

FOREWORD

When a man strides a continent like a Colossus for years, it is not easy to grasp the full breadth of his personality. It may not be possible for one person, working singly, to perform that task, even if a whole lifetime is devoted. In this volume, therefore, a number of contributors have co-operated towards presenting an important aspect of the personality of Pandit Nehru. The contributions have been happily linked up, edited and co-ordinated by the editors, with a searching and incisive analysis of this subject by one of the editors, Rajeev Dhavan.

Such books can be said to belong to the domain of history; or rather, they may be said to belong to that branch of history which is commonly called biography. However, what is offered here, is not biography in the raw. It is not a mere narration of bare facts in chronological order, about a great personality. Rather, each contributor has tried to illumine a particular facet of the subject. In other words, the reader will be able to have an idea of Nehru as seen through the eyes of each individual scholar who has co-operated towards the production of this volume.

To write about such a personality is not merely to write about that personality only. Such writing necessarily involves an assessment of the institutions and concepts with which the personality was associated. A great personality floats a number of lamps on the river of time. Lesser human beings will catch a glimpse of this or that small brilliant light, so floated. Some of the lamps so floated may unfortunately fade out or become diverted or may acquire a totally new light, in the course of history. But some of them may gather lustre and acquire greater and greater brilliance in course of time. The light thus lives on.

When, history in general, and biography in particular, are the subject matter of such studies, one has to take note of at least two features which, viewed together, may be said to constitute a dilemma. The first point is, that when one is too near an event or a personality, one's view of the contemporary persons or episodes may not be quite accurate. The very nearness of the event can constitute a hindrance to full comprehension. Small things may be magnified, while bigger things may be under-rated. But, on the other hand, if the events as they have happened, are not recorded within a reasonable period of their occurrence, there is the possibility that valuable material may get lost. Perhaps, the present is a convenient moment for undertaking a study of the subject to which the book is devoted. We are not too much removed from the era in which Nehru lived, nor too near that era.

The Indian Law Institute is grateful to all the contributors to this volume, and to the editors in particular, for the labour that they have put in.

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Director

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