

# The Remarkable Madame Pandit

*Champion of India, Citizen of the World*

## Manu Bhagavan

A pioneering politician and diplomat, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit (1900–1990) was an Indian icon, admired worldwide for her brilliance and glamour. Eleanor Roosevelt called her “the most remarkable woman” she had ever met. Madame Pandit, as she was widely known, moved in elite global circles even as she worked to improve the lives of millions. She traded quips with Winston Churchill, worked alongside Albert Einstein, and was detained for the attempted assassination of Benito Mussolini. She even came out of retirement to campaign against her own niece, Indira Gandhi, to stop an authoritarian take-over and save Indian democracy.

*The Remarkable Madame Pandit* is the definitive biography of India’s greatest modern diplomat. Manu Bhagavan chronicles Pandit’s life and times, from her upbringing in an illustrious family to her role in her country’s fight for independence and through her globe-trotting career bridging East and West. Pandit was India’s first woman cabinet minister, an ambassador to the United States and the Soviet Union, and the first woman elected president of the UN General Assembly. Her influence extended well beyond these formal roles: she became one of the most prominent international voices for peace while paving the way for women in many fields. Based on eight years of research using material in five languages from seven countries, this book tells Madame Pandit’s gripping story in full—and in so doing, retells the history of India and the world in the twentieth century.



**MANU BHAGAVAN** is a professor of history, human rights, and public policy at Hunter College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, where he is also a senior fellow at the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies. Bhagavan is the author or editor of several books, including *The Peacemakers: India and the Quest for One World* (2012) and *India and the Cold War* (2019).

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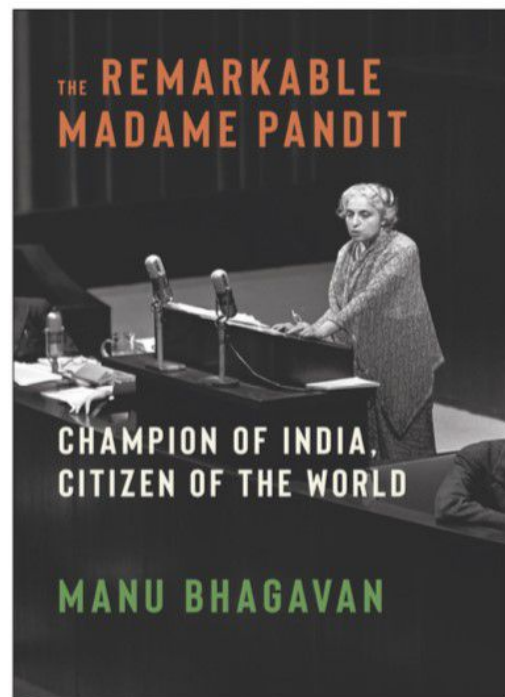
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—Gloria Steinem, writer and activist

“Sidelined by the ‘great men’ school of history writing, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit is brought to life in this vividly written and painstakingly researched biography. You’ll find yourself eagerly turning the pages to learn what happens next in a story you thought you already knew.”

—Daisy Rockwell, International Booker Prize-winning translator  
of *Tomb of Sand*

“With this illuminating biography, Manu Bhagavan restores Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit to the pantheon of extraordinary individuals who created a modern India according to their noble vision of international human rights. Written in lucid prose with a scholar’s unflinching eye, this is a deeply affectionate portrait of a complex woman, and a masterful recreation of a thrilling period in history.”

—Kiran Desai, Booker Prize-winning author of  
*The Inheritance of Loss*

“*The Remarkable Madame Pandit* is not merely a biography; it is a captivating exploration of a life that shattered barriers and challenged conventions. Bhagavan skillfully honors Pandit’s legacy, inviting us to reevaluate history through a new lens and inspiring us to envision a more inclusive, just, and interconnected world.”

—Indra Nooyi, former chairman and CEO of PepsiCo

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