



India's Nobel Prize Nominators and Nominees, Author: Rajinder Singh, University of Oldenburg, Germany, Publisher: Shaker Verlag GmbH, Aachen, Germany, Year of Publication: 2016; Price: 19.80 Euro; Pages: 94

The Nobel Prize is considered as the highest award of human endeavor in the field of science, culture and humanitarian services. Obviously there is a curiosity among people to know how the prize is awarded. Controversies and debates about a particular award is also not uncommon. Documents related to selection of Nobel Prize awards were kept secret until 1974. It is only in 1974 that the Nobel Foundation decided to allow documents related to a prize open for public scrutiny which are older than fifty years. This decision opened up a new vista for historians of science to research and analyze the prize giving mechanism in a variety of ways. As noted in the Foreword of the book “the first ten years after 1974 historians like Elisabeth Crawford and Robert Marc” researched over the available documents from different angles to understand the complex procedures starting from nominations till the award of the prize.

This book is India-centric, focused primarily on the Indian Nobel Laureates, Indian nominators and nominees in the field of science, literature and peace. Rajinder Singh, who is a well-known historian of science and is passionate about exploring information related to India and Indians, analyzed documents to present India's position in a global scale in terms of prizes, nominations submitted and nominators during the period 1901 – 1964. The book, in a sense, is an almanac of Indian Nobel prize nominators and nominees over the period 1901, the year when the award of Nobel Prize started, till 1964, the year upto which Nobel Foundation released documents to be used for research work.

The documents have been structured nicely in categories in which the prizes are offered, and the nominators and nominees from all countries have been presented in a tabular form which lets you understand the position of each country at a glance. India so far has won 6 Nobel Prizes; one in literature (Rabindranath Tagore, 1913), one in physics (C.V. Raman, 1930), one in economics (Amartya Sen, 1998), and three peace prizes (Mother Teresa, 1979; The 14th Dalai Lama, 1989; Kailash Satyarthi, 2014). As noted in the book, only 94 countries of the world have either nominees or nominators for the Nobel Prize and it is satisfying to note that India is one of them. Total number of nominees referred for the prize from the USA was the highest (4560) and from India was the lowest (131). It is to be noted that 131 “Indian Nominees” means 131 proposals were placed before the Nobel Committee.

The book revealed some interesting facts to ponder upon. For Chemistry Nobel Prize ten Indian chemists were asked by the Nobel Committee to nominate candidates for the award. They nominated 23 candidates of which 12 were Europeans and the rest were Americans. G.N. Ramachandran was the only Indian nominated for Chemistry Nobel Prize in 1964. In Physics, five Indians (C.V. Raman, M.N. Saha, H.J. Bhabha, S.N. Bose and G.N. Ramachandran) were nominated for Nobel Prize of which only C.V. Raman got the prize. C.V. Raman was nominated by all foreigners, M.N. Saha was nominated by two Indians (D.M. Bose and S.K. Mitra) and one American (A.H. Compton), H.J. Bhabha was nominated by all non-Indians, S.N. Bose was the only Indian who was nominated by all

Indians. C.V. Raman never nominated any Indian except G.N. Ramachandran. Bhabha also never nominated any Indian. In Physiology and Medicine, 18 proposals were sent from India, of which 7 were for foreigners who were working in India. In a sense U.N. Brahmachari was the 'true' Indian nominated for the Prize in 1939 and in 1942 and nominated by all Indians. In literature, 8 Indians were nominated of which only Rabindranath Tagore received the Nobel Prize. Of all these nominees, only Tagore, S. Radhakrishnan and Sri Aurobindo Ghosh were nominated from abroad and others were nominated by Indians. The book contains many such interesting information one can tinker with.

This information presented in the book is important to understand where we stand in terms of Nobel Prize contest when considered in a global scale. The book is an eye-opener for Indian scientists and Indians in general to comprehend why Indians are shy of nominating their fellow Indians for the award. Is it because the work done by Indians is not upto the mark to deserve a Nobel Prize or is it the colonial hangover that impels us to nominate foreigners instead of Indians? I recommend the book to be read by every Indian who is cognizant of his/her own country. □

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