Crisis of the Age, Experience and Expression.

Action, conflict, struggle - in his personal life as well as in the life of his countrymen provide the basic material of Jawaharlal Nehru's letters and books including the magnum opus, "An Autobiography". How far he was a creative artist? One may ask. Stephen Spender writes: 'I was reading Nehru's Autobiography last week, and it does not seem to me that he was a very extraordinary man, with an extraordinary mind. He does have extraordinary qualities, the chief of which is courage - extraordinary courage. Another outstanding quality of Nehru is that he was what you might call a creative man of action. He had a creative, speculative, rather poetic kind of mind, and you might first think that this man ought really to have been a writer'. It is a curious combination, no doubt, - a creative man of action to be at the same time rather a poetic kind of man. If Nehru's career through action, conflict and struggle is reviewed side by side with his prose writings it then becomes quite evident that he evinced great creativity both as an activist and a literary artist. Since the middle of the twenties of the century he has been in the mainstream of life not only in his own country but also in the world at large. In his experience of life is typified the experience of the age through which the world has passed in his time. A critic has observed: "Often enough Nehru is seen to be troubled by various conflicts, the age he lives in, the crisis in the spirit of man, and

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and by the world situation*. But in fact Nehru appears to be prepared to face the challenge of the age with the spirit of an eternal quest on life and civilization. Four sentences, as quoted from Nehru's last letter to his daughter Indira in 1933, from prison, reveal his understanding of his own age:

"We can no longer accept many of the ancient beliefs and customs; we have no more faith in them, in Asia or Europe or America. So we search for new ways, new aspects of the truth, more in harmony with our environment. And we question each other and debate and quarrel and evolve any number of 'isms' and philosophies. As in the days of Socrates, we live in an age of questioning, but that questioning is not confined to a city like Athens, it is world-wide".

This spirit of quest has to be considered along with the stark realities of a life of political struggle and suffering which the writer has been leading through this period. The search for new ways necessarily entails extreme sacrifice in life, for as Nehru says in his Autobiography, revolution can be experienced and enacted in the field outside and not in one's drawing room. That has been his own life, creative in action. It was possible for him to write with freshness, sincerity and conviction as he could so easily and effectively draw upon the realities of life that he had gone through and at times given shape to. And his writings do in fact make up a saga of the generations..."
that lived between the two great world wars and even thereafter right up to the threshold of the second half of this century. To a critic the value lies to a great extent in the power of communication that Nehru's writings reveal, and it is mainly on account of such power that he lays claim to his creativity as a literary artist. A very interesting statement by Leavis may be quoted in this context:

"The potentialities of human experience in any age are realized only by a tiny minority, and the important poet is important because he belongs to this (and has also, of course, the power of communication). Indeed his capacity for experiencing and his power of communicating are indistinguishable; not merely because we should not know of the one without the other, but because his power of making words express what he feels is indistinguishable from his awareness of what he feels".

The author of "an Autobiography", The Glimpses of World History, The Unity of India, The Discovery of India and a large number of letters, and essays and speeches (retained as written texts) can also take his due place in the rank of such 'tiny minority' by virtue of his power of realizing the essence of human experience of the age and his power of communicating the same through language which is both expressive and evocative. In the case of the writer with such distinction of twin faculty the creative mind is always at work being constantly nurtured by his speculative power. Experience and expression leap forth

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forth from the depth of the very soul of the author, because he has tasted the adventure of dangerous living at the beckoning of destiny and his dream for the human race. Thus, he is true both in action and speculation. In his case realism is something more than mere everyday events of life; it is surcharged with a passionate urge for the achievement of a goal in life. This passion is sustained and strengthened by deep-rooted emotion. On the historic backdrop of events in India, and for that matter, all over the world, from the time of the great war of 1914-18 right up to the fifties, certain central figures emerge who participate and promote these events with the originality of their own and Nehru is one of them. Inspite of his deep involvement in the events of current life, the most recognizable thing in Nehru's whole career has been his emotion, his idealism. He could dream of a brave new world where imperialism and exploitation have been things of the past and free nations are not only living peacefully and gainfully but are also contributing towards the growth of the New World. In all his writings Nehru has left the impress of a scrupulous adherence to that state of attitude of his mind which can be indentified as idealism, by no means it can be termed 'commitment'. On reading Nehru's Autobiography Jean Frost was so deeply moved that in a letter dated New York April 15, 1941 and addressed to Jawaharlal Nehru he described the lesson and inspiration which the book had brought to him: 'I want very badly to be able to hold my head high and to call myself honest. I have the incentive at least. It seems to me now that the most important thing in life is the

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life is the preservation of ideals ———— that they should be preserved at all costs and without faltering on the way*.

An essential feature of Nehru's writings is that often he goes from particular to general, and, that is to say, he soon arrives at an emotional and intellectual realm after passing through the hard and dry tract of realities. It is, therefore, noticeable that his idealism is born and reborn again and again in different chapters of his books and letters and speeches whenever he has to deal with certain events of very vital relevance to man's struggle for emancipation and regeneration. By far the best testimony to this feature of his writings can be seen in his emotional letters written from Jail to his daughter. Reference may be made in particular to letter No. 194 (dt. Aug. 7, 1933) : A Final look round the World and letter No. 195 (dt. Aut. 8, 1933) : The Shadow of War. In the first one Nehru makes an analytical study of the world situation, covering almost every country under the sun and examining the significant phenomena of human suffering. Extracts are quoted:

"In India Gandhiji has again been arrested and sentenced and back in Yervada Prison; Civil Disobedience has been resumed, though in a restricted form, and our comrades go to gaol again. A brave and dear comrade, a friend whom I first met a quarter of a century ago when I was new at Cambridge, Jatindra Mohan Sen Gupta, has just left us, dying as a prisoner of the British Government. Life merges into death, but the great work

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work to make life worth living for the people of India goes on.

"Of the countries of Western Asia, I have told you enough. There and in Egypt, the struggle for freedom goes on in various forms and in various stages. So also in south-east Asia, in Farther India and Indonesia-Siam, Indo-China, Java, Sumatra and the Dutch Indies, the Philippine Islands. And everywhere, except in Siam, which is independent, the struggle has two aspects; the nationalist urge against foreign domination and the urge of the down-trodden classes for social equality or at least economic betterment."

"...... All the South American countries have abundant mineral resources, and are thus potentially very rich. But meanwhile they are sunk in debt, and as soon as the United States stopped lending money to them four years ago, they got into a hopeless muddle, and there were revolutions all over the place. The three chief countries, the ABC countries as they are called, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, also succumbed to revolutions, owing to financial difficulties."

And in this manner he goes over to letter No. 195 which is a continuation of the earlier one. In this the author surveys Europe which he could not take up in the previous letter. "Europe remains, troublesome and quarrelsome Europe, and yet possessing many virtues." In this letter too the style and manner are the same, the author's deep concern for man, excitement and anguish

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at the events which appeared to him as symptoms of internal disorder, and, ultimately, his idealistic assertions:

"So you see what a curious chequer-board Europe is at present, with its conflicts and hatreds, and rival groups of nations glaring at each other. There is interminable talk of disarmament, and yet everywhere there is arming going on and new and terrible weapons of war and destruction are being invented. There is also plenty of talk of international cooperation, and conferences without number have been held. All to little purpose".

This is the language of one who has involved himself, heart and soul, in the current affairs in India and abroad and has discovered with distress that the trend is leading towards a tragedy inspite of 'interminable talks of disarmament'. The realities are all too depressing, and in anguish the author says: "All to little purpose". The essence of experience is expressed in the compressed sentence of four words. A crisis of confidence born out of the perpetual conflict between various interests of men through-out the world seems to be dominant in the writer's mind. Howsoever depressed he may feel, he is not an escapist. Being 'a creative man of action' he likes to look squarely at the cross-currents of tragic events world-over, and to draw a lesson or a moral and then to adjudge his own action. The moot question that can be relevantly asked in this context is whether the spirit of the age was clear to Nehru and to what extent is the same reflected in his writing? During the thirties of the century the
the motivating spirit running through man's civilization was an extreme type of nationalism. What was true of aggressive Italy, Germany and Japan was true in a different sense of Poland, Czechoslovakia, France, England, Russia, and innumerable African and Asian countries including India. The onslaught of the war and the consequences thereof continued to fan the sentiment of ultra-nationalism in all parts of the world. If it is diagnosed as the spirit of the age then it has to be admitted that Nehru's writings contain much of this spirit. In saying so it is not implied that his great humanism was by any means eroded by the stronger force of nationalism. In fact, nationalism, as it appeared to him was but inalienable from internationalism or United Nations or United mankind. Nehru accepted the basic truth of nationalism but knew how to relate it to wider issues of nations all over the world.

In section 10 under Chapter Nine (the Last Phase - World War Two) in the Discovery of India Nehru writes:

"Why had the Chinese fought so stoutly for many years? Why, above all others, had the Russians and other peoples of the Soviet Union fought with such courage, tenacity and whole-heartedness? Elsewhere people fought bravely also because they were moved by love of country, fear of aggression and desire to preserve their ways of life."

"... In India? There was a deep-seated dislike of the present, and the future seemed equally dark. No patriotic urge to action moved the people, only a desire to defend themselves..."
against invasion and a worse fate .......

Freedom is dear to all but most of all to those who have been deprived of it or those who are in danger of losing it. ....... The desire for freedom, for which so many in India had laboured and suffered, had not only received a check but it seemed that the prospect of it had receded into some dim and distant future. Instead of tacking that passion on to the world struggle that was going on, and drawing upon that vast reservoir of energy in the cause of India and world Freedom and for India's defence, the war had been isolated from it, and no hope was centered in its issue. It is never wise to leave any people, even enemies, without hope.

The spirit of the age being intense nationalism, it is reflected in an abundant measure in Nehru's thought and writing, for he is in the forefront of India's struggle for independence. And there is a difference. Nationalist to the core, Nehru has also often surpassed himself by virtue of his panoramic vision and wider participation. In the passage quoted above he makes an analogy of the passionate desire for 'freedom for which so many in India laboured and suffered' with a 'vast reservoir of energy' and wishes the same should have been fully utilized ' in the cause of Indian and world freedom'.

Units of facts and events are given detailed treatment in all his writings. Characters, their movements and various situations in the drama being enacted on the world stage are delineated with care, compassion and confidence. Drama is 'drama'.

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that is action, and Nehru takes great delight in action.
For him action, worth moral support, must be aimed at libera-
tion and resurgence of mankind. He gives vent to his regret and
despair at the tragic forebodings of all events rolling upon the
world stage in an endless stream.

To be able to reflect adequately the spirit of the age
is no doubt a great quality for a creative writer. In the conclu-
ding chapters of The Glimpses of World History and The Discovery
of India Nehru has not only made a critical analysis of the
bewildering political and social developments, actions and reactions
throughout the world, in this e century, particularly in the
so-called civilized West, but that he has also endeavoured con-
tantly to dive below the surface and to bring out the cry of the
suffering soul of universal man. What is in store for him, what
is his destiny?

The ennobling feature in his writing can be traced in
the author's ability to lift the tone from despair to hore, from
reality to dream, from details to general. A very wide and broad
perspective he really had for his vision of man and human destiny.
On reading Nehru's Autobiography, Rabindranath Tagore wrote in
his letter dated May 31, 1936 "Dear Jawaharlal, I have just
finished reading your great book and I feel intensely impressed
and proud of your achievement. Through all its details there runs
a deep current of humanity which overwesses the tangles of facts
and leads us to the person who is greater than his deeds and

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and trear than his surroundings”.

A serious critic should notice that details of events and cross-currents of various socio-political situations in the world as depicted in Nehru’s writings are often like waves on the sea surface but when one dips down below there are mysterious charms of the unfathomed depth enriched by a serenity of peace. Thus, a gift of reflective perception helps him enormously to pass through endless talking on endless topics. One of the most vital issues of the century involving the very security of human life and civilization can be diagnosed as heartless violence perpetrated on large scale at mass level. The malignancy has developed uncontrolled on international as well as on intra-national basis. All champions of the cause of freedom and social justice for man have suffered the inevitable sad experience of mass violence and war. They fail yet retaining their faith in man they strive and they dream, Then look for what lies beyond the visible maladies and obstacles. They struggle with the ugly present for the creation of a glorious future. Nehru has played this role magnificently. In all his major writings he has sincerely endeavoured to communicate his own intense experience of the most vital aspect of human attitude and action at the mass level in international and intra-national relationship. Quoted below are the last two paragraphs from his marathon 600-page Autobiography:

"On September 4th I was suddenly discharged from Almora Gaol as news had come that my wife’s condition was critical. She
She was under treatment in Badenweiler in the Schwarzwald in Germany. My sentence was 'suspended', I was told, and I was released five and half months before my time. I hurried to Europe by air.

Europe in turmoil, fearful of war and tumult and with economic crisis always on the horizon; Abyssinia invaded and her people bombed; various imperialist systems in conflict and threatening each other, and England, the greatest of the imperialist Powers, standing up for peace and the League Covenant, while it bombs and ruthlessly oppresses its subject peoples. But here in the Black Forest it is calm and peaceful, and even the Swastika is not much in evidence. I watch the mists steal up the valley and hide the distant frontier of France and cover the landscape, and I wonder what lies behind them.

Nehru's writings and speeches reveal to a great extent the spirit of restlessness and violence developing into a phenomenal force striking at all that is noble and kindly and beautiful in man since the Great War of 1914-18. The vicious forces of destruction regrouped themselves and reappeared in the early thirties of the century. The March of Japan on China, the Spanish Civil War, The rise of Fascism as a new political form of aggressive imperialism, emergence of Nazism and its irresistible gobbling-ups at tornado-like sweeps, hesitancy and opportunism of Great Britain, futile but continuous struggle for independence in India and other Asian countries,—these and similar other world events created an atmosphere surcharged with endless tension and the apprehension of an impending
impending disaster. Nehru has keenly followed the course of development of the series of such events and even taken active part in some of them. His involvement has been all-embracing. An idealist always knows his 'cause'. Face to face with the grim tragedy which has been spreading its spectre, Nehru retains his conscientious adherence to the principles of peace and freedom and equality of all peoples in the strife-torn world. But there are facts which cannot be by-passed: the fact of raging wild violence in the name of national supremacy, the fact of raping at the slightest or no provocation the basic tenets of humanity, the fact of purposeful ruination of all codes of civilized conduct for the sake of satisfying the hysteric ambitions of political demagogues.

In all Nehru's writings there is a true reflection of this 20th century spirit of intolerance and violence and brutality. Thus he writes in the Glimpses of World History (Page 818-819):

"Violence is a common enough phenomenon in history, but usually it is considered a painful necessity and it is excused and explained. Fascism, however, did not believe in any such apologetic attitude towards violence. They accepted it and praised it openly, and they practised it even though there was no resistance to them. The opposition members in Parliament were terrorized by beatings, and a new electoral law, quite changing the constitution, was forced through. In this way a great majority was obtained in favour of Mussolini."
In 1924 Europe was shocked by the murder of Giacomo Matteoti, a leading socialist who was a member of Parliament. He spoke in Parliament and criticized fascist methods during the election that had been just held. Within a few days he was murdered. The murderers were tried for form's sake, but they got off practically without punishment. A moderate leader of liberals, Amendola, died as a result of a beating! A liberal ex-Prime Minister-Nitti, just managed to escape from Italy, but his house was destroyed. These are just a few instances which attracted world attention, but the violence was continuous and widespread. This violence was apart from and in addition to legal methods of suppression, and yet it was not just emotional mob violence. It was disciplined violence undertaken deliberately against all opponents, not only socialists and communists but peaceful and very moderate liberals also."

Again in his Autobiography:
(Page 541-542)

"But peace to-day is itself merely an interval between two wars, a preparation for war, and to some extent a continuation of the conflict in economic and other spheres. There is a continuous tug-of-war between victors and the vanquished, between the imperialist powers and their colonial dependencies, between the privileged classes and the exploited classes. The war atmosphere with all its accompaniments of violence and falsehood, continues in some measure therefore even during so-called peace-time, and both the soldier and civilian official are trained

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trained to meet this situation."

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"Even when outward violence has been toned down, it has taken subtler and more dangerous forms. Neither the growth of reason nor of the religious outlook nor morality has checked in any way this tendency to violence. Individuals have progressed and gone up in the human scale, and probably there are far more of these higher type individuals (The highest type excepted) in the world today than at any previous period of history; society as a whole has progressed, and to a very small extent begun to attempt the control of the primitive and barbarian instincts. But on the whole groups and communities have not improved greatly. The individual in becoming more civilised has passed on many of his primitive passions and vices to the community, and as violence always attracts the morally second-rate, the leaders of these communities are seldom their best men and women."

This conflict between peace and violence can be examined in the context of the long history of human civilization. In every age violence, brutality and decline of morality come in uncontrollable waves, and there are conflicts and contests between these two forces of evil and righteousness. History stands evidence of the inexorable exercise of violence which spreads its devastating allurements with mephistophelean cunning and decisiveness. Man's struggle in every age has been to escape the self-manoeuvered deluge, but ultimately he has been overpowered and crushed.

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There have been brief periods of respite between destructive social upheavals. Art and culture and beauty have enriched man's civilization only during these periods of peace and fraternity. The progress and advancement of civilization of whatever worth today, have been possible by the victory of the forces of progress and righteousness. But the cycle revolves, the nemesis befalls quickly again. Twentieth century has earned extraordinary notoriety in this respect. This tragic keynote of this age has engaged the attention of all great statesmen, philosophers and writers of this age. Poet Tagore and Sri Aurobinda in India, Bertrand Russel and Churchill in England, ........... among others, have struck the chord in a spirit of apprehensive anguish and sometimes in a vein of sincere optimism about the future of mankind and this civilization of man's own creation. Thus wrote Tagore from his sick bed in 1940:

" .......... the demon of barbarity has given up all pretence and has emerged with unconcealed fangs, ready to tear up humanity in an orgy of devastation. From one end of the world to the other the poisonous fumes of hatred darken the atmosphere. The spirit of violence which perhaps lay dormant in the psychology of the West, has at last roused itself and desecrated the spirit of man.

"As I look round I see the crumbling ruins of a proud civilization strewn like a vast heap of futility. And yet I shall not commit the grievous sin of losing faith in Man. I would Contd...
I would rather look forward to the opening of a new chapter in his history after the cataclysm is over and the atmosphere rendered clean with the spirit of service and sacrifice. Perhaps, that dawn will come from this horizon, from the East where the sun rises. A day will come when unvanquished Man will retrace his path of conquest, despite all barriers, to win back his lost human heritage.

This curse of human fate has reared again and again in various shades in Nehru's essays and letters and speeches. Nehru has in him a great respect for man and great hopes too, but he is often despaired and shocked by the calculated acts of violence and brutality by man against man. Being himself involved in the phenomenal tides, and not a mere onlooker from the shore, of action and reaction, revolution and counter-revolution, war and rapprochement witnessed by the world in this century, he has been struck by the vehemence of this ineradicable flaw in the nature of men. So, the essential pathos of man's tragic struggle for existence on the earth's surface where endless infrastructure for facilitating happy and comfortable living have been built up by man's own talent and toil, can be heard ringing in woeful toils almost all through his writings.

It is an age of cold reasoning. There is an all-pervading atmosphere of gloom and panic. It is rather difficult for any philosopher, Statesman or writer having sincere regard for man, not to be a prey of pessimism in view of the society's helplessness before organized violence. On the other hand, Romanticism acts Contd...
like tonic for the growth and spread of optimism. Sydney Moore's imagination which is now about five hundred years old illustrates the point. Dream and wishful thinking for a glorious future for man were dominant features in all the poets and writers of the age of Romantic revival in England. Even in the great Victorian era, that is, the Nineteenth Century, when social order was changing in the West as a result of industrial revolution, the real stress was on a liberal wish-well-for all in the society. Stoicism of Matthew Arnold can be taken as an exception. Imagination was the forte for all thinkers and writers and poets, and it was quite impossible for the events and facts of life to overpower them, choke them and hypnotize them to the point of fear and panic and pessimism. The old foundation of faith and hope has suffered deep erosion in this century. War and war, violence and destruction; man's psyche has been under constant pressure; a dark canopy of tense suspense hangs over the vast panorama of the entire world. In Nehru's writings one can easily notice the essential spirit of this age, so gravely encumbered by remorseless violence and undermining of the values of life:

"The whole world is in labour, and the shadow of war and revolution lies heavy everywhere. If we cannot escape from this inevitable destiny of ours, how shall we face it? Ostrich-like, shall we hide our heads from it? Or shall we play a brave part in the shaping of events and, facing risks and perils if need be, have the joy of great and noble adventure, and feeling that our steps

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are merging with those of history "" (Glimpses of World History, August 8, 1933).

The nemesis that has befallen mankind has to be faced squarely and bravely in a spirit of sacrifice, and risking all that men have treasured as dear belongings; the challenge has to be faced in the spirit of an adventure staking everything in life in order that a new age may be ushered in.

The real tragedy of the century lies in gradual evaporation of that spirit and determination to rise and block the way of advancing violence, chaos and confusion. The edifice of civilization is crumbling down wherever man has looked up with hope and confidence. The conscious mind suffers enormously for it has to witness what it extremely abhors, but at the same time it has to put up with such an adhorring situation simply because it cannot muster courage enough to face the truth and face the final challenge in the spirit of great adventure. In the context of such a situation, the value of Nehru's writing can be estimated from his language as quoted below:

"In the multitude of crises, political and economic, that face us, perhaps the great crisis is that of the human spirit. Till this crisis of the spirit is resolved it will be difficult to find a solution for the other crises that afflict us.

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Today fear consumes us all - fear of the future, fear of war, fear of the people of the nations we dislike and who

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who dislike us. That fear may be justified to some extent. But fear is an ignoble emotion and leads to blind strife. Let us try to get rid of this fear and base our thoughts and actions on what is essentially right and moral, and then gradually the crises of the spirit will be resolved, the dark clouds that surround us may lift and the way to the evolution of the world based on freedom will be clear." (Prepared speech "An age of Crises - Broadcast Delhi, April 3, 1948).

Said in deep sincerity, the language of the quoted passage is, in fact, a bold attempt to overcome frustration, and to poke the dying flame of faith in man and his future. Otherwise, it is simply wishful thinking to say that 'the dark clouds that surround us may lift and the way to the evolution of the world based on freedom will be clear.' Because, even in the fifties—the memory of World War II having by that time receded to a safe distance—the horizon is yet cloudy with apprehensions of new wars. The psychology of post-Atombomb world is extremely shaky. There are two very significant sentences by Nehru on this: "The war ended and the atom bomb became the symbol of the new age. The use of this bomb and the tortuous use of power politics brought further disillusion." (Discovery of India, last page). Therefore, the hope expressed in the Delhi speech is rather unreal. And so, Nehru is equally sincere when he says a little later on (Address at University of Colombo, January 12, 1960):

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"With all the earnestness we may possess, sometimes we do not get over the old and new barriers that come in the way of mutual understanding. Then, I think that, in spite of our vaunted civilization, in spite of the advance of science and technology, we have lost our grip on some of the basic things of life, something that gives anchorage to life and some standard with which we could measure value."

Vaunted civilization of man is equated to almost nothingness, for in the very process of the advance of science and technology are laid the elements of disaster and destruction. Which way to proceed man cannot decide; conscious about the impending doom, yet no decision or determined effort to alter the fate. So, in ultimate analysis, 'to be or not to be that is the question' which continually haunts mankind in this century of great advance of science and technology. In such a situation of cosmic gloom, none can be spared of his share of the blame. To be in full fathom of the tragic situation is no doubt a great perception. Like ventilation of fresh air Nehru's language almost cleans up the soiled conscience of the universal man chased by a remorseless fate:

"I feel that today the world is .... tied up in fears (and) apprehensions, some of them justified no doubt. But (when) a person feels fear, bad consequences and evil consequences follow. Fear is not a good companion. It is surprising to see that this sense of fear is pervading great countries, fear, and grave fear of war, and fear of many things,

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It is easy to condemn people. Let us not do so, for who are without blame, who cannot themselves be condemned? In a sense, all of us who are gathered here today in this continent of Europe - are there any amongst us who have not been guilty in many ways? We are all guilty men and women. While we are seeking points where error occurs, we should not forget that there is not one of us who is exempt from blame.

The great drama of life being enacted upon the world stage is in fact a tragedy in content and when ‘we are all guilty men and women’ it is certain that in the final Act all will perish. But Nehru has always tried to take away people’s mind from this horrible prospect of a colossal disaster. In the cursed age of war, threat of war, fear and mass-scale violence, Nehru makes a grand effort to remain an optimist, and as a ‘poet with a creative mind’, this ‘man of creative action’ always endeavours to lit up the flickering lamp of hope and faith. Unlike the dominant mood of negativity prevailing world-wide, Nehru’s approach to the central theme of fear and violence is rather pragmatic. At times he is almost proclamative and like a preacher tries to say that he knows the way to salvation. Thus in the closing chapter of The Glimpses of World History (The Last letter) Nehru writes inspiringly in a matchless style:

"Sometimes the injustice, the unhappiness, the brutality of the world oppresses us and darken our minds, and we see no way out. With Matthew Arnold, we feel that there is no hope..."
in the world and that all we can do is to be true to one another.

And yet if we take such a dismal view we have not learnt aright the lesson of life or of history. For history teaches us of growth and progress and of the possibility of an infinite advance for man. And life is rich and varied, and though it has many swamps and marshes and muddy places it has also the great sea, and the mountains, and snow, and glaciers, and the love of family and friends, and the comradeship of workers in a common cause, and music, and books and the empire of ideas.

To be able to write in such a romantic mood and in such a poetic style is no doubt a distinction for Nehru as a writer endowed with the power for 'criticism of life'. His powerful feeling for life and his insistent faith in 'the possibility of an infinite advance for man' lend not only the essential dharma but also the gravity of weight in his writing, and as if with a sigh of relief his puzzled readers can also say sincerely: 'Life is rich and varied, and though it has many swamps and marshes and muddy places - it has also the great sea, and the mountains .......

But the fact remains that the sentiment expressed is more from Nehru's utopian vision and less from the cognizance of hard realities. The spirit of the age would hardly permit

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romanticism, imagination and poetic exuberance on greatness of man. If an analytical approach establishes that, (as is usually evident in his books, letters and speeches) the social imbalances and economic ills are all man's own creation, and that the civilization, as it has developed, will crumble on account of its inherent contradictions, there remains little hope and consolation for men in the existing state of affairs. The real message of the age can be one of a plain warning to men wherever on earth, that they will have to pass through the inescapable process of restructuring the form and content of social and collective living which is described as civilization.

The vital question of the atomic age, 'Has man a Future?', has been raised to a very high level of poignancy by Bertrand Russel in many essays, speeches, statements and letters. The passage quoted below communicates the same pathos, the same yearning as in Nehru's or Churchill's writings on the same theme of atomic man's destiny in this atomize age. So writes Bertrand Russel: 'The question is a simple one: is it possible for a scientific Society to continue to exist, must such a society inevitably bring itself to destruction? It is a simple question but a very vital one. I do not think it is possible to exaggerate the gravity of the possibilities of evil that lie in the utilization of atomic energy. As I go about the streets and see St. Paul's, the British Museum, the Houses of Parliament and the other monuments of our civilization, in my mind's eye I see a nightmare vision

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vision of those buildings as heaps of rubble with corpses all around them. That is a thing we have got to face, not only in our own country and cities, but throughout the civilized world as a real probability unless the world will agree to find a way of abolishing war.

It may appear curious in this context that Nehru should write in a note of hope and faith in the eventual regeneration of man inspite of unending strife and conflict, and the apprehension of atomic weapons being used in wars in future, and overall degradation. To all thinking persons in the West the future is a big question mark; further deterioration of human relationship on a global basis may be lying in future's womb. In spite of his deep concern and anguish over the existing state of affairs, Nehru speaks in an inspiring language about the great destiny of man. This duality in his feeling and thought process is significant. While the tragic aspect of the world situation governs and moulds his conscious approach to the theme, in his innermost mind the sincere feelings flow with hope and consolation like a life-giving stream. On finer analysis, it is to be observed that by intellect Nehru is in line with the greatest of social philosophers of this age who have read the course of history of the twentieth century man born and nourished and inspired and controlled by ultra-nationalism, extreme selfishness, and violent conflicts resulting from all these. On the other hand, by tradition Nehru is a believer, and is in full accord with the Indian
Indian spirit which is constantly endeavouring to correlate cause and effect. Accordingly, he can assert that future of men rests entirely on himself. As a statesman, thinker and writer he should in fitness of things inspire men to the path of righteousness so that they are ultimately led to the goal of a new world of peace and plenty, freedom and happiness.

Writing on such a vital aspect of contemporary life, Nehru bears a close resemblance to Bertrand Russel who spearheaded a movement of scientists, philosophers and intellectuals all over the world against war and organized violence, particularly against atomic weapons. An extract from Russel’s essay as quoted below, is a testimony of the great man’s concern for Man’s future, which as he too considers like Nehru, is well within man’s own grasp and grip should only he accept the challenge:

“Our world is a mad world. ....

The world has become so intolerably tense, so charged with hatred, so filled with misfortune and pain that man have lost the power of balanced judgement which is needed for emergence from the slough in which mankind is staggering. Our age is so painful that many of the best men have been seized with despair. But there is no rational ground for despair: The means of happiness for the human race exist, and it is only necessary that the human race should choose to use them.”

Greek drama is based on the concept of the tragedy of human life and the twin problems of Evil and Fate. ‘Man learns...”
learns by suffering, he learns how to face life, but he learns also that the ultimate mystery remains and he cannot find an answer to his questions or solve the riddle of good and evil'.- This is the essential feature of Greek tragedies as observed by Nehru himself. But, in the case of Sanskrit drama the finale is reached by conciliation and understanding. However grave and serious may be the facts and events of human life, the drama of that harassed life must not end in tragedy, — an 'aesthetic harmony' must be achieved through the final victory of truth and virtue. Man is crucified: but — why should not there be a faith in resurrection?

In Nehru's treatment of the theme of conflict and violence in twentieth century life a mixture of both these two approaches — Greek and Indian — is discernible. Therein lies the explanation of the duality in the feeling-and thought-process of Nehru in regard to the deeply tragic situation faced by mankind in general. It is, therefore, truly characteristic of him to write in notes of deep pessimism and anguish as well as of hope and expectation while looking at the growing barbarity and confusion all around. Thus he writes in the closing chapters of *The Glimpses of World History*:

"Postscript, NOV 14, 1938 — 'We live in an age of revolution, a revolution which started when the war broke out in 1914, and continues from year to year with the world in the throes of conflict everywhere. The French Revolution of 150 years ago..."
ago gradually ushered in the age of political equality, but the times have changed, and that by itself is not enough to-day. The boundaries of democracy have to be widened now so as to include economic equality also. This is the great revolution through which we are all passing, the revolution to ensure economic equality, and thus to give democracy its full meaning and to bring ourselves in line with the advance of science and technology."

This firm faith in the 'great revolution' to usher in a meaningful democracy ensuring economic equality is juxtaposed by a deep cry from the depth of his soul: "Suicides, flights, a mighty exodus of sorrowful, helpless, homeless people, with the immemorial grief of ages bearing them down, marching in endless procession to -- Where?"

In his optimism and pessimism Nehru is true to the spirit of the age but more so to himself. Often it seems, he is a victim of his own duality. He is so much excited about and enamoured of 'the advance of science and technology' whereby a 'great revolution' for economic equality will be ushered in. At the same time he is alarmed by the inexorable process of disintegration of the binding moral forces of the world family due to science and technology; Nehru is almost scared of the robot that is about to kill its own creator.

Thus, he has given vent to his sense of profound grief and anguish at man's helplessness before the mighty forces

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forces released by scientific research and development:

"The danger of such a disaster is by no means remote and unthinkable. Science, as we have seen, has brought many good things, but science has also added enormously to the horrors of war. States and Governments have often neglected many branches of science, pure and applied. But they have not neglected the military aspects of science, and they have taken full advantage of the latest scientific technique to arm and strengthen themselves. Most States rest, in the final analysis, on force, and scientific technique is making these Governments so strong that they can tyrannize over people without, as a rule, any fear of consequences."

If war breaks out, it is expected that the warring nations will immediately be attacked by hostile aircraft. These aeroplanes will come immediately after the declaration of war, or they may even come before, to steal an advantage over the enemy, and hurl high explosive bomb at the great cities and factories. Some of the enemy aeroplanes might be destroyed, but the remaining ones will be quite enough to bomb the city. And this kind of thing might be done simultaneously in the great cities of the rival Powers at war with each other. In a European war, London, Paris, Berlin might be a heap of smouldering ruins within a few days or weeks.
What will be the result of all this? Universal destruction? The end of the fine structure of culture and civilization that centuries of effort have built up?"?

Pathos expressed in such sincere concern for the future of civilization reflects the very spirit of the age with its cup of sorrow and suffering full to the brim. Western thinkers, specially English, have written on the fate of twentieth-century man in a mood of great alarm, and in literary estimate the worth of some of their writings is almost classic both in content and style. Surprisingly, the anguish expressed in the passages quoted above from Nehru bears close likeness to the feelings of Winston Churchill expressed so wonderfully in a piece of writing entitled "Shall we all commit suicide?" first published in 1925:

...... "Lastly, science unfolded her treasures and her secrets to the desperate demands of men, and placed in their hands agencies and apparatus almost decisive in their character.

It is probable - nay, certain - that among the means which will next time be at their disposal will be agencies and processes of destruction wholesale, unlimited, and perhaps, once launched, uncontrollable.

Mankind has never been in this position before. Without having improved appreciably in virtue or enjoying wiser guidance, it has got into its hands for the first time the tools by which it can unfailingly accomplish its own extermination. That is the
is the point in human destinies to which all the glories and toils of man have at last led them. They would do well to pause and ponder upon their new responsibilities. Death stands at attention, obedient, expectant, ready to serve, ready to shear away the peoples en masse; ready, if called on, to pulverize, without hope of repair, what is left of civilization. He awaits only the word of command. He awaits it from a frail, bewildered being, long his victim, now -- for one occasion only -- his master."

"Humanity as a whole" should rise up to the occasion for it is the crucial issue of man's self-preservation on earth, -- that is how Churchill struck the conscience of all in apprehension of a supreme catastrophe. Twenty years after this appeal from Churchill was the Atom Bomb brought into use in war. And the prediction of Churchill has almost come true in this post-Atom-bomb age: "Death stands at attention -- ready to shear away the peoples en masse." Interestingly enough, the warning and appeal came from the indisputable victorious hero of the Second World War of 1939-45. Really, therefore, man suffers at the hand of blind fate -- the theme of Greek tragedy-- and yet man struggles, unavailingly, for survival but alas, there is intervention of 'blind forces acting blindly against which man has to fight.'

Inspite of his full consciousness of the horrors of war, the sad lot and sufferings of man in different ages, and the apprehension of the ruination of man's civilization by the forces

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forces of evil let loose by man himself Nehru is able enough to raise himself to a higher level of self-confidence from which position he writes in glowing terms about man and his great destiny.

' Though we may be weak and erring mortals, living a bright and uncertain span of life, yet there is something of the staff of immortal gods in us.' This reflects the high spirit of traditional India which believes in the supremacy of good over evil, of truth over mean propaganda and falsehood, of peace and love over violence.

Viewed thus, it should be stated to Nehru's credit that, even not being an actor on the theatre of the twin World-Wars, he has been able to raise and expand his vision to encompass the whole mankind in its destiny towards a future which is ominously dark. The edifice of his creative writings rests on these three pillars: Personal involvement in the revolution in his own country, his intellectual and analytical power, and his faith and humane compassion. The third one is perhaps the strongest because of its great virtue of infectious optimism emerging from the traditional faith in resurrection. The study may thus be concluded with a devotion from Nehru's prepared speech, Jan. 12, 1950, Colombo, most representative of the aforesaid element in his thought and writing:

"With all the evil that we see around us and with all its degradation, we have to live in this world. There is,

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There is, nevertheless, plenty of good in the world and we have to see that there is plenty of what I as a Hindu would call the element of divinity in the individual as well as in the group. If we can have our feet firmly planted on the soil and do not lose ourselves in imaginary vagaries and at the same time have some of that divine fire in us, too, then, perhaps, we may be able to balance ourselves and develop some kind of an integrated life."