An analysis of the form and structure of the language used by Nehru in his writings will lead to interesting findings and conclusions of far-reaching importance in connection with the proper evaluation of Nehru's English prose. 'Indo-Anglian' literature as rechristened by Dr. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, has its history of development linked with the history of (i) the country's Renaissance through the spread of English education and (ii) National movement for the country's freedom from foreign rule. Jawaharlal Nehru's place in the history of this development has to be marked out after careful study, comparison and examination.

As a casual writer of stray essays and articles on socio-political issues he passed a period of apprenticeship unto February 1919 when he was initiated to journalism proper on being appointed a director of The Independent, claimed to be 'the only English morning daily newspaper in upper India.' An impression of his work during the early years of journalistic career can be made from the following observation, quoted: 'Mr. Nehru wrote about the Misa turmoil in Rae Bareilly and Faizabad districts but he wrote more about the politics of the day and he felt that without political emancipation economic freedom was not possible. His editorials were revealing; though a bit emotional.'

In the long course of India's Freedom Movement there are great names of front-ranking freedom-fighters who made valuable contributions to the process of thought and action by their

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journalistic writings. To pick up a few of such names: Motilal Nehru, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Motilal Ghosh, Sri Aurobindo, Surandramath Sarojee, Gandhi, Bepin Pal and others. It is an established fact that the nationalist Press in India, by the relentless hammering of their mighty pen paved the way for the fighters to march onwards whenever the occasion arose for 'action'. To make a comparative study of Indian journalism in the first half of this century it will be seen that, in mission, approach and language Gandhi's place is unique amongst them all. Young India and Harijan carried in their columns Gandhi's ideas and instructions to the millions of countrymen, and the message used to be received with the utmost reverence although not always followed or emulated in full. But that is besides the point. Gandhi was extremely cautious and painstaking in regard to his language with a view to enabling his message or directive make the easiest and deepest impact upon his reader.

But the same cannot be said of Jawaharlal. Calculated, measured and reasoned style of effective leader-writing appear not to have suited his choice or temperament. The Independent was closed down in 1923. Thereafter Nehru continued his link with newspapers and journals as a correspondent and also by contributing signed articles. The impressions of his visit to Russia in 1927 were published in a series of articles in Young India of which Gandhi was the editor. His articles also appeared in The Modern Review of Calcutta. The National Herald was first published as daily newspaper in English on September 3, 1939, and Jawaharlal resumed journalism again as a correspondent from abroad. The initial experiences Contd...
of the Second World War were recorded in his dispatches from Europe in passioned language and with intensity of feelings.

On a very careful examination of his writings in journals and newspapers it is to be stressed that articles and essays dealing with the issues of the time are rich more in emotion and feelings than in reasoned exposition of any situation of great importance. The style and text of his writings from the time of his assuming congress Presidentship in 1929 up to the 'Quit India Resolution' by the Congress bear testimony of much effortless spontaneity, rich in natural art and grace than any superimposed or composed sculpture. Articles and essays published between 1925 and 1941 were regrouped and published in book form as already stated in the introduction.

The essays and articles written over a decade from the mid-twenties served as background papers for his Autobiography which Nehru completed in jail during 1934-35. The same process continued even up to the time of his Discovery of India, written in Ahmednagar Fort jail during 1942-45. It is discussed in some details in the following paragraphs.

'Bharat Mata' in Chapter Three of The Discovery of India contains the same experience as beautifully narrated in an article which appeared under the caption 'A Road-side Interlude' (date of composition: September 18, 1936). While the original writing is spontaneous and direct, the contents of 'Bharat Mata' show much

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Restraint on the part of the author. The dialogues of the earlier writing have been expressed in the letter in the first person. Flow of style enriches the former with buoyancy and freshness of emotion, whereas the prose of the edited piece - Bharat Mata - is an example of the middle style of a cautious writer; it is especially so because of the fact that here Nehru is editing his own original writing.

There are instances of very significant changes which Nehru made of the text of the original article while incorporating the same into his complete books later on. One such instance is examined below:

The second paragraph of 'Bharat Mata' in The Discovery of India commences as follows: "Sometimes as I reached a gathering, a great roar of welcome would greet me: Bharat Mata Ki Jai - Victory to 'Mother India! I would ask then unexpectedly what they meant by that cry, who was this Bharat Mata, Mother India, whose victory they wanted? My question would amuse them and surprise them, and then not knowing exactly what to answer, they would look at each other and at me."

These three sentences in fact represent in a condensed form the first part of 'A Road-side Interlude':

"Suddenly we had to pull up, for right across the road sat a crowd of men and women, some withTorches in their hands.... They were a hefty lot of Jats, petty Zamindars most of them, and it was impossible to go on without a few words to them. We got out
and sat there in the semi-darkness surrounded by a thousand or more Jat men and women.

"Gauni Mara", said some one and a thousand throats answered lustily three times, "Bande Mataram". And then we had "Bharat Mata Ki Jai", and other slogans.

"What was all this about", I asked them, "this Sande Mataram and Bharat Mata Ki Jai?"

No answer. They looked at me and then at one another and seemed to feel a little uncomfortable at my questioning. I repeated my question: "What did they mean by shouting out those slogans?"

Still no answer. The Congress worker of that area was feeling unhappy. He volunteered to tell me all about it but I did not encourage him.

In this original piece the writer, in his story-telling style carries the readers with him and there is almost a sense of participation in the experience by the readers themselves too. No doubt, rich in experience and strengthened by exercise Nehru has produced scholarly prose in 'Bharat Mata', but it cannot be gainsaid that much of the freshness and inner life of the original writing has been sacrificed for the sake of brevity and improvement.

An important point noticeable in the revised piece of 'Bharat Mata' is the dropping of 'Bande Mataram' which has been

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used twice in the quoted extracts from 'A Road-side Interlude', once proclaimed by the crowd and subsequently uttered by the author himself in the form of an interesting dialogue. This fine instance would show that Nehru, mature with age and experience, grew cautious and calculating in his vocabulary, and The Discovery of India bears good evidence of it (excepting Chapters Two and a few other sub-chapters or passages in Chapter one and elsewhere).

Interestingly, Nehru is very careful in respect of words and expression in his letters on social, political and various other matters which have been published in book form as A Bunch of old letters. Most of the letters in the selection were addressed to him, but some of Nehru's finest letters are to be found in the book. As instances of creative writing these are very important for their original beauty both in thought and language. Some of his letters deserve close examination.

First of all, in the letter addressed to Edward Thompson, Aylesbury, England, on April 7 1940 Nehru deals mainly on the river Ganga. Thus he begins:

'Your idea of making film of the Ganga is fascinating. I am passing it on to the more intelligent Fanjit, but being somewhat imaginative myself I want to say something about it ... ...

... As the Ganga is history, the historical aspect should be brought out. The Ganga is infinitely linked up with tradition, mythology, art, culture and history. You find her cropping up everywhere. To deal with the subject adequately would be a tremendous

Contd...
task, but in any event the history and traditional aspect cannot be neglected. The superstitious side need not be stressed. Still, in order to understand Indian mythology, and art, the mythological origins of the Ganga might be referred to, that is Ganga falling on the matted head of Shiva, the matted head apparently representing the Himalaya mountains. This, I suppose, could best be done by reproducing some of the well-known sculptures depicting it. There are many such.

Then certain famous historical scenes ought to be shown, for instance, the coming of the Aryans and their reaching the Ganga for the first time and their joy at seeing this majestic river.

Then there are so many battles that have taken place round about the Ganga. The Greek invasion during the time of Chandragupta Maurya was stopped somewhere near the Ganga, possibly not far from Allahabad.

Earlier than this, *Ramayana* and *Maha Bharata* stories can be woven in. Asoka's period with his great capital, Pataliputra, on the Ganga.

Indian literature is full of the Ganga and you find her name mentioned in songs in Burma and Indo-China and elsewhere. In Harsha's time the Chinese pilgrim, Hiuuen Tsan, describes the Pushpa-Mela at Allahabad, which was even then an ancient festival. There are of course innumerable historical incidents that can be dealt with. The Gangetic valley, and more particularly the Doaba, that

Contd...
is the area between the Ganga and the Jawuna is full of history and tradition and song. If you take the Jawuna, that very beautiful and gracious river, you get the whole of the Krishna legend round about Kishna and Brindavan and of the sweet songs in Braj Gaasha.

I hope you will not use the name 'Ganges'. I dislike it. Ganga sounds infinitely better. I wonder how your forbears managed to change this good name into Ganges ...

In the quoted excerpts there is no emotion in the language, despite the subject. Imagination revives the glory, and the joy finds expression in a very sincere language. There is an undercurrent of joy in the allusions which collectively create an image of this ancient land itself through which the Ganga flows down. This is a fond style of Jawaharlal, particularly when writing on very intimate topics. The author's love for this majestic river, the Ganga, flowing from the Himalayas down to the valleys of India from the unknown days of the past is imbued with romanticism. Romantic imagination inspired such writing: '.... the coming of the Aryans and their reaching the Ganga for the first time and their joy at seeing this majestic river.'

Coming to political issues, however, style and language undergo a quick change in Nehru’s letters of the period between mid-thirties and early forties. The following letters can be selected for examination as relevant to the present study.


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To take up the last mentioned first, Nehru's letter addressed to Gandhi dated at Allahabad, August 13, 1934, deserves priority consideration. The letter is a full revelation of Nehru's inner conflict, grief and also confusion.

"My dear Babu,

After just six months of absolute seclusion and little exercise I have felt rather lost in the anxiety, excitement and activity of the past 27 hours. I feel very tired. I am writing this letter to you at mid-night.

But I wondered often enough if I was not a square peg in a round hole, or a bubble of conceit thrown about hither and thither on an ocean which spurned me. But vanity and conceit triumphed and the intellectual apparatus that functions within me refused to admit defeat. If the ideals that had spurred me to action and had kept me buoyed up through stormy weather were right - and the conviction of their rightness ever grew within me - they were bound to triumph though my generation might not like to witness that triumph.

... ... But what had happened to those ideals during this long and weary months of this year when I was a silent and distant witness, fretting at my helplessness? Setbacks and temporary defeats
are common enough in great struggles. They grieve but one recovers soon enough. One recovers soon if the light of those ideals are not allowed to grow dim and the anchor of principles holds fast. But what I saw was not set-back and defeat but that spiritual defeat which is the most terrible of all. Do not imagine that I am referring to the council entry question. I do not attach vital importance to it. Under certain circumstances I can even imagine entering a legislature myself. But whether I function inside or outside the legislature I function as a revolutionary for changes, political and social, for I am convinced that no other changes can bring peace or satisfaction to India and the world ... 

I feel that the time is overdue for the Congress to think clearly on social and economic issues but I recognise that education on those issues takes time and the Congress as a whole may not be able to go as far at present as I would like it to. But it appears that whether the Working Committee knows anything about the subject or not it is perfectly willing to denounce and to excommunicate people who happen to have made a special study of the subject and hold certain views ... ...

A strange way of dealing with the subject of Socialism is to use the word, which has a clearly defined meaning in the English language, in a totally different sense. For individuals to use words in a sense peculiar to themselves is not helpful in the commerce of ideas. A person who declares himself to be an engine-driver and then adds that his engine is of wood and is drawn by

Contd...
bullocks is misusing the word engine-driver.

This letter has become a much longer one than I expected and the light is already far spent. Probably I have written in a confused and scrappy way for my brain is tired. But still it will convey some picture of my mind. The last few months have been very painful ones for me and I take it for many others. I have felt sometimes that in the modern world, and perhaps in the ancient world also, it is oft preferred to break some people's hearts rather than touch others' pockets. Pockets are indeed more valuable and more cherished than hearts and brains and bodies and human justice and dignity ... ... ... "

The functional quality of the prose in which the hurried letter was written can be assessed by relating the texture of the language with the experience that it conveys. The vexed writer is not a detached onlooker in the irritating world around him, but himself an actor, vulnerable to it and intent to triumph over it. But at the particular situation an ordering of his experience does not seem possible. Therefore, the language is equally vulnerable, involved, humpi-jumpi. He feels he does not fit in with the current affairs - 'a square peg in a round hole' - , but the magnitude of helplessness is revealed by the ornate phrase: 'a bubble of conceit thrown about hither and thither on an ocean which spurned me.' What follows in the paragraph is robust optimism: his ideals were bound to triumph.

Contd...
Next paragraph betrays an ego: 'But whether I function inside or outside the legislature, I function as a revolutionary' ..... the strength of the statement, however, does not crystallise because of the weak utterances both before and after it. How can a revolutionary remain a silent and distant witness, fretting in his own helplessness when his cherished ideals are dishonoured? And, again, is a 'revolutionary' required to explain the role of a revolutionary - 'meaning thereby a person working for the fundamental and revolutionary changes, political and social, ...'. Similarly, the second sentence of the next paragraph deserves scrutiny, particularly the word 'excommunicate'. The next paragraph is, on close analysis, a satire on Gandhi's own peculiar approach to the concept of Socialism. In fact there is a hidden metaphor in the sentence: 'A person who declares himself to be an engine-driver and then adds that his engine is of wood and is drawn by bullocks is misusing the word engine-driver.'

Then, the tragic tone of the last three sentences which is inescapable on the reader is not really the writer's intention, who writes more in a cynical mood of derision. Again, there is a ringing sense of despair in the last sentence: 'Pockets are indeed more valuable and more cherished than hearts and brains and bodies and human justice and dignity ...' This sentence, however, stands in contrast with the preceding sentence where the insertion of the phrase 'and perhaps in the ancient world also' although intended to create a historic dimension of the tragic experience, has lost relevance with the last objective clause - 'rather than touch other's pockets.'

Contd..
Considered in this way, the total effect of the letter would be confusion, complaint, grief and also determination. And the prose style has admirably suited as a vehicle of the confused mood and irritated attitude of the writer.

An extract from Gandhi's letter in reply needs to be compared to appreciate the unique difference between the style of the two:

"Do read the resolution about 'loose talk' dispassionately. There is not a word in it about socialism. Greatest consideration has been paid to the socialists some of whom I know so intimately. Do I not know their sacrifice? But I have found them as a body in a hurry. Why should they not be? Only if I can not march quite as quick, I must ask them to halt and take me along with them. That is liberally my attitude."

Simple yet strong, therein lies the virtue of Gandhi's language; ... 'and their very bareness constitutes their strength,' K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar. Another essential virtue of Gandhi's writing has been identified by Edward Thomson: 'Perhaps his unsurpassed command of English language comes partly from his perfect control over his mind.'

In Jawaharlal's letter (to which this is the reply) ordering of experience and thoughts is lacking. Therein lies the weakness of his language.

Second in the series from the bottom is his letter of Contd...
April, 1939 addressed to Subhas Chandra Bose. A selected portion is reproduced below for an examination of the quality of the prose:

"There is no need for me to discuss my own foiling which you point out. I admit them and regret them. You are right in saying that as President I functioned often as a Secretary or a glorified clerk, and I fear I encroach in this way on others' preserves. It is also true that because of me Congress resolutions tended to become long and verbose and rather like thesis. In the Working Committee, I fear, I talked too much and did not always behave as I should."

Functionally, the language here is clear and straightforward. An ordering of the experience has resulted in a mood of acceptance of a given position, and the language is compatible enough to convey the mind. The opening two sentences and the closing one carry a sense of surrender and viewed in this light a lyrical vein is discernible in the quoted lines. Seen analytically, within this limited scope, the writer's sharp wit has leapt up on the surface in the third sentence.

In quality of restraint and discipline the simple prose style of the letter (selected portion) is perhaps a rare instance in the history of political correspondence of this period in our country. The point will be much more clear if the letter from Subhas Chandra Bose is placed by its side for the sake of comparison [selected extract from the letter dt. March 28, 1939]:

Contd...
"If the Working Committee had another member as talkative as yourself, I do not think we would ever have come to the end of our business. Besides your manners were such that you would almost usurp the functions of the President. I would, of course, have dealt with the situation by pulling you up, but that would have led to an open breach between us ... " upto the end of the long paragraph other shortcomings and ideosyncracies of Nehru's character and behaviour have been enumerated in a mercilessly attacking language. But the reply by Nehru is in a language which has defeated the allurements of provocation. And as such, the language is in tradition with the best prose found in his autobiography where he has been thoroughly honest about himself, even not afraid of looking a fool.

In an attempt to discuss the literary aspect of the letter of April 12, 1942 addressed to Franklin D. Roosevelt, President, U.S.A., it is necessary to take note of the high quality of the language in which soul's cry of India has been expressed. The style has been vitalized by artistry of words as in:

1) "That would have lighted a spark in millions of hearts, which would have developed into a blazing fire of resistance which no aggressor could have faced successfully."

11) "Danger and peril envelop us and the immediate future is darkened by the shadows of possible invasion and the horrors that would follow, as they Contd..."
they have followed Japanese aggression in China."

Viewed in a general way the restraint exercised in the language is surprising. It must be duly considered, however, that he was writing to President Roosevelt 'on whom so many all over the world look for leadership in the cause of freedom'. At the same time the most striking feature of the writing is that the spirit of India has been laid bare like an unseathed sword. The tone has been raised almost to epical sublimity because of the determination of facing a great challenge, and the lurking sense of self-sacrifice on a grand scale in the face of an indomitably advancing invading force.

There is a great intensity of pathos in this simple sentence: "We are a disarmed people".

Besides its historic importance, the letter is really great for the quality of the language composed with much care for words and style.


Paragraphs No. 2 and No. 3:

Honest and sincere feelings unfold petal-like, and the language has the element of harmony and fullness like a flower that blossoms inspite of its thorns. The conflicts of the age are-bearing like the clash of elemental forces are there like menacing icebergs but the writer's intention is to pilot through the calm and pacific surface, if it can be traced. The stress in this letter is on the

Contd.
the latter. It is worthwhile to quote a relevant portion:

"It is always a pleasure to meet people who open out new avenues of thought and help one to see a little more than the tiny corner of the world which is the average person's mental beat. As you say, few people see more than this little corner, and the agonising conflicts of today are certainly made worse by this narrowness of approach. This would be unfortunate at any time; in the present revolutionary epoch it is far more so. I do not think it is possible to charm away the conflicts merely by friendly contacts between well-intentioned persons. The conflicts are obviously deeper and the best of individuals seem to me to play a relatively unimportant role when vast elemental forces are at play against each other. We can try to understand the root causes of these conflicts, as far as we can, and then seek to remove them. But it is so very, very difficult to consider them apart from our own prejudices and sectional interests. The pleasantest of smiles does not get over these ingrained prejudices and the varying world outlooks that they produce. Still, the attempt must be made to cultivate friendly contacts for without them the world would be a drearier place even than it is."

The language bears evidence of insight and imagination, balanced harmoniously for melancholy, despair and optimism both run hand in hand. Imagination here is not unbridled. One is reminded of the compliment paid by Abul Kalam Azad: 'An equally impressive

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feature is your remarkable grasp of the architectonic imagination from which the details flow*. Serious letters of great politicians are often invaluable documents, their value lies in the information conveyed, of historical importance no doubt, but by implication containing literary elements in the character-sketches, descriptiveness, revelations of some peculiar conflicts, hopes and desires of contemporary life. Nehru's political letters help in enlarging the vision, the area of contemplation and mental participation. Such letters, however, cannot attain form and content unless the writer has consciously articulated, and ironically the very process of articulation wraps the text with the texture of documentaryness contrary to the tenets of literariness. To overcome the flaw, which is almost inescapable, there must appear in the letters a projection of the writer as an artist. Such counterbalancing is necessary for all letters of documentary value to be considered as material of literary significance. Nehru's letters published in 'A bunch of old letters' satisfy these twin conditions to a great extent.

Nehru's letters to Krishna, his younger sister, published as a collection, are more intimate in tone and emotion, and direct in appeal. The importance of these letters is the greater for the revelation they afford of the inner mind of Nehru, his very personal reactions to domestic and homely issues, and his communicative style - unaffected and unpedantic.

An important point about these letters is that no

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serious political, social or economic issue has been discussed here, and as a result the language is not unnecessarily burdened. An abiding freshness and spontaneity as in nature's blossoming appeal to all readers and thus create an eternal wealth of language and style. The explanation of such peculiar charm in these personal letters lies in the simple fact that here Nehru was not writing with an accepted pattern as in his 'Glimpses of World History' letters or under the shadow of political compulsion as in his letters discussed earlier in this chapter. It is interesting to note that most of the letters of this series addressed to Krishna were written from prison Ahmedabad Fort during 1942 - 1945. The letters will afford quite a useful study of the quiet development of the writer's mind and even his style of writing in course of three years spent in isolation. While these years were the most dramatic period of great changes and action and war on the earth, inside the jail Nehru, the man of action, was held back in forced inaction completely cut off from the grinding and growing world. The Discovery of India and his letters to Krishna - these are his writings while in jail during 1942 - 45. Measured by any standard of artistic skill the letters are much superior to the great book, if taken as a whole, in language and style. In this respect only the first two chapters of the book and only occasional passages in the subsequent chapters are comparable to the letters. While Nehru the author gives the Discovery of India its political and historical colouring, Nehru the poet infuses into the letters
the spirit of eternity. To substantiate the statement it is necessary to cite specially the following letters from the collection: letter No. 37 dt. 10.11.1942, No. 51 dt. 14.5.43, No. 65 dt. 18.2.44, No. 67, dt. 22.3.44, No. 74 dt. 23.8.44, No. 76 dt. 3.10.44, No. 83 dt. 6.2.45. The list is not exhaustive, and these are cited just by random choice. The essential beauty of the writing in these letters arises not from the style and context alone but from an undefinable quality which only a poet can bring about. Superseding all claims of the clamouring life of this fighting mad world, there is a beckoning in these letters towards a nobler, purer, yet simpler direction in life like the serene surface of the sea that keeps submerged the strong undercurrents of conflicting tides.

Quoted below are four vital sentences from his letter No. 37: "For my part I am almost always more concerned with the future. It is a far more exciting quest and the unknown has a fatal fascination. Also it satisfies one's conceit to imagine that one might be able to mould this as it emerges from the slime and mud of the present, as a potter with his clay. An empty conceit probably, but nevertheless good for the soul." The metaphoric introduction of 'a potter with his clay' raises the spirit of the content to a surer plane where man claims the creative art to cut out the shape of his own destiny from the uncharted future. Differing greatly from the content of the quoted lines, the following piece taken from his letter No. 51 is equally if not more appealing for the sympathetic catch or response created in the mind of

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'Life is difficult enough and it grows in complexity. There is a shabbiness and shallowness about it which hurts continually, and if we have the misfortune to be sensitive and to have any ideals. Yet we must face it, understand it and accept it, while at the same time we have to struggle against its evil and crudity. We are all the prisoners of the myths of the past and the emotions of the present with just a little elbow room perhaps. Yet that little might make a difference. So we hope and act and with that hope we face an unknown future.' These lines convey the message of an inescapable struggle to overcome the limitations of one's existence in the present, and yet there is an undercurrent of tragic tone which is almost infectious. And this element lends to the writing a sublimity which is poetry's true. Surprisingly, Nehru has himself sized up the theme by fine and superb strokes in one uncommon letter to his sister Krishna, letter No. 65 ZF. 18.2.1944.

"Mehmood had received your book also and he asks me to send you a message. .... He predicts that you will soon become a good artist of words if you continue to write. You depict tragedies better than comedies and that, according to him, is a true sign of an artist. He finished the book at night with a heavy heart and tearful eyes." For a scholar desiring to examine Nehru's mind and art these sentences are of great importance, and he will no doubt take note of expressions like 'a good artist of words' and 'a true sign of an artist' and the like. In the context of the present study, however, the most important part of the quoted...
passage is at the end ... 'with a heavy heart and tearful eyes.'

In Nehru's entire range of writing 'tears' is rare. In the given context a great artistic consummation has been achieved by the last two words. Convincingly, in his letters to his sister, Nehru himself is 'a good artist of words.' He writes so effortlessly, yet so artistically when in his letter of Dec. 1940 from Dehradun Jail he writes almost allegorically:

"I have taken things easily, during this month. I wanted to get rid of a feeling of tiredness, and it takes some time to settle down. I have done little hard work intellectually. I wanted to let my mind lay fallow - to busy myself with old physical activities. It is surprising how many such jobs can be done in prison. Cleaning and washing and generally keeping my own quarters in as decent a condition as possible, absorb quite a deal of time. Then I started digging. I decided to make the most of the digging. It was hard work for the soil is stony. Digging anyhow is not a light occupation, and I was annoyed at myself when I found that I got tired easily. I improved with practice. Having done this I played about within the fresh earth — how delightful it is! — and I put in some seedlings and flower seeds.

Like a fond but foolish parent straightaway I started spoiling our work by too much attention. I think I watered them more than was necessary and some of the seeds and seedlings seem to have rolled away. However, I shall get over these minor difficulties."
Allegorical significance is not very far to seek, political bondage looks like a rock and a constant struggle goes on for the removal or levelling of the rock. Free and united, the country will be like fresh earth upon which seeds of colourful planning and reconstruction would be sown, and the result will be ornamentation and enrichment. Ironically, the endeavour may fail, and often the dreamer, the planner, the implementer himself, like the fond yet foolish parent, turns out responsible for the abortive enterprise. In his letters to other great statesmen of his time similar sentiments have been expressed by Nehru in rather flat and direct prose. Nehru is easily transformed into an artist of words while writing to Krishna from behind the prison-bars.

The best proof of his prose appealing like genuine poetry is provided by the following passage taken from his letter No. 67, dt. 22.3.1944:

"All action is really a challenge to life. Only those minds who are in the ruts and fearful of any change, refuse this challenge, and yet even they cannot escape the hard knocks of life. Possibly they get them more, or sense them more, because they fear them more and are often taken unawares. The only real conflict which is oppressive is the conflict of the mind which arises from
from doubt and indecision —— the old question of Hamlet — to be or not to be, to do or not to do."

Instead of a consistent or regulated development of a reasoning thought initiated in the first sentence there happens to be a combination of ideas trying swiftly to overreach one another like the curling ripples of a running stream. Thus, the seemingly free statement, like a philosophic observation in the first sentence transforms itself completely into the pathos of the last sentence taking recourse to an allusion to an immortal theme composed in tragic symphony. Such effect of symphony arises in Nehru's writings where he is purely subjective, and on all such occasions his writings unceremoniously attain the virtue of true poetry, as in the extract quoted from his letter. Epilogue of action fades away, appears Hamlet. That is perhaps life. And this great irony is contained, in a nutshell, in the quoted sentences.

In one of his recent contributions to the "London Magazine" Stephen Spender has differentiated between the informative and the 'imaginative - creative' writing by arguing that 'the informative extends our knowledge of the width and depth of the ocean of things liquid in language which surrounds us. The imaginative - creative which forms pattern of order which crystallise within us. It is an exaggeration to say that one's life is changed by reading a poem or story, what may be changed is the pattern of words within our minds which formulate certain situations within our experience.' Best writing should have the capacity to 'enlarge

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the ocean of language in which we swim and 'to crystallise the experience in our word-blood', says Spender. This is no doubt an unconventional and novel way to judge the worth of literature, and it may also be gainfully applied to Nehru's with a view to assessing the worth of his writing in terms of such latest theory expounded by Spender. To a discerning critic, Nehru's writings will afford a good scope for investigation on the imaginative-creative elements. In the context of the present discussion, his letter No. 76 dt. 3.10.1944 can be taken up for careful sifting in terms of Spender's yardstick seen above. Nehru would:

"The other day, reading some of the old letters of Charles Lamb (the man who wrote the Essays of Elia and Tales from Shakespeare), I came across a couple of lines. We have yet the sight of, he said:

Of sun and moon and star, throughout the year, And man and woman.

Yes, I thought, we have yet the sight of the sun and the moon and stars, and yesterday was Sharad Purnima. In the early dawn, when I wake up, I see Jupiter peeping over the roof of a building. It is still dark then but it is the signal for getting up. In the evening Venus appears as the Evening Star. The night sky is slowly changing over and putting on its winter appearance. We have sight of all these and they never lost their freshness. But of the men we see the range is limited and I fear we grow less and less fresh to each other. And women? It struck me as an odd and arresting fact that for nearly 26 months—785 days to be exact—I had not seen

Contd....
a woman even from a distance. Previously it was not so for even in prison we had interviews occasionally. And I began to wonder - what are women like? How do they look - how do they talk and sit and walk?

Essentially, the beauty of the text lies in its completeness, which can rarely be appreciated by amputation and computation. The experiences of the writer are raised up in complete harmony with the two verses from Charles Lamb serving as an epilogue. But there is something more, arising from the peculiar element contained in the power of words helping crystallisation of experience in others through evocative word-patterns. It is the virtue of such power that Nehru's writing, especially in the quoted letter earns the distinction of "imaginative-creative". The essential poetry in the last two sentences is perhaps unparalleled in Indo-Anglian literature of the age. Scope exists for considering the merit of the lines by relating them to the personal experiences of the writer and then stretching the same to reach others experiences as well.

"And I began to wonder, what are women like? How do they look - how do they talk and sit and walk?" An inescapable response is evoked instantaneously which can be described as formation of word - nuclei in the inner mind of the readers comparable to a vast expanse where words are floating in endless scatter yielding to pressure of word-formations from outside for the crystallisation of like experiences through a responsive re-arrangement of words.
Examined from the literary standpoint these intimate personal letters of Jawaharlal Nehru written to his sister Krishna are to be placed in a special 'imaginative-creative' category and credited with poetic beauty, wealth of words and high sensitiveness as discussed in this chapter. His writings of historical and political interest may have to suffer from the natural disabilities of age, but not these letters for time cannot rob them of their great artistic value.

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