

**3.7. SPEECH OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA, SRI PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU,  
AT THE PUBLIC MEETING HELD AT 6 P.M. ON FRIDAY, THE 2<sup>ND</sup> OCTOBER 1953, AT  
THE ISLAND GROUNDS, MADRAS.**

Friends and Comrades, I find that there are some novel arrangements made here this evening. They look very impressive and presumably they are very good so far as hearing is concerned. Perhaps you would indicate to me if you are hearing me clearly at present. Those who are hearing me clearly will please raise your hands. (Cries of: O.K. Go ahead).

Well, gentlemen, we are meeting here again after nearly a year in the cool of the evening and I am wondering what you will not like me to talk about. I shall confess to you that when I come here to address a great Madras audience, I do not want just to talk to you on the superficial aspects of our problems or to repeat what I say elsewhere ; but I feel that we should talk a little more intimately; even though you might number many hundreds and thousands here.

I am coming, as you know, from Kurnool where yesterday we established the new Andhra State. And as I was there, my mind went back to a trifle over three hundred years—it may be much more of course, perhaps two thousand years and more—specifically many more years than three hundred years—but I think it was in the year 1647 that the first English factory was established in Madras, here in this City, somewhere—but where I do not know. And for exactly three hundred years, you had British rule in this City and round about, and it spread gradually. Indeed, Madras was one of the earliest places which came under British domination. Calcutta was built up later, and then Surat and two or three places like that. So, Madras grew up into a great City and a great State. And in 1947, exactly three hundred years after that British factor went up, a great historic change came over India, and India became independent. And now, yesterday, this oldest memorial. If I may say so, of British Rule, this State, this old Presidency of Madras, was being partitioned and split up. So, all these pictures came to my mind yesterday and to-day, and many others. Because, not only does the past fill my mind with innumerable pictures, but sometimes I indulge in the fancy of peeping into the dim future and trying to find out what it contains or what I would like to contain. But now I shall talk about this to you, this future.

Well, yesterday at Kurnool, I said many things; and among them I laid stress on the essential unity of India. I laid stress on this, and some people asked me and some newspapers also have said to-day “surely the Andhra State is not walking out of India, and if I may say so, nobody is going to be allowed to walk out of India. That question does not arise. But there is another question, and that is this: how are we going to function in India—with what measure of co-operative working between the different parts of India, with what measure of Unity. Unity of course will be there the political unity is there, the constitutional unity is there and nobody dare challenge it, either internal or external. But what is more important for us to understand is what lies behind that political, constitutional and legal entity, that is India. How do we think of it. Of course, most of us think of it as something much more than many of us have done, so that it may become a living, throbbing conception of unity for us, specially in the relative value that we attach in our minds to various things—our City, our Districts, our province or the whole State.

So, it is important that we should realize that; because, most of us—you will forgive my saying so—are rather parochial in our outlook; most of us except in moments of emergen-

cy, are lost in the smaller problems, forgetting the major ones, forgetting that there will be no small problems for us at all if there was this one major fact of India, the independence of India and the Indian Union uniting all of us together. So, I laid stress on this unity of India. India is a federal structure, and I think it was right and inevitable that India should be a federal structure, because in India there is, apart from that unity, a tremendous variety.

While a unitary form of Government gives perhaps greater strength, in one sense it comes in the way of that varied development and that feeling of each individual growing in his own environment that a federal structure may give. So, I think it was right and inevitable that we should have a federal structure—but we must always realize the importance of the Centre which binds all the different states and brings all areas together. We must always realize the importance of that conception of India.

Now what is your position if you go out of India. The only question you have is in your capacity as a citizen of the Republic of India, not of a particular State of India. So, it is well to lay stress on it. Specially, it is necessary to do that because we apparently entered a period when many people's minds are agitated by the thought of this linguistic province or that. Now, I think it is right that we honour the great languages of India, what we encourage them. It is right that people should be educated in their own great languages, in addition to the national language; but all this will become completely wrong if it serves to disrupt India or to weaken India in any way. Therefore, it is necessary to view this question in this largest context of India's unity.

We are going to appoint, not before long, a commission to consider the re-organisation of the states of India. Please observe that we do not talk about the linguistic divisions of India. We recognise them of course and we shall pay due attention to them; but we are not talking about the linguistic divisions of India, but of the re-organisation of the States of India, taking into consideration the cultural aspects the linguistic aspects the administrative aspects, the economic the financial, the security aspects, the defence aspects and finally the aspects of keeping the unity of India above everything and the economic progress of India in each particular part—we must see this whole picture. That is why I lay stress on it. And people may perhaps get somewhat irritated at my needless repetition of something that everybody knows—the unity of India. While everybody may talk about that, nevertheless, people perhaps do not feel it with that intensity or emphasis as I would like them to feel it. People do not feel it, not only when they loose themselves in their provincialism, as often people do, not only when they lose themselves in religious groupings and the like, more especially in that brand of isms called communalism, nor when they think of this caste or that caste, all these tremendous separating factors which had weakened India in the past and which we know we must face and overcome and get rid of it, if we are to build up a great healthy, prosperous and powerful nation. That has been the bone of India in the past, and with all our great virtues, in the past we suffered eclipse and disaster and defeat because we had not held together, because we thought of our little patch of our country or of our caste or of our group or of our religion, more than the fact of India and this huge country.

Well, we have changed I hope; but we have to din that into every mind, so that casteism and communalism and provincialism do not overcome our better judgment. There are, and I do not expect of course that the 360 millions of people of India will, each one of them, rise to great heights of intellectual or emotional effort; but I do expect the great majority of our people to understand this thoroughly, to appreciate and to react to it in the proper way.

I have wandered about India a great deal, even in the villages and hamlets of India; and I have the greatest respect for the peasant of India on whose solid strength India rests, if I may say so. Let us not forget that fact. We, who call ourselves intellectuals and live in cities and the like, let us not forget that the backbone or the strength of India lies in the peasantry of India, a peasantry which has often been exploited by us, city folk, a peasantry about whom we have thought with disdain considering ourselves their superiors, and we evolved a way of thinking that we who do not do manual labour, we, who work in the offices and read and write, are superior to them.

A country which considers manual labour as something degrading is a country which is well on its way to degradation itself, because there is nothing more ennobling than manual labour and the world rests on manual labour in spite of all the machinery and in spite of everything that has been invented and it is the human being and his work that count. So, I do expect the people of India millions of them, to understand this.

I am not making my appeal to persons who might consider themselves intellectuals and highly intelligent, living as they do in the City of Madras, because I find that when explained clearly, people understand this clearly everywhere. Some people of course do not understand it; some people in their communal and other organisations have unfortunately developed a perverted outlook or perhaps there is nothing in their heads to develop at all (Laughter) and allow their minds to sway this way or that way.

We are out for great things, for great stakes in this world of today. It is five or six years since we became independent, and I do not claim that we have solved the problems of India, but I do claim that these six years, in spite of our failures, will stand out as years of achievement. During these six years, India in the wide world today is thought of with great respect. Her voice is listened to and any opinion that she may give carries weight with innumerable people. It is a remarkable thing that a country which seven years ago was under a colonial administration was part of a great Empire, today, as an independent country, six or seven years afterwards, plays such an important part in world affairs. And mind you, not because she sought it, not because we seek to play that part we do not. And all those people who may talk about India's leadership of Asia or anywhere else misrepresent us. Because, we seek no leadership except the leadership of our own country, of our own people. When I say 'We' I mean the people of India, not I or anybody else. We seek to discipline ourselves and to remove our failings and ailments and poverty and all that. We have absolutely no desire to play a dramatic or other role in world affairs, and certainly we do not believe, if I may say so, in the leadership of India or any other country dominating other countries. But events have forced us to play an ever-increasing part in world affairs. That itself is worthy of your consideration. Why is that so? Why is it that without any obvious strength of material power, armies, finances, money power or of might-- We have either and we have plenty of grave problems and we suffer all kinds of difficulties. Nevertheless, the voice of India is respected. Why? Because I say there must be something essentially right in the voice of India; because behind the voice of India or behind the heart of India, however much we may otherwise be wrong there is certainly so fear; and it is not a voice coming out of fear. The greatest, the tallest and the biggest are feared and function therefore because of this overwhelming and overriding fear. Now, we are a poor country, we are a weak country from the point of any standards by which a country's strength is measured. But we are not a country that is afraid of anybody; and therefore the policy we pursue is not dictated by fear and therefore it is distinguished in the world today, because most policies in the world today are dictated by fear. And that is why, a certain re-

spect attached to what we say. It is a policy it may be right or it may not be right—but it is an honest policy, honestly thought out, honestly pursued and without, as I said, this compulsion of fear. And gradually, more and more people have begun to recognise it as such.

I reminded you a little while ago about the coming of the British to Madras 300 years ago. If you add another 100 to it and make it 400, you will see a big movement in history, i.e., the whole of Asia steadily relapsing more and more into passivity and inaction and, Europe which was much more backward than Asia in the roads of civilisation, becoming dynamic, expansive, growing and spreading out to countries of Asia. It was not a sudden process which lasted a couple of hundred years or so till it ended in the great empires which European countries built up in Asia, the British in India, the Dutch in Indonesia and the French in Indo-China and elsewhere. That was an amazing historic process covering a couple of hundred years or so. There are many things which can be said about that, but one of the most outstanding factors of that is that this great country of India—and this applies to other countries and to China—was completely and absolutely ignorant of the rest of the world. They lived within their own shells. They had great imperial courts, luxury and all that and great learning too. But they were completely ignorant of the rest of the world which marched on and on. They were ignorant also of what the rest of the world which marched on and on. They were ignorant also of what the rest of the world possessed and the result was that naturally and inevitably, we went down and they came up.

We read history and we may talk about imperialism and curse it. We may be right in many ways. But we must try to understand the motive force and the spirit behind the people and the Governments and see how India's history has been moulded greatly by the fact of our trying to live within a walled enclosure and not going out of it. While the rest of the world progressed in many ways we remained narcissus like, looking at our own beauty of countenance and thinking of our own culture and so on. But even beauty grows old, stagnates, if not freshened up.

Now, the question is are we in India—and this applies to China and to every other country going to live our own narrow lives, cut off from the world and do not want to know anything about the world? Now the moment you as an individual or as a nation think you are wise enough and do not want to learn anything from others, you are doomed; you have stopped growing. You are getting stunned and going to stagnate. That is what happened to India and China and the whole of Asia and we suffered for it. Such a thing cannot be repeated now when the rest of the world hits us on the head through our radio, newspapers and the like. We should develop the temper of curiosity for understanding things wherever they come from and not be content with thinking about our own virtuous condition. Because Asia was backward and cut off completely and gradually Europe began to think of her in terms of a backward and unprogressive people, tied up and ground down by social customs, by castes, untouchability and the like and therefore a people to be ruled firmly, may be if you like with humanity, but ruled firmly.

Two generations ago, hardly anybody in Europe thought that the countries of Asia would be independent in the foreseeable future. Lord Morley, who was supposed to be a great liberal statesman of British, said 40 years ago that his mind could not think of a time when India could be free. Amazing. When this was the outlook of a liberal statesman, what do you think would have been outlook of a Conservative politician? (Loud laughter) That is what they thought of Asia?

Now, in spite of these people, the countries of Asia became free and having become free, they began to make their influence led in world affairs. Yet, you will notice, that somehow, that old ..... not wholly disappeared, but they have not quite realised the big change that has come over world affairs by the fact of Asia having changed and great independent countries coming up. It is a patent fact. Asia may not have the atom bomb or hydrogen bomb. Asia may not desire to have these, but something has happened which has given Asia, if not this pugnacious type of spirit, a great deal of passive strength of resist being pushed about this way and that.

When I talk about an independent foreign policy for India, people refer to it as a neutral attitude. We are not neutral. We have positive ideas. When I talk about an independent policy for India, some countries criticise it and do not understand it. They say, 'what is this'? And yet, in the final analysis, what does an independent foreign policy for India mean? It means a refusal to be pushed about this way and that; it means deciding what you want to do for yourself. You may decide in favour or against a particular view. We may decide to co-operate or not with some, but the decision rests with us, the people of India and not with any other person or country which disapproves of its inevitably, thinks of pushing you about against the wishes of the people of India. I strongly object to that. I was not brought up to be pushed about in that manner even in the days of British rule here. So, the whole thing is that your mind has not completely got rid of the idea of Asia having just become independent and all that but that Asia should still be a camp follower. Now, in some kind of reverse or inverted way, Europe is falling into a wrong path to some extent may be not to a large extent—but is falling into that wrong path which Asia fell into, of ignoring Europe for the past hundreds of years. And therefore many of the policies which are being pursued somehow lack substance in the world—I mean of other countries and their air forces, their armies and navies. Well, no doubt they are important; for, even if you think of the economic progress of a country, it is highly important. I admit, nevertheless it is atleast as much important, if not more important; and that is the way the minds of many millions of people work. And if the mind of Asia is not understood. I do not mean to say the mind of Asia which is alike—of course it is not nevertheless there is a certain commonness in approach in so far as colonialism is concerned, in so far as foreign domination is concerned, and in so far as this attempt to push one this way and that way is concerned. We resist it and we indent resisting that and that is the normal reaction of the Asian mind. Now, this is not adequately realised in Europe. Changes take place in Asia and because they are not liked, an attempt is made not to accept them, which is not exactly the sign of wisdom. Look at this business of a great new State rising up in China. Does anybody doubt that here is that new State of China. Does anybody that it is strong enough to protect itself and that it has a strong Central Government, i.e., that the writ of the Government runs over all that State? It is not a question of your liking or your disliking it or your liking the policy they pursue or disliking it. The fact is of a great state existing there under a certain Government whose writ runs throughout that vast country, and yet if people say 'No, so far as we are concerned, that State does not exist, or we are not going to recognise it in the United nations or elsewhere' what are we to do about it? How can we argue that position? And yet, whole policies are based on that, on on the non-recognition of the major factor. How can a policy based on something that is wrong be correct? I am not talking to you about China just now; I am merely pointing out to you the extraordinary way of great statesmen and great countries shutting their eyes to patent and obvious facts of existence, facts of life. Then you build theories about life—that is extraordinary. You deny facts of geography! Are you going to change the world, the geography of the world? So frequently they go wrong. And this is a big

thing, that Europe and America, in spite of the fact that they have many wise men, in spite of the fact they are inquisitive and in spite of all that somehow they have not as a whole understood the tremendous changes and the tremendous ferment of Asia. They talk to us as if they are all against us, i.e., both the parties in this world tussle. Extraordinary question to ask, as if they only exist and we only exist to be pushed this way or that way; And yet, hundred of millions of Asia do exist and they propose to continue to exist and that are going to go on thinking for themselves, and not be pushed this way or that way or by that power or this power. That is a basic fact which has not percolated into the minds of many people in the West.

Now, do not imagine that I am speaking the language of bravado. I am not. I know our weakness, internal and external and all that. I know our terrific problems. I know still more the weaknesses of the countries of Asia. I am not exaggerating, but what I am referring to is the temper of Asia, and temper counts—the temper of millions of people; and it is a temper which refuses to be coerced and sat upon. That is the basic fact. Now, what I wanted to put to you was how India and Asia suffered and ultimately fell completely because of their self-complacency, because of the narrow limits of their living on their minds, because they refused to look outside their own house, big as it was, while the rest of the world progressed. Simple things had to be enumerated without any principle. Europe had printed books for hundreds of years. Not a slip of paper was printed in India. Even printed books came first only in Akbar's time, I believe. To understand the printed book, it was rather important from the Governmental point of view. And so, there was complete, tremendous stagnation and inertia. We imagined that we were wise and had nothing to learn. Well, books are important; but in some limited ways, arms are also important; and when the better weapons came, you could not face them with your bows and arrows. Baber came and why did he win? Because he had the cannon. The purpose of India did not at that time have it. Then the British and the French came here. Indeed they won, not by any superior courage but because they had better weapons the better kinds of weapons. Even so, they could not have won with their better guns, but they won because we, in our folly, were all split up cut and were fighting each other and were engaged in hiring British soldiers and French soldiers to help us in our in ..... quarrels. All that indicate how we have lost ground, how we did not understand the world we lived in. It is an extraordinary fact.

Well, you come back a little, say to about 150 years ago. I regret I do not remember the dates, I think they confuse one; I think we remember the course and events of history and not the dates. Once in India's history, the Marathas were likely to create a big Empire in India in the greater parts of India, and they held the greater part of Central India. Although the British and the French were here, nevertheless, the average observer would have seen the Mahrattas sprawling all over Central India, verging to what Ranjit Singh had developed in the Punjab and what Tipu had done in the South. These were the major factors. But then why were the Mahrattas not dominating India, you might ask. But the Mahratta never had a proper map of India. Think of that; imagine trying to conquer India without a map of India! Not that they could not have a map, but they never thought it important to have a map of India. They were very brave and gallant and they galloped and conquered forts and the like. But what did the British do? First of all, they had the most intelligent system of maps. Maps, according to them, were an intelligent system. In every quarter of India there were British agents who sent them information. Often they were Indians, sometimes ministers in the Courts of the State, sending information to the British! The British know exactly what the position was in each court in India; they knew exactly how the land lay, the lack of roads or the mountains and the shape of the country, and they struck whenever it suited them. How can courage alone stand

against all this. It showed the backwardness of Indian society at the time when the British appeared, utter backwardness in spite of greater luxury in our courts and in other respects. Now I am detailing all this past history to you so that we may all profit in the present. We have to be wide awake. We cannot relapse into that type of past. We cannot, even in the name of nationalism, revert to that kind of thing. There is a brand of nationalism which constantly talks about this past age. We are proud of our past—of course we are; but that does not mean that we should revert to the days of abuse and attack. In this modern world, it does not help to revert to thinking of things which have no relation to facts. We are doomed if we do. This is a world of science, an age if you like of technique a revolutionary age, a changing age all the time. The moment you change you fall altogether. Hold by all means to the basic principle of your life and basic principles may not change, I agree. But apart from the basic principles, there are many things. Life changes from day to day. You and I change; we grow old from boyhood to youth and old age and death comes; but the country goes on and so we have to think in terms of the India we are trying to build up. We are trying to build it up and in building it up we have to think of these basic factors not to fall into the errors of the past—the errors of complacency, the errors of imagining that we are all wise and we have nothing to learn, the error of imagining that our fate is determined by the stars and we need to anything at all. In fact not we should remember that a country progresses because of many things; it must have the resources of course resources means human resources, viz., thinking capacity, technical, artistic, knowledge and all that. But above all, a country and a people progress because they want to progress.

There must be that vital effort in them, the desire and the effort to achieve. If you look into the order of progress in the history of English, you will find all kinds of improvement which were taken up, but the basic thing there was a passion to go ahead. 'Let it go ahead'. Now my objection to the static way of thought is; even though in itself it might be correct in regard to some matters, it takes away that dynamism of progress from our minds. We sit and gossip—with all my apologies to my friends here—like women. We sit and gossip like old women and curse their Government and that Government or this or that party and do nothing at all about it. That kind of thing leads us nowhere. We have to develop an active, urgent sensation, a feeling emotion of going ahead with our problem. We shall solve them. It does not matter if we stumble and fall. We shall go ahead. We shall not be afraid of falling. We shall never be afraid of mistakes. A person who does not move, does not get anywhere. Therefore I think that one of the biggest things we have done in the last six years in this country is the building up of our National Scientific Laboratories, not only because of the work they do—and it is highly important—but because they will help in producing that temper of enquiry, that temper of curiosity for trying to find out things. That is the essential thing needed. Once you get that, you are saved; if you have not got it, not all your slogans will be of any avail. I do not know how far in these matters we are making good in the real sense and how far we are just talking tall. Of course, most of us belonging to the group called politicians, who are notorious for talking tall. But modern democracy encourage that kind of thing. Democracy is an excellent thing astonishing how it encourages the wrong people and yet, somehow or other, out of wrong people the right thing has got to be done. That is the problem of democracy; since the problem of choosing the right people by any other method has failed, we take the risk of even choosing the wrong people by the right method. But if you want democracy, you must realise what your responsibilities are. A successful democracy must have self-discipline. We must always remember that freedom has obligations and other things that go with it.

This vast country, spread out from the Himalayas way down south to the equator, this enormous country with its great variety and charm excites me and fills me with strong emotion. When it is my privilege to work for this country, its great heritage comes before me. When I think of India, pictures of many kinds come before me. I have seen millions of people all over India and have tried to look down into their eyes so far as I could and they have looked into my eyes. Even when I did not understand their languages and they did not understand my language, I have found that there is some communion between us, that we are in tune with each other and I have felt a great eagerness somehow or other to get over the enormous difficulties that encompass them. I know one cannot do that, by magical process. One has to work hard. We have to work hard. There is no other way. You may of course choose the right path or the wrong path. But whichever path you may choose, there is to be hard work. So think of this business as the most exciting adventure that you can have in this excited world of today, building up new India in all humility trying not to be pushed hither and thither by external forces and at the same time trying to be friendly to all throwing our weight on the side of peace in the world and concentrating on building our own country for its 360 million people, especially for its children, give them proper food, proper housing, proper education, proper health and proper opportunities for progress. Until you have provided these for every child in India, your attempt has not succeeded anywhere. Think of these. We are, all of us in our respective spheres, trying to build this new India. When I see anything that is built, small or big, it is creative effort; I see something solid taking shape like the huge Sindri factory or the works at the Chittaranjan Locomotive works or the great River Valley schemes for the new towns that are rising up in various parts of the country all by men's labour, by our labour; the thing is exciting to me and I see New India growing up. So I begin to think, as I said in another place today, that Mother India is in labour producing and building herself up again. We have to go through labour pains; but then we are producing this New India. JAI HIND.

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