

Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru

Series II Volume 37

Religious and Cultural Ties with Tibet¹

Premier Chou En-Lai did mention to me something about India and Tibet having direct relations in regard to religious and like matters. I do not remember his wording, nor can I say exactly what he meant. I did not press the matter with him. But, I think, he did say something about Tibetan scholars coming to India to study religion and Sanskrit, etc., and I told him that they would be welcome.² Any move in this direction should, of course, have to be referred to the Chinese Government. We should not do anything without their consent. Otherwise, as you say, this might lead to disillusionment.

About my going to Lhasa, I would indeed like to go there. But I am wholly unable to say anything definitely at this stage about my plans for the summer. Also, of course, if there is any such idea of my going there, I would have to refer it to Premier Chou En-Lai first. I would do so rather informally, to begin with. The various matters referred to in the Dalai Lama's letters might be examined and I can consider sending him an answer.³

¹ Note to Secretary General, Jabalpur, 26 February 1957. "Revolt in Tibet, Dalai Lama's Arrival in India 1959", MEA, Government of India. Also available in JN Collection.

² For Nehru's talks with Chou En-Lai, see *Selected Works* (second series), Vol. 36, pp. 583-619 and 623-638.

³ In two letters Dalai Lama wrote that India being the source of Buddhist Dharma, a strong religious and cultural bond existed between India and Tibet. He referred to Chou En-Lai's view that India and Tibet deal directly in the matters of religion and culture, and establish a permanent relationship on firm foundations. Dalai Lama sought the Indian Government's help for the development of Bodh Gaya Tibetan Monastery, and for establishing a new organization of Tibetan

I am returning the original letters from the Oalai Lama unopened to you. They might be opened and kept in the Ministry. Presumably there is nothing more in them than what is given in the translations already placed before me.

You might refer to my notes on my talks with Premier Chou En-IaL Perhaps I made some reference to his telling me about our religious contacts with Tibet.

To Shriman Narayan⁴

New Delhi
2 March 1957

My dear Shriman,

Your letter of 2nd March about the India-China Friendship Association. I think that we might adopt a cooperative attitude with this association and you can inform MPs and others accordingly.

You might, however, inform Dr Zakir Husain⁵ that while we shall be cooperative, we shall naturally expect the Association not to take any step which may be opposed to the Congress policy or the policy of the Government of India.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

Harnessing Brahmaputra Water⁶

I have long been interested in this part near the India-Tibet border where the

Sangha and monasteries at suitable holy centres in India. Dalai Lama informed that a new Abbot, well-versed in spiritual knowledge, would be accredited to Tharpa Choling Monastery at Kalimpong. He also hoped that Nehru would find time to visit Tibet in the following summer

⁴ JN Collection. Also available in AICC Papers, NMML

⁵ Noted educationist and a nominated Member of Rajya Sabha.

⁶ Note to Commonwealth Secretary, New Delhi, 12 April 1957 . JN Collection

Brahmaputra enters India. What Dr Krug⁷ has said was pointed out to me by Shri Kanwar Sain.⁸ In fact, I referred to this matter in some public addresses.⁹

The real fall takes place in Chinese (Tibet) territory and not actually in Indian territory. Of course, it may be possible to bring the water through channels to Indian territory and have the power house there. In any event, it would require the full cooperation of the Chinese authorities. China, if it so chose, could utilize this power itself without associating India. India cannot do so by itself and without the association of China.

It is obvious that at the present moment it will not be easy to use much electric power either in Tibet or in the North East Frontier Agency. But the Chinese are people who look far ahead. If their attention is drawn to this matter, they might well begin to think of some major scheme there, though even for them this is likely to be rather a distant scheme, in view of the conditions in Tibet.

Obviously, the proper use of this great fall would be for some joint Indo-China venture. I do not myself see where Pakistan comes into the picture.

Geographically, it is far away. Burma is nearer; but for Burma too, it is not likely to be of much use in the foreseeable future.

Shri Kanwar Sain also told me that there is a similar fall of a river in Indo-China at the spot which is near the meeting place, I think, of Vietnam and Cambodia.

⁷ Julius A. Krug (1907-1970); Research statistician, Wisconsin Telephone Company, 1930 and 1931; Chief, Depreciation Section, Wisconsin Public Service Commission, 1932-35; Public Utilities Export, Federal Communications Commission, 1936-37; Technical Director, Kentucky Public Service Commission, 1937; with Tennessee Valley Authority in various capacities, 1938-41; served with War Production Board on loan from TVA, 1941-44; Chairman, Office of Production Management and War Production Board, 1944-45; Secretary of the Interior, US, 1946-49; Leader, UN Flood and Water Control Mission to Pakistan, 1956-57

⁸ Chairman, Central Water and Power Commission.

⁹ Nehru also wrote notes to officials of MEA regarding flood control in the North East. See *Selected Works* (second series), Vol. 26, pp. 116-118 and Vol. 30, p. 395.

Laos is, I think, also not far. There also an enormous amount of electric energy could be produced which would be enough for all the countries of Indo-China. I think, he has mentioned this fact in the report he drew up for the United Nations.

To U Nu¹⁰

New Delhi
22 April 1957

My dear U Nu,¹¹

I have received today your letter of the 17th April 1957, with its enclosures.

Thank you for it.

I shall have the matters referred to in your letter examined by the Historical Section of the External Affairs Ministry. In case I can give you any useful information about them, I shall do so in a later communication.

I am sorry that there has been so me difficulty in your arriving at a settlement about border problems with the Chinese Government.¹² I confess that I do not very much like the attitude of Premier Chou En-lai in this matter. The impression created upon me is that he was not fully adhering to what he had told you or U Ba Swe¹³ previously. But this is for you to judge.

I am writing to you immediately so as to inform you of one particular development which took place here when Chou En-lai came to India on the last occasion. In your letter you say that while Premier Chou En-lai was prepared to accept the McMahon Line in the north, he objected to the use of the name "McMahon Line", as this may produce "complications vis-a-vis India", and

¹⁰ IN Collection

¹¹ Prime Minister of Myanmar

¹² For China-Myanmar border problems, see *Selected Works* (second series), Vol. 35, pp. 506-514

¹³ Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of Myanmar at this time

therefore, he preferred to use the term "traditional line".

When Chou En-lai was here last, we discussed many matters at great length. He referred to his talks with you and U Ba Swe and indicated that a satisfactory arrangement had been arrived at.¹⁴ In this connection he said that while he was not convinced of the justice of our claim to the present Indian frontier with China (in Tibet), he was prepared to accept it. That is, he made it clear that he accepted the McMahon Line between India and China, chiefly because of his desire to settle outstanding matters with a friendly country like India and also because of usage etc. I think, he added he did not like the name "McMahon Line".

This statement that he made to me orally was important from our point of view and so I wanted to remove all doubts about it. I asked him again therefore and he repeated it quite clearly. I expressed my satisfaction at what he said. I added that there were two or three minor frontier matters pending between India and China on the Tibet border and the sooner these were settled, the better. He agreed.

I entirely agree that the use of the word "McMahon Line" is not right and should be put an end to. It reminds one of British incursions and aggression. We are, therefore, not using these words any longer. Indeed, so far as we are concerned, we have maintained all along that our frontier with China, except for the two or three very minor matters, was a fixed and well known frontier and there was no dispute about it. We had never raised this question with China, but I had stated in Parliament here and also to Chou En-lai in Peking that there was nothing to discuss about our frontier as it was fixed and well known. We have now our check-posts all along this frontier.

Thus, so far as we are concerned, this frontier (known previously as the McMahon Line) is not a matter in dispute at all and Chou En-lai has accepted it. It is true that his acceptance was oral, but it was quite clear and precise.

¹⁴ See *Selected Works* (second series), Vol. 36, p. 614

As regards the two or three minor matters, we are expecting some Chinese representatives to come to Delhi fairly soon to discuss one of them. The territory involved is a very small one in the high mountains. We do not propose to raise the other two small matters at this stage. After one question is settled, we might, if we think proper then, refer to the other two.

I am writing to you immediately in answer to your letter so as to keep you informed about this so-called McMahon Line between India and Tibet and what Chou En-lai said to me on this subject, This has some relevance to your own McMahon Line.

Thank you for what you have written about our elections. I am afraid I am not very happy about these elections. So far as our Parliament is concerned, we have got a very big majority. In some of the State elections, we did not do so well and, as you must know, in Kerala, our smallest State, Communists have formed a Government.¹⁵ This is the first case, one might say, in history when a Communist Government has been formed as a result of democratic elections. It will be interesting to watch developments there. For the present, the Communist Government there is behaving with caution and apparently does not wish to create trouble.

But what has worried me greatly in regard to these elections, is not the measure of success or failure that we had but rather the inner weaknesses that came out. Somehow these democratic elections, good as they are, encourage human weaknesses.

I have been feeling very tired and rather stale. In another two days' time, I am going to the mountains for three or four days rest. That is not much. I am afraid I cannot remain away for much longer. Our new Parliament will be meeting early in May.

¹⁵ See *ante*, pp. 106, 118-119 & 334-339

Bandaranaike,¹⁶ has been pressing me to pay a visit to Ceylon for the Buddha Jayanti celebrations. As a matter of fact, we had specially fixed the Buddha Jayanti Day as an auspicious day for the first meeting of our new Parliament. I hope, however, to pay a brief visit to Ceylon soon after, going there on the 17th of May and returning to Delhi on the 20th.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

Message to Chou En-lai¹⁷

I am grateful to Your Excellency for your message of good wishes. I hope you will be good enough to convey my gratitude to your Government also.

The growing friendship between India and China has been a matter *of* the greatest satisfaction to me. I believe firmly that this friendship and cooperation are good for both our countries as well as for the peace and progress *of* Asia and the peace *of* the world. It was the happy privilege *of* our two countries to enunciate first the Five Principles *of* peaceful coexistence. As Your Excellency knows, these Principles have been accepted by a large number *of* countries. I am convinced that these Principles should form the basis *of* international relations. I send you all my good wishes.

¹⁶ S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike was Prime Minister of Sri Lanka

¹⁷ New Delhi, 24 April 1957. IN Collection