

SELECTED WORKS OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

Series II Volume 29

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Peaceful Path to Progress¹

...Now we cannot tolerate any deaths due to famine. We have to make all possible arrangements for flood relief. But I want you to remember that the bond between the provinces and the Himalayas cannot be broken. Therefore, the situation has to be faced in varying degrees. It is wrong to get into a panic every year over floods. We must make arrangements to minimize the damage that occurs. But we cannot stop the rains. Moreover the floods do some good too. Sometimes when there are heavy rains in Bhutan or Tibet, we have to suffer the consequences. Earlier we used to be taken completely by surprise. This year for the first time, we had flood warnings from Bhutan and Tibet, and I hope that the system of information sharing will be strengthened further. Then we will be able to take some precautions.

In short, we must not be disheartened by natural events like floods. We must understand that these are phenomena which date back to millions of years and do good as well as some damage. Yes, now we have the resource to control the situation to some extent, which we are doing. With greater cooperation, we can succeed even more. But there is no cause for panic. We must concentrate all our strength and energy on the task of progress and particularly on eradicating poverty from the country. A strong economy is the only solution to our problems. Poverty can be eradicated only through mutual cooperation.

¹ Speech at a public meeting, Guwahati, 27 August 1955, AIR tapes, NMML. Original in Hindi.

Brahmaputra Floods and their Lessons²

Sisters and brothers,

You may remember that I came here exactly a year ago when the Brahmaputra was in full spate and was devouring the city.³ Huge trees had fallen and innumerable houses including the Circuit House disappeared in front of my eyes. It was a terrible sight. We had tried to build a stone wall but even that disappeared. But we did not panic. This year also, we should not give in to panic. There is no place in this world for those who panic. Those who are bold and prepared to help themselves can weather any crisis.

There has been a great deal of thinking on how to save Dibrugarh and the nearby areas. Work began last November and gathered momentum in January. You have seen with your own eyes the result of all that work. The flood levels this year were higher than last year.⁴ We used to get reports in Delhi. The higher the water level rises, the greater the danger. But the work done by our engineers proved enduring and succeeded in stemming the fury of the Brahmaputra this time. In spite of the fact that the water rose to a higher level this year, it did not do any damage to Dibrugarh.

This is no small achievement, particularly since it was done in such a short time, within six or seven months. Huge boulders were thrown into the river and held in place by steel wires. It was a problem even to find the stones here. They had to be transported over two or three hundred miles. Five train loads were carried every day. Stone spurs were then constructed and

² Speech at a public meeting, Dibrugarh, 20 August 1955, AIR tapes, NMML (Original in Hindi).

³ Around the third week of August 1954, extensive damage was caused throughout Assam by high floods in the Brahmaputra. Nehru was in Dibrugarh on 5 and 6 September 1954. See Selected Works (second series), Vol. 26, pp. 115-118.

⁴ The river level at Dibrugarh by August 1955 had risen 1.09 feet above the highest level reached during floods in 1954.

everything was completed before the fifteenth of June. And Dibrugarh was saved this year from the onslaught of the Brahmaputra.

This was a big step. But the important thing is the lesson that we have learnt from this experience. People from all walks of life cooperated fully in the effort. It was, of course, the responsibility of the Assam Government and of the Central Government. The Central Ministry of Irrigation and Power played an important role. The railways were responsible for transporting five trainloads of stones every day. The armed forces helped a great deal too, so did the Department of Science and Natural Resources by supplying aerial photographs. Big tasks need the cooperation of many departments, and pooling of resources, knowledge and experience. I want you to understand the importance of cooperation for big projects like this.

I referred to the role of the armed forces. The students of Dibrugarh and the nearby areas and others also helped a great deal. Then we also got some help from outside. For the first time this year, we got information from Tibet, where the Brahmaputra originates, about the floods. Earlier we used to be absolutely in the dark. Some rivers flow into India from Tibet and others from Bhutan. But we knew nothing till the floods were actually upon us without warning. So this year we requested Bhutan and the Chinese Government to keep us informed which they did for the first time. For the last few months we have been getting reports from three different sources about the level of the Brahmaputra waters and the likelihood of floods. But the truth is that the waters of the Brahmaputra which flow into India are not from Tibet or China but from our own mountains in the North Eastern Frontier Agency.

Whatever it is, we have succeeded because of the cooperation among the Government of Assam and the Central Government, various ministries, engineers, scientists, students and other volunteer workers, coupled with the information received from Tibet and China. It is true that the greatest responsibility rested with our engineers who must be congratulated on

completing this task successfully. But the people who should be congratulated even more are the citizens and volunteers who worked to complete this task. What is the lesson to be learnt from this? There are great tasks waiting to be done. They can be taken up successfully only by cooperation between the Government and the people and pooling of resources and energies of the entire nation. No big step can ever be taken by the Government or the people alone. It requires the cooperation of all concerned.

So we have before us the picture of a great task completed successfully. Some work remains to be done. But it has been demonstrated quite clearly that we can fight the floods and save Dibrugarh. After six months of hard work, we are fully confident that we can safeguard Dibrugarh and the adjoining areas fully from the onslaught of the Brahmaputra. Please sit down. It is hot and you are in great discomfort. I am in the shade. It would have been better to have held the meeting in the evening.

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Approach to Bhutanese Problems⁵

I have read this report by the Foreign Secretary about his visit to Bhutan⁶ and found it very interesting and instructive. I agree with his main conclusions and, more especially, that our approach to the Bhutanese problems should be somewhat varied in emphasis. I think he is right in suggesting that we should give up the idea of pressing for closer political contacts or of asking for a

⁵ Note to the Foreign Secretary. MEA. 15 July 1955. JN Collection.

⁶ R.K. Nehru, the Foreign Secretary, and some other officials visited Sikkim, Tibet and Bhutan from 6 June to 2 July 1955. It took them four days from Tibet-Bhutan border to reach Paro in western Bhutan where the Maharaja received them for a four and a half days' stay till 23 June, and the Foreign Secretary submitted his report on the tour and his talks with the Maharaja and Jigme Dorji, the Prime Minister on 5 July 1955.

Political Agent in Bhutan.⁷ We should concentrate more on the social and economic approach.⁸

2. I have no doubt that O.K. Sen⁹ is their principal adviser on political matters and O.K. Sen's advice is seldom likely to be in favour of India. However, quite apart from O.K. Sen and his advice, we should lay greater emphasis on the social and economic side. Even there, there should be no attempt at any imposition. Help should be given when asked for and not thrust upon Bhutan.

3. The principal help that I envisage is to give opportunities to the Bhutanese for training in India. This training can be for:

- (1) survey work;
- (2) medical and health;
- (3) Hindi language and general education;'
- (4) engineering;
- (5) any other that is suggested might be considered.

⁷ RK Nehru had commented that Bhutan had not accepted India's demand for a resident Political Agent there because of her concern about safeguarding her status which was higher than that of Sikkim. as the stationing of a Political Agent was the old British method of bringing a country under control. Jigme Dorji however, had told him that some time later they might agree to this appointment when they had a fixed capital. At this time, the Maharaja. with the entire governmental machinery moved from valley to valley to maintain his hold on the administration.

⁸ Suggesting closer relation with Bhutan through social and economic channels. he had commented on monarchy administration proposals for framing a constitution and codifying the civil and criminal laws and land reforms in Bhutan. He also mentioned the problems of development of communications. economic survey. training of medical personnel. learning of languages especially of Hindi language and monasteries. He also commented on the conflict between the Bhutanese and the Nepalese who were confined to the southern terai of Bhutan and were regarded as foreigners. They were not allowed to go to the North. not represented in the Militia in the councilor in the assembly, which assisted the Maharaja.

⁹ Adviser to the Bhutan Government.

4. If they require some persons from India to help them in any of these activities or training, we should try to send to them such persons. But the initiative should come from them.

5. I do not know how far efforts to study the flood problem have gone. This is important for us.

6. It is certainly desirable for the Maharaja and the Maharani as well as others in Bhutan to visit India and to see the work being done here.

7. I should myself like to go to Bhutan, but at the moment I do not know when I can do so. Presumably, it will have to be in summer time. This summer is out of the question.

8. I am thinking of writing a letter to the Maharaja.⁶ In the course of this letter I could mention the Foreign Secretary's visit and my own desire to go to Bhutan to pay the Maharaja a visit. Will Foreign Secretary indicate any points that I might mention in this letter.

9. A copy of this note might be sent to Shri Apa Pant.¹⁰

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To Maharaja of Bhutan¹¹

New Delhi

16 July 1955

My dear Maharaja Sahib,

I have just returned from a long tour abroad. On my return, I received a report from our Foreign Secretary, R.K. Nehru, about his visit to Bhutan. I was naturally interested in his report and was happy to read his account of his visit. May I express my gratitude to you for the courtesy and hospitality which you gave to our party.

¹⁰ Political Officer in Sikkim and Bhutan with control over Indian Mission in Tibet.

¹¹ JN Collection. A copy of this letter was sent to the Foreign Secretary.

As I told you when you were here¹² and were good enough to invite me to visit Bhutan, I would very much like to go there. My difficulty is how to find the time for it. But the attraction of visiting Bhutan and meeting Your Highness again is great and perhaps sometimes or other I shall manage to reach there. I fear it cannot be this year.

I hope, however, that you and the Maharani will visit us again. It is always a pleasure to meet you both. Apart from this, we would welcome your visiting many of our projects which I am sure will be of interest to you. We are engaged, as you no doubt know, in a great effort to build up our country. Having nearly come to the end of the our First Five Year Plan, we are now preparing the Second Five Year Plan which is likely to be much more ambitious. In this, we are laying greater stress on heavy industry and, at the same time, on village or household industries. One of the developments in India which I consider most important and which is nearest my heart, is the Community Project Scheme and the National Extension Service for rural areas. This affects our vast rural population. It has already spread to about a hundred thousand villages and has brought about a remarkable change there. I am sure this will interest you as it is particularly applicable to underdeveloped countries.

I have recently learnt about the land reforms which Your Highness has introduced.¹³ I am very happy to learn of this because land reforms form an essential foundation for progress in other directions. I am glad also that you are promoting education and health services.

¹² Maharaja Jigme Dorji Wangchuk visited India in January 1954 and participated in the Republic Day celebrations.

¹³ He put a ceiling of thirty acres on large landholdings, distributed his own lands to his subjects, made the land revenue equitable and abolished it altogether in case of poor farmers with smaller holdings. The land tax accounted for three-fourths of the total revenue of Rs fifty lakh, paid mostly in kind. The Maharaja was trying to persuade the peasants to convert it into a cash payment.

Sometimes ago, we approached Your Highness' Government about the question of flood control which is troubling us greatly. I am glad that an agreement has been reached about this matter and that your Government will cooperate with our Government in this joint task.¹⁴ I need not tell you that we shall always be happy to help Your Highness by sending technicians or experts to Bhutan whenever they are needed. An even more effective method of helping will be to train Bhutanese young men and women in our institutes in India.

With all good wishes to you and to the Maharani.

Yours very sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

Policy towards Bhutan¹⁵

I have read this note by Shri Panikkar and I agree with him.¹⁶

2. I think we need not worry at all about Chinese or Tibetan claims on Bhutan or Nepal.¹⁷ Whatever might have happened in the past, and there is hardly anything that has happened to support these claims, I cannot imagine any

¹⁴ R.K. Nehru had reported on 5 July that an agreement between the two Governments had been reached about the initial steps to be taken in this regard. Accordingly flood control stations were opened at various places and the Bhutanese staff trained.

¹⁵ Note to the Foreign Secretary, 17 July 1955. JN Collection.

¹⁶ On 16 July, K.M. Panikkar, Member, States Reorganisation Commission and former Ambassador to China, had sent his observations on a note on Bhutan written by R.K. Nehru on 5 July 1955

¹⁷ R.K. Nehru had written that the Chinese claimed. last in 1910 and repeated in 1948 through the Tibetan Kashag, that Bhutan was their vassal state and "we cannot have special relations with Bhutan without their concurrence". They gave transit visas to the Indian party but took no special notice of the official visit to Bhutan. Panikkar's view was that though the situation required careful handling there was no serious danger of the Chinese putting forward any claim to suzerainty over Bhutan.

such claims being advanced now. Our policy of course should be the positive policy of friendship with these areas and contacts and help.

3. Therefore, as we have said before, we must give no impression to the Bhutan Government that we have any desire to have political or other control over it. We should not push our men there and it is only when they want any help that we should send it.

4. You mentioned that the chief help they want is financial help. I would not rule this out. But if this question is raised, it would be better, I think, to give them some financial credit here for purchases in India. However, this question does not arise now.

5. I entirely agree with Shri Panikkar's suggestion for the opening of a high level Hindi school in Kalimpong.¹⁸ I suppose Kalimpong would be the most suitable place for it. This should cater especially for the Sikkimese and the Bhutanese. But it should also invite tribal folk from the surrounding areas. This school should, I think, also encourage the teaching of Tibetan and Bhutanese languages for our people. It may have a section attached to it for this purpose. Also, as Shri Panikkar has said, there might be a small polytechnic attached. The school should be directly under the Central Government who should finance it. I suggest that you might put up a note to this effect and send it to the Education Ministry, with the suggestion that the Education Ministry, after considering the proposal and vetting it, might put up before the Cabinet as a special case.

6. It might be desirable to send a copy of that note or the substance of it to the West Bengal Government for their views.

¹⁸ R.K. Nehru commented on 17 July 1955: "Hindi is a source of strength to us and we must treat it as an instrument for projecting the Centre's influence in our border areas."

Proposal for an Institute in Sikkim¹⁹

In some of the recent papers put before me in regard to Bhutan (I think it was Shri Panikkar's note), it was suggested that we might start some kind of an institute in Kalimpong, more especially devoted to persons of Tibetan stock. I agreed with this general proposal and suggested that it might be worked out. Also, that the Government of West Bengal might be consulted.

2. I had a talk with the Maharajkumar of Sikkim²⁰ today as well as Dr B.C. Roy. The Maharajkumar suggested that a research institute for Tibetan, more especially with Buddhist books from Tibet should be started by the Government of India at Gangtok. Apparently, there is an old tradition which says that learning will travel from Tibet to Sikkim and find a home there.

3. Dr Roy mentioned that the Government of West Bengal intended starting a university at Darjeeling, and he suggested that this research institute could well be attached to that university, even though it might have a separate habitat at Gangtok.

4. Thereupon I told him about our own proposal which was somewhat different but which could perhaps be associated with these other proposals.

5. I am sending this note so that our own proposal might be considered in connection with these proposals.

Cable to Bhagwan Sahay²¹

I have read your letter and note of May 29th. Also your subsequent telegrams.

2. It was my intention to send a message to the King before my departure.

But on reconsideration I have decided not to do so at present.

¹⁹ Note to Secretary General. Foreign Secretary and Joint Secretary, MEA, 25 July 1955. JN Collection.

²⁰ Palden Thondup Namgyal.

²¹ New Delhi. 4 June 1955. JN Collection. Bhagwan Sahay was Indian Ambassador in Nepal.

3. It seems to me, however, that prospect of K.I. Singh's return²² makes it even more essential than otherwise for the King to take some action in forming Government.²³ After K.I. Singh's return, new problems and difficulties are likely to arise.

4. I trust your judgment to advise the King and deal with the situation in the manner you think best.

Cable to C.C. Desai

Your Telegram 668 August 20th

We are completely agreeable to cooperate with Pakistan in dealing with floods.²⁴ These floods, especially in the eastern region, are a common menace to both our countries and it is obviously desirable for collaboration in dealing

²² K.I. Singh, a medical practitioner from western terai, had attempted an unsuccessful coup in Nepal in January 1952. He escaped to China through Tibet and took political asylum there. King Mahendra granted him amnesty and he returned to Nepal in September 1955.

²³ To assert his control over the state machinery, King Mahendra appointed a five-member Council of Royal Advisers on 14 April 1955 and took steps to tone up the administration which were criticized as undemocratic and reactionary by the political parties. He called a conference of all political, social and cultural organizations at the royal palace from 8 to 17 May 1955 which was boycotted by the Nepali Congress, the Nepali Rashtriya Congress, the Praja Parishad and the Rashtriya Praja Party. The major points, which emerged after the deliberations, were: (1) termination of the direct rule, (2) dissolution of the Advisory Council, (3) restoration of democratic system, and (4) holding of general elections at the earliest. The King dissolved the Advisory Council on 10 June 1955 and initiated a series of consultations with the political parties.

²⁴ Desai had reported about his meeting with Chaudhuri Mohammad Ali on 20 August 1955, when Ali referred to the desirability of formation of a joint flood control commission. He had said that on receipt of the Indian Government's favourable response, the details about terms of reference, composition, location and funds etc. could be worked out. He also said that from a wider angle any joint action proving beneficial to people would lay surer foundation of goodwill between our two countries.

with them. In fact, these eastern floods come chiefly through Bhutan and Tibet and we have been in touch with these two countries in order to have previous information as well as, in Bhutan, to devise other methods of control.

2. Each major river valley region has to be considered separately from the point of view of floods. Last year we appointed several river commissions dealing with this flood menace. Among these commissions are Brahmaputra River Commission and the Ganga River Commission. They are expert Commissions and State Governments concerned are associated with them. They have already done good work. The main danger to East Pakistan comes from the Brahmaputra river and its tributaries. Also perhaps to some extent from the Ganga.

3. We accept in principle the proposal for cooperation between India and Pakistan in flood control in this eastern region which is so often devastated by floods. The manner of this cooperation will have to be carefully worked out. It might be desirable for Pakistan Government to constitute its own flood control commission for the eastern region. This commission could cooperate fully with our Eastern Commissions and they may even have a joint body or we may have a joint commission for that region. This is essentially a matter for expert engineers to deal with. We suggest that we might send soon one of our senior engineers dealing with flood control to Karachi to discuss broadly various approaches to this problem and to find out what suggestions the Pakistan Government has in mind. The next stage will be to consider the matter in greater detail and formulate specific proposals. If necessary, Ministers can meet at that stage, but previous discussions should take place at expert level.

4. Please convey this message to Chaudhuri Mohammad Ali.

5. As regard minorities, I agree that each country should look after its own minorities and produce confidence in them.²⁵ But, as you know, we continue to

²⁵ Mohammad Ali desired that both countries should gradually take diminishing interest in other's minorities. thus encouraging both confidence in and reliance on Government of one's

have large inflow amounting to about 20,000 per month from East Pakistan to West Bengal.

Discontent in Tibet²⁶

In the course of a talk with the Maharajkumar of Sikkim this evening, he referred again to our inviting the Dalai Lama to the Buddha Jayanti celebrations next year.²⁷ I told him that we had decided to invite him, but it was rather early to take any step now. Also that anyhow we had to sound the Chinese Government about it and the invitation itself would probably have to go through them, even though it might also be sent separately and directly. Our own idea was that when our new Ambassador went to Peking,²⁸ he might informally sound the Chinese Government about it first. We can then think of what further steps to take. It was obvious that the Dalai Lama would not be able to come here unless the Chinese Government approved of it.

2. The Maharajkumar said that it would be desirable for someone to visit Tibet with the invitation and it was rather difficult to go there in the winter months. In other words he suggested that this should be done before the next winter. I told him again that we had to approach the Chinese Government first. Also that much would depend on various developments in Tibet, which would probably govern the Chinese Government's decision. I said this because of what the Maharajkumar told me in a slightly different connection.

own country. Desai reminded him of agreements made out but not ratified, of agreements ratified but not implemented and of the general atmosphere in the Pakistan Foreign Office that unless Kashmir problem was settled every other problem must remain hanging. Ali said that that was wrong attitude and as soon as he settled down he would bring about a change of attitude.

²⁶ Note to the Secretary General and Foreign Secretary, 25 July 1955. JN Collection.

²⁷ Held from 24 to 30 November 1956.

²⁸ R.K. Nehru was to go to Beijing in October 1955 as Ambassador.

3. He told me that he met the Dalai Lama before he went to China.²⁹ It was clear then that the Dalai Lama was not at all happy and was going to China under pressure. The Maharajkumar had learnt through reliable persons that the Dalai Lama had not changed his opinion because of his visit to China and was still dissatisfied with things as they were.³⁰

4. So far as the Panchen Lama³¹ was concerned, he was exceedingly unpopular with the Tibetans and was considered more or less a stooge.

5. There was a good deal of discontent in Tibet. At present the question agitating the people there was the formation of the Committee, of which the Dalai Lama was the Chairman, to frame Tibet's Constitution or whatever it was.³² The Chinese Government would appoint this Committee. It was not clear to me how this Committee would be constituted, but the Maharajkumar seems to indicate that some people who were going to be elected or nominated by Tibetan groups to it. It was this process of election or nomination that was going to take place and for this purpose many important persons were gathering in Lhasa; more particularly the extremist anti-Chinese wing was gathering there and they wanted to control this Committee. Having done so, they would probably take up a strong attitude against China and

²⁹ On an invitation from Mao. the Dalai Lama left Lhasa in July 1954 for Beijing and returned in June 1955.

³⁰ According to the Constitution adopted on 20 September 1954 by the People's Congress, China's legislative body, "autonomous" regions were considered integral parts of the Chinese People's Republic.

³¹ (b. 1937); Installed as the Panchen Lama, 1944; Vice Chairman, Chinese People's Political Consultative Committee, 1954-64 and 1979.

³² As a result of adoption of the Chinese Constitution. the State Council adopted a resolution for the establishment of the "Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region of Tibet" to further integrate the administration of Tibet with that of PRC. With the Dalai Lama as Chairman, Panchen Lama and Zhang Guohua as Vice Chairmen and Ngapo Ngawang Jigme as Secretary General. the fifty-one-member PCART was to function as the central administration of Tibet.

possibly even demand independence. If they did so, there was again the possibility of the leaders of this movement being arrested. If this happened, there would be trouble in Tibet. Indeed the Maharajkumar hinted that this trouble might well spread somewhat outside Tibet into some border regions of China, like parts of Yunan Province.

6. I am passing this on for record in the Ministry for what it is worth. I am inclined to think that the Maharajkumar tends to give a one-sided picture of the situation, because his own contacts are with a particular type of person who comes out of Tibet. We should not, therefore, accept his appraisal as necessarily correct. But it does indicate that things are not well in Tibet.

7. The Maharajkumar also said that not much developmental work had been done by the Chinese in Tibet. When I mentioned that many roads and airfields had been built near our border, he denied this and said there were no airfields and very few roads had been built. These roads were also built chiefly by Chinese Pioneer Corps and not so much by Tibetans.