share his accommodation and then brought his family from Allahabad. He had to pay rent to the MP who, like many of his kind, took it even though it was illegal to do so.

Nehru himself was feeling rather unhappy at sending away Upadhyaya. He felt that the ordinary run of Congressmen were missing the familiar face of Upadhyaya whenever they came to Nehru's house. But Nehru did not enquire about where he was staying in Delhi and how he was making both ends meet. Some of Upadhyaya's personal friends helped him during this difficult period. What Nehru gave Upadhyaya was not adequate for him and his family to live in Delhi even modestly.

Soon after Rajaji assumed office as Governor-General on 21 June 1948, I spoke to him and he was good enough to allot Upadhyaya rent-free quarters in the Governor-General's estate. When Upadhyaya became a Member of Parliament, he was charged a nominal rent to fulfill the requirements of law. He still lives in the same quarters. In 1951 Upadhyaya spoke to me about his financial problems. In spite of help from friends during the past four years, he had piled up a debt of about Rs 10,000. I raised that amount for him and put him out of his misery.

Nehru's non-career adhoc Private Secretary, Dwaraka Nath Kachru, was a person who had never learn't the value of money except his own. And he loved the telephone too much. In the first three months of office, September to November 1947, Kachru ran a bill of Rs 7,000 on long-distance telephone calls. The official in charges of administration brought this to the attention of the Prime Minister who, naturally, became furious and wanted to see Kachru immediately. However, I rang up Kachru and asked him to make himself scarce for two days in order to give time to Nehru to cool down. At last Kachru came and received a dressing down. In a feeble attempt to defend himself Kachru advanced a new economic theory that actually there was no expenditure as the money paid would go to the Post and Telegraph

Department of the government. Nehru said "then you pay to the Post and Telegraph Department and see if the no-expenditure hurts." Kachru went about unsuccessfully to raise a loan. After a week I told Kachru "provided you have learn't a lesson, you might abandon the futile chase to find a creditor. No one will lend to a man who has no credit-worthiness." Ultimately, in the interest of propriety, Nehru paid the bill and prohibited Kachru from making trunk calls in future without his permission.

Nehru was particular that he should not spend money lavishly on himself. He would go on darning his old clothes including cotton Khadi kurtas and churidar pyjamas. Whenever he left a room he would put off the fan and lights himself instead of leaving it to the servants. When an old overcoat belonging to his father became totally unserviceable, Nehru turned down a proposal to buy an overcoat in London. Instead he bought some rough woollen material from the *Khadi Bhandar* and his tailor Mohammad Umar made the coat. I never discovered what D.P. Mishra was quick in discovering that "Nehru was extremely fond of European dress." It is true that until the mid-fifties he wore European clothes whenever he went to western countries. The reason was that he did not want to appear different and attract attention. Even during this period he wore Indian dress for formal occasions. From the mid-fifties onwards he wore only Indian clothes. During his last visit to Canada in winter in 1962, while I was no longer with him and he was in failing health, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit was worried and asked me to have a look at his wardrobe. I went to the Prime Minister's House with some useful items of winter clothing packed in a box. While Vijaya Lakshmi and I were examining Nehru's clothes which were spread on his bed, Nehru came and asked "what is going on here." Vijaya Lakshmi said "I asked Mac to come and have a look; so he is here." I showed Nehru some soft woollen vests which I had never used. He took two. Then I showed him some long tight-fitting under-pants made of the finest Egyptian-cotton, also not used before. He took three. Then, with considerable diffidence, I showed him my fur-lined overcoat. Surprisingly, he tried it and told me that it was too heavy and asked me to take it back.

Nehru's tailor Mohammad Umar, an old man, was a character. He was introduced to me by Raghunandan Saran whom Nehru knew very well. Umar's shop in New Delhi was looted during the partition upheaval, but his old Delhi shop escaped a similar fate. One of his sons had to flee to Pakistan. Umar made some clothes for me—a job well done. From then on only Mohammad Umar made clothes for Nehru. We got Umar's New Delhi shop restored to him. Soon Umar entered

the flourishing stage of his career. He advertised himself as "Tailor to the Prime Minister." His son in Karachi advertised himself as "former tailor to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru." I asked Umar whether use of Nehru's name in Karachi helped. He replied in his inimitable English "Sahib, Panditji is best-seller anywhere. My son is already one of the leading tailors in Karachi. He has more work than he can do."

As he was ever anxious to observe financial proprieties, Nehru was particular that no hoarding to anything should be resorted to in his house more especially during times of scarcity and rationing. Before I left him in 1959 I gave him a good number of his favourite long black utility type "Zeus" cigarette holders which were no longer available in India. He looked at me and asked "don't you know that I don't hoard?." I said that they were no longer available in India and that, in any event, they were not an essential consumer item. He took four and returned the rest to me saying "one can always stop using them when they are not available. I will feel uncomfortable if I store anything for the future. However, he did not have to, for I kept them for him and replenished his stock in small numbers periodically.

As in the case of elderly colleagues to whom he showed extra courtesy, Nehru showed respect to people in the mass. He would never smoke at a public meeting or in the presence of large numbers of people. He did, however, smoke at committee meetings. He was not a heavy smoker. He used the "Zeus" cigarette holder into which either a whole cigarette or cotton wool could be inserted to absorb a good part of the nicotine. Normally Nehru used cotton wool which was changed about four times a day, and kept the empty cigarette holder in water with a few drops of dettol at night. When he felt he was smoking too much, he would cut the cigarette into half to make the number last for the rest of the day so that the daily ration was not exceeded.

Nehru did not care for air-conditioners. He did not use them in his bedroom or in his offices in the Secretariat and Parliament. At night he preferred to sleep on the verandah. He once told me that he liked the smell of the earth. In summer, however, he used the air-conditioner in his study in the Prime Minister's House where he worked till late at night. In the mid-fifties, as Nehru was getting older, I felt it was essential to provide an air-conditioner in his bedroom as a standby in case of illness. I decided to bypass him and had the air-conditioner installed while he was abroad. On return from abroad he noticed the air-conditioner and at once knew I was the culprit and told me that he did not want it. I said that it was there to be used only in certain contingencies and that normally he need not use, it. However, we used

to put on the air-conditioner every day during summer for two hours before he came for lunch. It was put off as soon as Nehru's car was spotted at the gate. After lunch he would rest for some time in the bedroom which was kept cool for him; but the machine never worked while he was in the room. The air-conditioner served a particularly useful purpose during the last phase of his life, more especially the last month of his life—May 1964—which was as hot as an oven.

People will still remember Nehru going about with an ivory-tipped sandalwood baton in his hand. He did so as an aid to combat his nervousness. He always wanted to grip something. He once told me that, if he did not have the baton with him, he would roll a handkerchief into a ball and grip it.

Nehru was not a demonstrative person. One way of showing his affection for a person was to give him things he had used. At various times he had given me his "Eden" hat, a felt hat, a woollen beret cap, a silk shirt, his Harrow tie, shoes and chappals. I could not use the hats as they were one size smaller for my head. They were ultimately handed over to the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Museum on the eve of my departure from Delhi. The Harrow tie was stolen by someone.

Few in India realise the variety of services rendered by our missions abroad. I shall give two examples. Ambassador N. Raghavan sent a secret code telegram from Brussels disclosing the name of a person travelling by air to Delhi, the name of the airline, the flight number, date and time of arrival at Palam airport, and an indication of what he was smuggling on his person. The ambassador recommended the administration of a stiff dose of castor oil to the smuggler at the airport. The ambassador's suggestion was carried out by the customs authorities. It was incredible that the man could store so much precious stuff in that particular part of his anatomy. The smuggler confessed that for three days before his departure from Brussels he had starved and took only one glass of water on the plane.

Ambassador K.M. Panikkar sent a secret telegram from Paris to say that two members of the Pakistan embassy had secretly offered to hand over Pakistan's diplomatic code for a stiff piece which was specified in the telegram. I delayed submission of the copy of the telegram to the Prime Minister and told the Foreign Secretary that, if a minister's orders were required, he might take up the matter with Home Minister Pant; and that before a reply was sent to the ambassador, I might be informed. The Foreign Secretary cleared the matter quickly with Pant and showed me the draft reply to Panikkar to the effect that, if the ambassador was satisfied about the genuineness of the offer, the price asked for might be paid. I was taken aback and said that I would



Sandwiches on the Swiss Alps.  
The author with Ambassador  
A. C. N. Nambiar, 1953







The author  
with Lassie and  
Simba—Golden  
Retrievers,  
March 1955



Nehru, Indira, Rajiv and Sonia with Rajiv's Golden Retriever, 1959



With gloves on  
Nehru plays with  
a tiger cub, 1959



Indira's profile  
made specially for  
the author, while  
they were in  
Switzerland in  
1953, by sculptress  
Clara Quien.



Indira as the author knew her, 1949

**MUST SHE HIDE HER FACE NOW?** The Shah Commission has held that the decision to proclaim internal Emergency on 26 June 1975 was taken "exclusively" by Mrs Indira Gandhi in a desperate bid to continue in power despite the Allahabad High Court's verdict against her. Describing Mr Sanjay Gandhi's role as the "single greatest act of excess committed during the Emergency," Mr Justice J.C. Shah observed: "Here was a young man who literally amused himself with demolishing residential, commercial and industrial buildings in locality after locality without having the slightest realisation of the miseries he was heaping on the helpless population.

like to speak to the Prime Minister in his presence. So we went in. After seeing the papers the Prime Minister turned to me and asked if I had anything to say. I said "I totally disagree with the recommendation. The code offered might well be a discarded one. What facilities has the ambassador sitting in Paris got to ascertain genuineness? The payment involved is a secret one and no formal receipt will be obtained. Moreover I will not entrust so much unaccountable money to a man who changed "suzrainity" to "soverignty" while in Peking and subsequently told fibs about it." The Prime Minister said "regardless of what you have said, if you had put up the telegram to me straight away, I would have unhesitatingly said that Panikkar should be informed that we are not interested."

For some mysterious reason Lord Mountbatten was keen that India should institute the system of honours and awards. He recognised that the Constitution was to prohibit titles. He quoted the example of the Soviet Union but did not quote the examples of France and the United States. After much hesitation and procrastination, honours and awards for civilians were instituted subsequent to Mountbatten's departure. At first the awards were Padma Bhushan Tisra Varg, Padma Bhushan Dusra Varg, Padma Bhushan Pahle Varg, and Bharat Ratna. Many recipients took exception to the classifications as in a railway train and returned their awards to the President. Subsequently the nomenclature was changed to Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan, and Bharat Ratna. Curiously, Nehru spent much time in pondering over to which British honours our honours should be equated. At last he spelt it out in one of his fortnightly letters to the Chief Ministers which were also circulated to Governors, Chief Commissioners, Central Ministers and Heads of missions abroad. According to this, Padma Shri was equivalent to CSI, Padma Bhushan to KCSI, Padma Vibhushan to GCSI, and Bharat Ratna to KG & OM. It was pitiful to watch a man like Nehru wasting his time on this futility.

In the first list of honours the name of President Rajendra Prasad was not included. This "lapse" met with considerable criticism. The first act of Radhakrishnan, after assuming the office of President, was to confer Bharat Ratna on ex-president Rajendra Prasad. The Home Ministry was then directed to enter Rajendra Prasad's name as the first on the list of Bharat Ratnas. Rajendra Prasad was thus presumed to have been the first recipient of Bharat Ratna. This reminded me of the catholic church bestowing on St Peter posthumously the office of "Bishop of Rome" and "Pope" long after the term "Pope" was invented. Even today historians of the catholic church are not certain that

St Peter ever visited Rome. They are certain of only St Paul visiting the "Eternal City."

I felt glad when the Janata government abolished these superfluous, dubious and anomalous honours and awards.

Nehru took considerable time to differentiate between Nehru the freedom fighter and crusader and Nehru the Prime Minister and statesman. This caused repeated embarrassments especially when he spoke off the cuff. Once there was a meeting in Bombay to celebrate Paul Robeson's birthday. M.C. Chagla was the moving spirit behind it, Nehru complied with a request to send a message for the occasion. For some reason I did not see the message before it was despatched to Chagla by post. The Secretary-General of External Affairs Ministry, who received a copy of the message, showed it to me and said that the wording of the message would annoy the United States government. On enquiry I found the message had already been posted. I saw the Prime Minister and told him that while the treatment of Paul Robeson in the United States had been shocking in the extreme, it was part of the popular hysteria whipped by that evil man Senator McCarthy. I said it would be advisable to delete the sentences condemning the United States government. I asked him how the Government of India would feel if some prominent Americans held a function in New York to celebrate Sheikh Abdullah's birthday and the American President sent a message condemning the Government of India's action in keeping Sheikh Abdullah in prison without trial? He kept quiet. He sent a fresh message deleting the offending lines but retaining the personal warmth of feeling towards Paul Robeson, to replace the original one. Chagla, who is fond of seeing his name in print, committed the indiscretion of making public that the first message was amended.

Election time is one during which most people are expansive, some are irresponsible, some have fevered brains, some have loosened tongues and some have sharpened wits. I shall give two examples. In the backward area of the not very advanced state of Orissa the Ganatantra party dominated by feudal ex-maharajas who conducted its campaign against the Congress by bringing in the Mahanadi Dam for attack. Many speakers told the gullible people, with telling effect, that the water then available from the river was worthless for cultivation as the Congress had taken away all the electricity from it.

In Delhi a communal party spread the slogan "Break open Rama's heart, you will find Sita written on it; break open Nehru's heart, you will find Lady Mountbatten written on it."

I came across M.A. Jinnah in 1946 in Simla during the conference convened by the British Cabinet Mission. Nehru and party, including

Maulana Azad, stayed at the "Retreat" close to the Viceroy's Lodge, and Jinnah and party stayed at the "Yarrows" nearby. It fell to my lot to deliver communications personally to Jinnah. It was Nehru who corresponded with Jinnah on behalf of the Congress even though Maulana Azad was the Congress President. Whenever I went to "Yarrows" I found Jinnah sitting out in the sun. It was summer. Jinnah invariably stood up to receive letters from me. He showed no hurry in opening the letters and always found a few minutes to exchange pleasantries.

While Lord Wavell, Nehru, Jinnah and Baldev Singh were travelling in the Viceroy's aircraft to London in December 1946 at the invitation of Prime Minister Attlee, I happened to be seated in front of Jinnah. At 11 O' clock sharp Jinnah ordered beer. When the beverage arrived, Jinnah tapped me on the shoulder. When I turned round, he smiled and offered me a mug of beer. I thanked him and said that I was not used to the fluid. He understood. Readers need not think that I am investing myself with the virtue of a teetotaller. What I said to Jinnah was true of the period. I never considered abstaining from alcoholic drinks a virtue.

Michael Breacher, the Canadian Jew, came to see me with a letter of introduction from Lord Mountbatten in connection with the writing of a book on Nehru. For this Breacher was given a lavish grant by the Ford Foundation to cover the travelling and prolonged stay in India for himself, his wife and children. He managed to write a political biography of Nehru noted for its journalese. During his stay in India he was provided with an opportunity to accompany Nehru on one of his tours in India to enable him to observe Nehru at close quarters in all his moods. He was also given access to a copy of the typed manuscript containing old letters which were then under print as a book under the title "A Bunch of Old Letters." Then he asked for a tape-recorded interview. I agreed on the understanding that he would have the exclusive right over the record for purposes of his book but that the copy-right would vest in the *National Herald*. He agreed to it. Later he said he would bring the tape-recorder and undertake to have the typescript prepared for the *National Herald*. I said he need not take the trouble and that *All India Radio* would tape-record the interview and the Prime minister's PAs would make copies of the type-script.

As soon as the typescript was ready, I sent a copy to M. Chalapathi Rao and asked him to publish it as a copyright series straight away. After ascertaining that Chalapathi Rao had received the stuff, I gave a copy to Breacher. The next day we went off to Belgrade in Yugosla-

via. In Belgrade Prem Bhatia of the *Statesman*, now Editor-in-Chief, *The Tribune*, who was in the press party covering Nehru's visit, complained that *National Herald* was publishing the Breacher interview which was sold in advance to the *Statesman* by Breacher. He asked me if I had given permission to the *National Herald*. I explained the position to him and said "true to his name, Breacher has committed breach of agreement." Prem Bhatia's comment was crisp: "a Jew is a Jew."

A little before the Planning Commission was constituted, A.V. Pai, Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, conveyed a request of a group of senior officers of the government for a meeting with the Prime Minister to discuss the question of planning. The group was led by F.C. Badhwar, Chairman of the Railway Board, and included H.M. Patel, ICS, Secretary in the Defence Ministry. Badhwar is an engineer by training and took his engineering degree from Cambridge. Badhwar, who retired over 20 years ago, was one of the finest officers in the Government of India. He was the file-pushing type. A rare man of varied interests from wildlife to gardening, Badhwar was a lover of horses and polo and generally a keen sportsman. He knew the art of living well and graciously and where and how to find a good wife. H.M. Patel had established a reputation as a competent civil servant, but he was over-engined and overwhelming insofar as his colleagues and juniors were concerned. Like an elephant, he needed only three hours of sleep at night. He used his ample spare time in reading.

Nehru was glad to meet the group of senior officials and asked them to express their views on planning. Patel held forth and attacked the very concept of planning. In this respect Sardar Patel could hardly have done better. On the whole the group of officials was not enthusiastic about planning. Their views on planning were similar to those of M.R. Masani. They saw "red" in planning which, as a concept, was not familiar to them.

The Swatantra party, which he joined when it was formed, provided the ideal habitat for H.M. Patel. Ironically, he is now one of the architects of planning in the Janata government. Patel should remind himself daily of the saying of Thomas A. Kempist:

"Verily, when the Day of judgment comes,  
I shall not be asked what I read,  
But What I did when opportunity came my way."

At the time of partition, government servants were given the opportunity to opt for service in either dominion. A Syrian Christian from Kerala, who was a permanent servant of the Madras government, was

then working as a Superintendent in the Constituent Assembly Secretariat in New Delhi on deputation. Thinking that he would have better prospects in Pakistan, he opted for service in Pakistan. He thought that it was like working in Singapore or Malaya. It did not occur to him that Pax Britannica was finished in the Sub-continent and that in Karachi he had to take an oath of allegiance to Pakistan. In ignorance he went and was soon disillusioned about prospects of rapid advancement in Pakistan. Soon the long arm of the law reached Madras and Kerala. His house in Madras and the land he possessed in Kerala were declared evacuee property and taken over by the Government of India. The man sitting in Karachi was stunned and felt foolish like the squirrel which lost its nut. His numerous appeals fell on deaf ears. At last he wrote to me in desperation. The Prime Minister mentioned the matter in the Rehabilitation Committee of the cabinet which directed that the house and land should be restored to the man. Eventually he gave up his job and came away from Pakistan. Declaring the house and land of the man as evacuee property was perhaps legal in the narrow sense, but it was lacking in commonsense—something similar to the arrest of Frederic March in the “dry” area of the Madras state for possessing a bottle of scotch whisky. What the police did was not illegal but woefully lacking in commonsense. What is legal is not always right.

Another Syrian Christian from Kerala happened to be in Karachi working for Caltex Oil Company at the time of partition. When the time came for his annual leave, he discovered that he was stranded. He applied to the Indian High Commission in Karachi and drew blank. All his efforts failed. Then he telegraphed to me. The Prime Minister intervened, and the Indian High Commission was instructed to issue travel documents to him.

While Rajaji was, for a brief period, Chief Minister of Madras after being Governor-General and Home Minister in Delhi, Nehru visited the state. On the recommendation of the Union Health Ministry, the Prime minister agreed to visit the Christian Medical College and Hospital at Vellore during the tour. For some inexplicable reason the Madras government had never been friendly towards this institution which never took any grant from the Madras government and did not permit it to interfere in its internal affairs. Rajaji did not like the inclusion of a visit to the institution in the Prime Minister’s tour programme without clearance from the Madras government. A mild protest was registered with the Prime Minister’s Secretariat by the Chief Secretary to the Madras government. The Chief Secretary was told in no uncertain terms that in cases such as the Vellore College and Hospital and



T.B. Sanatorium at Madanapalle (the first of its kind in India), which were well-known all over India and enjoyed considerable international reputation, the Prime Minister was in no need of advice from the local government. The great dedicated old woman, Dr Ida Scudder, the founder of the Vellore institution, was greatly touched by the Prime Minister's visit.

During Chou En lai's first visit to India, Nehru was in a buoyant mood. Chou En lai said that he was lacking in experience in international affairs. He also told Nehru that China was way behind India in communications, science and technology. These pleasantries added to Nehru's buoyancy.

Nehru had noticed more than once the sloppy way K.M. Panikkar dressed. His collar and sleeves were often soiled. In Cairo Nehru noticed at the embassy the sofas were discoloured by oil from Panikkar's head. We were on our way to London and were staying in the High Commissioner's residence at 9, Kensington Palace Gardens, (Millionaire's Lane), London. The High Commissioner was Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit. One morning we were having breakfast. Vijaya Lakshmi and Indira left the table early to attend to something. Nehru suddenly remembered Panikkar. He told me that Panikkar reminded him of the Chief of an African tribe of very tall people who went about nude. The chief happened to see an English top-hat and fell in love with it. He ordered half a dozen and carefully stored them. On an important tribal occasion the Chief arrived ceremoniously with the top-hat on but with nothing else! Nehru could hardly contain his laughter, but he suppressed it. Nehru never laughed aloud.

Panikkar was an interesting character. In an expansive mood he once told me two things which were personal. One was that he did not know who his father was. There was a practice among certain Nair families of Kerala to arrange for Namboodiri Brahmins to be informal mates for their young women. After these women gave birth to two or three children, the Namboodiri Brahmins were discarded. The origin of this practice was perhaps a certain inferiority complex among Nairs and also perhaps designed to improve the breed from the point of view of grey matter. Panikkar said that as a young boy he was told that his father was a Namboodiri Brahmin. The Namboodiri Brahmins used to indulge in consummate hypocrisy and self-deception in this matter. Namboodiri Brahmins were not supposed to mingle with Nairs who are *Shudras*. In order not to be seen, they visited the residences of the Nair women only after night-fall; they left much before sunrise. There was no marriage. There was no responsibility about the children. It cost the Namboodiri Brahmins nothing. Physical contact with Nairs

meant pollution for the Namboodiri Brahmins. To avoid "physical contact," the Namboodiri Brahmin would place a betel-leaf over the navel of the Nair woman just before the sex act. The self-deception arising out of double-think is a part of our "ancient culture" and tradition about which we hear so much from some of our ministers with barren minds. This practice of giving Nair women to Namboodiris became widespread at one time, especially in northern Kerala. Chandu Menon wrote two powerfully satirical and widely-read novels—"Indulekha" and "Sharada"—attacking the practice which is now on its way out.

The second thing Panikkar told me was about his marriage. On Panikkar's return from England, where he had gone for higher education, Panikkar's imperious uncle sent for him and asked him to get ready to go with him in a small boat to watch the turbulent floods. Panikkar got a fright because he did not know how to swim, but he could not say "no" to the uncle who was very much aware of Panikkar's predicament. In the boat Panikkar witnessed the fury of the floods. Suddenly the uncle said "Madhavan, I have arranged your marriage. It will take place next Monday." Panikkar had never seen the girl. He was in a jam. In a small boat on the flood waters with no knowledge of swimming his position was so hopeless that he could not even plead for time. So Panikkar bowed to the inevitable and nodded his respectful agreement. That is how Kavalam Madhava Panikkar got married. He has not been on record as having said "and lived happily ever afterward."

I have heard many people say that Nehru was a poor judge of people. I never shared this view. The fact that Nehru was circumspect in airing his personal views about individuals did not mean that he did not know them or that he was taken in by them. He was capable of acting extremely cleverly when he chose.

One day Nehru related to me, with great relish, a confrontation he had with a former maharaja of Patiala who was a legendary figure (he was the father of Maharaja Yadavendra Singh). On a summer day in Simla, long before independence, Nehru was looking at some books in a book-shop. The Maharaja walked in and took Nehru to a quiet corner. The maharaja said that he and his brother-princes were at heart for the elimination of the British and the independence of the country and would not hesitate to join hands with the Congress. But he wanted to know what the position of the princes would be in the Congress scheme of things after gaining independence. Nehru told him that it was a matter which could be adjusted by discussions. Before leaving, the maharaja said "think over it."

Nehru knew that maharaja would atonce be reporting to the Political Department of the Government of India suppressing what he himself said and cooking up things which Nehru did not say. So Nehru wrote a longish letter to the maharaja recalling in detail what the maharaja said and not concealing what Nehru himself said. Nehru also asked for specific suggestions from the maharaja to enable him to discuss the matter with Gandhi and his principal colleagues. The letter was purposely sent by post so that the CID could intercept it and pass on a copy to the political Department. The maharaja never replied. Nehru chuckled and added "The maharaja must have got a fright when he learn't that the Political Department received a copy from the CID."

During the grace period of six months after the death of Rajkumari Amrit Kaur's elder brother, Lt Col Kanwar Shumshere Singh in May 1975, I was worried about the fate of my personal Library as I could not house it in any modest place I might rent in New Delhi. The library contained, apart from a good collection, some rare books over hundred years old, innumerable books which were out of print, very many expensive illustrated art books, a large number of books on natural history, and many reference books. Barring scientific and technical books, the library contained books on every conceivable subject. It was perhaps the largest personal library in New Delhi. It represented a collection spread over a period of about fifty years. A wealthy University was prepared to buy the library at a considerable price; but I was repelled by the thought of selling my books as normal parents would be at the idea of selling their children. Finally I donated my library to the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi and felt light of mind.

It had been my practice to be the first to say "Happy New Year" and "Happy Birthday" to Nehru as long as I was with him. Indira was invariably annoyed and once she complained to me that I didn't let her be the first. I said I could not help it as I happened to be working at midnight. I recommended to her to keep awake and I would be content to be second. This she could not do.

Before leaving Delhi for good at the end of October 1977, I called on an old friend who was in indifferent health. He used to be Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit's speech-writer in Washington and New York. Like her niece Indira, Vijaya Lakshmi could not do without a ghost writer. He told me that the day before, Vijaya Lakshmi had asked him to write for her, her autobiography. He was taken aback because he had never heard of a person writing the autobiography of another. He excused himself by pleading ill-health. I told my friend that there was a similar case in the past. Vincent Sheean received in New York an urgent

telegram from the Aga Khan (1875-1957) requesting him to go over to Paris for a meeting. The Aga Khan had made advance arrangements for Vincent Sheean's travel. The latter arrived in Paris where the Aga Khan warmly received him. After exchange of pleasantries, the Aga Khan said that he would very much like Vincent Sheean to write his (Aga Khan's) autobiography. The fee and perquisites offered were princely. Since Vincent Sheean had no intention of becoming a hack-writer, he excused himself and took the first available plane to New York.

In the early sixties Vijaya Lakshmi had told me that the manuscript of her book was already with her publisher and that the fee she would receive for the serialization of the book would be as high as that paid to Winston Churchill. I felt sorry for her, because I did not believe a word of what she said.

Feroze Gandhi was privately helped by Finance Minister C.D. Deshmukh with confidential information about the affairs of some Life Insurance companies. During the discussion in the Lok Sabha on the subject Feroze Gandhi made a speech. Certain portions of Feroze Gandhi's tutored speech were deleted by several responsible newspapers for fear of being hauled up for defamation. The law in India at that time was, as in the Mother of Parliaments, MPs could say anything in the Indian Parliament without attracting prosecution for libel. But, as in England, newspapers did not enjoy any immunity from prosecution for publishing libellous portions of Parliamentary proceedings. In Hyde Park and in Parliament the British have provided free scope for cranks and politicians to blow their tops and make themselves ridiculous, but they have wisely limited their audience.

Feroze Gandhi sponsored a private Member's Bill to extend immunity to newspapers. When the draft Bill came to the Prime Minister for a decision on the government's attitude, I told Nehru that it would be a serious mistake to support the Bill. I mentioned that legislators liked to see their names in the newspapers and for this purpose they would throw restraint to the winds, and it could only amount to putting a premium on irresponsibility, cowardice, and licence in the legislatures and indirectly in the press and the public. I added that such unbridled and uninhibited behaviour on the part of legislators could only bring legislatures into disrepute. Nehru agreed with me, but he said that the temper of the House was very much in favour of such a Bill. So he allowed himself to be led—with disastrous consequences for the future. One of the few good things Indira did during the emergency was to repeal the Feroze Gandhi Act. In its eagerness to appear as champions of press freedom, the Janata party hastily repe-

aled the repeal, putting the Feroze Gandhi Act back on the Statute Book, without assessing the full implications of the measure.

I believe it was in 1962 that the Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee passed a resolution stipulating that Congressmen, who had served as ministers for ten years or more, should cease to hold government office. Most people believed that it was designed to deny another term to Dr Jivaraj Mehta as Chief Minister and that the move was inspired by Morarji Desai who was then out of government under the Kamaraj Plan. At the meeting of the Congress Working Committee Nehru denounced the GPCC resolution. There was a clash between him and Morarji. Eventually the GPCC resolution was implemented and Dr Jivaraj Mehta was out. More to show his annoyance than anything else, Nehru announced the appointment of Jivaraj Mehta as India's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom and concurrently Ambassador to Ireland. Jivaraj Mehta was a distinguished doctor, an able medical administrator, and a freedom-fighter, but he was never interested in foreign affairs. Moreover he was too old and had two embarrassing handicaps. He belched frequently and secondly he could not contain himself. Nehru's appointment of Jivaraj Mehta as High Commissioner has only been surpassed in inappropriateness by Morarji's appointment of two non-official male Governors in the south after the Janata party came to power in 1977.

After Jivaraj Mehta presented his credentials to the Queen in Buckingham Palace, a well-known Indian doctor in England asked his friend the Queen's Lord Chamberlain "did the Indian High Commissioner belch in her Majesty's presence?" The prompt reply was "yes indeed, both ways!" Jivaraj Mehta did not fail to repeat his performance in the presence of President De Valera in Dublin.

The appointment of Jivaraj Mehta proved to be a case of Nehru cutting his own nose to spite his face.

I asked the two best Cabinet Secretaries Nehru had—N.R. Pillai and M.K. Vellodi—about their dealings with Nehru in matters of administration. Both said that Nehru's handling of administrative matters which passed through their hands was marked by a sense of fairness. He always had an open mind and invariably gave them a patient hearing. He never had favourites. In regard to promotions of officials whom he did not know personally, the standing instruction was that the proposals submitted by the Cabinet Secretary and Establishment Board to the Appointments Committee of the cabinet, of which the Prime Minister was the chairman, should ensure that no injustice was done to any individual.

H.V.R. Iengar, a former ICS officer and Governor of the Reserve

Bank of India, once complained privately that officials were no more than numbers for Nehru. The same complaint was voiced by Lord Norman Brook, the British Cabinet Secretary, about Winston Churchill.

## 20 *An Undiplomatic Letter to a Diplomat*

Walter R. Crocker, former Australian High Commissioner in India and later in Kenya, published the book "NEHRU—A Contemporary's Estimate" in 1966. Earlier, during a trip to India from Kenya, he had had some talks with me in connection with the book on which he was then working.

When the book was published, he had asked his publishers in London to send me a complimentary copy which took a mighty long time to reach me. In the meantime he wrote and asked for my comments on his book. I wrote to him a long letter which I reproduce below:

2, Willingdon Crescent,  
New Delhi-4, India  
13th June 1966

*Personal & Confidential*

My dear Mr. Crocker,

In one of your letters you had expressed a wish to have my comments on your book. Mrs Pandit, who recently secured a copy in Australia, lent me her copy; and I have just finished reading it.

I am afraid that in order to review your book I will have to write a book bulkier than yours. I shall not attempt it at present. Personally I feel, after reading your book, that you remain a discerning admirer of Nehru and that you retain basic goodwill towards India. However, I think your book will have, on the whole, hostile reception in India and the book might also do some harm to this country abroad. Two of your best Indian friends in Delhi told me a couple of days ago that they were surprised and angry at some of the things you have written in your book. It would be unfair on my part to disclose names.

I would like to point out a few factual errors in your book. The Sikhs are not a race. They are a religious community. The Sikhs are relatively recent converts from Hinduism—the bulk of them are Jats, some are Harijans and the rest are Hindus.

The Planning Commission members do not have cabinet rank. They rank with Ministers of State. Even Sir V.T. Krishnamachari had only the rank of Minister of State even though he functioned as the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission.

You have referred to Nehru's capacity to change overnight and

cited the example of the states reorganization on a linguistic basis. The citation is not correct. During Gandhi's time the Congress was committed to the creation of linguistic states. In British India Provincial Congresses were organized on a linguistic basis. Take the Madras Presidency which was one single administrative unit under the British. Four Independent Provincial Congress Committees existed there directly responsible to the All India Congress Committee—viz the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee, the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee, the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee which also comprised the Kannada-speaking areas of the Bombay Presidency, and the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee. In fact Nehru showed consistency in the formation of linguistic states. Should Nehru have got up and said "consistency is the hob-goblin of little minds" and refused to carve out linguistic states is a question on which opinions can differ.

You have referred to Indian villagers bewailing the exit of the British and asking the question "when are the British coming back?" I have never heard this except from Rajkumari Amrit Kaur who had no contact with villagers and whose political understanding was woefully deficient. She also used to hold forth about the "blunder" of eliminating the Indian princes and the big landlords. Indeed she was a victim of her own background. In many ways she belonged to a dead past which neither she nor anyone else could resurrect.

You talk of Indians' weakness for the white skin. I suffer from no such weakness. To me some of the dark women of India are any day more beautiful than the bland vegetables going about as females in England. I am told that opposites attract each other. How about Europeans' weakness for the brown skin? Four years ago, while I was in Badgastein (Austria), I had a great deal of trouble with white females who admired brown skin. I am a pagan, but at that time I was in no mood to fool around with women—white, brown, yellow or black. And I took recourse to all kinds of tactics to avoid being pursued by admiring females. A few years before that I was in Finland for a couple of days. I was struck by the beauty and elegance of women there. I was on an official visit and I had no time to spare for relaxation. During those two days I had amorous attention at social functions from at least four women—well placed and very beautiful. It was all due to my brown skin and not due to my looks which are nothing to write home about. Unfortunately (!) I had no time for them. Geneva is an interesting place to watch sex behaviour. You will see far more Swiss and other European college girls there pursuing Negroes and Arabs than "white" men. The issue



involved is not money. When Nehru visited the Soviet Union as Prime Minister, the Indian journalist who was most popular with Russian girls was the PTI Correspondent Ramachandran who is as black as printing ink.

I do not deny that several benefits have accrued to us, as by-products, from British rule. I am convinced that the greatest harm done to India by Britain was the systematic arrest of natural industrial development. For selfish reasons on the part of the British, India was cut off from the benefits of the Industrial Revolution. Think of what Japan achieved in 75 years in the meantime. The British tried their best to kill the Tata Steel Plant in Jamshedpur in the early days. I can understand it because the British were here primarily for their own health and not for the Indians. Didn't Britain fatten itself by ruthlessly exploiting India and other parts of the vast empire on which the sun never sets? And think of the material benefits which accrued to England from slave trade and piracy on the high seas!

The first batch of 200 African slaves passing through England was brought by the Captain of a British ship called "The Jesus." As the defender of the faith Queen Victoria, in true Christian spirit, admonished the Captain for taking slaves, and later Knighted him.

I presume you know something about Henry Morgan, the world's greatest pirate and King of the Buccaneers—a great cheat unsurpassed in cruelty and perfidy. Because of the wealth he brought to England, Charles II Knighted him. Not only that; after the Treaty of Madrid between the Spanish and English Monarchs about piracy. Charles II, ironically enough, sent back Sir Henry Morgan to Jamaica as Deputy Governor with orders to wipe out piracy from Caribbean waters. Sir Henry served his King, Jamaica and himself well and he grew constantly richer and more powerful. He died full of years and honours and was buried with royal pomp and mourning.

It was only on the 9 June 1966 that Chester Bowles publicly stated that India has made more progress in the 18 years after Independence than in the 200 years of British rule.

Your reference to Indian colonialism in Goa and Nagaland amused me. About Goa we made a mistake. We ought to have taken it at the time of the police action in Hyderabad. There was at no time any possibility of doing business with Salazar who went on quoting an ancient Papal Bull for the eternal possession of Goa. Maccao and Hong Kong will also have to go some time. In another 50 years the world is likely to be quite different from

what you would like it to be. I admit that it would have been advisable for India to agree to President Kennedy's advice to wait for six months. Salazar would not have changed, but our position would have been strengthened. I do not ignore the duplicity of Krishna Menon in the Goa business for very selfish reasons.

In dealing with the Nagas don't forget what happened to the Red Indians in the United States and the aborigines in Australia over a long period of years. In comparison we are humane even to the small number of Nagas who indulge in violence, because we believe they are our own people.

About Kashmir we committed some initial mistakes. India should not have taken the initiative to order a ceasefire until the whole of the state was recovered. The unilateral offer of a plebiscite at the time of Kashmir's accession was an error. Taking the issue to the United Nations was a blunder. Nehru in his early days in office was inexperienced in statecraft and offered plebiscites all round—in Kashmir, in the French and Portuguese possessions in India. In regard to Kashmir, taking things as they are at present, I have in my head one or two solutions, without a plebiscite, which will not result in much loss of face either of Pakistan or of India and which might work. But since I do not have the power of decision, it is futile to write about them.

I find you are enamoured by some of our "old women" in public affairs such as Sapru, Jayakar and Shiva Rao. If Rajaji's economic theories are to be implemented, we will have to drastically change our Constitution and scrap universal adult suffrage. I do not think that Rajaji has reconciled himself to the implications of the proposition "One Man One Vote." In England and other west European countries adult suffrage came after the general population had acquired a fairly good standard of life as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Think of the limited suffrage in Pitt's time. Even women did not have the vote. In India the reverse has been the case. We accepted universal adult suffrage in an economically and educationally backward country. It was a great act of faith. This has produced certain compulsions and it is in this context that the size of our plans should be looked at. The choice in India is between catching up with time, and saying good-bye to the "liberal democratic set up" based on adult suffrage.

Reading your book I got the impression that in many instances you proceeded on faulty premises. You were obviously handicapped by lack of inside and authentic information. I am compelled to observe that you have indulged in some sweeping assumptions. I am

also inclined to say that I have been somewhat mistaken about my estimate of you as a person with a sense of history and of historical movements. In some ways you remind me of a Frenchman who lived in France during the French Revolution. He dismissed the Fall of Bastille in the following words:

The Kingdom was needlessly plunged into chaos and to massacre. Several of the invalid veterans who formed the garrison of the Bastille—among them its Governor, the Marquis de Launay, one of the gentlest souls in France, were massacred and the head of the latter had been paraded through the streets at the end of a pike. The total count of the inmates freed was seven—four counterfeiters, one sex offender, and two madmen whom the crowd had carried in triumph from the prison to the insane asylum.

The figures are correct. But the verdict of history on the Fall of the Bastille is slightly different. It stands out as a symbol and a landmark in the annals of man's quest for liberty.

An Englishman once scornfully dismissed Gandhi's Dandi March as the trudging of a half naked fakir for a handful of salt. The "handful of Salt" was the signal to an unarmed people by a frail and intrepid man to stand up and fight, with nothing in their hands, against the mightiest empire in history. The "handful of Salt" will live in history as a greater symbol of humanity's march towards freedom than the "Fall of the Bastille."

I think one's background as well as one's way of looking at things will colour one's judgment. For example when Gandhi stood before the Taj Mahal he saw only forced labour. An American millionairess, after a visit to India 70 years ago, told an audience in New York that the most exciting experience she had in India was the Aga Khan by moonlight—she actually meant the Taj Mahal. The Oxford historian Vincent A. Smith who was an ignorant and insolent ex-ICS official, wrote, that the Taj Mahal was a barbaric ostentation completely devoid of artistic merit.

Haven't you ever heard of organized and widespread corruption and extortion in high British ruling circles in India before Independence? Hardly a Viceroy and his Vicerene was immune from it. In such cases the victims were Indian princess and rich land lords such as *taluqdars*. Shummy often refers to it as loot. Widespread official pressure used to be applied on landed gentry and traders for the purpose of extorting money from them for putting up statues of innumerable inconsequential Britishers throughout India. Substantial sums used to be taken as bribes at various levels

from Indian moneyed fools, outside the official world, for the grant of British honours. I can multiply instances.

Thank you for your letter dated 9th June which reached me today. I shall convey your message to Mr. Nambiar. Your vague recollection of having met him at the residence of Raghunath Rao in Geneva before the war may be correct. Mr. Rao and Mr. Nambiar are good friends. Incidentally Rao has retired as Assistant Director General of ILO; but he stays on in Geneva with his French wife. His only child, a girl, is married to a Rumanian emigree in Switzerland.

I hope you will not take offence at this rather too frank a letter.

Yours sincerely,  
Sd./- M.O. Mathai

H.E. Mr. Walter R. Crocker,  
Australian High Commission,  
P.O. Box No. 30360,  
NAIROBI, Kenya (East Africa)"

## 21 *Jayanti Dharma Teja and Shipping*

Dharma Teja, who hails from Andhra Pradesh, appeared on the scene in Delhi after my resignation from the government in 1959. In fact I had heard of him and his antecedents earlier. After the death of his American millionairess wife, who was older than him, under mysterious circumstances, Teja had acquired a young wife from the Punjab. He loved to parade her.

Prime Minister Nehru was impressed by Teja as a man who could get things done. He was taken in by Teja's grandiose scheme of shipping development in India. Teja was able to quote facts and figures about shipping and its importance to the economy which appealed to Nehru. Teja also enlisted the support of Mrs Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit's son-in-law who is the senior executive of the multi-national pharmaceutical firm in India, Ciba-Geigy of India Ltd. In fact this firm acquired financial interest in Jayanti Shipping Company floated in India by Teja under the Indian Companies Act.

The Minister of Transport and Shipping at that time was Dr P. Subbaroyan, a decent man but not one of the world's great workers. Nehru spoke to Dr Subbaroyan commending Dharma Teja. Dr. Subbaroyan passed on the matter to Dr Nagendra Singh who, fortunately, was the Secretary of the Ministry at that time. Dr Nagendra Singh hails from the Princely family of Dungarpur. He is a talented and scholarly man of great personal integrity and, like his brother, the Maharawal of Dungarpur, the embodiment of refinement and culture. Dr Nagendra Singh is now a judge of the International Court of Justice at the Hague, and the Maharawal, I believe, the Speaker of the Rajasthan Assembly.

I must digress a little here and say something about the Maharawal of Dungarpur. In the mid-fifties, in the wake of a bout of public criticism of the unusually large privy purses and privileges of the Indian princes, President Rajendra Prasad and the Home Minister persuaded Prime Minister Nehru to write individual personal letters to all the Indian princes suggesting the desirability of voluntary action on their part to effect cuts in their privy purses or to share some of it with the people of their former states. The response to the appeal did not amount to much. Some did create Trusts or otherwise made provision

to give part of their privy purses for public causes. The Nizam of Hyderabad, the world's greatest miser, sent a negative brusque reply. The finest and ablest reply was from the Maharawal of Dungarpur. He said nothing about his own "poverty" and problems. He pleaded the cause of the young *maharana* of Udaipur who had just ascended the gadi. According to the accession agreement the privy purse of Udaipur was drastically reduced on the death of his predecessor.

The Maharawal of Dungarpur reminded the Prime Minister that the House of Udaipur was more ancient than the Japanese monarchy; the *maharana* had descended from the sun; practically all other princes of Rajasthan did "*Sashtanga Namaskar*" (prostration) before the *maharana* of Udaipur; the great public esteem in which he was held was recognized by the Government of India by making him the one and only *maharajpramukh* at the time of integration of the Indian states; and that even the British government recognised his unique position by exempting him from attendance at King George V's durbar in Delhi where Indian princes had to bow low and pay homage to the King Emperor. The Maharawal appealed to the Prime Minister not only not to put pressure on the young *maharana*, but to restore the cut to a substantial extent. The Prime Minister was much impressed by the letter and promptly invited the young *maharana* to come to Delhi and stay in the P.M's House for leisurely talks with him, the President and the Home Minister.

The young *maharana* came and stayed in the P.M's House for several days, and met President Rajendra Prasad and the Home Minister. As a result the Home Ministry made substantial adjustments in his privy purse to ease the sudden drop effected after the death of his predecessor.

Dr Nagendra Singh came to see me for a private talk although I was not then officially connected with the PM. He said he was somewhat disturbed at the manner in which Dharma Teja was sponsored by the PM. Because of this, he feared, healthy resistance to unorthodox procedures might break down at all levels and ultimately the whole thing might end in a scandal. He said that in the Indian context "Private Sector" in shipping had become a misnomer in as much as 90 per cent of the price of every ship was given as a loan to private companies from the Shipping Development Fund.

I told Nagendra Singh "the PM is obviously impressed by the enterprise and adventurousness of Teja. Nehru is not the man to have any ulterior motives in sponsoring any individual. If you are convinced that Teja is not to be encouraged, then you should fearlessly place the facts before the PM at an interview. If there is no basis for that, you should assist Teja's company like any other Shipping firm, safe-

guarding government's interests completely in the process. In view of your apprehensions, you should be doubly careful in government's dealings with Teja." I asked him how government safeguarded the 90 per cent advance to a shipping firm. He replied "the vessel cannot be sold or otherwise alienated by the firm until the entire loan is repaid to the government."

Nagendra Singh told me "there is a big racket going on in shipping business. For every ship ordered by a shipping firm, the foreign supplier allows a minimum of two per cent commission on new ships and anything upto seven per cent or more on second-hand ships. Such commissions are not taken cognizance of officially by the government. In the Shipping Corporation of India I introduced the practice of receiving the commission in India and crediting the amount in the account books of the corporation; but in the shipping companies in the private sector the commission is shared by the Directors, never repatriated to India, no income tax is paid on it in India, and is tucked away in foreign banks—in short government is abetting income tax evasion and foreign exchange swindle on a substantial scale by a few. I am determined to bust this racket and ensure that the customary commission is entered in the accounts of the firms and not parcelled out to the directors."

I asked Nagendra Singh what he could do if second-hand ships were over-invoiced by the suppliers and, through some private arrangement with the Indian shipping firms, the money is given to the Directors in foreign exchange abroad. I pointed out to him the general practice of under-invoicing exports and over-invoicing imports in other commodities resulting in large-scale leakage of foreign exchange and income tax evasion which the Ministry of Commerce and Industry was unable to stamp out. Nagendra Singh did not have a satisfactory answer. He, however, said that shipping was the easiest industry to be nationalized as the quantum of payment of compensation was very limited, and that nationalization was the only ultimate solution.

I pointed out the Nagendra Singh "government at various levels is run by people with accountants' minds. The worst is the Accountant-General, Central Revenues (AGCR) Office. I know a case of a man whose pension for July-September 1959 was sanctioned by the AGCR on production of the necessary forms "duily filled in" with a "life certificate" to indicate that he has alive as of 30 September 1959. But the AGCR refused to pass the pension bill for April-June 1959, because no "life certificate" to the effect that he was alive as on 30 June 1959, was attached to the pension bill. Now, tell me, isn't a man who is alive on 30 September 1959 also alive on 30th June 1959? Can't the

AGCR understand this elementary fact of life? Does the AGCR live in the age of miracles? Does it believe in death and resurrection? The plain fact is that these are mentally dead men who are interested only in keeping papers complete even with needless ones. These men in government revel in the futile exercise of swallowing a camel and straining at a gnat."

It cannot be denied that Dharma Teja did, within a few years, add considerably to India's maritime fleet. He appointed Lt. General B.M. Kaul (ret'd.) as his "ambassador" in Japan during Nehru's lifetime. He offered an attractive position later to R.K. Nehru who, as a retired civil servant, had to take government's permission to accept the post. But the new Prime Minister Lal Bahadur, refused to accord permission. One of Nehru's PA's resigned without earning a pension and joined Teja's Jayanti Shipping Company on a salary and perquisites he could never dream of getting at any time in government or elsewhere. Ultimately, of course, the poor PA lost everything.

As Prime Minister Nehru's hostess, Indira was over-indulgent to Teja and his wife. At social functions in the PM's House the Tejas were conspicuous guests. During one such function in the PM's House, where important ministers and some senior officials were present, Teja's wife had the temerity to kiss Nehru. This was deliberately done to create impressions. What can even a Prime Minister do if a calculating woman grabs him and kisses him except to look embarrassed?

For a considerable time this was the talk of the town. And Teja and his wife strutted about triumphantly in Delhi and elsewhere. Later, after the death of Nehru, Indira paid the price for it in the form of several embarrassing questions in Parliament about Teja looking after her two sons in England and France. Neither was Mrs Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit spared, as it subsequently came out in the court from a statement by Teja himself that he had given money to Mrs Pandit to buy a jeep for her election. Mrs Pandit has not contradicted it so far.

Teja over-reached himself and came to grief. Because of the precautions taken by Nagendra Singh, government lost nothing. Recent press reports about Teja's final exit from India and the "losses" government is going to suffer as a result are highly uninformed. Teja's income-tax arrears are a different matter. In any event they are inflated and include fantastic expropriatory fines. Teja's foray into India only resulted in his ruin. All his shares in the Jayanti Shipping Company stand forfeited to the government. Then there is the value of ships taken over by the government from Teja's company. All these add up to much more than anything Teja owes to the government by way of



income-tax or any other dues. Teja's mistake was that he did not realise that it is impossible to become an Aristotle Socrates Onasis by gambling with government money. Teja should have stayed on abroad either in Panama or in Monte Carlo. He could have remained there as a millionaire but for his insane desire to be a multi-millionaire.

In November 1970 Dharma Teja said in a London Court that in 1966, while Indira was the Prime Minister, Uma Shankar Dikshit, Indira's factotum, asked him for Rs 10 lakhs for the *National Herald*, and that subsequently there was a meeting of Teja with Commerce Minister Manubhai Shah in the presence of Dikshit. At the meeting Manubhai Shah told Teja that if he did not give Rs 10 lakhs for the *National Herald*, that would be the end of him. That was a time when Teja was having trouble with the government of India. Teja's evidence before the London Court was reported in detail in the Indian Press, and remains uncontradicted.

It is well known that many of the shipping firms declare dividends even when there is no profit. A shipping firm in the south indulges in lavish self-entertainment at an expensive hide-out and enters the expense under the head "amenities." Amenities for whom? Workers and lowpaid staff? No, but well-paid senior executives and their wives. This firm paid Rs five lakhs for advertisements in the souvenir of the Indira Congress for the illfated 1977 general elections. The company has a vested interest in political parties.

Probably because of his early exit from the Ministry of Transport and Shipping, Nagendra Singh was unable to stop payment of commissions to directors of shipping firms in the private sector and to ensure their entry in the accounts of the firms. Recently a south Indian shipping firm bought a large second-hand ship for Rs. 14 crores. Was any commission on it received and, if so, has the amount been distributed among the directors in foreign exchange abroad, or has it been credited to the accounts of the shipping firm? Five per cent of Rs 14 crores amounts to Rs 70 lakhs. This shipping firm has the distinction of the former Chairman of its Board of Directors having been hauled up by the Reserve Bank of India for giving a lavish party in New York for which there was no foreign exchange sanction, and the frequent travels of himself and his entire family to western countries without foreign exchange sanction. On suspicion that he was doing all these on dollars which came out of the commissions on ships tucked away in foreign exchange abroad, the Reserve Bank of India started its proceedings. I do not know if the proceedings ended first or that death, timely and kind, saved him from possible ignominy and worse.

Why should the south Indian shipping firm put up the wife a senior official of the Government of India for an extensive period in its guest house? Why should the Lieutenant Governor of a union Territory stay in the guest house of this shipping firm and be lavishly entertained with everything thrown in? Why can't he stay in the Raj Bhawan?

The Chief Executive of the Hindustan Shipyard at Vishakhapatnam, a Government of India undertaking, called on the Managing Director of the south Indian shipping firm in the early seventies in an effort to induce him to keep the shipyard in view when planning for long-range requirements of new ships. He had the audacity to say that he was neither interested in the shipyard nor in the Indian shipbuilding industry. This south Indian shipping firm has so far successfully avoided placing a single order with the Hindustan Shipyard or any other Indian shipyard.

Prime Minister Morarji Desai recently cautioned the shipping firms against unhealthy practices and hinted at government takeover in this connection. He seems to have gradually come to the same conclusion as Nagendra Singh did 18 years ago that nationalization of shipping was desirable, easy, and the only solution.

## 22 *Meaning of Humiliation and Insult*

Soon after Morarji Desai formed the government at the centre early in 1977, *Indian Express*, which put on an air of being the government's mouthpiece, fed by the Ministry of Works and Housing presided over by that intellectual and moral giant Sikhander Bhakt, published several reports about:

(1) The Teen Murti would be reconverted as the official residence of the Prime Minister, and that the contents of the Nehru Museum could be taken to Anand Bhawan in Allahabad.

(2) The new house Indira was likely to get, the rent which would be charged, and that she would be required to pay six months' advance rent or produce a guarantee from a gazetted officer. These reports remained uncontradicted by the government.

I wrote a letter to Morarji Desai about both these matters. About (1) he showed commendable understanding in his prompt reply to me. I have referred to this in the chapter "Prime Minister's House" in my previous book.

About (2) I had informed the Prime Minister that any action designed to humiliate Indira would only bring discredit to his government and his nascent Janata party. In his reply he quoted rules and added that my reference to humiliation was not understood. I did not wish to prolong the correspondence.

Before I proceed further with this chapter, I would like to state that I firmly believe that it was a grave mistake to have made Indira the Prime Minister in 1966, and it would be a great disaster and misfortune for India if she were to come back to power. I am convinced that only the Janata party's follies and failures can make it possible for her to stage a come-back. But I would be the first to object to any attempt at humiliating a former Prime Minister. Punishment for wrong-doing, after going through the normal process of law, is a different matter.

Now I would like to help Desai to understand my reference to humiliation and the meaning I attach to that word. A junior Section Officer in the Government of India is a gazetted officer. Is a former

Prime Minister to go to such an official to make a request for a guarantee (that she would pay rent)? If there is such a rule, I say "to hell with it and to hell with the people who have quoted it." It is worse than humiliation to publish such nonsense and let it go uncontradicted.

The number one in a country should have the audacity to break a rule openly when there are compelling reasons to do so and when commonsense dictates it. He should also have the courage to institute a new rule when necessary. I remember a talk B.K. Nehru had with me one evening while he was in an expansive mood. He held forth about the preciousness of red-tape and how tenderly it should be nurtured. My laughing at him did not deter him in the least. He wound up his "speech" with the remark "but it should be cut occasionally—only at the highest level and after mature consideration." There is truth in what Biju said.

Morarji was able to live in a large house in New Delhi after he ceased to be a minister because of a new rule introduced on the directive of Prime Minister Nehru issued at my instance. That rule conferred on MPs who have been cabinet ministers, governors, and heads of Indian diplomatic missions abroad, as well as leaders of opposition groups in both Houses of Parliament entitlement to independent bungalows. I have referred to this in the chapter "Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit" in my previous book.

It passeth my understanding why the new government did not offer a house to the former Prime Minister when she had to vacate the official residence. How was Abida Ahmed, wife of the former President, allotted a large house when she owns one in New Delhi itself? How was Lalitha Shastri, wife of a former Prime Minister allotted a large house in New Delhi? I believe neither of them pays any rent. Why couldn't Indira, who had given away her ancestral house for a public cause, be given a house? And what is the rent she is being charged for the unfurnished bungalow No. 12 Willingdon Crescent, her present residence? It is the murderous amount of over Rs 2,800 per month. And what rent was Morarji paying for the large house he occupied as an MP? It was less than Rs 250 per month. At the present level of taxation, how many persons in India have an income of Rs 2,800 per month after taxes? How will she live? Is this socialism? Is this Gandhian economics? It is just highway robbery by the government. Is the government paying a pension to Indira who has been prime minister for eleven years? Most civilized governments do.

It is known to a few that when the Janata came to power at the centre the two "patriarchs" from outside advised the government to

pick up Indira and Sanjay under MISA and send them to Tihar jail for 19 months so that they could taste the bitter medicine they administered to innumerable people during the emergency. It must be said to the credit of Desai that he rose above anger and revenge and firmly turned down the proposal.

The arrest of Indira, taking her round in a jeep at night all over Delhi, with no member of her family with her was an arbitrary, crude, clumsy, uncivilized, vindictive and highhanded act. It proved to be a foolish act judged by subsequent events. It was worse than humiliation. The senior civil servant Vohra was also arrested, suspended, released and reinstated. How Gilbertian! During those days I wondered whether emergency had been re-established or whether Idi Amin had established his barbarous regime in India. What is surprising is that the minister concerned did not resign as a result of this imbroglio. It is the government and the Janata party which lost heavily in the process.

Those who sit on seats of power should understand that an individual and a nation will forget and forgive an injury but never an insult.

## 23 *Some Foreign Dignitaries*

### *King Saud of Saudi Arabia*

The visit of the King of Saudi Arabia was unique in many ways. The guardian of the holiest of holy places for the entire Muslim world had an opportunity to see Islamic institutions, shrines, Mughal art and architecture, and to meet prominent Muslims in India. He threw money recklessly on tips wherever he went. On the way from Kalka to Simla the King's car ran over a hen and killed it. The King at once stopped the car, found out the owner of the hen, and gave him a princely sum as compensation which was large enough to start a mini poultry farm.

The King once telephoned the Saudi Arabian Ambassador in New Delhi. When the ambassador learnt that the King was on the telephone, he sprang from his seat and just managed to say "Your Majesty" and then put the receiver down as a mark of respect. Later the ambassador told Prime Minister Nehru the story. The ambassador said "when I learnt it was His Majesty, I jumped up. Think of my speaking to His Majesty on the telephone. I was overcome by veneration for the person of my King and put the telephone down." The Prime Minister said "obviously the King wanted to tell you something." The ambassador replied "I got out of my house at once and started walking to Rashtrapati Bhavan to bow to His Majesty. Then I was persuaded by my staff to go in the car to save time. I reluctantly did so. I discovered that the King fortunately thought that the telephone was out of order. Think of my speaking to His Majesty on the telephone."

At the end of Nehru's visit to Saudi Arabia subsequently, the King gave me a Rolex gold watch with a gold strap. On the dial of the watch was engraved the image of the King's face with his goatee. On return to Delhi I sent it, with a note, to the Foreign Secretary to be passed on to the *Tosha Khana* because it was an expensive present. I had no intention of using that watch. The Foreign Secretary, in consultation with the Prime Minister, decreed that I should pay Rs 200 to the government and keep the watch. I was somewhat annoyed and told the Foreign Secretary that government had no authority to ask me to pay

money for something I did not want. He said that things sent to the *Tosha Khana* were sold by general auction and that the auctioning of a watch with the King's image might amount to discourtesy. I was not satisfied, but I promised to pay. Then a member of the Prime Ministers's Secretariat fell in love with the watch and wanted to buy it. I told him he could keep the watch by paying Rs 200 to the government on my behalf on condition that he would personally use the watch and not sell it outside. He was immensely pleased because he knew that the watch was worth several times the money he was asked to pay. I derived some satisfaction that the drew pleasure out of looking at the image of the King on the dial of the watch frequently every day.

The King also presented me with a traditional Arab cloak and head-gear. On return to India, I lost no time in passing it on to Mohammed Yunus who accepted it with veneration. He prospered in life and, though no more than a halfwit, flashed through the "emergency" firmament like a comet with a bombastic designation as his tail, and is now heard no more.

While in Saudi Arabia our ambassador told me that the manufacture, import and possession of soda was banned in that country. I was intrigued and asked him why. He said that the King believed "where soda is, there will whisky be." Prohibition in Saudi Arabia is total and is fiercely enforced. Even foreigners from western countries are flogged if they commit any prohibition offence. Wealthy people from Saudi Arabia, including the ones in charge of enforcement of prohibition, fly out to Beirut in Lebanon and spend week-ends there in drinking bouts and in revelry of all kinds. Enforcement of "morality" by compulsion can never be wholly successful any where.

The Law of Moses is still in force in Saudi Arabia in all its prestine barbarity. If a woman is caught in adultery, she is stoned to death; the man goes scot-free. The Arabs are the cousins of the Jews. In Abraham they have a common ancestor. Arabs are descended from Ishmail who was the eldest son of Abraham, and the Jews from Isaac who was the younger son. Byron has something to say about the "offence" for which women are stoned to death. "What men call gallantry, and gods adultery, is much more common where the climate is sultry."

On his departure from India the King presented Nehru with a huge Cadillac car with provocative fins. Nehru promptly sent it to President Rajendra Prasad for his use. Crown Prince Faisal of Saudi Arabia had, on an earlier occasion, also presented Nehru with a Cadillac. This was given away to the government hospitality organization for the use of

foreign dignitaries on their visits to Delhi.

*Aneurin Bevan*

In my previous book as well as in the chapter "A Visit to the Soviet Union" in this book I have written about the colourful British Labour party leader Aneurin Bevan. It was Rajkumari Amrit Kaur who first introduced me to Nye Bevan in 1946 while he was Minister of Health in England. I met him and his wife Jennie Lee at their residence in London during Nehru's hurried and brief visit to London with Lord Wavell, M.A. Jinnah and others in 1946.

As a young boy from a very poor family in Wales Nye had to work in the coal mines. Working in the deep pits affected his lungs, and he had to live with it throughout his life, and finally die of it prematurely. Without any formal education he became one of the greatest orators, like his fellow Welshman David Lloyd George, Great Britain has produced. Winston Churchill, master of the written word, considered Nye Bevan a natural orator.

During my innumerable trips to England between 1946 and 1962 I always took Nye and Jennie to the theatre and supper. Often we went to Soho to eat Chinese food. I also spent some time at their farm at Chesham on practically every visit to England. Whether in office or out of it, Nye Bevan was singularly free from pomposity and behaved with natural dignity.

When Attlee formed the government in 1945 Nye Bevan was appointed Minister of Health. Nye was determined to launch the National Health Service. He discussed the matter with the Permanent Secretary he inherited in the ministry. He found this senior official singularly lukewarm about the National Health Service; but found the second senior-most official enthusiastic. Nye told the Permanent Secretary that he must be weary and tired after the hard work during war time and advised him to go on leave for a good rest. Later he was transferred from the Health Minister. In the teeth of opposition from professional medical men and other vested interests Nye managed to push the National Health Service through Parliament.

Insofar as I can remember, Nye Bevan came to India twice—once on the invitation of Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and later on my invitation while he was no longer a minister. During the first visit he stayed in Rajkumari Amrit Kaur's house. On the second visit he stayed in the Prime Minister's House. This time I took him to Bhakra Nangal and Kashmir. In between the two visits, Jennie Lee came once on my invitation. She visited Agra, Almora, Calcutta, Bombay, Madras



and several other places. It was her first visit to India.

Once I took Nye to an after-dinner party at a friend's house in Delhi. Nye was a person who could drink well and could hold it perfectly. In the small party there was an Englishman who was an admirer of Nye. The poor fellow was somewhat tight and spoke incoherently. On our way back home Nye asked me what was the most disgusting thing in the world and answered the question himself "the sight of an Englishman drunk."

While Nye Bevan was in India in 1957, Krishna Menon asked me to speak to Nye about him and to suggest to him that he might keep in touch with Krishna Menon as Bevan was the Foreign Secretary in the Labour party shadow cabinet. I told Krishna Menon "I thought you had the British Labour party in your pocket!" Nevertheless I spoke to Bevan, but his reaction was far from encouraging.

I remember my innumerable talks with Nye both in India and in England. Once he told me of a plot by Stafford Cripps to oust Attlee. Cripps tried to enlist Nye's support; but Nye refused. He told me that he disliked and distrusted men with too much religion and austerity as they tend to impose their fads on others. And in his Welsh accent he told me "Maac, Stafford is a crank." Nye admitted that any day the colourless Attlee was more reliable than Cripps or any other Labour leader of his time.

Nye told me of a remark by a well-known wit when Stafford Cripps, known for his fads, vegetarianism, Quaker meditations, Fabian socialism, Spartan austerity, and insufferable righteousness, was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer:

"There, but for the Grace of God, goes God."

I am amused to find that Hiren Mukerjee, in his book "Portrait of Parliament," has used the witticism as his own about Morarji Desai.

After the Labour government went out in 1951 I arranged for Nye Bevan to write a weekly column for the Indian Express. Ramnath Goenka was generous enough to fix a substantial fee for the weekly columns. In 1957 Ramnath Goenka changed the payment to a monthly system regardless of the number of articles Nye sent. While Nye was not in a position to write due to illness which proved fatal, Ramnath Goenka showed considerable understanding and continued the monthly payment until Nye's untimely death.

On 18 August 1957 Nye wrote to me a personal letter the contents of which are reproduced on next page.

In the summer of 1959, while I was in London on my own, Nye and Jennie took me to the House of Commons for lunch. Later they got me a ticket for the small special enclosure which was part of the



18th August, 1957.

My dear Mac,

I have written to His Highness and also to Bakhshi. I am deeply indebted to you for the trouble that you have taken.

The arrangement made with Mr. Ramnath Goenka of the Express, I appreciate very much indeed. When I am away, for example as I shall be in Russia, it is a very considerable inconvenience and hardship to have to send off an article. At the same time, these visits are necessary for me, in order to obtain subject matter for the articles.

On the 6th September, I am going to Poland and on the 11th, I shall be in Moscow. I hope not to be away more than about ten to twelve days in all.

Certainly I look forward very much to seeing Krishnamechari. I hope that perhaps he will be able to visit us at the farm.

Again thanking you for your kindness,

Yours affectionately,

*Nye*

[Aneurin Bevan]

Mr. M.O. Mathai,  
Prime Minister's House,  
New Delhi,  
India.

House of Commons itself. On that day there was a foreign affairs debate. The speakers were Prime Minister Harold Macmillan and Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd for the government, and Hugh Gaitskell and Nye Bevan for the Labour party. Nye's speech was superb. The next morning I looked at all the daily newspapers. Without exception the newspapers gave far more space to Nye's speech than that of Prime Minister Macmillan. Of the total space allotted for the debate, the London Times gave 65 per cent to Bevan, 20 per cent to Macmillan, 10 per cent to Selwyn Lloyd and five per cent to Gaitskell. I then wondered if at any time the press in India will shed the dead

habit of boosting the men in government and show a healthy sense of proportion.

Harold Wilson and Michael Foot were the left-wing lieutenants of Nye Bevan in the Labour party. Nye had mellowed with age and experience without losing the fire in him. Had he lived longer, he would have been the Prime Minister. The ways of fate and destiny are inscrutable.

In 1960, while I was no longer with the Prime Minister officially, Nehru was going to London for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference. Nye was ill then—a mere bundle of skin and bones of what was once a tall and impressive-looking figure who used to create a flutter whenever he entered a room or an assembly of people. I suggested to Nehru that he might visit Nye at his farm. Nehru found the time to do this. He was overwhelmed by this gesture and the entire British press lauded Nehru for this. Nye died soon after—in 1960 at the early age of 63. He belonged to the band of rare men of elemental force and grandeur who leave their footprints on the sands of time.

It is a pity that Jennie Lee visited India during the emergency at the expense of the Government of India to tell us of the "gains of the emergency" and that "Indira is the best bet for India." Strangely enough it did not occur to her that the people of India knew more about the emergency and about Indira than she did. I remember Jennie reviling Attlee for accepting an earldom; but, when her time came, she accepted the title of "Baroness" with alacrity. People do change sometimes.

### *Marshal Josif Broz Tito*

It was Aneurin Bevan who first drew Nehru's attention to Marshal Tito. After a visit to Yugoslavia, Bevan wrote to me a personal letter in the late forties in which he said that Tito was a considerable person and that he and Nehru should meet. I placed the letter before the Prime Minister who forwarded it to the External Affairs Ministry with a short note to indicate that he was in no particular hurry to meet him. After the arrest and imprisonment of Djilas by Tito, Bevan's enthusiasm for Tito dimmed. Before his arrest, Djilas was a right hand man to Tito, but was later to write the book "Land Without Justice."

Tito the leader of a small, loosely-held and relatively under-developed country in eastern Europe, was conscious that he and his country could play no meaningful role in Europe. He was anxious to befriend Nehru in view of the importance of India and Nehru's pre-

eminent position among the newly emerged nations of the East and the magic of his name among the suppressed peoples of Africa. Tito was one of the earliest dignitaries to visit India. His visit was the beginning of "organized" receptions in Delhi and elsewhere. People of Delhi and the adjoining states were herded together to accord a "spontaneous" reception. The Delhi Administration was made responsible for the herding. The Government of India had to foot the bill. The practice continued to be resorted to on a vast scale in the case of other visits such as Khrushchev and Bulgarian, the British Queen, Eisenhower and Brezhnev. Ultimately this practice, perfected over a lengthy period, culminated in the vulgar and nauseating "solidarity rallies" of the Indira regime. "Tito" was an easy name for the villagers to remember. So, whenever they were herded for other dignitaries, they used to say "Tito again." Perhaps it was a question of "imprint." They have indeed seen many "Titos."

Tito has visited India more than any other foreign dignitary. At heart Tito is a very practical man not overburdened by pure idealism. He saw in Nehru his opportunity and in India and in the "emerging nations" scope for economic and political benefits for his small country. And the journalists installed him as a "founding father" of the non-aligned movement which is supposed to have many founding fathers as in the Janata party. After the exit of Nehru and Nasser, the journalists have installed Tito as "the Father Figure" and "the Presiding Deity" of the non-aligned movement.

On my first visit to Yugoslavia with Nehru, we landed at a small airfield in Pula and motored to Brioni, the small island off the Adriatic coast gifted to Tito by his countrymen. I saw ill-clad people with no shoes. Perhaps it is not a bad thing to go shoe-less in the climate of that southern area just as shoes are an encumbrance in Kerala.

While we were in Brioni a sad and curious thing happened in a beach resort nearby. A newly-married German couple, on their honeymoon, went out to the beach in their swimming costumes with a basketful of snacks and plenty of beer. They were swimming and imbibing alternately. Suddenly the girl said she was going in for another swim and asked him to stay and finish his beer. The girl was soon attacked by a shark, and she yelled. All that the boy did was to take his camera with the telephoto lens and take pictures of the last agonising moments of the life of his "beloved." As she disappeared under the water, the young man sat down and finished his beer. An English-speaking member of Tito's staff watched the incident from Brioni through his binoculars and then went to the beach resort and made enquiries.

Later he related the story. I said only a German could be so incredibly matter-of-fact.

### *Gamel Abdel Nasser*

Nasser was another man to whom Nehru did not take to spontaneously. But when Winston Churchill said at a meeting of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in London that Nasser was an usurper who seized power through violence, Nehru defended Nasser by saying that such a development was inevitable under conditions that obtained in Egypt, to overthrow an oppressive and corrupt regime and that Nasser had the support of the Egyptian people.

After reading an auto-biographical book by Nasser, Nehru thought that Nasser was a light-weight and a rash and immature person. Nasser started with "positive neutrality" and ended up in non-alignment. He always treated Nehru with deference as an elder and his mentor in many ways.

When the Anglo-French invasion of Egypt took place after Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, Nasser in desperation, sent for the Indian Ambassador in Cairo, Nawab Ali Yavar Jung, and told him that he had decided to go to the front sword in hand, engage in physical combat and die in battle. The ambassador telegraphed to Nehru and requested him to send a message to Nasser asking him not to take the extreme step. Nehru at once sent a warm, friendly, and appealing message in a "most immediate" cable to Nasser through our ambassador. American intervention, however, compelled the withdrawal of the Anglo-French forces and the need for Nasser to die in battle did not arise.

The rather artificial coming together of Egypt and Syria and the formation of the United Arab Republic as the first step towards the achievement of Nasser's grandiose and flamboyant design of a second Arab empire from Muscat to Morocco was bound to end in a wild-goose chase. When Syria, after a brief honeymoon with Egypt, broke away unilaterally, Nasser accepted the development with resignation. Nehru congratulated Nasser for his statesmanship in not using force to compel Syria to remain in the Union, even though Nehru knew that it was not possible for Nasser to do so.

With experience Nasser had mellowed, but fate willed that Egypt shall have a new leader.

### *Harold Macmillan*

Macmillan was the first British Prime Minister to visit India. He

arrived with his wife, Lady Dorothy Macmillan who is the daughter of the Duke of Devonshire. They stayed in the Prime Minister's House. I had met Macmillan a few times at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conferences.

When Churchill retired, R.A. Butler was superseded and Eden was chosen as the Prime Minister. Many people in England, including Nye Bevan, believed that Butler had more brains in his shoes than Eden had in his head. But in politics everything does not go by brains. In 1923 most people had thought that King George V would send for Lord Curzon and appoint him as Prime Minister of Great Britain. But, on the recommendation of the outgoing Prime Minister, the King sent for Stanley Baldwin, then almost unknown in the Conservative party, and handed over the seals of office to him. In normal times brilliance is at a premium in British public life. When Eden had to go on account of the Suez imbroglio, Butler was again ignored and Macmillan was chosen to succeed Eden. Choosing of the leader of the Conservative party in the House of Commons by election was introduced only after the tenure of Sir Alexander Douglas-Home as Prime Minister; and Edward Heath was the first one to be elected.

Macmillan was a noted liberal among the Conservatives. While in India Nehru, among other matters, discussed with Macmillan at length the liberation movements in Africa and the desirability of ensuring orderly change in the continent. Nehru said that he saw no advantage for the colonial powers in prolonging the agony, and added that, if the British took the initiative other colonial powers were bound to follow suit. This obviously had some effect for, within a short time, Macmillan visited Africa and made the most celebrated speech of his career—"the wind of change in Africa."

Unconsciously Macmillan had copied some of the gestures and mannerisms of Winston Churchill. Imitation is the best form of flattery.

While in Delhi Lady Dorothy Macmillan used to get ready early. Whenever she spotted me in the garden in the early hours of the morning, she invariably came out. She would ask for the names of plants and trees. She was fascinated by the tree *Corissia Malabarica* which was then in bloom—full of beautiful pink flowers in the shape of a mixture of lily and orchid. Originally from Kerala, Delhi has plenty of that tree now. Earlier U. Nu, Prime Minister of Burma, also got fascinated by the tree and we arranged to send with him to Rangoon a few of the plants in pots.

Macmillan spotted in my study the small sculpture of a woman in stone from a very ancient ruined temple in Mayurbunj (Orissa) presented to me by Governor Sukthankar. He was fascinated. He admired

it so much that after breakfast next morning I sent it to his room as a present. Within minutes he was in my study holding the sculpture as a treasure. He thanked me profusely still fondling the sculpture in both his hands. He sat down and asked me about its antiquity. I told him it belonged to the 8th century AD. That put up the value of the sculpture in his mind. He told me to which firm in London he was going to send the sculpture to be mounted and where exactly in his own house he was going to keep it. As a Scot he perhaps knew the price of everything but I felt sure he also knew the value of most things. He said that generally the climate of a country determined its art forms; in a cold country like England art expressed itself predominantly in the form of painting, while in Greece, Italy and India it was predominantly sculpture.

### *Konrad Adenauer*

Adenauer was one of the statesmen who impressed me considerably—next only to Winston Churchill. Tall and erect, he never used spectacles till his death in ripe old age. As an opponent of nazism he suffered under Hilter's regime. He had to work as a mason for his living. Elected as Mayor of Cologne after the collapse of Hitler, he suffered insult from the army in occupation of the British sector. An arrogant major in the British army dismissed Mayor Adenauer for inefficiency. The same Adenauer was later described by Winston Churchill as the greatest German since Bismarck. In my first book I have quoted from Adenauer's memoirs passages about Nehru.

It is well known that during the war German cities suffered more damage and casualties by bombing than any in England or elsewhere. Several important cities in Germany with their industrial complex were reduced to rubble. After the war the Germans brought heavy machinery into the open, crushed the rubble into paste and made bricks out of it on the spot. Work went on day and night in open air and the cities were rebuilt in an incredibly short time. When Nehru visited the Federal Republic of Germany in 1956, I could still see traces of damage in the cities of Cologne and Hamburg.

The allied powers took away much of the industrial machinery from Germany as reparations. The result was that very soon the Germans had up-to-date factories, but the others like the British and the French added to their already outmoded stuff.

In Bonn, Adenauer found time to personally look after the rose garden in the grounds of the Chancellor's House. He loved going in a motor boat on the Rhine and organized one such trip for Nehru.

Adenauer and a number of top industrialists and others joined the cruise. Lunch was served on the boat. In one of his talks with Nehru, Adenauer dealt at length on the need for developing "communications" in a vast and varied country like India. Nehru did not grasp what Adenauer meant by "communications" and went on explaining our plans for developing railways, roads, air traffic, post and telegraph, radio and tele-communications. What Adenauer meant by "communications" was "intelligence." As Chancellor he had a large secret budget for this.

At their first meeting Adenauer confessed to Nehru that until he met the tall Valerian Cardinal Gracias, he was under the impression that all Indians were short.

Nehru's attitude to Adenauer was governed by a good measure of reserve mostly because of the rigid Hallstein doctrine which, in effect, meant that the Federal Republic of Germany would cut off diplomatic relations with any country which established diplomatic relations with the "German Democratic Republic." Nehru never extended an invitation to Adenauer to visit India. He, however, did invite, through Maulana Azad, Vice Chancellor Blucher who subsequently did. Blucher had been known as a friend of India for long.

In 1962, I happened to be in Badgastein in the Alpine region of Austria for six weeks on my own. There I met a large number of Germans who had come for thermal cure. All the Germans I came across spoke of Adenauer with veneration as the man who, together with Ludwig Erhard, brought about the "German Miracle." I found only one dissenter who was an old woman from Hamburg. She was a rigid and fiercely prejudiced Protestant. She, however, had only one grouse: "Adenauer is a Catholic!"

### *Nikita Khrushchev*

Until the quiet, urbane and dignified Marshal Nikolai Bulganin was placed on the shelf in 1958, he as the Prime Minister and the ebullient Nikita Khrushchev, the extrovert, as the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, were like two peas in the same pod. There was at no time any doubt as to who had the supreme power. But when the two visited England and India, which have parliamentary systems of government, it was Bulganin the Prime Minister who took precedence; when they visited any east European country it was the bouncing First Secretary who took precedence.

At the first meeting, after the arrival of Khrushchev and Bulganin in Delhi, Nehru spoke to them at length giving them the philosophical



background of India's approach to problems, the essence of Gandhi's teachings and how the present generation of Indian leadership was conditioned. At subsequent meetings India's stand on the Kashmir question was explained and international affairs discussed. The talks were comprehensive but general. More than once Khrushchev turned to Bulganin and said that he was fascinated by the way the complex problem of the 500 and odd Indian rulers was peacefully solved. Repeatedly he spoke, with approval, of "pensioning off people."

Several times Khrushchev emphasised the need for a first-class aircraft industry for a large country like India and volunteered to send some of Soviet Union's best experts in the field. Some how it did not register with Nehru and no follow-up action was taken. It was only after the Chinese invasion that we woke up to the grim realities and secured Soviet collaboration in the production of modern military aircraft.

On the eve of Nehru's visit to Calcutta with Khrushchev and Bulganin, he asked me if I was accompanying him. I declined, saying that risking life at one public meeting was enough for me. He remembered the incident and laughed. It happened soon after 15 August 1947 on Nehru's first visit to Calcutta as Prime Minister. I accompanied him on that trip and went with the Prime Minister from Raj Bhavan to the Calcutta maidan. While walking to the dais I was following Nehru. There was a mad rush. I fell down and was trampled by hundreds of feet. I said to myself "what a way to die." However, I caught hold of the coat of someone and managed to get up. On the dais Nehru saw me in bad shape. Later he discovered what happened. He told me that in a crowd I should be in front of him and should never follow him. The attendance at the meeting he addressed that day was estimated at one-and-a-half-million—the largest so far assembled anywhere in India.

The crowd at the meeting addressed by Nehru, Khrushchev and Bulganin was incredible. It was estimated at four million—the largest assemblage of humanity in history anywhere in the world. It was an upheaval the like of which is unlikely to recur.

A record of this incredibly vast concourse of people was caught in the camera of an enterprising man, in its entirety. The American camera correspondent of *TIME* and *LIFE*, who was well-known to me, did the trick. He was an artistic man with a keen sense of history. I had instructed the Chief of Security in Delhi to see that the American photographer was given all the facilities in Calcutta. He surveyed the Calcutta maidan the day before the meeting and found a tall tree some distance away from which he could survey the entire scene. On the day

of the meeting he took his position on the tree, armed with a camera fitted with a powerful tele-photo lens. After Nehru, Khrushchev and Bulganin arrived at the meeting and Nehru started speaking, the American took the photograph of the meeting section by section. He took the negatives to New York to be developed. After he returned to India, he brought for me, as a present, a copy of this remarkable photograph six feet long and one foot wide. I had it suitably framed and kept it with me for well over 20 years. Then I handed it over to the Administrative Secretary of the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund to be passed on to the Nehru Museum and Library in the hope that it would be well preserved for posterity.

Before a lunch party for Khrushchev and Bulganin at the Prime Minister's House, all the servants and malis of the PM's house assembled downstairs with marigold garlands in their hands to greet the distinguished visitors. It was a spontaneous gesture. Nehru was impressed by this and said the next day that the gesture took place as the servants felt that Khrushchev and Bulganin were the benefactors of the poor. I told Nehru that I had a hunch that at the lunch for the British Queen the enthusiasm and attendance of servants and the number of marigold garlands would perhaps be more. He growled at me. Actually, what I said happened when the Queen came to lunch. I do not know that conclusion Nehru drew at that time, for I was not there then.

Khrushchev had a weakness for cashewnuts. Mangoes and cashewnuts were sent to him in Moscow every year by the Prime Minister as was done to some other foreign dignitaries.

Nehru's visit to the Soviet Union in 1955 and the visit of Khrushchev and Bulganin to India well and truly laid the foundations for a fruitful relationship between the two countries. Khrushchev remained as one of the best friends of India ever since.

During my association with Nehru, I had occasion to meet many other dignitaries also such as Chou En lai, U. Nu of Burma who possesses the most serene face I have seen, the flamboyant President Soekarno and Sultan Shahriar of Indonesia, Emperor Hirohito and Prime Minister Kishi of Japan, M.A. Jinnah, Sir Don Senanayake, Sir John Kotelelawla, Dudley Senanayake and S.W.R.D. Bandernaike of Ceylon, Joseph Chieflly and Sir Robert Menezis of Australia, King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, the Kings of Denmark, Sweden and Norway, Tage Erlander of Sweden, Queen Juliana of the Netherlands, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth II, Earl Attlee, Sir Anthony Eden, De Valera of Ireland, President Truman, and President Eisenhower. I shall not attempt to write about

them and needlessly prolong this chapter. In my first book I have written about Winston Churchill.

All the dignitaries I had met were vastly dwarfed while I was in the presence of Albert Einstein and I myself was reduced to nothingness. This great genius—scientist, philosopher and humanist—did not inherit one of the much maligned traits of his gifted race—the love of money. After he left Nazi Germany and took up residence at Princeton University in the United States, he was embarrassed by the salary he was given, by no means a very large sum then, and asked “what can I do with all this money?.” In his presence I instinctively felt the grandeur of his simplicity and the awesomeness of his humility and remembered the words of Jesus Christ about Nathaniel “behold an Israelite in whom is no guile.”

## 24 *An Unusual Hotel in Picturesque Surroundings*

In the autumn of 1957 Prime Minister Nehru paid a goodwill visit to Japan. Some years earlier President Rajendra Prasad had made an official tour of that country.

The Japanese were aware of the fact that before and during World War II Nehru was an uncompromising and outspoken opponent of Japanese imperialism and militarism; but they also knew that Nehru made a distinction between the fascist government of Japan and the Japanese people.

Three gestures of Nehru in the postwar period, while Japan was treated as an international outcaste by most nations, touched the Japanese people. They were:

(1) India's refusal to take war reparations from Japan.

(2) The speed with which India concluded the Treaty of Peace and Amity. India was the first country to do so, formally terminating the state of war.

(3) Sending an elephant to Tokyo for the Japanese children. This perhaps moved the Japanese people much more than anything else.

Wherever we went, the Japanese people referred to these gestures with gratitude and warmth of feeling.

It was while we were in Tokyo that the Soviet Union surprised the world by announcing the news of its putting a sputnik into orbit to circle round the earth.

During this tour of Japan, the Japanese Ambassador to India, in the course of informal conversations with me, asked "will you be offended if I say that Nehru has done some harm to India by following policies which created an over-size image of India on the world stage which could not be sustained by internal realities?" I said that from the early thirties onwards some regimes ruined their countries by following policies backed by illusions of "indestructible internal strength." He realised that I was referring to Germany and Japan. I drew his attention to the fact that governments of the world attached enormous importance to the Pope primarily because his word carried weight with millions of people, and that only Stalin asked "how many divisions has he got?." The fact that Nehru had spent his life working for a great cause and suffered in the process, and was recognised as

Gandhi's heir, had invested him with great moral authority. In Asia and Africa particularly he had become a symbol of man's quest for freedom and independence. And he happened to be the Prime Minister of a potentially great country with strategically important geographical position. All these compelled millions of people everywhere to listen to him with attention. Ever since India's independence Nehru never ganged up with others in the game of power politics. His activities on the international stage had been confined to peace and human freedom everywhere. We in India were aware of the inevitability of the next Prime Minister finding his level on the international stage more or less conforming to "internal realities."

Prime Minister Kishi and Foreign Minister Fujiyama, as a special gesture, took Nehru and party to Hakone for a week-end. It was a delightful mountainous place and we stayed in a homely hotel where rooms were not numbered but bore the names of flowers. Nehru's room was called "chrysanthemum," Indira's room was called "Lily of the Valley" (Indira was pleased with the name), N.R. Pillai's was "Syp Japonica Thunb," mine was "holly-hock," another was lotus and yet another was carnation. Hakone is famous for growing the world's largest and most luscious strawberry. Some are as much as four inches in length. These strawberries are grown on the gentle sunny slope of a particular hill. After dinner all the participants sat around and autographed the printed menu cards for each other.

While in Tokyo I saw a large number of people in the streets with their mouths covered with white cloth. In all innocence I told Ambassador Jha that, while I was aware of Buddhist influence in Japan for centuries, I had never heard that Jainism had spread to Japan. He laughed and told me that those people had covered their mouths because they had flu and they did not wish to spread contagion. He added that the Japanese had a highly developed civic sense.

At a reception on the eve of our departure from Tokyo for Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Canadian Ambassador asked N.R. Pillai, Secretary-General of the External Affairs Ministry, if the Prime Minister was going to issue a declaration to the world from Hiroshima against the use of the nuclear bomb. He said that the Canadian representative to the UN in New York had informed him that Krishna Menon had strongly recommended it and was expecting advance copy of the declaration to be released in New York. On our return to the Guest House, while Pillai was relating to the Prime Minister the Canadian ambassador's talk, I received, through the embassy, a cypher telegram from Krishna Menon. It was a sentimental message advising the Prime Minister "you and Indu should take the utmost precaution



Dinner

Thursday October 6th 1957

- Chicken & Macaroni Soup
- Patchery Trout à la Meunière
- Quail Cocotte au Jus
- Chicken Curry and Rice
- Spiced In Season
- Roast Potatoes
- Black Bread - Coffee - Tea

*M. K. ... (Handwritten)*

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at Hiroshima and Nagasaki against radio activity” and appealing to the Prime Minister to issue from Hiroshima a declaration to the world condemning the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and warning against its repetition. He asked for the advance copy of the declaration for “effective” publicity by releasing it to the press in New York. I gave the telegram to the Prime Minister who handed it over to Pillai after reading. The Prime Minister was somewhat annoyed. He commented “does Krishna Menon think that only Indu and I will be affected by radio activity and not the others who accompany me? What does he mean by ‘utmost precaution’? He need not have sent the telegram because he had already conveyed it through the Canadian ambassador.” No reply was sent to Krishna Menon and no declaration was issued.

While I am on the subject of Krishna Menon’s ways of functioning, I might as well tell here the story of how Krishna Menon deprived India of the post of Secretary-General of the United Nations.

During the latter part of his second tenure as Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjold had expressed privately to a few his idea that the next Secretary-General should be an Indian and that, in his view, the best person would be B.K. Nehru. Adlai Stevenson spoke to B.K. Nehru about it, but the latter told Stevenson that he was not interested. B.K. Nehru, however, promised Stevenson that he would privately speak to Nehru and recommend another name. Stevenson made only one stipulation—that it should not be Krishna Menon. Soon after, B.K. Nehru visited India and spoke to the Prime Minister. B.K. Nehru suggested the name of Bhagwan Sahay. The Prime Minister thought that it was a good suggestion and agreed to keep it secret from Krishna Menon and also to include Bhagwan Sahay as a delegate to the UN General Assembly in order to let him be known personally at the UN Headquarters. However, when the Indian delegation was announced, Bhagwan Sahay’s name was not there. B.K. Nehru assumed that either the Prime Minister had forgotten the matter or was loathe to thrust Bhagwan Sahay on a reluctant Krishna Menon who was to be the leader of the delegation.

Soon after, Dag Hammarskjold died in an air crash (1961). The search for a new Secretary-General began. B.K. Nehru’s name was upper-most in the list of candidates. The Russians were not averse to him. In fact they sent word to him informally that he would have their support. In the meantime Krishna Menon did his utmost to create opposition to B.K. Nehru wherever he could. He spoke to B.K. Nehru and advised him against accepting nomination for election—all the time making it clear that it was in his interest to shy away. B.K. Nehru

told Krishna Menon that this proposal was made to him even while Hammarskjold was alive and that he had told all concerned, including Prime Minister Nehru, that he was not interested. He added that there was no change in his position. Krishna Menon did not want to take any chances. He told Adlai Stevenson and some other important persons that B.K. Nehru would not be acceptable to India. This was done without clearance from the Prime Minister.

Ultimately U. Thant emerged as the dark horse.

Krishna Menon's insane desire to blot B.K. Nehru out of the reckoning reminds me of a story of an old multi-millionaires who lived in Chicago before the advent of the aeroplane. She had only one child—a girl who was married to a calculating young man. While the daughter and her husband were on a winter holiday in Florida, they received a telegram from the family lawyer in Chicago announcing the death of the old lady and asking for instructions if the body was to be cremated or buried. The son-in-law immediately replied "Do both; don't take any chances!"

If the candidate was Arthur Lall, Krishna Menon would have moved mountains to help him; but he had no use for people like B.K. Nehru and Rajeshwar Dayal who would not carry his satchel behind him and who were not slavish and had independent minds of their own.





I have written about Indira in my first book in which I had said "with all kinds of inquiry commissions functioning, I do not wish to write more about Indira at present. In a companion volume to this book, I shall write more." In this book I have tried to fulfill that promise.

Until she became the interim Congress President early in 1959, Indira enjoyed a well-deserved reputation as the one and only close relative of Nehru who did not exploit the Prime Minister's position. She was reserved and retiring, and kept herself aloof from governmental affairs. Her behaviour was correct and dignified.

When Indira went abroad with the Prime Minister for the first time, Nehru personally paid her air-fare. It is the general practice of heads of states and heads of governments to take their wives or one of their daughters to function as their hostesses while travelling abroad, and their governments meet the expenditure. As I did not think it was any use mentioning it to the Prime Minister, I spoke to the Finance Minister and suggested that he might raise this matter in the cabinet as an unscheduled item. This was done, and the cabinet unhesitatingly decided in favour of it. But Nehru made it a rule that Indira should not be given any daily allowance.

In the mid-fifties the Governor of Assam invited Feroze Gandhi to accompany the Prime Minister on his Assam visit and he accepted the invitation. Indira was annoyed at this. She told me that she did not want to be in the same room with Feroze Gandhi in the Raj Bhawan. She tried to get out of the trip by advancing some excuse but her father wouldn't hear of it. Ultimately she had to go.

On the 20 June 1954 on her return from Mashobra (Simla) with the Prime Minister, Indira spoke to me about her wish to make a change in Nehru's draft Will which read "My daughter and only child, Indira Priyadarshini, married to Feroze Gandhi, is my sole heir, and I bequeath to her all my property, assets and belongings." She wanted to delete the words "married to Feroze Gandhi." I told her that the only person who could make such a suggestion to her father was herself. I

\*This chapter was written before Indira Gandhi was expelled from the Lok Sabha.

advised her against it and told her that what was written in the Will was a mere statement of fact at the time of writing the Will and it was not binding on the future. However, I admitted that the words "married to Feroze Gandhi" in the Will were superfluous. Finally I told her "there is no need for you to be bothered about it because your position is stronger than that of a Nair woman of Kerala in the matriarchal system. All she has to do to get rid of her husband is to put his chappals out; and all you have to do is to put in a brief announcement in the newspapers." She smiled and that was the end of the matter. The Will was signed by Nehru the next day as planned.

My exit from the government coincided with Indira becoming the interim Congress President. She was worried about the vacuum created by my exit insofar as her father was concerned. That was the main reason for the early termination of her Congress presidentship. Her stewardship as Congress President was marked by two developments:

(1) Dismissal of the communist government under E.M.S. Namboodiripad and the ordering the mid-term poll in the state by the central government.

(2) Ending of the separate status of Bombay and merging the city with Maharashtra.

Some communists alleged that Indira's strong stand against them in Kerala was because of their attack on me earlier.

On the eve of the election of Lal Bahadur's successor in January 1966 Rajinder Puri, a delightful humorist, a fearless man, and an interesting writer produced a cartoon with the caption "A Cartoonist's View of the Favourite Faces" which I reproduce on the next page.

When the toppling of governments became a game in India both by the former Maharaja of Gwalior and later by Indira, V. K. Krishna Menon said that "toppling" like "badminton" was a game suited to women. He added that toppling started with Indira who instigated the overthrow of the Namboodiripad government in Kerala and that, since then, she had perfected the art.

In the autumn of 1962, about six weeks before his exit from the government, Krishna Menon heard that Indira had thrown her weight against him. He said bitterly to a friend "ever since the Dalai Lama fled from Tibet and got assylum in India, that chit of a girl, Indira, who has emotional attachment to the godman, had turned against me."

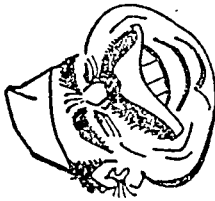
When the first split in the Congress was imminent, Krishna Menon

Hindustan Times - 15<sup>th</sup> January 1966



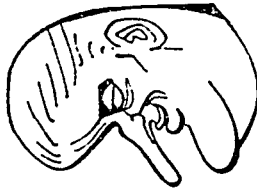
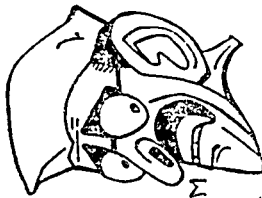
INDIRA

Political misfit — should join films!



JAGJIVAN RAM and NANDA

Both excellent, but each insufficient by himself. Together they could beat Laurel and Hardy!



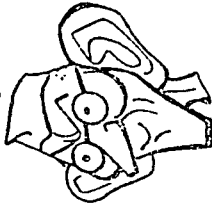
PATIL

Very funny, but not original  
An imitation of Mr PUNCH



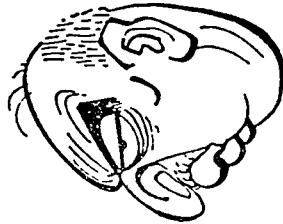
CHAVAN

Very promising indeed, but needs maturing. With more wrinkles and more fat may just make it.



MORARJI

If ears were larger, would listen to more feeble and look even odder!



KAMARAJ

Normally suitable, but should resist smiling — he'd then look almost human!

*Ainzi*

A cartoonist's view of the favourites' faces

told a member of the Congress Working Committee from the south, who specialized as a fence-sitter and chose to be all things to all men (and a woman), "do something to patch up the differences. Indira is a foolish and hysterical woman who would ruin the country."

Speaking at a public meeting in Delhi on 11 October 1970, Krishna Menon mounted a scathing attack on Indira. He administered a warning against democratic institutions being misused by political leaders to inject fascism and dictatorial elements in the country's body politic. He pointed out that Hitler achieved dictatorial powers through slogans promising everything to everybody. He asserted "conditions in India today are worse than those of China under Chiang Kai-Shek." He wound up by saying "this is the beginning of the end."

Kamaraj, who did so much to make Indira the Prime Minister, lived to regret his action bitterly. Sanjeeva Reddy had clearly warned Kamaraj against the choice. P.C. Sen, the Chief Minister of West Bengal, fully shared Sanjeeva Reddy's view. On 30 June 1970, Kamaraj publicly confirmed this. He added that no Chief Minister, barring D.P. Mishra of Madhya Pradesh, had shown any enthusiasm for Indira. He also said that it took a great deal of cajoling and persuasion to make the Chief Ministers and others to veer round his view. He added that his reasons for backing Indira were many. He had thought that, as one who had the advantage of watching Nehru dealing with the Congress and the government, Indira would have an in-built advantage. His fond hope that Indira "would attract votes like a magnet" was comprehensively belied at the 1966/67 general elections out of which the Congress emerged as a badly battered party.

About his error in making Indira the Prime Minister, Kamaraj used to say in private "a big man's daughter; a small man's mistake."

On the 11 October 1969, Kamaraj lashed out against Indira at a meeting of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee in the following terms:

It is true that I have been responsible for installing Mrs Gandhi twice as the PM. People now find fault with me for criticizing her. I had high hopes when I supported her candidature; but they were belied by subsequent events. It is like the Tamil saying—An attempt to make an image of Vigneshwara (Ganesh) ended up in creating a monkey.

In September 1966 I had to meet Indira twice, at her request, in connection with certain assets she had inherited from her father. An important and close relative of Indira heard about the meetings and

questioned me. I told the person the facts. Then the person gleefully said "that at Dinesh Singh visits her for 'consultations' daily after dinner and she always receives him in her bedroom where she has put a working table as an excuse." I told the person that Indira always had a working table in her bedroom ever since I had known her and that I was surprised that the person had not noticed it. I added "it is this type of false rumour spread by you and other vicious people and the foolish tendency of Dinesh Singh to give wrong impressions that have encouraged the vulgar posters, coupling Indira's name with his, hundreds of which appeared all over New Delhi and Old Delhi recently. I refuse to believe there is anything in it." Without disclosing the name of the important and close relative, I conveyed to Indira the story in a private letter dated 20 September 1966 in which I cautioned her "don't ever forget that you are now the focus of attention and your position as a young woman is a most difficult one under the blessed Indian conditions." No reply was called for; but she did send a reply dated 21 September 1966. I quote on next page the relevant extract from it.

After Indira became directly involved in politics, she changed beyond recognition. What she lost most was truthfulness. A year after she became the Prime Minister, a prominent editor, who was a supporter of hers and who had exclusive interviews with her periodically, told me "she is so bold that she can look straight into one's eyes and tell a black lie." She achieved remarkable success in this direction, and soon earned the reputation as a consummate liar. In her defence I might say that perhaps, like Lawrence of Arabia, she reached a stage where she tended to believe her own patent lies. There is no other explanation for her saying at several public meetings, after becoming the Prime Minister, that she had often faced bullets in her life! About her jail term, she told an interviewer in 1969 "I was regarded as so dangerous that I wasn't even given normal prison facilities." Her one and only imprisonment was in Naini Jail in Allahabad for a brief period of 8 months and 2 days from the 11 September 1942 to the 13 May 1943. Actually she was so harmless that the authorities released her. In jail she was with Mrs Pandit and her eldest daughter. They were all treated as "A" class prisoners, and they received special consideration.

Several times during her Prime Ministership Indira publicly raised the alarm that some people were trying to kill her. It was always the Jana Sangh. Perhaps she wanted to gather sympathy. When openly confronted by some Jana Sangh MPs she had to admit that she had no evidence in support of her allegation.

to the mother

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 does not happen again.

At a press conference at Aldur near Chikmagalur in Karnataka State on 4 November 1978 Indira said "we did not adopt forcible sterilization. It was Dr Karan Singh, the Health Minister, who strongly advocated forcible sterilization. He was implementing the family planning programme with his own ideas." Karan Singh promptly contradicted her by saying "Mrs Gandhi's political stunt to find a scapegoat for the sins of her son would not deceive anybody." And the General-Secretary of the CPI, C. Rajeshwara Rao, lost no time in saying "we had written strongly against the compulsory sterilization drive and she, as the Prime Minister, replied angrily, defending it."

Apart from the falsity of Indira's statement, it is unbecoming for a person to take shelter behind a subordinate. If Indira was not lying, then she was advertising her impotence as a Prime Minister to discipline or to get rid of a minister who flouted declared policies. However, everyone knows that Sanjay was the real Minister for Family Planning and Karan Singh was content to be the "boneless wonder."

Indira's abject dependence on ghost-writers of indifferent quality often landed her in embarrassing situations. I shall cite two instances.

Towards the end of May 1968, I happened to listen a radio speech of Indira in Melbourne during her tour of Australia and New Zealand. It contained references to the Himalayas and to the great mountaineers of Australia. Everyone knows that Australia has produced great cricketers, swimmers and tennis players; but nobody has heard of great Australian mountaineers. Neither Indira nor her ghost-writers knew that Sir Edmund Hillary, the first man to conquer Everest, is a New Zealander and not an Australian. It would have been appropriate for Indira to make that speech at the formal function in Wellington, New Zealand, where Sir Edmund Hillary was scheduled to be present. In the Melbourne speech Indira claimed that in her younger days she was a mountaineer. If staying in a house-boat in Srinagar or a tent at Pahalgam or a house in some of the hill stations qualifies her, then she is a mountaineer.

In its issue of 12 April 1972 the *London Times* published prominently the following:

The funny coincidence of Mrs Gandhi and a Pakistani Economist  
From Peter Hazelhurst

Delhi, April 11:—Delhi businessmen have discovered that one of Mrs Gandhi's recent important policy speeches on industry was based on an article by a Pakistani economist which appeared in a Hong Kong magazine in January. A close examination of the magazine and Mrs Gandhi's speech shows that the economist's article was used sometimes almost word for word by the Prime Minister. As an example, the economist, Mr. Mahbub Ul Haq, while examining economic theories of the subcontinent, wrote the following in the magazine *INSIGHT*, on January 12: "In my own country, Pakistan, the very institutions we created for providing faster growth and capital accumulation frustrated later on all our attempts for better distribution and greater social justice."

Two-and-a-half-months later, addressing the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) Mrs Gandhi declared "The very institutions we have created for promoting fas-

ter growth and capital accumulation now seem to frustrate our attempts for better distribution and greater social justice.”

Other parts of the article were barely disguised in the Prime Minister's speech. For instance Mr Haq had also written: “Once you have increased your GNP producing luxury houses and cars it is not very easy to convert them into low-cost housing or bus transport.” Mrs Gandhi had this to say: “Once resources are committed to luxury goods it is not possible to convert them into commodities of mass consumption like bus transport or houses for the poor.”

Mr Haq also wrote: “Development goals must be defined in terms of progressive reduction and the eventual elimination of malnutrition, disease, illiteracy, squalor, unemployment and inequalities.” The Indian Prime Minister said in her speech: “Development goals should not aim at the proliferation of consumer goods or services which benefit only a certain section, but must be defined in terms of progressive reduction and eventual elimination of squalor and inequality, of malnutrition and disease, of illiteracy and unemployment.”

Close study of what Mrs Gandhi said shows that she not only borrowed entire phrases from the article but in fact based her speech on the underlying philosophy of the Pakistani economist. As one bemused industrialist commented today: “We had accepted Mrs Gandhi's speech as an important policy statement, but I wonder if we can take it seriously if she merely copied it from an obscure magazine. In any event we seem to have a Pakistani economic adviser now.”

One of the most unsavoury developments in Delhi from 1958 onwards was the emergence of a semi-literate bearded Swami Dhirendra Brahmachari, as a power to reckon with. He was expelled from the Kashmir valley by Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad on receipt of numerous complaints of misbehaviour with women who went to him for yoga lessons. In those days he was a tall and attractive looking man. He arrived in Delhi penniless. Indira got him, as a gift, a new car from an automobile manufacturing firm. She roped in the unsuspecting Lal Bahadur, K.K. Birla and some others and formed a Trust for the promotion of yoga. Substantial sums were collected for the Trust, and the so-called Brahmachari started living in style. All this happened before the death of Nehru. After Indira became the Prime Minister, the Brahmachari's stars were on the ascendant. His transition from a hermit's hut to the jet age was rapid. The flying Swami owned air-conditioned ashrams in Delhi and elsewhere with all the modern conveni-



ences, a jet plane and a sizeable block of shares in the Maruti enterprise. He formed an important element in Indira's "kitchen cabinet" and later in the caucus and the mafia. Now he is facing charges of large-scale smuggling of foreign exchange and fraud. In Delhi he was known as Indira's Rasputin.

The populist phase of Indira's political career began with the 1969 split in the Congress and the subsequent nationalization of banks. Tongawallahs, scooterwallahs, shoe-shines and rallywallahs were left with the definite impression that money in the banks was theirs for the asking. This was reinforced by the slogan "*Garibi Hattao*" during the 1970 mid-term poll. Indira set in motion a whole lot of populist programmes involving the total outlay of over Rs 1,500 crores between 1971 to 1974 which missed their objectives and fueled inflation to unprecedented levels. When the colossal wasteful expenditure on some of the programmes began to attract adverse comments from the Controller and Auditor-General, the watchdog of public finance, Indira had a secret order issued to all Government Departments on 30 April 1976 not to submit confidential files on policy questions to the C and A.G. of India and reinforced it by another secret order in September 1976 covering both the centre and the states. This was calculated to forstall any stricatures on the management of government finances. These secret orders, which were objected to by the Attorney General Niren De, have recently been revoked by the Janata government thereby restoring the practice in vogue since 1955 when government departments were directed to make readily available to the audit offices files required by them, while files marked "secret" were to be sent personally to the C and A.G. or to the head of the audit offices.

Indira's 42nd Constitution Amendment enacted in 1976 change the "prescribing authority" for the form in which accounts of the union and states are to be kept from the C and A G. to the President who was only to "consult" the C and A.G. In the 44th Constitution Amendment sponsored by the Janata government and recently passed by Parliament, the article relating to the C and A.G. has been amended to provide that the President would prescribe the form for the accounts of the union and the states "with the concurrence of the C and A.G."

If anyone has the patience to count the number of foundation stones laid by Indira and no further action taken on them from 1970 to the time of her ignominious exit early in 1977, the enormity of her fraud on the people will be evident.

Indira's populist programmes and the "*Garibi Hattao*" slogan which V K. Krishna Menon described as "promising everything to every-

body” provoked Rajinder Puri to produce a cartoon showing an ill-clad famished “*garib*” with folded hands asking Indira with her long nose “Please Madam, can I get back *Garibi*? I have been miserable ever since it was removed.”

It is now known to many that during the emergency Indira approached the CPI for support for a Constitution Amendment to change the Parliamentary system of government to a Presidential system. Bansi Lal, the coarsest *jungle* among ministers, and little Sanjay took this up earnestly and resolutions were passed by the Congress Committees in Lucknow and Chandigarh demanding the conversion of Parliament, which had already outlived its normal terms, to a Constituent Assembly for framing a new Constitution. All this was aimed at perpetuation of absolute power in Indira’s hands and to ensure eventual dynastic succession.

It is relevant to give the sequence of some events:

12 June 1975: The Allahabad High Court Judgment invalidating Indira’s election to the Lok Sabha and barring her from seeking election for six years.

24 June 1975: Appeal to the Supreme Court preferred against the Allahabad High Court Judgement.

25 June 1975: Emergency was clamped down, political opponents were arrested and censorship imposed.

Before the Supreme Court could hear the appeal, the Constitution was amended to oust its jurisdiction altogether, nullifying the Allahabad High Court Judgment and wipe out the election law applicable to the case. Out of abundant caution the law was amended retrospectively and solely to resolve in her favour the issues of law raised in the case.

5 August 1975: The Election Laws (Amendment) Bill was rushed through the Lok Sabha in a day. The Rajya Sabha passed it the next day. It received the president’s assent immediately.

The Constitution 39th Amendment Bill was rushed through to come into force on 10 August 1975—a day before the Supreme Court was to hear Indira’s appeal. It put the Amendment Act in the ninth schedule immune from judicial challenge and inserted Article 329-A in the Constitution. Petitions challenging one who is or becomes the Prime Minister were to be tried before a special forum which, however, was not specified.

11 August 1975: Appeal came for hearing in the Supreme Court. The whole situation was best summed up by Chief Justice A.N. Ray of the Supreme Court in his judgment:

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From **STIR**

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"Please Madam, can I get back Garibi  
—I have been miserable ever since it was removed!"

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*Indian Express, New Delhi*

*22 Dec 1973*

First, it has wiped out not merely the judgment but the also election petition and the law relating thereto. Second, it has deprived the right to raise the dispute about the validity of the election by having provided another forum. Third, there is no judgment to deal with and no right or dispute to adjudicate upon. Fourth, the constituent power of its own legislative judgment has validated the election.

Indira's sense of guilt drove her at one stage to seek protection against criminal responsibility altogether. The 41st Constitution Amendment Bill, passed by the Rajya Sabha, purported to confer on the Prime Minister lifelong immunity for acts done before and during the tenure of office. The Bill was not proceeded with in the Lok Sabha.

Soon after the Congress split in 1969 Indira gave the green signal to the Intelligence Bureau to probe party politics, investigate the activities of senior colleagues including ministers, import of expensive sophisticated gadgets for bugging and monitoring personal conversations. During the emergency even the President was not spared from such transgressions. At the instance of Indira, the intelligence agencies also indulged in election forecasts for her party and also carried out constituency-wise surveys and investigating the loyalty of individual candidates before the allotment of party tickets to them.

Although so far no record of the involvement of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) in internal intelligence operations had been found, it was widely believed that during the emergency period RAW was deeply involved.

It was part of the Indira's style of functioning to bypass her senior colleagues and deal directly with their subordinates thereby undermining the very basis of good administration. Brahmananda Reddy was bypassed, and for all practical purposes Om Mehta was the Home Minister. C. Subramaniam was bypassed by putting Pranab Kumar Mookerjee in charge of banking, income tax, Customs and Enforcement Directorate. Since both Brahmanand Reddy and C. Subramaniam are men without much political following, they meekly pocketed the insult.

For many years as the Prime Minister Indira surrounded herself with a bunch of Kashmiris. At one time many people in Delhi used to refer to the Government of India as the Kashmir panchayat. When someone mentioned this to me, I asked him who comprised the panchayat. He replied that the full-time members were Indira, D.P. Dhar, P.N. Haksar, T.N. Kaul and P.N. Dhar and the part-time candidate members were R.N. Kao of RAW, Om Mehta and Karan Singh. Indira's principal

fund collectors were L.N. Mishra and P.C. Sethi both of whom were neurotic queer characters. During Mishra's time there was a price for every licence and permit. Never before had corruption premeated so comprehensively among ministers. The fact that much of this black money was kept in high denomination currency notes by the Prime Minister herself speaks volumes for the rotten state of affairs of the Indira regime. Indira was fully aware of the value of money to buttress her political position.

I shall not attempt to describe in detail here the murky happenings of the emergency and the period leading up to it. All these are well-known to people. They included:

Using the Constitution to subvert the very Constitution.

Declaration of emergency without a cabinet decision.

The arrest and imprisonment of all important opposition political leaders and thousands of others under MISA.

Imposition of censorship and the gagging of the press.

Misuse of mass media for personal and partisan political ends.

Trampling under-foot people's liberties.

Misuse of intelligence and police organizations, Income-tax department and Enforcement Directorate and other organs of government for political intimidations, vendetta, and fund collections for the ruling party.

Indira's strenuous exertions for the advancement of her son Sanjay.

Destruction of the independence of the judiciary.

Ill-treatment and harrassement of officers who acted with courage and refused to kowtow to Sanjay and the caucus.

Remorseless demolition of residential and commercial buildings of poor people.

Savage excesses in compulsory sterilization of poor villagers.

The 44th Constitution Amendment Act sponsored by the Janata government will stand out as the condemnation of Indira's doings during the emergency and the period leading to it.

The great political thinker Bhupesh Gupta of CPI propounded a profound general theory that what the people's representatives decide need not be referred to the people. Has he forgotten all the glorious things the "people's representatives" did from 25 June 1975 after locking up important opposition leaders, gagging the press and imposing dictatorship on the country? The CPI functioned as the jackal behind Indira. And this despicable mangy member of the pack, Bhupesh Gupta, was the *lia'sion* between his party and Indira while she was politically shaky—i.e., until 1970. The go-between was the ex-communist

Nandini Satpathy. As Indira did not wish to give the impression that she was dependent on the CPI, she saw to it that Bhupesh Gupta's visits to her were not logged in the register of the security staff or her engagement pad, thus ensuring secrecy. The same was the case with Dhirendra Brahmachari, another frequent visitor. Bhupesh Gupta also seems to have forgotten that the people by and large repudiated the work of their "representatives" during the emergency by their verdict in the 1977 general elections to the Lok Sabha. They followed this up later in the subsequent elections to the state legislatures.

On 5 May 1978, Indira visited her son Sanjay in Tihar jail to which she had sent many, including the *rajmats* of Gwalior and Jaipur, during the emergency. Sanjay was sent there for a temporary period by the Supreme Court, cancelling his anticipatory bail, with a view to preventing him continuing to bribe approver to turn hostile in a case in which he was charged with theft and other crimes. Indira told Sanjay "be brave, this is your political rebirth, and do not worry. Remember that me, my father, all have spent life in prison." She asked counsel Bhatia "you please see that Sanjay gets special treatment here. I do not want him to live with ordinary prisoners. This is a political conspiracy, I am afraid." Such thoughts did not occur to her when the two *Rajmats* were imprisoned there. This reminds me of the story of three Bishops—the Bishop of Winchester who was a married man with a philosophical bent of mind, the Bishop of Chichester who was a bachelor, and the Bishop of Manchester who was a married man. One day a young man came to the Bishop of Winchester with a long face indicating that he was full of personal troubles. The Bishop asked him "what is it that troubles you, my son"? The young man started narrating his tale of woe. The Bishop intervened periodically to say "it could have been worse." The young man got disgusted after hearing this refrain, and left. He came for mental solace; what he got was irritation. He decided to wreak vengeance on the Bishop. After about a month the young man called on the Bishop early one morning. He knew that the Bishop's wife had gone to Manchester. The Bishop asked the young man "what is it, my son?"

The young man: I have bad news, my Lord.

The Bishop: It could have been worse.

The young man: The Bishop of Chichester was found dead in bed in the cottage in the grounds of the Bishop's in house in Manchester. The cottage was struck by lightning; but nothing happened to the Bishop's house.

The Bishop: It could have been worse.  
 The young man: Yes, my Lord, it was worse.  
 The Bishop: Proceed, my son.  
 The young man: Your wife was also found dead in his bed.  
 The Bishop

(jumping up); WHAT?

People do react differently when something affects them personally and are singularly unconcerned when a similar thing happens to a fellow human being. Such is life.

Some people worry their heads off about Indira continuing to justify the imposition of the emergency and harp on its "gains." What else can she do to keep herself afloat? She is totally insensitive and remorseless. Henry Kissinger was right when he said that she was a cold-blooded woman. In comparison Kishan Chand, the Lt. Governor of Delhi who committed suicide out of remorse for his infamous part in the emergency, had some sensitiveness. She is hiding behind the theory "only the weak and the infirm repent." But when a John the Baptist comes clad in a raiment of camel's hair and a leathern girdle about his loins, living on locusts and wild honey, crying in the wilderness and calling people to repentance, Indira might confess her sins and get baptised. Until then Oh ye people hold your breath.

Some of the reactions to Indira's success in the Chikmagalur by-election indicated consternation as if a terrific swarm of locusts was approaching or terrible plague had erupted. The only sensible reaction was that of M.N. Govindan Nair, leader of the CPI Group in the Lok Sabha. He ridiculed the people exaggerating the importance of Chikmagalur by-election as if the entire future of the country depended on it. He said that the Congress (I), which had retained its seat, had not gained or lost by the by-election except that Indira would replace a less important member.

If Indira had shown some boldness and contested the by-election in the Fatehpur parliamentary constituency in UP, or the by-election in the Samastipur parliamentary constituency in Bihar, and won, it would have had some political significance though it would not have led to the withdrawal of prosecutions arising out of the findings of the Shah Commission.

Indira has little to contribute to her party by way of parliamentary skill. For the first time she will realise that as an opposition member in Parliament, ghost writers cannot help her or prop her up. As the Prime Minister she could read out ghost-written statements and answers to questions prepared by officials and feel profound. For the rest she

did make only some angry assertions in raised voice. Nobody has heard her make a reasoned and persuasive extempore speech in Parliament or in any select assembly. Her party had already got a Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha in C.M. Stephen who has more tin in his larynx than grey matter in his head.

Indira's ample manipulative capacity can be put to full use by her in an uninhibited manner as she is already the head of her political party. The chick of Magalur will be doing some good if she can manage to keep the Janata party in jitters lest it relapse into complacency.

Indira's purposeless visit to England in November 1978, which was described by the British media as "rehabilitation and resurrection visit," has some lessons for Indian politicians. Indira behaved with complete lack of dignity as if she was visiting the "Paramount Power" to report on happenings in a Satrapy and to beg for personal support. She had forgotten that her masters were in India and no longer in Britain. Few Indians have completely shed mental slavery even after 31 years of independence. The people of Indian origin in Southall and Birmingham are not Indian citizens but are foreign nationals. Instead of trying to enlist their support and sympathy, Indira could have gone to Rae Bareilly. It is relevant to quote here a passage I wrote in my first book:

Some time after the defeat of the Conservative Party in the general elections in Britain soon after the surrender of Nazi Germany in the Second World War, Winston Churchill visited the United States where he made the 'Iron Curtain' speech at Fulton. On his way back home he was asked by press-men in New York what he thought of the Labour Government and its policies in Britain. His reply was at once dignified and eminently appropriate. He firmly told his questioners that, as Leader of the Opposition, he had ample forums in his own country to make his views known about internal matters. He refused to say anything more.

Readers might compare this to the unbecoming utterances of Indira in England. But then, Winston Churchill was a big man proud of his country and its civilization and did not consider the mighty United States as the "Paramount Power" even though his mother was an American.



*Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan*

This giant of a man, Badshah Khan, about six feet six inches tall, towering over every one else in the Congress Working Committee, was so gentle, so mild and so meek that it was difficult to believe that he belonged to the turbulent North-West Frontier. Appropriately called the Frontier Gandhi, he succeeded in organizing a disciplined body of men called the Red Shirts and in the seemingly impossible task of taming a turbulent people to take to the ways of non-violence in political action. It was an infinitely more difficult achievement than training the people of Gujarat who, under the influence of Jainism, could easily take to non-violent methods.

Until about the end of 1945 the Muslim League was not strong in the Muslim majority areas such as the North-West Frontier, Sind, Punjab and Bengal. The Muslim League was a volatile force where Muslims were in a minority such as UP, Bihar etc. But, when the British intention of withdrawing from India became fairly clear, the situation changed radically. The insignificant strength of the Muslim League in the provincial legislatures in the Punjab, Sind and the North-West Frontier no longer reflected Muslim public opinion. The position of the nationalist Muslims and others who were opposed to the Muslim League became embarrassing. They were facing an avalanche putting to severe test their faith in secularism and the unity of India. They had to face hostile Muslim mobs hurling abuse at them and calling them traitors. Everywhere the British rulers encouraged the Muslim League in whatever way they could.

At the ill-fated Simla Conference called by the British Cabinet Mission in April 1946, M.A. Jinnah shook hands with Nehru and Patel but scornfully turned away from the outstretched hands of Maulana Azad and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan. Muslims in the Congress were a provocation to Jinnah who considered them as stooges.

The Congress Working Committee at its meeting on 2 June 1947, accepted the Mountbatten Plan of partition. At that time the Congress leaders were concerned about its "betrayal" of the North-

West Frontier. At the meeting only Gandhi and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan stood out clearly against partition. At the request of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan both Congress President Maulana Azad as well as Gandhi approached Lord Mountbatten to ascertain if the referendum in the North-West Frontier could include the alternative of independence as well. The Viceroy could easily silence them by the argument that Nehru was strongly against the grant of independence to any province and that he had agreed to the referendum in the North-West Frontier, as in Sylhet, as part of a larger plan.

Nehru urged the Khan brothers to prepare to go through the referendum on the sole issue of accession to India or Pakistan. He said that even if the Congress lost by a narrow margin, it could renew the struggle later.

Taking note of the Congress complaint that Governor Sir Olaf Caroe was a Muslim League partisan, Mountbatten replaced him with General Lockhart with a view to ensuring fair election. The North-West Frontier Congress under the leadership of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, however, decided to abstain from the referendum. Only 289,244 (i.e. 50.49 per cent) of the total electorate of 572,798 voted in favour of Pakistan, with 2,874 against.

Nehru did some wishful thinking on more than one count:

(1) That there was a fair chance of the Congress winning the referendum in the North-West Frontier, in which case the bottom out of the demand for the creation of Pakistan would be knocked off.

(2) Even if the Congress lost by a narrow majority, the Congress in the North-West Frontier could renew the struggle later.

To any objective person the chances of the Congress winning the referendum were remote. If the Congress joined the battle, the percentage of votes in favour of Pakistan was most likely to have been very much larger. Even if the referendum went in favour of India, Pakistan would have come into existence. And the North-West Frontier outside the gambit of Pakistan would not have survived for long. East Pakistan survived for about 24 years; but North-West Frontier would not have survived for 24 months.

The absurdity of Nehru's hint that even if the Congress lost the referendum by a narrow margin, the struggle could be renewed later has been made amply clear by what happened to Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and his Red Shirt Movement during the past 30 years.

Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan has been accused of timidity and even of

cowardice. It is obvious that he was so obsessed with "absolute" non-violence that he did not want to put that precious commodity to test. It is also quite likely that he had a more realistic sense of Muslim public opinion in the North-West Frontier at that time than Nehru and others.

It has been said that the meek shall inherit the earth. This did not happen in the case of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan—may be because he clung to an abstraction and failed to act. This reminds me of the story of a man who had read in the scriptures "throw your bread upon the waters, and it shall return to you ten-fold." He acted on it and later told a cynical priest "I put a loaf in a water-proof polythene bag and threw it on the waters. I had taken the precaution of attaching a string to it in case the almighty forgot his promise. I spent the whole night on the river bank. By the morning nothing happened; so I drew it back and went home disappointed." The priest told him wryly "if you had not used the polythene bag, water would have soaked into the bread which would then have weighed ten times!"

Fate and circumstances made this great and good man Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan a tragic figure of the sub-continent who spent most of his life, after partition, in prison or in exile. A worse fate befell that fine jovial man with a cherubic face Khan Abdus Samad Khan known as the Baluchi Gandhi who was brutally murdered.

Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan deserves the veneration and salutes of the Indian people, but conferring on him the Nehru award for international understanding was a thoroughly misplaced gesture. Between Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and "international understanding" there was nothing common.

### *Acharya J.B. Kripalani*

Of the many types of Congressmen the Gandhian era threw up, Acharya Kripalani was unique. The prefix "Acharya" does not mean that he is a Brahmin. It stuck to him because he was a teacher. All Sindhis whose names end with "ani" are *Kshatriyas*. The Sindhi *Kshatriyas* are successful businessmen; but dada Kripalani, who richly deserves the prefix "Acharya," remained a delightfully unbusiness-like and disorganized person. In the simplicity of personal life he stuck to the severest of Gandhian standards. He was one up on Gandhi in the practice of *Brahmacharya*. Gandhi adopted *Brahmacharya* after producing several children. Kripalani was a *Brahmachari* throughout. To many, who were not in tune with Gandhian ways, Kripalani's marriage was a joke. A prominent Congressman once

told me that he never understood the meaning of platonic love until he came to know of the relationship between Kripalani and his wife Sucheta.

Acharya Kripalani was never known to be communal, parochial or sectarian. Neither has he shown any fanaticism about imposing his fads on others. He is a liberal person with flexibility of mind.

Soon after independence there was an essay competition in a Delhi college. Students were asked to write short sketches of any one of the national leaders of their choice. One student found Acharya Kripalani an interesting subject of study. He wrote a piece which was a remarkable exercise in brevity. I quote below what he wrote:

With thinning long hair resting on his shoulders, this tall man with a lean and hungry look, small but piercing eyes and a nose like an eagle's beak, with a flowing plain shawl over his shoulders, reminded me of Caius Cassius, the Roman General and Senator. He believes in plain living and low thinking. He is so independent, cantankerous and free from fear that he is capable of attacking all other leaders except Gandhi.

This reminded me of an incident in the life of that great incisive scholar, ecclesiast and pessimist the Very Reverend Dr William Ralph Inge, who, as Dean of St Paul's from 1911-34, earned the sobriquet 'the gloomy dean.' Incidentally, his name does not rhyme with "cringe" but with "sting." While he was Assistant Master at Eaton (1884-88), Queen Victoria visited the famous Public School. A boy from the school was chosen to welcome the Queen at the solemn function. Dean Inge sent for the boy and told him "it is a great honour to have been chosen to make the welcome speech. While it is entirely for you to compose the speech, I decided to leave some thoughts with you. Avoid the temptation of using superlatives like 'when the Queen comes, it is sunrise,' and 'when the Queen goes, it is sun-set.' Be deferential. Above all be brief and matter of fact." The young boy was impressed by the advice. At the appropriate time the young brat got up smartly and made his welcome speech. He said "we are grateful to Her Majesty the Queen for finding the time to visit our school. Of Queen Victoria the less said the better."

Acharya Kripalani had the gift of eliciting the loyalties of younger people working with him and dealing with them as if they were his equals. And he took a fatherly interest in all the young women working with his remarkable wife. He took keen interest in match-making. He once decided that a nice Madras Brahmin girl working with

Sucheta should marry me. Without any reference to me he wrote to the father of the girl in Madras. The latter wrote to me giving his consent. It caused me much embarrassment. The disaster for the girl was averted by my remaining unresponsive!

Ever since I joined Nehru in Allahabad early in 1946 I had felt that Kripalani and Nehru were antipathetic towards each other. Kripalani was prone to make cynical and sarcastic comments about Nehru to others. Kripalani was very much a part of the "old guard" which did not see eye to eye with Nehru on anything except India's freedom. When, later in the year, Nehru became Congress President the unbroken tenure of 12 years of Kripalani's General-Secretaryship of the AICC was broken. But Nehru took him into the Congress Working Committee.

When Nehru gave up Congress Presidentship, after entering the interim government in September 1946, Acharya Kripalani was nominated by the Congress Working Committee as the Congress President. He took over that office on 15 October 1946. Kripalani failed to realise that the position of the Congress President changed with Nehru and Patel in the government. They, together with Sardar Baldev Singh representing the Sikhs, continued the negotiations with the Viceroy and the British. Even Maulana Azad went out of the picture. Kripalani was never before, associated with the negotiations with the British Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy. Kripalani's stand that the Congress President must be consulted on all important matters could lend itself to the interpretation that Gandhi should not be consulted on anything because he was neither a member of the Congress Working Committee nor even a four-anna member of the Congress. Kripalani's disclosure that Nehru told Gandhi "I will be damned if I consult Kripalani" is correct. However, the Congress President came into the picture as all important matters were discussed in the Congress Working Committee.

As a special gesture Nehru got the agreement of the new Viceroy Lord Mountbatten to include Kripalani as the third member of the Congress Delegation (along with Nehru and Patel) for formal discussions with the Viceroy. Thereupon Jinnah, who always claimed parity with the Congress, had one more member added to the Muslim League delegation.

In the face of the growing awareness that the position of the Congress President would no longer be the same as before, and the fact that Nehru held the firm view that the historic role of the Congress was finished with independence, Kripalani resigned from the Presidentship in November 1947.

In the chapter "Postscript" in my first book, referring to M.R Masani's book "Bliss was it in that Dawn" I made an erroneous statement that after 1941 Rajendra Prasad was never the Congress President. The Congress Working Committee did appoint Rajendra Prasad as the interim Congress President in November 1947, to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Acharya Kripalani. Rajendra Prasad vacated that position after a brief period when Pattabhi Sitaramayya was elected as the Congress President.

It was during the Presidentship of Pattabhi Sitaramayya that the suggestion of Nehru that term "*Rashtrapati*" be exclusively reserved for the President of India and should no longer be used by the Congress President was accepted by the Congress Working Committee. Pattabhi never objected to this change by arguing that it amounted to denigrating the office of Congress President.

It might be mentioned in this connection that from 1946-64, while Nehru was at the helm in the government, no Congress President—not even Kamaraj—counted for anything more than what Kripalani did. It is, however, true that after Nehru the position of Kamaraj as Congress president and the functioning of the party machine acquired a Tammany Hall flavour until Indira asserted herself and split the Party. This phase might be treated as an aberration.

After his resignation from Congress Presidentship and the death of Gandhi, Kripalani drifted. He left the Congress and joined the newly-formed KMPP and finally became a non-party man.

Kripalani has the distinction of being one of the few who declined to accept a Governorship. Once he got elected to the Lok Sabha as an independent from a constituency which was left uncontested by the Congress at the instance of Nehru. On a later occasion he contested against V.K. Krishna Menon and got defeated. Almost immediately afterwards he contested a by-election from UP and won defeating the Congress candidate—giving the lie to Indira's foolish boast that even an ordinary Congress volunteer could defeat Kripalani.

Acharya Kripalani is such a fearless man that he would never do anything or refrain from doing anything with an eye on personal gain. In fact such thoughts never entered his head.

### *S.K. Patil*

S.K. Patil was a protege of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel who used him as a tough to handle the difficult metropolitan area of Bombay. Sardar Patel knew the art of using widely different types of people. When a prominent Congress politician of Kerala was privately asked by a well-

wisher why he was using and supporting a particular person who was an unreliable and unpopular bossy type, he asked the question "is any one rearing chicken for the love of chicken?" Sardar Patel supported Patil to the hilt as long as he was alive. Patel was not unaware of Patil's faults. To all the detractors of Patil, Patel's answer was "find me another who will be as effective in Bombay as Patil."

Nehru kept Patil at a distance. Rajaji, who was Home Minister after Sardar Patel, suggested to Nehru that Patil might be taken into the cabinet. Nehru was not enthusiastic. However, he wrote to B.G. Kher, the Chief Minister, and to Morarji Desai, the Home Minister of Bombay private letters asking for their opinion. Both opposed the idea. Morarji's letter was brutally frank; I shall avoid creating trouble between Morarji and Patil by not publishing the photostat of the letter. Nehru dropped the idea.

After Patil's strong support for the Government of India's decision to exclude Bombay City from Maharashtra under the states reorganization scheme, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant thought that it was no longer appropriate to keep Patil out of the government. Pant pleaded with Nehru. It was only then that Patil could enter the government.

In the accepted political sense Patil was not a popular man. He loved the good things of life and made no secret of it. He broke social conventions wherever he could discreetly do so. He was an enemy of humbug and hypocrisy. He had ample respect for money and fully knew its manifold usefulness. He was never tortured by thoughts of ends and means. Neither was he ever assailed or vexed by ideological formulations. In private life he was the opposite of Morarji Desai.

Patil is one of the liberated persons in the Congress. He is a cosmopolitan in a cosmopolitan city. He is not communal or narrow in any sense. Maharashtrians generally dislike him; but Gujaratis are indulgent to him. Industrialists and traders supported him.

As a departmental minister, Patil was not a resounding success. As Minister for Food and Agriculture, Patil earned the reputation of having grown more foodgrains in the United States than in India.

Patil was not free from ambitions. He loved to feel that he was in the reckoning among those in the running for Prime Ministership after Nehru. His long-term scheming and planning for it were faulty. He did not fully realise that money and Tammany Hall methods would not work. He refused to admit even to himself that he did not generate enough confidence in others.

After Patil became cabinet minister, he made it a practice to spend the week-ends in Bombay for reasons which were obvious to those who were in the know of things. When there was public criticism of it,

Patil had his PA issue a press statement that the minister was personally paying the airfare. Some statistically-minded MPs calculated the monthly airfare and wrote to the Prime Minister saying that it was more than Patil's salary.

As an instrument of acquiring popularity, Patil started entertaining large groups of Congress MPs to lavish dinners at his residence. The MPs who enjoyed Patil's hospitality started collecting statistics of money spent on Patil's frequent extravagant parties and spreading rumours about his inexhaustible sources of "easy money." Patil's public relations was poor as his methods were clumsy.

Patil had a sense of humour. After the first Congress split he said publicly that it was only a little while ago that he handed over to Indira a large box full of one hundred rupee notes, but she had not returned the box.

#### *Dr Bihār Chandra Roy (1882-1952)*

Apart from the fact that he was tall and erect and an arresting figure, there was something big about Dr Roy. An illustrious physician and a bachelor, he was on the periphery of the national movement. He had been the consultant physician of many leaders from Motilal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru to innumerable others. I have heard eminent younger medical men say that Dr Roy had an uncanny capacity for diagnosis which was almost instinctive.

When independence came in 1947 Nehru offered Dr Roy the Governorship of UP. On his declining to accept the offer, Sarojini Naidu was appointed the governor.

Dr Roy had been the Chief Minister of West Bengal from 1948 till his death during which period he was the undisputed leader of the state. The relationship between Nehru and Dr Roy was marked by affection for each other. They called each other by their first names. In talking to Nehru, Dr Roy never minced words. He was one of the very few who could do so.

I had occasion to stay in Dr Roy's house in Calcutta as his guest. This was soon after he became the Chief Minister in 1948. I got up early in the morning and was agreeably surprised to find Dr Roy attending to poor patients. I believe he continued this practice till the end of his days.

In the mid-fifties Dr Roy spoke to me about the desirability of installing a small automatic lift in the Prime Minister's House. He said "Jawahar is no longer a young man even though he will not admit it. I have seen him going up by taking two steps at a time. It is bad. He is



one "of those who refuse to believe that speeding a car in a crowded city does not save time." Dr Roy, Nehru and I were about to go to the Secretariat in Nehru's car. I requested Dr Roy to speak to Nehru in the car. Dr Roy said "Jawahar, you know that Vallabhahi did not come to see you because he could not climb steps. I have also reached that stage and so has Govind Ballabh Pant. I have spoken to Mathai and I am arranging to have a small automatic electric lift installed in your house." Nehru kept quiet. Dr Roy was a good psychologist. He asked the manufacturers to get in touch with me. Soon Nehru was going abroad, and I took the opportunity to have the lift installed in his absence. After it became a *fait accompli*, Nehru almost regularly used the lift.

Dr Roy was invariably a dinner guest at the Prime Minister's House whenever he visited Delhi. On one such occasion he met the noted violinist Yehudi Menuhin and his wife. They were vastly impressed by him. They invited him to visit them in England whenever he was there. Dr Roy remembered this and met the Menuhins the next time he visited England. They liked him so much that they gave him the name "magnificent brigand."

One day Dr Roy, who looked depressed, spoke to me about his one great disappointment in life. It was about a brilliant young medical man Dr Susanta Sen who was popularly known as Budda Sen in Delhi. He had all the highest medical degrees England could offer apart from a post-graduate science degree from Cambridge. The degrees formed an impressive array. He was tall, slim and handsome. I have heard many wealthy sophisticated women say "Budda Sen has the best bed-side manners in attending to sick women." From London Budda Sen was brought to Delhi by Lady Linlithgow and during war-time he was posted to the Willingdon Nursing Home. After the war he resigned and set up private practice. He was an immediate success. Dr Roy had a fatherly interest in him. He had fervently hoped that Budda Sen would develop into India's most illustrious medical man for which he was amply equipped. Soon Buddha Sen developed other interests. Punctuality, the hall-mark of a good doctor, deserted him. Availability, the ordinary virtue of a doctor, also deserted him. Driving from Agra to Delhi while he was not sober, he bashed up his car, himself and a foreign girl. What emerged from the accident and subsequent hospitalization was the ghostly shadow of a once handsome man. His face was irreparably disfigured. Budda's position in Delhi soon became untenable. He migrated to London where he set up practice in Harley Street and was destined to fail. Then he migrated to Canada and few have heard of him since.

West Bengal was fortunate in having a titan like Dr B.C. Roy at the helm during a very difficult period. Like the Punjab, West Bengal suffered grievously as a result of partition. Unlike in the Punjab, the problems in West Bengal continued to be a running sore. Perhaps the gifted people of Bengal deserved more consideration and assistance from the central government. It is sad to think that the great metropolis of Calcutta has sunk to be the world's most dismal city. But for Dr B.C. Roy, the position of West Bengal would have been much worse.

People will remember Dr Roy as the last of the illustrious leaders Bengal has produced. He was one of the very few persons in India who would have filled any office with distinction and remained bigger than any such office.

#### *M.N. Roy (1893-54)*

It was a few months before his death that I came across M.N. Roy. I was aware of his background. A fellow Indian revolutionary, who knew Roy well in Europe, had told me an authentic story about Roy's first contact with Lenin in 1920.

Roy left India in 1915 at the age of 22 and took part in revolutionary movements in Mexico and Europe. He attended the Second World Congress of the Comintern in 1920. At the conclusion of the Congress Lenin told Karakhan, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister who was later liquidated in one of Stalin's purges, pointing to M.N. Roy "here is a young man who should be encouraged. His principal qualification is that he knows nothing. He is enthusiastic and he can be taught."

While in Berlin, M.N. Roy was a frequent visitor to the rooms of A.C.N. Nambiar. Roy was very fond of Indian food and could cook some Indian dishes with skill and imaginative improvisation.

A few months before Roy's death, Nehru received a letter from Jayaprakash Narayan saying that M.N. Roy was ill and in desperate need of financial assistance. Roy was then living with his wife Ellen in Dehra Dun. Nehru asked me to go to Dehra Dun to assess the needs. I informed Mrs Roy in advance about my visit and told her that I would also like to meet the doctor attending on her husband. After arrival in Dehra Dun, I met Mrs Roy first and then the doctor in her presence. I asked them to add up the bills pending for payment and to draw up an estimate of the financial needs for six months. When I met them the next morning, they gave me the figures. I told Mrs Roy that I had not asked to see her husband as I did not wish to put

any strain in him. She said he was aware of my presence in Dehra Dun and that he would be upset if I went away without seeing him. Then she took me into Roy's room. He was in bed neatly dressed. A tall and handsome man, with a well-proportioned figure, he looked very leonine. I conveyed to him Nehru's greetings and good wishes. He expressed his appreciation and gratitude to Nehru for sending me to enquire about his warm health. I told him that he should not worry about his treatment and requirements and that I had discussed all these matters with Mrs. Roy and his doctor.

On reaching Delhi I made my report to Nehru and recommended a sum to cover the existing and future requirements for six months. He asked me to add a thousand rupees to the figure I recommended. A cheque for the amount signed by Nehru was forwarded by me to Ellen Roy with the assurance that after six months the position would be reviewed.

No further financial assistance became necessary, for, the man, who had become a legend in his own life-time, passed away before the expiry of six months.

### *S. Srinivasa Iyengar (1874-1941)*

Seshadri Srinivasa Iyengar, an outstanding Madras lawyer, was at one time the most important Congressman in the south. He belonged to the galaxy of eminent men and women in the Congress—Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das, Vithalbhair Patel, and Sarojini Naidu. In 1926 he was elected Deputy Leader of the Swaraj party in the Central Legislative Assembly under Motilal Nehru. He presided over the Gauhati session of the Indian National Congress in 1926. S. Satyamurthi and K. Kamaraj were his early disciples.

Though a fiercely independent man politically and in many other respects, Srinivasa Iyengar was a singularly unliberated person in social habits. He conformed to the conventional and conservative behavioural pattern of the orthodox south Indian Brahmins.

If imitation is the best form of flattery, then Srinivasa Iyengar was an admirer of Motilal Nehru within the limitations of his orthodoxy. Ever since Motilal Nehru returned from a visit to Europe and the Soviet Union in 1927, Srinivasa Iyengar was gripped, like the salmon and the Atlantic eel, by an uncontrollable impulse to go on a journey overseas, just because Motilal Nehru had done so. But Srinivasa Iyengar had not so far worn European clothes. He found three young sartorial advisers in Dewan Chaman Lal, Tulsi Goswami and Asaf Ali. They got ready for him the necessary clothes—three wollen suits with

ties and socks to match, one black dinner suit with black tie and black socks, several white shirts, white collars, and two pairs of black shoes. Barring the dinner clothes, items in each set of clothes were given identical numbers. For example, if Srinivasa Iyengar picked up a tie, all he had to do was to look at the number and pick out all the rest bearing the same number in order to ensure that everything was matching. Dressing was thus made simple for Srinivasa Iyengar. He made the "westward ho" in 1928.

In Berlin, Srinivasa Iyengar was looked after by the famous Chatto (Virendranath Chattopadhyaya) and his brother-in-law A.C.N. Nambiar—both fellow revolutionaries. Srinivasa Iyengar was a friend of Nambiar's elder brother Professor Candeth in Madras. Chatto had high hopes of utilizing the visit of the ex-President of the Congress for the furtherance of India's cause abroad. Within an hour, however, Chatto came to the conclusion that Srinivasa Iyengar was a man with outmoded ideas incapable of creating any impression in the west and that he had undertaken the trip simply because Motilal Nehru had done it. Chatto was so disappointed that he gave up the idea of escorting him to the Soviet Union and asked A.C.N. Nambiar to undertake that irksome task. After arranging with Champakaraman Pillai and Nambiar to take the distinguished guest from India to a "Variety Theatre," Chatto told Srinivasa Iyengar that Nambiar and Pillai would be taking him to a typical "Aryan Cultural Show" in Berlin. The magic words "Aryan Cultural Show" generated in him a feeling that during that night he would be elevated to the recondite regions of sublime philosophical antiquity with incense-burning, blowing of conch shells, ringing of bells, chanting, and recitations from all the four Vedas. Champakaraman Pillai had purchased three tickets for the front row so that Srinivasa Iyengar could have an excellent view at close range. As the curtain went up, there came on the centre of the stage on a neat platform, from a sunken pit below, a bevy of shapely girls completely in the nude. His eyes glued to the scene, Srinivasa Iyengar asked Nambiar "why did you bring me here?" and started craning his neck as the girls flitted about and at the same time asking questions such as "is this a cultural show?," "do they have this every night?," "why do the Germans like women so much?," and "why did you bring me here?," And all the time he continued the craning exercise. Nambiar was amused and said "the Germans like women no more passionately than Indians do. The difference is that the Germans do not indulge in double-think and practise hypocrisy as the Indians do. We can leave if you like." Srinivasa Iyengar showed no inclination to leave and continued asking questions "how long does it last?,"

and "for the next show will there be a different set of girls?" and the craning of the neck never ceased until the show was over in the early hours of the morning.

The next evening Srinivasa Iyengar and Nambiar boarded the train for Moscow. When they crossed the German border into Poland, it was late in the evening and both Srinivasa Iyengar and Nambiar were already in their sleeping berths. There was a noise in the corridor shouting "Mr Iyengar, Mr Iyengar." Soon a policeman knocked at the compartment. He asked Srinivasa Iyengar to get dressed and to follow him. Srinivasa Iyengar was visibly alarmed and asked Nambiar what had gone wrong. Nambiar said that he would accompany him. The policeman took them to an impressive-looking man in resplendent uniform. He looked like a Marshal. Before he could utter a word, Srinivasa Iyengar started a speech: "I am the Vice-President of the Indian Parliament, I am the ex-President of the Indian National Congress which conducts the struggle for India's freedom. When you Poles fought for your independence, we Indians extended our sympathy. You Poles must now show sympathy for India's freedom movement." Srinivasa Iyengar would have prolonged his speech but for the intervention of the man in resplendent uniform by saying "Mr Iyengar, I am sorry to have caused you inconvenience. In the normal course your passport came to me for checking. I was impressed by your photograph showing you in striking attire and I had an irresistible desire to see you. Now in your drab, though perfect, European dress you have disappointed me. To compensate you, I am issuing instructions to ensure that during the night no one enters your compartment. I hope you will have a tranquil night." The passport photograph had shown Srinivasa Iyengar in Kurta with an "*angavastram*" (neatly-folded silver-bordered cotton shawl) hanging on top of it and a gold-bordered turban on his head.

Srinivasa Iyengar woke up early in the morning while Nambiar, as was the practice with him, was still asleep. Srinivasa Iyengar saw some yellow flowers growing wild in large numbers. As he had heard that Motilal Nehru was fond of flowers, Srinivasa Iyengar decided to show Nambiar that he was no less fond of them. He woke up Nambiar and, pointing his finger out, asked him "what is the name of that flower?" Nambiar, who was never interested in gardening, knew the names of only three flowers not familiar in Madras. He made a quick guess and replied "daffodil." By the time they were within fifty miles of Moscow, Nambiar had exhausted the three names he knew, and fervently hoped that Srinivasa Iyengar would not torture him with any more questions about flowers. But Srinivasa Iyengar asked one more.

Nambiar decided to start all over again and confidently said "daffodil." Srinivasa Iyengar grew grave and told Nambiar that he knew nothing about flowers, that the colour of the daffodil he had identified first was different and the shape was different. Nambiar explained "I am glad you have noticed the difference. Since the Great October Revolution, the Soviet Union has done remarkable work in the hybridization of plants resulting in considerable advancement in agriculture and allied subjects. This is a field in which you should take some interest while you are in the Soviet Union." With his concocted theory of hybridization, about which he knew little, Nambiar managed to get out of an embarrassing situation.

In Moscow the first person to receive Srinivasa Iyengar was Madame Kamanev representing the Society for the Promotion of Cultural Relations with the Soviet Union which had extended the invitation to him as well as to Motilal Nehru the year before. Madame Kamanev was the wife of a close associate of Lenin. After preliminary exchanges, Srinivasa Iyengar asked Madame Kamanev if freedom of speech prevailed in the Soviet Union. Quick came the reply "yes." Srinivasa Iyengar enquired if he could stand in the street and tell a person that the government was not a good one. Again the reply was "yes." Srinivasa Iyengar proceeded to ask if he could say it before two persons; then one by one he raised the audience to four persons. The answer continued to be "yes." Then Srinivasa Iyengar asked "suppose I say it before five persons?" Madame Kamanev replied "then you will be arrested as a street hooligan, and more stringent steps will be taken if the number registered a big rise." Srinivasa Iyengar turned to Nambiar and whispered in Tamil his profound discovery that there was no freedom of speech in the Soviet Union. Madame Kamanev was more amused than annoyed by the questions of a frozen adolescent.

Srinivasa Iyengar was also received in audience by Bukharin, President of the Third Communist International or the Comintern. That dignitary started the conversation with the words: "Mr Iyengar, I am eager to learn something first-hand from you about the great social and national liberation movement going on in India." Obviously he was giving Srinivasa Iyengar an opportunity to speak at length about the national movement in India. Srinivasa Iyengar's reply was a counter-question: "Grass-eating Brahmin, coming to Moscow, what else?" Bukharin commented that his question did not relate to agriculture but to the progress of the revolutionary movement! What Srinivasa Iyengar actually meant was the fact that an orthodox Brahmin like him had come to Moscow defying age-old injunctions

against crossing the seas was itself proof of the social and national liberation taking place in India. Nambiar, however, never felt so ashamed in his life. The only Indian in the last 50 years who has surpassed Srinivasa Iyengar in the art of answering a question by a counter-question is Morarji Desai who is still happily with us.

Srinivasa Iyengar also had a meeting with Karakhan who was the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union. Karakhan was a personal friend of Lenin and, like Bukharin, met with untimely death—Karakhan by execution under the orders of Stalin and Bukharin by mysterious assassination. During the meeting Karakhan told Srinivasa Iyengar “Independent India might well see to Afghanistan having the facility of a free port at Karachi.

Even though Stalin was heavily preoccupied with the session of the Soviet Congress besides the conflict with Leon Trotsky, which was at a high pitch then, he found the time for a meeting with Srinivasa Iyengar. During the meeting Stalin asked if India would accept dominion status in case the British offered it. While Srinivasa Iyengar fumbled, Stalin came out with the statement: “I would suggest acceptance.” This came somewhat of a surprise to Srinivasa Iyengar.

Returning to India, Srinivasa Iyengar did not find his political career smooth-sailing. There were many reasons for this, the most important of which was that there was no room for two Iyengars for leadership of the Congress in south India. Gandhi chose to put his weight behind the other Iyengar—C. Rajagopalachari even though Srinivasa Iyengar was far more popular. Gradually Srinivasa Iyengar found himself isolated in political life from which he quietly withdrew but not without bitterness. Some time after his withdrawal from active politics, Srinivasa Iyengar addressed a select gathering at the Madras Cosmopolitan Club. During that speech he broke into Tamil and said “Gandhi? *Avan Sappan*”—meaning “Gandhi? He is a worthless fellow.”

In 1939 the people of Madras discovered that the fire in Srinivasa Iyengar was not completely extinguished. The sympathies of Srinivasa Iyengar were with Subhas Chandra Bose in his confrontation with Gandhi and the Old Guard in 1939. When Bose came to Madras after resigning from the Presidentship of the Congress and forming the Forward Bloc, it was Srinivasa Iyengar who presided over the mammoth public meeting at the Madras beach. Thereafter Srinivasa Iyengar relapsed into inactivity and was not heard of until his death in 1941.

## 27 *Nehru's Adherence to Truth*

Aeschylus, the father of Greek drama, coined the undying phrase "In war, truth is the first casualty." Truth is the first casualty in politics too.

About politicians it can be said:

"Munchausen was but a type of thee,  
Thou, liar of the first magnitude."

Baron Munchausen of Germany is acclaimed as the world's greatest liar; but he was a harmless fibber. The liar in a politician is a matter of serious consequence.

It was Kipling who said of a politician:

Pagett, M.P., was a liar, and a  
fluent liar there with.

It was the politician in him that prompted Winston Churchill to tell Marshal Joseph Stalin "truth is so precious that it should be escorted by a battalion of lies."

We have Dr Joseph Goebbels's dictum: "the efficacy of a lie lies in the size of the lie and how often it is repeated."

The legendary Lawrence of Arabia believed that the best way to hide the truth was to tell half-truths. He took delight in advertising a fantastic story that in six years at Oxford he read every book in the library of the Oxford Union—the best part of 50,000 volumes. This means 25 volumes a day! A peculiar man with peculiar gifts, Lawrence was a neurotic weaving mysteries around him. Ultimately he reached a stage where he tended to believe his own patent lies.

In India Asoka Mehta has the distinction of being the staunchest protagonist of "white lies" in public affairs.

Gandhi was not a politician in the generally accepted sense of the word. Insofar as he was personally concerned, he cut out the seemingly important element in politics—the pursuit of power. What remained for him was the freedom of the country forming part of the wider and nobler whole—the pursuit of Truth."



Nehru was a man who dedicated himself for a great cause; but he did not believe in renouncing the world and all it contained. To him power was an instrument to do good, and political freedom was but the beginning of a prolonged struggle for economic development and social change. The crudities and vulgarities of politics did not infect Nehru. Undoubtedly Nehru was one of the most truthful politicians in history. This was largely due to the absence of fear in him.

A distinguished journalist friend once asked me if I could answer the question "pressed to a corner, would Nehru depart from truth?" I did not answer his question except to say that there was nothing absolute where human beings were concerned. The journalist's question haunted me ever since.

I shall relate a few instances.

(1) Defence Minister V.K. Krishna Menon utilized his tout from Madras to import a substantial number of trucks from "MAN" of Germany as a preliminary to the manufacture of such trucks for the defence forces in one of the ordnance factories in India. Krishna Menon wanted to circumvent Finance Minister Morarji Desai. So he spoke to Nehru and advanced specious arguments to convince him of the desirability of the project. Nehru sent for Lal Bahadur, the Minister for Commerce and Industry, and asked him to agree and facilitate the project. Lal Bahadur neither understood the implications nor had the courage to demur. Soon the German-made trucks arrived and were advertised as "Shaktiman" trucks. There were all-round protests. The Planning Commission wanted to know how much of the truck was "Shakti" and how much was "MAN." The Planning Commission pointed out that similar trucks were produced in India, that no techno-economic study was conducted, and that the project was a colossal waste. By that time, however, the agreement with "MAN" had been signed.

Faced with an awkward situation, Nehru chose not to face it squarely. Instead he sent a note to the Defence Ministry, with copies to concerned ministries and the Planning Commission, deprecating the practice of undertaking the manufacture of items with foreign collaboration when such items were already produced in the country. Thus Nehru saved his face and that of Lal Bahadur; and Krishna Menon got away with what he wanted by including as an item under ordnance factories from whose over-all financial sanctions he diverted the funds for the initial imports and subsequent manufacture of the trucks.

I happened to meet Lal Bahadur soon after the controversy blew over. He told me the entire story. I told him "you bear the responsibility for the whole thing because timely opposition on your part

would have scuttled the superfluous and wasteful project.”

(2) This happened after I left government. During the height of Sino-Indian troubles, our *Charge d'affaires* in Peking attended a formal Chinese reception. There was understandable furore in Parliament about this. In reply to a short notice question Nehru told Parliament that the *Charge d'affaires* had asked for telegraphic instructions from the External Affairs Ministry and that the ministry gave him permission to attend. “Ministry” in popular usage is the organization minus the minister. Legally it comprises the minister and the secretariat. Copies of all in-coming and out-going telegrams are submitted to the Prime Minister by the Central Cypher Bureau. I was sure that the reply to such a telegram from the *Charge d'affaires* in Peking would not be sent without clearance from the Prime Minister. However, I made enquiries and found that the draft of the reply to the *Charge d'affaires* in Peking was approved by the Prime Minister.

(3) A.G. Noorani, one of the reviewers of my first book, quoted the following from the transcript of Nehru's press conference of 7 February 1959, the first one after my resignation from government and Indira's taking over as the interim Congress President:

Mr Mathai was not influencing me in anything, in any policy or important matter. . .

I doubt if I spoke to him at any length—may be once in ten or 12 days. I met him daily in the course of business, papers coming up before me.

This was the time when Bhupesh Gupta, Rajya Sabha's oldest member, known for restraint, understatement, non-vociferousness, decorum, fairness, soft-spokenness, and fierce attachment to truth, was hurling vituperation at me and insinuating that I was the Deputy Prime Minister or even the *de facto* Prime Minister. No one likes to be told, at any rate publicly, that he is run by another.

Insofar as I am concerned, the “theory of influence” is ridiculous. In fact it does not exist. One can influence the course of events; but one cannot influence a human being. One can place facts and opinions before an individual and these may have some bearing on his decisions. But the decisions are his. This was the only basis on which I worked with Nehru. The term “influence” exists only in the dictionary of the weak and the infirm. I can say without hesitation that I did not “influence” Nehru in anything—important or unimportant.

The second part of Nehru's statement is totally wrong. I felt sorry for him when I read it in the newspapers while I was in Almora. So

did many people in Delhi who were in the know. Some of them thought that I might react to Nehru's statement by saying something in public; and they went to Morarji Desai requesting him to get in touch with me so that I would keep quiet. Morarji told them "his loyalty to the Prime Minister will prevent him from reacting publicly." Morarji was right.

I was entitled to privately ask the Prime Minister or retract publicly; but I was aware that it would have been inappropriate for a Prime Minister to eat his words publicly. However, I had ample evidence of Nehru's unhappiness at the words which had slipped out.

The instances I have enumerated are not of any particular importance. All in all, I repeat that Nehru was one of the most truthful of historic men.

On 23 September 1978 Desai said in New Delhi to a group of 40 Americans from the Jain International Meditation Centre of New York something very profound "I do not go in search of office, nor do I run away from office." This caused merriment to Indian readers for they know Morarji to be a relentless practitioner of Robert Bruce's dictum "if at first you don't succeed, try try try again." It was indeed at his fourth try, spread over a period of 13 years, that Morarji succeeded in becoming Prime Minister at the young age of 81! Morarji's statement to the gullible American meditators reminded me of what a "Swamiji" told an unsophisticated young boy, Vadivelu, of Madras some years ago. Vadivelu was the only son of a wealthy father who died when Vadivelu was a child. He was brought up by his religious uncle who was under the total influence of the "Swamiji" who lived in a cottage specially built for him on the grounds of Vadivelu's house. Vadivelu never liked the "Swamiji" because, whenever he wanted money, he had to get clearance from him. One week-end he asked his uncle for money to buy a cinema ticket and told him that the "Swamiji's" door was locked. The uncle asked him to wait. Vadivelu waited long enough to lose his patience. He climbed to the top of the cottage, removed six tiles, and slipped into the middle of Swamiji's room. There he found the Swamiji in bed with a young woman. In sonorous tones the Swamiji said "I am not here; I am in canjeevaram; I will return tomorrow. This is only my physical body; my astral body is in Canjeevaram." Vadivelu was confounded, got out of the cottage, and told his uncle what he heard but not what he saw. In all seriousness the uncle said "this happens to Swamiji once a week; such experience comes only to great *rishies* who are *yogis*; never disturb him; wait till tomorrow!" When Vadivelu attained majority and came into his father's property, his first act was to get rid of the Swamiji by

telling him "go to Canjeevaram and find your astral body."

On 23 October 1978, the Hindi daily *Aaj* of Varanasi published a report of its editor's interview with Indira. At the interview Indira said "Morarji Desai tells lies when he says that none in his cabinet drinks liquor. She alleged that "except for one or two, all ministers drink." She said "I have information that ministers approach foreign missions in Delhi for drinks" and added "the diplomats do not desire to disclose, nor do they want anybody to see the ministers drinking." As for herself, she said "I tell a lie only when journalists put me inconvenient questions." She hastened to add that she was not telling lies to the editor of *Aaj* who was interviewing her.

Morarji, as a fanatic, is like the ostrich and the cat. He believes only what he wants to believe. If Indira writes to him about the drinking habits of the so-called dignitaries in Delhi, perhaps Morarji will not be averse to referring it to the Chief Justice of India to determine if a *prima facie* case exists.

During the interview to the editor of the *Aaj* Indira unwittingly blundered into the truth about herself.

A product of the Aligarh Muslim University, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah started life as a teacher and strayed into politics by joining the "Muslim Conference" now a defunct organization. In 1938 he left the communal organization and formed the National Conference. But the practice of Sheikh Abdullah converting Muslim Friday prayer congregations in mosques into public meetings for political harangues continued and still continues. If such a thing is done by others in temples and churches, I do not know how Sheikh Abdullah would view it.

Sheikh Abdullah came into contact with Nehru after the formation of the National Conference. He brought the National Conference into the mainstream of Indian political developments by making it an affiliate of the All India States' Peoples Conference started by Nehru. He became its President in 1946 and kept the National Conference independent of the Indian National Congress.

Sheikh Abdullah's struggle was against the feudal despotism of the Maharaja of Kashmir. He knew that in this he would not get any support or assistance from M.A. Jinnah or the Muslim League. He considered Jinnah as no more than a jackal who was content to have a share in the tiger's kill. He was powerfully influenced by Nehru's secular approach and unstinted support for responsible government and civil liberties in Indian states.

Only communalists in India have accused Sheikh Abdullah of being communal. The National Conference blue-print for "*New Kashmir*" laying emphasis on "land to the tiller" perturbed the small *pandit* community pampered for long by the rulers of Kashmir. They were to be losers of much of their land which they never cultivated. It is they who were vociferous in raising the bogey of communalism against the Sheikh. Maharaja Hari Singh never trusted Sheikh Abdullah whose sworn enemy he remained with incredible tenacity. But for Sheikh Abdullah and the unqualified support for him by Nehru, the maharaja would have acceded to India along with other Indian rulers. The maharaja could not find another popular leader who could successfully challenge Sheikh Abdullah. So the role of the Maharaja in a crucial period remained negative and barren. Events overtook him

and ultimately he had to abdicate.

In the spring of 1946 the maharaja's government arrested Sheikh Abdullah and other leaders of the National Conference. At the time of his arrest Sheikh Abdullah was on his way to Simla at Nehru's request to meet him. Nehru curbed his impulse to leave the parleys with the British Cabinet Mission and go to Kashmir. He wanted to give the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, a chance to intervene. Nothing happened. On 15 June 1946, Nehru notified the maharaja that he would arrive in the state on the 19th. The maharaja informed the Viceroy that he would abdicate and his Prime Minister would resign if the Government of India asked them not to take any action against Nehru. On crossing Kohala bridge into Kashmir territory on 19 June, Nehru and party, including Asaf Ali and Diwan Chaman Lal, were arrested. Asaf Ali and Chaman Lal were to defend Sheikh Abdullah at his trial. I was also in the party. We were detained at Domel and later at Uri. The detention lasted under one week. The postponement of Sheikh Abdullah's trial and the insistence of the Congress Working Committee that Nehru should return, made him relent. We were released and we all returned.

When the trial of Sheikh Abdullah was fixed Nehru went to Kashmir. This time we were not arrested. We lived in a house boat on the Nagin lake. One experience during that visit stands out in my memory. We were invited to a dinner in the typical Mogul style. It was a 30-course dinner, mostly of highly-spiced meat of various kinds which would have gladdened the heart of the revolutionary and gourmet Mr Subrawardy who loved and dreamed of Indian food while in Europe. When I was confronted by the bewildering variety of rich food soaked in oil and fat, I was confused. I did not know where to begin. Returning to the house-boat I felt hungry and ate a few improvised sandwiches and some fruits.

It was when the raiders, aided and abetted by Pakistan, entered Kashmir that the maharaja took fright and signed the Instrument of Accession to India on 25 October 1947. As a first step the Maharaja released Sheikh Abdullah and his colleagues in the National Conference from prison and left Srinagar in search of safety.

In formally accepting the maharaja's accession to India. Governor-General Lord Mountbatten extracted from Nehru and the Emergency Committee of the Cabinet permission to add that the will of the people would be ascertained as soon as the law and order situation was restored.

The National Conference passed a resolution endorsing Kashmir's accession to India. Sheikh Abdullah was appointed head of a provi-

sional administration in Jammu and Kashmir. Soon after, the maharaja abdicated in favour of his son.

On 3 November 1946, Nehru gave formal shape to Lord Mountbatten's idea in a radio broadcast unilaterally offering a plebiscite in Kashmir under the UN auspices. This and going to the UN with a complaint of aggression against Pakistan at the end of 1947 were unmitigated blunders. Neither Lord Mountbatten nor Nehru and other Indian leaders had the foggiest notion of how the UN functioned and of the forces at work within that organization. India's original complaint is still unanswered. The aggressor and the aggrieved have been placed in the same basket and pious resolutions have been passed. India had been foolish enough to make concession after concession. This country is still eating the bitter fruits grown out of the seed originally sown by Mountbatten.

The offer of a plebiscite in Kashmir continued as a festering sore affecting the internal stability in Kashmir for a long time.

The presence of Sheikh Abdullah, the tall figure made taller by his tall fez cap, with his flamboyant gown, in New York at the UN early in 1948 along with N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar, made people think that he was no more than a dandy. And the Pakistanis, ably assisted by the British, succeeded in making the uncharitable expressions like "stooge" and "Indian Quisling" stick to him. His frequent impromptu utterances to the press on the Kashmir and other questions caused only needless embarrassments. In fact the Sheikh's presence, contrary to expectations, was more a liability than an asset.

For two years after acceptance of office in 1948 Sheikh Abdullah was busy organizing popular resistance to aggression by raiders and infiltration by Pakistanis as well as the work of the Kashmir Constituent Assembly. When normalcy was established, Sheikh Abdullah began to exhibit his flamboyance and play the lion and the messiah. Acquisition of air-conditioned Cadillac cars was part of the flamboyance. His principal colleagues, more especially Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, G.M. Sadiq and D.P. Dhar started to have misgivings about the Sheikh. Dwarak Nath Kachru was also in that group. Kachru was a young Kashmiri whom Nehru encouraged before independence and made him General-Secretary of the All India States Peoples' Conference. After independence Nehru appointed him as one of his Private secretaries in the government. It was one of Kachru's functions to keep in touch with Kashmir developments and to keep Nehru informed. From the first half of 1949 Kachru had been telling Nehru about the Sheikh's unreliability. Kachru even went to the extent of making a trip to Dehra Dun, without Nehru's knowledge, to acquaint Sardar Patel

of developments in Kashmir and the need to discipline if not replace Sheikh Abdullah. Kachru continued his contacts with Sardar Patel. Another person who privately joined the Bakshi group as an interloper, ready with advice to any who was willing to listen, was Colonel B.M. Kaul who later rose to be a Lieutenant General. Kaul was a military-man with political ambitions and capable of the worst type of intrigue associated with the normal run of Kashmiri Brahmins.

Early in life Sheikh Abdullah acquired a reputation of being a lady-killer. He maintained his reputation. Like all vain men, Sheikh Abdullah developed the illusion that he was irresistible to all women and that they were but sitting ducks for him. And he certainly was as vain as a peacock.

Nehru did all he could to accommodate the Sheikh to accord special status to Kashmir in the Constitution of India even though there was considerable opposition to it. This only whetted his appetite. Other ideas entered his head.

Sheikh Abdullah wanted an independent Kashmir having good relations with both India and Pakistan. He had secret talks with some foreign powers, particularly the United States, about the future of Kashmir even though he denied it when asked repeatedly from 1950 onwards. I quote below the contents of a secret telegram sent by the American Ambassador Loy Henderson to the State Department on 29 September 1950, which was made public in Washington in July 1978:

While in Kashmir I had two secret discussions with Sheikh Abdullah, Prime Minister, at his request, during the course of which he discussed with apparent frankness some of the problems and views on the future of Kashmir. He denied with considerable emphasis stories to the effect he was pro-communist, pro-Soviet, anti-west, or anti-US.

He admitted there were two communists in his cabinet. He said during elections which have just been held they had both been defeated and he had been compelled to arrange other constituencies for them. He could not afford to have a split with communists and fellow-travellers at the present juncture since they would turn on the National Conference in the same way that Chinese communists turned against Knomintang. He had to get along with them as best as he could so long as the future of Kashmir was undetermined.

He was also compelled to take certain measures such as breaking up of large estates without compensation to land-owners,



nationalization of certain enterprises etc in order that the National Conference rather than the communists should get credit with the people. Therefore so long as there was a possibility that there would at some time be a popular vote as to the future of Kashmir, the National Conference must do as much for peasants and workers as communists could reasonably promise to do.

He is not unaware of the dangers of communism but he was convinced his present course was the best method of meeting this danger. He personally had no hope for the economic future of Kashmir regardless whether it went to India or Pakistan or became independent unless it would have friendly interest and economic cooperation of the US.

In discussing the future of Kashmir, Abdullah was vigorous in restating that in his opinion it should be independent; that an overwhelming majority of the population desired this independence; and that he had reason to believe that some Azad Kashmir leaders desired independence and would be willing to co-operate with leaders of the National Conference if there was reasonable chance that such co-operation would result in independence. The Kashmir people could not understand why the UN consistently ignored independence as one of the possible solutions for Kashmir. It had held a special Assembly to deal with independence for Palestine which was smaller in area and population and less economically viable than Kashmir.

Kashmir people had a language and cultural background of their own. Their Hindus, by custom and tradition, widely differed from Hindus in India and in outlook and background. Their Moslems were also quite different from Moslems of Pakistan. The fact was that the population of Kashmir was homogenous in spite of the presence of a Hindu minority.

When I asked Abdullah if he thought that Kashmir could remain a stable independent country without the friendly support of India and Pakistan, he replied in the negative. In his opinion an independent Kashmir could exist only in case it had the friendship of both India and Pakistan, in case both these countries had friendly relations with each other; and in case the USA through the UN or directly would enable it, by investments or other economic assistance, to develop its magnificent resources. Adherence of Kashmir to India would not lead in the foreseeable future to improving the miserable economic lot of the population. There were so many areas in India in urgent need of economic development. He was convinced that Kashmir would get relatively little attention.

Never-the-less, it would be preferable for Kashmir to go to India than to Pakistan. It would be disastrous for Kashmiris to be brought under the control of a Government with a medieval Koranic outlook.

If it became necessary to compromise, the Sheikh would have been content to leave Jammu and Ladakh to India and Azad Kashmir to Pakistan as the price for India and Pakistan guaranteeing the independence of the valley. He had grandiose ideas of an alliance with the United States which would bring in massive American investment which could transform the valley into a Switzerland of Asia.

All available information indicated that Sheikh Abdullah was trying to go his own way. Reports from the Intelligence Bureau, impressions of journalists and visitors to Kashmir tallied with what some of Sheikh Abdullah's own colleagues have been saying.

Kingsley Martin, editor of the *New Statesman and Nation*, a shrewd observer and political commentator, after a visit to Kashmir early in the fifties, said in private that he was convinced that Sheikh Abdullah was not interested in Jammu and Ladakh, that his ultimate aim was the creation of the valley as an independent Sheikhdom enjoying hereditary succession with close ties with the United States.

In an interview to Khushwant Singh, published in the *Illustrated Weekly of India* dated 21 April 1974, Sheikh Abdullah said of the pre-1953 period "when I protested against the rejection of all Muslim candidates for jobs in the Post and Telegraph Department, instead of questioning their own pretensions of secularism, Indians began to question my secularism and cast aspersions on my loyalty to India." When Khushwant Singh said "surely not Pandit Nehru," the Sheikh conceded "no not Nehru" and added a back-hander "Nehru remained in the clouds. First it was Sardar Patel. He never wanted Kashmir to be part of India. He did not like my being close to Nehru. When he failed to create differences between us, he had surrounded Nehru with his own cronies who kept poisoning his mind against me—men like Mehrchand Mahajan, M.O. Mathai, Jai Narain Vyas, and Ajit Prasad Jain." When I read this, I wondered if Sheikh Abdullah had gone insane. Mehr Chand Mahajan, who became the Chief Justice of India, never surrounded Nehru. In fact Nehru kept him at a distance. Ajit Prasad Jain was not a crony of Sardar Patel but a lieutenant of Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and did not surround Nehru. Poor Jai Narain Vyas also did not surround Nehru. Neither was he a crony of Sardar Patel. In fact he had a soft corner for Sheikh Abdullah. Only I surrounded Nehru, and nobody ever accused me of being a crony of

Sardar Patel. There was no need for me to poison Nehru's mind as there were so many at it. The entire Nehru family, with the exception of Indira who kept herself aloof, not excluding Feroze Gandhi and Padmaja Naidu, wholly distrusted Sheikh Abdullah and had dinned into Nehru's ears that Sheikh Abdullah was unreliable and would let him down badly one day. Feroze Gandhi, in particular, was a deadly enemy of Sheikh Abdullah. This enmity had its origin in something personal during the brief period of his honeymoon spent in Kashmir in the summer of 1942. When Feroze Gandhi heard of the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah in 1953 he came to my study beaming. He said that Bakshi did a foolish thing in arresting Sheikh Abdullah, and added that Bakshi should have had Sheikh Abdullah taken to the top of a lonely hill on the Azad Kashmir border, pushed down and shot, and published the news that Abdullah had fled to Pakistan.

All the actions of Sheikh Abdullah during several months preceding his ouster in 1953 fitted into his grand design. At least from 1950 onwards all the colleagues of Sheikh Abdullah, with the exception of Mirza Afzal Beg, were at logger-heads with him for two main reasons: (1) Sheikh Abdullah's extreme reluctance to frankly discuss matters and his tendency to expect his colleagues to fall in line with his whims; (2) his refusal to initiate certain obvious steps, including the extension of the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of India to the state, arising from the broad decision accepting the accession of the State to India. Sheikh Abdullah was interested in all the rights but not in any of the obligations. He snubbed Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and publicly insulted Maulana Abul Kalam Azad on Id Day at the Idgah congregation in Srinagar. These were the two men who genuinely wanted to correct him in a friendly way and to help and support him. But by that time Sheikh Abdullah had become such an unbalanced person that he was in no mood to be corrected or helped. His government was disintegrating and his only supporter in the Council of Ministers was Mirza Afzal Beg. He became rude and arrogant and went to the extent of telling Ajit Prasad Jain that he found no difference between Nehru and Syma Prasad Mookerji, and also threatened that he would set fire to the state. Sheikh Abdullah and Afzal Beg finally unleashed mass hysteria in the valley by openly challenging the accession, questioning the presence of Indian forces in the state, and demanding the right of self-determination through a plebiscite to be held under the supervision of an international authority. Maulana Azad and Rafi Ahmed Kidwai were perturbed. Nehru invited Sheikh Abdullah to come to Delhi to talk over matters. Sheikh Abdullah refused. Maulana Azad, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, Gopalaswami Ayyangar and Nehru came to the

painful conclusion that the time had come to choose between two evils.

One day in 1953 Nehru called me and said he wanted something brief to be typed, but did not wish to give it to any PA. I noted down the points and some of the phrases he wanted to use. Then I locked myself in my bed-room and typed out on a plain sheet of paper a "Memorandum of Instructions." It was not addressed to anyone; it was not signed by anyone. It contained the date, not even the place. Ajit Prasad Jain, a Minister and close confidant of Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, took the sealed "Memorandum of Instructions" by air to Srinagar to be delivered to Yuvaraj Karan Singh, the Sadar Riyasat (Governor) of Kashmir. Karan Singh was to dismiss Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah from the office of Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, and to appoint Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad as his successor. No further action was to be taken against Sheikh Abdullah unless he indulged in violent activities or instigated violence.

Later, when I conveyed the news that Sheikh Abdullah was arrested, Nehru was annoyed. Recourse to arrest was to be taken only if Sheikh Abdullah put himself in the wrong. He rang up Karan Singh and expressed his disapproval of the action taken. He could do nothing more. What actually happened was that Bakshi took preemptive action. Bakshi had absolutely no doubt that Sheikh Abdullah would break the law and create disturbances. He took the bull by the horns. The central intervention in Kashmir met with widespread approval by the press and public in India. Nehru pocketed the compliment though he was apprehensive of international reactions.

One of the reviewers of my first book asked why I did not say anything about the report that Nehru wept when he heard the news of Sheikh Abdullah's arrest in 1953. The reason is that I had never heard such a story. The report is totally incorrect. It must have emanated from some interested people.

The Intelligence Bureau succeeded in leading Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad up the garden path by fabricating conspiracy charges against Sheikh Abdullah accusing him of collusion with Pakistan. Ultimately the conspiracy case had to be withdrawn.

Sheikh Abdullah was released from prison in 1964 during the Chief Ministership of G.M. Sadiq before Nehru's death.

Sheikh Abdullah's long incarceration made him bitter and suspicious. It was but a natural human reaction. However, it was unwise, in the extreme, for him to show his nationality as "Kashmiri" in his application for an Indian passport. It is just like a man from the Nilgiri Hills saying that his nationality is "Toda." A similar foolish

act on the part of M. Karunanidhi is on record before he came to power in Tamil Nadu. In the register of a luxury hotel in Madras, where he stayed for some days for writing a film script, he wrote down his nationality as "Dravidian."

Soon after his release in 1964 Sheikh Abdullah was at his old pet game again—the ultimate creation of independent Kashmir. He embarked upon an attempt to bring India and Pakistan together for a lasting settlement of the Kashmir question. He persuaded Nehru, by then an ill man, to let him go to Islamabad for talks with President Ayub Khan. When the news of this got published, public reaction was unfavourable. In this connection two pieces of disquieting news reached me:

(1) A Brigadier of Army Headquarters said at a party that the army felt very strongly about recent political developments in Kashmir and added that there would be trouble if any weakening was shown by the Prime Minister in regard to Kashmir's accession to India because the army did not want to have the shameful feeling that its soldiers shed their blood in vain. The Prime Minister let down the army once by ordering a cease-fire when our army was poised for clearing the raiders and Pakistanis from the entire Jammu and Kashmir area. It was the Prime Minister who created Azad Kashmir and not Pakistan. The army had enough humiliations after Independence; and it was not going to stomach the pusillanimity of politicians any more.

(2) A major in the army said openly at the Delhi railway station that if the Prime Minister did any monkey tricks in regard to Kashmir, he would have to go the same way as Gandhi.

On 28 April 1964 I communicated these to the Prime Minister for two main reasons:

(a) The Prime Minister was never used to calling for an appraisal of the reactions of the armed forces on any vital issue.

(b) At my last meeting with him the previous day I came to the painful conclusion that Nehru was not in a mental state to take in even elementary things and that it would be dangerous for India to let him take any initiative in any important matter.

What I conveyed to the Prime Minister had the desired effect. He took steps to make it known publicly that the proposed visit of Sheikh Abdullah to Pakistan did not mean any change in India's basic position relating to Kashmir.

Nehru died while Sheikh Abdullah was having his parleys in Pakistan. He returned with the feeling that his plans had gone awry.

Sheikh Abdullah had to live in frustration for another decade. He

bitterly disapproved of India's intervention in East Pakistan which resulted in the dismemberment of Pakistan and the creation of the independent state of Bangladesh.

The reduced position of Pakistan in the sub-continent and in the world made Sheikh Abdullah realise that it was no longer possible to play India and Pakistan against each other for the fulfilment of his dreams. This realism induced him to come to terms with realities of the situation. India responded, and Sheikh Abdullah agreed to head the government in Jammu and Kashmir in 1975. His national Conference won significantly in the elections which followed.

Some of the recent actions of Sheikh Abdullah remind one of the proverbial cat which is suspicious of cold water, having once fallen into hot water. Sheikh Abdullah sees the ghost of "1953" lurking in every corner. That partly explains his unbecoming action in compelling members of his council of ministers and his party legislators to take a pledge of personal allegiance to him. It also partly explains his break with Mirza Afzal Beg, a close colleague of 45 years standing and who stood by him in his difficult days. These are unhealthy symptoms of personality cult and dynastic tendencies. Or has the Sheikh become shaky? Fear is a bad companion for the "Lion of Kashmir." Really he has nothing to fear but fear itself.

## 29 *Some Ministers*

Even with an unassailable position in a party with overwhelming majority in Parliament, ministry-making in a vast country with much diversity was not an easy matter for Nehru. All kinds of interests like religious minorities, women, scheduled castes and tribes, regional, linguistic, experienced, old, young with promise etc had to be taken into consideration. Efforts to accommodate all the competing interests often ended up in the efficiency of the cabinet and council of ministers becoming a casualty. To some extent this imbalance was redressed by bringing in some competent men into the cabinet from outside and subsequently getting them elected to the Rajya Sabha.

Barring a few exceptions, more especially after Sardar Patel's death, Nehru's colleagues were not men who would frankly speak out in his presence. Many were tongue-tied before him, some were ever anxious not to displease him, and some tried to find out in advance what was likely to please him. Nearly all had an awe of him. The net result was that Nehru was not well served by his colleagues. This has also happened to other great leaders who towered over their colleagues in Parliamentary democracies. A striking recent example was Winston Churchill.

In my first book I have written about several prominent colleagues of Nehru in the government. In this chapter I shall write briefly about some ministers.

### *C.D. Deshmukh*

He was an outstanding ICS officer who ended up as the Deputy Governor and later Governor of the Reserve Bank of India during British times. Nehru wanted to include Deshmukh in the interim government in September 1946. Deshmukh had just then retired from the Reserve Bank of India. He told Nehru about his family troubles and that he wanted to make a final effort at reconciliation with his English wife. After conveying his excuses to Nehru, he went to England where his wife was staying in estrangement. Deshmukh's mission ended in failure. He even suffered the humiliation of being called "blackie"

by his daughter. Deshmukh ultimately returned to India after the final break with his wife.

Dushmukh was appointed a member of the Planning Commission when it was constituted. When John Matthai resigned from the Government on the 25 May 1950, Deshmukh was appointed as the Finance Minister. He continued to be a member of the Planning Commission as long as he was in the Government.

Though his background was that of a civil servant, as Finance Minister, Deshmukh showed considerable flexibility. He was a welcome change from John Matthai rigidity.

For the 1951/52 general election to the Lok Sabha Deshmukh had told me that he had decided not to accept my financial contribution from any one because he happened to be the Finance Minister. He set apart a sum much below the limit prescribed in the election law and restricted his expenditure accordingly. He won the election comfortably. He was happy that the Prime Minister adjusted his Maharashtra election tour programme in such a way as to visit his constituency.

Some time after Deshmukh became Finance Minister there were unprecedented floods in Bihar. The Prime Minister visited the state. He was moved by the sight of the damage, death and destruction caused by the fury of Kosi, Bihar's river of sorrow. He announced that the Kosi dam would be included in the plan. Deshmukh was incensed by the Prime Minister's action in making a public announcement committing the government without consulting the Finance Minister and the Planning Commission. He wrote to the Prime Minister in rather intemperate language objecting to what he did. It was a legitimate reaction on the part of the Finance Minister. But it was not legitimate on the part of the Finance Minister to tell some prominent Bombay industrialists that he would see to it that the Prime Minister ate his words. In fact the occasion for that did not arise as the Kosi project was ultimately sanctioned by the government.

Soon after Deshmukh became Finance Minister, I discussed with two persons of wide experience in administration the question of decentralization of financial powers. The persons were Narahari Rao, Comptroller and Auditor-General of India, who was a former Finance Secretary, and Asok K. Chanda, Secretary in the Ministry of Production, who was a former Financial Commissioner in the Railway Board and Financial Adviser in the Defence Ministry. The idea was that within the limitations of the budget the departmental ministers, aided and advised by the finance officers, should be the final authority for financial sanctions and not the Finance Ministers. This would eliminate needless delays. Several ministers had previously complained to the Prime Minis-



ter about the functioning of the Finance Ministry as an octopus reducing departmental ministers to non-entities and causing inordinate delays. At my suggestion both Narahari Rao and Asok Chanda sent notes on the subject and how to process the matter. The Prime Minister took it up with Deshmukh and told him that he would like the matter to be discussed at a series of informal meetings at which he himself, the Finance Minister (Deshmukh), the Education Minister (Maulana Azad), the Home Minister and the Comptroller and Auditor-General should be present. The Prime Minister also proposed that the Cabinet Secretary and the Secretary in the Ministry of Production (Asok K. Chanda), who had already been chosen to be the next Comptroller and Auditor-General, should be in attendance. Copies of the notes of Narahari Rao and Asok Chanda were also circulated to all concerned.

In his reaction Deshmukh was subjective. He viewed the proposal as a move to curb his empire. His ire fell on Asok Chanda. Deshmukh wrote to the Prime Minister objecting to the proposal. He also wrote that he regretted having agreed to the appointment of Asok K. Chanda as the Comptroller and Auditor-General and asked for its cancellation. There was a threat that, if the appointment was not cancelled, he would be compelled to resign from the government. I advised the PM to ignore the threat and told him that Deshmukh would not resign. In the mean time I seized the opportunity of turning the table on Deshmukh. I requested his friend N.R. Pillai to advise Deshmukh not to send any formal letter of resignation because of the possibility of the Prime Minister accepting it. Deshmukh did not send his resignation and chose to "eat his words."

The meetings suggested by the Prime Minister took place and the subject to decentralization of financial powers was discussed. As a result some changes took place. The changes were completed during the first tenure of Morarji Deasi as Finance Minister.

The failure of his marriage to an English woman and the mental sufferings accruing from it drove Deshmukh to go to the other extreme. He decided to marry Durgabai, a middle-aged Congress woman from Andhra Pradesh, who was a childless widow. Most people were surprised when the marriage took place. Durgabai is a thoroughly unsophisticated person. She was a member of the Planning Commission at the time of marriage. Earlier she was a member of Parliament, but was defeated in the first general election.

The first person Deshmukh told about his decision to marry was N.R. Pillai. The second was myself. After that he sent for P.K. Panikkar who was a sanskrit scholar and an amateur astrologer. Deshmukh gave Panikkar his own horoscope and that of Durgabai

without disclosing that he had actually decided to marry. After examining the horoscopes, Panikkar told Deshmukh that it would be an ill-matched marriage which would end in his political eclipse. Panikkar strongly advised against the marriage. Deshmukh told him that it was too late to break off. Later, Panikkar got the information that a professional astrologer recommended the marriage saying that it would give Deshmukh political strength. Panikkar's information was that Durgabai had brought in the professional astrologer.

Before Deshmukh broke the news to the Prime Minister, I reminded him that it was on his recommendation contained in a personal hand-written note that the Prime Minister appointed Durgabai as a member of the Planning Commission, and that he would do well to clear this matter with the Prime Minister. At the meeting with the Prime Minister, Deshmukh told him that when he made the recommendation about Durgabai's inclusion in the Planning Commission, he had no intention of marrying her. When the marriage took place in Durgabai's house on Akbar Road I was present with the Prime Minister and a few others at the civil registration ceremony.

Soon after the marriage, Durgabai was relieved of the membership of the Planning Commission and was appointed Chairman of the newly-created Central Social Welfare Board.

Rumours about fantastic astrological predictions and Deshmukh spread like wild fire after his marriage and even reached the Prime Minister. They were assiduously spread by females in Parliament who grew jealous of Durgabai. They spread the news that both Deshmukh and Durgabai were terribly under the influence of astrology.

During the Prime Minister's visit to Norway, the offer to start a fishery project in India was made by the Norwegian government. In fact the Norwegian Minister for Fisheries spoke to me about it before the formal offer was made. He asked me where I would recommend that it should be located. I replied "Kerala because your project is for sea-fishing and Kerala has a long coast-line." He made a note of this.

Later, in India, when the matter was processed, Deshmukh, as Finance Minister and Member of the Planning Commission, expressed his preference for Palvel in Maharashtra for the location of the Norwegian fishery project. Palvel happened to be in Deshmukh's Parliamentary constituency. Information about this reached me before a formal decision was taken. I told the Prime Minister about it, and his intervention settled the matter. That is how the Norwegian Fishery Project came to be located at Neendakara in Kerala.

Deshmukh was not destined to be in government for long. As a

Maharashtrian he was exercised over the non-inclusion of Bombay in the Maharashtra state when government's decisions were made on the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission. He resigned on 24 July 1956. Nehru held charge of the Finance Ministry temporarily until T. T. Krishnamachari was appointed Finance Minister on the 1 September 1956.

Maulana Azad continued to have a soft corner for Deshmukh. On the Maulana's recommendation, Deshmukh was appointed Chairman of the University Grants Commission. Later he became the Vice Chancellor of the Delhi University. After completing his term as Vice Chancellor, Deshmukh retired from public life.

### *Dr John Matthai*

In my first book I have written something about John Matthai. He studied economics in England and became a professor at the Madras University. He was picked up by the British and appointed as a member of the Tariff Commission of which he became Chairman subsequently—a position which had the status of an Additional Secretary to the Government of India. As Chairman of the Tariff Commission John Matthai is reported to have shown some favours to the Tatas on steel. This annoyed the British who sent him out as the Director-General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics in Calcutta—a post which did not enjoy more than the status of a Joint Secretary to the Government of India. Eventually John Matthai resigned and joined the Tata Group of industries as a Director. He came into contact with Nehru in his capacity as Chairman of the National Planning Committee appointed by the Indian National Congress.

While in Bombay as a Director of the Tatas, John Matthai was actively connected with the formulation of the "Bombay Plan"—a project sponsored by prominent Indian Industrialists.

In my first book I have dealt with John Matthai's entry into the interim government in September 1946 as finance member, his transfer to railways when the Muslim League joined the interim government, and appointment as Finance Minister in the dominion government on the exit of R. K. Shanmukham Chetty.

Many people considered that by 1946 John Matthai was out-of-date in economics. They doubted if in economic theory he had advanced from what is contained in the "Wealth of Nations" by Adam Smith. They were not sure if he was influenced by John Maynard Keynes whose books "Treatise on Money" and "The General Theory of

Employment, Interest and Money” profoundly influenced the economic thought and government policy all over the world.

As a man set in his views, he disliked taking advice from economic advisers within the Government of India. Dr P.J. Thomas, Economic Adviser in the Finance Ministry, became his earliest antipathy. Thomas was John Matthai’s successor at the Madras University and had a good standing as an economist. John Matthai could not stand the sight of Dr Gyan Chand, an economist whom Nehru thought well of before he entered the government. One can’t blame John Matthai for his attitude towards Gyan Chand because the latter was a woolly-headed person.

As Finance Minister John Matthai was not much more than a calculating machine. He lacked social consciousness, compassion and vision so essential in a Finance Minister of an underdeveloped country which had to catch up with time after accepting universal adult suffrage. And he had absolutely no political background or understanding. He was, however, a man of personal financial integrity. It is recognised that a liberal person will tend to become conservative after working in financial administration, and a conservative person tends to become rigid. John Matthai belonged to the latter category.

During the first year of John Matthai’s Finance Ministership a silly thing happened in which I got involved. The Budget Officer in the Finance Ministry sent the budget papers under double cover marked TOP Secret and heavily sealed to A.V. Pai, Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister. He opened it and got a fright when he discovered that it was the budget. He hastened to my room with the file and put it on my table as if he was getting rid of a time-bomb. That good and honest man said “we are all compromised; please give it to the Prime Minister personally.” I said “I have not seen it; why compromise me?; Why don’t you give it to the Prime Minister yourself?.” Before I finished the sentence he had hurried out of the room as if the time-bomb was about to explode.

It was the usual practice for the Prime Minister and the President to see the budget in advance and to initial it. I did not wish to have a second experience like this. I rang up the Budget Officer and asked him to come over. When he came, I told him that a new procedure had to be adopted in getting the initials of the Prime Minister and the President on the budget. I said the Budget Officer should fix an appointment with the Prime Minister and come personally with the budget, hand it over to him, get his initials and take it back. The President should also be dealt with in the same manner. This would ensure secrecy and avoid embarrassment to others. I also said that on

these errands he should be accompanied by at least one security guard. Then I told him "I have not looked at the papers which were placed on my table by A.V. Pai. Now you take up the papers and come with me to the Prime Minister's room." There the formalities were completed on the spot. This practice continues to this day.

In my previous book I have narrated an incident involving one of his sons which coloured John Matthai's attitude towards Nehru—an attitude which ultimately bordered on hostility. This came to the fore when Nehru constituted the Planning Commission. The man who was intimately connected with the "Bombay Plan" suddenly opposed planning. He was subjective in his reaction. He thought that the importance of his position as Finance Minister would be minimized, as if he was going to be Finance Minister for life! He pictured the Planning Commission, with the Prime Minister as its Chairman, as a super-cabinet. He publicly stated that the Planning Commission would be a fifth wheel in the coach, and resigned. Nehru had no hesitation in accepting the resignation. This happened on the 25 May 1950, on the eve of Nehru's departure for Indonesia on a good-will visit. An unseemly exchange of public statements followed between John Matthai sitting in Delhi on solid ground and Nehru sitting in the naval cruiser INS Delhi floating on the high seas. John Matthai was succeeded by C.D. Deshmukh as Finance Minister.

John Matthai lost no time in rejoining the Tatas as a Director. He wrote a short series of articles in the *Times of India* in which he paid tribute to Nehru as the most inspiring man he had worked with.

In the 1951/52 general elections John Matthai filed his nomination to fight the election to Lok Sabha from the Kottayam parliamentary constituency as an Independent against the Congress. A local Congressmen filed an objection under the relevant provision of the election laws saying that John Matthai was a Director of a company having contacts with the Government of India. The Returning Officer upheld the objection and rejected John Matthai's nomination papers. Thus ended his attempt to enter Parliament on his own.

### *N.V. Gadgil*

A typical Maharashtrian Brahmin and an old Congressman, Gadgil was a protege of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. It was on the latter's recommendation that Nehru took Gadgil into the cabinet on 15 August 1947, and gave him the portfolio of Works, Mines and Power. At that time "Power" included "Irrigation" also.

Gadgil had all the cunning of the Peshwas but not their efficiency.

He was, however, quick in his decisions some of which were not tempered by wisdom.

As an ardent supporter of Vallabhbhai Patel, he considered that denigration of Nehru was part of his mission. For this purpose he gathered round him some carefully selected journalists to whom he disclosed trends in cabinet discussions. It never occurred to Gadgil that he owed some loyalty to the Prime Minister. Many of the leakages of cabinet secrets were traced to Gadgil by the Intelligence Bureau.

Gadgil was an obscurantist in caste and class consciousness. He took great delight in building separate residential colonies in Delhi for government servants of various grades and naming them "appropriately." The colony for peons and chaprasis was christened "*Seva Nagar*;" the one for clerks was christened "*Vinaya Nagar*;" the one for junior officer grade was christened "*Man Nagar*;" and the one for higher grade officers was christened "*Shan Nagar*."

The quarters for the lowest-paid government employees were located as far away from the Secretariat as possible involving long pedelling on bicycles. For those who can afford to maintain cars, residences were as near the Secretariat as possible. Once I suggested to him to build a residential colony for ministers and senior-most officials with cars on the outskirts of Delhi and see that their cooks were given quarters only in "*Seva Nagar*," PAS in "*Vinaya Nagar*" and Private Secretaries in "*Man Nagar*"—all several miles apart. I also suggested that the exclusive colony be christened "*Maha Mahodaya Nagar*."

While he was minister, Gadgil's wife died. In keeping with the Indian practice of torturing those in bereavement by instant visitations instead of leaving them alone for a while, people rushed with long faces to offer their condolences to HM (Honourable Minister). Gadgil, with his capacity for quick decisions, confounded every one by marrying again within a month. This made the following Sanskrit lines come powerfully to my mind:

*Mathru Dukham Nirantharam,  
Bharthru Dukham Punar Bhariya.*

Though with no RSS sympathies, Gadgil was not free from communalism. After partition this communalism developed into fierce hostility towards Pakistan. He was totally opposed to the attitude of Gandhi and Nehru. Left to himself he would have welcomed the migration of all Muslims from India to Pakistan. He had no use for Maulana Azad and Rafi Ahmed Kidwai.

Before the Indus Water Treaty was signed by India and Pakistan, the sharing of waters flowing from India through Pakistan was beset by constant disputes. While the subject of irrigation and power was with Gadgil, he took delight in playing monkey tricks. He was a man who had no capacity to see beyond his nose. He was woefully lacking in statesmanship. On one occasion he exceeded all limits by drastically reducing supply of water to Pakistan. When there were protests, there were immediate denials. Finally Pakistan flew foreign observers and foreign journalists over vast areas of parched earth in west Punjab. Tell-tale photographs were published in newspapers in Pakistan and abroad. India was put in an awkward position. Nehru was deeply upset. He summoned a meeting of representatives of the Punjab government and senior civil, engineering and technical officers of Gadgil's ministry. Gadgil himself was present. Nehru asked for explanations. No valid explanation was forthcoming. Gadgil made a feeble attempt to defend the indefensible. Nehru shouted at him and asked him to resign. This was the only time that Nehru asked a cabinet colleague to resign in the presence of officials and other subordinates. Nehru did not follow up and press for the resignation. However, "Irrigation and Power" was taken away from Gadgil to constitute a separate ministry.

After the 1956/57 general elections Nehru refused to take Gadgil into the government. Subsequently Gadgil was sent as a governor which he gave up in disgust after a brief experience.

### *Sri Prakasa (1890-1971)*

Son of the renowned Sanskrit scholar and philosopher of Banaras, Dr Bhagwan Das, Sri Prakasa was a personal friend and contemporary of Nehru at Cambridge. The friendship between the two was abiding and life-long, cemented by common endeavour and suffering in the cause of India's freedom. They called each other by first names. Nehru called him "Prakasa" and the latter called Nehru "Jawaharlal."

There was something child-like about Sri Prakasa. He was a guileless person. He would open his heart to Nehru even in regard to the troubles with his children. He was such a sensitive soul that he had a sad and tortured look.

In the early years of independence Sri Prakasa was a man on whose reliability and loyalty Nehru could depend and to whom he turned when he needed such a person. Nehru chose him as the first Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan in 1947. He served in Karachi

in the formative and difficult stage in Indo-Pakistan relations in an atmosphere surcharged with suspicion, hate and animosity. He acquitted himself admirably with his sincerity, innate goodness and friendliness under extremely trying conditions.

From Karachi he was brought to Delhi and appointed as Minister of Commerce and Industry where he lost himself completely. As a minister he was fair-minded but was so gullible that he could be easily misled. Neither was he interested in the subjects he had to deal with.

Sri Prakasa was successively Governor of Assam, the composite state of Madras, and Maharashtra. As a Governor he was excellent. His political stature, his endearing old-world courtesy and capacity to entertain well, unlike some of the ancient ruins appointed as governors recently, stood him in good stead.

When he was appointed Governor of Madras he asked me if I could recommend an elderly woman who could be his house-keeper. I spoke to Indira and she agreed to part with an elderly Danish woman who was then in the Prime Minister's House. Her name was Anna Ornholt.

Anna Ornholt was a character. She came to India as a relatively young person in search of philosophy. For several years she was a companion of Lady Bose, wife of the great scientist Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose. Later she became governess of Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit's three daughters. In Allahabad Indira inherited her from her aunt. In 1946, when Nehru moved to Delhi, Anna Ornholt returned to Denmark. In 1948, soon after Nehru shifted to the Prime Minister's House, Indira asked me if she could ask Anna Ornholt to come back. Anna Ornholt was in correspondence with Indira and had offered to return to India at her own expense. Indira said that, apart from food, Anna need be given only a small pocket allowance as she would be getting an old-age pension from Denmark. Indira thought that since her children were small, Anna would be of help to her. I told her that Anna was too old; life in the Prime Minister's House was different from what it was in Anand Bhawan; the Prime Minister's House was an official residence where foreign guests would be staying and official parties would be held, and if Anna was excluded from these she would feel slighted; if she attended parties and wished to be present at all meals it would be a source of embarrassment. I left it to Indira to decide after mentioning the matter to the Prime Minister. She decided to ask Anna to come hoping that she would be able to solve some of the problems I had posed.

Anna came. Rajiv and Sanjay used to call her Tantana. She was a vegetarian living mostly on raw grated vegetables, some greens.



chapatis, nuts and milk products. As I did in Allahabad, I used to call her "the squirrel." Old Anna, with her wrinkled leathery face, did not want to be left out of anything. In a couple of years Indira discovered that Anna had become too old and was more of a nuisance than help.

Anna Ornsholt, who knew Sri Prakasa personally, gladly joined him in Madras. She had a special attachment to south India. After being in Raj Bhawan in Madras for some considerable time, Anna herself decided to retire from active life. Her departure synchronized with Sri Prakasa's transfer to Bombay. She joined a couple of old philosophically-minded Indian friends, acquired a house at Kotagiri in the Nilgiris and settled down there, and subsequently died there.

In 1952 Sri Prakasa, as the Governor of the composite state of Madras, came in for a severe drubbing from Nehru. In the general elections of 1952 the Congress in the Madras State fared poorly. Out of 367 seats in the State Legislative Assembly the Congress secured only 152. The heaviest losses were in the Andhra and Malabar regions. Several Congress stalwarts like Chief Minister Kumaraswami Raja, M. Bhaktavatsalam, N. Sanjeeva Reddy and B. Gopala Reddy fell by the wayside. A formidable opposition led by the indomitable T. Prakasam supported by Tenneti Viswanatham, under the name of United Democratic Front, emerged. The Communist party had a sizeable strength of 63. No party was in a position to form a government by itself. Initially the Congress reconciled itself to functioning as an opposition party, leaving the other parties to come together to form a government. This meant the Communist party coming into the cabinet as coalition partners which was a prospect disliked by many. The Congress had no outstanding leader in the Assembly. In that difficult situation friends and foes of Rajaji in the Congress turned to him as the deliverer. Rajaji, who was living in retirement after being Governor-General and later Union Home Minister, allowed himself to be persuaded by Kumaraswami Raja, Bhaktavatsalam, Kamaraj, Sanjeeva Reddy and others to enter the local fray. His only condition was that it should have the approval of Nehru.

C. Subramaniam and Soundaram Ramachandran were sent to Delhi to obtain Nehru's consent. They approached Nehru through N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar. In the meantime Governor Sri Prakasa had appraised Nehru of the situation over the telephone. Initially Nehru was not confident that Rajaji would be prepared to undertake the responsibility. In giving his consent Nehru expressed the hope that Rajaji would contest a by-election within six months.

Subramaniam fixed Nehru by saying that this was not so far considered.

When Subramaniam returned from Delhi and reported that Nehru had agreed, Rajaji pointedly asked "did you make any commitment on my contesting an election?" Subramaniam said "No."

Rajaji succeeded in winning over some splinter groups, including the Justice party, and independents and, in the process, did not hesitate to indulge in horse-trading by promising a ministership to one M.A. Manickavelu. This resulted in a slender majority for the Congress in the Legislative Assembly.

On the formation of the ministry by Rajaji, Sri Prakasa, who was a weak man with poor judgment, was prevailed upon to nominate Rajaji, on the advice of the outgoing Chief Minister, to the Upper House. This came as a shock to Nehru who felt that he was tricked by C. Subramaniam. In later years C. Subramaniam had to pay a heavy price for Nehru's distrust of him. After the 1962 general elections Nehru family turned down a suggestion to make Subramaniam the Union Finance Minister. Kamaraj also was not in favour of it.

Nehru considered Sri Prakasa's action as politically improper though not constitutionally illegal. He rang up Sri Prakasa and gave him a bit of his mind. Poor Sri Prakasa, meek and mild as he was, got shaken and offered to resign. The crisis, however, below over. Nehru never got reconciled to this. It marked the beginning of the parting of the ways between Nehru and Rajaji.

Rajaji, the hair-splitter and onion-peeler, however, had an argument even for the indefensible. He talked about shadow and substance and about the futility of chasing the shadow. He certainly would have found a contrary argument if the situation applied to someone else.

At an early session of the Legislative Assembly Rajaji clearly spelt out his attitude towards the communists. He said that he was their enemy number one and that they were his enemy number one, and that he would function on that basis all along the line.

With the separation of Andhra, Tamil Nadu had a fairly safe majority in the Legislative Assembly. But this did not make things smooth for Rajaji. Without proper consultation with any one he introduced a novel education system in schools on the basis of half-time work with parents. This generated fierce opposition from E.V. Ramaswami Naicker and his Dravida Kazhagam. Even some Congressmen joined in the chorus of protest. They looked upon the new system as a diabolic innovation brought about by a Brahmin to perpetuate caste system. In a mood of frustration Rajaji left the govern-

ment. He was succeeded by K. Kamaraj as Chief Minister. Progressively Rajaji became estranged from the Congress and his old colleagues and the rest of the story is well-known.

Sri Prakasa was governor of the composite state of Madras while Potti Sriramulu undertook a fast unto death for the creation of an Andhra state. When Potti Sriramulu reached a critical stage and his life appeared to be in danger, Nehru happened to be in Bombay. Sri Prakasa rang me up after midnight. He sounded a deeply depressed and bewildered man. He wanted to speak to the Prime Minister; but I said I would not like to wake him up. Nehru did not believe in Napoleon's dictum: "wake me up when the news is bad; good news can wait till the morning." Sri Prakasa did not wish to insist; but within an hour he rang me up again and pleaded with me to wake up the PM. I did so with extreme reluctance. As I expected, Nehru exploded on the telephone and made it clear that he would do nothing under duress. Potti Sriramulu died. Ultimately a new Andhra state was carved out of the composite state of Madras.

After serving a term as Governor of Maharashtra, Sri Prakasa retired from public life and settled down in Dehra Dun leading a quiet life. He passed away in 1971.

### *Satya Narain Sinha*

Satya Narain Sinha was a member of the Central Legislative Assembly before independence. He became a member of the Constituent Assembly in 1946 and continued to be a Member of Parliament until he was appointed Governor of Madhya Pradesh around 1970. Since 1946 he had been chief whip of the Congress in Parliament. On 15 August 1947, as chief whip, he was appointed as Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs. He was an unconcealed partisan supporter of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

Rafi Ahmed Kidwai was a sworn opponent of Satya Narain Sinha. Once Rafi got hold of some information about certain financial dealings of Satya Narain Sinha and reported it to the Prime Minister. Sinha had to do a great deal of explaining before he was let off the hook.

I once told Rafi, while Sardar Patel was alive, that his apprehension that Sinha was dangerous to Nehru was misplaced. I added that "I would rather suspect you than Satya Narain." He asked me why. I said "imitation is the best form of flattery. See how every new sherwani of Nehru is duplicated by Satya Narain; see how he is imitating Nehru by always having a rose bud in button-hole. He has

no ambition beyond becoming a cabinet minister. He is a harmless cissy."

Soon after Patel's death, Sinha came to Nehru, while I happened to be with him, and said "until the Sardar's death my loyalty was to him. I am a one man's dog. From now on my loyalty is to you." The Prime Minister told him that there was no need to pledge loyalty to an individual, and that his loyalty should be to the organization. The attitude of Satya Narain Sinha reminded me of the speech of an old Maharaja of Cochin at a banquet to Viceroy Lord Willingdon in which he said that the ruling house of Cochin had been successively loyal to the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French, and the British."

Sinha could think only in Hindi. His speaking in English was the result of a quick translation of his Hindi thoughts. For example, whenever he telephoned me he would begin by saying "I speaking Satya Narain."

Sinha would be uncomfortable if he did not apply *Athar* (Indian scent) on him few times a day. I asked him once how he acquired this feminine habit and where exactly he applied the scent. To my surprise he confessed that he applied *athar* behind his ear-lobes. In fact most MPs referred to Satya Narain Sinha as "*Athar*."

Like most of the superficial men, he was anxious to put on an air of scholarship. On the slightest provocation he would break into reciting *shlokas* from Tulsidas' *Ramayana*. He could also quote from *Surdas*. The peasants of UP also know by heart chunks of Tulsidas' *Ramayana*. I happen to know a woman MP who was considerably impressed by "Babuji's" scholarship. If any one took Sinha beyond Tulsidas and Surdas, he would find that he had a barren mind.

For five years Satya Narain Sinha was at logger-heads with another Bihari of the same name in the Lok Sabha. The other Satya Narain Sinha was a highly-strung person with incredible vehemence. He was a teller of tall tales. Many MPs believed him when he said that he was a General in the Soviet Revolutionary Army under Marshal Timoshenko, and that he was also an ace pilot who needed no airfield for landing and take off. People believed him because he was lost in Europe for a large number of years. He was the Indian counterpart of Baron Munchausen, the world's greatest liar; but he was a harmless fibber. Both the Satya Narain Sinhas accused each of opening each other's personal letters. There were frequent quarrels in the Central Hall of Parliament.

Satya Narain Sinha belonged to the tribe of Congress ministers who either left their wives in their villages or kept them under virtual *purdah* in their temporary Delhi abodes. As men of spiritual qualities

and upholders of our ancient culture they believed in the chastity of women but not in equality. Their treatment of their wives just fell short of African clitorization or enforcing the wearing of Greek chastity belts. Sinha chose to leave his wife in the village.

Some time before the passing of the Hindu Code Bill by Parliament, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya and two other elderly women spoke to me about "rescuing a young girl from the clutches of Satya Narain Sinha." I asked them if he had abducted any girl. They said "no"; but they gave me a long story. A Hindu refugee family from West Pakistan sought the help of Satya Narain Sinha. The eldest unmarried girl in the family was an educated and attractive one. Satya Narain Sinha employed her as his Private Secretary in the Department of Parliamentary Affairs. He gave her a car and also helped the family a good deal. Kamaladevi said that the girl met her and some others and expressed her extreme unhappiness and an earnest desire to sever her connections with Sinha. Kamaladevi wanted me to help the girl to get transferred to some other government job without loss of emoluments. She added that the girl was employed in the All India Radio before. I said that since the girl was not in permanent service, finding her another job would not be easy. At the instance of Kamaladevi the girl came to see me in my office in Parliament House and narrated her tale of woe. She did not want me to say a word to Sinha. She confirmed everything Kamaladevi had told me and reiterated her desire to have another job.

Somebody who saw the girl in my office, later reported to Satya Narain Sinha. He came rushing to see me the next morning. He said he was married to the girl and he did so after obtaining the consent of his wife and his grown-up children. The only condition they imposed was that the girl should not be given anything from the family property. He added that he would provide for the girl in other ways. He also told me that he was aware of the girl going to Kamaladevi and some other women and telling them that she wanted another job. I said that the girl saw me at Kamaladevi's instance and that I gathered the vague impression that she might want to see the Prime Minister. Sinha was perturbed. I asked him how and when he married her and said that nobody had heard of it. He said it was a secret marriage solemnised by the two taking vows in front of the image of their favourite goddess placed near a *tulsi* plant. I asked him about the relevance of the *tulsi* plant.

Satya Narain Sinha asked me if, in view of the possibility of the girl seeing the Prime Minister, he should see the PM and tell him everything. I said it would be in his interest to do so. That afternoon he

met the Prime Minister and told him everything and disclosed that I advised him to do so. Later the Prime Minister asked me "why did you send Satya Narain to me to waste my time?." I said "he told me a long rigmarole and asked me if he should see you. In order to get rid of him I said 'yes'." The PM smiled.

Soon after this incident, the girl left Sinha and married a businessman who was keen on marrying her for over a year.

In the last government formed by Nehru, Satya Narain Sinha was promoted as a cabinet minister in which capacity he continued under the Lal Bahadur and Indira regimes until he was sent out as Governor of Madhya Pradesh. In 1977 he retired from public life after a long innings.

#### *N. Gopaldaswami Ayyangar (and son G. Parthasarathi)*

Sir N. Gopaldaswami Ayyangar and Sir V.T. Krishnamachari were two remarkable men the Madras Provincial Civil Service threw up. They were almost like two peas in the same pod. Few ICS men could hold a candle to them in intellectual calibre and general competence as high-level administrators. Both rose to be Dewans (Prime Ministers) of important Indian States—V.T. Krishnamachari in Baroda and Jaipur and N. Gopaldaswami Ayyangar in Jammu and Kashmir.

Gopaldaswami was one of the prominent non-party men the British Cabinet Mission called in for consultations. He had a remarkable memory at an advanced age and this enabled him to prepare almost verbatim records of his important discussions with the Cabinet Mission and to send copies to Gandhi, Nehru and Sardar Patel.

The Congress nominated some eminent non-party men to be members of the Constituent Assembly in 1946. Gopaldaswami was one of them.

More than once Gopaldaswami declined to accept Nehru's invitation to join the government on the plea that he would like to concentrate his attention on the work connected with the Constituent Assembly. The third time Gopaldaswami agreed, and on 14 February 1948, joined the cabinet as Minister Without Portfolio. After the death of Sardar Patel, he became Minister of State and in 1952 assumed charge as Minister of Defence. He represented India at some of the interminable discussions in United Nations Forums in New York and Geneva on the Kashmir question. His performance was far from distinguished. He was terribly outshone by Pakistan's Sir Mohammad Zaffrullah Khan.

Two days before a journey from Delhi to Madras, which turned out

to be his last, he come to my office in the Prime Minister's Secretariat, without notice, to see me. I told him that he need not have taken the trouble and that I would have gladly gone to his house to see him. He said he was not too well and was going to Madras for a check-up by his doctors. He added that before going away he wanted to tell me something which I might keep in mind. What he wanted to say was about his only son G. Parthasarathi. He said "GP is a friend of yours. You know about his education and background. At present he is Assistant Editor of the *Hindu*. He is not particularly happy in the conservative atmosphere of the *Hindu* office. By temperament he is cut out for a diplomatic career. Keep this in your mind." I told Gopalaswami that about GP I could not agree with him more and that I was sure that opportunities for him would open up. He was visibly pleased with what I said. I went down with him to say good-bye. Little did I realise then that I was never to see him again.

Parthasarathi is an Oxford graduate. He was a good sportsman. He joined the editorial staff of the *Hindu* which is owned by his close relatives. For a time he was the *PTI* representative in London for liaison with *Reuters*, and was later the General Manager of the *PTI* with headquarters in Bombay, and after some time reverted to the *Hindu*. I have known him as an agreeable and level-headed person.

When the International Control Commissions were created for the Indo-China states of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, India was to provide their Chairmen. Krishna Menon had recommended Foreign Secretary M.J. Desai for Vietnam. The posts for the Control Commissions for Cambodia and Laos were open. I spoke to the Prime Minister and suggested the name of G. Parthasarathi for Cambodia. He liked the suggestion. He asked me to ring up Parthasarathi in Madras and ask him to come over to Delhi. He also asked me to mention the matter to Krishna Menon.

Parthasarathi came. The Prime Minister offered him the Chairmanship of the Control Commission in Cambodia—a post carrying the status of ambassador. Parthasarathi accepted.

In the meantime I had mentioned the matter to Krishna Menon, I was aware that Krishna Menon knew Parthasarathi and I was under the impression that he liked him. Krishna Menon's reaction came to me as a startling surprise. He said "you always encourage South Indian Brahmins, particularly Ayyangars. They can never be trusted. You have already committed the mistake of surrounding yourself with south Indian Brahmins in the Prime Minister's office." I told him "south Indian Brahmins happen to be the best PAs in Delhi. I tried out several from north India for the Prime Minister; but they could

not keep pace with the Prime Minister. They have only irritated him. The Prime Minister is a man in a hurry and he is impatient and cannot brook delay. Yet I have retained some from northern India. Any how only about half are from the south." I told Krishna Menon that it was unbecoming of him to condemn a whole community and that he was no different from E.V. Ramaswami Naicker of the Dravida Kazhagam. He simply replied "you will learn." I also told him that in any event Parthasarathi could not be accused of being narrow in any sense.

Despite Krishna Menon, Parthasarathi, served in Cambodia and later replaced M.J. Desai in Vietnam. Thereafter he had a series of high-level diplomatic assignments as Ambassador in Indonesia, Ambassador in China, High Commissioner in Pakistan, and India's Permanent Representative at the United Nations in New York. Then he served as the first Vice Chancellor of the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi for five years. His last assignment was as Chairman of the Policy Planning Committee in the Ministry of External Affairs where he had the ex-officio status of a Minister of State. He continued in government throughout most of the emergency period and retired on completing 65 years of age.

Gopaldaswami had the unique capacity for growing out of the cocoon of the civil service outlook, while son Parthasarathi grew into it. The manner of his retirement is also indicative of it. It did not occur to him to resign when emergency was declared. He hung on like an ordinary civil servant. The only difference was that he decided on his own age of retirement.

Gopaldaswami was one of the few persons to whom Nehru would go to clear his mind when a knotty problem presented itself. Nehru had respect for his practical wisdom and mature judgment and was always sure that he would tender disinterested advice. His death was a personal loss to Nehru.



### 30 *Face to Face With Eternity*

“Dark-heaving—boundless, endless, and sublime,  
The image of eternity”  
Byron

Confrontation with eternity is a subject which has always fascinated many. What an individual's thoughts are when he faces death and what his last words or last wish, if they can be recorded, are of immense value as a clue to his personality.

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur suffered a severe heart attack one night well past midnight in the first week of February 1964. After giving her a hot water bottle and telephoning for the doctor, I returned to the room and stood by her side. She was not able to speak; but she wanted to tell me something. She made a desperate attempt and uttered the word “Shummy” and then pointed her finger to her cheek. I knew she wanted me to kiss her on her cheek, and I sorrowfully did so. “Shummy” was Colonel Kanwar Shumshere Singh, IMS (Retd), the elder brother of Rajkumari Amrit Kaur—older by eight years. He was the brother to whom she was absolutely devoted and who always extended protection to her from her girlhood. In uttering the word “Shummy” to me, the Rajkumari was reminding me of my promise to her that I would remain with him if she preceded him. “Shummy” was the last word she uttered before she became unconscious and died. On a note of unselfishness and consideration for another ended the life of a remarkable woman.

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was born in 1887 and Colonel Kanwar Shumshere Singh in 1879. He was 85 when the Rajkumari died. He was sent to England when he was seven, lived with an English family in Kent and went to prep-school there; then to the famous Rugby Public School and on to Cambridge. After taking his degree from Cambridge, he studied medicine in London and took the medical degree. Then he worked in a London Hospital. He was a good cricketer—an all-rounder and played for W.G. Grace's London Country team. He considered W.G. Grace and Ranjitsinhji as the greatest cricketers; but was prepared to consider Jack Hobbs, Bradman, Hammond, Hutton and Sobers as tolerably good. He was full of cricket stories about W.G., Ranji and others of his time. He con-

sidered cricketer C.B. Fry as the handsomest man with the most perfect figure God ever created, and said the when Fry went to the pavillion, English Women would rush there in the hope of seeing the "perfect Adonis" undressing. The Australian batsman W.L. Murdoch arrived for a county match fully drunk and unsteady on his legs. Shummy put Murdoch's head under a tap and released cold water. Then Murdoch went in to bat. He made a century. Shummy asked him how he managed it. Murdoch said "I saw three balls coming to me. I took the middle one."

Shummy stayed in England for 21 years at a stretch, got into the IMS (he was one the earliest Indians if not the earliest to do so), married a tall beautiful English woman from a good family of Huguenot stock, and returned to India. He worked till the age of 55 and left without notice to the authorities when he heard that Firoz Khan Noon had decided to give him an extension. He lived to draw pension for 41 years. At the age of 95 he got a tummy upset after lunch. He thought that it was the end. I happened to be with him. He looked at me and said "I am going, my blessings to you MO" and then closed his eyes. I felt his pulse which was good for a man of his age. At tea time he was up refreshed. He lived for another year. The end came one morning in May 1975. The previous evening he had his usual quota of whisky and vermouth and enjoyed himself. In the morning he woke up as usual and felt normal. He lay on his back after his bed-tea and passed away peacefully without the slightest pain or discomfort. One does not normally associate beauty with death; but if ever it could be applied, it was Shummy's.

Morarji Desai at 82 held forth recently about the secrets of his health. I was more impressed by Shummy's at the age of 96. He enjoyed life in full measure and did everything which Morarji needlessly missed, and still kept perfect health.

The last words of Christ on the Cross were "It is finished. Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. Father, forgive them for they know now what they are doing."

Mahatma Gandhi's last words were "*Hey Ram.*"

The last words of Socrats were: "The hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways—I to die, and you to live. Which is the better, God only knows."

In December 1973, I received, through a third person, a typical message from T.T. Krishnamachari. Referring to me the message said "that rascal MO never gave me a good photograph of Jawaharlal. He has stored them all up. Steal one from him for me." On receipt of the message I sent to TTK the best photograph of Nehru I

possessed. TTK could not write the reply himself, but he managed to sign it. The reply dated 23 January 1974 read:

*T. T. Krishnamachari*

64, San Thome High Rd  
Madurai 28  
23<sup>rd</sup> Jan '74.

My dear Mathai,

Thank you  
for your letter of 16<sup>th</sup> Dec. '73. The  
photograph of J. was delivered to  
me last week by SK. I am  
affixing your instructions to the  
back of the photograph very possibly,  
it might come back to you.

We are living in a funny  
world, only cheer for y. me is to  
dwell on the fast. I hope you are  
tolerably fit

Yours affly,  
*TKrishnamachari.*

I believe it was the last signature TTK put on paper. His wish that dying he should see Jawaharlal was fulfilled. The photograph was safely returned to me soon after.

While Bertrand Russell was undergoing a jail term during the First World War as a conscientious objector, he read about Mirabeau. He found Mirabeau's death amusing. As Mirabeau was dying he said "Ah! if I had lived, I would have given repeats to this Pitt." Mirabeau went on "there is left but one thing to do; it is to perfume oneself, crown oneself with flowers, and to surround oneself with music to enter comfortably into this sleep from which one never awakes. Legrain, let them prepare to shave me, to do my complete toilet." Then turning to a friend who was sobbing, Mirabeau said "Ah well! Are you happy, my dear connaisseur of beautiful deaths?" At last, hearing some guns fired, Mirabeau said "Are these already the funerals of Achilles?" After that, Mirabeau held his tongue apparently thinking that any further remark would be an anti-climax. Bertrand Russell further commented that Mirabeau illustrates the thesis that all unusual energy is inspired by an unusual degree of vanity; there is just one other motive: love of power.

Long years ago there lived in Tellicherry a clever journalist who was the correspondent of the *Malayala Manorama*, perhaps the oldest daily newspaper in Kerala. The management held up for an unconscionably long time a request for a raise in his emoluments as it felt that the correspondent was slack in his work. This reason was made known to the correspondent orally. He lost all hope. After a month he arranged to send to the paper the news of his "death" over the signature of someone else. The news report contained the sentence that the last words of the correspondent were "Manorama is my only love." The paper published the report prominently highlighting the correspondent's last words indicating his love for the paper. It also published a short editorial praising the qualities of the deceased—hard work, devotion to duty and maintenance of high standards of journalism, and wound up by saying that in his death the paper had lost one of its best and ablest correspondents. A week later the "dead" correspondent appeared before the editor of the *Malayala Manorama* at Kottayam with a clipping of the editorial. The editor was stunned and promptly sanctioned the increment. The correspondent's revenge was complete when he told the editor, before he left, "the name Manorama in my so-called last words is that of the girl I love and not that of your paper."

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