CHAPTER III
CULTURE

Ours is a great country. We have had for centuries a great history. The whole of the
East reflects our culture. We have to represent what India taught right from the time of
Mohenjo – Daro and Harrappa. Whether in domestic affairs or in international affairs
we must adhere to certain standards.

Radhakrishnan

Culture encompasses every human being in the universe. It is the greatest
accomplishment in all spheres of human life. It survives in parallel with human
society. It endures in a distinct society at a particular time and place. The new
Encyclopaedia Britannica defines Culture as follows:

Culture is the integrated pattern of human knowledge, beliefs, customs,
taboo, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, works of art, rituals,
ceremonies and other related components. (784)
Culture is the attitude and performances of the people that are components of a particular group or organizations. According to Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English by A.S Hornby:

Culture is an “advanced development of the human powers; development of the body, mind and spirit by training and experience; all the arts, beliefs, social institutions …characteristics of a community, race etc.” (210)

It is an assemblage of accomplished beliefs, values, and behaviours shared by the members of society. N.L.Gupta defines culture as follows:

A society’s culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves. Culture, being what people have to learn as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist of the end product of learning: knowledge, in most general, if relative, sense of the term.(54 -55)

Culture is the integrated model of human knowledge, behaviour and belief that depends upon man’s dimension for acquiring and transferring knowledge to prevailing generations. In the words of Adamson Hoebel (1960): “Culture is more than a collection of mere isolated bits of behaviour. It is the integrated sum total of learned behaviour traits which are manifest and shared by the members of the society”.(169)

Culture commonly relates to patterns of human actions and the symbolic structures that give such actions significance. It is the foundation for evaluating human activity. According to Radhey Mohan:
Culture is neither a set of values, symbols and myths nor merely performing arts and literature as generally understood. It is a pattern of living, dynamic and variable, an enormously potent and influential tool which societies adapt to their changing environment. (47)

Anthropologists define Culture as the universal human ability to categorize, codify and impart their experiences symbolically. M. Harries reveals the function of Culture as: “Culture is the learned, socially acquired traditions and life styles of the members of the society, including their patterned, repetitive ways of thinking, feeling and acting”. (5)

Primatologists use the term Culture to refer to the human kind’s intimate relatives in the animal kingdom. Archaeologists give importance to material Culture, but the social Anthropologists refer to social statuses, interactions and organizations, whereas Cultural Anthropologists focus on cultural views and norms. As S.L. Sharma (1998) explains Culture:

In literary sense, Culture is viewed as a cumulative stock of analytical, artistic, and aesthetic sensibilities, Anthropically speaking, Culture connotes the way of life or mode of living of community. Sociologically viewed, it signifies a set of norms and values. Philosophically interpreted, Culture is what we are and civilizations what we have……From Psychoanalytical perspective, Culture refers to sublimation of raw human instincts for common good. (43-44)

Culture is the exceptional indication of human beings from the rest of the creations in the world. In the words of an eminent cultural critic, Iqbal Kaul,

Culture in its totality represents the quintessence of the collective achievements of a people in the fields of religion and philosophy,
language and literature, art and literature, art and architecture,
education and learning and economic and social organizations.(205)

Culture has been determined in innumerable ways. The conventions and
development of a particular time or people is called its ‘Culture’. The aesthetic pattern
of a society is comprised by the units of Culture which include specific characteristic
manners and customs of a group of people.

A set of Cultural peculiarity assumed by a group to meet its requirements and
secure its existence constitute its culture. Being a member of a society or group man
becomes cultured. An Anthropologist E.T.Hall states as: “Culture is the medium
evolved by humans to survive. Nothing is free from cultural influences. It is the key
stone in civilizations arch and is the medium through which all of life’s events must
flow”.(57)

In every culture, customs remain to a large extent subjective. People
behaviour in the society relies partly on the natural resources and on their biological
demands. Each generation receives Culture from parents and unknown ancestors.
Michael Harris Bond says: “Cultural groups within a nation are bound by the same
set of laws and governmental policies with respect to trade, taxation, immigration, the
media, the religion, education, and language”.(40)

Culture is imitation and hugely fluctuating. Each Culture has its own
characteristic purposes and totally different from other culture in the society.
Individual behaviour certainly represents the motivations of Culture. Culture supplies
the raw material with which the individual makes his life a complete one. Every
individual is refined because of the availability of the traditional stores of the
civilization. Ruth Benedict predicts:
To understand the behaviour of the individual, it is not merely necessary to relate his personal life – history to his endowments, and to measure these against an arbitrarily selected normality. It is necessary also to relate his congenial responses to the behaviour that is singled out in his institutions of culture. (14-15)

Culture manipulates a person’s psyche and makes it unattainable to get release from its stronghold. Cultural attributes are natural and are socially systematized, shaped and figured. The traditional culture and the individual undergo a gradual change but maintain general identity. It is always fascinating to notice the nature of the influence of culture on the individual’s development.

Culture is analyzed because people live in it as ordered human totality called social systems or communities. It is the necessity of the individual and the society. Every human society has its own culture. India has rich and varied culture. It sustains cultural unity and endures traditions from earlier centuries. India is a land of infinite variety of cultures, habits, customs and traditions. In this connection, Reginald Massey says:

No country in the world can offer the cultural variety that India has – from Kashmir in the north to Kanya Kumari in the south; from Kutch in the west to Tripura in the east. Every state in the republic now has its own cultural academy. (10)

Jawaharlal Nehru had fascination towards India and Indian culture. He laid substructure of new India by a fusion of Indian culture with western technology. He liberated the Indian masses with India’s rich cultural heritage through his writing. Nehru’s prime concern in culture is impressive. Though he was educated in England, he plunged into Indian culture and tradition. K.M. Munshi appreciates Nehru as:
Brought up in England, for a considerable time living an anglicized life, he was slow to appreciate many things characteristically Indian. But he passionately loves the people and the country. I should not be surprised if some day the soul of the Kashmiri Pandit might not come to be perfectly tuned to the mighty forces which have been working for ages to produce the greatness which is India today. (12)

Nehru acquired cultural values from his family surroundings especially his mother Swaruprani paved way for his experience of Indianness. Her devotional behaviour and other family member’s engagements in rituals inspired him. He had ingested the basics of Indian culture from his family surroundings. He was interested in comprehending the culture and tradition into which he was brought up from his early childhood days.

Nehru closely examined the value of Indian culture, when he began to write the book ‘Discovery of India’. He ascertained the spirit of past India through his writings. He determined Indian civilization as not only oldest but also advanced. He expressively described India’s spirit of integration and her urge for freedom. His writings such as Glimpses of World History (1934), Discovery of India (1946), Jawaharlal Nehru: An Autobiography, Letters, speeches and Occasional writings had immense impact on Indian culture.

Nehru presented a persuasive, innovative and reliable picturisation of Indian culture. He profoundly studied every aspect of Indian cultural heritage. His attention towards culture is subjective and illustrative. He supported all form of Indian culture in all episodes. According to T.R. Sareen and S.R. Bakshi:
The deep roots which our culture gathered on our soil were greatly eulogized by several Indian and foreign scholars ... throw new light on our culture, socio-economic pattern of life and system which had much impact on the future generation.

Nehru was fond of indulging himself in loud thinking about the ancient Indian culture. He says:

Who is Bharat Mata? For whose victory we are shouting? What is India? What is the Indian way of life?, What sort of people were our ancestors? How, indeed, did they live?. What gave them the courage of mind and body to probe the mysteries of the universe, tame the wild forests, sail the rough seas, and take Indian cultures to far off shores.

(18)

The questions awakened Nehru’s mind to experience the value of Indian past. He wanted to constantly explore the philosophy of Indian culture which influenced his writings. He asks:

What is Culture? And I am certainly not competent to give you a definition of it because I have not found one. One can see each nation and each separate civilization developing its own culture that had its roots in generations hundreds and thousands of years ago. One sees these nations being intimately moulded by the impulse that initially starts a civilization going on its long path.

(21)

Nehru presented a panoramic view of ancient culture. He acted as trained anthropologists. His deep research on Indian culture proved that he was a wonderful visionary of past. He craved to analyze the ancient India with different facets of
Indian culture; He connected past with present day notions and activities. He contemplated both good and bad aspects in Indian past. He confesses:

What is my inheritance? To what am I an heir? To all humanity has achieved during tens of thousands of years, to all that it has thought and felt and suffered and taken pleasure in, to its cries of triumph and bitter agony of defeat, to that astonishing adventure of man which began so long ago and yet continues and beckons to us. (DOI 25)

Nehru detected the value of the Indian past which was related to the present. He attempted his life to recollect that spirit of body and mind which moved to great intellectual and artistic achievements in the past. He points out as:

There is a 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. Unaffected by the storms and upheavals of the present, it maintains its dignity and repose and tempts the troubled spirit and the tortured mind to seek shelter in the valued catacombs. (DOI 7)

Nehru refreshed himself with the past powerful Indian cultures. The imprint of ancient India symbolized the new spirit in him. He was deeply wedded to the ancient rich cultural heritage of India though he seemed to be modern in outlook. He delineates the basic characteristics of Indian Culture as:

Atmosphere of tolerance and reasonableness, that acceptance of free thought in matters of faith, that desire and capacity to live and let live, which are dominant features of Indian culture. (DOI 89)

Nehru had different perspectives of culture. The radiance of his cultural traits was reflected in his writings. He set out on a voyage of India and offered a penetrating
analysis on the characteristics of Indian culture. He explored that Indian culture is one of the most ancient cultures of the world with an unbroken continuity. He states:

There is an underlying sense of continuity, of an unbroken chain which joins modern India to the far distant period of six or seven thousand years ago when the Indus valley civilization probably began. It is surprising how much there is in Mohenjo Daro and Harappa which remind some of persisting traditions, habits, popular ritual, craftsmanship even some fashions in dress.(DOI 67)

The fundamental feature of Indian culture is its great antiquity. Nehru admires this aptly:

Astonishing thought: that any culture or civilization should have this continuity for five years or more; and not in a static, unchanging sense, for India was changing and progressing all the time. She was coming into intimate contact with the Persians……But though she influenced them and was influenced by them, her cultural bias was strong enough to endure. What was the secret of this strength? (DOI 41-42)

Nehru is pioneer in revealing the Indian mysterious culture. He described the society, Culture and traditions of India from the past with great nostalgia. He expounded the most important characteristic feature of Indian culture as unity in Diversity. He applauded the aspect of unity in Diversity. He proclaims as:

The diversity of India is tremendous; it is obvious; it lies on the surface and anybody can see it. It concerns itself with physical appearances as well as certain mental habits and traits. There is little in common to outward seeming, between the Pathan of the North-West and Tamil in
the far South……All of them have their distinctive features, all of them have still more the distinctive mark of India.(DOI 54)

The secret of the survival of Indian cultures is because of the development of mixed cultures from Vedic times to present day. Nehru explores Indian culture from Indus valley civilizations, Vedic, Upanishadic, Epic, Gupta, Mughal and British periods to the day of freedom movement. He brings out the colourful, awesome picturesque culture of ancient India. He viewed that there was some inner urge towards synthesis in the past. He stressed the aspect of Mixed Culture more forcefully. Radhakrishnan (1946) states:

My writings, my main contents have been to make out there is one perennial and universal philosophy. This is found in all lands and cultures, in the seers of the Upanishads and the Buddha, Plato and Plotinus, in Hillel and Philogesus and Poul and the medieval mystics of Islam. It is this spirit, which finds continents and units the ages that can save us from the meaninglessness of the present situation and not any local variant of it that we find in the Indian tradition. It is absurd to speak of any Indian monopolies of political wisdom. (820))

The cultural synthesis took place between the Aryans and the Dravidians. They were the actual residents and deputation of Indus valley civilization. The distinctive characteristics of Indian culture are synthesis and fusion. Assimilating fresh home-ward foreign races and cultures is the best feature of Indian cultural tradition. There were many races in India like Iranians, Greeks, Parthians, Bactrians, Sakhas, Kushanas, Scythians, Huns, Turks, Yueh Chih, Zorastrians, Jews joined India in later centuries. Nehru remarked that because of the arrival of various races, India maintained her vitality and rekindled her from time to time. As he utters:
Whatever the word we may use, Indian or Hindi, or Hindustani, for our cultural tradition, we see in the past that some inner urge towards synthesis derived essentially from the Indian Philosophic outlook, was the dominant feature of Indian cultural, and even racial, development. Each incursion of foreign elements was a challenge to this culture, but it was met successfully by a new synthesis and a process of rejuvenation and new blooms of culture arose out of it, the background and essential basis, however remaining the same. (DOI 72)

Nehru explicated the significance of Indian culture through his thought and pen. He was of the opinion that culture had roots in the past and it assimilated various generations of experience. He says in Discovery of India (2004) as: A country with a long cultural background and a common outlook on life develops a spirit that is peculiar to it and that is impressed on all its children, however much they may differ among themselves. (52)

Nehru makes an attempt to discover past history and ancient culture of India. According to him,

Culture if it has any value, must have a certain depth, but it must also have a certain dynamic character. After all, culture depends on a vast number of factors. If we leave out what might be called, perhaps the basic mould that was given to it in the early stages of a nation’s or a people’s growth, it is affected by geography, by climate, by all kinds of events that have happened. (EWN 110)

Nehru is of the opinion that culture has roots in the past and it assimilates various generations of experience. He believes that culture is a benign companion to every individual. It must be the inner growth of the person. When every individual
cultivates an attitude of mind which understands another’s viewpoint, he can be called as cultured man. He stresses that cultural and moral values are to be considered to solve the complicated problems that afflict the world. As he points out the characteristics of good cultured man in an address at the University of Colombo on January 12th 1950:

I normally, find that those people who talk most loudly of culture, according to my judgment, possess no culture at all. Culture first of all, is not loud; it is quiet, it is restrained, it is tolerant. You may judge the culture of a person by his science, by a gesture, by a phrase, more especially by his life generally.

Nehru perceives that culture must be the inner growth of the person. He should have self restraint and consideration for others. As he reveals in Glimpses of world history as:

Culture and civilization are difficult to define, and I shall not try to define them. But among the many things that culture includes is certainly restraint over oneself and consideration for others. If a person has not got this self – restraint and has no consideration for others, one can certainly say that he is uncultured.

Nehru tried to discover the specialty of individual culture. His deep and penetrating analysis of culture included the individual culture also. In his speech at the Newspapers Editors Conference on third December 1950. He admits that: “I do not believe that a person who ignores the small things of life, the small truths, the small decencies, the small pleasantness, the small graciousness, can undertake anything big in a big way”.
Nehru wanted every individual to become part and parcel of Indian culture. He expected every individual to experience the values of their own powerful cultural heritage. He evaluated culture precisely and stated that there should be an interaction between mind and art. This is evident in his address at the University of Saugor on 30\textsuperscript{th} October 1952.

The capacity to absorb various streams of culture is a part of the creativeness of India. Therefore, there is no reason why we should adopt the narrow outlook of pride and folly which makes us think that we have everything and that we need receive nothing from outside…Every process of inclusion means lack of culture; every process of inclusion indicates growth. Those elements that believe in pushing things away narrow the mind and the nation falls back to a period of static culture. We have to be dynamic or else we cannot survive.

Nehru’s perspective of culture is tremendous. He means culture as an important characteristic of individual in the country. He believes that cultured Indian can lead the nation into a cultured one.

Nehru perceived himself and understands the Indian philosophy from his own point of view. He was more rational and methodical, took the form of Indian philosophy. His philosophical thought was his own understanding and examination which he acquires from culture. He employed philosophy pragmatically. He was more involved with the real philosophy of life rather than puzzle of the universe. M.H.Gavit and Attar Chand rightly point out:

Nehru did write a few words about his philosophy of life, but he was not an academic philosopher. He believed that the philosophical
systems studied in the seminaries, have often been relevant to human life. They have mainly been concerned with Metaphysics. But all meta beyond physics is guesswork. (99)

Nehru highlighted that there were many divergent views in each and every individual with the conflicts and challenges pressing in all directions. He demanded every man to stop the conflicts of his mind and become clear through Indian philosophy. He accepted that all people had some sort of philosophy of life intentionally or unintentionally. He had keen eye on Man’s absolute struggle for existence. As he explains:

Some vague or more precise philosophy of life we all have, though most of us accept unthinkingly the general attitude which is characteristic of our generation and environment. Most of us also accept metaphysical conceptions as part of the faith in which we have grown up.(DOI 14 -15)

It was the opinion of Nehru that the application of religious and metaphysical hypothesis to usual day to day worldly affairs is the philosophy of life. He wanted to foster ethics through judgements of value with moral principles. As Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam expresses similar view in his Ignited Minds:

Spirituality must be integrated with education. Self- realization is the focus. Each one of us must become aware of our higher self. We are link of a great past to a grand future. We should ignite our dormant inner energy and let it guide our lives. The radiance of such minds embarked on constructive endeavor will bring peace, prosperity and bliss to the nation. (20)
Nehru maintained introspective mood from early childhood to old age which paved way for him to substantiate a systematic process of his own philosophy. He felt inclined to follow the prudence of the ancients, convictions of middle ages and pessimism of the present. Human beings according to C.E.M.Joad are:

Part and parcel of the process of the nature so their religious aspirations as they point to some feature in the universe, which provokes and correspondence them and guarantees their fulfillment.

(73)

Nehru did not want to lose himself in religious feelings. He had no belief in God till his death. His personal philosophy is his refusal to believe God. As he admits:

What the mysterious is I do not know. I do not call it because God has come to mean much that I do not believe in. I find myself incapable of thinking of a deity or of any unknown supreme power in anthropomorphic terms and a fact that many people think so a continually a source of surprise to me. (DOI 16)

Nehru scholarly cherished the non–dualist philosophy of Hindu Vedanta. He felt that people embraced the traditional belief in Maya, Karma from sheer habit to avoid displeasing the Brahmins. He developed philosophical ideas through contemplation, academic questioning and search for knowledge. He attempted to make harmonious balance between ideas and actions. His atheism did not formulate ineffective in human faith.

Nehru was in favour of science and disapproval of metaphysics. He was a realist and he was against ceremonies. He acted as a philanthropic philosopher. He had his belief opposed to meagerness and prejudice, naivety and delusion,
emotionalism, and ridiculousness. The positive aspect of Indian philosophy lead him to find peace and tranquility. William Ward reveals as:

Although many things are found in philosophical writings of the Hindoos favourable to the practice of religious ceremonies and to devotion, yet the ancient system, it is evident, strongly recommended abstraction and the practice of those austerities which were intended to annihilate the passions. (33)

Nehru wanted to apply reason, knowledge and experience through dependence on truth and science. He trusted that the real philosophy must answer the present day problems. He displays as:

The real problems for me remain problems of individual and social life, of harmonious living, of a proper balancing of an individual’s inner and outer life, of an adjustment of the relation between individuals and between groups, of a continuous becoming something better and higher, of social development, of the ceaseless adventure of Man. In the solution of these problems the way of observation and precise knowledge and deliberate reasoning according to the method of science must be followed. (DOI 19)

Being an experiment, Nehru ascertained that science had added new facet to human knowledge. This proves that he is a man of intelligentsia. He entreated the Indians to adopt reason, experiment, observation and intuition as the vehicles in scientific method to solve the of individual, social and international problems. As Rajendra Pal Singh feels:

Science is the tool of acquiring knowledge; it is useful in helping to lead a comfortable life. The concepts of the world as one and mankind
as a whole co–sharer in the creation and bounties of Nature have been made true with the assistance of science. In these circumstances, science cannot be regarded as something opposed to Religion. Their objectives are identical; the distinction lies only in their approaches or methods. (118-119)

Though Nehru had the philosophical outlook he followed the method of science. He dealt with the fundamentals of all problems through intellectual approach. He expresses:

Let us therefore, not rule out intuition and other methods of sensing truth and reality. They are necessary even for the purpose of science. But always we must hold to our anchor of precise objective knowledge tested by reason, and even more so by experiment and practice, and always we must beware of losing ourselves in a sea of speculation unconnected with day- to-day problems of life and the needs of men and women.(DOI 19)

Nehru assumed truth as ultimate reality. He pointed out that the truth must be immortal, indestructible and invariable. In the words of M.N.Das (1992):

Nehru’s concept of truth, therefore is something dynamic and not static; it is life giving impulse but not a dead thought or hindrance to the growth of the mind and of humanity .It is better to understand a part of truth and apply it to life, than to understand nothing at all and flounder hopelessly in a vain attempt to pierce the mystery of existence. (107)
Nehru’s philosophical approach is vigorous and utilitarian. He preferred man to God, politics to metaphysics and socialism to spiritualism. These are the traits of Indian philosophy which are revealed by Nehru.

Jawaharlal Nehru recounts six systems of Indian philosophy. They are Nyaya, Vaishesika, Samkhya, yoga, Mimamsa and Vedanta. Nyaya means logic or the science of right reasoning. This logical method is a kind of mental discipline. Moreover, this analytical method has been practised from the ancient period and still it is in vogue in Indian schools and universities for the mental training of the educated students. According to Nehru “ Vaishesika system stresses the separateness of individual selves and objects, and develops the atomic theory of the universe. (DOI 193)

In the Samkhya system,

There is no creation by God, but rather a constant evolution, the product of interaction between spirits or rather spirits and matter, though that matter itself is the nature of energy. This evolution is the continuous process. (DOI 194)

The yoga system is for the discipline of the body and training of the mind to reach higher level of consciousness. Mimamsa system is ritualistic which contains the belief that human birth is the highest stage. The birth paves way to reach freedom and self-realization. Vedanta system can be defined as follows:

How atman , the Absolute soul pervades everything, how the one appears as the many and yet retains its wholeness, for the absolute is indivisible and cannot be divided, all this cannot be accounted for by the process of logical reasoning for our minds are limited by the finite world.(DOI 199)
Indian culture influenced other countries in the field of philosophy during the ancient periods through Upanishads. Recognition of divine knowledge has been considered to be the target of life. This is eloquently described in Indian Philosophy. Nehru declares:

This idea of some kind of penance, Tapasya, is inherent in Indian thought both among the thinkers at the top and the unread masses below. It is present today as it was present some thousands of years ago, and it is necessary to appreciate it in order to understand the psychology underlying the mass movements which have convulsed India under Gandhiji’s leadership. (DOI 91)

Nehru explores the Indian philosophy in various dimensions. He has his own perspectives regarding Indian philosophy. His main ideology is human concern. He comprehends the human misery and accepts the common sufferings of Indian masses. He longs for solving the conflicts and contradictions of human life through philosophical approaches. M.N.Das comments:

Nehru nurtures a philosophy of life. In his long life as a revolutionary, a nationalist, a democrat, a socialist, a pacifist, an internationalist – a man and a statesman – it was the reflection of that inner culture which made him what he was. An agnostic and an atheist he accepted ethics as his code of personal conduct. Critical and sceptic he endeavoured to be a pragmatist. With devotion to science he believed in reaching at truth and became an ardent rationalist. (410)

Nehru investigated religion in India closely on the basis of humanity. He emphasized that religion should enrich character, righteousness, love and clarity of
mind in every individual. He meant religion as the innermost morality of life. He did not approve of superstitious beliefs.

Nehru had aversion towards the unrefined interpretation of religion and arbitrary approach. These are the fundamentals of all the superstitious beliefs and intolerance. It constantly blinds ordinary men and women due to innocence and fear. Superstition and fear are related to religious practices emerging out of ignorance. He opined that a true religion never advocates superstition. Science is the remedy to cure superstition. According to M. Balasubramaniam:

Nehru is not either an atheist or an anti-religionist. If anything perhaps, his conception of religion and God which are spiritual realities in much purer and more exalted than any of the crude notions of the gullible minds ready to entertain any suggestion uncritically as part of religion, confusing religion with the fear of the unknown. What Nehru will fight for is the freedom of obsession and fear. Science is the activity of man directed towards the goal of understanding the world around him and adjusting his existence accordingly. (38)

Nehru seeks the help of science to eradicate superstitions from the religious practices. Nehru explains his principles as follows:

The spectacle of what is called religion, or at any rate organized religion, in Indian and elsewhere has filled me with horror, and I have frequently condemned it and wished to make a clean sweep of it. Almost always it seems to stand for blind belief and reaction and bigotry, superstition and exploitation, and the preservation of vested interests. (AY 390-391)
Nehru elucidates that the truly organized or spiritual religion instructs the people how to lead the life, naturally at different junctures. It need not convey the details of every event in life. Moreover, the science predicts the antecedent situation of the natural event by a practical investigation.

Indian society is filled with traditions, orthodoxy and communalism. The force of communalism in the name of religion led to conflicts and confusion in the society. As Nehru expresses in Glimpses of World History:

> Often in history we see that religion, which was meant to raise us and make us better and nobler has, made people behave like beasts. Instead of bringing enlightenment to them, it has often tried to keep them on the dark; instead of broadening their minds it has frequently made them narrow minded and intolerant of others. In the name of a religion many great and fine deeds have been performed. (GWH 43)

Nehru characterized religion as intolerant, narrow minded, egoistic and self-centered. He employed the term Hinduism in the framework of Indian national culture. The word ‘Hindu’ had familiar usage. The connotation of the word is to be correlated with much strict religious concept. Indian theory of religion had greater depth. Hinduism is an ethical religion, which prescribes the duties, responsibilities and moral codes of a human being and this religion is a religion which is a blend of Aryan and Dravidian thinking. It emphasizes truth and believes that truth is God. As he quotes the words of Gandhi:

> If I were asked to define the Hindu creed, I should simply say: search after truth through nonviolent means. A man may not believe in God and still call himself a Hindu. Hinduism is a relentless pursuit after
truth…Hinduism is the religion of truth. Truth is God. Denial of God we have known. Denial of truth we have not known. (DOI 71)

Jainism was a religion opposed to Vedas. It denies the authority of Vedas and most fundamentals of all matters. It gives priority to non-violence and constructs an organization of monks and priests. The approach of Jainism is realism and rationalism. The profound conviction of Jainism is truth. It acts as a moral and non-transcendental system. It accentuates on the self-disciplined aspect of life and thought. It remains as an offshoot of Hinduism. As Nehru states:

Jainism, a rebel against the parent religion and in many ways utterly different from it, was yet tolerant to caste and adapted itself to it and so it survives and continues in India almost as an offshoot of Hinduism. (DOI 122)

Nehru was fascinated towards Buddhism. The basic principles and messages of Buddhism are modern. He brought out the doctrines of Buddhism in a nutshell as follows:

Go unto all lands’, had said the Buddha to his disciples, and preach this gospel. Tell them that the poor and the lowly, the rich and the high, are all one, and that all castes unite in this religion….His message was one of universal benevolence, of love for all. For ‘Never in this world does hatred cease by hatred; hatred ceases by love’ and let a man overcome anger by kindness, evil by good. (DOI 129)

Buddhism was progressively prevalent in India. It appealed to even some Brahmins and flourished as a reform movement. Emperor Ashoka converted himself into the faith of Buddhism and endeavoured to expand it in India and in foreign
countries. Buddha was predominantly a principled teacher, revolutionary and not a follower of metaphysics. As Nehru declares:

He (Buddha) refuses to discuss this question, which is very remarkable for the Indian mind of his day was full of the individual soul and the absolute soul, of monism and monotheism and other metaphysical hypotheses. But Buddha set his mind against all forms of Metaphysics. (DOI 130)

Buddha always regarded and examined man’s life and his mental states. Nehru underlines Buddha’s teaching as: “There is an emphasis on the pain and suffering of life and the four Noble truths which Buddha enunciated deal with this suffering, its cause, the possibility of ending it and the way to do it.” (DOI 131)

The ending of this state of suffering is Nirvana. In the words of Nehru:

As to what is Nirvana, is people differ for it is impossible to describe a transcendental state in our adequate language and in terms of the concepts of our limited minds. (DOI 131)

Buddha teaches the path to emancipation which is followed by middle path. The middle path contains Aryan Eight fold paths. They are right belief, right aspirations, right speech, right conduct, and right mode of livelihood, right effort, right mindedness, and right rapture. Buddhism dominated Indian life in many ways. The importance of peacefulness, other worldliness, vegetarianism, foundation of monasteries in large number and rethinking on caste systems were the outcome of Buddhism. Similarly there was a cultural synthesis because of the interaction between the Hindus and the Muslims. As Swami Vivekananda reveals:

There was emergence of Islam in India during medieval period. There were penetration of the Arabs, the Mongols, and the invasions of Mahmud of
Ghazni, Afghans, and Turks. The Mohamadan invasion brought innumerable changes in the economic, political, cultural, and religious life of the people. The interaction between Hindus and the Muslims ends in the cultural synthesis and growth of mixed culture.

During the Mughal rule many Hindus became converts into Muslims. But Hinduism remained as a main religion in India. They gave more importance to divinity. Mixture of religion and Nationalism gained energy in the period of Rajputs, Sikhs and Marathas. In the words of Taj Ram Sharma:

The medieval historian still depends for his facts on tradition, and has no effective weapons for criticizing that tradition. He treats his material form a universalistic pointing view. Even in the Middle Ages nationalism was a real thing; but an historian who flattered national rivalries and national pride knew that he was doing wrong. (62)

But the Nationalism was partial one, which did not rise above the differences of religion or belief. This failure was lucid when the Rajputs, Sikhs and the Marathas came in clash with the British in the contemporary period.

The Installation of British rule led to various reform movements among Hindus and Muslims. Some Educated Indians who received English education from British accepted the western culture. This motivated Hindus towards Christianity because they were depressed with the antique social customs and traditions of Hinduism. Most of the people in Bengal had converted into Christianity and the conversions took place throughout the country. This made some reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen, Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi to foster Hinduism based on social reform.
Raja Ram Mohan Roy introduced Brahma Samaj which persuaded the rising Middle classes of Bengal. Displeasure arose among the society, because many-sided character of Hinduism was practised. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Swami Dayanand Saraswathi started reform movement called ‘Arya Samaj’ among the Hindus of Punjab, with the slogan “Back to the Vedas”. Nehru comments:

The slogan really meant an elimination of developments of the Aryan faith since the Vedas; the Vedanta philosophy as it subsequently developed the central conception of monism, the pantheistic outlook as well as popular and cruder developments were all alike severely condemned. Even the Vedas were uninterrupted in particular way. (DOI 367)

The successor of Swami Dayananda, Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa mingled with Muslims and Christians. He lived with them and followed their routines. He emphasized the necessity of religious faith and connected it with Hinduism and Philosophy. He brought other religions also within this fold.

Swami Vivekananda established the service for non–sectarian, named as Ramakrishna Mission. He had a Modernistic approach to problems of life. He hoped to establish bond between Indian past and her present. He sermonized the monoism of Advaita philosophy of Vedanta. He assumed that this will lead to humanity in Future India. He highlighted the urge for freedom, equality and the raising of the masses.

Apart from these reformers, Hindu reformers like Gokhle, Tilak and many Muslim reformers like Sir Syed, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Ali Brothers and Iqbal bestowed their best to vindicate their religion. The extraordinary celebrity of the Modern period was Gandhi. His concept of Religion is concerned with the moral
principle. He has named it as the Law of truth or love. His philosophy of life comprises truth and non-violence.

Nehru respected Indian religions such as Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Jainism. He trusted that religion has a dominant role in promoting traditions in India and connecting them with the notions of God. Swami Vivekananda says:

This is the ancient land where wisdom made its home before it went into any other country, the same India whose influx of spirituality is represented, as it were on the material plane, by rolling rivers, like oceans, where the eternal Himalayas, rising tier above tier with their snow-caps, look as it were into the very mysteries of Heaven. Here is the same India whose soil has been trodden by the feet of the greatest sages that ever lived. (112)

Nehru observes that all religions deal with undetectable one. He also noticed that the birth of Islam and the contact between the Hindus and Muslims led to mixed cultures born out of synthesis. But this mixed culture affected the religious and philosophical movements in India. The emergence of Bhakthi movement is the result of the synthesis. Various reform movements arose during the British regime in India. So, Nehru worked hard for the secularism. He felt that secularism is the fundamental democracy in India.

He also felt that Religion is concerned with the elemental ambiguity of life. The cognizance of an invisible riddle in the life of man is religion. He underlines that Man’s initiative, sincerity and industriousness alone will withdraw impoverishment and distress. Science is the tool for promoting all these aspects. Nehru reveals:
Religion as I saw it practiced, and accepted even by thinking minds whether it was Hinduism or Islam or Buddhism or Christianity did not attract me. It seemed to be closely associated with superstitious practices and dogmatic beliefs, and behind it lays a method of approach to life’s problems which was certainly not that of science.

(DOI 13)

Nehru feels that secularism helps to attain religious freedom. This can be done by creating a feeling of fraternity and harmony towards one another among the different groups of Indians. Rachna Mehtotra points out Nehru’s need of secularism:

Nehru’s concept of secularism is religious freedom, granting of equal status to all religions in India, Neutrality of the state in matters of religion, Development of mental attitude within various religious groups of Indians so that a feeling of fraternity and harmony towards one another could be brought about, Secularization in all areas of social life.(66)

Literature is one of factors which played dominant role in ancient culture in India. M.E. Manickavasagom Pillai remarks:

The history and culture of a society can be constructed from various sources. They are archaeology, epigraphy, numismatics, literature, written records and field investigation. In the study of the culture of a past society, field investigation is impossible. Under such circumstances, the other sources of information are of immense value. Literature is one of them and indeed this has been one of the earliest uses to which literature has been by systematic students. Literature as
such has to be handled with care in arriving at sociological and cultural
inferences. (1)

Nehru’s response to the world of literature is brilliant. He quotes from various
poets such as Swinburne, T.S.Eliot, Hopkins, William Blake, Roy Campbell, Max
Muller and the Chinese poet Li Tai Po. He also quotes from Upanishads,
Rajatarangini, Bhagavad Gita, History, Economics, Religion, Philosophy, sociology,
Psychology and Psychoanalysis.

The emergence of Vedas in literature is around five thousand B.C. It denotes
the primeval record of Indian mind and culture. They are classic than the Israel and
Greek literature. There are some uniformity between the Vedas and Avesta. India’s
Sanskrit scriptures and epics are called Avesta.

Nehru found that the composers of Vedas are full of liveliness. The old Vedic
hymns exhibit polytheism. The polytheism passed into monotheism and then to
monism. The Vedas are earliest songs of Indian Philosophy and literature. Nehru
identifies the actual importance of Vedic literature. The contents of Vedas are chants,
invocation, custom for slaughter, necromancy and impressive nature poetry. He
considered that the ancient Vedic Aryans were full of eagerness for life. They gave
priority to the soul and trusted in some kind of life after death.

Nehru records the earliest book and the first Veda as Rig Veda in his writings.
Rig Veda contains the first outflow of human mind, the maturation of poetry, and
nature’s pleasantness and strangeness. He ascertains the birth of Upanishad literature
is around eight hundreds B.C. which is an evolution of Indo—Aryan thought.

The contents of the Upanishads are spirit of exploration, intellectual enterprise
and discovering truth about things. Nehru opined that the emphasis of Upanishads is
on Self—awareness, on cognition of the individual self and absolute self.
Understanding the approaches and messages of Upanishads is a bit difficult for him.

As Nehru remarks:

The metaphysical aspects of the questions considered in Upanishads are difficult for me to grasp but I am interested by this approach to a problem which has so often been shrouded by dogma and blind belief. It was the philosophical approach and not the religious one. I like the vigour of thought, the questioning, the rationalistic background. (DOI 88)

The Upanishads rely on truth. Nehru declares truth as the dominating feature of Upanishads. He states “Truth wins ever, not falsehood with truth is paved the road to the Divine”(DOI 88). Nehru was impressed by the prayer of Upanishads. As he quotes as:

“Lead me from the unreal to the real
Lead me from darkness to light
Lead me from death to immortality”.(DOI 89)

Ancient Indian thought influenced Greek and Iranian thinkers and philosophers. Plotinus and St. Augustine were persuaded by the strange elements found in Upanishads. It had remarkable impression on European philosophers like Schopenhauer and Max Muller.

Nehru pointed out that the world’s ancient literatures of Greece and India have been lost since they were initially written on palm leaves or Bhurjapatra which were thin leaves of beech tree. Ancient Indian Books have been translated into Chinese and Tibetan in the later periods.

Kautilya wrote the book Arthasatra in the fourth century B.C. It was regarded as one of the most significant philosophies of India. The mode of logic and
argumentation began to enter in many Jain, Buddhist and Hindu scriptures. The two great epics of India represented the Indian philosophical tradition. The prime concern of the epics was to instruct righteous and moral standards. It mirrors the traditional trends of Indian religion and philosophy. It is a blend of facts and fiction.

The epics deal with ancient times when Indo Aryans were settling down. It also represents their conquests and civil wars. It widens great Indian traditions and legends in many ways. Nehru confessed that it was very difficult to find out the chronology of epics but they were moulded in pre-Buddhist period. The main objective of the epics was to underline the beneficence and greatness of man. The two epics impressed the life of common man in India. Nehru states:

I do not know of any books anywhere which have exercised such a continuous and pervasive influence on the mass mind as these two dating back to a remote antiquity, they are still a living force in the minds of the people.(DOI 98)

The Ramayana was the tale of expansion of Indo Aryans to the south. It was an epic with the certain unit of form. Indra Deva and Shrirama opine:

The Ramayana greatly influenced the people of the Indian subcontinent and became popular even beyond it…. The story of Rama has such a persistent popularity and hold on the minds of the people because it glorifies the value of unquestioning and unflinching obedience to the patriarch, which is the cardinal virtue of the patriarchal family which is the corner stone of the whole social structure of the pleasant civilization

Nehru states that Mahabharata was the compilation of ancient legends. It attracted Russian scholars and they produced Russian translations of Mahabharata.
The main heroine Draupadi was represented as the shared wife of five brothers. It portrays the fact that there could be many approaches to attain the truth. Nehru highlights the important concept of Mahabharata which is Dharma. The notion of Dharma holds the aim that man should serve not only for his own development but the welfare of the whole world. Dharma emphasizes that the bundle of duties and responsibilities of man alter according to situation and time.

Nehru considers that Mahabharata emphasized the basic unity of India or Bharatvarsha. The primeval name was limited to northern and central Asia up to Vindhya mountains. Mahabharatha explicates a code of life. It extols a philosophy of social and ethical relations. As C.RajaGopalachari explains:

The Mahabharata is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life; a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on problems that is hard to rival;….Through such books alone the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

Nehru noticed that the idea of Ahimsa or non-violence in different perspectives centres round the epic Mahabharata. He summarized the message of Mahabharata as “Thou shalt not do to others what is disagreeable to thyself”.(DOI 107).

Bhagavad Gita was an episode of Mahabharata which contains seven hundred verses. It directs the mind of man which was tormented by doubt and wavered by the dispute of duties. As M.Arunachalam reveals:
The Bhagavad Gita is more a religious code than a mere philosophical treatise. Although it is metaphysics and ethics, brahmavidhya and yoga sastra, it is not an esoteric work for the initiated, but a popular guide to help ordinary mortals to solve their problems in perplexing situations. Millions of the Hindu race have found solace for centuries in this great word of God which sets forth in simple and clear language the essential principles of a spiritual religion. (219)

Some intellectual leaders like Tilak, Aurobindo Ghose, Gandhiji interpreted Bhagavat Gita in their own way.

Nehru narrated that in this book Krishna advised Arjuna not to renounce his path of dharma (duty) even in burdensome situations. This reflected the message that there are three ways to human progress. They are the path of the intellect, the path of action, and the path of faith. As Nehru explains the contents of Bhagavat Gita:

The Gita deals essentially with the spiritual background of human existence and it is in this context that the practical problems of everyday life appear. It is a call to nation to meet the obligations and duties of life but always keeping in view that spiritual background and larger purpose of universe.(DOI 109)

Nehru explains that Kautilya’s Arthashashtra of the fourth century B.C elucidates the political, economic, social and military organization of the Maurya Empire. The book concerns with the matters of trade, commerce, legislation, law courts, municipal governments, social traditions and customs, Marriage and Divorce, rights of women, taxation and revenue, agriculture, horticulture, Irrigation, shops, navigations, Fisheries, the working of mines, factories, artisans, markets, census operations and Jails.
During pre-Buddhist period in India collection of Jatarka tales appeared. It was given shape after Buddha. It became integral part of Buddhist Literature. It was concerned with the former incarnations of Buddha. It manifested valuable facts to life.

R.P. Dupe comments:

Nehru regards the Jakarta tales as representing the popular tradition as contrasted with what he called the priestly or ruling class traditions and as such a source of great many insights and information. Nehru here foreshadows Redfield’s conceptualizations of the “Little and the great tradition” which was utilized in India, as elsewhere in the study and analysis of cultures which yielded knowledge of inestimable value.

(24)

Brahmi was the earliest form of writing in India. During Sixth or seventh century B.C, Panini wrote his grammar of Sanskrit language. Nehru praised the work of Panini. Mohan M. Mathews adds:

Panini’s work of grammar (Ashtadhyayi) composed in late fourth century B.C is reckoned as one of the greatest intellectual achievements of any ancient civilization- the most detailed and scientific grammar composed before the nineteenth century anywhere in the world. (2)

In Panini’s work, apart from grammar, Greek script was found. It displayed the fact that there was some kind of contact between India and the Greeks before Alexander came to the east.

During Christian era, there is an emergence of textbooks on medicine. Charak who had been in the royal court of Kanishka, wrote a book on medicine. Sushruta wrote Surgery. The textbooks listed out innumerable diseases and suggestive methods
of diagnosis and treatment. It concerns about surgery, diet, cleanliness, bath, obstetrics and education on medicine.

Nehru says that during the period of Khalif –Al –Mansur in the eighth century many Indian scholars went to Baghdad and wrote books on Mathematics and Astronomy. Aryabhatta was translated into Arabic. The great Mathematicians like Baudhayana, Apastamba, Katyayana, Aryabhatta and Bhaskara I and II contributed best works in mathematics.

Indian Mythologies became part and parcel of Indian culture. It widens one’s knowledge in various ways. In the words of Veronica Icons (1986):

India’s recorded civilization is one of the longest in the course of world history and its mythology spans the whole of that time and more. For some periods, indeed since Hindu scholarship traditionally has little interest in history as such, mythology and sacred lore constitute the sole record, and the changes that may be noted in such traditional materials are thus vital clues to our knowledge of social and political change. (6)

Apart from these Nehru was interested in reading Indian mythological stories. He even evaluated supernatural stories from the Arabian Nights and the Panchatantra which was filled with animal tales. He was attracted towards the Indian and European fairy stories, stories from Greek Mythology, the narrative of Joan of Arc, Alice in Wonderland and many stories of Akbar and Birbal, Sherlock Holmes, King Arthur and his knights, the Rani of Jhansi, the tales of Rajput chivalry and heroism. These tales filled Nehru’s mental state with strange outlook which had the setting of Indian Mythology.
Nehru opines that India is a prosperous land and rich in various luxurious articles which are exported to many foreign markets. P.T. Srinivas Iyenger remembers:

It has been proved that the people of India traded with foreign countries in the age preceding that with which we are dealing now. In the mantras we find references to “those who desiring wealth send ships to the sea” to voyages of “Parties of merchants going on the ocean in ships with a hundred oars”, “to distant lands for sale and barter”. (39)

Pepper and other spices are sent to western and eastern countries. In ancient times, India had been manufacturing fine clothes. Indian silk Industry developed some advancement and introduced special methods for the production of fast dyes.

The word ‘Indigo’ derived from India through Greeks refers to the knowledge of dyeing which gave an excellent impetus to India’s trade with foreign countries. Chemistry was more advanced in earlier centuries in India. Indian steel and iron were valued in foreign countries for warlike purposes. Various metals and metallic compounds were made for medicinal purposes.

Indians were skilled in Astronomy. They had intimate contact with Arab Astronomy. But the fundamental of Arab Astronomy is founded in Alexandria. India excelled in trade and managed innumerable foreign countries. According to Nehru,

Language is something infinitely greater than grammar and philology. It is the poetic treatment of the genius of a race and a culture, and the living embodiment of the thought and fancies that have moulded those words change their meaning from age to age and old ideas transform themselves into new, often keeping the old attire. (DOI 171)
According to Nehru, Sanskrit was the amazing classical language in India. It was the standard language of literates throughout India. Later many modern languages got derived from Sanskrit. He glorified the greatness of Sanskrit. It was also used for communication by the adjacent South Asian countries like Cambodia, Thailand etc……It can be regarded as the combining strength in India. Many contemporary languages like Hindi, Bengali, Gujarathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, Kashmiri and Assamese are seeds from Sanskrit except the languages of the Dravidian origin. The simple style, complex forms, elaborate similes and metaphors are involved in this language. It had rich poetry and philosophy.

Nehru believed that Sanskrit had become an ancient thing with changing times. The perpetual use of Sanskrit paved way for the prosperity of Indian languages and literature. Dorothy A.L.Stede, observes:

The importance of ancient Indian literature as a whole consists in its originality. Two of the factors in this originality are India’s isolation, which enabled her to pursue an independent development; and the existence of a caste which devoted itself to creative and critical thought. In nearly every department, lyrical poetry, epic, fable, drama, phonetics, grammar, mathematics, astronomy, medicine and law, the Indians achieved notable results. The vehicle of most of this literature was Sanskrit.

Nehru distinguished two varieties of prevailing languages in India. Hindu – Urdu, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarathi, Oriya, Assamese, Rajasthani ,Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto and Kashmiri which are derived from Sanskrit are called Indo –Aryan Languages. Tamil, Telegu, Kanarese, and Malayalam are called Dravidian Languages.
Some dialects and immature languages are also spoken in underdeveloped hill areas and forest tribes in India.

Nehru admits that the persistent use of printing press gave a great incentive to the elaboration of familiar Indian Languages. Some of the languages like Hindi, Bengali, Urdu, Tamil, Telegu, Gujarathi, Marathi were popular and had also progressed their literatures.

Two classical languages –Sanskrit and Persian played a predominant role in India. But both languages arrested the maturation of the popular provincial languages. The two classical languages are confined to serious writing. Nehru pointed out that the printing of books and newspapers improved the prose literatures in the provincial languages.

Nehru expressed that the early Christian Missionaries like the Baptist Mission at Serampore attempted to translate Bible in the first private printing press into prose variant of Indian languages. The missionaries implemented minor and underdeveloped languages and moulded them by compiling grammars and dictionaries for them. The translation of Bible into many languages eventuated in the growth of many Indian languages.

Nehru gave an account of the nature of some Indian Languages in his writing. Hindu –Urdu was the same language with two different literary scripts. There was vast difference in written format especially literary style. Thus emerged a common language to fill the gap between Hindu –Urdu which was named as Hindustani. Hindustani was the common language understood by the people all over India.

Nehru revealed the truth that the languages in India paved way for the unity of people of India. As he opined “The growing popular language, Hindi was encouraged
and an attempt was even made to bring about a synthesis between the religious faith of Hindus and Muslims”. (DOI 262)

Nehru says that during the Mughal period large number of Hindus wrote books in Persian because Persian was the official court language. Muslim scholars attempted translation of Sanskrit books into Persian and wrote it in Hindi. He also added that the Persian language became the popular language of the cultured people in Asia. All the Modern Indian Languages are filled with Persian words. Even the Dravidian languages are also influenced by Persians.

Nehru illustrated that in 1912, Abul Kalam Azad communicated a creative language called Al –Hilal. It was imaginative language in thought, approach and composition. His style of language was tense and virile because of its Persian background; He used unusual phrases for innovative ideas. Because of him there was a development in Urdu language.

Nehru explained that Buddha used the familiar language in his locality, which was Prakit derived from Sanskrit. Prakit developed the Pali language of the ancient Buddhist scriptures. Buddha’s conversation, discussions and other accounts were recorded in Pali language even after his death. Pali language manifested the fundamentals of Buddhism in Ceylon, Burma and Siam. Nehru discovered that Pashto was one of the Indo –Aryan languages descended from Sanskrit. It was renowned language of Afghanistan and North –West province.

Nehru artistically portrays architecture, sculptures, paintings, music, dance and drama in his writings. He opines that Indian art is flexible and adaptable in many ways. These art forms suit the needs of country, race and religion which they came into contact. The basic character of Indian art derives from ideals. These ideals are associated with the religious and philosophic outlook of India. He formulates that
these fine arts are the cultural life of people in India. He penetrates the Indian cultural life deeply and movingly in his writings. Indian art reveals the essential unity of all existence. As he articulates:

Indian art was flexible and adaptable and in each country it flowered afresh and many new ways, always retaining that basic impress which it derived from India….Indian art derives its basic character from certain ideas associated with the religious and philosophic outlook in India. (DOI 216)

Nehru feels that there is religious urge and philosophical ideals in the Indian art. Apart from these, beauty is conceived as subjective in Indian art. Ancient Indians loved beauty with some profound significance. The inner perception of Beauty is truth.

Nehru reports that Grecian analyzed Indian art from their own perspective. They mention that Indian art is something original which was slight reflection of Graeco Buddhist art. C. Sivaramamurti(1985) agrees that:” Indian art is a fascinating subject inexhaustible in its vast resources, soothing to the eye and pleasant to experience. It is one of the great phases of world art”. (30)

Nehru’s writing offers the review of Indian art in an organized manner. He showed that the first phase of Indian sculptural art and architecture is at Mohenjo -Daro in 1932. He is interested in the art pieces found at Harappa and Mohenjo -Daro in the Indus –valley civilization. Rama Prasad Chanda (1978) states :

The history of the Indian art before the reign of the Maurya Emperor Ashoka is shrouded by a thick veil of darkness. The excavations at Harrappa in the Punjab and at Mohen –jo –Daro in sind are lifting this veil in one province of India and revealing the remains of a great
civilization that flourished in the Indus valley in the third millennium before Christ. (1)

Nehru opines that the theme of nature impresses the Aryans in India. The love of Nature is portrayed in Sanchi Gates near Bhopal. Here one could find ancient art with wonderful carvings of flowers, leaves and animal forms. He remarks that after Sanchi period, there is an appearance of a new school of sculpture called Gandhara or the Indo –Greek school of the sculpture in the North of Aryavarta. It was under the support of the Indo Scythian kings of the Kushan period. The earliest model of this art belonged to the second century A.D.

Nehru opines that the work of the Graeco –Roman artists is the medium through which Greek dominance entered India. The best sculpture in Indian land is Amravati and Gupta art piece found at Gaya, Mathura and Sarnath. John Anderson appreciates the place of Sarnath as:

This locality, which is situated three miles to the north of benares,is famous in the annals of Buddhism, as it was here that gowtama Buddha first proclaimed his doctrines, about two months after he had attained Buddha hood at Buddha gaya. his first discourse is preserved in the sutra of the foundation of the kingdom of righteousness, which is generally translated as “turning the wheel of the law”(1) The Indo – Greek art is in charge of the image of Buddha in past India.

The image worship commenced in Buddhism and thereby the Buddha infant arrived in sculpture in Gandhara on the North West of India. But Gautama opposed image worship in Buddhism. Later Brahmans in India, in order to bridge the gap between Hinduism and Buddhism, introduced the ideas in Hinduism and symbolized Buddhist thought.
The Graeco – Roman craftsmen also used the image of Gods in their sculpture. John Cumming (1988) states:

How popular Greek and Graceo-Roman art then became may be judged from the fact that, of the vast number of minor antiquities recovered in the Parthian city, fully three-quarters are classical in character. Some of these where, no doubt brought by way of trade from western Asia or the Mediterranean area, but the majority where manufactured itself and, like the buildings of the period, which are almost invariably enriched by some classic features—pillars, pilasters, cornices or mouldings.....(145)

Nehru observes that Iranian and Persian domination contributed to Indian art. Achaemeneid art seemed to have intimate touch with Indian art of Maurya period and controlled it. Nehru conveys that Gupta period which prevailed from fourth and sixth century A.D was golden age in all aspects of Indian culture. The paintings of Ajanta, Bagh and Badami are depicting the life of the contemporary people in India. Ajanta portrays wonderful ideas and frescoes were created by Buddhist monks. D.C. Ahir (2000):

Of all the caves in India, the wonderful caves of Ajanta have attracted and aroused the admiration of scholars and tourists from all over the world. The Ajanta caves are unique as they combine three best specimens of art: architecture, sculpture and painting. The growth and decay of these caves correspond to the rise and fall of Buddhism in India. (23)

Buddhist art and Architecture developed much during the Kushan period.

Xinru Liu (1988) states:
Religion was another important in regulating social life. The development of the Mahayana school in the early Christian era enlarged the number of Buddhist lay adherents... traders and Guilds supported monasteries financially. An urban culture born in a community of merchants, artisans, and Buddhist monasteries crystallized in the boom of Buddhist art and architecture during the Kushan period.(5)

The different facets of women like princess, singers, and dancers with postures of sitting, standing are depicted beautifully. The monks attempt to represent the moving drama of life in their painting. Rachna Mehrotra (1996) says:

> With the fall of the Gupta dynasty the medieval trend in Indian art was introduced with its characteristic features of over –burdening details, excessive ornamentation and magnified size of sculptures. Though these trends were negation of the ideals of Indian art so beautifully portrayed in the Gupta art, yet it produced some of the magnificent temples and sculpture of which India feel proud of. (82)

The progress of Indian art during the seventh or eighth to fourteenth century has provincial styles nourished in various parts of India under the encouragement of the rulers of the dynasties of Palas in east India, Chahamanas, Gahadvalas and Shahis in North India, the Kachchhapaghata, the Kalachuris, the Chandellas, the Paramars and the Somavamsis in central India, the Chalukyas in Gujarat, the Rashtrakutas and the Chalukyas in Deccan, the Cholas, Pandyas, Pallavas and Cheras in south India. The life and civilization in India echoes in magnificent architecture and sculpture. Indian artists created the art based on mythology of Hindus framed the art.

Nehru estimates that the Muslim rule in India in the thirteenth century introduced an innovative art called Indo –Muslim which gave new dimension to
ancient ideas and thoughts of Indian people with simple and dignified design. Indo – Muslim culture is spiritual and secular. It includes mosque, mausoleums, houses, mansions, palace, forts, tower gates, halls wells, gardens, workshops etc….Muslim rulers are interested in building big –sized building. Nehru comments:

Beautiful buildings combining the old Indian ideals in architecture with a new simplicity and a nobility of the line grew up in Agra and Delhi. This Indo –Mughal art was in marked contrast with the decadent, over –elaborate and heavily ornamented temples and other buildings of North and south. ( DOI 286)

Qutub –ud –din started Qutub –Minar near New Delhi and his successor Illtutmish demolished the tower.. They followed old Indian buildings especially temples to build Qutub Minar. Nehru highlights that during the Sultan periods buildings were erected in states like Bijapur, Vijayanagar ,Golkanda and Taj Mahal at Agra. He also mentions about some architecture in Jaya Stambha tower in Chitoor. Nehru notices that the emperor Akbar created a Architecture with building forts. He established new city called Fatehpur Sikri near Agra and Fort at Allahabad. As John Cumming (1988) appreciates :

The monuments at Agra, and Fatehpur Sikhi, which lies some twenty three miles from it, comprise the best specimens of the Mughal architecture which reached its highest perfection during the reign of Shah Jahan….The Taj mahal which is famous throughout the world for its grace and beauty. Happily these relics escaped destruction during the period of unrest that followed the downfall of the Mughal empire…(62)
Nehru noted that India is famous for indigenous architecture. It is filled with old monuments and ancient sculptures. The Ellora, the Elephanta caves and buildings in Northern states like Delhi, Allahabad, and Agra reveal the story of ancient India.

R. Nath(1986) states:

The great Kailasa at Ellora and the famous caves of Elephanta, for example, owe their origin to the Rastrakutas who were saiva. It seems that Dhruva Rastrakutta who captured Gwalior c.790 A.D. built this beautiful temple as memorial of his conquests in the North. (74)

Nehru conveys that these architecture and cultural achievements were the things of the past age. They help a lot in understanding the culture of India.

The mighty caves of Ellora were carved out of solid rock in Kailasa temple. The Elephanta cave has the powerful Trimurthi, the broken statue of Shiva Nataraja, wherein Shiva dancing in the Elephanta caves which proves the majestic creations of Indian artists. There is a group of monuments at Mamalapuram in south India which characterizes the Indian culture. C. Sivaramamurthi remarks:

Narasimhavarman was responsible for the great monuments at Mahabalipuram the famous five rathas, each one exquisitely decorated e Dharcarvings like Ardhanarisvara, Harihara, vrishabhantika, siva, Mahishamardini Durga and so forth. The wagon roofed Bhimaratha beside the hug

Nehru records that the great Mughal emperor Shah Jahan began the Lyric age of Indian Architecture. He built Taj Mahal, Moti–Masjid – the pearl Mosque in Agra, the great Jami Masjid of Delhi, the Diwan –i- am and Diwan –i- khas in the palace of Delhi.
Nehru tells that in the end of eighteenth century, western colonialists like the Portuguese, the French and British settled in India and introduced their own art and architecture. According to Henry cousins (1926):

Buddhist, Jain, Hindu, Mohammedan, with the later Portuguese, Dutch, Armenian and English remains, help to make up a goodly assortment. Stupas, cave and structural temples, mosques, tombs, palaces, forts, churches, convents and graveyards are all represented, often quite near one another, succeeding each other from one end of the country to the other. Just as varied as these relics of the mason's craft are the peoples, languages, and religious beliefs which gave rise to them. (2)

Nehru wholeheartedly involved in performing arts like music, dance, song etc.,, He reveals: “I enjoyed greatly theatres, music, cinema, talkies, radio and broadcasting all this had been beyond my reach for many years, for even during my intervals of freedom I was too engrossed in other activities”. (405). Nehru also expressed the ancient Indian music, dance and drama in his writings.

Jawaharlal Nehru says that one can find references to Hindu God and Goddess in Indian poetry and music. Both are filled with old allegories and metaphors. Amir Khusrau, a Turk who had settled in ancient India in the fourteenth century introduced many innovations in Indian music. He brings out India’s excellence in innumerable factors like religion, philosophy, logic, grammar, language and so on. His songs are in old classical style of India which includes common language used by the villager, his way of life, and his customs. The subject matter of his songs includes the life in its various stages, of coming of the bride, separation from the beloved and so on.

Dance plays a dominant role in Indian culture. According to Projesh Banerji:
The rich heritage and culture of India is depicted in the various forms of Indian dance. We find detailed accounts of the codification of this art in ancient Sanskrit books especially the Natya shastra. This art had been traditionally handed down from the gods and has come to stay in the world. (1)

Nehru had an attraction towards Dance. This is evident in his words in Autobiography. “I spent a few days in Bombay on my way back. I was fortunate in catching Udai Shankar there and seeing his dancing. This was an unexpected treat which enjoined greatly. (405)

Nehru speaks about different forms of dances performed in ancient India. The Pathans in North West Province practise popular dances like Russian Cossack Dancing. The famous old dance forms in India are Java and Bali.Projesh Banerji points out the origin of Bali dance as:

Vijaya Singha’s influence over the island of Bali, known as “Bali Anka” or the lap of strong men (Bali). Evidently Vijaya was the general of a strong army and his strong men settled down at Bali, and from them the name of Bali has originated. (111)

Nehru makes an evaluation of Indian theatrical arts. He assesses the growth and decay of theatre arts in India. He expresses that Greek tragedy was the gift given by the Greeks to the world. But Indian theatrical arts progressed autonomously. One can find pertinence to ‘Natakas’ in earliest epics. The great grammarian of the seventeenth century Panini has illustrated variety of dramatic forms. ‘Nataya Shastra’ is the treatise on the theatre arts have been written in the third century A.D. It is fully based on the art form. The earlier dramatist ‘Ashvashaghosha’ who belonged to Christian era moulded Indian drama. After 1989 Europe acquired Indian drama.
through the translations of Kalidasa’s ‘Shakunthalam’ by Sir William Jones. M.R. Kale observes:

National poet of Indian culture, Kalidasa in his famous drama Abhijanana Shakunthalam has incorporated the element of curse of the sage Durvasa due to which Dusyanta fails to recognize Sakuntala when she has been sent to him afterwards, which is absent in the original story of the Mahabharata.

Nehru recorded that apart from Kalidasa’s plays there emerged some popular plays in Indian theatre. They were Shudhaka’s ‘Mrichhakatika’, Vishakhadatta’s ‘Mudraraksham’. The prominent emperor Harshavardha who lived in the seventh century was an outstanding poet and dramatist. Nehru felt that Kalidasa can be compared with Bhavabhuti.

Indian theatre got declined in the Ninth century. There are various causes for the decline such as political change or inadequacy of political liberty. The chief cause was that the Indian art forms were yoked with the religious themes, myths and characters. The invaders like Afghans, Moghal rulers, and Muslims discouraged it. Nehru indicated that the decline in drama was due to the general decline in Indian life from the ninth century onwards.

Nehru enunciated that he missed theatres in his personal life. He envied the innovative productions the foreign countries. He got little chance to view good plays in Northern India. He intimated that the Bengali, Gujarathi and Marathi drama progressed except Hindustani Drama. Because Hindustani drama was unrefined and inartistic

It was the opinion of Nehru that the Indian films whether they are silent films or talkies got derived from ancient Indian History or Mythology.
Nehru wrote and spoke on the complications of social structure existed in India. He felt that the Indo- Aryan culture was community oriented. It allowed independence to the individuals. Sarvepalli Gopal (2004) observes:

Reverting to India, Jawaharlal pointed out that though her social structure had proved to be wonderfully stable, it had failed in one vital particular: it had found no solution for the problem of equality and in fact had deliberately based itself on inequality. But a solution based on the genius of the Indian people and on Indian’s thought and culture had to be found if the political and social structure was to have any stability and if the discords between the various communities were to disappear. And this led Jawaharlal to plead for the faith and generosity which would remove fear and suspicion between the communities. (73)

Indian social life transforms day by day. He examined that the Indian Social structure is based on Joint family system, the caste system and the autonomous village community system. In all the systems it was the group that was considered as a prime importance than the individual. These systems are based upon these institutions which succeeded in promoting social safety for the group. But it subdued the Individual and his development.

In ancient period, Indian society was very dynamic. Initially there was a growth, but it later faded away. Indian society was spirited in the past which led to its advancement. But in due course it lost its flexibility. So long as firmness and security were the objective, this system functioned effectively. But it was threatened by the fresh theory of social development which could not be adapted to the ancient static ideas. A disagreement between age old traditions and customs and the fresh elements of modernism existed. Nehru desired that the Indian society should be
changed into modern to get the hope of progress towards the formation of democracy in India.

Autonomous village community has its own powers and operations. According to Nehru, Shukra’s Nitisara and some other ancient inscriptions provided the principles of election, and the importance of village panchayats. The village panchayat had executive and judicial powers. The elected council of members were given more respect by the king’s officers. Panchayat distributed land and collected taxes out of the produce. They paid the government’s share on behalf of the village. In these self- Governing Bodies, the central government interfered as the quota of taxes allotted to them had to be paid.

Autonomous village community system existed during Hindu period. It continued during Afghan and Mughal periods. During the British rule, autonomous village community system had declined.

Nehru also examines the caste system in India. He considers caste system as second pillar on which Indian social structure exists. The caste system can be traced out even in Rig Vedic Age. Earlier this system was focused to make difference between the Aryans and non- Aryans. The new system was created by Aryans. This system was based on Karma which is the merit of action. This was called as chaturvarna  Vyavastha. The whole society was categorized into four classes. Agriculturists, artisans and merchants are called as Vaishyas, the rulers and warriors are called as Kshatriyas. The priests and the intellectuals who are supposed to maintain the ideals of nation are called as Brahmins. Shudras are the labourers and untalented workers. This is the caste system prevailed in Aryan society.

Nehru then examines the importance of Joint family system. He regards this joint family system as the third pillar of Indian social structure. He opines that there is
a lack of individualistic tendency in joint families. This paved way to certain trends which were opposed to democratic principles. The relationship in the joint family aided the individual but it suppressed the individual and obstructed Individual progress. He felt that the interdependence on elders does not give enough chances for the younger generation to enrich their individuality and personality. Difference of opinion can be avoided in the joint family system. Hence Nehru supports small family system and opined joint family system would not suit for the modern times. Nehru trusted that with the joint family system, Indian society could not advance in its liberal, individualistic and democratic outlook. He investigated the complete social structure of India. He therefore has a desire for the change in society. He supports for the blend of ancient and modern approaches to achieve changes in the country.

To sum up, Nehru has given an appropriate definition for culture. He also delineates the different aspects of Indian culture with adequate illustrations. He also emphasizes the significance of Indian culture. His reaction to the world of art is equally brilliant. He has authentic appreciation for various arts in India. In the succeeding chapter ‘History’ as perceived by Jawaharlal Nehru has been delineated.