

Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru

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To C.P.N Singh

New Delhi

September 10, 1949

My dear Chandreshwar Prasad,

Thank you for your two letters, the latter being of September 4th.

I am afraid your conversations with the Maharaja go round and round without producing any results. I am beginning to think that no results are going to come from that source. When you see him, you can tell him of my disappointment over all this regret that the Government of Nepal is allowing valuable time to slip by. This time will not come back and the situation will get more and more difficult had offered my advice to him in all sincerity as a friend of Nepal and as one intimately concerned with India, also as one who has knowledge of world developments. If he is not prepared to accept my advice, I can do nothing further in the matter. Obviously if conditions in Nepal do not change materially, there will be agitation in India. We have tried to restrain these people and have succeeded to a large extent. But we cannot possibly succeed any more, if nothing happens in Nepal. Our policy of course is not to permit any agitation that aims at violence. But peaceful agitation we are bound to permit according to our Constitution and policy.

Owing to the developments in China and very probably a little later in Tibet, Nepal will have to face a very serious problem on her border before very long. Those problems will not be of a military character so

much as an invasion of ideas and dangerous ideas at that. This invasion can only be met by internal changes brought about in time. The draft treaty that you have sent will be considered in our office. I might inform you, however, that certain clauses in it about our not permitting any agitation or activity aimed at reform or change in the other country can hardly be accepted by us.

I am interested to learn about the Maharaja's inquiry as to the distinction between independence and autonomy. There is all the difference in the world. Even our provinces and states are referred to as autonomous, that is they have a large measure of autonomy. Some places like Bhutan have even more autonomy. But in the international sense Bhutan is subordinate to India, because she can have no foreign relations and cannot declare war or peace. As a matter of fact Bhutan remains autonomous only because we choose to allow it to remain so. Even financially it is dependent upon us and it can carry on only because of the subsidy we give.

The Maharaja is very much mistaken, if he thinks that I ought not to see Koirala or anyone else, because he does not approve of him. I consider myself completely free to meet or deal with anyone I choose.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

To Mohan Shamsheer Jung Bahadur Rana

My dear Maharaja Sahib,

Your Ambassador in Delhi handed to me today your letter of September 30th. I am grateful to you for it. I am hastening to reply to it as I am leaving for America early tomorrow morning.

In your letter you refer to the interview which Dr. B.V. Keshkar, our Deputy Foreign Minister, gave to D.R. Regmi. I think you have understood the significance of our Ministers and senior officials giving interviews to people. As a democratic Government we meet, subject to time and opportunity, almost everybody who seeks an interview whether we agree with him or disagree with him. Indeed, there is a tendency to find time to meet those with whom one disagrees. Meeting a person does not mean any kind of agreement with his views. You are no doubt aware that our Government in India is bitterly criticised by many groups and individuals. Yet we meet these individuals and representatives of groups who are completely hostile to us. We meet them sometimes socially, sometimes politically. That is the custom in democratic countries.

In accordance with this practice when Shri B.P. Koirala sought an interview with me some weeks ago, I gave it to him. As a matter of fact it is because of these interviews that we have been able to check the tendency to intemperate speech and action on the part of others. Your highness has mentioned an article in the National Herald of Lucknow. I had not myself seen this article previously. Again I would point out to you that the newspaper press in India is completely free to express its opinion subject only to the laws of defamation and to the preaching of violence. Our own Government is aggressively and bitterly criticised. We have made it perfectly clear that we will not interfere unless the criticism leads to or is intended to lead to violence. India, as Your Highness has rightly noticed, is at the present moment full of mental exuberance. There is a great deal of vitality in the country which sometimes goes in a right direction and sometimes in the wrong one. There are various ways of dealing with such activities.

We prefer not to suppress people's opinions or activities by governmental action, unless they lead to violence.

I have written this letter in some haste as I am going away soon and I hope Your Highness will forgive me for this brief reply to your letter. Please accept the expression of my high consideration and with kind regards,

I am,
Your Highness's sincere friend,
Jawaharlal Nehru.

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To John Matthai

New Delhi,
September 10, 1949

My dear Matthai,

Recent developments in China and Tibet indicate that Chinese Communists are likely to invade Tibet sometime or other. This will not be very soon. But it may well take place within a year. The Government structure of Tibet is feeble. A Lama hierarchy controls the whole country, the majority of whose population is very poor. Any effective attempt by the Chinese Communists can hardly be resisted, more especially as the greater part of the population is likely to remain passive and some may even help the Communists. On the other side at Sinkiang, Soviet influence is already strong.

The result of all this is that we may have the Chinese or Tibetan Communists right up on our Assam, Bhutan and Sikkim border. That fact by itself does not frighten me. But all along this border are tribal areas. In the past British officers carried on a policy of encouraging

separatist tendencies in these areas. They have to be tackled very carefully. It seems to me essential from every point of view that these areas should have good communications, that is, roads. This means a certain road development programme for these areas. There was, I believe, some such programme in the Assam scheme. But much of it has been cut down for reasons of economy. I think that it is a risky business not to develop these communications at this stage or in the near future. Later we might have to spend much more. At present we can proceed relatively slowly, as we have sometime. I am putting this to you, so that you might consider how far we could go in this direction in the near future.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

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The Case on Kashmir

JN: The whole problem in Malaya is extraordinarily confused. Normally one would say that they should have had their independence. But Malaysians will have to wait for their independence, since they themselves are in a minority in their own country and the active elements are non-Malaysians, who are following violent methods to achieve their ends. There has been a great deal of murder and killing on behalf of groups who are ranged against the Government. The Government cannot naturally permit these killings to go on. Therefore, it is difficult to devise how the changeover would take place, but the sooner it takes place, the better it would be for peace, and the Government must try to bring about a balance on Malaya's national problems.

Q: What is the attitude of India towards Tibet?

JN: India has always recognised the suzerainty of the Chinese Government over Tibet but Tibet is considered as an autonomous unit and India's dealings with Tibet are on that basis. We have recently become involved in this question of Tibet only because the route from Tibet to China lies through India.