

Jawaharlal Nehru: A Persuasive Writer of English Prose

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For Jawaharlal Nehru the writing of English prose was a matter of deep inner conviction and not some interesting turn of a phrase. Propelled by an intense faith in human endeavor his prose provided both a rationale for action and real courage to act. His style was an attempt to reveal his mind, the indomitable spirit that lay just beneath the gossamer of grammar gathering momentum upon mental activity. Nehru was forever trying to break through the barriers that separated him from others. He was keen to create a heart-to-heart bond, a mental equilibrium that would make ideas acceptable and interesting. This belief brought intensity and fearlessness to whatever he wrote. His prose in English helped the educated Indian masses to relinquish fear, and stand up against the armed might of the British Empire. They fought wholeheartedly for the freedom of their nation.

Nehru's unconditional candor prompted many writers to express their unqualified praise for his writing, foremost amongst them is perhaps John Gunther. Gunther places Nehru amongst the top ten writers in the world writing in English. "Hardly a dozen men alive

write English as well as Nehru," writes Gunther. Marjorie Boulton in her well-meaning book *The Anatomy of Prose* writes, "English people who will not trouble to write their own language well ought to be ashamed by reading the English of such writers as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru." Indira Gandhi, in the Preface to the Centenary Edition of *The Discover of India*,¹ says about Nehru: "Books fascinated Jawaharlal Nehru. He sought ideas. He was extraordinarily sensitive to literary beauty ... He was a luminous man and his writings reflected the radiance of his spirit." Nehru was essentially a man of letters who had, according to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, "strayed into politics on account of the unfortunate political conditions of our times." Left to himself he would have been a poet or a sensitive Indo-Englian writer.

It is perhaps difficult to believe that most of his important books were written while serving sentences in Indian jails. The condition of jails in India was deplorable. There were hardly any facility for study and most of the books made available to Nehru were basically secondary source material. It is understandable how difficult Nehru might have found to collect his thoughts in that unwholesome tranquillity and put them on paper. However, he was not to be let down by anything as his purpose was great—to give strength and courage to the frightened Indian masses who had come to accept British atrocities and dominance as natural.

Nehru's first book, a travelogue, appeared in 1928 and was about

Soviet Russia. It was entitled *Soviet Russia* and dealt with the changing faces of Russia and the cultural heritage of its people. This was followed by *Letters From a Father to His Daughter*² which was published in 1930 and was a bit pontifical, but highly emotive, as it dealt with some of the letters he wrote to his daughter Priyadarshini during those turbulent years when the future of India and its people was yet uncertain. Then after four years came his major work, *Glimpses of World History*³ (1934). This was followed by two major books : *An Autobiography*⁴ (1936) and *The Discovery of India* (1946). In both these books Nehru shows a keen awareness of the cultural heritage of the country and the temper of its people. At the same time he gives advice as to how Indians should conduct themselves at the present time. He is against traditionalism though he values tradition highly. The dead wood of the past must be removed; however only those things which are valuable in tradition should be allowed to stay. A cultural rejuvenation must be accomplished by resuscitating the past. He advocates this in his latter work.

Another useful work that contains Nehru's speeches, press statements and occasional exhortations can be seen collected in *The unity of India*⁵ (1941). The important speeches he gave during the period 1946-64 are now collected in five volumes and are easily available in Japan and abroad. Nehru was a prolific writer and even from jail he wrote letters to his friends and political adversaries, who in turn replied back. Their letters and some written by him

were collected into a book entitled *A Bunch of Old Letters*.⁶ It is an interesting book, full of praise and at times criticism for Nehru and gives an insight into the making of modern India. In one letter dated November 6, 1935 C.F. Andrews wrote to Nehru from Cambridge :

As I think I told you when we met in Poona, you are the only one outstanding person who seems instinctively to know what the West can understand and follow easily ... the moment I had read, 'Through a prison window,' it was as clear as possible to me that this was easily intelligible in Europe" (BOL, p.127).

Nehru's mastery over English prose arose from the steady education he received during early childhood through an English governess at home. Later under the benign influence of his Irish tutor Ferdinand T. Brooks, Nehru developed both a love of the English language and a taste for reading it. Brooks understood Nehru's youthful Indian mind extremely well and encouraged in him a steady liking for the literature in English, especially its poetry. Nehru's sensitive mind was able to absorb the connotative meaning of words and the wisdom that lay hidden behind them. In his *An Autobiography* we find a vivid account of his passionate involvement with romantic and suspense-filled English tales and stories :

I was well up in children's and boys' literature; the Lewis

Carroll books were great favorites, and *The Jungle Books*, and *Kim*. I was fascinated by Gustave Dore's illustrations to *Don Quixote*, and Fridtjof Nansen's *Farthest North* opened out a new realm of adventure for me. I remember reading many of the novels of Scott, Dickens, and Thackeray, H. G. Wells's romances, Mark Twain and the Sherlock Holmes stories. I was thrilled by the *Prisoner of Zenda*, and Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat* was for me the last word in humour. Another book stands out still in my memory; it was Du Maurier's, *Trilby* also *Peter Ibbetson*. I also developed a liking for poetry, a liking which has to some extent endured and survived the many other changes to which I have been subject (AA, p.14).

Brooks also encouraged his young pupil to study theosophy. He introduced Nehru to Oriental religious thought especially to Hinduism and Buddhism. Soon Nehru could find interesting ideas in *The Dhammapada*, *The Upanisads* and *The Bhagvad Gita*.

In 1904 Nehru joined Harrow. His academic performance at Harrow was excellent. In appreciation of his proficiency in English and his exemplary deportment he was awarded the first volume of G. M. Trevelyan's book on Garibaldi. It fascinated him so much that he soon procured the remaining two volumes on the same subject. Garibaldi's struggle-filled life proved to be a great source of inspiration to Nehru. Soon he began to dream of similar deeds of

valor and determined to put up a gallant fight for the freedom of his country.

Studies at Harrow were hard. To add to it Nehru's keen interest in sports left him with little time to keep up with his epistolary pursuit. However he was not deterred from keeping up regular correspondence with his father. Reading from the letters one can understand that even at that immature age young Nehru had developed a forceful but lucid style of writing. He describes to his father, with force and realism, a cricket match he had witnessed between Eton and Harrow. A strong pictorial clarity invades his description of the Cadet Corps' Field Day in a letter to his father. Nehru describes a hilarious incident about the eldest son of the Maharaja of Kapurthala Paramjit Singh who "was a complete misfit" at Harrow :

A curious incident took place once when, in the middle of the night, the house—master suddenly visited our rooms and made a thorough search all over the house. We learnt that Paramjit Singh had lost his beautiful gold—mounted cane. The search was not successful. Two or three days later the Eton and Harrow match took place at Lord's, and immediately afterwards the cane was discovered in the owner's room. Evidently some one had used it at Lord's and then returned it. (AA, p.18)

After completing his studies at Harrow Nehru joined Trinity College

at Cambridge where he began to study science. However his interest in English poetry and prose remained undiminished. Reading English writers brought about a transformation in his thinking. Meredith Townsend's analysis of Asia and Europe in a book by the same name fascinated Nehru so much that soon he was politically influenced by that kind of writing. Prose writers like Oscar Wilde and Walter Pater also guided his thinking during the early part of his university days. He enjoyed Swinburne and George Meredith for their poetic thought and was fond of reciting the opening lines of Swinburne's *Rondell*. W. S. Auden, John Masefield, Walter de la Mare, T. S. Eliot and John Keats were among the poets whose books still adorn Nehru's personal library in his first home called Anand Bhawan in the city of Allhabad.

Nehru's autobiography contains a brief section entitled "My Wedding and an Adventure in the Himalayas." It ends with his following comment and a quotation from Walter de la Mare's poem:

And I dream of the day when I shall wander about the Himalayas and cross them to reach that lake and mountain of my desire. But meanwhile the sands of life run on and youth passes into middle age and that will give place to something worse and sometimes I think that I may grow too old to reach Kailas and Mansarovar. But the journey is always worth the making even though the end may not be in

sight.

' Yea, in my mind these mountains rise
Their perils dyed with evening' s rose;
And still my ghost sits at my eyes
And thirsts for their untroubled snows.

(AA, pp.38-9)

Nostalgic and evocative the passage brings out both the dreamer and the determined man of action in him, who will never give up on the way howsoever hard the journey might be. "But the journey is always worth the making," creates the magic mesmerizing the masses to muster courage and continue on the arduous, and at times tortuous, road to freedom.

The same mood and temper is conveyed by Nehru' s fascination for Robert Frost' s famous poem "Stopping By the Woods on a Snowy Evening." The poem was a constant source of inspiration throughout Nehru' s life, so much so that in the autumn of his life he seemed to have grown so fond of the poem that he began to live it literally. Perhaps he was thinking of this very poem as he lay dead on his study table. For found on his table was a sheet of paper on which were written the following last lines of the poem:

For I have miles to go before I sleep.
And miles to go before I sleep.

For him the struggle was more important than the prize. In the

postscript to his autobiography he mentions that, "Perhaps, it is the struggle that gives value to life, not so much the ultimate result"(AA,p.597). It would be in the fitness of things to mention Nehru's perusals of the philosophies of Nietzsche and Bertrand Russell and the writings of Bernard Shaw, Lowes and Dickinson.

Reading for Nehru was a favorite pastime. So fond was he of reading that even while he travelled by car, train or plane he never failed to read either a book or a magazine. Undoubtedly it was his vast erudition and keen intellect that allowed him to develop a really individualistic and persuasive style. Simple and direct Nehru's prose could capture the inner essence of things and provide a realistic picture to any given situation. Consider the following passage from his *Autobiography* :

In Allahabad my mother was in a procession which was stopped by the police and later charged with lathis. When the procession had been halted someone brought her a chair, and she was sitting on this on the road at the head of a procession. Some people who were especially looking after her, including my secretary, were arrested and removed, and then came the police charge. My mother was knocked down from her chair, and was hit repeatedly on the head with canes. Blood came out of an open wound in the head; she fainted, and lay on the roadside, which had now been cleared of processionists and public. After sometime she was picked

up and brought by a police officer in his car to Anand Bhawan. That night a false rumour gathered together that my mother had died. Angry crowds gathered together, forgot about peace and non-violence, and attacked the police. There was firing by the police resulting in the death of some people.

When the news of all this came to me some days after the occurrence (for we had a weekly paper), the thought of my frail old mother lying bleeding on the dusty road obsessed me and I wondered how I would have behaved if I had been there (AA, pp. 334-35).

Here is excellent prose of suppressed emotion evoking sympathy at the self-control of the writer. No emotional outburst, no ranting and raving so many Indian writers are wont to use. Though there were times Nehru did yield to rhetoric as for instance in *The Discovery of India* in the following lines:

There is a stillness and everlastingness about the past; it changes not and has a touch of eternity, like a painted picture or statue in bronze or marble. Unaffected by the storms and upheavals of the present it maintains its dignity and repose and tempts the troubled spirit and the tortured mind to seek shelter in its vaulted catacombs. There is a peace there and security, and one may even sense a spiritual quality (p. 20).

but such occasions were rare and far between.

Strange as it may seem Nehru had a two-sided personality which at times moved in the direction of deep introspection and at others became dynamically active. This dual aspect was clearly reflected in his prose style, though it is dismissed as just a state of mind. In brief his writing style is highly balanced and deeply imaginative. His personal life as seen in his autobiography reveals a highly imaginative prose style as in the following passage:

And yet India with all her poverty and degradation had enough of nobility and greatness about her, and though she was overburdened with ancient tradition and present misery, and her eyelids were a little weary, she had a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions (AA, p.429).

Here the contemplative mood empowers his words through the conjunctive 'and,' linking up the clauses, giving the prose a new immediacy. However he revels in the typically balanced style, priding himself in its diction and rhythm born of refined conversation as in the following:

Not for most of us, unhappily, to sense the mysterious life of Nature, to hear her whisper close to our ears, to thrill and

quiver at her touch But though we may not see the sublime in Nature as we used to, we have sought to find it in the glory and tragedy of humanity in its mighty dreams and inner tempests, its pangs and failures, its conflicts and miseries, and, overall this, its faith in a great destiny and a realization of those dreams. But many have not undertaken this search, and having cut themselves adrift from the ancient ways, find no road to follow in the present. They neither dream nor do they act (AA, p.414).

It is easy to notice his penchant for verbal rhythm especially in the second sentence in the above paragraph. The prose is easy, flowing and conversational; as if someone is speaking to a friend in a relaxed manner.

In fact some of his most enduring sentences emanated in a mood of reminiscence making his prose poetic:

... there is the whisper of spring in the air. The bulbul and other birds are again to be seen and heard, and tiny shoots are mysteriously bursting out of the ground and gazing at this strange world. Rhododendrons make blood-red patches on the hillsides, and peach and plum blossoms are peeping out. The days pass and I count them as they go by ... (AA, p.571).

There is a wistful yearning for the past, perhaps a desire to

arrest the present and relish the dreamy world of yesterday; but alas it cannot be. This kind of prose is reminiscent of the poetry of Romantic poets and their love for nature.

Nehru's Wordsworthian love of nature made him understand the magic of the milieu and prompted him to write about its therapeutic quality in his *Letters From a Father to His Daughter*:

In the early morning I lay bare-bodied in the open and the gentle-eyed sun of the mountains took me into her warm embrace Sometimes I would lie under the pine trees and listen to the voice of the wandering wind, whispering many strange things into my ears and lulling my senses, and cooling the fever in my brain. Finding me unguarded and open to attack, it would cunningly point out the folly of men's ways in the world ... (p.200).

Certainly an impulse from the vernal wood can teach foolhardy men to live a better life by pointing out their preoccupation with life's trivia. Nehru, lying bare-bodied in the sun like some Indian mystic of yore in communion with the mystic rhythm of the universe, is the real interpreter of the mysteries of nature to man. Yet again enthralled by the beauty of nature he writes:

I love the uncommon combination of semi-tropical scenery and snow-topped mountains with a noble river running between them ... I shall carry away with me also, imprinted

on my mind, the silent beauty of the dawn as we sailed over the bosom of the Brahmaputra and the snow-covered peaks in the distance caught the first rays of the rising sun (LFD, p.189).

Here is exhilarating prose revelling in the environmental richness of the Himalayas. His poetic description of the Ganges in "Will and Testament," dated 21st June 1954, where he talks about the river as a symbol of everything that is India, is memorable:

The Ganga, especially, is the river of India, beloved of her people, round which are intertwined her racial memories, her hopes and fears, her songs of triumph, her victories and her defeats. She has been a symbol of India's age-long culture and civilization, ever-changing, ever-flowing, and yet ever the same Ganga. She reminds me of the snow-covered peaks and the deep valleys of the Himalayas, which I have loved so much, and of the rich and vast plains below, where my life and work have been cast. Smiling and dancing in the morning sunlight, and dark and gloomy and full of mystery as the evening shadows fall, a narrow, slow and graceful stream in winter, and a vast roaring thing during monsoon, broad-bosomed almost as the sea, and with something of the sea's power to destroy, the Ganga has been to me a symbol and a memory of the past of India, running into the present, and flowing on to the great ocean of the future.⁷

It is this very river that Nehru desired his ashes to be thrown in after his death.

Unlike others who complained and cribbed about the inhospitable condition in jails Nehru always found the solitude prison life provided as an opportunity to read and write. Most of his works were either composed or conceived of in prison. In 1922, while in the Lucknow District Goal, Nehru wrote:

Lying there in the open, I watched the skies and the clouds and I realized, better than I had ever done before, how amazingly beautiful were their changing hues.

‘To watch the changing clouds, like clime in clime;

Oh! sweet to lie and bless the luxury of time.’

Time was not a luxury for us, it was more of a burden. But the time I spent in watching those ever-shifting monsoon cloud was filled with delight and a sense of relief. I had the joy of having made almost a discovery, and a feeling of escape and confinement. I do not know why that particular monsoon had that great effect on me; no previous or subsequent one had moved me in that way. (AA, p.93)

It is easy to see that he always could put to good use the time he got while in prison. Goaded by the belief of transforming the masses and propelled by a feeling that “a chapter of [his] life is over and another chapter will begin,” (AA, p.597) Nehru never

stopped even though at times he was not clear what the future had in store for him.

Stylists and critics have noted Nehru's ability to compose picturesque passages. "If Churchill has an edge on Nehru in his ability to turn a phrase," writes Mr Khushwant Singh, "Nehru has the better of Churchill as a 'Painter of landscape.'" Native of Kashmir, the mountains and bucolic scenery had a special charm for Nehru and he could not help but be enamored by them:

Like some supremely beautiful woman, whose beauty is almost impersonal and above human desire such was Kashmir in all its feminine beauty of river and valley and lake and graceful trees. And then another aspect of this magic beauty would come to view, a masculine one, of hard mountains and precipices, and snow-capped peaks and glaciers, and cruel and fierce torrents rushing down to the valleys below. It had a hundred faces and innumerable aspects, ever changing, sometimes smiling, sometimes sad and full of sorrow As I gazed at it, it seemed to me dreamlike and unreal, like the hopes and desires that fill us and so seldom find fulfillment. It was like the face of the beloved that one sees in a dream and that fades away on awakening (JNAA, p.627).

Yet again Nehru's imagination could conjure up images from the pages of history long forgotten by ordinary men. Observe the poetic recreation of the Buddha preaching at Sarnath and the

evocation of the Ashokan inscriptions:

At Sarnath, near Benaras, I would almost see the Buddha preaching his first sermon, and some of his recorded words would come like a distant echo to me through two thousand five hundred years. Ashoka's pillars of stone with their inscriptions would speak to me in their magnificent language and tell me of a man who, though an emperor, was greater than any king or emperor (DOI, p.52).

Nehru's love for the beauty of nature grew intense when he was confined in prison in Dehradun as though his spirit was yearning for the freedom of open spaces and silent valleys. As he languished in prison he watched the open skies: "Lying there in the open, I watched the skies and the clouds and I realised, better than I had ever done before, how amazingly beautiful were their changing hues. To watch the changing clouds, like clime in clime; Oh! sweet to lie and bless the luxury of time."

Just as he loved describing the beauties of nature, Nehru was adept at vividly portraying people till they felt real. His portrayal of Lord Linlithgow carries with it the exactitude of a skilled craftsman:

Heavy of body and slow of mind, solid as a rock and with almost a rock's lack of awareness, possessing the qualities

and failings of an old-fashioned British aristocrat, he sought with integrity and honesty of purpose to find a way out of the tangle. But his limitations were too many; his mind worked in the old groove and shrank back from any innovations; his vision was limited by traditions of the ruling class out of which he came (DOI, pp. 437-38).

There is a slow building up of contempt for Linlithgow's traditionalism yet at the same time a diplomatic reserve not to be abrasive or rude.

Nehru succinctly described the follies and strengths of M. A. Jinnah and some revolutionary leaders such as Shyamji Krishnavarma and Madame Bhicaji Cama. A typical portrait is that of Raja Mahendra Pratap:

He was (and, I suppose, is still) a delightful optimist, living completely in the air and refusing to have anything to do with realities He appeared in a strange composite attire, which might have been suitable in the highlands of Tibet or in the Siberian plains but was completely out of place at Montreux in the summer. He seemed to be a character out of a medieval romance, a Don Quixote who had strayed into the twentieth century. But he was absolutely straight and thoroughly earnest (AA, pp. 150-51).

An extremely hilarious portrait but true.

In 1926 Swami Shraddanand was assassinated by an unknown fanatic. Nehru was horrified. His admiration of Swami Shraddanand's physical courage while facing the imminence of death comes out in the following sentences:

His tall and stately figure, wrapped in a sanyasin's robe, perfectly erect inspite of advanced years, eyes flashing, sometimes a shadow of irritation or anger at the weakness of others passing over his face—how I remember that vivid picture, and how often it has come back to me(AA,p.160).

A sculpturesque precision invades his prose when he describes Gautam Buddha seated on a lotus flower in his *Discovery*:

Seated on the lotus flower, calm and impassive, above passion and desire, beyond the storm and strife of this world, so far away he seems, out of reach, unattainable His eyes are closed, but some power of the spirit looks out of them and a vital energy fills the frame (DOI,pp.131-32).

Nehru has chiselled here a powerful person prose giving the Buddha vitality. In sketching these portraits Nehru was always propelled to find truth and humility howsoever difficult it might seem, and to shun falsehood and conceit. In the chapter, "Independence and

After," he writes:

Conceit, like fat on the human body, grows imperceptibly, layer upon layer, and the person whom it affects is unconscious of the daily accretion. Fortunately the hard knocks of a mad world tone it down or even squash it completely, and there has been no lack of these hard knocks for us in India during recent years. The school of life has been a difficult one for us, and suffering is a hard taskmaster. (AA, p. 206)

Nehru is invariably his natural self when we listen to his speeches. He compels the listener to hear. George Bernard Shaw, writing in a letter to Nehru, called him "the only Asiatic equivalent to Stalin" (BOL, p. 520). His exhortative speech, such as the "Tryst with Destiny" delivered on the 14th midnight 1947, stirs the complacent mind to action:

Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we

take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity (NA,p.76).

His first message to the press as the Prime Minister of India was full of sincerity coming straight from his heart:

It is a fateful moment for us in India, for all Asia and for the world. A new star rises, the star of freedom in the East, a new hope comes into being, a vision long cherished materializes We shall never allow the torch of freedom to be blown out, however high the wind of storm or tempest(NA,pp.77-78).

Again his grief on the assassination on Mahatma Gandhi reveals both his compassion and his superb oratorical skills:

The light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere Even in his death there was a magnificence and complete artistry. It was from every point of view a fitting climax to the man and to the life he had lived. Indeed, it heightened the lesson of his life. He died in the fullness of his powers, and as he would no doubt have liked to die, at the moment of prayer. He died a martyr to the cause of unity to which he had worked increasingly, more especially during the past year or more. He died suddenly as all men should wish to die. There was no fading away of the body or a long

illness or the forgetfulness of the mind that comes with age. Why then should we grieve for him? Our memories of him will be of the Master, whose step was light to the end, whose smile was infectious, and whose eyes were full of laughter (NA, pgs.106 and 113).

Nehru took a keen interest in writing detailed letters to his beloved daughter Priyadarshini. She was only four years old when he wrote to her from prison: "Priyadarshini—dear to the sight, but dearer still when sight is denied (GWH, p.7)!" These letters were quite educative but there were times when the father in him got the better of the teacher. A letter on the 13th birthday of his daughter that he wrote to her from the Naini Jail in Allahabad begins in this manner:

On your birthday you have been in the habit of receiving presents and good wishes. Good wishes you will still have in full measure, but what present can I send you from Naini Prison? My presents cannot be very material or solid, they can only be of the air and of the mind and spirit, such as a good fairy might have bestowed on you—things that even the high wall of prison cannot stop (GWH, p.1).

As one can see Nehru never juggled with his feelings. He had the rare courage to admit what he felt. This is why he always judged a work of art by its impact upon his emotions. Commenting on the Sanskrit language he writes:

A language is something infinitely greater than grammar and philology. It is the poetic testament of the genius of a race and a culture, and the living embodiment of the thoughts and fancies that moulded them. Words change their meanings from age to age and old ideas transform themselves into new, often keeping their old attire. It is difficult to capture the meaning, much less the spirit, of an old word or phrase. Some kind of a romantic and poetical approach is necessary if we are to have a glimpse into the old meaning and into the minds of those who used the language in former days. The richer and more abundant the language, the greater the difficulty (DOI, pp.165-66).

Impressed by the Vedic hymns Nehru called them the real unfolding of the human mind in the early stages of thought. Commenting on the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* he said: "They represent the typical Indian method of catering all together from various degrees of cultural development, from the highest intellectual to the simple unread and untaught villager."

Nehru's desire to be understood by the masses made him regard the Persian poet of India, Amir Khusrau, quite highly. Nehru writes: "Wisely he did not choose the literary medium which would have been understood by a small coterie only; he went to the villager not only for his language but for his custom and ways of living ... he sang of life in its various phases, of the coming of the

bride, of separation from the beloved, of the rains when life springs anew from the parched earth (DOI, p.345).”

Nehru not only commented on historical figures such as Kabir, Nanak, Sankaracharya, Ramanujacharya and Vivekanand but also gave perceptive insights on classics like Kautilya's *Arthashastras*, Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* and *Meghduta*, Ashvaghosa's *Buddha Charita*, Shudraka's *Mrichhastika*, Vishakhadatta's *Mudra-Raksha* and Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*. An avid reader of Buddhist texts he commented upon various works of Buddhism such as the *Tripitakas* and the *Jataka Tales*.

His love for art and literature remained undiminished throughout his life and he never spared efforts to write or procure books he wanted. His hectic political life could not stifle the artist in him, could not blunt “his finer perceptions.” Humayun Kabir explains that the “artist triumphs over the politician. That explains why he is perhaps the most loved of all Indian politicians.” Motivated by no mean urge of self-justification or rationalization Nehru wanted to “show the rightness and inevitability of his actions and events in which he was a prime participant.” And the “radiance of his spirit” shines even today from between the pages of his writings illuminating the soul of India.

Notes

1. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985). All subsequent references to the text are made from this edition and marked as DOL; they are incorporated in the main body of the paper.
2. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Letters From a Father to His Daughter* (Delhi: Oxford University Press,). All subsequent references to the text are made from this edition and marked as LFFHD; they are incorporated in the main body of the paper.
3. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Glimpses of World History* (Delhi: Oxford University Press,1985) All subsequent reference to the text are made from this edition and marked as GWH; they are incorporated in the main body of the paper
4. Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985). All subsequent references to the text are made from this edition and marked as AA; they are incorporated in the main body of the paper.
5. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Unity of India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985); All subsequent references to the text are made from this edition and marked as UI; they are incorporated in the main body of the paper.
6. Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*,(Delhi Oxford University Press, 1988); All subsequent references to the text are made from this edition marked as BOL; they are incorporated in the main body of the paper.

7. Ed. Sarvapelli Gopal, *Nehru: An Anthology* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 648. All subsequent references to the text are made from this edition and marked as NA; they are incorporated in the main body of the paper.