

"Letters from A Father To His Daughter"Summary

<sup>66</sup> Letters from a father to his daughter is a collection of thirty letters written by Jawahar Lal Nehru in 1928 to his daughter Indira Gandhi, when she was 10 years old. These letters were translated into Hindi by Mansi Khandelwal and the name of the Hindi compilation is Pita Ke Patra Putri Ke Maam.

The author Jawahar Lal Nehru says to his daughter that she is receiving presents and good wishes on her birthday, but from Naini Prison my presents can only be of the mind and spirit. The author wants to teach his daughter through several examples, like Hsien Tsang a great traveller from China.

Assignment

1. Write meaning of underlined words.
2. Answer the following questions:
  - (a) What present did Nehruji give to his daughter?
  - (b) For what purpose did Hsien Tsang come to India?
  - (c) From where Nehruji write these letters to Indira?
  - (d) Who was the translator of these letters into Hindi?
  - (e) Write a brief character sketch of Jawahar Lal Nehru?

Note: Do all work in your previous copy or in App. Sheets. (2)

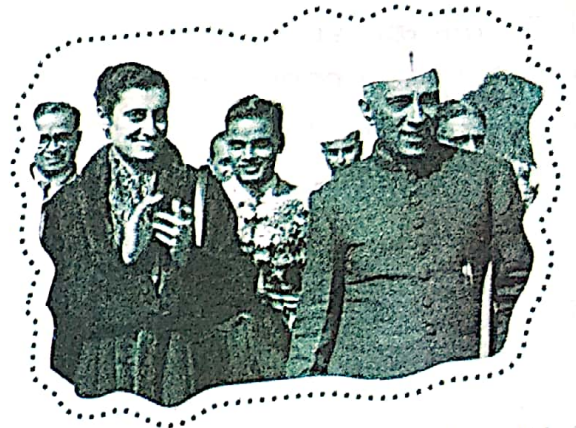


# 1 Letters From A Father To His Daughter

## Warm Up Session



*Letters from a Father to His Daughter* is a collection of thirty letters written by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1928 to his daughter Indira Gandhi when she was 10 years old, in which he told her about natural history and the story of various civilizations. At the time of the writing of these letters, Nehru ji was in Allahabad, in prison, while Indira was in Mussoorie. The actual letters written by Nehru ji were in English. They were translated into Hindi by the famous Hindi novelist Munshi Premchand and the name of the Hindi compilation is *Pita Ke Patra Putri Ke Naam*.



## Reading Time



My dear

On your birthday you have been in the habit of receiving presents and good wishes. Good wishes you will still have in full measure, but what presents can I give you from Naini prison? My presents cannot be very material or solid. They can only be of the air and of the mind and spirit such as a good fairy might have bestowed on you, something that even the high walls of prison cannot stop.

You know sweetheart, how I dislike sermonizing and doling out good advice. When I am tempted to do this, I always think of the story of a 'very wise man,' I once read. Perhaps one day you will yourself read the book which contains this story. Thirteen hundred years ago there came a great traveller from China to India in search of wisdom and knowledge. His name was Hiuen Tsang and over the deserts and mountains of the north, he came braving many dangers, facing and overcoming obstacles, so great was his thirst for knowledge. He spent



many years in India learning himself and teaching others, especially at the great university of Nalanda which existed then near the city that was called Patliputra and is now known as Patna. Later he wrote a book of his travels and it is this book which contains the story that comes to my mind. It is about a man from South India who came to Karnasuvarna which was a city somewhere near modern Bhagalpur in Bihar; and this man, it is written, wore round his belly and waist copper plates, and on his head he carried a lighted torch. Staff in hand, with proud bearing and lofty steps, he wandered about in this strange attire. And when anyone asked him the reason for this curious get-up, he told him that his wisdom was so great that he was afraid his belly would burst if he did not wear copper plates around it; and because he was moved with pity for the ignorant people round about him, who lived in darkness, he carried a light on his head!

Well, I am quite sure that there is no danger of my ever bursting with too much wisdom and so there is no need for me to wear copper plates or armour! And, in any event, I hope that my wisdom, such of it as I possess, does not live in my belly. Wherever it may reside, there is plenty of room still for more of it and there is no chance of there being no room left. If I am so limited in wisdom, how can I pose as a wise man to others and distribute good advice to all? And so I have always thought that the best way to find out what is right and what is not right, what should be done and what should not be done, is not to give a sermon, but to talk and discuss, and out of the discussion sometimes a little bit of truth comes out. I have liked my talks with you and we have discussed many things, but the world is wide and beyond our world lie other wonderful and mysterious worlds, so none of us need ever be bored or imagine, like the very foolish and conceited person whose story Hiuen Tsang has told us, that we have learned everything worth learning and become very wise, for the very wise, if any such there are, must sometimes feel rather sad that there is nothing more to learn. They must miss the joy of discovery and learning new things, the great adventure that all of us who care may have.]

I must not therefore sermonize. But what am I to do then? A letter can hardly take the place of a talk; at best it is a one sided affair. So, if I say anything that sounds like good advice, do not take it as if it were a bad pill to swallow. Imagine that I have made a suggestion to you for you to think over, as if we really were having a talk.

