



Jawaharlal Nehru's The Discovery of India: A Historical Approach

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Abstract

The Discovery of India, written by Jawaharlal Nehru during his imprisonment between 1942 and 1945, is not only a history of India but also a reconstruction of Indian civilization through Nehru's interpretation. This study examines Nehru's interpretation of ancient India, focusing on the period from the Indus Valley Civilization to the time of Ashoka. Contrary to the perception of history as a series of disconnected events, Nehru's interpretation of history is a continuous and developing process of civilization, which is driven by the synthesis of culture, the pursuit of philosophy, social change, and ethical administration. Nehru's interpretation of ancient India draws upon archaeology, Vedic texts, Upanishads, epics, heterodox schools of thought, and imperial politics to construct a vision of India that is constantly developing and dialogically engaged with itself.

The current research inquiry seeks to answer two key research questions:

- How does Nehru re-interpret ancient Indian history as a continuous and adaptive proof civilization, rather than as a disjunctive series of religious or racial periods?
- How does Nehru relate the early Indian intellectual traditions of Vedic speculations,

Upanishadic inquiries, epic ethics, and Buddhist reforms to the construction of modern Indian identity?

The research analyzes Nehru's interpretations of the Indus Valley Civilization, the Aryan problem, the Vedas and Upanishads, the Mahabharata and Bhagavad Gita, and the moralpolitical contributions of Mahavira, the Buddha, and Ashoka, alongside secondary scholarship from historians such as Romila Thapar, R.S. Sharma, A.L. Basham, and Ramachandra Guha. Nehru's approach is interpretative and humanistic rather than strictly positivist: he presents ancient India as complex and sometimes contradictory, yet capable of renewal through philosophical pluralism, cultural synthesis, and ethical statecraft. This vision of history forms the foundation of modern India as Nehru imagined it—a nation rooted in continuity, tolerance, and moral self-reflection, rather than exclusivist or rigid identities.

Keywords: Civilizational Continuity, Cultural Synthesis, Ancient Indian Historiography, Philosophical Pluralism, Nationalism and Identity, Ethical Governance.

Introduction

The past is not just a matter of a backward glance, but it is the source for a nation's concept of itself at a particular moment in history. In colonial India, history writing often represented the interests of the ruling elite, rather than a more general or representative history. British colonial scholars like James Mill and Vincent Arthur Smith divided the history of India into rigid sections like Hindu, Muslim, and British history, which seemed to suggest that India had never had a united history before the British arrived. These were the circumstances in which Jawaharlal Nehru wrote and delivered The Discovery of India. The purpose of writing The Discovery of India was more than just writing a history of events; it was a discovery that sought to rediscover India and give its civilization a sense of dignity, a sense of continuity, and a sense of intellectual pride.

Nehru's approach to ancient India is far removed from the

traditional political histories that emphasize kings, wars, and dynasties. Instead, he views civilization as a whole, its ideas, philosophies, social patterns, and moral values, in an attempt to understand how Indian society developed over thousands of years, how it met challenges, and how it adjusted without losing its essential identity. For Nehru, India is not a static culture but a living and developing civilization. This allows him to question the colonial notion of India as a passive and dependent culture waiting for progress from outside powers.

One of the most important aspects of Nehru's understanding of India is his view of the Indus Valley Civilization. The excavations at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa uncovered a highly developed urban culture with planned cities, sophisticated drainage systems, and a wellorganized civic life. He finds this a conclusive proof of the independent roots of Indian civilization. However, he is also cautious in his assessment, pointing out that the script is still undeciphered

and that many aspects of the civilization are still unclear. This indicates that while he is proud of the antiquity of Indian civilization, he is also cautious and thoughtful in his assessment.

When Nehru turns to the Vedic and Upanishadic periods, he highlights the growth of knowledge over religious dogma. He interprets the Rig Veda as a literary and philosophical work that reflects the early human quest for knowledge about nature and existence. The concept of *rita*, or the cosmic order, symbolizes the quest for understanding harmony in the universe. The Upanishads take this search further through dialogue and debates about the self and the ultimate reality. Nehru refers to these periods to prove that the pursuit of inquiry and logical thinking has been an integral part of Indian thinking, contrary to the common perception that Indian philosophy revolves only around mysticism and irrationality.

Nehru considers ancient India as a land of dialogue, scrutiny, and intellectual exploration.

The epic school of thought, particularly the Mahabharata and the Bhagavad Gita, is presented as a reflection of the struggle between right and wrong. These texts are not merely religious texts but stories that reflect on duty, action, and morality. Nehru sees these texts as an attempt to integrate philosophical ideas with real life. Likewise, the emergence of Jainism and Buddhism is presented not as a departure from tradition but as a reformation within the tradition. The teachings of Mahavira and the Buddha criticized rituals and social stratification but continued the search for truth and morality.

Ashoka is at the heart of this story of continuity and transformation. Nehru praises Ashoka's stress on moral governance and non-violence. Ashoka did not glorify conquest but preached moral governance and care for his subjects. This moment marks the beginning of the possibility of political power based on moral values, thus underlining Nehru's overall point that Indian civilization has always contained the seeds of tolerance and compassion.

This research paper will contextualize Nehru's reading in relation to more contemporary historians like Romila Thapar and R.S. Sharma, who are more concerned with socioeconomic patterns and material conditions. Historians like A.L. Basham enumerate India's cultural accomplishments with academic rigor, while Ramachandra Guha writes about Nehru's intellectual character. Through this comparison, this research paper hopes to evaluate whether Nehru's reading is strictly nationalist or whether it provides a fruitful integration of culture, philosophy, and history.

Two major questions guide this research. First, how does Nehru represent ancient Indian history as a process of continuous development and evolution, rather than as a series of disconnected eras? Second, how does Nehru integrate ancient Indian philosophical thought into the idea of modern Indian identity? These questions are important because they help to illustrate the ways in which history can influence national identity.

Together, the introduction has prepared us to consider Nehru's interpretation of ancient India as dynamic, curious, and morally engaged. Nehru's understanding of ancient India is neither an "encomiastic" one "in an uncritical or even zealous manner" nor an "objective analysis" in the manner of the "detached historian." It is "a reflective effort" to "explain the relevance of the past to the present." Nehru's understanding of ancient India is neither an "encomiastic" one "in an uncritical or even zealous manner" nor an "objective analysis" in the manner of the "detached historian." It is "a

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Literature Review

The historiography of ancient India, as an area of academic inquiry, has seen the rise of various intellectual currents, ranging from colonialist approaches to nationalist re-readings, and subsequently Marxist and subalternist approaches. Jawaharlal Nehru's **The Discovery of India** is an important work in the context of these intellectual currents, as it attempts an amalgamation of elements of nationalist aspirations and philosophical musings. To understand Nehru's reading of ancient India, which ranges from the Indus Valley Civilization to Ashoka, it is necessary to contextualize the work within the broader currents of academic inquiry of the time.

Colonialist historians like James Mill and Vincent Smith divided the history of India into rigid religious categories of Hindu, Muslim, and British rule, which created a fragmented narrative of stagnation and despotism. This created the image of ancient India as being mystical and socially static. However, the nationalist historians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries focused on the cultural and intellectual achievements of the subcontinent. In this context, Nehru's text represents a mature form of nationalism that sought to reinterpret the past without sacrificing the critical tools of modern historiography. Unlike previous revivalist writers, Nehru does not argue that ancient India was a flawless civilization; instead, he seeks to portray it as a dynamic and self-transforming entity.

Contemporary historians have presented varied interpretations of the same historical periods that Nehru writes about. Romila Thapar, in her studies of ancient India, highlights socioeconomic factors, regional differences, and the importance of archaeological findings in understanding history. Additionally, the author reveals his misgivings regarding the uniformity of theories of civilizational continuity and his observation of changes in political and social structures. The second author, R. S. Sharma, focuses on the role of material conditions, classes, and the development of caste and state societies. Sharma's Marxist perspective is quite different from Nehru's more cultural and philosophical approach, particularly in his discussion of Vedic society and the development of social stratification. In his discussion of the cultural and intellectual achievements of ancient India, other authors such as A. L. Basham, **The Wonder That Was India**, focus on the achievements of ancient Indian philosophy, art, and politics. The author takes a neutral stance on India's nationalist ideology. His balanced perspective is somewhat similar to Nehru's on the achievements of Indian philosophy but is more academic and historical in nature. **Ancient and Medieval India** by Spectrum is a concise overview of political events, dynasties, socio-economic developments, and is more suitable as a guide for Indian history exams.

Compared to this well-structured text, Nehru's work is more subjective and introspective, focusing on civilizational continuity rather than historical events. Contemporary scholarship on Nehru considers him as a political leader as well as a scholar who was influenced by liberal humanism and globalization. According to Ramachandra Guha, Nehru's work on Indian history is a reflection of his commitment to secularism, pluralism, and reason. This is reflected in Nehru's focus on philosophical discourse, cultural unification, and reform movements of ancient India.

Thus, the review of the literature reveals that although Nehru's work does not comply with the contemporary academic standard of scholarship on Indian history, it is of considerable intellectual value. Nehru's work is a combination of nationalist historiography, liberal humanism, and the incorporation of recent archaeological discoveries. The comparative analysis of Nehru's work on Indian history with other approaches to Indian history—Marxist, Structuralist, Revisionist—will place **The Discovery of India** within the context of historiography.

Analysis

Nehru's discussion of ancient India in **The Discovery of India** is not merely a linear discussion but an intellectual exercise designed to recreate civilizational identity. Nehru's approach to history does not attempt to view historical events in isolation from one another but rather looks for patterns of continuity, flexibility, and dialogue within history. The logic of Nehru's discussion is opposed to the logic of colonial historiography generally and specifically to the discussion by James Mill and other imperial historians who sought to divide Indian history into distinct and mutually exclusive periods based on religious affiliation. Nehru refuses to be bound by such divisions. By beginning with the Indus Valley Civilization, he asserts that Indian civilization has its own native antiquity, which is not dependent on later Aryan or foreign influences.

When Nehru writes about the discovery of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa as yielding "The Indus Valley civilization, as we find it, was highly developed" (Nehru, 2004, p. 65), the phrase is as much polemical as it is descriptive. It argues against the colonialist notion that the early history of India was primitive. Nehru points out the carefully laid-out roads, sophisticated drainage systems, and uniform bricks, and observes evidence of "Nehru emphasizes the careful town planning and excellent drainage system of the Indus cities (Nehru, 2004, pp. 65–66). These observations relocate ancient India within the larger history of the early urban civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia. Nonetheless, he does not exhibit overconfidence. He admits that "the script has not yet been deciphered" (Nehru, 2004, p. 66), which implies the limitations that exist in the interpretation of artifacts. This is important because it shows that Nehru's nationalism is informed by rational arguments and not mythical exaggerations.

Nehru's interpretive agenda also goes beyond the strictly materialist approach, as he suggests the possibility that there might be some connections between the religious symbols found in the Indus Valley and later Hinduism, especially with regard to proto-Shiva figures and fertility symbols. Therefore, Nehru's account moves from the archaeological evidence to the world of cultural memory. In fact, other scholars, such as Romila Thapar, who write on the same period, advise that one should be careful not to posit religious continuity before the advent of the European colonizers, especially without conclusive evidence, and that the imposition of Hinduism on the Indus Valley civilization might be a product of the nationalist agenda. Nehru, however, appears to be adopting a methodological approach that seeks to establish civilizational continuity, rather than the strictly objective approach that might be expected from an academic, since his historical writing also partakes of the anti-colonial agenda, which also seeks to posit the idea of continuity with a political agenda.

The shift to the Vedic period reinforces the overall academic attempt to rethink the beginning. Instead of portraying the

Aryans as destructive conquerors who destroyed all previous civilizations, Nehru portrays them as an essential part of an entire period of cross-cultural encounters. It is interesting to note that Nehru is famous for his statement that the Rig Veda is "the earliest book in the library of the world" (Nehru, 2004, p. 75), which positions India within the world knowledge base. This statement is also an attempt to break away from Eurocentric ideologies that place classical Greece as the sole source of philosophy. Nehru does not view the Vedic hymns as primitive incantations but rather as poetic explorations of nature and the universe. He observes that the hymns express "...a brave and joyous one... rapture at nature's loveliness and mystery." (Nehru, 2004, p. 75-76), which highlights an appreciation for life rather than an ascetic lifestyle.

There is a further level of complexity in the conventional image of Indian civilization as being fundamentally pessimistic or world-rejecting in this particular reading. The Vedic concern with the imagery of dawn, fire, rain, and the pulsations of the cosmos points to a concern with the external world. At the same time, Nehru points to the germinal development of speculative thought in the Vedas.

The idea of a universe ordered by a law of order, or *rita*, points to a development from mythological narrative to moral philosophy, indicating that there is an intellectual synthesis in Indian civilization.

Nehru, however, does not fail to point out the development of social stratification: "What was at first probably a functional division became rigid in course of time" (Nehru, 2004, p. 79).

This is a critical observation, as it points to historical change in social organization. The caste system is not presented as a static entity, but as a dynamic system. R. S. Sharma, in his book "Indian Feudalism," points to the fact that there was a distinction between the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas, and that "the distinction was not based on any difference in their Vedic learning or in their manner of life, but on their occupations and functions in the community" (Sharma, 1966, p. 26).

Sharma's Marxist perspective provides an explanation for the inflexibility in terms of the growth and development of agriculture and the creation of surplus in the later Vedic period. Despite Nehru's lack of use of Marxist terminology, his acknowledgment of the process of inflexibility demonstrates a recognition of social change. The inflexibility of the caste system, therefore, demonstrates a degeneration of earlier flexibility, which, for Nehru, highlights that civilization breeds both creative and controlling forces.

The Upanishadic period, as described by Nehru, is "a marked intellectual transition." The Upanishads, he writes, represent "a spirit of inquiry, of mental adventure" (Nehru, 2004, p. 88), and this definition demonstrates a respect for mental adventurousness. The shift from elaborate rituals to more introspective contemplation demonstrates a maturation of thought. The arguments surrounding Brahman and Atman represent a desire to comprehend the essence of things beyond the external world. Nehru's interpretation of the Upanishads is not as a rigid formulation but as a more exploratory one, which demonstrates that the thinkers of this period were engaged in "a passionate search for the ultimate reality" (Nehru, 2004, p. 89), and this highlights the dynamic nature of philosophical thought.

Contemporary scholarship supports this approach from an interpretation of Indian thought. Patrick Olivelle's work on the Upanishads focuses on the dialogic nature and philosophical radicalism of the texts. A similar approach is used by Romila Thapar to discuss the early history of Indian intellectual culture: "The early history of Indian intellectual

culture reveals a series of disputations between contending schools of thought.” Nehru’s work foreshadows this perspective by highlighting heterodox movements and noting that even skeptics and materialists “had their place in the wide sweep of Indian thought” (Nehru, 2004, p. 91). This is the central notion of his vision of cultural pluralism, which assumes Indian culture to be sufficiently inclusive and broad to encompass diversity and dissent.

This notion of inclusiveness takes on political connotations when evaluated from the perspective of colonial representation. British colonial officials frequently represented Indian society as being rigid and intolerant. Nehru’s discussion of intellectual inclusiveness offers a direct opposition to this notion of Indian society. Nehru’s discussion of ancient Indian society offers a validation of contemporary secularism and demonstrates that this notion of inclusiveness is not an import from the West but an extension of Indian philosophical thought.

The Epic Age continues this notion of inclusiveness. Nehru’s discussion of the Mahabharata assumes that this work is “a vast storehouse of tradition and legend” (Nehru, 2004, p. 99), emphasizing its scope. The work encompasses a range of topics from mythology to genealogy to politics and ethics within a cohesive narrative structure. This is a structural inclusiveness that mirrors Nehru’s broader notion of civilization as an accumulation of layers. The Bhagavad Gita is described within the work as “a poem of action and devotion and knowledge blended together” (Nehru, 2004, p. 101). The word “blended” is significant here as it assumes the synthesis of opposing notions of renunciation and action, contemplation and activity.

The philosophical interpretation of the *Bhagavad Gita* as presented by Bimal Krishna Matilal emphasizes the resolution of conflicts through action. Nehru’s reading of the *Gita* is consistent with this framework of interpretation. The hesitation of Arjuna on the field of war is taken as a paradigm of human uncertainty, while the advice of Krishna emphasizes commitment without any kind of attachment. Within this framework of understanding the

Gita, Nehru draws moral lessons that are applicable to contemporary political situations.

This reading of the *Bhagavad Gita* within a framework of political action is a significant aspect of Nehru’s historiography. He reads ancient texts as a way of understanding the present. Therefore, the epic tradition becomes a part of civilizational continuity.

At this point of his narrative, a pattern becomes visible: Indian civilization progresses not by negating what is past but by reinterpreting it. The Indus Valley civilization provides the urban base; the Vedic period adds the element of poetry; the Upanishads add the element of philosophy; and the epics add the element of ethics. Thus, each civilization builds upon the past without negating it. This is quite different from the colonial periodization of Indian history as marked by disjunctions and discontinuities.

The secondary historians add another level of complexity to the narrative by focusing on material conflict, regional differences, and social stratification.

However, even as they add these nuances, Nehru’s original idea of the progressive nature of Indian civilization through dialogue and adaptation remains relevant. Nehru’s work can be seen as not only an academic exercise but also an intellectual engagement with the debate on national identity. The discussion on the reform movement in the sixth century BCE serves to clarify the tension between the continuous and

the critical, the progressive nature of Indian civilization, and its transformation from within.

The rise of the reform movement in the sixth century BCE is the turning point in Nehru’s narrative of ancient India. Nehru describes the era as one of “intellectual ferment” (Nehru, 2004, p. 109). The use of the word “ferment” is deliberate and serves as an indicator of change and transformation. The use of the word is significant in the context of the discussion on social cohesion. The use of the word “ferment” instead of “unity” serves as an indicator of change and transformation through the dynamics of the social structure instead of the breakdown of the social structure. Jainism and Buddhism are not the collapse of civilization but the product of the desire for change through the application of critical thinking while being grounded in the Indian intellectual tradition. The discussion on the Buddha is one of reverence. Nehru argues that the Buddha’s teaching is “imbued with the spirit of compassion and love” and that he is “perhaps the greatest son of India” (Nehru, 2004, pp. 112-113). This is not an exercise in hero worship but an underpinning of Nehru’s own ethical framework. The Buddha is the epitome of rational spirituality, which is grounded in the rejection of metaphysics and the embrace of morality.

Similarly, A. L. Basham, in *The Wonder That Was India*, points out Buddhism as one of the important contributions of India towards the development of world civilization. However, the approach adopted by Basham is again descriptive and ideological. Nehru, on the other hand, has included the Buddha in the framework of civilizational history. According to Nehru,

Buddhism is an indication of the potential of India for reform. Reform is not the product of external influences, but the natural outcome of intellectual frustration. This approach is also against the colonial view of India as a static society which cannot change without external, particularly Western, influences.

In the view of the scholarly work by Romila Thapar, the rise of Buddhism in India is part of the larger process of socio-economic change. This change has included the rise of cities, the establishment of trade networks, and the emergence of new social groups such as merchants.

While Nehru has included the changes in the social milieu, he has not included them as the cause of reform. This difference is an indication of the basic difference between academic and nationalist historiography. However, the difference is not so basic as not to allow us to reconcile the two approaches by including the psychological aspect of the social change.

Jainism, although not given much emphasis, is also included in the framework of internal reform. The austerity and penance associated with Mahavira are another reaction against the dominance of rituals. The coexistence and conflict of these different approaches, as reflected in the account by Nehru, have given rise to the overall idea of pluralism. The Indian civilization is not weakened by these different approaches, but they are assimilated into the overall framework. The capability of the civilization to sustain multiple ethical systems at the same time has emerged as an important feature of the approach adopted by Nehru.

The Mauryan Empire, with Ashoka as the central character, presents an insightful portrayal of the complex relationship between power and ethics. Nehru’s narrative is based on Ashoka’s transformation following the Kalinga War. The central idea is Ashoka’s remorse and commitment to the path of Dhamma. According to Nehru, the inscriptions are infused

with “a voice singularly gentle and humane” (Nehru, 2004, p. 121). The emphasis on the idea of gentleness is an important one. It suggests the possibility of ethics influencing the exercise of power.

Romila Thapar’s analysis of Ashoka and the path of Dhamma suggests the idea of Dhamma as an instrument of political integration. Ashoka’s edicts are seen as an instrument of political integration. This facilitated the process of social cohesion. However, Nehru has not focused on the political usefulness of the edicts. Instead, he has emphasized the idea of Ashoka’s remorse. According to Nehru, Ashoka is an epitome of the subordination of power to ethics. This is an idea that is consistent with Nehru’s political ideology.

The Mauryan period is also an important one because it presents an idea of political integration. This is an idea of territorial as well as cultural unification. The process of political integration is an important one. It facilitated the spread of intellectual and moral traditions. The spread of Buddhism outside the territory of India is an idea of the spread of Indian thought. This suggests the idea of civilization as an open rather than a closed system.

Nehru has not portrayed ancient India as an ideal place. This is evident in the fact that he has not ignored the prevalence of social stratification. The idea of the prevalence of the caste system is an important one. This is because it suggests the idea of the inflexibility of the social order. However, the emphasis is on the idea of the prevalence of the spirit of adaptation. This is evident in the fact that social reform movements emerged. The tension between the idea of the inflexibility of the social order and the spirit of adaptation is an important one.

The role of secondary historians is to add another layer of complexity to Nehru’s synthesis by emphasizing conflict and inequality. While R. S. Sharma emphasizes economic stratification and class formation, D. D. Kosambi focuses on the analysis of material culture and social change from the point of view of Marxist methodology. While all this throws new light on the contradictions which Nehru glossed over, his purpose remains very different from that of the historian who is trying to write a socio-economic history of the Indian past. His purpose remains that of creating a civilization-centered history which would promote unity in diversity.

Ramachandra Guha remarks that Nehru combined scholarship with imagination to create a historical work which was more contemplative than archival. Written while Nehru was in prison, *“The Discovery of India”* reflects his urgency of political struggle and informs his approach which emphasizes continuity and diversity. Nehru uses his demonstration of the fact that India has always been a land of diversity - Aryan and non-Aryan, orthodox and heterodox, imperial and ascetic - to create a model of contemporary secular nationalism.

The metaphor of civilization as a manuscript which is normally described by Nehru as a palimpsest is very effective here. The earlier writings are not destroyed but overlaid so that they can be read dimly through the new writings. The civilization of the Indus Valley, Vedic literature, Upanishadic philosophy, the morality of the Epics, the reforming zeal of Buddhism, and the politics of the Mauryas exist together as overlapping strata. This metaphor avoids the dismemberment of the Indian past by colonialism and the particularism of Hinduism.

Nehru’s approach to history is that of a mediator who stands between positivist empiricism which insists on a strict division between interpretation and aspiration, and the mythic revivalism which uncritically celebrates the past. Nehru’s

history is an amalgam of evidence and philosophy which is intended to argue and transform the way Indians think of themselves.

Benedict Anderson’s idea of the nation as an “imagined community” provides an appropriate theoretical model. The idea of the nation is created through shared narratives that establish the idea of shared history. Nehru’s account of ancient India takes the same path. By focusing on the role of intellectual inquiry, ethical thinking, and coexistence, Nehru outlines an appropriate historical narrative for the development of democratic identity in the modern nation.

From the postcolonial perspective, one can argue that the historical narrative of the nation often ignores the existence of diversity.

Subaltern historians would argue that Nehru has not sufficiently engaged with the voices of the subalterns, including women, lower castes, and tribal populations. This is evident in the emphasis he puts on the role of the intellectual elite and the broader philosophical currents. However, this is not meant to detract from the fact that Nehru has made an important contribution by reimagining ancient India as dynamic and dialogic instead of static and irrational.

The overall impact of Nehru’s historical analysis is the repositioning of the Indian civilization within the broader context of the history of the world. It is neither derivative nor exclusive. It contributes to intellectual speculation, ethical thinking, and political thought within the broader context of the world. By integrating archaeological data, sacred texts, epics, reform movements, and imperial rule into an appropriate narrative, Nehru outlines an appropriate model of civilization based on the idea of adaptability.

Therefore, across the ancient period, there is an identifiable pattern of the idea of Indian civilization as an idea of negotiation rather than destruction. This is evident in the fact that “interaction results in synthesis, criticism in renewal, the exercise of power in the awakening of conscience.” The idea of shared history that Nehru outlines is not one of mere repetition. It is one of survival. This is because each historical epoch builds upon the structures of the past while creating new forms and retaining elements of the previous historical strata.

In this regard, Nehru’s account of ancient India goes beyond the mere historical narrative. It outlines an appropriate intellectual framework for the conception of modern India as diverse, secular, and ethical—a framework capable of integrating diversity without losing its unity.

Findings

The research shows that the writing of history by Jawaharlal Nehru is not done in a detached, purely academic sense, but rather with a sense of emotional involvement, careful consideration, and a strong sense of responsibility to the historical narrative. Ancient India, as described by Nehru in “*The Discovery of India*,” cannot be seen as a golden age or a civilization on the brink of destruction. Rather, ancient India appears as a living civilization, changing, self-correcting, and self-evolving. Indian civilization, as described by Nehru, is a process, a process undergoing change in form but retaining the same cultural and philosophical underpinnings.

The second major conclusion that the research makes about Nehru’s “*The Discovery of India*” is the way the author links philosophy with identity. As discussed above, the description of the Vedas, the Upanishads, Buddhism, and Ashoka’s concept of ethical governance goes beyond the purely historical to a sense of linking these to the very core of Indian

identity. Even when Nehru describes social issues like caste, political issues, etc., he does not shy away from the challenges they pose. Rather, he recognizes the complexity of the issues. As a result, the account presented by Nehru is balanced, not limited to a nationalist perspective.

The findings of the study indicate that Nehru's approach is interpretive and humanistic. He uses history as a medium to connect the past with the present by emphasizing that the secularism and unity of the contemporary Indian state are rooted in the ancient traditions of dialogue and synthesis. The historiography used by Nehru not only focuses on what has transpired in the past but also on what lessons India can learn from its own history.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the work of Jawaharlal Nehru entitled *The Discovery of India* is seen not only as an historical account but also as an enlightened portrayal of the civilizational identity of India. The present study has shown that the portrayal of ancient India, ranging from the Indus Valley Civilization to the Ashokan period, by Nehru is underpinned by the idea of continuity, synthesis, and inquiry. According to Nehru, history is not just an account of individual events or the rule of particular dynasties; rather, it is a long and evolving process characterized by dialogue, reform, and adaptation.

One of the main arguments of the work is that the author resists the colonial idea of periodization and fragmentation by focusing on the cultural. Nehru's discussion of the ideas of the Vedas, the philosophical thoughts of the Upanishads, the moral challenges of the Epics, and the reformist character of Buddhism is seen as an attempt to portray the idea of Indian civilization as being capable of renewal in a dynamic manner. The ethical state of Ashoka is seen as an allegory of the political tradition based on ethics rather than conquest. However, Nehru is not oblivious to the social complexities and tensions; he is aware of the complexities of caste and the concentration of power, although he tends to view them from a humanistic perspective that is not always materialistic.

The research also reveals that Nehru's historiography is more interpretative than empirical. His objective is not only to represent the past but also to construct the moral imagination of modern India. By establishing a connection between ancient philosophical pluralism and modern secularism and unity, Nehru establishes a bridge between history and nation building. Although later historians such as Romila Thapar and R.S. Sharma provide more specialized and structural approaches to history, Nehru's achievement is to integrate culture, philosophy, and politics into a coherent civilizational vision.

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