

**Prime Minister's Reply to the Debate  
in The Lok Sabha on 8 May 1959<sup>1</sup>**

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, this matter concerning the developments in Tibet has come up before this House as well as before the other House on several occasions in the course of the last few weeks and I have had occasion to make many statements on the situation arising from these developments. I should have thought that enough had been said for the time being about the basic facts. So those facts as known were challenged, in statements from China. Some of the statements from China, in so far as they related to India, were not accepted as facts by us. And I wondered sometimes whether it would serve any useful purpose for us to carry on this argument which could only mean really a repetition of what had been said. Nevertheless, it is perhaps a good thing for us to have this brief discussion here. But in the course of this discussion so many basic facts have been challenged, or basic ideas have been challenged, that it raises much wider issues than what has happened in Tibet.

The hon. Member who just spoke before me with warmth said many things which challenged all the basic assumptions of our country as a whole which has been accepted by this House and I think by the country as a whole with remarkable unanimity. Nevertheless, he challenged all those basic assumptions. Either he has never believed in those basic assumptions or what has happened in Tibet has made him change his opinion.

Now, I do not propose in these few minutes to discuss all the basic assumptions of our policy. All I would like to say now is that I do not hold with what the hon. Member has spoken. I do not agree with much

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Sen, Chanakya, *Tibet Disappears* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1960)

that he has said and so far as Government is concerned, we are not going to follow the policy that he has suggested that we should follow. I should like to make that perfectly clear.

### *Dalai Lama's Movements*

I may say in passing that we have laid no limitations on the Dalai Lama, except the limitation of good sense and propriety of which he himself is the judge.

But for the Hon. Member to suggest that we suggest that we should allow him to do something which he has not himself suggested, that is, making India the headquarters of some kind of a campaign and that we should allow the hon. Member and his party to join in this campaign is something which seems to be so odd, so remarkable of utterance that I cannot imagine how even he could have made it if he had thought about it. I need not say much about it, because it has no relation to what is happening in the world, or in India, or in Tibet, or in China or anywhere.

### *1954 Agreement*

He also laid stress on the 1954 Agreement, the agreement with China with regard to Tibet. He said we should never have done it. Again I do not quite understand what is meant by this kind of statement or this kind of viewpoint. What exactly he expects us to do is not clear except maybe perhaps to hold public meetings at Ramlila grounds and deliver speeches. That is not the way the foreign policy of a country is conducted, by public meetings held at various places in India. Public meetings are important no doubt. But we have to come up against not only basic policies and assumptions, but hard facts in regard to foreign policy.

I have no doubt in my mind that the agreement we made with China with regard to Tibet was a right agreement. It was a correct agreement and we shall stand by it and it is not correct even for him to say that that agreement has been broken. It may be said that he thinks that certain implications of that agreement have not been, according to him or according to anybody else, carried out. That is a different matter. But there is no question of that agreement having been broken. It lasts; it functions.

### *Emotional Upheaval*

I do not know how many people here know the background of all these problems. We have been moved naturally, we have had a kind of emotional upheaval, by recent happenings and it is quite understandable that that should be so because of certain intimate emotional and other bonds with Tibet, with the people of Tibet, or the mountains of Tibet, or Kailash or Manasarowar and so on, a mixture. We can understand that. And we can respect this emotional response. Nevertheless any policy that we lay down or attempt to lay down cannot be based on an emotional upheaval. They have to bear some relation to facts.

### *Historical Background*

I do not know how many Hon. Members here know the history, the background of Tibet, of China, of Mongolia, of Bhutan and Sikkim and Nepal in the last few hundred years. I wonder how many have cared to look into them. I do not know whether the Hon. Member who just spoke knows anything about it at all. I happen to know something about it and I have taken the trouble to read a quite a number of books and histories, Chinese chronicles, Indian reports, etc. Here is

the history of seven hundred years, or more, from the moment when Chengiz Khan invaded Tibet, when Kublai Khan also held Tibet in a peculiar way, considering the then Dalai Lama as his spiritual guru. It is a curious combination. Politically he was dominant, in Tibet, but Kublai Khan considered the Dalai Lama as his spiritual leader, so that you see a curious combination coming up. And in fact for a considerable period the relationship of Tibet with China was very peculiar; in a sense I believe I am not wrong in saying, the Chinese rather looked down upon the Tibetans from the Mongol times. The Chinese rather look down upon every country other than their own. They consider themselves as the middle kingdom, as the celestial race, a great country, whether it was the Tang Kingdom, or the Ming Kingdom or ultimately the Manchus for a long period. The relations between China and Tibet varied from sovereignty or suzerainty, or half-sovereignty or semi-independence for long periods like this coming one after the other till the Manchu dynasty right up to the beginning of the twentieth century held sway over Tibet, quite a considerable sway. Even in the last days of the Manchu dynasty, when it fell, it held some considerable influence in Tibet.

When the Manchu dynasty fell round about forty or fifty years ago it weakened. It weakened, but whoever held China, whether it was the Emperor, or whether it was President Yuan Shih-Kai, Chiang Kai-shek's regime, or whether it was the People's Government, they had one consistent policy from Emperor to the Communist of considering themselves as overlords of Tibet. No doubt, when Tibet was strong, it resisted that from time to time. There have been occasions when, twice at least, Tibetan armies reached the capital of China-it is rather old history - as the Chinese armies came repeatedly into Tibet. There

have been occasions when Nepalese army went into Tibet and Tibetan army came into Nepal. There was one occasion at least when a certain General from Kashmir, Zorawar Singh, who carried out a brilliant campaign across the Himalayas in Tibet only, of course, to meet a stouter enemy than Tibetan or anybody, the cold of Tibet. The temperature of Tibet put an end to him and his army there. All this is history, mixed history. There is no doubt that the countries with whom Tibet has been most intimately connected in the past have been Mongolia and China, naturally for historical and other reasons, religious reasons, cultural reasons.

#### *Present Day Situation*

But, all these do not count. In considering the present day situation, we have to take things as they are and have been recently. We cannot think of Chengiz Khan's time or Kublai Khan's time or the Manchu Emperors or Chiang kai-Shek or anybody else. In regard to the present situation, what exactly are we after? If we accept the Hon. Member Shri Vajpayee's statement, we should, more or less, prepare for an armed conflict on this issue. We cannot pat somebody on the back and tell him to fight and say, we will cheer you from the background. That is an absurd situation. We must be clear in our mind what we are saying or aiming at. I take it that we aim at, whatever problems may arise, first of all a peaceful solution of these problems. Peaceful solutions are not brought about by warlike speeches and warlike approaches. It is obvious that if some people in China think that by threats and warlike speeches, they can frighten China that is equally wrong. Obviously not. Great Countries, India or China, are not pushed about in this way. They react in the opposite direction.

So far as China is concerned-not with us, but with other countries, we know very well; with the USA, with other countries-China herself is a part of a military bloc system on the one side and China herself is intimately concerned with cold war. Not with us; but because of this bloc system. They have got used to ways of expressing their opinion which, personally, I find , is not the right way in international parlance.

### *Cold war technique*

And now about the cold war technique, we have recently had some experience of that regard to India. It is true, we have reacted against it. We did not like it. The question arises whether we should adopt that technique or not. It is an important thing, because it concerns our policy too. I think that neither that policy nor that way of expression which may be called cold war expression is right for any country : certainly not for us, unless we want to change our policy completely. We do not want to change it. We think it would be harmful from every point of view to change this policy. We should pursue that policy. That policy is based not so much on what the other country does, but on its inherent rightness in so far as we can understand it. We may be swept away now and then. It is a different matter. We are human beings. But, if we think coolly and calmly, we must realize that we must adhere to that policy. If so, our expression of opinions, our challenges, our threats, etc., should not be made if they do not fit in with that particular policy.

### *Calm demeanour*

That, I would submit to this House, is not a sign of weakness, I do not think any country in the world thinks that India, in the past few years, has adopted a policy of weakness. Some have accused us of bending

backwards and of sliding with this side or that side. I think they have begun to realise that if we are sometimes soft of speech, friendly of speech, it does not denote weakness, but a certain conviction that is the only right way to deal with international problems or, for the matter of that, national problems. Therefore, I submit that we must not talk about these warlike approaches and threats. We must not be overcome by anger even though, sometimes, we may feel a little angry about events that are happening. We must show by our firm policy and calm demeanour that we will continue that friendly effort that we have always made even when it comes right up to our borders.

### *Sympathy for Tibet*

There is a great deal of sympathy for the people of Tibet, undoubtedly. Certainly not because the people of Tibet have a feudal regime. They have been cut off and have had a static social system which may have existed in other parts of the world some hundreds of years ago, but has ceased to exist elsewhere. Nobody wants that here. As a matter of fact, I am quite sure, even the Dalai Lama does not want it in Tibet. Here, we see a strange thing, a society which had been isolated completely for hundreds of years suddenly coming out into the open, events throwing it into the mad world of ours, cold wars and all kinds of things happening, dynamic policies and ferocious policies and authoritarian policies. Imagine the contrast in these two. It is a vast gulf. It is inevitable that painful consequences flow from this type of thing. you can lessen them. You can try to moderate the effect of that impact. You cannot simply wish it away. It was the policy, I believe, of the People's Government of China, who realised that a country like this cannot be treated in a sudden way, to go slowly about the so-called

reforms or whatever it may be. Whether that policy has changed or not, I cannot say. Maybe it has changed somewhat. That is quite possible. Whether other changes are taking place in China, I cannot say. It was definitely a policy and they stated it publicly and privately that they realised this.

### *Different meaning*

There is another difficulty in my or our dealing with these matters, and that is, that the words we use have a different meaning for other people. For instance, we talk of the autonomy of Tibet. So do the Chinese. But, a doubt creeps into my mind as to whether not think so. There are so many other words. I am not talking of any deliberate distortion. That apart. Quite apart from any distortion, the ways of thinking have changed. They have changed anyhow and the cold war methods have made them change even more. It is frightfully difficult really to talk the same language, the same language of the mind, I mean. That difficulty arises because of that also, and tremendous misunderstandings arise. However, I cannot go into all these matters. One thing, I may say. Some reference was made, I think by Shri S.A. Dange, to some convention on Tibet by a certain Mazumdar. I have not heard of it except today. In fact, just when I came, I heard something about it. In so far as I have seen all the papers-I did see them-I think that whatever that convention appears to aim at or whatever it seems to represent, seem to be very wrong. It is a wrong approach, an approach which will do no good to anybody at all, and may do a good deal of harm if really it was the approach of any responsible people in India. For we must realise first of all one thing. What do we want? What are we aiming at? How can we get there? What can we do about it?

### *Painful process*

I take it that we are sad, we are distressed at events in Tibet. Why are we distressed? Presumably because we feel that a certain people are being sat upon, are being oppressed: whether the certain people, according to Shri. S.A. Dange, are certain feudal landlords or some people like that, or according to others, they are the common people of Tibet, or whatever it may be, there it is. I have no doubt in my mind that it is difficult to draw the line in such cases between the top feudal elements and the others. They all can be mixed together. And as a result, for the moment, they are all uprooted.

Now, where a society has existed for hundreds and hundreds of years- it may have outlasted its utility, but the fact is -uprooting it is a terribly painful process. It can be uprooted slowly, it can be changed even with rapidity, but with a measure of cooperation. But any kind of a forcible uprooting of that must necessarily be painful, whether it is a good society or a bad society. When we have to deal with such societies anywhere in the world, which as a social group may be called primitive, it is not an easy matter, how to deal with it. All these difficult things are happening. They should have happened, may be a little more slowly but with a greater measure of cooperation, because such a change can only take place effectively and with least harm to the fabric, to those people concerned, by themselves-they may be helped by others, may be advised by others, but by themselves. The moment a good thing is done by bad means that good thing becomes a bad thing. It produces different reactions. That is, I cannot judge of what is happening in Tibet. I do not have facts, neither does anybody in this House, except broadly some odd fact here and there.

But I am merely venturing to say that all these complicated systems - not so easy to disentangle; anyhow, whatever it may be - have brought undoubtedly a great deal of suffering to the people of Tibet. And I should have liked to avoid it. But what can I do?

### *Comic opera approach*

People talk in a strange way, of a number of representatives of countries being summoned and orders being issued, do this, and do that. I am surprised that they should think on these lines, as if this can be done.

Here is, after years of effort, going to be, I believe, what is called a summit conference somewhere in Europe, where the great ones of the earth, Russia, and America and England and France, and may be somebody else, Italy or whatever it may be, would be summoned to decide the fate of the world; it has taken years and years. What they will decide, I do not know. I wish them well. I wish they will come to some understanding. But the way casually Hon. Members here say that we should issue orders and decrees, get together and decide or it will be the worse for you, seems almost like a comic opera approach ; it has no relation to reality.

### *Indo-Chinese friendship*

It is a basic fact that China is a great country, and India is a great country, great in extent, great in background, great in many things. I am not talking so much about military power, although, from the point of view of defence or offence, no doubt, their potentials or actuals are considerable.

Now, looking at the subject from any long perspective, or even in the short perspective, it is a matter of considerable consequence that

China and India should be friends, should be cooperative. It does not mean that they should go to the same path, but they should not come in each other's way ; They should not be hostile to each other ; it is neither good for India nor for China. And China may be a very strong country as it is, and is growing stronger, but even from the Chinese point of view, it is not a good thing to have a hostile India ; it makes a great deal of difference to have that kind of thing-I am not talking in military terms, but otherwise. It is to the interest of both these countries, even though they function in different and in many ways, not to be hostile to each other. If China starts telling me what to do, I am likely to be irritated. If I go about telling China what to do, China is likely to be irritated, even more than I am, because, I am supposed to be a soft person and the Chinese are not supposed to be very soft about these matters; maybe. So there it is.

### *Our dignity*

Now, maintaining our dignity, maintaining our rights, maintaining our self-respect, and yet not allowing ourselves to drift into wrong attitudes and hostile attitudes, and trying to help in removing or in solving each problem as they arise, we may help a little-they cannot be solved quickly-that is the very utmost that one can do in the circumstances, or at any rate, creating an atmosphere which may help in doing this. How far it will go, I do not know.

So, I venture to say that this should be our broad approach in this matter. We cannot go any further. We might possibly help in that approach there.

After all, this House and the country have expressed in fairly effective language their reactions to Tibetan developments, to events in Tibet. Nobody doubts them. But I might say, that talking in fiery and hostile

language will not carry conviction but in fact, it will only lead to greater gulf being created and less possibility of any help being rendered in understanding or in finding a solution.

Therefore, I would beg to suggest that we should not allow ourselves to be swept away in these matters.

#### *Question of maps*

One thing which has referred to by two or three Members was the question of maps. Now, there is no doubt about it that this continuance of what are called old maps of China, which show certainly fairly large areas of Indian territory, as if they belong to the Chinese State, has been a factor in creating continual irritation in the minds of people in this country. It is not some crisis that has arisen, but it has been difficult for our people, naturally, to understand why this kind of thing continues indefinitely, year after year. It is not, mind you, a question of some odd little pocket here and there which may be in dispute on which we can argue; there are two or three pockets about which we have had, and we are going to have, discussions-but this business of issuing these maps which are not true to fact, which are factually untrue, and which can hardly be justified on the ground of history, of Marshal Chiang kai-shek's regime or any previous regime.

#### *No surveillance*

I shall just say one word more. I think Shri. S.A. Dange talked about the palace of the Dalai Lama and all that. I think that is an exaggeration. First of all, it is not his choice. It is our choice. And it is rather slightly bigger than a normal house in Mussoorie. We had to find a biggish house because of the number of people involved.

As I have said, there is no question of surveillance on him except for security reasons, and we have not prevented him from meeting anybody if he wants to meet. He has met, in fact, large numbers of people ; some people go for darshan to him, and some individuals, often Buddhist representatives from Ceylon and other places, are coming to see him; they all go there. Nobody prevents anyone. Certainly, as for the odd newspaper man, especially from foreign countries, who comes here in search of sensation, even him we do not prevent, but we do not welcome him, because such persons reduce everything to high sensationalism.

The other day, I said in the other place that all this business of God-King etc. is not to my liking. He is the Dalai Lama, referred to as the Dalai Lama; and if anyone creates sensation-mongering by saying God-King all the time ; I may say that the Dalai Lama himself does not like this business.

Therefore, we do not want this whole occurrence to be reduced or kept up to the sensational level. That was why we were not at all anxious that so many correspondents should go there and besiege him; and then there will always be difficulties, interpreters and all that ; and confusion will arise, and contradictions and all that.

ACHARYA KRIPALANI: You may allow some Communist friends to go and see him.

Mr. JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: We shall allow both our Communist friends and our PSP friends, both of them. It is not really a question of our allowing, we do not give permits. It is for him.

ACHARYA KRIPALANI: You may give them some extra facilities.

*Refugee problem*

MR. JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: Now, we have to face the larger problem of these refugees. It is a difficult problem, and it has been thrust upon us.

If I may say just one word, before the 11th March—that is not so long ago, about seven weeks ago—is it?—we had no inkling of what might happen in Tibet. On the 11th March was the first word we got of some demonstrations in Lhasa by Tibetans, and on the 17th, six days later, came this business of, so it is said, shelling the Dalai Lama's palace. Shri Dange said something about bad marksmanship. I am only saying what he said. It is not bad marksmanship, but deliberately they were sent there as a kind of warning. Anyhow, then the situation developed on the 20th, fighting took place there. The situation developed rapidly after that, and the House knows what happened afterwards. The Dalai Lama left there on the 17th evening and arrived here at the end of the month, so that we really were rather overtaken by events. We did not know that the Dalai Lama was coming here till about two days before he actually entered India. We had imagined when we knew he was traveling south that he might come, but it was only two days before that we heard that he would like to come, so that we were overtaken by events.

We had decided to accept him; later, when others came, we decided to allow them to come too, and there are, all these refugees, apart from the Dalai Lama. The present estimates are about 10,000—and all kinds of refugees, the old, the aged, some young people, some women, and it is obviously going to be a bit of a problem for us. We are not going to keep them in barbed wire enclosures for ever; for the present we are keeping them in two or three camps.

MR.M.P.MISHRA: Are all of them fed and lodged?

MR.JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: But the sooner we spread them out the better. Maybe, some will have to remain for sometime, I do not know.

MR.TRIDIB KUMAR CHAUDHURI: I have one question to ask ,only one small question.

One thing has intrigued many observes greatly, that the Dalai Lama has been elected by the People's Congress in China as one of the Vice-Chairmen.

AN HON.MEMBER: The Panchen Lama.

MR. TRIDIB KUMAR CHOUDHURI: The Panchen Lama and the Dalai Lama. I am sure of my facts. That is correct.

Because he is also a part of that State, has our Government received any request from the Chinese Embassy here that the Chinese Ambassador or any of his representatives should see the Vice-Chairman of the People's Republic?

MR. JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: No, Sir, we have received no such request. I stated, as you might remember, that the Chinese Ambassador would be welcome to see him if he so wishes.

DR. SUSHILA NAYAR: I want to ask the Hon. Prime Minister if these 10,000 refugees that have come are all well-to-do feudal lords, or they are the common people of Tibet.

MR. JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: I cannot give any description of all of them. They have not reached, they are on the way, but it is hardly likely that Tibet will produce 10,000 lords.