

HER POLITICAL LIFE AFTER INDEPENDENCE**Dr. Reenu Jain**

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On December 1946 Pandit Vijay Lakshmi returned to India. Sanjay had been born. She was a Minister of United Province.¹ India's first lady is now a lady without luster. India's achievement of independence has robbed her of her glory and greatness. Since August 15, 1947, she was become a clog in the mighty machine and has been lost to the firmament of a dream-grandeur.

India having achieved her goal, all the heroes and heroines both Lakshmis and Jawaharlals, have shed their halo of personal greatness. Their greatness henceforth is merged in the greatness of their country. Inside and outside the country they will be judged by the manner in which they play their role as helmsmen of India's destiny.²

It was appropriate that the first social function for which Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit was responsible as an ambassador was on August 15th 1947, to celebrate India's independence. As soon as she arrived in Moscow, the ambassador has arranged for a reception to be held in one of the hotels. It was a festive occasion attended by the diplomats of many nations who come to give their congratulations and good wishes to the ambassador on this very important day in Indian history.

Although it was disappointing to Mrs. Pandit to be so far from home on that special occasion, it was a delight to hear her brother speak on the radio as the first Prime Minister of an independent India³. Mrs. Pandit was appointed as an Ambassador to Russia. It was a first mission sent to a foreign country after Independence. There was other members also. They had to stop Tehran at Shah's invitation. From Tehran they had to fly to Moscow in a Russian Plane could carry them into the Russian territory. In Moscow they received a warm welcome. Credentials prepared in Hindi were presented. Her arrival was given a wide publicity. She was the first woman Ambassador to a communist country⁴. At the General Assembly, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit was again the only woman to head a delegation, although there were a few women delegates and alternates. As soon as the session was over. She and Lekha returned to Moscow to take up the duties that the Ambassador had barely assumed before she left for the U.N. During their absence boxes and crates from India and Sweden had arrived. Mrs. Pandit and Lekha set to work to blend the old and new together, so that the embassy would be more like home to them. The ambassador acquired a small staff of eight or ten. There were no Russians on the staff, but there was always an expert Russian translator.⁵

She must stay at her post in Russia. No one read Stalin's mind successfully, but everyone knew his expertise at planting communism where chaos plowed the field. Communism had flowered in India since it was brought there, not from Soviet-Russia but from London, by English radicals who tried and failed, to seize control of the Swaraj Crusade. India's Communist Party had no difficulty in finding money to finance agitprop activities and did not come from dues paid in by members⁶.

Testing her footsteps, she mentioned casually her surprise at finding, in her studies of Russian history, that the Great Soviet Encyclopedia described Mahatma Gandhi as "a reactionary... who betrayed the people and helped the imperialists against them, pretending in a demagogic way to be a

supporter of Indian Independence and an enemy of the British and has widely exploited religious prejudice".

She asked for permission to visit the Central Asian Soviet Republics. She asked repeatedly for a meeting with Stalin. It never came. "Our Foreign Policy" her brother directive summarized will eventually be governed by our internal policy. That policy is far from being communistic and is certainly opposed to the Communist Party. We cannot afford to antagonize the Soviet Union. At the same time, there is much goodwill in India toward the United States.⁷ She had to answer wide ranging questions put to her. There was hoisting of flag. Her daughter Tara and Lekha also joined her. Their activities were restricted to the embassies only. It was not an active life. She visited Leningrad. In the University she found the Russian translation of Ramayana. She moved to Stockholm. As Ambassador she led a delegation to the United Nations. Kashmir issues were raised there. Russian sympathy was with India. There were many restrictions in Russia.

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit stayed in Moscow for five months. It is a matter of deep regret to Mrs. Pandit delegation that the foreign Minister of Pakistan has chosen to make serious allegations against her country, allegations which are full of inaccuracies and miss-statements. During the seventeenth session, also, the delegation of Pakistan made similar allegations which we the refuted. One of the points just raised has been under consideration of another principle organ of the United Nations for several years. She would like to remind the members that it was India who brought the complaint to the United Nations. She would have preferred not to burden the Assembly with another detailed reply but in order to keep the record straight and lost our silence be misconstrued, she has obliged to answer the allegations that have just been made.

The Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Bhutto, had said that the central issue in Kashmir was that of self-determination and that both parties had accepted that. She would like to deny categorically here and now this assertion of the Foreign Minister of Pakistan. She would like to add, with all the authority of the Government of India that the issue in Kashmir is one of the aggressions, Pakistani aggression, committed in 1947 and 1948 and which continues to that day.

Pakistan would have the world believe that the Kashmir question began with the resolution of January 1949. Pakistan encouraged tribal raiders to pass through its territory and start a reign of plunder, arson, rape and murder with a view to terrorizing the Kashmiris into submitting to Pakistan rule.⁸

She returned to India once more during her Moscow assignment because Tara was married to Gautam Sehgal at Anand Bhawan in January 1949.⁹

Vijaya Lakshmi was an experienced administrator. She had already worked in various capacities. She was given an assignment in Washington after completing her work in Moscow. Bapu had advised her to maintain discipline and toughness and the will to resist the temptation of an easy life. These were his last words to her.¹⁰

In March 1949, the Minister of External Affairs of India announced that Ambassador Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit would leave Moscow to succeed Sir Benegal Rama Rao as Ambassador to the United States. It would be the first time that a woman had such an assignment in Washington.

Official duties finished, farewell functions over, Mrs. Pandit left Moscow and returned to India, where in April, at the home of the Prime Minister in New Delhi, her eldest daughter, Chandralekha, was married to Ashok Mehta of the Indian Foreign Service.¹¹

In 1949, Vijaya Lakshmi left for Washington on her new assignment. Rita was with her. She believed now in simple living. Freedom has affected a change in her pattern. She got a lot of help from her American friends. She met General George C. Marshall. He was a man of ideals.¹²

India Embassy there was a beautiful house bought and furnished by Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai when he was Agent General before Independence.

In Moscow she was Gaspaja Pasol, Madame Ambassador and treated as such no favours because she was a woman and no surprise that she was Ambassador. In Washington the newspapers were constantly commenting on her Sari and her hair style. Public life in India immediately after Independence imposed many restrictions one one's way of living and those who had been through long periods of jail and the rigors of the freedom struggle itself had molded themselves on another and simpler pattern. In her case, even if she had wished to change it would not have been easy because she did not have the means to do so and it was best to keep to the old design and create an image of new India, which she tried to do. Besides this she did not want to be a target for members of Parliament. She was still the only woman Ambassador and it was difficult enough to persuade parliament that she did her work as efficiently as a man without having debates about her cloths or her parties. She had the help of many American friends, men and women whose advice she valued. She was soon able to strike a happy medium between diplomatic ostentation and Indian austerity.¹³

On May 5, 1949, dignitaries, reporters and photographers awaited her plane landing at New York, where five years before no one met her and she wondered where to go and how to manage.

She was escorted to Washington, to the White House, where President Truman waited to welcome her. Then she faced her first Washington press conference. Her brother's Panchshila doctrine and insistence on India's non-alignment ran contrary to the stand taken by John Fester Dulles, then American Ambassador-at-large, that "He who is not with us is against us." She expected and was prepared for, sharp edged questioning.

In Russia, in shadow of the Kremlin, who found ways to work against undeclared but palpable resistance to hearing truths no passed for publication in Pravda? In the United States, her mission's purpose was impeded by her singular celebrity.¹⁴

In October, 1949 her Bhai Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru visited U.S.A. He had a very busy programme there. His three week's programme was very fruitful. After few days, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit presented her credentials to President Truman at the white House and was welcomed into the diplomatic crops of Washington. She settled into her new home and took up her duties at the office. Her Ambassadorial responsibilities, while much more demanding than in Moscow, seemed easier since language was no longer a barrier. At the Ambassador's first press conference there was an immense crowd of correspondents? Many accustomed to interviewing foreign diplomats, were surprised to find that Mrs. Pandit spoke flawless English and noted that she replied to their questions in short, positive sentences.¹⁵

India stood in need of food grains. The Russians also proved very helpful. They dispatched food grains at the time of need.

Mrs. Pandit was in Washington, when the Korean War broke out with the South. The Indians favoured the Koreans.¹⁶

There was much discussion of a new formula Menon: "Since the opposition to French colonialism in Indo-China is being led almost exclusively by the communists, the United States has begun plans to internationalize the war." Menon "we want out of his way to be unpleasant toward western

nations and their delegates". But Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit had not come back to the Big Class House to throw stones.

Assembly adoption of a modified Menon plan for Korea had not ended the Korean War. Chinese communist attacks intensified, with more use of heavy artillery than at any previous time. United Nations and South Korean forces were pushed back, with mounting casualties. Exchange of sick and wounded prisoners of war began, and then stopped. Every day's delay in effecting a truce cost more lives.

In the so-called first committee, she worked long hours, doing her best to progress agreement on a blueprint for repatriation of American, South Korean, North Korean and Communist Chinese prisoners; lacking which no truce was possible.

While Krishna Menon and the press and its cameras seemed irreparable. She was busy behind closed doors. When she could, she hurried from first committee debates to meetings of the commission on the Status of Women.¹⁷

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, English governess Miss Hooper would have been delighted with the news story that reported that she spoke in a low, well-modulated voice 'without a trace of accent'. Another journalist wrote that she was 'completely without pretence, affection, or feminine mannerisms.' The press enjoyed the frankness with which Madame Pandit answered questions.

The formal press conference was over, the women journalists crowded around Madame Pandit, asking for comments from a woman's angle.

She told them quite frankly that she was not a feminist but was concerned that women should play their part in world affairs, for she felt the world belonged to everyone and that all must contribute to its betterment.

When she was misquoted in a press interview, it always disturbed Madame Pandit, not only because she wanted facts to be correct, but also because of her discriminating use of words.

Howard University presented with her an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. This was her first honorary degree.

Madame Pandit's arrival in Washington, request began to pour into the embassy, asking her to speak. Hundreds of them had to be refused, but she accepted those she could. She felt that an important part of her work as Ambassador was to acquaint America with her country. When she went to San Francisco, it was very different from her visit there in 1945 while the United Nations Charter Conference was being held.

The Ambassador added, "Peace will only come when we have cleansed our hearts and are willing to share."¹⁸

She had met President Truman briefly during her lecture tour and her relationship with him remained a good one. There were no diplomatic trills about him.

President Truman was a brilliant man; more British than the British in the heyday of empire both in his dress which was always immaculate and his mind which was ultra conservative. His knowledge of Asia was limited probably because he was not deeply interested in that area, and of India he knew very little, past or present. The policy of nonalignment which was just being evolved meant nothing to him.

The word was peculiar and the concept still more so. In this he was not unlike Mr. John Foster Dulles who, under President Truman's bipartisan policy, was handling the Japanese peace treaty.¹⁹

A new state of Israel came into existence in the Middle East. The Arabs were uprooted, although both the Jews and the Arabs have always together lived peacefully. In Europe Hitler, the German Dictator had already butchered the Jews. He was bent upon rooting the out.

Henry Grady, Chester Bowles and John Kenneth Galbraith came to India as Ambassadors and envoys. Their stay sweetened the relations between there two countries. President Jackie Kennedy was assassinated. Great men had often been the victims of assassins. Mrs. Pandit attended his funeral.²⁰

She was the first woman Ambassador in the United States, she preferred that no special emphasis be placed on this fact and declared that diplomatic posts should be assigned on the basis of qualifications and ability.

One of the most unique and amusing was on April 16th 1950, when the Ambassador presented Shanti and Ashok, recently arrived from India, to the National Zoological Park. They were two baby elephants sent by her brother, the Prime Minister, as a gift from India to the Washington zoo.²¹

This gave the press and its photographers another page one package. Wherever she went, she was applauded, pictured, praised. At India's Embassy, she employed two cooks. One was Ram, a Kashmiri from Allahabad, who spoke only Hindi. The other, Etienne, was Cordon Bleu, from Paris, and spoke only French. She interpreted between them, kept them from stabbing each other and taught recipes to both. Often, they stood aside while with an apron over her Sari, she prepared the main dish for an official dinner with her own hands.²²

In December 1950 the Ambassador asked the United States Government to grant to India two million tons of wheat from its surplus for which India would pay one hundred and ninety million dollars. Congress kept delaying action. By the end of February the Ambassador was desperate. "The crisis is now", she said. "The threat of famine and shadow of death lurks around the corner". Many people sent petitions to Congress and letters with contributions to her, often with only twenty five or fifty cents but enough to let her know their corner.

In late February 1951 President Truman made a special request to Congress for the food. The bill was passed in June. Immediately the President signed it and four days later a shipment of wheat left for India. On August 17th first boat load was welcomed in Bombay.²³

While people were in grave need, legislators pondered on whether grain sent from the United States would be fed to the "Scared Monkeys" and the "scared peacocks" and much other irrelevance.

The official sanction came at last but long before that a ship carrying grain from the Soviet Union had reached Bombay and been received with rejoicing by the people and by Parliament. The amount that came was considerably less than the American loan, but it came at the right time and earned the gratitude of those who needed it. It was questioned many times about why the consignment from the United States had not been welcomed in the same way as had the Russian grain.²⁴

In February, 1951 having been appointed Ambassador to Mexico as well as to the United States, she visited the republic below the border and was royally received. Newspapers described her Sari and her Coiffure, but she no longer concerned herself about reporters who viewed her as a celebrity on a personal appearancetour.²⁵

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit was the first woman to carry two diplomatic posts. Not until February 1951 was she able to make her first trip to Mexico City. Shortly after her arrival accompanied by her military escort and the first secretary, Ambassador Pandit went to the Palacio National. Here the band played the Mexican National Anthem. The the head of the Presidential Guard of Honour escorted her into the Salon de Embajadores Ambassador's Chamber, where President Miguel Aleman received her in a special 'audiencia solemnel' After credentials were presented, the Indian Ambassador and the President conversed for a time through an interpreter, as Madame Pandit did not speak Spanish. An interview with the Press followed. Then the Ambassador laid a floral wreath on the Independence Monument.

Though language was a barrier, Madame Pandit did not feel strange in Mexico. The people at their stalls in the market places reminded her of India's bazaars. The Mexicans' love of colour charmed her and she reveled in their artistic flower arrangements.

It pleased her greatly when in October 1960, almost ten years later; the Integral union for Human rights of Mexico awarded her a special medal in recognition of her "efforts towards the realization of the Principles of the United Nations."

The Union, established in 1959, adopted the principles of the Declaration of Human Rights and was pledged to work for their realization. Seven medals were given to outstanding personalities, among them Sir Winston Churchill. Mrs. Pandit was the only woman. It meant much to her that Mexico remembered her brief time as India's Ambassador there.²⁶

During her term in Washington a grave crisis that faced the world was the outbreak of the Korean War. The incursion of North Korea into the South was termed an aggression by the Security Council. India's stand was that his aggression must be condemned and we supported the Security Council's resolution. From the beginning of the crisis India was greatly disturbed and because our Government was among the few represented at that time in China, we felt that we were in some sort of position to offer help to nations that had no contact with Peking.²⁷

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit was appointed to work in Mexico, while she was the Ambassador. She got a warm welcome everywhere. She found the people very friendly. She had a busy time there.²⁸ Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and Mrs. Roosevelt was a close friend.

On Jawaharlal Nehru's first visit to the United States be, together with the Indira and Vijaya Lakshmi visit to Mrs. Roosevelt in Hyde Park and laid a wreath on the late President's grave.²⁹

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru invited Mrs. Roosevelt to India and her itinerary included a visit to Allahabad where she was to stay in Anand Bhawan and, among other things, to address the students' Union of Allahabad University, The Union was at that time, communists dominated and though the invitation for the speech had come through them, it seemed that the decision had not been taken unanimously. For some days before Mrs. Roosevelt's arrival there were street-corner meetings by students, and anti-American placards.

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit sent a letter to the president of the students' union saying that, as Mrs. Roosevelt was India's honored guest. I could allow her to fulfill her engagement only if I received the assurance that she would be treated with the respect due her. No reply came and she presumed that the lecture had been canceled. The crowd insisted that Mrs. Roosevelt should attend the meeting and refused to give any assurance of their respectful conduct. They were in a belligerent mood. Finally the Vice Chancellor arrived and between us we promised to take Mrs. Roosevelt to the University, but were

appealed to the students' sense of hospitality not to hold her responsible for the policies of the United States Government.

All went well, but a request of the commotion was that Bhai resigned from his honorary membership in the Union.³⁰ On October 25, 1951, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit announced she was leaving her Ambassadorial posts, to return to India and campaign for election to Lok Sabha, the house of the people in India's Parliament.³¹

The news of the twenty fifth of October 1951 came as a disappointment to the many friends of Madame Pandit in the United States.³²

In India first general elections were held in 1952. Constitution of India had been introduced on 26th January, 1950.³³

On January 26, 1950, India became a republic. Elections had to take place under the Constitution, and preparations for these were a mammoth task. Electoral rolls had to be prepared, and since our electorate was largely illiterate, special emblems and ballot boxes had to be arranged. The total number of constituencies all over the country was 3,293, including those for the central legislatures and those for each state. In all 4,412 representatives had to be elected by the people by adult franchise, and the number of voters was approximately 176,600,000.

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit contested from Lucknow City. Lucknow had been the centre of the work as Minister of Uttar Pradesh Government, and earlier, it had been a second home to her during her childhood, when a great deal of her during time had been spent there on visits.³⁴

In her own constituency, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit walked miles for lack of roads or transport, wore her sandals through, stained her Saris with mud, ate what peasants ate, and talked with them as a woman of India, not as Madame Ambassador.³⁵

Illiteracy made it necessary to identify the contending parties by symbols: a pair of yoked bullocks for the Congress, a tree for Praja Socialists, an elephant for former untouchables a sickle for communists.³⁶

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit had been elected with an unusually large number of votes.

Election to the house of the People made it necessary for Mrs. Pandit to live in Delhi. She established residence at 2 York Place for herself and Rita.³⁷

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, with whom she had worked in United Nations Committees in efforts to continue and enlarge the Children's Emergency Fund, was coming to India by way of the Middle East and Pakistan.

At sixty-eight, she had set out across the world to show the corner he was wrong. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, pleased to guide and escort her, hurried to Allahabad to reopen the long-closed Nehru home so Mrs. Roosevelt could be welcomed there. Mrs. Roosevelt was to receive an honorary degree at the Allahabad University. A student organization sent her a letter containing "many of the usual allegations found in Communist propaganda". She said she liked to talk with young people and suggested inviting the ten students who signed the letter to come for tea. Their leader was loudly rude.

"Mrs. Pandit said his bad manners to a guest of India made him unwelcome in her home. He left and reported what she said to the other students. Three thousand of them, with a loudspeaker,

gathered outside the gates and insisted Mrs. Pandit must come out and apologize for having ejected one of their numbers".

Mrs. Roosevelt said she would like to visit the University Campus and talk to the students there. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and Mrs. Roosevelt entered the students hall, it was jammed. They presented her with a list of questions reminiscent of those young people in the United States used to ask during the 1930's. Vijaya Lakshmi answered but they did not agree with her.

Mrs. Roosevelt said, it is not surprising to me that there should be frustration among your young people when there is so much that needs to be done and they are so ill-equipped with the skills to do it. They will surely straighten out, as soon as there are jobs for them to work at and they have the training to fill them."³⁸

In 1952 Vijaya Lakshmi was appointed leader of the first goodwill delegation to the people's Republic of China and the delegates were carefully chosen representatives of all sections of Indian life- artists, authors, politicians belonging to all parties, academicians, scientists, communist and anti-communists, women and men. There were thirty six rationally.³⁹

They were welcomed in Peking by the Indian Ambassador, Dr. K.M. Panikkar, a well known historian, who was a great help to the delegation for consultation. It was a satisfaction to him that during the three weeks when the group covered much territory and met many outstanding leader of the people's Republics of China, including Mao Tse-tung, nothing was done that was not completely correct and appropriate.⁴⁰

Vijaya Lashmi Pandit met their leaders Mao, Chou-en-lie and Madame Sun-Yat-Sen. She witnessed Chinese films about spies and traitors. They were horrible films.

She visited China during Mao's days. They were sentiments of Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai found everywhere. But soon the Chinese occupied a big hilly tract of Indian Territory, almost twelve thousand square miles. The Chinese attacked Indian border in 1962, unfortunately because of faulty planning and lack of coordination India suffered a defeat. The wrong policy of Defence Minister Krishna Menon was a great factor behind it.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru got a shock of his life. He was the Prime Minister of India. Overwork and this unexpected event proved fatal for him.⁴¹ Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit returned from China, the government announced that the delegation to the 1952 General Assembly of the United Nations, the first one to be held in the new United Nation building in New York City, would again be headed by Mrs. Pandit. This seventh session opened on October 14th 1952, and after two years away from the Assembly, Mrs. Pandit was warmly welcomed on her return.⁴² The problem of paramount importance before His General Assembly is that of peace in Korea.⁴³ Korea was a major issue in the residential election campaign.⁴⁴

In 1953-54, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit was elected to hold the post of the President of the General Assembly. It was a matter of pride both for her, The Nehru family and the whole country.

She was the first woman to be considered for such a responsible job. People all over the world hailed her election. It was a great challenge to face international problems. She had to preside over the steering Committees. She had to preside over the steering committee. She had to consider the agenda. But she had always an objective approach to the problems in the debates.

Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold was very helpful to her. United Nation Secretariat extended her full co-operation. The Secretary General was a practical and an honest politician. During her period U.N.I.C.E.F. started in 1946 was made a permanent part on the United Nation. A provision was made for expansion of technical assistance for the underdeveloped area of the world.

United Nation Day was celebrated on October 24. Mrs. Pandit was the President. Mrs. Roosevelt remarked, "The President has lighted a lamp of understanding and good will in our hearts."⁴⁵

The year of Vijaya Lakshmi's resident ship, 1953-54 was a relatively quite year, the fury on the Korean issue having been already spent.⁴⁶

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit visited as many countries as she president of the General Assembly. Among them were Ceylone, Burma, Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, Malaya, Yugoslavia, Switzerland (although not a member of the United Nation) and the United Kingdom.⁴⁷

In 1954, Vijaya Lakshmi visited Japan. She was welcomed by the Prime Minister, Emperor and the Empress.⁴⁸

America still had her sway over Japan. In 1967 again she went to Japan on the anniversary of Hiroshima where one atom bomb had wrought havoc in 1945. The residents of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had fallen victim to the ghastly tragedy in August, 1945. On the occasion, she spoke about co-operation and peace which was the need of the hour.⁴⁹

Vijaya Lakshmi appointed as India's High Commission in England and India's Ambassador to Ireland and Spain 1955-1961.⁵⁰ The first High Commissioner was B.G. Kher, the Chief Minister of Bombay.⁵¹

2nd October 1954 Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit had been appointed of High Commissioner in London. It was a distinguished post, the most important one in India's diplomatic services. She would also be the first woman Ambassador to the Court of St. James's. She knew and loved England and undoubtedly agreed with Samuel Johnson who said, "A man who is tired of London is tired of life." Commenting on her appointment, the Sunday Times stated that Mrs. Pandit now had more diplomatic experience than any other woman in history.

Ela Sen, in the magazine House-wife, wrote that there were three stars in the diplomatic firmament, Moscow, Washington and London. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit had gathered all of these and 'pinned them to her personality as she wopuld diamond stars in her silver grey hair'.

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit was helped into the ornate carriage by the Marshal of the Diplomatic Corps.⁵² She was meeting the British Queen Mother and Duke of Edinburgh on equal footing. She was the representative of the free country. She had very good relations with the British during her seven and half years stay in England.

There was a problem of immigrant labour. Another problem was of Indian students. Those who sought admission in U.K. had a poor standard.

She got honorary degree by thee Universities of London, Edinburgh, Nottingham and Oxford. Then she returned to India. There was Suez crisis in Europe. Egypt was attached by Britain, Israel and France unitedly. India was with Egypt.⁵³

On 1st March 1955, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit became the first Indian representative to Ireland. In Dublin, speaking in Hindi, she told the people of Ireland that her mind was full of memories of the heroic past of their beautiful land, which had greatly influenced her generation in India.⁵⁴

In 1958, she was named the first Ambassador from India to Spain. In Spain her press conference, the Ambassador told reporters that she hoped to be able to develop cultural contacts between Spain and India.⁵⁵

In 1961 when Vijaya Lakshmi returned to India and there was rumour of her being nominated as Vice-President under Dr. Radhakrishnan. Unfortunately it seems the move was torpedoed by Krishna Menon to keep her out of the Indian political firmament. Deeply hurt, on Jawaharlal's insistence, Vijaya Lakshmi settled for the job as Governor of Maharashtra in 1962. She resigned from her post to stand for election to Parliament from the constituency (Phulpur) vacated by Jawaharlal Nehru's death. She resigned from the Lok Sabha four years later, when she did not feel able to serve her party in new climate under Indira Gandhi (Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's Daughter) who became Prime Minister in 1966.⁵⁶

In contest she did not get along very well with her niece Indira Gandhi, whom she called Indu. There was a feeling of suspicion and mistrust between the two. In her autobiography, Vijaya Lakshmi writes, at one point of time Indira Gandhi clearly said, "But Phuppi (auntie), I don't trust you politically". Vijaya Lakshmi also did not hide her disapproval of Indira Gandhi's son Sanjay Gandhi and his ways. However, she had a lot of affection for Indira's elder son Rajiv Gandhi, who reciprocated her affection.

In 1966, Indira Gandhi became Prime Minister of India. Judicial rulings threatened her over and she declared a state of emergency in 1975 which restricted freedom of the press and other democratic institutions. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit was deeply opposed to the Emergency, left the Indira-dominated Congress and joined the Janata Dal Party, where she campaigned against Indira Gandhi. Indira's Congress was soundly defeated in March 1977. At one time there was talk of her being a possible Janta nominee for the country's president ship, but did not materialize. The fall of Janata Dal Party left her a sad and bitter person. In 1979 she was appointed the Indian representative to the U.N. Human Rights Commission, after which she retired from public life. Her last years were spent in the privacy of her beautiful house in Dehradun. Her 90th birthday on August 18, 1990, was celebrated as a major event, with many members of the Nehru clan taking time off to spend the day with her.

One of the most towering women personalities of this country (India), Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit died at the age of 90 on December 1, 1990 after a long illness in her home in Dehradun.⁵⁷

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