

Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru

Series II, *Volume 7*

To Indira Nehru¹

Srinagar

May 4, 1938

Darling Indu,

This morning I had a dip in the Alaknanda at Devaprayag. The right place was the junction with the Bhagirathi but this was a mile away and I wanted to save time. The current of the Alaknanda (and even more so of the Bhagirathi) was so strong and the stones so slippery that it was not possible to go more than a few feet from the bank. But even so the water was delightfully cold and refreshing.

This morning we started from Devaprayag on ponies and rode about 19 miles. It was fairly hot going and we were rather tired at the end of it. Almost right through we followed the course of the Alakmmda. Many pilgrims, looking tired and footsore, were trudging away to Badrinath, with the prospect of another month's journey before them. It seemed strange that we had done this very journey by air in a few hours day before. Our bridle path was a good one and a pleasant and sometimes heavy scent of jasmine hung along it.

We reached here soon after noon long before our luggage. This eventually arrived after seven in the evening. This (Srinagar) is a pleasant little place, rather warm (we are only about 2000 ft. high or perhaps 2500) and with an atmosphere of isolation surrounding it. Everybody here has got one major desire-to have a motor road connecting Srinagar with the outside world, a very legitimate wish. Another wish, rapidly taking form and entirely right, is to develop electric power. In a hill country with numerous rivers and waterfalls

¹ Indira Gandhi Papers, N.M.M.L.

this, is the obvious thing but our Government have never thought along these lines. They only make roads and think of electricity for the hill stations where the officials go to. And because officials seldom come this way this poor spread-out district of the U.P., bordering on Tibet, has been grossly neglected. We shall remain here two days and then go to Pauri, a hill station 6000 ft. high, which is the headquarter of the district and is 8 miles away from here. From there we shall go to Devaprayag and Hardwar and back to the better known but more drab world.

It is very pleasant here in the late evening. Just cool enough. Some of the hill-sides have fires on them, intentionally caused, as this is supposed to improve the soil. The burnt grass and shrubs make good manure when the rains come. It is a poor country and there are few forests, the hill-sides are almost bare. In spite of the abundance of rivers, there is lack of water for the fields, although simple pumps could give enough for the fields. When I go back from here I shall add yet another picture to the long gallery in my mind-that of Garhwal, poor and neglected but full of great possibilities, if scientifically tackled. What an enormous number of things we have to do in India when once we get going.

The Alaknanda runs some distance down below us. Early tomorrow morning I hope to have a good dip in it. The current is not so strong here and it will be easier to sprawl about. I am looking forward to it.

Love,
Your loving
Papu

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To Mrs. Paul Robeson²

² J.N. Collection

New Delhi 26 June 1947

My dear Essie,

It was a great pleasure to have your letter of April 5th. Thank you also for the newspaper clippings you sent me.³

Somehow life is so complicated that it is difficult to keep in touch with one's friends. But I often think of you and Paul and I wonder when both of you will come to India as promised long ago. I fear you will find India rather slow with your extreme vitality. But with all our slowness we are also on the move and perhaps the tempo might increase.

The Asian Conference here was a very great success.⁴ Unfortunately most of us in our respective countries have got so tied up with our own problems that we have not been able to follow it up as we should have done. By the time the next session is held in China much will have happened.⁵ Surely you are not going to delay your visit to the East till then.

There is not the least chance in the world for me to go to America on a lecture tour.⁶ It is possible that I might pay a short visit though not soon. But the very idea of a lecture tour terrifies me. I just don't want to be ordered and dragged about to lecture.

My sister, Nan, is going to Moscow next month as our Ambassador. It is a tough job, but that is just why I have chosen her for it. There is just a possibility of her going to the U.N. General Assembly meeting in September/October.

³ Mrs. Paul Robeson sent to Nehru press clippings dealing with India, so as to give him some idea as to how the American press treated the Indian situation

⁴ 3. See Selected Works (Second Series), Vol. 2, pp. 501-523

⁵ Mrs. Paul Robeson expressed her desire to attend the second Asian Relations Conference to be held in China after two years as she could not attend the first Asian Relations Conference held in Delhi.

⁶ She wrote that there were rumours from time to time that Nehru would be going to the United States to lecture "That would certainly be sensational," she added.

I shall look forward to your new book Congo Journey.⁶ With all good wishes to you, Paul and Pauli.

Yours as ever,
Jawaharlal Nehru