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DISCOVERY OF INDIA IS AN PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY' AS A WORK OF ART



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ABSTRACT

Jawaharlal Nehru (14 November 1889– 27 May 1964) was the first Prime Minister of India and a central figure in Indian politics before and after independence. He emerged as the paramount leader of the Indian independence movement under the tutelage of Mahatma Gandhi and ruled India from its establishment as an independent nation in 1947 until his death in 1964. He is considered to be the architect of the modern Indian nation-state: a sovereign, socialist, secular, and democratic republic. He was also known as Pandit Nehru due to his roots with Kashmiri Pandit community while many Indian children knew him as "Uncle Nehru" (*Chacha Nehru*). The present paper is going to deals with the study of Autobiography of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's Discovery of India and how this book is an artistic work in literature.

KEYWORDS :emerged, paramount, secular, democratic, discovery etc.

INTRODUCTION

Nehru's *Autobiography* is without doubt one of the outstanding prose works in the field of Indian Writing in English. It is a literary expression of a man at the height of his powers. In fact, in it Nehru presents a picture of both of himself and the nation and merges the two into one entity with fine handling artist. The book reveals many facets of Nehru's complicated personality. There is neither mock modesty nor overstatement both of which are disastrous in an autobiography. Nehru's *Autobiography* also gives a comprehensive picture of the political life of the country. It is a living record of the eventful course of Indian history for over a generation. The narrative is vivid and remarkable as it

contains many pen-portraits of his great contemporaries. The book is written in an admirably good style. It is a fact that Nehru's *Autobiography* is an outstanding contribution to Indian English prose. The various aspects of the book can be discussed as follows.

VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

(i) Family Life : As found in all autobiographies, in Nehru's *Autobiography* too we get the description of the family-life of him. The autobiography opens with a very striking sentence : "A only son of prosperous parents is apt to be spoilt, especially so in India." Nehru was left to himself in his childhood as his two sisters were to younger than him. His family was very big. Loneliness his father Motilal Nehru. He loved his mother too. The 'Munshi' in the family was his confident in his childhood. Nehru was brought up a deeply religious family. But he did not believe in rituals. English values and manners were held in high esteem by the family of Nehru. Nehru read English books in his childhood itself. Soon he thought about the freedom of India. At the age of fifteen, Nehru was sent to Harrow and then he went to Cambridge. There his subjects were the branches of Science. Yet he had great interest in literature, politics and economics. Meanwhile, he read some books on sex too. He did not attach any sin to sex.

Nehru remained indecisive about his future career. He came in contact with the freedom fighters. He supported the moderates. Nehru went to England and studied law there for seven years. When he came back the found India in a dull political condition. Gokhale's Servants of India Society attracted him. He joined Home Rule Leagues. Nehru's marriage took place in 1916 in Delhi.

(ii) Nehru's Active Work in Politics : Soon Nehru came in contact with Mahatma Gandhi and got impressed by him. Due to his active part in Civil Disobedience Nehru was arrested. Very soon, Nehru got more and more involved in freedom movement. He played a pivotal role in Indian National Congress. He remained the General Secretary of Congress for several years. Then he was elected its President. Nehru then graphically described the Celebration of Independence Day on 26th Jan. 1930, the Salt Satyagraha and the Dandi March Motilal Nehru died in 1931. Many political events took place. Nehru was arrested in 1934. He was relieved for eleven days only as his wife was ill. Nehru stopped writing the *Autobiography* on 14th February, 1935.

(iii) As the Discovery of Both Nehru and India : The autobiography of Nehru presents an unforgettable picture of both the man and his milieu. This is what exactly makes a successful autobiography. The book is really both a 'discover' of Nehru and a 'discovery' of the India of the period roughly between the two World Wars. Like a true artist, Nehru has merged these two facts into one entity. The *Autobiography*, as result has become both personal and impersonal, real and imaginative, lyrical and epical. In a reply to the critics of the book, Nehru observes :

"The primary test of the book is psychological. For though I wrote as an individual about an individual, to some extent I may claim to have presented the mental conflicts of large number of others who worked in our freedom movement."

Ernest Toller emphasizes the personal and impersonal facts of the book and describes it as 'witness not only to a great personality but to the admirable struggle of a whole people'.

The *Autobiography* of Nehru is fusion of his personal life and the surrounding. Both of these facts can be studied as follows.

(a) Nehru's Personality : 'Discovery of Nehru' :

Like any *Autobiography*, Nehru's *Autobiography* too is about his personal life. It s the account of

Nehru's personality. It is a measure of the artistic features of the book that almost all salient features of his complex personality stand revealed in it. The books takes into account every quality of Nehru's head, hear! And soul. These qualities can be discussed as follows.

1) Intellectual Aspect : The Autobiography shows Nehru as an intellectual person. His faith in science and the scientific outlook is emphasized in the autobiography. The library of Motilal Nehru contained many scientific books such as on bell-fitting and on hot water apparatus. His tutor, Brooks, initiated Nehru into the mysteries of science. Nehru calls Science 'a great gift of the West'. According to him it was good to come in contact with the scientific and industrial West. Nehru says :

"To the British we must be grateful for one splendid gift of which they were the bearers, the gift of science and its rich offspring." (An Autobiography; p.449)

Nehru's faith makes him criticize Gandhi's blindness to it. He is shocked at Gandhi's statement that the Bihar earthquake was a punishment for the sin of untouchability.

Similarly, Nehru's social and political thought in the *Autobiography* is immediately connected with his belief in science. He admires the ideology of Marx because of the scientific method he adopted. So he is a severe critic of the Contemporary Indian Communist as they only abuse each other and do not have scientific base. He gives importance to "the growth of industry" (P.524).

Nehru's political philosophy also shows his intellect. The attainment of complete Independence is the proof of the fact. Nehru was the chief architect of the Congress. One of the most significant aspects of Nehru's political thought is his internationalism. Nehru wanted not only civilized India but the civilized world. He wished for the ederation of many country. About the Independence.

Nehru says :

"The real question before us in India is whether we are aiming at a new State or merely at a new administration."

The statement reveals Nehru's intellect.

2) Emotional and Imaginative Nature : Another aspect of Nehru's personality that finds expression in the *Autobiography* is his emotional and imaginative nature and his keen aesthetic sense. Nehru's rhetorical question "Is it a fact that a circular wall reminds one more of captivity than a rectangular one"? and his own answer. "The absence of corners and angles adds to the sense of oppression" are an excellent example of his "fine sensitivity". He dislikes the want of utter privacy. As he watches the brutality of prisoners being whipped, he feels 'a dull pain inside' (P.343). Nehru's first acquaintance with the misery of the U.P. peasants fills him with 'shame and sorrow'. He felt sad at the overwhelming poverty of India. Similarly, when as a young hunter, he killed an antelope, it looked up at with is great big eyes full of tears. The eyes often haunted him. In the prison, once Nehru nurses a sick puppy with care. He remembers how he played with a squirrel.

3) His Aesthetic Sense : Nehru's keen aesthetic sense shows itself in his numerous references to nature and to the world of art and literature. In the jail; Nehru treats "little tufts of grass and odd bits of stone as old friends." (P.353). He wishes to see the sight of the seas, mountains and seas. While in Dehra Dun Jail, the sight of the Himalayas is an added joy to Nehru. He watches the scenes of winter and spring. He is attracted to buds and leaves.

4) His Love for Art : Nehru had acute response to the world of art. He regrets for remaining aloof from

theatre, music, cinema, radio and talkies when he is busy or in a jail. He has genuine admiration for folk art. He deplores the vulgarity of the artistic taste of the middle classes. The harmonium is an awful instrument for him. It is an apt symbol for him. The Autobiography is full of astonishing range of vivid quotations. Really, Nehru is the man to whom no area of human thought is alien. His numerous quotations from the poets reveal a remarkable catholicity of taste.

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