My Moments with Prof. K.S. Deshpande

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1. Man and His Mission

Prof. K S. Deshphnade (KSD) is known to the world of Library and Information Science (LIS) discipline, and his mission was '*Librarianship*.' My association with him was like that of a grandson with his grandfather. His thoughts, ideals, his wisdom and understanding drew me further to his life and work. Anyway my longing to follow him took some time. Gradually the number of my visits to his house increased.

Rhythm of his working and his strong interest in Kannada, Sanskrit and English literature attracted me to his style of writing. Adding a valuable composition of Sanskrit in his articles with a philosophical accent was his style or the pattern of his writing. He was not just related to one subject area, but with many disciplines and people.

Always his house used to be full with many scholars, academicians and administrators partaking his abundance of knowledge. The whole profession of Library and Information Science adored him. Although it made me a little hesitant initially to write about such a towering and multifaceted personality like Prof. K. S. Deshpande, the man who was referred as "*Bhishma Pithamaha*" in the field of LIS, there was a strong urge to pay my humble tribute to his personality.

Further with my determinations to write about him started with his biographical sketch. He had spent most of his Life time in Dharwad (1924-2018) starting from his initial school days at the Karnatak High School. Later he went for his higher education to Karnataka College. He completed his MA in Kannada and entered Librarianship by securing a Diploma of University of Bombay in Librarianship. He joined Karnatak University as a Librarian and later became the Chief Librarian and Professor in the Department of Library Science. Looking at his family, he was the grandson of Ra Ha Deshpande, the founder of *Karnataka Vidyavardhaka Sangha*.

Prof . Deshpande was also freedom fighter. He participated in the freedom movement and was active in many social organizations. More than anything else, he was a great admirer of Gandhiji and has written a book and many papers about him.

Looking at Prof. Deshpande's experiences, one feels that 'Librarianship' was in his blood. He was instrumental in setting up and developing the libraries at Karnatak University, University of Mysore, Gulbarga University, University of Agricultural Sciences, Mangaluru University and Bangalore University.

His vision and new thoughts, with nice practical experiences have given a strong foundation to library administration. He formulated a few thumb rules in library administration which are followed even today by the young and senior professionals. His contributions can be taken for further studies in LIS Schools as case studies. Narration of his experiences used to flow one after the other covering his interactions with great people like Nobel laureate Sir C. V. Raman, RBI Governor C.D.Deshmukh, Dr.S.R Ranganathan, Prof. Marshal, renowned painter K.K.Hebbar were. these sources of inspiration. He created a great impression on these celebrities whom he met. I could watch his deep involvement and ecstasy as he used to recollect these moments and events.

2. My First Impression

My first impression was about his house, which was surrounded by trees, and the house was a landmark in that area. It was a visionary's silhouette of culture and knowledge, and was always illuminated with hopes and blessings. I saw people from all disciplines came, met him and sought his views and blessings: This was a regular feature. The entrance of his house (*Veranda*) was a place for display of many things, ranging from paintings of Late K. K. Hebbar, mementoes, honors, photos with Governor of Karnataka and Rajyostava Award, a set of *Karnataka State Gazetteers,* Kannada Encyclopedia to an old fashioned lamp hung on the wall. Each one had an inspiring story of his life-experience to tell. I had the proud privilege of listening to these stories directly from Prof.Deshpande.

Second, as I entered his house, I was always welcomed with a call inviting me to the dining hall. I used to find him busy with kitchenary assistance, a set of papers of new writings and books spread on the table. Later a cup of tea and snacks used to follow. He with his low voice used to express his

happiness that I had come. Then he used to share many new ideas about the development in LIS through the copies of newsletters of IASLIC, ILA and other professional associations received by him. He, with his mellow voice and probing smile, coolly used to tell me that I should write more, echoing on the lines of 'Publish or Perish.' He used to persuade, stress and encourage youngsters, and he always felt very lively with children. Along with many such activities, he was editing a manuscript of his next book which was still in the making, related to books and reading, which had quotes he has used in the context of libraries. Another such idea on which he was thinking was to stress that 'books are part of the future.'

3. Postcards: A Messenger

I was introduced to Prof. Deshpande by my father. We used to visit his house occasionally in Malmaddi on Mahishi Road, Dharwad. Then I entered the LIS profession and my interactions took me closer to him. Then gradually the frequency of my visits to his house increased. In fact to be more candid, it was not my follow up to see him quite often, but it was his persistence in reaching me with nicely handwritten postcards. His postcards quite often reminded me about the work yet to be carried out and a message to meet him. I have hardly seen him using the mobile for sending messages or to call me even in this electronic and SMS age. He used postcards to pass on his messages without disturbing us in the midst of our regular professional working hours. He gave importance to writing, using postcards as a medium, mostly written in Kannada. Postcards were neatly written with a precise message and the context. I think these postcards have to be stored and archived.

4. America, the Land of Libraries

After his trip to USA (Under India-U.S.A. Wheat Loan Educational Exchange Programme) in the year 1956, he wrote a wonderful document covering his experience titled, *America, the Land of Libraries.* It was a popular travelogue focusing on libraries in the USA. He used to tell about his visits as a story in our conversations. These narrations kindled interest in me to read the original document. I couldn't lay my hands anywhere on a copy of the book. Time passed on and my quest to read this document remained unfulfilled. My explorations to search for that document continued, and Google came to my rescue to get a link to full text in the *Hathi Trust Digital Library.* I was astonished to see the document archived by Google. I started reading the book, cover to cover; The narration was like a story. Some of the snippets extracted from the book are highlighted as

follow

- *It was a Eleven member team. The members of the team were J. M. Kanitkar, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, (2) B. L. Pathak, Saugor University, (3) B. K. Trivedi, Allahabad University, (l) Tara Singh, Lucknow University, (5) M. Yazdani, Osmania University, (6) K. S. Hingve, Poona University, (7) P. K. Banerjea, Agra University, (8) Bernard Anderson, Bombay University, (9) B. Sen Gupta, National Library, and (10) A. K.Mukerji, Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur. The study tour for which I was selected and had been sponsored under the India-U.S.A. Wheat Loan Educational Exchange Programme."*

- *The tour was spread over 5 months and all the expenses in connection with it were borne by the Government of the United States. The period of our stay in the States was fixed up as from 1-10-1956 to 28–2–1957 both days inclusive. But prior to our departure from India, the Director of the Wheat Loan Programme, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, called a conference of all the eleven of us and the group of Librarians who had been to the States under the same programme in 1955, at New Delhi".*

- *"The Land and the People of America with his brief outline of the tour programme, as it is an age of Statistics, he writes some facts and figures pertaining to the U.S.A. The U.S. is three times the size of our country in area. But the population of the country is about 17 crores. Giving the historical references of the Library and Library Movement he pens that there were 10,000 Public Libraries in USA those times. Further he writes that to divine the very important role that libraries are playing in US one has to acquaint, with cursorily the library movement. In his note he mentions that "for an average American Library is not a luxury but an essential amenity".*

- *Braille Books and Talking Books services for blind is throughout the nation is unique. One million volumes were distributed to 55000 blind readers in 1955.*

- *He states, "This ever since I took to the study of Library Science it had been my dream to see the Libraries at work in the United States, for the States are the cradle of the Library Movement as they are of many another mighty and progressive movements essential for the working of an enlightened".*

- *He states, "Believing as I do, that the colossal experiment of the working of democracy in India has a very great future, and that for the success of this experiment, an enlightened electorate is a sine qua non, I have always held that the potentialities of the Library Movement in India are indeed tremendous"*

I feel that these snippets trigger curiosity in younger generation of LIS professionals to completely read the book to know the author, his work through many interesting anecdotes written about libraries.

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4. His *Journal of Library Development (JLD)*

It all began, again with a postcard to me to initiate and revive the *Journal of Library Development.* It was followed by a series of such postcards. The *Journal* had ceased publication over 25 years ago. The *Journal* was close to Prof. Desphande's heart. These postcards signaled me that the time for revival of the journal had come.

Looking back into the history of the *Journal*, it was in 1962-63 the ICLD (Indian Council for Library Development) was established in New Delhi by Prof. Das Gupta. Then the Council of pioneers thought to activate further through publications. The ICLD then passed on this responsibility to Prof. K. S. Desphande by the then treasurer Late Shri. J. M Kanitkar. Continuing the efforts of yesteryears to suit today's needs was a hard task of transformation. Defining and redefining the scope and formulating changes to go with times, was necessary. Prof Deshpande lived in hard times without technical and financial support. I was thrilled to work with him and understand the importance of his usage of *Sanskrit slokas* to suit a context. He was indeed a person with multifold thoughts adding his interest in photos, photography which matched the content. One good example was the picture of 'the Sun God' which was selected to be the logo of the journal with Sanskrit quote, " // *Mano maya ayahim hi pursha*"// which translated in English means, " Man is all but mind."

It was indeed the desire and efforts of Prof. K.S.Deshpande to revive this journal after a long gap. It surprised all of us that at such ripe age Prof. Desphande was young and energetic at heart, and his inspiration was infectious in brining this journal to its lost glory. The transformation was

seen in the form of fresh outlook, a new editorial team, new writers and researchers in the field of Library and Information Science. It is now meant for providing a platform for new development in the field of LIS. Remembering all the old editorial team members, just to mark our respect to their intellectual input and associating all of them to this cause was a memorable experience.

Further, the original objectives and motives of the journal were to be kept alive. He stood firm to this idea to handover the essence of the journal's editorial policy to the next generation. The present editorial team is a mix of old and new professionals. The current editorial team will evolve with interested professionals to share the editorial responsibilities and be a part of the ICLD for development of library profession.

5. *Desha Kosha*

I came across a book written by Prof. Deshpande, probably the last one by him, which is a compilation of his 51 selected articles. It is a collection of masterpieces, worth possessing by public libraries and LIS Schools. It contains biographical sketches of great personalities he had come across. In the last two articles he stresses on 'Love for books' and 'Reading and Prosperity'. This anthology has a number of worthy messages for the young professionals.

6. Anubhava: An Interview with Prof.Deshpande

I, with the help of Shri I. H. Jahagirdar of the British Council, Bangalore, interviewed Prof.Deshpande under the video programme titled *Anubhava.* It was planned to bring out such a series of interviews of distinguished LIS Professionals who have made a mark in their career. Organizing such rare interviews would be part of the *Journal of Library Development'*s activities and series of CDs will be brought out.

7. His Thoughts are Timeless

Prof. Deshpande's thoughts and writings have to be etched into the new generation of LIS. His inspiration gives a firm foundation to the professional growth. Looking at KSD's literature and listening to his experiences, it appears that he stood tall in the profession, shouldered many responsibilities and lead the new generation. His thoughts, experience and writings with a high standard, outlines what was required to boost Librarianship. His ideas were adored throughout the nation and meticulously followed by many libraries and librarians.

His radical and master thoughts about 'Reading as a fundamental right', 'Library Legislation', 'University Libraries', Library Administration' and 'Reading and Prosperity' were among the themes he lived for. He used to lament on the declining standards and commitments of the next generation of LIS professionals. His searchlight, the *Journal of Library Development (JLD)* will remember him and his ideals in the form of articles and citations as a part of the editorial policy. The thoughts and ideals of Prof.Deshpande are evergreen and ever fresh.His work serves as operational manual of long standing postulates for Libraries and Librarians.

7. The Hundred and One Sutras

I picked up a copy of his old article titled 'Hundred and One Sutras' published in '*Timeless Fellowship' Vol. 3, 1967*. These 101 sutras are properly channeled into six parts. These sutras are good guidelines for librarians to apply to their libraries and will help in decision making. The content of these six parts is as follows.

I. The Governance of the Library, refers to library as an organization, about Library Committee, Sections of the Library
II. Building and Equipment
III. Books and Serials
IV. Finance
V. Promotion of the use of books
VI. Library Cooperation

Annexures include the UGC Staff Formula and some tentative standards for libraries nicely carved in this standard manual for Librarian.

8. Reading is a Fundamental Right

In this paper Prof. Prof.Deshpande stresses on the provision for free and compulsory education (Article 45 of Indian Constitution), its deficiencies and the Supreme Court's phenomenal judgments on Article 21. He has examined these ideas in the context of developing Public Library System in the Country to reach the entire population. The defects in the existing Public Library Acts have been delineated and suggestions have been given for developing a flawless and efficient network of public libraries in the Country.

Further, I was involved in assisting him in editing work to amend the Karnataka State Public Library Legislation Act in 1998. This work was submitted to the Government of Karnataka. While referring to this project,

it reminds me of a few lines quoted by Prof.Deshpande in the amendment document which reflect the ideas that flow in Prof.Deshpande's writings.

A Nation's Strength

What makes a nation's pillars high
And its foundations strong?
What makes it mighty to defy
The foes that round it throng?

It is not gold. Its kingdoms grand
Go down in battle shock;
Its shafts are laid on sinking sand,
Not on abiding rock.

Is it the sword? Ask the red dust
Of empires passed away;
The blood has turned their stones to rust,
Their glory to decay.

And is it pride? Ah, that bright crown
Has seemed to nations sweet;
But God has struck its luster down
In ashes at his feet.

Not gold but only men can make
A people great and strong;
Men who for truth and honor's sake
Stand fast and suffer long.

Brave men who work while others sleep,
Who dare while others fly...
They build a nation's pillars deep
And lift them to the sky.

-William Ralph Emerson

I feel it is not possible to cover all aspects of Prof. Deshpande, a great visionary and a down-to-earth practical librarian. Seeing through the prism of digital age, his experience, his administrative skills were ahead of his time. His ideologies ranging from sutras to his timeless thoughts will be selectively presented in *JLD*. Thus, the torch of KSD's contributions and ideologies will be taken forward.