

VALLABHBHAI PATEL

Jawaharlal and I have been fellow-members of the Congress, soldiers in the struggle for freedom, colleagues in the Congress Working Committee and other bodies of the Congress, devoted followers of the Great Master who has unhappily left us to battle with grave problems without his guidance, and co-sharers in the great and onerous burden of administration of this vast country. Having known each other in such intimate and varied fields of activity we have naturally grown fond of each other; our mutual affection has increased as years have advanced, and it is difficult for people to imagine how much we miss each other when we are apart and unable to take counsel together in order to resolve our problems and difficulties. This familiarity, nearness, intimacy and brotherly affection make it difficult for me to sum him up for public appreciation, but, then, the idol of the nation, the leader of the people, the Prime Minister of the country, and the hero of the masses, whose noble record and great achievements are an open book, hardly needs any commendation from me.

A clean and resolute fighter, he always fought hard and straight against the foreign government. Having received the baptism of "fire" in his early thirties as an organiser of peasants' movement in the U. P., he imbibed to the full the knowledge of the art and science of non-violent warfare. His ardent emotionalism and his hatred of injustice and oppression converted him into a crusader in the war against poverty, and with an instinctive sympathy for the poor he threw himself heart and soul into the struggle for the amelioration of the lot of the peasantry. His sphere of activities widened, and he soon blossomed forth into a silent organiser of the great institution to which we all dedicated ourselves as an instrument of our emancipation. Gifted with an idealism of a high order, a devotee of beauty and art in life, and equipped with an infinite capacity to magnetise and inspire others and a personality which would be remarkable in any gathering of world's foremost men, Jawaharlal has gone from strength to strength as a political leader. His trip to foreign countries necessitated by the ailment of his wife raised his conception of Indian nationalism to an ethereal international plane. That was the beginning of that international phase of his life and character which has throughout been noticeable in his approach to internal and world problems. Ever since, Jawaharlal has never looked back. He has grown in stature both in India and abroad. The sincerity of his convictions, the breadth of his outlook, the clarity of his vision, and the purity of his emotions—all these have brought to him the homage of millions in this country and outside.

It was, therefore, in the fitness of things that in the twilight preceding the dawn of independence he should have been our leading light, and that when India was faced with crisis after crisis, following the achievement of our freedom, he should have been the upholder of our faith and the leader of our legions. No one knows better

than myself how much he has laboured for his country in the last two years of our difficult existence. I have seen him age quickly during that period, on account of the worries of the high office that he holds and the tremendous responsibilities that he wields. He has never spared himself in the cause of the refugees who have seldom knocked at his door without redress. In the councils of the Commonwealth his has been a most notable contribution; on the world's stage he has played a very remarkable part. Yet, with all this he has maintained that original youthful look, that balanced poise, that sense of perspective and that *sangfroid* and *bonhomie* which are the results of a disciplined philosophy and trained intellect. True, we have some outbursts of his temper, but with his passion for promptness and right and his impatience of wrong and delay, such outbursts have been an incentive to exertion and quick disposal. They have been the reserve forces which, when suddenly released, have at times conquered lethargy, delays, circumlocution and absence of will to act.

As one older in years, it has been my privilege to tender advice to him on the manifold problems with which we have been faced in both administrative and organisational fields. I have always found him willing to seek and ready to take it. Contrary to the impression created by some interested persons and eagerly accepted in credulous circles, we have worked together as lifelong friends and colleagues, adjusting ourselves to each other's point of view as the occasion demanded, and valuing each other's advice as only those who have confidence in each other can. His moods vary from juvenile buoyancy to the seriousness of age and maturity, and exhibit that resilience which is at once disarming and accommodating. He is equally at home in the company of sportive children and deliberative elders. It is this variety and this adaptability which are the secret of his eternal youth, the amazing vitality which he exhibits and the invigorating freshness of his presence.

It is obviously impossible to do justice to his great and pre-eminent personality in these few condensed words. The versatility of his character and attainments at once defy delineation. His thoughts have sometimes a depth which it is not easy to fathom, but underlying them all is a transparent sincerity and a robustness of youth which endear him to every one without distinction of caste and creed, race or religion.

It is to this priceless possession of a Free India that we pay homage to-day on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of his birth. May he secure greater and greater triumphs in the cause of his country and in the pursuit of his ideals!

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Va. Vallabhai Patel