

Indo-American Relations: From Emergence into Strength



1949

From left: Indira Gandhi, First Lady Elizabeth Truman, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, President Harry S Truman and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru at a reception at the Indian Embassy in Washington, D.C.

The United States was the First Country to Exchange Ambassadors with Modern India

(Excerpts from remarks by K. Asaf Ali, Ambassador of India, on presentation of his credentials to U.S. President Harry S Truman in February 1947)

It is my unique privilege as the first Ambassador of the far-famed and ancient land of India and of her 400 million people to have the honour of presenting to You, Sir, as the Head of the Great Republic of the United States of America, the Letter of Credence to which His Majesty King George the Sixth of the United Kingdom, as advised by the Honourable Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Vice President and Foreign Minister of the Interim Government of India, has set His hand and seal, and charged me with the honourable task of delivering it to Your Excellency in person.

I may, on this historic occasion, crave Your indulgence, Sir, to assure You and through You the great and powerful people of the United States that my countrymen have watched with deep and extremely friendly interest the inspiring spectacle of the free and freedom-loving people of the United States marching from peak to peak of prosperity, and ever higher achievements, which have made the progressive pattern of Western civilization worthy of sincere admiration.

This is the first time after centuries, that India, at the dawn of her renewed freedom, has entered into direct diplomatic relationship at the highest level with a Power and people of the Western hemisphere who occupy a unique place in history in every sense of the term. Permit me, Sir, to assure You that my Government and people very greatly appreciated Your Government's decision to be the first in the world to exchange Ambassadors with India. We are peculiarly sensitive to friendship on equal and honourable terms, and loyalty to friends, once we know they are friends, is our national characteristic...



1947-1948

Ambassador to India
Henry F. Grady



1947-1948

Ambassador to the United States
K. Asaf Ali

New Delhi

Rec'd October 27, 1946
5:50 p.m.

Control 9202

His Excellency The Secretary Of State Washington

9262. I have the honour to inform Your Excellency that pending the appointment of an Ambassador to represent His Majesty The King in respect of India in the USA, His Majesty has approved the appointment of Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai as His Majesty's Charge d'Affaires for India. I have the honour to request that Sir G.S. Bajpai be received by Your Excellency's Government in that capacity. Signed Jawaharlal Nehru, member in charge External Affairs Department, Government of India.

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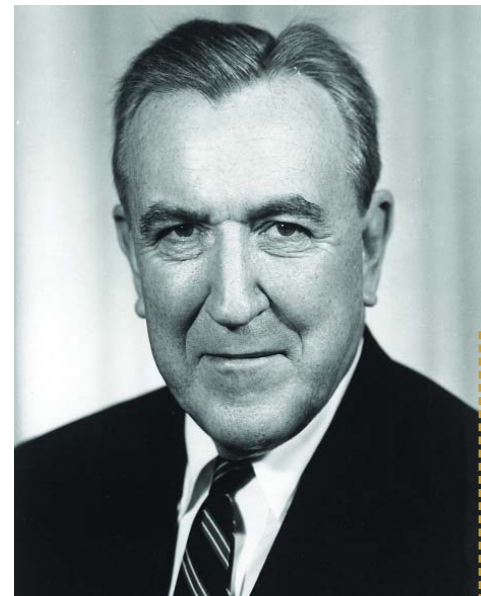
Min. Foreign Affairs
28-10-46
1st DIVISION OF
MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS
OCT 28 1946



1949-1952

Ambassador to the United States

Vijayalakshmi
Pandit



1951-1953, 1963-1969

Ambassador to India

Chester Bowles



1952

Former First Lady
Eleanor Roosevelt tries
her hand at a spinning
wheel during her visit
to New Delhi.

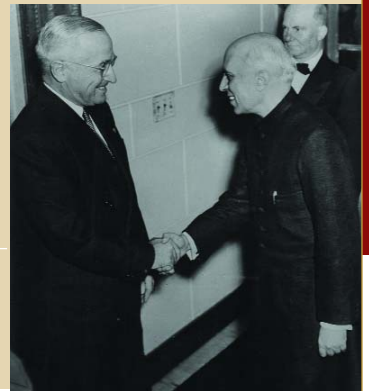
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Truman Telegram

On this memorable occasion, I extend to you, to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, and to the people of the Dominion of India the sincere best wishes of the Government and the people of the United States of America. We welcome India's new and enhanced status in the world community of sovereign independent nations, assure the new Dominion of our continued friendship and good will, and reaffirm our confidence that India, dedicated to the cause of peace and to the advancement of all people, will take its place at the forefront of the nations of the world in the struggle to fashion a world society founded in mutual trust and respect. India faces many grave problems, but its resources are vast, and I am confident that its people and leadership are equal to the tasks ahead. In the years to come the people of this great new nation will find the United States a constant friend. I earnestly hope that our friendship will in the future, as in the past, continue to be expressed in close and fruitful cooperation in international undertakings and in cordiality in our relations one with the other.

President Harry S Truman and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in 1949.



Telegram from President Harry S Truman to Lord Louis Mountbatten, August 14, 1947

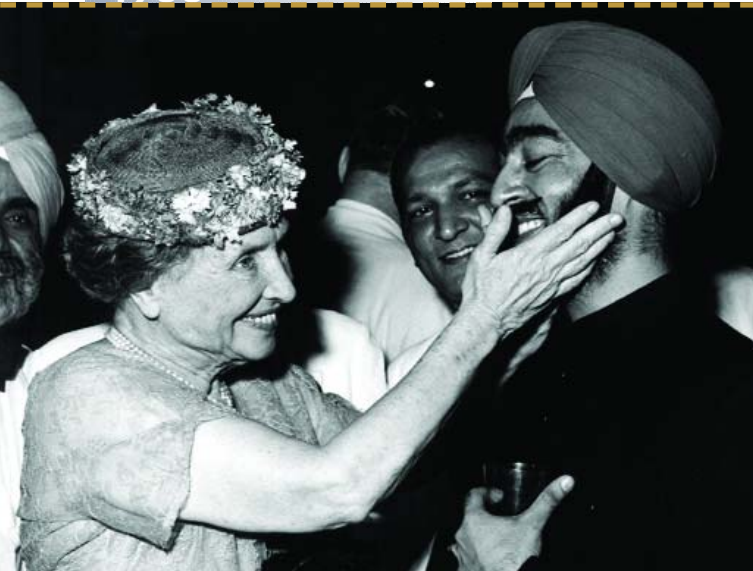


1959

Martin Luther King, Jr. and wife Coretta Scott King lay a wreath at Raj Ghat during a visit to India.

Helen Keller with a guest during her visit to Kolkata.

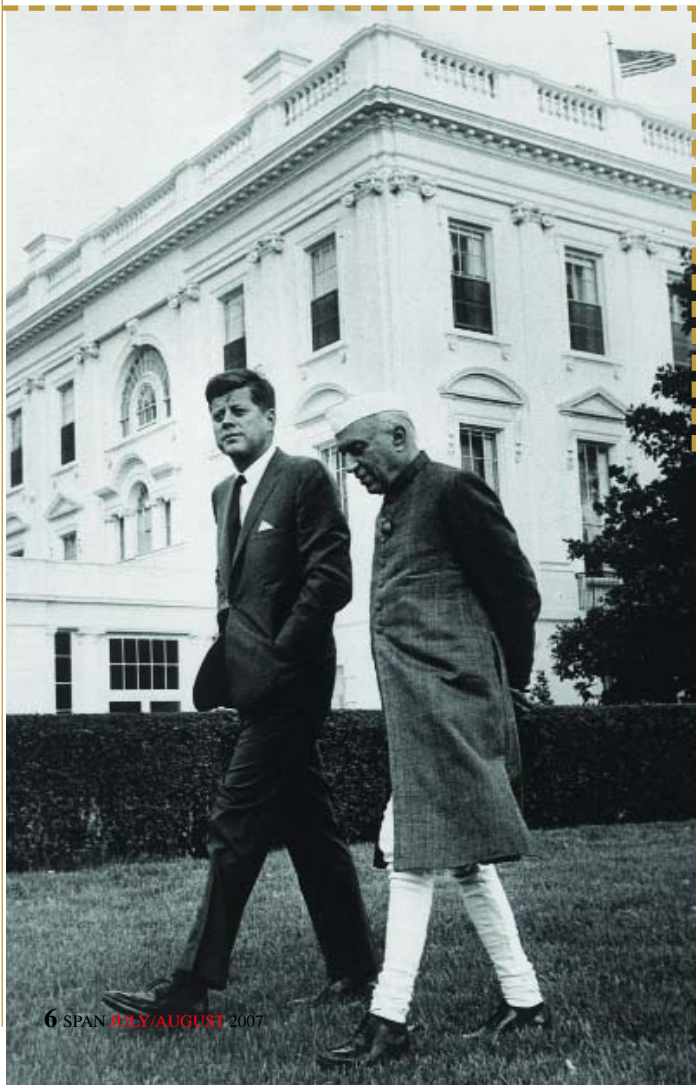
1955





1959

President Dwight D. Eisenhower arrives for the state banquet held in his honor by President Rajendra Prasad at Rashtrapati Bhavan. He was the first U.S. President to visit India.



1961

President John F. Kennedy and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in the White House garden. Prime Minister Nehru had also visited the United States in 1956.

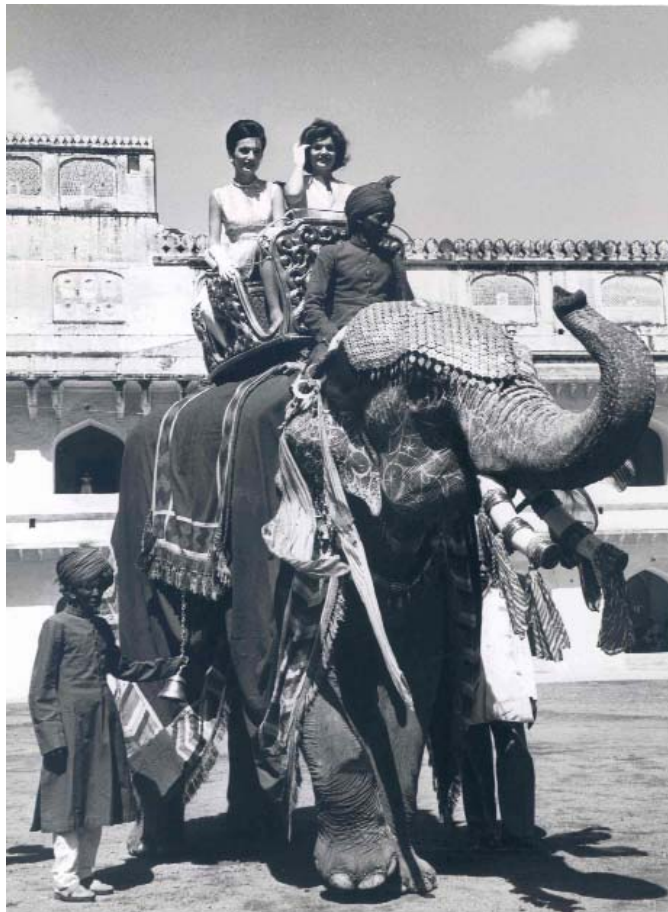
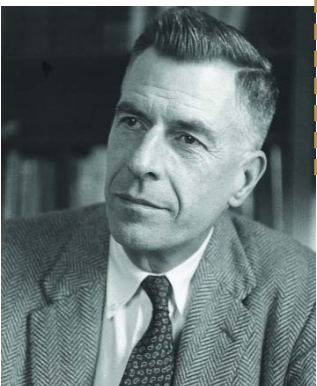
1961-1968

Ambassador to the United States
B.K. Nehru



1961-1963

Ambassador to India
J.K. Galbraith



1962
First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy (right) and her sister Princess Lee Radziwill ride an elephant at the Amber Palace near Jaipur, Rajasthan.



1963
President S. Radhakrishnan (second from right) with Walt Disney (right) at Disneyland, California, during his visit to the United States.



Sir Stafford Cripps and Mohandas K. Gandhi.

While we fully realize that the struggle for Indian freedom will have to be carried on and won in India itself, we value very greatly the good opinion and sympathy of the people of America. In the world today they represent the most powerful democracy, and they will no doubt play a dominating part in the re-shaping of world affairs. As we are ourselves devoted and committed to the ideal of a democratic free state in India we naturally look to America in many ways.

Letter by Jawaharlal Nehru to an American friend in January 1940

1975

Filmmaker Satyajit Ray visited Washington to launch a retrospective of his films. The series, sponsored by the American Film Institute, gave American audiences the opportunity to see 17 of Ray's classics. He was awarded an Honorary Lifetime Achievement Oscar in 1992.

President Richard M. Nixon plants a sapling at Raj Ghat in New Delhi. He had visited India as Vice President in 1953.

1969



1966

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and President Lyndon B. Johnson leave the President's Office at the White House. He had visited India as Vice President in 1961.



1973-1975

**Ambassador to India
Daniel P. Moynihan**

“We Americans may have some disagreement among ourselves as to what we are fighting for, but one thing we are sure what we are not fighting for is to hold the British Empire together. We don’t want you to have illusions. If you cling to the Empire at the expense of a United Nations’ victory, you will lose the war. Because you will lose us.”

An open letter to the people of Britain published in *Life* magazine in 1942

Indian Declaration of Independence Draws on American Declaration

“We hold these truths to be self-evident,” states the American Declaration of Independence, “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

The Declaration continues:

“That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, —That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”

It was to these words of the American Declaration of Independence that the framers of the Indian Declaration turned to for inspiration on January 26, 1930. The document prepared by the Indian National Congress was read at meetings throughout India. It says:

“We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people as of any other people to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have necessities of life so that they may have full opportunities of growth.

We believe also that if any government deprives a people of these rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or abolish it...”

Both the U.S. and Indian declarations are in the form of a general preamble and a list of abuses by the British government of the time. Since the United States and India were under colonial rule when these documents were written, their grievances are in many ways similar: unfair taxation, arbitrary exile, interference with trade, imposition of an expensive colonial administration and the presence of an army of occupation.



HIRAK SEN

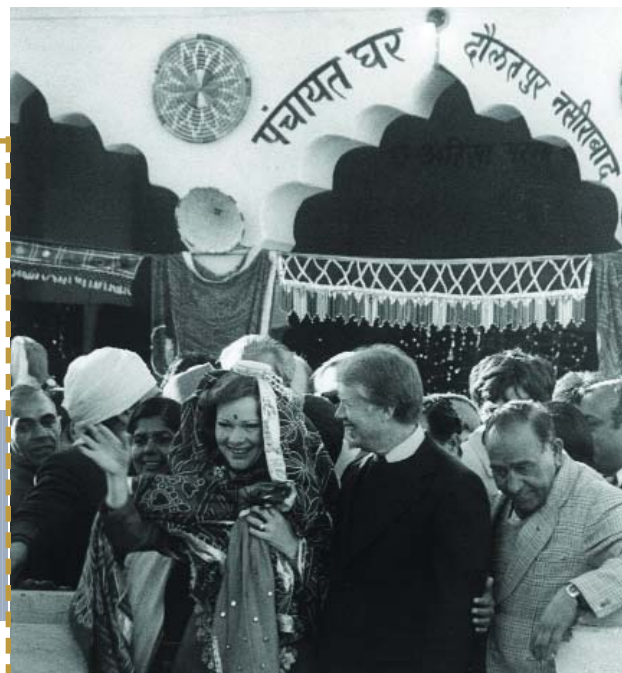


1978
Prime Minister Morarji Desai and President Jimmy Carter at the White House.



1977-1979

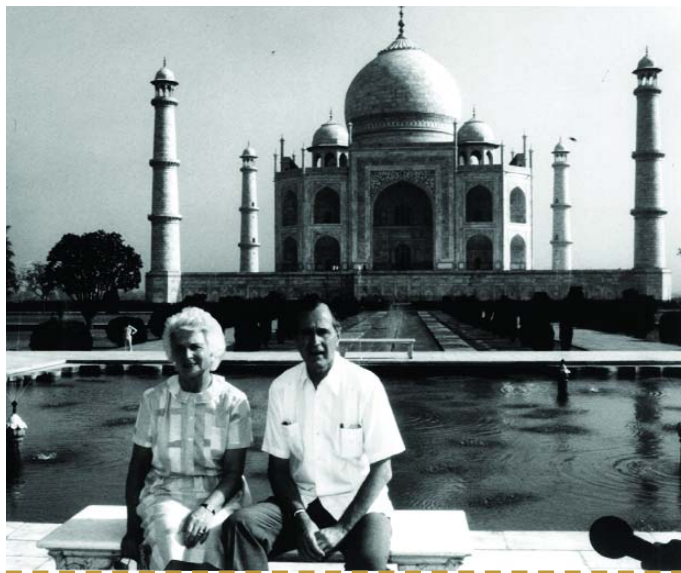
Ambassador to the United States
Nani A. Palkhivala



1978
President Jimmy Carter and First Lady Rosalynn Carter at Daulatpur village in Haryana. The village was later renamed Carterpuri.

1980-1984

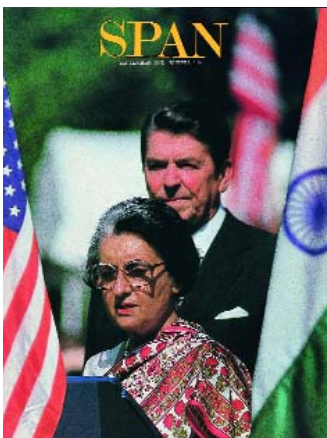
Ambassador to the United States
K.R. Narayanan



Stanley Wolpert's books are available at the American Library in New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai.

1984

Vice President George Bush and wife Barbara Bush visit the Taj Mahal in Agra, Uttar Pradesh.



1982

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi with President Ronald Reagan at the White House. Prime Minister Gandhi had also visited the United States in 1971.

1985

President Ronald Reagan, First Lady Nancy Reagan, Sonia Gandhi and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in Washington.





New Delhi

The first diplomatic organization of the U.S. government to be set up in New Delhi was the office of the Personal Representative of the President in Cochin House in 1941. The office moved into Bahawalpur House (left) in 1943. After India won independence in 1947, a full-fledged American Embassy was established at Bahawalpur House. The Embassy moved to Chanakyapuri in 1959.



Mumbai

A 1937 photograph of Wankaner House. It was later renamed Lincoln House and now houses the offices of the U.S. Consulate General. In 1843, President Martin Van Buren issued a commission dated October 5, 1838, to Philemon S. Parker, of New York, as Consul. At times during the 19th and early 20th centuries, a Consular Agency at Karachi was under its jurisdiction. Effective July 1, 1945, it was raised to a Consulate General, with Consul General Howard Donovan as the principal officer.



Kolkata

The Metropolitan Building in Kolkata which housed the United States Information Service office till 1991. The story of official representation of the U.S. Government in India begins in this city in November 1792, when America's first President, George Washington, nominated Benjamin Joy, of Massachusetts, to be Consul. In the 1860s, the Consulate General had under its jurisdiction seven Consular Agencies: Aden, Akyab, Bassein, Chittagong, Cocanada, Moulmein and Rangoon.



Chennai

The Chennai Consulate building which opened in 1969. A Consular Agency was established on May 24, 1867, with the appointment of Joseph L. Thompson, of Massachusetts, as Consular Agent. The post continued as a Consular Agency under the Consulate General at Calcutta until 1908. In June that year, the post was raised to the rank of a Consulate. It continued as a Consulate until August 15, 1947, when it was elevated to the rank of a Consulate General.

1992-1996

Ambassador to the United States
S.S. Ray



1994

Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao and President Bill Clinton address a press conference in Washington.

Courtesy THE WHITE HOUSE



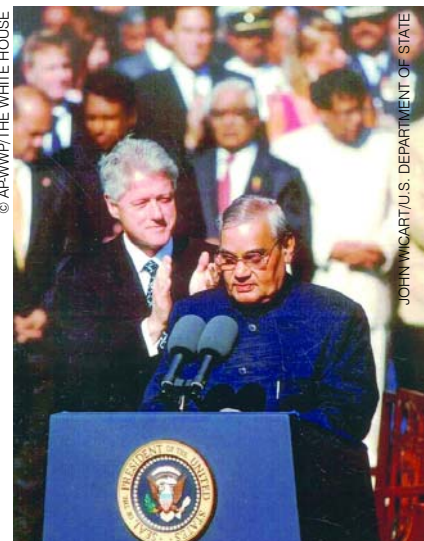
1994-1997

Ambassador to India
Frank G. Wisner



1995

First Lady Hillary Clinton meets Mother Teresa at the opening of the Mother Teresa Home for Infant Children in Washington in June. The First Lady visited India in March 1995 with daughter Chelsea.



2000

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and President Bill Clinton at the welcome ceremony on the White House lawns in September. President Clinton had visited India a few months earlier, in March.