

BOOK REVIEW (Malayalam)

RASHTRAPITHAVU (Part I) by K. P. Kesava Menon -
Publishers: Mathrubhoomi Printing and Publish-
ing Co., Ltd., Kozhikode, Kerala - Pages 439 +
VIII - Price Rs.12.00.

This is the first part of a remarkable two-volume biography of the Father of the Nation to be published in the Gandhi Centenary Year. The author Shri Kesava Menon, who is in his 84th year, was one of the early non-co-operators and thus had ample opportunity to know Mahatma Gandhi rather intimately and to participate actively in many of the historic events which moulded the personality of the Mahatma and in turn reflected it. Shri Kesava Menon had also had enough occasions in his chequered and always active career to form lasting relationships with the main actors of the drama of the fight for Indian Independence and the consequent consolidation of the hard-won freedom. With the detachment of a true journalist, Shri Menon surveys the growth of the National Movement in India and the direction given to it by the remarkable Mahatma; with his deep insight into human nature, the author disentangles the innumerable strands composing the highly complex personality of his hero; in considerable detail he describes the background of the major events in the life of Gandhiji as well as in the history of the Nation, which we see in these pages emerging from the dim quietude of the nineteenth century into the tumultuous glare of the middle of the twentieth century. Thus, RASHTRAPITHAVU is at the same time the story of the evolution of the Mahatma and the nation he moulded; it is a biography of Gandhiji as well as the political-social-cultural history of India during the last half-century. The scattered pen-pictures of the dramatic personae, about most of whom the author has some revealing personal anecdote to relate, enliven the lucid and masterly narrative. The first part takes the story to the year 1925, the watershed in Indian history, which, with the organised boycott of the Simon Commission formed in 1926, took a definite turn away from British connection. At the end of this volume we find the personality of the Saint-politician fully formed and the roused Nation fully prepared to follow where he led, regardless of consequences.

84 years young, Shri Kesava Menon is an astonishing phenomenon

in the cultural life of Kerala. Almost, if not totally, blind, he continues as the Chief Editor of the "Mathrubhoomi", one of the largest circulated dailies in the country, in which every week he contributes a remarkable column. The biography of Jawaharlal Nehru which Shri Menon wrote recently is perhaps the most comprehensive and penetrating study of Nehru to be written in any Indian language. After completing the two-volume biography of Mahatma Gandhi, Shri Menon has taken up the work of writing a biography of Jesus Christ. With all this, he finds time to continue the short biographical essays in the series "Architects of Modern India".

RASHTRAPIYTHAVU is certainly a significant addition to the ever-increasing volume of Gandhian literature. This penetrating study deserves to be translated into all the major languages of India.

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