



The **Essential**
Nehru

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MOTHI R. LALITHA

B. A. LITERATURE

THE
ESSENTIAL
NEHRU

Edited by
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PREFACE

One of Nehru's English admirers remarked that if in the future Indians wished to learn English they would do well to insist on its being taught from Nehru's *Glimpses of World History*, rather than from Gibbon or Macaulay, for here was 'better history and better English'. What is more relevant to our purpose is that Nehru wrote these letters to his daughter, a girl of 13. And he tells us in the preface to his *Autobiography* that he wrote this book for his own countrymen or else he would have written differently. His last important work, *The Discovery of India*, was born of his own desire to understand the past of India—its art and literature, its religion and philosophy and generally its culture which has a mass base and shows a remarkable continuity. His books and his speeches as Prime Minister thus constitute the work of one of the greatest Indians of our age and must therefore form an essential part of every educated Indian's mental equipment.

Nehru is, besides, one of our first and foremost writers of English prose. While his English, (due to an early education in England and the spirit of the times in which he grew up), is closer to English-English, his sensibility is essentially Indian. The experience which his language mediates is international in the best sense of the word, but is organized, absorbed and assimilated into an essentially Indian personality.

It is often said that Nehru missed his vocation, but in a sense he is politics' gift to literature just as in the past many an Indian poet and thinker was the gift of religion. But Nehru's is an inclusive sensibility, therefore rich and relevant for the growing mind. His profound regard for tradition, unflinching faith in the temper of science and democracy, a rare compassion and abiding concern for the future of man have all been articulated with a sensitivity and concreteness, hard to match among our writers of prose. Such are the compulsions behind this volume of selections from Nehru's writings and speeches. I commend them to the readers.

G.D.N.

Rs 5.50