THE THEME OF KAMALA

Composed of six cantos: Kamala, Our marriage and after, The problem of human relationships, Christmas, Death and (the epilogue) Mussolini: Return,—the second chapter in Nehru's *Discovery of India* is undeniably one of the most stirring studies in tragic pathos covering their conjugal relationship.

In his books and letters and essays reference to Kamala, his wife, is rather limited. Whether there was much more scope is doubtful considering the overall plan, style and approach of the writer. *Badenweiler: Lausanne* however is an exception. Characteristically it has the appearance of an interpolation in the scheme of the whole book which attempts at an intellectual analysis of the growth and development of India and Indianness, philosophically, historically, culturally and politically. In his Autobiography, Nehru speaks very rarely on Kamala, but wherever he has done so he has been sincerely expressive and thus expressive of the depth of his feelings about her. What is particularly noticeable is that all such references to Kamala in the Autobiography are underlined by the touch of a gloomy pen dipped in the darkness of tragic presentiments. Red marks of joy and gay sunshine are rare, if not totally absent. Many a such scope and occasion arose in this particular book where he could have dwelt a little more upon the brighter side of the lady's unfortunate career who had very often to taste from the painful cup of desolation throughout her married life. Personal issues are vastly rare in the book, unless these are primarily connected with the events and factors

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factors contributing to his 'own mental growth'. Kamala thus suffered the lot of similar hushed heroines of literary history to whom poet Tagore has so sympathetically awarded the tribute of 'Kavyer Upekshita', that is, neglected in the epics.

Whether Nehru was conscious or not of his lapses in this regard is a debatable question, but doubtless he compensated greatly in this chapter captioned 'Badeweiller : Loussane' in The Discovery of India. Writing in reminiscence, in these six cantos Nehru recaptures his mood and feelings in the most trying and tragic interlude of his troubled adventures with life. These pages cover the last days of Kamala. She lies, bedridden, fighting the losing battle against consumption, first in a sanatorium in Germany, then in Switzerland. Nehru is by her side, watching, consoling, inspiring and no doubt always apprehending. In both content and style of writing, here Nehru is entirely new to his readers, deeply personal and surprisingly lyrical - so much so that the whole piece assumes almost the shape and quality of a poetic drama.

In short sketches the author develops the character of the heroine of the piece, Kamala, his wife, from her early age when as an unsophisticated country girl with little formal school education she entered the family of Nehru as Matilal's daughter-in-law through her mature age sometimes a forlorn housewife, sometimes a freedom fighter and ultimately her cool self-effacement and death. Behind her great sacrifice lay the sincere urge and motive to pave the way for her husband in his Tryst with Destiny.

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Here is a study in reminiscence of the enigmatic figure of Kamala "who blossomed under duress and sacrifice."

The inner order in the piece is not difficult to grasp, although a little bit of exercise is necessary to sort out essentials and non-essentials. As one reads the fifth or last paragraph of canto I, Kamala appears in flesh and blood; "She came to us as an unsophisticated girl, apparently with hardly any of the complexes which are said to be common now. She never entirely lost that girlish look, but as she grew into a woman her eyes acquired a depth and a fire, giving the impression of still pools behind which storms raged". Then her totality is summed up in one sentence "But essentially she was an Indian girl and, more particularly, a Kashmiri girl, sensitive and proud, child-like and grown-up, foolish and wise". Thus they started as husband and wife. The author is in a mood of recapitulation, and a vivid re-enlivening of the past is effected. "We had been married for nearly twenty years and yet how many times she had surprised me by something new in her mental or spiritual make-up". And soon the author completely changes the tone of his treatment: "There was something elusive about her, something fay-like, real but unsubstantial, difficult to grasp. Sometimes, looking into her eyes, I would find a stranger peeping out at me."

This is, in essence, a sense of distance which grew in Nehru because of his own elusiveness to Kamala as there can be no doubt at all that by nature and also by pressure of circumstances Nehru could not participate with any measure of intensity in the
the joint venture of a conjugal life. This confession comes in the very first paragraph of canto 2; Our marriage and after, where he says:

"I thought of the early years of our marriage when, with all my tremendous liking for her, I almost forgot her and denied her, in so many ways, that comradeship which was her due. For I was then like a person possessed, giving myself utterly to the cause I had espoused, living in a dream-world of my own, and looking at the real people who surrounded me as unsubstantial shadows". Conscious of this personal failure in the task of reciprocity of married relationship, Nehru may naturally have taken shelter under excuses like his great adventure with life, his commitment to the goal of achieving independence of the motherland, his passionate zeal for the emergence of a new world free from fear of war and hunger. Instead, Nehru makes an artistic detour at this point and imaginatively conceives a romantic image of Kamala who is not an ordinary housewife seeking for help, consolation and sustenance from her husband; on the contrary she prefers to be a comrade-at-arms in the great struggle for national emancipation that her husband has been engaged with. But, in this too the hero neglects the heroine of the drama. Thus Nehru reveals his theme:

"She wanted to play her own part in the national struggle and not be merely a hanger-on and a shadow of her husband. She wanted to justify herself to her own self as well as to the world."
"Nothing in the world could have pleased me more than this, but I was far too busy to see beneath the surface and I was blind to what she looked for and so ardently desired".

Quoting from Tagore's poetic drama Nehru puts forth a simile of Kamala with Chitā who had said to her love: 'If you deign to keep me by your side in the path of danger and daring, if you allow me to share the great duties of your life, then you will know my true self'.

In real life, however, as admitted by Nehru, Kamala did not receive due welcome and comradely encouragement from her love. The image can easily get stalled, but the author saves her from that risk by making another detour. This time the detour is towards the real life of action as it could be best availed by Kamala.

Nehru lifts a few selected pieces from his treasure of memory. He refers to the courage and daring displayed by women of the country during the struggle of 1930's. He writes: 'Here were these women, women of the upper or middle classes, leading sheltered lives in their homes, peasant women, working class women, rich women, poor women, pouring out in their tens of thousands in defiance of Government order and Police lathi'. He refers to his father's reaction to this upsurge: 'He told us (in Naini Prison) how he had been agreeably surprised to see the energy, courage and ability displayed by women all over the country. Of the girls of his own household he spoke with affectionate pride.'

In the background of such a setting he then introduces the

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the role played by Kamala during those days of a glorious struggle. He writes: 'In this upheaval Kamala had played a brave and notable part and on her inexperienced shoulders fell the task of organizing our work in the city of Allahabad when every known worker was in prison. She made up for that inexperience by her fire and energy and, within a few months, she became the pride of Allahabad'.

It is a moot point to note that such transformation of an 'unsophisticated' housewife into a fighting woman at the forefront of events took place independent of Nehru himself. All her honour for such activities of courage and sacrifice is all the more greater because the motivation came from her own inner self and not from any inspiration passed on by her husband. Good enough, so far; but not the best as an image of a suffering soul in the eyes of an artist. The heroine's supreme sacrifice must be brought to the focus of attention. And that sacrifice in Kamala's life has been her self-effacement for the sake of her husband's glory and fame. No sacrifice is too great when the issue at stake is the husband's fame and future. In the ultimate analysis, therefore, she is great and noble chiefly as a wife, a truly Indian wife, or even sharing the universal and eternal feeling of an inalienable bond with one's husband, and being so suffers silently the pangs of separation from the very dear one and at the same time feels great solace and satisfaction at the thought of the beloved husband's ascending the throne of esteem and fame and glory. Thus, in a fine little paragraph of five sentences suggestive of drama—
dramatic action, Nehru brings out that eternal woman in Kamala and thereby gives the supreme touch of an artist in delineating the character of a wife who can sacrifice life's joy for the sake of her husband's mission but breaks down completely at the final moment of separation:

"When I was arrested in February, 1934 on a Calcutta warrant, Kamala went up to our rooms to collect some clothes for me. I followed her to say goodbye to her. Suddenly she clung to me and, fainting, collapsed. This was unusual for her as we had trained ourselves to take this jail-going lightly and cheerfully and to make as little fuss about it as possible. Was it some premonition she had that this was our last more or less normal meeting?

She is thus no less than a martyr in the sense that she has been sacrificing her dearest possession of life—her husband—and on such trying moments the tragic pathos of a bleeding heart defies control and gushes out to the surface. First and foremost, therefore, she is an ideal wife—an Indian wife at that—and then she has martyred herself for the 'cause' of her husband.

In the succeeding cantos 'The problem of Human Relationships' 'Christmas 1935' and 'Death' Nehru's treatment of the theme attains a wonderful literary charm by virtue of the quality of exposition and style. There is an artistic skill in the juxtaposition of these cantos for in the first one there is an illumination of Kamala, in the second a play of light and shadow, a preparation for the tragedy and finally in the third the dark curtain of death is drawn upon her. The canto 'Death' is in fact the final act of a tragic poetic drama but its tone and content do not conform to
to and do not directly follow from the previous two cantos.
Rather it can be said that the first one of these three cantos is a digression providing sweet relief to the grim context which is supercharged with tragic presentiments.

Inspite of the lack of adequate mental understanding between them, as frankly stated by Nehru in canto 'The problem of Human Relationship', the two are held in loving esteem by the people at large as 'adarsha Jori', the model or ideal couple. Inspite of their differences of way of life and outlook, 'inspite of difficulties and differences' both of them, Kamala and Jawaharlal, partook jointly and happily from the mysterious cup of life and felt, in the author's own language; 'How fortunate we were, I told her and she agreed, for though we had sometimes quarrelled and grown angry with each other, we had kept that vital spark alight, and for each one of us life was always unfolding new adventure and giving fresh insight into each other'.

In 'Christmas 1935' a discerning critic can easily note Nehru's attempt at two things: (i) a subtle touch forewarning, the slow but sure approach of Death and (ii) martyrlike self-sacrifice of Kamala. The first one is achieved through symbolic representation of some experienced facts read in paragraphs 2 and 3. Nehru's second aim is achieved by straight and simple narration of a factual situation:

"In January I went to Paris for a few days and paid another brief visit to London. Life was pulling at me again and

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and news reached me, in London, that I had been elected, for a second time, President of the Indian National Congress, which was to meet in April. I had been expecting this as friends had forewarned me and I had even discussed it with Kamala. It was a dilemma for me: To leave her as she was or to resign from the Presidentship. She would not have me resign.

The important point to notice in it is Kamala's self-abnegation. She is mortally ill, 'and it seemed that her life hung by a mere thread' and though beyond all hopes of recovery she passes over the immediate crisis and even while convalescing, her only solace and source of inspiration is her husband sitting at her bedside. In such a situation, to agree to leave her husband whose great destiny is calling him back to the life of struggle and adventure for the great 'cause', is but a sure invitation to death. It is almost suicidal on her part, But she does not care for her life, she is prepared to make the supreme sacrifice should that serve the 'cause' of her husband.

For a close parallel to this situation a sympathetic critic has to open chapter L XVI: Kamala was suffering at home and 'there was a progressive deterioration in Kamala's condition'. In Naini Prison Nehru would at times receive short bulletins stating her condition. News reached him that her condition was becoming critical again. Could he not go to her bedside to enthuse her in her struggle for life ? Of course he could only if he would give an assurance to keep away from politics for the rest of his prison term. That was the dilemma faced by Contd...
by Nehru. He was told that Kamala's condition was becoming worse and worse and his presence by her side might make all the difference between life and death. But how could he go against his own pledge, how could he be disloyal to his 'cause'? He was very much excited and agitated. And at that stage he was taken to see his ailing wife. Nehru found her 'almost in a daze with high temperature'. Then, in Nehru's own language: "She longed to have me by her, but as I was leaving her, back to prison, she smiled at me bravely and beckoned to me to bend down. When I did so, she whispered: 'What is this about your giving an assurance to the Government? Do not give it!"

Comparing this with the matter told again in the chapter under review a discerning critic naturally notices fine similarity in Kamala's reaction to the idea of her husband's making any sacrifice for her sake which may in turn adversely affect his own political fame and future. In 'she would not have me resign' rings the same note as in 'Do not give it'. Even when her illness is grave and death is almost knocking at the door, she prefers that her husband should unfalteringly advance on his own adventurous way and not make any compromise for her sake.

Thus in 'Christmas 1935' Nehru has been able to create the image of Kamala to whom her husband's 'cause' is more valuable than even her own life. And, in fact, the silent footsteps of death can be heard in the pathos-packed air in this short chapter.

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Then comes the great final scene 'DEATH'. Departs Kamala.

Complete in only seven small paragraphs the canto is a masterpiece in itself by virtue of the quality of the writer's style and treatment of the noble tragedy of Kamala's life. Packed with the idea of movement the canto contains the stillness of death in which really it reaches the finale.

On moving from Germany to Switzerland Nehru becomes restless with the enforced life of prolonged inactivity in having to remain by the patient, Kamala, his wife. The call for active participation in public affairs of his country have already started to ring irresistibly in his ears. He plans and prepares to return to India, and even his passage by the Dutch K.L.M. Air Line has been booked. The great throbs of life are easily perceived in all these.

The real pathos however lies in the contrastsituation. Dying Kamala lies watchful of her husband's movements; happy to the core of her heart that her husband would again go back to his great mission in life and at the same time sad and despaired at the prospect of separation from her love, the only anchor of life. She is in a mood of great conflict. Nehru writes thus:

"I was to leave Laussanne on February 28. After all this had been fixed up, I found that Kamala did not at all like the idea of my leaving her. And yet she would not ask me to change my plans."

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Silently borne, the conflict wrecks her from inside. The key-note of the character here is conflict, conflict within Kamala between a strong feeling for her husband's career and at the same time a pre-occupation with death. Soon, the very urge to be in life is lost. In the eyes of a reviewer - 'She is the calmest before her death'. Nehru has to cancel his flight! The end comes soon. "Early on the morning of February 28, she breathed her last."

Inside this short canto a quick reversion is achieved from life to death by the symbolic date of February 28. The particular day was fixed for the hero of the piece to re-embark for the field of action and adventure. It turned out to be the day of departure of the heroine to the other world of death—and eternal rest. All conflict of her life has now been resolved.

And finally, what remains unwritten by Nehru, in resolving her agony of conflict Death also sweetly promises her of the endless freedom to be enjoyed henceforth by her love to join again heart and soul, the struggle for the pursuit of his 'cause'. She has actually died a martyr's death!

The remaining canto 'Mussolini : Return' can be considered as an epilogue in consummation of the tragedy just concluded in the previous canto. A projection of the hero's mission for the fulfilment of which the heroine has sacrificed herself, comes here in full view. Nehru rushes back again to the busy and big and eventful world. Rome, Montreux, Geneva, Marseilles, Cairo, Karachi — all busy cities and centres of men's activities are Contd...
are raised before the eyes in quick succession. One short simple sentence contains the essential spirit of this epilogue canto: 'I continued my journey'.

The idea of movement is continued and developed in the closing paragraph where the author introduces the 'swift-flowing Ganga' and also the sea, where the last remains of our kith and kin are carried after death by that noble river. In the symbol of running Ganga there is an impression of continuity in the great flow of life with an ever-changing facade, and in the symbol of the Sea there is an impression of a transcendental fulfilment of the transient life of mortal men and women. Essentially these are purely Indian classical concepts and eminently suitable for utilization by the author dealing with such a delicate, noble and deeply emotional issue. Of much more importance is the treatment of the theme of Kamala's self-sacrifice in this poetic small chapter of such a highly serious book. The character of Kamala as depicted by the author here is that of a tender-aged unsophisticated girl blossoming into a great man's wife in the surroundings of a great family. He is the portrait of a character great in fighting, suffering and finally sacrificing her own self. Her fight is on two planes, one on the external front and the other in her inner self. From the constant inner conflict arises her suffering both mental and physical. Mental suffering she overcomes but not physical suffering. In death she achieves the peace which has been ever-elusive to her in her lifetime. Peace it is because a great problem of her life is solved at last which she had to silently bear all her life without solution.

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To be a worthy partner in the pursuit of her husband's great 'cause' and the inevitable life of strain and struggle or to be a happy housewife with husband and children and others in a patriarchal family where security and comforts of life are not far to seek - torn in this conflict Kamala is eaten up from inside. Its impact is lost upon her husband who moves within the charmed circle of a dream rooted in his 'revolutionary' urges.

That Nehru should be thinking that Kamala wants to rise up to the level of a great comrade-at-arms in the independence struggle working by his side may appear natural. 'Chitra' is his ideal consort heroine. 'Chitra' of Tagore's poetic drama 'Chitrângada' is in fact a romantic figure of India's enchanting past. Shaped in a romantic cast of mind Nehru will naturally select this character as an ideal and seek in her wife's figure such womanhood. In Shelley's Prometheus Unbound also the heroine plays a great role as a partner in her love's unyielding struggle. But obviously enough, Nehru's lack of proper understanding of Kamala's real self rests in this rather wishful thinking and the cherished unreality. Basically, Kamala is a symbol of Indian womanhood. This has been perfectly expressed in the one sentence by Nehru in Canto 3 of this chapter: "She became a symbol of Indian women, or of woman herself." By this Nehru tries to express something other than what it should really mean, for in the preceding canto he has written: 'She wanted to play her own part in the national struggle and not be merely a hanger-on and a shadow of her husband. She wanted to justify herself to her own self as well as to the..."
world. Nothing in the world could have pleased me more than this, but I was far too busy to see beneath the surface and I was blind to what she looked for and so ardently desired. What Nehru really misses to find out is Kamala's ardent desire in life as a truly representative Indian woman. The inner feelings of 'Lāhānya ' of Tagore's great novel 'Shesher Kavītā' may be said to reflect Kamala's true feelings. She would rather be happy to build up in her own sweet home and lavish upon the same her own feminine art and faith and talent in fulfilment of her own great dreams of life. The following few lines from Tagore's inimitable piece of poetry 'Asthā', written in a different context although, may be immensely expressive of Kamala's inner urge:

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many were the days my heart hoped to find a small house, where I could dwell all by myself. Neither riches nor honours did I crave: all that I hoped for was a small house.
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The tragic fact of her life remains that she has been baffled in this particular aspect of the eternal desire of Indian women of which, in the estimate of Nehru, she was almost a symbol. What alternative can she seek out for herself through which to satisfy the baffled longing of her life,—the longing to be a worthy wife, worthy mother, worth woman? She bears patiently the

* English rendering by Mrs Lila Ray, Calcutta. Contd....
the desolation of life caused by her husband's prolonged imprisonments, then she comes forward to share the duties and sufferings of her husband hoping perhaps that he will be happy at such gestures from her. The underlying sense of pathos and pain cannot be overlooked. The artistic success of Nehru's treatment of the theme is demonstrated by his ability to raise the tone and atmosphere of the situation in Kamala's days of dilemma and conflict from the level of pure frustration to the plane of tragedy. Tragedy it has been; no doubt, Kamala offers a perfect answer to her husband's call for a life of suffering and sacrifice. She gives away her all. She dies. She achieves martyrdom, pure and simple. The purity and simplicity are derived from her way of achieving it — silently, patiently, undemonstratively and in full faith and selflessness. This has been beautifully expressed in three short sentences in canto 2 of the chapter: "I had taken from her what she gave me. What had I given to her in exchange during these early years? I had failed evidently and, possibly, she carried the deep impress of those days upon her." And finally, in the last canto of the chapter, which should be considered as an épilogue, a high measure of poetic justice is in evidence in the sudden awakening in the bereaved husband's mind the painful sense of loss of some mysterious possession in life which has all along been ignored by him but has all along been cherished and dreamed of by the other partner. Kamala. Nehru writes of his deep feelings of pain while returning home from Europe soon after Kamala's death: "At Cairo there were some old friends to meet me, and then further east, over
over the deserts of Western Asia. Various incidents, and the arrangements necessary for my journey, had so far kept my mind occupied. But after leaving Cairo and flying, hour after hour, over this desolate desert area, a terrible loneliness gripped me and I felt empty and purposeless. I was going back alone to my home, which was no longer home for me, and there by my side was a basket and that basket contained an urn. That was all that remained of Kamala, and all our bright dreams were also dead and turned to ashes. She is no more, Kamala is no more, my mind kept on repeating.

That mysterious possession of life, as said in the foregoing paragraph, is gone with Kamala, not to return any more. The loss is in fact the loss of his home, of which suddenly he has become conscious. The pathos of the tragic situation appears concentrated in the sentence:

"I was going back alone to my home, which was no longer home for me ........".

Here is the culmination point of the whole theme for in this awakening of the nostalgic attachment in him for his "home" lies the vindication of the lifelong desire and dream of the departed Kamala. The impact of the loss is greatly accentuated by the introduction of the imagery of the 'desolate desert area'. So her martyrdom has not been in vain. Their home, all their bright dreams, that remained unfulfilled during Kamala's lifetime, have now at least at such a deeply personal moment of her beloved come

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come true in retrospect. That is how she conquers her home and her husband by laying down her life.

That, mentally, Kamala was preparing herself for self-sacrifice is borne by some hind facts, which have not been referred to by Jawaharlal but are nonetheless very important in relation to this context. A brief reference will perhaps serve the purpose. The intensity of Kamala’s attachment to her worldly life was gradually slackening in the early thirties and a deep religious feeling, or rather spiritualism, was taking hold of her. She came down to Calcutta with her mother, went to Belur Math and after much efforts got herself initiated into the order of Sri Ramkrishna Paramhansa by the grace of Swamy Shivananda, the then President of the Belur Math and Sri Ramkrishna Mission. Her letters to Swamy Abhayenanda are revealing and go on to show how much she had withdrawn herself into a deeper self of spiritual faith and surrender. Her sincere, or so to say, a frantic search for an absolute anchor where she could find that ever-elusive solace and also the significance of her none-too happy life. She wrote a few letters to Swamy Abhayananda of Sri Ramakrishna Math and Mission, Belur; between 1933 and 35. The following two excerpts from her letters will help in revealing to a great extent the mood and attitude of Kamala’s mind at a very crucial period of her life:

(From a letter dated 9.3.1934 at Anand Bhavan)

Bhai Abhayanandaji,

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'Ever since the great one (Swami Sivananda) entered into meditation I feel he is with me and this gives me peace. If I get restless I think of Lord Krishna. I have started reading the Gita. I had already completed reading it once but I have started it again. It gives me much pleasure. At times it seems to me that we were present during the happenings of the Mahabharata."

Again (from a letter dated 28.3.1935 at Bhowali):

"Bhai Abhayansandaji, Namaskar.

Your letter came after many days. I was wondering what the matter was.

I am fully confident that I shall be with God and that it will not be long before I am liberated from the sheaf of worldly life. I feel I have nobody but God and my way to Him is being cleared by circumstances. It is my regret that I could not put any questions to Guruji or tell him anything which might now have been of help to me. I have his kindness and I shall be assured by finding Lord Krishna."

This aspect of the agonizing conflict of Kamala's mind and her constant search for a satisfaction in sublimity has not been touched upon by Jawaharlal. He has left it entirely out of any consideration. But this surely provides an objective correlative to the critic for a better understanding of Kamala's tragic disposition so that the denouement as delineated at the close of these cantos become clear. It throws light on the 'elusive' character...
which reacts to situations of life essentially in a traditional Indian way. As an artist, Nehru has based the small drama on facts and situations which are intensely personal to these two lives. Otherwise it would have been difficult for him to put into it that extreme sincerity of a loving husband in the expression of both his deep attachment and unintentional neglect to the object of love. But, a passing reference would have contributed to a better compounding of the inner drama of the heroine's mind.

The tragic tone of the writing of the chapter has received exquisite support from the rhetoric of the language used by the writer.

Canto 1: Kamala - Nehru writes in the very second paragraph: "There was the same old brave smile on kamala's face when I saw her, but she was too weak and too much in the grip of pain to say much. Perhaps my arrival made a difference for she was a little better the next day and for some days after. But the crisis continued and slowly drained the life out of her. Unable to accustom myself to the thought of her death, I imagined that she was improving and that if she could only survive that crisis she might get well."

How illuminating are these four words - 'same old brave smile', and at once the past is unrolled before the readers' eyes, and also at the same time a contrast is introduced when in the very third sentence the reader gets the picture of Kamala's life

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life being slowly drained away. Thus the brave sail of a memo-
rable (suggested by 'same') fast now falls under the nervous
shadow of death. But the effect is sought to be offset in the next
sentence. This perhaps is the patent situation in life for Nehru
to create his own fancied world of escape, and here placed in the
crisis of his beloved wife's mortal illness Nehru imagines Kamala
must be improving. These two words 'I imagined' also suggest at
the same breath that the reality in store of fate must be other-
wise than what is imagined. Use of words and phrases impregnated
with suggestive ideas, sometimes happy, sometimes uncanny and
dometimes mysterious is a unique feature in Jawsharlal's hands.
Another glorious instance of such language deserves mentioning:
"As Christmas approached there was a marked deterioration in
Kamala's condition. Another crisis had come and it seemed that her
life hung by a mere thread. During those days of nineteen thirty-
five I ploughed my way through snow and slush not knowing how many
days or hours she would live. The calm winter scene with its man-
tle of white snow seemed so like the peace of cold death to me,
and I lost all my past hopeful optimism." These four sentences are
perhaps unsurpassable in any language for their measured composition
their sequence, the elegiac lyricism they pour out and above all
the profound sense of grief and helplessness they create in readers'
minds. The subject -matter being what it is, even very emotional
treatment could also successfully raise it to the level of creative
writing. Nehru has on the other hand introduced words, phrases
and images which are so very artistically woven into a tragic
overspread.

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Christmas signifies deep winter, and snowfall necessarily means the suspension of normal life and vegetation. And Komala's life too is in a critical condition. The uncanny forebodings of a life's end are represented by some mysterious-sounding words of extraordinary poetic intensity: 'The calm winter scene with its mantle of white snow'. And a vast icy panorama symbolizes 'the peace of cold death'.

Highly significant is his use of two synonymous words to express a particular state of mind 'I lost all my past hopeful optimism.' A great buoyancy of mind is easily detected in the combination of 'hopeful optimism' for herein lies a stress upon the indefatigable vitality of the mind which creates its own fancied realm of a cherished reality. In this passage therefore the vertically contrasted situation has been very beautifully drawn up by the use of uniquely expressive words and phrases. The mind soars high on top with the aid of optimism while it cannot but shrink in apprehension looking down below at the abyss of disease and death. Horizontally too, the readers' minds is led towards the vast panoramic view of life's painful existence in destitution. 'The calm winter scene with its mantle of white snow' and a lone traveller ploughing his way through the uncanny scene, - all these together helpness for the man journeying on with no prospect of success.

Language here has fully served its sublime purpose of evoking the noblest sentiments at its most economic and imaginative use. It does strike a critic a little surprising that a
chapter like 'Badenweiller + Laussane' can be made a part of such a serious reading historical quest which *The Discovery of India* is made of.

The peculiar heritage of this ancient land forms the main theme of the book. "It is the thought of this particular heritage and of its application to the present that has long filled my mind, and it is about this that I should like to write," ... says Nehru in the preceding chapter. With a view to making sufficient ground for the chapter on Kamala to follow immediately Nehru writes: "I shall begin this story with an entirely personal chapter, for this gives the clue to my mood in the month immediately following the period I had written about towards the end of my autobiography."

The chapter begins with Nehru's arrival at the Badenweiler sanatorium on September 9, 1935 and it ends with his return journey to India early in March 1936 after the demise of Kamala on February 28 that year. Except for a short visit to Paris and London in January 1936 this period is passed by Nehru at Badenweiler and Laussane as a constant companion of Kamala undergoing a baffling treatment. Going through the cantos in the chapter it is possible to capture Nehru's varying mood during this period. For the purpose of an artistic evaluation of the writing a study of his moods will be of little importance. Far more significant is the glorious memorial that has been created here of Kamala, and it has been fully discussed in the foregoing pages.

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It is of great importance to judge the relative place of
the chapter in the whole book. Though this particular chapter in
the beginning is entirely autobiographical both in content and spirit
Nehru's Discovery of India was planned otherwise. Confined within a
particular framework of limited space and time Nehru stretches his
vision far back into the dim past to assess and appreciate India's
true cultural identity which he and other countrymen are heir to;
then a close look at the perilous and painful present; the struggle
to conquer the ills of the day besetting India; the undying hopes
for the country's happy regeneration in the future. Exactly these
ideas can be easily traced in the lyrical little piece: Boudenweiler-
Loussane. Again, in the Discovery of India there is a perception
that the inescapable destiny of man is to flow with the tide of
inexorable time and history. The same idea emerges from what has
been drawn with deep feelings in the last paragraph of the last canto
of this chapter where Nehru writes thus: "And then Allahabad,
where we carried the precious urn to the swift-flowing Ganga and
poured the ashes into the bosom of that noble river. How many of
our forebears she had carried thus to the sea, ....."

Considered in this light, therefore, the significance
of this elegiac chapter can be determined as the symbolic preface
of the great book of ideas and analysis of man's past heritage,
to-day's struggles and future hopes.

Contd...
Despite of shock and grief and all the pathos of the struggle man has to go on with the assignment for the achievement of the 'cause', and there can be no halting or resting before the dreamed-of land of abiding peace and happiness for man is finally reached. So writes Nehru in the Epilogue Canto no. Six of this poetic chapter - "I continued my journey."