

Geschichte / History

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**Inside Story of Nobel Peace Prize Award -  
Indian Contestants**

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## Preface

My own interest in the history of the Nobel Prizes began in 1998, while I was working on my PhD thesis on “Nobel Laureate C.V. Raman’s work on light scattering.” Later the research was extended to the Indian Nobel Prize nominators and nominees in Chemistry, Physics, Medicine/Physiology, Literature and Peace Nobel Prizes. Recently “India’s Nobel Prize Nominators and Nominees – The Praxis of Nomination and Geographical Distribution” has been written by me. In 2015, based on the original reports of the experts’ of the Nobel Committee’s as well as the nomination letters, I wrote: “Mahatma Gandhi – Sex scandal and the missed Nobel Peace Prize”, Shaker Publisher, Aachen 2015. Certainly, Gandhi was not the only Indian to be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Before or after him, other persons, such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Aga Khan III, Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh, Sanjib K. Chaudhuri, N.K. Mukherjee, Benegal N. Rau, V. Bhave *et al.* were nominated. So far as I can judge, there is no single book which deals with Indian Nobel Peace Prize nominees. The present book is intended to fulfill this gap.

The experts’ reports are in the Norwegian language. Some of the nomination letters are either in Norwegian, Swedish, Italian, French or Dutch. They were translated with online-translators. This is one of the weak points in the text. However, I think that my knowledge about history of India as well as Nobel Prizes, compensate this weakness to some extent. But, it is not an excuse for mistakes in the

book. I shall be extremely glad to get feedback from the readers as I hope to improve the book in the next version.

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During my visit to the Norwegian Nobel Institute, Oslo, I had the chance to see and copy the nomination letters as well as experts' reports. I thank Mrs. Malene Emilie Augland, Mrs. Anne Cecilie Kjelling and their colleagues for their help. Thanks are due to Captain Praveen Davar, New Delhi, for sending me information about M.C. Davar.

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## Foreword

Following his will after the death of Swedish industrialist Alfred Nobel in 1896, annual prizes were introduced for service to humanity in the fields of Physics, Chemistry, Physiology or Medicine, Literature and Peace. Economics was not on the list of disciplines in Nobel's will and was introduced by the Bank of Sweden in 1969. Nobel awards raised criticism and controversies right from the beginning. To be frank, all awards are subjected to criticism because one cannot completely eliminate all subjective and human elements involved in a selection process. According to the original will of Nobel, the Peace prize should be awarded to 'the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses' and the decision for the prize should be taken by a committee of five persons to be elected by the Norwegian Storting (Parliament). History shows that Nobel prize in the fields of Literature and Peace attract more criticism and controversies as greater subjectivity is involved in these assessments compared to that of science subjects. It is no wonder then that controversies are more prominent in the award of Nobel Peace prize and are very often blamed on politics, biased opinion and Euro-centrism.

It is well known that two Indians, Mother Teresa and Kailash Satyarthi, have received the Nobel Peace Prize so far. It is astonishing to know that 14 other Indians were nominated till 1964 for the Nobel Peace prize and some of them were nominated even

multiple times. Aga Khan was the first Indian nominated for Nobel Peace Prize in 1923 and 1924. Others, arranged in chronological order, were Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh, H.M. Banerjee, Nalini Kumar Mukherjee, M.K. Gandhi, Sanjib Kumar Chaudhuri, Sir Benegal Narsing Rau, Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajah B. Manikam, Bal Brahmachari Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, S. Radhakrishnan, Mehar Chand Davar, Sri (Holy) Aurobindo alias Aurobindo Ghose.

Rajinder Singh in this book not only presented the names of Indians who had been nominated for the Nobel Peace prize during the sixty four years after the Nobel prize was instituted, but also presented the names of the nominators, their recommendations and confidential reports for each candidate that reveals behind-the-scene stories of the final selection.

That Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, popularly known as the Mahatma, was a strong contender for the Nobel Peace prize (nominated four times) is a case in point of how political and other influences dominate the final selection. The attempt to award the prize after his death in January 1948 was taken on a more serious note in spite of the fact that nobody had ever been awarded the Nobel Peace prize posthumously. Finally he was denied the prize on the grounds that he did not belong to any organization, nor did he have any property or testament that could manage the Prize money. Suffice it to say, there was the Sarvodaya Samaj, whose aim was to pursue Gandhi's ideas and a "Gandhi Memorial Fund" created immediately after his death, which could easily have managed the funds. According to the author of this book, sincere attempts were



not made by the Indian Government to convince the Nobel Committee about the management of funds. It is also clear that the Nobel Committee was uncomfortable about their decision of not awarding the Mahatma; the omission was partly amended at the time of awarding the Peace prize to Dalai Lama in 1989 when the Chairman of the committee announced that this was “in part a tribute to the memory of Mahatma Gandhi.

Being a reputed author and serious researcher on the history of science, with twenty years of scholarship dedicated to the history of Nobel prizes, Rajinder Singh has left no stone unturned in collecting materials, rare documents and confidential reports available in the archives of institutions and organizations of various countries to write this book. The end result is that the book depicts how political relationships, imperial mindset and even media reports influence the final selection.

The book is informative, revealing, interesting and provocative in some cases. Writing books on winners and heroes is more common and fashionable, I appreciate Rajinder Singh for his determination of delving into an uncharted territory of people who did not make it. I congratulate Rajinder Singh on his efforts in presenting a valuable book on a subject that is rather less known, yet will be interesting to all classes of readers. I also thank Rajinder for inviting me to write the book’s Foreword.

Professor S.C. Roy

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