

FOTO 1

THE WEDDING OF INDIRĀ NEHRŪ

1

INTRODUCTION

FOTO 2

2

In the city of Allahabad in northern India, this is the gracious mansion called Ānand Bhavan or Happiness House as it is seen by throngs of visitors today. In the years of the struggle for Indian independence it was the home of the great national leaders of the Nehru family--Motilāl, Jawāharlāl, and Indirā. Motilal Nehru, the father of Jawaharlal, was its builder. FOTO 3.

3

Motilal was a brilliant barrister who became also, late in life, a national leader of the independence movement.

This is the happy home that Jawaharlal longed for during many terms in British prisons, in days before India's independence. FOTO 4.

4

Here Jawaharlal's daughter Indirā grew up. Here at Anand Bhavan she was married, as we shall see, and here Indirā lived, later, with her son, Rājīv.

In the first age of India's independence each of these three--Jawaharlal, Indira, and Rajiv-- became prime ministers of India. So this house is India's Mount Vernon, to say the least-- the seat not only of a founder, but of a dynasty. Among the important happenings at this Happiness House, none was more important, in the end, than the wedding of Indira Nehru to Feroze Gandhi. It took place on March 26th, 1942. Now, at the beginning of a new century, Anand Bhavan is a museum of the Nehru family, a resort of scholars, and a national shrine that is thronged by patriots and tourists. FOTO 1.

Wedding of Indira  
11/5/42 2-99  
5  
6

This film about Indira's wedding takes us back sixty years to the period when Britain still ruled in India. In 1942 Anand Bhavan was already famous as a fountainhead of hopes for Indian independence. The attention that Anand Bhavan got from patriots then, however, was not greater than the attention that it got from the police. Jawaharlal's demands for independence were vocal and incessant and they were public and vehement. Incessant, also, were the imprisonments that he suffered in consequence. In March 1942 he had been free for three months-- an interlude in a series of confinements that had been going on for twenty years. He was using this precious leave from prison to give attention to his family and especially to planning the wedding of his beloved daughter Indira. FOTOS 5&6.

She was his only child, and he was her only living parent. Jawaharlal's wife Kamala was no longer living, so it was his responsibility alone to make arrangements for the ritual and to invite guests and to set the date and the place..

As the setting for the wedding no place would do, for any Nehru, save beloved Anand Bhavan. FOTO 7.

The house had ample verandas on several sides, and about the verandas there were lawns--lawns that would provide standing room for uncounted onlookers that would inevitably come to watch this great event in the life of a family of national fame. Jawaharlal chose, for the central ceremony, a veranda on the quiet rear side of the house, away from the street. FOTO 8.

That veranda had the special advantage of having adjoined to it a spacious stone platform extending outward into the lawn. Motilal Nehru had added the platform to the house with just such social occasions as this in mind. In the center of its floor there was a sunken box for fire--a central and necessary feature for any wedding performed in the Hindu tradition. FOTO 9.

Unroofed, open to the sky, shaded by the canvas of a high awning, it was an airy and cool setting for a gathering, event even on a hot March morning, and its spectacles could be seen by a thousand eyes. FOTO 10.

How these wide spaces were to be used by the wedding party, one can understand from this snapshot taken at the actual performance. Kindred and close friends alone are seen here in the inset veranda and on the platform. A deep crowd is to be imagined, extending far behind the cameraman but able to see very well the actionns on the raised platform. FOTO 11.

The calendar was studied, and the time of the wedding was determined carefully. The date was set beyond any possibility of change even in the year 1942--a time of deadly war and of many kinds of disruption. The ceremony would begin at nine o'clock in the morning, on Thursday March 26th, 1942.

Seventy guests have been invited--relatives and special friends.. As time will tell, there will be unexpected guests also, uninvited but welcome: national leaders of highest rank. A world crisis will drive them, anxious and unannounced, to the house of Jawaharlal their political chief. Neither will the general public be forbidden to come. As spectators they will be permitted to fill the lawns and even to stand in the nearby streets. This general sufferance will extend to reporters, and to this young instructor at the local Ewing Christian College. He was urged by friends of the Nehrus to go to the wedding with his movie camera, because he

7

8

9

10

11

alone in all the city--despite the harsh shortages of that third year of war--possessed one short roll of color film.

Even in the understanding of the simple, the coming wedding at Anand Bhavan was a very important event: the Nehrus were a family of highest social standing by any standard foreign or domestic. Those who were politically wise already guessed that Jawaharlal, the host, would someday govern India. But no one dreamed, then, that the wedding was the foundational event in the history of a whole line of prime ministers of India. FOTO 12  
The marriage would be fruitful. Indira would hold in her lap Rajiv, third of the line sprung from Anand Bhavan.

Almost no one knew the gravity and complexity of the issues that the host of the wedding was having to deal with on the wedding day.. "Happiness House" was not simply an abode of bliss. Even for the strongest of men, it was a testing-ground for stability and endurance. Allahabad on that day was a burning-spot in world affairs. The crisis there was of course political, but first of all it was military, sprung from recent world developments of very great violence.. Japanese armies were moving westward through Burma to India's eastern border. A hundred days before, the Japanese had joined Hitler's war with a massive surprise attack on the America's Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbor. FOTOS 13, 14, 15, 16 IN QUICK SUCCESSION.

Their bombing done, they had destroyed the only force that could have blocked their conquest of the seas as far as India. FOTO 17.

Let loose, their forces like a tidal wave swept over southeast Asia. They sank British and Dutch fleets in Indonesia and on the approaches to Singapore. The British surrendered Singapore itself on February 15th. On the second of this very month of March, three weeks before the wedding, the Japanese took Rangoon. Thousands of Indians and Europeans from southeast Asia took to the roads, fleeing toward India on foot, one step ahead of the Japanese. Turning inland, Japanese forces cut the famous Burma Road that had been supplying the last redoubt of Chinese freedom at Chungking. By the day of the wedding the Japanese possessed the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal and the first Japanese bombs were falling on the shores of mainland India. FOTO 18.

The members of the Indian National Congress knew the behavior of the Japanese in China too well to welcome them to India as liberators. They had to be

12

[Better hoped for, navy films]

14-16

17

18

resisted. But how? Mahātmā Gāndhī, the informal but very powerful leader of the Indian National Congress at the time of the Japanese onrush, proposed an entirely spiritual resistance. His chieftains of the National Congress' Working Committee would not promise to make their stand before the Japanese without weapons. The Mahatma then declared that he could not work any further with his colleagues in defense planning. He withdrew, and named Jawaharlal to be the successor to his position in the discussions of the Working Committee. In mid-January 1942 the National Congress did in fact give Nehru the primacy in discussion of defense. This burden of leadership, informal but real, still lay upon Jawaharlal on March 26th. Politically and otherwise, the problem of defense was complicated, and it was critical.

In London also, the prospect of another surge of Japanese conquest was causing great consternation. The leaders of Parliament drew up a plan for reconciliation with Indian nationalists: if they would cooperate at once with the defense effort of the existing government of India, Britain would guarantee India's immediate freedom at the end of the war. Sir Stafford Cripps arrived in Delhi on March 22nd bringing the complete proposal. FOTO 19.

On victory, it was promised, a constituent assembly of Indians only, would be called together to create under certain rules an independent government chosen entirely by Indians.

The rules that were laid down, were troubling. They would allow Muslims to withdraw, if they wished, to create Pakistan. But great unease centered also around the phrase, "On victory." *What* victory? The prestige of British generals at the moment was not high. Could *those* generals win? or only Indian leaders? Any choice of leadership would be a gamble, and a misjudgment would be catastrophic. Yet any long debate about leadership in defense would make the ensuing defense, in fact, no defense at all.

The Working Committee of the Indian National Congress had to confer and confer quickly. At once some of them began to show up at Anand Bhavan

unannounced. Before and during the wedding they were pressing for Nehru's attention, asking for moments that he could scarcely spare as single host at a great family observance.. FOTO 20.

Another tumult in which Jawaharlal was involved on the wedding day was a storm of opposition to the marriage match itself. To traditionalists of two faiths it was offensive, violating accepted practice in aspect after aspect. The groom had not been chosen in the traditional manner nor within traditional limits . Feroze Gandhi (not related to the Mahatma) had been chosen by Indira personally and by Indira alone, and she insisted that the right to decide was solely hers. Feroze was not quite the husband that Jawaharlal would have selected for her if he had been a traditional family autocrat. But he had long preached that the choice of a life-mate belonged to the person who had to bear the consequences. He could not, would not, cast a veto now. He tried to persuade Indira to delay her decision. Indira would have none of it. Shortly he accepted her choice, chose a date for the wedding, and gave the news to the press.. Thereby he had made peace with his daughter, but with certain others he had made war. The irregularity of the match enraged orthodox Hindus especially. FOTO 21. Feroze..

In no way, they declared, was Feroze Gandhi eligible for marriage to Indira Nehru. He was not a Cashmere brahman, nor any kind of brahman. He came of a middle-class family. His people were not even Hindus but Pārsīs. Zoroastrians by religion, they did not worship Hindu gods nor were they qualified for participation in Vedic rituals. Indian law provides no form of ritual by which a person of such alien religion could validly marry a Hindu.. Indira cannot become this man's legal wife. She will be his concubine, nothing more. The Nehrus, they said, were setting a dreadful example before the youth of India! There was Parsi anger also, based on a strong tabu against the marriage of any member of their community to a non-Zoroastrian. A swarm of abusive letters came down on the head of Jawaharlal. Even on the day before the wedding he was fearing that the ceremony might be marred by a demonstration in the street.

20

21

Neither Indira nor her father were afraid to ignore these denunciations of marriage outside the faith. More difficult for them was the question of the form of ritual that might be used. Neither were fond of rituals. Both hated old liturgies that were meaningless or offensive to modern minds. Both wanted to omit any Hindu materials that would be offensive to Feroze's Zoroastrian family. No ceremony was available, or had ever been devised, to unite such a couple. It would have to be created now. But neither Jawaharlal nor Indira had either taste or talent for the crafting of religious rituals. FOTO 22, ~~PENDING~~: Pandit Lachmīdhar śāstrī

obtained  
Feb. 2000

22

For help the Nehrus approached an innovative priest of their acquaintance, Pandit Lachmīdhar Śāstrī, professor of Sanskrit at St. Stephen's College, Delhi. He was a nationalist and a religious radical. He was more than glad to do the negative work of cutting away what Jawaharlal called the mumbo jumbo of the usual Hindu wedding, and agreement on the excisions was easy. In his conception of the new materials that should be used in replacement of the old, the pandit was less pliant. As substitutes for the old liturgies he had a store of modernist scriptures selected by himself, and strong feeling in favor of their use. As a passionate nationalist he was determined to inject civic values and patriotic sentiments into his reformed rituals. Nehru, though himself a politician, resisted the pandit's urge to politicize the coming ceremony. He brought into the editorial room, so to speak, the advice of Mahatma Gandhi, who had suggested beginning with the traditional Hindu materials alone, and using the red pencil alone, to find by subtraction a liturgical remnant of old scriptures that would be inoffensive to persons of all minds and all religions. The Mahatma's advice was not entirely neglected in the final literary work on the ceremony, but Jawaharlal had much else to do, and the workplace was the pandit's. On the great day, when Professor Lachmidhar came to the altar with the manual of the actual ritual in his hand, it was *his* taste, clearly, that had prevailed in its compiling. As liturgist and leader,

he took his hearers through a forest of strange new Vedic texts that he had selected for their civic content. FOTO 23/ i.e. the floral FOTO 1.

23

The pandit's performers needed steering! We shall be seeing their pleas for help, and shall notice the guidance that the pandit was giving them from time to time, by gesture and by nudges.

But the rite that the Sāstrī created, though it was strange in its surface appearance, was not entirely new in its basic outline. The great symbolic acts of the ancient Hindu wedding were well preserved in this new rite, and they were kept in their traditional sequence. When the camera catches them, they are visible milestones in understanding the progress of the ceremony. They tell us how far the action has gone. They even allow us to understand that our camera has just missed certain important acts, and enable us to reconstruct them.. Even though the the ritual incidents are often glimpsed with little of their surrounding context, the series of age-old visual metaphors tell us in a universally-intelligible wedding-language the elemental story of the uniting of Indira and Feroze. THE FILM: (The fotos cease now, for a time. The numbers on left refer to topics in the film.)

\*

1.

We are at the street side of Anand Bhavan, looking through the main gate, *seeing it* as it was seen a lifetime ago, on the morning of the wedding. In a few minutes we shall be at the moment that was set for the first events of this important important day.

And if this were not a Nehru wedding this gate would be, right now, the scene of a spectacle of great pomp. The entourage of the bridegroom would be approaching in gay procession, moving to the music of a hired brass band. All the groom's relatives and friends would be in the splendid file, dressed in their best.

And at their head the groom himself would ride astride a prancing horse, royally dressed. He would be a prince for the day-- and at a princely cost.. Tradition required Indian families to put on such a lavish show, by borrowing and bankrupting themselves if necessary. Jawaharlal had refused to support such extravagant customs, even by his example. At his request the Gandhi family had simply come over, informally, to his house. The ritual action of the day will begin and end in the lawn at rear, on the platform we have seen that adjoins a back veranda. The principal persons of the wedding were already stirring there, planning the seating for the many guests and for themselves, and awaiting the first arrivals.

2.

A very young relative is the first guest to arrive. Eager but bashful, he clings to the hand of his father.

3.

We catch a first glimpse of Jawaharlal, principal host of the day. He is in rapid movement but he pauses an instant to give even this cameraman a greeting.

There is some small problem, still, about the use of space. A broad circle about the sacred fire is to be kept clear. At its edge, the principal persons of the ceremony are to be seated in two facing lines that form a rectangle. Mats have been laid down there in two facing rows. One of the seats is to remain vacant. It is a mat for Kamala, Indira's mother. She is no longer living, and yet she is an honored presence..

4..

This is Vijaya Lakshmī Pandit, Jawaharlal's sister. In the deceased mother's place, she will be her brother's helper today in hospitality to guests. She will be free India's ranking diplomat one day--soon, India's ambassador in

Washington.

5.

Here is Indira, the happy bride. This day brings long dreams of hers to realization. In this celebration she does not wear the family gems, as most brides would. Flowers are her only ornaments. Nor will silks or brocades be seen here. All garments will be of homespun cotton. The Nehrus will set their own standards stubbornly. Wasteful customs will have no place in the observances of this wedding.

6.

The jaunty groom, Feroze. A tease and a prankster, he will save today's proceedings from solemnity. He wears the national Gandhi cap, the formal Indian coat, and jodhpur trousers.

The many guests have now arrived, all have been graciously shown their seats. Nehru has taken his own seat. At the beginning Indira sits at her father's side, Feroze facing her across the rectangle. The time to start has come.

7.

Settling down amidst confusion, Nehru asks a final question. Last directions are given to him and to others. Garments, hair, get final adjustments.

8

Suddenly we notice that the priest is gesturing rhythmically now, reciting with a bundle of stems of some kind in his right hand. This is the bundle of *darbha* grass that is a kind of baton for priests who are officiating in Vedic ceremonies. So we know that the ceremony has begun: lines are being chanted--will continue to be chanted--for more than an hour. Often the utterances will be speeches, actually,

of the principals, that the priest will chant on behalf of his clients in their various roles in the ritual.

Our camera could not record sounds. Visible actions, too, were few for many minutes. Yet, as the pandit's words rolled on, the camera was able to catch and keep, from time to time, dramatic moments of ritual action that told a story...

9.

Acts with clear dramatic meaning begin here as Indira and Feroze, sitting opposite each other in their respective lines, reach out to each other across the rectangle and clasp each other's hands. It is the traditional wedding act called *Pāṇigrahaṇa*, the Grasping of Hands, expressing the betrothed pair's own resolve to wed. We know its early place in the traditional sequence of wedding events.

And we know therefore that several quiet but important exchanges have already taken place. An essential first question has been asked by Jawaharlal or by the priest on his behalf, in words like these: "Feroze, is it your firm intention to take this daughter of mine as your wedded wife?" and Feroze has replied in words like these: "It is my firm intention indeed, and furthermore I vow never to neglect her, and ever to heed her wishes, and I promise to supply all her needs." And Indira has agreed to marry him, and clasped his hand.

We know that Jawaharlal then formally conferred his daughter on Feroze, in the ritual act called *Kanyadāna*, the Giving of the Girl. A formal transfer of responsibility is involved. Such giving occurs in the same spirit in many western wedding rituals also, and in almost the same words. Indira will shift from her seat beside her father and will be seen in the later part of the ritual at the side of Feroze.

10.

The clasped hands of bride and groom are bound by the priest with a string of flowers. By that priestly binding, the personal resolve of bride and groom to marry is powerfully reinforced. Their will to unite is strengthened now by the

acceptance and blessing of Vedic priests, loftiest of men and earthly authorities of the highest order..

11.

(The photographer next, for a split second, inadvertently took an exposure of a few frames in a side-view of the attending crowd. They are useless save possibly as a source of information on the wider layout of the ritual.)

12.

This is the symbolic act called the *Vastradāna*, the Gift of Clothing. In it, Feroze confirms his vow to supply Indira's material needs. He hands her a neat stack of garments. She dons the topmost of them, binding it about her waist. Her accepting of the clothing confirms her acceptance of marriage to Feroze.

13.

(He promised to clothe, she promises to feed.. In front of her she has an array of foods, and she leans forward and puts a morsel in his mouth. The exposure began too late to tell its tale effectively.. The half record seems useless--like No. 21, of the *Samāshaṇa*, below.)

14.

Bride and groom stand up, now, before the sacred fire. They bow and feed the fire, and then stand again before it. She is to perform the rite called the *Jayahoma*, the next act in the traditional wedding. Literally the Offering for Victory, the traditional rite came at a moment when the old-fashioned bride, while making a libation in the fire, swore that all her struggles for victory, henceforth, would be struggles for her husband's victory, and that it would be her aim to protect him against all hostile powers known or unknown. Just what vow was set

forth for Indira to recite at this juncture, this camera could not record. But the reporter of the city's newspaper, *The Leader*, caught the words and published them next day. Indira uttered a soldierly promise but a new and different one, not addressed to her husband but to the nation:

*If there are any people in the four corners of the earth  
who venture to deprive us of our freedom, mark!  
here I am, sword in hand, prepared to resist them to the last!  
I pray for the spreading of the light of freedom:  
may it envelop us on all sides.*

The hand of the reformist Pandit Lachmidhar is visible here, in an important shift in ethics toward political virtues. This is the vow that Indira actually took, and, I believe, took to heart..

15.

A second priest attends the sacred fire, making it flare up with libations of melted butter. The fire and the path around it will become the focus now of the ongoing ritual, until the marriage becomes final. The flame must be carefully tended. Their light will continue to play upon and illumine all of the couple's solemn acts. By circumambulations the pair will maximize their contact with the sacred fire and insure the benefits of its special powers. Even from pre-Vedic times when the Indo-Iranian religious tradition was still undivided, the special role of fire in ritual was to make communication possible between earthly worshippers and supernatural powers above. Vedic thought understood the fire of the sacred altar to be, through its updraft, a messenger carrying the gifts and prayers of worshippers aloft to the God or gods of celestial regions. Feroze's Zoroastrian tradition, also, focuses on fire as providing in worship a point of contact with

metaphysical realities.. Fire in Iran was understood to be the special manifestation on earth of the heavenly Right or Truth that is a modality in the being of Ahura Mazda himself. Pandit Lachmidhar has used, in its Vedic form, this ultra-ancient reverence for fire that is known in the traditions of both Feroze and Indira. After seven circuits of the fire, it is understood, the union of the pair that has been known and blessed by persons and priests below, will become known and blessed in eternal realms above also.

16.

Seven circuits, and on the seventh they will become man and wife on heaven and on earth, in highest Truth, forever. No possibility, then, of reversal, or any reconsideration whatsoever. The pledge could be made in minutes, but priest and rite do not hurry. It is a serious matter, calling for serious lectures. There are instructional preparations to be given, and lectures sitting and lectures standing, and there are interludes.

17

The verbal proceedings are long and heavy and beyond our camera's sensitivity. There is time for a glance at the principal assembly of guests. They sit in the shade of an awning that has been erected on the lawn beyond the fire.. Many eminent persons are seated there, leaders in national politics and the professions. At least four members of the powerful Working Committee of the Indian National Congress are here today. Identify them if you can!.

18

Back in the arena of ritual, the cycles of the Seven Steps, the *Saptapadī*, have begun. In course of these rounds, time is taken by the priest to perform enroute some incidental rituals of a minor nature. These include the traditional *Ashmārohaṇa*, the Stepping on a Stone. Here <sup>in</sup> Indira's ceremony these famous

steps are taken with a modernization that none can fail to notice. In the old-fashioned wedding a flat stone was laid down in the bride's side of the path in particular, and when the pair came upon the object in the course of their next circuit, she put her right foot on the stone and took oath that she would be as firm as that stone in her faithfulness to all the vows and resolutions of the day. In Indira's ritual a modern woman's view asserts itself. Here we see Feroze, too, groping for the stone with his foot-- awkwardly, and with some embarrassment. He, too, is taking the vow of rock-like faithfulness!

In time the decisive last round came, and the last step was taken, ~~without~~ great stir or special fanfare. Beyond all question, Indira and Feroze were now firmly and forever married. Observances will go on, but not, any more, to effect the marriage. The practices will take place, only to note and celebrate the fact that the marriage has occurred.

19.

(The traditional first meal of bride and groom, the *Samāshana* in which they sit together, was not omitted on this day, and the camera did not ignore it. But the camera catches it only for the blink of an eye. Its few frames are apparently useless. (Compare No. 15 above.)

20.

Over the heads of the seated couple, someone drapes a single cloth.

The cloth is a roof! The two are no longer a mere <sup>chance</sup> couple; they are a household. On this "roof", those who are nearby shower flower-petals now, blessing this new family. It is a process that continues; friend after friend comes forward and casts flowery good wishes on the "house" until it is almost buried.

21.

With palette and brush in hand, a married woman now approaches the seated bride and paints on Indira's forehead the red dot that identifies a Hindu married woman. Visibly now, she is Mrs. Feroze Gandhi.

22.

Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi are congratulated and blessed now in song. At this time in ordinary weddings priests or paid choruses sing professional benedictions. At this simple Nehru wedding, amateurs of the family--cousins and other relatives of the bride--pronounce these blessings musically. The principal musicians here are Nayantārā and Rīta Pandit, daughters of Nehru's sister, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit.

23.

*The Leader's* press report of the next day says that, at this point, Indira and Feroze stood up before the assembly and ended the formalities of the session by uttering a valediction. They incanted the last lines of the last verse of the last hymn of the Rigveda: The lines are available to us.:(10.191:3f,):

*May these people have common speech, a common assembly,*

*A common mind and common plan..*

*Uttering for you a common prayer*

*I make for you a common oblation.*

*Let there be a common purpose, common hearts,*

*a common mind, that ours may be a happy common life.*

samāno mantrah samitiḥ samāni

samānam manah saha cittam eshām.

samānam mantram abhi mantraye vaḥ

samānena vo havishā jahomi.

samānī va ākūtiḥ samāna hṛidayāni vaḥ

samānam astu vo mano yathā vaḥ susahāsati.

This may have been the first instance in history of the use of that passage in the liturgy of a wedding. Pandit Lachmidhar ended his rite with a suggestion, that turned out to be valid, of a coronation.

24.

Dismissed thus, the people of the assembly arose. Some hugged the bride and groom and wished them well. All mingled and chatted and did what they liked. So did the photographer. These portraits were snapped in the milling crowd.

25.

Here is Mrs. Handoo, charming Nehru relative.

26.

And handsome Feroze, as debonair at the end as at the outset..

27.

Indira at her happiest moment, and most beautiful.

28.

Feroze's aged mother, Rattimai Gandhi. She was camera-shy, but she was caught, and she submitted

29.

Ranjīt Pandit, husband of Vijaya Lakshmi. A Sanskrit scholar, he had

some part and in the shaping of this ceremony.

30

Indira and Jawaharlal take time to open and enjoy very many telegrams of congratulation that were arriving from far places in the world.

31. Rājendra Prasād, longtime struggler for independence, often the president of the Indian National Congress. He would be the president of the nation India itself through the first dozen years of its independence. Five-second insert, to be provided by NH from another personal film.

**N.B.**

34. Nayantara and Rita Pandit again. They enjoyed the wedding, and enriched it. Soon they will be students at Wellesley College, and Nayantara will become a writer of books about these times and this famous family..

Wedding gifts, in an adjoining room, were many, and splendid. It was an old custom, at this time, for families to show off the wedding gifts with pride, and to glory in their costliness. At this Nehru wedding, no such exhibition took place. Jawaharlal despised the boastfulness and the materialist spirit of such displays.

35.

A wedding meal follows now, for the seventy guests. It is a time, traditionally, for feeding guests sumptuous and costly dishes, in many courses.. Jawaharlal intervened to prevent the encouragement of any such model by his own practice. He lays out here a wedding dinner, that is totally Indian and totally plain. On a clean white ground-sheet, on plates of leaves, vegetarian foods are being served and water is given in soft earthen cups. Though Jawaharlal himself grew up amidst western luxuries, there are no crystal goblets here nor western silverware.

He will not be an exemplar of practices that India as a whole cannot afford.

36. Here, a courtly old Indian gesture is preserved. Guests will of course want to wash hands and mouth before the meal. They are not sent to basins or to spigots. Servants stand in attendance with their jugs and pitchers and pour water over the outstretched hands of those who are about to dine.

37. The faces of happy diners

38. A teen-age belle.

39. Here are adult relatives of Indira and Feroze, practicing the effective art of capturing food with the the chapātī. Their names? It was not a proper time to ask. Now it is. Can you help?

40. Leisurely departure of guests from Anand Bhavan. They stroll to the gate, full of food and memories. We reflect on ours--particularly on memories of Jawaharlal's stability under extreme pressures of several quite different kinds. FOTO 24B, or, 24A.

24B  
or  
24A

\*

As a young man Jawaharlal had never been romantic about rituals. Some expected it to be hard for him to be anything but dour as a conscripted master of ceremonies in the obscure and complicated ritual of a marriage. But he did love his family, and he held Indian traditions in general in some degree of respect. For the sake of family and nation he did his duties graciously, with sympathy but without submitting to practices that he had often called humbug. He would have nothing to do with old marriage customs that he deemed harmful, and even in the traditional liturgies of marriage he made as much change as his talent and his time allowed. Pandit Lacchmidhar's politicizations were willful and <sup>he was not</sup> insensitive to his patron's taste, but <sup>thru</sup> him Jawaharlal established a <sup>daring</sup> model of ~~daring~~

freedom in rituals that allowed <sup>have</sup> ~~modern~~ <sup>later</sup> persons to make creative innovations of their <sup>own</sup> choice.

Not the least of the virtues that Jawaharlal manifested on this day was equanimity. His composure was astounding when looked at with full knowledge of the passions and pressures that beat upon him from every side.. For self-control in the midst of storms he deserves tribute in the highest terms of any culture: We salute him for *samcittatva* in the vocabulary of the Bhagavadgita (13.9), *mens aequa in arduis* in the classical language of the west.

\*

We end with a political postscript.

On the second day after the wedding, Jawaharlal was already engaged in Delhi in discussions that became grim.. The question was the Japanese threat on the eastern frontier, and the Cripps proposal to meet it under British leadership. On April 3rd, the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress rejected Cripps' offer, and demanded the transfer of power to Indian hands at once. Many weeks of Indo-British haggling followed, but no modification of the Cripps plan was made that became acceptable. "Quit India" became a popular cry against the British throughout India. At a great meeting in Bombay on August 8th, a "Quit India" resolution was passed that was nationalist India's last word on the subject.. It was accompanied by threat of an immediate organized program of civil disobedience. The British response was instant FOTO 26

. Jawaharlal and hundreds of his colleagues were taken away by the police the next morning. . In a short time all the principal persons of this wedding were in jail. The Naini Central Jail would soon gobble up Indira and Vijayalakshmi Pandit, and then her husband Feroze.. Jawaharlal would be taken, direct, to the formidable old fort at Ahmednagar. FOTO 27.

There, behind these impassable walls, Jawaharlal would suffer <sup>the</sup> his last and longest imprisonment <sup>of his life.</sup> He would be kept there for almost three years, until all threat of

26

27

Japanese invasion had passed. The end of our tale of a gracious event is costly tragedy. The little camera of this story was a casualty as well. Lent to a young nationalist who went to the meeting where the "Quit India" resolution was passed, the camera went with him to jail. When he was released at last, the person emerged from the prison but the camera did not. The present film was its final opus. It thanks its patient viewers and bids them a long farewell. .

Norvin Hein.

2-17-99

Norvin Hein