It will be a rewarding task to sift and appreciate the literary merit of Jawaharlal Nehru's writings for that will be inestimable help in understanding the man, thinker and political Nehru. His Autobiography unfolds his inner self in various moods and postures. To look at it from the literary standpoint the most striking feature is the transformation of realities into images, myths or make-believes. To drive the point home it will be useful to compare and contrast the last paragraph of page 77 and the first paragraph of page 78.

"I took to the crowd and the crowd took to me .........." thus begins their mutual liking or fondness. Nehru subjects this fondness to a critical analysis. Instead of being critical the language soon becomes mellow and soft as if in a fond reminiscent mood.

" .......... and I never ceased to wonder how I, who was so different in every way from those thousands who surrounded me, different in habits, in desires, in mental and spiritual outlook, how I had managed to gain goodwill and a measure of confidence from these people". He saved the sentence by using how I twice but his use of the word 'managed', would appear inexplicable for he has referred before that the crowd had taken to him. Reality thus gets embedded into a little confusion. The confusion is cleared in the sentences that follow "was it because they took me something other
other than I was?" Thus, from a question involving a reality he indulges in self-retrospection. In quick sequence, however, he gives a sentence wherein he has built up a new idea: "And yet I could not get rid of the idea that their affection was meant not for me as I was, but for some fanciful image of me that they have formed."

In the paragraph that follows the critic is presented with a transformation. The masses, the crowd had so long been treated as a living entity who, in their love and affection, made much of their hero, took to him for, say, an imaginary halo around him. A further sifting of the attitude and approach of the crowd in relation to the author or other countrymen, or their country itself would have been the most appropriate treatment in this position. Instead, Nehru himself forms an image of the vast masses with whom he is one and at the same time feels apart from. A physical reality is transformed into an abstract element in pathos. He states in critical terms: "I am vain enough in many ways, but there could be no question of vanity with these crowds of simple folk". At the end of the paragraph the subjective mood develops almost into pure lyricism. "They were dull certainly, uninteresting individually, but in the mass they produced a feeling of overwhelming pity and a sense of ever-impending tragedy." This concept of a shadow of tragedy looming large on the helpless masses comes in lyrical terms again and again in his Autobiography.

In chapter XXX Nehru calls up from memory his unique

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unique experience in Maini Prison. The chapter contains his varied mental reactions of the time.

Solitude and silence as contrasted to society and sound are expressed in a very effective language. Maini Central Prison at that time contained nearabout 2,200 persons. But the author was kept by himself in a separate and small enclosure, 'circular in shape, with a diameter of about one hundred feet, and with a circular wall about fifteen feet high surrounding it.' Not only was he suddenly cut off from a very busy life, he was in fact, confined within one hundred feet covered circle which again was enclosed by a fifteen feet high wall. 'Movingly he describes, 'At night that wall enclosed me all the more' ... a superb expression, as if the wall itself was moving and shortening the breathing space, thus making his loneliness almost helpless at nightfall, and the finale is reached when the author says ... 'and I felt as if I was at the bottom of a well,' The picture in analogy is complete. The darkness of the well, the invisible but undeniably existing rings of the well, the water down below -------- a conscious reminder of helplessness -------- and the only living, feeling and thinking creature of God lying inside in utter loneliness and silence, not knowing what to do.

On this all-pervading silence is superimposed the sound of 'strange noises'. Three varied agents create the noises, and all that is contained in one sentence. The language almost recreates the series of sounds for the readers to listen: The convict overseers guarding the main wall 'frequently shouted to each other in varying

Contd...
varying keys'; inside, the night-watchmen 'counting away in a loud voice the prisoners in their charge'; nearer, an official going his rounds during night-duties would visit the enclosures and talk in a loud voice to the warder on duty. To make distinct the varying nature of these noisy voices the author uses meaningful expressions, which leave impressions of the distances and also of the irony of the situation. Thus, the guards at the main wall 'frequently shouted to each other in varying keys, sometimes lengthening out their cries till they sounded like the moaning of a distant wind'; for a solitary prisoner confined in an isolated cell, as if in a well, the distant shouting by the guards hears like the moaning of a distant wind. The pathos borne by the phrase is inescapable. Halfway inside, the Night-watchmen proclaimed in a louder voice that 'all was well', the basis of such proclamation being the presence of prisoners inside the barracks and this is an irony in itself. Nearest to the prisoner arises the voice of authority - a 'gaol official' - who does not merely ask a question but 'shouted an enquiry to the warder on duty'.

These 'Strange noises'- Human voices - arising at different hours of the night from different areas in Naini Central Prison are almost sensible. The language is vibrant, it is pregnant with these sounds recaptured as if in their varying moods from far and near. Again, the language, here, is of deliberate writing. As in the arrangement of the author's experience of 'noises' in the night from his solitary confinement so also in his selection of...
of phrases and use of words Nehru displays superb artistic skill.

While realism of the situation is quite apparent, and the author's success in re-enlivening the situation is fully admitted, the last sentence of the para —— presents the readers with two images: first, fields, with standing crops obviously, and peasants raising a loud voice for frightening and driving away wild animals, and second, a forest, night—time, the wild beasts raising loud cries as is natural during the hours of night. These two images arise in the author's vision separately. They are unrelated to the realities of the situation discussed hereinbefore. But the author admits that the realities would often fade out and thereby allow scope for fantasies to grow. He says, 'most of these voices reached me indistinctly, and I could not make out at first what they were'. But this statement does not clarify the transformation of the real situation into the contrary situation as in the two different images. The strength and beauty of the sentence lie in the honesty and spontaneity of writing. The experience is not commonly shared and therefore any articulate introduction of the picture-like situations would have fallen flat upon the readers. Rather, a tone of poetry emerging from his last sentence actually holds up the entire experience of interplay of sound and silence. In this sentence there is little evidence of careful and deliberate writing, for, the construction is not accurate:

"At times I felt as if I was on the verge of the forest,"
forest, and the peasantry were shouting to keep the wild animals away from their fields; sometimes it seemed the forest itself and the beasts of the night were keeping up their nocturnal chorus."

The admirable use of the verb 'keep' in two very different senses is no doubt the result of the author's conscious thinking; otherwise, the sentence bears signs of inarticulate spontaneity of genuine poetry. Various concepts like a miscarred space, remoteness, darkness of night, the noise, known or unknown but strange, the loud voice of emergency needs or of habit, and the like have been clothed together in the sentence as if effortlessly. The symbol in the final analysis, rests in the crudity of sounds. Scarcely there and the author's disapproval of the nocturnal chorus in his helplessness.

Chapter VIII is a long discussion on Bihar Earthquake; the next chapter is small in comparison and it comes as a relief after the experiences of the impressive and terrifying scenes of the quake ruins. In the former chapter the topic of earthquake is introduced at the eighth paragraph and altogether twenty-four chapters are devoted to it. The author displays divergent moods as various issues are discussed on the common background of an earthquake. Necessarily, language, style and treatment also a Descriptive language is used briefly and also at length, but everywhere with vivid imagination and a strong mood:

(a) "As these streets were cleaned corpses were being discovered some in curiously expressive attitudes, as

Contd...
as if trying to ward off a falling wall or roof.

(b) "Thousands of people were killed in Monghyr City alone, and three weeks later I say a vast quantity of debris still lying untouched, .......

(c) "The towns were impressive enough with their extensive ruins, and their roads torn up and twisted sometimes as by a giant hand, or raised high above the plinth of the houses on either side. Out of the huge cracks in these roads water and sand had gushed out and swept away men and cattle. More even than these towns, the plains of North Behar - the garden of Behar, they used to be called - had desolation and destruction stamped upon them. Mile upon mile of sand, and large sheets of water, and huge cracks and vast numbers of little craters out of which this sand and water had come. Some British officers who flew over this area said that it bore some resemblance to the battlefields of North France in war-time and soon after. "These are some representative pieces from the few paragraphs wherein the physical phenomenon has been objectively described. But it is noticeable that the language used does not preserve the objectivity even in these brief selections. The suggestion of a dead motion in the first, the author's personal experience in the second and the British Officers' experience in the third would show that purely an

Contd...
an objective description of the havoc wrought by the earthquake is not attempted. Imagination plays her own role.

Neither is there any impressive account of the quake-striken people, although an undercurrent of the author's great concern and sympathy for them runs all through this chapter. Instead of elaborating on people's distress the author attempts at a few pen-pictures. It is the method of an artist in painting or in fiction rather than of a reporter:

"All this probably lasted for three minutes or a little more and then it died down, but those three minutes were terrible enough. It is not surprising that many persons who saw this happen imagined that this was the end of the world."

"A little boy of twelve was dug out (I think in Kasaffarpur) alive ten days after the earthquake. He was greatly surprised. He had imagined, when he was knocked down and imprisoned by falling material, that the world had ended and he was the solitary survivor."

Certainly the affected persons could hardly recapitulate their feelings or impressions quite accurately after the passing of such a benumbing experience, but the author has recaptured it on their behalf and the sense of an extreme and is discernible. A prison-psychology is much in evidence. Analysing the language used here one's notice is at once drawn to identical expressions in both:
"Many persons who saw this happen imagined that this was the end of the world."

"He had imagined, ................

...................... that the world had ended........."

The devastations and wreckings were great indeed and without many parallels in the country. The references here to the peoples' reactions to their shock, fear, terror, misery and sufferings are not fully expressive. The attitude is more poetic than matter-of-fact. So also is the language, necessarily.

Closely following such sketches of people frightened by the shadow of the imminent 'end of the world' comes the brief anecdote of a childbirth amidst the quake:

'In Muzaffarpur also at the exact moment of the earthquake when houses were collapsing and hundreds were dying all round, a baby girl was born. The inexperienced young parents did not know what to do, and were distraught. I learnt, however, that both the mother and the baby survived, and were flourishing. In honour of the earthquake the baby was named Kampo Devi.' This is like an ambiguous episode - the arrival of a new life in the context of death en masse. Now, nature is like this, the tidal ebb and flow, life and death, destruction and construction. The author introduces the theme in beautiful sequence poetically. In the treatment and the language, however, it becomes difficult to remove the impression of a light humour - provoked by the author when he writes 'In honour of the

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of the earthquake the baby was named Kampo Devi. (Kampo meaning quake). And this lighter view in the midst of the prevailing seriousness of tone, matched with gravity of expression, relieves the tension and adds a humanizing touch to the impersonal severity in the processes of elemental nature.

In this chapter devoted to 'Earthquake' the author allows himself various digressions, and dwells upon topics or issues not vitally connected with the central theme. This very disgressiveness, this surplusage, brings the aroma of a true literary temper. For instance, he presents a discourse on the theme of self-esteem of the Government officials: 'But to be called inefficient and wanting in nerve hurts, for this strikes at the root of self-esteem; it disturbs the messianic delusions of the English Officials in India.' The flight of thought extends further in the very next sentence: 'They are like the Anglican Bishop who was prepared to put up meekly with a charge of unchristian behaviour, but who resented and hit out when someone called him foolish and incompetent.' The most destructive and tragic earthquake can hardly be covered in this style of writing. The author travels much wider away from the main subject in the paragraph - a very long one of fifteen sentences - coming next. In style and content this paragraph appears more like loud thinking on the part of the author or as if he is participating in a debate. The language used in the long...
paragraph is prosaic and the style is argumentative.

Such debating society style or loud thinking is noticed again in another digression in the same chapter. The author devotes three paragraphs completely to an argumentative discussion on "Gandhiji's statement to the effect that the earthquake had been a punishment for the sin of untouchability."

The topic itself is a digression. Leaving the realities of the earthquake in relation to men, women and children, to all the pathos and tragedy arising out of it, to the predominantly earthly side of the quake the author delves into a metaphysical discourse: "And if the earthquake was a divine punishment for sin, how are we to discover for which sin we are being punished? - for, alas! we have many sins to atone for."

The theme is sought to be backed by allusions. The author, in recording his experiences of the earthquake in his Autobiography, wanders far away from his track, his writing is

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hardly confined to the matter-of-fact realities of the time, for
more often than not he seeks to dwell upon issues for debate. It
is so perhaps because Nehru while preparing the larger scheme of
his autobiographical writing provided for adequate scope for such
manoeuvrings. On this he says: "As I wrote, I was hardly thinking
of an outside audience; I was addressing myself, framing questions
and answering them for my own benefit, sometimes even drawing
some amusement for it." Thus, in his Autobiography, although Nehru
wanted to write 'narratives' he has in actual practice often shelved
the realities and taken up issues or topics suiting his own
fancy, likes or dislikes; style and language also vary widely.

The next chapter, LIX, captioned 'Alipore Gaol', is compara-
tively short, complete in just four and a half pages, containing
twenty small paragraphs. Herein, an attempt has been made by the
author to record an account of the experiences of his trial at the
Chief Presidency Magistrate's Court, Calcutta, and thereafter at
the Presidency Jail at Alipore. Whatever might have been the scheme
for intention of the author this short chapter is exquisite in the
sincerest expression in language of the intense emotions of a suf-
fering soul. The tragic sense of the pathos of isolation is engen-
dered from the very start. This personal reaction at whatever
seems ugly and unaesthetic, his joy at the sight of new life in
the Nite's nest or in the blossoming flora, his fondness of the
city sounds during the night-time and other emotions and sentiments
have been put in rather very closely in these twenty paragraphs.

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Considering the style in which all these have been written this chapter assumes almost the form of a monologue. Paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10 and 11 begin with 'I'.

I was kept in the Presidency Gaol to begin with, ..... I was used enough to court trials I felt very lonely and isolated when I sat on the balcony outside before the trial began. I felt much better in the dock itself. I looked back with some satisfaction to my five and a half month's stay outside. 
I had one other regret. I was sorry that I had not visited even once the rural areas of Allahabad district. I was transferred from the Presidency Gaol to the Alipore Central Gaol; and there I was given a little cell, about ten feet by nine. I had hardly recovered from my first view of the seemingly fantastic structures around me when a terrifying sight greeted me."

Thus begin eight paragraphs out of twenty in this chapter. Even there is little or no dialogue with himself, but reminiscing, rather he likes to indulge in reminiscence.

"One shadow remained to darken my mind - Kamala's ill-health. I had no notion then how very ill she was, for she has a habit of carrying on till she collapses, But I was worried". (Page-7).
"I remembered the bears at the Zoo tramping up and down their cages. Sometimes when I felt particularly bored I took to my favourite remedy, the Shirshasana - standing on the head." (Page-14).

"........ and I lost weight rapidly. How I began to hate all locks, and bolts and bars and walls! (Para-19).

This chapter in monologue wherein the burden of theme is isolation stands in sharp contrast to the preceding one on 'Earthquake'. The difference in style and treatment, term and phrase is striking. For lack of an objective approach the author did not succeed there in rehearsing the awful drama of that historic earthquake. Here, in this chapter, often the language is verselike, pathos is ringing, the mood is poignant and lyrical, the joy at the sight of beauty is vibrant. A scene in the very first paragraph will show the quality of the writing:

"The constables seemed to be almost all from Behar or the eastern districts of the U.P. During the many journeys I made in the big prison lorry, to court and back or from one prison to another, a number of these constables used to accompany me inside. They looked thoroughly unhappy, disliking their job, and obviously full of sympathy for me. Sometimes their eyes glistened with tears".

The depth of the undeclared sorrow and sympathy of the dutiful, loyal but unhappy guards has been struck in one superb stroke in the last short sentence of six words, and for the reader the 'tears' are almost infections. Tragic enough, the glistening

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glistening tears of sympathy can only increase the pathos of isolation of the person for whom the stage has been set for the courtroom trial. The poignancy of loneliness has been very touchingly described in the scene where amidst the crowd of lawyers (and policemen too, obviously) the author finds himself so isolated and alone:

"Many of my previous trials had taken place in gaol precincts. But there had always been some friends, relatives, familiar faces about, and the whole atmosphere had been a little easier. The police had usually kept in the background and there had never been cagelike structures about. Here it was very different, and I gazed at strange, unfamiliar faces between whom and me there was nothing in common. It was not an attractive crowd. I am afraid gowned lawyers en masse are not beautiful to look at, and police court lawyers seem to develop a peculiarly unlovely look. At last I managed to spot one familiar lawyer's face in that black array, but he was lost in that crowd."

It is an instance of remarkable success of the author to set up, as if in a movie, the image of a lonely-feeling undertrial political prisoner inside the court gazing at 'strange, unfamiliar faces' and even when, per chance, he is able to spot one known face, that too gets lost in the crowd. Thus one person is singularly isolated amidst a crowd which appears 'not an attractive crowd'. Both fine and bold touches are used by the artist in

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in drawing the picture. How effortlessly he says in the very opening sentence of the next paragraph:

"I felt very lonely and isolated when I sat on the balcony outside before the trial began. My pulse must have quickened a little, .......

The resistance by one individual to the organised machinery of the government is inspired by an almost religious adherence to the ideal or the cause but the individual is entirely a human being and his mental reactions when placed face to face with the powers of the State should also appear human. His pulse, therefore, quickens a little. Spontaneity is the soul of the passage.

A little later on, the author picks up the symbols of the source of strength and power of the government and condemns them to indignity in the most economic use of language: "On our way we passed plenty of troops on the march with machine guns, armoured cars, etc. I peeped at them through the tiny openings of our prison van. How ugly an armoured car is, I thought, and a tank. They reminded me of prehistoric monsters - the dinosaurs and the like." The effect on the reader is instantaneous. With all the virtues of modern poetry these three sentences, almost symbolically, pronounce the heaviest censure on the government or the power of the day and the civilization it represented.

The monologue tends to become burdened with a cynical attitude, not quite normal to the author. In fact, the jail Contd...
jail surroundings sat upon his nerves and contributed largely to the growth of this cynicism. He writes: "Two chimneys, right in front of my cell and yard, were belching forth dense volumes of black smoke, and sometimes the wind blew this smoke in my direction, almost suffocating me. They were the chimneys of the gaol kitchens. I suggested to the superintendent later that gas-masks might be provided to meet this offensive." The last sentence is humorous on its surface, but the undercurrent of devastating cynicism is obvious.

But cynicism cannot hold good of the author who is basically romantic towards life and nature. His eyes are raised far above the jail walls, his vision goes beyond the brick and concrete surroundings, his urge for the aesthetics transcends the ugly and hostile cell precincts. Can one surpass the realities of near-surroundings of his existence? Or would it amount to escapism if one who revolts against all that is ugly and oppressive in life, would revel in aesthetics and beauties of life and nature?

Considering the sincerity of feelings and spontaneity of expression evident in the succeeding paragraph no doubt is left in Nehru's firm faith in the ultimate victory of life that blossoms out defying all imposed abnegations and hurdles. How confidently he writes: "I could just see the tops of one or two trees in adjoining yards. Yards! They were barren of leaf or flower when I arrived. But gradually a mysterious change came over them and little bits of green were peeping out all over their branches. The leaves were coming out of the buds; they grew rapidly and covered the nakedness of the branches with their pleasant green."
As if a new faith in life is re-kindled in the author's gloomy bosom; such seems to be the symbolic significance of the passage. The blossoming of new foliage sounds almost vibrant and a new dimension is added in confidence to the barren canvas when the writer's pen moves like a painter's brush and the pleasant green of new buds rapidly and reassuringly cover the nakedness of the branches.

Loneliness of prison life would often create in him a longing for the outside world, its beauty, its life and its movements. Such moods, of dejection sometimes or of joy, are recreated in different chapters of his Autobiography. From Alipore Central Jail he was transferred to Dehra Dun Jail. General conditions of Jail life were more strict and rigid and unfavourable there. He has been able to raise the account of his confinement from a mere tale of misery to a memoir impregnated with feelings, thought, philosophy, and joy. Lyrically sweet are his expressions where he gives vent to some of his most intense emotions in a bid to surpass the cruel limitations of the realities of his life in the prison Cell: His feelings gush forth in unbound poetic language; expression equals feelings:

"I was not flourishing in Alipore Gaol. My weight had gone down considerably, and the Calcutta air and increasing heat were distressing me. There were rumours of my transfer to a better climate. On May 7th I was told to gather my belongings and to march out of the gaol. I was being sent to Dehra Dun Gaol. The drive through Calcutta..."
Calcutta in the cool evening air was very pleasant after some months of seclusion, and the crowds at the big Howrah Station were fascinating.

In these five quick sentences the author has been able to create that eternal urge, more important passion than Nostalgia, that hunger for the association with the rest of his species.

On arrival at Dehra Dun, Nehru's isolation and loneliness appeared to be more severe. "The cell was better than the ancient one I had previously in Dehra Dun, but soon I discovered that other changes were not for the better. The surrounding wall, which had been ten feet high, had just been raised, especially for my benefit, by another four or five feet." Physically and mentally the impact must have been devastating. "......... and my eyes grew weary and heavy, faced always by those walls. There was not even the usual movement of prison life, for I was kept apart and by myself."

In spite of all this the fountain of life never seems to become dry; at the slightest touch the current gushes forth in all richness of sound and motion and spontaneity. Nehru writes:

"After six weeks the monsoon broke and it rained in torrents; we had twelve inches of rain during the first week. There was a change in the air and whisperings of new life; the temperature came down and the body felt relaxed and relieved. But there was no relief for the eyes or the

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or the mind. Sometimes the iron door of my yard would open to allow a warden to come in or go out, and for a few seconds I had a sudden glimpse of the outside world—green fields and trees, bright with colour and glistening with pearly drops of rain— for a moment only, and then it all vanished like a flash of lightning. The door was hardly ever fully opened. Apparently the warders had instructions not to open it if I was anywhere near, .......

There is nothing very sentimental in this writing, nor is it the language of descriptive writing. The passage communicates to the reader a certain experience of the author overlaid by pathos. But there is even some greater significance. Lying in a state of bondage and separated from the living world-at-large by a surrounding wall nearly fifteen feet high, he experiences the first showers of the monsoon, 'and it rained in torrents'. The static feelings begin to thaw, and can joy remain far behind? 'The whisperings of new life' start musing in his ears. Physically too he experiences new feelings of comfort, 'relaxed and relieved'. Casually or by chance he is rewarded by beauty that is visible, 'a sudden glimpse of the outside world—green fields and trees, bright with colour and glistening with pearly drops of rain'. This message from the 'outside world' has been amply communicated to those who read this. More successful is the air of contrast that settles on the whole situation in the sentences that follow: " .......... then it all vanished like a flash of lightning. The door was hardly ever fully opened." The link that was established so effortlessly is thus torn

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thus torn deliberately. Joy and sorrow come in waves. Drinks are offered to the thirsty only to be withdrawn immediately. What can be the reaction at such denial? Simple and sincere is the last sentence of the passage: 'That sight produced in me a kind of nostalgia, a heartache, I would even avoid looking out when the door opened'. Suppression of one's self, - it can be called. Oppressive realities of the jail life crush one physically, and often mentally also. The soul at times revolts, as in the case of the author, and it retains the power of discovering values in nature, man and bird and beast. The tragedy is heightened when he has to withdraw himself to his own cell as the inexorable realities come close down on him. In the few sentences of the short passage discussed above is contained that tragedy. The isolated life in bondage continues and continues and is driven to extremity, the state of utter helplessness would engender in him a converse feeling, and how beautifully has that been expressed in a few sentences! - "The little gaol of Almora was perched up on a ridge. I was given a lordly barrack to live in. This consisted of one huge hall, fifty-one by seventeen, with a Katcha, very uneven floor, and a worm-eaten roof which was continually coming down in little bits. In this vast expanse I lived in solitary grandeur." A note of satire is quite evident, but there is something more. The deep pathos of silence and solitariness is equally eloquent in these lines.

Bhru has the rare gift of accommodating two contradictory emotions in himself, such as his extreme sense of loneliness and his joy in moving with the masses, his pangs of isolation and
and his hopeful delight at sights of beauty and sounds of sweetness. In various passages in his Autobiography Nehru has displayed his power of expression of such diverse moods and emotions. A careful reader can discern in him a rare capacity of attaching emotional weight to his words for successful communication of the intensity of the feelings. Words, phrases and sentences appear surcharged, as if, with a vitality, a freshness, a deep breath, so to say, and these help the writing to assume a transcendental significance additional to romanticism. Quoting from the Chinese poet Li T'ai Po Nehru writes:

".......... 'We never grow tired of each other, the mountain and I. I am afraid I cannot say with the poet, Li T'ai Po, that I never grew weary, even of the mountain; but that was a rare experience, and, as a rule, I found great comfort in its proximity. Its solidity and imperturbability looked down upon me with the wisdom of a million years, and mocked at my varying humours and soothed my fevered mind."

The solidity and imperturbability of the mountain can thus be easily visualized, and with all its majesty it will really look down upon a tiny human figure immobilized inside a cell, and when it comes to the question of knowledge and wisdom that very will 'solidity and imperturbability' enjoy the superiority with the wisdom of a million years. The consciously elevated language and rhythm harmonize with the matter and mood,

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and provide to the oppressed mind a relief.

Thus, in chapter LXVI - Back to Prison - the author makes digressions from the main issue relating to his anxiety, worry and agony over his wife's illness vis-a-vis his own helplessness inside jail. Such mental conflict has of course been expressed in the third paragraph in an inimitable language:

"Bad news and the waiting for news made the days intolerably long and the nights were sometimes worse. Time seemed almost to stand still or to move with desperate slowness, and every hour was a burden and a horror. I had never before had this feeling in this acute degree."

After the initial spell of gloom a change in the context, that is, in Kamala's health slightly improves, takes place. Thus, in Nehru too, there is a corresponding mental reaction. A state of light and shadow, hope and despair, 'to be or not to be' so to say, goes on:

"The day before she was to leave for Bhowali I was taken from prison to bid her good-bye. When will I see her again? I wondered. And will I see her at all? But she looked bright and cheerful that day, and I felt happier than I had done for long."

A thaw can be felt here in the tragic stillness of the author's mind and the language also has lost the taint of near-morbidity as evident earlier. With such a change in the external

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external conditions and corresponding mental reactions of the
author he suddenly overcomes the dejection, and very soon, appear
to passages in sharp relief with his vast state of being. These are
the passages of digression. As it has been discussed earlier,
the author goes beyond the realities and soars high above in a
spirit of joy or even in a spirit of ineffectual romanticism.

Thus, Wehru is transferred from Raini Prison to Almora
District Gaol 'so as to be nearer to Kasela'. He writes:

"Indeed, even before I had reached her, the mountains
had filled me with joy.
I was glad to be in these mountains, and as our car
sped along the winding road the cold morning air and
the unfolding panorama brought a sense of exhilaration.
Higher and higher we went: The gorges deepened: the
peaks lost themselves in the clouds: the vegetation
changed till the firs and pines covered the hill-sides.
A turn of the road would bring to our eyes suddenly a
new expanse of hills and valleys with a little river
gurgling in the depths below. I could not have my fill of
the sight and I looked on hungeringly, storing my memory
with it, so that I might revive it in my mind when actual
sight was denied."

In this beautifully selected images from nature comes
out the pathos of a sensitive mind who is constantly being haunted
by the ominous shadow of his wife's illness. Thus, the freshness

Contd...
freshness of the 'unfolding panorama', the vegetation, the firs
and pines, symbolic 'life' in the 'hills and valleys and with
a little river gurgling in the depths below' all combine to create
an atmosphere of vitality as contrasted to disease and decay.
Quickly succeeding these, comes an image of majestic permanency
in the author's delineation of the great mountains:

"As we neared the end of our journey --------------
mountains that intervened."

Thus, satisfactory imagery takes place of an unsavoury
reality. In this, it contains a reflex of the author's psychology,
at greatly perturbed, it its depth on account of grave health conditions
of his wife, and therefore seeks rejuvenation from experiences with
nature. This explains the trend in Nehru to bathe in the beauties
of nature while the facts of real life continue to be depressing.

Much more than this; a poet's deeply mystic feelings
are also perceptible in his experience of mountains: "In the
semi-darkness of the moonlight or starlight the mountains loom up
mysterious, threatening, overwhelming, and yet almost unsubstan-
tial, and through the valleys can be heard the moaning of the wind.
The poor traveller shivers as he goes on his lonely way and senses
hostility everywhere. Even the voice of the wind seems to mock
him and challenge him. And at other times there is no breath of
wind or other sound, and there is an absolute silence that is
oppressive in its intensity. Only the telegraph wires perhaps hum
faintly, and the stars seem brighter and nearer than ever. The

Contd...
The mountain looks down grisly, and one seems to be face to face with something that terrifies."

Here, the shivering lonely traveller and the humming telegraph wires are contributing poetic vitality to a situation where the mountains have assumed mysterious and terrifying appearance in the semi-darkness of moonlight or starlight. Selection of words and phrases, and their combination into an organic whole appear to be near perfect. And faintly the situation is suggestive of a man's predicament before circumstances so very unalterable, mysterious and terrifying.

But elsewhere the author would use mountains as the symbol of a beacon sign to a distant goal towards which man is marching on for years and years and years, falling down again and again, but striving with a renewed energy for the uphill march. "My wedding and an adventure in the Himalayas" is a very short chapter of only five paragraphs with a four-line quotation from Walter-de-la Mare. These few paragraphs come as a relief after a long discursive chapter on "Wartime (Great War 1914-19) politics in India."

The marriage—she—are covered only in three opening sentences and the rest is all about the Himalayan adventure.

The tale of his climbing a height upto 15,000 or 16,000 ft. has nothing extraordinary about it, but much beauty and significance lie in the last or fifth paragraph on account of the depth of feelings and emotion and spontaneity of expression. His dream-like delight at the prospect of a visit to the Manasarover Lakes

Contd....
Lakes and the snow-covered Kailas, and the pathos of the dream unfulfilled, in this vein the author introduces in the chapter a symbolic importance for the mountains and man's passion for conquering great heights with challenging risks. Nehru writes:

"The higher valleys and mountains of Kashmir fascinated me so much that I resolved to come back again soon. I made many a plan and worked out many a tour, and one, the very thought of which filled me with delight, was a visit to Manasarover, the wonder lake of Tibet, and snow-covered Kailas nearby. Instead of going up mountains or crossing the seas I have to satisfy my wanderlust by coming to prison. But still I plan; for that is a joy that no one can deny even in prison, and besides, what else can one do in prison?"

The author has used his expressions with such a skill that the language almost equals the poetry inherent in the pathos of the dream unfulfilled. His dream is the wonder lake of Tibet but in real life his wanderlust has to be satisfied by internment in prison. The two words of similar sound value succeed in creating the dream and passion of man who is struggling to transcend his existence in a condition of bondage.

Even in the closing chapter (Epilogue) of the book, Nehru writes in the same strain about the charm of mountains and treats them with a symbolic significance:

Contd....
"The distant mountains seem easy of access and climbing, the top beckons, but, as one approaches difficulties appear, and the higher one goes the more laborious becomes the journey and the summit recedes into the clouds. Yet the climbing is worth the effort and has its own joy and satisfaction. Perhaps it is the struggle that gives value to life, not so much the ultimate result."

In content and expression there are striking resemblances in the passages at the beginning and close of the book. The reality recedes, an image appears. Life confined in the dark well of a prison cell is forgotten and the mind's eyes look upwards and respond to the beacon sight of the mountain tops which often recede into the clouds. Joy and satisfaction of the struggle become the poetic truth of life.