

Nehru's Prose and Speeches Focusing on Humanism, Socialism and Intellectual Perception

Dr. Pari Parameshwaran,
Asst. Professor,
Dept of Youth Welfare,
Madurai Kamaraj University

Abstract

This article lays focus on Nehru's shown importance on humanism, socialism and intellectual perception through his literary sensibility and as a writer, who have written varied type of prose which reveals the tensions and conflicts of his mind, the aspirations and struggles of his generation fighting for the liberation of India. Nehru's articles, prose writings and speeches are suffered with great literary worth and beauty and projects the artistic expression of his own life.

Keywords: Jawaharlal Nehru, humanism, socialism, liberation, struggles, artistic sensibility.

Jawaharlal Nehru, popularly known as the jewel of India, the maker of modern India and an ardent freedom fighter, was found to be richly endowed with a visionary and poetic temperament, artistic and literary sensibility. One of the foremost thinkers, statesmen, orators, internationalists and pacifists, Nehru was a writer par excellence in Indian English literature. He is said to have made relentless attack on poverty, ignorance, backwardness and superstitions thereby underlying the importance of "scientific temper" and doing his best so as to cultivate and spread it. No doubt, he was "a staunch socialist and believed in equality, freedom and brotherhood. His concern for the untouchables, the weaker sections of the society and the right of women was uppermost.... He was so popular that he became India and India was Nehru" (Kishore 31).

There is no denying the fact that Nehru was "a great democrat and pacifist" (31), out and out following the principles of democracy, peace, harmony and co-existence, for he believed in "live and let live" principle. Through his prose writings and public speeches, he proved himself to be a visionary, idealist and dreamer. Despite all this, he was found to be a very practical man in all respects. In a session of the Indian National Congress, he said charged with noblest sentiments and patriotic feelings.

"I have hardly any ambition left, but there is one ambition left in me. I should throw myself with all the strength and energy left in me into the work of building up of India

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 20:2 February 2020
Prof. Dr. S. Chelliah, Editor: Select Papers of the International Conference on
Human Praxis and Modern Configuration through Literature

Dr. Pari Parameshwaran

261

Nehru's Prose and Speeches Focusing on Humanism, Socialism and Intellectual Perception

I want to give it my utmost, till I am exhausted and thrown away my strength and energy in India's task. I do not care what happens to reputation after I am gone"

But if people choose to think of me then, I should like them to say, "This was the man, who with all his mind and heart, loved India and the Indian people" (Singh 31)

Nehru's life ran of course, the course of two great currents of modern history – the liberation of subject peoples and the emergence of socialist ideas. His contribution to both was immense. Socialism brought him close to the Soviet Union and he became the architect of Indo-Soviet friendship. As one of the first to recognize the blatant nature of colonialism and imperialism in India and the need for a global struggle against them, his active participation in this struggle, both before and after independence, has become a part of the history and ethos of national liberation" (Bhartia in 'Introduction'). There is no doubt that the popularization of socialism in India was one of the great achievements of Jawaharlal Nehru. But his concept of socialism was that of a liberal in the best democratic tradition, C.D. Narasimhaiah rightly comments:

"Jawaharlal is not a politician who gives a literary bias to his writing but an intellectual whom the times which are out of joint have drawn into the vortex of politics" (Kumar "Preface").

As a writer, Nehru is said to have written varied type of prose which reveals the tensions and conflicts of his mind, the aspirations and struggles of his generation fighting for the liberation of India got revealed beautifully in *An Autobiography*. "As a writer of historical prose, he stands unrivalled in the entire range of Indian English prose. *The Glimpses of World History* is humanistic survey of world history and *The Discovery of India* is not a picturesque and romanticized presentation of India's past but an intellectual, dispassionate, unbiased and balanced adoration of India's long journey through the ages" (Kumar 1). As the first Prime Minister of Independent India, Nehru was also the architect of modern India. He was, no doubt, born great and also achieved greatness by his vision, hard labour, sincerity, honesty, patriotism and great intellectual powers. He never wanted even a single minute in his life. It was he who gave us the slogan, "Aram Haram Hai". He was always full of optimism, vitality, vigour, enthusiasm and activity. He was a leader of the masses and beloved to them. Their deep love and respect for him always enthused, inspired and sustained him. The good of the masses was ever at his heart. His contribution to the

world peace and co-operation has been very significant. He supported the UN whole heartedly and gave the world the non-alignment movement and leadership to the third world countries. He had declared very categorically that sole aim of the movement was,”

“... Peace and Peace, we aim and pray for peace. Peace can only come when nations are free and also when human beings everywhere have freedom and security and opportunity” (Kishore 32)

Really, Nehru was India’s “man of destiny”. He was felt, understood, known and recognized as “a living legend” (32). He was next to Gandhi in the political hierarchy and importance. Of the meaning of Gandhi for India, Jawaharlal Nehru writes:

“In history, we read of great periods in the life of nations, of great man and women and great deeds performed, and sometimes in our dreams and reveries we imagine ourselves back in those times and doing great deeds like the heroes and heroines of old Ordinary men and women are not usually heroic. They think of their daily bread and butter, of their children, of their household worries and the like,

But a time comes when a whole people becomes full of faith for a great cause, and then even simple and ordinary men and women become heroes and history becomes stirring and epoch-making Great leaders have something in them which inspires a whole people and makes them do great deeds ... Today in India a great leader Full of love for all who suffer and passionately eager to help them, has inspired our people to great endeavour and noble sacrifice, so that they may again be free, and the starving and the poor and the oppressed may have their burdens removed from them. Bapuji (Gandhi) lies in prison but the magic of his message steals into the hearts of India’s millions and men and women, and even little children come out of their little shells and become India’s soldiers of freedom” (Spencer 38)

Gandhiji drew his idea of passive resistance from many religious sources. He found it in Buddhism, the religion of kindness. He found it in Christianity. But he found it most clearly for him in the great Indian poem, the Bhagavad – Gita. This poem has been described

as “the most beautiful, perhaps the only true philosophical song existing in any known tongue”. Jawaharlal Nehru says thus:

“Its popularity and influence have not waned ever since it was composed and written in the pre-Buddhistic age (before 563 B.C.) and today its appeal is as strong as ever in India it is a poem of crisis, of political and social crisis and even more, of crisis in the spirit of man” (P 39).

Nehru’s articles, prose writings and speeches are suffused with great literary worth and beauty. His prose style has been highly appreciated even by English critics like John Gunther, Frank Moraes, Ellen Wilkinson, Roger Baldwin and many others who all joined together in showering their words of praise on his prose style and literary craftsmanship. His literary genius has been highly appreciated by Marjorie Boulton who, obviously ranking Nehru with Tagore, M.R. Anand and Dr. Radhakrishnan, comments thus:

“English people who will not trouble to write their own language well ought to be ashamed by reading the English of such Indian writers as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Anand, Prof. Radhakrishnan and number of obscure Indians to be met in British universities”.

(P 91)

Walter Crocker has gone to the extent of remarking thus:

“Nehru wrote better English than most of us born to the language” (P 65)

Nehru’s writings and speeches are nothing but an artistic expression of his own life and feelings which merge with the life and history of India with the advent of Independence on Aug 15, 1947, he became the first Prime Minister of Indian Republic. He was one of the makers of modern India and under his able and judicious stewardship, India ushered into a socialistic and egalitarian nation. He stood for humanism, socialism, communal peace and harmony. Though he got overwhelming recognition as a statesman, politician and internationalist, he was endowed with literary and artistic sensibility, that too, with humanistic and societal outlook. During his study in Cambridge, Nehru was attracted towards socialism. G.B. Shaw’s Fabian Socialism, Meredith Townsend’s famous book *Asia and Europe*. G.M. Trevelyan’s three volumes on Garibaldi and Lowes Dickinson influenced Nehru’s adolescent mind with socialism. The mature Nehru came under the influence of Marx and Lenin. Soviet Russian inspired him. Nehru himself admitted as:

“Soviet Russia, despite certain unpleasant aspects, attracted me greatly and

seemed to hold forth a message of hope
to the world” (5)

Commenting on the amalgamation on various influences on Nehru, K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar says:

“.... And Jawaharlal has also acknowledged that these, the saintly leader and the epicurean father, as also the poet, Gurudev Tagore, have exerted the greatest influence on his life. Marx and Lenin, too, came into his life, and Jawaharlal’s eyes turned longingly towards Moscow. Thus “post-war Moscow” collided with “pre-war Harrow” and in the middle twenties Jawaharlal merged as a national leader of infinite possibilities and striking qualities” (P 298).

In fact, Nehru is an excellent literary artist endowed with rich, poetic imagination. All his writings are an immaculate expression of his active life and deep emotion, soaring imagination, limitless urges and boundless humanity. He does present an artist’s vision in what he writes and speaks and his vision is related to life.

Truly speaking, Nehru does enjoy an enviable position in Indian English prose. Recognizing this literary potentiality in Nehru, in the Foreword to *The Study of Nehru*, Dr. Rajendra Prasad writes:

“Jawaharlal is a man of culture in the widest and best sense of the expression. He is a man with ideas born of study of books and widespread contact with man, Indian and foreign. His emotional nature and his innate independence of thought have helped him in developing a style of expression which is direct and captivating. He is a gifted writer wielding the pen as an artist” PP VI-VII)

Nehru writes history like an artist. There is no exaggeration to call him a poet-historian. As a historian, he is unrivalled. He puts the facts and events of history under the transforming vision of a literary artist. He is found to be objective, just and fair-minded in portraying the great personalities. He shows lyrical intensity and exceptional poetic sensibility in describing the achievement of illustrious artists like Leonardo and eminent poets-Dante and Petrarch. Nehru, as a true literary artist, does rely on the imagination to work the miracle and imagination seldom lets him down” C.D. Narasimhaiah says:

“He thus puts life into the dead past and
the stage comes quite near us and living
and hating human beings move on it” (PTO)

As an effective and eloquent orator, his writings are poignant and poetic in tone with a human touch and socialistic outlook. His academic and convocation addresses revealed his

idealism, matured humanistic vision. Nehru's speeches at International conferences are known for his poetic sensibility, the humanistic wisdom of a great historian and matured social outlook of a statesman. Commanding on the literary significance of his speeches, K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar comments thus:

“... he could speak as man to man, as a piece of humanity to all humanity, each word sending forth creepers of understanding and sympathy, each accent instinct with fellow feeling and unpossessive love...” (P 310).

His *Discovery of India* records the glorious culture of India with vividness and sensibility. The style, with alternating argument and introspection, is highly personal and the descriptions of landscapes and personalities have a peculiar touch of the poetic. Assessing its importance as a work of historical consciousness, K.M. Pannikar writes:

“Its significance lies in the fact that it is the first attempt to write the story of the Indian people, to give a picture of the evolution of India from the earliest days to own time. It was thus a history in the proper sense of the word and not an assemblage of facts and details, a wearing narrative of local wars and struggles without any central purpose” (P 404)

His choice of words is excellent and he is found choosing highly expressive and suggestive words from a rich treasure. The use of concrete and suggestive vocabulary imparts simplicity and lucidity to his style, for example;

“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” (An Autobiography 379)

Nehru words, it is said, have an evocative power which is not traceable in any other Indian English writer. He was aware of the evocative power of language. He said:

“It is the poetic treatment of the genius of a race and a culture, and the living embodiment of the thoughts and fancies that have moulded them” (P 43).

It can be said that Nehru is an adept in expressing deep thoughts in fewest possible words. In this respect, Nehru stands in the front rank in Indian English prose. His heart is cut to the quick at the pathetic conditions of workers, who live miserably in grinding poverty; and the peasants, the symbol of India, whose lot it is to be “born to Endless Night”. Describing their miserable condition, he quotes from E. Marham’s poem, ‘The Man with the Hoe’:

“Bowed by the weight of centuries he leans
Upon his hoe and gazes on the ground.
The emptiness of ages on his face,
And on his back the burden of the world”
(An Autobiography, 73)

An internationalist of temperament, Nehru asserted that the ideal of democratic socialism should at first be implemented on the national level and then on the international plane. Nehru thought that religions have contributed greatly to the development of humanity and social uplift, for they have laid down values and standards and principles for the guidance of human life. All these have got reflected lucidly through his writings and speeches at all accounts. He believed in the freedom of the nations of the world from colonialism, imperialism and exploitation. Almost all his literary writings and speeches served as an instrument to promote world peace humanistic attitude and social outlook.

To conclude, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is beyond doubt, a humanist and social thinker whose speeches, writings and even programmes are full of the milk of human kindness with his illuminating thoughts so as to inspire the coming generations all the world not only for maintaining world peace but also for establishing unity of the human race in all respects.

=====
==

Works Cited

1. Bhatia, Vinod. *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Study in Indo-Soviet Relations*
New Delhi: Panchsheel Publishers, 1989.
2. Boulton, Marjorie. *The Anatomy of Prose*
London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1967.
2. Chibber, V.N. *Jawaharlal Nehru: Man of Letters*
New Delhi : Vikas Publishing House, 1970.

=====

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 **20:2 February 2020**
Prof. Dr. S. Chelliah, Editor: Select Papers of the International Conference on
Human Praxis and Modern Configuration through Literature

Dr. Pari Parameshwaran

267

Nehru’s Prose and Speeches Focusing on Humanism, Socialism and Intellectual Perception

3. Crocker, Walter. *Nehru : A Contemporary Estimate*.
London: John Allen and Unwin, 1949.
 4. Ghose, Sankar. *Socialism and Communalism*
Bombay, 1971.
 5. Iyengar, K.R.S. *Indian Writing in English*
New Delhi: Sterling Publications, 1969.
 6. Jain, Gagan. *Indian Famous Personalities*.
Delhi: Three FSS Publications, 2009.
 7. Kishore. B.R. and P.P.Singh. *Great Indians*.
New Delhi: Vee Kumar Publications, 2010.
 8. Kumar, Satish. *The Discovery of India*.
Bareilly : PBD, 1987.
 9. Moraes, Frank. *Jawaharlal Nehru*
New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956.
 10. Nehru, Jawaharlal. *An Autobiography*
Bombay, 1962.
 11. Narasimhaiah, C.D. *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Study of
His Writings and Speeches*
Mysore: Rao and Raghavan, 1960.
 12. Prasad, Rajendran. "Foreword" *A Study of Nehru*
ed. Rafiq Zakaria. New Delhi: Publication Division, 1959.
 13. Spencer, Cornelia. *Nehru of India*
Lucknow: P.T.I. Book Depot, 1951.
 14. Tibor, Mende. *Conversations with Mr. Nehru*
London, 1956.
-