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PREFACE

The three articles included in this book are amplified versions of talks delivered at a symposium on 'Gandhi and Nehru' held by the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi. The symposium evoked great interest, and it was felt that the text of the talks should be made available to a wider audience.

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CONTENTS

GANDHI AND JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

B. R. NANDA

I

'Are we rivals?' Gandhi asked in the *Harijan* of 25 July 1936, and himself answered: 'I cannot think of myself as a rival to Jawaharlal or him to me. Or, if we are, we are rivals in making love to each other in the pursuit of the common goal.' It is doubtful if Gandhi's explanation carried conviction to the young socialists, who looked up to Nehru as the leader of the militant Left, or even to the British officials, who pinned their hopes on a split in the nationalist ranks.

The crisis in the Congress leadership in 1936 was a grave one—graver than the public knew—but this was not the first occasion when Gandhi and Nehru had differed. They had had serious differences in 1922 on the aftermath of the Chauri Chaura tragedy, in 1928 on complete independence versus Dominion Status, in 1929 on the Viceroy's declaration, in 1931 on the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, in 1932 on the fast against separate electorates for untouchables, and in 1934 on the manner of the withdrawal of the civil disobedience movement.

The intellectual gulf that divided them was revealed by Nehru himself in his autobiography which he wrote in 1934–5 in gaol. Among Nehru's colleagues were several who expected and even incited him to revolt against the Mahatma's dominance in the Congress. On 4 March 1936, just as he was leaving for India, Subhas Bose begged him not to consider his 'position to be weaker than it really is. Gandhi will never take a stand which will alienate you.'[1] Four years later, Jayaprakash Narayan pleaded with Nehru to leave the Congress and form a new party 'to fulfil the remaining part of the political task and the main part of the social task of the Indian revolution.'[2]

Nehru did not heed these siren voices. He did not carry his differences with Gandhi to breaking point; the clash of ideas between himself and Gandhi did not turn into a clash of wills. Nor did he encourage his followers to organize an opposition to Gandhi's leadership, or to plan a split in the Congress party. Despite differences of thought, temperament and style, Gandhi and Nehru stood together for more than a quarter of a century. It was one of the longest, most intriguing and fruitful partnerships in the history of nationalism.

How two men, divided not only by twenty years of age but by deep intellectual and temperamental differences, could work together for so long, is an enigma to anyone who seriously studies their lives and the history of this period. The young, elegant man from Allahabad seemed to have little in common with the strange charismatic figure which burst upon the Indian political stage in 1919 with an almost elemental force. The primary school in Porbandar, where Gandhi wrote the alphabet in dust with his fingers, or the Bhavnagar college where he painfully struggled with lectures in English, belonged to an altogether different world from that of European governesses and resident tutors in Allahabad, Harrow, Cambridge and the Inns of Court in England in which the young Nehru grew up. True, Gandhi also went to England to study for the bar in the late 1880s. But the young Gandhi poring over the Bible and the Gita and desperately fighting the recurring temptation of 'wine, women and meat' was cast in an altogether different mould from that of the handsome, Savile Row-clad Kashmiri youth who prided himself on his agnosticism and Cyrenaicism, frequented the theatre, admired Oscar Wilde and Walter Pater and dabbled in Irish politics and Fabian economics. In the course of his twenty-odd years' stay in South Africa, Gandhi fashioned for himself a peculiar, almost unique philosophy of life which, though baffling to many of his contemporaries, was firmly grounded on deeply held convictions.

How could Jawaharlal Nehru with his enthusiasm for science and humanism take to a saint with prayers and fasts, inner voices and the spinning wheel? This is a question to which biographers, historians and political commentators will continue to seek answers. It has been suggested that Jawaharlal had a compulsive need to depend on someone, that at first his mentor was his father Motilal, and then Gandhi.[3] M. N. Roy suspected that Jawaharlal's

mind was slave to his heart, that he deliberately suppressed his own personality 'to purchase popularity' and become 'a hero of Indian nationalism . . . as the spiritual son of Gandhi.'[4] Hiren Mukerjee has hazarded the theory that Gandhi won over and astutely kept Jawaharlal on his side to exploit his charisma and influence with India's youth in the interest of the Congress Party, which was really controlled by vested interests.[5] These interpretations do not fit the facts of a partnership which extended over nearly three decades. The story of this partnership, the strains to which it was subjected, and the factors which enabled it to survive, show that it was not simply a case of domination of one by the other, that Jawaharlal needed Gandhi as much as Gandhi needed him, that political calculation no less than emotional affinity kept them together during these years.

II

When Gandhi returned to India at the age of forty-five early in 1915, his personality had already taken shape. To his western-educated contemporaries he seemed a quaint figure on the political stage. His South African record had given him a halo, but in the shadow of the Great War, public opinion was less worried about the Indian minority in South Africa than about India's political future. Gandhi's view that unconditional support to the British war effort would earn its reward from a grateful Empire in the hour of victory, seemed to most of his contemporaries extraordinarily naive. And, as if this was not enough, Gandhi was also harping on the superiority of Indian over western civilization, denouncing industrialism and advocating village handicrafts. All this must have sounded strangely apolitical and anachronistic to Jawaharlal Nehru, who had returned to India in 1912 after a seven-year sojourn in England. Though he had seen Gandhi at the Bombay Congress in 1915, and again at Lucknow a year later, Jawaharlal was not really attracted to him until after the Champaran and Kaira campaigns and the anti-Rowlatt Bill agitation. There were good reasons why Gandhi's satyagraha campaigns should have made an impact on Jawaharlal. Seven years at the Allahabad High Court, as his father's junior, had left Jawaharlal bored with the 'trivialities and technicalities' of the legal profession. The game of making money did not really excite him. He was groping for a new Weltanschauung. Political terrorism had little attraction for

him. The annual session of the Indian National Congress, and the armchair politics with which the elite of Allahabad amused itself, seemed to him much too tame. He was drawn to Gokhale's Servants of India Society with its band of political *sanyasins*, but he was repelled by its association with 'moderate politics'. When Gandhi published the satyagraha pledge and announced direct action to protest against the Rowlatt Bills, Jawaharlal was thrilled by the prospect of effective political action.

Motilal Nehru did not find it easy to reconcile himself to an extra-constitutional agitation, but Gandhi counselled patience on the son, and prevented him from taking an irrevocable step. Soon afterwards, in the wake of the tragedy of martial law in the Punjab, Motilal came into closer contact with Gandhi, and was surprised to find in him not a starry-eyed saint but a politician with a keen practical sense.[6] Before long the whole Nehru family came under the Mahatma's spell, and learnt to seek solace and support from him. This was an emotional bond independent of, but not without its influence upon, politics: differences of ideology and tactics become a little less intractable if there is a reserve of mutual respect and affection.

III

Gandhi's first impact on the young Nehru was strong indeed. Jawaharlal was, in his own words, 'simply bowled over by Gandhi straight off'.[7] The call to non-violent battle against the British Raj in 1919–20 struck a chord. 'I jumped at it. I did not care for the consequences.' His life underwent a metamorphosis. He turned his back on the legal profession, simplified his life, gave up smoking, turned vegetarian and began to read the Gita regularly, 'not from a philosophical or theological point of view', but because 'it had numerous parts which had a powerful effect upon me'.[8] He was fired by the missionary fervour of a new convert. 'Non-cooperation is to me', he wrote to the Chief Secretary to the U.P. Government, 'a sacred thing and its very basis is truth and non-violence.'[9] He was full of excitement, optimism and buoyant enthusiasm. He sensed 'the happiness of a person crusading for a cause'.[10]

From this ecstasy, a rude awakening occurred in February 1922. After a riot at Chauri Chaura in the United Provinces, Gandhi called off civil disobedience. Jawaharlal, who was in prison at the time, received the news with 'amazement and consternation'.[11] He

did not see how the violence of a stray mob of excited peasants in a remote village could justify the reversal of a national struggle for freedom. If perfect non-violence was to be regarded as a *sine qua non* for all the three hundred-odd millions of Indians, would it not reduce Gandhi's movement to a pious futility? A letter from Gandhi somewhat mollified him but it was only much later, with the perspective that time gives, that he realized that Gandhi was right, that 'he had to stop the rot and build anew'.[12]

The Chauri Chaura tragedy brought Jawaharlal down to earth. The exaltation of the non-cooperation days faded away. He had no stomach for the factional and communal politics of the mid-twenties. He served as Allahabad's Mayor and as General Secretary of the All India Congress Committee. These activities provided useful outlets for his boundless energy, but he did not recover his zest for politics, and indeed for life, until he visited Europe during 1926–7 for the treatment of his ailing wife. Under the stimulus of fresh reading and contacts with revolutionaries and radicals in three continents, the realization dawned on him that Indian politics had been much too vague, narrow and parochial. He learnt to trace links not only between British imperialism in India and colonialism in other Asian and African countries, but also between foreign domination and vested interests in his own country. The Brussels Congress of Oppressed Nationalities and the brief visit to the Soviet Union gave a tremendous impetus to these ideas. On return to India in December 1927, he persuaded the Madras Congress to pass resolutions in favour of 'complete independence'. He denounced feudalism, capitalism and imperialism, and talked of organizing workers, peasants and students.

Jawaharlal's performance at the Madras Congress deeply disturbed Gandhi. He wrote to Jawaharlal:

> You are going too fast, you should have taken time to think and become acclimatised. Most of the resolutions you prepared and got carried could have been delayed for one year. Your plunging into the 'republican army' was a hasty step. But I do not mind these acts of yours so much as I mind your encouraging mischief-mongers and hooligans .... If ... careful observation of the country in the light of your European experiences convinces you of the errors of the current ways and means, by all means enforce your own views, but do please form a disciplined party.[13]

Gandhi's objection was not so much to the radical views of the younger man, as to the light-hearted manner in which brave declarations were made without any serious effort to implement them. It

was all very well to talk of 'complete independence', but did the Indian people have the will to enforce such a demand? 'We have almost sunk to the level of a schoolboys' debating society', he told Jawaharlal. A few months later, he told Motilal Nehru, who headed the committee which was to draft an All-Parties Constitution (the Nehru Report) that 'unless we have created some force ourselves, we shall not advance beyond the position of beggars .... We are not ready for drawing up a constitution till we have developed a sanction for ourselves.'[14] The only sanction that Gandhi could forge was that provided by a non-violent struggle.

In December 1928, when the advocates of independence and Dominion Status clashed at the Calcutta Congress, Jawaharlal is reported to have told Gandhi: 'Bapu, the difference between you and me is this: You believe in gradualism; I stand for revolution.' 'My dear young man', Gandhi retorted, 'I have made revolutions while others have only shouted revolutions. When your lungs are exhausted and you really are serious about it you will come to me and I shall then show you how a revolution is made.'[15] After a long heated argument, much vacillation and 'mental distress', Jawaharlal eventually fell into line with Gandhi's compromise formula. Dominion Status was accepted as the basis of the new constitution, provided the British Government conceded it before the end of 1929.

To many of his young admirers Jawaharlal's attitude at the Calcutta Congress smacked of political cowardice; to Subhas Bose and members of the Independence for India League it seemed an abject betrayal. But it was sound instinct which kept Jawaharlal from breaking with the Congress Old Guard and the Mahatma. He seems to have sensed that if there were any conservatives at the Calcutta Congress, Gandhi was not one of them. As events were to prove, it was Jawaharlal, not the Old Guard, who won at Calcutta. There were some apparent disappointments and setbacks, such as Congress leaders' reaction to Lord Irwin's declaration on Dominion Status in November 1929 and the peace parleys in Delhi just before the Lahore Congress. Nevertheless, the fact remained that within a year, 'complete independence', instead of being the catchword of a few young radicals, became the battle-cry of the Congress party, and, to Jawaharlal's delight, Gandhi was back at its helm to direct another satyagraha struggle against the British Raj.

IV

After the Calcutta Congress, the political atmosphere became electric. Gandhi abandoned a trip to Europe which he had been planning and called for a boycott of foreign cloth. There were rumours of Jawaharlal's imminent arrest as he threw himself into the organizational work of the Congress with redoubled vigour. Politics again acquired for him a sense of purpose, urgency and adventure. All the signs pointed to Gandhi's return to the active leadership of the party. A majority of the provincial congress committees voted for him to preside over the Lahore session in December 1929. Gandhi declined the honour, but persuaded the All India Congress Committee to confer it on Jawaharlal. The thought that he had come to the highest office in the Congress 'not by the main entrance or even a side entrance', but by a 'trap door' which had bewildered the audience into acceptance,[16] was humiliating to Nehru. Nevertheless, the fact that it fell to him to preside over the momentous session at Lahore and to unfurl the flag of independence on the bank of the Ravi at the midnight of 31 December 1929, rocketed his prestige overnight. The Lahore Congress gave a tremendous boost to his popularity with the masses; it raised his prestige with the intelligentsia and made him a hero of India's youth.

As the new year dawned, events moved rapidly. With the observance of the Independence Day and the launching of the Salt Satyagraha, the political scene began to be transformed under the magic touch of the Mahatma. And once again, in the midst of a struggle against the British Raj, Jawaharlal felt that sense of complete identification with Gandhi he had experienced ten years before. His mood found eloquent expression in the tribute he paid to Gandhi as the latter marched to Dandi on the western coast for breach of the Salt Laws:

> Today the pilgrim marches onward on his long trek, the fire of a great resolve is in him, and surpassing love of his miserable countrymen. And love of truth that scorches and love of freedom that inspires. And none that passes him can escape the spell, and men of common clay feel the spark of life.[17]

The Salt Satyagraha drew the whole Nehru family into the arena. Jawaharlal was the first to be arrested; he was followed by his father, his sisters and his wife. But once again history repeated itself, and Gandhi called off the movement when it seemed to be on

the crest of a rising wave. Nehru was in Delhi in February and March 1931 and in touch with the Mahatma during his talks with the Viceroy. Nevertheless, the contents of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact on 4 March and particularly its second clause concerning the safeguards in the new constitution, came as a great shock to Jawaharlal.[18]

> So I lay and pondered on that March night and in my heart there was a great emptiness as of something precious gone, almost beyond recall .... The thing had been done, our leader had committed himself; and even if we disagreed with him, what could we do? Throw him over? Break from him? Announce our disagreement? That might bring some personal satisfaction to an individual, but it made no difference to the final decision.[19]

Gandhi observed Jawaharlal's distress, took him out for a walk, and tried to allay his fears. Jawaharlal was not convinced, but at the Karachi Congress, a few days later, he swallowed his dissent, and even sponsored the resolution supporting the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. He did this in order to prevent an open rift in the party and to strengthen the hands of Gandhi who was to represent the Congress at the Round Table Conference in London.

V

In December 1931, when Gandhi returned from his abortive trip to London, Jawaharlal was already in gaol. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact went to pieces, civil disobedience was resumed, the Congress was outlawed and more than sixty thousand people were convicted for civil disobedience. Jawaharlal had one of his longest spells in gaol—a total of 1,170 days—between December 1931 and September 1935. It was towards the close of this period that he wrote his autobiography. The author's preface referred to the 'mood of self-questioning', and the 'particularly distressful period' of his life in which the book was written. The distress stemmed not only from anxiety about his wife, who was hovering between life and death in Indian and Swiss sanatoria, but also from the decline of the struggle against the British Raj. As he recalled the story of his life and the course of the movement to which he had committed himself totally, Jawaharlal noted the conflicting pulls which Gandhi exerted on him:

> For it was clear that this little man of poor physique had something of steel in him, something rocklike which did not yield to physical powers, however great they might be. And in spite of his unimpressive features, his loin-cloth and bare body, there was a royalty and kingliness in him which compelled a

willing obeisance from others . . . . His calm, deep eyes would hold one and gently probe into the depths, his voice, clear and limpid would purr its way into the heart and evoke an emotional response. It was the utter sincerity of the man and his personality that gripped. He gave the impression of tremendous reserves of power.[20]

Despite his admiration for the Mahatma, Nehru found much in him which puzzled and even infuriated him. When he learned about Gandhi's fast against separate electorates for the depressed classes he felt angry with him for 'his religious and sentimental approach to a political question and his frequent references to God in connection with it. He even seemed to suggest that God had indicated the very day of the fast. What a terrible example to set.' As he thought of the tragic possibilities of the fast, he was seized with despair. 'If Bapu died! What would India be like then? And how would her politics run? There seemed to be a dreary and dismal future ahead . . . . So I thought and thought and confusion reigned in my head and anger and hopelessness and love for him who was the cause of this upheaval.'[21]

The untouchability fast was not the only occasion when Gandhi's religious idiom jarred on Nehru. In 1934, the Mahatma suggested that the terrible earthquake which Bihar had just suffered was a divine punishment for the sin of untouchability. It struck Nehru as a 'staggering remark. . . . Anything more opposed to the scientific outlook it would be difficult to imagine.'[22] A few months later, Gandhi's statement, calling off civil disobedience because of the failure of a 'valued companion to perform his full prison task', left Jawaharlal aghast at its emotional irrelevance. Jawaharlal had

. . . a sudden and intense feeling that something broke inside me, a bond that I had valued very greatly had snapped. I felt terribly lonely in this wide world . . . . Again I felt that sensation of spiritual isolation, of being a perfect stranger out of harmony, not only with the crowds that passed me, but also with those whom I had valued as dear and close colleagues.[23]

On occasions, Gandhi struck Jawaharlal as 'a medieval Catholic saint'.[24] Gandhi's philosophy of 'one step enough for me' seemed much too empirical, his political style too abrupt and unpredictable, his doctrine of non-violence too lofty for the common run of mankind. The autobiography reflects Nehru's doubts, his self-questioning and mental conflict.[25] Was not non-violence already hardening into 'an inflexible dogma' and 'taking its place in the pigeonholes of faith and religion . . . [and] becoming a sheet anchor for vested interests'?[26] Was it not an illusion to imagine that a

dominant imperialist power would give up its domination over a country, or a class would give up its superior position and privileges, unless effective pressure amounting to coercion was exercised?[27] Was it not romantic to hope for the conversion of princes, landlords and capitalists into trustees of their properties for the commonweal, or to expect *khadi* and village industries to solve the long-term problems of India's poverty? Was not Gandhi's emphasis on the spinning-wheel overdone and foredoomed to failure in an industrialized world?[28]

These doubts assailed Jawaharlal as he wrote his autobiography. Some of them had found expression in his talks with Gandhi in 1933 when he was briefly out of gaol. There was a public exchange of letters, in the course of which Gandhi had acknowledged with typical understatement that while they agreed in 'the enunciation of ideals, there are temperamental differences between us'.[29] While Nehru was in gaol during the next two years, these differences grew sharper. His ideas were taken up by a band of young Congressmen who were disillusioned by a failure of civil disobedience, and were attracted to socialist doctrines. In the 1920s, the Congress leadership had been challenged by young radicals on political issues such as Dominion Status versus independence. In the 1930s, the challenge was to be on economic as well as political issues; the contest was to be more serious not only for the coherence of the Congress Party, but for the relations between Nehru and Gandhi. It is impossible to understand their relations at this time without noting their diverse social philosophies.

VI

Though Jawaharlal had sampled Fabian literature and attended Bernard Shaw's lectures as a student in Cambridge and London, his enthusiasm for Marxism and the Russian Revolution was derived from reading and reflection in gaol, and the visit to Europe in 1926–7, which had included a four-day trip to Moscow. It is significant that one of the aims of the Independence for India League, which he and Subhas Bose had founded in 1928, was the revision of the economic structure of society on a socialist basis. In his presidential address at the Lahore Congress, Jawaharlal avowed himself a socialist and asserted that 'socialism had permeated the entire structure of society and the only point in dispute is the pace and methods of advance to this realisation'. A little earlier, he had

presided over the All India Trade Union Congress and argued that, despite the bourgeois character of the Congress, it did represent the only effective force in the country. In March 1931, thanks largely to Gandhi's support, he was able to push through the Karachi Congress a resolution[30] on fundamental rights and economic policy, which envisaged, among other things, the state ownership of key industries and services, mineral resources, railways, waterways, shipping and other means of transport. It is true that this resolution was only mildly socialist, but socialist ideas had not yet gained much currency in the Congress Party. What Acharya Narendra Deva told Nehru in 1929 about the U.P. Independence League was true of most protagonists of socialism in the Congress in 1931: 'We may all generally believe in the necessity of reconstructing our society on a new basis, but the ideas of most of us are vague and indefinite and most of us do not know how to proceed about the business.'[31]

Not until 1934 was the initiative for the formation of a socialist group in the Congress taken by a number of young Congressmen who happened to be in Nasik gaol and shared the disenchantment with Gandhi's leadership in the wake of his withdrawal of civil disobedience. Among them were Jayaprakash Narayan, Asoka Mehta, Achyut Patwardhan, Yusuf Meherally, and S. M. Joshi. They were later joined by Narendra Deva, Sri Prakasa, Sampurnanand, N. G. Ranga and others. They swore by Marxism, talked of the inevitability of class war, called for planned economic development on the Soviet model, discounted Gandhi's leadership and doubted the efficacy of non-violence in solving Indian political and social problems. Gandhi was their chosen target. Jayaprakash Narayan described him as a case of 'autochthonism'.[32] He believed that Gandhi was played out and could not carry the people further.[33] It was only by drawing in the masses, the peasants and the workers, that the Congress could broaden its base, rid itself of its defeatist mentality, 'socialize' the nationalist struggle and forge a massive anti-imperialist front.[34]

Gandhi was not impressed by the political wisdom of these young men, whom he described as a body of 'men in a hurry'. The talk of class war, expropriation and violence was repugnant to him. Nevertheless—and this was characteristic of Gandhi—he refused to be a party to the muzzling of Congress Socialists. Indeed, he helped them to secure larger representation in the All

India Congress Committee by the introduction of the single transferable vote.[35] He also announced his own formal retirement from the Congress organization, so that his critics, including the young socialists, should be able to express their views without being inhibited by his presence.

Nehru was in gaol when the Congress Socialist Party was founded. He never became an office-bearer, or even a member of this party. But there is no doubt that he was its hero and source of inspiration. Some of the leading lights of the party, such as Narendra Deva, Jayaprakash Narayan and Achyut Patwardhan, were close to Nehru and shared his outlook on national and international issues. Nehru's socialism, however, was not doctrinaire. Nor did he plan 'to inoculate the masses with the virus of Communism', as the Government of India suspected.[36] 'I am certainly a socialist,' he wrote in March 1938, 'I believe in the socialist theory and method of approach. I am not a Communist chiefly because I resist the Communist tendency to treat Communism as a holy doctrine, and I do not like being told what to think and what to do.' He made no secret of his faith in scientific socialism. He believed in curbing the profit motive, in promoting public ownership of key industries, and in using the machinery of the state to regulate economic activity. Gandhi's approach was different.

When not yet forty, Gandhi had developed a social philosophy of his own, based on a faith in non-violence and distrust of industrialism and the modern state. The India of Gandhi's dreams was 'a federation of small village republics', providing only for the essential needs of the community. Based on a thorough-going decentralization of the economic and political structures, it was to reduce the temptation for exploitation from within and aggression from without. It was to imitate neither British nor Soviet models, but was to be tailored to Indian conditions. It was to be, in Gandhi's words, *Ram Rajya*, 'the sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority'.[37] 'I tell my socialist friends,' he said at Faizpur in December 1936, 'you are not talking anything new. Our ancestors always said, this is God's earth. It is neither of the capitalists nor of zamindars nor of anybody. It belongs to God.'[38]

Congress Socialists did not take the Mahatma's claim to be a socialist seriously. To them, as to Nehru, his brand of socialism was a kind of 'muddled humanitarianism'.[39]

VII

Imprisonment and domestic affliction had kept Jawaharlal out of Indian politics for nearly four and a half years. Curiously enough, while he was behind prison bars, his political stock had risen; his was a name to conjure with among the masses as well as the intelligentsia; his autobiography was soon to give him a world-wide reputation as a writer. Gandhi was aware of Nehru's popularity as well as his differences with the Congress leadership. Nevertheless, he secured his election to the Presidency of the 1936 Congress, which met at Lucknow a few days after Jawaharlal's return from Europe. Conscious of the fact that the socialists were a tiny minority in the party, Nehru included only three of them—Jayaprakash Narayan, Achyut Patwardhan and Narendra Deva—in the Congress Working Committee, and gave the remaining eleven seats to the Old Guard—the 'Gandhi-ites'. The Committee found it hard to settle down as a happy family. The political temperature had risen before Nehru's return. His militant address at the Lucknow Congress raised it further. The Congress Socialists seemed anxious to drive their advantage home; the older leaders were suspicious and nervous; Nehru himself was on edge. 'Today I feel', he wrote to a friend on 3 May 1936, 'that there will be a tug-of-war in India between rival ideologies . . . . I feel myself very much on the side of one ideology and I am distressed at some of my colleagues going the other way.'[40] Two days later he wrote about his sense of intellectual isolation in the Congress Working Committee. 'The last dozen years have been years of hard and continuous work for me, of self-education and study and thought . . . . But others . . . have not taken the trouble to think or study and have remained vaguely where they were. But the world changes.'[41] By the end of June, the crisis, unknown to the public, came to a head when seven members of the Congress Working Committee sent their resignations to Nehru. A split in the party was on the cards.

It is tempting to dramatize the 1936 crisis as a tug-of-war between the Right and the Left in the Congress, with Gandhi backing the Right. But could Gandhi, who had roused the Indian peasantry to a consciousness of its strength in Champaran, Kaira and Bardoli, be fairly labelled a reactionary? Was it not Gandhi who had made the nationalist movement conscious of its responsibility to the underdog and made poverty a live issue? The dispute was not really about the adoption or rejection of a socialist creed;

the political issue still predominated. The members of the so-called Right wing in the Congress executive—Rajendra Prasad, Vallabhbhai Patel and others—looked askance at the Socialist group largely because of the threat it seemed to pose to the unity of the party, which had yet to recover from the hammer-blows of the Willingdon regime. The party was still illegal in the whole of the North-West Frontier Province and parts of Bengal. Anti-Congress forces, encouraged by the government, were raising their heads. A general election was due at the end of the year. And just when the party needed a united front, the Congress Socialists were embarrassing the leadership, talking of class war, frightening away potential supporters, and making new enemies. The slogans of class struggle against money-lenders and landlords by *Kisan Sabhas* and socialist conferences all over the country could prove costly to the Congress at a general election in which barely 10 per cent of the population was entitled to vote. A peasants' conference in Andhra had gone so far as to demand that Congress members of legislatures be given freedom to vote on issues concerning the peasants.[42] This was a demand which cut at the very root of party discipline; Nehru, who was the Congress President, rejected it out of hand. Nevertheless, it revealed a dangerous drift towards disintegration, which had to be checked if the Congress was to survive as a strong and effective instrument for fighting British imperialism.

There were, thus, not only ideological differences, but conflicting readings of the political situation which brought on the crisis in the Congress executive. Perhaps even more important was the mistrust between the Old Guard and the Congress Socialists. Each feared being edged out of the party. Nehru suspected that there was a conspiracy to destroy him politically. 'When I reached Bombay,' he wrote to Gandhi on 5 July 1936, 'many people stared hard at me, hardly believing that I was still politically alive.' Gandhi was not, of course, party to such a plot. He resolved the crisis with admirable speed, skill and firmness. He insisted on the withdrawal of the resignations, and vetoed the reference of the dispute to the All India Congress Committee, on the grounds that a public discussion would only aggravate and distort the differences among the leaders, confuse and demoralize the rank and file, and ruin the party's chances at the election. 'I am firmly of opinion', the Mahatma wrote, 'that during the remainder of the year all wrangling should cease and no resignations should take place.' He

played down the crisis, described it as a tragi-comedy,[43] and admonished Nehru for his edginess: 'If they [the members of the Congress Working Committee] are guilty of intolerance, you have more than your share of it. The country should not be made to suffer for your mutual intolerance.'[44] Though as late as November 1936 Edward Thompson was predicting that the Congress would split and 'Nehru will lead a group into the wilderness',[45] the crisis was really over.

Nehru was prudent enough not to heed the advice of the hot-heads among his admirers, who were urging him to extreme courses. If he had broken with Gandhi and the Congress in 1936, he would have dealt a blow not only to the Congress, but to his own political future. It was obvious that as long as Gandhi remained at the helm of the Congress, it was unlikely that any rival nationalist party could emerge or compete with it. The founding—or even the running—of a political party was not Nehru's *metier*. He could sway crowds, inspire intellectuals, reel off press statements and articles, run the A.I.C.C. office, and travel from one end of the country to the other, but he was not cut out for the role of a party manager. He did not have Gandhi's gift for discovering, training, and harnessing to the national cause men and women of varying abilities and temperaments. 'I function individually', he told Subhas Bose, 'without any group or any second person to support me.'[46] This detachment, admirable in its own way, limited his room for manoeuvre within the party. When Bose reproached him for not backing him up against Gandhi, Nehru said frankly that a head-on collision with the Mahatma was likely to be suicidal. 'The Left', he warned Bose, 'was not strong enough to shoulder the burden by itself, and when a real contest came in the Congress, it would lose and then there would be a reaction against it.' Bose could win the election and become Congress President against Pattabhi Sitaramayya, but Nehru doubted whether Bose could carry the Congress in a clear contest with what was called Gandhism. Even if he won a majority within the Congress, it would not ensure him sufficient backing in the country. And in any case a mass struggle against the government without Gandhi was inconceivable. Finally, Nehru warned Bose that there were already many 'disruptive tendencies' at work in the country, and it was not right to add to them, and to weaken the national movement.[47]

What Nehru came to realize in 1938, after closer acquaintance with the balance of forces in the country and the party, Gandhi had seen two years earlier. An open rift in the Congress in 1936 would have crippled the Congress organization at a critical juncture, and would have been a godsend to the British Government. It was not by seceding from the Congress, but by influencing it from within, that Nehru was to push it in the direction he wanted it to take.

It was during this crisis that Gandhi, with remarkable candour, revealed his reasons for supporting Nehru's candidacy for the Congress Presidency in 1936, even though his ideas were in conflict with those of a majority of his colleagues in the party leadership. 'You are in office', wrote Gandhi to Jawaharlal on 15 July 1936, 'by their unanimous choice, but you are not in power yet. . . . To put you in office was an attempt to put you in power quicker than you would otherwise have been. Anyway that was at the back of my mind when I suggested your name for the crown of thorns.'[48] Thus it turns out that Nehru's elevation to the Congress Presidency in 1936 was not, as Hiren Mukerjee suggests, 'to imprison the socialist wave in a strong little reservoir of Gandhi's own making',[49] but to launch Nehru forth on a favourable wind on the wide and stormy ocean of Indian politics.

It is true that in 1936–7 Nehru could not have his way on two crucial issues: elections to the new legislature and the formation of Congress ministries. But, thanks to Nehru's influence, the decisions on these issues did not dampen Indian nationalism. The Congress election manifesto bore marks of Nehru's militant socialism and anti-imperialism. And the election campaign, largely because of the prominent part he took in it, had the effect of awakening the masses. Finally, when the Congress accepted office, it was on its own terms and not on those of the British Government. The continual criticisms from Nehru and his socialist friends had the salutary effect of preventing the Congress ministers from sliding into bureaucratic grooves. Nehru's presidency thus gave a decidedly radical twist to Congress politics in 1936–7. Even E. M. S. Namboodiripad acknowledges that the presence of a left-wing leader at the head of the Congress 'enormously strengthened the forces of the left; the ideas of socialism, of militant and uncompromising anti-imperialism, of anti-landlord and anti-capitalist struggles . . . began to grip the people on a scale never before

thought possible'.[50]

In 1936, as in 1928, Nehru had stooped to Gandhi, but he had stooped to conquer. It is true that he was not able to get his views and programmes accepted immediately, or in their entirety, but he was able to influence the final decisions much more from within the party than he would have been able to do if—like Subhas Bose—he had left it to plough his own lonely furrow.

VIII

Thanks to Gandhi's intervention, the crisis in the Congress in 1936 was tided over. Nehru continued to be the President and was in fact re-elected for another year. He was not, however, in tune with his colleagues in the Working Committee. Gandhi sensed his unhappiness and irascibility. 'Somehow or other, everything I say and even perhaps do', he wrote to Nehru, 'jars on you . . . . you must bear with me till my understanding becomes clear or your fears are dispelled.'[51] 'I can't tell you', he wrote on another occasion, 'how positively lonely I feel to know that nowadays I can't carry you with me.'[52] Often the Mahatma would seek Nehru's approbation for whatever he was doing. When sending a copy of one of his articles in the *Harijan*, he told him on 15 July 1937, 'When you see it you will please tell me if I may continue to write so. I do not want to interfere with your handling of the whole situation. For I want the maximum from you for the country. I would be doing distinct harm, if my writing disturbed you.' A note on Gandhi's talks with Jinnah was accompanied by the exhortation to Nehru, 'not to hesitate to summarily reject it, if it does not commend itself to you'.[53]

The differences between the two men during these years often concerned current issues, representing a difference of approach or emphasis. Nehru, for instance, was not quite happy about Gandhi's interview with the Governor of Bengal on the release of the detenus, or about the embargo on Congress participation in popular agitation in the princely states. The slow implementation of the reforms by the Congress ministries vexed him, while most of his colleagues felt that he did not make sufficient allowance for the limitations under which they worked. The activities of the Congress Socialists provided another cause for misunderstanding.[54] Some of them, who were close to Nehru, made no secret of their conviction that Gandhi was 'finished', that he was incapable of

giving any further lead against the British Raj, that his technique of non-violence could not take the country to the final goal. After reading a book on the Russian Revolution, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai confided to Nehru: 'If we want to make further progress, we will have to make an attempt to destroy the mentality created by the CD [civil disobedience] . . . . We will have to give up the present standards of scrupulousness, personal integrity, honesty and political amiability.'[55] Truth and non-violence, Narendra Deva told Nehru, were 'noble ideas . . . . But they are so much being misused today in India that the day is not far distant when they will stink in our nostrils.'[56] Jayaprakash Narayan saw a real danger of the Congress being converted ' . . . from a democratic organization of the millions of the downtrodden people into a hand-maid of Indian vested interests. A vulgarisation of Gandhism makes this transition easy, and gives this new Congress the requisite demagogic armour . . . . We are faced today with the real danger of Indian industry being made a synonym for Indian nationalism.'[57]

It is not unlikely that what his friends were saying reflected Nehru's own inner misgivings at this time. The intellectual hiatus between him and Gandhi tended to magnify even small tactical differences into minor crises. But there were also basic differences in their reading of the political situation. During the two years preceding the war, Nehru was disconcerted by what seemed to him the tendency of the Congress ministries to compromise with the existing order. He was dismayed by the lack of intelligent interest on the part of his colleagues in the critical developments in Europe. And he was almost driven to despair by their inability to grasp the significance of the National Planning Committee and its many sub-committees, which, under his guidance, had held as many as seventy-two meetings in twenty months. 'I have never been able to understand or appreciate the labours of the Committee', Gandhi blandly told Jawaharlal on 11 August 1939. 'I have not understood the purpose of the numerous sub-committees. It has appeared to me that much labour and money are being wasted on an effort which will bring forth little or no fruit.'[58]

Because of all these differences with Gandhi and most Congress leaders, Nehru felt 'out of place and a misfit', and welcomed the opportunity in 1938 to visit Europe for a few months 'to freshen up' his tired and puzzled mind.[59]

IX

The outbreak of war in September 1939 added another strand to a complex situation. It set into motion forces which were to transform not only party alignments in India, but the structure of power in the world. It was also to reveal a fundamental cleavage between Gandhi and Nehru in their attitudes towards the war. 'Perhaps this is the most critical period in our history,' Gandhi wrote to Nehru on 26 October 1939, 'I hold very strong views on the most important questions which occupy our attention. I know you too hold strong views on them, but different from mine. Your mode of expression is different from mine.'[60]

Gandhi had publicly hailed Nehru as his 'guide' on international affairs. It was at Nehru's instance that the Indian National Congress had denounced every act of aggression by the fascist powers in Manchuria, Abyssinia, Spain or Czechoslovakia and taken the western powers to task for their policy of 'appeasement' towards the dictators. Nevertheless, Nehru had a lurking feeling that Gandhi had often accepted his point of view on international affairs 'without wholly agreeing with it'.[61] The Mahatma was second to none in his hatred of the tyrannies set up by the Fascist and Nazi regimes. He defined Hitlerism as 'naked, ruthless force reduced to an exact science worked with scientific precision'. Gandhi regarded Nazism and Fascism as symptoms of a deep-seated disease—the cult of violence. He did not, however, believe that violence could be neutralized with counter-violence. Through the pages of his weekly paper, the *Harijan*, he exhorted the victims of aggression, the Abyssinians, the Czechs and the Poles, to defend themselves with non-violent resistance. 'There is no bravery', he argued, 'greater than a resolute refusal to bend the knee to an earthly power.' Even after Hitler had swiftly overrun Poland in 1939, and Europe was gripped by fear and foreboding, Gandhi continued to affirm that non-violence could serve as an effective shield against aggression.

Neither Nehru, nor the majority of the members of the Congress Working Committee, nor indeed the rank and file of the party, shared Gandhi's boundless faith in the efficacy of non-violence. Clearly, Nehru did not see the war as an occasion for asserting the efficacy of non-violence; the important point was how the monstrous war-machine built by Hitler was to be stopped and destroyed before it could enslave mankind. Nehru had never accepted non-

violence as a method for all situations or all times:

> The Congress had long ago accepted the principle and practice of non-violence in its application to our struggle for freedom and in building up unity in the nation. At no time had it gone beyond that position or applied the principle to defence from external aggression or internal disorder.[62]

It soon became obvious that behind the facade of unity, the Congress leaders had serious differences in their approach to the war. The primary motivation of radicals like Jayaprakash Narayan was anti-British, of Nehru anti-Fascist, and of Gandhi anti-war. These differences would have come sharply into focus, had the British Government, under the influence of Churchill and Linlithgow, not short-sightedly tried to 'freeze' the constitutional position for the duration of the war. As long as there was no question of effective Congress participation in the central government, the question of whether India's support of the Allies was to be moral (as Gandhi advocated), or military (as Nehru proposed), remained purely academic. There were two occasions, however, when the vicissitudes of war seemed to bring a rapprochement between the Congress and the government within the realm of practical politics: in 1940 after the French collapse, and in 1941–2 after the Japanese triumph in South-East Asia. On both these occasions Gandhi found that most of his colleagues were ready to switch from a pacifist stand to a whole-hearted participation in the Allied war effort, in return for a reciprocal gesture by the British Government. The Congress parleys with Sir Stafford Cripps finally broke down not on the issue of violence versus non-violence, but on the constitutional and administrative details of a provisional government for the effective prosecution of the war.

The period immediately preceding and following the Cripps Mission in 1942 was a testing time for Nehru. He had little love for the British Government, but he was dismayed by its obstinate refusal to read the writing on the wall. Meanwhile, Indian public opinion was reaching the height of frustration. Between British folly and Indian frustration, the Allied cause, and particularly the future of the hard-pressed Chinese and the Russians, was trembling in the balance. In the aftermath of the Cripps Mission, Gandhi's decision to launch a mass struggle created a further painful dilemma for Nehru. The idea of launching a mass civil disobedience movement, when the war was on India's doorstep, at first seemed to him fantastic. His mind was full of thoughts of

citizen armies, home guards and guerilla warfare to beat off the Japanese invaders. Deep heart-searching and anguish led him even to think of deviating from the Congress policy towards the war. It was with some difficulty that he was persuaded not to strike out his own line on co-operation with the Allies.[63] During the months of May and June, he had long talks with Gandhi, who wrote later to the Viceroy: 'I argued with him [Jawaharlal] for days together. He fought against my position with a passion which I have no words to describe.'[64] Eventually, Nehru fell into line with the 'Quit India' stand, even though he was conscious that it 'gave second place to logic and reason' and 'was not a politician's approach but of a people grown desperate and reckless of consequences.'[65] Before agreeing to support the 'Quit India' policy, however, he had persuaded Gandhi to agree that Allied troops would remain on Indian soil during the war, and the 'provisional' government of free India would throw all its resources into the struggle against Fascism. For Gandhi, with his passionate commitment to non-violence, this was, as Nehru noted, 'a bitter pill'.[66] Nehru's decision to support the Mahatma on the 'Quit India' movement was thus not really the one-sided compromise it was made out to be by some of his critics. M. N. Roy wrote:

> Godly power of the Mahatma has overpowered the human wish of the romantic politician [Nehru] .... In vain has he dilated upon his differences and final agreement on fundamentals with Mr. Gandhi, for throughout his whole career he has blindly followed Mr. Gandhi. In fact he has no independence of thought or action.[67]

What M. N. Roy failed to see was that in reaching a compromise Nehru did not make all the concessions. If the internationalist had given in to the nationalist in Nehru, the pacifist had given in to the patriot in Gandhi.

X

After spending nearly three years in gaol, Nehru was released in June 1945 just before the Simla Conference was convened by the Viceroy, Lord Wavell. This was the starting point for a series of triangular negotiations between be British Government, the Congress, and the Muslim League, which culminated in the transfer of power and partition of India two years later. During these negotiations, the leading part was played by Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel and Abul Kalam Azad, but they remained in touch with

Gandhi and took his advice. Only in the last phase of the negotiations, towards the end of 1947 and the beginning of 1946, when Gandhi was busy touring the riot-torn countryside of East Bengal and Bihar, did his influence on events become minimal. This may have been due partly to his absence from Delhi—the hub of political activity—and partly to the swiftness with which the political landscape changed during this period, owing to the eagerness of the Muslim League to cash in on the British decision to quit India, and the anxiety of the Congress for a speedy and smooth transfer of power. In the aftermath of the Muslim League's 'Direct Action Day' at Calcutta in August 1946, communal violence spread like a prairie fire, and threatened to engulf the whole country. At the centre, the conflict between the Congress and Muslim League members paralysed the Interim Government. As the danger of civil war loomed on the horizon, Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel and most of the Congress leaders came to the painful conclusion that the partition of the country was a lesser evil than a forced and fragile union, that it was worthwhile to try to salvage three-quarters of India from the chaos that threatened the whole. Against this background the Congress Working Committee mooted the partition of the provinces of the Punjab and Bengal in March, and accepted the Mountbatten Plan for the transfer of power (and the partition of the country as its corollary) in June. The final decision was taken against Gandhi's advice.

Michael Brecher has suggested that Nehru and Patel opted for the partition of the country because they were tempted by 'the prize of power'.[68] Human motives are rarely unmixed, but in the summer of 1947 partition seemed the lesser evil not only to Nehru and Patel, but to the entire Congress leadership, with a few exceptions such as those of Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Jayaprakash Narayan. Gandhi's eleventh-hour proposal that the Viceroy call upon Jinnah to form an exclusively Muslim League Government was a bold gesture, but the Congress leaders, after their experience of association with Muslim League ministers in the Interim Government, were in no mood to endorse it. Nor did Gandhi's alternative of a mass struggle appeal to them. Struggle against whom? The British were going, and the Muslim League, with its calculated mixture of bluster and bullying, was hardly susceptible to the moral nuances of satyagraha. J. B. Kripalani explained the predicament of even those who prided themselves on being Gandhi's

blind followers. 'Today also I feel that he [Gandhi] by his supreme fearlessness is correct and my stand is defective. Why then am I not with him? It is because I feel that he has as yet found no way of tackling the [Hindu-Muslim] problem on a mass basis.'[69]

To Nehru and Patel it seemed in the spring and summer of 1947 that the Mahatma's idealism had outrun the needs of a critical and developing crisis, that the intransigence of the Muslim League and the mounting chaos in the country left no alternative to partition, that to insist on unity under such circumstances was to court an even greater disaster. Gandhi's rocklike faith in non-violence was admirable, but to most of his colleagues he seemed at the time an uncompromising prophet rather than a practical statesman. It was not for the first time that Gandhi found himself isolated. In 1940, the Congress had declined to accept non-violence as a shield against external danger; seven years later, it refused to embrace it as a shield against internal disorder.

Gandhi seems to have had a lingering regret that in the final stages of the negotiations with the British Government, he had been by-passed by Nehru and Patel.[70] Nevertheless, he lent them his powerful support at the crucial meetings of the Working Committee and the All India Congress Committee.[71] During the five and a half months which remained to him, he wore himself out in an effort to heal the wounds inflicted by Partition, and became, in the words of Mountbatten, a 'one-man boundary force for keeping the peace in disturbed areas'. Gandhi was not the man to nurse a grievance, and there is no evidence to show that the events leading to Partition created any permanent estrangement between him and Nehru.

As Prime Minister, Nehru continued to lean on Gandhi for advice and moral support during the latter half of 1947. A tragic reminder of this dependence came to Nehru within a few hours of the tragedy on 30 January 1948: 'I was sitting in my chair . . . worried about Bapu's funeral. The colossal problem that it presented baffled me. Suddenly, I said, let me go and consult Bapu.'[72]

Gandhi's death sublimated Nehru's relationship with him. The Mahatma's heroic fight against fanaticism and violence in his last months, and finally his martyrdom, had created a deep impression on Nehru. The memory of 'the Master'—as Nehru liked to call him—suffused with a fresh glow, and nourished by feelings of love, gratitude and guilt, remained with him until the last. He told a

correspondent in 1957 that he could not write at length on Gandhi as 'I get emotionally worked up and that is no mood to write. If I was a poet, which I am not, perhaps that mood might help.'[73] The awesome responsibility of running the party and the government perhaps gave him fresh retrospective insight into the methods of the Mahatma, who had borne the burden of conducting the movement for nearly thirty years. The process of intellectual reconciliation had indeed begun in Gandhi's lifetime; this can be seen by comparing the *Autobiography* with the *Discovery of India*, in which the criticism of Gandhi's ideas has been considerably toned down. In the intervening decade, Nehru had gone a long way towards rediscovering not only India, but Gandhi.

XI

The political equation between Gandhi and Nehru, extending as it did over a quarter of a century, was not static. It was continually evolving, and seeking a new equilibrium in response not only to the inner drives of two men of exceptional energy and integrity, but to the realities of the changing political scene in India. During the first ten years, the partners were really Gandhi and Motilal, the young Nehru's role being that of a favourite and earnest disciple of the Mahatma. The Lahore Congress brought Jawaharlal to the forefront of national politics, but it was not until the late thirties that he became a factor to reckon with in the counsels of the Congress. It is an indication of his rising political stature that while in the twenties his dissent was merely an inconvenience to the Congress establishment, in 1936 it almost split the pary. He owed his position in the party and the country in a great measure to his own qualities: his high idealism and dynamism, tireless energy and robust optimism, infectious faith in the destinies of the Congress and India, his glamour for the youth and charisma for the masses. Nevertheless, it is doubtful if he could have reached the apex of party leadership so early and decisively, had Gandhi not catapulted him into it at critical junctures in 1929 and 1936.

Gandhi knew that Jawaharlal was not a 'blind follower' and had a mind of his own. Their philosophies of life diverged widely, but they were at one in their desire to rid the country of foreign rule, its gross poverty, and its social and economic inequalities. Gandhi wanted to harness Nehru's great talents and energies and was confident of containing his impetuous and rebellious spirit. 'He is

undoubtedly an extremist', Gandhi wrote soon after Nehru's election to the Congress Presidency in 1929, 'thinking far ahead of his surroundings. But he is humble enough and practical enough not to force the pace to the breaking point.'[74] Seven years later, on the eve of a serious crisis in the party, Gandhi assured an English correspondent: 'But though Jawaharlal is extreme in his presentation of his methods, he is sober in action. So far as I know him, he will not precipitate a conflict. . . . My own feeling is that Jawaharlal will accept the decision of the majority of his colleagues.'[75]

To the question why two men with such diverse backgrounds and temperaments remained together, the simple answer is that they needed each other. In 1919, the young Nehru needed Gandhi to provide an outlet to his passionate but pent-up nationalism, and Gandhi, about to enter the Indian political stage, was on the lookout for able lieutenants. He had already enlisted Mahadev Desai, Vallabhbhai Patel and Rajendra Prasad. It is not surprising that the young Jawaharlal should have caught the Mahatma's perceptive eye and evoked from the outset a special consideration. He was to become Gandhi's link with the younger generation and his window to the world. Informed by study and travel, he became Gandhi's mentor on international affairs. His passion for clarity and logic often clashed with the Mahatma's intuitive and pragmatic approach, but he discovered before long that the Mahatma had an uncanny sense of the mood of the Indian masses, their potential and their limitations, and that his political decisions were in fact sounder than the explanations in which he clothed them. Nehru realized the indispensability of Gandhi's leadership and, therefore, never pressed his differences to an open breach with him. Whatever his doubts about the possibilities of non-violence for changing the hearts of those who wielded political and economic power, Jawaharlal felt certain that Gandhi was leading the country in the right direction. Indeed, realizing Gandhi's receptivity, flexibility and unpredictability, Nehru continued to hope that eventually the Mahatma's weight would be thrown in favour of radicalizing India's politics and economy.

Whatever their political differences, it is important to remember that Gandhi's link with Jawaharlal Nehru transcended the political nexus. Gandhi's extraordinary capacity to love and be loved was experienced by many of his colleagues and their families, but for the Nehru family he seems to have had a special affection.

With Motilal, he was a colleague rather than a mentor. Jawaharlal was doubtless a disciple, but a favourite one: the Mahatma's face shone with pleasure and pride in the company of the young Nehru, whom he hailed as his son long before he described him as his 'heir'. Intellectual and political differences did not diminish Gandhi's affection, which was deeply reciprocated by Jawaharlal. There was hardly a major domestic decision—whether the treatment of his ailing wife, the education of his daughter, or the marriage of his sister—on which Jawaharlal did not seek the Mahatma's advice and blessing. It was to 'Bapu' that the family instinctively turned for solace in moments of grief. When Kamala Nehru was dying in Switzerland, Jawaharlal was cabling her condition daily not only to her mother in India but to Gandhi as well.

Gandhi had less difficulty in understanding Nehru than Nehru had in understanding Gandhi. The Mahatma seems to have sensed almost immediately the deep loneliness, idealism and restless energy of the young Nehru and to have understood him even better than Motilal had done. Indeed, in the earlier years, Gandhi acted as a bridge between father and son. For Gandhi, the crucial test came when, after his visit to Europe in 1927, Jawaharlal suddenly seemed to have outgrown the political and economic framework of the party. Gandhi's reaction to young Nehru's rebellion was characteristic. He did not attempt to muzzle him. On the contrary, he encouraged him to be candid about the differences: 'I suggest a dignified way of unfurling your banner. Write to me a letter for publication showing your differences. I will print it in *Young India* and write a brief reply.'[76] Subsequently when Jawaharlal was straining at the leash after signing the Delhi Manifesto, welcoming Lord Irwin's declaration on Dominion Status for India, Gandhi told him: 'Let this incident be a lesson. Resist me always when my suggestion does not appeal to your head or heart. I shall not love you the less for that resistance.'[77]

Gandhi's refusal to impose his ideas on Nehru could not but have a moderating influence on Jawaharlal. The lack of resistance from the Mahatma reduced the incentive for an open revolt. Gandhi repeatedly offered to step off the political stage altogether, and to leave the field to Nehru and others. Since Gandhi did not owe his influence in the party to any office, it made him the less vulnerable: it was pointless to seek to throw out a leader who was always

willing to retire voluntarily.

It was not without much inner conflict and anguish that Nehru was able to reconcile the conflict between his mind and heart, between his own convictions, and loyalty to Gandhi and the party. Yet nobody knew better than Nehru how much he owed to Gandhi. It was from the Mahatma that he had imbibed an ethical outlook, a concern for the 'naked hungry mass' of India, and faith in peaceful and patient methods, in good means as a lever for good ends, and in argument and persuasion rather than in coercion.

The working partnership between them lasted until the end, but their philosophies of life never really converged. In October 1945, a few months before the negotiations for the final demission of British power began, Gandhi wrote to Nehru: 'I am now an old man. . . I have, therefore, named you as my heir. I must, however, understand my heir and my heir should understand me. Then alone shall I be content.' He went on to express his conviction that truth and non-violence could only be realized in the simplicity of village life and to envisage independent India, as was his wont, as a federation of self-reliant village republics. Nehru replied:

> The question before us is not one of truth versus untruth and non-violence versus violence. One assumes as one must, that true co-operation and peaceful methods must be aimed at, and a society which encourages these must be our objective. The whole question is how to achieve this society and what its content should be. I do not understand why a village should necessarily embody truth and non-violence. A village, normally speaking, is backward intellectually and culturally and no progress can be made from a backward environment. Narrow-minded people are much more likely to be untruthful and violent . . . .[78]

This scepticism about the feasibility of the rural Utopia, as outlined in *Hind Swaraj*, was not confined to Nehru: it was shared by almost the entire Congress leadership, and the intelligentsia, who never learned to appreciate Gandhi's philosophic anarchism, his unqualified commitment to non-violence, and his criticism of science and technology, industrialism and institutions of the West.

The argument between Gandhi and Nehru in 1945 on what constituted the good society remained inconclusive, but Nehru adhered to the line he had always taken in public and private. 'We cannot stop the river of change', he had written in his autobiography, 'or cut ourselves adrift from it, and psychologically, we who have eaten the apple of Eden cannot forget the taste and go

back to primitiveness.'[79] Hardly anyone affected surprise when, in Gandhi's lifetime, the Constituent Assembly set itself to the task of framing a constitution for a strong nation-state, based on parliamentary democracy, with all the paraphernalia of a civil service, army, navy and air-force, along with an infrastructure of modern industry. For Nehru and his colleagues, the question in 1947, as a shrewd critic has recently pointed out, was not that of 'personal loyalty' to Gandhi, but 'a matter of social perspective and principles . . . a choice between a strong industrial (and military) state versus a commonwealth of barely self-sufficient agricultural communities'.[80] Nehru chose the first, as indeed he had said he would, even during Gandhi's lifetime.

Nehru would have been the last person to profess that he was following Gandhi's blueprint for an independent India during his years in power. Even if it had been possible to recognize such a blueprint, it could hardly have been adapted to the mechanism of the modern state. *Sarvodaya*, unlike socialism, cannot be legislated into existence. The changes it postulates in the minds and hearts of men can be better attempted through voluntary effort and the example of devoted men, than through the authority of parliaments, cabinets, civil services, courts and the police. In fairness to Nehru, it must be acknowledged, however, that he applied Gandhi's ideas as far as he could to the needs of a modern nation-state. In that process 'something of Gandhism was knocked out, everything could not be absorbed. But nobody absorbed so much of Gandhi as Nehru did or incorporated so much of him in the inexorable working of statehood.'[81] The spirit of Gandhi may be seen in Nehru's consistent respect for individual liberty and secularism, his rejection of violence and regimentation, and his determination to find a national consensus within the parliamentary system. Like Gandhi, Nehru had a deep concern for the small peasant, the landless labourer and the industrial worker. The concept of Five Year Plans, though far removed from Gandhian economics, stressed the uplift of rural India and included programmes for community development, village self-government and cottage industries. Indeed, the point has recently been made that the Indian Planning Commission gave away hundreds of crores to subsidize village handicrafts, 'as a form of rural unemployment relief and as a tribute to Gandhi's sacred memory'.[82]

In foreign policy Nehru was not Gandhian enough to advocate

unilateral disarmament of India, nor did he turn the other cheek to Pakistan and China. Nevertheless, throughout his years of office, he threw his weight in favour of non-alignment with military blocks, conciliation, peaceful negotiation of differences between nations, and the widening of the area of peace. The deep conviction with which, despite difficulties and rebuffs, he pursued these aims doubtless stemmed from his long association with Gandhi. During his twilight years, in a world darkened by growing cynicism, violence and ruthlessness, Nehru was speaking in even more Gandhian accents, pleading for the linking of the 'scientific approach' and the 'spiritualistic approach',[83] and warning the Planning Commission against the dangers of 'giganticism'.[84] And in almost the last thing he wrote, he pointed out that while progress in science, technology and production were desirable, 'we must not forget that the essential objective to be aimed at is the quality of the individual and the concept of *Dharma* underlying it'.[85]

NOTES

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9. J. Nehru to G. A. Lambert, Chief Secretary, Government of U.P., 4 July 1921, Nehru Papers.
10. Nehru, *An Autobiography* (London, 1942), p. 77.
11. Ibid., p. 81.
12. Ibid., p. 86.
13. Gandhi to J. Nehru: 4 Jan. 1928, Nehru Papers.
14. Gandhi to Motilal, 3 March 1928, Nehru Papers.
15. Pyarelal, 'Gandhi-Nehru: A Unique Relationship' in *Link*, New Delhi, 30 May 1965.
16. Nehru, *An Autobiography*, p. 194.
17. Quoted in D. G. Tendulkar, *The Mahatma* (Bombay, 1952), vol. 3, p. 31.

18. Gandhi told Lord Irwin (Halifax) that Jawaharlal had wept on his shoulder 'over this tragedy of the betrayal of India'. See Francis Watson (ed.), *Talking of Gandhi*, (Bombay, 1957), p. 63.
19. Nehru, *An Autobiography*, pp. 257–9.
20. Ibid., pp. 129–30.
21. Ibid., pp. 370–1.
22. Ibid., p. 490.
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25. J. Nehru to Colonel J. C. Wedgewood, 23 April 1941, Nehru Papers.
26. Nehru, *An Autobiography*, p. 547.
27. Ibid., p. 544.
28. Ibid., p. 525.
29. Quoted in *Indian Annual Register*, 1933, vol. 2, p. 358.
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45. *News Chronicle*, 12 Nov. 1936.
46. J. Nehru to Subhas Bose, 4 Feb. 1939, Nehru Papers.
47. Ibid., 3 April 1939.
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50 E. M. S. Namboodiripad, *The Mahatma and the Ism* (New Delhi, 1958), p. 74.
51. Gandhi to J. Nehru, 5 April 1937, Nehru Papers.
52. Ibid., 25 April 1938.
53. Ibid., 30 April 1938.
54. On 30 July 1937, Gandhi sent Jawaharlal extracts from a speech of Yusuf

Meherally with the remark, '[it] is an eye-opener for me. I wonder how far it represents the general socialist view .... I call it a bad speech of which you should take note. This is going contrary to Congress policy.' Nehru Papers.

55. Rafi Ahmed Kidwai to J. Nehru (undated), Nehru Papers.
56. Narendra Deva to J. Nehru, 10 Dec. 1937, Nehru Papers.
57. J. P. Narayan to J. Nehru, 23 Nov. 1938, Nehru Papers.
58. Gandhi to J. Nehru, 11 Aug. 1939, Nehru Papers.
59. J. Nehru to Gandhi, 28 April, 1938, Nehru Papers.
60. Gandhi to J. Nehru, 26 Oct. 1939, Nehru Papers.
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81. M. Chalapathi Rau, *Gandhi and Nehru* (Bombay, 1967), p. 102.
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83. *The Statesman*, 1 Dec. 1958.
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GANDHI AND NEHRU: THE CHALLENGE OF A NEW SOCIETY

P. C. JOSHI

I would like to make some preliminary reflections on Gandhi and Nehru as leaders of India's resurgence as a new nation. On the question of leadership, Nehru himself once observed as follows: 'Perhaps this is as good a test as any of a country's cultural background and its conscious or sub-conscious objective: to what kind of a leader does it owe its allegiance?'[1] It can be said without any exaggeration that Gandhi and Nehru symbolized not only the best of India's age-old culture and civilization but also its will to build a new civilization on its old foundations.

People of my generation, part of whose lives lay in the pre-independence period and the other in the post-independence period, have known both the heroic age of nationalist struggle, and the unheroic age following independence. For us, Gandhi and Nehru were not only political leaders but also heroes and mentors. Continuing in the tradition of the early nationalists, they gave us our categories of thought to comprehend the problem of India. They gave a positive content and direction to the vague urges and strivings of a resurgent people. They also gave us the will to struggle, and an ethical and moral character to India's rebellion against colonial tyranny. It is this ethical and moral character which saved us from the fanaticism and negativism affecting many other nationalist movements. Many a time we questioned the quality of their leadership and many a time we mentally rejected them. Time and again we felt that their leadership had not been adequate to the task of changing India and of re-building it on new lines. But subsequent events in India and elsewhere led us towards recognizing their positive role and achievements. We rediscovered them as outstanding individuals, as path-finders of a resurgent nation and as a

voice of sanity in a tension-torn world.

We have ourselves passed through inner turmoil and transformation in living and re-living our mental lives with Gandhi and Nehru. And when I write today on Gandhi and Nehru, I do so with much greater humility than I would have done as a much younger person. Today when I think of Gandhi and Nehru, I first think of the sense of struggle and of forward movement that they introduced into Indian life. Gandhi especially converted a nation of petitioners and sychophants of British rule into a nation of fighters against the British Empire. What Gogol once said about pre-revolutionary Russia could be said with much greater force about India under British rule. In an outburst of despondency Gogol remarked:

> Where is the one who in the native language of the Russian soul could pronounce for us the mighty word 'forward'? Century after century passes, and a half million stay-at-homes, lubbers and block-heads are immersed in deep slumber, but rarely is a man born in *Rus*, who is able to pronounce this mighty word . . . [2]

The same mood of despondency pervaded India before Gandhi and Nehru arrived on the Indian scene. In a demoralized, disunited and despondent India, Gandhi and Nehru uttered the daring word 'forward'. It is this national will to go forward which needs to be revived in the present situation. Here is a situation marked by internal division and confusion. The Indian elite is once again losing its sense of purpose and its commitment to the tasks of building a new society. We need now the rock-like moral firmness of Gandhi and his determination to galvanize the people into a unified and active force. We need Jawaharlal Nehru's sense of history and his sense of urgency about the unfinished economic revolution. We need all this to pull us out of the quagmire of philistinism, petty politicking and amoral self-seeking in which we are immersed today.

Nehru often said that he was a small man who acquired a touch of greatness because of his association with great historical tasks; that he rose in stature as he identified himself with India and the stupendous task of transforming an old society into a new nation. In an historic broadcast in June 1947 Nehru said: 'We are little men serving a great cause, but because the cause is great something of that greatness falls upon us also.'[3]

It is also relevant to recall that both Gandhi and Nehru had firm faith in India's potential to carve out a new path for herself

consistent with high ideals. Nehru often said that whenever he thought of himself in relation to the complex problems of a big country like India he was overwhelmed by a sense of his own inadequacy. But whenever he thought of India, of her past achievements and present potential, never for a moment did he doubt India's adequacy to solve her gigantic problems.

Today, when the very principle of leadership has been seriously undermined, it is useful to recall Nehru's view of Gandhi as a leader. In Nehru's view, a leader should be a combination of a prophet and a politician. If a leader functions merely as a politician, adapting himself to the exigencies of the moment and the weaknesses of the people he has to lead, he abdicates his leading role and ceases to be an instrument of their advance. The very definition of a leader implies that he is ahead of the people and is capable of uplifting them. At the same time, if he is too far ahead of them and if he takes no account of their own inclinations, orientations and even their weaknesses, or if he moves contrary to their urges, he would lose his following. An effective leader is in this sense both a prophet and a politician, an idealist and a realist.

Nehru expresses this dilemma as follows:

> How is a leader of men to function? If he is a leader, he must lead and not merely follow the dictates of the crowd, though some modern conception of the functioning of democracy would lead one to think that he must bow down to the largest number. If he does so, then he is no leader and he cannot take others far along the right path of human progress. If he acts singly, according to his own lights, he cuts himself off from the very persons he is trying to lead. If he brings himself down to the same level of understanding as others, then he has lowered himself, been untrue to his own ideal, and compromised that truth. And once such compromises begin, there is no end to them and the path is slippery. What then is he to do? It is not enough for him to perceive truth or some aspect of it. He must succeed in making others perceive it also . . .
>
> The amazing thing about Gandhi was that he adhered, in all its fullness, to his ideas, his conception of truth, and yet he did succeed in moulding and moving enormous masses of human beings. He was not inflexible. He was very much alive to the necessities of the moment and he adapted himself to changing circumstances. But all these adaptations were secondary matters. In regard to the basic things he was inflexible and firm as a rock.[4]

Leaders like Gandhi and Nehru had the capacity both 'to strike together' and 'to march alone'. In a sense, Nehru's task was far more difficult than that confronting Gandhi; the freedom struggle

aroused the best in the Indian people and provided a social context favourable to the release of the impulses of idealism, sacrifice and selflessness; in contrast, the developmental challenge following freedom appealed not so much to the higher side of human nature as to its stronger (or baser) side.

While making these introductory observations I am deliberately drawing attention to Gandhi's and Nehru's qualities of leadership, and emphasizing the importance of the moral element in leadership, which seems glaringly absent in present-day India. A passage from Balzac, whose writings mirrored the moral crisis following the rise of commercialism and the decay of the mediaeval social order in Western Europe, aptly captures the basic Indian malaise today. His nostalgic reference to 'magnificent figures of integrity', whom one needs very much, but cannot find, brings before our mind's eye the figure of Gandhi. To quote:

> So men lapse, by a succession of compromises with evil of that kind, into a lax moral state which is characteristic of this epoch. *Today one meets more rarely than in any previous age with those firmly-based unyielding men who stand four-square against temptation, to whom the slightest deviation from the straight line of rectitude amounts to crime, such magnificent figures of integrity as have inspired two masterpieces*, Moliere's *Alceste* and, in our own day, Jeani Deans and her father in Walter Scott's novel. Perhaps a work of the converse kind depicting the devious paths into which a man of the world, a man of ambition, forces his conscience as he tries to sail close to the wind to reach his end while keeping up appearances, would be not less fine, nor less dramatic.[5]

Gandhi and Nehru both held the view that the challenge of building a new society was far more formidable than that of overthrowing foreign rule; the effort required for this unfinished task was of a qualitatively different kind than that required to win political freedom. Why was the challenge of building a new society a more difficult one? We find an answer to this question in the writings and speeches of Gandhi and Nehru.

According to them, in the course of the nationalist struggle India faced an external enemy, and then the joy of struggle was its own reward. But when we fight for an economic or a social revolution, we are struggling, as it were, with a large part of ourselves. We are trying to remake ourselves, to change our habits, our attitudes, our ways of life inherited from the old society. We are now called upon to overcome the weaknesses that we have imbibed as a result of centuries of stagnation and slavery. This new kind of

war is far more exacting than a national war or a war of national consolidation. For this war we need leaders who have some of the basic qualities of Gandhi and Nehru. No doubt we have to outgrow our old leaders in various fields, as a child outgrows his parents. But the *moral* aspect of the leadership of Gandhi and Nehru has to be re-affirmed more earnestly and urgently today than ever before.

This question of following the example of Gandhi and Nehru and drawing lessons from their lives requires a discriminating attitude. It requires the courage to reject what has become obsolete and the humility to preserve and carry forward what is still living and relevant.

I would like to emphasize here that a large part of what has come to be known as Gandhism is the very negation of the spirit of Gandhi's teachings. Similarly a large part of what has come to be known as Nehruism is the negation of the spirit of Nehru's teachings. Much of what passes for Gandhism or Nehruism is not based on the dynamic quality of their thought and practice but on its obsolete aspects. Even the greatest leaders or personalities are historically conditioned and circumscribed, responding to the challenges of their times. Qualitatively new responses are required to meet the challenges posed by the new period. Thus, the *living* elements of the legacy of Gandhi and Nehru have to be separated from those which are of no significance today. It would be tragic if we substituted a deified Gandhi for a *living* Gandhi, and if we repudiated his spirit but paid lip-service to his teachings. India has a long tradition of rejecting the ideas of a series of prophets, but of converting them, nevertheless, into deities entitled to formal worship. It would be much better to consciously reject Gandhism after serious appraisal, than to present a false appearance of following Gandhi.

A very subtle way of denigrating Gandhi is to posit that Nehruism is a repudiation of Gandhi. It is my belief, however, that Nehru was perhaps one of the best disciples of Gandhi produced by India. It is impossible to separate the study of Gandhi from one of Nehru. They were together in the freedom struggle and they stood together in the struggle for a new society. It is as impossible to imagine a resurgent India without Gandhi, as it is to imagine a new India without Nehru. The two together, and in continuous mental and spiritual interaction with each other, impart a historical grandeur, a depth and completeness to India's struggle for a new

society. Even when Gandhi was no more, Nehru did not cease to interact mentally and spiritually with Gandhi's legacy. In fact, Nehru's perception of the vital elements of Gandhi's legacy was sharpened after Gandhi's death.

I would like to substantiate this point with reference to history. Economic and social historians have often discussed the significance of the great 'Industrialization Debate', the great battle of ideas which preceded and accompanied the rise of a new society in Russia. But seldom in our centres of learning do we study the great 'Development Debate' from Rammohun Roy to Jawaharlal Nehru. There was, in particular, a great debate between Gandhi, Tagore and Nehru on major questions relating to the western impact and the type of society suited to India. It was a major and meaningful dialogue on the perspective of a new society. The vision of a new India was the product of this creative interaction between the intellectual and cultural giants of that age. This vision, which became a part of national consciousness, was neither wholly Gandhian nor wholly Nehruvian, nor can it be ascribed wholly to the thought of Rabindranath Tagore. Nehru's thinking on economic and social questions became less theoretical, and more conscious of the concrete Indian situation, as a result of interaction with Gandhi and Tagore; while Gandhi's thoughts on economic and social development bear the imprint of his dialogue with Tagore and Nehru.

Thus, each one of these giants provided a corrective to the other. Consider, for instance, Gandhi's intensely religious tone, his reliance on his inner voice, his anti-westernism, his constant appeal to Indian traditions, and his numerous idiosyncrasies. Carried to their logical conclusion, without the powerful corrective from someone like Tagore or Nehru, this ideology would have led to the emergence of the cult of the Messiah and to Gandhi's elevation into a miracle working saint, reminiscent of the Middle Ages. But for the sharp intellectual thrust from Jawaharlal Nehru, these ideas would also have given free play to the forces of mysticism and irrationalism in Indian politics. If Gandhism had been left to the interpretation of lesser men claiming to be true followers of Gandhi, some of the secondary aspects of Gandhi's thought and practice would have acquired exaggerated prominence, and might have been used on an extensive scale to rationalize hypocrisy, empty moralizing, sectarianism and blind anti-westernism. And

here Nehru provides a powerful corrective. Especially noteworthy was his insistence on an intellectual rather than a mystical approach to social problems, his distinction between the universal elements of western civilization and its aberrations, and his plea to look ahead rather than behind us. It is to Nehru's credit that he reinterpreted the vital elements of Gandhi's message to India and the world in terms of concepts and categories which could be understood by the modern intelligentsia in India and outside. Without Nehru, Gandhi's message may have run the risk of being distorted and even vulgarized by ardent adherents eager to create a Gandhi cult. Without Nehru, Gandhi would have had no interpreter of his message in the modern idiom to the modern world.

On the other hand, without Gandhi's impact, Nehru would have been as unaware of the permanent elements of Indian civilization and as much of a stranger to India's village-dwelling peasant masses as were the rootless modernists and radicals from the urban intelligentsia. It was Gandhi's impact which set Nehru on the path of *The Discovery of India* through an exploration of Indian history and tradition and through direct contact with the Indian people in different parts of India. Nehru's later writings and speeches are marked by a synthesizing quality, a catholicity and a deep love and respect for the Indian people. Here is a Nehru qualitatively different from the Nehru of the *Autobiography* with his pronounced romanticism, his impetuosity and his deep individualism.

One can discern in Nehru's inner transformation the quiet, profound and pervasive influence of Gandhi. It was Gandhi who was mainly responsible for Nehru's psychological transformation from an ivory-tower intellectual into a mass leader. The credit for Nehru's de-westernization or his Indianization, *in the best sense of the term*, should also go to Gandhi.

This process, by which each influenced, or was influenced by, the other, is illustrated, for example, in *Hind Swaraj*, the book which presents Gandhi's world-view in its pristine purity. By juxtaposing Gandhi's original point of view with the conceptions which evolved and crystallized in the last period of his life, we would discern a softening of the sharply negative approach to modernization as presented in *Hind Swaraj*. The mature view that emerges from Gandhi's speeches and writings is quite different from the position which he first took in *Hind Swaraj*. True, Gandhi continued to emphasize that his position on the question of modernization

remained unaltered; that he even regarded modernization as an evil. But any impartial student of Gandhi's thought can discern that Gandhi showed considerable flexibility in accepting such ingredients of modern civilization as he thought were helpful for mankind and beneficial for the masses. Gandhi's continuous dialogue with Tagore and Nehru was one of the reasons for this realistic approach which he showed in the later period. Their influence led him to combine a kind of unyielding fundamentalism on the ideological plane with a resilient realism on the practical one.

Similarly, in Nehru's *Autobiography*, we find a trenchant critic of Gandhi's 'paradoxes', and his backward-looking world-view. But in his later writings and speeches Nehru adopts a more positive attitude to Gandhi. He re-discovers the relevance of many of Gandhi's basic ideas and insights to the Indian situation. It would be wrong, therefore, to treat Gandhi and Nehru as fixed and static in their outlook and perceptions. It would be absurd to think that these leaders, who moulded the thought and practice of millions of men and women for half a century and more, were like immutable idols of stone.

The more one studies their lives the more does one discover that each was continuously growing and evolving. Gandhi never ceased to grow as an individual and as a leader. The same was true of Nehru. Moreover, their lives were full of compromises, contradictions and inconsistencies. They were men of flesh and blood, with passions, prejudices and interests. They showed tact, the healing touch and sense of humour required in dealing with an infinite variety of human problems in a changing society. They did not impose their own concepts on the Indian people in a mechanical, arbitrary and authoritarian way. Their own philosophy of life was continuously enriched and remoulded by their direct contact with the people and with events. It is extremely risky, therefore, to base one's attempt to understand their world-view merely on a study of their writings and speeches. The evolution of their ideas has to be related to their involvement in problems of individual and social living. It is for this reason that Gandhi warned N. K. Bose not to rely exclusively on his writings for an insight into his thought and practice. He asked Bose to live with him for some years, to see him at work and to share his experience of living, if he was earnest about seeking an understanding of Gandhism. Through this approach, the understanding of Gandhi was bound

to be vastly different from one derived from studying him at a distance from his writings. Bose told me how this direct contact with Gandhi gave him a deeper understanding of him than had been possible earlier by studying his writings. By staying and working with him as a member of his team, Bose rediscovered his intensely human quality on the one hand and his dynamic quality on the other. He found that the secret of Gandhi's greatness lay not in the absence of human failings and foibles, but in his inner restlessness, ceaseless striving and intense involvement in the problems of mankind. He was not a slave to ideas and concepts. On the contrary, ideas and concepts were for him aids in grappling with human problems, and were to be reconsidered if they did not work.

This leads me to the broad generalization that Gandhi and Nehru originally represented two divergent responses to the challenge of the industrial society, the challenge of western civilization on the economic, social and cultural planes. Nehru's contribution lay in wholeheartedly welcoming the industrial civilization and in linking Indian nationalism with the perspective of India's transformation into an industrial society. We must remember that there was a powerful traditionalist ideology in India which was inclined to turn anti-colonialism into a wholesale denigration of western, industrial civilization. Nehru's historical role lay in emphasizing the distinction between 'two Englands—the England of Shakespeare and Milton, of political revolution and constitutional liberties for freedom, of science and technical progress; and the England of the savage penal code and brutal behaviour, of entrenched feudalism and reaction.'[6] Nehru called for a fight against the 'wrong England', but insisted that India must learn from the 'right England' that had made a great contribution to human civilization.

Nehru argued that India had succumbed to British colonialism because she had lagged behind in the race for material progress. As a result of her 'inner weaknesses' India failed to make a transition to the industrial age. The industrial revolution which western Europe experienced in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries passed India by. Hence colonialism in India had to be fought not only on the political plane, but also in the economic sphere. An industrialized India alone could make a decisive break from the colonial past. This firm commitment to industrialization distinguishes Nehru from Gandhi. In contrast, the Mahatma emerged

as the staunchest critic of industrialism and the most consistent advocate of values of India's pre-industrial civilization. But to regard the Mahatma as the apostle of anti-industrialism only is to ignore the complexity of his role in Indian history.

We must make a distinction between Gandhi's fundamental value-commitments on the one hand and the consequences of the forces released by him through his anti-colonialism on the other. Such is the paradox of history that the apostle of anti-industrialism was historically conditioned to play the role of a creator of certain essential conditions of industrialism, a role which had no sanction in his own philosophical orientation. How is this 'paradox' to be explained? How can Gandhi be regarded as a conscious opponent of industrialism and its unconscious promoter at the same time?

The first thing to note is that both Gandhi and Nehru were leaders of a national revolution which culminated in the emergence of a national consciousness on the one hand and a nation-state on the other. The consolidation and strengthening of a national consciousness and a nation-state usually leads in the direction of an industrial revolution; for without an industrial revolution the national consciousness does not have economic substance, and without industrial strength the newly formed nation-state is neither strong nor secure in the modern world. Thus, by playing the most important part in achieving national consciousness and a nation-state, Gandhi helped to create the two most important instruments for accelerating an industrial revolution in a backward country. It is in this sense that Gandhi acted as an 'unconscious tool of history'. It was given to Nehru to utilize these instruments—national consciousness and a nation-state—when initiating the process of planned industrialization. Gandhi's role was crucial in awakening the most dormant and stagnant sector of Indian society, viz., the Indian village. By drawing the villager into the mainstream of national awakening, Gandhi played a unique role in Indian history. Without the awakening of rural India under Gandhi's leadership, the economic growth and social development which followed India's achievement of political freedom would have been inconceivable.

Gandhi's unintended contribution to the growth of an industrial society in India can be better understood if we take into account his critique of the colonial model of modernization on the one hand and his indictment of the evils of traditionalism on the other. Gandhi

thus initiated not only an anti-colonial, socio-cultural revolution, but was also at the head of a Reformation movement within Hindu society.

As far as anti-colonialism on the social and cultural planes is concerned, Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* should be treated as an attack on the colonial model of modernization rather than on the basic ideals and values of western civilization. It should be noted that early nationalists like Dadabhai Naoroji, R. C. Dutt, and M. G. Ranade had shown a keen perception of the economic consequences of India's transformation into a colony, that is to say, into an agricultural hinterland of the British Empire. Later, Nehru enriched this understanding of economic colonialism by drawing upon the Leninist critique of imperialism. But it was Gandhi who showed an unerring insight into the *colonial social superstructure* and its role in buttressing economic exploitation. Gandhi understood that the economic aspects of colonialism would not be so disastrous for the people of the country if they were not sustained by a pernicious and corrosive superstructure. The important ingredients of this superstructure identified by Gandhi were a denationalized intelligentsia, a parasitic business class and an authoritarian and anti-people, colonial state. These acted as intermediaries between the colonial empire and the common people and as the indigenous agents of foreign oppression and exploitation. Gandhi criticized these social and cultural bulwarks of colonial rule, showing how the intelligentsia, which was the product of Anglo-Saxon education, became denationalized by its pseudo-western ways. It produced parasitic social groups like lawyers and the *sahibs* and *babus* of the colonial regime. He showed how the urban business classes were mostly commission-agents of the British, operating for the interests of the empire and against the interests of the native people. He also exposed the top-heavy, extravagant and 'Satanic' nature of the colonial bureaucracy and the absence of any organic relationship between this bureaucracy and the Indian people.

Gandhi's approach, however, was not merely negative. He offered a positive ideological perspective by which the intelligentsia, the business class and the bureaucracy could be remoulded. No doubt, his perspective suffered from one-sidedness in so far as he put the *main* emphasis on transforming the consciousness of the people rather than on altering the structure of property and power. His programme included: teaching in the mother tongue, the reno-

vation and reorientation of education, the decentralization of power, the concepts of voluntary poverty and of bread labour, the elimination of unearned property incomes, the subordination of individual to collective interests and to service of *daridranarayan*, etc.—ideas and practices which involved breaking away from the exploitative, parasitical and elitist mentality of the colonial period, and creating a qualitative transformation of the human element. Gandhi's primary concern was to create human agents for national development and social revolution, by remoulding those values and attitudes which the Indian people had imbibed from the oppressive colonial regime on the one hand, and the moribund traditional social structure on the other. Gandhi attached far less importance to preaching than to practice as a method of changing social consciousness. He preferred to lead the way by dint of his personal example rather than impose a moral revolution on them from the outside. His insistence on labour (especially manual labour), as the basis of a moral life, brings him very close to the Marxist view of morality. To quote Mao: 'Man is moral so long as he is working.'[7]

Gandhi belonged to the line of Hindu reformers who have time and again rejuvenated Hinduism from within, and thus saved it from inner decay and ossification. He was a rebel who showed that life had outgrown the rigid shell of Brahmanical customs and practices. This shell, therefore, had to be discarded. Gandhi thus emerged as the leader of a revolution both among the elite and among the Hindu masses. At the elite level, he initiated a movement against the hiatus between the elite and the masses, seeking to reintegrate the two on a new basis. He questioned obsolete and oppressive social customs and practices, such as the division between high and low castes, the elaborate ritualism and unashamed parasitism of the high castes, and their practice of untouchability. He tried to revolutionize elite consciousness by his concept of a self-denying but life-affirming individual, by his ideas of 'voluntary poverty' and 'non-possession', by his call for dedication to *swarajya* and to the service of *daridranarayan*. Equally important was his appeal to the masses not to co-operate with exploitative and oppressive social institutions and practices, and to cultivate a consciousness of their dignity and power: Gandhi called for a conscious break from the outlook of passive resignation.

If Gandhi sought to promote an anti-parasitical orientation and a this-worldly puritanical ethic at the elite level, he became an agent

of an anti-fatalistic consciousness at the level of the masses. Pulling the masses out of their age-old ignorance, apathy and passivity, he created new stirrings of life among them. By attacking traditionalism at its very roots, he became a far more powerful modernizer of Indian society than thousands of modernists who had dismissed him as a traditionalist. To put it differently, Gandhi emerged as a great social reformer and innovator trying to revolutionize tradition from within, to re-interpret it and to develop it so as to suit the needs and demands of the modern age. His approach was at once defensive (i.e. conservative), and dynamic. He sought to uphold and conserve tradition against the onslaught of westernism, and in this sense, was a conservative. But this conservatism was the conservatism of one who was seeking to preserve the continuity of the vital elements of tradition. At the same time, by recognizing that tradition had to pass through a process of internal reform and rectification, he succeeded in reducing the gulf between tradition and modernity.

It appears that two processes were at work simultaneously in India—the process of reform within tradition to suit the needs of the modern age on the one hand, and the re-interpretation of modernity to suit India's needs and conditions on the other. While Gandhi was at the head of the first type of movement, Nehru played an outstanding role in the second type. Both were, therefore, the great bridge-builders between tradition and modernity in India.

In order to appreciate the significance of Gandhi's reformation as a bridge between tradition and modernity, it is necessary to understand the social background of Gandhi's emergence on the Indian scene. The character of the Hindu elite during the colonial period following the 1857 Mutiny exhibited the two divergent tendencies of orgies of self-indulgence on the one hand, and of life-negating asceticism on the other. Both these tendencies gradually created a wide chasm between the pursuits of the elite and the inevitable demands of the less privileged. Gandhi's reformation redefines the concept of a good life and condemns self-indulgence at the expense of the people as parasitical, and, therefore, as amoral. It rejects the *sanyasin*'s self-mortification as an escape from social demands and obligations. In the first case a revolution is effected by identifying the good life with a life of labour, of voluntary poverty and service to the country and its people. In the second case the other-worldly asceticism is made socially purposeful and life affirming by the concept of the *karmayogin* who does not re-

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nounce social responsibility but fulfils it in a spirit of renunciation. We may recall that the fruit of industrialism in the west and elsewhere was *bhog* (or full satisfaction of material appetites), but the seed of industrialism in all cases was *yoga* (i.e. work, tireless work, but with renunciation, or sublimation of material appetites). The Gandhian reformation with its concept of an elite engaged in tireless work in a spirit of renunciation had a basic affinity with historical movements which threw up the Puritans and the Bolsheviks as the architects of industrial society. Why the Gandhian reformation failed to throw up its own variety of Puritans as the architects of an industrial society in India is beyond the scope of this article. However, I believe that the Gandhian concept undoubtedly embodies an untapped spiritual potential for sustaining an industrial revolution in India. In other words, there appears to be an inner contradiction within Gandhism—its rejection of the industrial society at the ideological level, but its profound support for a revolution within Hinduism, which is a potential stimulant to an industrial revolution.

We shall now elaborate on a point briefly made earlier: Nehru's role in Indianizing the concept of modernity or in creatively reinterpreting the concept of modernity keeping India's specificities fully in view. Nehru's contribution can be fully appreciated if we remember that many of his eminent predecessors had tended to equate modernization with westernization. Their view of modernization was imitative and mechanical, involving the mechanical transfer of the values, institutions and technologies of the west to Asian countries.

Gandhi's reaction to modernization was partly, if not wholly, a response to this thoughtless, imitative approach to the Indian problem adopted by west-oriented modernists. 'My resistance to Western civilization,' he observed in 1927, 'is really a resistance to its indiscriminate and thoughtless imitation based on the assumption that Asiatics are fit only to copy everything that comes from the West.'[8] He himself, however, could not effectively meet the challenge of the westernizers because he seemed to throw out the baby with the bath-water. He tried to meet the threat of westernization by opposing modernization itself. It was Jawaharlal Nehru who effectively met the modernists on their own ground by adopting a creative approach towards modernization. Nehru made a distinction between three distinct meanings of the term 'modernization'.

In the first sense, modernization can be defined in terms of the basic ideals and values of the modern age or in terms of a world-view which first originated in a comprehensive form in the west and later spread to other parts of the world. The essential ingredients of such a world-view are such elements as commitment to equality, liberty and humanism; a positive valuation of science and its practical application to nature and society with a view to mastering the problems of ignorance, hunger, disease and natural calamities; respect for work, enterprise, and methodical regulation of life as the attributes of an industrial civilization.

In the second sense, modernization refers to those ideological, technological and institutional forms which emerged in western countries in the process of transition from a pre-industrial to an industrial society. Thus, individualism on the ideological plane, labour-saving technology, capitalist enterprise, and urbanization on the economic plane, and parliamentary democracy and the welfare state on the socio-political plane, represented the western road to modernization. The western road also included imposition of colonialism on vast, primarily non-western regions of the world.

In the third sense, modernization denotes the ideological and institutional changes which emerge under the impact of direct or indirect dominance of western powers over Asian countries. The colonial pattern of modernization thus needs to be identified as a distinct pattern. It was qualitatively different from the western model. What is more significant is that it contradicted the basic spirit of modernization as embodied in the first sense of the word. By upsetting the old socio-economic pattern and without creating a new one, it led people to equate modernization with destruction, without construction. It thus discredited the idea of modernization itself.

Nehru introduced clearer thinking on the question of modernity versus tradition, and made some fundamental points which deserve special attention. He reiterated the deep inner crisis of western liberalism and emphasized that problems of the twentieth century could not be tackled with the tools provided by nineteenth century liberal thought. He tirelessly showed how liberalism failed to either explain or resolve two major social contradictions of western civilization. The first was the wide gap between its profession of equality and its practice of inequality. Though committed to equality between nations and between individuals and groups within

nations, in practice it tolerated colonial domination over non-white peoples and racial and class inequality within western societies themselves.

The second was the contradiction between the forces thrown up by the scientific and technological revolution and obsolete social institutions. The productive forces released by science and technology were in conflict with the institution of private property and the idea of *laissez-faire*. These produced scarcity in the midst of plenty, mass poverty in the midst of elite prosperity.

By drawing attention to the inner contradiction of classical liberalism, Nehru pointed to the necessity of an inner revolution within liberalism to suit the needs of India in the twentieth century. Nehru's concepts of an open society, secularism, democracy and socialism in the context of India evolved as a result of this view of nineteenth century liberalism.

The next important theoretical advance was Nehru's attempt to meet the challenge posed by Marxism as a rival to liberal thought in the second half of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. Nehru drew abundantly upon Marxism and Leninism for his critique of the basic premises of classical liberalism. He drew especially upon Marx's conceptions of historical materialism and class struggle and on Lenin's conception of imperialism, to reveal the inner contradictions of liberal thought and the capitalist structure of western society. From the vantage point of Marxism, Nehru was able to look beyond nineteenth-century liberalism in general and capitalism in particular. He thus saw very clearly the futility of repeating the course of western history in the Third World. He emphasized the need for a new ideological basis for the changing societies in Asia. He interpreted the emergence of Soviet civilization as a clear break from nineteenth-century liberalism, and as part of the search for a new type of social order based on economic and social justice. At the same time Nehru could not identify himself with the violence, civil war and severe restrictions on liberty which became associated with the Stalinist alternative to western liberalism.

Nehru's approach is thus marked by a clear demarcation both from nineteenth century liberalism with its negation of equality and the early twentieth century Russian experiment in socialism with its association with violence and denial of liberty. The historical significance of Nehru's vision for India lies in his bold attempt to

overcome the schism characterizing western civilization and to harmonize liberty with justice on the one hand and social revolution with non-violence on the other. A synthesis of the vital elements of liberalism with those of Marxism thus embodied an important aspect of Nehru's creative approach to modernity.

Finally, Nehru needs to be remembered for his attempt to make creative use of Gandhi's critique of modernization. Nehru did not reject mechanization as Gandhi had done, but he incorporated some of the latter's thought to evolve an *Indian* variant of the modern, industrial society. For instance, Nehru rejected Gandhi's backward looking ruralism, but recognized the role of rural development, of labour-intensive technology, and of small and cottage industries in a village-based, labour-surplus and mass poor Indian economy. Nehru also shared Gandhi's revulsion against elitist affluence. Without rejecting the concept of economic progress, Nehru sought to interpret economic progress as a war on mass poverty.

After discussing the role of Gandhi as the reformer of tradition and of Nehru as the creative interpreter of modernity, let us conclude by touching upon the most important question. Where did Gandhi and Nehru go wrong? Where, especially, did Nehru, who was at the centre of activity for more than a decade and a half after Gandhi passed away, go wrong?

Nehru's chief inadequacy lay not in his faulty vision, but in his failure to create new instruments with which to implement the programmes of national development and social change. The social force which was created in quest of freedom proved grossly inadequate for the transformation and development of a big country and its vast masses. Nehru failed to create a new social force capable of bringing about a social revolution and economic transformation. This constitutes perhaps the weakest spot in the Nehru legacy for India. And it is the challenge facing the present generation in India who are the inheritors of the Gandhi-Nehru legacy to address themselves to this historic task.

NOTES

1. J. Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (London, 1956), p. 76.
2. N. A. Dobrolyulov, *Selected Philosophical Essays* (Moscow, 1948), p. 174.

3. Dorothy Norman, *Nehru—The First Sixty Years* (New Delhi, 1950), p. 327.
4. J. Nehru, Foreword in D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol. i (Bombay, 1951), p. xiii.
5. Honore De Balzac, *Old Goriot* (Penguin Books, 1951), p. 150.
6. J. Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (London, 1956), pp. 285–6.
7. Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, vol. iii (Bombay, 1954), p. 104.
8. M. K. Gandhi, *Young India*, 8 August 1927.

THE NEHRU-GANDHI POLARITY AND ECONOMIC POLICY

RAJ KRISHNA

It seems from the continuing debate on economic policy in India that people are trying to find answers to every current economic question either in the Gandhi corpus or in the Nehru corpus. In the process, they have set up a Gandhi versus Nehru polarity.

Unfortunately, we shall never find all the practical answers we need in the Gandhi-Nehru system of thought. The two leaders asked all the important questions; and they offered some answers at the conceptual level. But in an important sense concrete answers to most of their questions are still to be found. The present generation cannot escape the burden of finding the answers for itself. It cannot take shelter in the texts. The texts have some pointers but no final, ready-made solutions.

Most issues of economic policy in India involve the determination of right proportions in which different forms of investment and different forms of organization may be combined. For instance, there is the perennial question of combining (a) agricultural and industrial investment, and (b) heavy, light and small industry investment in the right proportions, as also the eternal issue of the proper mixing of Statist, capitalist, co-operative and mixed forms of ownership and organization. Choices between alternative proportions in which these different forms may be combined are often presented as choices between extreme forms. And Nehru and Gandhi are represented as preferring one extreme or the other. But a study of their thoughts on specific issues shows that these representations are unfair and untrue. In most instances the two leaders were, in effect, arguing about proportions and not choosing extremes. There were, to be sure, differences of emphasis between them but a sharp Nehru-Gandhi polarity in the whole field of eco-

nomic policy is a fiction. The sharper differences related only to two or three areas where Gandhi's strong religious orientation and Nehru's strong Fabian orientation had a direct effect.

In his lifetime Nehru's chronic eclecticism was a notorious joke in the universities. He would seldom advocate anything without adding the 'but' clause to recognize the merit of the other options—either in the same speech or on other occasions. This eclecticism can only be interpreted as an intuitive awareness that the problem in hand did not require the exclusive choice of any one alternative but a combination of many options.

On the question of agricultural versus industrial investment, for example, we find Nehru saying at the World Agriculture Fair in 1960:

> Through these thousands of years it is mother earth that has sustained us . . . agriculture is of primary significance. . . . [1]

On other occasions he stressed the vital role of agricultural growth for industrialization and defence:

> In an agricultural country like India . . . agriculture itself has to play a vital and basic part . . . to support industrial development.[2]
>
> . . . agriculture is highly important. How can a country fight when it is lacking in food?[3]

But then he would also emphasize the importance of heavy industry:

> We want heavy industry because without it we can never really be an independent country.[4]
>
> The progress of industrialization will be a great factor in the defence of the country.[5]
>
> The big and powerful countries of the world are the countries which have industrialized themselves and thereby gained strength, whether for war or for peaceful progress . . . . The test of real strength is how much steel you produce, how much power you produce and use.[6]

Within the industrial sector, however, he wanted all kinds of industries, and not only heavy industry, to grow. As he said at Avadi in 1955:

> . . . in planning we have to balance heavy industry, village industry and cottage industry.[7]

This thought keeps re-appearing in his speeches. Therefore it would be grossly unfair to argue that he was a mere industrializer or a heavy-industry fanatic. But he was not a technocrat, nor an economist. He could not himself compute the balanced rates of growth

of investment and output in different sectors. These could only be determined by the Planning Commission. As a leader, he could only ask for the simultaneous development of all sectors.

Gandhi, too, was no economist computing the allocation of investment, but his passionate commitment to 'the revival of the village' was balanced by a recognition of the necessity for industry, though this industry was to be located mainly in the villages:

> If every village begins to produce its own cloth, its strength will greatly be enhanced. But to achieve that we don't want to close down the textile factories by legislation.[8]

Thus he did not want all mills to disappear. He did not even want cities to disappear; he only wanted a non-exploitative relationship between cities and villages:

> It is only when the cities realise the duty of making an adequate return to the villages for the strength and sustenance which they derive from them, instead of selfishly exploiting them, that a healthy and moral relationship between the two will spring up.[9]

What is more, Gandhi explicitly recognized the need for heavy industries and modern machinery. But he wanted them to be chosen and organized so that (a) they would not concentrate power; (b) they would not displace labour; and (c) they would subserve rather than supplant village industry.

> I do visualise electricity, ship-building, ironworks, machine-making and the like existing side by side with village handicrafts. But the order of dependence will be reversed. Hitherto the industrialization has been so planned as to destroy the villages and village crafts. In the State of the future it will subserve the villages and their craft.[10]

> Now that we know the use of steam and electricity, we should be able to use them . . . .[11]

> I have no quarrel with steamships and telegraphs.[12]

> . . . there would have to be a factory for making these Singer Sewing Machines, and it would have to contain power-driven machinery of ordinary type.[13]

> Machinery has its place . . . . But it must not be allowed to displace necessary human labour.[14]

> . . . there would be no objection to villagers using even the modern machines and tools . . . . Only they should not be used as a means of exploitation of others.[15]

> I am aiming, not at eradication of all machinery, but limitation.[16]

These views of Gandhi and Nehru on the agriculture-industry dichotomy, and related issues, clearly show that, while stressing the need for heavy industry, Nehru wanted light and village industries

to grow at the same time; and, while asking for growth in village industry, Gandhi recognized the need for heavy industries and modern techniques, provided that they stood the appropriate tests of social desirability. Thus they both wanted a combination of various industries, unit sizes, techniques and locations, and left to technicians the task of working out the proportions in which they were to be combined, keeping in view the basic human values to which they were both committed. Both were pluralists; and the adoption of any extremist position in their name would be alien to their basic ethos.

With regard to the private sector-public sector polarity we again discover a similar dualist position held by the two leaders. Nehru's position is reflected in the following passages:

> All basic industries should be State owned completely, while the medium and the small industries should be co-operatively owned. That can only be a gradual process. Meanwhile private enterprise should have scope. If you allow any enterprise to function, then you should give it adequate scope.[17]

> . . . at the present stage in India the private sector has a very important task to fulfil, provided always that it works within the confines laid down, and provided always that it does not lead to the creation of monopolies and other evils that the accumulation of wealth gives rise to.[18]

> . . . persons who believe in a socialist pattern must believe in the public sector growing all the time. But it does not necessarily mean that the private sector is eliminated even at a much later stage.[19]

We can see that the inevitable 'but' is there. The famous Industrial Policy Resolution of 1948, which Nehru sponsored, was clearly based on the mixed-economy philosophy of reserving some key sectors for the State and leaving the rest free for private enterprise:

> We have in our Industrial Policy Resolution laid down a broad approach of what is called a 'mixed economy' which combines public enterprises and private enterprises. We put industrial undertakings in three categories. The first category is mainly of public enterprises reserved for the State; the second consists of those industries which are broadly private enterprises or those which may be public or which may be private; and the third consists of those industries which are in the main private enterprises. Of course these distinctions are not rigid. There are no hard and fast lines.[20]

Gandhi also believed in the 'mixed economy' though he did not use the phrase:

> The heavy machinery for work of public utility . . . would be owned by the State . . . .[21]

> . . . the village communities or the State would own power houses . . .[22]

> ... the means of production of elementary necessities of life remain in the control of the masses.[23]
>
> As far as possible every activity will be conducted on a co-operative basis.[24]

Not only did he accept private ownership, but at one point he held that

> ... the violence of private ownership is less injurious than the violence of the State.[25]

But he wanted property-owners to become trustees using their surplus for society:

> The rich man will be left in possession of his wealth, of which he will use what he reasonably requires for his personal needs and will act as a trustee for the remainder to be used for the society.[26]

In the case of forms of production, then, not only were the two leaders pluralists but they wanted similar types of industries to be operated by the State and the private/co-operative sectors.

There are at least five other themes on which the thinking of the two leaders complemented each other. First, they shared an absolute commitment to the democratic method in the realization of economic objectives. Jawaharlal Nehru considered democratic and non-democratic varieties of socialism time and again but he consciously rejected the non-democratic options—often on the strength of Gandhi's statements. The following statements are typical:

> I ... am a convinced socialist and a believer in democracy, and have, at the same time, accepted wholeheartedly the peaceful technique of non-violent action which Gandhiji has practised so successfully during the past twenty years ....[27]
>
> ... it is possible, in theory, to establish socialism by democratic means, provided, of course, the full democratic process is available .... The rejection of democracy does not or should not come from the socialist side ....[28]
>
> We have definitely accepted the democratic process. Why have we accepted it? Well, for a variety of reasons. Because we think that in the final analysis it promotes the growth of human beings and of society; because, as we have said in our Constitution, we attach great value to individual freedom; because we want the creative and the adventurous spirit of man to grow. It is not enough for us merely to produce the material goods of the world. We do want high standards of living, but not at the cost of man's creative spirit, his creative energy, his spirit of adventure; not at the cost of all those fine things of life which have ennobled man throughout the ages. Democracy is not merely a question of elections.[29]

Gandhi's profound passion for democracy hardly needs documentation, but it is important to note that he identified democracy

with the 'Swaraj of the masses' established and sustained by non-violence:

> In the democracy which I have envisaged, a democracy established by non-violence, there will be equal freedom for all. Everybody will be his own master.[30]

> True democracy or the Swaraj of the masses can never come through untruthful and/or violent means, for the simple reason that the natural corollary to their use would be to remove all opposition through the suppression or extermination of the antagonists. That does not make for individual freedom. Individual freedom can have the fullest play only under a regime of unadulterated *ahimsa*.[31]

Second, both shared a passion for distributive justice. We find Nehru saying:

> We aim at a strong and free and democratic India where . . . present-day inequalities in wealth and status have ceased to be.[32]

and Gandhi declaring:

> . . . the possession of inordinate wealth by individuals should be held as a crime against Indian humanity.[33]

> My ideal is equal distribution, but so far as I can see it is not to be realised. I therefore work for equitable distribution.[34]

> . . . all the bhangis, doctors, lawyers, teachers, merchants and others would get the same wages for an honest day's work.[35]

Third, they were both staunch economic nationalists, as evidenced by Nehru's statement on the relationship between economic independence and the development of basic industries, and Gandhi's philosophy of Swadeshi. Their nationalism led to self-reliance as a major objective in Indian planning.

Fourth, Nehru was deeply concerned, like Gandhi, about the conflict between modern large-scale technology and distributive justice, mental health and ethical and spiritual values. He was searching for a way of deriving the productivity benefits of modern technology without its unfortunate side-effects:

> We have to break . . . this barrier (of poverty) by profiting by the new sources of power and modern techniques. But in doing so we should not forget the basic human element . . . the lessening of inequalities . . . and . . . the ethical and spiritual aspects of life . . . .[36]

Finally, though it is true that the earlier Plans failed to reduce unemployment, it is not possible to maintain that Nehru underrated the importance of the problem. Many people will be surprised when reminded that Nehru laid down for the ten years beginning with the Third Plan the same target which the Janata government

has fixed for the ten years beginning with the Sixth Plan:

> The time has come to put an end to unemployment in ten years. By ten years we mean two Five-Year periods.[37]

This was a crystallization of what Gandhi had specified on the eve of independence as the very purpose of planning:

> . . . real planning consisted in the best utilization of the whole man-power of India.[38]

These statements show how difficult it is to be original in setting an overall employment target for India.

It is obvious from this brief review that there was much common ground in their thinking—with some differences of emphasis—in many crucial areas of economic policy. But on some questions their diverse philosophical positions produced more marked differences.

First of all, we can detect a strong difference between them on what they would consider to be desirable levels of consumption. Gandhi explicitly believed in minimum necessary material consumption:

> He (who has made the ideal of equal distribution a part of his being) would reduce his wants to a minimum, bearing in mind the poverty of India . . . .[39]
>
> Civilization, in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication of wants, but in their deliberate and voluntary restriction.[40]
>
> Non-possession requires that man should, like the birds, have no roof over his head, no clothing and no stock of food for the morrow.[41]

We can see that the Mahatma's thinking about consumption was derived from his definition of civilization, his faith in redistribution, as well as his commitment to the ideal of 'non-possession' which God-seekers must pursue. Nehru, on the other hand, believed in the good life, an aesthetically and hedonistically good life, which was alien to the Gandhian ethos.

Different attitudes to life styles necessarily led to different positions in related fields of policy. If one believes in austere consumption one can consistently lay more emphasis on small-unit production, simple technologies and village self-sufficiency, as Gandhi did. But the moment one relaxes the assumption of authority on a mass scale, one must be more eclectic (as Nehru was) in the choice of the scales and techniques of production and the geographical boundaries of self-reliance.

This explains why Nehru could not believe in the desirability of village self-sufficiency to the same extent as Gandhi. In fact, he

has clearly said that

> . . . the self-sufficiency of the village . . . should not be mixed up with the idea of decentralisation . . . while decentralisation is desirable . . . if it leads to old and rather primitive methods of production . . . we remain poor . . . .[42]

The link between poverty, elementary technology and village self-sufficiency is clearly perceived here. In Gandhi's thought, on the other hand, decentralization and village self-reliance went together:

> My idea of village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its vital wants.[43]
>
> The Panchayat will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office.[44]

Nehru was to emphasize the importance of panchayati raj (as he did when panchayati raj was introduced in Rajasthan in 1959) but he never identified decentralization with village self-sufficiency. Village self-reliance was, therefore, a second issue on which the two leaders held a substantially different position. But on national self-reliance, they shared the same opinions.

A third major difference can be noticed in their attitude to the State. To Gandhi, the State represented:

> violence in a concentrated and organised form.[45]
>
> a soulless machine which can never be weaned from the violence to which it owes its very existence.[46]

These thoughts clearly carry the echoes of anarchist philosophy, the notion that the State is inherently evil and must eventually be made to disappear. But Nehru, because of his Fabian orientation, envisaged a dominant role for the State in the socialist development of the country.

The crucial distinction we should note here is the one between social ownership which Gandhi's thought emphasizes and State ownership which Nehru visualizes. Gandhi wanted property to be socialized in the hands of village communities, except for some heavy industry which might be owned by the State:

> I know socialists and communists . . . who believe in the universal ownership of instruments of production. I rank myself as one among them.[47]

Nehru, on the other hand, clearly wanted all means of production to be controlled by the State.

In the current debate about the pattern of economic development in India in the last twenty-five years, one comes across two views. One is that the pattern which materialized under Nehru's inspiration was utterly misconceived. It was un-Gandhian inasmuch as

the bulk of investment was devoted to heavy, capital-goods industries and large-scale consumer industries in the urban areas; rural development was neglected. The other view is that the pattern of development so far has been essentially right; and that the unsolved problems of poverty and unemployment will be dealt with only if the process continues at an accelerated pace for a sufficiently long period of time. The truth, as usual, lies between these extreme positions.

To some extent, the kind of development which occurred in the Nehru and post-Nehru periods was inevitable. In a sub-continental economy with a very large market, abundant natural resources of every kind, and vast reserves of unskilled and skilled manpower, the building up of a strong and diversified capital goods base was a historical necessity. If today we can boast of a large measure of self-reliance, it is because considerable capacity has been created in the metallurgical, mechanical, chemical, power and transport sectors. These sectors are basic precisely because they are equally indispensable for defence, for large-scale consumer goods production, for small-industry development and for rural development. The technical linkages between agriculture and industry are such that even a 4 per cent rate of growth in agriculture is not possible without a high rate of growth in industries which supply the input requirements of a growing agriculture in the form of cement, bricks, pipes, pumps, electric power generation and transmission equipment, agricultural implements, diesel oil, fertilizer, pesticides, roads, vehicles, etc. And a seven per cent growth in industry is not possible without a high rate of agricultural growth, because nearly half the modern industrial sector either processes agricultural output or supplies agricultural inputs.

Now that the first phase of building up the industrial base has been completed (and one round of import substitution is over), it is more than ever essential to give much greater emphasis to rural development and the creation of employment.

Thus instead of taking a black-and-white view of Indian development, we can take an evolutionary view in which we recognize an early phase in which some priorities with which Nehru was associated were inevitable, and a second phase, now beginning, in which the priorities can and must be substantially altered to those emphasized by Gandhi.

If there were mistakes in the allocation of resources in the early

phase, they have again to be identified as mistakes about proportions in which planned investment flowed in different channels at the margin rather than a mistake in the choice of the plural strategy which always characterized Indian planning. For instance, it would be wrong to say that agriculture was neglected in the Five Year Plans. For, as we have noted, Nehru, as indeed all planners, attached prime importance to agriculture. Nearly a fifth of the public sector Plan outlay has been consistently allocated to agricultural development. In addition, heavy investments were made in industries producing agricultural inputs and processing agricultural outputs. There was a massive increase in the flow of credit to the agricultural sector from Rs 70 crores in 1950–1 to Rs 2,000 crores in 1975–6. Almost all agricultural inputs are subsidized; agricultural income is lightly taxed, and during the last thirteen years minimum prices, covering the full cost of production, have been guaranteed for all major crops. This set of policies can hardly be described as embodying the neglect of agriculture. But the fact still remains that the allocations for agriculture (particularly irrigation extension and fertilizer production) and for rural infrastructure and social services could and should have been higher. The actual allocations have obviously been insufficient to raise the irrigation ratio above 25 per cent even after five Five Year Plans. And they have left us with 80 per cent of our poverty and 80 per cent of our unemployment in the rural areas.

Similarly, the effort to develop small and village industries could have been greater and more sincere. Special schemes for target groups such as small and marginal farmers and area planning for guaranteed full employment could have been launched long ago. But, again, all these deficiencies of allocation or timing relate to the choice of proportions. The planners are trying to improve the proportions. But the continuity of a plural strategy of advancing on all fronts in pursuit of multiple national objectives (growth, equity, employment and self-reliance) is inevitable.

A sharp distinction between Nehruvian and Gandhian thought, or of a Nehruvian and a Gandhian era, accords neither with the texts nor with the facts and compulsions of Indian economic development.

Whatever may have been the Gandhian or Nehruvian elements in Indian planning, it has completely failed to realize the two objectives which were dearest to Gandhi as well as to Nehru, namely,

the reduction of unemployment, and the reduction of poverty and inequality. We must recall the familiar, dismal figures again and again. After twenty-eight years of planned development, India has 20.5 million unemployed persons—16.5 million in the rural areas and 4 million in the urban areas. The number of people said to be poor is 294 million—239 million in the rural areas and 55 million in the urban areas. As for inequality, the poorest 10 per cent of rural households owned only 0.1 per cent and the richest 10 per cent owned more than half the total rural assets in 1971–2 as well as in 1961–2. And out of at least 21.5 million acres of potential surplus land, only 1.3 million acres had been distributed up to July 1977. In the urban areas, the assets of the top twenty business houses increased from Rs 2,500 crores to Rs 4,500 crores between 1969 and 1975. Their assets accounted for two-thirds of the paid-up capital of all joint-stock companies.

Therefore, whatever be its other achievements, the development process in India has been associated with increasing unemployment, poverty and inequality. There can be no apology for this outcome. Gandhi had written that:

> I would be very happy indeed if the people concerned behaved as trustees (of their surplus wealth) but if they fail, I believe we shall have to deprive them of their possessions through the State with the minimum exercise of violence.[48]

Now it is for us to decide how much further unemployment, poverty and inequality should increase before the power of the State is exercised to establish some distributive justice.

Of all the redistributive measures, the urgency of land reform was most often stressed by Nehru. A large mass of reform legislation was enacted. But it must be admitted that, at the executive level, the land reform effort was almost totally frustrated by landed interests.

Two other basic reforms which met the same fate are those of education and the administration. Nehru spoke frequently and eloquently on the need for these reforms. A number of Committees and Commissions reported on required reforms during his regime. But with all his power and popularity, he could not bring about any significant improvement in the entrenched systems of education and administration. The systems recorded phenomenal quantitative growth and steady quantitative deterioration—except in a few elite outfits here and there.

The main explanation of these failures seems to lie not in the thought-systems of Gandhi and Nehru, but in the Marxist proposition that the dynamics of the distribution of property ultimately depends on the dynamics of the distribution of organized class-power in society. The parliamentary democratic process can be an instrument of redistribution only in so far as it progressively tilts the distribution of political power in favour of the poor. But in the early stages of the evolution of the process in societies steeped in poverty the proportionate representation of the poor in the legislatures remains smaller than their representation in the population, in spite of adult franchise. And their representation in the executive remains smaller than in the legislature. This gap in the power of the poor explains why even in a country with millions of poverty-stricken voters, the distribution of income and property does not improve. The gap can only be bridged by the universal politicization and unionization of the poor outside the legislatures. Only unions of the poor, partly subsidized by public sector funds, can effectively secure for them, in all regions and sectors, their due share in productive assets, knowledge, credit, social services, and employment.

It is unfortunate that almost all redistributive legislation and planning was designed by and entrusted for implementation to the bureaucracy alone. It was wrongly assumed that the bureaucracy would redistribute. Simple facts about the bureaucracy—that it is not a redistributive force, that it may not even be a neutral force, and that it is a class with its own interests which do not always coincide with those of the other major classes—which have been forcefully emphasized by Djilas, were ignored or played down in the mainstream of India's socialist thought.

Experience has proved that the bureaucracy cannot be the sole instrument of redistribution. If redistribution is to occur the unionized power of the poor will have to be exercised incessantly on the legislative and administrative systems. Even if the new planners allocate enormous resources for rural development, small industry development and massive employment generation, it is doubtful whether these resources will reach the poor unless they unite and supervise their use. Redistribution cannot simply be a gift from the top; it has to be brought about by the beneficiaries from below.

In the next phase of Indian development, the supreme task of

both Nehruites and Gandhians must be the disciplined mobilization of the mass power of the poor. Otherwise the Gandhi-Nehru goals of full employment and distributive justice will continue to elude us, despite the allocation of substantial resources for the benefit of the poor.

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This short book contains three essays dealing with the Gandhi - Nehru relationship; the essays are written by a historian, a sociologist and an economist respectively. In the first, B R. Nanda examines the political views of the two leaders, their mutual accommodation to one another despite differences in perspective, and the manner in which Nehru applied some of Gandhi's ideas after Independence. The second essay, by P. C. Joshi, again emphasizes the interdependence of their relationship in ideological terms. Raj Krishna, in the third essay, examines their views on industry and economic planning, repudiating the idea of a Gandhi - Nehru polarity.

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