

PREFACE

Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964), the famous Indian statesman is also a distinguished man of letters, whose cyclopean range of creative oeuvre is widely acclaimed for the inherent humanistic vision enveloped in it. Reputation of Jawaharlal as such, is well established not only in India but all throughout the world. His contribution to the diverse genres of literature: autobiography, history, epistle, oratory, articles and the like, has drawn considerable recognition from the reader and the critic alike. Critics of eminence : K. R. S. Iyenger, C. D. Narasimhaiah, V. N. Chibber, Chaman Nahal, William Walsh, M. K. Naik, and the like minded others' approval of Jawaharlal as one of the pioneers of Indian English literature may be envisaged as a sure affirmation of his standing and achievement as a man of letters.

Acknowledged as literary masterpieces by many, and opposed as mere creative works of a statesman by a few, the literary works of Jawaharlal is now more than sixty years old. The pioneering effort of Jawaharlal in transforming his sublime thoughts into a befitting language resulted in the literary art, marked by lucidity in artistic expression.

As an active participant of the Nationalist Movement of India, Jawaharlal had to undergo prison, and it provided him ample time to devote himself to creative writing. Thus, he took to writing with an aim at interpreting the events -in the face of the crucial juncture of times; and on the basis of his experiences. Jawaharlal, a witness to many and varied

changes in contemporary society faithfully portrayed those in the large canvas of literature. As such, Jawaharlal's literary works have undeniably mirrored the nation who was willing to grapple with the reality at that moment encountering devastating experiences like the Jaliwanwala Bagh massacre.

Jawaharlal has presented the growth and development of social consciousness in his literary art that suggests his egalitarian views. The trauma of a changing moment, in the new perspective of a certain kind of awareness, has been aptly demonstrated by him enabling the reader to consider his creative oeuvre as authentic social documents. Later, Jawaharlal had to shoulder the responsibility of a nation as the Prime Minister, after it attained the much aspired liberty from the British Raj. Hence, it may be presumed that Jawaharlal's creativity involves the intelligentsia, to do an interaction between them and him enhancing them to put wider importance on the realistic portrayal of the experiences shared by the people in the wake of the liberation movement. However, our interest on Jawaharlal's literary works is not only for the depiction of reality in the face of a change in the socio-political scenario, but also for their sheer literary value they are enveloped in, which may be attributed to his acclaimed status as a man of letters. It should not be overlooked that his works, despite the description of the cause of India's freedom, mainly centre on the cause of humanity.

Further, we incline to think that the illumination of Jawaharlal's writings and speeches as done by the critics, earlier, is sketchy, and un-

elaborate. Hence, a systematic, comprehensive, and detailed study of Jawaharlal's creative works needs to be undertaken to justify this erudite scholar of the twentieth century. Viewing him as an architect of modern India on the one hand, and his pursuit of creative works on the other, the present work entitled, *Jawaharlal Nehru as a Man of Letters : A Critical Study* attempts to trace the literary career of Jawaharlal from 1930 to 1964. However, in our attempt to do so, it has been felt relevant for bringing in his statesmanship, as both the sides of Jawaharlal are closely connected, and is unrealistic to avoid the political aspect of his personality. While the need of a systematic, in-depth study has been kept in mind throughout the preparation of this work, the responsibility of rigorous critical evaluation has not been sought to be evaded.

It has been seen that, of late, Jawaharlal has often driven the critic and the reviewer into his camps, generating both uncritical adulation and unthinking condemnation. The present work attempts to maintain a balanced approach to these views pertaining to the need to open up the discourse that Jawaharlal as a man of letters, may, in future, be overshadowed by his well acclaimed statesmanship. Keeping in view the same idea, perhaps, K. R. S. Iyenger in his 'Foreword' to C. D. Narasimhaiah's book, *Jawaharlal Nehru : A Study of His Writings and Speeches* (1960) has commented thus :

Jawaharlal's writings and speeches give us some measure of the man, give us too an easy means of knowing him intimately. The Prime Minister is a world figure, beset with, problems, surrounded by the minor "high and mighty", and we can neither

know him- nor perhaps care to know him. But Jawaharlal the artist in words, the historian tantalized by Clio's veering moods and sudden advances, - Jawaharlal the gift of the gods to India, ... this power and this personality is what we dearly cherish and admire...¹.

Sharing Iyenger's view as a student of literature it would be our attempt to maintain a proper balance to both the equally important recognitions Jawaharlal enjoys with reference to his works in their socio-historic context. As a curious reader, however, it would be our sincere attempt to establish that Jawaharlal would receive the same attention from the critic as a man of letters as the statesman in him has attained. Indeed, in our attempt to study his literary acumen, it would be kept in mind that both the encomiastic titles are complimentary to one another.

My interest in Jawaharlal first grew when I was a high school student and I went through the *Letters From a Father to His Daughter* (1930) which was our rapid reader. Although I could not trace the literary value the work draws, yet the content of human civilization in simple language overwhelmed me. While I joined a college as a teacher in English I had to deal with some of the famous parts of Jawaharlal's *An Autobiography* (1936) and *The Discovery of India* (1946) which were included in the syllabi of Degree (Major) and (General) courses in English. I was really surprised to feel the pulse of Jawaharlal, the author by this time, while his ardent 'nationalism' intertwined with diverse ideologies: like 'humanism', 'socialism', 'Marxism' and the like expressed in trenchant language could mesmerize and motivate me to take up this

project. At this moment, I feel that 'politics' and 'literature' were the two parallel traits of Jawaharlal's personality while the synthesis of the two has enriched it more. Hence, it becomes arduous to separate one from another, particularly when the creativity of Jawaharlal is taken into consideration. With an objective to situate him as a man of letters, an earnest endeavour has been made in this work to explore his writings and speeches from two different perspectives: as works of literature, and as social documents. However, the primary emphasis has been put on the former as it is related to the context of the title while his much acclaimed position in politics has come here and there in our discussion. His literary works have been observed from an angle in this thesis that throws insight into history and politics of that particular time. It is, indeed, our effort to establish that, for chronicling a turbulent period of Indian history, the literary works of Jawaharlal are also invaluable social documents. They serve as social history providing the reader information about the itinerary of a nation looking forward for liberty from the Raj. Thus, it is believed, they are authentic as source materials. Added to this, it may be stated that the creative works of Jawaharlal enable the reader to reconstruct India's past and identify the consciousness of a subjugated nation whose spirit for liberty is a saga now.

In the present thesis an attempt has been made to discuss the following of Jawaharlal's works: *Letters From a Father to His Daughter* (1930), *Glimpses of World History* (1933), *An Autobiography* (1936), *The Unity of India* (1941), *The Discovery of India* (1946), A

Bunch of Old Letters (1958), *Jawaharlal Nehru : Selected Speeches* Vol. I-V (1982). While attempting an analysis of Jawaharlal as a man of letters, it has been kept in mind to focus his concern as a 'world-citizen'. These works taken up to appropriate Jawaharlal as a man of letters, it is hoped, would do justice to our objective.

An attempt has been made in the present work to examine the varied thoughts of Jawaharlal along with his vision of humanity as his socialistic goal. It has been kept in mind that since Jawaharlal, the statesman, is a product of the Nationalist Movement, so are his literary works. Hence, his creativity is believed to be clothed into his concept of nationalism. The humanistic concern of Jawaharlal has been observed as a trait of his socialistic goal, mirrored in his writings and speeches, comprising his creative oeuvre. It is to be recalled that Jawaharlal, either as a statesman or as a man of letters, undeniably follows the path provided by Mahatma Gandhi, in leading the social milieu. Indeed, his standing as a humanist, is another feather added to his cap as a man of letters.

A man of the East and the West, Jawaharlal was inclined to various socio-political ideologies. Although he was not a propagandist of any doctrine, yet his strength as a modern thinker, it is believed, emanates from 'Marxism', 'Socialism', 'Gandhism' and the like. George Bernard Shaw's 'Fabian Socialism' was close to his heart and he believed that in India also it was essential to change the face of the country. All these notions have been duly recorded in Jawaharlal's writings and speeches that manifest his creative encounter.

The present work tries to highlight the text's relation to the events described in it. The method adopted for the work is objective and analytical.

For the convenience of treatment, the work has been divided into six chapters. The introductory chapter is intended to give a general account of Jawaharlal's life and achievement. Its more particular objective, at the same time, is to offer an idea how Jawaharlal was influenced by the luminaries like Gandhiji, Motilal Nehru and many more while events, books, his education in England etc. had left indelible imprints on him. A brief but rapid survey of some of the existing criticism has been incorporated into this chapter. Chapter II is devoted to *Jawaharlal Nehru : The Autobiographer* wherein his *Autobiography* has been thoroughly discussed to show how Jawaharlal's apt blending of 'self' and 'surrounding' gives the book and his standing as an autobiographer a precise identity. His modernity of thought as revealed in the work, and the treatment of nature are the two aspects of the book. Chapter III is an endeavour to present Jawaharlal as a historian. Special attention has been paid to his awareness of history as he was not a professional historian in the academic sense. Chapter IV is an attempt to study Jawaharlal's strength as an epistolarian. Chapter V examines Jawaharlal as a prose-writer. Since language is the only communicative medium between the creative writer and the reader, it has been kept in mind that it should be thoroughly studied. For viewing Jawaharlal as a distinguished prose writer, his speeches too, have been studied as oral prose. An attempt has been made to discuss Jawaharlal's oratorical disquisitions, which, we believe, are comparable to that of Edmund

Burke, the British Parliamentarian who became famous after the delivery of his speech on 'American Taxation'. Special emphasis, however, has been put on Jawaharlal's prose which is an envy to many, and exemplary as well. The literary versatility of Jawaharlal, it is believed, has been explored in its right perspective.

Throughout the work, an attempt has been made to maintain the balance of Jawaharlal's two equally acclaimed recognitions as stated earlier. His objective interpretations of 'self' in the *Autobiography*, of 'history' in the trilogy, *Letters From a Father to His Daughter*, *Glimpses of World History*, *The Discovery of India*, poetic imagination in the speeches, it is believed, add a particular dimension to his creativity.

As the preoccupation of Jawaharlal was politics and he used to write only under particular circumstances conditioned by his frequent imprisonments for taking part in the Nationalist Movement, in our analysis it comes off and on. As such, there may be some repetitions of ideas here and there, and the very context of the thesis, it is hoped, would justify them. Further, throughout the work, an attempt has been made to maintain a systematic pattern of Jawaharlal's thoughts while the chronological study of the texts has been avoided.

The proposed study is divided as under :

Chapter I : Introduction : Jawaharlal Nehru : The Moulding of the Mind.

Chapter II: Jawaharlal Nehru: The Autobiographer (*An Autobiography, 1936*).

Chapter III : Jawaharlal Nehru : The Historian (*Letters From a Father to His Daughter, 1930*), *Glimpses of World History (1933)*, *The Discovery of India (1946)*.

Chapter IV : Jawaharlal Nehru : The Epistolarian (Letters included in the first two works of the trilogy on history, and a few from *A Bunch of Old Letters (1958)* and *Letters to The Chief Ministers of India (1985)*, *Nehru's Letters to His Sister (1963)*, *Before Freedom : Nehru's Letters to His Sister (2000)*).

Chapter V : Jawaharlal Nehru : The Prose-Writer.

Chapter VI : Conclusion.

Notes and references follow immediately after each chapter. The number within parenthesis at the end of a quotation indicates the page number of the text under discussion. The editions of the works which have been used for the study, have been mentioned in the 'Bibliography'. The 'Bibliography' covers all the relevant books and source materials along with the works cited, that have been found helpful for a better understanding of the subject.

Notes and References

1. Iyenger, K. R. S., 'Foreword' to C. D. Narasimhaiah's *Jawaharlal Nehru : A Study of His Writings and Speeches*, Rao and Raghvan, Mysore, 1960, xix.