WOMEN DIPLOMATS AND FOREIGN POLICY: ASSESSMENTS OF VIJAYALAKSHMI PANDIT

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "**Women Diplomats and Foreign Policy: Assessments of Vijayalakshmi Pandit**" submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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To *Ma* and *Data*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ICS	Indian Civil Service
IFS	Indian Foreign Service
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Chapter One

Introduction

Having a cursory glance at the history of the Indian foreign policy establishment, one would rarely come across the names of women who have played their part in the Indian diplomatic history. Finding literature available on these women serving as diplomats and their lives and experiences, in personal and professional capacity is equivalent to finding a needle in a haystack. Thus, firing up one's curiosity as a student of international politics about where are the women placed as holders of power positions in the foreign policy circles and why is it that their history at large remains missing from the foreign policy chronicles? Keeping these questions in mind, this research focuses on unraveling and problematizing the absence of women in the narratives of Indian foreign policy making, as the starting point to the larger question of locating women in the narratives of International Relations. Primarily, this study approaches the above-mentioned inquiry to address the theoretical question of gender in foreign policy decision-making. The central question here is that in spite of holding power positions, why are the contributions of women in the study of foreign policy absent or sidelined in the conventional literature? The subject of enquiry for the purpose of addressing this issue here is the assessments of Vijayalakshmi Pandit[1] in Indian foreign policy with a definite focus on highlighting and explaining her absence from mainstream foreign policy writings.

A pertinent point is made by Iver Neumann in his study of Norwegian diplomats, *At Home with the Diplomats: Inside a European Foreign Ministry*, about women in diplomacy. He not only highlights the scarcity of literature on the overlaps between diplomacy and gender, but also reminds one of how the entry of women in active diplomatic circles has been an uphill task. He informs the readers that more often than not, the only presence women have had in chronicles of diplomatic exchanges has been as diplomat wives. Adding on, up to the Second World War, women were barred from being a part of the diplomatic corps in most of the European countries. And, even if they were allowed to pursue a diplomatic career, their personal lives

[1]The spelling of Vijayalaksmi varies across sources. While some works write the name as Vijaya Lakshmi, other write it as Vijayalakshmi. The private papers in Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, also read the name as Vijayalakshmi. This dissertation uses the second spelling, i.e., Vijayalakshmi Pandit.

were to be compromised so as to not hinder with their professional duties. As a result, several restrictions were put on women serving in the foreign services, making it difficult for young women to have an equal access to opportunities in the foreign office (Neumann 2012).

Nancy E. McGlen and Meredith Reid Sarkees, write in their work on American women in the executive branch of the government that there are several factors responsible for the inability of women to have an impact on foreign policy. They argue that fundamentally, this could be attributed to the 'cultural stereotypes' regarding the ability of women to make foreign policy decisions that could be held responsible for their constrained entry in the foreign policy institutions (McGlen and Sarkees 1997). An argument asks for a gendered sociological analysis of the government offices and the prejudices held therein.

Similarly, Cynthia Enloe, in her seminal work *'Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics'*, writes of the 'elite international club and it's masculinized norms'. While Enloe acknowledges the appointment of Madeline Albright, Condoleezza Rice and Hillary Clinton in important foreign policy offices as a probable upward movement in the visibility of women in international politics at large, she makes a larger point about the temporariness of this development and the 'political history of marriage', which 'plays a decisive part in opening and shutting doors to women in diplomacy'. She also writes about the 'manly trust building' exercises upon which the interstate relations buildings depend, and where women diplomats find themselves at a disadvantage vis-à-vis their male colleagues (Enloe 1989). While, both these studies are enlightening in initiating an inquiry into the role of women in foreign policy, they are primarily centered on the Western foreign policy establishment. The question then emerges: is the nature of the impediments outlined by these scholars for women operating in the realm of foreign policy universal? Or, do the experiences of female foreign policy practitioners from the non-west differ from their Western counterparts? What this study aspires to dwell on is assessing the influence of women in Indian foreign policy establishment, the existing writings on which remain sparse.

In this context, Pandit, the first female Indian diplomat becomes a figure worthy of academic attention. Madame Pandit, as she was famously called, was the second child of Motilal Nehru, a celebrated aristocrat and the sister of Jawaharlal Nehru,

independent India's first Prime Minister and the man who is credited as the chief architect of Indian foreign policy. Born in a household that was to become an integral part of the Indian freedom struggle soon, politics was something that never intimidated Swarup (her birth name: Vijayalakshmi was the name she was given after her marriage to Ranjit Pandit). Rather, she increasingly became a part of the freedom movement and stood her ground in domestic politics as well. She she served several years of incarceration in the struggle for Indian independence and later was successfully elected to the legislature of the United Provinces and also as a member of the Constituent Assembly. Hence, the public sphere was not an unknown turf for Pandit. However, what concerns this research is that she remains absent from majority of foreign policy literature, despite her unparalleled diplomatic contribution in the making of India's foreign policy.

The legacy of Nehru dominated the early years of Indian foreign policy. With much at stake as a postcolonial country, it was important for India in the early years of independence to make a desirable impression on the world. The turf of international politics was not unknown but was new to modern India as a democratic republic. It was in this context that Nehru was to put together his team of foreign policy experts.

Diplomats make an extremely important cog in the wheel of foreign policy machinery. They are the official spokespersons of their countries and the legitimate representatives in international affairs. Every action of theirs can be construed as denoting the thoughts and policies of the countries that they come from. And, it was Nehru himself who had handpicked the first batch of diplomats of free India. Amongst these people of importance was also his sister – Vijayalakshmi Pandit. Being the only woman holding a position in the foreign policy circle at that time, Pandit was shouldering great responsibility as she moved across as the Indian ambassador to the most powerful countries.Of course, it is not to be missed that Pandit was not a career diplomat but was a political appointee. But, that stood true for many other ambassadorial appointments of that time (Dr. Radhakrishnan, Asaf Ali, G.L Mehta, Ali Yavar Jung, to name a few).Pandit was the first Indian ambassador to Stalin's Soviet Union from 1947 to 1949, which was not an easy posting. Thereafter, she represented India in the United States and Mexico (1949-51), United Kingdom and Ireland (1955-61), and Spain (1958-61). In between, in 1953, Pandit created history by becoming the first woman president of the United Nations General

Assembly; she was also the first Asian to hold the post. While at the United Nations, Pandit is remembered for vociferously championing the cause of human rights and her vehement opposition to South Africa's apartheid policy. What she was also appreciated for during her UN years was the astuteness and immense grace with which she spoke for what she believed was just. Pandit also intermittently served as the head of the Indian delegation to the UN during the period spanning across 1946 to 1968.

What made Nehru choose his sister for a task as important as negotiating with the Soviet Union or the United States? What might come across as an act of nepotism could possibly have more probable explanations. The Prime Minister had a team of well-trained career diplomats at his disposal. They were men who were deft at making negotiations and running embassies. Their experience with the British Indian government further added to their merit as independent India's representatives to important countries. Still, he chose a woman with no diplomatic experience to represent the India in Moscow and later in Washington and in other important countries?

One probable explanation is that India at that point had a gamut of unique circumstances to deal with. As a young country emerging from the horrors of partition, it could not afford to antagonize either of the power blocs. It was important to be received well in the realm of international politics, as India's resources would not suffice to realize the desired vision of development and it was certain that external help would be needed, a reality that Nehru was quick to grasp. However, the world of Cold War politics had its own prejudices and dispositions. Stalin, to begin with, had his reservation about India truly being independent and an ally of the communist Soviet Union. India retaining the membership of the Commonwealth of Nations did not help its case either. Hence, at this important juncture in history, the choice of Pandit as the first Indian diplomat to Moscow makes it significant. What is interesting is that Moscow was to be the beginning of a series of extremely important deputations that Pandit was sent for in the subsequent years. Such successive postings have rather been a rarity for any other career diplomat.

Pandit certainly had more to her than merely being Nehru's sister. She had her own share of contributions to the early years of Indian foreign policy that remain unexplored. Moscow was not Pandit's first interaction with international politics. In

1944, she was flown to United States with the help of Chiang Kai-shek, the Chinese nationalist leader, and the direct aid of President Roosevelt to attend the Pacific Relations Conference to be held at Hot Springs where she represented India's case for independence. This visit was thereafter turned into an extensive tour across America where she acquainted her audiences with the plight of India and successfully garnered much support for the cause of India's independence (Bhagavan 2012; Khipple 1946). Thereafter, she went on to represent the Indian League in America at the insistence of J.J. Singh[2] at the San Francisco Conference on the United Nations Charter. In both these instances, speaking in front of the entire world, Pandit emerged as a voice to be taken seriously and left her mark. These were to be one of the many victories to come for this 'Daughter of India' (Khipple 1946).

The question however remains: if Pandit was a figure worthy of such impact then why is it that one finds little mention of her in any analysis of the early years of Indian foreign policy? It is this very absence of Pandit from the study of Indian foreign policy that this research proposes to study and hopefully fill using a feminist lens of academic inquiry.

Pandit: Remembered/Forgotten in the Mainstream Narratives

To study the life of an Indian diplomat of mid-20th century, it is a prerequisite to understand the nature of the Indian foreign service establishment, as it was in the early years of independence. It had a character of its own. Subimal Dutt, a diplomat (active in the years 1947-1962) and later Foreign Secretary to Prime Minister Nehru (1955-961; this also makes him the longest serving Foreign Secretary of India), allows one a succinct understanding about the character of this new creed of diplomats that emerged around 1947. In his book, *With Nehru in the Foreign Office*, Dutt writes of the problem faced by the Nehru government because of the paucity of trained personnel who were skilled enough to serve as diplomats. Rudra Chaudhari too corroborates this in the following words, "According to Bajpai's own calculations, the Indian services needed at least 1,200 officers. In the middle of 1947, it only had 410" (Chaudhari 2014: 32). This issue however, was addressed by

[2] Singh was the President of the India League. He, along with Syed Hossain, Anup Singh and B. Shiva Rao, arranged for funds for Pandit and her delegation to stay in San Francisco and to speak as the Indian representative.

allowing lateral entry into the Indian Foreign Service of non-career diplomats who were essentially people with sound public credentials. Alongside, there were also the new recruits appointed following the due procedure (Dutt 1977). Vijayalakshmi Pandit belonged to the category of lateral entry.

Dutt writes:

> "Most of the senior ambassadors selected in 1947-48 were drawn from public life, some with mature political experience, whom Nehru knew well and could trust to carry out his policies faithfully. Among these were Asaf Ali in Washington, Vijayalakshmi Pandit in Moscow, V.K Krishna Menon in London, Sri Prakasa in Karachi, Dewan Chamanlal in Ankara, Minoo Masani in Brazil and Ali Zaheer in Tehran" (Dutt 1977: 40).

The most intriguing amongst all these names is that of the only woman diplomat, i.e. Madame Pandit. Nehru's influence on the Indian foreign policy is well known. Dutt's autobiographical account also reiterates this by recounting how Nehru chose his own team and made his own decisions, while consulting the few he trusted. While appointing diplomats, he faced little interference from any other division of the government (Dutt 1977), thus, allowing him a free hand in constituting the first batch of Indian representatives abroad. In the view of this observation, it is interesting to look at the choice of Pandit as India's face abroad.

Pandit enjoyed an extraordinary diplomatic career, as stated earlier. Manu Bhagavan (2012) in his work, *The Peacemakers: India and the Quest for One World* writes at length of the caliber and the many victories of her as India's representative to the world, while she spoke at some of the most important post Second World War public platforms. The book that primarily charts out the path taken by India in its quest for a more humane world, talks at length of the Nehruvian and Gandhian ideals that aspired for manifestation of 'One World' that is built on the edifice of humanism. Bhagavan's writing is refreshing as it celebrates those who are frequently forgotten. He talks of figures like Pandit and Hansa Mehta who are often known for their role in Indian politics but are dismissed as un-influential voices on the international landscape. His is probably the only work that describes Pandit in her own capacity, as an international figure and as a diplomat. Though Bhagavan's work focuses more on the role of Pandit in the United Nations, it also appreciates her merits as an Indian envoy. He writes of the importance her appointment as ambassador had for Nehru to the two super powers of the world. He argues that Nehru's choice of Pandit, as the Indian

ambassador to Moscow and later to Washington was India's attempt to bridge the relations between the two power blocs. It held great symbolic weightage. Interestingly, Bhagavan also celebrates Pandit's diplomatic and debating talents, which in his assessment were unparalleled and that invited her the desirable attention in the international arena. Unfortunately, despite applauding Pandit and her many achievements, his work remains narrowly focused on her role in the United Nations and consideration of her as a diplomat, a practitioner of international politics, appears merely in the passing.

The mainstream literature that talks of Pandit can be streamlined into three categories. First, literature that identifies Pandit primarily as Nehru's sister, a tag that mostly went on to overshadow all other achievements of hers. Second, writings that applaud her role as a freedom fighter and an Indian politician, covering her jail stories and her time as a member of the legislature in the United Provinces and of the Constituent Assembly, and later the Indian Parliament.Lastly the literature that talks about Pandit in the capacity of her being the first woman president of the United Nations General Assembly. Bhagavan's work would primarily fall in the third category. Examples of the first and the second category of literature could be the writings of and on Nehru, including the works of Brecher, Zachariah, Guthrie, to name a few (Brecher 1959; Zachariah 2004; Guthrie 1963).

What is missing is a category of writings on assessments of Pandit in her capacity as a diplomat. Accounts of the early years of Indian foreign policy remain silent on the role of Pandit in the foreign policy decision-making. *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy,* while it covers the gradual evolution of India's foreign policy since independence, too remains quiet on Pandit's diplomatic contributions. Though, there are fleeting references in the text of Pandit as the one who 'broke the glass ceiling' in her two consecutive postings as an Indian Ambassador (first to Moscow and later to Washington) and of her role in the United Nations, there is no detailed account of her in the capacity of a serving envoy or of the influence that she had on foreign policy decision making (Raghavan 2015; Kennedy 2015; Chitalkar and Malone 2015; Bhagavan 2015).

Srinath Raghavan (Raghavan 2009) in his book *War and Peace in Modern India* devotes an entire chapter to the character of early Indian foreign policy. However, even he manages to recount Pandit in his writing only as one of the influential

diplomats in the early years of independent India who had direct access to the state leadership and hence, undertook 'independent initiatives' that were much loathed by the 'officials in Delhi'. The other references of her in the book are all indirect, either through the correspondences of Nehru or in the citations of the accounts of K.P.S. Menon, the then Foreign Secretary of India (1948-52). As a result, it would be no exaggeration to say that while this seminal work on Indian foreign policy explores the role of figures like Nehru, G.S. Bajpai, K.P.S. Menon and V.K. Krishna Menon in the early years of Indian foreign policy, it provides bare minimum space to Pandit, as a diplomat of sufficient influence and unparalleled experience. Similarly, in his later writings though Raghavan does speak of Pandit's role in the United Nation, once again there is dearth of recollections of her experiences and influence as an Indian envoy in the foreign policy (Raghavan 2016).

Rudra Chaudhuri (Chaudhuri 2014), in his book on Indo-US relations, *Forged in A Crisis: India and the United States since 1947*, offers one of the rare accounts that brings to attention the role played by Pandit in the formative years of Indio-US relationship. These years were also the days of the beginning of the Cold War. Thus, negotiations were more vexed and also of greater importance for India. Chaudhari, in his work does highlight the role of Pandit, as a diplomat negotiating the pressing matters with utmost urgency with her American counterparts. This stood particularly relevant for negotiating food assistance for India from the US to meet the acute deficit of '4 million tonnes of grain' that the country faced in the year 1950 (Chaudhuri 2014: 64). He writes of the deftness with which Pandit made it clear to her counterparts about India's stand of non-alignment and Indian ideals and aspirations as a young nation, and what it expected from US as a country with which it looked forward to share a friendly relationship. She was acting along the position as outlined to her by Nehru. This also makes one reflect upon the reason for choice of Pandit as India's envoy to countries that held great importance for the Prime Minister at that time.

Denis Kux's study of India-US ties, *India and the United States: Estranged Democracies*, gives a detailed account of the evolution of the relations between the two countries, the hiccups that the early years of Harry S. Truman and Nehru witnessed, and how the association between the countries developed through the Cold War. However, his writing fails to do justice to the role of Pandit as an Indian envoy.

Though there are a few references to her as the Indian Ambassador to the U.S and of her reception by the American government, the book primarily studies the Indo-US relations focusing on the ideas of Nehru (Kux 1993).

Rakesh Ankit, in the recent times, is one of the few scholars who emphasizes upon the diplomatic caliber of Pandit while she was posted as the Indian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom and at the United Nations. He explores her role as an active participant of the intergovernmental relations between the two countries. His earlier writing, covering the period from 1954 to 1961, allows one to think of certain interesting probabilities as it studies the bilateral relationship between India and United Kingdom through the actions and appearances of an individual, i.e., Vijayalakshmi Pandit (Ankit 2016). Still, narrations about her these works remain wanting and there remains a need to further carve Pandit's role as a diplomat, something that goes beyond the mere use of adjectives that congratulate her oratory skills. However, Ankit in his recent work allows one a better sense of Pandit's years as an Indian ambassador in Moscow. Here he gives a detailed account of the missing literature on Indo- Soviet relations in the first three years of Indian independence and resultantly furnishes enough material to understand the frustrations that Pandit had to endure in a not so friendly Soviet Union (Ankit 2018). His work doesn't provide a gendered analysis of Pandit's position in Moscow but nonetheless provides enough material to establish her role and importance.

A review of the existing writings allows one to observe that of the various but limited impressions that one finds of Pandit in the Indian foreign policy literature, it is only in Pandit's own words that there exists a detailed account of herself as a serving diplomat. To begin with, she writes of the year 1947 when she was told of her first official posting,

> "Bhai had another talk with me and said he had decided on Moscow for me…I expressed my doubts about a diplomatic career. Ad hoc visits to conferences and the United Nations were one thing, but to take on a task that needed special training, and at a time when the eyes of the world were on a newly independent India, might be a mistake. I knew nothing of embassies or of Moscow"(Pandit 1979: 227).

The first glance at Pandit's own words leaves the impression that she was not very confident about the role that she was about to embrace. However, a closer examination of her life suggests that she was not the sort of a woman who would

remain meek or clueless or even under-confident. True, she was operating in the unknown turf of diplomacy and international relations but without doubt she was a rather keen observer and an eager student. This is what enabled her to use the opportunities that came her way to her best advantage.[3]

Attempting to understand Pandit's initial expectations from her new office, we can look at her recollection of the initial brief that she received from the Government of India. Writing about her interactions with Sardar Patel, who was to introduce her to the prospective role as an Indian ambassador to Moscow, Pandit observes that what she had expected was, "instruction and information regarding government thinking on India's problems as well as her specific approach to Moscow, in terms of politics" (Pandit 1979: 228). Instead, to her disappointment what she was provided was a brief on ideals like "adherence to values, friendship with all nations, avoidance of war", to which she expressed her dissatisfaction to Patel in the following words, "But… these are expressions of hope Sardar, you are not outlining a policy. Surely we must have a positive and realistic policy" (Pandit 1979: 228). While there is more to fill the context of this account, it is certainly an important observation that provides one a way to look at her as a practitioner of foreign policy who had her own views and opinions. However, the prime question that remains to be investigated here is, why has a person of such public importance remained nearly absent from the existing accounts of Indian foreign policy?

Of the few biographers who have written about her life and experiences, none have constrained themselves from describing the influence that she had over her audiences. Be it the dignitaries she was entertaining or the large crowds that she addressed in foreign lands, the force of her words swayed all. Such was the influence she had on those whom she crossed paths with. Anne Guthrie writes in her biography of Pandit, describing her time as the leader of India's first mission to the United Nations in 1946:

> "When Mrs. Pandit arrived, camera bulbs flashed and reporters pursued her, eager for a statement from the first and only woman to head a delegation.

[3] As elaborated in Chapter Four through a study of an impression of her contemporaries. Also, the recent work of Rakesh Ankit gives a detailed account of the deliberations of Pandit in Moscow and how she tried to work around every opportunity that she could seize under the constant surveillance and the stone walling from the Kremlin.

> Among those present for the general Assembly were men she had come to know when she unofficially attended the Charter Conference in San Francisco. Now she met them on an equal footing, not only as a member but also as the leader of a delegation"(Guthrie 1963:118).

Vera Brittain in her portrayal of Pandit celebrates her as someone who had a profound impact on creating new diplomacy of the new India, whose influence was second only to that of Nehru. Elucidating upon the significance that Vijayalakshmi Pandit holds in the history of career diplomats, she writes, "No other diplomat, man or woman, has carried within a period of 15 years the ambassadorship to three major powers and the presidency of the United Nations" (Brittain 1964: 11). This speaks volumes of the stature of Pandit, or so one would assume. It thus is intriguing that why the literature on the formative years of Indian foreign policy is silent on the influences of Pandit. However, it is true that this question definitely needs to be preceded by an enquiry into whether she had any substantial influence on foreign policy decision-making or not.

Having said that, there is a bigger question at play here. It being the need for adequate consideration to be given to the role of women in the corridors of foreign policy decision-making and broadly in the realm of international politics. Diplomats, by the very nature of their vocation live dual lives. Neumann borrows from Charles Taylor's identification of the two scripts of 'Western human beings'. He writes that human beings follow two distinct scripts. The first script concerns what he calls the 'decency of everyday life' which 'celebrates the low key, monotonous laboring life'. The second script is the 'heroic script'. Neumann argues that in the vocabulary of Western diplomacy, the very title 'career diplomats' highlights the second story of the lives of these individuals serving the foreign policy institution. This is what takes precedence over their other existence. He writes that the very phrase 'career diplomat' is essentially used to highlight the importance of the work that these individuals do and to underline the weight that their jobs hold. Thus, as it is interpreted, the lives of these individuals is reduced to the professional roles they fulfil (Neumann 2012).

Superimposing this framework over the non-Western diplomats and particularly women diplomats, it is not surprising that the nature of life as a diplomat for these people is no different. Focusing on women, one would presume that women

diplomats with regard to the scripts that are to be followed do not differ from their male counterparts. However, the sparse presence of women in the foreign policy literature makes one wonder about the significance they hold in their field. These women are at the center of power, then why is it that they are mainly absent from the study of foreign policy making? Does gender have a role to play here? Figures like Pandit had a peculiarity of their own and that is essential to be recognized. On one hand she was a woman who was acting in a man's world that too in the simmering heat of cold war politics. On the other hand, she was also someone who was a privileged elite, as was true of most of the early diplomats even in the Western world (Neumann 2012). Then, the core issue is one of the receptions of a woman of such a background by those who study the discipline. How is it that they view her role and contribution? How is it that they receive her in corridors of power, which in this case were the corridors of foreign policy decision-making? Do they look at her with reverence, disdain or utter dismissal that would be attributed to someone like Pandit because of the privilege of birth that she enjoyed? Or, do they try to investigate her role as a diplomat and attempt to explore the reasons for her absence from the mainstream literature? It is when the last question is pondered upon that the issue of gender comes forth in the inquiry.

The question that Enloe asks: 'Where are the women?' (Enloe 1989) applies to women in power positions as well. Diplomats are very powerful creatures and one would expect women who are diplomats to enjoy no less of this power privilege. However, while to the outsider, they might appear to be commanding great influence, a crucial point of inquiry remains the perception of these women within the power corridors that would resultantly influence their visibility in decision-making. Are these women mere symbols of token female representation or do they possess real power? This is an important question. One of the very few studies on women as foreign policy decision makers is by McGlen and Sarkees. In their work, *Women in Foreign Policy: The Insiders*, they dwell upon the rarely taken up yet so important question of the ability of female foreign policy makers to have a real impact on the decision making in the foreign policy institutions they serve (McGlen and Sarkees 1993). Diplomacy is one such foreign policy institution. It is on all these lines of inquiry that this research would explore the larger question of the absence of women

from the accounts of foreign policy by analyzing the life experiences of Pandit, in the capacity of a diplomat.

Definition, Rationale and Scope of the Study

The primary aim of this research is to address the lack of visibility of women in foreign policy literature. Like all other explorations, archival material once brought to light, succeeds in leaving behind an imprint on the minds of the readers. It opens gateways to information that might have until now remained unexplored (Duff and Cherry 2008). The proposed study aspires for the same using the unexplored primary resources on Indian foreign policy.

The literature reviewed for the purpose of the study reveals that there is much that has remained unaccounted and unexplored in the early years of Indian foreign policy when it comes to the contributions of Pandit. Pandit, as a woman, suffered from the same peculiarity as other women leaders of postcolonial South Asia. It cannot be disputed that she enjoyed the privileges of coming from an illustrious lineage that armed her with the vocabulary to make political statements; but she also had to her credit an extremely illustrious career as a diplomat that reflected in her consecutive postings to the powerful countries of that time. Hence, the lack of the accounts of her influence on the formation of Indian foreign policy in the early years remains questionable.

The principal aim of this research is to study Pandit as a practitioner of foreign policy. This would be done through analyzing the various assessments of her, as they exist in the available primary and secondary literature. As already mentioned, the absence of her influence from the literature on foreign policy would be further problematized to ascertain the possible reasons for the same.

A prevalent point of dismissal of Pandit in the early accounts of Indian Foreign Policy is often done on the grounds of her appointment being a product of nepotism. However, this study, in the light of her various achievements in the global arena, would argue that such sidelining of Pandit from the foreign policy narrative had more to do with her being a woman than her being an apparent product of favoritism/nepotism. Pandit was the only woman in Nehru's core team of foreign policy advisors. Her contemporaries were experienced men of influence like Bajpai,

K.P.S. Menon, and Nehru's close aid and associate V.K. Krishna Menon. However, she was the Prime Minister's sister. One would assume that the familial ties would give her a clear passage to influence the thoughts and actions of Nehru who was also the Foreign Minister. Yet, her absence from the popular commentaries on Indian foreign policy makes one question this presumption.

In a nutshell, this research proposes to ascertain the role of Pandit as a serving diplomat of newly independent India and to study her influences on foreign policy decisions of the then Government of India under the leadership of Nehru. It also aspires to explore the question of gender and diplomacy by assessing the possible reception of women as foreign policy practitioners in the world of international politics, keeping Pandit as the case study.

The study would approach the above-mentioned aim by analyzing Pandit through three prime prisms. The first would be a study of her through the impressions of her as recounted by her contemporaries in their writings. The published works and private papers of figures like Bajpai, K.P.S. Menon, Dutt, T.N. Kaul, and B.N. Rau would be studied for this purpose. The second tangent of inquiry would be through the existing reception of Pandit in the Indian foreign policy writing. Her presence will be studied and her absence will be problematized. This would be done keeping the assessments by her colleagues as a point of inquiry to investigate the place accorded to her in the existing literature. Lastly, theoretically, this research proposes to study the reception of women in foreign policy establishments. The question of gender in foreign policy decision-making would be addressed through analyzing the life and experiences of Pandit.

The questions asked for the purpose of this inquiry are as follows:

1. Where are the women in foreign policy decision making?
2. How did the foreign policy establishment of newly independent India receive a woman diplomat?
3. Why has Pandit remained absent from the narratives of Indian Foreign Policy?
4. Did gender play a role in influencing her reception as a practitioner of foreign policy by the academia and her contemporaries? If yes, was she undermined because she was a woman?

It is though these questions that this study deals with the role of gender in foreign policy narratives.

Hypotheses

1. Gender plays a decisive role in the absence of Pandit from Indian foreign policy narratives.

2. Despite her absence from the extant Indian foreign policy literature, Pandit made important contributions to the shaping of India's foreign policy.

Research Methodology

This study adopts an exploratory research design that is deductive in nature insofar as theory would precede observation. A feminist inquiry is employed here to analyze the observations gathered from archive-based study. The primary data studied has chiefly been collected from the private papers of Pandit, Subimal Dutt, K.P.S. Menon and others, available in the archives at Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

Secondary sources for the study consist of the biographies of these figures and the existing literature on Indian foreign policy. They would be subject to an interpretive analysis.

It is through these historical observations that one becomes more convinced of the need to explore the role of Pandit in the early years of Indian foreign policy.

Theoretically, this study explores the feminist strand of inquiry in studying foreign policy decision-making. Drawing from Enloe's work (Enloe 1989) this research asks the crucial question that she asks, i.e., 'Where are the women?' It dwells upon the visibility of women in foreign policy literature.

Thus, to sum it up, using the life of Pandit as a case study, this research is one informed by 'feminist curiosity' (Enloe 1989) and it attempts to analyse the Indian foreign policy establishment through a feminist lens. The study aims to explore the possible explanations for the absence of Pandit from the major body of Indian foreign policy literature, and to problematize the same.

Chapterization

The dissertation is divided in five chapters, including the current chapter titled*Introduction*. The remaining four chapters of the dissertation are as follows:

Chapter Two: The Presence and Absence of Women in Foreign Policy: Revisiting Gendered Diplomacy

This chapter furnishes the theoretical matrix within which the empirical inquiry is set. Here the role of gender as a category is explored to determine the visibility of women in foreign policy establishments and literature. It also explores the postcolonial character of the Indian Foreign Service and how it impacted the reception of women in Indian diplomacy. Broadly, this chapter outlines the need to study female figures in international politics and the possible impact of such inquiry on the larger explorations in the field.

Chapter Three: Madame Pandit'sPortrayal in Foreign Policy Literature

Here various impressions of the role and life of Pandit, as they are present in the existing writings, have been reviewed to ascertain where she stood in the then foreign policy discourse of India. Accounts of bilateral relations between India-US, India-Soviet Union and India-UK are the primary field of exploration here. The descriptions of Pandit in these secondary academic writings have been studied to ascertain her stature in Indian foreign policy.

Chapter Four: Through Eyes of The Others: An Assessment by Her Contemporaries
This chapter studies the impressions of Pandit as accounted by her contemporaries who themselves were involved in crafting India's foreign policy in the early years. Their published works, private papers and interviews constitute the sources of study here to gauge the recollections of Pandit by these men and so as to put it under a feminist scrutiny.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

The findings of the research have been summed up and coherently put forth in is last chapter.

Chapter Two

The Presence and Absence of Women in Foreign Policy: Revisiting Gendered Diplomacy

To understand the empirical reality one has to delve into the theoretical foundation of the domain of the study as proposed in this chapter. An archival inquiry to retrace the life and experiences of a female diplomat also requires a detailed comprehension of the reason for these archives being unattended to for years. The female envoy is sparsely studied and rarely credited in the narratives of foreign policy making. The researcher has to take upon herself the exploration of the cause behind these tendencies within the discipline and in the diplomatic circles, so as to problematize the absences and to grasp the motivations that have for years contributed to a gender imbalanced portrayal of diplomatic history. This chapter addresses these issues. By locating the theoretical biases that have ensured an absence of the female protagonists from the foreign policy narratives, this chapter sets the matrix within which this study of the life and experiences of Vijayalakshmi Pandit is located.

In his lecture for the Second Lecture Series of the K.G Saiyidain Memorial Trust (1975), K.P.S Menon spoke on 'The Changing Patterns of Diplomacy'. In his lecture he borrows Sir Ernest Satow's definition of diplomacy, i.e., 'the application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between the government of independent States' (Menon 1975). Menon describes diplomacy as a job demanding tact and skill for the purpose of securing life and preserving peace. According to him, States are made of individuals. While there exists 'police and magistracy' to keep individuals from harming each other, how does one keep an 'erratic state in order' (Menon 1975)? It is here that the relevance of diplomacy comes into the forefront and diplomats become indispensable.

Tracing the evolution of patterns of diplomacy, a child of the Conference of Vienna (1815) and essentially a European creation, Menon tracks down the journey of diplomacy in the Indian subcontinent. From the mythological texts of Ramayana and Mahabharata, Menon spoke of Nehru in the modern era and his influence on the Indian diplomatic corps. In his speech, he dabbled with the careful perusal of various thoughts on the idea of diplomacy the early years of Indian foreign policy, that he was a part of. However, there exists no female diplomat in his narration of history, and

‘petticoat diplomacy’ or ‘boudoir diplomacy’ is granted bare minimum space in his account of the kinds of diplomacy. What one speaks in public or writes about is reflective of personal discretion. However, individual choices of speech are not mere cosmetic actions. They reflect underlying thoughts and inclinations harbored by a person. Thus, coming back to the question of what does one gather from Menon’s speech? Amongst other things, it is the near absolute absence of women in his world of diplomacy.

Menon writes of “petticoat” or “boudoir diplomacy” existing in some periods of world diplomatic history. However, he adds that it was not until the appointment of Madame Kollantai of the Soviet Union to Sweden in the 1920s that the world saw its first woman diplomat. From here he jumps onto the existence of women heads of States since time immemorial and offers his comments on the formidability of these women and their unhesitant use of “feminine assets” to meet the interests of their countries. Also, he warns one of the ‘dangers’ of boudoir diplomacy. A cautionary advice against the overindulgence in “pleasure of women” and falling down in front of the “feminist charm” which “extends to cover the weightiest affairs of the state” (Menon 1975). Here he is endorsing the advice given by M.D Cailleres (the Ambassador of Louis XIV in the eighteenth century) to the Ambassadors.

The objective behind recollecting these words of Menon is to highlight the corners in which female diplomats are pushed to in the popular memory of diplomacy. Through the sub-discipline of foreign policy studies, while women find some scant references, these are primarily instances of token representation in mainstream literature, the worth and achievements of these women in the field of diplomacy remain largely understudied, a common near global phenomenon. Menon’s lecture here stands as an apt example as while he mentions one Russian and three Chinese women diplomats in these sparse words dedicated to the female counterpart, nowhere does he refer to Pandit, the first woman diplomat of India and his colleague.

Pandit was a woman extraordinaire by several standards. She was the first female ambassador of India and went on to become the first female president of the UN General Assembly. Her postings included a string of great powers and wherever she went, she won accolades for her charm and her great oratory skills. Then, one wonders about the omission of such a woman by Menon while he speaks of women diplomats. It can be gauged as a conscious omission due to the personal equation

between Menon and Pandit as both were in constant competition to have greater influence on the Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. Nonetheless, it indicates a bigger phenomenon, the phenomenon of the forgotten women diplomats of the world, and of India in particular.

As Neumann writes, the "body of the diplomat" is a fairly new sight of inquiry in the study of International Relations. He studies the Norwegian foreign ministry to provide a gendered and class analysis of the composition of the organization. In his theory driven inquiry, Neumann finds that the history of the female diplomats of Europe largely exists in oral memories as little or no literature has been devoted to these subjects in the study of International Relations (Neumann 2018), a phenomenon not different in this part of the world (India).

The aim of this chapter is to highlight such omission of women from the mainstream narratives of foreign policy chronicling. There exist underlying meanings and forces that result in the exclusion of women from the tales of diplomacy that need to be explored and the female contributions in the diplomatic world requires to be brought to light. This chapter attempts to problematize the blank spaces left by the silencing of the female voices in the diplomatic world, analyzing it using a gender lens. The chapter ascertains the role of gender in determining the visibility of women in foreign policy establishments and literature and outlines the need to study female figures in international politics and hence, the possible impact of such inquiry on the larger explorations in the field.

Where are the Women?

> "Political man is a familiar figure with long history…Political man has fascinated and challenged historians and philosophers; he has been described, dissected, praised, excoriated, and psychoanalyzed" (Kirkpatrick 1974:3)

As highlighted in the previous section, the question of gender doesn't not find itself featuring in inquiries concerning diplomacy. That, however, does not make diplomacy a gender-neutral domain. By default, the the quintessential image of a 'diplomat' is of a well- groomed, well- mannered man floating through negotiations of international politics (Towns 2009; McCarthy 2014). The Oxford dictionary's definition of a diplomat is, "An official representing a country abroad". This indeed is gender-neutral. Thus, an attempt at finding women diplomats is met with a mere

handful studies in this domain. Hence, reflecting the existence of a lacuna in the existing foreign policy scholarship.

The precise age or the birth of diplomacy in world history is unknown. However, its evolution over the years has been mapped by various scholars. From traditional to modern age diplomacy, it is evident that the coming of the nation state and of democratic governments has greatly impacted the nature of diplomatic negotiations and diplomats. Historically, diplomacy has been a vocation reserved for elites endowed with the 'mannerisms' to deal with the men in high offices. Simply put, those of the 'noble origin' were the men who found their way to the diplomatic quarters (McCarthy 2014; Aggastem and Towns 2017). However, with democratization, the gateways of this coveted vocation were finally opened for those hailing from humbler backgrounds.

Geographically, Europe has been a focal point in the evolution of modern diplomatic history. Much of what contributed to the making of the modern diplomatic institutions has been a product of the international occurrences of the wars fought and the peace that followed in European lands. So, just as the basic characteristics of the institution of diplomacy have much to owe to their European legacy, the same applies to the omission of women within this domain.

It was in the late nineteenth century, as the great powers were meeting in Berlin (Congress of Berlin in 1978) that the rules governing diplomacy became established. McCarthy argues that while the pre 1878 era still allowed aristocratic women to exert some influence over the negotiations of statecraft, the post-Berlin era absolutely marginalized them from the quarters of international political engagements. Primarily, it galvanized the character of the institution of modern diplomacy as an absolute male terrain (McCarthy 2014). Thus, contributing to the development and sustenance of the idea of a diplomat being embedded in masculine characteristics.

The world and institutions of statecraft and negotiations, as studied today remain highly masculine in their demography despite the increased induction of women officers to diplomatic posts. Approximately eighty-five percent of the serving ambassadors world-over are men. Additionally, the possibility of a female official to make it to high offices, despite the increased induction in foreign services, remains a rare sight. This impediment to the advancement of the female actors of diplomacy in

particular and of politics in general could probably be attributed to the precedent in 1878 at Berlin that got carried forward, which was rooted in the social and cultural norms of patriarchy, and found its way beyond Europe to the rest of the world (Aggestam and Towns 2017).

Over two decades ago, Cynthia Enloe asked a question that shook the fundamentals of how we as scholars have been studying the discipline of International Relations. Invoking a feminist curiosity, Enloe asked, "Where are the women?" (Enloe 1990). Two decades have passed and the question remains as poignant as it was then and also when applied to the field of diplomacy. The 'gender blindness' of the discipline has persisted despite the expansion of the subfield of feminist studies in International Relations when it comes to the question of women in diplomacy (Aggestam and Towns 2017).

To begin locating the women in diplomatic institutions, one has to first understand the gendered meaning of diplomacy as it exists and which has allowed for a certain "hegemonic masculinity" (pattern of practice that allowed men's dominance over women to continue) (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005) to dominate the field for too long, as the above mentioned works of Towns and McCarthy underlines. But prior to delving into an inquiry derived from that understanding, it is imperative to clarify in what capacity is the term 'institution' appropriated here for the purpose of studying diplomacy? Institution as understood here is both, a consolidated frame of rules and structures within the established hierarchies of which individuals operate. Secondly, it can be understood as an established set of patterns, what could be called traditions, which defines and establishes the matrix within which the individual agents operate. While, bureaucratic offices within the foreign ministry can be associated with the first interpretation of the term, diplomacy at large can be understood in relation to the latter.

Enloe in her 1990 study asserts that women are often reduced to the status of 'furniture' when serving on the secretarial desks of foreign ministry offices. They are treated as mere spectators of the political issues and are not considered worthy of attention, as the important decisions of international politics are taken by men. She emphasizes that while most of the women in foreign offices who are assigned clerical jobs are of no interest to academia and researchers at large, it is the feminist researchers who driven by their feminist curiosity acknowledge the importance of

these women and give due consideration to their contributions to the working of the state, individually and as a whole (Enloe 1990). However, when it comes to studying women as serving ambassadors, i.e., in the higher posts in the foreign affairs ministries across the world, even the feminist inquiry so far has been falling short. The feminist curiosity has mostly been unable to fuel interest towards these women who nonetheless remain under represented in the systematic study of International Relations, even by feminist scholars within the discipline. Enloe, Towns, Aggastem, Adami, McGlen and Sarkees, etc., are just a handful of feminist IR scholars who allowed some space to female diplomats in their study. In fact, majority of the gender informed work on women diplomats has actually been done by historians studying diplomatic history and not IR researchers (Farias 2015; McCarthy 2009; McCarthy 2014; Kiddle 2015; Jeffreys-Jones 1995; Wood 2005; Wood 2007).

Women, for aeons have struggled to break the glass ceiling and establish a firm standing in the public sphere of activity. The domain of the international is no exception to this phenomenon. Historically, women have struggled to be a part of the power structure that calls the shot in world politics. At the higher levels, the more basic struggle has been one of being recognized as important actors in international affairs, a demand often dismissed and a status primarily denied. The acknowledgements that have come about the female presence has mostly been associated with the relegation of women as victims or survivors of violence and deliberations to change that narrative and this can be corroborated by the bodies of work produced by J. Ann Tickner, Christine Sylvester, V. Spike Peterson, Laura Sjoberg, etc. Typically, such an inquiry begins with women being compounded with children as the most vulnerable elements in world politics and then moving onto detangling the two, i.e. women and children.

Not undermining the importance that the study of women in sites of violence is essential, as women certainly make a large segment of individuals at the receiving end of violence, institutional and otherwise. However, taking feminist inquiry to all spheres and to ensure that the curiosity for women and of women does not get trapped in academic silos, it is imperative to look at other sites of operation where women are performing agents. Diplomacy is one such domain as these women are in power positions but yet remain marginalized.They battle the established male dominance within the world of diplomacy to try and qualify to hold top ranks in the foreign

office; also, they remain largely understudied in the academic analyses of foreign policy institution and the chronicles of diplomacy. It is only when women from all walks of life become the subjects of feminist research that we will be able to claim this subfield within the discipline to be truly inclusive and doing justice to its champions, i.e., women.

Women operating in male dominions of international politics are constantly tackling power hierarchies that keep them at the receiving end. The domain of diplomacy, as mentioned earlier, has traditionally been an all male sphere of operation. Even when it was opened to the female entrants, it did not absolutely breakdown the wall between the public and the private sphere as the women were allowed to be employed only until she got married. A bizarre rule that found its way beyond Europe too and hence, allowed the female officers a very short span of professional life, if they intended to get married (Neumann 2012). In India this rule was scrapped post the contestation of the misogynistic service rules by C.B Muthamma in the apex court of the country in 1979(C. B. Muthamma vs. Union of India and others 1979). This reduced the choice for women as they had to choose either their career or the desire to have a family, an unfair condition that had no justification, at least a sensible one; thus, creating an atmosphere of unequal access to opportunity.

It is true that over the years the participation of women has increased in international negotiations in general and also in the diplomatic quarters as serving professionals in particular (Aggestam and Towns 2017). Nonetheless, this upward trend falls flat when examined under Robert D. Putnam's 'The law of increasing disproportion' (Putnam 1976). propounded in 1976. The supposition of this law holds that the correlation between a position of political authority and the high/dominant status of those occupying it stands directly proportional to each other. That is, the more powerful an office is, the more likely it is that it would be occupied by a member of the dominant/privileged group. This, argues Putnam, is applicable across all three group based stratifications or systems identified by him in his study; that being "age system, gender system and arbitrary set system". Speaking of the gendered system, he argues that the higher an office of power is, the less likelihood there is of it being occupied by a woman. The woman here is a member of the subordinate/underprivileged group. Thus, this is "the law of increasing disproportion".

Extending and applying this law to a gendered study of diplomacy would translate into an assumption that the higher and more influential a post is in the hierarchy of the diplomatic structure, the less is the possibility of it being occupied by a woman This postulation finds vindication in the facts around the female appointees in the diplomatic establishments the world over, at large. To begin with, India found its first female ambassador in the year 1947 in Pandit. This was followed by the induction of Muthamma in the Indian Foreign Service as the first woman to have cleared the All India Examination. Thus at the dawn of independence, the country opened its diplomatic corridors and the Foreign Service for women. However, regardless of this achievement, the journey towards greater visibility and power for these women was not easy given the adoption of many regressive practices of the colonial period. While Pandit definitely stood privileged, being Nehru's sister and got the most illustrious postings in her hand, she has for years survived only on the margins of foreign policy in India. On the ground, Muthamma had to wage a battle to be treated equally and not be discriminated against for being a woman when the she was bypassed for promotion by the Ministry of External Affairs(MEA) in 1979(C. B. Muthamma vs. Union of India and others 1979). Not to forget that it took India nearly half a century to appoint Chokila Iyer as its first woman Foreign Secretary in the year 2001. This was followed by two more women's appointments in 2009 (Nirupama Rao) and in 2013 (Sujatha Singh).

Towns and Niklasson find in their 2016 study that the percentage of female ambassadorial appointments have risen over the years to twenty-five to forty percent for states like Finland, Philippines, Sweden, Norway, United States, Canada and Columbia (Towns and Niklasson 2016). Their research also corroborates Putnam's law as stated earlier. Studying diplomacy as an aggregate set of practices, they dwell upon the "clustering of female ambassadorial postings to states that are considered "politically more gender equal"". Such an inquiry also allows one to investigate the conflict between preferences for the masculine traits vis-a-vis the feminine traits while choosing envoys to countries of importance by the home country. As it is understood, the countries to which an ambassador is posted reflects its credibility and merit within the home foreign service institution. No wonder that Pandit's postings to the USSR, US and the UK made much noise at that time as these were the countries that mattered in the world of Cold War politics. This is also reflective of the norm

that the more capable a diplomat is, the higher the likelihood is of her getting posted to a country that is important and that requires deft diplomatic skills to negotiate for the home State. Juxtaposing this observation to the law of Putnam brings to light the conundrum that faces a feminist inquiry of the institution itself. If women barely make it to the top ranks due to the gendered hierarchies prevailing in the diplomatic world, the likelihood of them being considered as officers of merit is automatically debunked due to the preference for a male representative, thus denying them an equal service opportunity. Taking on from here, Towns and Niklasson base their research on the presumption that the relative military and economic might of a State mirrors the corresponding weightage given to the ambassador's postings there. They study the data from fifty countries with highest GDP in 2014. Analysing data comprising of 6,990 ambassador postings across fifty countries, the researchers find that female ambassadors are more likely to be made incharge of "small embassies in low status countries" compared to their male counterparts. This, therefore, reflected a preference of States for female diplomats for low profile postings. Also, Towns and Niklasson (2016) find in their study that women occupy only fifteen percent of the top diplomatic posts in these countries. This stands in stark contradiction to men occupying eighty-five percent of the ambassadorial posts, which mostly include the most coveted postings. This is an unsurprising yet unsettling observation provided that women make nearly fifty percent of the world population (World Bank 2017).

The point of discussing these observations is to bring to attention the increased presence, yet the shadowed identity of women diplomats in the study of international relations. True that the number of female appointments the world over have risen over the years. But, it is imperative to not confuse mere presence with effective presence. Gender hierarchies within organizational institutions are tough to breach for the women practitioners of foreign policy. Diplomacy here becomes an interesting site, as it is a platform where the domestic gendered hierarchies and prejudices come into contact and interact with the gender norms prevailing on the broader canvass of international politics. This, allows us a comprehensive understanding of how gender plays at all levels of foreign service interactions, local and international. Also, it prods us to not be satisfied with the marginalized presence of women in the discipline of IR as a subject of inquiry. This because, as Christine Sylvester warns us,

> "Sometimes, though, only shadows of "women" appear out from under a plethora of heavy outlines already drawn as international politics. Women can be not quite visible, difficult to fathom, to hear and see in some accounts, implied or implicated only in discourses comprising the field. They can be sketched in watery ways in and among the many layers of assumptions that ooze out of crisp renderings, that spill forth from a written text, that suggest hidden roles that never get any attention" (Sylvester 1997:14).

Thus, making it imperative for the feminist researchers of International Relations to dig deeper and find the actual stories of the women who have been around for a while, but have not made to the center stage of academic inquiry so far, unfortunately.

Female Diplomat of the Non West: The Subaltern of the International

While there is a general concern about the omission of women from the historical analysis of international relations, main point of contention is also the relegation of the women of the global south to near non-existence. The works that have been mentioned thus far, if one notices, are all works of western scholarship. These are also works that problematize and analyze the absence of women, but in a western setting. The examples of female diplomats of relevance as sighted in these works are by default women of the West. That leaves the postcolonial, the non western women without any torchbearer to emphasize the significance of their existence and their contributions. While there exists an evident sex based bias in the omission of the women from the academic inquiry in the discipline, there is also a North- South/ West-Non West tangent to this discourse. A tangent that is also reflective of the demographic and geographic supremacy of the global north over the discipline of International Relations. A domination that determines what questions attain relevance and are looked into for answers. Undoubtedly, in such a scenario even if the female finds some representation, it is the white woman; a woman who is closer to the headquarters from where the discipline is captained.

Contemporary times have contributed to a call for an increased diversification in the discipline of International Relations. This has contributed to the issues of race and gender and the postcolonial existence seeing the light of the day in the mainstream discourses. Rebecca Adami's work is one such example (Adami 2015). Adami has been working on the contribution of the southern women to the drafting of the UNHR declaration in 1947. Her attempt counters the West-centric historical narrative of the birth of the UNHR that has conventionally celebrated the women of the global North

like Eleanor Roosevelt, but has forgotten her southern counterparts (Hansa Mehta, Begum Ikramullah and Minerva Bernardino) who had brought much to the table so as to make the declaration of Human Rights more inclusive in character. It is a similar inquiry that is warranted in the area of diplomatic field so as to ascertain that the women from the non-west who mattered are not lost in history. Adami's work is just one such example. But this brings to light the need to broaden the horizons of the scope of inquiry in the discipline of IR.

Chandra Mohanty uses the expression of 'the third world woman' to warn of one dimensional representation of the women of non west as the oppressed, impoverished and awaiting to be a liberated individual in the western literature (Mohanty 1988; Mohanty 2003). This can be applicable to the academic inquiry in IR as well, and in the feminist IR in particular. The western gaze has to be revamped to also look at women in power position to weave an alternative narrative of the non western women, which indeed is a part of history. This, of course, a herculean task as the disregard for the women in the foreign policy establishments of the non western countries is further compounded by the lack of interest in the subfield of diplomatic studies. The latter having been left open to be the forte of historians and not International Relations scholars. This stands to be an unnecessary withdrawal or disinterest as the study of world politics can only be benefitted by the lessons of history, including the history of the individuals who have been at the helm of power in international affairs.

The problem with this interaction of the western feminist International Relations with the non western female subject is also a reflection of the significance and power the epistemological location of the speaker holds in the discipline. This speaks more of "practices of representation" (Alcoff 1995).[4] A conflict exists in the practice of representation as the privileged diplomatic woman does not fit the criteria of the victimised non Western woman that the Western scholarship often chooses to "speak" for. The problem is the omission of women of power of the non west, from the western narrative of IR. This resonates with Spivak's observation on the work of western feminist scholars which according to her is enmeshed in power relations and

[4] Alcoff asks the question of who gets to speak for whom? It is the positionality of the speaker that matters. So, while the Western feminist scholarship might be "speaking" for its non-Western female subject, it doesn't necessarily represent the subject.

making the knowledge production concerning the non western subject narrow, and problematic in its scope (Spivak 1999).

Borrowing from Adami and invoking Spivak's work on the "impossibility of female representation" (Adami 2015), it can be understood that the politics of representation of the non-Western subject and object formation of the Western International Relations scholarship has more often than not rendered its non western women diplomats into the silos of irrelevance, as it does not meet the narrow understanding of the non-Western woman adhered to by the Western scholarship. This is intertwined with the larger problem of the image formation of the "third world" by those residing in the "first world" countries; i.e., the narrow characterization of the third world subject as a victim and the dismissal of those within the latter geography who operate at the helm of power. The greater danger that these depositions create is that they build a narrative that speaks for one category of the society, it is attempting to represent at the cost of others. The power discrepancies of gender more often than not cut across class, caste, race, etc. Thus, such narrow approachtowards the non Western woman adopted by the western IR scholarship would only create a larger tendency in the broader discipline to not factor in the role of the women from the non west, who despite occupying high offices have to struggle with the patriarchal norms of the institutions they are a part of.. This, renders the woman diplomat of the global south/non west invisible from the broader history of world affairs. More importantly, treating women diplomats as passive observers in international politics and degenerating their status in the hierarchies of the discipline further, reduces the possibilities of making the women participants the central characters in the tales of world politics.

Inherited Absences: From British to Indian Diplomacy

The Indian governmental and bureaucratic structure has much to do with the British establishment from where the "steel frame" was inherited/imported. Same applies to the birth of the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) as an institution which evolved from the ICS and later came under the umbrella of the Indian Civil Service. It was at the behest of Nehru that in 1946, Bajpai was made in charge of putting together the first team of what was to become the officers of the IFS (Dasgupta 2018). As mentioned earlier, the first female entrant to the IFS who cleared the examination was Muthamma, in 1949. As the services on a whole were inherited from the British set up, it would be

desirable to study the place of women in British diplomacy to understand the similarity in the dispositions of the two establishments in their reception and treatment of its female diplomats – one being the colonial establishment and the other being the postcolonial inheritor.

Helen McCarthy (2009) has produced commendable body of work and probably the only one of its kind on women in British diplomacy. McCarthy informs the readers through her study that it was not until 1949 that the doors of British Diplomatic and Consular Services were opened for women. The primary reason for this delay in incorporation of women in this public domain, while the other efforts for more equitable treatment for women in public sphere had borne fruit earlier, can be attributed to the attitude of the Foreign Office. It was the British Foreign Office that had vehemently resisted the entry of women into the diplomatic corps on the grounds of women not being taken seriously by their foreign counterparts and also the logistical issues that would mushroom once these officers decided to get married. It is no surprise then that the female diplomats were supposed to retire once they chose to tie the nuptial knot. That practice was adopted by the Indian foreign service establishment as well. When the female recruits joined the IFS, they were made to sign an undertaking that stated that they would resign in case they choose to get married.[5] Not to forget that the class constitution of then British Foreign Office and that of the IFS (primarily) was near identical. Entrants hailing from humble background in the nascent years of the Indian foreign office were only a few. However, this was a characteristic of the diplomatic cadre the world over and India and Britain were no exceptions (Neumann 2012).

The involvement of women in the British diplomatic quarters began with their involvement as typists, secretaries in addition to their involvement as diplomats' wives. It was the urgency of the second world war and the need for increased workforce in government jobs that had opened these avenues for women to join the

[5]Seema Sirohi wrote in the August issue of Outlook, 2018. Her feature titled 'Ms. Uninterrupted' is a two and a half page long write up on women ambassadors. This article very briefly acquaints one with the glass ceiling that the women foreign officers have had to struggle with in the South Block. The article also stressed upon the relevance of the judgment of Justice V.R Krishna Iyer in 1979, which denounced the IFS as an establishment for adhering to service rules that were misogynistic in character, thus, making the institution as a whole biased against its womenstaff. The court had also observed the need for the Foreign Service to revamp its attitude towards female officers and thus ensure equal opportunity and treatment for them.

Foreign Office at the lower rung. The role of the diplomat's wife however, had existed due to the prevalent tangent of "domesticity and the duty of the wife" to entertain her husband's guests. However, a look at the history of the engagements of the envoys would bare that the wife too was fulfilling the diplomatic duties ascribed to her, unofficially. She was to be the eyes and ears of the diplomat. She was to dig out information of relevance. She was to set the ambience right with impeccable hospitality so that the affairs of the state could be dealt with, and much more. The diplomat's wife had to lay the groundwork, literally, to make the embassy the true representation of the State it belonged to. This was the reason why the provision of taking the spouses along was provided in the service. However, the irony was that it was only applicable to the male diplomat who could to bring along his 'wife', thus, giving a hetero-normative character to the service rules. This though became a point of conflict when women entered the foreign service in the capacity of serving diplomats as neither were they allowed to take any other family member along, nor were the husbands allowed to accompany them on foreign postings as the rules were for a woman to accompany the man and not vice versa (McCarthy 2014; Neumann 2008; Neumann 2012). Thus, it gave another excuse for the arbitrary policy of demanding resignation upon marriage to be put in place. Thus, restricting the female envoys from attaining a balance of personal and professional lives and also altering career choices for many young women as they had to choose between the family and the profession. An imbalance that was certainly not desirable by most.

Much of the groundwork for the battle to make women a part of the British foreign service was also done by the increased role played by women in the international organisations. This was then League of Nations first and later the United Nations. The struggle for Human Rights at these forums and the broader negotiations for peace set an example of the capability of women to grasp the complex nuances of world politics. What further added to the weight of women's movement was the role the elite women of the British society were to play in these platforms, just like their counterparts in the US and other European States that allowed for a sound lobbying for an equal status for women in the diplomatic service; an intensive struggle to gain access for women in the rungs of diplomacy (McCarthy 2014).

The Indian case was very different, yet similar. The entry of women in the foreign service was in line with the greater values of a free India based on freedom and

equality for all. In the initial years of the establishment, the class character remained elite in nature, but that was more to do with the resources required to access good education in pre independence and newly independent India. Without these skills appearing for the All India Examination would in itself not be possible. Unlike Britain, the women championing the cause for women's rights in India were the stalwarts of the freedom struggle. However, history tells us that there was no such campaign led for the rights of women in diplomacy until Muthamma decided to challenge the institution of Foreign Service in the courts of law in 1979(as mentioned earlier in the chapter). Thus, impeding the struggle for equality of the female officers in the foreign policy establishment for a prolonged period of time.

The Indian Foreign Service inherited a culture that was a product of the influence of the colonial experiences of its founding officers and the aspirations of a newly independent Nehruvian India. This was further amalgamated with the norms and traditions of the society as it prevailed. Though the struggle for independence had already brought a large number of women into the public domain, the peculiarity of the institution of diplomacy as inherited from the British predecessors did not allow for an easy upward mobility for the female recruits, as said before. True, that Pandit had opened the door for many by setting an example. However, it cannot be forgotten that her privilege as the sister of the Prime Minister could not be replicated by the others who joined the service at the lower rungs unlike her. The section of the ICS officers who were at the helm of running the MEA were also an integral feature in the setting of gender dynamics in the establishment of this new service, as will be further corroborated by the evidence found in Chapter Four, which is essentially devoted to the archival study of Pandit and her contemporaries. Though not explicit in the writings of these officers, an in-between reading of the text on the interactions of the ICS officers and Pandit is reflective of the subtlety with which gendered prejudice played in the sphere of public offices. In this case, it was in the sphere of the foreign service.

On 9 February 1996, *The Independent*, a British newspaper reported about the unceremonious departure of Pauline Neville-Jones from the foreign service under the headline, "A Very Undiplomatic Incident". The news item spoke of her decision, having served thirty-three years in the British Diplomatic Service, to step down from her post as the Political Director in the Foreign Office when she discovered the subtle

downgrading of the office she was appointed to. This, as many newspapers cited, was her encounter with the glass ceiling in the foreign service. Nonetheless, a determined and optimistic Neville-Jones hoped that her departure from the office would make her eligible for an A-grade deputation to Paris as her last posting overseas before her retirement at the age of sixty. But, the mother organization had other plans. Not only was she bypassed by her six-year junior colleague, Michael Jay (a deputy under secretary) for the coveted posting to Paris (till now handed over to seasoned diplomats as a pre retirement treat), her request for promotion was also denied. Though Neville-Jones was offered a consolation posting as the head of the mission in Bonn, which would have made her the first British female officer ever to lead a grade one embassy, she decided to opt out in the face of the dissatisfaction she experienced with the institution she had served for the most of her life. Neville-Jones thus, left in search of greener pastures and joined the investment banking organization NatWest (McCarthy 2014).

Neville-Jones was no ordinary diplomat. She had a career that could be the envy of many. Very early in her career, she found her way to illustrious postings. In her share of the many professional feats, she was appointed as the third secretary in Rhodesia (during the Unilateral Declaration of Independence); first secretary to Washington during the Watergate scandal; second in command in Bonn at the time of reunification of Germany, to name a few. For home postings, her career at desk jobs was no less a feat. At the young age of forty-three, she was assigned the job to head the Planning Staff, the in-house think tank of the British Foreign Office. Thereafter, she went on to become the first female chair of the Joint Intelligence Committee of the British government. It was from hereon that Neville-Jones was made the Political Director, an appointment that eventually led to her decision of leaving the service when the stature of her office was diluted after she was appointed to it. The story of Neville Jones is important as it reflects the journey and the experience of a female, single diplomat who despite her impeccable career had to choose between job satisfaction and what the institution she served had to offer. This departure of Neville-Jones opened the Pandora's box for the British foreign office. Different newspapers carried different sides to the story, however, even those who were not a fan of this particular female diplomat could not shy away from commenting on the abysmal

record of the Foreign Office when it came to promoting women officers to top ranks. A reminder of the "masculine dominance" in the foreign service (McCarthy 2014).

This storm that had caught the British diplomatic power corridors reminds one of the similar issue that was witnessed when Muthamma approached the Supreme Court of India in 1979 against her being superseded for appointment in the foreign service ranks. Muthamma, the first woman to join the IFS by clearing the All India Civil Service Examination, in her petition to the court argued that her denial of promotion was on the grounds of gender discrimination. She argued that the institution of the IFS has for long time been discriminatory against its female recruits and that the denial of her promotion is also a reflection of the same. The bench that heard the case held in the end that the institution of the foreign service and the service rules described therein had a "misogynous posture" and asked the respondent, i.e., "the Union of India and others" to take corrective measures in the case in sight and also to work upon correcting the "sex based prejudice" inherent in the establishment at the earliest (C. B. Muthamma vs. Union of India and others 1979).

Muthamma's case was a touchstone in the struggle of women in the IFS for equality in service. Though dismissed, the stand taken by the apex court led to the doing away of the arbitrary service rule that required women to render resignation upon getting married which was a major milestone. That, made diplomatic career a feasible option for many of those women who were kept at bay by the need to choose between a family or a professional life. However, this case did not solve the issue of inherent constraints on the upward mobility of the female officers. As mentioned earlier, it was not till 2001 that India got its first female Foreign Secretary, Iyer, and though the number of female recruits joining the service kept increasing with each passion years, those making it to the top ranks remained but a handful.

This resemblance in the trajectory of incidents highlighting the struggle of women officers for equal treatment in service, corresponding with the obstacles faced in upward mobility within the establishment only highlights the uncomfortable postures of these institutions when it comes to deal with their female recruits. As mentioned earlier, the Indian foreign policy establishment inherited its framework and its official etiquettes from its British predecessor. But alongside, it also inherited the biased stance against its women entrants. True, that the entry of women in the IFS in free India was right at the cusp of independence, but as history shows an equal and fair

treatment to these officers in all aspects of service remained a far fetched reality, a lot owing to the prejudiced service rules and the general attitude of dismissal towards the female entrants. Thus, it is crucial for us to recognize and bring out the voices of these actors of international politics out of the corners into the mainstream, so as to understand the nuances of the life of a women diplomat and the place of a woman in the history of diplomacy as it stands missing today. Not to forget, such a deliberation also holds significance as it is through the study of the women who served in the foreign policy establishment that can one understand the gender dynamics that come to play in the institutional landscapes of international politics, domestic and international.

Marginalized but Not Irrelevant

The absence or the silencing of some diplomats also has to be looked at by considering the tendencies of academic inquiry within the domains of the Indian IR scholarship. What has added to the sidelining of women diplomats from the broader academic inquiry of the Indian scholars is the utter indifference amongst the foreign policy scholarship to investigate the role played by these women. As it appears, just like its counterpart in other parts of the world, the Indian International Relations academia too embraced an understanding of foreign policy establishments to be concerned chiefly with the great power politics and the role the male figures played therein. The female subject, as a decision maker or a representative of India, did not qualify as interesting subjects of study for the Indian IR scholars' fraternity, further contributing to the sidelining of women from the narratives of the Indian foreign policy. The most recent example in such trends of academic inquiry could be the rather intriguing inquiries of Deep-Datta Ray in the making of the Indian foreign policy (Datta-Ray 2015). Datta-Ray studies at great lengths the workings of the Indian diplomats to argue for the indigenous roots of India's diplomatic postulations, instead of the more often argued European inheritance of the same. In the course of his inquiry, he interviewed several Indian diplomats to understand the contexts in which they operate so as to establish the uniqueness of Indian diplomatic establishments. However, what finds the feminist researcher wanting is the near absence of women in the establishment in this study of Datta-Ray. To add, there exists only one woman diplomat in his list of interviewees for this project. Arguably every scholar can have his own methodology and his own preferences for those who

he wants to make a part of his work. However, such omission of the experiences of the female envoys of India in such inquiries of 'modern Indian diplomacy', only give proof of the negligence of the Indian International Relations academia of the works and contributions, and opinions, of those women of the foreign service who have been the representatives of the country the world over. Unintentional it may be but it also amounts to discrediting the merit of these women in the historical accounts of their professional domain.

Moving on to a broader landscape, over the decades gone by, since feminist curiosity found its way into the study of international relations, there has been some work done on women in diplomacy. As having already discussed earlier in this chapter, other than a handful of International Relations scholars, most of the work around gendered understanding of diplomacy, that focuses on female diplomats has actually come from the historians studying the life of individuals in diplomatic history. However, the importance of the need to extrapolate this knowledge of the individual lives to a broader analysis of diplomatic process, and mechanics of international politics cannot be stressed upon any further. Though the discipline, at the behest of feminist scholars, has sharpened its tools of study to make way for women centered understanding of international relations over the years, diplomacy which stands as the most basic and the most visible domain of world politics, remains missing from this reprioritized orientation. This raises the question about why such is the case?

In part this question could be answered by using Acker's observations about the little feminist debate that has historically gone into the study of organizations. This can be appropriated here, as diplomacy is understood as an institution as well, with its own organizational hierarchies that also imitates the gendered hierarchies adopted from the society. Acker observes that though the radical feminists of the early days denounced the "bureaucracy and hierarchy as male created and male dominated structures of control", the obviousness of organizational power and masculine control pushed the scholarship to the point where it no longer felt the need to debate gendered undercurrents at work in an organization. Another point she makes is the presumption of the gender neutrality of organizations, i.e., the idea that gender is difficult to see when only the masculine is present. Acker explains this as the presumption that mostly, despite of only men operating in organizations, the presumption that their behavior and perspectives are representative of the "human", the fallacy made is of

presumption of gender neutrality in the organization; which, in turn associates any association with the idea of a gendered analysis as contamination of the organizational order and character (Acker 1990). This presumption of the gender neutral character of organizations does not acknowledge the absence of women in these places and thus, it fails to acknowledge the need for a gendered inquiry that insists upon finding the women. An observation of this could be associated with the opening paragraphs on Menon's speech. The absolute absence of women in the Indian foreign service in his speech on Indian diplomacy reflects an absolute indifference towards the operation of gender within the diplomatic structure by him. However, this still does not provide a convincing explanation for the sidelining of the gendered study of diplomacy that focuses on women diplomats by the feminist works in International Relations at large.

A possible reason that can be understood here is the nature and the status of the job of a diplomat. Diplomats, by default are the elites in the bureaucratic organizations in their countries. An observation of the coveted status of the IFS in India can corroborate this proposition. The privilege and the luxury of the job and being the spokesperson of the state doesn't not largely meet the description of the victimized women, at least not at the face of it. While most feminist inquiry in international relations has been devoted to the study of the relation and the position of women with and within the atmospheres of violence in all it forms, the privileged life of a women diplomat does not match this criterion of warranting a gendered analysis. The women diplomats thus fall in the category of elites who by conjecture seem to be beyond the gendered lens that has been intriguing the predominant feminist inquiry in the discipline. This reminds one of Chandra Mohanty's expression of the 'third world woman'. Just like Mohanty warns one of reducing the third world to the stereotypes of vulnerability, it is crucial for the International Relations scholars to recognize that there exist power dominions worthy of academic inquiry within the third world that have yet remained unexplored. The epistemological errors of solely relying on the western scholarship to study this domain brings along the risk of the problem associated with representing the 'other'. It thus becomes a responsibility of the scholars of the non west to delve into the inquiry themselves, if we do not want a narrative in the larger disciplinary discourse that is far removed and non

representative of the realities and the nuances that go into the making of a third world or a post colonial state and its people and institutions.

For the broader scholarship of the discipline, works on foreign policy with its male dominated scholarship is anyway highly unlikely to take up the relevance of female envoys in the foreign service as its area of interest without a push from the feminist quarters. This is broadly reflective of the male dominated nature of the discipline which the seminal works of Tickner, Enloe, Sylvester, etc., challenged at the very advent of feminist International Relations. Though the apathy of the non feminist scholars towards women diplomats is not justified but understandable here, it is the indifference of the feminist scholarship that demands to be corrected if women from all quarters, privileged and underprivileged are to be made a part of the broader and more inclusive understanding of international politics.

This study makes one such attempt at telling the life and history of the first woman ambassador of India to bring to light that though these women might be elites, they still remain marginalized owing to their gender in the larger history writing of foreign policy discourses and of International Relations as a discipline. Thus, the aim here is to use the life and the experiences of Pandit to bring home the point that without the incorporation and understanding of women in diplomacy in the broader domain of International Relations discourses, it is unlikely to make the discipline truly more inclusive. We might have written enough about those suffering at the hands of power but we would have thoroughly ignored those at the helm of power who remain sidelined regardless of their privilege. Not to forget, an interest in the lives of women diplomats would open up the possibilities of exploring archival material for a more nuanced and probably alternative understanding of the workings of international politics. It would also contribute to bridge the gaps in history and provide a wholesome and sound analysis of how the world of international politics operates.

Chapter Three

Madame Pandit's Portrayal in Foreign Policy Literature

'Madame Pandit', a sobriquet that Vijaylakshmi Pandit had acquired in the course of *America'sTown Meetingof the Air*. This was a popular radio program where she had been invited to debate the end of imperialism in March 1945. Acing the discussion and emerging as a favorite of the audiences, Pandit also gained the title of 'Madame Pandit', something that stayed with her till the very end of her life. Her daughter, Nayantara Sahgal, an author and journalist, recounts how the use of this label never actually thrilled its recipient. Pandit found it to be rather Western and was not always happy about its usage, but made her peace with it (stated by Sahgal during an informal conversation with the researcher on 27th January 2018).However, to those who know of her, the very fact that in those days her name was taken in the same breath as that of Madame. Chiang Kai Shek and Eleanor Roosevelt speaks volumes about the status she enjoyed amongst her admirers. These two ladies were the face of humanitarian endeavors on the international platform in those times. And, what makes this recognition even more worthwhile is that she is addressed in her own right and not as a mere appendage of Nehru.

Sahgal, the middle child of Pandit, remembers, "My mother was not that confident when she started."(stated by Sahgal during an informal conversation with the researcher on 27th January 2018). Her reminiscence of her mother's journey makes one consider the gradual making of a diplomat, to trace the ebb and flow of evolving as the representative of one's country. For a woman in a newly independent India, even if her brother was the prime minister, there was a considerable degree of labour to emerge as an independent voice worthy of recognition. This chapter traces the recognition that Pandit garnered in the course of her diplomatic life, and assess her contribution to the early years of Indian foreign policy. Looking at her representation in the existing literature on foreign policy, this chapter explores the possibility of any legacy that came to be associated with Pandit, the first woman diplomat of independent India.

The chapter deals with three kinds of literature. One, literature on early Indian foreign policy making and the key figures involved in the exercise. Using this category of literature, this chapter studies the place of Pandit in mainstream Indian foreign policy

writings. The second type of literature analyzed for the purpose of positioning Pandit in the existing historical narrative is the literature recounting her role in the United Nations due to her association with the United Nations and the term as the first female President of the United Nations General Assembly. Lastly, the chapter uses Pandit's own writings to understand her experience in the capacity of an Indian envoy and the voice of India in a Cold War ridden world. This is to juxtapose her own experiences with how it has been written about in the other forms of literature; thus, contrasting her own sense of self with how she was perceived by others. These three categories of writings hopefully would allow one a comprehensive understanding of how foreign policy history, and how history in general, remembers Pandit.

Madame Ambassador or Nehru's Sister?

An article titled 'Russia has Outmaneuvered Us*'* in the *Saturday Evening Post,* in 1948 read:

> "In January of this year the leaders of India's small but noisy communist party issued instructions to the faithful which somehow came to the knowledge of Pandit Nehru's government. The essence of the message was that further co-operation with the Congress Party and its representatives in the government was futile. The faithful were, therefore, to go into action against the new government. It took them several months to go into action. When they did, Nehru who has for years been a friend of the Soviet Union, sent his sister to Moscow, as India's first ambassador, cracked down hard" (*Saturday Evening Post*, 1948).

Though to be read in context of it being a reportage from an American newspaper, thus the un-biasedness of the writing being contentious, the last line of the above-mentioned paragraph stands testimony to the bearing the position of first ambassador to Moscow held for the United States. However, it also marks the constant reference to Pandit as Nehru's sister, an association that largely defined her existence in majority of the foreign policy writings. A reductionist view of her that this work largely contests.

On the 3rd of August 1947, Pandit set off to Moscow to head her inaugural posting as an Indian ambassador. The stationing was tricky and of crucial importance to India. First, because it was independent India's first mission abroad. Secondly, it was the first official diplomatic representation of the country in the Soviet Union; a country of much importance in the Cold War smeared world. Also, there was another element that made this assignment stand out. This being the fact that it was the first Indian

mission abroad that was headed by a woman. As Pandit herself recounts in her autobiography:

> "Normally in Moscow it was a simple affair, but mine was a special case. It was India's first Embassy and a woman was at the head of it" (Pandit 1979: 237).

The apparent 'peculiarity' of a woman heading a diplomatic mission can be observed in Pandit's own recollections. She writes, reminiscing the remarks of Madame Catroux, wife of General Georges Catroux, the Ambassador of France, of her advent:

> "My arrival had caused a flutter in diplomatic circles…"What are we to do with Mrs. Pandit?" she asked the Foreign Office. "Is she to sit with the men after dinner? Do we include her in women's parties, and does she speak any language that we can understand?" (Pandit 1979: 238-239).

Thus, reflecting the unwelcoming norms of the world of diplomacy towards women in foreign service. While the men had the "cigar clubs" to retire to, a woman officer was not seemed fit to be a part of the same. So, she was left in a lurch as neither could she join the women who were all diplomat wives, nor was she invited with the men as they discussed policy stances in the informal settings they retired to.

Pandit and Madame Cartoux went on to become great friends during their time together in Moscow. Pandit recounts her experiences in the Soviet Union in the chapter titled 'Moscow' (and rightly so) in her autobiography. The writing is filled with numerous emotional recollections, from the grief of having to miss the celebration of Indian independence, as she would be serving as the Indian Ambassador in Moscow on 15 August 1947[6], to the 'tremendous send off' that the delegation got in Delhi, to the two-day stopover in Tehran *en route* to Moscow and the spectacular hospitality that the Indian delegation received at Moscow. She also

[6] Pandit was an active participant of the Indian freedom struggle along with the other members of her family. Having spent years in prison for the cause of independence and having lost her husband, Ranjit Pandit in the struggle against colonialism, the attainment of independence held great emotional value for her. She writes in her memoir, "For some still unknown reason I was to leave for Moscow before the day on which the transfer of power was to take place. I pleaded to be allowed to remain in India until then, but was told that Moscow was important and that August 15 must be celebrated there" (Pandit 1979).

enumerates in her accounts details about setting up an embassy in a foreign land at a nominal cost. [7]

Most striking in Pandit's writing is the acknowledgement of how she felt that at Moscow, she was treated as a diplomat and not as a woman diplomat.

Pandit writes,

> "The Russians treated me with great respect and I was given no specialconsideration on grounds of sex, which pleased me" (Pandit, 1979: 240).

These words set one thinking about the reception of a woman in the diplomatic quarters at that time. Possibly, as Pandit writes, she was not discriminated against based on sex while she was serving as an Indian official in Moscow. But, did the foreign policy scholarship also treat her with noteworthy credentials as an equal with other male envoys? It is for this purpose one turns to further writings on early years of Indian foreign policy, to consider what place she was given in the existing inquiries.

Being the sister of Nehru, Pandit was also a figure of much relevance. Her appointment as an ambassador was seen as a symbolic gesture marking the importance that the Soviet Union held for India. This also reflected in the afore-mentioned snippet from the Saturday Evening Post. However, one rarely finds much thought given to her in any of the academic writings in the foreign policy literature, even in works exclusively devoted to the Nehru period, where often considerable weightage is given to the role diplomats like V.K.S Krishna Menon, Sir G.S Bajpai, T.N Kaul, K.P.S Menon and other or works devoted to these men and their lives (Nehru 1951; Brecher 1959; Lengyel 1962; Gorwala 1959; Raghavan; Choudhary).

According to Paul F. Power,

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[7]The friendships that Pandit shared with her contemporaries from other countries also makes a part of the recollections, along with the headache of how to run the embassy at a nominal cost. This is important as Pandit was often criticised by the Indian Parliament and the Ministry of External Affairs in Delhi for incurring extravagant expenses in the embassies. However, Pandit, in her recollections writes of the difficulty of procuring anything in Russia as all essential requirements, including furniture, decoration and food items were sold at exorbitant prices.Thus, it was not just her, but most countries had to procure the essential requirements from places, sometimes other countries, so as to make running an embassy economical in character. Her writing also documents the attitude that the Soviets held towards India, which was not really independent in their eyes as one person said to Pandit, "How can you be independent while the British army is in control of your country and other British officials remain there? That isn't what we call independence!" (Pandit, 1979).

> "In foreign policy matters Nehru has sought and received advice from an inner circle. Over the years this group has included Lord Louis Mountbatten, Britain's terminal Viceroy and India's first Governor General; Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai Secretary General of the Ministry of External Affairs 1947-1952; K.M. Panikkar, a versatile intellectual and India's ambassador in Peking,1950-53; Maulana Abul Kalam Moslem Scholar and Congress leader ; Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, a philosopher and India's ambassador to the Soviet Union, 1950-53, subsequently India's Vice President and then President; V.K Krishna Menon, Nehru's volatile and controversial advisor and agent for many years ; Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, a sister, formerly India's ambassador in Moscow and Washington, and now governor of Maharashtra…"(Power, 1964, pp. 260).

The last name in this list given by Powel is of "Indira Gandhi, Nehru's daughter". However, if one would look at the names that laid the edifice of the Indian foreign policy, Pandit stands to be the only woman diplomat in this all male club; an occurrence, that is rare. The presence of female diplomats was not common in the diplomatic circles at that time, and India was no exception.

The recollections in foreign policy literature of any figure of historical importance have to assessed not only on the frequency of such referrals but also about the the contributions made or achievements. The question that is important is whether the writings do sufficient justice to the role and position of the individual/s concerned? Based on such a parameter, the references to Pandit falls short in the existing texts not only on the quantitative yardstick but also on the qualitative one. Recollections of her role as a serving diplomat are scant. The only writings which seems to have done some justice to her achievements are the ones on India and the United Nations and the role she played in that sphere of international scene.

Trying to tease out the influence of Pandit based exclusively on the existing literature becomes a herculean task. If one has to go solely by what is already written, it could be inferred that the only domain where she had an influence was the United Nations and rest of her diplomatic career was devoid of much achievement. A true understanding of what role and influence Pandit actually wielded can only be studied by revisiting the archival accounts and by reopening the sources from where the current historical narrative emerges. Despite being the first female diplomat from India, the existing narrative seems to have not done to the role that Pandit played in early years of Indian diplomacy.

The Oxford Handbook of India Foreign Policy, an important guide for studying the evolution and core tenets of the Indian foreign policy, gives place to Pandit in three select chapters. The first mention of her can be found in Pallavi Raghavan's chapter on the establishment of the Ministry of External Affairs (Raghavan 2015). However, Pandit is written about here with regard to her role in the United Nations where she fiercely debates against the policy of racial discrimination in South Africa.

The second reference to Pandit is made in the chapter titled, 'Nehru's Foreign Policy: Realism and Idealism Conjoined*',* by Andrew B. Kennedy. Kennedy analyses Indian foreign policy through the personality of Nehru. He calls Nehru 'the foundational figure in Indian foreign policy', someone who stands to be 'both a heroic visionary and tragic figure in retrospect' (Kennedy 2015). In his study, Kennedy deals with the quintessential inquiry in the early Indian foreign policy studies, i.e. was Nehru a realist or an idealist. In this course he looks the 'meanings and significance of Nehru's most important foreign policy initiatives' (Kennedy 2015). It is in this context, while teasing out what Nehru stood for and the importance the idea of Non-Alignment held for him that Kennedy acquaints his reader to Pandit. He writes:

> "As Nehru observed, rivalry between opposing blocs had 'led in the past two world wars' and that it' may again lead to disasters on an even vaster scale'. Or as Nehru would later put it, 'the very process of marshalling the world into two hostile camps precipitates the conflict which it has sought to avoid'. This moralistic concern for world peace, in turn, was not simply contrived for public purposes. As he wrote to his sister, Vijayalakshmi Pandit…'we have to steer a middle course not merely because of expediency but also because we consider it the right course'" (Kennedy 2015: 96).

The purpose of dwelling upon this passing reference of Pandit in the work of Kennedy becomes important to highlight a pattern that unfortunately has been the most prominent references to her in both popular and academic memory. This is her being spoken of on the margins of the narratives that revolve around Nehru and his achievements.

The third and the last citations of Pandit that one finds in this foreign policy omnibus are in the chapters penned by Poorvi Chitalkar and David M. Malone on India's engagements with global governance institutions; and, by Manu Bhagavan, titled 'India and the United Nations: or Things Fall Apart' (Chitalkar and Malone 2015; Bhagwan 2015). While the former celebrates Pandit's memorable determination to

fight against South Africa's 'Ghetto Act' in the inaugural session of the United Nations, it is only Bhagavan who pays due attention to not only the personality of Pandit but also of the history she created in her life as an Indian representative. Though, his recollection of her borders on being uncritical, he does introduce the reader to the pioneer that she was in the history of India's international relations, something that he dwells upon in his other writings as well, in greater detail (Bhagavan 2012).

These recollections of Pandit at one glance can provide a credible overview of how she is written about in the existing Indian foreign policy literature. There are two ways primarily in which she is remembered. First, on the sidelines of the accounts of Nehru; and second with regard to her role in the United Nations. The latter being literature that speaks more of her and less of her brother. However, the works in this category are also sparse, which is primarily the writing by Bhagavan. Writings on her years as an Indian diplomat or as a foreign policy expert or even as the only woman in the closed knit advisory circle of Nehru are practically non existent. There do exist a few passing referrals, but none studies her as the first woman to enter the Indian foreign relations circles as a serving diplomat.

Srinath Raghavan, writes in his seminal work, *War and Peace in Modern India: A Strategic History of Nehru Years*, of the labour that went into the making of a new foreign policy for a newly independent India. He writes,

> "Fashioning a new foreign policy entailed not just articulating ideas but also creating structures and roping in people. British India had had no dedicated foreign service. As foreign minister in the Interim Government, Nehru has started planning for a professional diplomatic corps… In the initial years after Independence, diplomatic representation was restricted to countries that were considered central to India's interest. The choice of the top- level officials was a critical decision" (Raghavan 2010: 21).

Raghavan writes with considerable eloquence about Sir Bajpai, who was referred by Nehru as his 'pillar of strength'; and of Menon, Ratan Kumar Nehru (a cousin of Nehru), or of Subimal Dutt or M. J. Desai and other diplomats who were all part of the handpicked corps. He writes briefly but doesn't compromise with the achievements of these men that are chronicled in history. However, what remains intriguing is that Pandit is put in the category of 'other influential ambassadors' in the nascent years of Indian foreign policy. This categorization of Pandit in the 'others'

category is puzzling as in the subsequent lines to this introduction, Raghavan writes of the good access that these individuals had to the leadership' i.e. to Nehru, and of the overreaching attitude exhibited by some of these individuals that at times created conflicts in the foreign policy chambers in Delhi (Raghavan 2010). Thus, not devoting much attention to the ambassador sister of the Prime Minister appears misplaced in the inquiry by the author, as one would assume the sister to have at least as much access to Nehru compared to anybody else in the foreign office. There are sufficient footnotes in the text to display the constant communication Nehru had with his sibling over relevant issues in international politics. Then why is it that while the men find their due place in the recollections of the making of Indian foreign policy, the sole woman in the circle fails to do so.

Turning to the literature available on bilateral relationships of Indiawhere Pandit served (USSR; US and Mexico;UK, Ireland and Spain) is also disappointing. The near absence of anything written about her during her years in Moscow (1947- early 1949) could also be attributed to the short duration of her stay there. Pandit left the Soviet Union and went to her second posting to Washington in 1949; but a short stay at a designated posting is hardly a reason to forget her from the study of Indo-Soviet ties.

Marking a series of unparalleled postings as an Indian envoy thereafter, the next post assigned to Pandit was in the United States. Pandit, served in the US for three years, from 1949 to 1952. In these years she cultivated many friendships and also moved around more freely, because of the more liberal environment in the US compared to the restrictions imposed on foreign dignitaries in the Soviet Union. Also, she didn't have to endure the cumbersome task of setting up an embassy from scratch in Washington, unlike her frustrating experience in Moscow.A relief Pandit thoroughly welcomed (Pandit 1979). She writes, "...in the summer of 1949, I left for Washington with Rita. Our embassy was a beautiful house bought and furnished by Sir Girija Shankar Bajpai when he was Agent General before independence" (Pandit 1979: 249). However, Pandit is also accounts for the difference in her reception at Moscow and Washington. While in Moscow she was "Madame Ambassador", in Washington she was "Madame Pandit", the sister of Nehru. She writes, "... my being India's Ambassador was not taken seriously. It was an uphill struggle during the first few

weeks to insist on this recognition, but I succeeded in obtaining it" (Pandit 1979: 249).

In the early years of independence, the U.S viewed India with much skepticism. This apprehension of the Truman administration was primarily a product of the Indian policy of non-alignment and Nehru's affinity towards Russian socialism. Chester Bowles, the American ambassador to India (1951-53), made sincere attempts to convince President Truman that 'this was the 'new world' and 'only those who think in fresh, radical terms can be effective'. This to emphasize how it was imperative for the US to 'embrace this new world and not fear change' (Chaudhuri 2014). However, the American suspicion and dislike towards India did not cease. In this matrix, it was the task of the Indian envoys to soften the American attitude towards their country and to convince the world that India indeed was truly non-aligned. Rudra Chaudhari in his outstanding study on the India-United States bilateral relations documentsthat it was primarily G.S. Mehta, who served as the Indian ambassador to the US after Pandit who performed the role as a facilitator of harmonious ties most successfully. Chaudhuri calls Mehtaan "educator" whose aim was to "give even to the rigid American minds" (Chaudhuri 2014). An attitude that displayed the eagerness to deal with the Americans on an equal footing.

However, Chaudhuri recognizes the place Pandit had in being the face of India internationally, and of the keen endeavors of Nehru to make the country a 'high-stakes player' in world politics. It was a product of the planned and thoughtful labor that culminated in Pandit becoming the leader of the Indian delegation to the United Nations in 1946. While India was struggling to be a part of the various councils and committees in the international institution, the representatives were briefed by the Prime Minister 'to be nothing less than tough with those who choose to be tough with India (Chaudhuri 2014). It was a victory of these laborious efforts that eventually did culminate into India becoming a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 1950 and Pandit being elected as the first woman president of the General Assembly in 1953, thus, making Pandit an integral part of the early Indian victories India on international platforms.

A year earlier, in 1945, Pandit represented India in the San Francisco Summit, the precursor conference to the formation of the U.N. This was not the official Indian

delegation that she was heading. Instead, she was there to argue for India's independence as a counter to the presence of the official British Indian delegation that was headed by Sir Bajpai. Chaudhuri chronicles the efforts of Pandit in the following words:

> "In the Spring of 1945, the Truman administration got a taste of nationalist India at the San Francisco Conference. Pandit, who headed a delegation of Nehru's choosing, opposed to the delegation sent by Viceroy Lord Wavell, addressed the gathering. Her fervent and articulate plea to recognize Indian independence with the aim of heralding 'the dawn of a new and a better day for an all but crucified humanity' was not entirely lost on the new administration" (Chaudhuri 2014:16).

That was the first of the many to such occasions when Pandit spoke and the world heard. Evidence of the charisma and the influence with which she spoke can also be found in the work of Bhagavan (Bhagavan 2012). He writes:

> "She had travelled to the United States to convince Americans of the justness of India's cause and had won many friends, among them some of the United States' most prominent citizens… Her appeal allowed her to lead an anti-imperial and anti-racist coalition at the San Francisco summit to create the United Nations… She led the charge against the most tenacious defender of the old order: Winston Churchill" (Bhagavan 2012: 3)

Thus, Pandit had left her imprint in the US even before she was posted there as the Indian ambassador. Her years in America were marked by several tough negotiations and Chaudhuri does incorporate her role in his narrative of what he calls the 'maximum hardship post' (Chaudhuri 2014). The relationship between India and the US was one filled with apprehensions on both sides. Dennis Kux, in his seminal work calls the two countries 'estranged democracies' (Kux 1993). Chaudhuri takes the inquiry further as he writes of the layered nuances of fruition of an amicable relationship between the two biggest democracies in the world. In the introduction to his book, he devotes significant attention to the work done by India's foreign policy bureaucracy to develop cordial association between the two countries. A premeditated attention to the role played by the Indian foreign policy bureaucracy in America during the foundational years of bilateral association provides enough space for recording Pandit's contributions in the literature unlike the writings by Kux.

Amongst the other works on the role of Pandit in moulding the relationship of India with other countries were she posted (USSR, joint charge of Mexico while she

was in the US and, UK with Ireland and Spain as the joint charge), one finds the work of Rakesh Ankit that talks at length of her role as the Indian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom (1955-1961) (Ankit 2016). This was her longest posting to a foreign land, and also the one right after her presidency of the UN General Assembly. The UK was again, an extremely important country in the scheme of India's foreign policy. UK was the coloniser against whom many in the then government had fought vehemently, but at the same time, Nehruvian India looked forward to a friendly relationship with the British now that it was a part of the Commonwealth of Nations. However, the duration of Pandit's ambassadorship was marked by tumultuous circumstances, what Ankit calls 'the nadir of the Indo-British relationship'. The two countries could be at loggerheads with each other over two issues of extreme importance to both, as illustrated by him in his writings. These issues were the Suez crisis, which was crucial for the UK; and, Kashmir, which was an extremely sensitive issue for India and Nehru too(Ankit 2016).

Ankit, to begin with, recognizes in his writing the absence of any recollection of the role played by Pandit in the Indo-British relationship. He writes of how the seven years that Pandit spent in the UK was an important period in the Indo British relations as it "saw the highs of continued military and economic cooperation and the Queen's first visit to India and the lows of Suez, Hungary, Kashmir and Congo" (Ankit 2016). It is in this light that he points out the absurdity of Pandit being left out of any accounts of the Indo-British ties at that point; as all narratives, writes Ankit, "focus, after Jawaharlal Nehru almost exclusively on VK Krishna Menon". He adds, "Nehru's many biographers have either overlooked her or been politely complimentary,or have mentioned her only in terms of her 'crossed swords' with Krishna Menon" (Ankit 2016:21).

As accurately captured in the above excerpt, it is the very omission of Pandit from the historical Indian foreign policy narratives that leads this researcher to the study of her prominence in the reality of that world. Ankit brings the attention of his readers to the importance that Pandit held for the British and how the government had been following her not only since her international debut in 1945, but since 1937 when she emerged in the domestic politics of the United Province in India. The following passage marks this observation: the "Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO) and the Foreign Office (FO) in London" followed the trajectory of Pandit's movement from

1937 onwards as she ventured actively into domestic and international political sphere. He provides us with the remarks of the Foreign Office when it observed in 1949 how "Pandit (and India) 'fancied herself in the role of the wise friend of East and West, understanding both and partisan of neither . . . She was also the mouthpiece of Asia. Her views often coincided with those expressed by Soviet speakers yet the materialism of Marxist Communism was alien to her'"(Ankit 2016:21). This was followed by the remarks of Alexander Clutterbuck, then British High-Commissioner in India, in 1952, about "the challenge that Britain had vis-a`-vis the Pandit-led Indian 'crusade' on especially Colonial matters", and reflected upon the desirability "to persuade her to temper her emotions with realism" (Ankit 2016: 21). Thus, reflecting the FO's suspicions about Pandit and them considering her as a reasonable threat to the colonial propaganda.

Coming to the reception of Pandit's candidature to be the President of the UN General Assembly by the UK in 1953, Ankit observes the skepticism in the British government. London viewed such development as a "great disadvantage to the West" but it was more the Colonial Office (CO) that the FO or the CRO that was uncertain of her as it observed, "Pandit's 'intimate experience of our susceptibilities on colonial issues'" (Ankit 2016: 22. The wariness of the British was not merely restricted in the run up to Pandit's election. It was post her elections as well that they continued to remain doubtful about her intentions. Ankit writes: "the UK delegation to the UN felt that Pandit, as President, had 'delighted in belabouring all participants in the Cold War alike' and doubted 'whether this attitude has much enhanced her reputation'. This, to the CRO meant that Pandit had 'not been entirely impartial in her activities'"(Ankit 2016:22); thus, making her actions unpopular amongst her British colleagues. However, it is not to be missed that the UK did not fail in recognizing the personal feat that the newfound 'prominence of India' was for Pandit and her colleague, Krishna Menon (Ankit 2016).

There is another category of literature that primarily looks at Pandit as a mere agent of Nehru and therefore acknowledges her in the passing. It is this last category that dominates the existing discourse on the life and legacy of Pandit. These works focus primarily on the thoughts of Nehru and accommodate Pandit as a mere spokesperson. Thus, they do not acknowledge attempt to inquire about the individuality of her own thought process and ideology (Brecher 1959; Brown 2003; Guha 2007; Malone 2011;

McGarr 2010; Mukherjee and Malone 2011; Reid 1981; Singh 1993).

Alongside, there exists another category of writings that are devoted to Nehru and his life in political office. While these works take into account the individuals Nehru interacted with during the course of making a place for India in the world, they fail in giving any prominence to Pandit and her role as an Indian envoy reporting to the Prime Minister in these writings. She is inadvertently reduced to being 'Nan' (as Nehru fondly addressed her), the little sister in the bare minimum space that is allocated to her in these works. And even when they write of her appointment, they stop at the description of her as the Prime Minister's sister who was made the Ambassador. Thus, creating an impression of Pandit's positioning in the foreign office being an act of nepotism and rarely anything more (Brecher 1959; Gopal 1979; Gopal 2003;; Zachariah 2003). The only exception in this category of literature is the work of Alex Von Tunzelmann. Though Von Tunzelmann's book is largely devoted to the life and relationships of Nehru and the Mountbattens and its subsequent impact on young India's dealings with the world, he gives Pandit due credit for her achievements on the international platform. To begin with, Von Tunzelmann acknowledges the success of Pandit at the Pacific Relations Conference at Hot Springs in 1945 and also celebrates the élan with which Pandit mesmerized her audiences on her first appearance on an international platform. He writes of Pandit's time in the US following this conference and complements her for the deftness with which she took on every possible opportunity that came her way in making India's case heard to the world. Making his readers aware of the positive impact of Pandit's campaign aimed at making a sound case for India's independence in front of the world powers Von Tunzelmann writes,

> "The presence of this sophisticated Indian woman in their midst only enhanced what the U.S. government already thought…Acting Secretary of State John Grew told the media that the United States 'would be happy to contribute in any appropriate manner to a satisfying settlement. We have close ties of friendship, both with the British and with the people of India"(Von Tunzelmann 2007: 130).

Also, largely Von Tunzelmann describes Pandit as a "sharp and personable Indian politician", a description that allows for an imagination of Pandit as a personality with her own distinct characteristic. Thus, the work of Von Tunzelmann stands as one of the rare writings of Nehru that recognises Pandit in her own accord. However, as said

earlier, this remains one of the rare writings.

In such a scenario, Ankit's work becomes an important resource, opening the doors for further explorations of Pandit's achievements as an individual acting in official capacity as an Indian envoy abroad. Ankit elaborates in detail about the trajectory of the Indo-British relationship under the high commissionership of Pandit. It was during the seven years that she served as the Indian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom that the relationship witnessed various crests and troughs. They deteriorated in the wake of the cold war tensions that surfaced in the face of the Baghdad Pact in 1955(to which Nehru expressed his opposition to military alliances and also his fear of Pakistan taking advantage of such alliance to strengthen its military force against India) and the Suez Crisis in 1956. However, the relations between UK and India soon gained normalcy with the efforts of Pandit, for which she is seldom given credit. It was her working closely with Louise Mountbatten to arrange meeting of the leaders of the two countries to smoothen the tensions brewing. And. it was the British Premier, Harold Macmillan's visit to India in January 1958 which did the needful. In the research by Ankit we read a lot about what was communicated to her by the Home ministry in Delhi or the Foreign office; or what was communicated through her by the British government to Nehru; all these citations thus highlighting the importance of her presence in London.

There also exist in Ankit's writing, citation of instances to mark the individual initiatives made by Pandit, acting in her diplomatic capacity, to further the bilateral relationships between Britain and India. For example, the preparations done by her prior to Nehru's visit to London for the Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference in 1956.As Ankit writes, "Pandit was making her own preparations to make Nehru's trip meaningful. She reckoned that as Eden was much influenced by Robert Gascoyne- Cecil 5th Marquess of Salisbury and Defence Minister Walter Monckton, Nehru should spend some time with them. Leader of the House of Commons RA Butler, another old India hand, was friendly to New Delhi and would have appreciated a meeting. Macmillan, of course, was the 'man of the future' and Nehru had to meet him" (Ankit 2016: 27).These reflect the thought put in by Pandit in the relevance of such customary interactions and in grasping the importance of the role these could play in setting the stage for smoother relations between the two countries.

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A keen observer and an eager learning Pandit was doing her bit to ensure that no stone is left unturned to make Nehru's visit a success.; a duty that any competent diplomat would delightfully perform.

Another instance cited in the writings is the warning given by Pandit to her brother in the wake of the Suez crisis 1956. This was with regard to India's 'half hearted condemnation' of the Soviet invasion of Hungary (Ankit 2016). She brought to Nehru's notice and cautioned that,

> "…even those who were otherwise friendly to India and opposed to the Anglo–French adventure in Egypt 'felt compelled to express sorrow' at India's stand on Hungary. As emotions got full play and talk turned to India's 'double-standard', the Indian High-Commission in London felt the heat"(Ankit 2016: 28).

Nevertheless, despite the spotlight on Pandit in the aforementioned work, one keeps looking for more material on her own thoughts and aspirations, for herself and for India. Though the above-mentioned texts talk at length of Pandit, she still continues to remain an appendage to Nehru, a categorisation of her life that the study aspires to overcome.

While posted in London, Pandit was also given the charge of Indian ambassadorship to Ireland. It was a joint accreditation, just as it was for her predecessors, Krishna Menon (1947 to 1952) and B.G Kher (9152 to 1955). Ireland and India had shared a considerable degree of cordiality and mutual respect in the years preceding independence, until 1950's, when the lull began. The amiability was largely attributed to the shared colonial past of both countries. A proof of this could be found in the refusal of the Irish government to return the call of Pan Asiatic Federation of Madras, a more radical Indian nationalist organization, for its support in countering Nehruvian

policies in 1947. These appeals were not entertained by Dublin because, as O'Malley recounts,

> "Officials at Iveagh House were not enamoured by the Pan Asiatic Federation and were keen not to court anyone hostile towards Nehru's new regime" (O'Malley 2011: 147).

Thus, though not particularly excited by the joint posting as it did not want to become the backyard of British diplomacy, Ireland made an exception for India. This position was taken by Ireland also because it was soon leaving the Commonwealth of Nations in 1948, thus losing a prominent platform of indirect diplomacy (i.e. inter commonwealth relations) in the lieu of established bilateral relations was gone. While, O' Malley does mention in her work the admiration and amiability Pandit enjoyed with her Irish counterparts, the focus of the Indian foreign policy bureaucracy appeared to be on London. Also, the Irish had to be coaxed for several years until an Irish embassy was set up in Delhi in 1964! Therefore, Pandit's deployment to the U.K. and Ireland was a important but an account of her active role stands missing in the literature available.

Chronicling Pandit's Contributions at the United Nations

As mentioned, the association of Pandit with the United Nations and her eventual presidency of the General Assembly of the organization in 1953 is what she is most remembered for. This perhaps remains the second most important identification attributed to her other than being a Nehru sibling. However, this was something that she had earned with her credible work as an advocate for the cause of the colonised and a human rights crusader in the years preceding India's independence (not disregarding the privilege associated with an aristocratic background as that allowed a ready access to opportunities, something that had been the core feature of modern diplomacy considered as an elite institution and thus a platform reserved for those who were privileged by birth).

It is the work of Bhagavan that is a standalone account of Pandit and her achievements in the existing scholarship on India's relations with the world. Though eulogizing on certain occasions, the writing does a commendable job in bringing her back into the story of India's path to becoming internationally relevant. However, the scope of the work of Bhagavan remains narrow as it essentially remains focused on

the role played by Pandit in the United Nations. He studies Pandit's presence in the UN as her being torchbearer of the Gandhian and Nehruvian vision of 'one world', based on humanism and internationalism. He writes of her as a soldier fighting for human rights and peace. Bhagavan traces the journey of Pandit in the world of the international from her first appearance in Virginia, Hot Springs in 1945 to her subsequent feats in the United Nations in the later years. Writing of the impression she left on her audience in Hot Springs the text speaks,

> "Madame Pandit's performance garnered her attention far and wide. But an even greater challenge lay on the horizon. At the behest of the Big Three (the United States, England and the Soviets), representatives from around the world were soon to gather in San Francisco to discuss the creation of a new world organization to maintain peace and security. Anti-imperial forces were coalescing to take a stand at the meeting, having agreed that Madame Pandit was the one person who could best champion their cause, to ensure that *justice* was included in the institution's conception" (Bhagavan 2012: 32).

The above words would come as a revelation as the absence of Pandit from the available literature stands in sharp contrast to the observations made by Bhagavan over here. The works like Bhagavan's also forces us to ponder over the reasons behind the disappearance of Pandit from the prevailing chronicles of Indian foreign policy

Bhagavan, in his portrayal of Pandit, familiarises the readers with the person that she was. The newspaper clippings of that time, used as references in his work allows one to grasp how Pandit was captured in the popular imagination of the audiences who witnessed her in action on the international platforms; thus, reflecting impressions of Pandit in public memory. One such example given by Bhagavan is when Pandit was appointed as the Indian Ambassador to the United States in 1949. He writes,

> "Madame Pandit had won plaudits in Washington for her work as ambassador, as she had in Moscow earlier. Her posting always tore down old walls. She was the first woman to represent a foreign power in the United States.Reflecting widespread public opinion, the American press raved. One Washington paper reflected on her efforts at San Francisco and claimed that it would be a 'sure thing that she would be a success in her new office.' After all, the paper reminded its readers, she had both 'beauty and brains.'An Indianapolis report called her 'India's most brilliant woman,' whose 'distinguished oratory to the United Nations is known in the United States.' They hoped that she and her brother would 'open a new bridge to United

> States-Soviet amity.'Her appointment in the United States had received nationwide coverage, with stories appearing from Alabama to Florida.Quoting Pearl Buck, *The Washington Post* said that she 'is so beautiful that one must first become accustomed to the fact.' Quoting a reporter who witnessed her in action in the United Nations in 1946, the *Post* added "It is a joy to listen to her, to watch her snatch points from her platform opponents in debate. Seeing her in action, one understands better the spirit that has upheld both herself and her distinguished brother" (Bhagavan 2012:113-114).

He further adds,

> "The American press continued to venerate her throughout her tenure as ambassador, even as she took tough and unpopular stands defending the Soviet Union and now communist China in a variety of instances.Her diplomatic skills were unrivaled. In 1949, the student body of the Vogue School of Fashion Modeling named her one of the Ten Model Women of the world, lauding her for intelligence.A year later, Eleanor Roosevelt declared that Madame Pandit was 'the most remarkable woman she had ever met,' quite a compliment from a woman of such accomplishment as herself" (Bhagavan 2012:113-114).

Another scholar who provides some reference to the career of Pandit as the India's representative abroad is Vineet Thakur. In his article titled, 'The "Hardy Annual": A History of India's First UN Resolution', Thakur celebrates the debut of India on the world stage with the remarkable feat achieved by its first Indian delegation there, led by none other than Pandit. The much-celebrated resolution was on "Treatment of People of Indian Origin in the Union of South Africa". It was secured by a two-third majority against South Africa; a huge achievement for a newly independent country at the international stage. It wasn't merely a victory against the racially discriminatory policies in South Africa but the resolution held significant global importance. As Thakur documents:

> "A South African newspaper was quick to underscore that it was "the first success gained by East over West, by non-European over European in the international sphere."Furthermore, India had raised racism to an issue of world politics even though, in the Resolution itself, "racial discrimination" was not mentioned" (Thakur 2017: 402).

This was the first of the many other histories created by Pandit. However, one does not find anything new in Thakur's writing with regard to the person of inquiry here as the story of Pandit's great achievements at the United Nations have been a part of the mainstream literature, starting from the Civics and History text books in higher

secondary Indian schools. Thus, it can be concluded that the problem with the existing plethora of writings revolving around Pandit is this that it all repeats the two or three instances of her achievements on the international platform, most noticeable being her appointment as the UN General Assembly president, and fails to make more out of the thoughts and calibre of this female pioneer in the modern diplomatic world. Therefore such accounts fundamentally fails to address the question of the merit of Pandit's achievements; observation of nepotism being the easiest consideration in most of such written works. What this apathy towards the life and experiences of Pandit reflects thus is the complete disregard for the only woman in the foreign policy corridors of newly independent India. An error that could possibly be reflective of a deeper problem of male centrism of the foreign policy studies

In her Own Words

The third and the final set of writing that this chapter analyses to get a sense of Pandit's place in history are her own words. In terms of published literature, unlike other diplomats such as Menon, Bajpai or Kaul, Pandit has just one autobiography that familiarises the readers with her life as an Indian politician and as the women pioneer in South Asian diplomacy.

In her autobiography, Pandit allows the readers to gather a glimpse of what she experienced as the only woman serving in the foreign services at that time. In her writings she has devoted a few chapters to her sojourns abroad. Of these, three are exclusively dedicated to the United Nations; while the first two here deal with the pre 1947 encounters in the UN, the third speaks of her presidency of the General Assembly.

Going through the memoir, one cannot but sense the desire that Pandit had to be heard. One observes that while she was timid and uncertain in the beginning, when she was asked to represent India internationally, she was a quick learner. In no time she understood the nuances of diplomatic interactions. Unlike others' portrayal of her as prime minister's sister, her writing suggests that she was treated as any other foreign service official would be treated. An excerpt from her conversation with Sir Bajpai before she departed for Moscow reflects so. Sir Bajpai on meeting Pandit told her, and she writes,

> "'Public figures will be under sharp attack from Parliament much of the time, and you more than most-you are the Prime Minister's sister and it will be the national assumption that you will get favors. I know,' he continued, 'that actually the reverse will be the case. Your brother will bend backward to do less for you than for his other ambassadors, but people will not believe this, so you must shed your sensitivity!' This proved correct and caused me many heartaches throughout my diplomatic career" (Pandit 1979:228).

Thus, the journey for Pandit was not an easy one. Beginning from missing the moment of independence to when questions were raised about the mandatory expenditures she had to incur on setting up the embassy in Moscow, to the numerous indirect conflicts with Krishna Menon, Pandit had to often face the annoyance of not being heard readily. Her various recollections of the years in office, in the autobiography, acquaint the readership with the possible frustrations and also the fears that come with holding great responsibility. It tells one about the constant source of inspiration that Nehru and Gandhi were for her in testing times. And, most importantly it familiarizes one with the sharpness of her mind and the individuality of her thought process that is rarely found in the existing records of the foreign policy discourse.

However, like most autobiographies, this one too is more emotion-laden. Thus, one has to be cautious to not get carried away with the mood of the writer, as such an error would impede an unbiased inquiry of her life as a diplomat. Having said that, it is also imperative to not absolutely shun away the female experience. This too is extremely crucial as it is this very experience that enables the researcher to understand the missing place of the Pandit and her experiences as a woman in the field of foreign policy. In the chapters devoted by Pandit to her diplomatic career, one finds several anecdotal reflections on the interactions Pandit had in the diplomatic circles and also about the details of a female experience operating in an all male professional circle. Unfortunately, more attention is paid to the nitty gritty of running the Indian mission vis-à-vis any macro commentary on the political weather of the world at that time. But this should not be discounted as these observations fuel ones curiosity to explore the life of a female diplomat and also to inquire how Pandit was perceived by her contemporaries. Thus, leaving one in the dire need to turn to the archives in Chapter Four titled, *Through the Eyes of the Others: An Assessment by Pandit's Contemporaries***.**

Conclusion

The aforementioned survey of the writings on and about Pandit makes it adequately clear that her contributions to the carving of India's place in the world of international politics is an under-researched domain. At the cost of sounding repetitive, as the first female diplomat of the newly independent India, as an Indian politician and the first woman president of the General Assembly, the need to ascertain her relevance in the annals of history cannot not be emphasized more.

The existing writings, even while celebrating her, look at Pandit time and again through the presence and thoughts of Nehru; a prism that has engulfed her very existence in the foreign policy narrative. True that as a diplomat, she was to be an agent of the Prime Minister, but this doesn't result in her own ideas being obscure in the sphere of her profession. The need is to look at and study Pandit as a diplomat and not just Nehru's sister. This is also relevant so as to bring her out of the looming ginormous shadow of Nehru, a task that is herculean as most of the works on Indian foreign policy have repeatedly placed overwhelming importance on him.

Another mammoth hindrance is, in this pursuit of bringing back Pandit, is the paucity of literature available that explores the various nuances of a woman in the foreign policy circles, including Madam Pandit. Therefore, in the course of studying the texts referred to in this chapter, one realization that stands hard to miss is the necessity to turn to the archives to understand how the foreign policy establishment in India responded to a female presence at the dawn of independence. This is what Chapter Four in this work would dwell upon so as to attempt a holistic analysis of the untold story of Pandit; a narrative that gives her due credit in the making of India's foreign policy in its foundational moments.

Chapter Four

Through the Eyes of the Others: An Assessment by her Contemporaries

Ann Towns and Birgitta Niklasson in 2017 cite Krook and O'Brien when they say, 'ambassadors serve as heads of diplomatic missions, representing a sending state's interests abroad. Any ambassadorship is a position of prestige and esteem'. They go on to describe the importance of ambassadorship to a diplomat:

> "Being a politically appointed ambassador carries great status, and for career diplomats, the ambassador position is the apex of a diplomatic career. Given the trend of male overrepresentation in high-status positions, the general overrepresentation of men in ambassador positions is not surprising" (Towns and Niklasson 2017: 522).

Further:

> "Some appointments, generally those for states at the centre of military and economic power, are considered much more weighty than others. Being appointed ambassador to Washington DC or London is clearly not equivalent in significance to being posted in Maputo or La Paz" (Towns and Niklasson 2017: 522).

Thus, the importance an ambassadorial post holds in the life of a serving diplomat is sufficiently recognized, not to forget the relevance of certain deputations over the others. When an individual is sent as an envoy of her/his country to another State, it also stands as a faith of the bureaucratic and the political leadership in the capabilities of that individual to safeguard the interests of the home country. This makes one wonder about the forgotten history that the first woman diplomat of India. Using Towns and Niklasson's observation of overrepresentation of men in ambassador positions it wouldn't be wrong to expect the first female appointment of a newly independent country like India to be memorable in its history. Vijayalakshmi Pandit had a career that could be the envy of any serving diplomat. Beginning with heading the Indian mission in Moscow, she went on to be the face of India in the US and the UK, with an intermittent presidency of the United Nations General Assembly and leading the Indian Delegation to the UN up until 1963! Then why is it that she remains absent from the chronicles of Indian foreign policy? Is she not worth remembering or is diplomacy as an institution of international politics unfair towards remembering its female contributors, especially in post-colonial India?

With the aim of evaluating the place of Pandit in the workings of Indian foreign relations, this chapter dwells upon the impressions of her contemporaries about her. This is also to gauge the reception of a woman as the spokesperson of her country

within the Indian diplomatic quarters. For the purpose of this analysis, the chapter relies on various diaries and correspondences between diplomats like Menon, Dutt, Bajpai *et al*. as primary sources. For the purpose of secondary sources, the chapter evaluates the autobiographical accounts written by these individuals and others. The chapter also incorporates findings based on interview with the surviving members of the foreign service recruits who have shared space with Pandit in those years. The individuals taken into account for the purpose of this study can be divided into two categories. First, those who were either Pandit's seniors or shared an equal official status with her. The second category is those who worked as her subordinates, primarily the young junior recruits of the Indian Foreign Service(IFS). This categorisation has been adopted deliberately in this study. The reason behind using this demarcation is to study the reception of the only woman diplomat from two vantage points. On one hand were those who were already well placed in the Indian foreign policy circles, who had little to lose if they could not get themselves to agree with Pandit. Not to forget that these were also men from the former Indian Civil Service (ICS). They were trained officers serving first the British and then the Indian government. The second category of men were those who were assisting Pandit, who were trained in embassies run by her. The purpose here is to attempt a comprehension of how the men vested with greater power in the foreign service dealt with a woman being put as their equal vis-a-vis reactions of those who were lower in the hierarchy of the established order. This lens of analysis is also expected to comprehend better the disregard or indifference, where it existed, for Pandit, and whether it was a product of clash of egos and how much of it could be attributed to a fair assessment of her potential as a diplomat. This approach is expected to allow a nuanced understanding of how gender plays at multiple levels and amongst men from varying power positions within the Indian foreign policy establishment.

Girija Shankar Bajpai: The Grand Old Man of Foreign Policy

Girija Shankar Bajpai, can rightly be called the grand old man of the IFS. He, like majority of his colleagues was a child of privilege. Born to a jurist in Allahabad, he went on to graduate at the top of his class from Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1914, he appeared for the ICS examination and there too he aced the examination. Even though he began his career as a cadre officer in the United Provinces, international

affairs was where Bajpai's heart lied. It was also in this domain that he marked his legacy as an officer of, first the British, and then the independent Indian government. As Das Gupta writes of him, his true passion surely was international relations (Das Gupta 2018).

Bajpai was the much celebrated diplomat in the British Indian administration. His intellect and deftness as a civil servant won him many accolades throughout his career. In 1942 he was appointed as the Agent-General for India in Washington, thus allowing him a seat from where he could further sharpen his prowess in international dealings. He had the favour of the British and the admiration of Nehru, something that ensured his prolonged relevance in the power corridors of Delhi. It was to him that Nehru handed over the charge of establishing the IFS. He was also administratively the chief architect of the Ministry of External Affairs. Until 1952, he was the de facto foreign minister of India (Das Gupta 2018). Such was the stature and credibility of Bajpai that Nehru and he functioned well together despite ideological differences; while Bajpai was known for his realist position and suspicion towards the Soviet Union, the idealist in Nehru was inclined to build friendly relationship with the USSR at the earliest. However, despite of their varying opinions, there are instances when Nehru trusted former's knowledge more than his own judgment.

Bajpai was Pandit's arch adversary on her first international appearance for India in San Francisco in 1945 when she was heading the unofficial Indian delegation to the conference of the United Nations, Bajpai was keeping a close eye on her for the British. Later, in independent India, both worked in collaboration: while Bajpai was the Secretary General to the Ministry of External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations, Pandit became India's first ambassador to Moscow.

One wonders, how a man of Bajpai's distinction and stature, viewed Pandit, the only woman in the foreign policy team of Nehru. There is no available private papers of Bajpai for public perusal that this study could rely on. However, there exist correspondences between him and Pandit that could be used to gauge his responses to and reception of her in the foreign office. Though limited material is available for the scope of this chapter, one could knit up a rough picture of how Bajpai was towards Pandit using these resources. Alongside, one also counts on the recollections of the relationship between the two in the accounts of other individuals serving in the foreign office around that time, as can be found in the subsequent sections.

Glancing through the material available including Pandit's own accounts, it can be established that she had great admiration for Bajpai. In her autobiography she writes how he was the one who briefed her on what she could expect to deal with in the Soviet Union, when she learnt of her posting to Moscow. He warned her that the task would not be easy but also did not show any lack of confidence in her abilities. Bajpai, on the other hand, despite being wary of Pandit during her time in San Francisco in 1945, eventually grew fond of her once she started working as a diplomat who often looked to him for guidance in New Delhi. The fact cannot be dismissed that Bajpai enjoyed Nehru's confidence which could have only added to Pandit's reverence for this seasoned bureaucrat and her readiness to often seek his opinion on matters of importance. Though Pandit often bypassed hierarchies and wrote directly to Nehru regarding issues that concerned her and were in her understanding relevant enough to be brought to the notice of Delhi, Bajpai was the other individual with whom she communicated with regularly during her postings. She often expressed to him the doubts and difficulties she was facing while acting in official capacity. For e.g. in 1947 she wrote to him from Moscow:

> "When I came here I was given no instruction at all as to what I was supposed to do- I have functioned all alone according to my own understanding of Government's foreign policy and have no idea whether my line has been right or wrong. I only hope I shall not be brought to task for having said or done something which did not fit in with the policy of Government" (Pandit 1947).

The only other person for whom Pandit's correspondences back home reflected such regard was Nehru. Also noticeable is the frequency with which Pandit wrote to Bajpai. This could be reflective of her getting responses from him that encouraged her dependence on him for expert advice.

So, it is important to understand Bajpai's assessment of Pandit. While, as cited earlier, the lacunae of sources makes it difficult to get a sense of Bajpai's perception, it is through an interpretative reading of the material available that his opinion about Pandit could be grasped. One such example is the recollection by Bajpai of an interaction with the Siamese Foreign Minister over a dinner party in New Delhi in 1947. In Bajpai's memory of the night, the minister had coaxed Nehru to send Pandit to Bangkok as the Indian Ambassador, to which the Secretary General quipped: "We should certainly like to send Mrs. Pandit to Bangkok but there is only one Mrs. Pandit"(Bajpai 1947). While this is just a single line picked from the plethora of

exchanges that Bajpai engaged in, his narration of the same to Pandit comes across as his way of expressing confidence in her abilities as a capable diplomat.

A closer study of the correspondences between Bajpai and Pandit suggest that the Bajpai understood the difficulties faced by Pandit while heading the missions. It should not be forgotten also that the other two senior-most officers, i.e., K.P.S. Menon and V.K.Krishna Menon shared a difficult relationship with Pandit. It was only Bajpai in the established order who gave her considerable audience and took cognisance of the issues she faced, other than Nehru. Hence, while other senior officials in Delhi joined the chorus, even if behind closed doors, with the media and the parliament criticizing Pandit's constant pleas for increased allowance for the better upkeep and social engagements of the embassy in the Soviet Union and later in the US, it was Bajpai who understood the reasonableness of her demands. Writing to Pandit in October of 1947 Bajpai consoled an anxious Pandit:

> "If I were you I should pay no attention to what appears in some Indian newspapers regarding expenditure on the Moscow Embassy. This kind of sniping, especially from those whose malice is sharpened by personal disappointment, is lamentable, and one has to stand up to it. India should either maintain Embassies according to the accepted standards of the Capitals where these Embassies are located or not have Embassies at all. The maintenance of dignity is as much a virtue as the avoidance of extravagance" (Bajpai 1947).

These words of encouragement were much welcomed by Pandit. Probably Bajpai with his suspicion towards the Soviets and their intentions could understand the unease that Pandit faced in Moscow. He was also the only other official person to whom she could express her grievances about Krishna Menon's disregard towards procedural conduct in diplomatic settings, given the closeness and high esteem the latter enjoyed with the Prime Minister. The fact that Krishna Menon did not have a fan in Bajpai made things easier.

While the letters exchanged between Pandit and Bajpai were mostly concerned with the procedural bureaucratic dialogue as expected between colleagues, there are also instances where Bajpai at his end is providing Pandit with an additional update on the affairs back home, about the transfers made and the engagements the Prime Minister had. Though an update on domestic affairs from Bajpai to Pandit is understandable as in case she was required to explain any of the domestic happenings in her official capacity as the Indian Ambassador abroad, she shouldn't have been caught off guard,

Bajpai's correspondences with her are also marked with an ease in the style of writing. They shared a friendly relations which largely remained missing from Pandit's interactions with other contemporaries of that stature. The semblance of these interactions is not identical to but appears to be a mellowed version of the correspondences Pandit had with Nehru. But of course, Nehru being her brother wrote in a personal tone whereas Bajpai was always succinct and official in his choice of expressions.

However, Bajpai did hold Pandit in good esteem both professionally and personally, something that is reflected in the tone of the exchanges and is also corroborated by the interview of M.K Rasgotra who worked with both individuals in different capacity (Rasgotra 2018).When Ambassador Rasgotra joined the service in 1949, Bajpai was the Secretary General in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA); whereas, with Pandit he had several interactions in Delhi and outside India. He was also one of the officers accompanying her on her official visit as the United Nations General Assembly President to Sri Lanka in 1954.

K.P.S. Menon: The Philosopher Diplomat

K.P.S. Menon stands distinguished as a diplomat having served as the first Foreign Secretary of India (1948-1952). The foundational years of IFS were cemented by the work and perseverance of several towering personalities. While Nehru was the political commander who laid down the ideological base, the blueprint of a functional foreign office was prepared by figures like G.S. Bajpai, Menon and Subimal Dutt, the troika. Menon had a distinguished presence since the very beginning. Hailing from an illustrious family and a degree from Oxford in tow, he nurtured and a deep interest and knowledge of world affairs. This was complemented with the excellent oratory and writing skills; all these along with a distinguished service record made Menon 'India's first top diplomat' (Das Gupta 2018).

Menon and Pandit had their first encounter in the US during the UN Conference where they were adversaries. While Pandit stood tall and successful, Menon was not a man to shower praises on others. Browsing through his papers, one cannot help but notice that the documentations of his encounters with Pandit were nothing but scant. Though a prolific writer who religiously made a diary entry each day, there is nothing

more that a few sentences that one comes across about Pandit in his reminiscences. However, a few words speak volumes, and this shall enable the reader to gauge the impressions Menon held of Pandit. The two belonged to similar yet different creeds. While both shared a privileged background, Pandit was the daughter and sister of the Nehru men. Her lineage resembled a heroic legacy, most towering being the presence of her brother (whom even Menon much admired). She was home schooled under the supervision of her European governess. Her knowledge of the world and world affairs came first from her brother and later on from her association with the Indian freedom struggle. This, however, did not impede her developing her own understanding of world affairs when put onstage in the international theatre. Pandit had a deft and curious mind and a zeal to represent India's voice in the world when she was first sent to the US by the Indian National Congress. It was her intellect and quick grasp of surroundings that enabled her to take charge in the Pacific Relations Conference in Hot Springs, Virginia, 1945 where she was not even acting in as a representative of the official delegation sent by the government; unlike her contemporaries attending the conference. This was then followed by an extensive tour where Pandit won many hearts and impressed several minds with her oratory skills and belief in the cause of independence for India, thus, marking (informally) the beginning of her international career as an Indian representative. Menon was a witness to these developments.

The difference between these two figures stood stark, in addition to the difference of personalities. Menon had received exemplary formal education, unlike Pandit and was a widely travelled man having spent considerable part of his life in foreign lands, from England to Ceylon to Zanzibar and so on. He was a graduate in history from Oxford university and had all the skills required to be an able academician (Das Gupta 2018). Thereafter, he went on to join the ICS and built a reputation as an able officer under the British Indian government. Das Gupta calls him one of Bajpai's "colonial discoveries" alongside Subimal Dutt, who went on to influence Indian foreign policy(Das Gupta 2018). Before taking charge of office in independent India, Menon was inducted in the ICS. He belonged to the Madras batch of 1922. In the year 1925, he was only the second Indian officer to be made a part of the Foreign and Political service, a prestigious appointment. Throughout his years in office in pre-independence India, he had not hidden his joy about the idea of attainment of independence. This is not to say that he was hostile to the British. But he much

welcomed the thought of an independent India. Despite harbouring sympathies for the freedom struggle, his reputation in the eyes of the British government was never questioned. This was to be attributed to his official prowess as an Indian agent abroad. As Bajpai observed of Menon's work in Ceylon in 1929, he was 'the best Indian agent who ever went there' (Menon 1934).

While we look at Menon's reception of Pandit as a colleague, it would be unfair to leave out his opinions of those who served the cadre. A glance through his diaries suggests that there were few other than Nehru on whom he showered many praises. This is particularly true of his contemporaries who are peripheral characters in this narrative. While Krishna Menon was "arrogant", Bajpai was "a little pompous" (Menon 1935a).

Menon writes about Bajpai in his diary that: "Baji is a clever fellow, but an egoist. A little too much a tactician, too. He may overreach himself" (Menon 1935b). On his part, Menon's views about Krishna Menon, differed only in the respect that he not only disliked him but also gradually lost all admiration for him in the subsequent years, this was unlike the constant regard he had towards the professional capabilities of Bajpai. He writes: "Krishna Menon is undoubtedly able, but essentially an egoist." (Menon 1946a). This impression in the later years deteriorated as can be observed in these words of Menon:"Krishna Menon is most insufferable human being I have ever come across" (Menon 1947).

This dislike towards Krishna Menon was developed and further strengthened as the two often crossed paths as the top officers in post-independence India. The purpose of speaking of these other individuals here is to understand Menon as an individual before assessing his views of Pandit. This also is to avoid any error in judgement and misplaced interpretations concerning the reception of the latter as a woman diplomat. While Pandit held office as an Indian envoy, she also had a lineage that influenced, for better or worse, how people viewed her. Menon's observations of her could be placed as a classic example of his amiable tolerance of Nehru's charming sister despite his utter dislike for Pandit who was an Ambassador.

In 1945, when Pandit made her international debut at the San Francisco Conference for the framing of the United Nations Charter, Menon was the Chief Adviser to the British Indian delegation. Thus, he was an opponent, as mentioned earlier. But, his

account of the days in San Francisco do not reflect any aversion towards her. He writes:

> "The Indian delegation was eclipsed in the public eye by the presence of Vijayalakshmi Pandit in San Francisco in an unofficial capacity. Ramaswamy Mudaliar thought it best for the delegation to keep her at arm's length. He would not ask her to the receptions which he gave at our hotel, but had no objection to my seeing her privately. This I did on more than one occasion" (Menon 1945).

He writes nothing in his autobiography about the impact of Pandit's delegation on the minds of the American peoples. Neither does he mention the campaign and the stellar speeches that she gave on her year-long tour to the U.S, for which she is highly praised in the writings of Bhagavan (Bhagavan 2012). In Menon's diary of that year, there are not more than two places where Pandit is mentioned. He writes of her: "Mrs. Pandit and Syed Hussain were here. I was charmed by the former and impressed by the latter. He was frank and so self informed. But she is charming" (Menon 1945).

Here too, there is nothing in Menon's accounts about her impactful speeches or the informal tours that she took. The singular description of her as 'charming' is all that exists. An adjective that Pandit was mostly reduced to, while the men were ascribed with descriptions which celebrated their intellect. This stands in stark contradiction with Bhagavan's archival work on the prowess of Pandit as an Indian representative in the U.S.A. in 1945-1946. Even Pandit's own recollections of her extensive tours and works of others who have written of her defy the lack of any effective influence of Pandit on her audiences, as her omission from the memories of Menon might suggest (Bhagavan 2012; Bhagavan 2015; Brittain 1965; Guthrie 1963).

In 1946, Menon and Pandit were again together to attend the first session of United Nations General Assembly in New York. It was Pandit who had wanted Menon on board for this conference. Menon was informed of this by none other than the Prime Minister himself (Menon 1946b).He recounts his meeting with Pandit in New Delhi as follows: "Mrs. Pandit dropped in, and I had a long talk with her about important matters. Charming woman, but I wonder how well she can present the South African case" (Menon 1946c). The case being mentioned here is the impeccable argument that Pandit gave against the "Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act, 1946" of the South African government which discriminated against the Indians residing in South Africa by curtailing their ownership of property in the white areas

of Natal.While Menon's observations of Pandit from the previous year call her a charming woman, there seems to be little faith in her capabilities in the eyes of Menon. It is interesting as while Menon manages to attribute some or the other skill to his male contemporaries in his diaries, there is no adjective used for Pandit other than acknowledgement of her 'charm'. Menon thus, gives the impression of having measured Pandit's capabilities to be of unsatisfactory standard. The probable reason for this can be understood, in Rasgotra's observations, as the dislike that the senior cadre of the foreign service had towards Pandit for being Prime Minister's sister and thus her demands and complaints being heeded to (Rasgotra 2018"). In New York, Menon writes of Pandit's speech in the UN as follows:

> "The subject which interested us most was South Africa. Mrs Pandit spoke on it with almost emotional fervour. 'If', she said, 'Jesus Christ were to seek to enter South Africa today he would be excluded as a prohibited immigrant.' General Smuts defended the policy of South Africa with dignity and restraint. For a long time, the fate of the resolution on South Africa, mild as it was, was in doubt. It had been passed in the Political Committee but whether it would secure the requisite two-thirds majority in the plenary session of the General Assembly was uncertain. While delivering her final speech, Mrs Pandit developed a twitch in the eye, and many people thought that she was in tears. Whether this lachrymose circumstance affected the final voting or not, I do not know; but to our great joy the resolution was carried by a majority of one. That was the beginning of the stirring of that world body's conscience, which in 1962 led to a unanimous resolution against South Africa and Portugal" (Menon 1965:220).

Sarcasm drips from the above-mentioned reference as it is nothing but a sleight of words. While Menon acknowledges the success of India's advocacy against South Africa's discriminatory treatment of the Indians residing there, he reduces Pandit's work in the assembly as a matter of chance. A product of good fortunemaybe, even though as many treat this victory for India as a personal achievement of Pandit. In his writings, there is a brushing away of Pandit as an active agent of the voice for a just cause, by characterizing it as someone who got lucky.

One turns to his diary for that year to see how he observed her in his personal accounts and there is scant references to Pandit, both mentions being secondary to his disapprovalof the behavior of Krishna Menon, who was also a part of the Indian delegation to the UN. He writes,

> "Had a meeting in Mrs. Pandit's room. She was not in a good mood. I think Krishna Menon has been working her up. I do not like Krishna Menon. Able but

> so egoistic, I think. Vetted Mrs. Pandit's speech…I would have liked to tone it down a little… She spoke in the afternoon and was much applauded by the assembly-especially by the colored and liberal sections" (Menon 1946d).

Here too K.P.S Menon does not write anything of the qualities of Pandit as an Indian representative. In his diary of 1946, the only place where he seems to have acknowledged any talent of Pandit is with regard to a dinner thrown by the Indian delegation to the United Nations for the other delegates attending the Conference. He calls Pandit a 'fine hostess'(Menon 1946e). The vocabulary used by Menon reflects his willingness to acknowledge Pandit within certain limited and traditional spheres, which in this case is the sphere of domesticity.

The second and relatively longer mention of Pandit in his diary stands as follows:

> "Had a first class row with Krishna Menon. He is most insufferable. Thinks himself all knowing and superior to everybody also… read and picked holes in the speech I had written for Mrs. Pandit; I snubbed him hard. We created quite a scene at lunch recess. Mrs. Pandit's speech went off excellently" (Menon 1946f).

It is this very incident that Menon writes of in his memoir in the following words:

> "In one of the rooms at Lake Success, we were discussing a resolution on the admission of new members, such as Ireland, Portugal and Mongolia, to the United Nations. Mrs Pandit was to speak on this subject. I had prepared a speech for her, and Krishna Menon started picking holes in it. I argued my point of view and showed, that his criticisms had no substance in them. This only made him more cantankerous. My voice, too, began to rise in spite of myself, and finally I told Mrs Pandit that if she were to alter a single comma in my draft I would have nothing more to do with her work in the General Assembly. Mrs Pandit would not or could not choose between Krishna, and myself. Perhaps she even found a little feminine pleasure in the spectacle of two men – and two Menons – squabbling, as did Weightman, then Foreign Secretary, who said that it was a good idea to set a Menon to catch a Menon! Anyhow, Mrs Pandit delivered the speech exactly as I had written it" (Menon 1965:221).

The use of the phrase 'feminine pleasure' over here might just be figure of speech. However, it gets one to question the general disposition of a man of his stature towards a female colleague. An overview of Menon's recollections of Pandit and absence of the same from the majority of his writings allows us an opportune gap to gauge the gendered biases that existed in the interpersonal relations of these individuals in foreign offices. It is further exploration of this facet that is traced in the changed impressions of Pandit in the Foreign Secretary's writings. While his initial expressions about her are cautions yet patronising, in the years that followed Menon

did not mince any words while he writes about her. In his diary entry of 20 August 1951 he writes:

> "Mrs. Pandit is here. Non agreed. Most infuriating. Butter will not melt in her mouth. But those who know her know that all that is put up. She is utterly unreliable"(Menon 1951a).

The distaste that Menon had for Pandit finds expression in the above entry. He never dwells upon the reason behind such disapproval for her in his writings. All that one finds are statements filled with sourness, but no evident reason for what led to these feelings. Probably, Menon in his diaries was also cautious of his concern for the Prime Minister's sister falling in the wrong hands. Nonetheless, he had his way of making it known that to him, she did not hold either merit or regard. What is worth noticing most is the secondary status accorded to Pandit in all of Menon's memories in the foreign office.

Subimal Dutt: The Longest Serving Foreign Secretary

Another aforementioned colonial discovery of Bajpai, Dutt inherited the legacy of his mentor. Ultimately becoming the longest serving Foreign Secretary of India (1955 to 1961), he created an impressive reputation for himself right at the very start of his career. Dutt was an outsider to the aristocratic circles of the foreign service corps. Hailing from a village in Chittagong, brought up without any privilege and the opportunities that came with it, he entered the ICS in 1927 entirely owing to his excellent intellectual abilities and sheer hard work. Like his peers, one gets a peek into the thoughts of Dutt through his memoir. When studying his private papers, unfortunately, not much material can be found on the subject of study for this chapter. There is also little reference to Pandit in his memoir. However, the scant references that one comes across about Pandit are all positive in nature. Dutt's description of Pandit moves beyond her identity as Nehru's sister and gets defined in words that talk of her as asomeone who possessed the quality of 'capable leadership'. Citing an occasion from the memory with Nehru, which was a reception given for Pandit prior to her departure to Moscow in 1947, Dutt offers his readers a glimpse of his thoughts on the nature of this appointment. He writes:

> "To most Indians the Soviet Union was a mystery land…The younger generation wanted to know all about the Russian people and the secret of their strength. And who would be a more reliable observer than Nehru's own sister who had already proved her ability in many fields?" (Dutt 1977: 10).

Dutt's recollection of Pandit stands in stark contrast with those of her other senior contemporaries, particularly from the impressions of Pandit in the writings of Menon. It can be observed that Dutt was rather cordial towards Pandit and did not harbour any dislike towards her. This could also be a result of the cordial relationship Pandit shared with his mentor, Bajpai. However, even though Dutt did not write much about her, whatever he wrote it spoke of Pandit as a sharp and capable woman serving in the foreign office.

Yezdezard Dinshaw Gundevia: Reminiscing from the Kensington Palace Gardens

Hailing from a well to do Parsi family in what was then Bombay, Y.D. Gundevia was inducted in the much-coveted ICS in 1930. He served in the United Provinces as an administrative officer up until 1945, when he started his foray in the world of diplomacy. Why Gundevia becomes a person of interest in this study of Pandit is because he served as her Deputy in the Indian High Commission in London during 1954-56. In pursuance of establishing impressions of Pandit amongst her contemporaries, one relies on Gundevia's own writing to gauge how he evaluated her. The first mention of Pandit in Gundevia's memoir is of the impressive performance of Pandit and her victory against General Smuts, the South African Premier and against his government's discriminatory treatment of Indians in South Africa (the infamous Asiatic Land Tenure Act and Indian Representation Act, 1946), in the United Nations meet in New York in 1949. Gundevia writes:

> "This two-thirds majority vote in the first session of the UN General Assembly was naturally acclaimed as a very big victory for India, which was then not even a dominion of the British Commonwealth. …We have never again been able to canvass so much support in the United Nations for any cause that India advocated in the years to come, and this resounding vote has always been looked upon as a personal triumph for Vijayalakshmi Pandit- who later came to be elected the President of the UN General Assembly in 1954 "(Gundevia 1984: 63).

But a better view of his assessments of her can be found in his memories of United Kingdom. True, Gudevia was working as a subordinate to Pandit. However, he had been in the service long enough to have his own opinions of what makes an able diplomat. Though personal judgements are rooted in subjectivities more often that not, one cannot ignore how Pandit was seen by someone who worked so closely with

her. When Pandit arrived in the United Kingdom as the Indian High Commissioner in 1955, she once again had to fulfill the task of establishing the Indian High Commission in London from scratch as her predecessor, Krishna Menon had the bare minimum in furnishing and making the High Comission functional according to Pandit's standards. It is in this context that Gundevia writes of her arrival in London:

> "…a hurricane it was that hit KPG. Everything was wrong, from the attic to the cellar and kitchen, and much of it had to be put into shape before "Bhai" arrived to the Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference, which was now less than a month away. It must be said in all fairness to my lady that KPG did need a lot of doing up…Vijayalakshmi could not do what she wanted to do in a month, but what she did with it in twelve months that followed was well worth doing. There were, of course, larger and more decoratively furnished Embassy premises in London, but when Vijayalakshmi had finished doing what she wanted-I did not see the end of it in two years-9 Kensington Palace Gardens was certainly a good picture" (Gundevia 1984: 152).

He further narrates the following impression he had of Pandit while she operated in the office of the High Commissioner. He writes:

> "…I would have to cope with tears and tantrums and a cupboard full of contradictions. The more she spoke of "Bhai", the more you could see that she was not sure of her brother's confidence. She was not sure about being the apple of his eye. She did not know that she was her brother's veritable "blind spot". Every time she got the chance, she would loudly proclaim that she was "not a feminist", because exactly the contrary was so very true and so very obvious-every inch a woman and that's what it was. It took me some time to learn that she wanted no confrontation… She would gladly approve of anything we wrote home and everything we did. But with problems you could not go anywhere" (Gundevia 1984:153-153).

Citing the aforementioned excerpts from his writings, one can fairly gauge a tone of irritation, or probably indifference in Gundevia's assessments of Pandit. While he does not raise any doubts about her prowess as a diplomat, he doesn't even furnish any instance that would praise her working in the official capacity. This is studied in contradiction to the observations made from Rakesh Ankit's work in Chapter Three(Ankit 2016). What is interesting is the descriptions of Pandit being eager on setting up the embassy, this portrays her more like a spoilt little sister of the Prime Minister than a task master of an Ambassador, an issue Pandit faced throughout her diplomatic career, particularly from her contemporaries in the ICS particularly. However, the constant tendency of Pandit to write to Nehru, bypassing the hierarchies

in the establishment can also be ascribed as one of the probable reasons for her remaining under his shadow.

What is also interesting in this memoir is that in the chapter dedicated to Gundevia's posting in London, Pandit remains a background passive presence in his interactions with Nehru and others. This is in stark contradiction to how he addresses the other ambassadors he worked with. For Radhakrishnan, he showers adjectives praising the former's intelligence and deftness of communication. For Pandit, no such good words of professional efficiency are rationed. He uses the following expressions to tell the readers of his first meeting with Radhakrishnan after he arrived in Moscow:

> "There was the famous philosopher, sitting up in bed, propped up by so many pillows as his backrest, his legs folded under a blanket, sadhu-like, his slender fingers holding a pen in the right hand, a book in his left hand, reams of writing paper scattered on his lap, and the rest of the bed littered with more written and unwritten sheets and a number of other books… From the Geeta or the Upanishads - which he was then busy translating - to the problems of the Russian domestic staff which we were to face in these new surroundings, Dr. Radhakrishnan had a solution for every minor detail" (Gundevia 1984: 81-82).

Now if one compares this to how he described his first encounter with Pandit, as quoted before, the impression formed would probably be that the troublesome sister of Nehru who didn't deserve any high praise. Undisputedly, the difference in the adjectives that Gundevia used for the ambassadors he served is also reflective of the difference in the impressions he had of them. True, admiration has much to do with appreciation of an individual's personal characteristics and interpersonal rapports. However, what one needs to take cognisance of is the difference in the vocabulary used. This is imperative to understand the reception of the only woman envoy under a gendered lens. The language used by Gundevia to describe Pandit and Radhakrishnan exposes a possible de facto association of domestic chores with the woman. While Radhakrishnan's assistance in solving the problems of the embassy as a household is applauded as a genius of the philosopher, Ambassador Pandit's insistence on better furnishing and better running of Kensington Palace Gardens is received by her subordinate with a touch of amusement and disdain. It is correct that there does exist appreciation for the results of her efforts, but there is also a feeling of mockery and irreverence in the recollections of Pandit. A study of Pandit in the memories of her Deputy in the UK cannot help but make one think that regardless of the scant words

of praise spared for her, Gundevia could not go beyond viewing Pandit as anything much beyond being the little sister of her 'Bhai'. His words in collectivity paint her as a spoilt sibling who doesn't want to fail in the eyes of her much-revered elder brother. Not to miss that there is near zero mention of Pandit's work in her official capacity, dealing with people in high offices, while serving as an Indian High Commissioner in Gundevia's writing. She is more of Nehru's 'Nan' than the Indian High Commissioner in these recollections and that is all that her identity and relevance seems to be reduced to.

Triloki Nath Kaul: The First Associate

A member of the 1939 batch of the ICS, Kaul was a part of the team that assisted Pandit on her first diplomatic mission abroad. He was the one sent to Moscow in July 1947, a month prior to Pandit's arrival, to set up the embassy. Thereafter, he also accompanied her to Washington in 1949, serving as the First Secretary to the Ambassador. Thus, he witnessed and assisted Pandit in her formative years as an Indian envoy. A family friend, lovingly addressed as 'Tikki", he was also someone Pandit was much fond of, as can be established from her memoir. Kaul eventually parted ways with Pandit in 1950 when he was transferred as the Joint Secretary to the Indian High Commission in China. Nonetheless, Kaul remains one of the important contemporaries of Pandit, though junior, whose impressions of her can allow one to assess the place of the first woman diplomat in the Indian foreign policy circles. His writings allow us to study the surroundings within which Pandit operated in Moscow and the US. And, though his narrations one attempts to gather how he himself viewed Pandit.

To begin with, in his memoir, Kaul writes of the cold reception that Pandit received on her arrival in Moscow. Not to dismiss that this was the Russian disposition towards all foreigners in the country; additionally, the Soviet officials made no attempts to hide from Pandit and her staff the mistrust they had of India's independence and of its intentions towards the Soviets. So obvious was the disdain to the Indian delegation in Moscow that Kaul and his associates actually persuaded Pandit to write to Nehru asking for India's withdrawal from the Commonwealth, a suggestion that the Prime Minister did not act upon. However, of Pandit's time in Moscow, Kaul makes it clear in his writing how she was a 'misfit' in that atmosphere of constant suspicion and surveillance. He says this usually kept Pandit in a foul

mood. Nonetheless, when in official engagements, she was as charming as ever. Stalin never met Pandit, and this was a result of his dislike of independent India's decision of retaining its membership in the Commonwealth and the continued presence of the British officials in certain government offices. Added to this was the problem with Nehru's refusal to side with either of the power camps. Also at play was the personal dislike for Nehru; while Nehru was seen as the "lackey of British imperialism", Gandhi was considred a "bourgeois reformist" (Kaul 1982). How could a country led by these men be a friend of the Soviets? This appears to be one of the primary reasons for Stalin's snubbing of Pandit while she was posted in the Soviet Union. However, according to Kaul, the fault also lay on the part of Pandit. He pens how he had coaxed her to request a farewell call to Moscow weeks before her departure. To this suggestion she had said, 'Why should I? He can call me if he likes'. Amusing as this sounds, it also reflects a stubbornness and pride in Pandit's character. According to Kaul, though Pandit was partly correct in what she said since Stalin had not bothered to give her audience during her time there and the snubbing that she faced from the Soviet officials, it appeared that she had "expected to be treated with the same attention and fuss as in the US" (Kaul: 1982).

When one reads through Kaul's autobiography, you can catch a glimpse of the defiant yet pleasant personality that Pandit was. As Kaul puts it, "she could say the most outrageous things with a smile and get away with it". The adjectives that he uses for her in his writings are "frank and blunt" along with being "gracious and charming" (Kaul: 1982). A mix of traits that would probably serve a diplomat well.

Of the opportunities for developing mutual friendship between India and the Soviet Union during Pandit's tenure, Kaul undoubtedly expresses stonewalling that India was met with in Moscow. The Russians were still caught in the "dogmatic period of Stalinism" and hence, did not recognize the potential of a friendly India (Kaul: 1982). There was much lost in miscommunication. Also, as Kaul observes, India expected too much from Moscow without developing any groundwork for fruitful collaborations. However, though Kaul talks of opportunities missed and misconceptions bred while in Moscow, he talks little of Pandit in action in her official dealings. What is there of her in his writing of the time in Russia is more a reflection of her as a person and almost nothing of her as a diplomat, leaving the readers wanting to know more of her as an official and not merely as Nehru's sister.

Kaul offers more while talking of Pandit's time in Washington as India's Ambassador to the US. He writes:

> "Mrs. Pandit, as India's Ambassador to the USA, was in her element. She got a lot of publicity, both in her own right and as the sister of Nehru…But even in the USA, the State Department did not like her frank outspoken remarks on public platforms. She made up for it by being gracious and friendly in private conversations. She succeeded in pursuing her brother, the Prime Minister, to pay an official visit to the USA, in October 1949" (Kaul 1982: 157).

These recollections of Pandit portray her as an able communicator for India to the world. It reflects traits of confidence and sociability in her, which could only help an envoy of a newly independent country that is eager to make its mark in the world. A world that is hard to be won over and which needs to be told that India does not need patronisation, rather what is offers is friendship based on mutual respect and an equal footing for all parties involved. Pandit had the persona to convey these aspirations of India and did fit into the social ambience of her circles abroad, other than the Soviet Union. But then, no non-Russian did truly fit into the environment that Moscow had to offer, as Kaul's writings agree. This was primarily because of the atmosphere of constant suspicion and surveillance that all foreign envoys were met with in Moscow.

In another of Kaul's writings, one does not come across an account much different. There too he takes the reader through the landscape of the political realities of the diplomatic terrain. With regard to Pandit he does write of her victories in office while in Moscow and Washington. Like his memoir, he doesn't waver from the narrative of the Soviet mistrust that the members of the India mission battled each day. However, he cites an instance that, in confirmation with most of the commentaries on Pandit, stands as an example of the command she held over her audiences, in private and in public. It was on the occasion of the eight-hundredth anniversary of the founding of Moscow that Pandit was invited to speak at the Bolshoi Theatre. When she was done speaking, she was given an ovation, a reflection of the great oratory skills that she possessed and Kaul does not undermine this talent of Pandit in his writings. Rather, he writes of the surprise all were in for when despite all the efforts made, the Soviet ice refused to melt for India.

Of Pandit's expectations in office he writes that she was someone who arrived in Moscow with the eagerness to give a sound and friendly head start to the Indo-Soviet

relations (probably, an expectation imbibed from the hopes of her brother). However, her intent or efforts saw no reciprocation from the Russian counterparts. This disappointed Pandit immensely, leading her to communicate her dismay to Stalin's men through her fortnightly press statements to the Western media reporting from Moscowbut it didn't work. However, Pandit did make the most of social gatherings she attended and actively made good contacts, that could help her in dealing with the Soviet counterparts. One such individual was Alexandra Kollontai, famously addressed as Madame Kollantai, the first female ambassador in the modern world. During her diplomatic career she served in Norway (1923 and 1927-1930), Mexico (1926) and Sweded (1930-1945), It was in Sweden that she was eventually promoted and made the Soviet Ambassador in 1943. Kollantai had worked closely with Lenin and it was she who had arranged the "Indo- Soviet Vecher", where Soviet writers and artists were invited to the Indian embassy. Thus, allowing a maneuvering space to develop cultural interactions between the two countries. This, according to Kaul was a modest success, which left Pandit dissatisfied in her professional capacity (Kaul 1979).

Other than these scant and repetitive references, there is not much that can be found of Pandit in Kaul's writings, be it the books or his private papers available. His descriptions of her juggle between personal descriptions and observations while in office, focus more of the former. As a senior office bearer, Kaul found Pandit to be someone who had a sense of humour and relied on her colleagues to smoothen any feathers she may have ruffled with her outspokenness. As an orator, he writes of her as someone with a 'ready wit' and his documentations reflect the sharp mind that she has. A description that finds resonance in accounts of her other subordinates in the following sections of this chapter.

Jagat Singh Mehta: Recollections from London

Coming from an aristocratic affluent feudal background, Mehta had studied in Cambridge and acquired a chance induction in the foreign service upon his return. Having joined the IFS in 1947, Mehta was soon to rise up the professional ladder. His close professional association with Pandit was established when he was appointed as

the Principal Private Secretary during her High Commissionership in London in 1954, and he was later appointed the Head of the External Department in the Indian High Commission in United Kingdom, succeeding P.N. Haksar. This elevated Mehta to the stature of Political First Secretary to the High Commissioner (Gundevia 1984). He had also accompanied Pandit on the Indian delegation at the annual meeting of UN General Assembly in Paris in 1948. Alongside, Mehta had an extended family relation with Pandit as his brother-in-law was married to the latter's eldest daughter, Chandralekha Pandit. From 1954 to 956, Mehta was in London assisting Pandit at the High Commission. Unlike the recollections of Pandit by his seniors and contemporaries, Mehta's reminiscence of her stands to be more affectionate and one of admiration. He writes,

> "Being in London as PPS with Mrs. Pandit was an unusual experience. Along with Eleanor Roosevelt, Mrs. Pandit was possibly the best-known female political figure in the world. London instantly recognized that India had honoured the country by nominating her to be HC. It was, of course, also known that she was the Indian PM's sister but she had established an independent identity for herself. She had been Ambassador to both the USSR and the USA and, to crown it all, she was the first woman to be elected to preside over the United Nations General Assembly" (Mehta 2010: 92-93).

This by far is the most positive written description of Pandit acting as a diplomat and a public figure by any of her contemporaries. He also writes of the celebrity status of Pandit when he mentions how he had to deal with several institutional and personal 'fan mails' that were sent for her on her arrival to the United Kingdom. Of Pandit's dealings in the office, unfortunately Mehta disappoints as he barely mentions Pandit's political interactions with her contemporaries. In his discussion on the Suez crisis (by then he had been transferred back to Delhi serving as Private Secretary to Krishna Menon), while he showers accolades of praises for the person that Pandit was and the eye for finesse that she had in the running of the embassy, there is nothing about how the how the High Commissioner in UK dealt with the tensions that marred the political atmosphere. Thus, continuing the trend of the absence of her professional competencies in the tales of her contemporaries

Maharaja Krishna Rasgotra: The Only Surviving Contemporary

"Vijayalakshmi Pandit opened the doors of Indian foreign service for all other women" says Ambassador Rasgotra when asked about his interactions with Pandit as

a young officer in the foreign service (Rasgotra 2018). Being a recruit from the second batch of All India Services Competitive Examination, 1949, he remains an extremely important resource person in this study of Pandit as he is probably the only surviving diplomat of distinction who has worked with every luminary in the formative years of the IFS. He was also one of the officers who worked with Pandit in different capacities for short durations and also cultivated an amicable friendship with the family. A conversation with him allows one to catch some glimpses of Pandit in her professional and personal bearings. Alongside, in his memoir, he is clear in acknowledging Pandit's unique position as the only female envoy in those times, something that none of her other contemporaries have taken cognisance of.

Having observed Pandit as a subordinated throughout her life as a diplomat, the Ambassador allows a great degree of comprehension of her in different postings. When questioned about the appropriateness of Pandit's appointment to Moscow, he responded by saying that he thought it was not a wise appointment made by the then Prime Minister, Nehru. But, decision of sending Pandit to Moscow was a reflection of the great importance Nehru attached to the Soviet Union and his misconception that following the success at the UN in 1946, Pandit would be a great success in Moscow as well. However, Stalin never granted an appointment to Pandit through her brief stint there (Rasgotra 2018). Could this be counted as Pandit's failure as a diplomat on her very first posting? He disagrees:

> "…during her tenure in Moscow…Stalin showed little appreciation of Nehru's gesture and never received Mrs. Pandit, because it was said that he was seriously ill throughout her stay in Moscow. But that was a pretext. The fact is that Stalin was in doubt about India's independence…. Be that as it may, Nehru had other uses for this highly talented diplomatist with a magnetic personality, who was already a prominent world figure. If Stalin chose not to meet her, so much worse for the old man: the loss was his!"(Rasgotra 2016: 23).

Ambassador Rasgotra further adds that Stalin seemed to have some complex about Pandit. He saw her as someone who would only mouth the ideas of Nehru for whom he didn't have much liking, thus making him skeptical of Pandit and her capabilities too. Her history of having had been transported to the US in a special plane arranged bynone other than the American President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Pandit's success while touring in the US did not do much good for her reputation with the Soviets either. Also, he brings to notice the 'communist atmosphere in Moscow' that

Pandit was a misfit in, socially and politically. And, contrary to her demeanor was the censorship and constant surveillance that came along with the life in the Soviet Union. As Kaul recollects in his memoir, “No foreigner was allowed to travel more than 40 km. outside Moscow, without permission. Soviet citizens were forbidden to meet foreigners, especially diplomats” (Kaul 1982:147).

Pandit though having stood firm in the face of British oppression, was not accustomed to such limitations being put on her activities in a foreign land. Not to forget, she was denied permission when she expressed the desire to visit the Asian Republics. For a woman with a rebellious spirit and an advocate of freedom, a freedom fighter herself, the apprehensions and the misgivings of the Russians towards anyone and everyone foreign was beyond Pandit’s comprehension. Even if she wanted to rationalise it, she was not too pleased with the quality of life this resulted in. Thus, her time in the Soviet Union was not what can be called pleasant. Officially, her achievements there stood to be minimal. True, she was Nehru’s sister whose appointment was also to be a reflection of his personal commitment to the Soviet friendship; but by the time she left Moscow, Pandit was just another one of the passing envoys posted in Stalin’s Russia. While she went on to charm many others (the British, the Americans, the French and so on), there were no pathbreaking achievements concerning the Indo-Soviet relationship during her time there. Her successor, Radhakrishnan, says Ambassador Rasgotra, was a more appropriate choice as the dreamy philosopher was evidently more welcome in the poetic and philosophic circles of Moscow than the liberal and independent Pandit. Radhakrishnan, was also someone who could respond to the Russians in their own language of philosophical wit (Rasgotra 2018). Dispatching Pandit to Moscow was a hurried decision on part of the Indian government, Nehru in particular. However, the former diplomat is quick to add that it is not that Pandit lacked any diplomatic skills; they just couldn't blossom in the “oppressive” atmosphere in the Soviet Union. Something that was not in sync with the natural free spirit of Pandit as an individual. The baggage was too heavy to be borne and thus, she finally possibly asked Nehru to get her out of Moscow (Rasgotra 2018).

Did Pandit do enough groundwork to smoothen the task for her successor? Was she an able diplomat? Being questioned about Pandit and her capabilities as a diplomat, Ambassador Rasgotra responds:

> "She was one of the most shrewd persons I have come across in my life. Very sharp perceptions. She could judge a character, specially a man, in a moment. She knew how to handle people at the diplomatic best. Also, her own judgement of her capabilities was quite high"(Rasgotra 2018).

Talking of how she was received by the other prominent office bearers in the Indian foreign policy establishment at that time, including both Menons, Bajpai, Dutt etc, he provides one with the context behind the indifference or dislike towards Pandit that can be documented in the interactions and writings of most of her contemporaries of near equal stature (esp. Menon). He says:

> "Our embassies were bare bone embassies. The allowances that were given to senior diplomats and ambassadors at the mission were very meagre. And Vijayalakshmi had a style of entertainment and she always spent more than they gave… her demands for more allowances made the officials from Delhi complain bitterly amongst themselves and finally felt obliged to sanction the money. She was the sister of the Prime Minister. However, despite this they did not give her enough money to furnish the embassy in Moscow. Same was the story with the house in London" (Rasgotra 2018).

The aforementioned statement betrays the probable special treatment that was given to Pandit for being Nehru's sister. However, was this really a VIP treatment and for how long did this continue? According to the Ambassador, though Pandit would make demands regarding an increase in the embassies' expenditure, she did learn soon in her career that if there are certain rules, then one has to comply with them while still trying to get ones demands fulfilled. This was as early as her time in Washington and indeed reflects the sharpness of Pandit's mind in dealing with the hurdles that came her way back home in Delhi.

Coming back to the merit of her appointments and her receptions abroad, Ambassador Rasgotra observes that the platform where Pandit truly was a success was her time in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). It was a platform, the grandness of stature in which she fit in seamlessly. Regarding her postings and the deliverables achieved, he quips, "not that anyone else was a success as an Indian envoy in the countries where she was posted". This, as India was greeted by a very hostile world wherever it looked, Pandit really shone in the glory of the United Nations, which was a larger global platform where ones' personality mattered much more. And, emphasizes Ambassador Rasgotra, her diplomatic disappointments were not solely hers. Almost every Indian envoy was a failure at their respective postings as the Americans and the British and the Soviets did not want to listen to Nehruvian

India aspiring for an equal footing in international politics. Pandit, however, left a mark wherever she went.

Of her other postings he begins with commenting on her time in London. Pandit was very happy during her long tenure in London and everyone was very happy with her there too, recollects Ambassador Rasgotra. So charming and charismatic was she that even Churchill could not help growing fond of her regardless of his reservation towards women in political/public offices. She had several fans in America, she created "tremendous impression" on the public with whom she often directly engaged while there. She was there, as a foot soldier of India, telling the world about the greatness of her country and of Nehru and Gandhi (Rasgotra 2018). One could add that an apt specimen of the impact she created and how it bothered the governments abroad is Mrs. Roosevelt's (who was a friend of Pandit) letter to the then Secretary of State of the US where she wrote, "it was dangerous to stir up feelings against Great Britain' at that time" (Raghavan: 2018). Thus, reflecting the success of Pandit's presence and the success of her tour of advocacy of Indian independence in the US, which had evidently unnerved the British government, but had also ruffled feathers in the American administration.

Elucidating upon Pandit's rapport with her contemporaries, the veteran diplomat is quick to mention how even the "hawk-eyed" Bajpai who was watching her closely as the British Agent General in Washington in 1945 got along fantastically with her in the later years. This is despite Pandit speaking against him and his government publicly with great fervour in the pre-independence interactions of the two. It was Pandit's personality and the astounding impression that she left on people, that there were sponsors eager to fund her tour in the US as there was no possibility of Congress being able to afford the expenses from its own pockets. Pandit, according to Ambassador Rasgotra had many things going for her; personality, utter charm, articulate, well informed, extremely sharp understanding of the interlocutors, to name a few. She was someone who was cut out for a global audience, and her reputation in the UN validates the same. Her biggest quality was the ease and the eloquence with which she would put India's case across to the international audiences. He recounts his conversations with foreign diplomats as he had assisted Pandit on a few occasions. He pleasantly reminisces about how these several young and energetic diplomats and seniors as well would be absolutely taken by Pandits clarity of expression and would

exclaim, “the way this woman explains your policy, we do not understand why America, Britain and others are opposing it!”, the Ambassador would respond to them saying, “because they are fools!”(Rasgotra 2018).

A rare citation in the available literature, the former foreign secretary also writes in his memoir about how Pandit was received as a woman by her international counterparts. This stands to be a pleasant acknowledgement as there exists barely any work on Pandit as the woman who remains a pioneer as the first women diplomat from India. This comes as an agreeable discovery as none of her other contemporaries recognise the play of gender in the diplomatic corridors that Pandit had to manoeuvre through. Ambassador Rasgotra writes:

> “The arrival of a woman ambassador in the cloistered domain of diplomacy, with its strict adherence to protocol, practice and precedence, was a bundle of embarrassments. For how should she be seated at a dinner table? As a spouse, or a woman invitee or an ambassador? Or, where would she retire when men and women separated after dinner in two different rooms…. But Mrs. Pandit would have none of it. ‘I am an ambassador’…’and I assert my right to be treated as such. I do not smoke or drink cognac but I shall join the men for political talk’” (Rasgotra 2016 :24).

Similar defiance on the part of Pandit to be discriminated against based on gender is documented by the Ambassador in the form of the conversation the former had with Dean Acheson, the then Secretary of State. Acheson, as writes Ambassador Rasgotra, “could not reconcile himself to the idea of a woman representing her country as an ambassador” and he did not hide his horror at the female representative being there as an Indian envoy. So much so that he went ahead and said to Pandit that he could not accept her as India’s representative for he could not understand “why do pretty women want to be like men?”. However, what he did not expect was Pandit’s instant reply where she said to him, “They don’t. They only want equal rights and privileges, and I insist on having mine”. An encounter that even Pandit writes of in her memoir (Rasgotra 2016; Pandit 1979).

To sum it up, Ambassador Rasgotra offers a positive and admirable impression of Pandit in his recollections. According to his experience serving with her, he opines that Pandit was a woman capable of the job she was assigned to and was impeccably good at it too. Once again, commenting on the usual dismissal of Pandit as an ambassador who did not achieve tangible results for India, he is quick to say:

> "If Pandit did not make any gain, who made any gain anywhere at that point of time. Chawla in America, G.L. Mehta who succeeded Pandit and was in the U.S. for seven-eight years, what did he gain there? The aid was coming because they had to give aid. They had money, this new world and horizon has come in sight which needs money for development, or arming themselves and so on. There were commercial gains. You give aid because you gained back in several ways. For e.g. when the U.S sold us rice, they insisted that rice should go to India in American ships and they raised their freight charges. Thus, there were larger motives at play" (Rasgotra 2018).

Thus, in the assessments of this retired diplomat, Pandit remains a woman of great potential, someone whom everyone looked upto. He recounts how when Pandit would walk around in the halls of power in foreign lands, people would look at her and say, "this is the new India. India that shines" (Rasgotra 2018). It is this spirit and charisma of Pandit and also her intellect and deftness in diplomatic dealings that Ambassador Rasgotra thinks one has to most certainly study. He expresses disappointment that no academic inquiry has studied Pandit's role in the early years of Indian foreign policy establishment seriously as he strongly insists that it was Pandit who made things easier for the women who were to follow her footsteps and find their way into the corridors of power of the IFS.

Conclusion

The assessments of Pandit by her contemporaries move beyond binaries and reflect a complexity that comes with studying someone with her lineage. The senior officers of the foreign service like K.P.S Menon and Gundevia held an attitude of irreverence and disapproval towards her, latter possibly being a product of her being the Prime Minister's sister. A relation that in their view helped her acquire the position equivalent to these men in the foreign office, despite of her not having gone through the rigorous process of induction and training that these fellow officers had to endure. The juniors associated with Pandit, however, held her in much admiration and high regard. Accounts of Mehta and Rasgotra betray great degree of appreciation towards Pandit and her role in the office of the Ambassador. The remaining two individuals, i.e., Bajpai and Kaul (former being the grand old man of Indian foreign policy while the latter was a subordinate of Pandit who assisted her from Moscow through Washington) both offer a comparably balanced assessment of her. To begin with, Bajpai's dispositions towards Pandit are gauged through his correspondences with her due to the lack of any written material available by him. However, that does not hide

the fondness that eventually grew for Pandit in him as is reflected in the detailed letters addressed to Pandit and is also corroborated by the accounts of her other subordinates. Kaul, on the other hand appears to have mixed emotion towards Pandit. While he did admire her and was fond of her, his writings address the professional differences that he had with her approach in Moscow.His writings give the impression that he hoped for her to be more diplomatic and towards the end of her tenure wanted her to try harder to acquire an appointment with Stalin. This is not to undermine the argument that he underlined how Pandit's task was indeed difficult and the hostile Russian attitude did not make things smoother. Kaul does not revere Pandit, neither does he dismiss her the way Menon does. Rather, he assesses her as an individual with character flaws who indeed was good at executing responsibilities as India's envoy to the developed world.

Thus, drawing from the above, it is understood that tracing Pandit in the chronicles of foreign policy making, institutional or individual, is a herculean task. While the previous chapter argued the absence of Pandit from the narratives of mainstream foreign policy literature, this chapter attempted to carve her presence in the personal accounts of her contemporaries. As in the mainstream foreign policy literature, this domain too has a nominal presence of her in most of the accounts of these men. The only exception being Ambassador Rasgotra, who offers a deeper insight on Pandit, though that is more a result of the interview with him. What remains astounding in these accounts is also an absolute absence of the celebration of Pandit as an early woman diplomat. From her first appointment to the postings that followed, there is no celebration of her achievements in office. One wonders that if the first female diplomat of independent India was not applauded for her pioneering role, expecting other female participants in the establishment to be given any credit would only be a wishful thinking. The only place where Pandit's gender is acknowledged in terms of her achievements comes with respect to the reception of her appointment as the President of the UNGA. Otherwise, her position as a woman is never acknowledged by those working with her. This does not mean being non-acknowledged in a dismissing sense. This lack of recognition falls more in line with an absolute indifference to the gendered dynamics of the establishment. Indifference, as is understood can at times be worse that dismissal. And it is this dismissal of the role of

gender that calls for a gendered inquiry into the experiences of Pandit as the first serving woman diplomat.

One of the driving force behind the rationale of this assessment of Pandit and her contemporaries is to establish her place in a historical narrative where it stays missing. While, the aim t is to find how much credibility she held amongst her compatriots, it is also to gather the probable reasons for her omission from the prominent tales of that time in India's international affairs history. It is also to problematize her near absence in the study of diplomatic history. To sum it up, the evidence furnished in the above sections make it rather clear that Pandit certainly did leave an impression wherever she went. Regardless of the personal biases that some of her colleagues held against her and which influenced their reception of her as a co-worker, to dismiss her as insignificant would only be a folly, in line with what the existing literature has already done. Even the scantest mention of Pandit in the stories of these men is unable to undermine the grandeur of her personality and the positive impact she had on her audiences, as is given in some of the examples above. Then why is it that she is merely a peripheral character in the study of Indian foreign policy. Drawing from the material found in the archival inquiry, the concluding chapter proposes that this disdain and disregard of some of her peers and subsequently of the academia towards Pandit is rooted in two biases. One, as already mentioned is the bias against her privilege of birth. The second is the institutional and disciplinary disregard towards women who challenge the male dominated terrains and thus are pushed aside even before they rise to prominence (as discussed in Chapter Two). Pandit, given her family legacy could not have been pushed aside, but she certainly could have been forgotten, because that is how systemic biases function and that is what appears to have buried the life and experience of Pandit in the closed boxes of archival materials of diplomatic history, something that this study has attempted to recover.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Google is each individual's gateway to human history in current day and age. Thus, when the search for a female diplomat fails to display bare minimum results, it is disheartening. Where did the female diplomats disappear in the narratives of history? The answer is complicated and multilayered. While it is true that every individual cannot find her place in the pages of history, the pioneers at least ought not to be forgotten. A trend visible in the historical positioning of male pioneers reflects that the first men are never forgotten, be it the first foreign secretary, the first ambassadors, the first secretary generals, etc. Similarly, it would only be fair to expect the first women diplomats to not be forgotten. But, they have been obliterated, which reflects the lack of any deliberations into locating the female ambassador in the historical narratives. The study sought to understand the reasons for the absence of women in diplomatic history.

Employing the use of a coherent narrative (Elman 1997) the aim of this study has been to locate Pandit within the chronicles of Indian foreign policy. What is attempted is to work through the case study of Pandit, using it as an anchor, to manoeuvre into the broader inquiry regarding the role that gender plays in the reception of women in foreign policy establishments. Thus, addressing the larger question of "where are the women?" (Enloe 1990). It is with this intent that this work has attempted to tease out the importance of women as diplomats in the world of foreign policy making. The point here been to try and overcome the narrative-theory divide that exists in the study of women in power positions and to establish a bridge between the two when it comes to studying women as players of foreign policy. The aim here has been to use the theory to provide the narrative and vice versa and locate women within the power corridors of the foreign ministries.

Indian diplomatic history stands as an undermined field. Women find a scarcer presence in this subfield of inquiry. The purpose of this study has been twofold, i.e., to weigh the contributions of Pandit in Indian foreign policy making in the early years of independence, and to determine whether her absence from the mainstream academic and institutional memory is a product of subtle workings of gender within

the domains of diplomacy as an institutions and academia as a fraternity. In the course, the study has dealt with the immediate questions regarding the reasons for Pandit's absence from the conventional literature, her reception by her colleagues, and the place of women in foreign policy decision making.

In the course of testing the hypotheses advanced at the beginning of the study, the following observations are important: First, the existing work or explorations of the relevance of Pandit's contributions in independent India and international politics remains scarce. Thus, her life and experiences are an area of study that fundamentally stands under-researched and largely unexplored. Second, this lack of curiosity towards the story of the first woman diplomat of India can be attributed to her relation to the then Prime Minister, i.e., her being the younger sister, Nehru much doted upon. Thus, her appointment is more often than not reduced in popular discourse as an act of nepotism and hence brushing aside any need to study Pandit's professional achievements in the foreign policy discourse.

These observations are further compounded wwhen one looks at the role that gender plays in the workings of diplomacy as an institution and as a process. Drawing from the works of McCarthy, Towns, Aggastem, Nikklason and others, it is evident that historically women have not been allowed an adequate space in the writings on foreign policy making (McCarthy 2009 and 2014; Towns 2009; Towns and Niklasson 2016; Aggastem and Towns 2018; McGlen and Sarkees 1993). This largely being a product of the bias of the existing IR scholarship against the lives and experiences of women in diplomatic offices; a category that this work recognises as the 'Marginalized Elites' of international politics. Putting this consideration into an assessment of the Indian foreign policy establishment, it is observed that the academic negligence of Pandit's feats as India's first woman diplomat to the world has to be associated largely with the subservient place accorded to her in the diplomatic circles.

Having said so, any deliberation aimed at locating women within the workings of Indian foreign policy has to begin with an acknowledgement and a study of the first woman who became India's official envoy abroad. Hence, a study of the life and experiences of Pandit as a serving diplomat becomes indispensable in this larger inquiry of gender and foreign policy making.

Drawing from the theoretical inquires delved into in this study, it becomes evident that diplomacy, historically has been a male dominated domain. Women found their way into this professional sphere the world over pretty late in modern history. In India, however, the advent of woman entrants into the foreign service happened right at the dawn of independence. However, the upward mobility of women diplomats in the Indian Foreign Service remained a far fetched dream, as shows the track record of women making it to the top posts in the institutions. The appointment of the first woman foreign secretary of India as late as 2003 stands as a proof of such marginali sation . Not to forget the "sex prejudiced" character of the service rules that did not permit the women officers to retain their jobs in the foreign service upon getting married. A rule that, as observed the Supreme Court of India, was misogynist in nature and which came under wide criticism from all quarters only in the year 1979 when Muthamma, the first non-lateral entrant in the diplomatic corps, took the establishment to court because she had been bypassed for promotion. Though the number of women joining the institution of foreign service has increased considerably over the past years, the increased representation stands to be more quantitative in its character than substantive. This stands proven, as mentioned earlier, by the mere handful of women making it to the top of the bureaucratic ladder.

Diplomacy, stands to be a sphere where the interactions of the individuals employed by the institutions lead to an interconnection between the domestic and the international gender hierarchies. Thus, a study of diplomacy though a gendered lens allows one an understanding of the position of women holding positions of power in the world of international politics.

The hypotheses as advanced at the beginning of this work were as follows:

1. Gender plays a decisive role in the absence of Pandit from Indian foreign policy narratives.
2. Despite her absence from the extant Indian foreign policy literature, Pandit made important contributions to the shaping of India's foreign policy.

Based on the research, it is argued that both the hypotheses holdtrue. To elaborate further, let us go through the hypotheses in sequence. Starting with the first hypothesis; an analysis of the prevalent dispositions of the existing Indian foreign policy scholarship makes it apparent that the academic inquiry thus far has only paid

scant attention to the role and achievements of Pandit acting in her capacity as India's ambassador to the great powers in the Cold War era. This negligence of Pandit's diplomatic existence can be associated with two possible predispositions prevalent during her years in office and in the years that followed.

First, the aversion towards devoting any serious attention to the role of Pandit in the making of Indian foreign policy associated with the disapproval of the diplomatic corps and of the academic quarters, at large, of the nature of Pandit's appointment. As most observers view her elevation to the office of India's Ambassador as primarily an act of nepotism, they not only dismiss her contributions but also do not consider her as a worthy of inquiry. Whereas the scholarship dismissed Pandit as merely the younger sister of the Prime Minister, who became his personal messenger in the ambassadorial office; the contemporaries of Pandit in Delhi were often left fuming with her bypassing the institutional hierarchies and corresponding directly with "Bhai", the Prime Minister. Not to forget that this discomfort was further heightened amongst the cadre of the ICS officers who had been absorbed by the newly established Ministry of External Affairs as these were the individuals who had worked hard through their lives to earn the officers the were occupying. Pandit, on the other hand had been made an equal to them regardless of not having any prior diplomatic experience; something that did not go down well with this section of officers.

However, it has to be kept in mind that Pandit was not the only lateral entry into the diplomatic corps established by Nehru. There were public personalities too who were inducted into the service, e.g. Asaf Ali, Radhakrishnan, K.M, Pannikar, to name a few. It is surprising then that while all these men received considerate attention in the diplomatic cadre, Pandit remained largely sidelined. It is at this juncture that the second prevalent predisposition comes into operation, i.e., the decisive role of gender in the absence of Pandit in the existing foreign policy narratives, which testifies the first hypothesis advanced in this study.

Notably the clash of personalities and the different interpersonal dynamics had their share of contribution in the sidelining of Pandit from the foreign policy narratives. However, when one goes through the archives and studies the reception and assessments of Pandit by her contemporaries, along with aforementioned discomfort with her familial background, one observes the description of Pandit's demeanour as

a diplomat being reduced to the singular adjective, i.e., her being addressed as 'charming'. The few places where her work is acknowledged in these personal writings, is often reduced to being a great hostess rather than being an able negotiator for India. Even her failings, for those who view them as such, have not been given enough consideration; thus, contributing to a near obliteration of this first female diplomat of India in the historical accounts of foreign policy.

The relegation of Pandit at the margins of Indian foreign policy literature requires an interpretive reading of the material available. As stated in the earlier chapters, the words that individuals pen down are reflective of the depositions held deep within. Therefore, when Pandit is reduced to being addressed as 'charming' by almost all her male colleagues in their writings, the association of this adjective with description of feminine beauty and charisma in the tonality of these writings comes as a disturbing, though not surprising realisation.

The Indian foreign policy establishment was inherited from its British predecessors. So were the norms prevailing and the attitudes of those working therein. The improbability of a welcome reception to a woman in the high power positions of diplomacy was also a feature of this institution that was populated by many officers of the ICS whom Pandit worked alongside once she was appointed as ambassador in post-independence India. An attentive study of the personal accounts of Menon, Gundevia, Kaul, amongst some of her Pandit's colleague, reflects this observation.

The personal disapprovals of Pandit's diplomatic appointments by those who refused to give her any attention in the existing narratives is compounded due to the deep rooted disregard despite her being the first woman diplomat of independent India. Such disdain is reflected in an absolute absence of any celebration of an appointment of this nature in the recollections of those who worked alongside her. So, while the diplomatic corps and the academic scholarship was quick to celebrate her feat as the first female President of the United Nations General Assembly as a victory for India, emphasising her gender in the course of such celebrations, there exists no celebratory expression recorded in the existing writings of her appointment as the first woman diplomat of India and of how her achievements went on to open the doors for other women to join the diplomatic profession. To add, the accounts of the men who served alongside Pandit largely remain silent on her role. Thus, leading one to believe that Pandit's immediate identity as a woman did stand to play a decisive role inter being

pushed into the corners of oblivion in the tales of Indian foreign policy or into her being reduced merely to the status of the younger sister of Nehru, the tall man of Indian foreign policy.

This observation brings the discussion to the second hypothesis advanced in this research, i.e., despite her absence in the existing foreign policy literature, Pandit made important contributions to the shaping of Indian foreign policy. The place an individual is accorded in the pages of history is understood to be a reflection of that person's success or failures as evaluated by those writing the historical account of that time. The absence of Pandit from the existing foreign policy writings created a fertile ground for an easy dismissal of her diplomatic career as an unsuccessful one since she did not bring much to the table in the form of grand diplomatic achievements for India. This assessment however, requires to be studied in the context of the largest standing of India in the international political landscape prevailing at that point of time.

The world of Cold War politics was one where a newly independent India was struggling to carve out a niche for itself. It was in this context that more than substantial material achievements, the success of the diplomats were reflected in their able manoeuvring in the international domain, something that was aimed at maintaining India's independent non-partisan stance. According to Ambassador Rasgotra's observation (upon being asked about the successes of Pandit and about her being a capable diplomat) none of the Indian diplomats in the early years of independence delivered as per the conventional standards of diplomatic success which he says was not a mark of their professional failure. Rather, it was a product of a hostile environment that a young India had to operate in – a world that wanted India to join camps instead of following its independent path and ideology. It is in this context that the workings of the early diplomats of India need to be studied. More than achieving material returns, the herculean task in front of them was to safeguard the values that India associated itself with. And, if they managed to do even this, it was a significant achievement. Pandit's performance as an Indian envoy stands to be no exception to this generalisation (Rasgotra 2018).

Amongst few of the contemporary assessments of hers, the writings of Bhagavan open the doors for those working on India's relations with the world to study the understudied achievements of Pandit at the United Nations General Assembly

(Bhagavan 2012 and 2015). Adding on, it is reading through the works of Ankit, Thakur and picking from the margins of the writings of Raghavan, Chaudhari et.al that one successfully grasps the need to further study the role of Pandit in the making of India's foreign policy (Ankit 2015, 2016 and 2018; Chaudhari 2014; Raghavan 2009, 2016 and 2018; Thakur 2017).

In addition, it is through a careful reading of the bilateral negotiations at that time in history and these being analysed alongside the accounts of the colleagues of Pandit who served under her at the missions which she was heading, that it becomes further evident that Pandit did effectively create a robust platform for India to showcase its aspirations and demands in the world of international politics; and, it is these achievements of her that need to be studied in greater detail so as to carve out a place for this first woman diplomat of India in the history thus told. This becomes imperative as she has primarily been viewed by the academic scholarship as merely being "Nehru's sister". Barring a few works (as cited earlier in this study) the academic interest in the experiences of Pandit as an Indian Ambassador to the Great Powers has been minimal. Why this exploration insists on placing the relevance of Pandit in the writings about Indian foreign policy is because the absence of the female actors from the history of the establishment only allows for a skewed understanding of diplomacy as an institution. While there exist deliberations in the larger international relations theoretical inquiries to unearth the undermined sections of the discipline, exclusion of women diplomats only contributes to a narrow perception of the field of diplomacy and the institutions of foreign policy. This is so as a crucial component of the "role of gender" in diplomatic quarters stands ignored. Hence, so as to ensure a wholesome development of the theoretical approaches to the discipline, it is imperative that women at all levels of state and the institutions therein are brought within the ambit of academic interests; and women in diplomacy are one such section of women who have been operating in the power corridors for long but have not gained recognition from the scholarship on the subject. It is this selective telling of the history of foreign policy establishments that this study has addressed.

To conclude, the primary aim of this work has been to put forth the need to open a broader research agenda that would work towards the acknowledgement of the voices of the women in the history of Indian foreign policy and making those voices loud enough to be heard. Juxtaposed against the larger question of the reception of women

as high office bearers in the India diplomatic circles particularly and the world in general, Pandit stands as a case study that seeks to answer the larger question about the role that gender plays in diplomatic corridors. Therefore, her story also warrants to be studied for a greater and more nuanced understanding of the early years of Indian foreign policy. An understanding drawn from those chapters of history so far remains untold as the female presence remains silenced.

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