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**‘Swadeshi Ink on Swadeshi Paper:
Jawaharlal Nehru’s *Rajneeti Se Door*’**

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Abstract

Jawaharlal Nehru wrote prolifically, through private and public correspondence. These writings are collated in volumes of his selected works, through a collection of his letters to chief ministers, and most famously in his three English language books *Glimpses of World History*, *An Autobiography* and *The Discovery of India*. All of those books are replete with Nehru’s fascination for history and historical forces, and have politics, both domestic and international in the foreground. The historiographies he lays out often preface the political, where the straight line drawn from the historical origins of nation- states, world systems, even individual actors in a political world, to the acts undertaken or performed by them is quite direct and astonishing. In that respect, his book *Rajneeti Se Door (Far from Politics)*, a much later work is fascinating first, unlike all his other writing, for being written in Hindustani, and second, as presenting a foil to Nehru’s political thought. Put together in the winter years of his life, *Rajneeti Se Door* is a text laden with reflection, and alternative imaginations about the transformation of politics. This paper will attempt to bring the barely studied book more firmly into the pantheon of Nehru’s writing, while drawing links between Nehru’s philosophical thought and Tagore’s fascination with the apolitical.

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‘Swadeshi Ink on Swadeshi Paper:
Jawaharlal Nehru’s *Rajneeti Se Door*’

‘Dear Jawaharlal, I have just finished reading your great book, and I feel intensely impressed and proud of your achievement. Through all its details there runs a deep current of humanity, which overpasses the tangles of facts and leads us to the person who is greater than his deeds and truer than his surroundings. Yours very sincerely, Rabindranath Tagore.’

- Tagore to Nehru, on the occasion of the publication of Nehru’s autobiography, 31 May 1936¹

Introduction

Rajneeti Se Door (Far from Politics) is at first glance a travelogue with writings about the histories of places, people and their struggles². On further reading, it becomes evident that the book is an exposition of people as citizens, the landscape as territory and struggles as essentially political. Thus, the book strays farther and farther away from its title, until its twenty-one chapters become in fact, exactly the opposite of what the reader might have initially expected. It is soon clear that the book continues with a method widely found in Nehru’s writing wherein by constantly intertwining the political with the historical, he leads the reader to the conclusion that in studying one, we study both. *Glimpses of World History* (1934) devotes entire chapters to issues of the day such as the problems of Asia and Europe, disarmament, war; *An Autobiography – Towards Freedom* (1936) has essays on the meaning of religion and on the League Against Imperialism; and, *The Discovery of India* (1946) has essays on Sanskrit, Greece and Pearl Harbour³. Along with *A Bunch of Old Letters* (1958), these invocations form a brilliant exposé of Nehru’s thought. Through his books, Nehru attempted to open India up to the world and placed its history in conversation with other histories. The books also always locate Nehru physically at the time of their writing – by specifying where sections of the books were written - aboard ships, on travels, in prisons. This brings the enormous heft of his person to bear on the subject at hand. It is no longer only a lesson in historical fact, but an invocation for the reader to participate in, and to feel the weight of the struggles of humanity, not contained by borders, but on full display in the daily lives of India.

There is, of course, much more writing by him, edited together in the two series of the *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, and in his five-volume *Letters to Chief Ministers*. The five books mentioned above are different in that they were authored and edited by Nehru himself. *Rajneeti Se Door* is even more fascinating for two reasons – first, it is the book that has received the least amount of attention, scholarly or otherwise, and; second, it is a collection of essays written in Hindustani, an atypical choice for Nehru, who preferred writing for a global audience, and thus in English. This paper will discuss the main thrust of Nehru’s writing in *Rajneeti Se Door*, beginning with the title itself, which could be literally translated as *Far from Politics*, alluding to the idea that the book deals with subjects that having very little to do with Nehru’s political life. This is a pretence, in fact, as the question turns out to be a provocation, better cast as ‘what can we think of that is *not* political?’ This question is also divisive not only because it could have multiple possible answers, but also because one of those possible answers is that *nothing* is totally removed from politics. It is

this possibility that Nehru is chiefly concerned with in these essays.

The rhetoric in the title is neither trite nor clever, but rather a meditation on the conceptual distance between what we know of politics and how we might strive to make sense of the world without it. By posing this question, Nehru made it acceptable to question the political in a postcolonial milieu. He also made possible the breaking down and rebuilding of what constitutes the political. I shall return to a fuller discussion of these interventions, but it suffices to say here that both these moves were deeply radical. They were also distinct from Nehru's earlier written work because they are histories of people and places written as the lives of ideas. In each of the essays in this collection, Nehru dealt with a particular idea or set of ideas and how it played out through Indian lives. This makes for close observations of what larger-than-life ideas such as the nation, the state and politics have meant for Indians in their daily lives, and indeed also for the animals and forests of India. This is very much an attempt at a worm's eye view, aimed at understanding politics outside of New Delhi, and outside of the trappings of government. Thus, the title literally translated to *Far from Politics* is better understood as *Far from Politics (as we know it)*. This approach invigorates the writing in this book in a manner unlike that of his previous three books that while impressive in scale, scope and expanse, present nothing of the sort of play with ideas that is on display in *Rajneeti Se Door*. In this book, Nehru discussed ideas as having lived lives and presented those lives as being essentially political, and therefore never completely at a remove from politics. This play with the meaning of politics and the constituent elements of being political is not the work of a head of state, but rather that of a thinker, and a transgressive one at that. This paper will discuss these transgressions as a radical aspect of Nehru's thought that has not received much attention.

In discussing the book, the paper will put forward two related ideas – first, the idea that we can think of Nehru not just as a possible subject of history but also as an intellectual historian himself. His thoughts are by no means philosophical as they are not even subtly concerned with the internal cohesion of ideas, and as a historian, he was much more interested in their provenance (where they came from) and circulation (where they went) and their lived lives (how they came to be). The paper will explore the idea of *Rajneeti Se Door* as a signifier text – a travelogue written between the rural countryside and the colonial prison - that is in fact an exposition on the lives of ideas such as nationalism, and the state. The second suggestion put forward by this paper is that this sort of radicalism is a uniquely Tagoreian impulse. In writings on Nehru, there has been an effort to recover his ideas as having taken their cue from Gandhi, followed by efforts to distinguish between Nehru as a Gandhian and Nehru as a Nehruvian⁴. I will suggest in this paper that it is also worthwhile to think of Nehru as a Tagoreian. From within Tagore's enormous intellectual legacy, Nehru was deeply influenced by certain tropes that he further radicalized and developed in his thought. This influence has been cited and discussed before, of course, but in this paper, it will be focused on Nehru's work in *Rajneeti Se Door*⁵. The paper is written in four sections. Following the introduction, the second section of the paper will discuss the scope of the essays, a third section will draw out the links between Tagore's thought and that of Nehru's and the paper will come to a close with the conclusion that discusses what this book does for the figure of Nehru as thinker and historian.

Put together in the winter years of his life, the book benefits from the romanticism of a travelogue, and the veneer travel writing lends introspection. The vast travels, the impulse to expound on the histories of nations while traveling, and the written-up memoir of that journey on its completion is very obviously Tagoreian. Although this style of writing is by no means limited to Rabindranath, the dismantling of political categories through those writings

and the assault on a politics bereft of humanism, are interventions that carry the distinct impress of Tagore. I will discuss *Rajneeti Se Door* in light of this idea – that Nehru’s writings in this book bore the distinct mark of Tagore’s thought, and that in making those forays, Nehru attempted to locate the history of ideas in the short lives they had lived thus far in post-colonial India. In a chapter titled ‘The Last Letter’ in *Glimpses of World History*, Nehru wrote to Indira (his daughter), “...what a lot of good *swadeshi* ink I have spread out on *swadeshi* paper. Was it worth while, I wonder... this is not history; they are just fleeting glimpses of our long past.”⁶ These lines are indicative of Nehru’s resolve to locate himself in the Indian struggle for freedom, as is clear from his use of the term *swadeshi*, and although his writings often dealt with the ideas that formed the leitmotif of the anti-colonial movement for independence in India, he hesitated to call his writings history, preferring to refer to them as letters or essays. This was possibly in deference to other great historians that Nehru had read much of, but this paper contends that in fact, Nehru’s writings together do offer a specific treatment of history, and his own relation to it.

In *Glimpses of World History*, Nehru offers a view of the wider world, and its contending ideologies; in *An Autobiography – Towards Freedom*, he traces his own life alongside the development of the Indian freedom movement and then locates both in the timeline of world history; and finally, in *The Discovery of India*, he recounts India’s history from ancient times to the twentieth century to highlight her identity as a nation. Throughout this work, he located the self, the global and the nation as being analogous⁷. In *Rajneeti Se Door*, which can be seen as the last of these books, he took this method even further, casting the relation between the self, the global and the nation as being political, and in opening up that relation to critical scrutiny. Furthermore, keeping in mind that ideas presuppose agents, even amongst those writing on history, Nehru occupies a unique place, as he was both the agent of an idea, and the historian of that agency⁸. This was a remarkable position to have occupied, and *Rajneeti Se Door* written long after he had assumed office as India’s first Prime Minister, is a unique book, the work of a man whose entire life was consumed by the political, deftly turning the formulation of the political on its head, illuminating its excesses and questioning its infirmities. In light of these moves, the paper will discuss what this book does for Nehru, and how it might be possible to recover a different thinker through the study of his writings in a different language, in a different time.

The Travelogue as a Meditation on Politics

Unlike the books Nehru wrote in English, *Rajneeti Se Door* comes across as a seemingly minor work, but is in fact, a rather eclectic collection of essays, strung together by a compassionate view of India and its humanity, with only two essays of the twenty-one looking beyond national borders at Nehru’s travels to Ceylon and China respectively⁹. Nine of these essays on topics of global significance were translated and included in a collection of Nehru’s writings in English, *The Unity of India*¹⁰ and some essays that appear here in Hindustani were reprinted from the original in English from *The Discovery of India* and *An Autobiography – Towards Freedom*. One of the essays published in *Rajneeti Se Door* titled ‘*Rashtrapati*’ was rather controversial when published in English as ‘We Want No Caesars’, an anonymously written scathing critique of Nehru as Prime Minister, later revealed to have been penned by Nehru himself¹¹. The other essays are less piercing, and rather quite sentimental, especially when Nehru writes of the majestic beauty of the Himalayan mountain ranges in ‘*Himalaya Ki Ek Ghatna*’ (An Incident in the Himalayas), the beauty of the valleys in ‘*Surma Ghati Mein*’ (In the Surma Valley), and of his idyllic homeland in ‘*Kashmir Mein*

Bara Din’ (Twelve Days in Kashmir). Yet, Nehru also wrote of Kashmir’s peculiar politics, of Sheikh Abdullah, known as the *Sher-e-Kashmir*, and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and his followers, whom he refers to as *Fakhr-e-Afghan* and the *Khuda-e-Khidmatgars*, and of the fate of Kashmiri Pandits. He wrote of his travels ‘by automobile’ through Vernag, Achhal, Anantnag, Martand, Pahalgam, Jammu, Wazirabad, Sialkot and on to Lahore. In a moving remembrance, he says, ‘But Kashmir calls back, its pull is stronger than ever, it whispers its fairy magic to the ears, and its memory disturbs the mind. How can they who have fallen under its spell release themselves from this enchantment?’¹² The romanticism with which he describes these travels offer a fascinating insight into the mind of the man who wrestled with the Kashmir issue post-partition but rarely made much of his own ties to the region. The Kashmir essay points to a larger trend in the book, where Nehru deals in each essay with rather lofty issues, but the treatment of those issues is so nonchalant that one might be forgiven for thinking he was only referring to them in passing.

Most conspicuously, the essays turn to two themes – that of nationalism and modernity. On nationalism, the most striking essays are *Do Masjidain* (Two Mosques), *Jail Main Jeev-Jantu* (The Animal Life of Prisons), and the four essays that draw links between literature, the meaning of words and the language question in India - *Humara Sahitya* (Our Literature), *Sahitya Ki Buniyad* (The Foundations of Literature), *Shabd Ka Arth* (The Meaning of Words) and *Rashtra Bhasha Ka Prashn* (The Question of Language). In *Do Masjidain* (Two Mosques), Nehru begins the essay with a panoramic view of the rise and fall of Constantinople, its origins in Byzantium and the significance in world history of the Bosphorus. He then makes a radical turn for the political, engaging with the secularization of the Aya Sophia and the modernization of Turkey under Mustafa Kemal Pasha. Engaging with that line of thinking even further, Nehru suggests that the same could perhaps be thought of in the context of the grandest mosque in Lahore¹³. He cleverly places the secularization of the Aya Sophia in contrast with the communalization of the mosque in Lahore, without making an explicit suggestion with respect to the latter. The essay ends with an ode to the Ataturk, of whom he says, ‘The king surrendered, the caliphate became slaves, but a few Turks stayed defiant. One of them was Mustafa Kemal who preferred to revolt’.¹⁴ Naturally, the essay on Turkey also turns to the question of modernity and modernisation, but not much emphasis is laid on either. Nehru seems content to leave alone the question of what inferences could be drawn for India from Turkish secularisation.

Jail Main Jeev-Jantu (The Animal Life of Prisons) is a most curious essay, one in which Nehru discusses the pigeons in Almora Prison and the pests and beasts elsewhere, especially in Dehradun Jail, of which he says, ‘I was imprisoned in my small room in Dehradun Jail for fourteen and a half months and I started to feel like I had become a part of it.’¹⁵ Writing seamlessly about prisoners in jails, including himself and the animals and birds that inhabited these spaces, Nehru seems to be paying homage to Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, that had been published only a decade earlier. He then extends this symbolism to nations, writing about nations in terms of the animals they have chosen to represent them – ‘Different nationalities have chosen different birds and animals to symbolize their ambitions or their national character. The eagle is the US’s and Germany’s, the lion and the bulldog are England’s, fighting cocks are France’s and the bear was Russia’s old symbol...most of the animals are attackers, fighters, hunters. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that those peoples who keep these symbols in front of them and create life, form their nature accordingly - they pounce on others, they growl at others. It is also no surprise that Hindus are gentle and non-violent, because their ideal animal is the cow’, he writes.¹⁶ There is no talk here of internationalism, and although he alludes to the difficulties nations face in dealing with each other, he presents

no resolution, leaving the discussion open-ended.

While noting similarities in the violent nature of nations, Nehru also wrote on the differences in character between the same nations, and the problems these created for harmonious relations. In *Shabd Ka Arth* (The Meaning of Words), Nehru quotes a linguist, J S Mckenzie to say, ‘An English man, a French man, a German and an Italian cannot by any means bring themselves to think quite alike, at least on subjects which involve any depth of sentiment; they have not the verbal means’¹⁷. This leads him to consider the question of language in India – what language Indians must most strongly associate with, and tie up their identity in the defence of and the roots of languages, in particular the Hindustani he is writing in – ‘what is Hindustani?’ he writes, ‘vaguely we say that this word includes both Hindi and Urdu, as spoken and as written in the two scripts, and we endeavour to strike a golden mean between the two, and call this idea of ours Hindustani. Is this just an idea with no reality for its basis, or is it something more?’¹⁸ Although they are not divided into sequential sections dealing with each of these issues, the essays discussed thus far form one distinct part of the book – one that deals with questions of cultural, linguistic and national identity. These are thus the most esoteric of the lot, and are left unresolved. They offer no systematic treatment and the author provides no answers to the questions raised in the essays. Rather, he indicates that these questions will resolve themselves in India’s public life and that each of these questions will ignite India’s politics. In the essays, there is no clear distinction between India pre- and post-independence. So, an essay about Nehru’s time in a colonial prison is easily interspersed with his travels through India as its first Prime Minister. All three of his other major works were written in 1934, 1936 and 1946, therefore all published before Indian independence in 1947. *Rajneeti Se Door* written in the 1950s, thus, is also intriguing because it is the first collection of essays that puts together Nehru’s impressions of the country that he was Prime Minister of.

In the epilogue to *An Autobiography*, Nehru wrote about what traveling and travel writing meant to him –

‘In writing this narrative, I have tried to give my moods and thoughts at the time of each event, to represent as far as I could my feelings on the occasion. It is difficult to recapture a past mood, and it is not easy to forget subsequent happenings. Later ideas thus must inevitably have coloured my account of earlier days, but my object was, primarily for my own benefit, to trace my own mental growth. Perhaps what I have written is not so much an account of what I have been but of what I have sometimes wanted to be or imagined myself to be... There was another aspect of this extensive touring that gripped me. For me it was a voyage of discovery of India and her people. I saw a thousand facets of this country of mine in all their rich diversity, and yet always with the unifying impress of India upon them. I gazed at the millions of friendly eyes that looked up at me and tried to understand what lay behind them. The more I saw of India, the more I felt *how little I knew of her* infinite charm and variety, how much more there was for me to find out. She seemed to smile at me often, and sometimes to mock at me and elude me.’¹⁹

This sentiment seemed to have remained with him through Nehru’s life, of his relative unfamiliarity with India and its people. Yet, it was a commitment to seeking out this ‘the human material...how they act, what moves them, what does not affect them’ that seems to be in these writings at the forefront of his mind²⁰. In that sense, we can see here Nehru’s

attempts at placing concepts such as nationalism outside of barebones politics, and to locate them in humanity, and as actively spurring humanity on. These essays deal with the barest of the problems faced by Indians in their daily lives and are fundamentally different from Nehru's other writings, meant for a global audience. Nehru's proclivity for grandness, usually badly contained in his writings on India's place in the world, is absent in these essays, primarily as conditions in rural India do not lend themselves to grandness of vision and would be cruel and misplaced in that frame. Nehru, in fact, uses the minutiae of this life to deal with the materiality of these large concepts, and the essays convey a sense of him having his ear close to the ground.

Tropes that are common in Nehru's other writing, such as modernity, globality, and futurity are all halting in their conceptual gain here. The accent on them is minimal and they are only invoked in a larger humanist context. In all his writing, Nehru has in various iterations, dealt with how difficult it is 'to move large numbers of people, to make them act...' ²¹ He returns to this in *Rajneeti Se Door*, but in the context of science – in *Vigyan aur Yug* (The Progress of Science), he writes, 'I have become involved in the great human upheavals that have shaken this land of ours in recent years. Yet in spite of the tumult and movement that have surrounded me, I do not come to you wholly as a stranger. For I too have worshipped at the shrine of science and counted myself as one of its votaries.' ²² Almost pedagogical, as a lot of his writing tends to be, the essay on science explains to the reader in great detail why it is important to pay heed to science, and how science, an inevitable force will lead India into the next century. This gives Nehru a platform on which to enthuse the Indian masses, and he moves away from the anti-colonialism and nationalism of earlier writing. Even the essay on China - *Cheen-Yatra Ke Sansmaran* (Memories of Travels in China) - is focussed on Nehru's travels through, Kunming or Yunan Fu, Chungking and his landing on an island in the middle of the great Yangtze River with its many gorges. There is no mention of the civilizational ties that bind China and India together, or indeed of Chinese communism, of the great revolutions of its peoples.

In fact, by depoliticising these places, Nehru opens the reader up to the possibilities of engaging with these cultures. This is Tagore's device, which he clarified in his letters to Nehru, written on the occasion of Nehru's previous travels to China and Japan. Tagore wrote, 'I feel proud that the new spirit of Asia will be represented through you and our best traditions of Indian humanity find their voice during your contacts with the people of China', warning Nehru that India was 'passing through an eclipse when her own reality is lost to her in a haze of parochial politics, sectarianism, and domestic contention: contact with a greater world of eastern culture will, I fervently hope, help in removing her obsessions and enliven her national existence with a new humanity' ²³. In Nehru's writings and travels and writings about travels, this foreboding seems to have stayed with him. In fact, *The Discovery of India* reads very much like a homage to Tagore, about whom he writes – 'More than any other Indian, he has helped to bring into harmony the ideals of the East and West, and broadened the bases of Indian nationalism. He has been India's internationalist par excellence, believing and working for international co-operation, taking India's message to other countries and bringing their messages to his own people'. The book celebrates Tagore as a figure 'who was full of the temper and urges of the modern age and yet was rooted in India's past, and in his own self built up a synthesis of the old and the new' ²⁴.

Indeed, Tagore's influence on Nehru seems most apparent in both men's struggles to make Asia rhetorically potent. Their invocations to eastern cultures resulted in an attempt to study India anew. In that vein, *Rajneeti Se Door*, Nehru attempts to recover the landscape of India

and to understand the materiality of the lives of Indians who populate that landscape. This perspective of looking at spaces as collectives of individuals is also a distinctly Tagorean idea, one that cannot be adequately described by the term 'cosmopolitan', without simultaneously subduing its radicalism. In the next section, I will discuss how Tagore radicalised spaces as different from their nationalist politics, and the imprint of those ideas on Nehru.

Nehru and the Radicalism of Tagore's Thought

Tagore's thought was deeply anti-political, anti-nationalist and anti-imperialist, as he read all three as mutually constitutive. It is interesting to note Tagore's views on the nation, the state and on the East-West dynamic. In his treatise *Nationalism*, Tagore put forth the view that politics, as a method of achieving social cohesion, was deeply problematic. He was wary of the 'profound inauthenticity'²⁵ of politics. In his arguments against nationalisms, both European and Japanese²⁶, he expressed an anxiety that a political form of life would unavoidably lapse into an 'aggressive, competitive and acquisitive practice of imperialism'²⁷. In openly critiquing nationalism as the manifestation of politics, he sought to restore the creative potential of social life. Tagore's philosophical position was therefore anti-political and assumed politics and nationalism to be mutually constitutive and reinforcing. For Tagore, the onslaught of politics diluted the social texture of peoples, who, finding themselves organized as nations, would emulate rather than innovate, leading to a tedious sameness between worlds. The state, too, Tagore saw as undesirable and sought to put forth a community-based conceptualization of social life, focused on the development of the individual.

Tagore emphasized flows between communities, such as might already exist, placing the cultural over the national. For him, the role of the state could be restrained by encouraging the movement of people and ideas outside of its structure. In light of the exhaustive historical description of the processes of globalization, especially in the late twentieth century, this idea might seem rather self-evident. However, the internationalism of Tagore's political thought at the turn of the twentieth century when India was still only a colony, is deeply radical. The constituent of the global he foresaw would be the Indian nation-state, but that nation-state not yet a reality, Tagore anticipated India as a 'land without a centre'²⁸. The state could become a repository of the diffused form of the aspirations of its peoples, yet because those aspirations had also been expressed elsewhere in the world, they would not become provocations to nationalism. It is this 'idea of India' that is carried forward in Nehru's own thought, albeit with different inflections of emphasis²⁹.

For Tagore, the East and the West were also conceptual categories. He considered at length their shared impulses, even where they had developed in parallel, not in conjunction. Tagore critiqued ideas such as nationalism that he thought were dangerous, but encouraged others that he thought could be syncretised in India. He warned against the unthinking adoption of any one model saying, "We began with a blind, foolish, insensate begging at the door of Europe, with our critical sense entirely benumbed. That was not the way to make any real gain."³⁰ Yet he warned against "a wholesale suspicion of the West", wholly aware that in escaping "the quicksands of our infatuation, we may go to the other extreme". After all, "the reaction of disillusionment is just as unreal as the first shock of illusion", he said³¹. For Tagore, the idea of the global was "including but not restricted to the West"³². Tagore had subverted the antithetical understanding of the East and the West by pointing to their mutually inclusive character. In so doing, he prefaced Nehru's thought, whose motif was to

politicise geography differently. It is crucial to note that Tagore's interventions possessed a degree of "avant-garde intellectual thinking" characterized by a deep suspicion of politics³³. In reading Tagore, one is very aware of what Foucault called "the astonishing efficacy of discontinuous, particular, and local critiques"³⁴.

Yet, the question of whether Tagore had a political philosophy and what exactly it was has been a source of some puzzlement to theorists and biographers alike³⁵. Tagore's most enduring philosophical inheritance appears to be widely acknowledged in the form of his exchanges with other thinkers, whether it be in the form of his inter-Asian dialogue with the Japanese curator and art historian Okakura Tenshin or the 'truth debates' he held with Gandhi³⁶. What is fascinating is his reception in the East in China, and Japan, and in the West, in England and America, for instance, because it is in the East that he faced a tremendous challenge to his thought, profited from such criticism and subsequently, further refined his view of nationalism. The 'violent reaction' to his talks in China in 1924 tends to narrow the focus of his visits to the views he expounded on Chinese and Japanese nationalism³⁷. Yet, equally significant are the pronouncements he made on India, and evolving Indian nationalism, stating emphatically that India was not and did not need to become a nation³⁸. Tagore clearly 'remained very far from being a traditionalist' and on his travels, this had meant that his 'standing in China was clearly under some cloud'³⁹. Even so, Tagore looked to China as a source of weighty intellectual traditions and combined with the traditions of thought in India, he was convinced these would present a potent new force. As Sen puts it, 'Tagore had, by then, persuaded himself - and a lot of others too - that there was something deeply incomplete in the priorities of the Western world, a gap in the closing of which eastern thought, from India and China and elsewhere, had something constructive to offer.'⁴⁰

This also, of course, meant a deep and critical engagement with what constituted the West. Evidently, he struggled with and delighted in problematizing the West as a conceptual category and in widening the meaning of the term by visiting at different times different parts of it such as the United States, Italy and Yugoslavia⁴¹. Of course, the West was invented too, just as Asia had been before, with a focus on the 'unacceptable version of modernity' it presented⁴². But both formulations are considerably more interesting, particularly from a theoretical point of view, when viewed through the prism of Tagore's anti-colonial leanings and his normative project to lend credence to those leanings by offering to the East and the West what the other did not possess⁴³. As Isaiah Berlin wrote in 1961, 'It is not difficult to call for a return to the past, to tell man to turn their backs on foreign devils, to live solely on one's resources, proud, independent, unconcerned. India has heard such voices. Tagore understood this, paid tribute to it, and resisted it.'⁴⁴ This method of approaching the political is well elucidated in the truth debates, a round of conversations he held with Gandhi, which led him to refine his position regarding philosophy, but also within philosophy, and had definitive consequences on his thinking about Indian nationalism⁴⁵. In fact, Tagore's dismantling of the concept of nationalism opens the door for a larger discussion on Tagore as a political thinker, with insight on his methods⁴⁶. The closest one gets to deciphering this method is to think of Tagore as embracing 'a negative tendency, which emphasises all that is good in negation'⁴⁷. By chronicling what politics is *not*, or *ought not to be*, Tagore was able to dissolve it. Yet in this project, he remained non-committal to what would seem a logical progression from the dismantling - the subsequent rebuilding of the political. Instead, he declared that his interests lie in man's upliftment into spirituality, through an emphasis on the social and the cultural⁴⁸. Yet, through his chosen device i.e. the letters he wrote while traveling, he interspersed his marvel at the landscapes he was in, with significant departures

concerned with the project of remaking politics, perhaps despite himself.

The non-committal intervention and the travelogue as political discourse are both methods in evidence in *Rajneeti Se Door*. These are the seeds of the ideas that one can pick up in Nehru's later writing. In *Rajneeti Se Door*, Nehru moves beyond the anti-colonial slogan to the post-colonial call for the revival of politics. For Tagore, the nation, the state and politics all became in the end residual categories – Tagore's writings on these themes were exposés intended to strip them of their farce, and treat them as hollow shells, not ideas alive to their time and rooted to certain spaces. Nehru took Tagore's critique of these concepts very seriously, but sought to rework these concepts, not abhor them. He did this in part by writing histories of spaces differently. Unlike in his three major English-language books published earlier, *Rajneeti Se Door* pays no attention to Empire as an overriding concern. In this book, the metropole receives no attention and India is not treated as a former colony. This move away from earlier vocabularies is used as a method to reimagine politics. Nehru suspends the idea of India as an ex-colony by turning to the travelogue, which helps him recast India in the imagination of the reader; the political subtext in the essays is written in the form of an afterthought or as context, so the text on the whole doesn't commit to being a discourse on the meaning of politics. This too is a method borrowed from Tagore, whose own extensive travels, as discussed above, occasioned many of his treatises on concepts rooted in the political, while claiming to do so.

Thus, it can be deduced that Nehru's writings in *Rajneeti Se Door* make for an interesting play on concepts, and on following ideas as they transpire in the Indian everyday. But did this writing achieve and does it demonstrate a reorientation in Nehru's political thinking, or indeed, in Indian political thought in the mid-1950s? We have already ascertained that it *claimed* to do neither. It seems rather disingenuous to suggest, therefore, that it did. What we do have evidence of is the unresolved questions it presented in each essay. These questions seem to cohere around a few common concepts – such as the nation, the state and politics – without mentioning them too frequently. The essays move to and fro between the concepts on the one hand and Indian actualities on the other. Following Tagore, Nehru thus initiates a dialogue between the materiality of everyday life and landscape in India and the exalted politics of concepts such as the nation and the state. This is an innovative technique and animates these concepts in a way that is intended to reacquaint the reader with them afresh. To take an example, in *Chhutkara* (Escape), the first essay in the collection, Nehru writes of the temptation to leave politics altogether:

‘...my mind was elsewhere. It was wandering over the mountains of the north with their deep valleys and snowy peaks, and precipices and gentle slopes covered with pine trees and deodars. It panted for escape from the troubles and problems that encompassed us, for peace and quiet and the gentle sight of the wind. At last I was going to have my way, to pander to my secret and long-cherished desire. How could I trouble myself with Ministries coming or going, or the melting-pot of international affairs, when the door of escape lay open before me?’⁴⁹

and he goes on:

‘Sometimes I would lie under the pine trees, and listen to the voice of the wandering mind, whispering many strange things into my ears, and lulling my senses, and cooling the fever in my brain. Finding me unguarded and open to attack, it would cunningly point out the folly of men's ways in the

world below, their unceasing strife, their passions and hatred, their bigotry in the name of religion, the corruption of their politics, the degradation of their ideals. Was it worth while going back to them and wasting one's life's efforts in dealings with them?'⁵⁰

Although these seem like the thoughts of a hapless man, the rest of the essays in the book indicate otherwise. It seems, in fact, that Nehru bemoans the loss of reason and morality, so as to reorder politics, to radicalize it. He uses this self-conscious romanticism as a foil to the critical, moving in the space of the book from a deeper more romantic view of politics to his disenchantment with its realities, finally to a more radical argument about the revival of India as a political space. In all his other books, he situates himself firmly on the within, locating himself within a political tradition, then locating within himself that very same political tradition. In *Rajneeti Se Door*, he begins by breaking this mould, and writes about politics in a different register. We soon learn that the alienation he feels from politics is but a temporary hiatus, not a permanent estrangement. But that break has opened up possibilities for intellectual ambition. With Nehru on the outside, he is able to reconfigure his political imagination, to reassemble it in light of all that he has learnt on his travels through India⁵¹. Thus, the travels provide more than an occasion – they ignite in him a commitment to the ideas he had always held dear, but which had been weakened in their encounters with an Indian experience. He thus offers us a resolutely local critique of politics, in yet another ode to Tagore.

Indeed, as is clear from the previous two sections, Nehru used the travelogue in a Tagorean sense, employing its devices to deflate his own ideas, to gain a new and clear vision of what lies beyond the politically organised India. In a moving paean to the depth of the human spirit that makes such a politics possible, he turns to the story of Gindallo Rani, a young woman of Naga origin, who was caught up in the Civil Disobedience Movement launched by Gandhi in 1930, leading to her incarceration by the British. He writes of her:

‘...she lies in some prison in Assam, wasting her bright young womanhood in dark cells and solitude. Six years she has been there. What torment and suppression of spirit they have brought to her, who in the pride of her youth dared to challenge an Empire! She can roam no more in the hill country through the forest glades, or sing in the fresh crisp air of the mountains. This wild young thing sits cabined in darkness, with a few yards, may be, of space in the daytime, beating her fiery heart in desolation and confinement. And India does not even know of this brave child of her hills, with the free spirit of the mountains in her... I thought of Gindallo, the Rani, sitting in her prison cell. What thoughts were hers, what regrets, what dreams?’⁵²

Nehru's utter desolation at the frustration of Gindallo Rani's spirit, the sheer tragedy of her prospects for freedom, this is not Gandhian at all, for Gandhi would have seen this sequence of events as an occasion for Gindallo Rani to assert the sovereignty of her soul, who no one could imprison. This is Tagore here, mourning through Nehru, bereaving this censure of the spirit, not thereafter free to roam, free to sing.

Conclusion

Nehru's writing of history often went beyond just the facts, and his books are proof that he disapproved of a dry retelling of events. This is all too well, as some of his recollections would seem rather dated to the twenty-first century reader – his memories of Bombay, for instance, which he liked because 'there is space'⁵³. Writing to Indira in *Glimpses of World History*, he thought dates were 'not very attractive things', that in fact, 'a long list of dates [was] a most depressing affair'⁵⁴. Instead, Nehru was interesting in the intellectual traditions of writing history, both in the East and in the West that he had learnt from. It is, thus, only befitting that we locate Nehru's sets of texts as an active attempt at capturing some of that intellectual tradition. On having read *The Discovery of India*, Einstein wrote to Nehru in praise of his exposition of the 'glorious intellectual and spiritual tradition of your great country', admitting that it was 'not easy reading for a Westerner' but adding that nonetheless, he had been moved by the 'the tragic influence and forced economic, moral and intellectual decline... and the vicious exploitation of the Indian people'⁵⁵. Even in writing of India's intellectual traditions, and locating them in other more global histories, Nehru came to occupy a place in the very traditions he was writing about.

Historians of modern India have spoken of Gandhi's invigorating the political space, and of his genius in revitalising the disparate political traditions that predated his arrival on the scene. Yet, Gandhi's deep radicalism in forging such a space was beyond the pale of the normality of politics⁵⁶. It was Gandhian politics – petitions for it, revolts against it, all included - that would present the Indian nation-state with its foundational politics. Gandhi's methods were far removed from the traditions that preceded them, and the novelty of these methods heralded the birth of a new political tradition. This exalted politics left its mark on the sets of ideas it sent forth into Indian public life, and was in many instances, untranslatable to the Indian masses⁵⁷. The masses of people that made actionable Gandhi's political thought in the form of the anti-colonial movement followed Gandhi's choreography of the events that formed pivotal points in that struggle. The unstoppable force of Gandhi's conviction animated his politics, yet, in the independent nation-state that followed, it was Nehru who served as the vehicle for those ideas, to both Indian and global audiences. As he translated the Indian experience for the global audience, he translated the global for the Indian and served as interlocutor between the two through his writings, as is evident from the letters he wrote to his daughter, his sister, his colleagues, his Chief Ministers, and other readers.

In *Rajneeti Se Door*, Nehru did for India what Tagore had done for Asia. The problem of the translation of the global to the local audience and of the local to the global audience existed in India, of course. But even more so, there was the mutual incomprehensibility of multiple local Indias. Nehru's writings in Hindustani are foremost an appraisal of many Indias addressed to one another. In his earlier books, Nehru had focussed on making the global palatable, and consequently, on making universality appealing as an ideal to be upheld. *Rajneeti Se Door* is different from that body of work because it is not a global history – it is a local history with global consequences. By narrowing his focus in this book, Nehru moved away from the larger canvasses he was used to, and brought into sharp relief the idea that politics could be rescued from its own deficiencies. As I have discussed in this paper, the book is not concerned with the resolution of those inadequacies but is content with posing them in the form of a rhetorical question. In *Rajneeti Se Door*, the constituent elements of politics are held up to scrutiny and the reader is invited to participate in Nehru's journey of resistance, resignation and resolve. This is a significant move, with far-reaching effects, because it tests 'the imagined limits of political feasibility'⁵⁸. The idea that politics can be dismantled through its constituent categories and that it can be reworked into an edifice and

that this process is useful and urgent – this in itself is an innovative idea, in the present and certainly was in the 1950s.

For India, this was especially crucial, as the global had come to be associated with the imperial, due to the Indian experience of Empire, in that they both occupied that expanse of space and of spatial imagination. Indians had long suffered at the hands of imperial history, which they increasingly saw as an extension of the nationalist history of the colonising power. Nehru set out to erase that by writing his own histories. He wrote histories that made clear where he was writing them from, and it was never restricted to a seat of either colonial or anti-colonial power. In that sense, we could consider *Rajneeti Se Door* an epilogue to his earlier English language books, or we could consider the latter a preface to this text. In the first formulation, it would seem that the epilogue is meant to unsettle the imagination dominated by imperial systems of thought and blunted by the lull of the postcolonial state. In the second formulation, it would seem that this text is an attempt to demolish the idea that the nation and the state are always and forevermore to be accepted as they were, but to forward the notion that they needed to be presented and justified repeatedly, in various iterations, until they achieved some semblance of openness⁵⁹. This in itself was an achievement that Nehru was able to open up these questions and leave them open to critical inquiry. The proof of this innovativeness also lies in the fact that the dominant idioms in the Indian political space have the space to shift – for instance from patriotism to democracy to nationalism - less than a hundred years after India achieved independence⁶⁰. As a political actor, Nehru was ‘not a figure of extremes’⁶¹. It should come as no surprise therefore, that his discourse on politics is not rousing, but it is nevertheless quite astonishing in its reach and ambition.

¹ Tagore’s letter to Nehru of 31 May 1936, included in Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson [eds.], *Selected Letters of Rabindranath Tagore*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Letter 297, 465-466; Also Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘31 May 1936,’ in *A Bunch of Old Letters: Written Mostly to Jawaharlal Nehru and Some Written by Him* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2005), 189.

² Jawaharlal Nehru, *Rajneeti Se Door*, (New Delhi: Sasta Sahitya Mandal), 1957, 172. This is the third edition of the book. The date of first publication is under debate, but based on the dates of individual essays, it can be surmised that it was certainly published in the 1950s. Incidentally, the publisher of this book, the Delhi-based Sasta Sahitya Mandal had been established by M K Gandhi in 1925.

³ See Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography – Towards Freedom*, (New Delhi: Penguin Books India), 2004, 672; Jawaharlal Nehru, *Glimpses of World History*, (New Delhi: Penguin Books India), 2004, 1155; Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India), 2008, 656.

⁴ Ananya Vajpeyi, *Righteous Republic: The Political Foundations of Modern India* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 172.

⁵ See for instance, Ramachandra Guha, ‘Traveling with Tagore’, in Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism* (New Delhi: Penguin Classics), 2012.

⁶ Nehru writes to Indira, ‘...what a lot of good *swadeshi* ink I have spread out on *swadeshi* paper. Was it worth while [sic], I wonder... I have given you the barest outline; this is not history; they are just fleeting glimpses of our long past’ in Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘The Last Letter,’ 9 August 1933, *Glimpses of World History*, (New Delhi: Penguin Books India), 2004, 1155.

⁷ For a detailed exposition of this idea, see Sudipta Kaviraj, *The Imaginary Institution of India: Politics and Ideas*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 71. Kaviraj says that for Nehru, ‘history came to be a central idea’.

⁸ Quentin Skinner, ‘Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas’, *History and Theory*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1969), 11.

⁹ The following essays appear in Jawaharlal Nehru, *Rajneeti Se Door*, (New Delhi: Sasta Sahitya Mandal), 1957, 172. Their titles have been translated to convey the essence captured in the original Hindustani, and are therefore, not literal translations. Where Nehru published these essays later in an English version, his translations are preferred; the rest are mine. 1) *Chhutkara* - Escape 2) *Himalaya Ki Ek Ghatna* - An Incident in the Himalayas 3) *Do Masjidain* - Two Mosques 4) *Rashtrapati* - We Want No Caesars 5) *Baarish Mein Hawai Safar* - Flying in the Rain 6) *Bambai Main Monsoon* - The Monsoon Comes to Bombay 7) *Cheen-Yatra Ke Sansmaran* - Memories of Travels in China 8) *Rail Mein Chhutti* - A Holiday in a Railway Train 9)

Garhwal Mein Paanch Din - A Visit to Garhwal 10) Surma Ghati Mein - In the Surma Valley 11) Kashmir Mein Bara Din - Kashmir 12) Lanka Mein Vishram - Repose in Sri Lanka 13) Jail Mein Jeev-Jantu - The Animal Life of Prisons 14) Main Kab Padhta Hun - When do I Read? 15) Humara Sahitya - Our Literature 16) Sahitya Ki Buniyad - The Foundations of Literature 17) Shabdon Ka Arth - The Meaning of Words 18) Rashtra Bhasha Ka Prashn - The Question of Language 19) Snatikayein Kya Kare - What Should Graduates Do? 20) Samajik Hitt - The Good of Society 21) Vigyan Aur Yug - The Progress of Science.

¹⁰ See Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Unity of India, Collected Writings 1937-1940* (New York: John Day Company, 1942), 432.

¹¹ For the essay in English, see a reprint in Chanakya, 'We Want No Caesars', in Nilanjana Roy, Anikendra Sen, Devangshu Dutta [eds.], *Patriots, Poets and Prisoners: Selections from Ramananda Chatterjee's The Modern Review 1907-1947*, (New Delhi: Harper Collins India), 2016, 352. For the context in which Nehru wrote this essay anonymously, see 'We Want No Caesars: Nehru's Warning To Himself', *Caravan Magazine*, New Delhi, 14 November 2016, accessible at <http://www.caravanmagazine.in/vantage/want-no-caesars-nehru-warning>.

¹² In referring to his work, Nehru's own translations of his essays are preferred through this paper. These lines are excerpted from the essay on Kashmir that was translated and reprinted in Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Unity of India, Collected Writings 1937-1940* (New York: John Day Company, 1942), 220-240.

¹³ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Do Masjidein', *Rajneeti Se Door*, (New Delhi: Sasta Sahitya Mandal), 1957, 18; this essay first appeared in Jawaharlal Nehru, *Glimpses of World History*, (New Delhi: Penguin Books India), 2004, 1155 as 'Mustafa Kemal Breaks With The Past, May 8, 1933'.

¹⁴ Ibid, 23.

¹⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Jail Mein Jeev-Jantu', *Rajneeti Se Door*, (New Delhi: Sasta Sahitya Mandal), 1957, 102. Translation mine.

¹⁶ Ibid, 114-115. Translation mine.

¹⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Shabdon Ka Arth', *Rajneeti Se Door*, (New Delhi: Sasta Sahitya Mandal), 1957, 135. These lines appear originally in English in the book, presumably because they are a quote.

¹⁸ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Rashtrabhasha Ka Prashn', *Rajneeti Se Door*, (New Delhi: Sasta Sahitya Mandal), 1957, 142-153. This essay first appeared in English in 1937 and was reprinted as 'The Question of Language', July 15, 1937, in Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Unity of India, Collected Writings 1937-1940* (New York: John Day Company, 1942), 241-245.

¹⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Epilogue', *An Autobiography – Towards Freedom*, (New Delhi: Penguin Books India), 2004, 596. Emphasis mine.

²⁰ Sarvepalli Gopal, *Imperialists, Nationalists, Democrats: The Collected Essays*, ed. Srinath Raghavan (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2013) 202.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Vigyan Aur Yug', *Rajneeti Se Door*, (New Delhi: Sasta Sahitya Mandal), 1957, 164-172; This essay was first written as an address to the National Academy of Science delivered at their Annual Meeting held in Allahabad on 5 March 1938. It was reprinted in English in *The Unity of India*. I have used that version to benefit from Nehru's self-translation; see Jawaharlal Nehru, 'The Progress of Science' in *The Unity of India, Collected Writings 1937-1940* (New York: John Day Company, 1942), 178-183.

²³ Tagore's letter to Nehru of 17 August 1939, on the eve of Nehru's departure for China, included in Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson [eds.], *Selected Letters of Rabindranath Tagore*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Letter 332, 509-513.

²⁴ Ramachandra Guha, 'What Nehru Owed to Tagore', *The Hindu*, 23 November 2008.

²⁵ P N Furbank, quoted in Sunil Khilnani, "Looking for Indira Gandhi," *Seminar*, August 2004, 13, saying this about political life, but it could have just as easily been applied to the domain in which those lives took place.

²⁶ Sunil Khilnani, "Politics and National Identity" in *The Oxford Companion to Politics in India*, eds. Niraja G. Jayal & Pratap B. Mehta (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 194.

²⁷ Michael Collins, *Empire, Nationalism and the Postcolonial World: Rabindranath Tagore's Writings on History, Politics and Society* (Oxon: Routledge, 2012), 90-91.

²⁸ Tanika Sarkar, quoted in Ramachandra Guha, *Patriots and Partisans: From Nehru to Hindutva and Beyond*, (New Delhi: Penguin, 2012), 1.

²⁹ Rabindranath Tagore's phrase, made memorable by Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1999), 263.

³⁰ Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2009), 45; Guha, *Patriots and Partisans*, 189.

³¹ Rabindranath Tagore, quoted in Guha, *Patriots and Partisans*, 195.

³² Rabindranath Tagore, *Greater India*, trans. Surendranath Tagore (Madras: S. Ganesan, 1921), 101.

³³ Michael Collins, *Empire, Nationalism and the Postcolonial World: Rabindranath Tagore's Writings on History, Politics and Society* (Oxon: Routledge, 2012), 152 and 73.

³⁴ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003).

³⁵ On the 'innumerable difficulties' experienced when 'one tries to examine the ideas of Tagore with a view to finding out his political philosophy', see A. H. Somjee, 'The Political Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore', *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 22, 1-2, 1961, 134-143.

³⁶ On the dialogue with Okakura Tenshin, see Rustom Bharucha, 'Under the Sign of 'Asia': Rethinking 'Creative Unity' Beyond the 'Rebirth of Traditional Arts', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 2:1, 151-156; on the Gandhi truth debates, see Michael Collins, 'Rabindranath Tagore and Nationalism: An Interpretation', Heidelberg Papers In South Asian and Comparative Politics, Working Paper No. 42, October 2008; also see Amartya Sen, 'Tagore and his India', in Anders Hallengren [ed.], *Nobel Laureates in Search of Identity and Integrity*, (Hackensack: World Scientific, 2004), 177-214.

³⁷ Rustom Bharucha, 'Under the Sign of 'Asia': Rethinking 'Creative Unity' Beyond the 'Rebirth of Traditional Arts', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 2:1, 151-156. In turn, Bharucha is of the view that the most comprehensive and meticulous documentation in English of Tagore's reception in Japan and China is Stephen Hay, *Asian Ideas of East and West: Tagore and his Critics in Japan, China, and India*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 1970, 480.

³⁸ Partha Chatterjee, 'Tagore, China and the Critique of Nationalism', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 12, 2, 2011, 271-283.

³⁹ Amartya Sen, 'Tagore and China', in Tan Chung, Amiya Dev, Wang Bangwei [eds.] (New Delhi: Sage Publications India, 2011), 3-12.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 5.

⁴¹ On Tagore's visit to the US, see Stephen N. Hay, 'Rabindranath Tagore in America', *American Quarterly*, 14, 3, 1962, 439-463; also see Harold M Hurwitz, 'Tagore in Urbana, Illinois', *Indian Literature*, 4, 1/2, Tagore Number, 1960-1961, 27-36; on his visits to Italy, see Giuseppe Flora, 'Tagore and Italy: Facing History and Politics', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 77, 4, 2008, 1025-1057; on his visits to Yugoslavia, see Svetozar Petrovic, Tagore in Yugoslavia, *Indian Literature*, 13,2, 1992, 5-29, notably the section where Petrovic discusses how 'Nationalism became the book of the 1920s in Yugoslavia'.

⁴² Alastair Bonnett, 'Occidentalism and Plural Modernities: or How Fukuzawa and Tagore Invented the West', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 23, 2005, 505-525.

⁴³ For the anti-colonial project, see Michael Collins, 'History and the Postcolonial: Rabindranath Tagore's Reception in London, 1912-1913', *International Journal of the Humanities*, 4, 2007, 70-84.

⁴⁴ Ramachandra Guha, 'Traveling with Tagore', in Rabindranath Tagore, *Nationalism* (New Delhi: Penguin Classics), 2012.

⁴⁵ For a study of the differences between Gandhi's and Tagore approaches to philosophy, but also within philosophy, see Bindu Puri, *The Tagore-Gandhi Debate on Matters of Truth and Untruth*, (New York: Springer), 2015, 181; also see Michael Collins, 'Rabindranath Tagore and Nationalism: An Interpretation', Heidelberg Papers In South Asian and Comparative Politics, Working Paper No. 42, October 2008, where Collins rightly points out that these papers constitute 'a crucial historical and textual source for an interpretation of Tagore's thinking on nationalism'.

⁴⁶ For a sophisticated treatment of Tagore's critiques, see Rahul Rao, *Third World Protest: Between Home and the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 288.

⁴⁷ W. S. Urquhart, 'The Philosophical Inheritance of Rabindranath Tagore,' *The International Journal of Ethics*, 26, 3, 1916, 401.

⁴⁸ Frost makes the argument that Tagore never committed himself to an 'explicitly political cosmopolitan project', but I am more interested in his non-commitment to remaking the political per se, once it had been dismantled. See Mark R Frost, "'Beyond the Limits of Nation and Geography': Rabindranath Tagore and the Cosmopolitan Moment, 1916-1920", *Cultural Dynamics*, 24,2-3, 2012, 143-158.

⁴⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Chhutkara', *Rajneeti Se Door*, (New Delhi: Sasta Sahitya Mandal), 1957, 172. This essay first appeared in English in 1938, reprinted as Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Escape', *The Unity of India, Collected Writings 1937-1940* (New York: John Day Company, 1942), 200-204.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 202.

⁵¹ This is also very much a Gandhian method. As Bilgrami points out, 'Gandhi's thought and his ideas about specific political strategies in specific contexts flowed from ideas that were very remote from politics; instead they flowed from and were integrated to the most abstract epistemological and methodological commitments'; see Akeel Bilgrami, 'Gandhi, the Philosopher', *Economic and Political Weekly*, September 27, 2003, 4159.

⁵² Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Surma Ghati Mein', *Rajneeti Se Door*, (New Delhi: Sasta Sahitya Mandal), 1957, 70-76. This quote is taken from the English essay that first appeared in English in 1939, reprinted as Jawaharlal Nehru, 'In the Surma Valley', *The Unity of India, Collected Writings 1937-1940* (New York: John Day Company, 1942), 188.

- ⁵³ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Bambai Mein Monsoon', *Rajneeti Se Door*, (New Delhi: Sasta Sahitya Mandal), 1957, 38-40. This essay first appeared in English in 1939, reprinted as Jawaharlal Nehru, 'The Monsoon Comes to Bombay', *The Unity of India, Collected Writings 1937-1940* (New York: John Day Company, 1942), 211-213. In it, Nehru writes, 'I like Bombay. There is space.'
- ⁵⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'To Indira', Letter of 22 August 1933 in *Glimpses of World History*, (New Delhi: Penguin Books India), 2004.
- ⁵⁵ Rasoul Sorkhabi, 'Einstein and the Indian Minds: Tagore, Gandhi and Nehru', *Current Science*, 88, 7, 2005.
- ⁵⁶ See for instance Faisal Devji, ed., *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptations of Violence*, (London: Hurst Publishers, 2012), 176.
- ⁵⁷ Dunn explains how we must consider 'how far is... the meaning of any set of ideas irreducibly infected by the conditions of its birth'. See John Dunn, 'The Identity of the History of Ideas', *Philosophy*, 43, 164, 1968, 85-104.
- ⁵⁸ Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori [eds.], *Global Intellectual History*, (New York: Columbia University Press), 2013, 18.
- ⁵⁹ This idea is formulated in conversation with Kaviraj's assertion that 'nationalist ideology... made Indians believe that the imagining of the nation was an accomplished and irreversible fact; it did not have to be constantly presented and justified.' See Sudipta Kaviraj, *The Imaginary Institution of India: Politics and Ideas*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 121.
- ⁶⁰ Karuna Mantena, 'The Ideas of Indians', *The Caravan*, 1 March 2013, accessible at <http://www.caravanmagazine.in/reviews-essays/ideas-indians>
- ⁶¹ Sunil Khilnani, "Nehru's Judgement," in *Political Judgement: Essays for John Dunn*, eds. Richard Bourke and Raymond Geuss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 257.

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