

Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru

Volume 30

Reference on Pondicherry

Page 56

Future of Pondicherry¹

I have come back to you after nine months to renew our old acquaintance.² I have long been a pilgrim, wandering about from place to place, and even more than that from people to people. For my pilgrimage is not so much to places as to the minds and hearts of my people. And so I wander about this great country, whenever I have the chance to meet our people, to look into their eyes, try to fathom what lies behind those eyes, try to understand their urges, their sufferings and what they need.

It is a difficult task, for we are many people, 360 millions. We are in effect, all of us, these 360 millions, on a pilgrimage. We were pilgrims to swaraj and after much labour, suffering and sacrifice, we achieved that goal of swaraj, and now we are on an even greater pilgrimage to better the condition of these 360 million people, to raise their standard of life, to lessen their unhappiness and misery and give all of them the opportunity to lead a good life, a peaceful and cooperative life, to serve not only themselves and their country, but also the larger cause of humanity and peace. When I came here last you gave me a great welcome, and today also, you have overwhelmed me by your affection. I do not quite know how to thank you for it. Nevertheless, I thank you, the councillors of the

¹ Speech at a public meeting in Pondicherry, 4 October 1955. From *The Hindu*, 5 October 1955. and AIR tapes. NMML

² Nehru visited Pondicherry in January 1955. Also see *Selected Works (second series)*, Vol. 27, pp. 234-237, for Nehru's speech at a reception in his honour at Pondicherry on 16 January 1955

Government and the Mayor³ and his colleagues and all of you for this welcome.

We in the rest of India and you in Pondicherry lived under some kind of a colonial regime for a long period. Perhaps it needed a colonial regime to shake up our country, to rouse it from its stupor and passivity. But obviously it restricted the growth of a people. So, in India, we were restricted, we were choked and we could not keep pace with the events of the world. We lived a rather closed-in life. Now that the opportunity has come to us in India we want to go ahead fast. We want to catch up. We want to do many things which we might have done earlier if we had had the chance. Anyhow, we have got the chance today and the responsibility for doing things is entirely ours and nobody else's. We can blame nobody for our failures.

So also with you, a change has come ever here in Pondicherry and the change has come in a good way as it came in India. And it makes a lot of difference, whether we do things in the right way or the wrong way. Even good objectives, if we try to attain them in the wrong way, may lead to wrong results. So in India after a long struggle with the British authorities, we came to an agreement with them and we talked in a friendly way and we set an example, which was unique in world history, of a great country like India and a great country like England coming to terms on one of the biggest questions, namely, the freedom of India. It is true that circumstances always play an important part. There was a compulsion of circumstances behind that agreement. Nevertheless it is true that some people try to ignore certain circumstances and are oblivious of the temper of the age, of the temper of the times, and thereby get into needless difficulties. Anyhow, we came to an agreement with the British and this change in India was carried out peacefully and we are now friends with the

³ Joseph Latur

British people. We have no longer any grievance against them. We do not nourish grievances of the past. We think of the future.

So also here in Pondicherry, after many ups and downs, there was a friendly agreement between the Government of India and the Government of the Republic of France, and, as a result of that agreement, as you know, what is called a de facto transfer of authority took place here. In law, de jure, constitutionally, the change has yet to take place. I hope it will take place soon. But because the state of affairs is somewhat confusing, it brings difficulties in its train. But the fact is that the real change has taken place and we have only to stamp it and endorse it formally.

This change took place ultimately by a friendly agreement with the French Government. That too was a unique example of settling a difficult and intricate problem peacefully and in a friendly way. And I congratulate you, the people of Pondicherry, upon it, and I congratulate the French Government upon it, and if I may say so in all modesty, I congratulate the Government of India upon it.

We have thus set two outstanding examples of settling great and difficult problems between nations peacefully and cooperatively. The agreements between England and India and France and India are examples not only for us but for the rest of the world as well. There are many grave international problems today-there always are-but gradually people are coming to believe that the way to solve the problems is not by war. War solves no problems and if it apparently appears to solve one problem it creates a dozen more in its place. Therefore people are beginning to recognise that the way to solve a problem, however difficult it might be, is through peaceful methods, by negotiations, even though that might take time. Even though it may not bring solutions immediately, that is the only right way. We have learnt that lesson, and I believe all of us in the world are learning

it, and that lesson applies not only to . international problems but to national problems.

We have many national problems. Are we trying to solve them by conflict, by breaking each other's heads, by rousing hatred? Surely, that is not the way.

We have to solve all our national or international problems in a spirit of accommodation, in a spirit of cooperation and in a spirit of peace. That will not, however, be by giving up any principle. If the principle is important enough, one stands for it and tries to attain the objective peacefully and without violence and hatred.

I welcome you to the great brotherhood of the Indian people. It is a great family of 360 millions or more; and in joining that family you are entitled certainly to all the rights and privileges that come with the membership of that brotherhood.

But you have also to shoulder the obligations of that membership because there is no right without its corresponding obligation and duty. And a nation which only claims the rights of a nation or people and forgets to discharge its obligations, duties and responsibilities is likely to lose those rights also. Therefore, we have to function together in this big country and discharge our obligations, and work to build this new India.

During these few months since the changeover in Pondicherry, you have been passing through a period of transition and that transition period will, no doubt, continue. You are trying and we are trying, to adjust ourselves to this transition. There are many difficulties to surmount. At the same time, there are great gains also. You are free to advance, even though you may stumble when you advance. I can say with some confidence that during these few months you have made progress in many ways. It is for you to judge. I am expressing only my own opinion. Sometime back you had your elections. They were also held during this transition period. Since the

election you have been functioning somewhat differently and I believe making progress in various ways.

As you know-and the Mayor just reminded us of it in his address-we have stated quite clearly that we want not only to continue the closest contact with the French language and culture here but also to maintain the centre of that language and culture in Pondicherry.

Culture is important in the life of a nation, but there can be no culture unless there is a measure of material well-being. There is no such thing as culture for the hungry, the naked and the poverty-stricken. Therefore the most important task for us here in Pondicherry and all over the rest of India is to raise the standard of our people and to fight the curse of poverty. It is not an easy matter because we have to deal with 360 million people. And they are going to raise themselves, not by any help from outside, but by their own efforts, their own labour, their own hard work, their own sweat, and, sometimes, by their own sufferings.

Having won political freedom, having reached one great stage in our pilgrimage, we have immediately to repack our bags and start afresh on another pilgrimage-a pilgrimage that leads us to the welfare state, to a socialistic pattern of society, to the well-being of our people, so that every single individual in this country will have full opportunity for growth. That is our work now. It is a tremendous work and there is, perhaps, no end to that work. Each step leads to the next. We are marching along that path. I think it is true to say that even during the last eight years of the independence of India, we have proved ourselves.

So when I welcome you to the brotherhood of the Indian people, I offer you certainly such advantages as we have and ask you to share them with us. But I remind you that I am also inviting you to hard work. We permit no laziness, shall I say, no leisure, in India today. India is at work, building and building and people who do not join in that work will fall out-I am not

concerned with nor interested in them. I am interested in the men and women of India who work, whatever their functions in life may be. We have no use for the lazy in India. We have no use for those who cannot help, with mind or body or something, in this great work of India. Therefore, it is to work that I invite you, to work for the benefit of India, to work for raising the stature of our country and the people, and to work for peace of the world. We are engaged in great adventure and this adventure, like other adventures, tests us and puts us on trial and demands the best that is in us.

We aim to establish all over India a socialistic pattern of society in a democratic and peaceful way. Some people always have a tendency to complain. You have every right to complain if anything goes wrong. Complaints should be enquired into and set right wherever possible, but very often I find that the people who complain do so from what I call the complaining habit. They have not got the mind to work. They have got into the habit of complaining. They go on complaining, whatever happens, right or wrong. Now, as I said, complaints should be made where they are necessary but it is not by complaints that we will make good but only by working and setting right complaints. This attitude of complaint is a legacy of the colonial times; it is a legacy which a subject race carries with it. Not being used to doing things by themselves and not being allowed to do things for themselves, they got into the mood of frustration and whining. That is not the way a young and vital people should look at things.

We are an ancient race in India, but today we are a young republic, a vital republic engaged in a tremendous adventure. of building itself up. I hope we can combine the wisdom of our long past with the vitality of life and work.

We have undertaken great tasks with the faith that we would fulfil them. Let us not waste too much time on past history and past complaints and

running each other down because we are much too busy in these great tasks.

We know that Pondicherry has been facing a great many difficulties and we want to help Pondicherry to the best of our ability. Indeed we have been helping Pondicherry far more, perhaps, than any other part of India. You will be glad to know that apart from other help that we are giving, we have decided to erect a new pier so that Pondicherry may again become a good port and its trade and commerce may increase. We have also decided to locate some new industries here so that the people of Pondicherry may have more employment and Pondicherry may produce more goods that are necessary and add to the wealth of this area.

You also know that we are extending our Community Development Project and National Extension Service all over India and also here, so that whether it is the city or the rural areas, both are going to be looked after and helped. But all this help that comes ultimately becomes real help only if the people of Pondicherry work hard and take advantage of it.

This great task that we have before us demands, first of all, unity amongst ourselves, work from each one of us, men or women, and peaceful methods and cooperative behaviour. The time for conflict between different sections and different classes is past now. That is a waste of energy and does not produce results. We must solve our problems cooperatively, and work for the great plans that are laid down in our Five Year Plans. One of them is completed. The other, the Second Plan, is being formulated and that will include a chapter or section on Pondicherry. So when the task is set, we shall set out to complete it.

I thank you again for your affection and welcome, and wish you all well. Now, say with me: Jai Hind, Jai Hind, Jai Hind.

& & &

Talks with the Laotian Delegation

Illustrating India's own policy, the Prime Minister said that India had come to an amicable agreement with France over Pondicherry and although it could easily settle the Goa issue by resort to armed force, the Government of India had declared that this issue too would be solved in a peaceful way. India was opposed to war, even to small conflicts, as these led to grave international consequences. It was important to realise that today there were no local problems, as such; they all had international implications. He referred to the German problem which could not be solved because of conflicting views amongst the Great Powers. He did not know when this problem would be solved, though he supposed it would be solved someday. As regards Indo-China generally and, therefore, also Laos, if the French had not carried on a war for nearly seven years, the problems might have been more easily settled. He realised that the problem in Laos was difficult. On the one hand, there was France-she, however; was now going out. There still remained the Vietminh and China giving sympathy as HRH had said. The truth of the matter was that China on the one hand, and the USA and other Powers on the other, were afraid that Indo-China, including Laos, might become the base of hostile powers. When he met Ho Chi Minh last year,⁴ PM said that he told him that he should withdraw all support from

⁴ Describing the problems faced by Laos in the last 16 years, His Royal Highness said that the invasion of Laos by the Vietminh had compelled his government to defend itself, while the French, more or less forced the hands of his government by insisting on fighting the Vietminh on all fronts and declaring that they were waging a war of liberation. He felt that the decision of the Geneva Conference to recognise the de facto control of the two northern provinces of Laos by the Pathet Lao was not based on a correct appreciation of facts and had created many difficulties. He added that the objects for which the Pathet Lao ostensibly stood, namely, independence, end of colonialism and a democratic form of Government, had all been achieved. Emphasising the urgency of an early solution, His

the Pathet Lao, otherwise this would give a reason to the United States or France for intervening. Similarly, he had told representatives of the United States and other powers that they should in no way interfere in Laos in order not to provoke the other side.

In fact the essence of the Geneva Agreement was that Indo-China should not be used either by China, the USA or any other power as a base in their own rivalry and hostility to each other.

The Geneva Agreement had made two points:

- 1) that there was one Laos and only one Government in Laos, namely, the Royal Laotian Government;
- 2) that there should be a political settlement regarding the two Northern Provinces.

While the first was generally admitted, the difficulty was with regard to how and when the second issue was to be settled.

While the Government of India naturally examined the whole question on its merits, it felt that mere legal arguments and considerations would not lead to a solution and, they were concerned with what practical steps could be taken to bring about a settlement. Such a settlement could not come from outside, but must necessarily come from within. That is why he had suggested to the Prime Minister of Laos at Bandung that he might have talks with the Pathet Lao.

Royal Highness felt that there was great danger in a situation where the Pathet Lao, materially assisted by the Vietminh and morally supported by the Chinese, maintained armed forces.