



Inside Story of Nobel Peace Prize Award - Indian Contestants, Author : Rajinder Singh, University of Oldenburg, Germany, Publisher: Shaker Verlag GmbH, Aachen, Germany, Year of Publication: 2016; Price: 21.90 Euro; Pages: 234.

Rajinder Singh is a well-established Historian of Science who started his journey in this field by working on his Ph.D. thesis: “Nobel Laureate CV Raman’s work on Light Scattering”. He is author of ten books and a score of research papers dealing with Indian Nobel Prize Winners and their Nominators. The book under review is focused on Indian Nobel Peace Prize nominees, including Aga Khan III, JawaharLal Nehru, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Raja MahendraPartap Singh, S.K. Chaudhuri, N.K. Mukherjee, B.N. Rau, Vinoba Bhave et al. Mahatma Gandhi was also nominated for Nobel Peace Prize but the author has dealt with Mahatma in a separate volume: “Mahatma Gandhi – Sex Scandal and the missed Peace Prize”. The author has researched the archives of Nobel Foundation and prepared this volume based on 14 Indian nominees for Nobel Peace Prize.

The Foreword by Professor S.C. Roy recounts the

herculean effort made by Rajinder in collecting materials, rare documents and confidential reports from archives to prepare this book. The author had to use online translators to get information about nominees written in Norwegian, Swedish, French, Italian or Dutch languages. In the Introduction, the author summarizes the history of Nobel Prizes and Indian contribution.

The first Indian nominee to Nobel Peace Prize was Sultan Muhammad Shah Aga Khan III. He was a great linguist who was well versed in Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Hindi, English, French and German. He played an important role in politics after WWI. He was nominated twice in 1923 and 1924 by the Persian Prince Samad Khan on the plea that the war between Turkey and Europe was prevented due to Aga Khan’s efforts. However, his Indian nomination became highly controversial due to communal politics of India and intrigues of political secretary of British – Indian government who opposed the move.

Raja Mahendra Partap Singh was an Indian revolutionary who was an avid traveller and visited many countries of Europe during 1920s to meet world leaders who were opposed to British. His main interest was to publish his journal “World Federation”. He acted as a Diplomat for the Amir of Afghanistan and finally settled in Japan before his return to India in the 1950s. It is interesting to recall that Raja M.P. Singh was nominated by a Swedish doctor, Nils August Nilsson, who was a member of International Peace Bureau, Sweden but it failed to find favour with Nobel Prize Committee.

Hari Mohan Banerjee and Nalini Kumar Mukherjee were two Bengalis who were nominated by Calcutta University professors for their books and pamphlets written to promote Peace. However, both nominees were not short - listed by the Nobel Peace Prize Committee. The author concludes that Nobel Prizes are not awarded for ‘Ideas’ in the form of ‘Books’ unless these ideas are put into practice and show some concrete results.

Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi was a strong contender for Nobel Peace Prize who was nominated 4 times in 1937 - 1939, and 1947, even posthumously once in 1948. It is a mystery why Mahatma Gandhi failed to get this coveted award when he was amply qualified for Peace Prize. Jens A. Seip, who was tasked to for preparing a report on Gandhi, wrote: “There is no doubt that Gandhi

is considered as spokesman for violence-free resistance; a pacifist in the most radical sense, who influenced his country's politics and his people's minds". Gandhi was short listed every time but failed to win. After his death in 1948, there were lots of nominations for Gandhi from USA and Europe but Nobel Prizes are not awarded posthumously, as a rule.

Sanjib Kumar Chaudhary had a brilliant academic record and served as a Professor of English Literature in 3 universities. He turned out to be a Jurist and wrote many books and pamphlets related to politics and law. But his proposals for 'Reunion of India and Pakistan' and "A Constitution for the World Government" were considered as significant contributions to World Politics. Chaudhary was nominated to Peace Prize four times and made lot of propaganda to win the award but failed to influence the decision of Nobel Committee as concluded by the author.

Benegal Narsing Rau was another brilliant scholar from India who served as India's permanent representative to the UN (1949-51) during the Korean crisis. He played the role of a mediator in the Korean War and put forward a proposal "World Disarmament and Aid to Underdeveloped Countries" but was ignored for the Peace Prize. It is interesting to note that Rau was not nominated by any Indian but by his foreign supporters.

Jawahar Lal Nehru was another strong contender for the Peace Prize from India who was nominated seven times during the period 1949 to 1961. The author has made critical analysis and investigated Nehru's case in great detail before concluding that he was not seen as a 'peace-maker' by Indians or foreigners. Rajah B. Manikam, a Christian missionary, was nominated only by Swedish nominators belonging to his own church but was not considered worth the Prize. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi was nominated by his Indian and Italian followers for his "Spiritual Regeneration Movement" through Yoga but was ignored by Nobel Committee.

Acharya Vinoba Bhave, a Gandhian and a leader of Bhoodan Movement in India, was nominated by his foreign supporters but not a single Indian. He was rejected for the Peace Prize, in the same way as his Bhoodan Movement has been rejected in India. Servapalli Radhakrishnan, the Philosopher President of India, was nominated for a record

nine times, during 1950 to 1963, by his supporters worldwide. He was short-listed thrice but failed to win the Prize. Meher Chand Davar from Punjab was a nationalist and supporter of Hindu-Muslim unity but not a strong contender for the Prize.

Aurobindo Ghose, the revolutionary turned spiritualist, is considered by the author as the last nominee in the book under review for Peace Prize from India. Aurobindo was a prolific writer and Editor of a magazine "Mother India" and his nominators tried to impress the Nobel Committee by his published work. However, the author concludes that like other Indian 'Rishis' and 'Gurus' the nomination of Aurobindo did not convince the Nobel Committee and he was not even short-listed for the Peace Prize.

Rajinder has made a critical analysis in the last chapter "Concluding Remarks" and discussed the reasons why Indian nominees failed to make the grade for winning Nobel Peace Prize. It shows the modus operandi of nominators as well as the evaluators of reports. If nominators indulge in propaganda, it does not pay, as the committee seeks confidential reports about the nominee from evaluators. Author concludes that norms for Nobel Peace Prize are not the same as for Nobel Prizes in Physics and Chemistry and some element of politics, religion, and ideology plays a role in decision making.

The author has admitted in the Preface that using on-line translators is a weak point in the text. I find lot of howlers and some serious grammatical mistakes in the text. Just to cite one example, the author writes on page 175: "It would not be exaggerate to assume that it had to do less to do with Pakistan, but more the USA's politics in that area". On the whole, I congratulate Rajinder Singh for his unique contribution to History of Science by this publication which highlights the Indian nominees for Nobel Peace Prize. Let us not forget that India's track record is better in the field of Peace Prizes as compared with other areas as India has been awarded three Peace Prizes, namely Mother Teresa (1979), Dalai Lama (1989) and Kailash Satyarthi (2014). □

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