

Of Four *Real* Leaders

Some Reminiscences

By

Minoo Masani

Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom
Mumbai

MINOO MASANI

Minocher Rustom Masani
(November 20, 1905 – May 27, 1998)



Mino Masani did his schooling in Bombay at the Cathedral High School and the Bharda High School. He played cricket and hockey in school and also took to the violin taking music lessons. After school it was the Elphinstone College, the London School of Economics and Lincoln's Inn, which is a Law College in England. Returning to India he joined the Bombay Bar but soon gave up practice to participate in the freedom struggle.

He was imprisoned for participating in the Civil Disobedience Movement. In January 1933 while defying a ban on meetings, he was arrested and spent the whole of that year in Nasik Road Central Prison. While in Nasik jail he joined Jayaprakash Narayan, Achyut Patwardhan, Yusuf Meherally and others to form the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) and became its joint secretary. He went underground in 1942 as part of the Quit India struggle, was caught and imprisoned again.

After his release from jail in 1942, Masani entered legislative politics via the Bombay Municipal Corporation. (He was Mayor at the age of 37 – a record as the youngest mayor which was broken only recently) and to membership of the Indian Legislative Assembly

(Cont'd. on cover page III)



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(Published Posthumously)

Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom

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Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom (ICCF)

The ICCF was founded in 1951 as a non-party organisation of scholars, writers, artists and scientists to defend intellectual liberty, to cultivate a spirit of free enquiry and an appreciation of the arts. It is registered under the Societies Registration Act, Act and as a Public Trust under the Bombay Public Trusts Act, 1956.

Among its founding members were Jayaprakash Narayan, Minoo Masani, Khushwant Singh, Tarkateerth Laxmanshastri Joshi, Ashoka Mehta, V. B. Karnik and J. B. H. Wadia.

Its publication, *Quest*, a Literary Quarterly, had to shut down in 1976 during the emergency due to difficulties with the Censors.

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An Explanatory Note

Why Now?

Minoo Masani died on May 27, 1998. Four years earlier failing eyesight was depriving him of what he enjoyed doing most – reading, writing and dealing with his mail; but he continued coming to office going through the motions of work. I recall his telling us that once he stopped this routine he would die. One day, on 16 December 1994 he called me to his room in his office and handed me a folder with a manuscript for publication. Opening the folder there was a memo addressed to “Whomsoever it may concern.” The memo read: “I hereby authorize Mr. S. V. Raju to discuss with you, the publication of my manuscript, “Reminiscences of Four Great Figures”. The manuscript was of 38 typed pages. That he was fast losing his eyesight was evident from the fact that his signature on the memo was spread over two rows.

I read it through and wondered how to carry out his instructions, a not uncommon problem in my long association with Minoo Masani whom some called the “perfectionist” and others the “purist”! I was aware that not many publishers would be interested in printing booklets with less than 50 pages. Also, these essays were extracted – and adapted - from his 2-volume autobiography published in 1977 and 1981 respectively. After making a few discreet enquiries my fears about the disinterest of publishers were confirmed. I put the manuscript safely away confident that the real value of these essays would come later when the next generation might like to know more about the “four figures” including Mahatma Gandhi and to some extent Jawaharlal Nehru despite their ubiquitous presence on currency notes, postage stamps, statues and roads/*margs* in every metro, city and town!

They were all Masani’s contemporaries and the reminiscences were his frank, even irreverent, first person accounts of his encounters with the “Four Great Figures”. We have taken the liberty of including one more article that was not part of the original manuscript. He

wrote an essay entitled “Two Styles of Leadership” for a *Freedom First* special issue on Leadership published in January 1980. Though written 21 years ago, it almost seems like he wrote it as a foreword for his “Reminiscences...”!

Minoos Masani, who was an active participant in the freedom movement; known and acknowledged as a writer, speaker, politician and an outstanding parliamentarian, had no pretensions about his qualification as a leader. In fact in the 2nd volume of his autobiography (*Against the Tide*) he wrote: “ I never had any illusion about the fact that I personally lacked the political appeal of the kind that a country like India needed for the purpose. I had always conceived my role in Indian politics as an effective Number 2 man, who could run the machine efficiently provided there was a leader who had the necessary charisma. Such as the role I was able to play along with JP in the 1930s and with Rajaji in the 1960s.”

In today’s world there is a universal, almost fatalistic acceptance of the poor quality of ‘leaders’ not only in public life and politics but in almost every field of human endeavour with no discernible evidence of the likely emergence of the kind of leadership thrown up by the freedom movement; or even in the early years after independence.

This was, some of us felt, the opportune time to publish this booklet – 12 years after he had written it and on the occasion of his 106th birth anniversary (which falls on Sunday the 20 November) as a tribute to his memory and to let him me know that we miss the likes of him.

That’s the answer to “**Why Now**”!

SVR



TWO STYLES OF LEADERSHIP

“Pundits and pollsters have decreed already the theme for next year’s Presidential election. It is to be about leadership. “

These are the opening sentences of an article in the *Guardian* (London) about the American Presidential election. They show that the problems of leadership, including the lack of leadership, are not a monopoly of this country.

In India, the word “leader” and its Hindi derivative “*lideri*” have become dirty words. What a pity! Because, if India needs anything today, it is good leadership. This is true not only in political life, where it is so obvious, but also in the fields of education, management and various other walks of life.

In Short Supply

There are perhaps special reasons to account for the fact that leadership in India is in short supply. Our tradition and culture contain elements which do not exactly encourage the qualities of courage, dissent and adventure, which are essential parts of the bundle of qualities that go to make a leader.

Thus, for example, there is often the somewhat exaggerated and hypocritical respect for the aged and for those in authority. Grown up men and women will smoke, but not in the presence of their parents, and we are all loyal to those who are at the head of our Government until they are removed and then turn our backs on them. On the one hand, there is the cult of personality and on the other the absence of what in England is called “the non-conformist conscience” which takes the form, when necessary, of

saying: "I am damned if I can see it that way."

Since the English poet wrote long ago:

"They are slaves who dare not be
In the right with two or three".

it is obvious that the number of those who are prepared to stick their necks out for an unpopular or unpalatable cause is limited even in Britain. Unfortunately, such men are even more scarce in India.

Then there is what the historians have described as the dialectical nature of the Indian mind which is unable to see things in terms of black and white but can only see grey all round. Pandit Nehru's speeches, when he was the Prime Minister, followed a wellknown pattern of saying: "At the same time, we must remember" and then a little later "on the other hand, it is also true that". No wonder this trait of not coming down on one or the other side of the fence led in due course to the evolution of what is grandiloquently described as the policy of "non-alignment."

The result of this background is that as Gandhiji remarked, "India has to learn to say 'no' ". This is still valid and a lack of decision making in regard to matters big and small is omnipresent.

One of the biggest weaknesses of Indian Management at the top is a weakness in decision making. In politics, this takes the form of "tailism", to use Lenin's phrase, on the part of political leaders, which means not leading one's party but carrying out the behest of the dominant trend in the party, whether it is right or wrong. Gandhiji, of course, was an exception to this case. As is well known, he resigned even his four-annas membership in the Congress rather than compromise his own principles.

Stipulating Terms

I personally happen to agree with the view of leadership that was practised by Winston Churchill and General De Gaulle, which

was that they were only available to lead their parties so long as the parties were prepared to follow them. In other words, they were prepared to be leaders on their own terms. Compare that with the record of Mr. Morarji Desai and Mr. Charan Singh as Prime Ministers from April 1977 till now, and one sees the contrast between the two styles of leadership.

Most politicians in India believe that a leader who asks to be relieved from his position if the Party does not follow his lead on a major issue behaves like a dictator, whilst a democrat will bow to the party's decision, however injurious it may be to the national interest.

In the result, we have certainly had big government but not strong government. We have had, since Independence, a meddlesome but ineffective government which passes laws which we cannot enforce. We are a country, where, as somebody put it, we have a bullock cart economy with labour laws which are more "progressive" than those in the most advanced democracies of the world.

Many years ago, Walter Lippman in his book *The Public Philosophy* wrote:

"If the people find that they must choose whether they will be represented in an assembly which is incompetent to govern or whether they will be governed without being represented, there is no doubt at all as to how the issue will be decided. They will choose authority which promises to be paternal in preference to freedom which threatens to be fratricidal. For large communities cannot do without being governed. No ideal freedom or democracy will long be allowed to stand in the way of their being governed....."

If Indian democracy today is in danger and the country faces the possibility of authoritarian government, it is because those who call themselves democrats cannot, or will not, lead.

No Shortcuts

There is no shortcut out of this predicament. What is needed is education – education in Indian citizenship, education in leadership. A small but modest effort on these lines has been made by the Leslie Sawhney Programme of Training in Democracy which came into existence in 1968 and has since trained some five or six thousand men and women in the importance and skills of grass roots activity.

Those who seek to promote the qualities of leadership can do no better than remember some pertinent things which were said twenty-six centuries back by a Chinese Philosopher, Lao Tze who set down the criteria for judging a good leader:

“A leader is best
When people barely know that he exists
Not so good when people obey and acclaim him
Worst when they despise him.
‘Fail to honour people
They fail to honour you’,
But of a good leader, who talks little
When his work is done,
his aim fulfilled
They will all say : “We did this ourselves.”

This article by Minoos Masani was first published in the special issue of *Freedom First*, January 1980 on “The Crisis and Challenge of Leadership in Modern Society”

MAHATMA GANDHI

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi
(2nd October, 1869 – 30th January, 1948)



Jamnalal Bajaj asked Gandhiji whether it was fair that he should take Jayaprakash and Masani into his confidence in the same way that he did to his loyal supporters like Jamnalal. Gandhiji's reply was that he was aware of this but he had two kinds of friends – the loyal ones who did what he said and the critical ones who were good chaps but were not convinced. He found both of them extremely valuable.

Thanks to an introduction by my father who happened to know Mahatma Gandhi, Gandhiji invited me to join him on his Harijan tour of Orissa, after a meeting of the Congress Socialist Party and the All India Congress Committee had concluded their sessions in Patna.

So early one morning, I got into the long third class compartment reserved for Gandhiji and his party.

In Orissa, Gandhiji walked four miles in the morning and four miles at twilight, from one village to another, spreading the gospel of liberation of the untouchables.

He was good enough to allow me to walk alongside of him

with one hand on my shoulder and discuss with him my somewhat juvenile ideas about socialism and nationalisation and to tell me why he did not approve of them. According to him, state ownership and management were not instruments of social justice, because it only increased the power of the bureaucrats and the possibilities of corruption. How right he was, but I did not see it in that light at that stage.

Orissa was a very poor state and there were no cattle in the villages, so there was no cow's milk. All the same, Gandhiji asked Prabhavati, Jayaprakash's wife, who was in attendance on him, to see that I got tea with goat's milk, morning and afternoon, since I was accustomed to having tea. This was typical of the old man's concern for his guests.

I did not always get up for Gandhiji's early morning prayers, so one day he asked me why I was not at his prayer meeting. My rather impertinent answer was that the singing of *Raghupati Raghava Rajaram* was very beautiful to listen to in bed! Gandhiji had a great sense of humour and he enjoyed the joke.

On a particular morning, I was awakened because Gandhiji wanted me to give evidence at a charge levelled by one of his women assistants against Prabhavati. Gandhiji was the head of the family and he was acting as judge of the domestic tribunal. He asked me whether it was true that when I was about to sit next to the other lady at lunch the previous day, Prabhavati beckoned me to sit next to her. I told Gandhiji that this was not what had happened because I sat next to Prabhavati every day because of my friendship with Jayaprakash, her husband. So Prabhavati was duly acquitted. It occurred to me that it was rather absurd for the great man to be asked to go into the silliest squabbles but nothing was too small in Gandhiji's eyes.

When Gandhiji sent me a summary of our discussions, I found his opposition to socialism and nationalisation, stated so harshly

that I thought it would have a counter-productive effect on the minds of the young socialists. I thought this would be a pity, so I wrote to Gandhiji if I could see him to talk things over. He very kindly agreed and asked me if I would join a train on which he was travelling to Bombay which would leave Igatpuri at 5 in the morning and arrived in Bombay a little later.

Nothing daunted, I took a train to Igatpuri the previous afternoon and went to sleep in the waiting room. I made the local porter promise to wake me up the next morning in good time for the train. Imagine my horror when I opened my eyes and saw from the door of the waiting room, Gandhiji sitting at the window of his third class compartment. I collected my clothing and bedding and ran, helter skelter, to the train which started moving just then. Gandhiji laughed uproariously at my plight, but I managed to board the train while it was in motion. Gandhiji suggested I first wash my face and recover my breath. After I had done this, I explained the problem to him. He was kind enough to see my point. He said he would write a revised and much milder version of his opposition to our socialist plea.

I received this in due course and was able to publish it to some advantage. Gandhiji's action showed the generosity of this man and his patience with doubting Thomases.

A little later, Jayaprakash and I called on Gandhiji at Wardha. I used to shake hands with Gandhiji on these occasions, but Jayaprakash who claimed to be a Marxist bent down and touched Gandhiji's feet. When I asked him to explain this, he said, after all, he was a Hindu!

On one occasion, Gandhiji showed us his Draft of a revised Constitution for the Congress which would tighten up the organisation and make life more difficult for minorities like the Socialists. We said we liked this Constitution but could only support it if he added a clause that all elections within the party would be by a system of

Proportional Representation so that the minorities like ours did not get squeezed out. He readily agreed and pinned on to his Draft, the clause that I wrote down to that effect. On this basis, we agreed to support his Draft Constitution.

This matter was to come up for discussion at a meeting of the All India Congress Committee in Bombay a little later. On the eve of that meeting, the Congress Socialist Party met in Bombay. When we reported on Gandhiji's Draft of our agreement with him, there was a great deal of opposition from the rank and file, but we fought like Trojans and managed to get the party to accept Gandhiji's Draft Constitution on those terms.

At the AICC meeting a little later, Jayaprakash and I, not being members of the AICC, both sat in the press gallery as journalists. Imagine my horror when the Draft Constitution was circulated, to find the clause on Proportional Representation missing. Being an angry young man, I sent a note to Gandhiji, drawing his attention to this and asking whether this was a printing error or he had gone back on his word. I saw the volunteer hand the note to Gandhiji who put it on the table in front of him. When Gandhiji spoke next, he said that his young friend, Masani, had sent him an angry note. He wanted to explain. The Draft that was circulated was the one accepted by the Working Committee which had deleted his amendment.

Not satisfied with this, we went to Gandhiji's camp during the next interval and I said to him, "Bapu, this is subtlety not worthy of a Mahatma. You know perfectly well that if you had fought for our amendment as we had fought for your Draft, this would not have happened". Having said this, we stalked out of his camp. Evidently, my remark touched the Mahatma to the quick, because when the AICC reconvened after the break, Gandhiji moved that the matter of the Constitution be referred to a Sub-Committee whose members he named, the last two being Jayaprakash and myself. This Committee would meet that evening to reopen the matter.

That evening, Gandhiji fought like a Trojan to get our amendment accepted and overcame the opposition, with Gandhiji and the Socialists on one side, and Rajaji on the other.

So the next morning, the AICC adopted the missing clause of Proportional Representation, by a majority consisting on one side, Gandhiji and others along with the Socialists and the obdurate members of the Working Committee on the other.

This generous response was typical of Gandhiji's kindness to his young Socialist critics.

Prabhadevi reported to us a little later that once Jammalal Bajaj asked Gandhiji whether it was fair that he should take Jayaprakash and Masani into his confidence in the same way that he did to his loyal supporters like Jammalal. Gandhiji's reply was that he was aware of this but he had two kinds of friends – the loyal ones who did what he said and the critical ones who were good chaps but were not convinced. He found both of them extremely valuable.

Some time in the middle of 1935, I wished to visit England. Unfortunately, my passport was due to expire just about that time. No visas were then required for Indian citizens to visit England but I feared the Indian Government would take away my passport and refuse to renew it. I, therefore, decided to smuggle myself out of India via Ceylon which was called by that lovely name at that time. So I announced I was going to North India on a tour and took a train Southwards. All went well till I got on the boat which commuted between India and Ceylon. As soon as the boat took off, a gentleman came up to introduce himself to me and said he was a member of the Indian Police from Delhi. He asked for my passport. I realised that the game was up and said, I did not have a passport on me as I was visiting friends in Ceylon. "Come, come, Mr. Masani, we know you are going to England, so would you kindly hand over your passport. You can ask it to be returned in due course from Delhi". I insisted that I had no passport on me, so he asked the policemen

to stand guard near my luggage and we paced up and down the deck glaring to each other. As we saw the coast of Ceylon approaching, he said with a smile, "Well, goodbye, Mr. Masani. Enjoy your holiday. My instructions were to get the passport off you if I could but you very wisely declined". Oh boy, was I relieved.

But my troubles were not to end there. I took the Lloyd Triestino boat which unfortunately was to call in Bombay before going to Europe. But Mussolini's flag was there to protect me from the Indian Police. When we docked at Ballard Estate, I saw Khan Bahadur Pettigara, Deputy Commissioner of Police, standing with a posse of police on the pier to welcome me. But I signalled to him that I was not coming down. I also similarly informed my friends who were there on the pier to see me. So for one hour, this cat and mouse game continued. At last, the boat took off and was on the high seas. But even that was not the end of my troubles. When I landed in Dover, the British police asked for my passport and said I could ask for it to be returned in London. Thanks to a Labour M.P., Lord Farringdon, the matter came up for discussion in both Houses of Parliament.

Mr. R. A. Butler who was Under Secretary of State for India said I was a dangerous Communist on my way to Moscow. The British Government would give me a return permit to India if I boarded the boat at Tilbury Docks and went straight home.

I was hopping mad because to be called a Communist was an insult. I wrote an angry letter to Mr. Butler saying "How dare you?" But relief was not long in coming. It seems Mahatma Gandhi was shown Mr. Butler's statement at his ashram in Wardha. Always generous to help any opponent in trouble, Gandhiji told Reuter that Mr. Butler should be ashamed of himself since he was supposed to know a little about India. Mr. Masani was not a Communist. He was one of Gandhiji's young men. So would he kindly apologise to me and restore to me my passport.

This appeared in the *Daily Herald* the next morning and the

effect was magical. I received my passport back with an apology from Mr. Butler. I was very appreciative of the old man rushing to my rescue in this manner.

As it happened, I boarded a boat to the Soviet Union and not for India. In Moscow, the Comintern deputed the leaders of the British Communist Party to see me at my Hotel, namely Harry Pollitt, Ben Braddley and Rajni Palme Dutt. They seemed to share my concern for the inefficiency of the Communist Party in India who had been describing the Congress Socialists as “Social Fascists”. From now on, we had to be their “Socialist brothers” which was the new Comintern line of the 7th World Congress. I asked at this stage why they could not dismiss the Indian Communist Party and accept the Congress Socialist Party as their associates in India. I was asked whether we would be able to accept the discipline of the Comintern. I gave a flat negative in reply. My proposal was then turned down and when I asked why, I remember Palme Dutt said, “but Comrade Masani, Moscow must have its own party in India”. Quite.

On my return to England, I was invited by Jawaharlal Nehru to join him at Badenweiller in Germany where his wife, Kamala, was in a Nursing Home. Before doing so, I undertook a speaking tour of various British universities, organised by Krishna Menon who was not at that stage, a Communist. Krishna was then in St. Pancras Hospital on a hunger strike because an English girl had jilted him for a Labour M.P. but he perked up when I asked him to arrange my lecture tour of British universities and forgot about the hunger strike! When I was in Badenweiller, staying at the *pensione Erhardt* as Jawarhalal Nehru’s guest he, one day, threw a letter at me across the breakfast table and said, “Minoo, who is this man, Krishna Menon?” I told him he was the Secretary of the India League and how he had arranged my lecture tour and put aside his hunger strike. Krishna had asked Nehru for his patronage in arranging his public meetings in London.

So I told Nehru that if he agreed, it would probably save

Krishna's life. Jawaharlal said, "All right, if you say so". I was later blamed by many friends for introducing Krishna to Nehru. I pleaded guilty but if I had not done so, somebody else would have.

Unfortunately, after I returned to India, Kamala was transferred to Lausanne in Switzerland, where she died.

Some time early in 1939, I had gone to see Gandhiji in Delhi. I told him that a World War was approaching and hoped that he would oppose it as an Imperialist war which was the line of the Congress Socialist Party. Gandhiji said no. I shall remain "*tatashta*" which meant neutral or passive. He explained that he was against war but the Congress Working Committee would be quite prepared to support the war if they got India independence in return and he would not like to come in the way.

Gandhiji then said that he trusted my belief in non-violence but not that of Jayaprakash Narayan. He deplored the fact that a future leader of India should be so hazy about fundamentals like non-violence and truth. When I returned home where I was staying along with Jayaprakash at the residence of Satyavati Devi, I reported this conversation to Jayaprakash who was then in the process of shaving himself. Jayaprakash put down the razor and stopped shaving and said he was too upset by the criticism from the old man and would cut himself if he continued.

World War II broke out in September 1939 and the long process of bargaining started between the Congress Working Committee and the British.

Some time in 1940, Gandhiji asked why I did not see Sardar Patel any more. With my usual bluntness, I said that was because as Gandhiji knew, Sardar had a habit of lying about what had transpired.

Gandhiji was unable to deny this, so he thought a little and

said, “Masani, in my effort at attaining India’s Independence, I take help from all kinds of people with all kinds of weaknesses and try to get the best out of them for the cause. Are you a bigger Mahatma than myself that you would not condescend to do this?” Duly reproved, next morning, I went to see Sardar. “*Kem, aya?*”, he asked.

Some time in 1941, Mr. P. A. Narielwalla, who was a favourite of Jawaharlal Nehru, asked if I would collect some money for the *National Herald*, Nehru’s paper in Allahabad which followed a pro-Soviet line. I mentioned this to a group of fellow barristers in the High Court Library and Dina Kooka (later Dina Ahmadullah) gave me Rs.100 and said this is for Gandhiji’s *Harijan* and not for Nehru’s *National Herald*. Gandhiji’s *Harijan* was then following an anti-war line. I passed the donation on to Mahatma Gandhi and mentioned to him Dina Kooka’s remark, which I said, reflected her point of view on the two leaders and their policies.

Gandhiji wrote back, “Your donation I accept, but the comparison does not flatter me. Jawaharlal is a patriot of the highest calibre”. I wrote back and protested. “Neither the lady in question nor I doubted Nehru’s patriotism”. What we expressed was a disapproval of his pro-Soviet and his pro-war point of view.

One of Gandhiji’s greatest mistakes was to put Nehru as his successor. That mistake has cost India very dearly.

When the war came to an end, and normal life was restored, elections came up for the 100 seats in the Indian Legislative Assembly which was then India’s Parliament. Imagine my surprise when Sardar Patel called me and asked if I would stand as Congress candidate from Bombay city along with Dr. G. V. Deshmukh in the forthcoming elections. I was rather surprised but agreed. Sardar then suggested I should meet him in Poona where Gandhiji was staying at Dr. Dinshaw Mehta’s Nursing Home, so that we could obtain Gandhiji’s blessings.

When Sardar ushered me into Gandhiji’s room, the old man

asked, “Why have you brought Masani to see me?” Sardar explained that we wanted Gandhiji’s blessings for my candidature to the Indian Legislative Assembly. With his sense of humour and never one to allow a chance to pass by, Gandhiji replied, “Good. I have always told you that Masani was a very good man”.

In the event, I was returned at the top of the poll and Dr. Deshmukh was also elected to the Indian Legislative Assembly. I may explain that the voters at that time, had to be payers of Income Tax or hold tenancies of flats. This meant, in fact, a lower middle class electorate who were reasonably independent and could be addressed in English. No wonder the level of the Members of the Indian Legislative Assembly was quite high.

Gandhiji was opposed to the partition of India. So were Jayaprakash Narayan and I. I have no doubt that if Gandhiji had thrown his weight on the scales, the partition of India could have been avoided.

But, unfortunately, Gandhiji gave in once again to Nehru. When Jayaprakash went to persuade him to oppose the partition at the AICC Congress Committee meeting, Gandhiji declined to do so but also persuaded Jayaprakash to desist from doing so. In the event it fell to Dr. Lohia to lead the opposition which was, as a result, reduced to a minority.

When I came back from a walk in Delhi on the evening of 30th January, 1948, I was shocked to be informed that Mahatma Gandhi had been assassinated at his prayer meeting in Birla House.

Next morning, I followed Gandhiji’s body to the funeral grounds, in what was one of the saddest moments of my life. ●

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

(14th November, 1889 – 27th May, 1964)



In many ways, Jawaharlal was a schizophrenic. Half British gentleman, half Communist. I often reminded him of Lenin's remark – you cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs. Nehru wanted to take India to Communism by democratic methods. What a hope.

My first contact with Jawaharlal Nehru was in 1934 soon after the formation of the Congress Socialist Party.

I wrote to him as Joint Secretary of the Party, requesting his support as a socialist. He very graciously invited me to stay with him at Anand Bhavan to discuss the matter. So I took the train to Allahabad and was met at the station by Lal Bahadur Shastri, who was then something like an ADC to Jawaharlal Nehru.

Lal Bahadur took me to Anand Bhavan, Nehru's residence, where I remember Nehru introducing me to Lal Bahadur as "Masaniji". Nehru was very friendly to the idea of a Socialist group within the Congress and gave a letter for publication, saying so, which was duly published.

After that, on several occasions in the mid-thirties, I had

occasion to be Nehru's guest at his home in Anand Bhavan and became somewhat good friends, but we always had points of differences which came up from time to time. Thus when the U.P. Congress Socialist Party led by Acharya Narendra Dev and Babu Sampooranand refused to cooperate with Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, who was Nehru's favourite and Kidwai became President of the U.P. Congress Committee, Jawaharlal got quite angry and told me, "Whoever non-cooperates with Rafi, non-cooperates with me". I took the liberty to disagree with this proposition.

Some time in the mid-thirties, I was at breakfast with Jawaharlal when Syed Mahmood, one of Nehru's followers, came in from the railway station, having traveled overnight from Lucknow. He brought a message from Chowdhry Khaliqzaman, the leader of the Muslim League in U.P. The proposition that he sent for Nehru's consideration was that since Nehru had won all the Hindu seats to the U.P. Assembly under the Government of India Act of 1935 and the Muslim League had won all the Muslim seats, there could be a coalition government in U.P. with Nehru as the Prime Minister and Khaliqzaman as Deputy Prime Minister, the membership of the cabinet being two to one in favour of the Congress.

This appeared to me to be a very reasonable proposal to share power as is common in Scandinavian countries and in other countries in Northern Europe, but Jawaharlal not only found the proposal objectionable but flew into a rage and got very rude to Syed Mehmood, who protested, "*Arre sahib, muje kyon gali sunathe ho, main tho postman hoon. Mananana ho to maan lo, nahin to inkar karo*". Nehru dismissed him and asked Mehmood to tell the Chowdhry to go to hell which he did ten years later when they formed Pakistan.

Jawaharlal was a gracious host but somehow suffered from a great lack of humour. On one occasion, when we were at a meal with Nehru at the head of the table and Kamala Nehru, his wife, opposite me beside him on one side, Feroze Gandhi's name came up in the conversation. At that time, Feroze was a lad in his early

teens who had a great calf love for Kamala. This was quite innocent and a matter of general comment. Jawaharlal turned to me and said, "Minoo, can you imagine falling in love with my wife?" I thought this to be a churlish remark and chivalrously replied, "Yes, I could fall in love with her myself". For this, I was given a lovely smile by Kamala, but to my surprise, Jawaharlal who should have said, "Good for you", or some amusing remark, glared at me angrily across the table as much as to say, "How dare you?". I found this to be a very sad example of the lack of humour from which Nehru suffered.

Another example of the humourless weakness of Nehru is what happened at Etawah in U.P. Nehru moved from the Chair, a resolution sympathizing with the Spanish Republic against General Franco in the Civil War which was then raging in Spain. To Nehru's horror, Mr. Mahavir Tyagi who had a great sense of humour, said, "I want to oppose this Resolution". "What, oppose this Resolution?", asked Nehru angrily. "Yes sir", said Tyagi. "All right, go up to the rostrum and do so" said the Chairman. The argument in opposing the Resolution was that from the example of the Spanish Republic, he did not want it to go the way of all those whom Nehru had supported in the past. Abyssinia in its opposition to Mussolini, the defence of Manchuria against Japan were two examples from the past. His argument was that if they passed the Resolution on Spain, Franco would win! The whole audience including myself rocked with laughter at this quip. Only Nehru did not see anything funny in this and shouted, "*Budtameez, sharam nahi athi?*" which made everyone laugh even louder.

Some time in the late thirties, I wrote an article in the Congress Socialist Weekly entitled, "Soviet Trials – A Threat to World Socialism". My argument was that thousands of people including old Bolsheviks who were executed as Fascist agents, were either the victims of a frame-up by Stalin or they were genuinely Fascist agents. Both alternatives were damning to the cause of Socialism. When Jawaharlal showed his annoyance at my article, saying "Stalin knows best", I am sorry to say that my friend, Jayaprakash Narayan

agreed with him.

Nehru was a blind Stalinist and even when Khrushchev denounced Stalin in his speech at the 20th World Communist Party meeting in 1956, three years after Stalin's death, and I sent Jawaharlal a copy of the speech which showed that Khrushchev agreed with me and not with him, Jawaharlal did not bother to reply to my letter.

When Stalin died in 1953, Jawaharlal adjourned the Indian Parliament against all convention. Delhi newspapers said that since Gandhiji's death, the Prime Minister had not seemed to be as unhappy as he was on this occasion.

Some time in late 1947 or early 1948, Jawaharlal asked me to open India's Embassy in Brazil. This would be the first diplomatic mission in Latin America. I agreed but later when Nehru lost his temper with me during a talk about Stalin, I asked to be forgiven for not accepting this position. Jawaharlal wrote an apology to me and asked me to see him, which I did. "What's bothering you", he asked. My reply was that I was afraid that Nehru was leading India into a Soviet alliance against the West. Our linguistic ties and political relations are with the West." I noticed the one argument that should have been given, was not given by him, namely, that the USSR was a totalitarian dictatorship and we should not shake hands with murderers. The arguments given by Nehru were obstacles to a Soviet alliance which in due course, were overcome. However, I was persuaded to go to Rio de Janeiro in 1948. I stipulated, however, that I would only accept this assignment for one year, and not be pressed to stay longer.

I put the proposition to Sardar Patel who said that he would be prepared to arrange for my re-election to the Constituent Assembly on my return to India.

He asked my friend, Shantilal Shah, to sit in my place and give up the seat on my return which Shantilal readily did. When I returned to India, a year and a quarter later, to Nehru's annoyance,

since he wanted me to continue to be abroad longer, Jawaharlal objected to my re-election to the Constituent Assembly on the ground that I did not agree with his foreign policy. That, said Sardar, was irrelevant since he had given me his word of honour that I would be given my seat on my return.

Some time in the late forties, I had an unpleasant argument with Jawaharlal about Stalin whom I criticized. Jawaharlal banged his breakfast table and said, "You are perverse". I told him that this attitude of his made personal conversation with him impossible. I did not blame him but I blamed his sycophants in Delhi. "*Panditji, Panditji, Panditji*", they have been saying to you and it is going to your head. You think you are God Almighty and I do not propose to treat you as such. You are just a nice chap so it is better we do not talk to each other privately. We shall talk to each other across the floor of Parliament".

The result was that we did not talk to each other for 15 years. Early in 1963 I visited Taiwan. On my return to India, the New China News Agency in Peking charged Nehru with sending me to Taiwan. This of course, was not at all true. So I issued a press statement in Bombay absolving Nehru of the charge. I sent Jawaharlal a copy of my statement saying "I have let you off the hook".

I got a very nice letter in reply asking me to see him on my return to Delhi. When I did this, Jawaharlal was having a cup of tea. "Come and have a cup of tea with me, Masani", he said with great charm. "Thank you", I said somewhat coldly. "What's wrong with my tea?" he asked. "Nothing, I said, "it is not the tea I object to". Anyway, I had a cup of tea with him and reported to him on my visit to Taiwan. Jawaharlal made a note of my report. When he asked me whether President Chiang Kai Shek referred to him, I said, yes, but that he would not like what he said. "Never mind," said Jawaharlal. He said, "In spite of Nehru's base ingratitude, I have never said a bitter word against him". Next day, when Nehru turned over my report to his officials in the Ministry of External Affairs

they told me that he had repeated this remark with a straight face I said, yes, I would like to take my hat off to him. He did not have to do that.

In many ways, Jawaharlal was a schizophrenic. Half British gentleman, half Communist. I often reminded him of Lenin's remark – you cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs. Nehru wanted to take India to Communism by democratic methods. What a hope.

A few weeks before he died, Jawaharlal moved the 17th Amendment to the Constitution which would have permitted the Government to expropriate land without compensation, from peasants who owned more than the land permitted by his ceiling laws. When I demanded a division of the House before lunch break, on noticing that the Congress Party was not there in adequate numbers, the Speaker put the Amendment to the vote and declared it lost on the ground that the majority of the Members of Parliament were not present in the House at that time. Jawaharlal appeared very angry and banged his fist on the desk when he was told that I was responsible for this mishap. Rather than bow to this decision of Parliament, Jawaharlal called a special one day session of Parliament at great cost to pass this Resolution and to prove who was the boss. Well, this was not to be. The Amendment was to come up on Monday for discussion. Jawaharlal died on Saturday.

As it happened, Nehru's death was very untimely because he had told Sheikh Abdullah who had gone to talk to Pakistan with Ayub Khan, to bring Ayub Khan to Delhi, so they could settle the Kashmir problem. I was very sad at Nehru's death because I realized only Nehru could undo the mischief that had been done on Kashmir and I said this to Sheikh Abdullah who was then staying with Mrudula Sarabhai that he was the man bereaved, because nobody else could settle this matter, since Nehru alone had the clout to do so. We are, therefore, still plagued by the Kashmir problem. ●

RAJAJI

C. Rajagopalachari

(10th December, 1878 – 25th December, 1972)



Rajaji was, undoubtedly, next to Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest man I knew. He had a wonderful razor-sharp mind and a tremendous sense of humour.

Rajaji was, undoubtedly, next to Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest man I knew. He had a wonderful razor-sharp mind and a tremendous sense of humour. I enjoyed my close association with him for over ten years.

From 1957 when I was elected to Parliament as an Independent from Ranchi, to 1959, I tried very hard to establish a new Party which would be liberal and non-socialist, unlike all other parties in India. I tried very hard to mobilize one or two men to be the leader of the Party. One was Jayaprakah Narayan and the other was Rajaji. I shuttled continuously between them in the years 1957 to 1959. Rajaji claimed that he was too old and ill to launch on this adventure. JP agreed that India needed a conservative party but asked to be excused

on the ground that he believed in non-party democracy.

In the early months of 1959, I carried on a ceaseless battle against Jawaharlal Nehru's attempt to collectivise the land on the Soviet model under the deceptive title of "Joint Cooperative Farming". I received postcards from Rajaji congratulating me on the performance of the "one-man opposition". He also gave me very valuable support in my fight.

Some time, in the middle of 1959, I was invited by M. A. Sreenivasan, retired Dewan of Mysore State to address a public meeting in a townhall in Bangalore with Rajaji in the Chair. I jumped at this opportunity.

It was a very successful public meeting. There was electricity in the air. A big crowd listened to the speeches outside the hall through loudspeakers. Rajaji responded to the mood. I made a scathing attack on Nehru's policies, both domestic and foreign and when Rajaji's turn came, he described me as a 'polished Parliamentarian' who was unable to speak frankly. He went on to describe Nehru as a "megalomaniac". This along with Rajaji's other quips was received with thunderous applause. Next morning Rajaji sent for me to the Woodlands Hotel where he was staying and said, "Masani, let us form the new Party. The time is ripe" and so it was.

When the day for establishing the new Party in Madras arrived, I was in Calcutta and I went to the airport in the morning to fly to Madras. Unfortunately, the pilot was not allowed to take off because of low visibility and we were marooned at the airport throughout that day. This turned out to be disastrous because by the time the plane took off that afternoon and arrived in Madras, it was already too late for me to have my say. I was rushed to the place of the meeting where everything was ready except my signature on the announcement. It was not possible to reopen the matter at this stage so I signed on the dotted line and the announcement was rushed to the press.

The name of the new Party still remained to be given and this was done by Rajaji at a public meeting that we addressed that evening when he announced that the new Party would be called the Swatantra Party. It was a very good title because it meant “self-determination or self-automation”. The nearest translation in Europe would be the Freiheit Party.

Next morning, however, I saw Rajaji at his home and told him I was very unhappy about the previous evening’s press release. Did he realize that most of the future members of the party were from the South? It was a poor start for an all-India Party. I suggested, therefore, that another meeting should take place in Bombay of a more national character where the new Party would be formally launched. Rajaji readily agreed.

We met in Bombay on 1st August 1959. It was Tilak’s birthday. Unfortunately, there was a downpour the previous night and the pandal was washed away by the rain. All the same, the Preparatory Convention was held, the Party was formed and this time, the North was duly represented.

In December that year, Rajaji asked me to take over the conduct of the Party as General Secretary. So we established a shoestring office in Bombay with S. V. Raju as Office Secretary. We carried on throughout the sixties. People in Europe were shocked to learn on what a small budget we managed to run this continental party.

During those ten years, there were many occasions when Rajaji would interrupt me to say, “Masani, stop. I know what you are going to say and I will reply to it”. His guess was always right. I am happy to say that we normally agreed.

At this stage, I was elected President of the Party.

The first occasion of a different point of view was when I saw Rajaji in Madras after the demolition of our United Opposition

in Delhi on 3rd January 1971 which I had boycotted when the others decided to drop a common platform and a common shadow cabinet. I realized that the “Indira Hatao” slogan would give Indira Gandhi victory in the next election. Rajaji did not disagree but he wanted to support my action but continuing in the *kitchra*. When we differed on this, he dropped his proposal and agreed to support my point of view at the meeting. Unfortunately, Professor Ranga, always immature, said we should not leave the *kitchra* and since the majority supported him and Rajaji, it was decided that we should be represented at the meetings of the Joint Front in Delhi. The only member to support me outright was Dandeker who suggested that he and I should resign in protest. I explained to Dandeker, however, that with the elections a fortnight away, this would be disastrous. We would certainly lose the elections and the entire blame would be thrown on us for leaving the Party leaderless. So it was agreed that Dandeker and Rusi Cooper, the Party’s General Secretary, should represent us in Delhi, but they did so with disastrous consequences because the other Parties pocketed most of the seats and treated the Swatantra Party like Cinderella.

When the results of the Parliamentary elections came in, it was found that we were reduced from 44 to 8 in the Lok Sabha. This was the result of the sabotage of the United Opposition. I had by that time decided that a Party that was so stupid and suicidal, was not one I could continue to lead.

At the meeting of the General Council in Bombay, therefore, I tendered my resignation as President. Many of our colleagues pressed me to continue. Colonel Pasricha, for instance, argued that a General did not retire after a lost battle. My answer was that we had not lost a battle but a war, and as far as I could see, the last hope of democracy was over. I, therefore, pressed my resignation.

In 1972, Rajaji’s end came. He more than once told me, “Masani, my mind is clear but my body is letting me down”. He was moved to the Madras General Hospital during his last illness. I flew from

Bombay to be at his bedside and I could see that he was literally “living on gas”. I asked the doctor whether it would not be a kindness to withdraw the oxygen and let the old man go. Doctor said his heart agreed with me but his mind and his training did not go along. So for two more days, we sat around his bedside, watching the old man breathe heavily like a fish but with no sign of life. On the third day, the doctor told M. S. Subbulakshmi, the great musician to gather round his bedside and sing *bhajans*. It was nearing twilight. I sensed that the doctor was now going to stop the treatment. I was next to the oxygen tank and operator. The doctor stood on the other side of the bed. He then made a sign to the operator to turn off the oxygen. This was done and Rajaji died without drawing a further breath. I later thanked the doctor for his kindness and he said by now he too realized the futility of keeping Rajaji alive in an artificial manner.

I took a plane back to Bombay that afternoon and said I would not attend the funeral next morning because of the unpleasantness that would result.

The vultures from Delhi had arrived to take the body and this is what happened. “What Swatantra Party” they asked Pilloo Mody and others who were there. Rajaji belonged to the nation, and so the Swatantra Party leader and flag were brushed aside. Some time later, the Party decided by a majority to dissolve itself. This was done over my opposition. Pilloo Mody, the new President, said this was necessary so that members of the Party could join Charan Singh’s Lok Dal. Later, I lived to see Pilloo Mody tell me that his main purpose in political life was to drive Charan Singh out of national life, but by that time, it was too late. ●

JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN

(11th October, 1902 – 8th October, 1979)



It would not be inadequate to describe Jayaprakash Narayan as a glorious failure.

I first saw Jayaprakash Narayan towards the end of 1932 when he called on me at the Bombay High Court Library as I was then practicing as a Barrister. Jayaprakash was then functioning as the Secretary of the Underground All India Congress Committee whose permanent officers were in prison. I still remember standing with him on the verandah of the High Court Library building, having a quiet chat.

A few days later, on 4th January 1933, I addressed a public meeting at Chowpatty in breach of law as an act of civil disobedience and was duly arrested. “You silly fellow, Masani, why did you have to do this?” said the Deputy Commissioner of Police as he escorted me to a bug-infested cell at the Gamdevi Police Station. He meant this in an affectionate way as he did not relish having to arrest me. That was part of the British sense of values that they sympathized with those they had to punish. I was put up before the magistrate the following day, duly pleaded guilty and was given one year’s rigorous imprisonment. After a certain number of days in Arthur Road

prison in the company of Phiroze and Keki Bharucha, I was duly moved to Nasik and put in the Nasik Road Central Prison. I was delighted when I entered the B class yard to see JP there. We had neighbouring cells in which we were locked at 6 p.m. and unlocked at 6.00 a.m. Believe it or not, this is a thing that I enjoyed because I could then have a quiet evening and read what I liked instead of the endless chattering of my fellow prisoners.

During the year we spent together, JP and I discussed the formation of the Socialist Party or group in the Congress and its future programme. This emerged on our release in 1934 as the Congress Socialist party of which JP became the General Secretary and I one of the Joint Secretaries.

This was an unfortunate compromise with JP and myself when in prison. I was a democrat of the British Labour Party variety. He was a Communist and we should have ironed this out but like good opportunists, we pushed this issue under the carpet, not realising that ghosts are not laid so easily. JP was not as influenced with Mahatma Gandhi's thinking as I was. This was partly due to the fact that his wife, Prabhavati did not live with him but was one of Gandhiji's entourage. All the same, Gandhiji's influence was working in an imperceptible manner.

The issue of the Communist United Front and the expulsion of the communists who had wormed their way into the Congress Socialist Party, was an issue on which we constantly argued and differed. Even when we found the communists were using the Congress Socialist Party to destroy it, I could not persuade JP to agree to their expulsion. Things came to a head with the outbreak of World War II in 1939. JP persuaded me not to press my resignation from the Congress Socialist Party on the assurance that he would not compromise on the war issue. But being a man of some weaknesses and confusion, he did so.

I thereupon lost my patience and resigned from the membership of the Congress Socialist Party. I had also resigned from

the office of Joint Secretary of the Party a year earlier on this issue.

Along with me, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, Achyut Patwardhan and Asoka Mehta also resigned. In our joint letter of resignation, we said that in the split between Mahatma Gandhi on one side and the Communists and Subhash Bose on the other, we could not agree to join with the Communists and Subhash Bose against Gandhiji.

When I took this letter of resignation to JP and showed it to him before releasing it to the press, he said it was fine and that I could go ahead. "You will no doubt reply to this resignation and defend yourself". To my horror, JP said he would not. "Are you a man or a mouse?" I asked him. He laughed and said that is because he thought it was right but was not sure.

As it turned out, this refusal was not only generous but a wise move on his part, because two years later he was to say so publicly. "Masani was right. I was wrong". By that time, his Communist friends had opted for British rule and declared it (the Second World War) to be a People's War and were actively cooperating with the British Government and police. That was too much even for JP who was a good patriot and nationalist.

Then came Quit India and JP and I were happy to be working together again with Achyut Patwardhan and others in the Underground Quit India Movement after Gandhiji and the Congress Working Committee were interned in the Ahmednagar Fort. JP and his companions once sent me to Delhi to talk to Mr. William Philips who was President Roosevelt's envoy in the capital. When I met Mr. Philips, I explained to him the motives and purposes of the underground resistance to the British rule. He said he appreciated our motives but President Roosevelt's first ambition was to win the war against Hitler and the Japanese and that must take priority over their sympathies with the Indian people. He could not, therefore, support us because we were, as part of our freedom struggle engaged in sabotage activities like cutting telephone wires and pulling up railway tracks. We agreed to disagree but parted in a very friendly

way.

Came the end of the war and the transfer of power in 1947. By that time, JP was leader of the Praja Socialist Party which replaced the Congress Socialist Party. JP was always a confused man and refused to accept the sincerity of the British in leaving India.

How could the British be leaving India to Indian hands since we had not succeeded in driving them out? With this logic, JP refused to join the Constituent Assembly of India. It took him several years to understand that Karl Marx was not always right. In 1946, when the Cabinet Mission came to India, JP visited Gandhiji in Panchgani. He told me that Gandhiji wept when referring to JP's speech rejecting the Cabinet Mission Plan in the interests of the Assam Hindus. He thought Nehru had destroyed the unity of India which was true. Many years later, when I was writing my memoir, "Bliss Was It in That Dawn", about my pre-war life, I was not sure that I could quote JP on Gandhiji weeping so I wrote and asked him to confirm my impression. He did so and I published his letter in my memoir. In 1947 the All India Congress Committee was to discuss the acceptance of Independence at the cost of the acceptance of Pakistan.

Gandhiji's position was that he did not agree with this but that Nehru and Patel represented the wishes of the Indian people who were prepared to divide India in order to get rid of the British. I urged JP who was seeing Gandhiji on one of those days to plead with him that this was not the true position and that the partition of India was too big a price to pay even for Independence. This was proved by the massacre of one million Muslims, and one million Sikhs and Hindus later and the rape of lakhs of women of both sides.

Unfortunately, Gandhiji could be very persuasive and JP agreed not to oppose the Partition of India. And it was left to Ram Manohar Lohia to divide the AICC along with the minority.

A little later on 30th January 1948, Gandhiji was assassinated

by Nathuram Vinayak Godse. JP wrongly blamed Sardar Patel for not taking proper precautions to protect Gandhiji's life. This was very unfair but the Sardar and JP could never hit it off. I tried to get the two men together, but even when they met, they could not resolve their differences. It was not till 1975 after Sardar Patel had been dead for some 25 years, that JP made a speech saying that Patel would have made a better Prime Minister than Nehru and that he was wrong about him all these years.

When, during the War years, JP was in solitary confinement in the Punjab, I was very worried about his being put up with the Punjab police who always had a bad tradition of torturing their victims. I, therefore, sent my friend, Mr. H. R. Pardiwala to move a *habeas corpus* petition for JP's release, but he was also arrested and detained, and I had to work hard to get him released.

JP was not allowed to receive letters or literature to read. I was then Mayor of Bombay in 1943-44 and wrote to Khizr Hyat Khan, who was Prime Minister of Punjab to permit me to correspond with JP and to send him reading material. The Punjab PM was good enough to agree to my request. So I was able to correspond with JP in prison and I still have a file of his letters from jail, duly censored of course. I sent him a lot of anti-Russian literature to cure him of his silly weakness for Stalin and the Socialist revolution. This time I struck gold. JP was at last moved and enjoyed reading this stuff as his letters described.

When I sent him a copy of my book "Socialism Reconsidered", published in 1944, he wrote back and said that he was nearly 100 per cent in agreement with me. He was in greater agreement about the anti-socialist part entitled "A False Dawn" but no so enthusiastic about the other part, "A New Dawn" in which I had accepted Mahatma Gandhi in place of Karl Marx. Later when he came out of prison, he told me that he was reproached by his socialist supporters for welcoming my book. How stupid people can be when their creed or religion is attacked.

In 1945, after I was elected Congress Member of the Indian Legislative Assembly, I made a speech demanding JP's release from jail in Agra where by then he had been moved from the Punjab. The Viceroy whose secretary was then a crusty old bureaucrat, Sir John Thorne, called me and said, "Masani, would you like to meet your friend in jail?" "I would like to do so but JP would like it even more", I said since nobody was allowed to see him. "You can go to Agra and spend the day with him", said Sir John. "Oh no", I said, "You would spy on me". "No, I won't", he said. "I shall tell the jail staff to keep out of that jail ward and let you speak to him alone". So I spent the day with JP in Agra prison. Sir John had stipulated that when I came back, I would have lunch with him and tell him about my visit. When I did so, he asked me if he released JP as I wanted him to do, would he do something rash or violent? "Of course not", I said. A little later, JP was released.

On 15th August, 1947, power was transferred from the British to Indian hands. The Constituent Assembly of India of which I was a member, went on to draft a Constitution for the Indian Republic.

Unfortunately, JP and the Praja Socialist Party which he led, did not accept the genuineness of the transfer of power. JP's argument was that according to Karl Marx, nobody handed over power unless he was forced to do so. No such force had been brought to bear on the British, therefore, the transfer of power was a fraud. It is amazing that independent people had become victims of a dogma. Karl Marx was guilty of many stupid mistakes. In fact, Marx himself once said, "Thank God, I am not a Marxist". The result of this was that JP and the PSP were unrepresented in the Constituent Assembly of India, and threw away a good opportunity to press their point of view.

As mentioned earlier, JP and Sardar Patel did not like each other. I tried very hard to remove the misunderstandings between them but even when they met, they failed to make friends. This I deplored because it was not until Mrs. Gandhi's bogus Emergency of 1975 that JP publicly admitted that Sardar Patel would have made a better Prime Minister than Jawaharlal Nehru.

Ever since I wrote my little book, “Socialism Reconsidered”, in 1944, JP whose thinking was very near mine, failed to publicise his heresy, partly due to an innate conservatism and partly not to shock his socialist followers.

In 1953, JP went on a fast for a certain number of days as repentance for having accepted a verbal assurance from Rafi Ahmed Kidwai who was then the Minister for Communications and which JP had accepted as President of the Postal Workers’ Union.

The Minister failed to carry out his promise and JP felt responsible for the letdown. Of course, they should have known Congress Ministers better by then. JP’s fast was undertaken at Dinshaw Mehta’s Clinic in Poona. I went to see him there and met Prabhavati before I went to see my fasting friend. Prabhavati said the fast was having a good effect on JP but not as purifying as Mahatma Gandhi’s fasts.

When I saw JP, I asked him whether he was not now ready to renounce Marxism and accept Gandhiji as his new mentor. JP said he was, so I asked him to write an article for my monthly journal, *Freedom First*. I received the article by the eighth day. This was the first time that JP had sent an article before the promised date! Normally, he was a very reluctant writer. The article was entitled “Incentives to Goodness”. In that article, JP confessed that he had for too long worshipped at the shrine of the false goddess of “Dialectical Materialism” and he had now realized that there was no materialistic solution to men’s problems. According to him, Gandhiji performed that function. This was a watershed in JP’s thinking because from then on till he died, he adhered to *Sarvodaya* as his new religion.

In January 1975, JP told a correspondent that the aim of the total revolution was “a radical, social, economic, political, educational, cultural and ethical change. We are trying to bring about these changes by people’s action and this will be a long drawn out process; hence I have called this movement a continuing revolution.”

This brought him into confrontation with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi because Mrs. Gandhi insisted on supporting the scoundrally politicians of Bihar whom JP was trying to replace.

When I was in Delhi during that time, Mrs. Goody Oberoi who had been a member of the Swatantra Party, informed me that Mr. C. Subramaniam, Mrs. Gandhi's Finance Minister, would like to meet me. This we did in a room at the Oberoi Palace Hotel. Subramaniam asked whether the confrontation between Mrs. Gandhi and JP could not be brought to an end. I said it could provided the Prime Minister wanted it. He said she knew about this talk with me and wanted to know if I could deliver the goods on behalf of JP. I said, I could. I dictated my terms to him on a piece of paper which bore Mrs. Oberoi's name. My terms were:

- 1) The Government in Bihar to be replaced by one that enjoyed JP's confidence.
- 2) Mrs. Gandhi to accept JP as an advisor in regard to national problems but not to be bound by his views.

Subramaniam thought these terms were reasonable and promised to let me know after he had spoken to Mrs. Gandhi.

When I saw him in Bombay after some time, he told me what had happened. Mrs. Gandhi said what I suggested made sense but she had other alternatives in mind. The declaration of national Emergency and JP's arrest were obviously what she had in mind. She asked Subramaniam to hand over the piece of paper from which he had read out to her. I asked him what he did. He said he tore off Mrs. Oberoi's name and gave the rest of the paper to her! So that was that.

What followed was JP's arrest and detention in solitary confinement at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. Unlike Mr. Morarji Desai who was similarly detained in an Inspection Bungalow somewhere in the Punjab, JP did not take his solitary

confinement very kindly. It affected his health. It got so bad that in the end, Mrs. Gandhi had to release him so that she was not held responsible for his death. I rushed to Chandigarh to see JP on his release. He told me that he would force an election and defeat Mrs. Gandhi. This he did a little later.

I met JP's doctor. I asked him what had happened. He said he thought JP had a tumour in his intestines and had used some very strong drugs to cure it. That unfortunately destroyed his kidneys which stopped functioning. I was satisfied with the doctor's bonafides and did not share the suspicion which some people entertained that the doctors had tried to poison JP at Mrs. Gandhi's instance.

When JP reached Bombay, he entered Jaslok Hospital and was under the care of Dr. Shantilal Mehta, the Head of the Hospital. Shantilal saw JP in his room while I was there and asked him what he should tell the press who wanted to know whether JP's life was in danger. I asked Dr. Mehta if it was. He said it was which was very unusual for a doctor to say in the presence of the patient. I thereupon suggested to Dr. Mehta that he might tell the press that JP's life was not in immediate danger. This he did.

Dr. Mehta and his colleagues fought very hard to save JP's life. He was put on dialysis machine which emptied his blood every other day and pumped the blood back into the kidneys after it was purified. This was a weakening and painful process. Luckily JP recovered enough to be allowed to go home to Patna carrying with him a small dialysis machine which he used at his residence at Kadamkuan. I used to visit JP from time to time and once I even contacted amoebic dysentery when I visited the dirty city of Patna. During my last visit to him, I told him that as things were going, the Janata Government which he had put in office was doing very badly and would not survive and I would expect Mrs. Gandhi to win the next election. If he lived long enough, he would see Mrs. Gandhi restored to power perfectly democratically. He said he had nothing personal against Mrs. Gandhi but she would have to obey the

Constitution. I laughed and said that was a 64,000 dollar question.

As it happened, JP passed away before 1980 when Mrs. Gandhi came back to power. During JP's long illness, I wrote two small books about him, published by Macmillan. The first was called, "Is JP the Answer" and the second was "JP – Mission Partly Fulfilled". When I came to the end of the second book, I had to decide on JP's epitaph because it was obvious he would not last long. I, therefore, took my proposed epitaph to show JP for his approval. He was then staying as Mr. Ramnath Goenka's guest at his flat in Express Towers at Nariman Point. I read to him some lines of Robert Louis Stevenson which I thought were appropriate: "Oh toiling hands of mortals! O unwearied feet, travelling ye know not whither! Soon, soon, it seems to you, you must come forth on some conspicuous hilltop, and but a little way further, against the setting sun, descry the spires of El Dorado. Little do ye know your own blessedness; for to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive, and the true success is to labour."

JP was very moved and broke down and said this would suit him admirably. It would not be inadequate to describe him as a glorious failure.

JP had to undergo a biopsy. Achyut Patwardhan said that sometimes patients collapsed during a biopsy.

I told JP what had happened to Kamaraj. How Mrs. Gandhi had captured his body at his death. I would not like that to happen to him. "Ok, draft a statement and I would sign it to eliminate that danger". I produced a draft statement from my pocket. "Just like you", said JP. He approved of it except for one minor change. That evening, Soli Sorabjee brought a Notary Public with his big register to notarise his last Testament which said that if he gets a chance, he would drive Mrs. Gandhi from the office right away. Fortunately, JP survived his biopsy. The document was later published with an article of mine in the London Journal, *Encounter*. ●

Minoo Masani (*Cont'd. from cover page II*)

which later converted itself into the Constituent Assembly. He was appointed India's Ambassador to Brazil. He returned to Parliament and the Lok Sabha seven years later, initially as an independent and later from 1963 to 1971 as a Swatantra Party member representing Rajkot in Gujarat.

After retiring from politics in 1971 Minoo Masani took over the editorship of *Freedom First* the journal he had founded in 1952. As editor he fought the censorship imposed during Mrs. Gandhi's 'emergency' and sought the court's protection against Mrs. Gandhi's censors in what came to be known as the *Freedom First* case.

In March 1968 he founded the Leslie Sawhny Programme For Training in Democracy to train young people in citizenship – to be conscious of their rights and their duties as citizens. Then there was the Society for the Right to Die with Dignity which he founded to campaign for euthanasia for the terminally ill. In 1985 he set up the Project for Economic Education to educate public opinion on issues relating to the economy in general and the economic reform programme that was initiated in the 'eighties, in particular.

Like so many others Masani was deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and wanted free India to make the fullest use of the economic thought of Mahatma Gandhi.

Minoo Masani was a household word in the forties and early fifties because of his book *Our India* published in 1940. The book, addressed to the youth of India, sold over a million copies and was a prescribed text book in schools even in pre-independent India.

Another book for children was *The Growing Human Family* which he described as "a book of elementary sociology about the human race."

Publications authored by Mino0 Masani

- 1939 *India's Constitution at Work.* (with C. Y. Chintamani)
- 1939 *Soviet Sidelights*
- 1940 *Our India*, new edition (1953)
- 1944 *Socialism Reconsidered*
- 1944 *Your Food*
- 1945 *Picture of a Plan*
- 1947 *A Plea for a Mixed Economy*
- 1950 *Our Growing Human Family*
- 1950 *Co-operative Farming, the Great Debate*
- 1951 *Neutralism in India*
- 1954 *The Communist Party of India—a Short History*
- 1967 *Congress Misrule and Swatantra Alternative*
- 1969 *Too Much Politics, Too Little Citizenship*
- 1970 *Liberalism*
- 1975 *The Constitution, Twenty Years Later*
- 1975 *Is J.P. the Answer?*
- 1977 *J.P.'s Mission Partly Accomplished*
- 1977 *Bliss was it in that Dawn ...*
- 1981 *Against the Tide*
- 1989 *We Indians*
- 2011 *Of Four Real Leaders* (Posthumous)

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