Prof. K. S. Deshpande: An ideal Icon

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I had known Prof. K. S.Deshpande for more than fifty years, initially as a teacher, then as a co-professional and then as a mentor. In early years I was scared of going near him because of his seriousness. Subsequently, I learned how soft he was at heart.

Prof.K.S. Deshpande, Nadoj Channaveer Kanavi and Smt. Malati Pattaanshetti were the members of District Library Committee while I was posted as the District Chief Librarian at Dharwad. The then Deputy Commissioner Shri Sanjeevkumar constituted a committee to prepare a comprehensive development report of the District Library, under the Chairmanship of Prof. K. S. Deshpande. This report was prepared in just one and a half month and was presented before the Library Authority. Being the Member Secretary of the Committee, I received applause from the Deputy Commissioner for completing the task before the stipulated time. I had a unique chance of working closely with Prof. Deshpande. The purpose of telling this is to highlight Prof. deshpande's nature of wholeheartedly completing the accepted task before the time-schedule. This has left a deep impact on me.

Well, working with him on many similar activities developed a close bond with him. He used to telephone me and inquire about my wellbeing, even if I miss contacting him in-person or over telephone for more than a week or two. He used to shower love and care to anyone who came to him. His home was known for its hospitality. Almost anybody could go to his house anytime. His wife, Smt. Kusumakka was equally affectionate and cordial with all guests. When it comes to hospitality, she was always a step ahead of Prof. Deshpande.

Prof. Deshpande had given me a nickname, 'Hombal Maharaj', and he always referred to me by this name. Initially, I thought he must be making

fun of my poor background or my fat body. One day I gathered all my courage and asked him why he refered to me as 'Maharaj.' He looked up into my eyes and told me that I had the royal magnanimity, and that it was not any exaggeration or sarcastic comment.

I had an opportunity to write my life experiences in the form of a book in Kannada, titled *Tered Pustaka* (*An Open Book*). I requested Prof. Deshpande to write a foreword to the book. As a part of his foreword, he wrote, "Shri Hombal has written about the ups and downs in his professional and personal life. Being the first reader of the book, I am fully satisfied. I congratulate him." His words of encouragement motivate me to do more professional work.

Prof. K.S. Deshpande had great love and care for library staff and LIS students.. He always contemplated about books and promoting reading culture. He struggled to raise the status of librarians. He used to cordially share his rich experiences with me and other youngsters. He always used to narrate many anecdotes, quotations from English and Sanskrit literature. Prof.Deshpande was a great admirer of his teachers Prof Marshall and Anderson of the University of Bombay. He was a sincere disciple of Prof B. S. Kesavan, the first librarian of the National Library Calcutta. There used to be a lot to learn from events in his career. Given below is one of his most frequently narrated experiences.

> Prof. K. S. Deshpande cherished the memory of the UGC Chairman Prof. C.D. Deshmukh's visit to the Karnatak University in general and to the Library, in particular. He had organized a book exhibition, showcasing Marathi translation of Kalidasa's *Meghdoot* by C.D. Deshmukh. Prof.Deshpande had also made a brochure titled, *Know Your Library: Library Guide.* Prof Deshmukh was so impressed that he spent more than the allocated time in the library. On reaching Delhi, Prof Deshmukh sent a circular to all the university librarians to prepare 'Library Guide' on the line of Prof. Deshpande's model.

I must have heard this a number of times from him. He used to have a spark in his eyes, as he narrated this event. Indeed, it was a great event in his life and it is a great source of inspiration.

In the year 2000, Prof. Deshpande was given Ranganathan-Kaula Award for Lifetime Achievement. Dr. Velaga Venkatappaiah, another great library professional, who has instituted this award, came personally to Dharwad to handover the award to Prof.Deshpande. The award giving ceremony was held at *Rangamandir*, in the neighborhood of Deshpade's house. The event was graced by the presence of Smt Gangubai Hanagal, the renowned exponent of Hindustani Music. Another significant person present at the event was Shri N. K. Kulkarni (Known as Nani kaka to the radio listening community) of All India Radio. I had the fortune of being at the event.

Wrangler D. C. Pavate and Prof D. M. Nanjundappa were the two outstanding vice chancellors in the history of Karnatak University. These two had great impact on Prof.Deshpande. He used to admire the depth of their knowledge and administrative skill. Wrangler Pavate remembers and appreciates Prof Deshpande in his autobiography.

Prof.K.S.Deshpande has written many books. A select few are as follows.

Library Science: a study
Library Development in India
America, Land of Libraries
University Library System in India
Gandhiji is Relevant Forever
DeshKosh

Timeless Fellowship, a noted journal in the field of Library Science.He served as the editor of this journal for many years.

Prof. K.S.Deshpamnde was not merely confined to academic field. He rendered a number of social and organizational services in different capacities. He contributed significant service to the Indian Standards Institution (Now known as Bureau of Indian Standards.) and Indian Library Association. He was associated with the Bharat Scouts and Guides movement. Prof.Deshpande was the President of Gandhi Peace Foundation for many years, and in that capacity he was involved in spreading Gandhian thoughts. He served as President of the Dharwad Unit of the Family Planning Association of India. On taking over the Century old *Karnataka VidyaVardhaka Sangha* as the Working President, he took the Sangh to new cultural heights.

Prof. Deshpande gave a powerful address at the *Karnataka VidyaVardhaka Sangha* on 2nd October 2004 on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti. He stressed that Gandhiji is relevant forever in ever changing world. Shri Chandrakant Bellad, the local MLA presided over the function. Prof. Deshpande's speech was so effective, so powerful that most of the audience felt that Prof. Deshpande's speech should be published. I was so much influenced by the thoughts presented, hat I gave Rs 5000/ on the spot to sponsor the publication. The resultant booklet is appreciated by many who have read it.

Prof. Deshpande's deep concern about the status of Public Library System in Karnataka was known to all. No wonder, Shri H. Vishwanath, the then education minister, constituted a two-member committee comprising Prof. Deshpande and Prof. Gopinath and Dr. K. N. Prasad as the secretary to prepare Amendments to Karnataka Public Library Act, 1965.

Prof Deshpande was felicitated at the District Library, Chitradurga in 1999 when I was serving there as the District Librarian. That was the International Year of Older Persons. In view of this, I took Prof Deshpande to Mr Nijalingappa, 99, a former Chief Minister of Karnataka to felicitate at his residence, 'Vinaya'

Prof. K. S. Deshpande festschrift volume titled *Current Problems and Trends in Library Information and Services* was broughtout from Varanasi in 1990.

In July 2008, a felicitation volume in Kannada titled *Prabudh* was presented to Prof. Deshpande by his admirers. I was lucky to have served as the treasurer of the Committee which brought out the volume. Some amount was in balance after the volume was published. It was decided by Prof. Deshpande's admirers to institute an endowment lecture on 5 May every year under the aegis of *Karnataka VidyaVardhaka Sangha* using the balance amount.

Priror to this, there was another endowment on Deshpande's name under the presidentship of Prof. B. B. Hungund. In addition, Dr. K.N.Prasad, G.B. Hombal, Late V.L. Kalyan and others were also associated with it. The endowment lectures were held in Mumbai, Delhi, and other major cities in Karnataka like Bangalore, Dharwad, Bijapur etc.

My Last Meeting with Prof. Deshpande

I initiated and planned a reunion of 1968-69 batch students of B.Lib.Sc. This was to mark our fiftieth year in librarianship. It was scheduled to take place on 12th August 2018, being the Librarians' Day, at the *Karnataka VidyaVardhaka Sangha*. It was proposed to honour Prof K.S. Deshpande as a part of the event.

I had been to Prof. Deshpande's house on 3rd August to invite him for the 12th August event. He was quiet active and lively. He promised that he would spend more than an hour with us on 12th August. His usual warm hospitality was very much there. I was happy that he was healthy enough to attend the programme, as he was 94 years old and fragile.

On 4th August morning my telephone rang to give me the shocking news of KSD's demise! I just couldn't believe it. I rushed to his house. There was nothing left. An era had come to end.

It is a matter of pride for me to have been alive during the lifetime of such a multifaceted personality.