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1982

## Review of *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru: An Introduction*

Lakshman Dewani

*Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund*

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Dewani, Lakshman, "Review of *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru: An Introduction*" (1982). *Documentary Editing: Journal of the Association for Documentary Editing (1979-2011)*. 179.

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# *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru: An Introduction*

LAKSHMAN DEWANI

The publication of the *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* was undertaken by the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund in New Delhi in 1968. The object was to help build a corpus of Nehru's writings and speeches on a variety of subjects which span over a period of fifty years of active political life of one of this century's foremost public leaders and statesmen. It was a stupendous task to collect his writings from various sources, ranging from government archives to private individuals. The task was, however, made less difficult by the availability of a large number of Nehru's letters and other writings in his own collection. This collection, now preserved in the Nehru Memorial Library in New Delhi, is a vast storehouse of information on Nehru's ideas as well as on the history of the past fifty years or so of India's struggle for independence.

The trustees of the Fund desired this project to be a non-governmental venture. They therefore decided to finance it from donations collected by the Fund from all over India, including some received from abroad to perpetuate Nehru's memory. The Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund has been engaging itself in several other activities to promote Nehru's ideas, including the awarding of Nehru Fellowships every year to two or three outstanding scholars, scientists, or artists within the country to help them to further pursue their creative work. The Fund also invites, every year, on the occasion of Jawaharlal Nehru's birthday, on November 14, a scholar of repute to deliver a Nehru Memorial Lecture. Among several distinguished scholars from abroad who have delivered Nehru Memorial Lectures have been two well known American scholars, Noam Chomsky and Margaret Mead. Also, to promote an interest in science among the youth, the Fund holds an annual exhibition in New Delhi of the best scientific works of young school students drawn from all over India on the basis of competition organized at the district and the provincial levels.

The *Selected Works* began with a team of four persons to collect, sift, and arrange the material, and duly edit and annotate it for publication. This team of three sub-editors with one editor was headed by one honorary general editor. The general editor of the series is Professor S. Gopal, a well-known historian in India. The editor who worked on the project for a period of about one year decided to leave before the material for publishing the first volume had been made ready. He had, however, as a result of his queer thinking, got the post of a sub-editor redesignated as a research officer. He perhaps suffered

from a not uncommon notion that he alone would be able to carry on his shoulders the entire burden of editing and publication. The first three volumes, however, were printed in 1972 chiefly as a result of the fine team work put in by the three sub-editors redesignated as research officers with the overall supervision and guidance of the general editor. By the time the first volume had almost been printed, a new editor joined the project, but he left by the time the fourth volume was in production. Yet another editor who followed him also left within a year of joining the project. They left because none of them showed the ability to cope with the onerous demands of editing a series which was unique in the country, as till now no other historical series of a comparable nature has been published with as much regard for the maintenance of historical accuracy and printing excellence. The team of young men and women who are responsible for having contributed largely to the publication of the fourteen volumes in a series published so far can take pride in producing a work of such great value and historical importance. This team at present is comprised of ten research assistants and two research officers, headed by one associate editor and the general editor. The associate editor, who joined the team in late 1973, works more in a managerial capacity, as the entire burden of producing the volumes devolves on the team of researchers.

The volumes published so far cover the period from the early childhood days of Nehru to the time when the World War II ended in the middle of 1945, leading to the release from detention in jail of the leaders of India's nationalist movement. The fifteenth volume, now in production, covers the entire period of negotiations between the various Indian political parties and the alien government which was then seriously preparing itself to terminate its rule over India.

Some of the salient features of the *Selected Works* are:

- (1) Each volume contains material for a number of years which is divided into seven or eight broad subjects, with each subject heading being further sub-divided into small sections according to subject;
- (2) a volume covers a period of two to three years on an average and the number of pages in each volume does exceed more than seven hundred pages;
- (3) each item included in a volume is richly annotated to render understanding of the time and the events better;

- (4) the letters received by Nehru or replies received to his communications are put in a summarized form in footnotes whenever they are available;
- (5) the names of all the persons appearing in the text are identified and wherever possible short biographical notes are written on them;
- (6) the correspondence or speeches made in Hindi or on certain occasions, verses written in Urdu and citations made in French or Sanskrit, are reproduced in original form in the text with their translations in English given in the form of footnotes. For instance, in volume thirteen, which covers the period of Nehru's detention in jail for a period of three and a half years during World War II, he learned Urdu from his senior Muslim colleague and jailmate, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. From the same jail, he wrote, in his letters to his daughter, several Urdu couplets, which reveal Nehru's sense of helplessness and his sad feelings. These efforts of his to learn Urdu and his writing couplets in Urdu to his daughter have been extensively reproduced in the volume;
- (7) so far, nothing has been omitted from the volumes if it merited inclusion, in spite of its containing some uncomplimentary references to political associates or opponents;
- (8) each volume carries a glossary of Indian terms appearing in the text, and has eight to ten illustrations which have a close bearing on the subject matter discussed in the volume; and
- (9) in addition to an index listing all names of places, institutions, and individuals, the index entry on Jawaharlal Nehru gives in a summary form the major events or his views on important matters in an alphabetical order.

It is expected that the pre-independence series will be completed by the end of 1983 and will comprise seven-teen volumes. The post-independence series, which will mainly include Nehru's correspondence as India's first prime minister for a period of seventeen years, will be started in 1984, and it will be about fifteen volumes. Each volume's preparation for the press requires, on an average, one to one-and-one-half year's time to check, collate, and annotate. The press takes about nine months to print seven hundred pages of the text and index. Normally, after reading galley proofs, the research team of two or three persons which is responsible for making the volume ready for the press also has to read the first and the second proofs of the pages. The printing is done on linotype machines and as a consequence, any changes or corrections, and sometimes addition and subtraction of some information, is strongly resented by the printers. We have, however, found from our experience that certain changes or additions made even at the second proof stage are inevitable. This becomes absolutely

unavoidable in the event of the research team's inability to get the necessary biographical data or some other information from the printed sources. In such cases, information has to be obtained from other sources, and this is mostly done by correspondence. It has, therefore, been our sad experience that the sponsors of the project do not show adequate appreciation of the efforts involved in such a time-consuming work, and show impatience with the rate of progress of the work. For last two years or so, the sponsors, turning their faces away from facts, have been firmly insistent that the publication of the post-independence series must be completed by the end of 1986.

I may mention that I have come to The United States to collect material relating to Jawaharlal Nehru and Indo-U.S. relations during the time of his prime ministership of India from various presidential libraries, such as the Truman Library in Missouri, the Eisenhower Library in Abilene, the Johnson Library in Austin, and the Kennedy Library in Boston. In Princeton, I have been collecting material from the papers of John Foster Dulles, Adlai Stevenson, and Louis Fischer which are preserved in the Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library. My visit to this country has been made possible by a fellowship granted to me by the Council for International Exchange of Scholars, Washington, D.C. The material collected by me will be used in the *Selected Works* series.