CHAPTER III

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as the Prime Minister of India and his approach towards the Merger Movement

Jawaharlal Nehru (1889 – 1964), India’s first Prime Minister, was the chief architect of domestic and foreign policies between 1947 and 1964. Born into a wealthy Kashmir Brahman family and educated at Oxford, Nehru embodies a synthesis of ideals: politically an ardent nationalist, ideologically a pragmatic socialist, and secular in religious outlook, Nehru possessed a rare combination of intellect, breadth of vision, and personal charisma that attached support throughout India. Nehru’s appreciation for Parliamentary democracy coupled with concerns for the poor and underprivileged enabled him to formulate policies that often reflected his socialist learning. Both as Prime Minister and as Congress President, Nehru pushed through the Indian Parliament, dominated by members of his own party, a series of legal reforms intended to emancipate Hindu women and bring equality. These reforms includes raising the minimum marriageable age from twelve, to inherit property, and declaring illegal the ruinous dowry system.

The threat of escalating and the potential for red revolution, across the country seemed daunting in the fact of the country’s growing population, unemployment and economic inequality. Nehru included Parliament to pass a number of laws abolishing absentee landlordism and conferring titles to land on the actual cultivators who could document their right to occupancy. Under his direction, the
central Planning Commission allocated resources to heavy industries, such as steel plants and hydroelectric projects, and to revitalizing cottage industries. Whether producing sophisticated defense material or manufacturing everyday consumer goods, industrial complexes emerged across the country, accompanied by the expansion of scientific research and teaching at universities, institutes of technology, and research centers.

Nehru believed that on the whole Baron agreed with him. As far as India was concerned, Nehru told Baron that he wanted a united country with no foreign basis or islands of extra-territoriality; and it followed that he would like French possessions on Indian soil to be absorbed in the Indian Union, “not be compulsion but because the people there would naturally desire this to be done.” He further pointed out that a free India would be a federation of autonomous units. It was possible that even within a federating unit there might be smaller autonomous areas forming cultural or linguistic units. He desired to maintain the unity of India and a strong Central Government and were anxious not to come in the way of the variety of India and the cultural autonomy of its different regions. But agreement in the language of diplomatic discourse has various shades of meaning, ranging from concordance of views of virtual disagreement and, in the light of subsequent events, the Governor of French India was giving the impression of being accommodated in regard to Pondicherry possibly, because he hoped that one good turn would deserve another in return and Nehru would be equally “understanding” of the French position on Indo-China. That question came up and Nehru told the French Charge d’Affairs Henri-Paul Roux that there was a strong
feeling in India over the conflict going on there. "It was natural not only for Indians," Nehru remarked, "but for the people of other parts of Asia to dislike intensely the activities of a foreign power to suppress the people of a colonial territory." This was on June 14th and the writer was none other than O.P. Ramaswami Reddiar, a veteran Congressman from what was then Madras province and is now Tamil Nadu, President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee in 1938 and destined to serve as Chief Minister of the composite Madras state from 1947 to 1949. There was also the question of customs union which French India had entered into with British India in 1941 whereby "all goods exported from or imported into the ports of Pondicherry and Karaikal," were subjected to the same duties as were applicable to exports and imports from and into Indian ports where the Union Jack flew. The Governor of French India wanted the agreement to continue but desired "certain minor modifications." The French settlements in India comprised an area of 203 square miles with a population of 323,295 according to the Census of 1941. Nehru wrote back to Reddiar on June 23rd, 1947, that they had received "no proposals from the French Government about their settlements in India". Nehru showed himself willing to discuss minor modifications but pointed out that "nothing should be done to weaken the administration and thereby possible to enable a revival of smuggling" Baron agreed. Was Nehru being unduly complacent regarding the real intentions of the French Government? The concluding part of his note would suggest that he had some doubts that the French position was far more ambiguous than Roux or Baron had made out. This was borne out by the difficulties

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33 Iqbal Singh, Between the two Fires, Towards an understanding of Jawaharlal Nehru's Foreign policy, Vol. II, New Delhi, 1992, p. 262
34 Iqbal Singh, op.cit.p.260
which arose in the period ahead and also is clear from a note prepared by Quai d'Orsay at the time and marked “very secret.” However, in the predicament in which Nehru and the Government of India were, they had no other option but take the French Ambassador’s assurances at their face value while keeping their fingers crossed. Girija Shankar Bajpai had submitted a note to Nehru on June 26th - three days after Nehru had written to Reddiar in Madras – drawing his attention to something he had come to know from a British source, Col. E. W. Fletcher, a member of the Indian Political Service and Consul General in the French settlements in India for two years between 1945-47.55 The transitional period between August 1947 and March 1952 was an important one as it bridged a gap between the old Legislative Assembly and the new Parliament.56 It helped the new Ministers and senior officers in the administration to familiarize themselves with the working of the new Constitution. At the same time, the Members of Parliament learned to conform to Parliamentary traditions and to suitably adapt them to the needs of independent India and the work of the Parliament of India. It was a period during which progress was made both in regard to elaboration of rules of procedure and the setting up of various committees partly to regulate the work of the House and partly to regulate its relationship with the executive.57

The Naga problem was created by some Indian citizens who were wishing to secede from the republic; the problem of the French and Portuguese settlements was the reverse; many – if not all – of their inhabitants were eager to merge their territories with the mother

55 Iqbal Singh, op.cit.p.263
57 Ibid
country. This problem straddled the domestic and foreign policies of India. The Indian people regarded these demands for integration as part of their national movement. The congress had always encouraged this view and Nehru, more than any other leader before 1947, had involved Pondicherry and Goa in the effort to defeat imperialism. ‘wherever human liberty and human suffering are involved, the problem is not a little one. Wherever people struggle for freedom and against repression they enact a drama which is always full of vital interest to lovers of liberty all over the world. Colonial domination, for however long, could not result in the assimilation of the occupied territory by the imperial power. Pondicherry and Goa were geographically and culturally parts of India and had to be so politically as well. It was only a matter of time and circumstances as to when this happened.

Never well-informed about India and often relying on second-hand sources, principally British, for their assessment of political developments in the subcontinent, the French—or rather that citadel of Bourbonism, Quasi d’ Orsay—by the summer of 1947 were expecting not only the division of India into two successor states of the Raj, but further fragmentation of the country. Bajpai felt, rather naively it seemed, that this kind of mischievous disinformation could be corrected by sending at least an Indian Charge d’Affairs to Paris. He suggested this to Nehru in his note.

Nehru dealt with Bajpai’s note the very next day. In a note written on June 27th he agreed with Bajpai that India “should send a Charge to Paris as soon as possible” and for several reasons. But as far as the fate of French India was concerned, he rightly stressed, that was

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58 Note to defence Secretary, 19th June 1956, National Archives, Record centre, Pondicherry.
ultimately going to be decided “in India or rather by developments in India.” He repeated the substance of the talk he had with the French Governor of Pondicherry a month earlier and observed that M. Charles Francois Baron had acknowledged that there was no alternative to the French settlements becoming part of India, but that France would like to have “some cultural privileges” in these territories. Nehru said that he “had no objection to this (if they could be arranged) provided politically French India was absorbed into the Indian Union. Col. Fletcher need not therefore be afraid of Pondicherry becoming the base of a foreign power.”

The last sentence was a subtle poking of fun at the British Consul General’s exaggerated fear of the French obtaining certain political leverage in their enclaves in India under the guise of cultural links. However, over the next few weeks people in the French settlements were beginning to take things increasingly into their own hands and were straining at the leash. The inspiration for the agitation in these areas certainly did not come from Delhi which had its hands full with infinitely more agonising problems and would have liked the population of Pondicherry, Chandernagore, and Goa, to show a little more patience. This can be clearly gathered from a note which Nehru wrote on August 8th, 1947, exactly a week before the traumatic birth of independent India. The remaining settlements were: (a) Pondicherry, the capital, together with the adjoining territory; (b) Karaikal and dependent districts; (c) Yanam, with the dependent rural areas; (d) Mahe with the adjoining territory; and (e) a factory in Surat.

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59 Iqbal Singh, op. cit, p. 263
60 Iqbal Singh, op. cit, p. 264
61 Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, Foreign Affairs, p. 673
answer is obvious – the problem of French enclaves in India of which the most important as well as the largest was Pondicherry on the East Coast, the other being Chandernagore (near Calcutta), Mahe and Karaikal. As it happened, the Governor of French Charge d’ Affaires, M. Henri Paul Roux, called on Nehru at Delhi. It was on May 27th, 1947, and judging from Nehru’s record of their talk, the discussion seems not to have been confined only to the French “loges”, but covered French possessions in India in general. Of course he discussed with Baron the question of these little islands of French but has “a certain nuisance value to the rest of India. “Baron agreed “that there should be a settlement about them soon and in fact that reference had been already made to Paris.”

The French enclave of Chandernagore in Bengal became a part of the Indian Union after the treaty for its cession was signed in Paris in 1951 by the two Governments. Bahour, one of the eight divisions of Pondicherry and consisting of 25 villages with 25,000 people, had been in the forefront of the struggle of the people of the French settlement to throw out French rule and be united with India.62 In the beginning of 1952, Thangavelu Gounder, a Municipal Councillor of Bahour, presided over a meeting which passed a resolution asking the French to quit their settlements without a referendum. Soon a reign of terror was let loose in Bahour, forcing many people to flee to Indian Territory.

There was the problem of Goa and two other toe-holds of Portugal in India –Daman and Diu. There was also problem of winking out the French from their enclaves of what they called

62 Ibid
"Comptoirs". They were tiny pimples of colonialism on the face of India, but they were in danger of turning gangrenous if neglected for too long owing to some complication factors. Actually, Goa did lead to what the West called a "War" and the Indians called a minor "police action". The complicating factor here was the Portugal was a member of the North Atlantic Treaty. Besides, Portugal had many treaties with England, one of them going back to as early as the second half of the fourteenth century. N.R. Pillai, Secretary-General of the External Affairs Ministry at the time had, wisely, obtained a complete list of Portugal's treaties and their texts with England from the British High Commissioner's Office in Delhi in June 1954. Nehru also referred to the case of K.I. Singh. K.I. Singh posed as a Communist and a "revolutionary". He was a citizen of Nepal with a criminal record. He was given encouragement by China. Nehru pointed out this to Chou, "This kind of thing created apprehensions in the minds of Asian countries." Chou's reply to it was: K.I. Singh crossed into Chinese territory with some other men in possession of rifles and ammunition. According to international custom, China disarmed them. Nothing more was done. An agreement between India and France was reached regarding the de facto transfer of the French enclaves, chief of them being Pondicherry on 21st October, 1954, seven years after the British had quit their Indian Empire. Combat described the Comptoirs as an anachronism; Le Monde commented that the last vestiges of the days of conquest were over; but a commentator in Le Figaro termed it as a "cruel decision", like Vietnam was. To assume, however, that the withdrawal of the British would be followed rapidly and inevitably by the liberation of other foreign possessions in India was to sink into
facile optimism. The negotiations with the French dragged on till 1954, when M. Mendes –France found an honourable way of handling over Pondicherry and other bits of French territory. Meanwhile, the French Ambassador in India, Count Ostorog, made a calculated diplomatic faux pas. Obviously a man of the ancien regime, he retained the title of “Court” though titles were abolished after the French Revolution. Speaking at Bombay early in June 1954, he had criticized the Indian Foreign Secretary in discourteous even insulting terms. He had said that R.K. Nehru did not know the spirit of compromise and had gone to Paris, not to negotiate, but to dictate the terms of settlement. His private views of how R.K Nehru has conducted the negotiations were even more critical. He is supposed to have told a very high official of the Ministry of External Affairs that France may be down and out, but not so down and out as to be dictated by a fake dictator.

That was why R.K. Nehru gave a press conference in Paris on June 12th and announced his decision to return home which virtually ended the negotiation. Evidently, the intentions of the French authorities were to gain time to strengthen their position both military and otherwise. But this was a foolish policy and could land France in a fiasco, not as resounding as Dien Bein Phu, but to be noticed by students of international affairs. The more the French dug in their toes the more the people’s impatience mounted. Kewal Singh confirmed it in telegram after telegram which he sent to Jha at the Ministry not only of the freedom struggle spontaneously breaking out in the various enclaves, including Pondicherry where the French had concentrated their main forces. Kewal Singh reported they were receiving arms and ammunition by the shiploads. Some of the cases were labelled “Made
in U.S.A." Part of them were being smuggled to their other Comptoirs, like Karaikal. Actually, they had given orders to shoot down the volunteers in Mahe demanding the merger of Mahe with India.65

The French quickly realized the weakness of their position in Pondicherry and Chandernagore: colonial fragments which they had retained over the years more from sentimental reasons than from the practical advantages they brought. Accordingly, they took steps to negotiate a transfer of their Indian possessions to the Delhi Government. Chandernagore was incorporated in India on June 9, 1952 while Pondicherry, Mahe, Karaikal and Yanam were transferred de facto on November 1, 1954 and formally ceded by treaty on May 28, 1956.

Parliamentary Initiatives and Impact

One of the occasions and perhaps the most memorable when Parliament asserted itself arose in 1955-56, when the problem of reorganizing the States was taken up in the light of the Report of the States Reorganization Commission66. The Marathon debate that took place on the Commission’s Report in 1956 was sufficient proof to show that Parliament was no “rubber stamp” of either the Executive or the party in power. In fact, the final decision to create a bilingual Bombay State, an altogether new proposal, was the product of spontaneous Parliamentary initiative. Also there were other allied decisions, which were equally important and emerged from Parliamentary debates on the subject of the States Reorganization. Abolition of disparity in the salaries of Judges of High Courts of Part A

65 Iqbal Singh, op. cit, p. 273
66 Subhas Ch. Kashyap, op. cit, p. 170
and Part B States, discontinuance of grouping of states into A, B & C categories, creation of the office of Linguistic Commission and creation of Legislative Council for the State of Madhya Pradesh were some of the other instances of decisions which could be attributed to initiatives from Parliament. Speaking at an All India Seminar on Parliamentary Democracy on 25th February, 1956, Nehru had said: “We believe in democracy. Speaking for myself, I believe in it, first of all, because I think it is the right means to achieve ends and because it is a peaceful method. Secondly, because it removes the pressures which other forms of Government may impose on the individual. It transforms the discipline, which is imposed by authority largely to self-discipline. Self-discipline means that even people who do not agree—the minority accept solutions because it is better to accept them and then change them, if necessary, by peaceful methods. Therefore, democracy means to an attempt at the solution of problems by peaceful methods. If it is not peaceful, then to his mind, it is not democracy. If he may further elaborate the second reason, democracy gives the individual an opportunity to develop. Such opportunity does not mean anarchy, where every individual does what he likes. A social organization must have some discipline to hold it together. This can either be imposed from outside or be in the nature of self-discipline. Imposition from outside may take the form of one country governing another or of an autocratic or authoritarian form of Government. In a proper democracy, discipline is self-imposed. There is no democracy if there is no discipline. Nehru believed that the Parliamentary form of Government was more likely to bridge the “hiatus between desires and their fulfillment” than the other forms, which lead to “some measure of

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67 Ibid

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authoritarianism”. The Parliamentary system with all its failings had “the virtue that it can fit in with the changing pattern of life”.

But the Portuguese had no intention of leaving Goa at any time and, recognizing that the Government of India could not compromise on this issue, adopted an attitude of aggressive hostility. For example, they offered assistance to the Nizam in his attempt to keep Hyderabad aloof from the Indian union. Nehru demonstrated tremendous enthusiasm for India’s moral leadership, especially among the newly independent Asian and African nations, in a world polarized by Cold War ideology and threatened by nuclear weapons. His guiding principles were nationalism, anticolonialism, internationalism, and non-alignment. He attained international prestige during his first decade in office, but after the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 when New Delhi tilted towards Moscow criticisms grew against his inconsistency in condemning western but not communist aggression. It would appear that Henri-Paul Roux, who had first come out to India as Charge d’Affairs to be soon promoted to the post of Ambassador of France in Delhi, had called on Nehru that morning to convey an urgent message from Georges Bidault, at the time French Foreign Minister who ended up badly and was even accused of complicity with the Ultras’ revolt against General de Gaulle and his Algerian policy in the early 1960s.68

In dealing with Pakistan, Nehru failed to formulate a consistent policy and was critical of the improving ties between Pakistan and the United States; mutual hostility and suspicion persisted as a result. Despite attempts at improving relations with China, based on his much publicized five principles - territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-

68 Iqbal Singh, op. cit, p. 270
aggression, non interference, equality and cooperation, peaceful coexistence - war with China erupted in 1962.

France, too, was an original member of NATO, but there was never any question of the French invoking the treaty organization in safeguarding their enclaves or what they called their "Comptoirs" in India-Pondicherry, Yanam, Karaikal and Mahe. However there were other complicating factors and the problem dragged on for more than seven years after and the British had portioned and quit India. During the most critical phase of the problem Kewal Singh (later to be the Foreign Secretary at the Ministry) was holding the fort as the Indian Consul-General in Pondicherry.69 The people were growing impatient over the longer the problem took to resolve and some of them launched a freedom struggle. But Nehru was for caution and a peaceful settlement.

The French authorities applied the classic remedy of all imperialist powers. They tried to suppress the freedom movement with the French Indian Police, officered by police officers specially imported from metropolitan France for the purpose because they could not trust the Indian policemen. To avoid unpleasantness, the Ministry sent their Foreign Secretary, R.K. Nehru, to negotiate a peaceful transition of the French enclaves to Indian sovereignty. But Quai d'Orsay had its own ideas about transfer of sovereignty and argued that it was constitutionally impossible without being blessed by the National Assembly.70

69 Iqbal Singh, op.cit.,p.271
70 Iqbal Singh, op. cit, p. 272
The fall of the French Government proved a blessing in disguise, both in Indo-China and India. Pierre Mendès-France was elevated to the Premiership of France. He was largely responsible for the success of the Geneva Conference. A little later in the year, he found his way, what Dr. Gopal calls "an honourable way" of handing over Pondicherry and other French enclaves to India. One of the toughest problems of India's foreign policy was in neighbouring Nepal. It had to be handled with the utmost discretion and delicacy. All the major powers were involved in it, working against each other and practically all against India. Certainly, Americans were trying to muscle in china too, and it had a seasoned army strategically well-placed in Tibet.

Political Repression in French Enclaves

Newspapers continue to give information about police and other activities in the French Enclaves in India against those who are in favour of merger with India. These people, no doubt, are citizens of French India and, therefore, in a narrow sense, we cannot intervene. But obviously these activities of the French Government affect us directly. The French Government in this matter told them that this kind of political repression of people who are in favour of merger and preventing them from expressing their opinion or carrying on their normal activities makes it clear that there can be no free referendum or plebiscite in these areas. We must protest strongly against this and inform them that this repression produces repercussions in India.

No Tolerance of Foreign Footholds in India

The position in regard to French and Portuguese establishments in India is that the Government of India takes a serious view of the

71 Iqbal Singh, op.cit.p.273
continued oppression of the people and specially of the nationalist elements in the French and Portuguese possessions in India. This oppression, as well as the recent report of some neutral observers, make it perfectly clear that there is no possibility of any fair conduct of the plebiscite or referendum in those places. We have agreed to a plebiscite because we wanted the people to decide. But we have seen that the Governments there do not propose to allow fair conditions to prevail. Therefore, a plebiscite can hardly take place.

Normally speaking, one Government does not interfere with the internal steps taken by another in regard to its own nationals. But the position regarding French and Portuguese establishments in India cannot be so regarded. It is inevitable, as we have said before, that these enclaves in the heart of India must become part of the Indian Union. We have patiently waited for settlement by negotiations and we still hope to settle in this way. But it must be clearly understood that we cannot tolerate foreign footholds in India, more especially when there is serious oppression taking place on the citizens who express their sympathies for a merger with India. This very oppression puts an end to the slightest justification, if any, for the continuation of these foreign footholds.

The Situation in French India

The Prime Minister started by asking Shri Sellane Naicker about the activities of nationalists inside Pondicherry. Shri Sellane Naicker stated that under the present conditions of repression by the French Government and terrorism through goondas, no political activity was

72 Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru, op. cit. p. 674
For any public assembly, permission of the local Government was necessary, which was invariably refused to the nationalists, whereas even private meetings or social gatherings by them could not be held, as those attending such meetings were immediately subjected to goondaism. Since the Government were directly behind this type of oppression, the nationalists could get no redress from it.

Shri Sellane Naicker stated that if the Prime minister so ordered, they could occupy the outlying French Enclaves as there were about 7000 – 8000 refugees dispersed all along the Frontier and there was in addition the Indian population to help them. The Prime Minister replied that there was little difference between a private invasion from outside and an official invasion and if force had to be used, India could as well send an army. We had to deal with the foreign power, which had a certain position in Europe, hence it would at once result in war with France. The Government of India, however, intended to settle the matter by negotiation and was not prepared to enter into an international war to expedite the integration. The Prime Minister added that the position would not be the same if the people inside French territory took any action. Referring to the statement in the memorandum that the Government of India were pre-occupied with the question of Kashmir, hence they were indifferent to the French Indian problem, the Prime Minister stated that this was not so and that there was no connection between the two. The Prime Minister further made it clear that the Government of India were going to deal with the matter through diplomatic channels and that they will not practise any fraud or

73 Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru, op. cit, p. 675
74 Ibid
deception or be party to any form of goondaism. He also added that the Government of India would not give any help, financial or otherwise, to do anything inside Pondicherry. He said that India was hence forward going to take up a bigger and stronger attitude with France but they could not expect any great results, because of various factors, namely, international as well as internal and external affairs of France, came into play. 75

The Prime Minister explained that the policy of India was determined by India’s national interests and these interests demanded that the Pondicherry must integrate with India.76 Even if the nationalists inside French India were helpless, merger must take place.

He further stated that Pondicherry and the other colonies were in the nature of symbols to France, which was already a disintegrating power. The Government of France was weak and it was not easy to deal with a weak Government. The Prime Minister, in his capacity as Congress President, agreed to advise the President, Tamil Nadu Congress Committee to take greater interest specially with regard to propaganda and meetings. The Prime Minister told him that the situation all over the world was rapidly developing, hence it would not be advisable to take an adventurous step. He suggested that the nationalists should, at first, build up their strength before thinking on those lines.

75 Ibid
76 Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru, op.cit.p.676
The Prime Minister gave the following advise to the deputationists who specifically asked him if they should stay tranquille:

a) To give as much publicity and propaganda to the present state of affairs in French India and bring to notice all cases of repression and goondaism. This would help in building up a case against the French Government;

b) To help the Congress Committees in the border districts to do propaganda: and

c) To do anything else that was possible inside Pondicherry

The Prime Minister then considered the suggestions made in the memorandum:

a) As regards the continuance of the land customs cordon, he stated that the nationalists had, early this year, recommended a customs union agreement with France.77 The Government of India had already taken up the question with the French Government but they would now consider the proposal for the continuance of the land customs cordon, as, infact, the present negotiations appeared to be leading in that direction:

b) With regard to complaints against customs officials, the Prime Minister stated that the Government would be prepared to look into them. He would also consider the proposal for the reintroduction of the permit system.

c) As regards the reduction of export quotas for the French settlements, the Prime Minister said that, according to his

77 Ibid
reports, the present quotas were on the low side. The deputationists explained that the real problem arose because of the large scale smuggling of essential commodities into Pondicherry.

d) With regard the control over the movement of currency, the Prime minister stated that the point had already been examined but it was not considered advisable to take such a statement.

e) As for the request of the deputationists for the grant of monitory aid and other concessions, the Prime Minister made it clear that the Government of India would not give any financial help. The Government of Madras could, however, examine the question of concessions in the matter of appointments, etc:

f) As regards increase in the strength of prohibition staff to prevent people going to French Indian territories for purposes of drink, the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister of Madras pointed out that the real solution lay in the reintroduction of the permit system as it was not possible for the prohibition staff to prevent the movement of people.

Policy towards foreign possessions

Goondas are not only harassing the Indian French nationals, that is citizens of Pondicherry but sometimes show the temerity even to attack Indian nationals. They attacked a couple of our policemen. This is a strange state of affairs. Everybody knows that Pondicherry and Mahe and one or two other places as well as Goa in western India, are geographically the inalienable parts of India. Everybody knows or ought to know that the British empire in India had ended. It is fantastic
for any one to imagine that bits of the Portuguese or French empire can continue in India.

Again because of our love of peace we have waited patiently for a peaceful solution of this problem and we did not wish to force ourselves on any one and would let the people decide by plebiscite. Three years ago there was some kind of an agreement between us and the French Government about some plebiscite or other and preparations were made. That has not taken place yet. Meanwhile methods of gangsterism have flourished. An atmosphere of goondaism has been created there, and if a person talks about the merger with India, goondas are likely to smash his head. It is an extraordinary state of affairs.

The other day some neutral observers came to India and went to Pondicherry. Among other things, they reported that gangster methods were practised in the French settlements. Why are these methods practised? If gangster methods are being practised in Pondicherry, that can only mean one of two things or both: one is that the Government of the French settlements connive at them or encourages them, and the other is that it is totally powerless to control them. There can be no third explanation for it. In either event, the situation becomes an intolerable one. If an Indian national is interfered with, we take action, of course. Normally speaking, if a French Indian national, that is, an Indian citizen of Pondicherry, is interfered, because he is a foreign national, we cannot take any action. But when the goonda tactics are employed to crush a movement in favour of merger of these establishments in India that it is a matter of the most intimate concern to us. After the experience of these two years or so, the obvious
thought that comes to one is that these gangster methods are meant to crush or terrify people from voting for India.

There is then an end of this plebiscite business. India stands in this ground, namely, that Pondicherry and other French settlements and Goa must inevitably belong to the union of India.\(^7\) There is going to be no further debate about that issue.

Adie memoire on French settlements in India

The embassy of India, present their compliments to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and have the honour to state as follows:

1. In accordance with an agreement arrived at between the British Government and the representatives of the people of India, the British power withdrew from India in August 1947. Certain parts of India were partitioned and became Pakistan. The historic process, which had brought about the end of British rule in India, would be completed only when the remaining enclaves, which were under foreign colonial rule, were also integrated with the union of India.

2. Accordingly, approaches were made to the French Government for a friendly settlement in this matter and the transfer of the French establishments to the union of India. Conferences took place in Delhi and Paris on this issue and the French Government recognized that the Union of India was justified in asking for a radical change in the existing situation. The nature of this change, however, was not agreed.

\(^{7}\) Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru, op.cit.,p.678
that full opportunity should be given to the inhabitants of these Settlements to determine the nature of this change.

3. By a declaration dated the 8th June, 1948, the national assembly of France decided that the people of the French settlements in India should determine their future political status by means of "a free and sincere consultation, the particulars of which would be fixed in agreement with the elected municipal councils of those settlements". On the 19th June, 1949, a referendum was held in the settlement of Chandernagore and there was an overwhelming vote in favour of the transfer of the free town to the Indian Union. A referendum in respect of the remaining four French settlement which are in South India has not so far being held as no agreement has been reached between the two Governments regarding the modalities of the consultation, and as conditions for a free referendum do not exist in these territories.

4. In their anxiety for an early settlement, the Government of India have felt obliged, on several occasions, to draw the attention of the French Government to the fact that conditions in the French settlements are becoming more and more unsatisfactory politically. This is borne out by the report of the three neutral observers, deputed by the French Government in March 1951 to inquire into the conditions existing in the settlements. The neutral observers considered it indispensable that "owing to certain defects characterizing political life in the settlements" certain measures ensuring
complete freedom for the electoral body during the electoral period should be adopted.

5. The Government of India regret to note that the French Government have taken no steps to implement the recommendations of the neutral observers. Conditions in the settlements are steadily deteriorating and lawless elements have been given a free hand to terrorize people who are in favour of merger. Due to the inactivity or open connivance of the local authorities, a situation has arisen in which freedom of speech; press or association has in practice ceased to exist. Numerous incidents have taken place in Indian territory bordering the settlements and the various representations made in this behalf by the Consul-General of India in Pondicherry and the Embassy of India in Paris have gone unheeded. The existing state of affairs has convinced the Government of India that no useful purpose would be serving by proceeding further on the basis of having a referendum in the French Settlements. Conditions suitable for the holding of a free and fair referendum have in fact ceased to exist.

6. In the circumstances, the Embassy of India are constrained to inform the French Government that the Government of India do not consider themselves bound any longer by their previous agreement with the French Government's declaration of the 8th June, 1948. The Government of India accordingly consider that negotiations between the two Governments should take place on the basis of a direct transfer of these areas to India. They have no doubt that the
French Government will appreciate that it is not consistent with the status of India as an independent Republic that such foreign enclaves, which are relics of colonial rule, should continue to exist on Indian soil.\textsuperscript{79} They are anxious that this question should be settled by agreement in a peaceful manner.

The Indian Government’s note of 11\textsuperscript{th} October condemned firing and the use of methods of coercion against Indian nationals in the French settlements and said that no fair referendum could be held under such conditions. About 50 families of French Indian nationals had in recent weeks, migrated to the Indian Union from French Indian settlements because some gangsters had made life impossible for them. These gangsters operated with connivance of the French India police.

The Governor of French territories then dilated on his Governments plans for developing cultural institutions and “a kind of a University” in Pondicherry. According to Nehru the French idea was that the University in Pondicherry “should serve India by bringing French culture to the French”. However, Baron wanted to know from Nehru, Indian reaction to this idea before the French Government embarked on its implementation. He naturally referred to the political developments in India which were bound to have an impact on Pondicherry and he rightly said that there were two parallel sentiments among the population: there was the sentiment for India as the motherland to which the people were attached; but there was also the sentiment of attachment to France as a consequence of their long

\begin{footnote}{Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru, op. cit, p. 680}
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association with France and French culture. The Governor suggested that Pondicherry and presumably, other French enclaves in India might become parts of the Union of Free India and at the same time "there might be a kind of dual nationality for the people there so that they might be both citizens of the Indian Union and for some purposes citizens of France."70

With much of what the Governor of French India had outlined as his Government's plans for their enclaves in India, Nehru was generally sympathetic. He recognised that there was the dual sentiment among the population of Pondicherry. As far as India was concerned, he told Baron, he wanted a united country with no foreign basis or islands of extra-territoriality; and it followed that he would like French possessions on Indian soil to be absorbed in the Indian Union, "not by compulsion but because the people there would naturally desire this to be done."71 On the proposal for a dual nationality which he described as "novel", however, he demurred and said that it required full examination as to how far it was practicable. Something of the clan built up during the period of struggle for independence still remained with him and he not only was willing to entertain the continuance of Pondicherry’s cultural attachment to France because of its long history of cultural association with that country, but added: Possibly some means would be devised to maintain this or some similar connection, which would not come in the way of Pondicherry being a full member of the Indian Union. India would be a federation of autonomous units. It was possible that even within a federating unit there might be smaller autonomous areas forming cultural or linguistic units. While

70 Iqbal Singh, op.cit,p.261
71 Ibid
we desired to maintain the unity of India and a strong Central Government, we were anxious not to come in the way of the variety of India and the cultural autonomy of its different regions.

All that has happened is that he had some talks with the French Ambassador (Charge d’Affaires?) here and the French Governor of Pondicherry. Our policy obviously is for the union of these parts with the rest of India, though we are quite agreeable to French cultural associations to continue.\(^{82}\) As for appointing representatives in the French enclaves, Nehru told Reddiar that there was no such proposal before him. In any case, he remarked, normally, “representatives are appointed from our Foreign Service which is being recruited.” But he was willing to consider any suggestions that Reddiar might have to make which would be “welcome.” Nevertheless Reddiar’s surmise that the French Government was being somewhat disingenuous when they said that they had no objection to their settlements including Pondicherry joining the Indian Union, was not altogether groundless and Nehru had a confirmation of it from no less a person than G.S Bajpai who, after his return from the United States, was appointed officer on special duty in the external affairs department.

The message expressed the French Government’s anxiety over the situation in Pondicherry and Chandernagore, more especially in the latter place, because the Indian nationalists were suspected of staging “something aggressive” on August 15\(^{th}\), the day on which the Union Jack was to be hauled down over the Red Fort in Delhi and the Indian tricolour hoisted.

\(^{82}\) Iqbal Singh, op.cit.p.262
This was certainly true of Chandernagore, where the Mayor, Kamal Prasad Ghosh, had declared on August 4th that "Chandernagore forms an integral part of Bengal and has every right to break its links with imperialist France". Moreover, a general strike had been called and a hartal proclaimed, but withdrawn after the French authorities released a hundred persons they had earlier arrested. In Pondicherry also the situation was tense. Bidault very much hoped that peace would be preserved in both places and there would be no untoward incident. Nehru also wished that calm would prevail, especially as he felt that the French were being reasonable. They had already decided to cede their "logos" in India immediately and further "grant extensive financial and administrative powers to the municipalities in the French possessions in India. These municipalities would thus have a great deal of autonomy in the future". Added to that, Nehru noted, the French Government were going to have elected members to the Councils in Pondicherry, Chandernagore and their other enclaves. Indeed, Nehru’s note of August 8th reads almost at times as if he was holding a brief for the French Government. He wrote: All these were looked upon as a first step. They proposed to take other and more far-reaching steps in the near future, but they could not indicate their exact nature at the present moment. But they wished to assure us that it was their desire that all these matters should be settled amicably between the French Government and the Government of India and in accordance with the wishes of the people in French India. They felt sure that their final decisions would be in accordance with the wishes of the people in the French possessions and the Government of India. In view, however, of Parliamentary procedure, they could not declare anything at present.
Consequently they did not want any publicity to be given to the steps they were taking, except that “they were handing over the loges free.” Nevertheless Nehru asked Roux for something specific in writing about this,” to avoid misunderstanding. But the French Ambassador was not forthcoming, though he promised to communicate with his Government at once to get the precise formula. This might well have set Nehru wondering. For in diplomacy it is rarely that ambassadors come with urgent messages from their Foreign Minister of another country without being briefed by their Governments as to how to answer the obvious questions which the other side might put to them, at least informally. In this particular case, the contrast between Roux’s keenness for Indian Government to give the maximum publicity it could to the French offer to hand over their “loges” at once and without any quid pro quo with his coyness in giving anything specific and in writing on their larger holdings of real estate in India was, to say the least rather marked and suggested that they were playing for time or had some reservations on their assurance to Nehru that they wanted nothing else but the preservation of their cultural links with French India, or both.

Nehru for his part was prepared to give the French the benefit of the doubt even if he guessed that there was some divergence between their assurance to him and their real position on the question of Pondicherry and the rest of their settlements. In fact, he assured Roux that his Government was as keen as the French to see every question being resolved in a friendly way “and in accordance with the wishes of the people of the French possessions.”

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83 Iqbal Singh, op.cit.p.265
84 Iqbal Singh, op.cit.p.266
agitation in Chandernagore, it is very difficult, and indeed hardly possible, for us to do anything in the matter. There were all manner of groups in Bengal and we could not control them (they could hardly control themselves). Indeed, we were having plenty of trouble in some parts of Bengal. Even the so-called Congress group in Chandernagore was in no way organisationally connected with the Indian National Congress. Although they use the name of Congress they were an independent group somewhat in sympathy with the ideals of the National Congress, but functioning entirely separately. So far as we were concerned, we did not want any untoward happenings in Chandernagore or Pondicherry.

What Nehru told Roux was the plain truth. Certainly, neither Nehru nor any other responsible Congress leader, whether in the Interim Government or out of it, wished to have any more trouble than they were already facing. Roux, for his part, seemed to be exercised over a report that some people were planning to pull down the French tricolour at Chandernagore and told Nehru that this would create "a bad impression in France." With this Nehru agreed and assured Roux that they "would not like any disrespect to be shown to French flag" but in his note, he observed: "It was not clear to me however what he could do in the matter, except possibly to give private advice to some private individuals, he was not in touch with them". As for the substantive issue, he summed up the position as it seemed to him on the eve of independence in his note: The position thus is that Mons. Roux will communicate with his Government and ask them for a precise formula about the French loges. An immediate publicity was

\[83\] Ibid
given preferably before 15th August. If the French Government are agreeable we might also state that the whole future of the French possessions was under active consideration of the French Government and they hope to settle it in accordance with the wishes of the people concerned. But we should only state what the French Government itself is agreeable to, lest there should be some misunderstanding in the future.

The total area involved was less than 200 square miles. The Portuguese, on the other hand, continued to treat Goa as an integral part of metropolitan Portugal. It is true and had been in Goa since the middle of the sixteenth century when they made it into a thriving trading and missionary centre, associated throughout Christendom with the name of Saint Francis Xavier. But by the 18th century, the standing of Goa had declined sharply, and for the whole period of British rule in India it remained a sleepy, second-class port, handling chiefly export cargoes of iron ore. There was some smuggling and in the two world wars it caused a good deal of inclination to be hustled into some kind of political action. "It does not help in dealing with tough people to have weak nerves. The army, however, failed to deal decisively with the rebellion. Its efforts, reminiscent of what T. E. Lawrence and Nagas to provoke criticism of India abroad. So Nehru urged the army to act swiftly but not brutally, and pressed again with many minor political changes while working out the major political decision on the future administration of the area. It must always be remembered that if the Nagas are made to feel that they have no other alternative but to fight and die, they will prefer doing so. We must give them a better

\footnote{Ibid}
alternative and seek their co-operation or at least [that] of those who are prepared to co-operate. This has not been done so far by the Assam Government or by our military.

Nehru realized that the Portuguese were beyond persuasion and would only yield under pressure either from other powers which are from the people of Goa. ‘Some time or other these people are going to have a route awakening to the 20th century.’ But building up the international support was a gradual and heart breaking process, while there was considerable support for the Portuguese, among the vested interests in Goa that had grown in strength over the centuries. It was not certain that if a plebiscite were held immediately, India would win. So Nehru discouraged the states peoples movement and the Bombay Government from promoting a popular campaign on the borders of Goa, preferring to start negotiations with the Portuguese Government.

To give the Portuguese no scope for complaint Nehru vetoed the establishment in India of a provisional Government of Goa. Organizations working for the merging of Goa with India were viewed with the little more tolerance than before: but this did not involve any alterations of policy which was still one of inaction and patience, waiting for the popular movement in Goa to gain strength, for the colonial economy to weaken, for the transfer of Pondicherry to have an influence in Lisbon and for sympathy in world opinion to prevail. ‘To expect sudden changes and always to think in terms of bringing about a big crisis is wrong both from the general political point of view and that of satyagraha.’

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The Pope, when Nehru met him, had agreed that Goa was not a religious issue. The world, and particularly the Atlantic Powers, should take note that India would tolerate about Goa. But the peaceful approach was the right one not only from point of view of Goa and India but also because of major issues in the world. The Government of India was not pacifist but they would only go to war in case of an armed attack.

It was not generally appreciated that Nehru had in fact shown a gritty resolution in adopting his policy of restraint. ‘It has been no easy matter to stop satyagraha and doubt if any other Government anywhere in the world could have had the courage and strength to take such an unpopular step’. The only action he took to counter this misunderstanding of his policy was to send an official note to all the Bandung countries reminding them that India was entitled to their support on this issue. Adherence to peaceful methods despite flagrant provocation could not blur the fact that Goa was a symbol of intransigent and oppressive colonialism, completely out of keeping with the spirit of Asia and Africa and indeed of all freedom – loving people all over the world. Refusal to react to Portugal’s use of force and the decision to stop the satyagraha should not be interpreted as acceptance of the “Monstrous abnormally” of Portuguese rule in Goa. The only settlement which India would accept was as in the case of Pondicherry, an early withdrawal of the foreign power followed by a normal transfer of authority. “A flash of anger short through his eyes as he said, “There are some questions over which it is permissible to have two points of view, but over this one, that is the Goa issue, it
seems that only one view is possible". But the very belief in Nehru’s dedication to peaceful methods weakened the pressure that foreign Governments were willing to exert on Portugal and confirmed them in the even-handed attitude that was all in favour of the status quo. Those who had faith in Nehru could not take seriously his assertion that India would not accept indefinitely the continuance of Portuguese rule in Goa. The adamant Portuguese attitude and the failure of other powers to interfere meant that the dilemma could not be solved by Nehru’s method. It would have to been broken, at the cost of Nehru’s principle, or the Portuguese left undisturbed, in defiance of Nehru’s commitments. Nehru was as yet not prepared to take what he considered to adventurist action.

Nehru’s various public activities were held together by a general theory of Government. Ruling India was to him not just a matter of dealing with files or issuing executive orders. These were important duties, but only a small part of the whole. Democratic Government ‘is not something which we can deal with merely because we have some general knowledge or ability’. Regard had to be paid to the deeper issues beneath the day-to-day concerns.

The fact is that often we are struggling with major problems without the larger experience which gives assurance to the mind. We have to be firm and we have to be flexible. We must not be undecided and unable to make up our minds. But we can only be firm if our minds are clear about major problem. There should not be the human touch, but behind the human touch one should give the feeling of firm

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98
decisions. That is, while one should be flexible, one should not be weak in handling an issue and our approach to the party and to the public should always be friendly.

This art of human management had in these years to be exercised by Nehru at every level, both in the larger, impersonal context of binding the masses to the Government and in the more delicate task of holding this colleagues together. This country requires such a tremendous deal of managing in a variety of ways. This, of course, was true of India in general but in dealing with narrower, personal problems of Nehru was indispensable. He alone, in the higher ranks of the Congress, because of his undisputed command over the Party and the people, could keep individuals and groups from dissension.

French settlements in India became part of Indian Union after the ratification of the treaty of cession between India and France on 16th August 1961 and by the Constitution (14th Amendment) Bill passed by Parliament on 30th August 1962. The Bill provided for the representation of the former French settlements in the Lok Sabha and for the setting up of a representative Government by the Constitution (Fourteenth) Amendment Bill passed by the Lok Sabha on 30th August 1962.

The constitution (fourteenth amendment) bill passed by the Lok Sabha on 30th August 1962, provided for the representation of the former French settlements in the Lok Sabha and setting up the legislatures in the Union territories of Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Goa, Daman and Diu and Pondicherry.
By the time the first General Elections were held under the new Constitution in 1952, Parliamentary democracy had taken deep roots. This election itself was something unique in Parliamentary history all over the world. The conduct of elections won all-around admiration. This was repeated in the second and third general elections, held in 1957 and 1962, respectively. Expression of the free will of the people was the hallmark of these elections. Even though the size of the electorate grew with successive general elections, it was to the credit of the system working under Nehru that there was minimum room for complaint against the election process and machinery. The Indian National Congress, led by Jawaharlal Nehru, was returned to power in all the three general elections with comfortable majorities in the Lok Sabha.89

Pandit Nehru was the prime architect of India’s political institutions. His contribution to the evolution of Parliamentary democracy in the country was unique. It was he who built, brick by brick, the infrastructure and edifice of Parliamentary institutions in India. The years that followed the commencement of the Constitution constituted a period of great stress and strain for the nation and for the world at large. That India’s representative institutions endured was a great tribute to Nehru’s abiding faith in and respect for the Parliamentary system. The Union Parliament itself was under Nehru’s leadership performed a tremendous conflict resolution and national integrational role during the formative years (1950 – 64). As the Leader of the House – Provisional Parliament (1950 – 52), First Lok Sabha (1952 – 57), Second Lok Sabha (1957 – 62) and Third Lok

89 Subhash C. Kashyap, op.cit.p.167
Sahba (1962 – 64), Nehru played the most outstanding role in establishing healthy practices and precedents. Free and fair elections to Parliament based on universal adult franchise were, for Nehru, the most sacred festival of democracy and an article of faith. He showed tremendous respect to the institution of Parliament and to Parliamentary practices and procedures.

Nehru had the fullest faith in Parliament as the Supreme representative institution of the people. He believed in the primacy of Parliament and in its supremacy within the field assigned to it by the Constitution. In the matter of the role of the judiciary and extent of judicial review Nehru took a very firm stand and said that the courts could not become a third legislative chamber; their role was to interpret the laws made by Parliament and not to themselves lay down the law. It was through his conscious efforts that Parliament secured a Preeminent position in the country’s policy. The effectiveness of the institution of Parliament was convincingly vindicated on several occasions.90 Nehru was meticulous in showing courtesy to Parliament; the very manner of his entry into the House, the graceful bow to the Chair each time he took his seat or left the House, his strict observance of Parliamentary etiquette in the best sense of the term, and his readiness to answer even irritating interruptions were exemplary. As Shri R.Venkataraman, the then President of India says, “it was his innate gentleness and his gentlemanliness that made Nehru an ornament to Parliament”.91 He took keen interest in the question hour and seldom missed it. He was present during most of the debates on major issues and listened to the members with attention. Nehru

90 Subhash C.Kashyap, op.cit.p.168
91 Subhash C. Kashyap, op. cit. p. 169
answered questions with dignity and dexterity, gracefully and effectively. Mrs. Violet Alva once observed that Nehru spoke “with passion but not with malice”. Sometimes he denounced wrongs “with the spirit of a rebel but he left no wounds behind”. He “could intervene and answer any intricate point and wind up the critical stage of any debate. He even went to the extent of getting the members of his won party expelled from the membership of Lok Sabha if found guilty of conduct unbecoming of a member of Parliament. Nehru reacted more strongly on a subsequent occasion in Lok Sabha about 13 years later when some members indulged in disorderly conduct while the President was addressing both the Houses assembled together on 18th February, 1963. The committee was set up to go into the conduct of these members, had recommended that they should be reprimanded. Replying to the discussion on the Committee’s Report, Nehru said: “The sole question before us is – it is a highly important one and vital one what rules and conventions we should establish for the carrying on of the work of this Parliament with dignity and effectiveness. It was for the first time that it happened, and if that was allowed to continue without any strong expression of opinion of this House or Parliament, it would have been a bad day for our democratic institutions and Parliament especially. This Parliament is supposed not only to act correctly but lay down certain principles and conventions of decorous behaviour.

In an impressive show of Parliamentary power, an I.C.S Secretary (H. M. Patel) and a powerful Finance Minister (T. T. Krishnaachari) had to quit their posts in the Mundhra case involving question
regarding investments of L. I. C. funds etc. The matter was raised in the Lok Sabha and followed up by Feroz Gandhi, a distinguished Parliamentarian. In the Berubari case the Government had decided to cede certain parts of the territory of the Union to Pakistan under an agreement. Parliamentary pressure compelled the Government to refer the matter to the Supreme Court and to bring forward a Constitutional Amendment before Parliament. The Supreme Court opinion established the principle that no part of the territory of the Union of India could be ceded by the Government without Parliamentary approval and without the Parliament amending the Constitution. When in the midst of some controversy and reported differences, an army General (Chief of Army Staff, General Thimayya) submitted his resignation, Prime Minister Nehru firmly and categorically declared in the Lok Sabha that in India "civil authority is, and must, remain supreme." These were significant and memorable words particularly in the context of what had happened to democracies in some of the neighbouring countries.

In the 1962 debacle following the Chinese aggression, the Defence Minister (V. K. Krishna Menon) had to resign as a result of Parliamentary pressure. It showed at once the power of Parliament on the one hand and the magnanimity and vision of Nehru and his deep commitment to the highest norms of Parliamentary democracy on the other. When he found that the majority opinion in the Congress party and in Parliament was against his own personal predilections he readily, willingly and gracefully bowed to it.92 The compulsory Deposit Scheme which came into force on 22nd May 1963 evoked

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92 Subhash C.Kashyap, op.cit.,p.171
strong opposition from the people and Parliament. It was virtually withdrawn even before the year was out. What came to be known as the Serajuddin affair resulted in the Minister of Mines and Oil (K. D. Malaviya having had to resign after admitting receipt of money from Serajuddin for political purposes and after being subject to an enquiry by a Supreme Court Judge. The reported VOA deal between India and U.S.A generated considerable heat and opposition in Parliament and ultimately Government had to rescind the agreement. A Constitution Amendment Bill introduced on 24th April 1964 and seeking to indemnity certain actions of officers during the Emergency was withdrawn by the Government in view of strong reaction against it in Lok Sabha. Thus, on several occasions, Parliament chose to assert itself, especially on issue of national importance.

**Accommodating the opposition and accepting Criticism**

Nehru was always more than willing to accommodate the view of the Opposition in the greater interests of the nation. He listened to the viewpoints of the opposition very carefully. It was, he said, fully democratic that the Opposition should criticize the Government’s policies; only it would be more helpful if they offered constructive criticism. Even though the Opposition was weak in numbers. Nehru accorded it considerable importance and held the view that “it would not be right for us to appear to be vindictive”. He met the Opposition leaders occasionally to exchange ideas on crucial issues. He would make it a point to compliment those who made fine speeches and raised important issues. Also, he would talk to them. His personal relationship with many Opposition members was most cordial and friendly. Glowing tributes have been paid to him for his unfailing
courtesy and consideration shown to Opposition members of Parliament. Nehru felt responsible not only to the members of his own party but also to those of the Opposition and in fact to the whole nation., He was conscious of the fact that he was the Prime Minister of the entire country and the leader of the whole House and not merely the leader of the majority party in Parliament.

Under Nehru’s stewardship the rights and privileges of members were duly safeguarded and the dignity and prestige of the House maintained. He asserted, “I am jealous of the powers of this House and I should not like anyone to limit those powers”. Once when some members from the Opposition felt that certain remarks made by the then Special Assistant of Nehru (M. O. Mathai) were a contempt of the House and brought a privilege motion, Nehru requested the Speaker to refer the matter to the Committee of Privileges. He said: “When a considerable section of the House was feeling that something should be done, it is hardly a matter for a majority to over-ride those wishes, suggestion to drop this matter would not be a right one because it almost appears that an attempt was made somehow to hush matters or hide matters, it is not a good thing for such an impression to be created”.

Nehru appreciated and informed criticism from all quarters and did not hesitate to accept and appreciate valid points. On one occasion during the discussion on President’s Address an Opposition leader, Ashoka Mehta, described the President’s Address as odourless, colourless and blamed the Government for it. While replying to the debate, Nehru dealt with that points first and said: Nehru would often

93 Subhash C.Kashyap,op.cit,p.172

105
begin by welcoming "well-deserved criticism" in Parliament saying that his Government could benefit them. At the same time, he would disarm his critics by observing that beyond that criticism there was a vast amount of agreement on fundamentals, and then he would set out to analyse the areas of agreement. Nehru might have sometimes appeared "impatient and intolerant of criticism, obstruction and indecision, so characteristic of democratic assemblies". But, in fact, he was at great pains to appreciate criticism. He was so introspective as to go out of the way to see the other man's point of view. He tried his best to pick out points from the criticism of the opponents of his stand, and was patient enough to try to rebuild and reshape his own plans and ideas. Within the Congress party also, Nehru permitted debates and discussions, inviting different shades of opinion on various matters. Thus, Congress was flexible enough to accommodate different points of view. It offered enough scope for every opinion and criticism to develop and held frequent discussions or consultations, the gist of which were often given out in the press for public information and discussion. This characteristic of the functioning of the party enabled it to hold its position in the House. The discussions and developments in the ruling party meetings themselves greatly influenced the Government in shaping its policies and in responding to public opinion. The impact of the party on the administration was perhaps as important as that of Parliament. Nehru led the way in emphasising the need to preserve the dignity of the House. Nehru's approach and attitude to Parliament were largely responsible for the growth of healthy Parliamentary traditions in the first decade and a half of Parliament in independent India. In the words of Dr. Gopal, the biographer of Nehru: "Building on the familiarization with politics
brought about by the national movement, Nehru defied conventional wisdom and introduced adult suffrage. Much as he disliked the sordid rivalry implicit in elections to legislative assemblies, Nehru gave life and zest to the campaigns; and, between elections, he nurtured the prestige and vitality of Parliament. He took seriously his duties as leader of the Lok Sabha and of the Congress Party in Parliament, sat regularly through the question hour and all important debates, treated the presiding officers of the two Houses with extreme defence, sustained the excitement of debate with a skilful use of irony and repartee, and built up Parliamentary activity as an important sector in the public life of the country. The tone of his own speeches in Parliament was very different from that which he adopted while addressing public meetings. He still sometimes rambled, but sought to argue rather than teach, to deal with the points raised by critics, to associate the highest legislature in the country with deliberation on policy and to destroy any tendency to reduce it in Max Weber’s phrase, to ‘routinized impotence’. By transferring some of his personal command to the institution of Parliament, he helped the Parliamentary system take root”.

The result was that debates in the Indian Parliament attracted wide attention not only in India but in the wide world outside. Foreign affairs debates were eagerly looked forward to. The visitors Galleries and Diplomatic Galleries were fully packed during all such debates. There were some momentous occasions like the debate on the nationalization of the Suez Canal. Often, the debates helped to ease tense situations, resolve conflicts and highlight India’s impact and

94 Subhash C. Kashyap, op.cit,p.176
contributions in the process. Nehru always emphasized the desirability of Ministers". This ability to accept others viewpoint and extract out of them the best elements, to be used for the good of the society, was one of the most remarkable traits of Jawaharlal Nehru's personality. It is worth recalling how once when Shrimati Rukmani Arundale's Private Member's Bill on Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was under consideration. Nehru walked into Parliament and declared that the Government was committed to the principles of the Bill and would bring forward its own legislation on the subject. It was through such firm stands and spirit of accommodating legitimate suggestions that Nehru laid the foundation of Parliament of the largest democracy on earth and made it a potent instrument of nation building, social engineering, economic reconstruction and national integration.

Thus, before the Nehru Era in the history of India came to an abrupt (end in May 1964), firm foundations of Parliamentary Government had been laid. The Parliament of independent India – of the Sovereign Democratic Republic of India – had been in existence for nearly 14 long years. During this period, the nation was able to actually work the system of representative Parliamentary democracy and to adapt it, where necessary, to India's own ethos, needs and aspirations. The country was fortunate in having at the helm of affairs a galaxy of highly distinguished and competent men headed by the great stalwart of the freedom struggle, Pandit Nehru himself. They proved to be as good nation-builders and administrators as they had been patriots and freedom fighters. Also, the existence of a well-organized and reasonably disciplined political party – the Indian

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95 Subhash C.Kashyap, op. cit., p.177
National Congress – with its firm faith in representative institutions proved a great boon in the task of institution building, developing healthy traditions, ensuring effective functioning of Parliament and State Legislatures and of the Congress Ministries at the Union and State levels etc.

The war was a rude awakening for Nehru, as India proved ill-equipped and unprepared to defend its northern borders. At the conclusion of the conflict, the Chinese forces were partially withdrawn and an unofficial demilitarized zone was established, but India’s prestige and self-esteem had suffered. Physically debilitated and mentally exhausted, Nehru suffered a stroke and died in office in May 1964. His legacy of a democratic, federal, and secular India continues to survive inspite of attempts by later leaders to establish either an autocratic or a theocratic state. Nehru’s long tenure in office gave continuity and cohesion to India’s domestic and foreign policies, but as his health deteriorated, concerns over who might inherit his mantle or what might befall India after he left office frequently surfaced in political circles. After his death, the Congress Caucus, also known as the Syndicate, chose Lal Bahadur Shastri as Prime Minister in June 1964, a mild-mannered person. Shastri adhered to Gandhian principles of simplicity of life and dedication to the service of the country.

The driving force behind Nehru’s contributions towards the building up of a Parliamentary system was a profound democratic spirit, which found expression not only in the setting up of Parliamentary institutions but also in providing the right atmosphere for the flourishing of such institutions. Once, when he was asked as to what his legacy to India would be, Nehru replied: “Hopefully, it is four
hundred million people capable of governing themselves”. The Parliamentary system and its institutions that we have today evolving through the changing times are indeed an integral part of this great legacy left behind by Nehru. The Parliament and its healthy conventions and traditions, evolved during his life-time, and which have become essential and permanent features of our democratic polity, owe greatly to the persistent efforts of Jawaharlal Nehru to make Parliamentary democracy strong and resilient for ever in our country.\textsuperscript{96} Nehru’s vision of developing Parliament as a symbol of the nation’s will has become a reality. We all know how meticulous Nehru himself was in the observance of these norms and conventions and that too, to the last breath of his life.

\textsuperscript{96} Subhash C. Kashyap, op. cit., p. 185