

Jawaharlal Nehru: An Assessment

By
G.V. Desani

In late 1964, G.V. Desani was invited by a senior editor at The Illustrated Weekly of India to provide an assessment of Jawaharlal Nehru. Mr. Nehru, a widely recognized world figure of his day, was India's first Prime Minister (1948-1964). He died in office at age 75.

The Weekly's editorial staff considered the Desani article quite controversial so they fashioned a framework questionnaire on the subject and sought out at least two additional views. Prior to publication Desani slightly modified his analysis to address the three topics.

THE EDITOR'S QUESTIONNAIRE

- 1. Which particular facet of Mr. Nehru's personality and character impressed you the most?**
- 2. If you were asked to mention his most significant achievement in the context of international goodwill and world peace, what would be your answer?**
- 3. What is your own personal assessment of the impact that Mr. Nehru's work will make on future generations?**

1. The obituarists and anecdotists would do better if they would abide by the rules and refrain from stuttering autobiography (instead of concentrating on Mr. Nehru) or indulging in keening (long after the hour of mourning). And *please*, spare us the varnish. “Eyes darkened though it was midsummer afternoon. By slow degrees the people became aware that they were in an India without Nehru...” is the style of the Publications Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting). One sees the rules of decorum compromised often enough, though. Some undertakers even go as far as canvassing business from likely prospects!

The particular facet of Mr. Nehru’s personality, in the ’fifties, which – one would have thought – stood out, was his *charm*. This – and his looks were a component of it – was no small asset to his cause (his Indian concerns) so as his public relations with the heads of states, ambassadors, artists, writers, all sorts, were concerned. This positive might be weighed against the patronage, tolerance and sometimes outright contempt that the underprivileged, the uncouth and the amateurs earn from those with the advantages of birth, money, tradition, expensive education and cultivated parents.

Mr. Nehru, I thought, was a very lonely man and in a continuous conflict with his environment and with the company he kept. This would be a consequence arising from his background – as expressed in his thinking, behavior, and in his choice of reading, food, and drink, and brand of cigarette – and the background of (if there is such a thing) the average Indian political leader, or the average Indian for that matter.

While bidding farewell to his friends at the airport, he was photographed as kissing the youngest of the family (Lady Pamela). There was a pile of letters from readers to the editor – a sympathetic European – objecting to the publication of the photograph. (The writers – admirers of Mr. Nehru – were of the view that Mr. Nehru’s engaging gesture was “un-Indian” and were censuring the editor for it.) A U.P. politician – who held responsible positions in the party and was appointed a minister later on – demanded an interview with him to complain that “Mountbatten was causing Hindu-Muslim riots and” – personally – “having Hindus and Muslims beaten up”. (Lord Mountbatten was the Governor-General.) The man was told that Lord Mountbatten could not be having people beaten up because, well, he – the politician – did not know English or European gentlemen, even allowing for the fact that Lord Mountbatten had signed documents during the war meant to deceive the enemy. He saw Mr. Nehru all the same. Allowing for the opportunist, the yes-man and the hanger-on, Mr. Nehru was up against such people throughout his *post-jail* days. His “rudeness” and outbursts of bad temper with his inferiors and sometimes with his equals – to the point of using or meaning to use his palms and fists – were largely due to this factor.

He could seize a woman by the shoulders and push her to the ground – Mr. Kingsley Martin had witnessed this. This minus in him was mistaken by some as his “strength”.

Leadership is often assumed by men, whether they will it or not, from such a conflict – which is, strictly, not a conflict between individuals but rather between cultures, standards, ideologies and etiquettes. When Mahatma Gandhi – in his younger days, soon after his return from South Africa – found that otherwise educated and even eminent men were entirely untutored in matters connected with sanitation and hygiene, he assumed leadership and the duties of the camp scavenger and (because nobody else would) of the clerk.

If Mr. Nehru had had his way, he would have preferred writing. He was emotional enough. (Some of the people closest to him had no scruples about gossiping about his continuous and passionate talking in his sleep during the days of the transfer of power,

his general excitability, or bursting into tears in a certain recent crisis.) He had an exaggerated or a romantic notion about writing. He had no gift of imagination or originality and he was not a political dialectician. (As a politician he was rather the reproductive agent of the people – socialists, reactionalists, historians, economists, writers on science – whose theories he had adopted, bearing the same relationship to them as an actor does to his playwrights.) Had he devoted himself entirely to writing – as a political witness and commentator – he would have thought and written as Mr. Kinsley Martin does (and possibly developed Mr. Martin's interest in the theatre and the arts). As a political visionary, he might have been as good as General Smits, and as an organizer and recorder of personal and historical data, he would have remained as competent as the author of *Discovery ... the Autobiography* and ... *World History*. (If he had not been a writer, he would have talked. Mr. Nehru was quite the most spouting, repetitive, loquacious and wordy communicant of his day.)

QUESTIONS OF LEADERSHIP

The question if the leader leads or if – sooner or later – the led, the inertia and the circumstances generally lead him is still unresolved. The mechanisms of establishing and sustaining what is known as the personality cult are understood however. The impact, on the average, of 30 photographs a month released to the press, appearing at every kind of fuss and ceremony, the press conferences, the daily professionally-edited summaries of speeches, interviews and news by the radio, are considerable and effective devices of imposing an image. Mr. Nehru permitted all these and was not averse to sitting through a film, having breakfast – to depict the start of his day – or allowing his windows to be blazed by arcs at night to show that he burnt the midnight oil. All in all – further emphasizing his contours – he was, I am content to say, a *singular* man.

One cannot possibly think of a statesman anywhere in the world, East or West – indeed none among the distinguished contributors to the Editor's recent symposium – who would in his will require that *post-cremation* his ashes be scattered from an airplane over his *desha*, (land, territory, country). Speaking of the people, rather than the symbol *desha*, should anyone care to announce such an intention when alive – and had Mr. Nehru done so, and had the Indian people a few more taboos than, say a European people— there would have been a howl of protest, to say nothing of a debate over the legalities. Quite aside of any religious or other susceptibilities, in situations such as these caused by peculiar wishes – Mr. Nehru was a lawyer by training – it would be the Public Trustee who would conduct the obsequies – the prompt and dutiful compliance with the wishes of a deceased – and it would be he who would discharge the burial expenses although those would be chargeable to the beneficiaries of the deceased's estate (“person who orders the things necessary for a burial is responsible for the expenses”). And there would be *very* few people who would require of a married daughter – we have read this recently – and her children, bearing about the most unmistakable and publicized name, that they should bear his name as well. (The nominee, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, is to be known henceforth as [Mrs.] *Nehru* Gandhi and likewise her children.)

These *public* attitudes and postures, *post mortem* – and a will is an instrument of disposal of one's estate to take effect after one's death, strictly no more and no less and thus a *private* business – regardless of the reasons advanced, the explanation “Why I do this...”, are *most* revealing of Mr. Nehru's personality and character and plead for induction and analysis.

2. *Mr. Nehru's most significant achievement in the context of India's Independence...* is the part he played, *pre-Independence*, with all the others, as an aide of Mahatma Gandhi, in the political struggle against the British – not forgetting his

moderating and anti-sectarian, and anti-communal bias, which ensured security to the minorities, and his loyalty to Mahatma Gandhi's ideas which lead to happy relations with the British and the country's association with the Commonwealth.

With regard to India's *Reconstruction, post-Independence*, all the landmarks (including, incidentally, the wording of our Constitution, the political doctrine Socialism, the law of the land and the most significant and the least noticed event, the near-victory over the scourge of malaria) are a legacy of the 20th Century, the Western liberality (happy and civilized amends for the former preoccupation with exploitation, colonialism and the rest), European and American experiment and discovery, and indeed money and other aid. The remotest village in Africa, a settlement up the Amazon, Greenland, even the Poles, are being "reconstructed". No special qualifications are needed to preside over the change. A glance at the "reconstruction" during the last 10 years of the new countries, Australia, Israel, and the old, Egypt, Mexico, would be a sobering experience. Indian *independence* or self-sufficiency – economic, in the matters of defense on land, air, the seas and the mountains – does not exist. We survive by foreign aid and no special talent is needed to benefit from the offered aid, as the present successors of Mr. Nehru would confirm (adding, "It is the triumph of the policy of non-alignment") and as – among those who have done rather well – the currently diverted SEATO members, the Pakistanis would agree (adding, "It is the triumph of the policy of alignment").

INTERNATIONAL STATUS

Considering our national income today, we have no sort of status among the nations. It was in response to appeals – after the Government's failure to defend what Mr. Nehru and his Cabinet believed to be Indian territory, and dispensing with the services of the Defense Minister, Mr. V.K. Krishna Menon – that the Americans and the British (and the others since) came to our rescue. These people had repeatedly warned Mr. Nehru – the events have shown that he was not even a chessboard strategist, certainly no student of military matters – who solicited aid when attacked and who, till the last moment, continued to lecture them about their defense preparedness, even about the strictly European-American continental defense program (such as NATO).

It was in Mr. Nehru's day – but for the purposes of embroidery and speeches – that the country officially renounced Mahatma Gandhi's device of *satyagraha* and lost faith in *ahimsa*. One allows for an occasional voice like Mr. Vinoba Bhave's who suggested – I rely on memory – that we urge Indian children up the Himalayas and bombard the advancing Chinese army and airmen with veritable "bullets of love" – the children being, in Mr. Bhave's view, the "bullets of love". This writer, too, made a suggestion to the perceptive editor of this journal and advised that Mr. Nehru might sit *dharna* – carry on a *satyagraha cum* a fast, up the NEFA frontier, to convert the Chinese. (It was about the time that the order had gone out to All India Radio – which organized some female voices and offered an item – to build up "Vira Jawaharlal" [*Warrior* or *Hero* Jawaharlal]). That "eccentric" suggestion – quite apart from the factor, *attract attention first, then elicit response* – might have been made because "Mahatma Gandhi showed us that the human spirit is more powerful than the mightiest of armaments. He applied more values to political action and pointed out that ends and means can never be separated..." (The words are from a speech by Mr. Nehru.)

The concept of Indian unity – cultural, geographical – was challenged in Mr. Nehru's day. His surrender to those who contended with him and the legal ratifications of such compromises are on the record. On the record, too, are the accession to India by the Maharaja of Kashmir, the invasion of that state by Pakistani troops, the cease-fire ordered by Mr. Nehru, the offer of a plebiscite by Mr. Nehru, the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah by

Mr. Nehru, “the final and irrevocable” integration of the State to India – to confirm which to the United Nations Mr. V.K. Krishna Menon had been photographed in a state of collapse prior to being decorated by the Government – and the releasing of Mr. Abdullah after years of detention – who promptly repudiated the integration of the state (of Kashmir) to India idea – and Mr. Nehru’s “intensive discussions” with him “towards a settlement of the Kashmir problem” (thus the scribe of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting) and the offer of a passport to him to fly to Pakistan for further discussions as (more or less) his unofficial emissary. (This sort of wayward conduct did irreparable damage to the Indian image abroad.)

The history of our relations with our next door neighbors – Mr. Nehru was the Foreign Minister since Independence – Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma, China, and till recently the French, the Portuguese, the Tibetans, and Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, are not worth boasting about. (The Chinese Foreign Minister Marshal Chen-yi, recently named Sikkim and Bhutan as “China’s Southern gateway”. It would be a rash man who would expect help from any of the neighbors named, should the Marshal decide to mount guard at the Southern gateway.) Today, an Indian citizen cannot visit Kailas or Manasarovar without the good offices of the Chinese Army agency (and that part of the *desh*, consequently, is bereft of Mr. Nehru’s ashes.)

The most serious of all failures – there is a conspiracy of silence about this matter – is the failure of all attempts to achieve the emotional integration of the Muslim community – which is a minority only for purposes of statistics. (There cannot be a social integration of this or any other community unless the laws that apply to the majority community also apply to this or any other community.)

THE POPULATION PROBLEM

The chief and the only political problem – so Aldous Huxley had said – was the problem of population control. It was about the year 1949, when he was on a visit to Dublin, that a member of the Eire government had a private discussion with him. The conclusion was almost the paraphrase of what recently (August last year, in fact) the Health Minister of the outgoing Congress Ministry of Kerala State, Mr. Nair, said. “If we go on at this rate,” he said, “we shall soon reach a stage where there will **not** even be standing space left for our people” (not to mention starvation and begging from the nations). This problem was left nearly untouched by the government headed by Mr. Nehru – if we view the figures – as political compromise with the voter.

Anybody with the eyes to see would bear witness to the lowering of standards since Independence and the abandoning of the rather distinctive cultural values of this country. (A scorn of the traditional values sooner or later must lead to attacking such values.)

These considerable facts, and particularly the reverses from the Chinese – allowing for the opportunism and the ambition of his political opponents – led to a loss of confidence in Mr. Nehru’s leadership. There were ably worded and argued attacks on his policies by eminent journalists – Indian and former supporters abroad – and he himself accepted *a priori* that his party – of which he had been for many years General Secretary and President – as a body was wanting in the kind of morals one expected of a political party: it had been built up and led by Mahatma Gandhi, after all, although technically he did not belong to it. No less an authority on India than Prof. L.F. Rushbrook Williams – on this theme of Indian Reconstruction – wrote of the usually undemonstrative British commanders in retirement who had shed tears at the humiliation of their old regiments. (This cannot be said of the political leadership in Pakistan in its

relation with the Pakistani part of the old British-Indian Army, or even of the Burmese and the Singhalese armies.) The crisis in the country today — admitted by the government — is inherited from the administration headed by Mr. Nehru.

VOTERS' RESPONSIBILITY

These matters and themes are recent Indian history and very exactly connected with Indian *Reconstruction*, and with the subject of the competence or otherwise of those charged with it. It is as well to add that, howsoever one might read Mr. Nehru and his times, it must not be forgotten that he was an *elected* leader and no voter can escape the responsibility for how his government thinks and behaves.

3. Mr. Nehru's consistent endeavor — so far as the propagation of *ideas* was concerned — was to attack religion and tradition or what he thought was religion and tradition. His guiding choice — I borrow these convenient terms from a Roman Catholic glossary — was “the Natural” rather than the “the Supernatural”. This attitude of his has been called a “scientific outlook”. (His occasional reverent references to the Buddha and the Buddha's Theravada image, taking part in the ritual at the *mazaar* — the tomb — of the Khwaja Ghareeban Nawaaz at Ajmer, and the Juma Masjid in Delhi, his preoccupation with the Gita and the Vedanta, and quite recently the *abhisheka*—the offering of ritual honor and libation to the *lingam* at Srisailam — a member of Mr. Nehru's party told me this, to my surprise, some months ago on my way to Nagarjunakonda — must be regarded as pastimes or the hazards of his office and not serious concerns.)

In spite of it — assessing the effect of Nehru's *ideas* — it would indeed be hard to meet a Hindu, a Muslim, a Christian, a Sikh, a Jain, or other, or indeed any colleague of his in the government who renounced his faith or his God because of Mr. Nehru's “scientific outlook” or his very widely publicized doubts or denials of any so-called “Supernatural” realities. That effort of his was without any visible effect. (Mr. Nehru's attack on religion and tradition were tolerated, because tolerance happens to be a Hindu or an Indian virtue. In India one takes it for granted and one values it gratefully when one is abroad or among the mules anywhere.)

Under Mr. Nehru's leadership — this is a matter of soundness of judgment, of right and wrong emphasis, of priorities, or realism or the opposite— the maximum energy, expenditure of money and resources was dedicated to foreign affairs. The effort — his concern with “the World” and “World Peace” — could be outlined as offering advice, as anti-megaton bomb speeches, as pleas for peace speeches, and year in and year out, teacher, taskmaster and traffic constable commentaries on all events abroad. (The Indians remain sickeningly sensitive to any criticism and would drop all “peace” pretensions if any superior European or American or other told us — as a correspondent, in a most widely circulated American magazine, did tell Mr. Nehru — “To mind your own filth” — or if he lectured to us about our inhuman treatment through the centuries of the so-called lower castes and the outcastes, our widows, the sick, beggars in our streets, the spitting habit, our arranged marriages, our sanitation, our dowry system, our way with personal hygiene, our child marriages, “breeding like rabbits” or our table manners.)

These preoccupations — aside of the warm approval from the intellectuals and some politicians with a just or fancied reason to despise the Great Powers and the rivalries and a loud enough applause from the lay folk everywhere with no stakes other than to be left alone and live in peace — led Mr. Nehru to visions of Asian leadership, Asia-African leadership, anti-Colonialism leadership, the Third Force (for Peace) leadership, Nehru-Sukarno-Nasser-Tito friendship (leadership), the Panchasila Indian-

Chinese (the greatest number *Bund*) leadership, non-Aligned Nations leadership, and of course to the “historic” reward of such a leadership — absolutely in everything he did, including the composing of his will, he never let himself forget the “historic” aspect — which is aptly summed up in the ancient Hindu *status*-symbol *Jagat Guru* (World Teacher). For a country with our *basic* problem still unsolved — there is hunger, poverty, illiteracy, lack of child care, of education, communications, adequate transport, roads, yield of the land, sanitation, civic amenities, clear water — it was an ambitious bid or a *singular* one (*singular* in the sense in which I have used the word to contrast Mr. Nehru’s personality and character with the average Indian leader’s or an average Indian’s). None of these expectations materialized in Mr. Nehru’s lifetime. When the country was attacked, Mr. Nehru sent out appeals all over the place and discovered how few friends we had (compared to the many applauding ones).

QUOTATION AND COMPILATION

It is true that [there was] no original analysis of the problem of war, or technique to bring about peace between the nations — “Peace” was the recurring Foreign Ministry theme — issued from India, nor even an agreed definition of the words *Force* or *Threat* (of *Force*) — to claim or regain frontiers or territory whether by China in the Indian North or by Mr. Nehru in Goa. (Such an analysis was forthcoming from savants in Europe and America. Nationalism, for instance, was analyzed to be a major factor leading to international rivalries and conflict.) Nothing creative was suggested by Mr. Nehru which could, with advantage, be applied to resolving India’s own international problems, with Pakistan, for instance, or with the Chinese, and the Portuguese, without recourse to the despised methods. What was offered could be traced to the reader-writers of the left wing British weeklies and was quotation and compilation. Mr. Nehru brought himself and the country to the ignoble position of having to solicit of the major powers — whom he had repeatedly lectured about “total disarmament” — for supply of arms, bombs, bombers, bullets, pleading “our way of life”, “security”, “necessity”, “the integrity of the frontiers” — incidentally, the very reason and words they had proffered for their own military preparedness. Our conduct — the present Indian Home Minister, Mr. Nanda, has made a candid, even forthright admission of corruption in the administration and the Prime Minister, Mr. Shastri, has given a welcome assurance about not ignoring any allegations of dishonesty against a minister — and the habitual lying and deceiving about one’s income and illicit hoard, give the lie to any claim or pretense to “our heritage”, “spiritual tradition” or “other-worldliness” (among the leading and the trading classes at any rate).

One allows for the gullible: and the clown, the suggestionist, the myth-maker and those with a vested interest in symbols and memorials. The honest student of Mr. Nehru and his times, however, is likely to go astray — in his assessment of Mr. Nehru’s work — for several reasons, among which might be the following six:

If he considers Mr. Nehru’s work theoretically — as a set of hypotheses — a great many British and other intellectuals do, among them Lord Russell and Mr. Kingsley Martin — without exposing himself and living through the effects and consequences of the theories. (For example, a particularly intelligent B.B.C. executive — facing the prospect of yet another English winter — had one [a true enough one] word for the Bombay sun and summer, “lovely”. A thorough overexposure led him to seek emergency treatment for stroke and burns and a revised [a true enough] judgment.)

If one were to judge Mr. Nehru from his adopted ideas and beliefs — as one might a writer who suggests and proposes without assuming the responsibility for any action. If one did that, it would be quite easy — indeed proper — to yield to him. Yet — as food for thought — no politician of his day (dared) advocate war or condone violence and cruelty.

It would be a banality indeed to credit any one with “humanity”, a bias for or “love of freedom”, “... of democracy”, “... peace on this planet”, “...the Charter of the United Nations”, “...solidarity”, “... prosperity”, “... planning”, “... unity”, “...emancipation” – among other colorless attributes. Such clichés can be heaped up, without adding to or subtracting from the personality of almost any average or aspiring Member of the British Parliament or U.S. Congressman. Since one takes a certain standard for granted, an individual politician’s work must be assessed, not on the basis of such minima, but rather on the basis of any originality he may have possessed, and of course on his attainments. An intelligent discussion of the technique he may have used, a comparison with what is being accomplished elsewhere, and a weighing of his acts – often against competing and conflicting values – of his *practice* rather than his beliefs and words – would be necessary requisites for a sound judgment.

If one gave in to *exaggerations*, to the point of attaining absurdities – he would have been the last man to claim this – and accepting a catch phrase such as “Nehru won Indian Independence”.

Some would have it that Mahatma Gandhi won it. Others that the Congress Party did, yet others that the volunteers did, the Ali Brothers did, Maulana Azad did, and some that the trading classes and Mr. Birla – who contributed to the funds of the Congress Party – did. Similar claims have been advanced on behalf of the spiritual exertions of Sri Aurobindo, the *Gupta Avatar* (the Veiled Incarnation) the late Baba Motilal of Bombay – there are photographs showing him in a posture of meditation aiming an arrow at an effigy of the British Empire – and several “occultists” and their followers require that *their* “astral struggles” might be recognized as decisive.

“HISTORIC” FORCES

It would be an intelligent man who would study the published program of the British Labor Party – *many* years before the event – and diligently study the specific references to Indian independence, and to the political future of Burma and Ceylon, and not be unmindful of the claims of the British voter. It would be sensible to regard Mr. Nehru as an instrument of the “historic” forces – as he himself would have agreed.

If a student were further deluded by propaganda and political advertising and accepted Mr. Nehru as “the leader of India” (as the *proto*-image of “India”). Mr. Nehru’s precise status was akin to that of the Prime Minister of any Commonwealth country. ([This is] regardless of the political maturity or even the literacy qualifications of his voters. The Indian city- and town-dweller, in his egotism, is aberrant enough to believe that it is he or she who elects the Government and not the peasants and not the folk in near enough six lakhs of Indian villages – who *are* “the largest democracy in the world”.) There was in his day, and there is today a parliamentary opposition in this country and some of Mr. Nehru’s old comrades – not all ambitious politicians – rather than accept the prizes of office, chose to oppose him. Indeed, there was controversy about the propriety of having the proposed Nehru Museum at the address chosen, and about the business of minting coins in his honor. And at least one state assembly (West Bengal) passed the condolence resolution, as worded and proposed by the Chief Minister, by a majority vote rather than unanimously.

If a student of world affairs judged Mr. Nehru’s work from his *advocacy*. Mr. Nehru’s, or his symbol, India’s “*world presence*” arose from his “Peace Message” – his speeches and written statements – and those can be packaged and summed up in the following words:

The main objectives of *India's* foreign policy are the pursuit of peace, independent approach to each controversial and disputed issue, the liberation of subject people, the maintenance of freedom, both national and individual, the elimination of racial discrimination, the elimination of want, disease, ignorance.

The objectives of our foreign policy are the preservation of world peace and enlargement of world freedom, the emancipation of colonial and dependent countries and the recognition in theory and practice of equal opportunities for all races. We see no domination over others and we claim no privileged position over other people.

The United Nations, in spite of its failings and weaknesses, is something good. It should be allowed to develop into some kind of world government or world order.

All the people of the world have a right to life and progress and the fulfillment of their destiny. They have a right to peace and security. They can preserve that right now only by living peacefully together and solving their problems by peaceful methods. They cannot convert each other by force or threats of force. The only way is to exist peacefully.

(These words are Mr. Nehru's; only the phrases are condensed to save space.)

A SUGGESTION

It is suggested that if the word *India*, in the above statement, is replaced by *U.S.A., Malaysia, Pakistan, France, Volta, U.S.S.R., Zambia, U.A.R., Israel* and the names of any of the three contending parties in the recent *United Kingdom* general election, and the Communists, their prime ministers, ambassadors, and the leaders, would sign it. *Who wouldn't?*

(The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has published an excerpt from an article by Mr. Kingsley Martin, Mr. Nehru's old and loyal friend, which has these relevant phrases: "I have never thought that he was open to criticism about his use of force in Hyderabad or Goa. On both occasions he could settle a problem, obviously in the right way, without serious bloodshed. He was never a pacifist ... but he was ... always on the side of peace.")

Such sanctimonious material, besides being on a par with, *Question:* (from a destitute) "I am starving. What shall I do?" *Answer:* "Go make money!" is at its best an applause-making Christmas card, wishing Peace and Goodwill, with reasons and arguments advanced in favor of Peace and Goodwill, and at its worst is an affront to intelligence if repeated over and over again, year in and year out, particularly because it – and all other similar advocacy – happens to be a rehash of the Fabian Society manifesto, the Salvation Army manifesto, the United Nations manifest, the Communist manifest, *et cetera, et cetera.*

The issue surely is not the endorsement of what everybody can see is needed – but *how to?* And the best place for a successful experiment is in and around one's own house.

If a student regarding Mr. Nehru's work as an aggregate. Following *child, adult, old man* analogy, one might consider his work – the struggling man trying to overcome obstacles and aiming at certain results would be "work" – in three phases. *First*, the

young Nehru, the heroic image, the man who – with all the others who followed Mahatma Gandhi – challenged the British and suffered humiliations and wrote and spoke with courage, and as an equal, and with indignation, against oppression, social and political injustice, tyranny, ignorance, superstition, and who spoke as an internationalist whenever Asian, African or world affairs were discussed. *Second*, the Prime Minister of India who was the mouthpiece, as it were of the left wing British intellectuals, and whose standards were English or British (the cultured cosmopolitan British) and who often said things, in an intellectual idiom, to which few just men could take exception and who – in spite of the fanaticism of most of his followers – wrote his books in English and not in Hindi or Kashmiri and who chose an English school in England rather than an Indian school in India as good enough for his grandsons. *Third*, the last phase, the phase of opposition, challenge, antagonism, general balancing and tight-rope walking, judged in the light of his compromises, battles for office, moral concession, and the infringement of the earlier promise.

At its best this was the phase of nationalism. Loyalty to the family – a lesser virtue – so easily becomes an anti-other families (an anti-social) trait. (Every well-fed law breaker in the land, the adulterator of food, the tax evader, the hoarder, the profiteer, the corrupt official, swears by his family.)

It is in *post*-Independence India that one hears (over the popular program *Vividh Bharati* of All India Radio) “*Desha hi mata hai, pita hai, bandhu...*”, which is a clumsy paraphrase of “*Twameva mata cha pita cha twameva...*” (*Pandava Gita*), words addressed to God as Father, Mother, Friend, Playmate, and now being addressed to *desha* (land, territory, country). It is by such symbolism and devices that patriotism (Mr. Nehru had it) devolves and degenerates into nationalism.

Many in this *desha* have wished to merge in God, some with the symbol Brahman, some into the inconceivable peace called Nirvana and Mr. Nehru to “mingle with its dust” and eventually – if they are no more than their visible material selves – all with dust, although some choose a particular dust and that too is a vanity (which is a quotation from the book *Ecclesiastes* of the Bible and an acknowledgement of the piercing insight into human foibles to be found in inspired literature).

Although men live and swear by symbols, *desha* is but a name for a social organization. A personality – whether it is Mr. Nehru’s, with its peculiar yearning for “the dust and soil of India”, or Mr. Mao Tse-tung’s, with its driving passion for earthy frontiers, or Senhor Salazar’s, with its luxurious craving for *provinces of Portugal* in far-off Asia and Africa – exists in relationship with other personalities: and such expressions of it can be reckoned as arising from rather a pathetic appetite for some unusual individuals to achieve some sort of “love” relationship with the not so unusual – with millions of them, in fact, and most of them unknown to themselves personally and as odd a merchandise as can be.

Allowing for all his *singularity*, since he was not a martyr or even a tragic figure, in any sense of the term, Indian, Greek, Afghan, *the impact of his work*, quoting from the Editor’s Questionnaire, “*on the future generations*”, would seem an exaggeration.

(Editor’s note: In addition to minor editing, the text has been made consistent with American English spelling and punctuation.)