Dr.C. D. DESHMUKH (1896-1982): A GEM AMONG GENTLEMEN

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Dr C. D. Deshmukh
Who was the first full-time,
Chairman of the UGC,
Transformed the
University Libraries
in to the real hearts
of the Universities

Dr. Deshmukh belonged to that rare species of men who are blessed with exceptional gifts of the head and the heart which enable-them to shine in whatever department of life, they choose to work. In a sense therefore Dr. Deshmukh brought the Midas touch with him to a variety of jobs entrusted to him during his brilliant and successful public career which spanned over five decades. He stood first class first in all the examinations he took, including the I.C.S. As an administrator and statesman he had but only simple and easy solutions to the most complicated and perplexing of problems. As the first Indian Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, the third Finance Minister in Nehru's Cabinet, the first full-time Chairman of the U. G. C., etc. he always brought eminence and grace to the positions he held. Office and success sought him and it was never the other way round- In token of his very distinguished services he was Knighted by the British Government awarded the coveted Magsaysay prize and the Government of India conferred upon him the Padma Vibhushana. I had no personal contact with him until he became the Chair-man of the U. G. C. In the course of my sojourn in the U. S. A. during 1956-57, I had the privilege of talking to a distinguished American audience. A question and answer session followed

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and the Professor of Political Science in the University asked the most fashionable question of the day in the U. S. A. viz., "Who after Nehru"? Among the very few names I listed in reply Deshmukh's was the more prominent.

As Chairman of the University Grants Commission his contribution to the development of the Universities in general and Libraries in particular was singularly great. But for him the University Libraries, instead of becoming the very hearts of the Institutions, would have continued to be mere appendages. He was a man of great vision and firm convictions and largely because of his efforts, the status of the library in the University and their professional staffs were elevated-

Dr. Deshmukh made it a point to visit all the Universities in the country to have first hand information and knowledge about their state of affairs. As a part of this programme he visited Dharwad in 1957. He was to pay a very brief and hurried visit to the University Library for about five minutes. But when he came to the library, even though the library was still in an infant stage, having a collection of only 30,000 books housed in 3 rooms in the buildings of the Training College for Men in the city, he spent nearly 40-45 minutes discussing various matters connected with the organisation and administration of the library with the Librarian. And at the end of the visit he asked the me to make a summary of the discussions particularly on the need for the Indian University Libraries to acquire back volumes of periodicals in the form of micro-cards and send it on to him. Later, when the note was sent to him he saw to it that copies of it were made and dispatched to all the University Libraries in the country.

Dr. Deshmukh visited Dharwad. again in June 1959 to inaugurate the Education Building of the University. The library had just then been shifted to its wing on the Eastern. side of this building-He was pleased with the arrangements made and listened for a while to the recorded version of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar. Later when he delivered the address, inaugurating the new building, he cited facts and figures relating

to the antiquity and the greatness of the region from the article on the Public Library Movement in Bombay Karnatak written by me-. (A copy of this had been sent to him earlier). He acknowledged openly that he had gleaned all that in-formation from this paper. In fact he held up the brochure for the audience to see. Such was the magnanimity of Dr. Deshmukh!

It was Dr. Deshmukh who appointed the first Library Advisory Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. R. Ranganathan and convened the first Workshop for the University and College Librarians where plans to organise and administer libraries on modern lines were approved. Dr. Deshmukh took keen interest in the proceedings of the Workshop. He did find time to attend one of the plenary sessions of the Workshop at which I moved a number of amendments to the working paper and additional recommendations, which were appreciated by him. Thanks to him the University Libraries were immediately able to get additional hands to look after them properly, adequate grants to strengthen their age old meager collections, special grants for erecting new and functionally planned buildings and for furnishing them in a modern manner.

As the Chairman of the Joint Action Committee of the U.G.C. and Wheat Loan Workshops, I had to meet the Chairman of the U. G. C. In one of such meetings, Dr. Deshmukh evinced keen interest in the matter of reducing to a sizeable extent the postal rates for books being sent on Inter Library-Loan by libraries in the country and other recommendations. But by the time the final recommendations of the Workshops could be submitted to the U. G. C. and the Government of India, Dr. Deshmukh was out of office and had assumed the Vice-Chancellorship of the Delhi University. Even so, he invited the Chairman and his colleagues to meet him in his office in the Delhi University. The day of the meeting being a holiday, the venue was shifted to the India International Centre which again was Dr. Deshmukh's creation. He was in a relaxed and reminiscent mood and had plenty of time at his disposal. in the course of the

conversation he narrated his own study habits as a student at the Cambridge University, and mentioned with pride mixed with humility that his answer scripts at the final examinations had been preserved by that University as model scripts.

Later, after one of my visits to Delhi in connection with a meeting, I was returning to Dharwad via Bombay. As I went to the Delhi Air port I was accosted by Dr. Deshmukh who was alone, waiting to go to Bombay on the same flight. During the flight Deshmukh, who was a brilliant conversationalist, waxed eloquent: over the potentialities of the Sanskrit language and told me how it could even handle such latest and mundane developments as hydro-electric programmes, atomic research, etc. He even recited one or two such poems from his collection of Sanskrit poems which had just then been published. Later he referred to the earlier days of his career. One of the memorable experiences that he recounted was his association with the Round Table Conference. He was designated: as one of the three Secretaries of the Conference with a senior British Civil Servant as the Secretary General. Dr. Deshmukh was charged with the duty of making a summary of the proceedings of each day of the Federal Structure Committee and sends it to the Prime Minister by about 7-00 p.m. so that he could scan it having his dinner at 10 Downing Street. This happened day after day and the Prime Minister was so deeply impressed by the precision, eloquence and comprehensiveness of the summary, that he was curious to know the name of the person who was handling the job in such an admirable fashion and in such a short time. When he was informed that it was Dr. Deshmukh's handiwork, the Prime Minister asked the Secretary General to convey his felicitations to Dr. Deshmukh. Suffice it to say that the hour and forty minutes' air journey will remain ever green in my mind-

Dr. Deshmukh was a great Sanskritist and the story is told of how in one of his visits to the Sanskrit Department of a college as the Chief Guest, the student representative surprised him by reading out his welcome address in Sanskrit. Dr.Deshmukh rose to the occasion by

delivering his speech, extempore, in beautiful and eloquent Sanskrit. Though his subjects of study at Cambridge were Botany, with Chemistry and Geology his contributions to the field of economics and banking, planning and administration, science and culture, were dazzling indeed!

Dr. Deshmukh was an extremely handsome person. He was also blessed with a photographic memory and nothing was too small for his consideration. Unto him that hath even more shall be given says the Bible and here was Dr.Deshmukh who besides being an intellectual prodigy, an incomparable administrator, a statesman of great vision and foresight was also a gem among gentlemen. He strode across the India of his days like a gentle colossus

Librarians in this country owe a deep debt of gratitude to this savant, for it was he who translated into reality the recommendations of the Sadler and the Radhakrishnan Commissions regarding the upgrading of the post of the professional staff in the University Libraries to be at par with the posts of teachers in the Post-graduate Departments. We, therefore, offer our humble and grateful salutation of affection and regard to the memory of this great Indian.

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