CHAPTER V

STYLISTIC DEVICES

Jawaharlal Nehru has proved to be a jewel of India. In his address, lofty thoughts are couched in sweet and courteous language. The splendour of the soul shines in every sentence. The apprehension that lurked in many hearts disappeared after the oration. As was the address, so was his deportment. During the Congress session, he did all his work independently and impartially. And since he worked incessantly and strenuously, everything was completed on time and without any hitch.

Mahatma Gandhi

Nehru was one of the most distinguished writers of Modern India. To overcome loneliness in prison, Nehru involved himself in the process of effective writing. He had passionate commitment to write and he was successful to a large extent. B.R. Nanda conveys:

The sensitive, shy, young scientist – cum – barrister could have imagined himself no more in the role of an author than that of the speaker. It is curious but significant that Nehru, one of the most distinguished and successful writers of our time, made his debut into the world of letters not only comparatively late in life, but unwittingly, almost unconscious.

He is known for his penetrating intellectual, tenacious memory, fertile creativity, and great involvement in writing. His writings are not only personal testaments but also political compilations. Nehru’s writings had some purpose. As he says in Discovery of India:

There was certain distaste for just throwing a book which had no particular significance. It was easy enough to write, but to write something that was
worthwhile was another matter, something that would not grow stale while I sat in prison with my manuscript and the world went on changing. I would not be writing for today or tomorrow but for an unknown and possibly distant future. For whom would I write? And for what? Perhaps what I wrote would never be published, for the years I would spend in prison were likely to witness even greater convulsions and conflicts than the years of war that is already over. (DOI 22)

His main objective in his writing is to engage himself in his writing. He recorded the past events and related it to the present day thoughts and activities in his writing. To get relief from the burden of mental agonies and to get mental satisfaction, he indulged in the process of writing. As he himself revealed in his Autobiography:

Why am I writing all this sitting here in prison? The quest is still the same, in prison or outside, and I write down my past feelings and experiences in the hope that this may bring me some peace and psychic satisfaction. (AY 219)

Jawaharlal Nehru did not have a particular person in mind when he wrote his works. He used privileged command over English Language. He wrote spontaneously like an Englishmen. He was a eminent philosopher and innovative writer. Because of his multi – faced personality, people of the world considered him learned scholar whereas the foreigners had recognized him as an expert of English language. Madame Chiang Sheik reveals as:

My estimation of Nehru as a writer, I think, is shared by all who find a delight in reading good English, and I am glad to have this opportunity to direct attention to what I believe is the most salient facet of a strong character which presents so many facets. Long after the noise and confusion of political battle
have died away and become a memory of the past, literary fame will continue and it is not foolhardy to prophesy that Nehru will continue to shine as a star in the firmament of English literature as long as the English language lasts.(13)

He could be considered an expert of English Language. He was very much pleased of his knowledge of the English Language. He recorded all his works in English language. Vasant G. Gandhi remarks:

His books enrich the Indian literature, as do his essays, articles, speeches and statements. A master of the English Language and man of letters. He would not sign a document that had been prepared by anyone else. He was proud of his command of the English language and wrote all of his works in English. He once told at his own trial, “Indeed, he used words precisely and it is easy to read his works. He employed words accurately in his writings and it is uncomplicated to understand his works. Once immersed into them, it is exacting to set his any of books aside for long.

Nehru has a good command over languages such as English, French, Latin etc… He has emotional commitment to Literature. He has deep respect for many literary figures like Shelley, Shakespeare, Rabindranath Tagore, Southey, etc… Nehru has literary vision. Literature is a basic ingredient in Nehru’s thought. His literary approach to life is clearly seen in his attitude and behaviour. He regards Literature as a major asset of the human mind. He opines that literature can liberate man from illiteracy.

Nehru’s writings appear to be expressive, lyrical and epic. They exhibit his manifold characteristics as writer and man of tales of his own lives. It is
combined with the tale of nation and its battle for Independence and sovereignty. L.F. Williams says:

It was the entire frankness of what was written, together with the profound interest of the story he told, that gained Jawaharlal his very large and important reading public. He had the great advantage of being able to speak to the intellectual classes—especially at the universities—in the very phrases and terms which they themselves used. He wrote as one of themselves. He told Englishmen exactly what they wanted to know about India in his own transparently clear style, and made them feel that India was not merely a land of saints and mystics but also of quite human and fallible people like himself who were definitely lined up to fight against Hitler and Mussolini along with any freedom—loving Englishman, if only the latter would allow the same freedom to India that he demanded for himself(221).

Nehru’s style is interesting and even entertaining. The communicative style of his writing reveals his scholarship. He spoke with a natural fluency. In his writings he discussed the problems of the people. Manisha says:

He had established his affinity with the people….He spoke with a natural fluency, a rambling speech which took in the people from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. Every sentence or two he would digress, and then come back to the people, the forty crore people their joys and sorrows, their pain and sufferings. By his words he made himself a part of people’s problems. They could all leave their burdens to him and go home in peace!(52)

Nehru used intimate communicative style in his letters and prison diaries. He was dynamic, impressive, and persuasive in his addresses. His major works are filled with thought-provoking content as well as beautiful in their simpler style. He
employs straight forward and uncomplicated style. He seems to preoccupy his masses to direct discussions and talks. He wrote letter as the direct form of address. He utilized distinctive, visionary, subjective, and casual prose style. Though it is exclusive letters to his daughter Indira, they form a well – knit sequence of world history for every reader to appreciate. Priyadarshini M.Gangte(2006) remarks:

    Any interest in the outstanding figure such as Nehru does not diminish with time. More so, with his relevance which needs hardly to be overemphasized. It is mostly due to his charm coupled with far-sighted vision and statesmanship, his personality and concern for the masses and downtrodden that he remains ever fresh in the minds of the people. It is also due to fascination of not only those who were lucky to work with him personally but also those who came to know him through his rich literary works, numerous memoirs and several scholarly publications about him.

Nehru’s writing reveal the magnificent and multi – faceted mind of the writer. Nehru was among a few of Indian writers, who found a path to familiarize the colonial motives.

    Nehru sometimes selects a fanciful and elevated tone. It could grow tiresome. But one cannot find in his work that trend towards obscurity and bombast. He dramatically begins his writing and sustains the tone till the end. He never uses clichés and archaisms because he feels that these disfigures so much Indian prose in English. Indeed, Nehru is considered to be a political leader by many people. But he is also one of the best Indian prose writers of the twentieth century.
Nehru wrote upon every feasible theme so as to assure, persuade, captivate, explain, attack, argue, reminiscence, combine and understand in more than four decades of writing.

His writings are also a memorandum of the eventful course of Indian history for well over a generation. Throughout the lengthy narrative of his writings, the reader is acquainted with the spectator account of an individual who had primary knowledge of the issue and the persons involved.

Nehru is not simply narrating events but revitalizing them. He also expresses how these happenings have touched his thoughts, ideas, actions, beliefs and fears. Vague and dry historical facts, figures and details are narrated lively in his works. He used to narrate stories without sermonizing and teaching.

Nehru becomes a more interesting writer. The expression of dissent adds muscle to his writing. A standard eloquence of expression is filled in his works. He stressed that one is nothing without the other. He never cuts and hacks away sentence by sentence. Nehru had an obviously metaphorical cast of Intellectual. He has compared history to a famous river. Indeed he thought lot about history and felt immensely the pressure of history.

The Discovery of India is a classic instance of Nehru’s elevated style. He uses multi-clauses sentences. Sometimes his sentences are expansive yet syntactically balanced. He framed clarity and meaningful sentences. He proceeds strongly from specifics to generalities. His use of generalities explains his self-styled humanism and universalism.

He used literary language while describing a natural landscape. Nehru likens the taking of hazards to the thrilling of climbing the mountains, while those who hold back wishing safety and security.
Although Nehru read extensively and well, he was not curious to give lots of quotations from the works of other writers. The reason may be he spent so much time in prison with limited availability of books. His relationship to his reading was profoundly practical. He took reading as means of learning something about the world past or present. He wished to read traveler’s history- Hsuen Tsang, Marco Polo, and research of history and society. He also read on Karl Marx, Oswald Spengler, Reinold Neibuhr. He hated reading novels as they left him “mentally slack” Nehru admits as:

I read here history and read also a part of her abundant literature, and was powerfully impressed by the vigour of thought, the clarity of the language, and the richness of the mind that lay behind it. I journeyed through India in the company of the mighty travelers from China and western and central Asia who came here in the remote past and left records of their travels.(EWN 4)

One can find his affection for generalities and groupings. Although he traveled extensively for decades on end he was a persuading speaker who captivated huge crowds. His references to the Indian peasantry almost always took the form of the generalized description.

Nehru was neither a literary writer nor a professional historian. He was a world statesman and the architect of English Language. He was an imaginative writer with deep intellectual. He acquired better knowledge of world history. Vasant G.Gandhi recollects the words of Alphonso karkalla as:

Jawaharlal Nehru was not a professional author who devouted his lifetime to writing but a man of public- affairs who became a writer by necessity. By training he was a scientist and a lawyer, by choice he was a politician; by attitude he was a humanist; and by sensibilities he was a poet. Yet what he wrote was historical prose, or prose that has become historical….perhaps
Jawaharlal Nehru may survive longer in the memory of mankind as an author than as a politician.

Nehru’s writings expressed flawless English prose for which he was admired by all over the world. Since he was educated in England, he used English as his literary language. He artistically expresses his thoughts and ideas through words. His intellectual exploration is revealed through his sentences.

Nehru asks himself many questions. He used this strategy in his writing in order to decide a definite viewpoint. It was evident in Nehru’s Discovery of India as;

Is this I have wondered, the growth of spirit of resignation, or is it a toughening of the texture? Is it just age and a lessening of vitality and of the passion of life? Or is it due to long periods in prison and life slowly ebbing away, and the thoughts that fill the mind passing through, after a brief stay, leaving only ripples behind. (DOI 11)

Nehru was particular in title. His title forecast his subject of the letters and approach. He often gives short titles such as ‘Childhood’, ‘Theosophy’, ‘Non- Co – Operation’ , ‘In Europe’, ‘struggle’, 'Earthquake’, ‘Eleven Days’, Paradoxes’, ‘Famine’, ‘Kamala’ etc… The titles such as 'India’s strength and weakness’, ‘The variety and unity of India’, ‘the Advantages and Disadvantages of an Individualistic Philosophy’, ‘India old and New’ help the readers plan how to interpret his essays. Nehru uses questions as title in some of his letters such as What is Hinduism?, What is religion?, Whither India?, where do the riches go?, Can Indians get together?

Nehru sets the introductory paragraph as a lead into the essay and main discussion. His opening paragraph arouses the reader’s interest and sets tone for the whole essay. He presents clear Introduction. He opens his essay with an Anecdote. He believed that a brief personal story could lead to the essay interestingly. In the
Discovery of India, Nehru opens his essay with the story of Buddha. He begins as: “The Buddha story attracted me even in early boyhood, and I was drawn to the young Siddhartha who, after many inner struggles and pain and torment, was to develop into Buddha” (DOI 132)

The concrete images and vivid modifiers set deeply emotional tone for the essay. He opens the chapter entitled ‘Ahmadnagar fort Twenty Months’ in the book Discovery of India as:

It is more than twenty months since we were brought here, more than twenty months of my ninth term of imprisonment. The new moon, a shimmering crescent in the darkening sky, greeted us on our arrival here. The bright fortnight of the waxing moon had begun. Ever since then each coming of the new moon has been reminder to me that another month of imprisonment is over. (DOI1)

His English Experience reinforced his elegant and cosmopolitan tastes. He was a voracious reader and his areas of interest included Literature, History, Science.

The freedom struggle resulted in a revolutionary brand of writing that voiced sentiments against the British empire. Several political leaders from different parts of the country emerged as literary figures such as Jawaharlal Nehru. The English Language becomes a sharp and strong instrument in the hands of Nehru. He also wrote his autobiography, which is known for its literary flair. He stands out as a prominent leader who excelled in writing prose. Nehru was heavily influenced by literary movements taking place in the west. He used Indian phrases alongside English words and tried to reflect a blend of the Indian and western culture. Nehru himself remarks:” I am a lover of words and phrases and try to use them
appropriately. Whatever my opinions might be, the words I use are meant to express them intelligibly and in ordered sequence”.(32).

Nehru’s prose style elegantly demonstrates his personality. His prose is as cherished and sensitive as his personality. He was an instinctive writer. Words flew from his pen as spontaneously as his thoughts from his mind. His style is highly reminiscent. He selects provocative and indicative words for his prose. Infact his words have an expressive power which is exceptional in Indian prose writers. His standard of suggestiveness of style is seen in his writings. In his writings, one could find poetic prose. All his description is quite innovative and poetical.

His Autobiography is noteworthy as the self – depiction of one of India’s famous sons in the developmental years of his fast ascent to Indian fame. Most memorable times are also recorded in it. He talks about his mentor Mahatma Gandhi, the culture of Cambridge, and the ferocious idealism of Marx – Lenin, the study of the sciences and the attraction of the Humanities; the participation in troubled politics and the occasional call of solitariness. These elements combined together influenced his prose art.

All his works are filled with personal history and the nation’s political development along with a sense of drama throughout. The influence of life and letters of the minute consequences of places such as the attraction of nature in prisons, an adventure of involvement in or making of present history, the references of human behaviour, the mental characteristics of colonialist rulers, and the charisma of Gandhian Satyagraha all get woven into an elegant narrative. The narrative is pure and suggests its beauty to the reader’s heart. He wields simple but attractive style of narration.
Most of his books have gone into more than dozen editions and have been translated into many languages. They are incontrovertibly noteworthy prose works in the annals of Indian writing in English. It is a literary expression of an individual at the height of his powers. P.E. Dustoor points out as;

The personality behind his pen is not only a modern, rational personality; it is also a striking and powerful personality- one that leaves a clear impress of itself on every line the pen writes. It is the vigour of Jawaharlal’s mind, the earnestness and integrity of his character that shine through his work and give it an extraordinary power and appeal.(75)

Nehru fills his narrative with many proficiently executed pen –portraits of people which bring to light his shrewd comprehension of human nature. It also displays his capacity to capture necessary elements in his subject’s character. It also contains the use of tiny and concrete details and entertaining anecdotes and his discerning blend of irony and sympathy.

Jawaharlal Nehru’s writings articulate the life –giving air of culture and sparkle with a steady glow. Nehru’s apt use of words and phrases like “eerie things’ for bats, ‘venture some’ for squirrel, ‘plaintive’ for koel, ‘imperturbability’ for mountains are appreciable. Madame Chian Kai- Shek remarks:

Aspirants to literary fame would be speedily disqualified if they could not show in every line that they possessed a sensitive knowledge of the value of words and the ability to weave them into sentences which gave the reader real if unexpressed pleasure. To Nehru is conceded not only the possession of those attributes but a hardly rivaled command of the written word to impeach or to placate, to thunder like an angry Jupiter, or to caress the ear with the melody of the Muses.(13)
His prose style acquires charm with Nehru’s penetrating observation, sense of humour, scope of reading, expression for poetry and ‘serious reflection in the end’. He also had the ‘ability to link’ where no connections seemed possible which is an indication of literary mind. He brings alive the brilliant expression by which the readers recognize him as prolific writer. His enduring language proves his intelligence. All these become evident in his writings.

Nehru is known for his eloquent style. He follows his own way of presenting facts. He could attract common reader. His fascinating style reveals that he is one of the towering figures in prose writing. When one analyzes his prose linguistically, one can find different stylistic devices in the works of this distinctive writer. He reinforces his messages using innumerable stylistic devices such as repetition, rhetorical question, inversion, simile, metaphor, and humour.

Jawaharlal Nehru uses repetition in his writings every now and then. He uses the word ‘Death again and again in the following lines in order to give emotive force.“ Usually a quick death, often a brave death, death for a cause, death with a purpose, death which seemed in this mad world of ours an inexorable logic of events, sudden end to the life we could not mould or control”.(DOI 2)

To give emphasis in the sentence, Nehru uses repetition of idea using synonyms. He says : “But there was no convention or law or rule to govern the conditions under which Indian prisoners and detenus had to exist, except such ordinances which it pleased our British rulers to issue from time to time”.(DOI 2)

Nehru used Inversion to give prominent importance to single word or group of words. He used for the sake of rhythm and sense. he has used the device ‘inversion in ‘Discovery of India’ as: “No longer Could I function, as did in my younger days as
an arrow flying automatically to the target of my choice, ignoring all else, but that
target".(DOI 12)

Nehru used Rhetorical question to express the intense conviction of a certain
point of view. He uses Rhetorical question often in his writing. He says:

What do we find in this world of ours today?. Wars and conflicts ravage the
world and the energy that should go to build up a better order of society is
spent largely in mutual competition and destruction. If that is the condition of
the world at large, what of our own unhappy country.(EWN 8)

Nehru has used many comparisons in his writings. He used many figures of
speech like metaphors and simile in his prose. He states in The Discovery of India :

“There is stillness and everlastingness about the past; it changes not and has a touch
of eternity, like a painted picture or a statue in bronze or marble”.(DOI 7)
Nehru has used metaphor in his prose as follows “I Ploughed my way through snow
and slush not knowing how many days or hours she would live. The calm winter
scene with its mantle of white snow seemed so like the peace of cold death to me, and
I lost all my past hopeful optimism”.(DOI 35)

Nehru’s style has a tendency of satire and Irony. His portrayal of people is
often satirical, but he is not a satirist in the traditional sense of the term. He used the
weapon of satire against the opponents, religious sectarian and British rulers. Apart
from this Nehru is known for his humour. When he wanted to convey the information
that his father drank whisky, he reported to his mother that his father drank blood.
This is evident in his words. “Once I saw him drinking claret or some other red wine.
Whisky I knew I had often seen him and his friends drink it. But the new red stuff
filled me with horror and I rushed to my mother to her that father was drinking
blood”.(AY 8) Srinivasa Iyengar rightly points out as ;
Humour too never failed him, and wit and irony were ready in the armoury, though used very sparingly. And with what matchless candour and even courage he limned his “Self – portrait”!. Topical writing and journalism wither with the setting of the Sun, but Jawaharlal’s topical writing is touched by his humanity, and so even his journalism, at its best, glows with the Incandescence art.(307 -308)

Nehru used stylistic devices effectively in his writing. In the formation of his style, rhetoric, oratory and preaching have contributed a lot as most of his essays were initially presented as lectures. The prose style of Nehru has the poetic effect. He has effectively used the stylistic devices in his writings to stress the ideas he wanted to convey.

In his less conventional writings he accomplished and fascinated personal style. Accurate and unique words, the quotations from religious books, inscriptions, from the French, and the English Romantics, from T.S. Eliot’s poetry, from Carlyle, swift, Hieun Tsang, Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore are impressively appropriate and the synthesis of reverie and discussion, remembrance and self – analysis rings sincerity and truthfulness. Nehru was wisely and widely educated in the ancients and the moderns, delighting the companionship of great thoughts and great minds.

Jawaharlal Nehru makes an abundant use of quotation from authors and poets he holds in high regard. Uma Iyengar says:

Nehru’s command over the language stemmed from the nature of his education. His writings are replete with quotations and allusions. While later he strengthened his Hindi, to communicate with the masses, he admits to approaching India from the west and viewing her as a friendly European world. He was impatient to change her outlook and appearance and give her a
garb of modernity. Before setting out on this mammoth task, he wanted to acquire a holistic perspective of her past, present and future. (EWN 18)

Jawaharlal Nehru is an eminent prose writer par excellence. His writings reveal all the excellence of good writing. In his writing it is radiant spirit that reflects itself, and his prose is an admirable mixture of fact and fiction, good sense and creativity. His style is incomparable and exemplary. He was quite familiarized in articulating intense thoughts in fewest possible words.

All the writings of Nehru possess political thoughts as well as literary achievements apart from sentimentality, emotions, engagements, personal affairs and privation of the author. His writings bear copious testimony to his apparent style and excellent sense of language. His writings are no dry chronicle but appealing narration brightened by varying degree of creative fervour. His prose writing is influencing the readers and at the same time uncomplicated to understand.

To sum up, In Nehru’s writing, one could find inimitableness. A close examination of his writing would reveal complicated mixture of theoretical description and an inherited passion on his part to put his concepts into concrete realism. Nehru expressed his ideas in simple sentences. But the impact of those ideas would bring in reformation and revolution. Thus, the prose style of Nehru has multi – faceted aspects.