THE ARTIST OF CONFLICT AND LONELINESS

In evaluating Jawarharlal Nehru's creative writings the critic is almost baffled by the inexplicable contradictions in his thoughts and attitudes. Even his own personality remains unexplained to some extent when seen from various angles arising in his writings. Delighted by crowds and masses and children, he often suffers from a sense of loneliness. In all his major books, and in many of his essays, letters and speeches there are repeated references of this near-pessimistic feeling of being deserted.

Often his writings reveal an inner conflict even when enjoying glory and victory, a feeling of isolation even when riding gallopingly on mass popularity, an escapism even when in the thick of a battle. Wavelike they appear and disappear. Therefore, there is no constancy of the mood. And from such contrasts his writings achieve a mosaic-like decorative beauty. Even words have much to contribute indirectly in achieving this end. For instance, Nehru very often gets inspired with the idea of 'revolution'; at the same time he is seized with the concept of 'destiny' beaconing man to great responsibilities. At times he uses these words in a long sweep: 'In India, only a revolutionary plan could solve the two related questions of the land and industry as well as every other major problem before the country.' (A.B. Chapter: Struggle) In his speech delivered at the Constituent Assembly on 3.11.48, 'destiny' played a great role; 'Now may I beg again to repeat what I said earlier? Destiny has cast a role on this

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on this country. ........ we also have to act as men and women
of destiny ..... (we can never forget) the responsibility that
freedom, that this great destiny has cast upon us.'

But the critic's greatest surprise arises from his discovery that Nehru's use of such words are often inspired by the intrinsic beauty of the word only, for whenever his mood changes, he makes categorical departure from his position proclaimed earlier by such chosen words. An instance of such duality is placed below:

Source: Autobiography. Chapter: Struggle: 'But Congress at present meant Gandhiji. What would he do? Ideologically he was sometimes amazingly backward, and yet in action he had been the greatest revolutionary of recent times of India. ... But because he was a revolutionary at bottom and was pledged to political independence for India, he was bound to play an uncompromising role till that independence was achieved.'

Source: Autobiography. Chapter: 'Dual Policy of British Government: 'Where was this elusive peace that was being sought, when the Government was triumphantly trying to crush the nation every way, and people were starving to death in the Andamans? But I knew that, whatever happened, it was Gandhiji's way always to offer the olive branch.'

By this pair of glaring examples it is to establish that Nehru being constantly driven from one mood to another would give expression to his immediate feeling, and as such, inspite of

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of inconsistency, the appeal of the words is permanent: Gandhi, the greatest revolutionary, 'a revolutionary at bottom', and his way was 'always to offer the olive branch'.

The apparent riddle in the duality of his feelings and attitude — one of joy and hope and the other of pain and pessimism — lends a peculiar charm to his writings of this period. Some rare moments of life, some wonderful experiences have been eternalised in wonderful words as an artist would do to make permanent on his canvas a flash of beauty in a phenomenal convulsion. In some of his earlier essays he has raised his prose to great heights of lyrical beauty while depicting two contrary moods - in action and in escapism - in one stroke. Quoted below are a few lines from his essay 'Back Home' (Eighteen Months in India, published June, 1937):

"It is good to come back home after six weeks of continuous wandering. Some have the wanderlust, and I have it myself in some measure, and I have to get out of the old rut and cross mountains and seas and make acquaintance with new countries, new people. And when one may not do this, as alas too often I may not, I give vent to my imagination and we take long and improbable journeys and seek adventure in distant countries. ... ...

Back again to files, Visitors, visitors with nothing worth-while to say, wasting time. An occasional visitor who is interesting taking up more time. And all the while the shwe Dagon Pagoda floating in the air and the gem Contd...
The major problem before the critic lies in the shifting attitude of the author in respect of his relationship with the multitude of people. Often it becomes difficult to assess the extent of the author's mental involvement with either the general or the particular, and the problem becomes even more complex if considered in the light of his avowed individualism.
Duality in his writing consists of his easy swing from the collective to the particular and vice versa. He is easy at both these two positions. This arouses a sense of critical surprise: Subhas Chandra Bose in his famous letter of March 28, 1939 posed this question to Jawaharlal Nehru: 'You are in the habit of proclaiming that you stand by yourself and represent nobody else and that you are not attached to any party. Occasionally you say this in a manner as if you are either proud or happy because of it. At the same time, you call yourself a Socialist — sometimes a full-blooded Socialist. How a Socialist can be individualist, as you regard yourself, beats me. The one is the antithesis of the other.' And Nehru's reply was: 'I suppose I am temperamentally and by training an individualist, and intellectually a socialist, whatever all this might mean'. Earlier, Richard B. Greggs from the United States of America also raised a similar question: 'I gathered from your letter that you agree with Niebuhr's pessimistic estimate of people in crowds. If that be so, I confess I do not fully understand how you and he can be socialists, for surely socialism would call for high and sustained ethical conduct by the masses unless you propose to establish and maintain it by violence of a small minority'. About the conduct of the masses Nehru has left sufficient written material to facilitate an estimate of his view and attitude in this regard. But the amazing aspect of his psychology lies in the faith and expectation in an individual's capacity to enthuse and arouse the masses. Even after his highly impressionistic visit to the Soviet

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Soviet Russia in the later part of the twenties this basic characteristic of Nehru's psychology remained unchanged. In a letter of January, 1928 he wrote to Gandhi in a language fully expressive of his inner mind: 'You know how intensely I have admired you and believed in you as a Leader who can lead the country to victory and freedom. I have done so inspite of the fact that I hardly agreed with anything that some of your previous publications—Indian Home Rule etc.—contained. I felt and feel that you were and are infinitely greater than your little books. Above everything I admire action and daring and courage and I found them all in you in a superlative degree. And I felt instinctively that however much I may disagree with you ; your great personality and your possession of these qualities would carry us to our goal.'

Action and adventure means an intense living in the present. While Nehru is fully seized of this life of action his imaginative excursions in the past are equally true to his personality. This duality occurs again and again in his letters, essays and books, and this factor can be explained by pointing out that essentially he was an emotional visionary and at the same time an actionist politician. Another puzzle that confronts the critic of his writings relates to the weakness of his intellect and reason when faced with the jeopardy of circumstances. The shell of his high idealism cracks at the pressure of events or situations which are contrary to his own stance or way of doing or believing. Protesting he submits; he accepts a settlement outwardly and tries to build up arguments in favour thereof but struggles within himself: 'The

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'The other and vital question of our objective of independence, remained. And now I saw in that clause of the settlement that even this seemed to be jeopardised. Was it for this that our people had behaved so gallantly for a year? Were all our brave words and deeds to end in this? The independence resolution of the Congress, the pledge of January 26, so often repeated? So I lay and pondered on that March night, and in my heart there was a great emptiness as of something precious gone, almost beyond recall.

So I thought and thought, and confusion reigned in my head, and anger and hopelessness, and love for him who was the cause of this upheaval. I hardly knew what to do, and I was irritable and short-tempered with everybody, and most of all with myself.

And then a strange thing happened to me. I had quite an emotional crisis, and at the end of it I felt and the future seemed not so dark.

The artistic value of the writing lies in the inner cry of the tortured soul. "Panditji will let go what he has if it is dictated by the needs of the next stage but he will do so with a little pang that makes him appear more romantic than what he really is." [Prof. Dhurjati Prasad Mukherjee]. The appropriateness of the observation is brought home to the critic quite easily because wherever Nehru has been faced with such situations requiring a sacrifice by him of his own faith, or

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or stand or reasoning for the sake of any higher expediency he gives vent to his innermost crisis in such language which at once elevates the writing to a higher level of romanticism.

He looks back with a nostalgic emotion to what he has abandoned and looks forward with hope and doubt to what he aspires for, and in between he travels in an area which is delinked with both, and Nehru expresses his own position in the same agony of a victim tossed on the sands while the dark blue sea roars on one side and the vast expanse of silent shore stands overlooking in pitying unresponse. Nehru's fascination for the lyrical twist comes out at its best on such occasions, and such occasions have come to his life in course of bitter experiences both at personal and political levels. In the depiction of his mood during the intervening period he has adopted a system of monologous vocabulary, writing in a half-oratorial vein. It can even be described as auditory imagination: For instance:

'The sun was setting as I trudged back, with Kripalani as my companion, along the dusty road from Segaon (Sevagram, Head Quarters of Gandhi) to Wardha. We had met and parted that evening of the 22nd of February at Segaon, those of us who had for so long been the members of the Working Committee of the Congress, and the long argument was over.

'How many times I had gone along that dusty path during the past three years, mostly by automobile, sometimes by bullock-cart, once or twice on foot. The scene was a familiar one, with the bare arid plain stretching on every side and hardly a

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hardly a tree in sight. Yet it seemed different, perhaps because I myself had changed and looked at with different eyes. The sun hung like a ball of fire on the horizon and beauty filled the silent air, but I was in no mood for beauty and felt weary and depressed. Loneliness gripped me in that empty plain and the lengthening shadows seemed ominous. We walked silently, for neither of us was in a mood of conversation. I was walking away not from Segaon but from something bigger, more vital, that had been part of me these many years. (Unity of India: Chapter - A Survey of Congress Politics - 1936 - 39). These lines are glorious for the rhetoric and sheer beauty of words and imagery and suggestiveness. The setting sun like a ball of fire could perhaps be drawn by an imaginative painter to visualize a situation so surcharged with an ominous foreboding, and in the same sentence one reads with an inescapable thrill, "beauty filled the silent air" and the effect lingers on like the notes of a music touching the depths of one's soul. Most important of all is the vastness of the situation, inner and outer. Starting with the particular, the bare arid plain stretching on every side and hardly a tree in sight ----- the writer soon creates a very general feeling of cosmic gloom by silence and loneliness and emptiness and lengthening shadows. And finally comes the all-pervading tragic cry for the loss of 'something bigger, more vital, that had been part of me these many years'. Thus, the writer's personal feeling of the moment is raised to a transcending height, almost stretching out to unlimitedness. The distinction of a creative artist

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artist is gained by the writer in such passages conveying his intermediary mood which is free from concrete realism. To quote George Bernard Shaw: "The effect the artist produces on others is that of unlimitedness; and it is this great mystery and infinitude which attracts us all to art at first sight in these days."

To apply this test to Nehru's writing the critic discovers that the secret of the 'mystery' lies in his momentary disassociation from the possessive past and the consoling future, and flight to great heights of feeling and imagination and then the sudden withdrawal of self into stark loneliness amid limitless expanse of the unknown. There is exquisite lyricism in such passages and often the critic is struck by the spontaneity and effortlessness with which the words flow out to relieve the writer's poignant feelings of the virgin moment. As an instance of such artistry of words a few lines are reproduced from the last chapter - Epilogue - of Nehru's autobiography:

"The years I have spent in prison! Sitting alone, wrapped in my thoughts, how many seasons I have seen go by, following each other into oblivion. How many moons I have watched wax and wane, and the pageant of the stars moving along inexorably and majestically! How many yesterdays of my youth be buried here; and sometime, I see the ghosts of these dead yesterdays rise up, bringing poignant memories, and whispering to me: 'Was it worth while?'

A floating moment of reflective mood it is, and

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and the agony of a wounded soul cries out its supreme question, 'was it worth ?', and thus this very essentially personal poignancy touches the strings of eternity, where time appears timeless, where the sun and the moon and the stars rise and fall in endless procession, where the universe pervades all fragmentary individuals and retains under its cover all big and small, and where alone the reply may be had to the question : 'was it worth ?'

In this way, Jawaharlal writes like a creative artist. After a careful study of his writings - history, autobiography, essays and letters - such passages of high literary and artistic value can be marked out in successive frequency. Read out of context such passages may be losing in vitality, but on ultimate analysis these are the spheres of Nehru's genuine literary creativity, and like laughing and lifeful mountainsprings they give beauty and meaning to the still and sombre outline of the mountain itself. Extraordinarily lyrical, these passages strongly suggest that the writer is soaring high in the open between two cliffs - one: historical reconnoitering and the other: spotlights on the future, and a detachment has taken place in his inner self so that the emerging ideas and their expression both are bathed in purity, and as a result, his writing reaches the level of creative art in its truest connotation.

Analysing critically, however, the critic has to make a reverse journey from this point and discover that the writer cannot be judged absolutely from an isolated or detached position completely separated from his earthy relationships.

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Pangs and agony, his tragic contemplations—what all these are born of? Conflict, no doubt,—conflict between his idealism, his values of life and his dreams on the one hand and the given situation of life, crowds and events in his own country and abroad on the other. He is hurt in his attempt to break the static surroundings, and often there is a conflict. Again, the conflicts arising out of indecision at the prospect of clash and chaos illuminate the character much more effectively. Thus, he is found immersed in the relentless flow of life, and he is dashed and pushed and hurt by rushing currents wherever he tries to run against the tide. In this way, his finer feelings on life and suffering and martyrdom arise from his deep involvement with the ceaseless tide of human activities from which he partakes enough and to which he makes his own great contributions.

Great buoyancy and vigour of life can be evidenced in the endless series of movements, upheavals and action on the political front in the Indian scene as well as in many other countries all over the world in this century. Jawaharlal's participation in such movements have been deep and direct. Admittedly, the chief attraction for him of the huge upheavals of life was the vigour underlying. His experiences and communicable ideas emerge from the life of action. At the base of his creative writings lies the deep reservoir of experiences of actions of a fighting life dedicated to a 'cause' which he describes in different ways in this essays, books and letters. Not often, therefore, are his writings abstract or metaphysical or purely

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purely philosophical. He rushes to the fire, he is hurt and he cries out. The essential poetry, music and impact of the cry are born of the universal tragic truth expressed. About physical pain there is no concern at all, because martyrdom implies that. So the impact of the wound on the hero's soul creates the mystery of infiniteness, and that in its turn makes art of what otherwise would be commonplace.

Moreover, the writer's inalienable and active relationship with the struggling masses in his own country at a given period of time and his enlivening wiring up with history lends the essential realism to his idealism. Idealism devoid of realism often sounds either didactic or vainglorious; even a heroic character may in the end find himself crestfallen instead of high idealism because it is alienated from realism. Shakespeare has exemplified this in the character of Brutus in Julius Caesar. In Jawaharlal there occurs a rare combination of the two apparently opposite but organically inseparable traits of a true hero's character. Conflict is the inescapable result, and Nehru's memorable writings bear, at a very high artistic level, the iridescent of hope and despair, courage and fear, love and violence, pervading his mind at the stage when he is deeply involved with the realities of the present while challenging these very realities: to quote:

"In thinking over the troubles and conflicts of the world, I forgot to some extent my own personal and national
national troubles. I would even feel buoyant occasionally at the fact that I was alive at this great revolutionary period of the world history. Perhaps I might also have to play some little part in my own corner of the world in the great changes that were to come. At other times I would find the atmosphere of conflict and violence all over the world very depressing. Worse still was the sight of intelligent men and women who had become so accustomed to human degradation and slavery that their minds were too coarsened to resent suffering and poverty and inhumanity. Noisy vulgarity and organised humbug flourished in this stifling moral atmosphere, and good men were silent. The triumph of Hitler and the Brown Terror that followed was a great shock, though I consoled myself that it could only be temporary. Almost one had the feeling of the futility of human endeavour. The machine went on blindly, what could a little cog in it do?"

(Autobiography: Chapter: Struggle)

This was written in prison-cell during the middle of the thirties. In the passage his buoyancy is defeated by pessimism at the end. He was seized with these thoughts and emotions from much earlier period, and the theme as well as his way of writing were developing in him in course of years as he passed through new and complex experiences. In a letter written in 1931 to Will Durant in New York (from Ananda Bhavan, Allahabad, dated 20.8.1931) Nehru expressed his ideas in a reversed order, from a feeling of despair to optimism: "I have believed in Science and logic and reason, and I believe in them still, but at times they seem to

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seem to lack something - and life seems to be governed by other and stronger forces - instinct and an irresistible drive towards something - which for the moment do not appear to fit in with their science or logic as we know them. History with its record of failure, the persistence of evil in spite of all the great men and great deeds of the past, the present breakdown of civilization and its old time ideals, and the dangers that lurk in the future, make me despair sometimes. But in spite of all this I have a feeling that the future is full of hope for humanity and for my country and the fight for freedom that we are waging in India is bringing us nearer the realization of this hope.

Later on, the second World War made him feel much more involved in the affairs of mankind as a whole of which the national issue was but an inseparable part. Writings of this period give proof of his great ability to create a broad sweep and to touch great depths in brief and precise writing. In a letter from Allahabad on Oct. 13, 1939 to Mrs. Frances Gunther in New York, he wrote: "Meanwhile we in India have to face our problems which have become terribly difficult since the war began. We argue and make temporary decisions but all the time there is a feeling that fast moving events have taken charge of the situation everywhere and men and women have become their play-things."

And as the war advances and engulfs the world, east and west - crushing and grinding into pieces the standing edifices built up by man and thus preparing the grounds for the rebirth of civilization and reconstruction on the shattered ruins of the past -

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Jawaharlal gains both in intensity of feeling for mankind as a whole, and in an urge for joining the fast-moving drama of high action wherein all are involved throughout the world. During this period, his promises and pathos, his unrelenting determination and binding limitations, his dreams and actions raise him to a level of Promethean heroism, for his writings covering this particular phase in his career are often incomparable in excellence even with much of his earlier writings endowed with rhythm and lyricism. Indeed, the last few paragraphs of the section captioned 'Frustration' under Chapter Nine - 'World War Two' in his book The Discovery of India - can be claimed as part of best English prose writing on this greatest human tragedy of history. In every word and sentence there is the rigging of revolt and romanticism and idealism, and at the same time, at its depth, the emotion is rooted in realism. The author writes from his living contact with and full consciousness of the quaking and rolling present. As usual, he would often appear subjective in these passages also, but his language highly succeeds in creating an atmosphere of cosmic deluge leading to a total catastrophe as in King Lear. And in this success lies the artist's consummation of creating a sense of limitlessness. Sentences are reproduced from these passages at random to show how mysteriously a transcendental tragic element captures the concrete forces of the living world: "It was a heart-breaking situation, for while the crisis called to us and we were bubbling over with the desire to act, effective action was denied us. Catastrophe and disaster advanced with tremendous strides towards us while India lay helpless and inert, bitter

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bitter and sullen, a battle-ground for rival and foreign forces.

"The cost of war was heavy and the consequences full of uncertainty. That war was not of our seeking, but since it had come, it could be made to harden the fibre of the nation and provide those vital experiences out of which a new life might blossom forth. Vast numbers would die, that was inevitable, but it is better to die in war than through famine; it is better to die, than to live a miserable, hopeless life. Out of death, life is born anew, and individuals and nations who do not know how to die, do not know also how to live. "Only where there are graves are there resurrections!".

"Only the suffering and sorrow were for us, and an awareness of impending disaster, which sharpened our perceptions and quickened pain, and which we could not even help to avert. A brooding sense of inevitable and ineluctable tragedy grew upon us, a tragedy that was both personal and of nations".

"What positive aim was there in this war, what future would emerge out of it? Was it just a repetition of past follies and disasters, a play of nature's blind forces which took no cognizance of man's wishes and ideals? What was going to be the fate of India?"

"God we may deny, but what hope is there for us if we deny man and thus reduce everything to futility. Yet it was difficult to have faith in anything or to believe that the triumph of righteousness is inevitable".

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While the pathos and pains and tragic forebodings are almost elemental, the basic concern underlying these passages relate to 'men's wishes and ideals'. In ultimate analysis, all history philosophy, poetry, science and culture have to answer this simple yet great question: 'What hope is there for us if we deny man?' And in this great capacity (a) to keep toe upon the razor like thin edge of martyrdom on either side of which there is the darkness of fear and frustration or the joy of faith and (b) to retain all the while an inalienable identification with man - as individuals or as a mass, nationally or internationally, of this generation or of the past or of the future - raises Nehru's writings to great heights of literary excellence.

Thus, a sense of homogeneity of mankind is the most mighty undercurrent governing the diverse wavelengths of thoughts and utterances of Jawaharlal. His stress is on the common thread running through the fate of people as a whole wherever they may be suffering or fighting in this wide world in the quest of liberty, peace and progress. This concept of homogeneity of mankind is the gift of the French Revolution and then reinvigorated by the Russian Revolution of 1917-18. Flowering of this concept is found in the writings of poets and philosophers of this century - Rabindranath Tagore in India and Bertrand Russel in England, for instance, but rarely in national statesmen. Herein lies the key to Nehru's success in reaching the hearts of millions of his readers throughout the world. Even in a little personal letter he would give out his sincerest feeling on this very theme. Quoted below is a three-

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three-sentence letter written in one of the darkest days of the World War Two of July 13, 1940 from Allahabad to Miss Florence Garvin in the U.S.A.:

"Thank you for your letter (12.4.40) which I read with interest. The problems of to-day overlap each other and cannot be treated separately. They all hang together and I suppose we shall either all go down together or survive and make progress together".

Homogeneity of mankind is thus placed on the lap of history which is continuous. Homogeneity of time also becomes a correlative concept. Time, history and a vast sense of togetherness of man - a combination of all these endow his writings with a sublimity. In fact, had not the author shown his living concern for men, his inspired writings could have gone unnoticed inspite of his idealism and excellence of style. Some modern critics of Shelley, reviewing Prometheus Unbound have observed that Shelley does not create people, he is not interested in people, he is interested in ideas, principles, philosophy. All critics are, however, struck by Shelley's passion for reforming the world. Jawaharlal is at times utopian no doubt, but rarely does he show concern for reforming. He loves men and women and children as they are in their daily life, in their sorrows and joys, in their frailty and honesty, in their life and death. No doubt, Nehru too is interested in ideas, he often dilates on high idealism. But most of all he is interested in men, as what they are, although he is always conscious of the need for their uplift in an orderly

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orderly manner. How truly is reflected Nehru's concern for the common stock of man in the lines quoted below wherein he has given a free expression of his ethical ideas and arguments as well as his sympathetic evaluation of the people:

"Our final aim can only be a classless Society with equal economic justice and opportunity for all, a society organised, on a planned basis for the raising of mankind is higher material and cultural levels, to a cultivation of spiritual values, of co-operation, unselfishness, the spirit of service, the desire to do right, goodwill and love - ultimately a world order. Everything that comes in the way will have to be removed, gently if possible, forcibly if necessary. All this sounds fanciful and utopian, and it is highly unlikely that many people will be moved by this noble motives. But we can keep them in view and stress them, and it may be that gradually they will lessen the hatreds and passions that fill most of us.

Our methods must lead to this goal and be based on these motives. But we must also realise that human nature being what it is, in the mass, it will not always respond to our appeals and persuasions, or act in accordance with high moral principles.

(Autobiography).

The last sentence is highly significant. It needs be pointed out that Nehru's imagination and approach to the theme of mass behaviour and motivation are not constant, rather shifting. His writing is coloured accordingly. The basis of his dilemma lies in his socialistic beliefs in 'a Society organized on a planned

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planned basis and his simultaneous wonder at the dynamism of people's own free will and action. He writes:

"As I watched these great crowds and the unending streams of people going to and from the river, I wondered how they would react to the call for civil resistance and peaceful direction action. How many of them knew or cared for the Lahore decisions? How amazingly powerful was that faith which had for thousands of years brought them and their forbears from every corner of India to bathe in the holy Ganga; could they not divert some of this tremendous energy to political and economic action to better their own lot?" (Autobiography).

The fourth sentence: 'Could they not divert etc....' makes it transparently clear that the author's confidence in the energy and strength of the 'great crowds' is conditioned by the prospect of motivation growing in people's mind without force or coercion being applied. This is his highest respect for man. He is not a distant onlooker or a mere cool and emotionless judge of men and events. No critic will say, as they may say of Shelley, that Jawaharlal was interested only in dreams, idealism - a beautiful idealism of moral excellence - reformation, philosophy, utopianism. It is a rase pleasure, therefore, to discover in Jawaharlal Nehru a devout and dedicated pilgrim proceeding stubbornly on a journey of quest whose searching eyes are eagerly gazing at the distant horizon behind hills and deserts for the pinnacle view of the temple of Freedom, peace and progress, while his eyes do not also lose the sight of both men and bird and beast moving and
and dancing and crying in his nearest vicinity on the way.

How to explain, then, his feeling of isolation that takes grip of him at sudden and random intervals? Such visitations of the feeling of isolation occur under various contexts, and in different situations of Nehru's life. In his Autobiography, essays, letters, even in The Discovery of India, he makes a sudden detour as if to avoid the ills and excitement of the crowded highway, and walks some distance on solitary sojourn through a silent pathway. While he is fully absorbed in action or busy amidst the people, he withdraws himself unceremoniously into temporary retirement.

Even on a cursory review of his career it will appear that Nehru was fated to suffer a life of loneliness. Quoted below is an exquisite account as written by F.R. Moraes in an article captioned Nehru the Internationalist: "He is lost in Anand Bhavan" said a Congressman to me. He roams about the great house in utter loneliness. His wife is dead. His mother is dead. His daughter is abroad. His two sisters live outside Allahabad. He is all by himself in that huge tomb of a house. It is tragic watching him. To such physical loneliness he had acclimatized himself from the prime of his youth. Long terms of imprisonment in the solitary cell gave him a good seasoning. So, stress should be laid rather on the feeling of loneliness which is mental than what is purely a physical experience. The great philosopher-writer Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan has brought this out in beautiful language. "He (Jawaharlal) has few friends. He is essentially a lonely man. The crowds attract him and he is attracted by them. In company he is youthful, light-hearted; these are the usual devices of covering up one's inner loneliness. Moraes too is the opinion that "Though for the masses,
It has been stated earlier in this Chapter that occasions arose in Nehru's political career requiring him either to compromise his idealistic principles with the naked realities or to opt for a break-off, being unable to carry home his convictions with others. Again his moments of indecision, when placed between the horns of a dilemma, would push him into a brooding loneliness and inner suffering. No biographer could perhaps portray this experience of Nehru's self-imprisonment than that written by himself, because his restlessness was marked by self-questioning to which he subjected himself in constant attempts to satisfy his endless curiosity and quest about man, man's civilization, this very world and this great universe. The last section - Two Lives - under Chapter three of The Discovery of India serves as a unique instance wherein Nehru has been able to analyse himself in relation to this particular aspect of his mental get-up. The core-picture is drawn by four sentences in the second paragraph as quoted below, although the three paragraphs are integrally correlated:

"feeling of tiredness and disillusion would sometimes invade my being, and then I would seek escape from it in cultivating a certain detachment. Slowly my mind had prepared itself for this, and I had ceased to attach much value to myself or what happened to me. Or so I thought, and to some extent I succeeded, though not much, I fear, as there is too much of a volcano within me for real detachment. Unexpectedly all my defences are hurled away and all my detachment goes."

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The theme will remain confused unless the nature of his feeling of tiredness and disillusion is explained and this "sometimes" identified. As regards the first, it is mysterious how frustration could subdue him inspite of his resistance to it. The expression 'would sometimes invade my being' allures the critic to different alleys of psychological and metaphysical discussions. But, that should not be necessary. Nehru is very much an open personality, and gives out his mind without any reservation, without any sophistication. The critic, therefore, need not engage in hypothetical reasoning. Prof. Hiren Mukherjee refers to "an idea that he (Jawaharlal Nehru) was something of a 'torn being', which T.S. Eliot spoke of in his poems". Prof. Mukherjee, however, has something also to suggest: "As a sensitive young man drawn into the hurly-burly of public life, he may have passed through that phase, but it must have been short-lived, and in his own way he soon achieved a remarkable integration". Accepting that such integration was partially achieved by him at the ripe stage of his career, his writings, speeches and activities even after Independence all go to show that his 'Two Lives' continued in him up to the last day of his life. On a careful examination of his writings, however, it is observed that instances of his feeling of loneliness, tiredness and disillusion are more frequent in the protracted and eventful period of his career between 1928 and 1942. Grave conflicts arose in him between intellect and emotion during this period. Serious difference of opinion on policy, principle and programme in national politics also occurred between
between him and his close friends and colleagues. Disillusion descended upon him at the sight of his ideals, views and beliefs being turned down or misunderstood by others, either in rank and position or in rank and file, for the sake of some immediate gain, real or imaginary. Jawaharlal Nehru's real problem with himself during this period was the distance he created between him and others by his radical and uncommon approaches to national and international problems. To the doctrinaire he appeared unconventional; to the traditional he was a revolutionary, to the practical he was a romantic dreamer. The core of the problem lay in the fact that in Jawaharlal there appeared a curious mixture of apparently contrasting thought processes and approaches to life and action. With all this he had an originality of his own. A Socialist in conviction but a liberal of English cast by faith, an Indian by blood but an European by education and adaptation, a lover of the masses and crowds but a perfect individualist, a leader of the T.U.C. but not a believer in the emergence of one class in power through violence, highly intellectual but deeply loyal in emotion to amazingly dominating Gandhi, - thus Jawaharlal Nehru was too complex a character and at times an alien amidst Indians. Nehru's soul is in agony for all these differences, for often he is tortured by a feeling of a stranger, and the texture of his prolific writings of this period is impressively embroidered with the threads of tragic colours of his mind. Highly relevant to this context and supporting the above proposition is a letter to Jawaharlal from one Miss Dorothy Enge Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A. dead January 7, 1945 from which a few enchanting lines may be quoted:

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"I cannot read, even think of you, and what you are, that my heart does not ache but never fails to brighten when I think of your courage. As is said of you, you are an Indian who became a Western, an aristocrat who became a Socialist, an individualist who became a great mass leader. Oh, such poignant words, but there was another word that I read as it flared up at me - loneliness - and though this is true at times, believe that there are many on earth who are with you.

To me you are not a famous personage, or a writer, or a diplomat, though all this is true - but to me, none of those tempestuous things; only a man, born so great that he is far ahead of his time, with the result that while all admire him, few understand and love him."


Truly, during the long stretch of about twelve years from the year of his assuming Presidentship of the Indian National Congress in 1929 to the day of his last imprisonment Jawaharlal was ever-bubbling and overflowing with energies and ideas for the achievement of a new Indian social life based on Socialist economy. But Nehru and other leaders motivated on the same line of thought and action, like M.N.Roy, could not create a mass-base or organise effective revolutionary corps with this new message. Gandhi had already, by the unconquerable power of his simple, primary, elementary humanitarianism based on eternal Indian message of love and service and sacrifice, taken possession of the entire ground.

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Others tried to infiltrate or attack from behind but Jawaharlal made attempts through direct approach if he could carry the party with him. He burnt his finger, conflicts came after. He felt spent up, crippled and isolated. Gandhi used to bring him back to his nerves by his overpowering personal charm. This is the essence of the saga that Nehru was able to write on himself and his time. And in his magnum opus - autobiography - Chapter LXI; Desolation he has epitomised this whole proposition in brief yet with all clarity and conviction; two paragraphs - Para 7 and para 8 - contain the central idea. A reference to these passages will help immeasurably in a very close and clear study of the writer's mind and the nature of the agonizing conflict; these sentences must also convince literary critics of any camp of the style, the rhetoric, the word magic in which lie embodied the extreme pathos of a conflict-torn rebel.

Completely heart-broken, the idol of the crowds withdraws himself even from them in a mood of utter frustration; thus he wrote to Gandhi on the same occasion that forms the basis of the Chapter "Desolation" in his autobiography: (From his letter dated 13.8.34, Para 3).

"Human beings have an enormous capacity for adapting themselves, and so I too adapted myself to some extent to the new conditions. The keenness of my feelings on the subject, which amounted almost to physical pain, passed off; the edge was dulled. But shock after shock, a succession of events sharpened that edge to a fine point and allowed my mind or feelings no peace or rest.

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Again I felt that sensation of spiritual isolation, of being a perfect stranger out of harmony, not only with the crowds that passed me, but also with those whom I had valued as dear and close comrades. My stay in prison this time became a greater ordeal for my nerves than any previous visit had been. I almost wished that all newspapers might be kept away from me so that I might be spared these repeated shocks.

The letter is pessimistic in spirit and language. The related passages in the book however enjoy an optimistic tone. Similar instances of see-saw game of pessimism and optimism, when in the midst of a conflict, are to be seen in his writings during the period when differences of opinion and faith developed between him and his closest colleagues on Socialism and again during the Congress crisis on Subhas Chandra Bose.

The facts and events are now part of history, and much of his writings would be priceless material for socio-political research. Independent of history or of local context are such passages where one listens in a hush to the pangs of a tortured soul, to the painful murmurings of an eagle that has broken its wings; and these passages are of lasting literary merit for therein lies captured the finest sentiments of one of the greatest humanitarians of the century who often had to suffer the setbacks in regard to his ideals and objectives. Hamlet-like he appears in these passages for the sincerest expression of his indecisions, vacillations, feelings of frustration and isolation while thrown on the horns of a dilemma. Thus, drawing his self-portrait he attains the subli-

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sublimity of a creative artist, Prof. Thurjati Prasad Mukherjee made some interesting observations on Jawaharlal Nehru's writings, and the sentences most relevant to the points under discussion here are quoted below:

"Yes, he is a creative artist. I have never read certain passages of his 'Autobiography' or his essays without a catch in my throat, my hair standing on end; and that's about all that one can say or do about art." (Nehru Abhinandan Granth : A Birth day Book - Nov. 14, 1949).

A study of the inter-action of Nehru's Two Lives is, therefore, essentially necessary to get a fuller significance of the lasting literary merit of his writings. Not the robust statements, nor political analyses rather his fine nuances self-consoling platitudes, occasional outbursts in anger or frustration are rewarding to literary critics. And the nuances are born of the clash or conflict inherent in the duality of his self.

Reared and nurtured in the warm atmosphere of Renaissance of Europe, Nehru imbided the spirit of broad humanitarianism and liberal optimism. Added to these was a buoyant romanticism, which gave him a spirit of quest for the unknown, a spirit of adventure, an intense longing for what is not and, crowning all, a flight of imagination which would often relieve him from the burden of the present and take him to a land of dreams. Mentally surcharged with this bubbling and joyous spirit he comes to address the people of India, to share with them the finest gifts of his renaissance thoughts and ideas. But unfortunately, India, with all

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all poverty and backwardness on the surface, had a personality of her own, simple yet stubborn, weak yet eternal, unlearned yet essentially cultured at the roots. Psychologically therefore, India was not prepared to swallow his message. Often Nehru seemed to be missing the link, and the result would be, in modern terminology, a communication gap. Thus an intellectual Nehru with his accidental modernism suffers emotional set-back when his ideas do not sell lovingly with the vast millions at his homeland who are steeped in oriental traditionalism. Thus, the source of his mental conflict is easily identifiable. Mysteriously, however, the two gaze at each other and a magnetic spell of love draws them nearer and nearer, the communication gap notwithstanding. And, from this well of love Nehru draws sustenance to keep himself wedded to his own idealism and allied with the people to whom the idealism often appears strange and alien. In fine, therefore, Nehru's intellect and emotion, his conflicts and isolation, and then his rejuvenation through love-this cycle can explain properly the meaning of his writings when examined from an artistic point of view.

The proposition may be rearranged like this: In intellect, thought and quest Nehru has the imprint of an English Liberal, almost a utopian, subsequently turned a believer in Socialism. As owned by himself in his autobiography: "Personally, I owe too much to England in my mental make-up ever to feel alien to her. And do what I will, I cannot get rid of the habits of mind, and the standards and ways of judging other countries as well.
as well as life generally, which I acquired at School and College in England." In relation to India, however, he is deeply romantic, even childlike sometimes. "The sight of this outline against the Sky (the Himalayas), and now their summits and sides are covered with fresh snow, have meant a great deal to me. They seem to rouse in me ancient memories of the long ago when perhaps my ancestors wondered about the mountains of Kashmir and played in their snow and glaciers." (From Nehru's letter to Gandhi dated 13.3.34, Anand Bhavan, Allahabad). This sounds almost Narcissus-like, but in essence the sentiment expressed is romantic, for the sweep of imagination is very broad, and this imagination is his force when he hears the footsteps of the first Aryans coming up on to the soil of India, or when he suddenly discovers in course of hurried tours in ordinary village folk the face and grace of exquisite beauties sculptured and painted in Ajanta and Ellora. Thus, India and the millions of Indians whom he constantly comes across, both have a dreamlike appearance before him. To them he has a message to impart - the message of a socialistic utopia. And the people of his dream are awed and surprised and baffled by it. A music is thus born, - of conflict, of an apparent tragedy, - in fact, a song of ambivalence.

To quote from his autobiography again: "I felt lonely and homeless, and India, to whom I had given my love and for whom I had laboured, seemed a strange and bewildering land to me. Was it my fault that I could not enter into the spirit and ways of thinking of my countrymen? Even with my closest associates I felt that an invisible barrier came between us and, unhappy at being unable to

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Thus, Nehru's romantic unison with India is baffled by his intellectual approach. Explained by imagery the position would appear like the running of a spinning-yarn from outside which, despite best efforts, cannot get into the weave of a long fabric constantly in the make on a living loom.

In this context an anecdote related by Prof. Dhurjati Prasad Mukherjee may be considered for its illuminating value: "He (Jawaharlal) kept on puffing and smiled to say, 'We don't quite belong.' Many passages of his autobiography floated in my memory. We don't quite belong - but to whom? To India? Yet, he loves India and is ever making it. India too belongs to him in a way. There is nothing defective in that exchange. Is it, then, the class-difference in upbringing, attitudes and manners? Psychological distance is a function of social distance. Is it, thus, his inability to de-class himself, or just the meanness of jealous admirers? Or is it all due to his forward gaze and wide vision from which the public are generally averse? They have often criticized him for being a dreamer, a visionary, an internationalist. Yet the explanation is not adequate. Shall we then, come to the fundamental ambivalence of love? Such questions worried me that evening."

The pathos is thus summed up in one question: 'Do I belong?' Another great literary artist of this century to be...
to be haunted by the same question was Joseph Conrad, who coming with an alien background, selected oriental topics and characters and wrote in English. He too suffered from loneliness, a brooding sense of isolation. But the parallel ends there. In Nehru the conflict is far deeper and almost organically related. His topic is India and the on-rush of events on her soil and his own part in the drama. Here, on this vast panorama, amidst the multitudes, the question reverberates: Do I belong? In his autobiography, The Unity of India and a number of essays and letters written right up to the early forties, he tells vividly and with deep sincerity his experiences of the long journey of life, and as he marches on, the milestones one after another appear before him with the torturing question inscribed thereupon: Do I belong? The question may be real or a mere hallucination, but from this arises great murmurings of a running stream that has to dash and revolt against rocks on its sides or at its bed apparently obstructing but in essence giving the stream shape and speed and sound. In essence, therefore, the question is very real to his self, and from this question are born various quests on life and man and even on his own self. And thus, the great saga of life is written.