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**NEHRU
ON EDUCATION**

NEHRU ON EDUCATION

Rajendra Pal Singh



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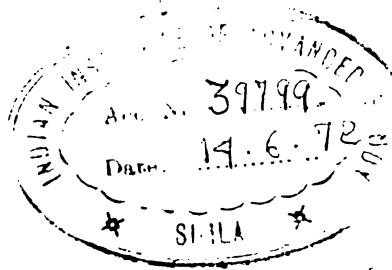
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*TO MY FATHER & MY MOTHER,
who is no more with me but whose
Sacred Memory shall live on
so long I live.*

Acknowledgements

I am extremely grateful to all my friends whose interest and inspiration have enabled me to finish this book. In particular I must thank Mr. V. N. Srivastava, Asst. Curater, Curzon Museum, Mathura and Mr. R. K. Yadav, Reader in Education, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi for offering me some very valuable suggestions. I must also thank Dr. Reginald Bell for reading the first two chapters and suggesting improvements. Thanks are due to my publisher, Mr. S.K. Ghai for undertaking the publication.

While I acknowledge with thanks all suggestions given to me I must own with humility the responsibility for the faults that this work must contain.

Mathura,
Oct , 1965.

—*R. P. Singh*

1

Preface

Jawaharlal Nehru, like Nature, was always (and is) a tempting and fascinating subject for study ; and, like an object of great art he charmed everyone. His tremendously colourful personality had a universal appeal. Consequently no single analysis could ever hope to exhaust the qualities of his enduring fame. He defied every such attempt by making the analysis appear too shallow and ordinary to fit in his august stature. Indeed, behind the gleam of his beautiful eyes almost a world was kept hidden away from the gaze of the common people. That was the real world of Nehru, inhabited by perfectly cultured beings, and, where 'wants' had lost their etymological meaning. This was, in brief, his vision of future India as well, an ideal he set for us to achieve.

Nehru had in him a curious admixture of pride, scholarship, finesse and humility. If his education conferred upon him certain unique privileges, his humility won for him a place of distinction seldom attained by a non-religious man in this country. None escaped the enthralling effect of his captivating smile. All appeared to understand the hidden meaning of his words. But obviously very few actually did. Perhaps his vision of future India is not difficult to interpret but translating it into practice would require the unceasing efforts of the countless millions spread over numerous generations. And, herein lies the greatness of the man.

Like all social and cultural reformers Nehru touched upon the subject of education with a definite end in view. Inasmuch as his dreams of future India required a good deal of dissemination of education to come true, he turned towards education to give him a helping hand. His was, however, not the approach of trained educationist or an educational theorist but of a man who comprehended fully the propagating and perpetuating powers of this discipline and wished to utilize it so. Unlike his political perceptor he did not propound a theory of education but merely charged it with certain functions which he thought were necessary to render him useful service in the building up of a new (at least, a different) social order.

Before launching upon this stupendous undertaking a word, by way of explanation is, I believe, necessary. No attempt had been made to interpret the impossible. I have merely tried to piece together the educational ideas of Nehru scattered in the plethora of his writings, interviews, press reports and rambling speeches and addresses. And, in so doing I have kept myself away for the fear of colouring the facts with my own convictions. That this study can in no way give the complete picture of the man, who had become a legend in his own life-time, should be self-evident. I am also aware of the limitations of my learning and capacity of interpretation, and, therefore, I wish the reader not to mistake my inspirer with his diminutive figure that my poor description is likely to make of him, for to quote Nehru himself. "It is difficult to judge great and extra-ordinary men...",¹ and who would dare deny that this is not true for him as well. Indeed, like Lenin, "As time passes he grows greater, he has become one of the chosen company of the world's immortals."²

1. *Glimpses of World History*, p. 403.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 682.

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THE BACKGROUND

At the turn of the present Century, India was a happy witness to an upsurging national, political and social consciousness. For this, the international climate was responsible to a certain extent. But the main work was done by the national leaders of this country among whom Nehru dominated the scene for nearly four decades. His education and upbringing were calculated to make him a snob but the inherent sensitiveness and the humane outlook conspired to give him a different personality. In fact, India was fortunate to have a national leader of his type. A gentleman by birth, lawyer by profession and a politician by an accident, Nehru had the outlook of a scholar, the detachment of a scientist and the unbounded love of a humanitarian. Though not an educationist in the strict sense of the term, he came very close to being one. After all, Father of the Nation had also no training in education and yet he bequeathed us a system of education eminently suited to the genius of the country.

Education, we all know, is a sensitive subject. Like a flower every passing wind makes it bend in its own direction. All kinds of progress have a direct bearing on education. Indeed, social progress is a comprehensive term which covers a wide range of human activities. Consequently, leaders in every walk of life depend for the propagation of their ideas on the disseminating powers of this discipline. Education serves as a bed-rock for the future edifice of society. Naturally, therefore, Nehru's educational views cannot be considered in isolation. They depend for their life-giving sap on his ideas on religion, political ideology, social standards and spiritual values.

POVERTY & CULTURE

What struck Nehru most in the course of his early experiences, was the extreme poverty of his countrymen. Poverty, Shaw once pointed out, is the greatest of all crimes. Nehru agreed with him. A national leader of his kind must consider the removal of this grinding poverty of the people his first major work. He was critical

of all those who kept people reminded of the past alone. It was to him a nonsense to talk of India's great past if her present was so depressing. Culture and prosperity are largely interdependent. He wrote, therefore, "it is an insult to talk of culture to people who have nothing to eat."¹ And he never forgot this fact till he breathed his last.

DOWNFALL OF INDIA

As a historian Nehru had analysed the causes of the rise and fall of civilizations. He was aware of the causes of India's downfall as well. Even before the Muslims appeared on the scene, this country had lost her vigour and vitality. Her culture had stopped growing. Her Kings and Emperors had lost the vision of a united country. In fact, they had become so narrow-minded that they deservedly earned a reproof from a contemporary Muslim historian. And then "the British became dominant in India,.....because they were the heralds of new big machine industrial civilization."² So the only way we could achieve freedom from wants and attain a place of distinction in the world was to beat the British in their own areas of accomplishments. But this was impossible without gaining complete independence ; therefore, he raised his strong voice against the humiliating fact of foreign domination.

THE ULTIMATE AIMS

Education was a task that the British had undertaken most unwillingly. Regardless of its 'limited and perverted' character, Nehru realized that it had "opened the doors and windows of mind to new ideas and dynamic thoughts"³, and, therefore, its dynamism was welcome.

Nehru, unlike Gandhiji, kept his eyes riveted on the future. He was certain that a great future lay ahead of this country. "India will find herself again when freedom opens out new horizons, and the future will fascinate her far more than the immediate past of frustration and humiliation."⁴ He had, however, no faith in mere

1. *Glimpses of World History*, Asia, 1964, page 536.
2. *Discovery of India*, p. 312, Meridian Books Ltd., 1956, London.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 313.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 579 c/f. *Hindustan Ki San.asyayen*, p. 151, cf. *Glimpses of World History*, p. 116, 9 & 10.

imitation of foreign models nor in "a narrow culture confined to a small fastidious group". He neither liked the divorce from the past nor the denial of the 'new urges and creative tendencies'.¹ Obviously therefore, his future India was to have all the good qualities of a living and growing society—a society which looks back for inspiration but forges ahead with firm determination to attain high ideals sifting and improving her strengths and is at the same time forever watchful of contemporary trends.²

As far back as in 1936, he had declared, "A free India, with her vast resources, can be of great service to the world humanity. India will always make a difference to the world ; fate has marked us for big things." In his broadcast to the nation in 1954 he reiterated, "If we aim at the big things of life, if we dream of India as a great nation giving her age-old message of peace and freedom to others, then we have to be big ourselves and be worthy children of Mother India." Naturally, therefore, he asked his countrymen to have confidence in their country's destiny. India was going to be both cultured and prosperous in a not too distant future. What was required was a strong character and deep understanding of great ideals, notwithstanding the fact that we need scientific techniques and knowledge for the growth of our industry. "We cannot afford to leave those ideals which this country adopted some thousands of years ago."³ Material prosperity divorced from those ideals was in the final analysis a futile pursuit.

NEED FOR A BALANCE

Long before India gained freedom the national leaders had realised the difficulties ahead. They had their own solutions for the various problems India was to face in future years. Gandhiji had visualized that the solution of the country lay in making the villages self-sufficient communities. His cherished dream was the attainment of 'Ram Rajya'—an idyllic society free from all kinds of conflicts. His disciple, Nehru, thought otherwise. Aristotle corrected the faults of the Platonic system. Nehru's conception of a perfect

1. *Discovery of India*, p. 579.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 522-523.

3. Sharma, H. D., *Nehru Aur Nai Peeree*, pp. 210-212, N. D. Sehgal & Sons, Delhi, 1962 (in Hindi).

social order was different from that of his preceptor. Under the heading *The Modern Approach to an Old Problem* he talked of a 'better' mind which is 'practical and pragmatic, ethical and social, altruistic and humanitarian.'¹ He was conscious of the spirit of the Age. For him the ideals of the modern age were humanism and the scientific spirit or perhaps the synthesis of the two. But he was opposed to a science which was "impersonal, purposeless, and almost unconcerned with our application of the knowledge it puts at our disposal".² Nevertheless, he believed that "the earnest scientist of today is the proto-type of the philosopher and the man of religion of earlier ages."³ He pleaded therefore, for the discovery of a "balance between the body and the spirit, and between man as part of nature and man as part of society."⁴ But he asserted that perfection is beyond us, for it means the end, and we are always journeying, trying to approach something that is ever receding. Though a pagan in outlook,⁵ he believed in man having "something of the stuff of the immortal gods in him."⁶

We are, Nehru believed, on the verge of an international culture in which this country was destined to play a special role. How could, therefore, Gandhiji's Ram Rajya be a proper ideal for us, he asked. "We have a long way to go and much leeway to make up before we can take our proper station with others in the van of human civilization and progress. And we have to hurry," he cautioned, "for the time at our disposal is limited and the pace of the world grows ever swifter. It was India's way in the past to welcome and absorb other cultures. That is much more necessary today, for we march to the one world of tomorrow, where national cultures will be intermingled with the international culture of human race."⁷ Evidently his was a different mind from that of Gandhiji.

THE CASTE SYSTEM

Nehru had studied the evolution of Indian society and knew

1. *Discovery of India*, op. cit., p. 572.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 572.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 574.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 576.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 571.
6. *Ibid.*, op. cit., p. 577.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 581.

exactly the causes of India's downfall. The caste system was one of them. This, however, does not mean that he failed to realize its importance or underestimated its contribution. Contrary to common belief he held, "The caste.....is a part and an intergral part of a much larger scheme of social organization." And, therefore, "it may be possible to remove some of its obvious abuses and to lessen its rigidity, and to leave the system intact."¹ He doubted the continuance of this system in view of the economic and social changes that were taking place all around us. He foresaw that the break-up of this huge social organization "may well lead to a complete disruption of social life, resulting in absence of cohesion, mass suffering and development on a vast scale of abnormalities in individual behaviour unless some other social structure, more suited to the times and to the genius of the people, takes its place."²

Nehru held that the mere disruption or doing away with a system was not enough. In the absence of a vision of the future we might create a vacuum which may fill itself with things that we may have to deplore.³ Consequently he analysed the history of this social set-up down the centuries of India's existence as a civilized nation. In conclusion he declared, "all the pillars (autonomous village community, caste-system and joint family system) of the Indian social structure were thus based on the group and not on individual. The aim was social security."⁴ "Progress was not the aim and progress, therefore, had to suffer."⁵ He was as well aware of the glorious democratic heritage of India⁶, as he was of the value of caste system which was "obviously opposed to democratic conceptions".⁷ Despite all this the country had flourished for a long time. Nehru observed "the ultimate weakness and failing of the caste-system and the Indian social structure lay in the fact that they degraded a mass of human beings and gave them no opportunities to get out of that condition educationally, culturally or

1. *Discovery of India*, p. 242.
2. *Ibid*, p. 243.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 243.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 251.
5. *Ibid*, op. cit., p. 251.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 252.
7. *Ibid*, p. 253.

economically.”¹

In the past, the social structures existing elsewhere were not very different from the one obtaining here in this country “but in the context of society today, the caste system and much that goes with it are wholly incompatible, reactionary, restrictive and barriers to progress”.² And “there can be no equality in status and opportunity within its frame-work nor can there be political democracy and much less economic democracy”.³ Consequently, “between these two conceptions conflict is inherent and only one of them can survive.”⁴

RELIGION

Nehru was well aware of the important role religion had played in the development of humanity. He was opposed to its imprisoning the truth in its set forms and dogmas. Evidently he was opposed to the reactionary side of the religions which “checked the tendency to change and progress inherent in human society”.⁵ But it had a positive side also. Religion was not synonymous with sectionalism or dogmatic practices. In fact religion was related to higher values of life. Therefore, he told a gathering in 1959 that the so-called conflict between religion and science was unreal. Both science and religion aimed at the good of the individual. This was in keeping with the ancient traditions of the country, for who has not heard of Ashok’s message :

“It is by humility that one’s soul acquires strength. We must keep control on language. This can be done by refraining from decrying other religions and praising one’s own.”

SCIENCE AND THE SCIENTIFIC TEMPER

While reading Nehru, one is constantly reminded of one fact. The writer has no patience with anyone or any system which stands in the way of the country’s progress.⁶ He had devoted his entire energy to making this country once more prosperous and cultured.

1. *Ibid.*, p. 253.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 253.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 524.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 524.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 524.
6. Autobiography, p. 523.

He gloried in the past of India and recognized and valued both the caste system and the religions. But he had nothing but contempt for those who talked of past alone. "I pity both Hindus and Muslims who always weep for the past. I do not condemn past for it has served good things but these people do not run after the good things but the useless and harmful things".¹

India's salvation, Nehru emphasized, lay in adopting scientific techniques. His admiration for the modern scientific progress was, however, also highly restricted. "Science ignored," he pointed out, "the ultimate purposes and looked at fact alone."² Because of this lack of vision in science, Man had become almost a 'geological force'.³ He knew that the advancements in science are unlimited. "Yet it may be that the scientific method of observation is not always applicable to all varieties of human experience and cannot cross the uncharted ocean that surrounds us."⁴ He was painfully aware of the limited powers of science and philosophy in understanding this Universe and Man. Therefore, he wrote, "When both science and philosophy fail us we shall have to rely on such other powers of apprehension as we may possess. For there appears to be a definite stopping place beyond which reason, as the mind is at present constituted, cannot go." He went on, "Science deals with the domain of positive knowledge but the temper which it should produce goes beyond that domain. The ultimate purposes of man may be said to be to gain knowledge to realize truth, to appreciate goodness and beauty."⁵ Not unlike the great Greek, Plato, he declared, "The scientific method of objective inquiry is not applicable to all these and much that is vital in life seems to lie beyond its scope—the sensitiveness to art and poetry, the emotion that beauty produces, the inner recognition of goodness."

He had no intention of being mysterious. If he pointed out the weaknesses and limitations of science it was because he wanted people not to over-estimate its powers or scope. He, however, did

1. Sharma, H. D. op. cit., p. 64 and cf. *Glimpses of World History*. p. 70 & pp. 11—13.
2. *Discovery of India*, p. 524.
3. *Ibid.*, 524., *Hindustan Ki Samasyayen*, pp. 155—164.
4. *Ibid.*, op. cit., p. 525.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 526,

not derive any consolation from that fact. Spiritual powers have their own value. But by praising the spiritual powers the fact that in scientific knowledge and wealth India was far behind the West could not be denied.¹ He emphasized the importance of both science and the scientific temper and exhorted Indians not to neglect either. Describing almost lyrically the need of this temper he wrote, "When we go to the regions beyond the reach of the scientific method and visit the mountain tops where philosophy dwells and high emotions fill us, or gaze at the immensity beyond, that approach (scientific) and (its) temper are still necessary."²

Obviously, science can lend us both its temper and approach. We can exploit our resources with great profit if only we learn to handle them properly. He pointed out, "It is, therefore, with the temper and approach of science, allied to philosophy and with reference for all that lies beyond that we must face life."³ He suggested the developing of an 'integral vision of life' which embraces in its "wide scope past and present, with all their heights and depths, and look with serenity towards the future".⁴

He informed us that even the West which receives both admiration and adoration from us all for her achievements and discoveries in the field of science had not succeeded in acquiring the 'real temper of science'. Indeed, it is difficult to acquire it. His conviction was that the scientific approach and temper are or should be, "a way of life, a process of thinking, a method of acting and associating with our fellowmen."⁵

He, therefore, admitted his partiality towards science.⁶ In fact, Nehru declared, its applications are inevitable and unavoidable for all countries and peoples today.⁷ Mere application was not enough. We had to acquire its temper also.

1. Sharma, H. D. op. cit., p. 164.

2. *Discovery of India*, op. cit., p. 526.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 527.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 527.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 525.

6. *Hindustan Ki Samasyayen*, Sasta Sahitya Mandal, p. 103, cf. *Glimpses of World History*, p. 251.

7. *Discovery of India*, p. 525.

INDUSTRY

Almost associated with the learning of scientific spirit and temper are the modern demands of better standards of living. Growth of industry holds the only key to this problem. Most of his speeches and writings have this growth as their theme.¹ The supremacy of Europe lay in its hold over science whose by-product undoubtedly is industry. He was certain that this country would also soon be an industrial power. After all, Soviet Russia, a comparatively backward country, had succeeded in reaching the top in a couple of decades. There was no reason why India could not emulate her example. Russia had performed the miracle with the help of planned economy and heavy industrialisation. Hence an accent on plans in India.² The reader is reminded that Nehru's interest in planning was not an outcome of an uncritical and blind acceptance. In fact, he understood and appreciated the reasons behind such planning. He had come to accept the ideal of planning in the early third decade of the present century. With the passing of each year this interest grew. To achieve socialist democracy through phased planning became gradually his chief concern.

A characteristic western product, Nehru had an open mind. Understandably enough, his was a 'non-doctrinaire approach'.³ He was merely concerned with the solution of the problems. Names or 'isms' did not appeal to him much.⁴ He was essentially pragmatic in outlook and advocated the adoption of the golden mean in matters of choosing 'isms'.⁵ Both his outlook and the advocacy for the golden mean remind us of Aristotle—the principal inspirer of the West. This country can never repay the debt to this Great Man for synthesizing in a peculiar way the Eastern and Western values. He wanted India to learn all the virtues of the West and avoid her evil ways. He wanted, for instance, India to grow industrialized but

¹ *Hindustan Ki Samasyayen*, op. cit., p. 203.

² cf. Nehru's visit to U.S.A., November, 1961, Govt. of India Publication, p. 120, cf. Jain, K. P., *Nehru as an Economist*, Sahitya Bhavan, Agra—3.

³ Zakaria, Rafiq, *A Study of Nehru*, p. 307, Times of India Publica-

warned that the big machine was a 'mixed blessing'. Therefore, he pleaded for the retention of "the good things of industrialism and to get rid of the evil that attaches to it".¹

PROGRESS AND VILLAGES

In the very early days of his political career Nehru had learnt much about the villagers and their villages. Long before he took the reins of the government he had realized, that India and the villages were synonyms. The progress of one would mean naturally the progress of the other. Like Gandhiji he had also accepted the challenge of raising their standards. But unlike him, he had refused to accept that these villages...pitiable reminders of the feudal age, could be developed into self-sufficient communities. Indeed, it was not in the interest of the country to think in these terms. "To live a self-sufficient village life cut off from the rest of the world was not conducive to progress in anything." "Growth and progress," he reminded us, "consist in co-operation between larger and larger units. The more a person or a group keeps to himself or itself, the more danger there is of him or it becoming self-centered and selfish and narrow-minded."² The seeds of future progress lie in industry and urbanization.

There was another reason why Nehru believed that urbanization was the answer to our malady. We are already on the threshold of a world government and international living. To talk then of a rural civilization is nothing short of retrograde thinking. "The modern industrial world has," he wrote, "really advanced beyond the stage of nationalism, The whole machinery of production of goods and distribution does not fit into the nationalist structure of government and countries. The shell is too small for the growing body inside and it cracks."³ It is incorrect to say that he was not aware of the shortcomings of this system, but there is absolutely no alternative to its adoption. We are after all not condemned to remain a back number all the time and, therefore, the choice is clear and the objectives are all listed.

1. *Glimpses of World History*, p. 357.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 357.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 380.

THE ORIGIN

No one I believe has analysed better the aims underlying the British-inspired Indian education than Nehru himself. His amazing knowledge of history provided him with the proper back-ground for its right understanding. He dealt with the historical origins of our contemporary education and observed that the Britishers did not want to impart education for the fear of losing their Empire. They, therefore, deliberately prevented the spread of new education.¹ But very soon the British realized that to set the clock back would not be possible. The Directors of the East India Company felt the need to reduce the cost of administration. Unfortunately this could not be done without employing natives on a large scale. The problem of education became closely knit with the problem of providing trained Indians for Government service.² Nehru, therefore, observed succinctly, "The British government in spite of its dislike of education, was compelled by circumstances to arrange for the training and production of clerks for its growing establishment. It could not afford to bring out from England large numbers of people to serve in this subordinate capacity. So education grew slowly and, though it was a limited and perverted education, it opened the doors and windows of the mind to new ideas and dynamic thoughts."³

Even an education whose major aim was the production of clerks was a blessing in disguise. Nehru was quick to acknowledge it. "English education brought a widening of the Indian horizon, an admiration for English literature and institutions, a revolt against so many customs and aspects of Indian life, and a growing demand

1. *Discovery of India*, p. 319.

2. Phillips, C. H., *The East India Company*, Oxford University Press, 1961.

3. *Discovery of India*, p. 313.

for political reform.”¹

NEED FOR CHANGE

Indian society needed certain revolutionary changes to become modern. The inequalities in our society grew out of its feudal outlook. When the whole world was feeling a wind of change, as it were, India could not afford to continue to live in her age-old shell. Nehru felt that socialism was the answer to this problem. In fact, as early as 1929, he indicated his approval of the socialistic approach.² He repeatedly pointed out the faults underlying our present social organization. The static nature of our society was out of tune with the times. In the days long gone by, Indians had social mobility, sense of adventure and a joy pervading their entire being. Consequently they succeeded in giving us a rich heritage.....comprising a ‘glorious language and the highest form of art’.³ The modern split-personality and the dichotomy between our actions and beliefs are the direct result of this social immobility. Had we tried to keep pace with the times, the artificial barriers that we have built all around us like prison-walls would not be there. Social equality and justice would not appear so far away as they do now.

His brand of socialism was, however, very different from either that of Russia or China. “My idea of socialism is,” Nehru explained, “that every individual in the State should have equal opportunity for progress.”⁴ He even remarked that, “where I differ from Indian socialists is that I have a scientific background and am more aware of the impact of science on social evolution.”⁵ In any case, the cankerous growth of our society was not doing us any good. Indeed our economy and social structure have outlived their day, and it has become a matter of urgent necessity for us to refashion them so that they may promote the happiness of all our people in things material

1 cf. *Glimpses of World History*, p. 448.

2. Zakaria, R. op. cit., p. 309.

3. Foreword in Ramadhari Singh’s book *Sanskrit Ke Chaar Adhyaya*, Rajpal & Sons, p. 9 (1956).

4. Speech to the All India Congress Committee, *The Hindu Weekly Review*, May 28, 1958,

5. Brecher, Michael, *Nehru, A Political Biography*, p. 10, Oxford University Press, 1961.

and spiritual.¹ But his socialism was to be achieved through 'common consent', 'by the process of free discussion'.² Could, therefore, the role of education be under-estimated ?

No social order can change without the help of an organised educational system.³ And if the change envisaged is from once foreign-dominated colonial society to a democracy-oriented socialistic order the duties that education has to shoulder can be imagined. In a country where traditions are sanctified, where religion has a tremendous hold over the people, the changes Nehru was thinking of could not be brought about easily. He realized fully the limited values of the 'sudden passing of few laws'.⁴ The real changes are brought about by education. Naturally, therefore, education was a precondition for change. Mere emotional appeal to socialism or its understanding was not sufficient to bring in a new social order.⁵ Something more was required. Understanding of the real issues at stake and an unbiased attitude born out of good education were perhaps his way of looking at things.

TRANSCENDING CHAUVINISM

He pointed out repeatedly that no civilization was either inferior or superior. Man had gradually emerged from barbarism to the modern civilized state but even then a mild provocation or the outbreak of a war peeled off the thin veneer of his cultured being. National provincialism would become meaningless with the establishment of a world government. Scientific progress coupled with modern economic factors made a narrow nationalism an outmoded idea. The very fact of our survival depended upon our shaking off the old shell of nationalism.⁶ Science has helped us to liberate ourselves 'from eternal drudgery, illness and want'.⁷ If we only succeeded in

1. Moraes, Frank, *Jawahar Lal Nehru*, Asia, 1956, p. 422.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 422.
3. *Hindustan Ki Samasyayen*, pp. 137—142.
4. *Autobiography*, The Bodley Head, London, 1958, p. 588.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 588-589, cf. Karanjia, R. K., *The Mind of Mr. Nehru*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1960, pp. XVI-XVII.
6. *Humanism and Education*, A UNESCO publication (Hindi translation), 1961, p. 212 (Nehru's address to the conference).
7. Introduction to *Nehru on World History*, The Bodley Head, London, 1961 (abridged ed.), p. viii.,

transcending chauvinism, there would result an unending spell of peace and harmony. Who else but the schools were to prepare children for this peculiar modern need.

AIMS OF GOOD EDUCATION

In the true spirit of a born educationist Nehru provided us with the aims of good education. "Education must provide," he wrote in a letter to his sister, "a gradual transition to wider spheres of activity and new experiences. Intellectual training, important enough, cannot take the place of this growth through personal experience of others."¹ He also wrote, "School helps in developing self-reliance and the habit of co-operation, which are essential for every growing child, and indeed for a grown-up person also."²

But in the following citation his natural propensity for educational thinking becomes clear. He wrote, "Every parent wants his or her child to have all the virtues, all the good fortune. In a more or less static period, certain virtues and accomplishments are more useful.In a rapidly changing period other virtues and capacities assume importance. But whatever the period, self-reliance, fitness of body and keenness of mind and a harmony between the two, and a certain basic sense of values are always desirable."³

He is conscious of the other functions of education as well, at least the ones that are related to parent's ideas about the child's future—vocation and the development of his innate abilities. He, therefore, frankly admitted that it was pretty difficult to "advise on the subject of children's education. So much depends on the child, so much on the objectives that the parents may have in view. I do not mean a difficult objective, like a profession or job in life, but rather the general approach to life, the philosophy of life, if you like to call it so."⁴ All of us, he held, have a definite philosophy of life which is affected by the social circle in which we move, "that lays down the standard to be aimed at with minor varieties."⁵

1. *Nehru's Letters to His Sister*, Faber & Faber, London, 1963, p. 158.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

3. *Ibid.*, op. cit., pp. 151-152.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 151.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 151.

The fact that aims of education vary from individual to individual, he had no hesitation in pointing out. He was also aware of the basic reasons which caused variations in the objectives of education. Regardless of our likes and dislikes, the changes go on taking place all round us. In the face of such changes and variations in the aims of education, there are certain values that remain unaffected. They are the perennial objectives, the eternal and unchanging aims. The training of intellect was one of them. Since we are required to face "the ever-changing present with the power of quick decisions,"¹ an untrained intellect would fail us at the first confrontation with reality. "In the times of storms and stresses the only capital that counts is intelligence—individual capacity to face a crisis calmly and to overcome it."² Naturally, therefore, the children should, besides becoming 'strong and healthy,' learn "how to look after themselves and others."³

HOME AND SCHOOLS

In India good schools live cheek by jowl with bad ones. Nehru was, it appears, aware of the existence of both. Indeed, he took pains to define a good school. "If a school is of the right sort," he told his sister, "the children would soon adapt themselves to their new surroundings and get used to a wider co-operative life than they could have in the pleasanter but more restricted life of home."⁴

It is commonly held that only workers in the field of education realise the value of home. Rarely does a layman know it, at least seldom does he mention this fact. But not so Nehru. Not only did he know the value of home, he even compared it with the good school. Only school can provide, he held, certain conditions of good living, although school can in no way take the place of home. "School and home," he pleaded, "between the two (must) establish a kind of balance, and home becomes more desirable when it is not always there."⁵ Here probably he was speaking from experience. His own long and lonely childhood days were at the back of his

1. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 159.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 158.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

mind. In a school children grow, co-operative, intelligent and healthy. "Both for their health and mental development the companionship of other children, the discipline of school life, and plenty of open air and games will be good."¹ The educationist in him was the most eloquent here. In these few lines he provided us a list of the school activities and also their ultimate purpose.

There are other ways also in which a school makes contribution. It brings out the latent abilities of children. The school provides opportunities and occasions for the development of their inherent potentialities. "A proper school develops children and brings out their inherent capacities which otherwise may not have sufficient scope."² The corporate life of a school has its healthy affect. Nehru, therefore, reiterated in another letter,....."how much better it is for children to grow up with others of their age in healthy and co-operative atmosphere of a good school rather than be confined to their homes."³ If one were to compare the incomparables, —the school and home, Nehru appears to choose [the former as against the latter obviously because in a school children learn more and act more naturally than in the conflict-free surroundings of a good home.

NEED FOR A PROPER SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

He would be an incomplete educationist who dealt with the ideals alone and left the drawing of the blue-prints to men lesser both in station and intellect. We are fortunate that Nehru did not have that much patience. In point of fact, according to Nehru education was charged with certain specific functions. And these he wanted us to understand clearly.

In his inimitable manner he informed the people of the Soviet Union in 1928 that there was a need to have a proper system of education in India, particularly because she must be made to grow strong and great. "All the world over there is a realization that only through right education can a better order of society be built up." "Education is not something in the air, cut off from the daily

1. *Ibid.*, p. 156.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 176.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

life of the students or from his future work as a citizen. Real education, it is felt, must be based on the actual environment and experiences of the child and it must fit him for the work he will have to do in after life."¹ These were the pre-basic education days. One is pleasantly surprised to hear Nehru talk in the vein of a typically post-basic educational theorist. Could we not say that the idea of basic education germinated here in the speech of Nehru? At least we can assert that he came very close to holding it. Incidentally, he admired the system of basic education very much.² The reader is warned not to confound his admiration of the system with his admiration for its originator.

He came very close to advocating Basic Education once when he wrote, "It is well recognised now that child's education should be intimately associated with some craft or manual activity. The mind is stimulated thereby and there is a co-ordination between the activities of the mind and the hands. So also the mind of a growing boy or girl is stimulated by machine. (Evidently here he parted company with basic education because machine does not play any role in the Gandhian Scheme). It grows under the machine's impact..... and opens out new horizons. Simple scientific experiments peep into the microscope, and an explanation of the ordinary phenomena of nature bring excitement in their train, an understanding of some of life's processes, and a desire to experiment and find out instead of relying on set phrase and old formulae."³ These are

1. Cited from the Speech in Soviet Russia, 1928; *Wit & Wisdom of Nehru*, New Book Society of India, New Delhi, pp. 173-174.
2. *Hindustan Ki Samasyayen*, p. 141. *cf.*, *Nehru's Speeches*, Vol. III, pp. 402—406. At the Avadi Session of the Indian National Congress on Jan. 23, 1955 Nehru proposed a resolution on basic education containing a reference to its fundamental tenets, ".....Since basic education uses the medium of productive activity and correlates academic Subjects to different castes, and to the social environments it is evidently suitable for the needs and conditions of India." And, in his speech on this resolution Nehru called basic education of very great importance. Because, "We require an education for the purpose of achieving the national aims and social objectives of free India. In particular we want a system which can train the right type of personnel for the speedy execution of developmental plans."
3. *Discovery of India*, *op. cit.*, p. 416.

typically modern ideas fresh from a modern educationist's pen, as it were. He continued, in the same book, "Self-confidence and the co-operative spirit grow, and frustration, arising out of the miasma of the past lessons. A civilization based on ever-changing and advancing mechanical techniques leads to this."¹ He avers, therefore, "Such a civilization is a marked change, a jump almost from the older type, and it gives rise to new problems and difficulties but it also shows the way to overcome them."²

SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Nehru described the type of curriculum he wanted our children to study. Reminiscent of some Western educationists like Nunn or Whitehead he declared his 'partiality for the literary aspects of education' and also his admiration for the classics.³ His bias, however, signified his desire for a balanced curriculum because in the same breath he stressed the need for studying various science subjects also. This balanced approach is characteristic of him. If the classics helped a child to appreciate higher values and enjoy subtler things of life the study of science enabled him to adjust himself in this highly complex technological age. The purpose of education was neither the mere enabling of a child to understand how to fit into this world like a suitable cog nor to make him understand the subtleties of life alone. A proper education performed both functions. Consequently Nehru went on, "But I am sure that some elementary scientific training in physics and chemistry, and especially biology, as also in the application of science, is essential for all boys and girls." Besides explaining the purpose of the inclusion of these subjects in a modern school curriculum, (to make a child fit into the modern world with its peculiar requirements), he dilated upon the fascinating aspects of the study of science. "There is something very wonderful about the high achievements of science and modern technology (which no doubt will be bettered in a near future), in the amazingly delicate and powerful machines, in all that has flowed from the adventurous inquiries of science and its applications, in the glimpses into the fascinating workshop and processes of nature, in

1. *Discovery of India*, op. cit., p. 416.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 416.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 416.

the fine sweep of science, through its myriad workers, in the realms of thought and practice, and, above all, in the fact that all this has come out of the mind of man.”¹ While reading this paragraph one is struck by its uncomparable lyrical beauty—the writing of a genius who could make others feel and imagine like him, and who had the power to transform the drab into something beautiful and even help one to listen to the sweet rhythmic music in the confusing din of the technological monstrosities by a simple flick of his pen.

The reader is cautioned not to interpret Nehru’s great appreciation for science as something of a fad because he was himself a man of science ; and his bias for the classics, a casual favour. He was sincere in his convictions and consequently he repeatedly pleaded for a balanced approach.

CHILDREN : FUTURE HOPES

Nehru’s interest in children is deep-seated. He is particularly solicitous of their well-being and proper upbringing. Children must be made to appreciate the world around them. They must be made aware of their history so that the mistakes committed by their elders may not be repeated by them. One of the ways this can be done is through museums. “I should like to see the whole country dotted with museums. Every child of India should see something of these artistic treasures, should understand something of what have gone to build up India, should assimilate even in a small measure the genius of India.” The children will be, he hoped, “more sensible and open their eyes and ears to this beauty and life that surrounds” them in world, the beauty that is in the flowers and trees and birds and the mountains and stars.²

He wanted the aesthetic sensitivities of the children to be highly developed. This will help them grow really civilized and cultured. When they grow up, these children will love their own country and culture better than we do, but shall not fail to appreciate that of others. In brief, in the modern atomic age they are the future hopes of a better world order where hostile view-points would be reconciled

1. *Discovery of India*, op, cit., p. 416.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 416.

without waging wars and in fact the wars themselves shall lose much of their ghastly character when a real international forum is created with strong moral force behind it. A single world war, these days means the complete annihilation of the human race. "It was a strange thing that the same human mind which was trying to create heaven on earth was busy inventing tools of complete destruction. We have enough already which could have made our Age a Golden Age. (Here he was not referring to the poverty-stricken East). But will we succeed? We could succeed only if we realized the dangers of misusing our power. Unfortunately our mental life was, generally speaking, deteriorating fast."¹ We could counter-act the trend by preparing our children in healthy traditions. They were the only hopes.

AIMS OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

Nowhere, it would appear, was Nehru more at home than among the University students. Steeped in the European traditions of higher learning he always exuded an academic air himself. He defined once the aims of University education in typical Newmanian style. He reminded a gathering of University students that "a university stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for progress, for the adventure of ideas and for the search of truth. It stands for the onward march of the human race towards even higher objectives."²

The major functions of University education obviously do not include the preparation for specialized jobs. A University had no place for sectionalism or giving shelter to communal elements. He had clearly indicated his dislike for chauvinism also. In the national interest Universities had to achieve the objectives already set for them. He told the same gathering, "We aim at a strong, free and democratic India where every citizen has an equal place and full opportunity of growth and service, where present-day inequalities in wealth and status have ceased to be, where our vital impulses are directed to creative and co-operative endeavour."³ And much to the chagrin of many, he declared, "In such an India communalism, separation, isolation, untouchability, bigotry, and exploitation of man by

1. *Humanism and Education*, op. cit., pp. 212-214.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 212-214.

3. *Nehru's Speeches*, Vol. I, 1946-49, Government of India, p. 335.

man have no place, and while religion is free, it is not allowed to interfere with the political and economic aspects of a nation's life."¹

It was simply unacceptable to him that in the name of University education shelter and protection be offered to communal feelings. He was indignant at the use of communal prefixes in the names of educational institutions. Communal feelings give rise to separatist tendencies in a nation which is emotionally not yet one. Therefore, he repeated, "For my part I do not like the intrusion of this communal spirit anywhere, and least of all in educational institutions." "Education," he emphasized, "is meant to free the spirit of man and not to imprison it in set frames."²

In several respects Nehru's view may not appear novel to a westerner. But not so to us, since with all our tall talks about humanism, international brotherhood and fellow feeling we are still soaked in the spirit of narrow communalism, casteism, chauvinism and petty mindedness. The difference between Nehru and an ordinary Indian lies in the fact that while we concur with him on several counts we are reluctant to put those theories into practice. For Nehru himself there existed no dichotomy between thoughts and action. But to most of us, he appeared a shade too frank and outspoken because we ourselves seldom practice what we preach. An honest man, however, has nothing to hide. Writing in 1922 to his father, Nehru said, ".....Absence of any organised intellectual life.....gradually kills the power of free thought. We dare not think or follow up the consequences of our thought. We remain in the ruts and valleys, incapable almost of looking up towards the mountain-tops....."³ Indeed he was up against this very habit of ours. "Thought," he said, "in order to justify itself must lead to action."⁴ An educated man should allow action to follow inevitably the thought. This was a major problem that India faced and he told us the way to solve it.

He repeatedly advised the University students to acquire a

1. *Nehru's Speeches*, Vol. I, p. 335.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 340.
3. Nanda, B. R. *The Nehrus*, p. 213. George Allen & Unwin, 1962.
4. *India and The World*; George Allen & Unwin, p. 70, 1936.

scientific attitude. No nation he held, can progress without acquiring mastery over it. But science and its products are soulless and require careful and proper handling.¹ A powerful automobile is a useful and desirable thing, but one must know where to go in it. Unless properly guided, it may jump over a precipice.² Science should be used only for good ends and the onus of so doing lies on the University students. A free and developing country like India required innumerable technical and technological hands and these men could serve their country and the world in various ways. It was the job of the Universities to produce doctors, statesmen *etc.*, people who could serve their country and mankind equally well.³

Nehru called upon the intellectuals to leave their ivory towers and come out to face the realities of life. We have had enough of arm-chair attitudes, he said. Refusal to face stark reality and an unpleasant one at that, was tantamount to defeatism. The world is not a pleasant place to live in but like practical people they (intellectuals) must come forward to help build a new social order and a habitable world.⁴

CRISIS IN MAN

For Nehru the greatest crisis in the modern world was the crisis in the spirit of man. He reminded us : "We have built up a great civilization and its achievements are remarkable. It holds the promise of even greater achievements in the future. But while these material achievements are very essence of civilization, ultimately, culture and civilization rest in the mind and behaviour of man and not in the material evidence of it that we see around us."⁵ The modern world because of its 'din and noise', of machinery, unfortunately "prevented men from thinking", he told the Saugor University graduates. It appeared that the world was getting out of tune with the life of the mind and the spirit.

1. *Hindustan Ki Samaspoyen*, p. 103.

2. *Glimpses of World History*, p. 897.

3. *Hindustan Ki Samasayayên*, p. 104, cf. Moraes, F.—*Nehru, J. L.* p. 485, Asia. 1956.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 142.

5. Presidential Address Indian National Congress, Oct., 18, 1951.

According to K.G. Saiyidain, "For Nehru one of the important problems of education is to restore the supremacy of the mind and spirit in life, which is being threatened, curiously by some of the most magnificent material creations of the mind itself."¹ If the Universities do not create this harmony which is so sadly lacking in the modern man, who else would ?

Ours is a strange world and its requirements are very peculiar. Only a person who could distinguish true from false and propoganda from reality could be regarded an educated man. An educated man must be self-reliant and must have the ability to arrive at proper decisions. Consequently, Nehru advised the students to inculcate a habit of thinking with a view to developing great powers of perception and decision making. It was not at all necessary for all to become philosophers. Ambitious young-men and youg-women, he declared, were needed for the progress of the country. The country will always require doctors, and engineers and scientists. Besides having professional knowledge and special techniques in the various branches of science and humanities they must also develop proper habits of thinking.² Nehru observed in his speech at the Indian council of world affairs, "In the ultimate analysis, country's development or position is due to and can be measured by the quality of its people. Everything else is secondary ; money and this and that is completely secondary. Primarily it is the quality of the people."³ And if the people continue to remain as they are, dependant on others for their own work, the purpose of education would be entirely defeated. He noted with great regret and indignation "the amazing capacity (of the people) to ask for help and the amazing incapacity to do things oneself". It was the work of education to help people develop habits of self-reliance, self-help and independence.

But despite all this he was for ever hopeful of a better future. In his address to the Indian National Congress on January 23, 1955 he re-affirmed his faith in the youth of India. "Given opportunities, India can produce hundreds of thousands of absolutely first class

1. Zakaria, R., op. cit., p. 394.
2. Sharma, H.D. op. cit., pp. 165-167.
3. *Indian Express*, Oct. 8, 1958.

people in various branches of work and knowledge." He lamented, however, that "the people do not have these opportunities". And, therefore, he continued, "Nothing saddens me so much as the sight of children who are denied even food and clothing. If our children today are denied education, what is our India of tomorrow going to be?" Like a true socialist he declared, "It is the duty of the state to provide good education for every child in the country. And I would add that it is the duty of the state to provide free education to every child in the country."

WOMEN'S EDUCATION : AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

At a women's college in Madras on January 22, 1955, he condemned our stress on mere bookish education. Bookish education leads to nothing and fails to achieve any ideal. "Education has mainly two aspects, the cultural aspect which makes a person to grow and the productive aspect which enables a person do things. Everybody should be a producer as well as a good citizen, and not a sponge on another person even though the other person may be one's own husband or wife."¹ If interpreted this should mean that an uneducated woman like a man should receive education not only to become cultured but also to become an active partner in the running of a family. Economic dependence on man had degraded women in our society. This need no longer continues since we are not only a free country but a socialist democracy wherein all members of the society have to bear equal responsibility.² If men do not help them, women should fight to achieve their rights.

Education of the women-folk, therefore, had to be given with definite ends in view. "If you educate the women probably men will also be affected thereby, and in any case, even children will be affected. For every educationist knows that the formative years of a person's life are the first seven or eight years.....obviously it is the mother who counts most of all. Therefore, the mother who has been well trained in various ways becomes essential to education. Therefore, it is necessary for women to be educated, if not for themselves, at any rate for their children."

1. *Hindustan Ki Samasyayen*, p. 87.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

With the advancement in education, Nehru was certain that we shall become cultured and civilized. He pleaded, therefore, "Let us spend what we have on education and its content rather than (on) brick and mortar." We can do nothing better than express hope that the Government of India and the people of this great country will make his dreams come true.

NEHRU AND GANDHIJI

Nowhere perhaps in the history of the world can we find two contemporaries like Jawaharlal Nehru and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi with their peculiar relationship of the disciple and mentor, so unlike each other and yet so close and intimate. Only the ancient Greece could furnish us with a parallel in Aristotle and Plato but the likeness ends beyond a superficial similarity.

Gandhiji like Nehru reflected the temper of his times and represented the Indian heritage in its most dynamic form. To appreciate and understand both is to visualize the underlying currents of their contemporary progressive thinking. Their thinking was the result of their analysis of our society. The Indian society was afflicted with social, political and economic evils. The British were not the only people to blame for our degradation. We were also to share some of the responsibility. As already indicated, their (Gandhi and Nehru) approaches and analyses were neither always identical nor the solutions suggested by them for India's betterment similar, and, yet they influenced profoundly the pre and post Independence thinking. Consequently a comparison of their basic beliefs is essential to the understanding of their educational writings.

Both wanted to see India grow into a perfect society. But their pictures of perfection were so different from each other, that one wonders how could they pull on together so well as they actually did.

For Gandhiji industrialisation was an evil designed to render people unhappy. India should avoid following closely the footsteps of the West. If he compromised with this idea, in the later stages, he did so on one condition ; machine was to be used for the good of man. Nehru, however, regarded that science and its discoveries were neither moral nor immoral. All depended upon their use. Industrialisation was a reality. It was impossible to run away from it. Indeed, it was to our advantage if we used it for our good.¹

1. *Autobiography*, The Bodley Head, London, 1958, p. 510-11.

“Present-day civilization is full of evils, but it is also full of good, and it has the capacity in it to rid itself of those evils. To destroy it root and branch is to remove that capacity from it and revert to a dull, sunless and miserable existence. But even if that were desirable it is an impossible undertaking. We cannot stop river of change or out ourselves adrift from it, and psychologically we who have eaten of the apple of Eden cannot forget that taste and go back to primitiveness.”¹

Nehru like Gandhiji appreciated the caste system of Hindus but pointed out its weaknesses also ; and, therefore, he was emphatic in his assertion that caste was not a suitable division of society in the modern times. Gandhiji thought otherwise. He insisted on people following their parental and family professions. No profession was higher or lower, though.²

Nehru regarded Gandhiji ‘an extra-ordinary paradox’. Since he was an outstanding man there was no harm in that because “all outstanding men are so to some extent.” It was because of this fact probably that Nehru could not understand Gandhiji’s favouring “of a political and social structure which is wholly based on violence and coercion.”³

Although Gandhiji had declared himself to be a socialist, yet Nehru thought he was “as far removed from the socialistic (outlook), or for that matter of that the capitalistic (outlook) as any thing can be”. Nehru explained, “To say that science and industrial technique today can demonstrably feed, clothe and house everybody and raise their standards of living very greatly, if vested interests did not intervene, does not interest him much, for he is not keen on those results, beyond a certain limit. The promise of socialism therefore holds no attraction for him, and capitalism is only partly tolerable because it circumscribes the evil.”⁴

In the words of Gandhiji, “My socialism is not limited socialism of books, it is a natural and effortless socialism. It has grown

1. *Autobiography*, The Bodley Head, London, 1958, p. 511.
2. Seth, Dr. K. D., *Bhartiya Shiksha Darshnik*, Vedic Prakashan, Allahabad, 1960, p. 197 (Hindi).
3. *Autobiography*, op. cit.; p. 515.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 517.

out of my belief in non-violence. There cannot be a man who may practise non-violence and yet may not oppose social injustice.”¹ One may easily discern the hiatus between the two definitions of socialism. Reasons for this difference are also not far to seek.

According to Nehru, Gandhiji followed “a long succession of men of religion”.² “It is because of this that Gandhiji wants to improve the individual internally, morally and spiritually, and thereby to change the external environment. He wants people to give up bad habits and indulgence and to become pure.”³ Nehru had absolutely no quarrel with him on this score. But he regretted that Gandhi did not plead far enough. Giving up smoking, sexual indulgences *etc.* on which Gandhi laid stress were not enough. Nehru wrote, “Opinions may differ about the relative wickedness of these indulgences.....(but) these personal failings are less harmful than covetousness, the fierce conflicts of individuals for personal gain, the ruthless struggles of groups and classes, the inhuman suppression and exploitation of one group by another, the terrible wars between nations.” While Gandhiji pleaded strongly for giving up the former, for the latter he evinced little or no interest.

As against Gandhiji, Nehru opposed the existence and continuance of classes in a social order. “In a democratic country like India, the continuance of classes meant going back from the ideas of democracy.” “Democracy means,” he defined, “equality, and democracy can only flourish in an equal society. It is obvious enough that the giving of votes to everybody does not result in producing equal society. In spite of adult suffrage and the like, there is today tremendous inequality. Therefore, in order to give, democracy a chance, an equal society must be created, and this reasoning leads them to various other ideals and methods. But all these people agree that present-day parliaments are highly unsatisfactory.”⁴

The ideal of Ram-Rajya put forward by Gandhiji was evaluated by Nehru thus : “In primitive communities the village was more

1. Nanda, B. R., *op. cit.*, p. 269.
2. *Autobiography*, p. 518.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 521.
4. *Glimpses of World History*, p. 854.

or less self-sufficient and fed and clothed itself and otherwise for its needs. Of necessity that means an extremely low standard of living.”¹ On the contrary “the huge population of today would not be able even to subsist in some countries, they would not tolerate this reversion to scarcity and starvation.”² Further, “no country today is really independent or capable of resisting aggression unless it is industrially developed.”³ Nehru emphasised upon the fact that world was shrinking everyday with the advancing pace of science. Internationalism was a matter of self-preservation. Isolation and annihilation are more or less synonymous terms.

Nehru acknowledged with Gandhiji the existence of the huge village population. But the suggested means for their betterment, were not always identical. Gandhiji wanted not only the use of Indian goods but village-made goods. He regarded the exploitation of villages by cities as a form of violence.⁴ He favoured decentralisation of power and the removal of the evils of industrialisation—mass unemployment and concentration of wealth in the hands of few.⁵ Gandhiji’s Ram-Rajya was made up of self-contained, self-sufficient and politically independent organisation of villages.⁶

Nehru warned against the doing away with industrialisation because that would mean “falling prey, economically and otherwise, to other more industrialised countries, which would exploit it.”⁷ He was indignant at “the praise of poverty and suffering. I do not think they are at all desirable, and they ought to be abolished. Nor do I appreciate the ascetic life as a social ideal, though it may suit individuals. I understand and appreciate simplicity, equality, self-control, but not the mortification of the flesh...To be in good moral condition requires at least as much training as to be in good

1. *Autobiography*, p. 522.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 522.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 526.

4. Nanda, B. R., *Gandhi*, Sasta Sahitya Mandal, New Delhi, 1965, p. 261 (Hindi).

5. *Ibid.*, p. 267.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 268.

7. *A Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 390 ; cf. *Glimpses of World History*, p. 830.

physical condition. But that certainly does not mean asceticism or self-mortification."¹ Nehru also admired non-violence, but he differed with Gandhiji when the latter put more stress on means rather than the ends.²

These fundamental differences in outlook had to lead to differences in educational ideals. Not that Gandhiji, for instance, did not want children to read science. He did. But the difference lay in their attitude towards its usage. Machine and industrialism were by-products of science and Gandhiji could not see eye to eye with either.

Gandhiji's education was designed to produce moral and spiritual men and women. His religion was related to all human practices and beliefs. Religion and spiritualism do not have their own separate fields. Indeed, they find expression in all kinds of activities—political, social and personal. For a believer in true religion, there is no need to leave society or his normal work. Religion and education were complementary to each other. Education had to look after an individual's moral and spiritual powers. But he was rather pained to note that modern education ignored soul and therefore all the powers and possibilities of soul were held in abeyance for the more material aims to be achieved. Materialism as against spiritualism was being emphasized upon. Since education leads to salvation therefore only that education which lead individual to salvation was the most proper education. "But religion is after all a matter for each individual and then too a matter of the heart, call it then by whatever name you like, that which gives one the greatest solace in the midst of the severest fire is God."³

Nehru had declared himself a pagan, an agnostic.⁴ For him this world was interesting enough to hold his attention. The other world, the life hereafter had virtually no interest for him. "Even if God exists," he would write, "it may be desirable not to look

1. *Autobiography*, pp. 510-11.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 549.

3. *A Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 43.

4. Seth, K. D., *op. cit.*, p. 203.

upto Him or to rely upon Him. Too much dependence on supernatural factor which may lead, and has often led, to a loss of self-reliance in man and to a blunting of his capacity and creative ability.¹ Further, "As knowledge advances, the domain of religion, in the narrow sense of the word, shrinks. The more we understand life and nature, the less we look for supernatural causes. Whatever we can understand and control ceases to be a mystery."² It is not so much the religious attitude he would like our children to acquire as the scientific temper, already referred to earlier.

Nehru would have liked to see Indian society organised in harmony with the ancient ideal of 'functional organization'.³ And inasmuch as the caste-system helped us achieve this ideal he was all for it. But he opposed the inherent seeds of aristocratic approach based on 'traditionalism.' It was the function that was of supreme importance and not the birth. Naturally hereditary professions had little in common with the modern outlook. Education should therefore be imparted on the basis of aptitude and equality of opportunity.⁴ Not that Gandhiji differed radically from this stand-point : only he did not dislike so intensely either the traditional education or the custom.

Nehru was critical of the type of education which led an individual to hate manual work. He declared many a time that he was not opposed to higher education but he wanted the attaining of balance between purely intellectual and physical work. A perfectly educated man had this balance. An engineer who sat at the table and issued orders was an anomaly. But most of our engineers had that attitude. He therefore praised the system of basic education initiated by the Mahatma. He said in 1955, "The type of education which presumes to concern itself only with the reading of books is from any point of view incomplete. Basic education stressed both things—physical and cultural fitness and the ability

1. *Ibid* , p. 526.

2. *Discovery of India*, p. 527.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 534.

4. *A Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 173 ; Brailsford to Nehru : "No one has your courage, your mental power and above all, your vision of a humane, classless society."

to do things with the hands. You can take it from me,' he assured his audience, "that if your hand can do things, your mind will work more satisfactorily."¹

It is, however, doubtful if he would have gone all the way with Gandhiji to declare : "In my opinion, education *i.e.* the knowledge acquired through education, should not be used for earning money. The means of livelihood must always be some form of productive manual labour, such as weaving, carpentry, tailoring *etc.*...I consider the fact that doctors, lawyers, teachers *etc.* follow their respective professions with the purpose of earning money to be one of the main reasons of our downfall as a nation."² In a modern society this kind of thing is simply impracticable. People working in the industry and huge factories cannot but work for money. It would appear that no other way of remunerating the worker is possible. In the Ram-Rajya, no doubt, such a system of payment would be eminently suitable. And Gandhiji was talking of an ideal social set-up. Gandhiji hastened to correct himself by declaring, in the same book, "But this is an ideal and may not attain it fully in practice. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the closer we keep to it the better it would be for us."³ His educational institution would have to be different. His accent was on "the service of the country as the main aim of education. There can be no room for a 'career', and where the ideal is to use one's knowledge for the service of the county and treat earning money, secondary."⁴

No debate was possible on the question of serving one's country. And Nehru admitted of none. Indeed, he favoured this view-point himself. According to him, for instance, the soul of India lay in the villages. Educated people did not like to go there to work. Even the government servants were unwilling to go there. It was a cowardly act and something unworthy of an educated man.⁵ He pleaded for an education which was related to the rural life so

1. Address to the Indian National Congress.
2. Gandhi, M. K., *The Problem of Education*, p. 79; Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
5. Sharma, H. D., *op. cit.*, p. 195.

that the products of this system did not run away from work in the rural areas.¹ This, however, did not mean that he was opposed to the villager's reading modern scientific and technological subjects. Here he parted company with Gandhiji.

Nehru's India was to be highly industrialised. Indian schools had to produce a proper personnel to man the big industry. Since basic schools could not provide the required personnel one wonders whether Nehru, while talking and praising basic education, knew everything about this education and the ideals it stood for.

In several respects Nehru's ideal remained the West. He stated emphatically, India "must learn from the West for the modern West has much to teach and the spirit of the age is represented by the West".² For Gandhiji, on the other hand, it had little or nothing to teach us. The West with all its science and technology stood for materialism and power, some thing unpalatable to Gandhiji. Though his disciple Nehru had maintained all along, "Now, in India, we are bound to be industrialised, we are to be industrialized, we must be industrialized, for greater wealth and production."³ He was sure that "India is going to be run by a large number of trained people in future and ultimately, as everywhere else, by a relatively small number of A-class men in technology and science."⁴ He had complete faith in India's science personnel who were 'first-rate' but wanted them to multiply their numbers.⁵

As against Nehru whose eyes were riveted on future, Gandhiji, curiously enough, was concerned with the present alone. "He is well informed about current events and follows them carefully, though inevitably he concentrates on present-day Indian problems... Most people, however, are not much concerned with the long run; they are far more interested in the tactical advantage of the moment,"⁶ so wrote Nehru on Gandhiji.

1. Sharma, H. D., op. cit., p. 196.
2. *Discovery of India*, p. 519.
3. *Nehru's Speeches*, Vol. I, p. 370.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 379.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 380.
6. *Discovery of India*, p. 462.

Despite these differences, none understood Gandhiji better than Nehru perhaps because of this fact alone the latter was appointed Gandhiji's heir.¹ Aristotle alone of all the disciples appreciated the idealism of Plato. At the death of his master, Nehru paid at once the most touching and glowing homage that ever was paid by a disciple so different in attitude and yet so familiar and intimate—one would say, an Aristotlean homage to the sacred memory of the departed idealist, Plato.

1. *A Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 507.

THE LANGUAGE TANGLE

Of all the issues this country is currently faced with, language has given rise to the largest number of controversies. So much emotional heat has been worked up that even people with sound reason have been swept off their rational grounds. Some have even shed blood shamelessly. Some others have talked of partitioning the country on the language basis. Mutually contradictory opinions have been expressed by the same set of people. History has been misquoted with amazing consistency and scholarship. And, to cite Prof. A. R. Wadia, "The language problem has become very acute in India today, so acute that it may well be spoken of as the battle of languages. Soon after India became free, there was a wild talk against the dominance of English in our educational system and it came mostly from politicians. But they too have been hopelessly divided as to which language is to replace English: Whether Hindi or a regional language. There has been a regrettable amount of woolly thinking on the language question and it has created a hesitancy and an uncertainty in our educational policy."¹

It is against this background one has to consider Nehru's opinions and beliefs, strong likes and dislikes. Here the reader is reminded that this kind of problem is not peculiar to this country. Others have faced it and solved it in their own ways in accordance with their history, culture and traditions. This country will also succeed in resolving the conflicting opinions and eliminating the warring tribes.

It is merely a question of time. History will record the names of all those who played important roles in the language controversy. The writer has no doubt that Nehru's name will outshine those of others not because his was the sanest and the most informed mind

1. *The Future of English in India, Asia, 1954*, p. 22.

or even because it was endowed with the keenest vision and foresight but because it was a peculiar combination of all these with the additional advantages of consistency and objectivity.

The controversy associated with languages has origins in history. Only once or twice was India a politically united country before the advent of the British. And, therefore, when the British rule came to an end we were left with the most urgent task of getting ourselves emotionally integrated ; for politically we were so already. Thus a problem that had co-existed eternally with us had been resolved only temporarily with the adoption of English as the media of instruction and public services by the alien Government. Immediately after Independence, India was required to solve countless big problems ; not unimportant of these was the problem of language.

It should not be out of place to refer to an eminently interesting book, in which Mr. Le Page deals with the question of the national language in the emerging countries. He says that in these countries education has been called upon to fulfil two urgent tasks. One of them is "to establish cultural homogeneity and a common sense of identity among the members of diverse races and cultures who find themselves members of one State as a result of a series of historical accidents."¹ And, the second is of finding jobs for the educated. Both these tasks are of paramount importance to an emerging nation. Nevertheless, what appears to be a political problem is essentially in the ultimate analysis, an educational problem. If the medium of instruction is an international language the danger is "what is learned cannot profitably be applied to the local scene". If the child is made to learn two languages, *i.e.*, one for home, another for outside world, he tends to develop a dual personality. "In such a situation very often the child who would respond creatively to his own situation does not do so well at school as the clever parrot. Education through the medium of a foreign language may encourage a kind of opportunism which is not prepared to give an unselfish service back to the community."²

1. Le Page, R. B. : *The National Language Question*, Oxford, 1964, p. 23.
2. *Ibid.*, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

And if the teaching is done through the vernaculars the resentment among the students and their parents is fierce, because higher or professional education cannot be easily provided in it. The lack of economic opportunities through the vernacular becomes a great source of frustration.

But this problem does not end here. If a programme of higher education is implemented through vernacular languages, enormous programme of translating original text-books will have to be undertaken. Further, translation will become a regular necessity creating thereby a major problem of the production of efficient bilingualists.

In the case of India, even if we took seriously to the three-language formula, which is commonly accepted as the only solution to this enormous problem, the problem will not, even then, be finally resolved.

The problem is when the two languages, besides the regional language, should be introduced, When exactly should schools start the teaching of Hindi as link-language in non-Hindi areas and the teaching of English as the foreign language. When should a child start learning the foreign language is a question that has driven scholars into several camps.

Nehru was aware of all these problems associated with the language question. He knew its history, its educational implications and also appreciated the political nuances involved in it. Not only as an astute politician but, also as a man of vision and insight he made momentous decisions and appeared boldly in the public on this issue. He did not deliberately court annoyance or indignation but he was never afraid of it either. He confronted the issue with determination and gave his opinions faithfully. His was the voice of a leader whose immense faith in the people led him to put forward arguments before commanding obedience.

This, however, should not indicate to mean that he was always understood and that he did not have to face any opposition. Indeed, in the words of Sarojini Naidu, he was "a man of destiny born to be alone in the midst of crowds, deeply loved and but little understood".¹

1. *A Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 407.

LINK-LANGUAGE (*Retrospect*)

As far back as 1930 Nehru evinced deep concern in the language question. He even wrote pamphlets on the issue, one of which was described as a 'miracle worker' by Sarojini Naidu. She advised him enthusiastically to see "the radiant satisfaction it has (had) produced among the most disgruntled".¹ In the pamphlet entitled *The Question of Language*, he suggested the adoption of a link-language with the minimum vocabulary and structures, something akin to Basic English. This evoked the following remark from Adolph Myers, "If there is any underlying unity, it is based on the idea perhaps that India is in the throes of social revolution which must include education in its scope, and that the idea of Basic, itself revolutionary, may well play an important part in that revolution, affecting not only the teaching of English, but also the whole psychological and pedagogical approach to education."²

Nehru had realized very early that involved in the language question was the very unity of this country. Unless a solution was found the disruptive forces will eventually succeed in shaking the foundations of India. Long before Independence, therefore, national leaders were busy evolving a workable formula.

Nehru wanted to find a formula which was neither revolutionary in concept nor practice. For the South he suggested a common script for all the four languages they have, and for the North he advised the adoption of Hindustani. Gandhiji wrote the foreword to the pamphlet on Hindi-Urdu question by Nehru, in which he deplored the rise of 'an unfortunate controversy' in connection with the language issue. He praised Nehru's paper as "a valuable contribution to a proper elucidation of the whole subject considered from the national and purely educational point of view"³.

In a separate letter to Nehru, Gandhiji suggested certain modifications in the former's stand-point :

"You have suggested a Common Script to be evolved out

1. *A Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 101.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 273.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 246.

of the four Southern languages. It seemed to me to be as easy for them to substitute Devanagari as a mixture of the four. From a practical stand-point, the four do not admit of an invented mixture. I would, therefore, suggest your confining yourself to the general recommendation that wherever possible the provisional provincial languages which have vital connection with Sanskrit if they are not offshoots from it, should adopt revised Devanagari. You may know that this propaganda is going on.

“ Then, if you think like me, you should not hesitate to express the hope that as Hindus and Muslims are one day to be one at heart, they will also, who speak Hindustani, adopt one script *i.e.* Devnagari, because of its being mere scientific and being akin to the great provincial scripts of the languages descended from Sanskrit. ”¹

Gandhiji was not alone in these suggestions. Mahadev Desai also suggested to Nehru to modify his stand-point. He suggested that (a) instead of Urdu-absorbing Hindi, it would be better if the entire process was just the other way round and (b) the South was asked to adopt Devanagari script in place of an amalgam script which he (Desai) regarded as an impossibility.² In fact, he elaborated his view-point by observing :

“ The casual paragraph (in Nehru’s paper) might fan the flame of the mischief of separation which some of the bigoted Andhras, Tamils and Kannadas have raised as a kind of bugbear against Hindi. As a matter of fact it is recognized by scholars that there is more affinity between Tamil and Malayalam on the one part and Devnagari on the other, or between Telugu and Kannada on the one part and Devanagari on the other, than between Tamil, Malayalam Telugu, and Kannada. As languages Tamil and Malayalam are one group ; Telugu and Kannada are another. Rajagopalachari has written series of articles suggesting a few changes in Devanagari in order to make it easy of adoption by South India, and the fact that hundreds of thousands of south Indians have learnt Devanagri script with little effort is strongly in favour of Devanagari Script for the whole of the south. I had a letter the other day from a

1. *A Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 246.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 248.

South Indian Saurashtra who says that they had a mixed Telugu-Tamil script, which is now lost and they would gladly adopt Devanagari rather than Tamil and Telugu.

“Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam have a very large admixture of Sanskrit words. That stock is daily growing, and even Tamil is now adding to itself a large number of Sanskrit words. Adoption of Devanagari would stimulate the process.”¹

In India there has always existed a small class of people who have advocated the adoption of Sanskrit both as the *lingua franca* of the peoples and the medium of instruction at the highest levels. This question was debated by English people in Macaulay's days. Even in our own times Sanskrit has not lacked advocates. In fact, if we look at it objectively the entire case does not appear so hopeless. After all, old languages have been revived and in some cases completely new languages have been created. Recently the Jews made history by electing modified Hebrew as their national language. And in no time, they switched over to it in every walk of life.

Nehru admired the richness of Sanskrit and the vast literature it contained. He was aware that Sanskrit had continued despite the political interruptions in this country. He even praised the amazing vitality of this language. But he was slightly amused to hear Dr. F. F. Thomas, in 1937, speak for the adoption of Sanskrit as a link-language for this country.² For Nehru this was a retrograde step. Sanskrit was a dead language and its revival now will mean the petrification of all other modern languages. There was no doubt that Sanskrit could supply numerous technical, scientific and government terms as it has done in Thailand³ but that was the limit.

He acknowledged the fact that all modern Indian languages other than the Dravidian languages have descended from Sanskrit which meant that there was a great affinity in all of them. Therefore, the real language question in India has nothing to do with this variety. It is practically confined to Hindi-Urdu, one language

1. *A Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 248-9.

2. *Discovery of India*, p. 157.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 158.

with two literary forms and two scripts. As spoken there is hardly any difference: as written, "especially in literary style, the gap widens. Attempts have been, and are being made to lessen this gap and develop a common form, which is usually syled Hindustani. This is developing into a common language understood all over India."¹ While dealing with the historical background of Hindi and Urdu, Nehru wrote, in 1937, that Hindi was the language of the rural areas, and Urdu of the urban population.² And by bringing these two closer together we were merely attempting to bring cities nearer to the villages.³ He expressed his earnest wish that both Hindi and Urdu will not fall back upon Sanskrit and Persian respectively for enriching themselves. French and English words that were already in currency were more suitable for adoption than the creation of entirely new words.⁴ He was confident that although these two languages will remain different in appearance, a strong climate was being created for bringing the two close to each other. He even advised the champions of Hindi and Urdu to feel happy over the progress of each other's languages.⁵

It is true that Hindi was commonly the language of Hindu masses who lived in rural areas and Urdu of Muslims who clustered round urban units which rose with the passage of time to acquire the status of the language of the elite. It had an advantage over Hindi; Persianised Urdu was the court language of later Muslim rulers who immediately preceded the British rule. After a temporary eclipse when it was out of favour with the new rulers, the political reasons (divide and rule policy) again conspired to encourage and help it. Therefore, when Nehru was writing in the third and fourth decades of the present century he had to acknowledge the fact that in the North the Hindi-Urdu controversy had certain communal undertones as well. Partition of the country was unthinkable. Since Hindus and Muslims had to live together their cultural differences should not be accentuated by the differences in their languages. It is against

1. *Discovery of India*, p. 159.
2. *Hindustan Ki Samasyayen*, p. 91.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

this background that one must read Nehru in the thirties and forties. Nehru could visualize the distant dark clouds and suspect their ominous intentions. Therefore, he wanted to set his house in readiness, sound and clean, to meet the challenge.

He therefore deplored the tendency in Hindi of borrowing indiscriminately Sanskrit words. He thought this would have an isolating affect. "The language of literature will become distinct from the language of the people. Far richer languages have declined and eventually died because of this tendency". For instance, "in the years of the decline of Sanskrit literature, it lost some of its powers and simplicity of style and because involved in highly complex forms and elaborate similies and metaphors. The grammatical rule which enabled words to be joined together, became in the hands of the epigenes a mere device to show off their cleverness by combining whole strings of words running into many lines."² And, further, "words change their meanings from age to age and old ideas transform themselves into new, often keeping their old attire. It is difficult to capture the meaning, much less the spirit, of an old word or phrase".³

Nehru ridiculed as fiction the suggestion that India has hundreds of languages. He exploded this oft-repeated theory by a sarcastic comment, "The oft-repeated story of India having five hundred or more languages is a fiction of the mind of the philologist and the census commissioner who note down every variation in dialect and every petty hill-tongue on the Assam Bengal frontier...." And if this were a proper method of calculating languages, Europe has hundreds of languages and Germany has, I think, listed as having about sixty."⁴

Beneath the surface of the superficial variety of cultures and languages in India Nehru acknowledged there was a basic unity in cultural traditions and in the ways of living. He admired the growth of all modern languages and wished them to become powerful and rich enough to replace this alien language, English. It

1. *Discovery of India*. p. 159.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

was however dangerous to talk of 'one nation, one culture, one language'. It reminded him 'of some of the Fascist and Nazi slogans of old'.¹ It clearly meant that although Nehru recognized the need of a link-language, he did not wish it to flourish at the cost of other modern languages.

In his book *Away from Politics*,² Nehru discussed the question of national language once again. He declared that language was an index of a nation's 'character.'³ Language reflected the nature of a people. People's language therefore should perform two tasks firstly : it should be flexible enough to change with time, and secondly, it should be humble enough to accept current terminology of the people, irrespective of its origin. Wherever this is not done the language of literature ultimately drifts away from the life of the common people and becomes a dead language. The 'acid test' of the national language should be its flexibility and adaptability and also a simple vocabulary.

He averred that India's national language could only be Hindi or Hindustani because it has all the necessary qualities to acquire that status.⁴ He also made clear that its script should be Nagari but wherever there was a demand, Urdu script could also be accorded recognition.⁵

Nehru was often accused of changing his stand under pressure. He was criticized for ambiguity and for offering solutions far removed from life. Evidently these charges are as incorrect as they are untenable. It is the common lot of great leaders to be sometimes criticized for the stand they have never taken, and, praised for results whose inspirations have emanated from unknown sources.

POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD (SOUTH VS NORTH)

Thanks to the Muslims-league the dawn of independence was

1. Presidential Address, Indian National Congress, Jan. 17, 1953.
2. *Rajniti Se Door*, Sasta Sahitya Mandal Prakashan, 2nd ed., 1950 (in Hindi).
3. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
4. *Ibid.*, 140.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 148. For an excellent detailed study of the controversy between Hindi and Urdu the reader may consult : *Nehru, the first Sixty Years*, ed. Dorothy Norman, Vol. II. Asia, 1965, pp. 186—195.

both fearful and bloody. After things quietened down a bit the national leadership became busy in finding out proper solution for India's immense problems. The question of link-language came up once again. But now the entire context had changed. The country had been divided into two parts on the basis of M. A. Jinnah's 'two nation theory'. Urdu, which was not accepted as the national language of Pakistan even could hardly be considered as the link-language of India.

Therefore a new fight was on between Hindi and English. The former was being identified in the South by the extremists, with the "imperialism of the North," and the latter thus far an alien language which had smacked of foreign domination to all, was being regarded by some as a new pawn on the political chessboard from the side of the vested interests.

One is amused to find certain protagonists of Hindi, of the pre-Independence days, suddenly change sides and employ flattering and endearing words for their latest fancy to vindicate their reasonableness. It would be incorrect to suggest that Hindi was opposed by the South alone, in Bengal also it became equally unpopular. The recent riots in Madras (1965) could be taken as the bursting of a storm that was gathering long since. One wonders whether the holocaust could have been prevented by Nehru had he been alive, then.

In the post-Independence period Nehru had reached his colossal status. He dominated the entire political horizon and snubbed every opposition for its views. Even his opponents had to admit failure in his august presence. "He alone among the country's top-leaders, has the sense and the stature to call over-enthusiastic people to order and saw that a delicate balance was not upset."¹

Did Nehru change after Independence? How is it that he was criticized by both protagonists of Hindi and English? For the former he appeared too lukewarm in support to be really effective; and for the latter too committed to come forward in its support. Reasons for criticism probably lay elsewhere. Perhaps because he came from the Hindi speaking area it was expected that he would

1. Mukherjee Hiren, *The Gentle Colossus*, Manisha Granthalaya Private Ltd., 1964, p. 130, Calcutta.

take a definite side and stamp his feet in its favour and since he did nothing of the sort he was subjected to vehement criticism: And, in the South he was suspected to be spear-heading the 'imperialism' of the North and naturally therefore his every speech was misconstrued.

THE PLACE OF ENGLISH

The place of English in the Indian school curriculum depended on the fact that English was a window on the west and could be neglected only at our own peril. In his answer to a letter from Ramadhari Singh 'Dinakar' Nehru said, "There is the danger of our getting aloof from the world of thought in all its aspects and becoming complacent in our own little world of India. For this reason also contacts with foreign languages are essential." The late Prime Minister went on elsewhere. "That it was obvious that high-class training in Science, Technology *etc.* could not be given today and for some years to come without a knowledge of a foreign language."¹ And by 'a foreign language' he meant English because "that is the easiest foreign language for us". We have already dealt with his increasing preoccupation with the global approach to every problem. His critics were not endowed with a similar vision and therefore failed to appreciate his point of view.

English, according to Nehru, was intimately associated with scientific knowledge and modern advancement. He was, at times, impatient with his critics who did not realize this association. He exhorted people to understand that "our whole future progress depends on this process of industrialisation and the use of higher techniques. It must be remembered that it takes long to train a first-class scientist or technician. To put up a steel-plant takes some years. It takes five times as much time to train a competent atomic scientist as it takes to put up an atomic reactor. We have thus today to organize training for the people for the Second and third Five-Year Plans. We can not delay this, or else our planning and industrial progress will be automatically held up."

He went on, "It is obvious that this high-class training cannot be given today and for some years to come without the knowledge of

1. Delhi, Sept. 10, 1956.

a foreign language. It is possible and indeed desirable to give elementary scientific and technological training in Hindi or our other regional languages. We can translate some text-books as we have actually done. We can built up our technical terms in Hindi, as we are doing. But we cannot produce the vast and complicated thought that lies behind this technical and industrial age by translating a few books or having a list of terms. Changes in technology today are so rapid that even books that are printed get out-of-date very soon. Every scientist has to keep up-to-date by reading many scientific and technical periodicals, usually in several languages. For this and other reasons it seems to me essential for us to continue in a big way adequate teaching of English as a second language."¹

For him, this knowledge would have an additional advantage of developing and enriching Hindi and other languages. He spoke with some impatience when he said, "I fear that many of our people have little conception of the world we live in—this world of automation and atomic energy."²

Nehru felt that for a country like India the study of English was valuable because of our backwardness in the scientific and technical field. But he did not look at the problem from a narrow angle of mere utility. Even most advanced countries of the West which are in the fore-front of industrial progress do encourage study of foreign languages. To learn a foreign language is like adding an additional string to one's bow. Nehru said, "In many countries of today, the teaching of a foreign language is compulsory in the schools. Usually English is the foreign language."³ There was nothing unusual about our learning English in our schools.

It must be noted that here Nehru was speaking of the teaching of English as a foreign language. It was to remain the medium of instruction for higher technical and scientific subjects. But for the rest, other languages were allowed to have their due. He acknowledged that "real mass progress in India can only be made through our own languages and not through a foreign language. He had continued, "It is of course not necessary or possible for

1. *Nehru's Speeches*, Vol. III, Govt. of India Publications, 1958, p. 423.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 425.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 426.

everybody in India to know English. But a very large number should know it for the reasons I have stated above." This however did not mean that he wished to create a new class of English-knowing people. With sincerity, therefore he said, "I am anxious to prevent a new caste system being perpetuated in India, an English-knowing caste separated from the mass of our people."¹

Speaking at a meeting of the Congress Parliamentary party on May 7, 1954, Nehru referred to the controversies that had arisen in the matter of languages. He wished the audience to appreciate that despite heat and passion connected with this controversy "there is so much common ground in India". He wanted people to remember that "languages cannot be put over by compulsion on large number of people : it can be done only by agreement, only by consent".² He cited the example of Yugoslavia where existed three major languages and two scripts. All the three languages and the two scripts were recognized by the state as official languages and official scripts.

Apparently Nehru was suggesting a similar pattern for this country. For the South he advocated the adoption of one script for all the Dravidian languages and for the North he pleaded for Hindi in the Devanagari script. Such a solution was not new to him. He had made references to it earlier on as well.

He wanted that whatever solution was finally agreed upon it must not handicap the people in the South. In point of fact, he wanted to allay the real fear of those people. "It is important, because what really troubles people is a feeling that they might be handicapped in service, in business, politics or in Parliament, if some language which they cannot adequately master or adequately know is made the passport to further success and advancement. That is the real fear at the back of the minds of people. You must remove that fear."³ He made it clear that "English cannot be in India anything but a secondary language in future". He hoped that English will be taught as a compulsory language to a large number of people

1. *Nehru's Speeches*, Vol. III, p. 424.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 394.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 395.

although it cannot be taught to everybody.”¹ He even admitted the fact that the “Indian languages have suffered psychologically and otherwise because of English ; yet they have gained a great deal too from contacts with the wider world”.²

Here we would like to summarize Nehru’s ideas regarding English for the sake of better understanding :

1. English must continue as a foreign language in India both because it contained valuable literature in science and technology and because teaching of a foreign language was essential for the growth and enrichment of Indian languages.
2. Although he had no wish to perpetuate an English-knowing caste, yet he wanted some people in India to learn English very efficiently.
3. If English was being taught in India as a second language there was nothing unusual about it. Other countries also followed the same practice.

HINDI Vs OTHER LANGUAGES

Nehru is often criticized for ambiguity in regard to the problem of the link-language for this country. How far removed is this allegation from the truth ? He was a thorough democrat and in keeping with the democratic traditions Nehru pleaded for a flexible approach in this connection. “We should avoid rigidity in our approach to the question of language.”³ Dealing with the change that had come about because of Independence he said, “English is certainly used in education especially in the universities. But the instruction in the regional languages is a big break linguistically from the past.”⁴ He emphasized this fact by repetition. “I repeat that the big thing that has happened in India is that the medium of instruction has changed from English to regional languages. It is right and essential for our education to be in the regional languages

1. *Nehru’s Speeches*, Vol. IV, Govt. of India Publications. 1964, p. 60.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
3. *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 49.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

if we have to deal with the masses of our people.”

Speaking on the occasion of releasing the fifth volume of the Tamil Encyclopaedia at Madras in Jan. 1958, Nehru cited the examples of other officially multi-lingual countries. In the Scandinavian countries study of three languages is compulsory. So is the case in Switzerland. There was no reason why this approach could not be adopted successfully here in this country. Nehru referred to the decision in India to have as the mother-tongue the medium of instruction ‘in the early stages’. But in the later stages other two languages should be introduced. He even cited an expert opinion on the question of introducing languages other than the mother-tongue. “The scientific theory is that the sooner one begins to learn a language the better. Of course, it is good sense too, and it has been supported by scientific examination of the structure of the brain.”²

In fact what Nehru was trying to suggest was the universal adoption of Hindi in the three-language formula. Gradually people will come to evolve a medium of communication replacing English. But there was to be no hurry.

In another speech Nehru dealt with the problem of Hindi *versus* English. “One of the basic facts today,” he argued, “is that the medium of instruction in schools now is the language of the region, whether it is Tamil, Telugu..... This will produce a generation utterly unlike the generation to which we belong. I want you to realize that it is not a question of Hindi *versus* English, it is a question of 14 languages—or more than 14, even though they are not in the constitution.”³ He was aware that this runs the “risks and dangers in the Indian languages becoming autarkies or developing a separateness”. “We should,” he suggested, “fight any such tendency, but in fighting it we should try not to come in the way of their development. We should encourage their fullest development. I believe it is through such development that the languages can come together. We shall get over the danger of linguistic

1 *Nehru's Speeches*, Vol. II, p. 54.

2 *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 48.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 58

separatism as long as we encourage the right tendencies and one language group does not try to impose its will on other groups.”¹

Logically enough Nehru touched upon the question of a link language. “It follows obviously that we require some kind of common language link and the Constitution has said that Hindi should be that official language link.” He emphasized upon this fact and made it clear that “it (Hindi as link-language) is for official correspondence or official work between the States.” He drew the attention of the Members of the Parliament to the fact that the case for English as a link-language was very weak.

For the sake of argument he was prepared to accept Hindi as deficient in several respects. But the fact remained that Hindi was going to be the link-language of this country. He acknowledged with sincerity and earnestness that Hindi might mean “disability for the non-Hindi knowing people. I say it will undoubtedly be disability.”² He therefore advised the honourable members to face this fact.

Therefore he pleaded that as an interim measure “a rule must be laid down by which we do absolutely nothing which creates disability of the non-Hindi speaking areas, in regard to services and the like matters”.³ He did not want Hindi to be imposed on a non-Hindi State. In this matter the States be given time in order to be able to volunteer. “I want to remove the idea that they will suffer in service or in work or in any other way.”⁴

He submitted to the House, “And, more especially to our colleagues from the Hindi-speaking areas, that if there is one thing that is going to come in their way, it is their over-enthusiasm. The way they approach this subject often irritates others, as it irritates me.”⁵ It was not the approach alone but the terminology Hindi people were adopting was also severely criticized by him. He pleaded for a terminology that was easy to understand and not cut off from life. In fact, he wanted, all Indian languages to adopt

1. *Nehru's Speeches*, Vol. IV, p. 53.

2. *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 58.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

common scientific and technical terminology.”¹ In India at least we should try to develop a common technical and scientific phraseology for the languages of India. It will be a great nuisance and burden if we differed even here.”²

He continuously reminded people of the fact that “the industrial revolution is coming to India, rather belatedly, no doubt, and India is trying to catch up with developments of the twentieth century. This industrial revolution changes the texture of our life and our thinking. It introduces words without number which we have to use in the new occupations, and all the efforts of Dr. Raghuvira and Seth Govind Das cannot meet that situation.” And, the reason he gave for this situation was that they were trying to produce ‘merely ‘volumes after volumes of artificial words, so called translations’. Consequently, he pointed out, “Nobody will accept them, because the languages of science and technology will not come out of the class-room or the translator’s room ; it will arise from the scientists and technologists.”³

His sense of history propelled him to warn people of the dangers of isolation and eventual decline. He had before his mind’s eye not only the civilization of this country but that of others as well, which had once blossomed, grown into their full stature and suddenly petrified. He had made his own analysis for this also.

In a peculiar admixture of history and linguistics, he told an audience, “A language grows through contact with other languages. It begins to decline as soon as it restricts itself and aims at purity of blood. This is true not only of languages but of nations. The history of the world shows us that nations stagnate and decline when they isolate themselves from others and insulate their minds against fresh winds. Nations advance by contacts with others and by opening their windows to fresh air. Languages grow in a similar way.”⁴

If he was misunderstood, the fault did not lie with him. It lay in the minds of those that had neither his vision nor sense of

1. *Nehru's Speeches*, Vol. IV, p. 61.
2. *Ibid.*, Vol. III.
3. *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 57.
4. *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 63.

history. For small men their own life-time is the limit for everything they wish to accomplish. They measure the achievements of everything, even nation's achievements with their own life-spans. But a great man is aware of the insignificance of a life-span as compared with that of the nation's. For him we are but small characters *amidst multitudes of others*, playing our limited roles for a very brief period of time. After we pass, others take our place but the stage and sequence of events never change. Some people play their roles very well, get applause, but eventually disappear. But the rest are lost both in the commonness of their roles and the insignificance of their background.

Most of his critics were impatient with Hindi's pace of progress under his leadership. But in fact they were victims of false illusions. They wanted to hurry the pace of Hindi to achieving its ultimate goals destined for it to achieve, within their own brief life-spans so that the posterity could see them cast in their historic roles of assisting Hindi achieve its stature. This age of publicity can sometimes make the popularity of certain individuals appear entirely disproportionate to their actual roles and statures.

Nehru made it clear repeatedly that it was wrong to equate Hindi with English. "In the sphere of national languages, only national languages have a place. We cannot speak of English in that connection."¹ Because, "Our progress should be in the direction of developing Hindi, not only as a regional language, but as a link-language and maintaining English to serve that purpose so that there may be no gap." And he advised people not to try to get rid of English "but fixation of the English language in our minds".² If it was bad to have a fixation of English it was equally bad to obstruct the growth of Hindi by artificial manuring and fertilization because Hindi's growth was identical with the growth of the nation. He asked, "What will it profit us if we honour Hindi and put it in a closed space, which prevents not only its growth, but the nation's growth".³

1. *Nehru's Speeches*, Vol. IV, p. 65.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

THE QUESTION OF SCRIPT

Nehru's efforts were largely directed to bringing closer together all the 14 national languages by making them adopt common technical and scientific terminology as also by making their literature appear through a single script. In this connection he gave a piece of sound advice. He asked people not to abandon any script for a single common script but let all type of selected literature appear in Nagari script also, alongwith the original script of a national language.

"Script is a barrier between the languages. It is easy for a Hindi-knowing person to learn the other languages derived from Sanskrit, like Bengali, Marathi and Gujarati. Some difficulty arises from their scripts, but not much. If these languages were written in the same script, as European languages are, a great barrier to their understanding will be removed. It is, however, difficult for languages to change their scripts. Therefore, we do not propose that their scripts should be replaced by Nagari. We suggest that along with their own scripts, Nagari should be used for writing these languages. This has to take place spontaneously without legislative compulsion."¹

As against this democratic method, had India been a dictatorship, any solution could have been forced down the throats of the people. In several countries this has happened but this cannot be allowed to happen here in this country which is fundamentally wedded to the democratic ways of living. Commenting on the method Kemal Pasha adopted in his country in order to resolve this problem Nehru wrote, "A dictator can be very thorough, especially if he happens to be popular. Few other governments would dare to interfere so much with people's lives."² Although he was highly popular himself and some people even thought he was dictatorial in his methods, he had no intentions of forcing his will on the people. He preferred to argue, persuade and convince rather than dictate—even if the solution he intended people to accept was eminently suitable and correct. But at the same time it is incorrect even to suggest, let alone aver, that on this question Nehru fumbled from time to time.³

1. *Nehru's Speeches*, pp. 63-64.

2. *Glimpses of World History*, p. 735, 892.

3. Mukherjee. Hiren, op. cit., p. 130.

It is a mere truism to say that Jawahar Lal Nehru was both a man of action and a dreamer of dreams. He combined in himself, perhaps in equal measure, Eastern and Western qualities. With all his criticism of Oriental customs and habits he was essentially a man of the East. If he appreciated innumerable Western values, seldom did he show impatience with any Eastern ideal. This curious admixture as it were, baffled several of his critics. In fact, Nehru defied conventional standards, for rarely did he conform to any given social or intellectual ideal. He was at once a consummate lawyer and an uncompromising visionary. A democrat by belief, he could appear dictatorial in his manners. Most scholarly in his writings, he was often repetitive, ordinary and fumbling in his speeches.

Nehru denied being 'a man of letters'; instead, he declared, he was 'something of a journalist.' This was decidedly being modest because in the known history rarely has a journalist possessed his sense of history or analysed so well the causes of rise and fall of civilizations. When aroused emotionally he could write passages after passages of incomparable lyrical beauty.¹ It is an uncommon phenomenon in a mere journalist.

In every Age, the Indian mythology asserts, great persons are born to set in order this rather unmanageable world. This theory may not be universally acceptable but the underlying idea can hardly be disputed. Nehru and Gandhiji enter the twentieth century as luminous personalities to illuminate all the dark and dank corners of this country. Their impact is evident in all walks of life including literature, philosophy, politics and the most impressionable of them all education. Nehru was more akin to Ravindra Nath Tagore than Gandhiji although he had obviously less contacts with

1. cf. Dr. P. E. Dastoor, *The Hindustan Times*, May 27, 1964. In an article on Nehru as a writer, Dr. Dastoor remarks that he was capable of writing 'impassioned, dignified and rhythmic prose'.

the former than with the latter. Both in style and content Nehru was very near to Tagore although he avoided mysticism and verbosity, a habit so common in poets. Like Tagore he denounced narrow nationalism.¹ Internationalism was not a matter of choice, it was a necessity. But Nehru, like many other leaders, was very proud of this country. In his own way he had understood the underlying current of India's life and had seen its future in a wider, and perhaps more significant, perspective. He was sure that a great future lay before us, only people had to measure up to it. For this, he exhorted us, not only to take good education which included preparedness for a profession and sophisticated living, but also to possess a sense of social well-being and civic responsibility.

Nehru laid emphasis on the dynamic side of education. The rate at which this world is moving and changing leaves no place for complacency and quiet enjoyment of the fruits of our past labours. The struggle continues. Only those who are prepared for changes in life that occur, are worthy to live. Change is the law of Nature. Therefore the accent must of necessity be on the dynamic aspect of life. People who did not grow and adapt according to this principle were condemned to remain as back number cut-off the main stream of life. It was not sufficient that one showed awareness of it. Action must follow thought. It was a crime against community to live in ivory-towers and dole out sermons at the appropriate hour. Education must provide proper training to the children. To learn to work with our own hands does not involve any indignity. It was a false sense of dignity which made desk-work appear superior to the field or laboratory work. Nehru asked us to abandon it. To the extent basic education put an accent on manual work he was all for it. But there his agreement ended.

India was going to become strong and great not in a distant future. Her greatness will largely depend upon her mastery on the elements of science and technology. Therefore it was the duty of the current educational system to gear itself to our future needs. If we wish to achieve even a part of our past glory we shall have to work for it. Merely indulging in the praise of the past was definitely harmful. India's past, he had analysed, was the result of a dynamic

1. cf. Mukherjee, H. B., *Education for Fulness*, Asia, 1962, p. 28.

social order and the capacity to adapt. Caste-system was out of tune with time and therefore it will have to go.

Besides the mastery over science, the acquiring of scientific temper was also necessary. Without it economic growth would be stunted. Machinery was in itself neither moral nor immoral. The ends to which it was used made it either moral or immoral. It was necessary therefore to have the knowledge and the requisite temper for making a proper use of their by-product, machines.

Nehru's concern for here and now is as great as his pre-occupation with the future. The reason for this emphasis lay in the fact that a strong superstructure is laid only on a solid foundation. For a healthy growth of any organism be it social or otherwise weeding out of unwanted things is essential. His criticism was directed against out-of-date habits and customs. Schools of tomorrow should be free from the bad practices of the past. The curriculum should contain in good measure scientific subjects and laboratory-work. Children should learn to handle things personally. Nehru wanted them to inculcate a habit of manual work, which they must realize is neither indignified nor superfluous.

The fact that Nehru wrote 'mountains of letters' to his daughter with a view to broad-basing her education makes him join the ranks of the greatest educators of the world. His claim for being called an educationist cannot be denied merely because he did not propound formally a scheme of education or start a school of his own. It was not for nothing that Gandhiji asked him to accept a professorship.¹ Undeniably Gandhiji was an astute observer of men's characters. He had seen in him the traits of becoming a great teacher. Indeed, his role as a grand-leader of India is sufficient to make this claim granted, for a leader is always an educator as well. He taught us in various ways and provided us with a vision of a great India. Who else but a Rishi could perform this task so magnificently.

In the words of Dr. Mukherjee, "Greatness of an educator does not lie in the fact that he had thought or done something which has not been thought or done before, the sources of his greatness should be sought for somewhere else. The greatness of an

1. *A Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 42.

educator may lie in the fact that he effectively formulated or organized ideals, principles, or methods that characterized a particular period, as most of the great educators did, or that he brought into prominence thoughts rather vaguely perceived by others, as Rousseau and Pestalozzi did ;.....or that he left a deep and wide influence either on the educational theory or on the school system of his and succeeding ages. The greatness of an educator may also lie in the force and intensity, the passion and fire with which he felt and expressed himself about the urgent educational problems of his times.”¹

The future will indicate his claim even more emphatically than any amount of contemporary writing ; for the future will tell how he left his impress on the shape of things to come in matters educational. We can only hope when the tumult of politics becomes a quiet part of history and the dust of contemporary controversies settles down, a clear picture of Nehru’s work will emerge radiant and glowing, uncomparable in its quiet splendour and unforgettable in its simplicity and appeal.

1. *Education for Fulness*, p. 441.

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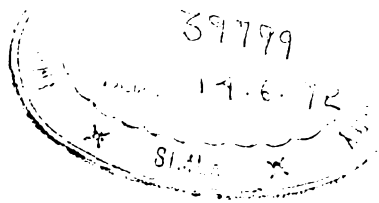
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