

Kamala Nehru

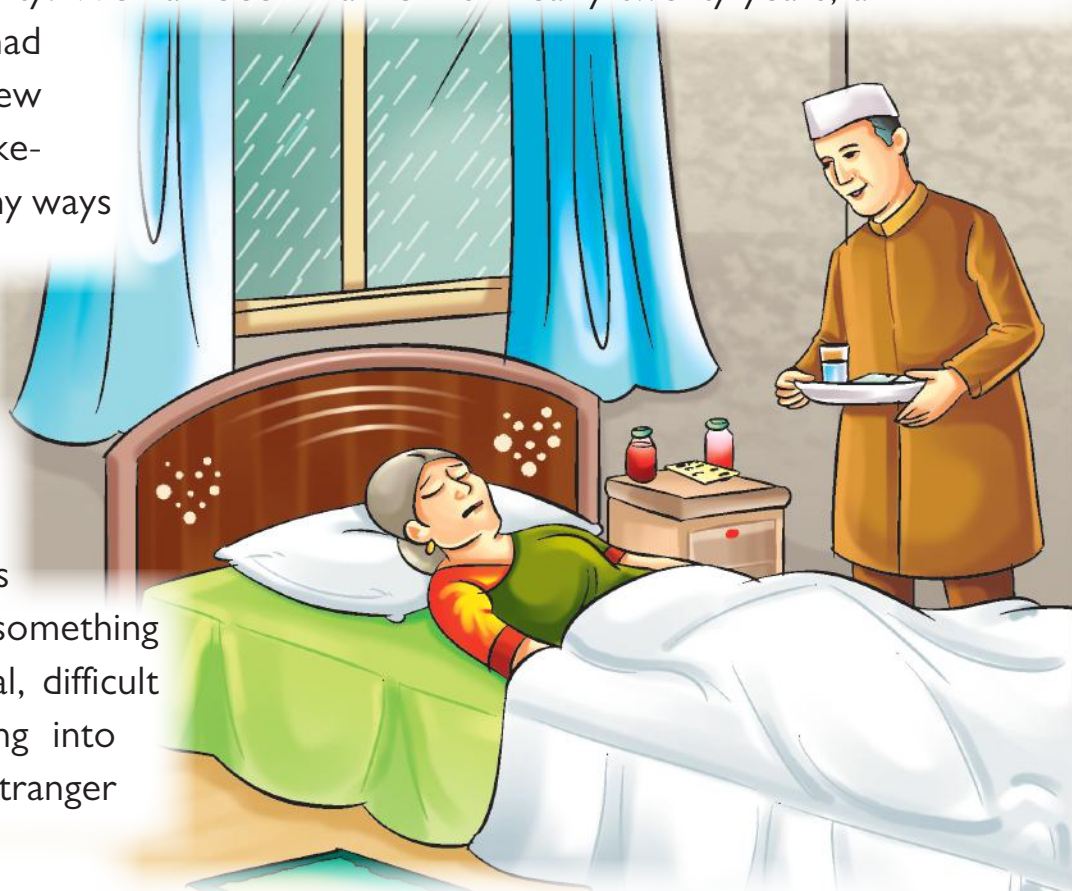
On September 4, 1935, I was released from the mountain jail of Almora, for news had come that my wife was in a critical condition. She was far away in a *sanatorium* at Badenweiler in the black Forest of Germany. I hurried by *automobile* and train to Allahabad, reaching there the next day, and the same afternoon I started on the air journey to Europe. The *airliner* took me to Karachi and Baghdad and Cairo, and from Alexandria a seaplane carried me to Brindisi. From Brindisi, I went by train to Basle in Switzerland. I reached Badenweiler on the evening of September 9, four days after I had left Allahabad and five days my release from Almora jail.



There was the same old brave smile on Kamala's face when I saw her, but she was too weak and too much in the grip of pain to say much. Perhaps my arrival made a difference, for she was a little better the next day and for some days after. But the crisis continued and slowly *drained* the life out of her. Unable to *accustom* myself to the thought of her death, I imagined that she was improving and that if she could only survive that crisis she might get well. The doctors, as their way, gave me hope. The immediate *crisis* seemed to pass and she held her ground. She was never well enough for a long conversation. We talked briefly and I would stop as soon as I noticed that she was getting tired. Sometimes I read to her. One of the books I remember reading out to her in this way was Pearl Buck's 'The Good Earth'. She liked my doing this, but our progress was slow.


Morning and afternoon I trudged from my *pension* in the little town to the sanatorium and spent a few hours with her. I was full of the many things I wanted to tell her and yet I had to *restrain* myself. Sometimes we talked a little of old times, old memories, of common friends in India; sometimes, a little *wistfully*, of the future and what we would do then. In spite of her serious condition she clung to the future. Her eyes were bright and vital, her face usually cheerful. Old friends who came to visit her were pleasantly surprised to find her looking better than they had imagined. They were misled by those bright eyes and that smiling face.

In the long autumn evenings I sat by myself in my room in the pension, where I was staying, or sometimes went out for a walk across the fields or through the forest. A hundred pictures of Kamala succeeded each other in my mind, a hundred aspects of her rich and deep personality. We had been married for nearly twenty years, and yet how many times she had surprised me by something new in her mental or spiritual make-up. I had known her in so many ways and, in later years, I had tried my utmost to understand her. That understanding had not been denied to me, but I often wondered if I really knew her or understood her. There was something elusive about her, something fey-like, real but unsubstantial, difficult to grasp. Sometimes, looking into her eyes, I would find a stranger peeping out at me.



Except for a little schooling, she had no formal education; her mind had not gone through the educational process. She came to us as an **unsophisticated** girl, apparently with hardly any of the complexes which are said to be so common now. She never entirely lost that girlish look, but as she grew into a woman her eyes acquired a depth and a fire, giving the impression of still pools behind which storms raged. She was not the type of modern girl, with the modern girl's habits and lack of poise; yet she took easily enough to modern way. But essentially she was an Indian girl and, more particularly, a Kashmiri girl, sensitive and proud, childlike and grown-up, foolish and wise..

Most of us menfolk were in prison. And then a remarkable thing happened. Our women came to the front and took charge of the struggle. Women had always been there of course, but now there was an **avalanche** of them, which took not only the British Government but their own menfolk by surprise. Here were these women, women of the upper or middle classes, leading sheltered lives in their homes-peasant



women, working-class women, rich women-pouring out in their tens of thousands in defiance of government order and police lathis. It was not only that display of courage and daring, but what was even more surprising was the organizational power they showed.

Never can I forget the thrill that came to us in Naini Prison when news of this reached us, the enormous pride in the women of India that filled us. We could hardly talk about all this among ourselves, for our hearts were full and our eyes were dim with tears.

My father had joined us later in Naini Prison, and he told us much that we did not know. He had been functioning outside as the leader of the civil disobedience movement, and he had encouraged in no way these aggressive activities of the women all over the country. He disliked, in his paternal and somewhat old-fashioned way, young women and old messing about in the streets under the hot sun of summer and coming into conflict with the police. But he realized the temper of the people and did not discourage anyone, not even his wife and daughters and daughter-in-law. He told us how he had been agreeably surprised to see the energy, courage and ability displayed by women all over the country; of the girls of his own household he spoke with affectionate pride.

At father's instance, a 'Resolution of Remembrance' was passed at thousands of public meetings all over India on January 26, 1931, the anniversary of India's Independence Day. These meetings were banned by the police and many of them were forcibly broken up. Father had organized this from his sickbed and it was a *triumph* of organization, for we could not use the newspapers, or the mails, or the telegraph, or the telephone, or any of the established printing presses. And yet at a fixed time on an *identical* day all over this vast country, even in remote villages, the resolution was read out in the language of the province and adopted. Ten days after the resolution was so adopted, father died.

The resolution was a long one. But a part of it related to the women of India: 'We record our homage and deep admiration for the womanhood of India, who, in the hour of peril for the motherland, forsook the shelter of their homes and, with unflinching courage and endurance, stood shoulder to shoulder with their menfolk in the front line of India's national army to share with them the sacrifices and triumphs of the struggle...'

In this *upheaval* Kamala had played a brave and notable part and on her experienced

shoulders fell the task of organizing our work in the city of Allahabad when every known worker was in prison. She made up for that inexperience by her fire and energy and, within a few months, she became the pride of Allahabad.

Word Treasure

sanatorium : hospital for chronic illness

perceiving : aware if

automobile : vehicle, motor

airline : aeroplane

accustomed : unexpected

drained : lacking

avalanche : sudden simple

triumph : great victory

crisis : problem

restrain : stop

wistfully : sadness

unsophisticated : very simple

up heaval : sudden change



EXERCISE TIME

Comprehension Skills

A. Tick (✓) the correct option :

- I went by _____ to Basle.
a. bus b. car c. train
- We had been married for nearly _____ years.
a. twenty b. twenty five c. thirty
- My _____ had joined us later in Naini Prison.
a. father b. mother c. uncle
- _____ days after the resolution was so adopted, father died.
a. Twelve b. Four c. Seven
- Kamala became the pride of _____.
a. Ahemdabad b. Aurangabad c. Allahabad

B. Fill in the blanks with the correct option :

mountain, twenty, brave, notable, January 26, 1931

- Pandit Nehru was released from the _____ jail of Almora.
- Pandit Nehru and Kamala Nehru were married for nearly _____ years.
- Resolution of remembrance was passed all over India on _____.
- Kamala Nehru played a _____ and _____ part in the freedom struggle of India.

C. Write 'T' for true and 'F' for false statements :

1. Kamala Nehru was perfectly healthy when Pandit Nehru saw her in the sanatorium.
2. Kamala Nehru was a well-educated Kashmiri girl.
3. All classes of women joined the India's struggle for independence.
4. Pandit Nehru's father didn't like the participation of women in the freedom struggle.
5. Resolution of remembrance paid to tribute to women of India.
6. After twelve days the resolution was so adopted and father died.



D. Answer the following questions :

1. What was Kamala Nehru's condition when he saw her ?
2. How did they spend the last few days together ?
3. How did Nehru's father react to various activities of the women ?
4. What was the resolution of remembrance ?
5. What was the tribute paid to women in the resolution ?
6. How was Kamala Nehru's mind in her schooling time ?

Fun with Words

E. Match the words given in column I with meanings given in column II :

Column I

1. sanatorium
2. crisis
3. accustom
4. pension
5. wistfully
6. homage
7. upheaval

Column II

- a. dutiful honour or respect shown
- b. strong agitation (of society), sudden or violent change.
- c. with mournful expectancy or longing.
- d. clinic where patients suffering or recovering from a long illness are treated.
- e. small private hotel in certain European countries.
- f. point in the progress of a disease when change taken place resulting in the recovery or death.
- g. to make (a thing) customary,

Essential Grammar

F. Adjectives are connected with nouns and pronouns. They usually tell us about people or things.

They can go before nouns or after verbs—be, seem, look, etc.

Adverbs are connected with other words, for example, verbs.

Adverbs of manner tell us how somebody does something or how something happens.

He looked hungry. He ate hungrily.

The music is slow. The pianist is playing slowly.

It is an easy language. You can learn this language easily.

In the above sentences, 'hungry', 'slow' and 'easy' are adjectives.

'Hungrily', 'slowly' and 'easily' are adverbs.

In most cases of adverbs of manner : Adjectives + ly = Adverb

Adjective : sad, quick, polite, careful, happy

Adverb : sadly, quickly, politely, carefully, happily

G. Choose correct word for the following :

1. I felt _____ today. (happy / happily)
2. You seem very _____. (angry / angrily)
3. She walked way _____. (quick / quickly)
4. Could I have a _____ word with you ? (quick / quickly)
5. I listen _____ to the teacher. (careful / carefully)
6. She looks _____. (sad / sadly)
7. I have got an _____ job for you. (easy / easily)

H. Write adverbs of the following words :

- | | | | |
|------------|-------|--------------|-------|
| 1. freedom | _____ | 9. slow | _____ |
| 2. brave | _____ | 10. real | _____ |
| 3. fast | _____ | 11. fair | _____ |
| 4. modern | _____ | 12. most | _____ |
| 5. proud | _____ | 13. complete | _____ |
| 6. easy | _____ | 14. natural | _____ |
| 7. quick | _____ | 15. simple | _____ |
| 8. silent | _____ | 16. actual | _____ |

Essential Writing

- I. Write a brief biographical account of a person you consider to be a role-model.

Essential Speaking

- J. 'The Discovery of India' traces India's history, culture and freedom struggle. Discuss in your class about it.

Fun to Do

- K. Which qualities do you think, a leader have? Write these qualities on small slips and paste it here.

My Dream Leader Should Have