INTRODUCTION

To Jawaharlal Nehru many reviewers have attributed the highest significance as a hero of contemporary history, basing their considerations on the martyr-like "hero's" great political role during nearly fifty years of this chequered century. A typical observation may be quoted from Rafiq Zakaria's Foreword to Ram Gopal's unique book The Trials of Nehru; he writes: "The sanctity that comes to be attached to them (trials of Jawaharlal for his political activities against the British Government for India's freedom) is not so much because of the trials as such but on account of the role that a particular individual happened to play therein, symbolising in himself the clash between the decaying 'present' and the blossoming 'future', that gripped the environment. Such a conflict had necessarily to be above the ordinary laws of the time, representing as it did the larger conflict between the thesis and the antithesis. And since a particular individual became a hero of the drama, so to say, it was round him that the whole plot revolved; naturally he acquired supreme importance." Such archetypal personalities shine in their own inexplicable glory and deny any scope for analytical review. The pervasiveness of the halo and aura around their names, as in the case of Jawaharlal Nehru, appears so complete that any attempt to examine a particular branch of their manifold interests and activities gets lost like a lone sailor's drive on an uncharted ocean.

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An approach to the theme of Nehru as a creative writer in English is therefore beset with the same problem, for, he is an accredited political visionary with the brilliant record of struggle and sacrifice for the people's emancipation, and a uniquely dear and popular Prime Minister of 'the biggest democracy in the world'. How to extricate his 'literature' from the labyrinth of his public life with which the critic is faced instantaneously in his attempt to evaluate the written stuff? The problem is graver than what is apparent. The critic is constantly haunted by the hero's haloed personality; the resultant feeling of awe and wonder sweeps him away from the marked-out arena of literary criticism. Nehru as a writer is certainly engulfed by Nehru as a political leader riding on an all-time high crest of popularity and public esteem. The inescapable influence is dangerous no doubt, this certainly tends to colour the critic's views. In a study like this to examine the literary merit of Nehru's writings the risk can scarcely be avoided of being led away by other considerations than purely literary, but at the same time it has also to be recognized that the entire range of his written text is related, directly or indirectly, to political, historical and social topics extending panorama-like to vistas of the past, the present and even the future, and covering thematically issues of purely national and also of widely international importance. In fact, some keen observers of Nehru's life and work are of the opinion that the stress and turmoil of his political career provided the sure base on which

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be could set up the edifice of his literary workmanship. The main weightage is thus shifted from the creation to the creator. It is a moot point, therefore, to enquire whether it is possible to relate the critical study of Nehru's writings to his published works independent of his personal importance as a political leader of India's Freedom Movement and then as the country's Prime Minister.

The question is perhaps difficult to answer, but it will be futile to pursue the point. As the background is always political, an approach to the topic from the stand-point of a purely literary criticism will appear illusory to the casual reviewers. The need really exists for a serious examination of the quality and worth of Nehru's writings free from any other consideration than literary. His four main books, An Autobiography, The Glimpses of World History, The Unity of India, The Discovery of India have been applauded as remarkable pieces of writing in English. Interestingly, more often a study of his writings satisfies two parallel quests: 1) Socio-political and 2) literary. A typically representative observation of such twin satisfaction may be read in the sentence quoted below from Edgar Snow: "His (Jawaharlal's) Autobiography is not only indispensable to any student of Asia, it is among the treasures of English literature." In the present study, however, the main interest is not in Asia or any other continent or country for that matter, but in English literature.

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In his books, essays, letters and written speeches Jawaharlal Nehru has been able to maintain a high standard of English prose style. This is important, no doubt, but at the same time there are also other elements bestowing on his writings genuine virtues of creative writing. Often the poet and visionary in the politician Jawaharlal removes the veil of the matter-of-fact day-to-day affairs, problems and programmes, and infuses an artist’s emotion in his words and sentences, as a consequence of which his writings reach the high-water mark of literature in its true connotation. A great humanist feels extremely hurt at the plight of man all over the world in this agonising age of panic and fear inspite of science and technology holding out great hopes for the future. The spirit of the age has often spoken through Nehru, though he may not have understood its manifestations, objectively speaking. Often he writes of a ‘destiny’s beckoning’ to which man should respond. His wonder and delight at the sight of nature’s beautiful manifestations come out in flowing language like a youthful ever-bubbling spring. Again, in a mood of detachment from the coarse realities of life he has aroused a sense of ‘unlimitedness’ which in the opinion of George Bernard Shaw, is the sign of a true artist. Such creative aspects of Jawaharlal Nehru’s writings deserve careful appreciation and evaluation with a view to assigning to them their true title in the history of English literature.

Miss Dorothy Norman, in her ‘introduction’ to her own...
excellent work Nehru, the First Sixty Years has made a very
significant observation: 'I should like to suggest in conclusion
that, whatever one's disagreements or criticisms, Nehru emerges
as both an outstanding literary figure of our epoch and as an
important political force.' Of the twin aspects, priority has
rightly gone to Nehru's image as a writer. Dr. Keshkar has, how­
ever, made the point much more explicit by striking the original
keynote from which arises the real charm of Nehru's writings:

"Pandit Jawaharlal was essentially a visionary, a poet,
a thinker and then a politician. His political thinking was colo­
cured by his emotions and his vision. To him the creation of a new
India was an exciting venture in which all of us should join and
the achievement of this high ideal was to him not a question of
material prosperity but of spiritual uplift and a contribution to
further progress of mankind."

In this spirit of adventure, dream and romantic vision
lies the true 'Renaissance' spirit that Jawaharlal acquired from
the West. And this particular element was the most dominant in him
throughout his political career, and was at its full play in his
writings, more when he was in the thick of the conflict, trial and
struggle for the liberty of his people from the foreign rule.

It is perhaps the most important point to note in this
connection that Jawaharlal Nehru's 'Career' as a writer is divided
into three parts: First, stretching between 1920 and 1928, - the
the period of his 'apprenticeship' both political and journalistic, during which he was well initiated into essay writing for newspapers and journals, including The Independent, a daily Allahabad. Writing from inside the prison cell also started during this period. Second, nearly fifteen years, spread over from 1928, the year of the publication of his first book 'Soviet Russia', some Random sketches and Impressions to 1942 - Quit India movement and imprisonment. Three major books: An autobiography, The Glimpses of World History and The Unity of India and other collections of essays like: Recent Essays and writings (1934), India and the World (1936), Eighteen months in India (1938), Whither India (1937), Prison Humours ( ), China, Spain and the War (1940), were published. Then the third, extending up to the end of his life. Between 1946 and 1960 the publications include The Discovery of India, Visit to America, Nehru on Gandhi, and A Bunch of Old letters.

Of the three, the mid-period is the most important in consideration of the merit and excellence of Nehru's truly creative literary writing in English. All his written materials and even speeches of this period are highly rich in literary style, and deeply surcharged with feelings and emotions often bordering on romantic ecstasy. Thought and intellect also go into their making, but cannot out-weigh the genuine literary beauty. In the last phase, important for The Discovery of India, and some memorable...
addresses including the famous 'The Tryst with Destiny' speech on the eve of Independence of the country - Nehru's writings, generally speaking, lack in the buoyancy, freshness and directness of the mid-period. This attempt at an analytical study therefore, covers mainly Nehru's published works and letters of the mid-period and those upto 1950.

The relevance of the study can be judged from the abiding and universal element in Nehru's writings, arising primarily from his deep love and compassion for men, and his almost indefatigable confidence in man's ability to conquer fate, an inherent flow of aesthetic beauty, and an interplay reflecting the spirit of the age, the tragic crisis of faith and sunny optimism of confidence. Any serious evaluation of the literary merit of his works should therefore evoke more than merely academic interest. Such a study is important because it can decipher the reflections of the mysterious oriental drama on the mirror of West's 'Renaissance' mind of Nehru. The treatment of the individual and the abstract elements in his writings has a kind of extraordinariness in it, and by virtue of this quality alone his writings deserve examination and review on a separate scale than those of his contemporary political leaders, including even Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo.

Scholars on the subject of Indo-Anglian literature have paid great tribute to both of them in reference to their invaluable contribution toward the development of English writing in India in recent history.
It is perhaps wiser to place Nehru's writings on a wider plane and to judge the merit thereof by applying norms and principles of literary criticism as such. Whereas in literary criticism the lines of investigation are lexicon, style, diction, the spirit of the age, romanticism, character-study, ego, sense of beauty, nature-study and the like, the scope of a study like this must also be stretched wide enough to include considerations of Indian idioms and literary characteristics, the heritage of thought and culture of the country, the combined effect of which develops into a style of mystic beauty. And yet, often such style defeats all attempts of analytical examination, it is to be enjoyed and appreciated. To this extent, therefore, Nehru's writings will defy the avowed standards of literary criticism.

Two points are valid in connection with this analysis:
(i) Nehru the hero arose from the conflicts in the general background of India's freedom struggle, and his personal sacrifices for the same 'cause', and (ii) Nehru the writer will claim more abiding interest and universal acclaim not because of the background upon which he can personally rest, but because of the inner purity, beauty, strength and appeal of his writings.

From these considerations it is essentially necessary that the researcher-critic should evolve his own line of approach and investigation to bring out and elaborate upon the literary significance of the written texts. Such liberty has been availed of in the present study, for, without that liberty a critical exposition
of the stuff, what has been claimed at, cannot be possible on the part of the critic.

It is important to remember that Jawaharlal Nehru's writings are multi-dimensional; various facts, themes, emotions and elements are integrated into a whole. When discussed in their mutual relationship and individual significance these diverse materials will testify to the literary merit of the texts. Therefore, instead of proceeding in any precise order of approach, such as chronology or historical study or linguistics or political and social philosophy and similar other divisions of any set pattern, this study of Nehru's writings has actually probed into certain issues of genuine literary significance either underlying or surfaced in various areas of Jawaharlal Nehru's composed text. Essentially, therefore, the study is a naive: approach. While it is necessary that any valid opinion on any great writer should not doubt come from a searching study of his writings in entirety, the method adopted in these discourses is however based on a selective examination. Relevant passages from different texts have been picked up, not according to any pre-determined course or pattern, but as the needs of a particular line of investigation would demand. The nine chapters that follow have been devoted to different areas of approach to the texts that cover (i) in terms of time nearly three decades, (ii) in terms of content history, autobiography, political essays, addresses and manifesto, journalistic dispatches, letters, prepared speeches and the like, but in form nothing resembling drama or story or poetry; (iii) in terms of purpose - communicative, emotionally inspired, on a 'thinking aloud' manner, never didactic. No chain of a holding thought
or concept therefore runs through the different chapters instilling into them any element of homogeneity. In the process, however, stress has had to be laid upon such aspects as language and words, poetic elements, style of literary exposition, experience and communication, vision, humanism, epic dimension, artistic approach to and treatment of the conflicts of life. The study is no mere academic dissection of the texts, but an honest endeavour at tracing the roots of the impulses, inspiration and imagination of the author at his very personal level and expounding the voice of permanence that echoes through the lines. To achieve this the critic has to be exclusive in his approach. The political importance of all Nehruvian topics must be kept aside, and the critic must exclusively concentrate on those aspects of Nehru's writings which are significant and important, (from the literary point of view) as his personal responses to the surroundings. Therefore, it is claimed that the study is not lacking in a centre; it is no doubt the observation, analysis and perception of the diverse aspects of the assorted material, but then there is a constant quest for the style of the author as reflected in his uttered words.

A literary atmosphere needs be created by the available material for the required psychological preparedness to remain within the restricted sphere of such a quest and assessment. This must be achieved by utilising to the maximum extent possible all relevant references to Nehru's literariness; the image of his

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literary personality has to be built up by a sustained effort. An anecdote left for the posterity by late Prof. Dhurjati Prasad Mukherjee is of immense value in this context; and, therefore, the same is reproduced below:

"We came back to the sitting room. He (Nehru) wanted me to stay on. And the memory of the next hour is most memorable even today. The shelves contained some books of poems, I think by Auden, Masefield, Walter de la Mare, Spender, Eliot and Yeats. He fondly handled each, turned its pages, waited on one, and read out a stanza or two. Many a poet has recited verse before me, but Panditji's reading is the best I have heard. ... He read one lyric of Walter de la Mare with a soupcon of emotion. The reading went on for more than a hour. I wonder how many of our statesmen read poetry,"

The allusion reveals an essential feature of the 'man' in Nehru, the man who is identified by his style. And this style goes into his total being, into his revolts, hesitations and creations. To a romantic visionary the very existence is rhythmic poetry, therefore, his experiences in life are also communicated to the community through art and poetry, the only medium that can bear the intensity of his feelings. Through imagination he acquires material and impetus for creative vitality, and through words he gives shape to his ideas and ever-emerging images abridging dreams with reality. Both for the nourishment of imagination and the

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the renewal of words he dives deep into poetry that has already been created. In this respect, Jawaharlal Nehru was untiring in self-preparation, and when examined in the field of creative literature, his vigour and vitality and a unique reserve of imagery and words surprise even a sceptic among the critics.

Considered from the standpoint of literary criticism it is the great capacity of Nehru's words to reveal the very primal and yet eternal emotions and feelings wherein lies the deepest significance of his writings. His wide sweep of vision, his mental conflicts, deep sorrows and joys, his idealism, and in fine, his entire personality find rhythmic expression in choice words and imagery which inescapably arouse a sense of 'unlimitedness' transcending the author's own personal and external elements. The undying value of Nehru's writings as creative literature, as genuine products of art at that - is contained in this wonder of his language through which there is, just like the blossoming of a flower, an exposition of the inner self of the man. In the chapters that follow the chief endeavour has been to discover and perceive the same blossoming.