

THE DISCOVERY OF INDIA-AN UNCONSCIOUSLY THEISTIC VOICE

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Abstract: A sincere attempt has been made to elicit the unconsciously theistic voices in Jawaharlal Nehru's monumental work THE DISCOVERY OF INDIA. Close perusal of the work has thrown light on the fact that the author has unconsciously slipped into *theism* notwithstanding his refusal to accept the Creator as a mysterious force controlling human lives. His outright respect for the Vedas and *Puranas* has been perused umpteen times to arrive at this conclusion. It has emerged on close scrutiny that Nehru as a historian has an objective outlook about the Vedic history of the land. However, Nehru as a literature slips into subjectivity while expressing his awe and amazement at India's Vedic history. The article elucidates the theistic voices heard in Nehru's great work!

Keywords: The Discovery of India, Vedic History, Religions, Human Life.

OVERVIEW

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, as many would have us believe is a proclaimed atheist! India's first Prime Minister is believed to have shown refusal to swear in under an oath in the name of God! No wonder, he stands alongside some of the most celebrated atheists the world has ever seen!

Nehru's intellect and brilliance as a litterateur are too well-known to be described at length. The genius of Nehru as a writer wasn't unknown even in the pre-independence era. However, the struggle for India's independence evidently obtruded upon the great man's time and energy not allowing him to be as prolific in writing as he would have wished!

'The Discovery of India', his monumental work had been conceived and written or scribbled in piece meals during the pre-independence era. The book delves deep into the century old Vedic history of the land which had geographically seldom been the India he had struggled to liberate and create; the land was a huge conglomerate of princely states!

How best an atheist would have discovered pre-independent India's history, is still a matter of conjecture to research scholars! To delve deep into the land's Vedic history with nonchalance or a steadfast sense of detachment is something an author could not have done despite the claims of objectivity advanced by literary critics and the author himself!

The author clearly states that religion as an individual entity does not appeal to him; that religion is not a scientifically proven entity is his CONSCIOUS claim. There is no inconsistency whatsoever in this conscious statement. For the author lucidly explains his personal belief. He challenges the religious claim of the world being created by a mysterious source believed to be the creator. Here once again he is quite conscious about his claim. Perhaps the author believes that *big bang* theory in Physics explains the creation of universe.

Any conscious attempts at history ought to be attempted without being attached to dogmas or theistic propaganda. Nehru is quite successful in this regard. He delves deep into the factual data as a computed statistician would have done in the modern era. The factual accuracy of the data has indeed amazed all historians till date.

Nehru, the historian and Nehru the litterateur are two entities that need close scrutiny here! Nehru as a historian stands tall as regards the voluminous information he provides to the world. A study of the land in such a copious manner had not been attempted hither to! Here Nehru, the historian is quite objective in character.

Is *The Discovery of India* written only from a historian's perspective? Is Nehru more of a litterateur or historian by temperament? These questions need answer!! Selective reading of this monumental work shall not help us find answers to these questions.

A couple of decades ago, I would have safely inferred that the book throws in atheistic and objective perspectives of the author. But today, I must confess I am a convert. There have been different stages to my reading of this book. I have read it for information. I have read it for pleasure. In the final phase I have read it for critical appreciation.

The final phase of my reading has been without inhibitions. On the previous occasions, Nehru's reputation as an intellectual and his proclaimed atheism have been at the back of my mind resulting in an inhibited approach to reading. On these occasions, the author appeared objective and atheistic as perceived by casual readers and scholars.

But in the final phase, I have mellowed into more of an uninhibited reader prepared to analyze the work more objectively and critically. My first task was to distinguish between Nehru as a historian and litterateur. My belief that Nehru was more of a litterateur than a historian by temperament helped me separate the chaff from the grain.

Nehru, the litterateur deals at length with Vedas and the epics of the land. An indescribable sense of attachment to the Vedas and the epics as confessed by the author is indeed a case study here. That the chant of certain incantations, relaxes one's mind is perhaps an unconscious admission of theism in him.

The author had indeed conducted laborious research before placing on record his observations on the Vedas and mythology. Evidences indicate that during the pre-independence era he had visited Kurukshetra (where the war between the Kauravas and Pandavas took place) Ceylon (Sri Lanka-where Lord Sri Ram slew Ravan, the King of Rakshasas), Rameshwaram (which has a bridge connecting Sri Lanka-believed to be built by Sri Ram's monkey soldiers), Sri Krishna temple in Mathura and Dwarka (believed to be the Kingdom of Sri Krishna).

His mention of great Rishis or Sages could not have come without a close study! Now here in the book does he ever mention about the Sages possessing any power of clairvoyance. But then he emphasizes that they had knowledge of men and matters beyond the human realm. He looks up to them in great awe. He reinforces or reiterates himself that he does not consider them to be charlatans. Here an unconscious voice of a *theist* can be heard.

Nehru evidently employs clever metaphors and imageries to say he loves the Sages and the repository of wisdom in the Vedas without being wedded to theistic ideologies. The figures of speech are quite handy in camouflaging the *theist* from an inhibited reader who gets carried away by the excitement of his first reading of the work and the reputation of the author as a proclaimed atheist.

At the outset, it is always difficult to notice the *theistic voice* in *The Discovery of India*. But once the reader is past the stage of inhibition (mentioned earlier) he will realize that there are voices that commend theism in the book.

Is this an inconsistency in *The Discovery of India*? Absolutely no! Nowhere in the book does the author try to establish his *atheism*! The author's genius undoubtedly puts him alongside the pantheon of greats and intellectuals by virtue of his monumental work!

The theistic voices are unconsciously muttered most of the time. However, on occasions, although rare, the author becomes conscious of the mutterings and does not illustrate them further but for the use of some figures of speech.

A discerning reader should be able to see the unconscious voices in the book. The same reader should be able to understand and appreciate the balance Nehru has struck between the perspectives of a historian and litterateur.

In spite of the unconscious voices referred to in the article, Nehru's general claim as an atheist should be respected. Nehru, the litterateur and Nehru, the historian are placed in comparison with each other here. A highly discerning reader can safely infer that by temperament Nehru is a litterateur and by design he is a historian. The litterateur unconsciously sounds theistic and the historian is objective and reaffirms his general belief as an atheist. It should be inferred that both complement each other.

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