

CHAPTER II

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU : THE AUTOBIOGRAPHER

In this chapter an attempt has been made to study Jawaharlal's *Autobiography* to assess him as an autobiographer on his own strength. It has been observed that the work deserves critical attention not only for the delineation of the life of Jawaharlal, a true patriot, but also for stirring the world with the intense and apt description of the Nationalist Movement of India. The work reflects the awakened consciousness of the nation. This significant period of Indian history has been agreeably presented in it and there is ample reflection of contemporary events.

Comfortably putting all these descriptions in a just and humane manner, Jawaharlal has supported the reader in understanding the socio-political scenario of his times. Thus, the *Autobiography* may be considered as a seminal work of literature, presenting as it does the mind and action of Jawaharlal not only as a statesman, but also as a prolific writer. Various facets of the writer's personality have been observed in the course of the narrative, which are as informative as interesting. Speaking of the struggle and experiences the Indians faced at that particular period, Jawaharlal has celebrated the spirit of the nation precisely, in this work. In fact, the *Autobiography* as a literary piece suggests the author's line of thought imbued with 'self analysis', which has been viewed as critical. When the necessity of discussing this work of Jawaharlal has arisen, it is kept in mind that many traits of thought

comprising his individuality can be noticed only in his *Autobiography*. From this perspective, it may be stated that it is an illuminating literary work, having the importance of a social document.

Admittedly, then, the *Autobiography* has depicted a nation which was trying to be free from an age-old bond of slavery and became conscious of its inborn right : 'freedom' from alien rule. Thus, chronicling the ongoing events, the work certainly has generated a creative interaction in the reader and the critic, while enhancing its status as a classic of its kind. As the exemplary achievement of Jawaharlal's literary career, the work is helpful in reconstructing the history of India. As an autobiographer, Jawaharlal has understandably directed his insight into the 'self' and the 'surrounding'. This is really commendable, and befitting as well, and it prompts us to behold the narrative structure carefully. However, interpreting the contemporary situations in a simple but lucid linguistic expression, Jawaharlal has exhibited his literary acumen which requires a close study to appreciate the inhabiting sensibility in the work. C. D. Narasimhaiah strikingly has evaluated Jawaharlal's standing as an autobiographer in the following words :

... [Jawaharlal] himself exploded many legends concerning himself with admirable candour and analysed the motive springs of his actions with that rare intellectual integrity which belongs to the truly great. And the result is a narrative which is charming, indignant, humorous and poignant by turns, yet always human and inspiring ...¹

Speaking of the 'intellectual integrity' behind the creative work, Narasimhaiah has obviously thrown light on the capability of Jawaharlal as a writer. He has, further, viewed the narrative as 'charming', 'indignant', 'humorous', and 'poignant'. Very often, the narrative is humane and inspiring, for the method adopted by Jawaharlal, which is sensitive as well as artistic. Jawaharlal's preoccupation with politics gives the description a newer mode offering the reader an idea about his life and activities. However, centering the work on a sense of optimism, Jawaharlal has been able to carry the same to the reader, as it permeates the account. After the publication of the work in 1936, Jawaharlal stated in the *Postscript* added to the next edition :

...That autobiography, published in England, had a kindly reception from all manner of people in various countries, and I was glad that what I had written had brought India nearer to many friends abroad, and had made them appreciate, to some extent, the inner significance of our struggle for freedom.(599).

It is seen that Jawaharlal's aim was "to occupy [himself] with a definite task"(xv), while he began writing the *Autobiography* in a mood of 'self-questioning'. Further, from *the Preface* it has come to our knowledge that he was not doing it 'deliberately for an audience'. Prior to the completion of the work, Jawaharlal was occupied with the thoughts like, "A number of references to our internal politics and personalities may also be of little interest to the outsider"(xv). Since an attempt was made by him 'to trace' his 'mental development' and not to write 'a survey of recent Indian history', he felt that the "account is wholly one-

sided and, inevitably, egotistical...”(xv-xvi). But the passage cited from the *Postscript* suggests the other side of his assumption. And despite his repeated assertion that the “autobiographical narrative remains a sketchy, personal, and incomplete account of the past verging on the present, but cautiously avoiding contact with it”(xvi), it has drawn tremendous attention from the public because the work takes to enlighten them, documenting the happenings in a convincing way. Indeed, that projection is so authentic in bringing out the inherent passion of a nation, that it invariably records the concern of the autobiographer. Therefore, it is easily understood why the book has exacted critical attention from the reader and the critic.

To put Jawaharlal as a writer in the line of socialistic cause, his abiding faith in humanity should be taken into consideration. Appreciating him in that line, on the basis of the *Autobiography*, one may view his consistent effort to pursue his goal as a socialist writer. Now, it has become our objective to find out how far Jawaharlal has extended his equalitarian ideas regarding his notion on man and society in this work. Of course, the struggle for freedom is an aspect of that idea which keeps us mesmerized. Undeniably, Jawaharlal, sacrificing everything at the altar of India, joined the struggle to pursue that goal, deeply associated with the cause of humanity. From this angle, one may maintain this work as a relentless search for humanity, a work that probes into their various conditions. However, it should be kept in mind that the objective of attaining freedom from the imperial power is the impetus

behind the creativity of Jawaharlal. Thus, his concept of humanity, and the urge for freedom are coterminous in nature in their respective sphere.

Despite repeated assertions of Jawaharlal in the *Preface* that the “account (narrated in the *Autobiography*) is apt to mislead the reader and lead him to attach a wider importance to it than it deserves” (xvi), there is scope for looking for the elements that truly urge one to examine the narrative as a work of literature. The account offered, has allowed the reader to have a perceptive knowledge of the happenings while they serve as firsthand documents. The narrative, hence, may be viewed as a text written in the line of “social history”, while it has recorded the transformation taking place in the world; particularly in India where the people stood united facing the Raj on the opposite side. Thus, the *Autobiography* as a literary work sets out to narrate the recovery of social consciousness through a process of confrontation with the reality. Evidently, a corresponding evolution in the process of thought of the Indians has been of keen interest to Jawaharlal, and as an autobiographer, he has made an attempt to represent that consciousness. The narrative, thus, has served as ‘history’, despite being an autobiography.

In all fairness to the exploration done to appreciate Jawaharlal as an autobiographer, one must refer to the definition of an autobiography, which appears to be helpful in appreciating him as such. As the literary critic, Roy Pascal in his work, *Design and Truth in Autobiography*(1960), has cited :

...Autobiographies offer an unparalleled insight into the mode of consciousness of other men. Even if what they tell us is not factually true, or only partly true, it always is true evidence of their personality²

The above observation rests on the assumption that autobiographies reveal the “mode of consciousness” of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’, while in Jawaharlal’s *Autobiography* revelation of the ‘self’ appears to have merged with the idea of the ‘other’ represented by the millions of masses in India. Interestingly, as a specific literary genre, an ‘autobiography’, maintains the same critic, “satisfies a legitimate curiosity about the ways of the author”³, makes us put faith in the account provided in an autobiography, since it reveals the way of the writer. In this context, Jawaharlal’s *Autobiography* may also be seen as a work that offers profound insight into his ‘ways’ associated with his ideologies. It has been observed that he speaks less of himself than of the events encircling him. The observation of the literary critic, M. H. Abrams on ‘autobiography’ as “a biography written by the subject about himself”⁴ comes closer to the treatment of the ‘self’ as done by John Stuart Mill (1806-73) in his *Autobiography* (1873), a classic of its genre; and Bertrand Russell (1872-1970)’s *Autobiography* (1967, ‘68, ‘69) in three volumes. All these creative works encompass the happenings in the lives of the respective writers. As such, the treatment of one’s life as the subject matter is prioritized in an autobiography. Jawaharlal’s *Autobiography* is engagingly different from the others of its kind, as he chooses to address the contemporary events worldwide, more than his life. To his credit, the

theme of his *Autobiography*, though it should be based on his own life, yet his emphasis on the incidents, instrumental in moulding his thoughts, has given a new measure to the work, and there lies his success as an autobiographer.

Jawaharlal's claim "not to write a survey of recent Indian history"(xv) in the *Autobiography* does not corroborate the descriptions he has incorporated herein. It has been observed that he is so engrossed in his patriotic endeavour that the account of it only has been prioritized. Thus, the projection of the nationalistic consciousness in a befitting manner, reveals Jawaharlal, the autobiographer, as one who is concerned with the plight of the nation. It is seen that throughout the narrative, he has preserved that social concern. The sole objective to occupy himself "with a definite task" in "the long solitude of gaol life as well as to review past events in India"(xv) directly warns us not to expect an autobiography of the conventional kind. Jawaharlal clarifies his aim as an autobiographer who differentiates between the two issues : writing or surveying "recent Indian history" and "review the past". M. K. Naik has aptly put it thus :

... The book gives ample evidence of Nehru's secularism, his scientific temper and his socialist sympathies. *An Autobiography* is easily the crowning achievement of Nehru as a writer ...⁵

The content of this particular work, wherein the thought-provoking issues : "secularism"; "scientific humanism"; "socialism" and the like, along with the freedom movement, have been the autobiographer's

preoccupation, and all of them have been succinctly dealt with. Further, the narrative propagates an extraordinary kind of sweeping curiosity about the events of Jawaharlal's times. In fact, the multi-faceted disposition of Jawaharlal - as a visionary, as a writer, and as a radical humanist, has been noticed in the light of the thoughts he put faith into. His views on 'Marxism', 'socialism', and the like, it is believed, have empowered him as a humanist and a progressive thinker, and concentrating on the factors that decide human destiny he has desired to change the face of poverty as well as inhumanity. Keeping in mind, the concept of 'Destination Man', which was coined and used by Jawaharlal to define the goal of advance of the new Indian democracy, it may be maintained that he believed in the spirit of humanity, which, he believed, can change a society radically.

In fact, Jawaharlal puts equal importance on the freedom movement of India as well as on the events, like the World Wars. From this point of view, it is seen that "...separate problems, political or economic, in China, Abyssinia, Spain, Central Europe, India, or elsewhere" (601) continue to haunt Jawaharlal, and he tries to grapple them with different socio-political doctrines. These problems also occupy him, as the Nationalist Movement of India has done. And in the process of developing the ideologies, he has learnt to make an encounter with these, considering them as facets of the same world problem. As he opined,

...If freedom was to be established in the world, not only fascism and Nazism had to go but imperialism had to be completely liquidated...(601).

Jawaharlal's consideration of the "agrarian problem" as the major problem in India, and further, his recommendation to uplift the conditions the kisans were living in, are again suggestive of his humanistic thoughts. It is to be recorded that his interest in Marxism was born of his love for the oppressed and the downtrodden. As he has observed in the *Autobiography*,

The Indian kisans have little staying power, little energy to resist for long. Famines and epidemics come and slay them in their millions...(62).

The *Autobiography*, thus, has mirrored the mind of Jawaharlal whose sympathy for the kisans, it is believed, stems from his humanitarian ideologies, and these are directly related to his concept of Marxism. Added to this, it may be said that Marxism as a theory of interpreting society has helped Jawaharlal in humanizing the narrative.

An unmistakable sense of the growth of the mind of Jawaharlal, can be observed in the *Autobiography*, and therein lies his strength as a successful autobiographer. Jawaharlal has fascinated the reader with the description of his transformation from the 'only son', supposed to be spoilt for the material comfort he enjoyed at the primary stage of life, to the statesman of international fame through various stages – "a theosophian teenager with a flat insipid look"(16); "a bit of a prig"(26);

a barrister with western education; and an avid disciple of Gandhiji. There is not any overstatement on his part, which might have lessened the charm of the narrative, and the autobiographer. Manoeuvring all these in a pleasant way in narrating his life, Jawaharlal has, indeed, given a new meaning to this specific genre of literature. Besides, by doing so, he has glorified the pattern of his *Autobiography*.

One would be justified in assuming that Jawaharlal has effectively dealt with several concepts like “imperialism”, “nationalism”, “colonialism” etc. in the *Autobiography* exhibiting his knowledge of them. However, as an artist in language, Jawaharlal has drawn the reader’s attention to the theme of ‘history’ and ‘culture’ as delineated by him in this work as also done by some other Indian writers in their respective works : Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and Mulk Raj Anand. It needs mention that Anand’s *Apology for Heroism* (1946), though it is not an autobiography, somehow resembles the *Autobiography* of Jawaharlal regarding the masterly handling of their ideologies. However, the flow in the narrative art, in both Anand and Jawaharlal, may be compared. To quote Anand from the *Apology for Heroism* :

There is no doubt in my mind that, among the fundamental values, the dignity of man is the highest. And this dignity has little meaning without the food and clothes and shelter which are the elementary conditions of existence...⁶

And to quote from Jawaharlal :

...A man who is the victim of economic circumstances, and who is hedged and restricted by the struggle to live, can very rarely achieve inner consciousness of any high degree. A class that is downtrodden and exploited can never progress inwardly...(379).

In each instance, Anand and Jawaharlal set to nurture the same tune, resounding human dignity above everything. In their creative avenues, thus, the unblemished reflection of humanity is instrumental in enlivening their primary concern. Indeed, the *Autobiography* of Jawaharlal allows one to apprehend the real condition of one's existence as a whole, that speaks about one's inner feeling for man and society.

The work reveals the attempt of Jawaharlal who has exercised restraint in this creative art. Even his 'birth', considered the most important day in one's life has been put in a simple and short sentence at the foot note of the first chapter :

I was born in Allahabad on the 14th November 1889, or, according to the Samvat Calendar, Mergshirsh Badi 7, 1946 (5.).

Though the expression is terse, yet it is full of meaning, since it shows how Jawaharlal as an autobiographer has effectively dealt with the subject in an 'objective' manner without letting the *Autobiography* to be ruled by personal colour. It is his merit as an autobiographer who has followed the epigraph written by Abraham Cowley (1618-67), giving the reader a hint that he is not at all ready to praise the 'self' in his *Autobiography*. Jawaharlal's aptitude in using the epigraph is a good

example of an explicit statement of aims which really calls attention to the book subject,

It is a hard and nice subject for a man to write of himself : it grates his own heart to say anything of disparagement, and the reader's ears to hear anything of praise for him (1).

From the title, *An Autobiography* the purpose of the writer is apprehended while the incorporation of the epigraph suggests some different and unconventional motif. Knox C. Hill has commented that, "An epigraph often suggests the theme of a book",⁷ and this epigraph is a generalization of Jawaharlal's *Autobiography*. Right from the beginning, we are not to expect enough revelation from him, though, expressions like, "We were Kashmiris" (1) are suggestive of his manner of bringing in his identity. However, some customs, regarding marriage or others have been brought to notice which are helpful in offering us insights into the customs existing in that particular community, namely, 'the Kashmiris'.

However, the necessary information about his parents, Motilal and Swarup Rani Nehru has not been skipped, while stating his ancestry. The book suddenly begins with,

An only son of prosperous parents is apt to be spoilt, especially so in India. And when that son happens to have been an only child for the first eleven years of his existence there is little hope for him to escape that spoiling...(1).

The inherent irony ruling the sentence raises a curiosity in the reader and he eagerly waits for the unfolding of the narrative. Again, the sentence has strong resemblance with the opening line of *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), one of the well-acclaimed novels of Jane Austen :

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of good fortune must be in want of a wife...⁸

It has been observed that both Austen and Jawaharlal are equally capable of arresting the 'irony' of situation, and at the outset of their respective works, they have proved their strength. At the same time, they are aware of the opposite meanings of the sentences. Their claims, made with the help of ironical presentations, may be dismissed as being unworthy of consideration as universal truth. The work nowhere reveals Jawaharlal as 'a spoilt child'. On the contrary, his wisdom as a son, as a father, as a world-citizen is continuously being noticed. Nonetheless, the autobiographer's sense of humour associated with his 'birth' may be registered as one of his rare traits. It urges one to know about the consequences in the life of the subject.

An obvious pride in tracing the ancestry has been recognised in the work which is of utmost importance, since it shows how the Kauls became "simply Nehrus"(1). This is expressive of the mind of Jawaharlal, who has faithfully presented the history of the family. He has devoted the necessary description to illuminate about his forefathers. It is, indeed, done in a succinct manner, a characteristic way of his linguistic expression. However, the expression may be short, but pointed to the

aim. He has put another exemplary message, conveying a coincidence with the birth of Motilal :

A curious and interesting coincidence : the poet Rabindranath Tagore was also born on this very day, month and year (2).

Thus, Chapter I of the *Autobiography* is important as it projects Jawaharlal's ancestry. Besides, his vision has been found subjected to "self questioning" (xv) that leaves the reader in a state of curiosity to know the author well. Another important aspect of the *Autobiography* is that the autobiographer describes the strong bond of love, faith and emotional security existing among the inmates of Anand Bhawan, which is truly the abode of happiness. Again, from the work, it has been known that Jawaharlal spent his childhood years under the care of governesses and private tutors, which was contrary to the then social system in India, and only a few, except the British, could indulge in the luxury as stated, and enjoyed by the Nehrus, after Motilal earned a handsome amount from his profession of an advocate.

Frederick T. Brooks, the resident tutor, taught Jawaharlal many mysteries of science, and together they "rigged up a little laboratory" (14), to work out experiments in physics and chemistry. Jawaharlal's interest in reading was increasing owing to the influence of Brooks. Although for a limited time, he was drawn to 'theosophy', a subject to which Brooks himself was attracted deeply. But it did not last long in Jawaharlal. The growing years of Jawaharlal have been recorded in the *Autobiography* and the accounts help us comprehend his formative

stage. To him, father Motilal was a man of 'iron will' with strong 'temper', 'strength', and 'courage', and appeared to his son as "an embodiment of strong personality"(7). Lauding father Motilal, Jawaharlal has expressed his love and respect to Motilal, in the following words,

...Full of the spirit of play and fond of good living in every way, he found no difficulty in spending what he earned. And gradually our ways became more and more westernized. (5)

Further, the picture presented by Jawaharlal of Motilal, before death, gives us insight into his deep feelings :

...There he sat like a lion mortally wounded and with his physical strength almost gone, but still very leonine and kingly... Even when a constriction in his throat made it difficult for him to make himself understood, he took to writing on slips of paper what he wanted to say (246).

From the narrative, it is evident, that Jawaharlal has continuously subjected himself to discretionary 'self-examination' making the work more interesting, because just giving mere descriptions of the events, leaves it to the reader to study or scrutinise the narrative. But, Jawaharlal has arduously done the same task in his narrative, as an effective interpreter of events. However, one may get a chance to recall one's own childhood going through the descriptions of Jawaharlal, while he recounts his own childhood days, as full of fun and frolic.

From earlier years, Jawaharlal, accustomed to the westernised ways of life mixed up with the British friends of Motilal. Nevertheless,

considering their presence as alien rulers, Jawaharlal felt a kind of resentment in the depth of his consciousness. But he could not record bad feelings “against individual Englishmen”(6). K. R. S. Iyenger has explained the narrative in the following words :

It is this zest for life and sense of adventure, this steady glow and feeling of continual growth that Jawaharlal has communicated to his narrative...⁹

This “continual growth”, noted by Iyenger, is firmly rooted into Jawaharlal’s thoughts comprising his individuality. It, in fact, suitably finds way in his works of literature, and more particularly in the *Autobiography*. The work as a part of his literary art, has engagingly recorded the transformation of Jawaharlal from a minor boy to a nationalist. Besides, the work is laudable for identifying his faith in various socio-political or economic doctrines.

The early years of Jawaharlal were spent in Harrow Public School, London where he “managed to fit in to some extent in the life at school and work and play kept [him] busy”(17). His full share in the games and other activities proved that he was “no shirker”. It has been seen that the nationalistic ideas which were embedded in his thought, now, grew more and more in his mind and he “mused of Indian freedom and Asiatic freedom from the thralldom of Europe” (16). This vision of Jawaharlal may be considered extra-ordinary, as the later part of his *Autobiography* narrativizes it to a great extent. As such, the work proves his strength as a nationalist whose only aim prior to independence, was to liberate India

from the rule of the Raj. The book also shows his formative years, spent in India, and in London, presenting to us the process of widening his “intellectual horizon”. Thus, one wonders, how he came under the spell of western intellectual thoughts that governed him thoroughly. “Nationalism”, to him, was a stand against “imperialism”. K. D. Verma has explained the duality pertinently thus :

... For the Indian intelligentsia especially for men like Aurobindo, Gandhi, Nehru and others who were educated in England and steeped in western intellectual thought, it was not difficult to comprehend the meaning and significance of nationalism...¹⁰

For a very significant move, Jawaharlal joined the Nationalist Movement and his “faith in [Gandhiji’s] political insight grew” (44) after his coming back to India in 1912. A continuous stay of seven years in England enriched him with experiences and he began to think about the struggle from different perspectives that led him to comment later that “nationalism is an anti feeling and it feeds and fattens on hatred”(75). A new phase began in Jawaharlal’s life after he joined as a junior advocate to his father, Motilal in Allahabad High Court.

Another important aspect of his life is his marriage with Kamala Kaul in 1916 which has been narrated in Chapter VI, of the *Autobiography* in the following way :

My marriage took place in 1916 in the city of Delhi. It was on the Vasanta Panchami day which heralds the coming of spring in India (37).

It is seen that restraint has been maintained by the autobiographer in narrating his own marriage. The above sentence has just provided the information, and there is, on Jawaharlal's part, no illustration of the event, which he could have done easily. It is the characteristic of him, as an autobiographer, while choosing to tell about the events, considered to be unavoidable in the course of the narrative. In his narration, he is always precise, and states only the minimum. Thus, the economy of expression results from his narrative technique.

Jawaharlal's involvement with the Nationalist Movement grew more after his wedding and the *Autobiography* has "ample fictional potential in the progress of the narrative, in the creation of the elements of expectation, surprise and suspense, portrayal of character, presentation of situations and implicit comment on the socio-political scene...".¹¹ Thus, the work has strong resemblance with any fictional work, like some of the novels of Jane Austen, Dickens, Thackeray etc. in whose writings the above elements, 'expectations', 'surprise', 'suspense' and the like, sustain our interest. Truly, Jawaharlal has thrown light on some contemporary figures who were part and parcel of the liberation movement. The pen-portrait of Gandhiji is drawn in striking language :

... He was humble but also clear cut and hard as a diamond, pleasant and soft-spoken but inflexible and terribly earnest. His eyes were mild and deep, yet out of them blazed out a fierce energy and determination... (46).

The above description of Gandhiji can defeat any fictional writer in their delineation of character in such a clear and simple language.

One can hardly ignore the inherent passion in some passages in Jawaharlal's treatment of Nature. It suggests his love for mother Nature, which is the perennial source of comfort to him, while he was inside the jail. Narasimhaiah has examined Jawaharlal's art of narrating the beauty of Nature in the following words :

...[Jawaharlal] is perhaps at his best in portraying nature's changing moods and appearances. If the tumble and dust of politics and practical affairs make him indignant and apply his vial of wrath on his victims, Nature soothes him and exhilarates him ...¹²

Admittedly, the above explanation conveys more meaning than its literal one. The "journey to Nature", Jawaharlal maintains, "is always worth the making even though the end may not be in sight"(38), and it shows his passion for a journey in the lap of Nature. In his apt and charming prose, Nature has been concretized sometimes, and occasionally it has been personified, as it was done earlier, by the British romantic poet, John Keats . In Jawaharlal's words :

... Autumn again was pleasant, and so was the winter, except when it rained. With thunder and rain and piercing cold winds, one longed for a decent habitation and a little warmth and comfort. Occasionally, there would be a hailstorm, with hailstorm bigger than marbles coming down on the corrugated iron roofs

and making a tremendous noise, something like an artillery bombardment (355).

In portraying the changing moods of Nature, Jawaharlal has excelled even Keats. Passages like the above, arrest the apparent beauty of Nature in her variegated forms. He has further observed that spring in the plains is a “far longer one than in the plains below” (354). It is the season that makes the fresh mango leaves “reddish brown, russet coloured”, but the colour soon changes. However, all these beautiful descriptions are in tune with the inner harmony that Jawaharlal has achieved observing Nature. But, the soothing effect of Nature has been immediately succeeded by the description of his jail term, resulting in a sense of alienation :

Prevented from indulging in normal activities we became more observant of nature's ways. We watched also the various animals and insects that came our ways ...For over a year after that I lived in that cell surrounded by these wasps and hornets, and they never attacked me, and we respected each other. (355).

Thereafter, inside the cell, Jawaharlal faces various “humours” created by bed-bugs, mosquitoes, flies, wasps, hornets, etc. His encounter with them has been suitably described as “continuous war”. Nonetheless, his concern for all these living beings is evident in the work.

It is true, that the supine forms of Nature are his sources of sustenance. Jawaharlal's love of the mountains symbolizes his growing

loneliness as he is alone for a considerably long time. His journey from one jail to another intensified that loneliness. To quote him :

...The snowy peaks of the Himalayas stood fastening in the far distance, high above the wooded mountains that intervened. Calm and inscrutable they seemed, with all the wisdom of past ages, mighty sentinels over the vast Indian plain ... (569).

Indeed, Jawaharlal, the autobiographer with an aesthetic mind, derives peace from Nature, as the British romantic poets Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley did. Jawaharlal's habit of eulogizing Mother Nature reminds us of the attitude of some of the romantic poets.

Clearly, Jawaharlal's emotional attachment to his parents, Gandhiji, Kamala, his sisters, and daughter Indira has been of abiding interest in the work. The descriptions incorporated into the *Autobiography* are true to life and they contribute to the achievement of the autobiographer. In the opinion of Narasimhaiah, in the narrative Jawaharlal lays bare with "the restraint of an artist that makes for the success of the *Autobiography*"¹³. However, there is no attempt on Jawaharlal's part to paint himself as a picture of poise and self-control always. If he would have pursued to do so, it would have falsified his feelings, and incidentally miss the chances of success for the work. Some exemplary situations may be considered in this context.

When the Nehrus came in contact with Gandhiji, father Motilal envisaged big issues that involved "a complete upsetting of [the Nehrus']

lives”; thus, both father and son had distressing time about the inevitable.

In Jawaharlal’s words :

Father – I discovered later, actually tried sleeping on the floor to find out what it was like, as he thought that this would be my lot in prison ... (42).

The ‘cleavage’ of their tension has been noted in the father’s action that resulted in sleeping on the floor. Already in the earlier chapter, it has been recoded that father Motilal, accustomed to luxury and comfort, could not believe that his only son’s destiny would lead to such abnormal happening. The behaviour of Motilal, and Jawaharlal’s feeling for him suggest the everlasting bond between the father and the son.

Another notable example is the incident when mother Swarup Rani took part in a non-co-operation strike and was beaten by the police severely. The news of her fainting on the road with blood flowing from the skull reached Jawaharlal in jail and he instantly reacted thus :

...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 ... I would have reached little of the consequences, personal or national (355).

This passage shows his concern for his mother for whom he is ready to give up the lesson of non-violence taught by Gandhiji.

Another noteworthy incident that occupied Jawaharlal was his wife Kamala's prolonged illness, and despite his restraint in expression, some musings on this part aptly reveal his care for her. To put it in his words :

There [Kamala] lay frail, and utterly weak, a shadow of herself, struggling feebly with her illness, and the thought that she might leave me became intolerable obsession ... we were attracted to each other and got on well enough ... (561).

The above situations are full of potential for melodrama envisaging human destiny in language. Jawaharlal, however, does not strike any heroic attitude or declare, in the manner of Ibsen's, *Brand* (1866), that neither mother nor the wife is as dear to his soul as his motherland.

It has been seen that in all the cited situations, Jawaharlal's emotion has intermingled with reality, and his realization about the 'forgetful' attitude shown to Kamala, has come to the surface. It is this sheer integrity of Jawaharlal as an autobiographer that enables us to sustain our interest in his book. It has been observed, further, that the accounts of his father, mother and wife suggest an emotional attachment. It is true, then, that in his delineation of his 'self' and 'surrounding' in the book, he remains as true as his larger canvass of life without allowing his narrative to be tainted with subjective colour. As such, his standing as an autobiographer is always characterized by objectivity. Jawaharlal's growth in the face of different circumstances can be monitored in the light of the narrative. So, the *Autobiography* is a virtual record of a growing man with a sensitive mind much concerned with the human predicament.

The outline of the *Autobiography* may look simple, but the depth of Jawaharlal's mental and emotional growth is difficult to comprehend. It becomes an arduous task in judging a man who has 'an exile's feeling' in his own country, even after his deep involvement in the freedom struggle. He becomes more difficult to apprehend, while he utters like "a stranger and alien in the West" (595). "I have become a queer mixture of the East and West", Jawaharlal observes, "out of place everywhere, at home nowhere" (596). This certainly is the utterance of a man who had to undergo prison for the cause of the country, and led a life rather unconcerned with the outer world. This trenchant judgement on himself powerfully dramatizes the major events of his life as well as minute descriptions of India's freedom movement, focusing on the issues he experienced.

The plight of the 'kisans' of 'Oudh' and 'Partabgarh' in Uttar Pradesh played an important role in his life. Jawaharlal's direct contact with the kisans helped him know that "peasantry were a blind, poverty stricken, suffering mass" (48) who were brutally used by the government, the landlords, moneylenders, police, lawyers, etc. Slowly but surely, Jawaharlal's philosophy of humanity develops, and the "quest for identity"¹⁴ rules the *Autobiography*, giving birth to all these issues as contents of the work. Thus, he may be called a scientific onlooker who is also the "rationalist and humanist who tries to stand aside and scrutinize it all with detachment"¹⁵. Mention must be made here that the naked picture of the agrarian society elevates his sense of self-consciousness and the two different worlds appear in his mind : the world of the naked hungry mass represented by the peasants, and the world of the privileged.

Despite portraying the picture of poverty, the work continues to exhibit wit and humour which have been used but sparingly by Jawaharlal. As K. R. S. Iyenger has rightly observed :

...Humour too, never failed him and wit and irony were ready in the armoury, though used sparingly ...¹⁶

The view of Iyenger enables us to identify humour and wit in some of Jawaharlal's descriptive passages. It is well to remember how the autobiographer draws the picture of Shyamaji Krishnavarma who was living in Geneva with his wife. In his words,

[Shyamaji Krishnavarma's] pockets were bulged with ancient copies of old paper, the Indian sociologist, and he would pull them out and point with some excitement to some article he had written a dozen years previously... (149).

The humour associated with the description, further, has been intensified with the information that although Shyamaji has plenty of money, yet he did not believe in spending, and so, "he would even save a few coins by walking instead of making the tram..." (149). The old fellow, Krishnavarma considered that all comers were "either British agents or after his money". The humour used here is not meant to satirise the character of the elderly person, but to convey a humoursome trait in the character concerned.

Undoubtedly, one may notice the continued impact of humour in the narrative, as Jawaharlal has incorporated a combination of wit and

pathos, which is “an indiminishable feature”¹⁷ of this work, as noted by V. N. Chibber.

Jawaharlal’s position as an autobiographer is imperative as well as assertive and it can be safely debated that he has revealed ‘self’ and the ‘surrounding’ in an inseparable manner, and so, both may be discovered in relation to the other . In the process of the narrative, there appears a fictional poetic history. As the Indian novelist in English, Mulk Raj Anand has observed in the following words,

[Jawaharlal]...seems to have adopted his own life as an experiment in history making and writing the famous *Autobiography*.¹⁸

Anand has pinpointed the profound achievement of Jawaharlal, the autobiographer. However, it is to be stated that Jawaharlal has not tried to project any experiment as his “primary object” was to occupy himself with a search for identity that was necessary in the long solitudes of gaol life. In that sense, the work is definitely a different one from others of its kind, as his objective as stated in the *Preface*, is only to remain unaffected by the dull and monotonous existence of jail life.

It has been observed that the book contains as much poetry as history because some of the passages read like poetry in prose. The *Autobiography* of Jawaharlal may be examined as a prose-poem dealing with the discovery of his self. The narrative can be brought under the category of prose-poem, while noticing the style of the work. It is full of

sonorous quality. Again, the work may be identified as Jawaharlal's *Prelude*, because almost echoing Wordsworth, he argues that it was his attempt to trace his own mental development. The soft, lilting sound of the carefully chosen words incorporates a poetic kind of narrative. Primarily, the passages, full of the descriptions of Nature remind us of his love for artistic and aesthetic expression. Comparing the inherent lyrical quality in the poetry of William Wordsworth and in the prose of Jawaharlal, one may find out the similarity in their execution of feeling.

From Wordsworth's *Prelude No 1* :

My own voice cheered me, and far more, the mind's
Internal echo of the imperfect sound;
To both I listened, drawing from them both
A cheerful confidence in things to come .¹⁹

To quote from Jawaharlal's Autobiography :

January has given place to February, and there is the whisper of spring in the air. The bulbul and the other birds are again to be seen and heard...(571)

The "echo" of the season is heard in the whisper of the spring in Jawaharlal, while he narrates his life. However, the presence of "cheerful confidence" in Wordsworth's *Prelude* suggests the pleasure he derives from nature. It may be added that both interpret Nature in their characteristic manner.

Jawaharlal's *Autobiography*, however, records his vision of the future designing the emancipation of the India as a modern nation. That vision presents his growing oscillation between mother India and Jawaharlal's European self. It is visibly present in the work enhancing his dilemma over the course of action. In it, Nature seems to play the role of a silent partner in this self-making process. Jawaharlal amidst his tiresome experiences was intoxicated by the breathtaking sight of "a huge ice field" surrounded by snow-peaks, in the Himalayas. Nature's beauty fills his mind providing instant relief from the humdrum of day-today activities. His description of the Himalayas and longing for going there has been contrasted with his unwilling stay inside the prison walls. Jawaharlal aspires to "reach that lake around the mountain of his desire" (38). This "mountain of desire" is the Himalayas which is well expressed in artistic prose endowed with poetic imagination. This "desire" may then be recognised as a trait of his mind that transcends the condition of slavery into the liberation of the soul. Thus, freedom of spirit, both in political and economic senses, is the elementary force impelling Jawaharlal as a thoughtful writer. As K. Chellappan has observed,

Nehru refers to the organic sense of life that one can develop in the solitude of confinement rather than in this mad world of war and politics; but that is not the be all and end all of his escape from it.....²⁰

The above view of Chellappan indicates why Jawaharlal constantly refers to nature. The following words denote the comfort provided by nature to Jawaharlal :

But sometimes there is an escape for a while at least, from this world last month I went back to Kashmir after an absence of 23 years. I was only there for 13 days, but these days were filled with beauty and I drank the loveliness of that land of enchantment. I wandered about the valley and higher mountains and climbed a glacier and felt that life was worth while. (611).

The passage sounds well, and suitably expresses why Jawaharlal feels life worthwhile. It is so, as he experiences the beauty of Nature. Besides, that one's mysterious journey to her envelops the endless quest of life in different forms, is also an abiding theme of the *Autobiography*. His re-enactment of the journey to the Himalayas here is an image of the journey of life. Throughout the entire narrative; his perception of unity in the development of his life and national history seems to be quite an unconventional one. Still, both run in parallel descriptions. First his own life has been observed in the following language :

Perhaps my thoughts and approach to life are more akin to what is called western than eastern, but India clings to me, as she does to all her children, in innumerable ways ... I cannot get rid of either that past inheritance or my recent acquisitions ... (596)

Then he illumines national history :

Through long ages she had travelled and gathered much wisdom on the way, and trafficked with strangers and added them to her own big family... but throughout her long journey she had clung to her immemorial culture, drawn strength and vitality from it, and shared it with other lands ...(429).

In the above passages Jawaharlal has interwoven his own life to his awareness of history. Besides, it is well to remember that in the *Autobiography*, Jawaharlal gives sufficient account of his prison-years and how he “managed to accustom [himself] to the jail-routine, and with physical exercise and fairly hard mental work kept fit” (348). The work is “a measure of the artistic success of Nehru” opines Naik and “almost all salient features of his complex personality stand revealed in it”²¹.

The biographer, Walter Crocker estimates this work of Jawaharlal as “the mixing of personal frankness with personal illusiveness”²², that usually suggests some “mystery” present in the *Autobiography*. However, Crocker’s view may be dismissed, because there was no illusiveness for a man whose “important contribution for the unborn generations may well consist rather in stimulating the mind...”²³, argues Narasimhaiah. One may overlook the statement of Crocker on the basis of Narasimhaiah’s view. As an impartial onlooker, Jawaharlal has closely examined crucial situations. As a rule, then, he has practised the salient characteristic of the British restraint as he has been already powerfully moved by the western intelligentsia.

Another feature in the autobiography is the writer’s frequent use of quotations : from the epigraph of Abraham Cowley to the poetry of Robert Frost, T. S. Eliot, Walter De La Mare and others. It shows his wide reading. All the quotations are apt and engaging revealing his skill as a writer of eminence.

There are few autobiographers like Jawaharlal who have proved that an account of a life is appealing in relation to the way the writer has gone through in the face of 'victory' and 'defeat', 'prosperity' and 'disaster'. Jawaharlal's readiness to accept the events in their usual motifs shows his outlook. Thus, his *Autobiography* invites comparison with some well-known autobiographies. At this moment it would be worth while to refer to Gandhiji's well-acclaimed autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (1927), that expresses his activity which rests on practical politics, religion and non-violence. There are the manifestations of humanity that transcends the face of reality in the work. To quote from Gandhiji's work :

... It is not my purpose to attempt a real autobiography, I simply want to tell the story of my numerous experiments with truth and as my life consists of nothing but these experiments it is true that the story will take the shape of an autobiography. But I shall not mind, if every page of it speaks only of my experiments ...²⁴

Certainly, the 'purpose' of writing the book, according to Gandhiji is to narrate his "numerous experiments with truth", while Jawaharlal's purpose of writing his *Autobiography* was to put an objective analysis of the current events in the wake of the nationalist movement. However, another difference is that Jawaharlal was entirely in prison while he took to writing his work that "developed a mood of introspection" and there were "shock and sensation again and again" (599). So, both had different attitudes as revealed in their works. Further, Gandhiji's emphasis on his "experiments in the spiritual field"²⁵, which he believes as just, and

capacitates him in deriving “power” to work in the political field is quite contradictory in nature to the confession of Jawaharlal in his *Autobiography* : “Of religion I had very hazy notions. It seemed to be a women’s affairs...” (8). Gandhiji’s spiritual leaning has been evidently present in his work that gives birth to his “philosophy of humanity” while Jawaharlal’s ‘humanism’ has been considered rational, that stems from his scientific spirit backed up by wide reading. However, it needs mention that despite the vast differences in their attitudes, Jawaharlal was deeply influenced by Gandhiji and his book.

Again, the *Autobiography* of Bertrand Russell written in three volumes, covers many sides of his life, especially his interest in “European history”, “knowledge of science” and “mathematics” etc. All these have been narrated in a commendable language rightly situating him as an irresistible writer. There is great similarity in the descriptions of childhood in Russell and Jawaharlal. Streaks of humour also are manifest in Russell’s writings that find expression in his *Autobiography* as it is seen in that of Jawaharlal’s work. It needs mention that both were students of Cambridge University. Sufficient and subtle expressions on love of Nature in both the works show the writers as lovers of Nature. In the words of Russell,

...I became intensely interested in the beauty of sunsets and clouds, and trees in spring and autumn, but my interest was of a very sentimental kind...²⁶

From the *Autobiography*, however, it has been clear that Russell's love of nature though 'aesthetic', is "an attempt to escape reality"²⁷ because of his "preoccupation with sex"²⁸. Nonetheless the inherent "idealistic feeling" of Russell in the work cannot be overlooked. Indeed, "love for nature", leaning towards "aestheticism" on Jawaharlal's part is true to his heart that occurred in him during his youth because of the influence of Oscar Wilde and Walter Pater. It survived through his life giving an anticipation of "living a full and many-sided life ..." (20). The contrast between the two autobiographers can be noticed in their respective narratives : The *Autobiography* of Russell is a monumental work comprising the autobiographer's personal accounts that reveal his good knowledge of various branches, as opposed to that of Jawaharlal where the personal has been blended with the historical. Russell as an intellectual onlooker has drawn inspiration from the surroundings, while Jawaharlal has done so from close contact with the people.

This discussion of Jawaharlal as an autobiographer has enabled us to comprehend his literary versatility in terms of his constructive approach to life. His success as an autobiographer is immeasurable. As C. D. Narasimhaiah has put it pertinently,

... It is hardly necessary to say that in *An Autobiography*, Nehru finds scope for the excellent exercise of almost every literary gift. Above all, here is an individual who is absorbed in his subject matter and the vision of a whole people. Such an individual is found discovering himself in the *Autobiography*; that is the secret of the interest that the book holds for us...²⁹.

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