

Dr. PANJABRAO DESHMUKH

Well wisher of Farmers

SHYAM SUNDER NARAIN MUSHRAN

Acting President, M. P. Krishak Samaj.

It is less than one year since God separated Dr. Deshmukh from us, but his collected memories of so many years have become a valuable heritage to us. His grand personality, devotion to work, thinking for the welfare of the farmers all over the nation will always cherish his immortal memories. He was not a man only but an association in itself. Though he was educated abroad, lawyer by profession but was full of Indianity and national thinking. The real picture of Bharatmata (India) and poor farmer had always been before him.

For the first time, I had chance to acquaint with Dr. P.S.Deshmukh, when I was student in the Agriculture College at Nagpur. At that time under the scheme of Montague Chelmsford reforms he was one of the members of Provincial Cabinet (Prantiya Mantrimandal) Till then I knew him only as Politician and educationist. At the outset of Mahavidhyalaya Sneh-Sammelan his speech impressed me very much. He

gave an analytical description of the problems of farmers and extended his practical suggestions also. That day I could see Doctor Saheb in the form of a real farmer. All the works done by him in later life, were only the practical forms of his this particular speech which he delivered that day. Since, then I heard his thoughts and speeches and conversed with him on many problems and topics as many times.

With the inception of Bharat Krishak Samaj I had an opportunity to come close to him. In 1954 he founded Bharat Krishak Samaj in Kashmir. In 1957 the Madhya Pradesh Krishak Samaj was founded. After that we were quite close and more intimate. The inaugural function of M.P.Krishak Samaj was also attended by him. For many other times he also graced our activities by his valuable presence. I was knowing him since the existence of former Madhya Pradesh so I enjoyed personal relations with him.

He never disappointed me wherever I asked him to grace any special occasion as distinguished guest. In 1961 the delegation of State Agricultural Ministers was sent to U.S.S.R. and Dr. Deshmukh was in the same delegation. I was the only Dy. Minister in the whole delegation. In 1963 he honoured me by appointing me as the leader of the Farmers Delegation sent to U.S.A. He was keeping full sympathy with our M.P. Krishak Samaj and he selected two persons from Madhya Pradesh while sending the delegation of Farm Leaders to U.S.A. He always showed a path to us and till end he kept all kind regards to our state Krishak Samaj.

He was the only man responsible for organising World Agriculture Fair in New Delhi. In this Fair he demonstrated Indian Farmer before other nations on the globe. He uplifted farmers from small villages and huts to the world level platform. The position which farmer is enjoying today is the gift of Dr. Deshmukh only.

The credit of sponsoring the programme of exchanging farmers from one country to others also goes to him. It was he who arranged to send Indian farmers to U. S. A. and hosted U. S. farmers in India. The same tradition is still in vogue. This has increased agricultural knowledge of Indian farmers and mutual understanding between the farmers of two countries.

In 1928, when he was elected the chairman of Amravathi District

Council he took a revolutionary step of raising 50 per cent taxes for meeting the expenses of compulsory education to all. It was done in his two years term of Chairmanship. In 1937 Shivaji society was formed for extending education facilities.

Dr. Deshmukh, was always in touch with world agricultural activities. It was his keen desire to make the Indian farmers upto the standard of other nations' farmers. It was possible only by adopting scientific methods of farming. Therefore besides World Agriculture Fair, he also organised Agriculture Fairs on state level every year. Like this, he proposed a practical way to educate our farmers. These fairs made our farmers conscious and active. They started using new methods of agriculture and new devices.

He was always busy to make our farmers rich and prosperous. He was of the opinion that a farmer must get the maximum return from the consumer for his farm produce. He insisted Government for fixing minimum prices of the agricultural commodities. Today this fact has reached at the peak level, Dr. Deshmukh also insisted to fix the minimum prices of agricultural produce one year ahead. I am confident this view of our Dr. Deshmukh will also be recognised by the Government one day or other.

Fixing minimum prices is the only way to save the farmers from the catastrophe of weather uncertainty, and profiteering by

middlemen. This will encourage the farmer to produce more in the fields. His one thought that impressed me a lot, was that the cost of farm produce may be fixed after calculating the cost price and labour of farmer. The same formula is prevalent in other industries and may too be considered fit for agriculture. This practical thought of Dr. Deshmukh is a challenge to the leaders who are dreaming of a prosperous India.

He was friend of all the farmers, From Kashmir to Kanya-Kumari in the north-south and from Punjab to Assam in the east-west he was revered by every farmer. He was ideal for national integrity and symbol of real Indian Farmers. All the farmers of India pay their tributes at his first death anniversary. But to fulfil his incomplete task and to obey to his ideals will be a real tribute to him.



Dr. PANJABRAO S. DESHMUKH

A Glimpse

Dr. A. P. PADOLE

'A Real man and few are such men'. In recognition and appreciation of the contribution and services he had rendered to the masses in general in not only Vidarbha but throughout the country, as a whole, a Diamond Jubilee of Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh, Union Minister for Agriculture, had been organised on 27th December 1960, in Amravathi, under the Presidentship of the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Shri Yeshwantrao Chavan to honour him with a purse of Rs. one lakh or over by the people of Vidarbha.

There are very few statesmen having a pragmatic and progressive outlook on the problems of the suffering humanity as Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh a veteran leader of Vidarbha, born in December 1898 in a far distant village by name Papad, in Amravathi District of a petty farmers' family and brought up in a rural atmosphere humming with farm activities and aspirations, Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh, popularly known as 'Bhau saheb' struggled hard to achieve his right to children education and rose to be a resplendent personality in educational as well as political life of

our country. A village boy far cut off from the civilised cities fifty years ago had to waste a precious year of his life in the third standard for want of 4th class in the village school of Papad though he secured first place in his class. He did not rest contented and, therefore, managed to go away from his parents for his further education, which he could receive after great hardships involved in walking a few miles from the village to the school at the taluka place, resisting at times inclement weather etc; It is only in this background that one can understand and appreciate his devotion to the cause of education among the rural population. Shri Shivaji Education Society, of which he was the Life-time president, stands in probably the whole of Maharashtra a monumental work of his sincerity, integrity, and social responsibility which he has displayed in starting about 150 institutions from pre-primary to University education, diversified, diffused, over almost all districts in Vidarbha catering to the needs of the rural areas. Where a Government could not visualise, vitalise and often is staggered he had with limited men and money, dared to kindle the hopes and aspirations of the rural population and prepare them psychologically to achieve their right to education and emancipation from social and economic exploitation by the socially and economically privileged classes of Vidarbha.

History of the last thirty years has revealed that Dr. Deshmukh

never hated the Brahmins as such but the religious exploitation of the masses by the Brahmins as a community. It is apparant that some of his institutions are manned by Brahmins and he had not closed the doors for their entry into the institutions of Shri Shivaji Education Society into which hundreds of Brahmin students secure admission every year. Next, he had resisted the economic exploitation of the farmers by the Sahukars (money lenders) and business community in Vidarbha as he often said this land has been a grazing ground invaded by pests outside Vidarbha on which they have grown fat leaving very little for the indigenous population of the land. He once said, they should take lesson from what had happened in Assam recently.

In 1930, he was appointed as a Minister for Education, P. W. D. and Agriculture in the C. P. and Berar Government. It was his solicitude and sagacity that was responsible for adopting measures to grant educational concessions in fees to the students belonging to agriculturists and taking their education in High School and the Colleges. Again, following the economic depression of the Thirties, the agriculturists in Vidarbha were being reduced to labourers under the pressure of money-lenders and businessmen and economic exploitation aggravated the evil of agricultural indebtedness which caused ruin of thousands of agriculturists. But Dr. Panjabrao had forthwith brought debt concilisation legis-

lation and saved a number of agriculturists from the clutches of the money-lenders

After Independence, the country witnessed in him a true representative of the agriculturists as he advocated their cause in the Constituent Assembly and also fought relentlessly to focuss the attention of the national leaders on the pitiful conditions of the Backward classes and provide for their economic and educational advancement. As a Minister for Agriculture, Government of India he impressed the country by his sincerity and missionary zeal with which he looked after his portfolio. Apart from other factors responsible for the increase in agricultural production, his insistence on introduction of Japanese method of paddy cultivation will have to be given due weightage. He has also made his mark in the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation and occupied the Chairmanship of International Rice Commission. It is well known that he was the guiding force behind the

national organisation of Farmers Forum and All India Backward Classes Federation,

As a Parliamentarian and politician, his records of speeches in the Constituent Assembly is a feather in his cap of which every villager must feel proud of. It was his ingenuity and insight which he indicated in his forceful arguments to defend the interests of the down-trodden and depressed that had convinced the resourceful Prime Minister to accept him as his colleague in the nations' Cabinet. If Prime Minister had no roots in the rural India though he felt the pulse of it, his colleague Dr. Deshmukh had the rural mind, heart and body to see through.

This is why the people in Vidarbha in spite of disapproval and resistance by Dr. Deshmukh, celebrated his Diamond Jubilee on Monday, the 27 th December 1960 and paid glowing tributes to him along with a purse of Rs. one lakh and over for his selfless service to the people.



DR. PANJABRAO DESHMUKH

An Appreciation

R. SRINIVASAN,

General Secretary, Farmers' Forum, Madras.

Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh was one of the great men of the present century. A man gifted with imagination, foresight and driving energy, he founded many institutions of which Bharat Krishak Samaj, the National Organization of Farmers stands supreme. In any thing and everything which he attempted or did he was braking new ground and giving effect to new ideas. His complete disinterestedness his single minded devotion to the interest of the rural people and his extraordinary efficiency is something remarkable. He had the rare gift of 'Capacity to execute his plans' His motto was 'United, there is little we cannot do'.

In society he was quite simple easily accessible and receptive to ideas. Age never weighed him down. He was doughty champion of the farmer. He always felt that the contribution of the farmer to the National economy is and should be the highest and always fought for an adequate income

level for the farmer. Himself a son of the soil, his only aim and ambition were to make the land more productive and through it to ensure prosperity to the country. 'Sujalam it is and Subalam it shall be' he would often say. We all know the progress our organisation has made under his guidance; and its important contribution to increase productivity.

As we look back, I am sure each one of us will recall with supreme happiness the spirit of friendship and fellowship which has pervaded all our activities. He made us all work in such close harmony creating a spirit of comradeship and generous co-operation. We shall be very grateful for the enriching experience we had; with him.

The greatest tribute we could pay to him would be to follow up the work for which he devoted all his energies-establishment of a representative and powerful organisation for the farmers to use as a mouth piece.

Dr. PANJABRAO DESHMUKH

An Appreciation

DEBNATH DAS

Hon. Secretary, Paschim Banga Krishak Samaj

In the wake of freedom and liberation of teeming millions of people of India from foreign yoke on August 15, 1947, the masses of India naturally thought of their better destiny by way of eking out a dignified life as robust and strong citizens of India, after having been in political bondage coupled with economic-cum-social tyranny. When India's First Five Year Plan was introduced in 1952 the Government of India took naturally some basic steps for the improvement of agriculture in the country. Having been attuned to slavery at the hands of foreign rulers and vested interests the farmers and peasants of India rarely got for centuries together full meals a day let alone educating their children or having a modest home. They toiled and the sacred soil was almost moistened with their sweat and tears by hard labour but they were denied to all fruits of their toil. When the light of freedom spread over all corners of the country the farmers

hoped that better days would dawn on them. At that moment appeared a man whose life's mission had ever been to elevate the social and economic status of the farmers and he realised that the farmers must have an organisation of their own apart from political turmoil and intrigues so that they could make themselves conscious of their role and to better their lot they could adopt progressive and scientific methods in the development of agriculture like their counterparts in other developed countries. Thus, the gate to knowledge and consciousness was opened by Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh popularly endeared as Doctor Saheb. Doctor Saheb rightly realised that the improvement of the agriculture and the improvement of the social-cum-economic status of farmers do not necessarily go together until and unless the fruits of their toil in the development of agriculture do not accrue to them. Doctor Saheb desired from the bottom of his

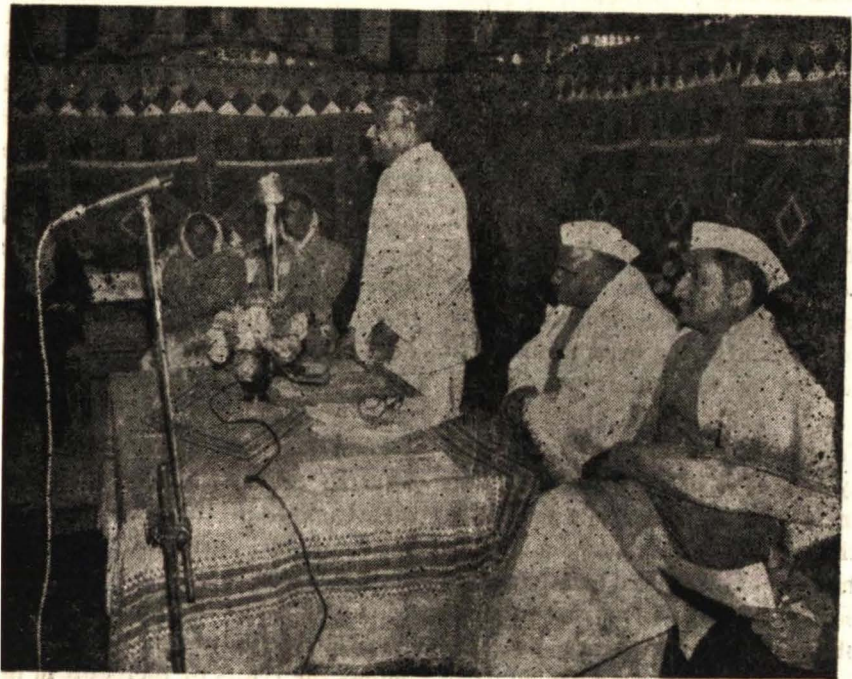
heart that the farming community in India to be good, strong and dependable citizens of the country must be placed on good economic footing and his was a life dedicated for this cause. As the Founder of Bharat Krishak Samaj he instilled in the minds of the farmers of the country to grow more and more on their soil and to have great ambition to thrive like other citizens of the country. Due to his constant struggle the voice of the farming community has found an echo in the minds of the rulers who are the makers of India's destiny. His

demise has taken from us a friend, a philosopher and guide of the peasants and farmers. The void cannot be filled in but to be true to his mission for which he lived and died we should take vow in fulfilling that mission which is the mission of India.

Mahatma Gandhi once told that 'to serve the farmer is simple. We require simple men with simple manner and Simple law.'

Let us translate the vision of Mahatmaji and the dream of Doctor Saheb into reality.

JAI HIND



Shri A. M. Thomas, Union Minister of State for Food, assuming the office of the President, Farmers Forum, India. (BKS)

PANJABRAO DESHMUKH

Reminiscences of

GANGA LAL CASEWA

Ex. Secretary National Agricultural Co-operative Marketing
Federation, New Delhi.

I met the late Dr. Panjabrao Dashmukh for the first time in December 1958. Prior to that, my acquaintance with him was only through newspapers. Seeing his name so frequently in the headlines, I used to wonder vaguely as to what sort of man he was. Was he also, like most of our leaders too eager to see his name so frequently in print? I was not free from some state of resentment even with the newspapers which did not seem tired of playing on his name so much.

Although I met Dr. Deshmukh to seek a job in the National Agricultural Co-operative Marketing Federation (NAFED) of which he was the Chairman, my meeting with him was not in an atmosphere of supplication. In a junior position I was employed—an indifferent job, indifferently. I was thus in a mood of casualness that I had called on him, little knowing that this was my trust with destiny.

My association with him was both rich and rewarding. Not once did he turn down a suggestion I had made, nor did he ever interfere with my day to day administration. Yet, nothing was done in the NAFED without his knowledge and there was no problem relating either to business or relations with other societies or with the Government (which were even in turmoil) on which he had not a constructive suggestion to make or an improvement to offer. During the period of 7 years that I was associated with him, I who was a stranger till yesterday, had remitted under joint signatures with him several crores of rupees. But not once did he ask me, 'Casewa, to whom are you remitting this money?' or, 'For what purpose?' Such was the immensity of the trust he reposed in me. I like to believe that he found me worthy of it.

When on an occasion I mentioned to him his absolute trust in his associates, Dr. Deshmukh, said

that God had been kind to him and he always sent good and trustworthy men to work for him.

By the time I joined the NAFED the portfolio of Co-operation had been transferred to Mr. S.K.Dey and Dr. Deshmukh had been redesignated as Minister for Agriculture.

Dr. Deshmukh had high hopes of the Federation. He had been working for it for several preceding years. He had raised this matter in the Conference of State Ministers of Agriculture held at Srinagar and the bye-laws of the Federation circulated and discussed at the All India Seminar held in 1958. He had the matter discussed twice by the National Co-operative Development (the then, and¹ Warehousing) Board.

Dr. Deshmukh, had observed how in the field of agriculture the middleman had been profiteering at the expense of the producer. As Chairman of the Committee for State Trading, appointed by the then Ministry of Commerce, Dr. Deshmukh, made recommendations, which eventually led to the creation of the State Trading Corporation. He had, thus, the opportunities also of studying the mechanism of big business. He had, therefore, arrived at the conclusion that a central organisation operating only for and through co-operative societies, would bring to the farmers ultimate relief. With his characteristic determination, he had worked for an organisation in which was embodied

his tireless devotion to the cause of the farmers and his inspiration of several years of dedicated service. He had hoped that such an organisation will receive the support from all quarters will promote cooperative societies, not as the Government does by indirect stimulus, but by actively in association with cooperatives in the field of marketing. Unfortunately, his dream of obtaining support from the Government was shattered by the somewhat personal overtones of the relationship which his successor developed towards him.

But the Government was unyielding. The maximum accommodation they gave to Dr. Deshmukh's view point was to let him remain a Director of his Federation. As a disciplined member of the Government, he accepted calmly the decision and resigned the Chairmanship of the NAFED. I remember the Board had met in an atmosphere of suspense and since he was yet a Minister he still commanded the loyalty of those whose first loyalty is to themselves. Quietly he took the Board into confidence and said that as Government had not understood his position, he had agreed to submit his resignation. 'But', he said, 'I love the National Agricultural Co-operative Marketing Federation more than my Ministry. I am prepared to be guided by your collective wisdom and I shall act according to your advice.' Saying, 'I now leave myself in your hands'

he left the chamber. Some one else then conducted the meeting, and what happened thereafter is apart of history.

I wish, however, to place on record that throughout this period of trial, Dr. Deshmukh, did not wince. Never did he utter a harsh word for his self-appointed opponent and detractors. Never did he wish them ill, much less do. Not that he had not the power. His hold on the people of Vidarbha was legendary and few could match him as a Parliamentarian. Some of the finest speeches heard on the floor of the House came from him. But he would not use his prowess to attack those who had taken initiative to hurt him personally. Such was the magnanimity of his heart that when one of his colleagues, who had caused him some trouble, called on him after the new Ministry had been formed (in which Dr. Deshmukh was not included) and promised friendship, he readily forgave all provocations and accepted the avowal of steadfastness without reserve.

As a lieutenant to Rafi Ahmed Kidwai he played his part well. In fact Rafi Saheb was Food Minister for whom Dr. Deshmukh had great respect. Large hearted beyond imagination, Rafi Saheb had allowed him full freedom, to experiment with his original ideas. Himself a great man in his own right, Rafi Saheb was never jealous or petty. It was in those days that Dr. Deshmukh, wrote those

famous letters, which later came to be known as agriculture Ministers circular letters. What fund of information these letters contained! Even today although some of the data mentioned therein has become outdated, his letters are a work of reference for all serious students of agriculture history and its problems. These letters had already earned for their author a niche in the hearts of State Agriculture Ministers when Rafi Saheb's successor preferred to stop their circulation.

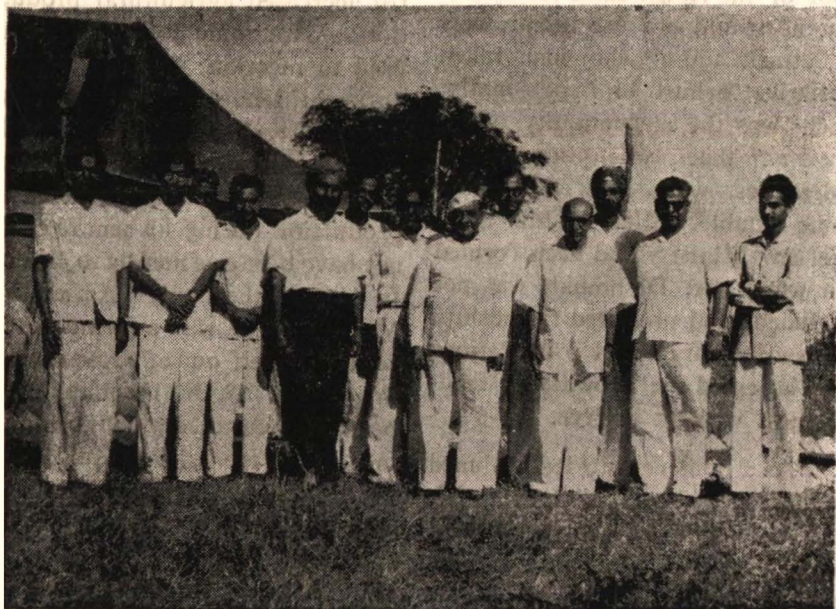
In the limited sphere allowed to him he, thus, continued to work for increased agricultural production. With some satisfaction, he used to mention that it was only during his tenure that food production had reached its peak and while Nature must have been bountiful for him, the continued increased production during his tenure could not have been due merely to chance. In 1962, the only Agriculture Minister, who was a farmers' son, found himself out of Government. Who knows if Dr. Deshmukh had been allowed to continue to implement his ideas, we would have been today less dependent on P.L. 480 than we are.

Dr. Deshmukhs' personality radiated goodwill and his sincerity goodwill was so transparent that he earned not only the admiration but also the affection of whoever came in contact with him. The friendship was never one-sided. He used to reciprocate with the same affection that he received.

Dr. Deshmukh, was a visionary and not merely a dreamer. All though sometimes he dreamt unusual dreams. Nobody could have believed that an organisation barely a few years old, like the Bharat Krishak Samaji, could hold a world Agriculture Fair and would have the unique distinction in the history of the world to be the host of Mr. khrushchev and Mr.Eisenhower.

Although the creator of the Bharat Krishak Samaji is not alive today, the work which he had commended in his life time will continue. How well, it will depend upon us who have inherited the lagacy, how ill upon those who in his life time would not render unto Ceaser all that was Ceaser's but may now themselves be mellowed down by time and experience.

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Dr. P. S. Deshmukh with Professors and Students of Shivaji College.