

# Jawaharlal Nehru's the Discovery of India: An Exploration of India's Glorious Past

*Dr. Kumar Indra Bhushan*

## *ABSTRACT:*

*Jawaharlal was born on November 14, 1889, in the midst of affluence and luxury that had come to the family, due to the newly acquired fortune by his father Motilal Nehru. Being the first living son of his father, from his second wife Swaruparani, the new born was the total attraction of his parents. He was brought up with extra care and emotionally charged affection. Motilal was keen to provide for his, the education as best as his wealth could procure. Jawaharlal got from his parents nice upbringing, good education, cultured living and economic security, all in full measure. Jawaharlal Nehru holds a very important place among the modern leaders of India. His contribution to the freedom struggle has been very important. He sacrificed the comforts of affluence and submitted himself to trails and tribulations for the sake of India's freedom. He underwent not less than nine years of incarnation during the national movement. He was elected President of Indian National Congress several times. When India become free, he was elected the Prime Minister of India. As a prose writer Nehru wrote a varied kind of prose which evinces his skill in historical writing in *The Glimpses of World History* and *The Discovery of India*, personal writing in *An Autobiography*, epistolary writing in *A Bunch of Old Letters* and *Letters From a Father to His Daughter*. *The Discovery of India* abounds in literary graces. In it Nehru aims at writing about the glorious past of his country by bringing it in some relation to his present day thoughts and activities. He tries to explore ancient India's spiritual foundation and glorious culture with vividness and sensitivity.*

**Key Words:** incarnation, introspections, discovery, indianisation, inkling, spiritual, luminaries, vassalage.

## **Introduction:**

The *Discovery of India* written during Nehru's imprisonment following the Quit India Movement records the glorious culture of India. The style with alternating argument and the introspections of landscape and personalities have a peculiar

touch of the poetic vision. In *'The Discovery of India'* Nehru tries to explore ancient India's spiritual foundation and ends up by emphasizing the need for social reform. He tends to remove all those blemishes of Hinduism which have made Indian society

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**Teacher, English, High School, Koriapatti, Supaul**

the vehicle of torment and suppression. He condemns the perniciousness of the east system and advocates the need for the abolition of untouchability in all its manifestations. He pleads for political freedom and prospects against the denial of elementary human rights to the millions.

Nehru's intellectual curiosity forced him to discover India. He removes all misgivings about India and does away with the British conception of Indian history, which stressed on regional and provincial jealousies and disintegration. Nehru's lasting contribution to Indian history was that in the course of his discovery of India.

The sources of The Discovery of India are manifold. Nehru read India's history and her abundant literature. He had an inkling of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Geeta, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the works of Kalidas and other Sanskrit classics, the Buddhist literature, various schools of Indian philosophy. Kautilya's Arthashastra, Sukracharya's Nitisara, Kalhan's Rajtarangini, Indian poets and writers, European historians were the special charm for Nehru's impetus to write about the treatise. But books and other documents could not satisfy him because he wanted to know the relation which existed between India's past and present and happier future. Endowed with poetic imagination and sensibility Nehru had a comprehensive idea of India's great and glorious past by personal observation of Mohanjodero in the Indus Valley and all around him saw the houses

and streets of this ancient city which is said to have existed over five thousand years ago. Even then it was an old and well-developed civilization.

Nehru journeyed through India in the company of mighty travellers from China and Western and Central Asia who came here in the remote past and left records of their travels. He wandered over the Himalayas, which are intimately connected with old myth and legend and which have nurtured our thought and literature. The mighty rivers of India- the Sindhu, the Brahmaputra, the Yamuna and the Ganges captivated him greatly. To Nehru the Ganges became the symbol of India's eternity.

Nehru visited old monuments and ruins, ancient sculptures and frescoes- Ajanta, Ellora, the Elephanta Caves, the lovely buildings in Agra and Delhi. He participated in the Kumbh Mela and saw there thousands of people. He also came in contact with the masses and knew all about their degradation, abject poverty, faith in rituals and superstitions of his wide reading, gave him an insight into India's past. Nehru found tremendous impress of oneness in the diversity of India. In spite of cultural, lingual, geographical, racial, climatic differences and diversity there is a powerful undercurrent of unity and an awareness of common cultural heritage. Ancient India was a world in itself, a culture and civilization. All Indian belonging to any religion, caste or racial group is called an Indian in foreign countries. It is an indication of Indian's unity

and culture.

Nehru conjured up vivid pictures of great luminaries when he visited a particular place associated with them. At Sarnath near Varanasi he could almost see Buddha preaching his first Sermon and some of his recorded words came like a distant echo to him through two thousand five hundred years ago. Ashoka's stone pillars conjured up the image of an emperor who was greater than any king or emperor. So long Panorama of India's history unfolded itself before him and he could clearly see its ups and downs, its triumphs and defeats. He was greatly influenced by the continuity of India's cultural tradition through five thousand years of history.

The Discovery of India" brought Nehru to focus because it was written at a time when India was in the front pages of newspapers all the world over.

Nehru felt a deep involvement with India with the movements, ideas, and institutions which had been imparting a feeling of continuity of unity, of the country, of his birth. India's vassalage to British Government pained him and he began to think about her future.

In 'The Discovery of India' Nehru selects historical events in order to build up the cumulative effect of India's urge to freedom. He candidly tells that she resisted the invader from early historical times. When the invaders proved too strong they were absorbed as the Greeks, Scythians,

Huns, Turks and Afgans in course of time. They were gradually indianised and they began to look upon India as their homeland.

Jawaharlal Nehru felt that a common cultural background had exerted a powerful influence on the minds of Indians. This background was a mixture of popular philosophy, tradition, history, myth and legend. Even the entirely uneducated and illiterate shared this background. In ancient India some inner urge towards synthesis derived essentially from the Indian philosophic outlook, was the dominant feature of Indian cultural and racial development.

Nehru proves that Indian civilization is not only one of the oldest but most advanced one. Hinduism is not a dogma but a way of living. It is accommodative and absorbent like the sea. He highlights the greatness of the Vedas and the Upanishads which come down to us from the dawn of history. Their philosophy and poetry are of a very high order and they have influenced even great European thinkers. It tells us about the beauty and greatness of Sanskrit language and literature, about the peerless wisdom expressed in the Geeta, and the Ramayana and the Mahabharata about Indian art technology and craftsmanship; about her contribution to science and mathematics. It also tells about Jainism and Buddhism about Ashoka and Hars, about Afgan and Turk invasions and their indianisation, about the large heartedness and secular outlook of Akbar and the Aurengzeb and about the East

India company and consolidation of the British rule.

'The Discovery of India' also highlights India's march for freedom Nehru points out the causes of India's decay. According to him a civilization decoys much more from inner failure than from an external attack. Her springs of inner spiritual strength dried up and she shut herself up in the shell of narrowness and rigidity. The caste-system as observed by Nehru, began as a system of division of labour became consequently rigid in the course of centuries and led to the disintegration of Indian social composition.

In 'The Discovery of India' Nehru has given some original and convincing interpretations of history. He does not approve of the division of Indian history into the popularity accepted Hindu India, Muslim India and British India. This division is neither intelligent nor correct in the eyes of humanism. It is really misleading and erroneous to write about Muslim invasion or Muslim period in India. The Afghans and the Mughals who invaded India no doubt, were gradually Indianised and they began to look upon India as their homeland.

Nehru thinks that religions have contributed greatly to the development of humanity. We are living in an epoch of science which deals with the domain of positive knowledge. Neither religion nor science can lead mankind on the path of progress. It is the synthesis of both that can deliver the good.

### **Conclusion:**

As a great modern writer of India, Jawaharlal Nehru discovered India, at least India of the peasants who always remained in his thought. The Discovery of India abounds in literary graces. Nehru as a historian shows remarkable and penetrating observation of history exceptional poetic sensibility and consummate stylistic excellence in describing the achievements of great artists. It describes the greatest value of the glorious past of the ancient India which abounds with the spiritual values of the primitive society. The Discovery of India is a historical record of the myth, legend and rituals and the religious heritages of the ancient India. Hence in reality this writing of Nehru is his discovery of the glorious past of India through which he counts the cultural and ethical motto of the past.

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