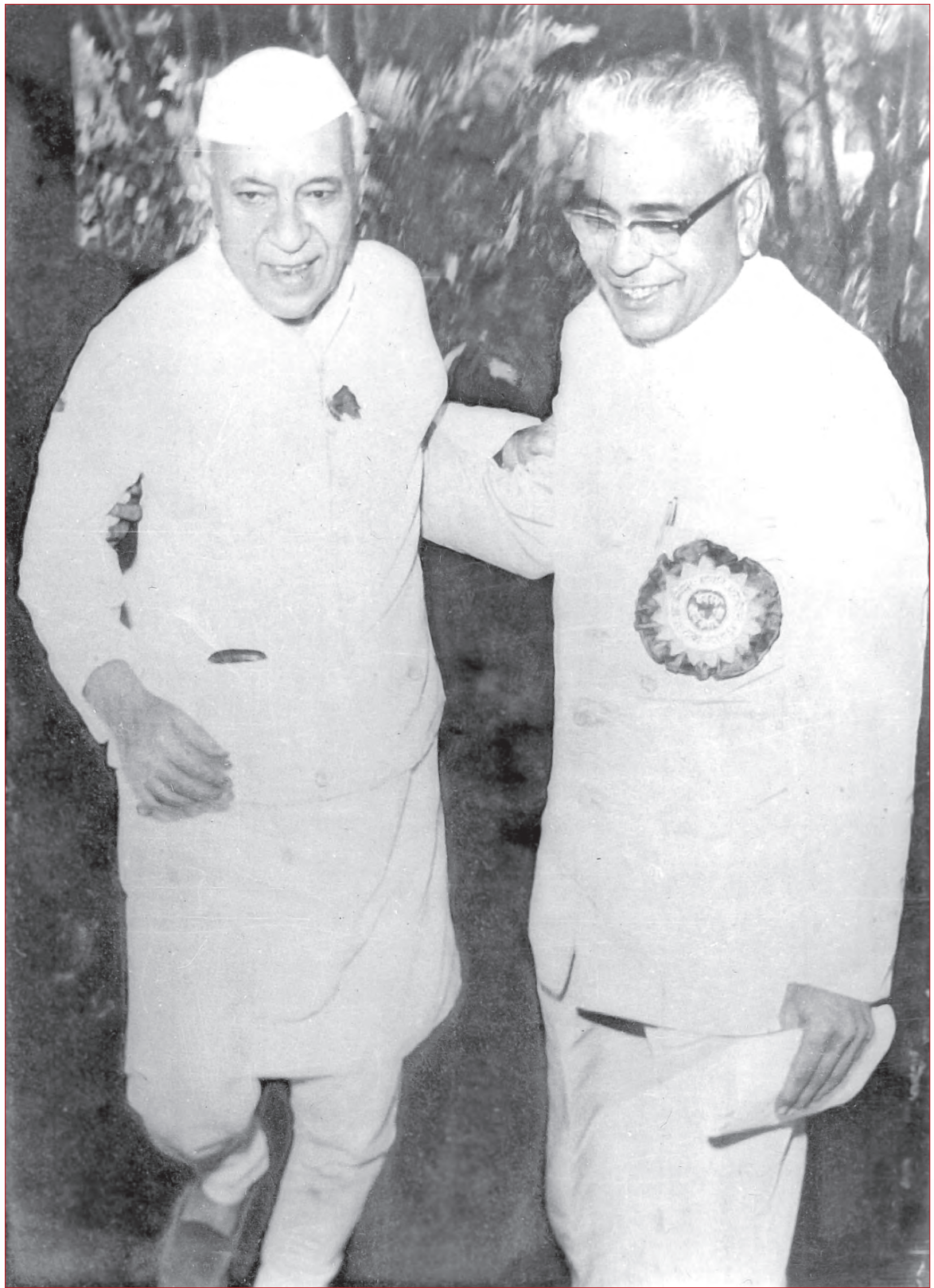


# MAHARASHTRA AHEAD



## Pioneer of Green Revolution



*Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Vasant Rao Naik*



## PERPETUAL BLOOM OF GREEN REVOLUTION...

We have reached the end of 2012, a year full of events and happenings. The month of December is filled with number of events, variety of programmes and initiatives.

Pradnyasurya Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar attained Mahaparinirvan on 6th December 1956. Millions of people throng Chaitya Bhumi in Mumbai to pay sincere homage to the great son of India who provided an invigorating inspiration to millions of deprived people of the country. Remembrance of the 'Mahamanav' on 6th December inspires all of us. Flag Day is celebrated all over the country on 7th December in memory of Soldiers who laid their lives for the nation. Flag Day donation gives us an opportunity to give financial assistance for implementation of welfare schemes for soldiers. On 20th December we reverently remember the great saint Gadge Maharaj on his death anniversary who dedicated his entire life to serve people for spreading message of cleanliness and eradication of superstitions. The Consumer Protection Act was passed on 24th December 1986. Since then every year, 24th December is being celebrated as National Consumer Rights Day for consumer awareness. The distinguished birth of Jesus Christ who gave message of Peace, Love and Compassion to the World will be celebrated as Christmas on the 25th December with devoutness and festivities. During the same month a session of the Maharashtra Legislature is held at Nagpur, second Capital of Maharashtra.

Birth Centenary of late Vasant Rao Naik, the father of Green Revolution in Maharashtra and a personality who adorned the position of Chief Minister of the State for 11 years at a stretch is being celebrated during this year. I am extremely happy to present you the **SPECIAL ISSUE** of Maharashtra Ahead as **"VASANTRAO NAIK BIRTH CENTENARY ISSUE"** on this occasion.

It is a matter of coincidence that the Birth Centenary of Vasant Rao Naik has occurred in the same year that of Yashwantrao Chavan, the Architect of Modern Maharashtra. Yashwantrao Chavan was the First Chief Minister of Maharashtra. The great visionary had laid the foundations of modern Maharashtra and dreamt for glorious future of Maharashtra. His expectations were fulfilled to a great extent by Vasant Rao Naik during his tenure as Chief Minister for more than a decade.

Although he came from Banjara community of Rural Vidarbha, Vasant Raoji proved his merits and started shining on the political and social horizons. Intellect, organizational excellence, vision, untiring efforts and the fellow feeling that he had for the common man, concern for neglected sections of the society and farmers were his virtues which carried him to the zenith of success.

The politics of Vasant Raoji was one of maturity and restraint. He held his opponents in esteem. He was a great administrator and had a vision for the changing scenario of the World. He provided an equal justice to the needs of rural and urban areas. Backbay Reclamation was carried out during his tenure. This was a landmark in the developmental process of Mumbai. The credit for Navi Mumbai and CIDCO, Aurangabad also goes to him. The industrial development in Maharashtra found new vistas all around the State during his tenure.

However, the true identity for Vasant Raoji Naik will always be as the father of Green Revolution in Maharashtra. Even after reaching the apex position in politics he remained a farmer at heart. It was a great challenge for the sensitive personality like Vasant Rao to face the distress during famine of 1972. He took up the challenge and went on to vow for self sufficiency in terms of food grains for the State. This was the first time for a Chief Minister in India to set up four agricultural universities in the State. He personally kept himself abreast while the agricultural universities went on to carry research for new varieties of pro-agriculture crops, development of agro-technology and took the results of the research to the doorstep of the farmers. Many of his experiments were carried out by him on his lands at Gahuli and then propagated elsewhere. Due to his untiring efforts the scarcity of food grains in Maharashtra was reduced to a great extent. It was during the tenure of Vasant Raoji Naik that the firm foundations for a dominant, collective, socially progressive, industrially developed and economically prosperous Maharashtra were laid...

All these facets have been elaborated in this Special Issue. This volume is replete with articles penned by senior political leaders, senior editors/ journalists and literature personalities on the life and works of Vasant Rao Naik...

I am hopeful that readers will welcome this issue just as other ones...

**Pramod T. Nalawade**  
Editor-in-Chief, 'Maharashtra Ahead', DGIPR



# Contents

## MAHARASHTRA AHEAD

VOL.2 ISSUE NO.8 DECEMBER 2012 ₹50

### Editor-in-Chief

Pramod T. Nalawade

### Managing Editor

Pralhad Jadhav

### Team Maharashtra Ahead

Suresh Wandile

Kirti Pande

Kriti Lalla

### Sales and Circulation

Digamber Palve

Vilas Bodke

### Produced by

Navbharat Press Ltd.

Director Operations: D.B. Sharma

### Project Management Team

G.M. Operations: A. Shrinivas

A.G.M.: Dalvinder Singh

Manager: Ashok Shirke

Editorial Coordinator: Subhash Shirke

### Prepress

A.G.M. Prepress: Sachin Phulpagar

### Art

Art Director: Mahesh Jadhav

Photos Correction: Siddhesh Sawant

Maharashtra Ahead is printed on behalf of the Directorate General of Information and Public Relations, Government of Maharashtra, at Navbharat Press Ltd

Navbharat Bhavan,  
Plot no. 13, Sector 8,  
Sanpada (East),  
Navi Mumbai 400 706.

Published by Pramod T. Nalawade at Mantralaya,  
Mumbai-400032

Letters should be addressed to  
Directorate General of Information and Public  
Relations, New Administrative Building, 17th Floor,  
Opposite Mantralaya, Mumbai-400032.  
Email: maharashtraahead.dgipr@gmail.com  
Please visit the website  
<http://dgipr.maharashtra.gov.in>



Directorate General of Information  
and Public Relations

A Government of Maharashtra Production

- 5 The Revolutionist  
- The Chief Minister
- 7 A Treasured Tenure  
- Sharad Pawar, Union Minister for Agriculture
- 9 The Statesman  
- Suresh Dwadashiwar
- 14 Indebted to Vasantao  
- Sushilkumar Shinde,  
Union Minister for Home
- 16 Pragmatic leader  
- Dinkar Raikar
- 18 The Quintessential  
- Na. Maa. Joshi
- 21 Pioneer of Green Revolution  
- Abhay Mokashi
- 25 The Visionary  
- Rajendra Darda, Minister for Education
- 28 Landmarks
- 30 Indomitable Willpower  
- Prof. M.S. Swaminathan
- 32 Stalwart Leader  
- Prof Fauziya Khan, Minister of State
- 34 A Model Chief Minister  
- Dilip Chawre
- 37 Foundations of Maharashtra State  
- Kiran Kendre
- 41 The Optimistic  
- Narayan Haralikar
- 44 Humble Governance With Social Sensibility  
- Yudhishthir Joshi
- 47 A True Family Man  
- Sharad Akolkar
- 50 A True Democratic  
- Homi J. H. Taleyarkhan
- 51 Courageous and Realistic  
- S. L. Kirlskar
- 53 Wielder of Power by Persuasion  
- Dr. Rafique Zakaria
- 55 A Born Leader  
- Dayanand Bandodkar
- 56 The Gospel of Self-sufficiency  
- Dinesh Desai



Pls note: The views expressed by the writers are their own



# THE REVOLUTIONIST

Late Vasant Rao Naik who decorated the position of Chief Minister for the longest duration is also credited for an eminently admired tenure. The White and the Green revolutions during his tenure changed the whole lifestyle of the farmers and those connected with agriculture. Even today we continue to taste the positive fruits of change that he brought about in agriculture. Famous for his modern lifestyle Late Vasant Rao would also be remembered forever for his historic decisions...

The Chief Minister **Prithviraj Chavan** recollects...



**A**lthough the outward appearance of Ex-Chief Minister Late Vasant Rao Naik seemed to be ultra-modern with closed collar Jodhpuri attire, stylish pipe at the lips, shining golden spectacles and his true passion for hunting, his personality was in fact that of a total and typical rural Marathi by thoughts and practices. The agriculture and the farmers was a subject both of his interest and intent. After completing graduation from Morris College, Nagpur he also qualified himself with a Degree in Law. He was duly famous as the first Lawyer from Banjara community. He started his practice under the genuinely unique and famous lawyer Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh. However without getting caught up just in practicing the Law, he initiated a huge social movement for development of his own Banjara community.

It was here that he started on a

passage in social and political circles. Starting as President of Municipal Council of Pusad, he ascended to such well deserved positions as Legislator, Minister of State, Minister and then the Chief Minister. Coming from an entirely rural setting this leader of the people remained at the helm of affairs in Maharashtra State for the longest duration ever. The credit for the same has to go to his honesty, popularity and the complete faith he had in his work.

Vasant Rao passed his Matriculation from the Neel City High School, Nagpur. It was during this period that he got interested in reading. He extensively read novelist-authors like Haribhau Apte and Nathmadhav. Apart from these two literary geniuses he was immensely influenced by the thoughts and writings of Mahatma

Phule and Sane Guruji. Subjects such as eradication of untouchability, women education, social awareness, and social struggle of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and Dale Carnegie also impressed him and ignited the spirit for social work in his mind...

On one side there was social and political agenda and on the other agriculture and farmers. These were not just subjects close to his heart but also of intense studies. Curiosity in agriculture led him to devise many developments in the Taluka. I need to emphasize again that this eminent leader who placed an indelible mark on the economy, agriculture, industry, society and political arena of Maharashtra also holds the record of being the Chief Minister of Maharashtra for the longest duration. He could continue



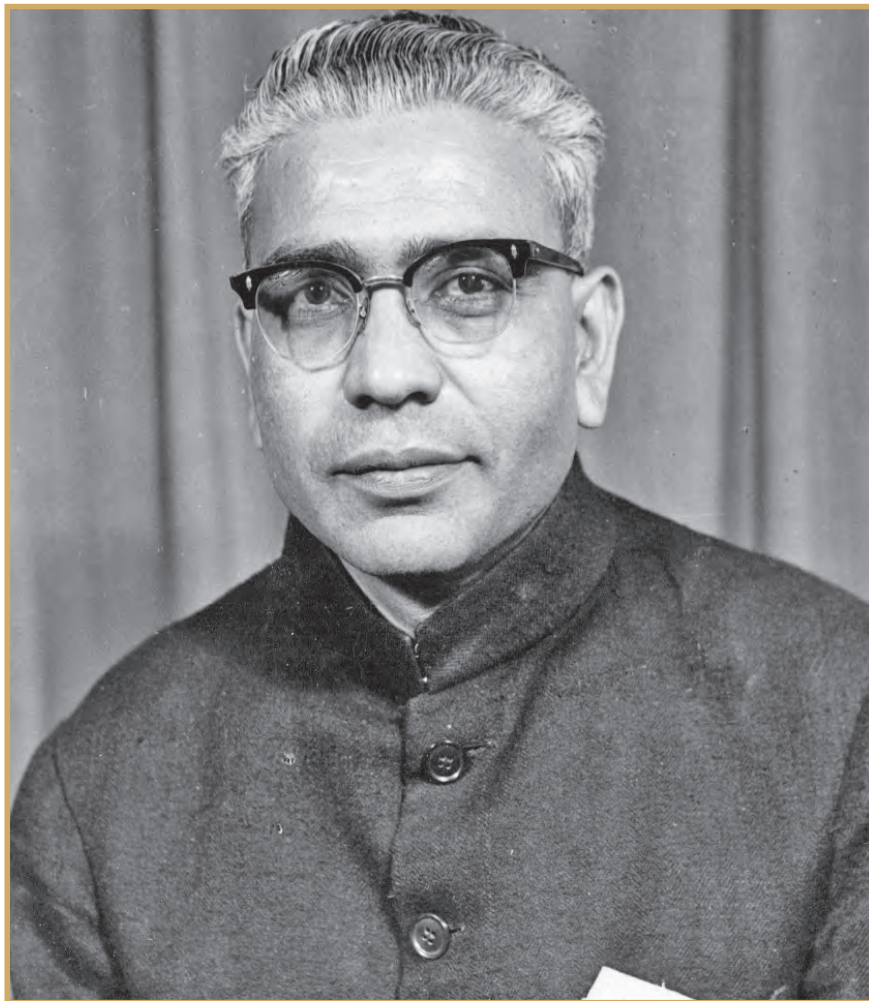
*Vasant Rao Naik, Vatsalabai Naik with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Vijayalakshmi Pandit*



as Chief Minister without a break and in a dignified manner only due to his popularity...

Vasantrao took many bold decisions during his extensive tenure. It was through these committed decisions that he provided a concrete direction to the State. He essentially prioritized farmers and their problems. He took a decision for monopoly purchase of prominent crops in the State such as Cotton, Jawari and Rice and implemented the same as well. He brought the milk deficit State to an apex position in milk production. In order to improve milk production he organized purchase of Hybrid cattle through Bank loans for farmers. Hence we have to give full credit to Vasantrao for White revolution just as the Green revolution.

The Employment Guarantee Scheme that has been implemented in the whole country providing work to the poor as well as needy and proved to be immensely successful was initiated during the tenure of Vasantrao alone and a large number of wells and ponds were excavated. The roads reaching remote villages were laid out. While implementing these "Grass Root" projects, four Agricultural Universities



### On 14th February 1964, Vasantrao took an important decision that Marathi would be official language for the State

were also created in the State. The traditional agricultural methods to be complemented by modernization, farmers to be equipped with state-of-art technology and farm practices in order to survive competition with developed countries were the objectives behind this worthy initiative. All this could happen only due to the visionary agricultural perspective held by Vasantrao.

His modern thought process could be seen through an initiative to start the first Open Jail in the State at Paithan. With a view to control the matka and gambling menace he started Maharashtra State Lottery. On 14th February 1964, Vasantrao took an important decision that Marathi would be official language for the State. In the year 1965 he publicly stated, "If Maharashtra does not become self sufficient in food grains in the ensuing two years, you can hang me..." He kept his word and within the next two years he saw to it that Maharashtra was self sufficient in food grains...Although these are some of the symbolic examples of his work, they are immensely important from the point of view of overall progress of Maharashtra.

He completely changed the face of Maharashtra in his extensive tenure

of 11 years. He made everything from agriculture to revenue, from official language to liquor sale and also Government machinery oriented to work. He strived at his best during natural calamities such as water shortage and famine.

He carried the same indelible impression to the Parliament as he had left as a Chief Minister of Maharashtra. He was well known as a courteous, humble, cultured, composed and smiling leader. With these virtues he had very amicable relations with senior leaders such as Indira Gandhi and Lal Bahadur Shastri...Although seen with his modern attire and lifestyle, this eminent leader was truly a saviour of the farmers...

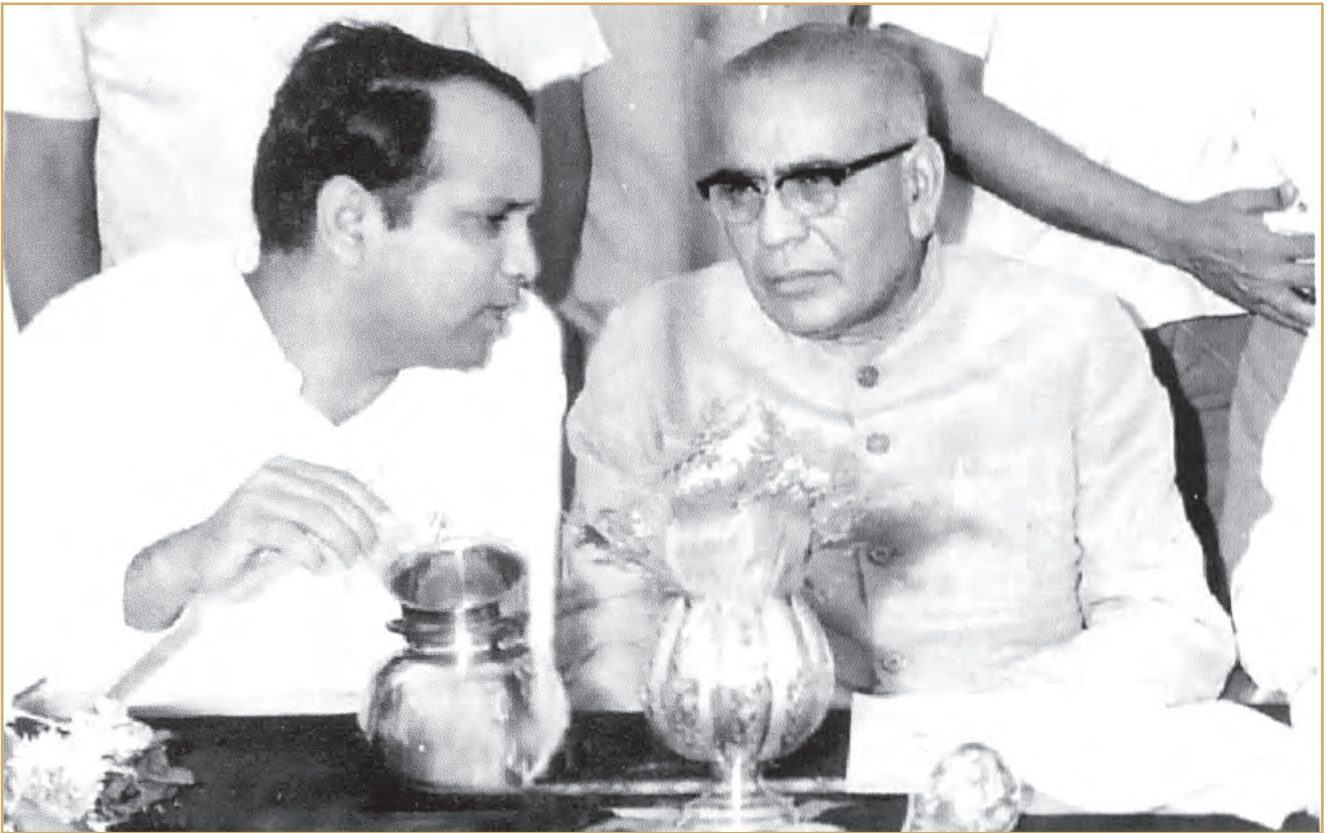
Maharashtra has continued to take strides on the path set out by him. ■

- As told to **Satish Lalit**



# A TREASURED TENURE

Vasant Naik always felt that the country would only survive if the agriculture survived. During his tenure the industries ancillary to agriculture got a real boost. Being extremely well organized himself he was revered for his knack of carrying along everyone with him. Reminiscing memories of a bygone era, Union Minister for Agriculture **Sharad Pawar** has expressed his feelings...



*Vasant Naik and Sharad Pawar*

**F**rom the point of view of Maharashtra, it is truly a rare occasion that the Birth Centenary of two of the most eminent craftsmen who led Maharashtra to sublime prosperity namely Yashwantrao Chavan and Vasant Naik is being celebrated in the same year. It would not be out of place to say that Yashwantrao Chavan laid the foundation of a modern

Maharashtra and Vasant Naik mounted a pinnacle on the same.

In the truest sense of the word it was Vasant Naik who provided the direction to the State of Maharashtra. In the decade of sixties Maharashtra was not flourished as an industrial State. The centre of industries was with the Uttar Pradesh. Vasant Naik always held that while it was necessary

to propagate industries in the State, we must also preserve farmers as well as agriculture in the State. His contention that majority of communities are dependent on agriculture and if we could preserve agriculture we could also preserve the Nation. He felt that the agriculture should be given the status of an industry. For him any subject culminated in agriculture and the



foremost ingredients for industries and agriculture were electricity and water. Huge electricity generation projects such as Koradi were commissioned during his tenure. Dams like Jayakwadi became operational.

He accelerated the growth of agricultural ancillary industries such as spinning mills and milk production so that it would provide a boost to agro-based industries. During his tenure not one but four Agricultural Universities were set up in Maharashtra. These were his gifts to the State. The setting up of Maharashtra State Seeds Corporation so that the farmers should get quality seeds also took place during his regime.

I could myself learn to fight famine and the calamities from Vasanttrao Naik alone. No one will ever be able to forget the Koyna Earthquake and the 1972 famine. We could come out of both these worst scenarios only due to the exemplary perseverance exhibited by him. Being extremely well organized himself he was revered for his knack of carrying everyone along with him. During the famine period we had a grave shortage of food grains. The people had to go hungry at times. We had to get the food grains from other States. He used to personally talk to the Chief Ministers of various States. I was a Minister of State at the time. He asked me to shoulder responsibility for co-ordination. I used to provide him a daily report in the evening. Here I would like to mention an incident down the memory lane...He had come to Pune for a Review meeting of the Officers. I had reached Pune after meeting the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and briefed him about the food grain stocks and distribution. He was distressed by the fact that we had to run from State to State for getting the food grains. Although the grave concern was bothering him he never showed the same. He used to tell us that we should face the calamities courageously.

On the same day he had a public meeting at Shaniwarwada. Everyone was anxious about what the Chief

Minister would say in his speech. In his speech he said, "The fact that we have to go pillar to post for food grains is disgraceful to a progressive State. However I take a vow and all of you are witness to the same that if Maharashtra State does not become self sufficient in terms of food grains within the next two years, I shall publicly hang myself". This showed the infinite confidence he had in himself and also served the aim to generate immense confidence in the people of the State. After this, he brought high yield Hybrid varieties to Maharashtra. For propagating the

It would not be out of place to say that Yashwantrao Chavan laid the foundation of a modern Maharashtra and Vasanttrao Naik mounted a pinnacle on the same

Hybrid Jawari he himself carried the mast through the whole of the State. In order to provide a meaningful rate for the cotton, he implemented the Cotton Monopoly Procurement Scheme. He used to gladly accept any constructive suggestion even by the opponent parties. This was a period when agitated mill workers took out processions. The Bandh-procession call by leaders such as Com. Dange or George Fernandes used to be unprecedented. He used to discuss and transact the matter in an extremely skillful manner. He never allowed the matters to come to a break point.

The Employment Guarantee Scheme brought by him also was an unprecedented one. This provided a job to whoever asked for it. During the famine the people got remunerative work. The road web in Maharashtra

and the small and medium dams were the result of this Scheme. Today the Scheme has been accepted by the whole Nation. In order to irrigate maximum agriculture land, a crash programme of construction of wells and minor irrigation projects were undertaken. He used to inculcate confidence in young Ministers like me. The researchers at Agriculture Universities came up with a variety of new species of grains. In effect we could nurture a huge potential of agricultural scientists. The variety Nanded 44 is still revered all over the country.

While addressing the farmers he used to insistently say, "Bring your agriculture under irrigation. Let the drops of rains drench the soil alone... If your land does not have water use your sweat...but see that the agriculture comes under irrigation..."

Under the provisions of Constitution of India, only the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes had reserved seats namely with 13 and 7 percent. Maharashtra has a large number of Nomadic Tribes and they are living life on the boundary. When this came to his notice, the State promulgated the Third Schedule taking the provisions of article 16(4)(b) into consideration. Through this decision was taken to reserve 4 percent seats for deprived constituents from the Nomadic Tribes. After this a number of Ashramshalas were initiated in the State and effectively this community got an opportunity for employment.

During an 11 year period from 1963 to 1975, Vasanttrao Naik saheb took the State of Maharashtra to the utmost esteem in the Country. During the time, the Chief Ministers from States like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar used to be changed quite often. However, it was only Vasanttrao Naik who created a magic of providing a stable Government in Maharashtra for such a long duration. Due to this alone we could generate infrastructural facilities in Maharashtra. The ideals he projected are absolutely inspiring even today. ■

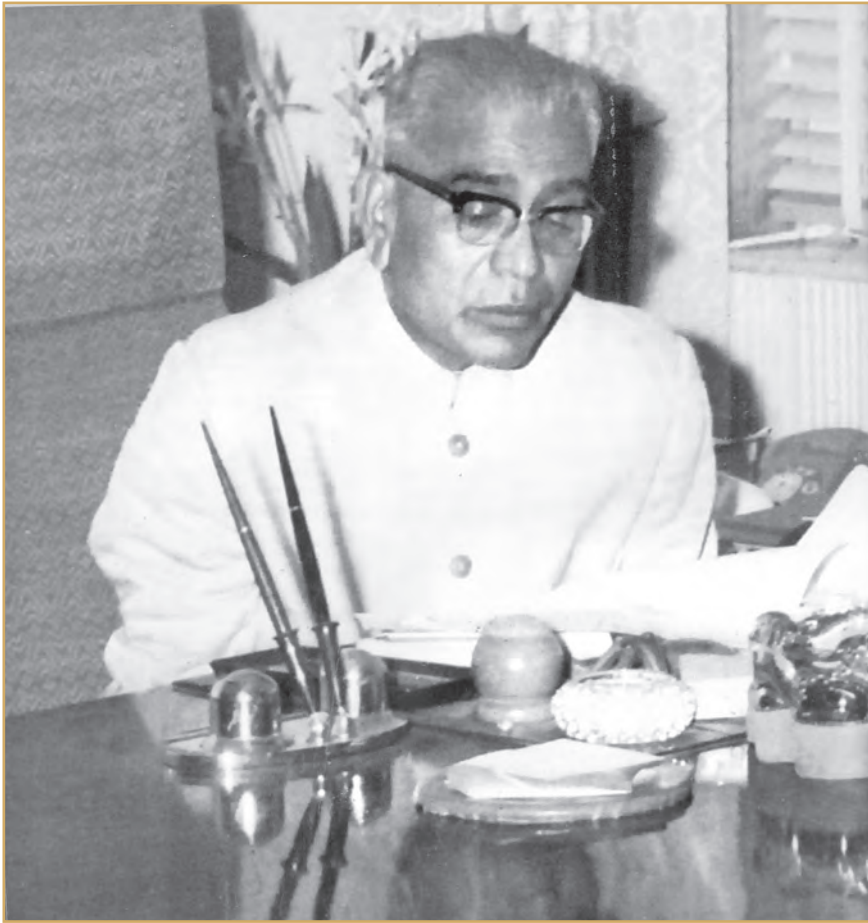
- As told to **Mohan Rathod**





# THE STATESMAN

He was revered by rural folk as well as middle class urbanites and rich elite from the State. He was a leader of the farmers and had total confidence reposed in him by urbanites. He was recognized across the spectrum of social activities and was admired in the cultural arena says eminent Marathi writer and Editor of Daily Lokmat **Suresh Dwadashiwar**



**A**lthough the ascendance and acceptance of reigns as Chief Minister of Maharashtra by Kannamwar after Yashwantrao was a part of the established traditions of the time, it was neither the tradition nor the coincidence that Vasant Rao Naik occupied the coveted position immediately after Kannamwar. This was an earnestly thought of strategy by Yashwantrao although in the beginning it had the feel of a political option. After

the India-China War of 1962, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru offered the coveted designation of Defence Minister of the Nation to Yashwantrao. At the time Dadasaheb Kannamwar was Deputy Chief Minister of the State. He was prepared to forego the demand for a separate Vidarbha State and to get Vidarbha merged into Maharashtra alongwith fifty plus MLAs supporting him. He was also a very senior Freedom Fighter. None of these parameters were

available with Vasant Rao to become the Chief Minister of the State.

He had worked as Agriculture, Cooperation and Finance Minister in the Bilingual Mumbai State headed by Yashwantrao. However he did not have an aura as a Freedom Fighter. He did not have any class of disciples from the peoples' representatives either. None of the organized castes was with him. The Banjara community from which he evolved had been known as a small nomadic and tribal cluster which was illiterate as well as backward. Although he came from such community, he was well known as a leading advocate with a clean character, a smiling representative of the people and a Minister who left his indelible mark on the administration. He was neither a mass leader like Yashwantrao nor did he have the popularity enjoyed by Kannamwar...and yet to raise him to the coveted position of Chief Minister of the State was clearly a politically visionary and intelligent leadership decision by Yashwantrao.

At the time also there was a group of Maratha leaders from Western Maharashtra who was ready to ascend to the throne of Chief Minister of the State after Yashwantrao. Balasaheb Desai was a front runner for the same. Balasaheb was also from Satara District just as Yashwantrao and elder to him. His contention that his seniority in politics, his contribution to the freedom struggle and the Maratha community strength he carried with him would bring the pie of Chief Minister post to him was even not out of place. Balasaheb at that time and afterwards



as well carried an aura of a Chief Minister with him and spoke like one.

The selection of Vasantryao Naik, an unknown entity in Marathi and Maratha politics till the time to the position of Chief Minister of the State itself bore the signs of political and regional challenges that would face him in his tenure. The primary objective before him was to generate empathy in the unhappy and dejected Maratha leadership and to generate an all-round acceptance from an entire State while being from Vidarbha and from a backward class. The decision by Yashwantrao to provide the reins as Chief Minister to Naik who also hailed from Vidarbha just after Kannamwar was definitely aggravating the Maratha community and sure to rebound on to him. It should also be understood here that he was targeted for the same.

It was said that Yashwantrao was not confident about leaders from the community and also did not feel that his disciples would continue his politics. However as the Congress organization was absolutely more solid and was truly loyalty based and as any word from Yashwantrao was considered to be precious as a pearl Vasantryao was able to overcome many of the difficulties faced by him. In his conquest of Maharashtra mindset, a great part was played by his openness, soft spoken nature and convincing attitude as well as his smiling grace which could

get anyone to agree with him. All the bigwigs from Loknayaak Bapuji Ane to Yashwantrao honoured him for his effortless cultured attitude and called him a 'Leader who could carefully preserve his innocent calm even in stressful conditions'. Even opponents like Atre and Mrinal Gore also never reserved themselves from praising him. His trust with the administration as a

**He was never  
overburdened  
with the problems  
before him and  
never seen losing  
his clarity of vision  
due to these  
problems**

Member of the Legislative Assembly and Deputy Minister in the erstwhile Madhya Prant and Vidarbha was quite enduring and mature. He was a tiger by attitude in his work. Vasantryao was at the helm of affairs as a Maharashtra Chief Minister for a long tenure of 11 years and he spent all these years working absolutely 24x7 to put it in the phrase widely used today.

Of course there was another worthy reason behind handing over the reins of the State to Vasantryao in terms of

the doused fires of a separate Vidarbha movement. That the three top leaders of the movement Loknayaak Bapuji Ane, Jambuwantrao Dhote and T. G. Deshmukh hailed from the same District as Vasantryao was another plausible reason for the choice. The arithmetic choice also made the people of Vidarbha to forget their demand for a separate Vidarbha though it was duly accepted by the States Reorganization Commission. There might have been a thought in the minds of executive leaders in western Maharashtra that the Vasantryao at the helm would not be in any way overburden them as he did not have a sturdy support from any group of political activists or class to bank upon. Vasantryao's tenure as Chief Minister passed all the acid tests. However one must admit the fact that Vasantryao carefully preserved his exclusive personality and independent impression while catering to the expectations of commanding Maharashtra leaders from him. It was never seen during his tenure that he waited for approval either from Yashwantrao or bigwigs from Delhi for any important decision. The State saw him resolving complicated State issues just as naturally as he would light his famous pipe.

During his tenure, Maharashtra faced many calamities. During the natural and manmade ones such as Koyna earthquake and the unprecedented famine during the seventies decade Vasantryao provided a genuinely positive leadership to the State. At the same time he also proved that he alone understood the intricacies of political and administrative matters as well as the minds of the people from the State...This soared his personality to a larger than life stature in the hearts of Maharashtra and he was seen with reverence and confidence by everyone.

There was a political earthquake before the natural one at Koyna. Balasaheb Desai had resigned as Home Minister and had taken the road to Patan. When a procession by the mill workers in Mumbai took a violent turn, Balasaheb had refused to order firing

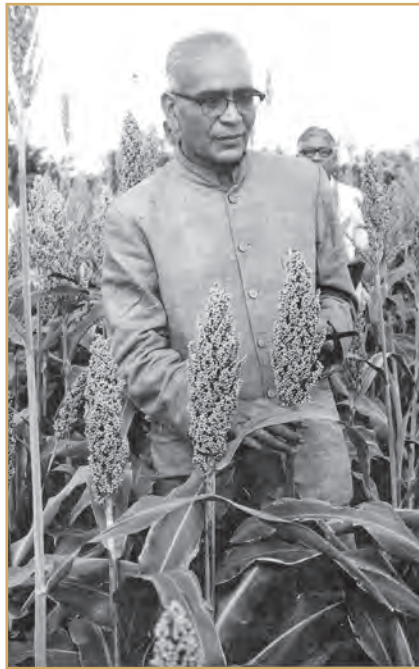


for maintaining Law and Order. The angry Mumbai Congress had passed a resolution venting displeasure about Balasaheb Desai. Ministers Homi Talyarkhan and Kailas tendered their resignation to the Chief Minister for the same reason. In order to find a solution, Vasantrao used the good offices of S. K. Patil, a senior leader from Mumbai to mediate in the matter. The matter got diffused and the Ministers took back their resignations. At the same time he politely persuaded Balasaheb to be at the helm of Finance instead of the earlier Home portfolio. The whole exercise in a way was an acid test of the lack of political experience and Vasantrao passed the same with honours.

The Finance Ministry was offered to Balasaheb and which he had declined earlier proved to be a boon in disguise. The Koyna earthquake jolted just while he was at Patan. He exercised all the powers accrued to his post and worked for the earthquake affected areas in an exemplary manner. He brought every help from the World over and came back to Mumbai only when he had built 70,000 homes for the quake affected people. During the entire episode Vasantrao stood like a rock behind Balasaheb and also was fully prepared with any kind of help needed in his relief work.

During the same period Senapati Bapat started his indefinite fast in front of the residence of the Chief Minister on the question of border issue. Senapati was revered all over Maharashtra as a great elderly thinker and stalwart such as Bheeshmacharya. Naturally the whole politics got agitated with his fast. While everyone was concerned how the matter could be resolved with the firmness of Senapati on one end and an option less Government on the other, Vasantrao met the Senapati in the pandal where he was on fast. He volunteered to mediate with the Central Government on the question which was bothering Senapati. The honesty in his soft and earnest pleading melted the firm stance of Senapati. He not only ended his fast but also agreed to

an invitation from Chief Minister and experienced his courtesies as a guest at 'Varsha' for a day....Acharya Atre was one of the intellectual powers during the time with extensive damaging capabilities. He had continued with his fierce attacks on the Government. In order to reduce the sharpness of these attacks, Vasantrao invited Atre to his residence for a Lunch. Acharya Atre was provided with a silver plate and bowls which was different than others. When Acharya enquired about the same Vasantrao replied that these were purchased by Vatsalabai for her brother. Vatsalabai's brother was no more at the time. Acharya was overwhelmed by the reverence she had provided him by considering him as her brother.



Under the fierce leadership of Mrinal Gore, young women from a rolling pin agitation stopped Chief Minister's vehicle on the road. One of the women got on to the bonnet of the car and took out the tricolour with the rod raising the same in her hand. Mrinaltai corrected the mistake of her activist afterwards. She went to the Chief Minister's cabin with the tricolour and the rod to meet him. In her own words the way in which Vasantrao accepted

the tricolour in solemnity and with total modesty from her hands showed beyond doubt the sheer patriotism in his heart.

Jambuwantrao Dhote also hailed from Yavatmal just as Vasantrao. He was a true pro-Vidarbhaite and unnecessarily staunch critic of Vasantrao. He took up to agitations against Vasantrao, stopped his vehicles, disturbed his meetings and always carried a political agenda to keep him on his toes and distressed. However while Jambuwantrao's mother was hospitalized in Mumbai, Vasantrao made it a point to visit her. The incident made Jambuwantrao to understand Vasantrao clearly and his opposition afterwards did not carry the teeth it had earlier.

He envisioned bringing Green Revolution to Maharashtra being a farmer himself. While announcing this he also proclaimed, "If I cannot wipe out the food deficit of the State within a year, you can hang me!" in a public meeting in Pune. He denied paying heed to the advice by Yashwantrao that a politico in power in a democracy should not hasten to reach extremes. During the ensuing year and afterwards he undertook persistent efforts in the area of agriculture and irrigation which resulted in the State being acknowledged as 'Sujalam Suphalam' by the Nation and the World at large.

1971 saw an unprecedented famine gripping the State and also people from rural hamlets and urban areas descending on the streets. Without giving in to the devastating calamity Vasantrao got all the parties under a single umbrella and brought the ambitious Employment Guarantee Scheme to Maharashtra. This brought employment to lakhs of youth and provided strength to the lives of crores of people. The Employment Guarantee Scheme was accepted by the whole country subsequently. The presently operative Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA) is an extended and National edition of the same Scheme.



Vasantrao strengthened the cooperative movement accelerated by Yashwantrao for the next 11 years. The sugarcane production increased and more than 100 sugar factories got activated. He was also the leading encouragement to Grape Farming. The huge grape farms and the winery industries flourished from the encouragement. He was also instrumental in accelerating efforts so that the milk production was increased and that the farmers should get more avenues of income...

During his tenure the Monopoly Cotton Purchase Scheme was initiated for cotton farmers from Vidarbha. The revolutionary Scheme relieved the farmers from the clutches of moneylenders.

With all these schemes, Vasantrao became a leader worthy of total confidence for the entire rural Maharashtra instead of remaining a representative of Yavatmal or Vidarbha. Balawantrao Mehta Commission brought the scheme of decentralization of power to the Nation and a huge enactment of the same was carried out in Maharashtra in 1962. Vasantrao had a lion's share when the next 12 years saw strengthening of scheme and providing present culture to the Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad. He got firmly knit with the

rural activists from Maharashtra and in turn the rural areas met a worthy friend to call their own.

Vasantrao's life had a rich cultural hue to it. He was a devoted and ardent reader. He had a great repertoire of English and Marathi books and was specific in referring to these books in his speeches. He was very close to the Maharashtra cultural stream. The 49th Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan was held at Yavatmal in 1973. His nephew Sudhkarrao Naik was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. He himself was the Chief Guest. Yashwantrao inaugurated the event and G. D. Madgulkar was the President. In his speech on the occasion, Vasantrao earnestly called upon the Marathi literary personalities to see that the agony and the anxieties of the rural people are reflected in Marathi literature. His words and the sincerity therein are still remembered... This is just a journey through the memory lane...

The security at the time was not fortified to cut off Ministers and Organizers from the common man. The inauguration was over and the event President, Inaugurating Guest as well as Chief Guest were discussing just in front of the pavilion. The Police were at a distance. Common people attending the event were able to reach the

dignitaries. While Vasantrao was about to light his famous pipe, even before anyone could interfere an old rural folk with a turban on his head came to him. What should he have demanded from the Chief Minister? He said, "Could you give me the matchbox please?"...

He had an extinguished bidi in his hand. For a moment Vasantrao observed him and then without a word he went on to light the bidi by his lighter in front of everyone present. The rural person came back naturally. A journalist stopped him and asked, "Do you know who had lighted your bidi?" "No. I do not know" the person said innocently.

"Vasantrao Naik...Chief Minister of Maharashtra..." the journalist told him...

"My God! The son of that Phulsingh Naik?" the person uttered at ease and was on his way...The incident clearly shows how close the leaders were to the people...

Although he was active in party politics he always kept himself aloof from party squabbles. He went on to meet Golwalkar Guruji, the Supremo Sarsanghchalak of the R. S. S. while he was terminally ill and was able to adhere to the restrictions to keep his politics aside. He had a perfect sense of what kept his nearest people happy. When Prince Agakhan visited Mumbai, the Chief Minister arranged a Dinner in his Honor at the Princess Room at The Taj Hotel. Vasantrao provided an exquisite pleasure of a life time to his great friend from Khoja community Dr. Hirani and his wife by inviting them to this prestigious event. He could preserve inimitable non-enmity scarcely available in the political arena. While we can see what all small matters cause people to bloom and boast in the present times, it was really pristine and precious to see that this person who experienced the power of being at the helm of affairs of Maharashtra as a Chief Minister for 11 years and neither exhibited even the slightest of arrogance nor was never found to be inebriated with pride. The greatest



*Mrinal Gore addressing during rolling pin agitation*



of the facts was that even when he held the power for so many years, no one could ever charge him with any wrong use of the same. His qualities of keeping aloof even being a part of the whole group, not to become a politician being deep in politics and to remain firmly on the ground while tackling the nuances of the world before him seem to be magical in the present period. It would not be out of place to say that Vasant Rao alone could wield this magic during such a long political tenure in Maharashtra.

The success Vasant Rao had earned was larger than life. A child born at a hamlet Gahuli in Pusad taluka of Yavatmal District in a nomadic community strived on the basis of his intellect, efforts and faith and became Chief Minister of Maharashtra State... He became a unique personality to earn the repute to repeat the feat thrice...No one had earlier or after him carried this feat. His leadership became all inclusive and universal to foster affection from all over the State. Many of the Schemes started by him at the State were acknowledged and taken up on a National basis.

He was revered by rural folk as well as middle class urbanites and rich elite from the State. He was a leader of the farmers and had total confidence reposed in him by urbanites. He was recognized across the spectrum of social activities and was admired in the cultural arena. He had fans all over the State in every field. He commanded even greater success and reverence with his inimitable non-enmity amidst fierce politics. He was befriended by stalwarts from across the political parties. S. M. Joshi felt proud of his deeds and Thackeray from Sena also had an affectionate feeling. He was friends with Krishnarao Dhulup of Peasants and Farmers Party and Com. Dange also wished to keep affectionate relationship with him. Congress owned him fully and the opponents did not consider him to be an enemy. Another of his larger than life successes could be attributed to his being spotlessly clean character while remaining active



**Vasant Rao Naik, Yashwantrao Chavan and G.D. Madgulkar at Marathi Sahitya Sammelan held at Yavatmal**

in politics for so many years. Neither his opponents nor the media or the so called investigative journalists were ever able to stick a charge to his name... He carried himself as simple and clean while entering politics as he was at the end of his life...

If the period in between bestowed anything on him, it was mature modesty, an ever smiling face, a true disciple even while being a leader himself and his selfless attitude to be aloof from the crowd although he was one of them and also unique...

When Vasant Rao took over the reins of Maharashtra, it was a deficit State. The State had a huge shortage of food grains and was in the shadow of a famine. Mumbai was discontent and the workers were in agitation mood. Vidarbha also reeled in discontent and Marathwada was facing a storm over the development deficit... Western Maharashtra felt that this Chief Minister was forced upon them, whereas Konkan felt the brunt of distance between the region and the origin of Chief Minister...

When Vasant Rao relinquished the reins as Chief Minister the deficit had been mopped out. The food

grains front was self sufficient. The discontent in Mumbai and Vidarbha had pacified. The development deficit for Marathwada was overcome and Konkan had forgotten the clash with him...The difference between times when a responsibility is held and when it is relinquished alone decides the success and failures of a leader... Considering this, although the success that Vasant Rao achieved was not total it was worth the congratulations and both himself and Maharashtra as well were satisfied about the same...

Vasant Rao never faced the type of criticism that Yashwantrao faced during the early days of his tenure and he never was an object of an immature ridicule faced by Kannamwar. Just as he was appointed as the Chief Minister with dignity, he also transferred the same to the incumbent next to him keeping the integrity of reverence for him in public minds...

That a leader of this stature remained at the apex position at Maharashtra for so many years and created a solid path for its progress to eminence in future itself commands warm salutations! ■

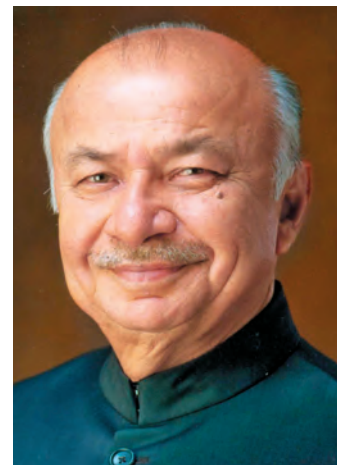


# INDEBTED TO VASANTRAO

Vasantrao played a major role in crafting and nurturing my tenure. I can never forget the debt that I owe to him. I am going ahead with the thought process that he bestowed on me and I humbly accept his major contribution in my political and social achievements reminisces Union Minister for Home, **Sushilkumar Shinde**

**W**hile Vasantrao Naik was the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, I was a Police Officer. It was a coincidence that I came to politics. During 1974, I was contesting a Bye-election for the State Legislature. As soon as the ticket for the same was allotted to me I went to Varsha bungalow to meet Vasantrao. I met Shri Nashikkar, his secretary at the time and requested for a meeting with Vasantrao. Shri. Nashikkar made me to wait for an hour in a hall at Varsha. Even after an hour there was no sign of any message from Vasantrao. I met Shri. Nashikkar once again and brought this to his notice.

Shri Nashikkar had just forgotten to inform Vasantrao of my arrival due to exigencies of work and he also begged for an excuse. He said that he would immediately inform the Chief Minister about me and got in touch with the Chief Minister on telephone. Within 5 minutes Vasantrao came to the main hall to meet me. He enquired about me. He told me to contest the elections with confidence. He also said that he would be standing firmly behind me and that I should not worry at all. He gave me an envelope and best wishes for my success in the election. The envelope contained the amount for expenses for contesting the election.



He promised me that he would come personally for electioneering. Generally the Chief Minister does not participate in the election propaganda for a Bye-election. However Vasantrao participated in the same for my sake.

Huge crowds had gathered for the public meeting. He conquered the audiences through his speech. During his speech he said, "I have come here for propaganda for an activist

with a very bright future ahead of him. He is going to eminently serve the State of Maharashtra. You elect him and I shall definitely make him a Minister." All of us were speechless. How was this possible? I was contesting the election for the first time. There were many legislators senior to me. This was something incredible. All of us felt that he had spoken with the intent of finding me elected and not to lose the election.

I won this election with a huge margin. I became a legislator for the first time and Vasantrao kept his promise. Naiksaheb got me inducted to the State Ministry. Just as the proverb said his deeds always reflected his words fully. He adhered to his promise to the voters from my constituency and my entire political career took a positive turn. I never had to look back at any time. In an ascending order I went ahead in my career. I got an opportunity to occupy the chair once adorned by Vasantrao from which he governed the State..I





went further to become Governor and today I hold the prestigious position as the Union Home Minister. While working with Vasant Rao, I learnt many factors of State governance. It would not be wise to say that State has moved forward and progressed unless there is an overall development of the neglected sections of the society. Therefore we must be most proactive towards them and see to it personally that various projects are planned for them and implemented effectively. This factor was brought to my notice by Vasant Rao on many occasions and I always carried the same with conviction.

When I took over as Chief Minister of Maharashtra State, I planned

## He had closely watched the problems faced by common people, farmers and the oppressed sections of the Society

many schemes for Social justice and implemented them with a dedicated phased programme. Vasant Rao played a major role in crafting and nurturing my tenure. I can never forget the debt that I owe to him. I am going ahead with

the thought process that he bestowed on me and I humbly accept his major contribution in my political and social achievements.

Vasant Rao Naik had an immaculately admired personality. He had closely watched the problems faced by common people, farmers and the oppressed sections of the Society. He crafted meticulously and laid the foundations of a new Maharashtra. The ideals and the directions he provided are immensely inspiring for Maharashtra. I feel myself privileged that I got an opportunity to work in his Council of Ministers; I could observe him at close quarters and could study his method of work.

*As told to Mohan Rathod*

## Through Others' Eyes

"Shri Vasant Rao Naik is truly a man from the countryside. His undoubted sympathy with the rural folk has well attuned him for dedicated work for their uplift. He looks upon their prosperity and happiness as symbolic of India's prosperity."



**- Y.B. Chavan**

Minister of Defence, New Delhi

"Shri Naik is an essentially human person, and that is what has particularly attracted me to him. He is a person of wide sympathies and most scrupulously keeps up his associations with colleagues when once those are formed."



**- Sri Prakasa**

"Shri V.P. Naik is an able administrator and a statesman. He possess all the qualities of a strong leadership."

**- Jagjivan Ram**

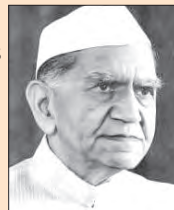


"Shri Vasant Rao P. Naik has a background of selfless service rendered to different causes for several years. His services to the State and to India are well-known and needs no recital."



**- K.M. Munshi**

"Shri Naik ranks high among the architects of Maharashtra. Every field he has entered, beginning from Local self-Government to the State Legislature, he has enriched by positive contributions of far-reaching significance. His work in the agriculture sector, his introduction of the Land Ceiling Act and Panchayat Raj in Maharashtra are true and strong foundations for socialism which the country has set out to achieve."



**- F.A. Ahmed**

Minister for Irrigation & Power, India

"Shri Naik is not only an outstanding administrator but also a great humanitarian. He never lost sight of the overall requirements and situation in the country and always viewed his State's problems in the perspective of the national problem."

**- C. Subramaniam**

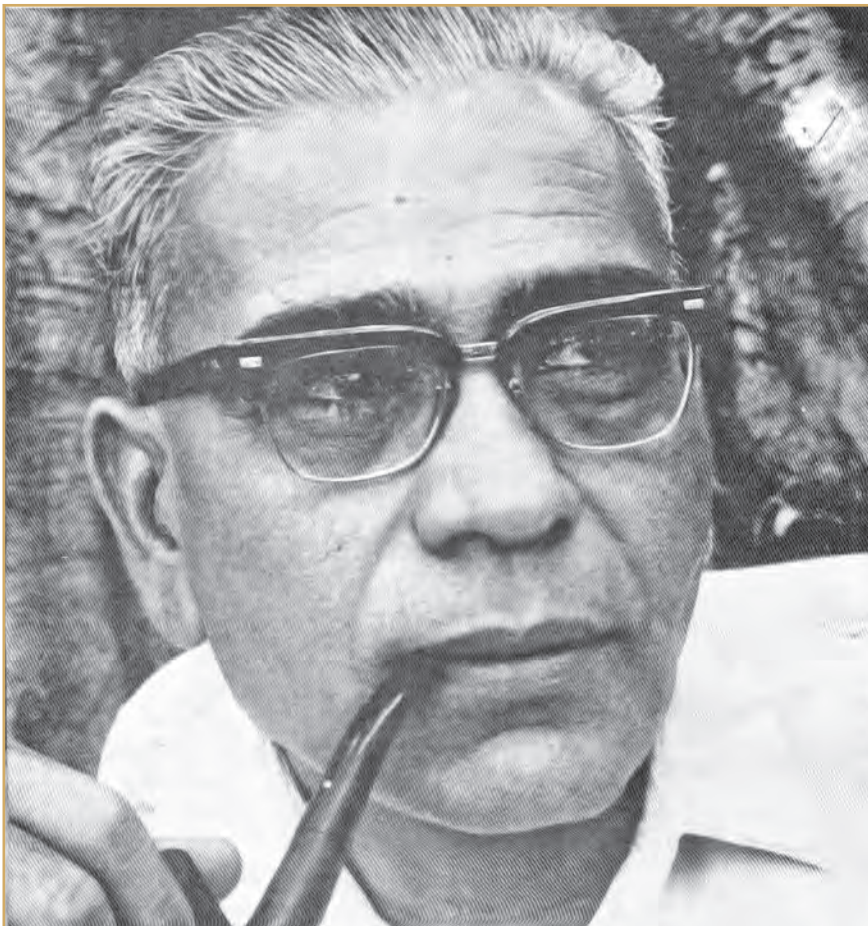
Minister for Food & Agriculture, New Delhi



Courtesy : Shri Vasant Rao Naik Gaurav Granth, 1966

# PRAGMATIC LEADER

Vasantrao Naik decided to diversify industrial sector. He offered special incentives to industrialists moving to backward areas. As a follow up, he announced setting up of Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation zones at taluka level to ensure that jobs stayed within the range of villages and yet industrial clusters would provide the prosperity to the inhabitants and fatten the State treasury as well says **Dinkar Raikar**, Group Editor, Daily Lokmat



popularly known, ruled Maharashtra with a firm and just hand from 1963 to 1975, The State of Maharashtra had been loyal to the Congress party since Independence and since then the tradition was for the local legislators to elect the Chief Minister on their own. The State was the embodiment of stability when several States were witnessing the era of "aya rams and gaya rams".

Today no one will believe that Maharashtra had abundant power supply and used to cater to the requirements of Karnataka and Gujarat. Industrialists were happy with the availability of land and power. With stability and peace, there was an influx of labour to this State as well, which the industrialists appreciated.

Farm and food grain production too was on the higher side. In fact, Naik was a pioneer of green revolution in the State. Pollution was under control and there were no headaches about water supply as well, with big irrigation schemes under way.

Naiksaheb was clearly in command and took keen interest in ensuring that his policies were being strictly rolled out.

He had this keen eye to keep everybody's interests at heart. The rise of urban clusters led him to realize that there would soon be a mad scramble from the rural areas to leave their villages for the glitter of the cities. It was to stem this that he decided to diversify industrial sector. He offered special incentives to industrialists moving

**A** Maharashtrian visionary who advocated industrialization and advanced the causes of the masses as well? If this question was to be placed before any present day television anchor or the new generation of news editors, the chances of a reply by another of these silver-tongued worthies even in 3 minutes is remote.

Such a person did stride the political firmament of this country. His name was Vasantrao Phulsing Naik, who served as Maharashtra's Chief Minister for 11 long, progressive and successful years, before he made the way for S. B. Chavan at the behest of the party leadership.

V P Naik, or Naiksaheb, as he was





**Vasant Rao Naik, Yashwantrao Chavan and Smt. Indira Gandhi consoling the affected**

to backward areas. As a follow up, he announced setting up of Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation zones at the taluka level to ensure that jobs stayed within the range of villages and yet industrial clusters would provide the prosperity to the inhabitants and fatten the State treasury as well.

The MIDC schemes were ably supported by the Maharashtra State Finance Corporation which offered financial assistance. And to complement this dream further even SICOM offered a helping hand. As a visionary, Naiksaheb was peerless.

But it was indeed a powerful troika which was holding high the flag of Maharashtra. At Delhi we had a stalwart in Y B Chavan in the Union Cabinet. And the redoubtable Vasantdada Patil was the president of the Maharashtra Congress. With V P Naik keeping a firm hand on the rudder, it was indeed smooth sailing for the State on the development front.

That is until politics came into play-hardcore and non-developmental politics. Which is why today you see the State losing its pace of industrialization owing to acute shortage of power and water among other things. The well-etched schemes of industrialization have almost come to a halt following V P Naik's exit and citizens have observed how political cronyism rules State's various agencies meant to promote industries.

Naiksaheb was a person at ease with

**With V P Naik  
keeping a firm  
hand on the rudder,  
it was indeed  
smooth sailing for  
the State on the  
development front**

everyone from the strata of society. He was smart enough to ensure that some trade union morchas were allowed and gracious enough to meet the rallyists half-way after having driven down from his Malabar Hill residence and greeting them at Girgaum Chowpatty. This created a healthy atmosphere in all sectors.

And how was Konkan's drought tackled? It was supposedly because "well-meaning" journalists used to harangue Indira-ji during her visits to Maharashtra about the need for infrastructure schemes in Konkan region to uplift the impoverished population. It was from such sessions that the idea for the Konkan Railway was floated. It did take some years before it became a reality, but the jobs kept on flowing to ebb the tide of misery in the region.

Naiksaheb's character was clearly cut from one rare bolt of cloth- never to be spun again. ■



# THE QUINTESSENTIAL

Although Vasantryao was a man of few words he was an immaculately open minded as well as considerate...He was ready to understand his opponents and never lost his cool under any circumstances. In fact he loved his enemies... He could find an amicable solution to any problem...Maintaining dignity of the Chair and order at the house was his forte recalling **Manohar Naik**, Minister for Food and Drug Administration talked about his uncle late Vasantryao Naik to senior journalist Na. Maa. Joshi from Yavatmal

## How would you introduce Late Vasantryao Naik to the present generation?

Late Vasantryao Naik was like a sacred pink water lily Lotus in the politics. Although he was a revered as a pioneer of Green revolution, efficient Chief Minister, creator of four Agriculture Universities in the State and also a great personality as leader of the masses, for me he was my uncle and a true farmer who always carried out new experiments in the field of agriculture. He was closely related to farming for his entire life and also as a Chief Minister. Visiting his ancestral hamlet Gahuli for for undertaking new experiments and adopting new projects and techniques was his passion.

Even while the entire District

administration attended him while he was at Pusad, he discussed the issues at hand and moved to visit his fields. With heavy expenses that he incurred on his experiments, he was reprimanded by his elder brother for wastage of finances. However he stood his ground with humanitarian explanation that the family was capable of bearing the loss but needed to help marginal farmers who were not so lucky. His objective was to make farming comfortable and affordable for farmers. He always considered that he was a representative of farmers and hence it was his duty to help the farmers in all respects. He experimented with Hybrid jawari, tomato and cotton. He strived for improving the variety and the yield. He personally guided farmers about



cultivation as well as working schedule and helped them to be independent.

## Will you please focus on family aspect?

He sincerely maintained a rich family bond and took immense care to nurture the family. His relationship to his brother Babasaheb was like Ram and Laxman. Vasantryao took all decisions with the consent of Babasaheb. Every guideline provided by Vasantryao was like a commandment for Babasaheb. When Babasaheb suffered an acute heart ailment, Vasantryao took a quick decision and saw that eminent Cardiologist Dr. Date from Mumbai visited him at the earliest. When Vasantryao escaped a helicopter accident at Aurangabad, it was Babasaheb who rushed immediately. The love and intimacy between them would be remembered by generations to come. Babasheb continued to remain a mentor, guide and philosopher for Vasantryao.



*Vasantryao Naik with his elder brother Babasaheb Naik.*



### Do you remember any incident when Vasant Rao Naik was puzzled?

I distinctly remember the dilemma Vasant Rao was in when there was a split in Congress. There was a Congress with Indira Gandhi and there was another one with Yashwantrao Chavan and others. Vasant Rao was puzzled and it was difficult at the time to arrive at a decision. He talked to Babasaheb and rushed to Pusad to discuss the matter at length with him.

Babasaheb reminded of the firm and rooted association with Yashwantrao and also added the point of indebtedness as it was Yashwantrao alone who installed him as the Chief Minister of the State. In a very positive philosophical thought, Babasaheb also stated that the greatness is a combination of character and intellect of the highest order. If the same is to be measured by the lasting value of solid work carried out in the arena of thought and action no one could come even near to the stature of Yashwantrao in Maharashtra. He guided Vasant Rao to join Yashwantrao Congress and the word was obeyed sincerely. The incident will also show how these brothers were true and committed to the values and principles. Vasant Rao remained as the Chief Minister of Maharashtra for more

than a decade and his mental prowess was proved with the results he produced during this period with incredible speed and acumen...He was totally analytical and cut through the problem with an ease which stunned many intellectuals... The solutions came by almost like a magic he wielded...In a way beyond remembering and revering him for his political dominance he would be remembered more for his courage never to submit or yield...

### Tell us something about his nature and personality?

As Chief Minister of Maharashtra State Vasant Rao Naik always remained at high esteem due to his political impartiality and judgment. Chief Minister of a State is one of the most important offices in Indian democracy that serves the constitutional, legislative and executive ends as well as almost every phase of political arena.

The Chief Minister has to be dynamic and with abilities to deal with the actual needs and problems of masses from the State during the development process. He has to become a meaningful, stabilizing and stimulating force in the democracy. Vasant Rao Naik sincerely served the objectives set by the constitution. For that matter

Vasant Rao Naik certainly worked within the frame of democracy. Although he did not follow any regular pattern, he clearly satisfied all the reasonable expectations...

He not only loved the members of his family but also keenly appreciated all those who had talent. It was the ingenuity of Vasant Rao Naik who discovered gems in the form of Dr. N. P. Hirani, presently the Chairman of Cotton Federation and Shivajirao Moghe presently the Minister of Social Justice, Government of Maharashtra...

Although Vasant Rao was a man of few words he was an immaculately open minded as well as considerate...He was ready to understand his opponents and never lost his cool under any circumstances. In fact he loved his enemies...He could find an amicable solution to any problem...Maintaining dignity of the Chair and order at the house was his forte...Sometimes when he was upset, he raised his hands and just said, "what can I say to you?" At the official residence of the Chief Minister, the presence of Vasant Rao Naik was genial, kind, affectionate, ready to help and extend uniform courtesy to everyone.

When he resigned as Chief Minister of Maharashtra State, he expressed his





gratitude with truly touching words, "I am a debtor to you for many things, for your unfailing cooperation in the Legislative Assembly and Council and for your expectations for decisions." He had a great and affectionate bond even with Jambuwantao Dhote, Uddhavrao Patil, Krushnarao Dhulap, N.D. Patil, Ahliya Rangnekar, Tara Reddy, Mrinal Gore and others...

When he resigned as Chief Minister of Maharashtra State on the 20th February 1975, Janta Shikshan Prasarak Mandal's College had a debt of around Rs.12 Lakhs. Vasantao calmed down a perturbed President of the Mandal Dr. Hirani and assured that help would be coming from the friends... After the sad demise of Vasantao, my elder brother Sudkhakar Naik and the then Chief Minister of Maharashtra raised funds by organizing various cultural programmes and freed the Mandal from financial burden and tension.

Vasantao Naik had maintained very good relations with press and media persons. He was of the opinion that media and press should criticize Government if it does not work for the betterment of the common man of the land. He disliked sycophancy. He appreciated the role of media and

journalists or media persons could comment freely against him.

He did his best to implement the orders and Government Resolutions. Many times the members of his cabinet disagreed with his decisions but frankly paid fulsome tributes to his impartiality. Many opposition leaders showed their

## He sincerely maintained a rich family bond and took immense care to nurture the family

dissatisfaction and displeasure saying that a certain decision by the Chief Minister was not in the larger interest of the people. Vasantao Naik always tried to convince the opposition when they organized morchas held Dharna andolan and patiently faced them all...

Vasantao Naik was a fan of cricket. He enjoyed all test matches in Mumbai. He loved non-vegetarian food. He was well known for his passion for hunting. He was an all-rounder. He was born on 1st July 1913 at Gahuli in Yavatmal

district in a Banjara family which falls under VJNT Community. He was a learned advocate. He got married to Vatsala Ghate, a Graduate Brahmin girl from Nagpur. This was an inter caste love marriage. He was the president of Pusad Municipal Council and afterwards Chief Minister of Maharashtra for 11 years. He was an extraordinary person from a royal Banjara family. He could not bare the shock of losing his elder brother Babasaheb. Vasantao Naik died on 18th August 1979 at Singapore due to a massive heart attack. The end came just two months after the death of his elder brother Babasaheb.

Vasantao Naik built modern Maharashtra with care and love. He never lost his temper. He was unique. He loved agriculture and cared for farmers. He was an excellent administrator. After his sad demise in Singapore at the age of 66 his remains were brought to Gahuli and funeral rites were performed in the presence of lakhs of people from all walks of life. His Samadhi was built in the field of village Gahuli near the Samadhi of Babasaheb Naik. Vasantao Naik will always remain a source of strength, love, energy and belief for us and all his fans. I pay my humble tribute to Vasantao Naik. ■



# PIONEER OF GREEN REVOLUTION

Vasant Rao Naik made a mark for himself, not merely in politics, but also the socio-economic life Maharashtra. He revealed his qualities as a Statesman, with a keen interest in the welfare of the people at large, especially the downtrodden says **Abhay Mokashi**



**V**asant Rao Naik, whose birth centenary is just a few months away, holds the record of being the Chief Minister of Maharashtra for the longest period of time- eleven years. He was in electoral politics for 33 years and made a mark for himself, not merely in politics, but also the socio-economic life of Maharashtra.

Whether as a Minister or as the Chief Minister, Naik revealed his qualities as a Statesman, with a keen interest in the welfare of the people at large,

especially the downtrodden. He was a great visionary and all the decisions that he took showed great application of mind.

Naik was born on July 1, 1913 in Gahuli, a small village in Yavatmal District. He participated in the freedom struggle and was elected Member of Legislative Assembly of Madhya Pradesh during 1952-1957. Later, he was a legislator of the then bilingual Bombay State during 1957-1960. After the formation of Maharashtra,

he was elected to the Maharashtra State Legislative Assembly in 1960 and continued to be a member till 1977. In 1977 he was elected to the Lok Sabha from the Washim parliamentary constituency.

Between 1946 and 1952 he was the President of the Pusad Municipal Council. He holds the unique distinction of being a Minister in three different States. He was Deputy Minister in Madhya Pradesh from 1952 to 1956; Minister in the bilingual State of





Bombay from 1956 to 1960; Minister in the Government of Maharashtra from 1960 to 1965. He became the Chief Minister of Maharashtra three times in 1963, 1967 and 1972.

After the death of Marotrao Kannamwar, he was elected Chief Minister of Maharashtra, a post which he held for more than eleven years during 1963-1975. He was the father of the Green Revolution in Maharashtra. The industrialization of Maharashtra is largely the legacy of his progressive industrial policies. Later his nephew Sudhakar Naik also became Chief Minister of Maharashtra.

He was a secular person to the core and strongly endorsed the right of the people from other States to come to Maharashtra. Communal riots broke out in the powerloom town of Bhiwandi, in Thane district, in 1970, when Vasantrao Naik was the Chief Minister and the riots spread to Jalgaon. Naik was able to ensure that the riots do not spread to other parts of the State. He set up peace committees in different areas and immediately started work on rehabilitation of the riot affected. In order to ensure that peace is restored fast and that the rehabilitation work is carried out efficiently, Naik stationed himself in Bhiwandi.

Accompanied by Union Home Minister Yashwantrao Chavan, he visited the riot affected areas to understand the plight of the people. Seeing the loss of life and property of both the communities, he took a policy decision that riot victims would be given aid by the Government on the lines of the aid given to those affected by natural calamities.

His commitment to secularism was exhibited during this riot. In the thick of the riots in Bhiwandi, the then president of the Jan Sangh and Member of Parliament, Atal Bihari Vajpayee addressed a public rally in Mumbai, where he said, "...henceforth Hindus will not take the beating." This was reported by the media and Naik was irked by Vajpayee's statement. He wrote to Vajpayee that as a respected Member of Parliament and as the president of a political party, he (Naik), found it improper on the part of Vajpayee to name a religion. "During a riot, nobody belongs to any religion. Respected persons like you, who believe in democracy, should try to bring about peace. It is easy to make inflammatory speeches well meaning leaders should decide whether to fuel fire or to extinguish it. I have expressed my feelings," Naik said in his letter to

Vajpayee.

Within three years of his becoming the Chief Minister, the Shiv Sena was born and Naik's detractors often nicknamed Shiv Sena as Vasant Sena, alleging that the Shiv Sena had Naik's silent blessings. Right from its formation, the Sena had taken an anti-Communist and anti-migrants attitude. During that time, Naik had stated that national integration and national unity were highly essential to fight against the various problems of the State and the nation.

In his address on the occasion of Maharashtra Day of 1966 he said, "While looking at the problems of Maharashtra, there is a need to have faith in national integration. Today there are discussions on the interests of the Maharashtrians and the non-Maharashtrians and it is sad that these discussions often have some bitterness in them. All those who have settled in Maharashtra for employment are Maharashtrians. They may have come from any State, but they all belong to Maharashtra. Opposing this view is not only unconstitutional, but also it damages national unity."

While stating this, he made it clear that the interest of the Maharashtrians would be taken care of and that those who come from other States, should gel with the local people and should strive for the development of Maharashtra.

Naik's biggest contribution can be said to be in the field of agriculture. He was keen on making Maharashtra self-sufficient in its food grain needs and he took several steps in that direction.



He is known as the father of Green Revolution in Maharashtra. Naik was concerned about the food shortage in the State and the country and he decided to give priority to the development of agriculture in the State. He did not leave a single opportunity to speak about the importance of development of agriculture. He appealed to the farmers to put in hard work and that he, as the Chief Minister, would provide all that is need for the growth of agriculture in the State. He was not an armchair advisor on agriculture.

He toured the State to understand the problems of the farmers and to immediately resolve those issues that could be resolved.

He often lamented that agriculture received attention only during the times of a drought. Land being one of the most important factors for the development of agriculture and Naik realised that unless the farmers had access to land, they would not be carry out agricultural activities properly. Maharashtra is the first State in the country to bring about the Land Reforms Act and Naik was instrumental in incorporating this law.

The vestiges of zamindari had been left in the country even after Independence. While the land owners relaxed in their homes, those who slogged on the field, were given very little money and some of the produce, which kept them in poverty; the landowners on the other hand, were earning good money. In an effort to end this kind of exploitation, Naik took the initiative and brought about an amendment to the land Act, giving rights of ownership to the tiller. The new law came into effect on April 1, 1957 and principle incorporated in it came to be known as land to the tiller, Maharashtra being the first State in the country to incorporate such a law.

The law not only gave the tiller ownership of the land, so that his exploitation would end, but it also gave the tiller the opportunity to live with dignity.

So strong was his faith in the importance of agriculture that in his speech before a Congress camp, he said

that democracy can become strong only when agriculture becomes strong and if the nation's democracy collapses, it would be only due the collapse of agriculture.

**He did not leave a single opportunity to speak about the importance of development of agriculture. He was not an armchair advisor on agriculture**

He firmly believed that the State and the nation could become strong only due to development of agriculture. He was critical of the repeated statement that Maharashtra and India are poor. He sought the proper utilisation of land resources for increasing the agricultural produce.

During Naik's tenure as the Chief Minister Maharashtra contributed 25 to 30 per cent of the total food production in the country.

Acknowledging the need for good

seeds in agriculture and the exploitation of the farmers by the private sector supplying the seed, Naik took the initiative in setting up the Maharashtra State Seed Corporation in 1976, though the seed of this concept was sown by Naik in 1972. Though there was one such body at the national level, floated by the Central Government, Maharashtra became the first State to have such a corporation. Seeds need to be made available to the farmers taking into consideration the climate, the rainfall and the quality of soil, where they are to be used.

The Maharashtra State Seed Corporation, known as Mahabeej, was floated with Maharashtra State, National Seed Corporation, farmers and Maharashtra State Agricultural Universities as share holders. Thanks to Vasant Rao Naik's visionary outlook, the Mahabeej, with its advanced research laboratory, has come up with 50 types of crops and has done research in 250 varieties of seeds, including various pulses, oil seeds, cotton and hybrid jowar.

Naik was aware that the agricultural production cannot be increased merely by making available land and seeds; sufficient amount of water was also required and Naik sanctioned several dams for that. He started concentrating





on the construction of dams, from the time he was the minister for irrigation.

Among the dams that came up due to his efforts are Ujjani, Jayakwadi, Arunavati and Upper Wardha.

At a time when there was a belief, which still continues, that the rural economy in Maharashtra is dependent on the production of sugarcane, Naik firmly believed that it was cotton and not sugarcane that played a major role in the rural economy. He was of the opinion that the cotton growers were the real backbone of Maharashtra's economy.

When there was a shortage of cotton in the country, he assured that Maharashtra was single-handedly

be lifted and the traders would import cotton from Egypt and dump it in the market to bring down the prices of the home grown cotton. Even otherwise the traders would quote a low price for the cotton, aware that the farmers would not be in a position to take the cotton back. Naik was aware of this, but had to give a thought to the problem for a few years, to find a solution to the problem and to stop the exploitation of the cotton growers. With the help of his ministerial colleague, Yashwantrao Mohite, he introduced The Maharashtra Raw Cotton Procurement, Processing and Marketing Act, 1971.

The Cotton Procurement sought to

He knew the intricacies of farming and did not lose any opportunity to go to the fields. He had himself sown hybrid jawar in his farm at Pusad, his birth place and staunchly advocated the use of the hybrid seeds, which gave better yield and required less water. Naik also introduced the drip irrigation system, which helped farming with the use of very little water.

It was during his study of the problems affecting agriculture that he realised that the mere use of hybrid seeds was not enough to increase food grain production and that there was a need to come out with seeds that would require less water for growth. He also felt the need to do research in agriculture and also study the soil quality and find out ways to improve the quality and to find seeds that could be used for cultivation in different kinds of soils.

With a scientific outlook, Naik established a Directorate of Agriculture and on September 1, 1964, appointed a ten-member expert committee. Among other things, the committee recommended the setting up of an Agricultural University in the State and recommended seven places where such a university could be set up.

Thus the first Agricultural University in the State was set up at Rahuri in Ahmednagar district in 1968, with the help of Pennsylvania University. Soon such universities were set up in Akola, Parbhani and Dapoli too.

Naik's mandate for the universities was clear; it was not merely to create graduates in agriculture, but also to take up research that would be helpful in increasing agricultural produce in the State.

These universities have done amazing research in jowar, cotton, wheat, tur, rice, chickpea, ground nut, orange, chickoo, soil and so many other issues connected with agriculture. The effect of all this is Maharashtra is today self sufficient in food production and there is enough surplus too.

No wonder, Vasantrao Naik is known as the father of Green Revolution in Maharashtra. ■



capable of overcoming the deficit, provided there was a proper policy to stop the exploitation of the cotton growers by the traders. He was critical of the fact that when the cotton grown by farmers was ready the Centre would lift restrictions on the import of cotton, but the moment the cotton was purchased, the restrictions reimposed, leading to an increase in the price of cotton and the benefit, instead of going to the cotton growers, goes to the traders.

Whenever the cotton was ready to be brought to the markets in Vidarbha, the import restrictions would

ensure that the cotton growers got a fair price for their produce and that the price was not decided by exploitative agents, but there was resistance to it from the agents and some elements in the Marketing Federation, who brought obstacles in the implementation of the scheme. Moreover, the Central Government would give extension to the Act on a yearly basis. To add to it, neighbouring States started giving a better price for cotton and the cotton found its way to these States. All in all, Naik's intention of giving a better price to the cotton growers was fulfilled.



# THE VISIONARY

Interestingly, he first used to experiment new techniques at his in Gahuli village and then only advised others to use them. Vasant Rao Naik was basically a hardcore farmer who simply loved farming reminiscences **Rajendra Darda**,  
Minister for Education



*Vasant Rao Naik accompanied by Jawaharlal Darda, Veenadevi Darda, the then Zilla Parishad President Deorao Patil Chaundhikar and Rajendra Darda [Small boy] in vineyard of Yavatmal*

**A** self-less leader who strove for empowering and educating people, a visionary who ushered in green revolution and also laid the foundation of industrialization of Maharashtra and an able administrator who successfully steered the destiny of this State for more than a decade, late Vasant Rao Naik was indeed a visionary and remarkable individual. Looking back, it's amazing to see various aspects of his personality. Naik used power for making farmers turn to modern farming. He was the one who made

people aware of modern science and agricultural techniques.

Interestingly, he first used to experiment new techniques at his in Gahuli village and then only advised others to use them. Vasant Rao Naik was basically a hardcore farmer who simply loved farming. But then, he also knew importance of education. He himself had to face a lot of difficulties while obtaining education as there were no schools in his native village. That is why he was possessed with a thought that education must reach to the grassroots

of society and worked hard for turning this dream into reality.

Vasant Rao was a politician committed to the welfare of the common man. He made every possible effort to protect interests of the State. In him, Maharashtra had an amazing individual who respected opposition parties and leaders and won over the enemies by his loving and caring nature. A large-hearted friend, strong-willed politician and altruistic social worker is how Maharashtra knows him.

It's not easy to effectively lead the



State like Maharashtra for eleven and half consecutive years but he did this with élan. Fortunately, I could see him from close quarters since my childhood. I was witness to many discussions the late Chief Minister had with my father. Later, as a journalist, I had an opportunity to move around with Vasantao. The whole Maharashtra is aware about the warm and cordial relations Darda and Naik families share. Vasantao hailed from a society which lives in 'tandas' (small hamlets). During the pre-independence era, the Banjaras were not initiated into education at all.

I remember an anecdote dating back to 1945 narrated to me by father Babuji. Those were the days of freedom struggle. Babuji had returned to Yavatmal after his release from Jabalpur jail and taken up work of uniting youths of the district. It is for this cause that Babuji had been to Pusad to meet Vasantao, who was practicing law there. It was monsoon season and Babuji saw Vasantao venturing out of his house with an umbrella. "Where are you going?" Babuji asked. "It is

vital for Banjara community to obtain education. I am going to conduct classes to impress importance of education on the community members," Vasantao said. He himself was well-educated but earnestly believed that his backward society should also educate itself. This yearning for education in him was indeed praiseworthy and aspiring.

### **NEVER MADE DECISIONS IN A HURRY**

Vasantao never took any decision in a hurry. He always thought once, twice and ten times. So, his decisions never turned out to be incorrect. On the contrary, they used to be far-reaching and effective. He very adroitly led the State during the famine of 1972 and ensured that nobody remained hungry. Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) mooted by V S Page was implemented under his leadership. The root of the Union Government's Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme lies in the EGS. Naiksaheb is also known for another landmark scheme-Cotton Monopoly Procurement Scheme. He observed that farmers

had to sell cotton at throwaway prices and Monopoly Scheme was born to stop this.

He was never a controversial leader—may they be State or national leaders—land themselves into controversy by their statements or deeds sometimes or the other. However, Vasantao Naik was an exception. He never uttered a single improper word and was never in the eye of the storm. He led the State by coordination. Vasantao had to deal with fiery opposition leaders like Krushnrao Dhulup, S M Joshi, Acharya P K Atre, Jambuvantrao Dhote, Mrinal Gore, Keshavrao Dhondge, and Uddhavrao Patil. He offered respect to such leaders even accorded the status of minister in the opposition parties as in his own.

Vasantao Naik was a man of few words and no enemies. He never got angry and if he ever was angry one could not discern this from his face. Maximum you could see is smoke blowing out from his pipe at a faster pace. Here, I would like to specially mention an incident. All Maharashtra knows that Vasantao and my father



*Vasantao Naik, Jawaharlal Darda and others*



late Jawaharlal Darda were close friends. Late Mrs Indira Gandhi was defeated in 1977 elections. After this, differences cropped up between two friends over whether to stay with Indiraji or not. My father chose to go with Indiraji and even resigned as legislature. In January 1978, he wrote a touching editorial 'Runanubandhachya tutuni padlya gathi' describing the pain of parting with a friend. The next day, Naiksaheb came to Nagpur to meet my father. We saw both hugging each other and crying inconsolably. Though they were in different parties, their friendship remained intact.

During the Legislative Assembly elections in 1978, he came to Vidarbha for the campaigning of Swarnsingh Congress. He stayed at our house at Nagpur. Naik was on the ground floor, my father was on the upper. The later campaigned for Indira Congress and the former for Swarnsingh Congress. Naiksaheb wanted to visit Bhandara for campaigning. Vidarbha was swept by Indira wave then. I was entrusted with the responsibility of taking Naiksaheb to Bhandara and bringing him back to Nagpur safely.

**INSPIRING SPEECHES**

Naik had great concern for farmers. Maharashtra could witness green revolution only because of him. In those days, I got an opportunity to move around with Naik as news editor of Lokmat. I heard and jotted down many of his speeches addressed to group of farmers. These discourses used to be inspiring. I have notes of a speech he delivered at Pandharkawda in Yavatmal district. "Irrigate your land by any way possible. Give it dam water, rainwater, well or nullah water. If this is not possible, moist it with your sweat." It was moving words like these that made green revolution possible. Naiksaheb used to say that we have to bring about revolution. "One always equates world revolution with blood. It is said that revolution is not possible without bloodshed. But we are not envisaging such a revolution. For the revolution we



are looking for, we will have to toil hard in farms and work ceaselessly in industries. This is the revolution that we want to usher in."

**"Irrigate your land by any way possible. Give it dam water, rainwater, well or nullah water. If this is not possible, moist it with your sweat"**

**VASANTRAO NAIK'S THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION**

He considered education as sacred and important task. He was particular that teachers get prestige and status. We should create great faith in the minds of students about schools and teachers, he felt. He was worried over the trend of lack of dignity of labour creeping in the society and believed that if today's education does not change this mindset, there is no possibility of the country overcoming the problems it was facing.

It is being said that education makes man perfect. However, these days we are witnessing that nation prosper by the dint of hard work of their people. "Education should lead to awareness of dignity of labour, confidence and tendency to be self-dependent or else it will reduce to merely compiling information", he used to say in his speeches.

In a way, Vasant Rao Naik was not a person inclined to politics. Still, he led Maharashtra nearly 12 years. Vasant Rao worked ceaselessly and toured the entire Maharashtra for battling the grim situation created by the famine of 1972-73. People with him were tired but Naiksaheb never looked exhausted. A leader belonging to nomadic tribe like Banjara became the darling of the whole Maharashtra with the help of his wisdom and loving nature. He made this State financially strong, taught us how to fight famine. He was the one who offered good prices to farmers who cultivated white gold. A leader like Vasant Rao Naik who gave prestige to farming and farmers, cared more for hungry populace of his State than power and remained unassuming even after remaining in the top echelons of power for years, is indeed rare. ■



# INDOMITABLE WILLPOWER

Shri Vasantryaoji was convinced that Maharashtra's agriculture can be improved only by bringing about a combination of scientific know-how, political do-how and farmers' enthusiasm. Hence, he wanted to strengthen the Agricultural Universities, states Prof. **M.S. Swaminathan**, M.P. (Rajya Sabha)

The lives and livelihood of a majority of population of Maharashtra depend on agriculture, comprising crop and animal husbandry, fisheries, forestry and agro-forestry. Shri Vasantryao Naik therefore chose agricultural progress as the pathway for rural and agrarian prosperity. A large portion of Maharashtra was rain fed and there was drought frequently. The yield of dry land farming crops like Jowar, Bajra, Oilseeds like Safflower and Niger and pulses was low. Farmer-centric marketing arrangements were poor. The monsoon and the market were the major determinants of a farmers' well-being.

Shri Vasantryao Naik was convinced that we need a technological breakthrough to end the misery of farmers. Fortunately, Hybrid Jowar, CSH-1, became available in 1965. Shri Vasantryao Naik decided to test CSH-1 in his own farm first before recommending it to farmers. He obtained over 5 tonnes of Jowar per hectare with CSH-1. He therefore used Hybrid Jowar and later hybrid bajra as the agents of change in the Barani (rainfed) areas of Vidarbha and Marathwada regions of the State. He took hybrid jowar seed production in his own farm. Thus, he became a great teacher through practicing what he advocated. He became role model among the farmers of Maharashtra.

In the 1970s, Maharashtra was affected by severe drought. It was then Shri Vasantryao Naik appointed

the young Shri Sharad Pawar as the Minister for Agriculture in the State Government. Shri Vasantryao encouraged Shri Sharad Pawar to take bold and imaginative steps to bring a message of hope among farmer families. Shri Sharad Pawar convened a meeting at the Mahatma Phule Krishi Vidyapeeth's Agricultural College at Pune to chalk out a new strategy for agriculture in Maharashtra. I also attended that historic meeting when it was decided to launch and Yield Guarantee Programme in Wheat, Jowar and Bajra, where new high yielding varieties of hybrids were available. This scheme was designed to instill confidence in the minds of farmers that they can double the yield of these crops, provided they cultivated the high yielding hybrids/varieties with proper agronomic practices. Shri Vasantryaoji gave enthusiastic support to the yield guarantee scheme, which instilled a new confidence in the minds of farm women and men.

Vasantryao Naik became a great teacher through practicing what he advocated. He became role model among the farmers of Maharashtra



Shri Vasantryaoji was convinced that Maharashtra's agriculture can be improved only by bringing about a combination of scientific know-how, political do-how and farmers' enthusiasm. Hence, he wanted to strengthen the Agricultural Universities. Due to political reasons Maharashtra had established four Agricultural Universities in the 1970s, namely Mahatma Phule Krishi Vidyapeeth, Panjabrao Krishi Vidyapeeth, Marathwada Agricultural University and Konkan Krishi Vidyapeeth. Shri Vasantryaoji, left to himself, would have followed the University of California Model, with a uniform Agricultural University of Maharashtra with well developed campuses at Rahuri, Akola, Parbhani and Dapoli. All these campuses would have retained their special names like Mahatma Phule campus, Panjabrao Deshmukh Campus, etc. However, what has been done politically



cannot be undone and Vasanttraoji proceeded with developing coordination mechanisms which will enable them “to deliver as one” as far as transferring the fruits of research to farmers is concerned. He also transferred a large area at the Aarey Milk colony, Mumbai, to the Konkan Krishi Vidyapeeth for providing opportunities for practical training to Veterinary Graduates. Now the Animal Sciences and Fisheries Sectors are in a separate University. Even if there are several Universities, the “deliver as one” principle of Vasanttraoji should prevail, if the Farm Universities are to fulfill their original purpose of extending end to end service to farm women and men.

Shri Vasanttraoji was deeply concerned about the adverse impact of recurrent drought on rural families. He recognized that livestock and livelihoods are intimately related in villages. Also, the ownership of livestock is more egalitarian than that of land. Hence, along with Arvind Mafatlal, Manibhai Desai and others, he organized cattle camps during drought years. Farmers can keep their cattle in such camps during the duration of drought. The camps were established near a water source and



**During Expansion of Shetkari Sahakari Sakhar karkhana Sangli Vasantdada, Vasanttrao Naik, G.D. Patil, Rajarambapu Patil and Krishnarao Dhulap**

the animals were fed with nutritious feed comprising sugarcane, bagasse, molasses and urea. Thus he helped to save valuable animal germ plasm.

Shri Vasanttrao Naik served as a bright affirming flame amidst the sea of despair prevailing then in rural areas. Where there was darkness, he brought light. Where there was a sense of hopelessness, he brought hope. He converted Lal Bahadur Shastri’s slogan

“Jai Kisan” into reality. He supported movements like Pani Panchayat of Salunkhe, as well as Van Panchayats.

We are now entering an era of climate change and global warming. Let us organize in memory of Vasanttraoji “Mausam Panchayats” to enable rural families to maximize the benefits of a good monsoon and minimize the adverse impact of unpredictable weather. ■

## Birth Centenary Celebrations Committee

A committee of following honourable members have been set up to chalk out the proposed programmes to celebrate Birth Centenary Year of Ex-Chief Minister Late Vasanttrao Naik from 1st July 2012 to 30th June 2013.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1] Prithviraj Chavan, Chief Minister -Chairman                     | 10] Prof Fauziya Khan, Minister of State for General Administration- Member |
| 2] Chhagan Bhujbal, Minister for Public Works- Member              | 11] Manikrao Thakre, MLA- Member  |
| 3] R.R. Patil, Minister for Home-Member                            | 12] Sandeep Bajoriya, MLA- Member   |
| 4] Patangrao Kadam, Minister for Forest- Member                    | 13] Nilesh Shivram Deshmukh Parvekar , MLA- Member                          |
| 5] Shivajirao Moghe, Minister for Social Justice -Member           | 14] Shantaram Potdukhe -Non Government Member                               |
| 6] Balasaheb Thorat, Minister for Revenue- Member                  | 15] Haribhau Rathod- Non Government Member                                  |
| 7] Anil Deshmukh, Minister for Food and Civil Supplies- Member     | 16] Girish Gandhi- Non Government Member                                    |
| 8] Manohar Naik- Minister for Food and Drugs Administration-Member | 17] S.P. Upasani- Non Government Member                                     |
| 9] Nitin Raut, Minister for Employment Guarantee Scheme - Member   | 18] Secretary, GAD-Member Secretary   |



# LANDMARKS



- 1st July, 1913 : Born in an affluent farmer family from Banjara community from Gahuli, a hamlet in Pusad Taluka, Yavatmal District.
- 1933 : Passed Matriculation Examination from Neel City High School, Nagpur.
- 1937 : Passed B. A. Examination from Morris College (Present Vasanttrao Naik Social Sciences Institute).
- 1940 : Passed LL.B. Examination from University College of Law, Nagpur.
- 1941 : Started practicing Law with Late Barrister Panjabrao Deshmukh, eminent lawyer from Amravati and then started independent Law practice at Pusad.
- : At the forefront in Pusad Taluka 'Adarsh Gram Chalwal'.
- : Due to his passion and efforts 'Gahuli' became an ideal village.
- 6th July, 1941: Married to Miss Vatsala Ghate B. A. coming from a Brahmin family. The Banjara community got agitated over this Inter-caste marriage. He was also castigated for some time.
- 1946 : Elected as President of Pusad Municipality. He held this position till he was elected and became Deputy Minister in the erstwhile Government of Madhya Pradesh. During his tenure he carried out many developmental activities.
- 1950 : Adorned as President, Pusad Harijan Free Hostel and Digras National Free Hostel.
- 1951 : Member of the Vidarbha Pradesh Congress Committee and Executive body.



- 1952 : After the 1st General elections, appointed as Deputy Minister for revenue in the then Government of Madhya Pradesh.  
 : Adorned as Chairman of Madhya Pradesh Housing Board during this period.  
 : He was also Vice-Chairman of Madhya Pradesh Land Reforms Committee and Chairman of the Government of Madhya Pradesh Metric Committee.
- 1956 : After the reorganization of the States, he was appointed as the Minister for Cooperation, Agriculture and Dairy Development in the then Mumbai State.  
 : Member at the All India Congress, Maharashtra Regional Congress Committee and its Executive body since then.
- 1957 : Elected to State Legislature from Pusad Constituency for the second time and adorned the position of Minister for Agriculture at the State.  
 : Elected as a member of the Indian Council of Agricultural Finance Society.
- 1958 : Visit to Japan as a member of the Indian delegation to the International Rice Commission. Attended F.A.O. meetings at Tokyo.
- 1959 : Establishment of 'Phulsing Naik College' at Pusad.
- 1960 : Appointed as Revenue Minister in the 1st Council of Ministers after the creation of the Maharashtra State. It was this time that the Government of Maharashtra enacted the path breaking Land Ceiling Act.  
 : During his tenure as a Minister was also the Chairman of the Democracy Decentralization Committee and initiated the Pachayati Raj System in the State.
- 1962 : He was elected for the third time to the Maharashtra State Legislature from Pusad in Yavatmal District and once again was adorned with the position of Revenue Minister. He continued with this Ministry till he became the Chief Minister of Maharashtra State.
- 5th Dec. 1963 : He took over as Chief Minister of the State.
- 1964 : A tour to Yugoslavia
- 1965 : Inauguration of AANTAR BHARATI (Indian Academy of Letters), Mumbai.  
 : With the onset of Indo-Pak war, he inspired the audiences with his forceful and mentoring nationalistic speeches between 9th and 11th September. The whole Maharashtra was fully enlightened with the spirit. He toured the whole Maharashtra for war related efforts by the State.  
 : A whirlwind tour of 25 districts of the State for propagating the NEW programme for agricultural productivity.
- 1966 : There was a grave situation due to the scarcity of water. Another whirlwind tour of the scarcity-hit districts of the State in order to provide confidence and courage to farmers.
- 1967 : Tour of Maharashtra for effective electioneering for the General Elections. He was elected to Maharashtra Legislature for the 4th time from Pusad Constituency and once again was unanimously elected to decorate the position of Chief Minister, Maharashtra State on the 6th March 1967.  
 : Speech at the State Legislature on Border Issue (17.11.1967)
- 1970 : Tour of U. S. A. on the invitation of Government of the United States and visit to some European countries.
- 1972 : Tour of Maharashtra for electioneering for General Elections. He was elected to Maharashtra Legislature for the 5th time from Pusad Constituency and was decorated with the position of Chief Minister, Maharashtra State for the THIRD time on the 14th March 1972.
- 20 Feb. 1975 : Resigned from the position of Chief Minister, Maharashtra State.
- 12 Mar. 1977 : Elected as a Member of Parliament from Washim Constituency.
- 18 Aug. 1979 : Breathed his last at Singapore at the age of 66.

*Coutresy: Mahanayak, authored by Madhukar Bhawe*

*Reference: Samanyatil Asamanya- Vasant Rao Naik : Written by Pandharinath Patil*



# STALWART LEADER

In the decade of sixties per acre agricultural productivity was very low. Due to the efforts by *Vasantrao Naik* new varieties of *Jawari* and Cotton were researched. Agricultural Scientists started reaching farmers to mentor them. As a result of all these the agriculture productivity improved during the decade of seventies. A change in the lifestyle of farmers was evident describes Minister of State Prof **Fauziya Khan**

The history of Maharashtra cannot be complete without honourable mention of the Late Chief Minister of Maharashtra State Vasantrao Naik among the very few visionary stalwarts who contributed immensely to the crafting and laying the foundations of a modern Maharashtra. Many a times it may happen that the society oriented role played by personalities does not find a place in the present while these people were active but the history has to unquestionably take cognizance of the same. While discussing about the passage of Maharashtra till date the history will undoubtedly have to take cognizance of the era from Yashwantrao Chavan to Sharad Pawar. However the strong bond between them was Vasantrao Naik. It is therefore appropriate to say that the passage for Maharashtra till date has been from Yashwantrao Chavan to Sharad Pawar via Vasantrao Naik.

During his formative years Naik saheb was part of rural area and from a deprived as well as negative constituent of the society. He strived and adorned highest education overcoming many hurdles in the path. He achieved success even while the educational facilities were almost non-existent. While studying at the Morris College in Nagpur he was greatly influenced by reading as well as two eminent personalities namely a visionary social revolutionist Mahatma Jotiba Phule and writer Dale Carnegie.

A closer look at his 11 year tenure as Chief Minister of Maharashtra will prove that while providing a

meaningful support to areas such as agriculture, farmers, education and industry he also extensively cared for deprived constituents of the society as a social commitment. He used to say that if the educated people are not able to work for social justice, how can we expect the same from the uneducated? With a view to proliferate education to all strata of the society he initiated and accelerated the establishment of hostels and primary schools. He streamlined the education in Maharashtra. The secondary education in Western Maharashtra and Marathwada was of 11 years duration while the same in Vidarbha was 10 years. The disparity was removed with streamlining of education all over the State.

While I was a Legislator, I had fervently demanded that the Marathwada Agricultural University at Parbhani should be adorned in the name of Vasantrao Naik during a discussion on a non-governmental motion at the Legislative Council

It is therefore appropriate to say that the passage for Maharashtra till date has been from Yashwantrao Chavan to Sharad Pawar via Vasantrao Naik



in 2003. I followed it up with full conviction. During the year of his Birth Centenary, the University is being renamed as an effort to relate Green Revolution to Marathwada Agricultural University. I am duly proud of the decision as a citizen of Parbhani and also feel immensely gratified as constituent of the Government and a Member of the Vasantrao Naik Birth Centenary Celebrations Committee.

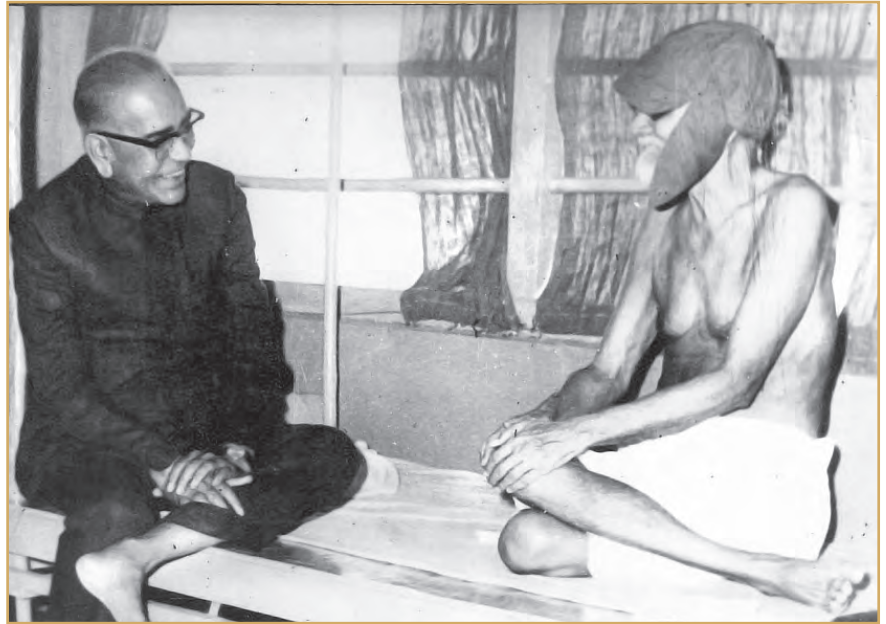
He was fully aware about Education. He always insisted that apart from moral education the students need to inculcate the concept of social commitment in them. He held that the teachers were also equally responsible for the same. Everyone should strive to endow an appropriate prestige and status for the teachers who carry out the indispensable and pious work of providing knowledge. The school and the teacher should remain as revered identities in the minds of students. He used to emphatically say that the entire society must express at least a symbolic gratitude for the precious work of



education carried out by the teachers and there should be a sincere societal attitude to appropriately honour them. He used to also say, "Please never think that you are undergoing education for a job". While giving voice to his distressed sentiments he had once stated, "It is said that the education completes a person. However, the attitude observed in our country at the present is quite different. We need to become cultured through education".

Naik saheb was an illustrious personality. He courageously faced the incidents and calamities such as border issue, strike by mill workers, Koyana earthquake, the devastating famine of 1972 and skillfully handled these situations. He felt that while we must strive for industrial growth, building confidence in the large majority of farmers and farm workers toiling in agriculture was also equally essential. To establish four Agricultural Universities in Maharashtra was not an easy task. Out of these four, one is located at Parbhani.

Non-irrigated agriculture ditches the farmers. The agriculture arithmetic of the farmers collapses in the absence of rains on schedule. Naik saheb was fully aware of this. He therefore initiated projects for rainwater conservation in agriculture and digging of wells. The wells irrigated agriculture...Kirloskar engines and pumps were visible on agricultural lands. Small barrages were built around the same time and later got recognized as VASANT BANDHARE. In order to avoid any regional imbalance, he made sure that none of the regions were



Vasant Naik with Acharya Vinoba Bhave

subjected to injustice during creation of Agricultural Universities.

**CONTRIBUTION TO BHUDAAN MOVEMENT...**

The prevalent system at that time was that of Zamindari. Each Zamindar wielded thousands of acres of agricultural lands. Vasant Naik got motivated by the Bhudaan movement started by Acharya Vinoba Bhave and got thousands of acres of agricultural lands donated to the movement. He invited Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Shrimati Indira Gandhi and created a prestigious moment for Bhudaan movement. He was the originator of Employment Guarantee scheme and Cotton Monopoly Purchase Scheme. He alone

took the daring decision for bringing the Land Reforms Act. He challenged the Zamindars with his announcement of "Land for those who till". He was himself a Zamindar and hence was able to bring about a change in their frame of mind. The announcement provided a renewed inspiration for farm workers and marginal farmers. These steps deserve to be addressed as most positive ones in terms of social justice...

During the earlier part of the seventies decade, the Marathwada Development agitation had become acute. Naik saheb did not lose his cool even while the whole Marathwada had been stirred. This was because he had a knack to understand the problems faced by the agitators and also impeccable solutions to their problems. It was only due to his vision that Marathwada was bestowed with establishments such as Marathwada Agricultural University, Chikhalthana Industrial Estate, CIDCO at Aurangabad, as also Marathwada Development Corporation. He used to carry along everyone in any task. He never got caught up in any type of group, discrimination and caste or religion politics and hence he became a leader acknowledged and revered by everyone. ■

**VASANTRAO BELIEVED...**

This is no Culture...just an abnormality...

"Does it constitute cultured attitude if a human discriminates between humans and does not treat others with humanity? We do not get outcast when we touch a dirty animal. We do not get unhygienic when we touch a dog or a cat...But we get outcast as soon as we touch a person born in an untouchable society no matter how clean and hygienic he may be...What a wonder?...We get back the purity just by getting sprinkled with a few drops of water...This clearly shows how badly the Indian society is inflicted with abnormal attitude and how flimsy and meaningless are our ideas about touchable and un-touchable...We should truly pity ourselves if we consider this to be the zenith of our culture..."



# A MODEL CHIEF MINISTER

Naik was, above all, a smart leader. He paid attention to all sections of the population. His tenure, one of the longest in India's political history, was marked by two wars, two drought years, flooding and the Koyna earthquake. After each challenge, he rose more confidently. Still more importantly, he ignited a determination among the people fight to the situation and overcome the advertises says **Dilip Chaware**



*Vasantdada Patil, Vasantrao Naik and others on his farm land at Gahuli*

**V**asantrao Naik, the soft-spoken Chief Minister of Maharashtra, shocked the nation when he declared at a rally, "Hang me publicly if Maharashtra does not attain self-sufficiency in food grain production within two years."

This ultimatum hit the headlines.

Vasantrao Naik made this grim declaration at a public meeting at Pune in 1965 when the nation was reeling under the impact of two wars with Pakistan and the earlier war with China. Recurring droughts in many parts of the country had affected the production of food grains. Reports were pouring in that starvation deaths had started

taking place. Against this background, Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri had disclosed at the public meeting that the US President had been delaying signing the PL 480 documents though the document had been lying before him for several months.

India was to receive food grains from the US under the PL 480 and the payment for the consignments was to be made in rupees. Shastri's disclosure disgusted Naik so much that he made this declaration, on the spur of the moment. Expectedly, he was ridiculed for it by the opposition and the media. However, Naik showed that the impossible could become possible

by his single-minded concentration on raising the State's farm output. Ever since, Maharashtra has not experienced food shortages.

Explaining the reason for his declaration, Naik later said, "When I heard Shastriji's words, I was angry with myself, with ourselves. Any self-respecting man would have felt the same anger. If the US was pressurizing us to give up the values on which we were brought up just because we were dependent upon it for food grains, what was the worth of our existence? Outraged by the frustration, I offered to get hanged if my State did not become self-sufficient in growing its own requirement of food grains within two years."

Naik made this declaration, knowing full well that no preparations had been made. Budgetary provisions and other formalities were a long way off. Still, he felt confident to offer his own neck since he had confidence in the people of Maharashtra.

A born farmer, Naik firmly believed that agriculture was the only avocation that could feed billions of Indians, offer them work and livelihood. From time to time, Naik impressed upon the people to adopt the new technology and water management principles in agriculture. He held that a Green Revolution means bringing about a fundamental change in the farming community's attitude towards agriculture, changing its beliefs about traditional crop patterns.



Therefore, he insisted that the age-old methods of farming must be discarded and the dependence on the vagaries of nature must end. Modern and scientific approach was the need of the hour.

Naik emphasized the role to be played by each level of society in making the Green Revolution a success. He said that each elected representative, each bank, each officer of the Government, each voluntary agency and each agriculture university must participate in taking on this challenging task.

Naik firmly believed that agriculture alone had the capability to end India's unemployment problem. Not opposing industrialization, Naik maintained that the farmer was the backbone of the Indian economy. None other activity but agriculture could sustain the growing population.

When the Green Revolution he had unleashed started showing positive results, an elated Naik said that this unprecedented experiment had created a confidence among the farmers of Maharashtra. The increased farm production had reoriented the attitude of 'agriculture for survival' to a 'market-based' approach. The farmer must not be content with just subsistence, he must generate wealth from his holding. The farmer of the future must be a 'rich farmer' and the chronic poverty of villages must vanish.

Naik believed that the farmer in India possessed an in-born wisdom. When he was convinced of a philosophy, he embraced it without reservations. This had been endorsed by the Green Revolution in Maharashtra, Naik announced cheerfully after the initial success of his campaign to make the State self-sufficient in food grains production. He acknowledged this great achievement when he said at a public meeting, "I am happy to note this change in attitude. The record of the past four years shows that the farmer of Maharashtra is convinced of the need to change his attitude towards agriculture. I find that he has been trying crop innovations in each season."

Explaining his insistence on modernization of agriculture, Naik

said that it was not a sudden thought. The best tool to measure a country's affluence was its agriculture. This was an accepted principle. As far as the Indian economy was concerned, its every sector had a close relationship with agriculture. Natural calamities had shown time and again that if agriculture was hit, even industry felt the impact. Given this situation, the Green Revolution's successful march ahead was everybody's responsibility.

To elaborate his thinking, Naik said that all available water must be used judiciously to grow more and more. Referring to the war with Pakistan, he made a memorable statement, "We can deploy more troops on the borders if the need arises but if we are defeated on the agricultural front, we will never recover."

**"We can deploy more troops on the borders if the need arises but if we are defeated on the agricultural front, we will never recover"**

Naik advocated the establishment of a society which was based on socialism and social justice. Self-sufficiency in each sector was dear to him. He believed that Maharashtra had the strength and potential to lead the nation on the path of progress and transformation. At the same time, he made it clear that this would become a reality if every individual in Maharashtra was motivated to contribute his best, was supported by the leadership and if this combination was dedicated to the removal of poverty.

Naik announced that the State Government would participate wholeheartedly in this human endeavour. He declared, "I don't mind if a few projects do not materialize but the common man in this State must



be able to live as a human being, with dignity. I am aware that there is no instant solution to achieving this goal. All of us must work ceaselessly to achieve it. I am prepared to consider any suggestion, any proposal that will take us forward in attaining this goal. I assure you that funding will not be a problem for this. If we are determined, we can surmount any challenge."

Naik was candid with elected representatives as well. He told them, "Members come and go but the institutions continue. Therefore, elected representatives must not forget that the institutions belong to them. They should minimize their social and political differences so as to make the institutions more efficient and useful."

When Naik took over, Maharashtra was a young State, just three years old. Western Maharashtra, Vidarbha and Marathwada were the three regions which needed emotional integration. The old British mindset was intact and the bureaucracy was very strong and adamant. It was justly called the steel frame. Maharashtra was regarded as the best-administered State. Naik was happy to inherit this legacy but he felt that the State should run for the people by their representatives and not by officers. He brought about this reorientation almost painlessly. A bond of confidence was established between the bureaucracy and its political masters. Of course, both sides respected each other's aspirations and limitations. Still, something more was needed to be



done and Naik was successful in doing it without disturbing any side.

Naik's another major achievement was earning the confidence of the people. He used to tell his colleagues and officials that the people should be taken into confidence. "Admit any mistakes you may have made but tell people that these were committed while working for the larger good," was his advice. This is the reason the people of Maharashtra trusted him and lent their support to the Government whenever it was required, especially at the time of the war with Pakistan. Women donated their gold, students their pocket money and elders, their pension amounts.

The best example of the unique chemistry Naik developed as a Chief Minister is the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS), which was enacted in Maharashtra when the State was facing unprecedented drought in 1972-73. The opposition stood by Naik in formulating and implementing the scheme. An estimated 70 million rural people could survive this challenging time owing to the EGS. It is now adopted at the national level. Implicit faith in the leadership by the people is guaranteed to prosper a State. It was during Naik's term that Maharashtra recorded several spectacular achievements, the self-sufficiency in food grains being at the top of the list. Chronicles of those days describe how Naik met people on various EGS works in different parts of the State, listened to them patiently and amended the policies on the spot if he found that people's complaints had substance. As a consequence, a vast number of people in rural areas were enabled to tide over the crisis and there was no starvation death, neither any farmers' suicides.

Naik abhorred negativity. In his inimitable style, he would narrate how negativism had been ruling the roast. Naik used to say, "The officers will first try to find a precedent to turn down something. The bureaucracy will try to reject a proposal or public demand by referring to previous decisions or the laws. We have, it

seems, developed a process. Under this, not doing anything, nor taking any decisions is considered the safest route in governance. In my opinion, this tendency is the main culprit. I don't mind if some mistakes take place while working but not working at all under the shelter of rules and regulations is unpardonable."

Naik was, above all, a smart leader. He paid attention to all sections of the population. His tenure, one of the longest in India's political history, was marked by two wars, two drought years,



**Attending journalists tour at his village Gahuli**

flooding and the Koyna earthquake. After each challenge, he rose more confidently. Still more importantly, he ignited a determination among the people to fight the situation and overcome the adversities. Opponents in his own Congress party and in the legislature had been looking for opportunities to counter his growing popularity. Naik did not lose his balance even once. When Senapati Bapat, the respected freedom fighter, declared that he would sit on an indefinite fast in front of the secretariat on the Maharashtra-Karnataka border dispute, Naik went to meet him and disarmed the opposition which was planning to exploit the fast for mobilizing the opinion against the Congress party. But Naik's gesture of calling on Bapat had exactly the opposite effect.

Naik's affection and regard for opposition parties ensured a smooth sailing for him in the legislature. He would make it a point to stay

in the house when veterans like Krishnarao Dhulup, Datta Deshmukh or Uddhavrao Patil were scheduled to speak. This was in the days when the opposition's numerical strength in the house used to be minuscule. He would say, "No democracy is meaningful unless there is an opposition. Our faults and lapses come to our notice when they are highlighted by the opposition."

In personal relations, too, Naik had been most dignified. When Bapu Kaldate, a prominent socialist, took ill during a winter session at Nagpur, Naik went to his MLA Hostel room and offered to extend the necessary medical treatment, including going to abroad. In the next election, Kaldate was defeated. A couple of years later, he was convalescing at his Aurangabad residence when he received a call from Naik's office that the Chief Minister wished to meet him. Kaldate replied that he was not well enough to leave his house due to health reasons. The same night, Naik reached his house and spent some time with him. Showing such consideration for a former MLA by a Chief Minister was rare. But Naik had cultivated personal relations with so many people that even his opponents thought twice before attacking him.

Naik had a friendly equation with the media, too. Still, he was not short of critics. However, he never criticized the media. On one occasion, news stories appeared in a section of the press that Naik had constructed a palatial house at his hometown of Pusad. Naik did not send any clarification nor any rebuttal. A few months later, he took a press party to Pusad to visit his farm and naturally, the reporters saw his house, too. On their own, they wrote how the reporters about his 'palace' were exaggerated.

Naik's rule was marked by harmony, progress and development. He remained the Chief Minister for over a decade because of his positive attitude, confidence and patience. Even today, he is ranked among the best chief ministers India has produced. ■



# FOUNDATIONS OF MAHARASHTRA STATE

Vasant Rao Naik's immaculate 11 year tenure provided the stability and acceleration to Maharashtra. The decisions he took and the projects he implemented during this period were path breaking. He was always an intent personality. On one side he would think of the agriculture, on another getting self sufficient in terms of food grains, on the development of progressive cities such as Mumbai, Pune and Aurangabad, on industrialization of the rural areas, on the new dams and in addition to all these on providing work to the unemployed... This is an introduction to the decisions taken and the Schemes implemented by him during his extensive tenure...

**T**he first Chief Minister of Maharashtra State Yashwantrao Chavan envisioned the decentralization of democracy. Vasant Rao Naik played a major role in bringing this dream to reality. Yashwantrao Chavan was fully aware of the fact that the true democracy would not be established unless the powers of the State were decentralized to the rural areas instead of remaining concentrated at the Mumbai headquarters. With the same perspective he appointed a 'Democracy Decentralization Committee' under the Chairmanship of the then Revenue Minister Vasant Rao Naik. Vasant Rao proved the confidence bestowed on him by Yashwantrao Chavan significant beyond doubt. With fifteen months of exhaustive studies he presented his report. The roots of the democratic decentralization in the State today can be found in this report. The Panchayat and Zilla Parishad Act came into existence based on this report. His recommendation in the report that the Chairman of Zilla Parishad should not be the Collector of the District but should be an elected representative of the people was revolutionary. He always held firmly that the leadership from rural areas must have a greater say in the decision making. This model of decentralization of power was accepted across the Nation. Hence just as the credit for

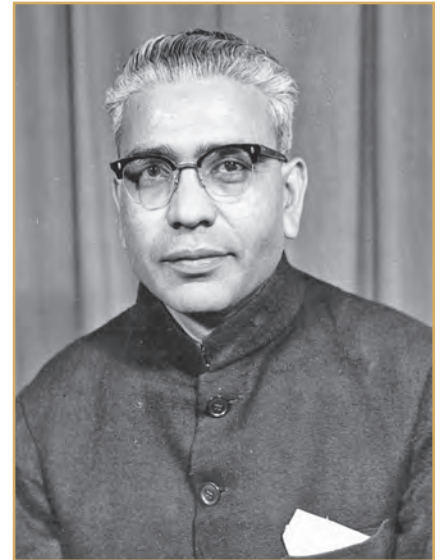
decentralization of power goes to State of Maharashtra, it also has to go to Vasant Rao Naik.

## OFFICIAL LANGUAGE STATUS FOR MARATHI

Vasant Rao Naik announced on the 1st May 1966 providing an official language status for Marathi presiding in the hearts of 40 million residents of Maharashtra. Orders for carrying out all the Government work through Marathi were issued. At the same time a confidence was inculcated in people from the State speaking other languages that they would not be inconvenienced. It was decided to establish Regional offices of Language Directorate at Nagpur, Pune and Aurangabad. Before this decision, the language for official work was English. As the medium of interaction was a foreign language the common man and the Government remained distanced. The confidence behind this decision was that in a democratic set up the medium of interaction would bring proximity between the Government and the people.

## AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

Vasant Rao Naik was hailed as the Pioneer of green revolution. He was fully engrossed by a singular aim of making the State self sufficient in terms of food grains. He contended that the



common man should be benefitted on priority as he is dependent on the agriculture. He provided utmost priority to agriculture in the State and carried his ploy with a vow to propagate agriculture and to remove the difficulties faced by the farmers wherever he went. He toured the whole State with a message for using modern seeds and fertilizers, for inducing the farmers to change the traditional agricultural perspective and take up the agriculture with modern methods. He inspired farmers with his studied analysis and great oratory. He would humbly say, "We do not have a magic wand which would make us self



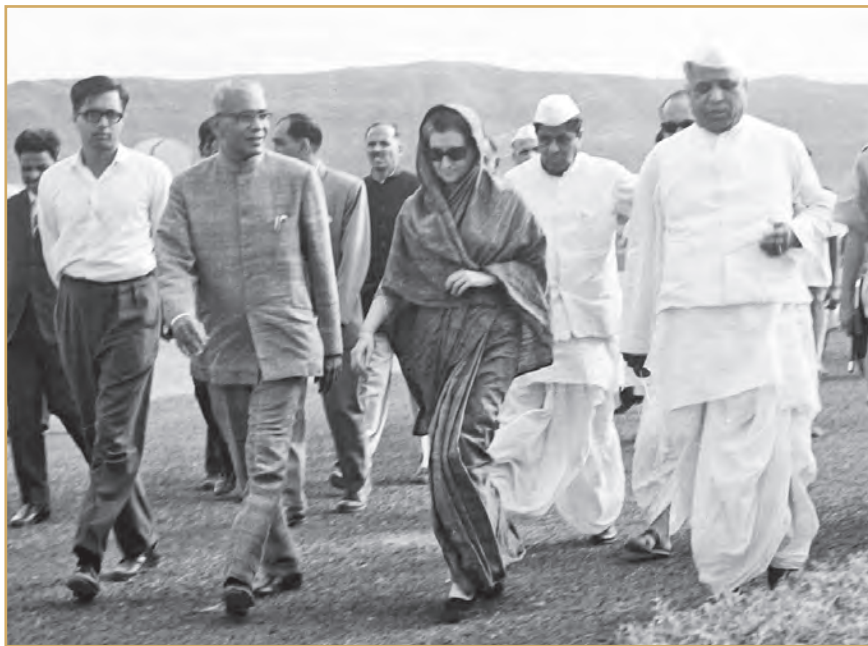
sufficient overnight. You will have to strive and I shall provide the resources. I shall not fail in providing you the resources". His efforts proved quite rewarding. Maharashtra got a great fillip and acceleration in modernization of agriculture. While observing the huge yields from the green crops one finds an image of Vasantrya embedded therein.

### LAND REFORMS

Maharashtra became the first State to create and implement the Land Reforms Act. Maharashtra accepted the maxim "The land belongs to those who till it". Maharashtra was also the first State to eliminate 'Khoti' and 'Malguzari'. The main aim of the Act was to remove the disparity in respect of land holdings and to secure the people who actually tilled the lands from all types of exploitation. It was expected that the measures would encourage farmers for improvement in the productivity of lands and enhance the quantum of food grains. The establishment of the principle of Social Justice was immensely helped by these land reforms decisions taken by Vasantrya Naik.

### INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION

After Vasantrya Naik took over the reins of the State, the work at the Maharashtra State Industrial Development Corporation was duly accelerated. The industries that had concentrated in Mumbai area got decentralized and expanded in other cities in Maharashtra. Butibori (Nagpur), Walunj (Aurangabad), Satpur-Ambad (Nashik), Islampur (Sangli), Latur (Dist. Latur) and others got established during his tenure alone. MIDC provided lands on priority to sectors such as Automobile, Chemical, Engineering, Pharmaceutical and others and decentralized the industries to a very great extent. MIDC developed the lands and provided the infrastructural facilities to the industrialists. The end result was the facilitation of educated youth particularly from the rural areas to find employment locally.



### EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEME

Originated in Maharashtra, the Employment Guarantee Scheme has today been accepted all over the country. Shri. V. S. Page presented the plans for this Scheme. Vasantrya Naik strived

“We do not have a magic wand which would make us self sufficient overnight. You will have to strive and I shall provide the resources”

day and night in order to successfully implement this Scheme which provided work to lakhs of people. The pattern of this Scheme was 'work for anyone who asks for'. The Scheme specially envisaged equal remuneration for both men and women and a crèche for caring the children of women workers. A huge quantum of work was created through the medium of Employment Guarantee Scheme. The pride of toiling farm worker was awakened by this Scheme and during the famine provided him

with an employment instead of leaving him at the mercy of fate. For famine prone areas the scheme came as a boon. Works such as leveling of lands, road construction, trickle lakes, reservoir lakes and excavation for wells were taken up on a large scale. Through the vision of Vasantrya Naik the Scheme proved immensely successful and path breaking within a short span of time.

### MAHARASHTRA STATE LOTTERY

Maharashtra State Lottery started in 1969. The background of starting the same was to pull out the workers from the clutches of 'Matka'. The addiction of Matka was creating a disaster in the lives of workers and middle class. While the subject was being discussed Vasantrya Naik as Chief Minister initiated Maharashtra State Lottery as a positive social option to the devastating Matka. Prizes worth lakhs of rupees were announced for a single rupee. The Lottery faced criticism at the time. However Vasantrya Naik emphatically said, "The mill worker from Mumbai and the working class are spending hundreds of rupees on Matka and getting ruined. Just by the closure of Matka we cannot ensure freedom of the workers from gambling. We shall have to find out a social option for the same.



This is why we are initiating this lottery. A rupee spent for the same will go to the development work and few will also be benefitted”.

**COTTON MONOPOLY SCHEME**

Vasant Rao Naik was conscious that a farmer cultivating cotton is a major stay of the State economics. However he was also aware of the fact that the Vidarbha farmers were always being exploited by the middlemen, commission agents and the businessmen for generations together. While the cotton arrived during harvest the businessmen purchased the cotton at rock bottom rates. The farmer who had arrived with the bullock cart full of cotton could not return without selling the same. As a result the farmer was being looted. Vasant Rao Naik decided to stop the loot. The then Cooperation Minister Yashwantrao Mohite took the lead and from the concerted efforts of the duo a unique ‘Cotton Monopoly Scheme’ emerged. For this purpose a ‘Cotton Compilation Process and

Sales’ Act was passed by the Legislative Council. The Scheme was to provide worthy rates to the cotton producing farmers of the State. The Scheme nipped in the bud the prevalent purchase of cotton at rock bottom prices. The support prices of cotton started to be decided. Cotton got a guaranteed price. A system was developed to process this cotton and to sell the same. A Scheme to constrict the tendency to loot the already distressed farmers had emerged from the exemplary vision of Vasant Rao Naik...

**THE CREATION OF NAVI MUMBAI**

Considering aspects such as alarming growth of Mumbai, the vast crowds, insufficient and narrow roads and the increased shortage of housing Vasant Rao Naik took an ambitious decision to create a satellite township at Navi Mumbai as an option to Mumbai. He constituted CIDCO as a new establishment. Today Navi Mumbai is considered as a planned

city complete with all the facilities. This city got created through the vision of Vasant Rao Naik. It is easy to dream but very difficult to bring the dream to reality. But Vasant Rao Naik dreamt of a new city and brought the same to reality. During the time we did not have the modern machines seen today. Still Vasant Rao ventured to construct the huge Vashi Bridge and brought it as a total success. There was a huge change due to this bridge. The people trickled to make an abode in Navi Mumbai. Today Navi Mumbai is a prestigious city replete with Railway, Transport, basic infrastructure, huge water resources and expansive malls. The last 40 years have seen the rapid development and expansion of this city. This is a symbol of the visionary that Vasant Rao Naik was...

**RURAL ELECTRIFICATION**

After Vasant Rao Naik took over as the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, the Maharashtra State Electricity Board was accelerated. A challenge





to provide electricity to the remotest village in Maharashtra was undertaken. Power Generation was emphasized. Efforts were initiated for a chain of Power Generation Centers across the State. Khaparkheda, Paras, Bhusawal (Thermal) and Pophali, Yeldari (Hydroelectric) were commissioned. At the same time electrical engineering education from various colleges started on a large scale. Hence there was never a shortage of engineers and technicians in this field. Earlier, only a few cities in the State had electrification. However Vasantrya Naik aimed at providing electricity to the remotest village in the State. Through electrification, the face of rural Maharashtra transformed completely. New and modern industries got inspired and accelerated. With electrical connection to agriculture farmers were able to reap two crops a year. The darkness from the households disappeared and gave way to an enlightened prosperity...

### CONFRONTATION WITH FAMINE

The 1972 famine was a grave calamity faced by Maharashtra. With rains absent, the rivers and the streams were dry...A severe scarcity of drinking water loomed large coupled with stressful hunger and non availability of work as there was no work in the fields. It was one of the biggest challenge to come out of the fierce calamity of famine. However Vasantrya Naik stood his ground firmly and with conviction... He and his colleagues collectively pledged to confront this natural calamity head on...

During this phase the first decision was taken to pay the fees for all the school and college going students from exchequer. The idea was that no student should lose his education due to the famine. In addition to this it was decided to allow part time work under Employment Guarantee Scheme to the enrolled students if they wished so. Thousands of students were advantaged due to this.

During the same period the excavation work for the lakes and Nalla bunding work were also undertaken on

### EXEMPLARY DECISIONS

- Decentralization of Democracy and implementation of Panchayat Raj
- Cotton Monopoly Scheme...
- Employment Guarantee Scheme...
- Rehabilitation of the people affected by devastating Koyna earthquake in 1966
- Construction of 70,000 tenements destructed by the Panshet floods
- Assistance to the people affected by the communal riots in Bhiwandi city in 1970
- Provision of the rank of a Cabinet Minister to the Leaders of opposition both in Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council...
- A decision not to initiate Chapter Cases against the opposition party leaders for taking part in the political or public agitations...
- Important decisions to the effect that there would be no shortage of food grains and cattle feed. The problems of agricultural loss and drinking water would be resolved...
- Decision to effect purchase of Jawari through Marketing Federation
- Establishment of four Agricultural Universities with a view to modernize agriculture and creation of seeds providing yields even with low rains
- Initiation of a Scheme for Rental Housing
- Creation of District Planning Committee

a large scale. The whole of Maharashtra saw the fruits of this exercise in the ensuing period. During the famine it was necessary for the hands to get work. For this Vasantrya Naik met the Prime Minister and requested him to initiate some work on the railways. Tankers were used to supply drinking water to various hamlets in the State. The cattle were also taken care of along with the people. Camps for the cattle were erected. It was ensured that the cattle would not be led to the slaughter houses...This was the period which tested Vasantrya Naik on every aspect and he came out with exemplary success in each of them.

### CREATION OF AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITIES

The decision to create four separate Agricultural Universities in the State

was the pinnacle of the scientific agricultural perspective of Vasantrya Naik. While recommending supreme priority for agricultural development the Kothari Commission had suggested that each State should have an agricultural university. When Vasantrya Naik scientifically studied the subject he found that research was essential in many aspects of agriculture such as creating new species of seeds, searching for seeds which could provide yields even at low rainfall, soil testing and others. He set up a committee under the Chairmanship of State Director of Agriculture. It was decided to create the first Agricultural University at Rahuri in Ahmednagar district. Further Agriculture Universities were set up at Akola, Parabhani and Dapoli.

Through this initiative, the Chief Minister also managed a regional balance. These Universities carried out a meritorious work in triple aspects of research, education and agricultural service and further in terms of agricultural reforms and development as well. The record of creating four Agricultural Universities during the tenure of a Chief Minister in any State is rightfully held by Vasantrya Naik. This is the most appropriate example of his trust and relationship with agriculture.

On the whole the tenure of Vasantrya Naik was dedicated to laying the foundations for Maharashtra State. His contribution to Agriculture, Education, Employment, Industries, Urban Development and others were noble. He could relieve the State from unprecedented calamities like he had a magic wand to wield...Untiring efforts, scientific perspective, judging the people, affinity about the common man and inspiring words which could turn foes into friends were some of the attributes of his enormous personality... This son of the soil who was always immersed in the thoughts of developing Maharashtra could only be conferred with the Honor of 'Vikaspurusha'...

The excellence of all round development. ■

- **Kiran Kendre**



# THE OPTIMISTIC

The Nariman Point of the Marine Drive, Today is a gift from this visionary administrator. The Prestigious buildings standing there are no less than a monument to this able administrator, who changed the Sky Line of Mumbai, states **Narayan Haralikar**



*Concern and care for the poor Vasant Rao Naik with Smt. Indira Gandhi*

“**B**ombay (Mumbai) is that way a very important city, and the problems that are facing us today are also as great as the city itself. The problem of the city is that we receive thousands of people every day who come without anything. Practically, I doubt whether they purchase their railway tickets also. They come in thousands and create problems for us.”

One may doubt today that these are the words of a party leader with parochial policies, which the liberals must attack. But No! No! These are not (not) the words of any small leader of a very tiny party. These are the utterances of one of the ablest administrator Chief Minister of Maharashtra Shri. Vasant Rao Phulsing Naik, an efficient, sensitive, caring Leader and a stern, astute administrator-the third Chief Minister of Maharashtra, that he was, who summarized the basic problems of this megacity Mumbai, way back in

1963, almost 50 years back.

We find the issue has not been resolved completely even today. The reasons may be various, but the point is being as a Chief Minister, he was sensitive to the grass root issues that mar the administration and the development of the city or the region. He was considering to empower the Municipal Commissioner of Mumbai (then Bombay) to demolish the illegal slums in the city and rehabilitate them, using force if needed, elsewhere.

Those were the days when India as a whole was facing acute shortage of food grains. India was importing huge quantity of wheat and millets (of poor quality) under international treaty for public distribution. Shri. Vasant Rao Naik, being a son of an ordinary farmer and that too from a tribal Banjara family, was very much perturbed. He was then a Deputy Minister for Revenue in the then bilingual Bombay State which

comprised of present day Maharashtra and Gujarat, both. Later he was entrusted the responsibility of Minister for Cooperation in the year 1957, when the agitation for linguistic State for Maharashtra i.e. Samyukt Maharashtra had gained momentum. The unilingual Marathi speaking Maharashtra, though truncated, finally became a reality in the year 1960, under the leadership of Shri. Yashwantrao Chavan, popularly known as Y. B. Chavan. Shri. V. P. Naik was a Minister in the cabinet of Shri. Chavan.

Biggest contribution to the administration, especially for the rural administration in Maharashtra, by Shri. V. P. Naik is the Panchayati Raj System. It had been a constitutional obligation for the State Governments to adopt the Panchayati Raj System in the rural administration. “The State shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government,” it was stated in the constitution of India.

Later, in 1957, the Balwantrai Mehta Committee recommended democratic decentralization by setting up Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), and devolving the necessary resources, powers and authority to them. Rajasthan became the first State to institute Panchayati Raj in 1959, followed by Andhra Pradesh. Maharashtra Government, however, decided to set up a committee under the then Revenue Minister Shri V. P. Naik, as the Chairman, to study the Balwantrai Mehta Committee report and make recommendations. Balwantrai Mehta Committee had recommended a three tier system of rural governance with





**Vasanttrao Naik and Vasantdada Patil at Yavatmal Zilla Sarpanch Sammelan**

strong democratic structure. The Naik Committee however preferred to recommend shifting of the power base from middle level Block Panchayat to the district level Zilha Parishad. The Committee was of the view that too much of democratization of the grass root institutions, in the absence of adequate skilled (trained) staff would do more harm than benefit.

He as the chairman of the committee suggested opening of more institutions for training of the necessary staff at all levels. In the process it was also suggested that, though, the system would be headed by an officer of Indian Administrative Services (IAS) cadre, all other staff would not come from the State Revenue cadre. At the same time a link with the existing system was maintained by vesting the supervisory powers with the District Collector, of course without any interference from him. Today we find how prudent the decision was. This decision helped developing the administrative skills with firsthand experience in the Panchayati Raj system, as the next step was Administration with humane touch.

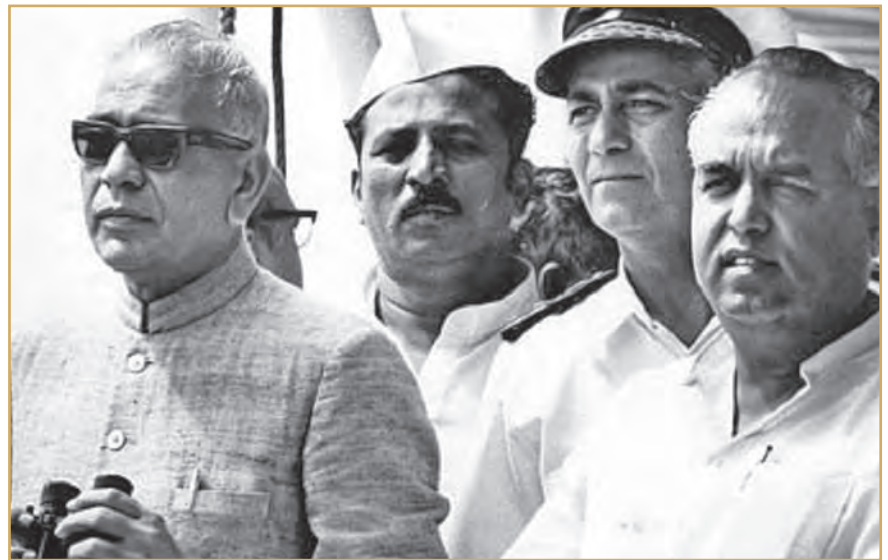
It will be interesting to know his views on Decentralization of Power or Power to the Peoples' Representatives, i.e. Democratization of the Governance. A conference of the elected members of the Panchayati Raj institutions in the State was organized immediately after the implementation of the Three-tier Panchayati Raj system as recommended

by the Vasanttrao Naik Committee, at the behest of the then Chief Minister Y. B. Chavan. Addressing the delegates, Shri Naik said, "Grampanchayat Administration is criticized by many. It is not the issue of academic excellence. Here we need to get the work done for the welfare of the people. Their issues should be resolved by themselves at the village level. The local people must participate in the administration for the development of the village. It is a policy to strengthen the Nation by development at the grass root level." He also exhorted them to run these Panchayati Raj institutions with a humane face for the welfare of the

common man and development of the village. It was means to create a New Society, he believed. It is for the people today to understand and judge the success of the Panchayati Raj.

Administration with human touch and farmer first was motto of Shri. V. P. Naik. The contemporary media persons always remembered how V. P. Naik would celebrate the first showers of monsoon. He had studied the pattern of monsoon and the agriculture in Maharashtra earlier as the revenue minister and also as the minister for cooperation. The great famine (or the Situation of scarcity, as the typical jargon of the Government revenue machinery would say) of the late sixties, during his tenure as the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, stimulated him to usher in the much acclaimed Green Revolution. Stirred by the severe drought and the difficulties of the cultivators and the rural population, he inspired many of the agricultural scientists to research for high yielding variety of seeds.

He was instrumental in establishing Agriculture Universities in Maharashtra. His efforts yielded desired results. Journey of Maharashtra towards self sufficiency in food grains had begun. V. P. Naik, though highly educated, he would always take out time to experiment with agriculture, cultivation. In order to avoid



**Chief Minister of Maharashtra V.P. Naik (left) along with Vasantdada Patil (right) and Vice Admiral Sourendra Nath Kohli watching the naval exercises in Mumbai on February 23, 1973.**



losses to common farmers, it was his practice to experience every new variety of seed first in his own farm. Many had criticized him that he wanted to earn first for himself. His critics were proved wrong as his observations about the yield in a corner of his farm land would provide minute and detailed inputs for further research. Farmer First was policy behind this kind of experiment. He also experimented with grape and sugarcane cultivation besides cotton and opened a hitherto unknown vista for the farmers of Vidarbha to earn more than the traditional cultivation. He provided a new dimension to the administration and the Government policy.

Administrative foresight of Shri V. P. Naik provided great relief to farmers for the past four decades and probably in the years to come. It was his administration with Humane touch, that gave birth to the Employment Guarantee Scheme, a tool for development of the State by providing means for living during the scarcity conditions. Many kilometer long roads were constructed in rural Maharashtra initially and later the scheme was utilized for creating irrigation facilities such as percolation tanks and farm tanks. Years later, the very same EGS was used to boost horticulture in the State during drought conditions. It provided another earning source for farmers during better weather conditions. Despite his best efforts, however, the farmers of Vidarbha failed to utilize the Government schemes for own uplift and finally, about five years back they resorted to suicide. Lately the Central Government too accepted the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) at national level and it proves the vision and administrative acumen of V. P. Naik, the Chief Minister.

Many tend to brand Shri. V. P. Naik in black over his decision to reclaim land from the Sea. But I would prefer to say it was his vision that he decided to reclaim land from the sea. The Nariman Point of the Marine Drive, today, is a gift from this visionary administrator. The prestigious buildings standing there are no less than a monument to this able administrator, who changed



the Sky Line of Mumbai. He knew there was paucity of land in Mumbai. Mumbai had natural limitations for expansion and hence he decided to reclaim land in South Mumbai. The present day Cuff Parade and part of Nariman Point is its outcome. Moreover one might see the seeds of recent State Government policy

He also experimented with grape and sugarcane cultivation besides cotton and opened a hitherto unknown vista for the farmers of Vidarbha to earn more than the traditional cultivation

of Slum Clearance and Rehabilitation in one of his statements.

Shri. V. P. Naik, as the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, in the year 1963, addressing the Annual General Meeting of the Bombay Chamber of Commerce and Industries (BCCI), dealt with the tricky subject of slums and civic amenities and public order. His address gives us the glimpses of his administrative vision and also the political inability, as he was

the trusted and obedient worker of the ruling political party. He lamented that “Bombay is that way a very important city, and the problems that are facing us today are also as great as the city itself. The problem of the city is that we receive thousands of people every day who come without anything. . . . the problem of slum is there and it adds to the problems that we are already facing. We will have to provide some facilities for them in order to attract them to leave their slums, but as I told you this is very ticklish problem. There are a number of slums, uncertified slums, and the slums can be created overnight. . . . So we will have to be rather stiff about it and meet the situation.” Unfortunately, however earnest he was in resolving the issue of slums in the city, as the Chief Minister he could not progress a centimeter ahead. The present day SRS or the slum rehabilitation scheme is nothing but a tribute to the visionary Chief Minister V. P. Naik, who spelled it almost fifty years back.

This is the Centenary year of V. P. Naik. The State Government is also planning to celebrate it on a massive scale. The State Government ( and also the political party to which Late V. P. Naik belonged,) if, could raise a cadre of committed officers and subordinate staff, embracing the human values, for the development of the villages and small habitats, preservation of our flora and fauna , probably no other tribute is necessary for this visionary Chief Minister of yester years. ■



# HUMBLE GOVERNANCE WITH SOCIAL SENSIBILITY

He created the expanse of Backbay Reclamation for accommodating the alarming increase of Mumbai city. He also laid the foundations of the satellite city of Navi Mumbai. He also brought CIDCO to reality in order that scientifically structured cities could be created in Maharashtra, says senior journalist **Yudhishtir Joshi**



**V**asantrao Naik was a rare modest person to adorn the coveted Chief Minister position of Maharashtra. He was a personality which did not allow a minuscule contempt of frustration within the residents of Maharashtra while he was at the helm of affairs of the State for around 11 long years. The statement made here about the residents of Maharashtra is not just indicative but a deliberate one. The political leaders all around him and playing everything in the game of power for 11 years that Vasantrao remained Chief Minister could not be considered as cooperative with him as they were also in the fray and were hurt at a very tender place in their hearts. However as he was also a great hunter and exactly knew how and where to target, the opponents were usually

left with a loss of their sting completely. Another fact worth consideration is that although the common man was facing all types of problems and frustrations in his daily life he never had any grudge against the Chief Minister. If the slogan popular today had existed at the time it would have loudly and affirmatively said, "Mukhyamantri kaisa Ho?... Vasantrao jaisa ho" for sure.

Vasantrao had a poise of his own. He had the courage and a straight talk from the heart. His vision always proclaimed in very crystal terms how the Maharashtra should prevail in the future. Vasantrao was apt to take extremely bold decisions. He was the father of Green revolution in Maharashtra. The Employment Guarantee Scheme was entirely his initiative and he laid the foundation for

reclamation at the Backbay, Mumbai. A single Education Board for the entire State and the thought of streamlined courses came in to existence during his tenure alone.

Only a few years had passed for creation of Maharashtra State. Therefore it was natural that the thorns of regionalism were both stiff and pointed. Sometimes this resulted in sparks flowing around with full intensity. One such fierce agitation during his regime was that for a separate Vidarbha State.

With the creation of a singular syllabus for primary and secondary education and a unique system for S. S. C. examination all over the State, the then Education Minister Madhukarrao Chaudhary had already made sure that the ensuing generation would not feel any differences due to regionalism. The transparent results of visionary implementation of the scheme can be seen today. After six decades although the regionalism thorns have not lost the prick, they have definitely become blunt enough not to inflict a wound. Another courageous decision implemented by Vasantrao culminated in bringing the State out of the 'dry' fads of prohibition.

Those who have witnessed Mumbai and other cities from the State earlier to 1965 would definitely be impressed in total by the decision by Vasantrao. Particularly every dingy and dark lane of Mumbai at that time proliferated with the illegal country liquor manufacturers carrying out their business in full swing.



The cottage industry had created an unprecedented maximum in all the city slums and the surrounding villages. The filthy liquor devastated generations together and distressed the families. The newspapers had sure news at least once a fortnight about so many people dead after consumption of the poisonous country liquor.

Faddist Gandhians and activists from Sarvodaya cult were in total favour of prohibition. On one side these people were continuously pressurizing the Government for prohibition and on the other the country liquor was proliferating everywhere. This was one cottage industry which was emerging stronger every day. The resultant threat perceptions arising out of this cottage industry turned Mumbai in to a base for National and International gangs of criminals. As they held the reins of this multi million and fast breeding industry, they had become almost monopolistic criminal bosses. Vasant Rao carefully and consciously analyzed the social, economic and political angle of the phenomena and decided to do away with prohibition. The decision brought in an increase in the revenue to the Government. It also provided an additional source of sumptuous earning to the sugar factories in the State through manufacture of country and foreign liquor. The illegal business



of filthy and poisonous country liquor was brought under control. The decision also saved the lives of a huge number of poor youth who were inducted to criminality through the illegal transactions of this liquor.

The generation today cannot even imagine the condition of Maharashtra State earlier to 1968 due to Prohibition in vogue. A single decision by Vasant Rao changed the scenario. Those who have witnessed the life at the time and today can alone comprehend the visionary decisive powers that Vasant Rao wielded. Total prohibition is never the way... diligent governance has to have the flexibility.

There was a sea of change in attire as well in gossip when Vasant Rao became the Chief Minister of Maharashtra. He

used to always prefer Jodhpuri suit. He had a stature which would befit the 'stay fit' terminology used today. Although he had straightforwardness in his deliberations he nurtured a very humble and convincingly soft spoken personality. This could be amply proved by glancing through his speeches in the Legislative Assembly. While speaking on an important topic his presentation used to be tenacious and full of pervading humbleness but with a strong belief in himself and his thoughts. After every few sentences in his presentation, he used to skillfully argue with the words...please...and blunt the fiercest attacks from the opposition parties.

On one side there were the newspapers that were ferociously slicing the Government on almost every issue and on the other there was the Jambhvantrao Dhote Sena in full form and on a warpath demanding a separate Vidarbha. Mrinal Gore and her firebrand women activists kept the Government on their toes through their rolling pin agitations and at the same time an all party ensemble at the Legislature proper used to attack point blank at the Government.

Without providing even a chance for bitterness about himself Vasant Rao completed his innings as Chief Minister of Maharashtra State for 11 years at a stretch. The twofold character of Vasant Rao always complemented and cared for each other while carrying out the governance of the State with full diligence. One of the characters was an exemplary CEO and the other character was a smart and visionary politician. This was one of the rarest combinations to be found in a personality born in a backward Banjara community and coming from a small hamlet of Gahuli in Vidarbha...

During his college days he courted Vatsala a Brahmin girl from Ghatge family and exchanged vows for a love marriage. This proved beyond any doubt that he was a person in favour of changes. When he arrived on the political stage and subsequently took over the reins of Maharashtra as the





Chief Minister the force of change soared amazingly. The media was not so much proliferated then it is today. The newspapers had a meager run and most importantly it was not a period when the politicians and the members of the Government provided sumptuous advertisements to the press for getting praised...They had a limited sphere...

Agriculture was a subject which Vasantryao always held at his heart. He was sincerely proud of calling himself as a farmer. It was proper that during his tenure alone the Agricultural universities were set up in Maharashtra and the Maharashtra Seeds Corporation was initiated.

Vasantryao, the Chief Minister was completely distressed during the severe famine that struck the State in 1972. He was putting himself fully on for saving the cattle. He was the person who implemented the Scheme of providing work to anyone and wherever he was and assure him of the future. This was the first time in India that such a Scheme was planned and implemented with total success. At any cost he did not want his farmer in a ramshackle...When the rains arrived after this distraught famine, Vasantryao was as happy as a child...He had emptied his pockets and immediately dispatched his orderly to get sweets within a moment...The cheer on the face of this Chief Minister was beyond words...

A tour accompanying Vasantryao as a Chief Minister was a boon in disguise. Just the reported word or any news carried to him would never satisfy him. He used to visit the fields, see the crops for himself and at times sat down to clear the weeds. Very carefully he observed the standing crops. His agricultural expertise would silence even the field specialists.

He was the anchor for decentralization of governance in terms of creation of Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad. He ended the regime of Malgujars by implementing the Land Reforms Act. The reform brought on a furious opposition from his own party men, but he conquered over them and brought the Land



Reforms in practice.

The entire lobby of the cotton traders was acting for bringing in and implementing the Monopoly Cotton Purchase Scheme. However without much of friction and bitterness the Scheme was implemented.

He created the expanse of Backbay Reclamation for accommodating the

others...

It has to be mentioned as a fact that we would not have such a warm hearted Chief Minister for Maharashtra and this is not at all an exaggerated statement. When Senapati Bapat started his indefinite fast in the scorching heat in front of 'Varsha', the official residence of the Chief Minister, Vasantryao was impatient. Not because he was against the insistence on a fast by Senapati. He only insisted that Senapati should be seated in a shadow.

While the mandatory Winter Session of the Legislature was on at Nagpur, the firebrand MLA of the Peasants and Workers party Shri. N. D. Patil started a fast in front of 'Ramgiri' the residence of the Chief Minister. The severe winter winds saw determined Shri. N. D. Patil scouting his stance... Vasantryao arrived in the night and escorted Shri. N. D. Patil honourably to Ramgiri. The sight of a great leader fasting in the expansive verandah of the Chief Minister's Bungalow with the Chief Minister inside the bungalow itself cannot even be imagined ever...

As the holding back of compassion expanded, the people started distancing themselves from one another...Under such circumstances the fond memories of Vasantryao Naik truly and actually shake the roots of our own being. ■

Vasantryao had a poise of his own. He had the courage and a straight talk from the heart. His vision always proclaimed in very crystal terms how the Maharashtra should prevail in the future

alarming increase of Mumbai city. He also laid the foundations of the satellite city of Navi Mumbai. He also brought CIDCO to reality in order that scientifically structured cities could be created in Maharashtra...There were projects on Electricity, Dams and many



# A TRUE FAMILY MAN

Vatsalabai held a position of exemplary prominence in the life of Vasantryo Naik. She was a close witness to the all inclusive and enormous stature borne by Vasantryo in all respects...The interview by Senior Journalist **Sharad Akolkar** in the year 1966 and published in the Shri Vasantryo Naik Gaurav Granth placidly introduces the multi faceted personality of Vasantryo Naik



“Consider this...Sometimes we play cards at leisure...In such a game also Vasantryo is always a winner and naturally all of us utter words such as “even the cards are on your side...”

With a screeching sound the driver stops the vehicle and awakens me with his words... “We have arrived at the Chief Minister’s bungalow, sir!” I was not able to comprehend the elapse of 15 minutes since I boarded a taxi to reach Malabar Hill from Crawford market. While I was engrossed in looking at the rainbow drenched city of Mumbai from the window of the vehicle the taxi was already in front of bungalow occupied by Vasantryo Naik...

This was the residence of Vasantryo Naik, Chief Minister of Maharashtra. I stood at the gate for a moment. His bungalow was attired with greens on all sides. The winds from the Arabian Sea were jostling freely with the coconut, betel nut, banana and mango trees around the bungalow. While the greens were moving on the waves of the wind they were exhibiting an excellence of life held by them...At the entrance I came across a plaque which had ‘VARSHA’ engraved on it...

Within the cycle of seasons, the Earth comes out with a variety of faces. During the monsoon it gets dressed with the typical hue of green. The musical presentation of Meghmahar

is religiously performed during this season alone. The exiled Yaksha from Kalidasa also sends his message to the farmers toiling on the soil through the medium of clouds...This is because the centre of aspirations for farmers is always located in the rains that is in VARSHA...

Incidentally the name of the bungalow where the Chief Minister of Maharashtra resides is also VARSHA... I thought about how meaningful the name was...

Occupied by my thoughts I had reached the entrance of the bungalow. As usual there were some people waiting in the hall. I started a conversation with Private Secretary to Chief Minister Shri Pathak. The same moment Vasantryo came out from the bungalow probably for going away with some work... Through the crowd of visitors he suddenly saw me and with his eloquent smile said,

“Are! When did you come?”

I went near him and answered, “I am in Mumbai for the last two days. We are taking out a special issue of “Gramdoot” Weekly and had to get the cover designed. I got some free moments and thought of meeting you. I understand fully well that you are hard pressed for time and hence I was trying if I could interview Kaku (Mrs. Vatsalabai Naik) at least.”

“Oh! Although I do not think she also has any time today you can try!” saying this Vasantryo went away.

I sent a slip through the peon and requested Vatsalabai for providing me time for an interview. I was immediately ushered into the bungalow.



Vasantrao started practice as a lawyer at Pusad after LL.B. However law practice was not the only thing that attracted him. He attended to his agriculture even more than his practice. He had dedicated himself to social work. From literacy to prohibition and from village improvement to doing away with the ancient traditions he carried his movement at villages near Pusad. He was more interested in social development than in politics...He never had a place for isolation in his life...He never had lunch alone...there would be at least a few people with him...On a day when there would be no one he would not eat properly...He was delighted to serve the people joining him for food...Being a great host and extending courtesies has been an integral part of his life and personality. Apart from this he is also keenly interested in helping others...He never thinks twice when it comes to help someone in need...

When I entered the bungalow, Vatsalabai was teaching her younger son Niranjan. However I thought that the session was almost over as she arrived in the hall immediately. The tea and snacks were served. Before I could introduce myself she said, "You are from Yavatmal and while I was at Pusad Taluka during the last general elections you accompanied us..."

I felt much at ease. We started to discuss over a cup of tea.

I explained that the topic for my interview was "Personality of Vasantrao in her perspective" to which she answered, "See, if there is anything extremely important in his life from my point of view it is his tolerance and perseverance..."

"Did I disturb your teaching schedule with Niranjan?"

"No...No...Not at all...The work was almost finished and that is why I could give you the time..."

"Will it be OK if I started with some questions?"

She agreed immediately...

"You have been the better half for Vasantrao since his induction into public and political career. What were the specialties of his personality at that time and how were these developed?"

Listening to my question attentively she answered, "It was in 1941 that I got married to Vasantrao. We stayed at Pusad and Gahuli after marriage. The public life for Vasantrao emerged during this period. While staying at Pusad, we

used to visit our fields at Gahuli on and off. On one such visit to Gahuli a person came to Vasantrao and requested for a loan of Rs. 500. Vasantrao obliged him immediately... His attitude to help anyone with anything remains intact even today. Along with his attitude for extending huge courtesies, I have never seen him getting angry with persons committing mistakes. In fact he used to quietly make the person understand his mistake. I have always felt that he conquered many a people with his tolerance."

I just interrupted her and asked...

"Today Vasantrao is holding the position of Chief Minister of Maharashtra. It means that he is in politics. The politics always needs strategic abilities. A tactful person alone can be a forerunner in politics. However Vasantrao has not exhibited any of these traits in his life. Then how could he reach the apex position of a Chief Minister?...I believe that you alone can explain this in a better manner as you have been very close to him all along..."

"Yes. Vasantrao is extremely tolerant and he takes pride in playing a host. He also has an attitude to mix up freely with everyone. In spite of all these, it is only due to his destiny that he was able to progress in a political arena. He has been blessed with a huge luck factor. As a lawyer practicing at Pusad he was actively engaged in social developments. Incidentally he also got introduced and inducted in the political arena. His political career started when he was first elected as President of Pusad Nagar Parishad. Further with a similar coincidence he was awarded a ticket to contest elections to the then Madhya Pradesh Legislature. He had not even applied to Congress for consideration of a ticket. Still he got the candidature with which he won the elections and was even chosen to become a Deputy Minister. This was all part of the coincidence while he became Deputy Minister at the erstwhile Madhya Pradesh...It continues till today while becoming the Chief Minister of Maharashtra State



*Vasantrao with Vatsalabai and sons Avinash and Niranjan*



of working diligently... Of course I have to take the usual care that every other woman takes for her husband..."

While Vatsalabai stopped for a moment, I put forward my next question...

"I think that the wives of political personalities have to share certain extra responsibilities than those from common people and at the same time such women cannot escape their share of joy and sorrow!..."

"In the married life of other women there is no chance for hustle-bustle... It moves on quietly...However, there is always a great hustle-bustle in the life of persons in political arena and they have to attune themselves to such life...The ladies in political environments carry higher and more sensitive concerns in addition to normal concerns shared by a married women from a common family...Now consider this...As a child Niranjana always wishes to speak with his father. However, one has to bear with the fact that Vasantao is always in a hurry and cannot devote enough time for his home and family..."

We had been talking for a long time and I presented my last question...

"What would Vasantao like to do after his retirement from politics?..."

"He always says that he would like to build a farm house with a small garden and lead his life as a farmer after retirement..."

The interview was over and I bid a goodbye to Vatsalabai...However on my way back the sentiment voiced by her echoed in my mind... "Vasantao would like to be a farmer..."

Although the life of Vasantao Naik developed sequentially as a social activist, lawyer and political leader and while these were the prime facets of his personality, his inner self always remained that of a farmer...

I was returning through the tree lined pathway with the background of lilted sounds of leaves swaying on the winds and getting mixed with the roaring ones from sea behind...The Koel on a mango tree had also joined the choir..." ■

without any type of political tactical play whatsoever...Everything went on either due to luck factor, coincidence or his attitude and today he is the Chief Minister..."

Once again I interrupted Vatsalabai... "Not possible by any chance...No one can be bestowed with the position of Chief Minister of a huge State of Maharashtra only on the basis of his luck. The services of such a person need to be appreciated and acknowledged by the populace...Vasantao has created a huge deposit of services to the people and hence based on his own capabilities Naik saheb has become the Chief Minister..."

The moment I had completed my statement Vatsalabai said, "What you say may carry some truth. However what I say is also not false. In his entire life Vasantao has always had the support of huge luck and he accepts the same. Consider this...Sometimes we play cards at leisure...In such a game also Vasantao is always a winner and naturally all of us utter words such as "even the cards are on your side..."

I continued with my question... "Since Vasantao has become the Chief Minister he has to carry out so many duties and naturally cannot

provide enough time for family matters...How do you take care of such eventualities?..."

Vatsalabai replied at once... "It is not that Vasantao is very busy with his tasks only because he became

**"If there is anything extremely important in his life from my point of view it is his tolerance and perseverance..."**

Chief Minister...The busy schedules have started ever since he got inducted to politics...It is true that the busy life has further accelerated at present and hence my first priority is to look after his health as his wife. With this in view I try my best with the maxim "early to bed and early to rise" for him to the extent possible...However till now I have not been successful in my endeavors...Even while he is fully occupied with work he never gets sluggish. He has pursued a habit



# A TRUE DEMOCRATIC

He is as much at home in the forest and the field as he is in the Cabinet or in the conference room. Whether he is dealing with the man in the street or leaders of the nation, he is his same unruffled, reticent self, flexible but unflinching, persuasive but persistent, vigorous but no vociferous, courageous to the hilt but without bravado in the least, recalls **Homi J H Taleyarkhan**

**S**hri Vasantao Naik, Chief Minister of Maharashtra, is a leader who is known for his unruffled nature and for his strength of character. He has steered the State with great courage and dexterity in a difficult period and by his own intimate knowledge of agricultural methods has pulled out Maharashtra from a very serious food situation. His tact has been responsible for the solution of many problems and his firmness has shown that he knows that if a democracy is to succeed, it also requires discipline of attitude and behaviour.

His unassumingness is another trait which is greatly to be admired and however powerful his authority he has never sought to make a show or a parade of it.

Difficulties do not deter him. He has been quietly effective and determined in the implementation of the decisions once taken. He has kept the cabinet working as one team and has been responsible for many of the beneficial schemes that have helped to improve the lot and the condition of the people of the Maharashtra.

He has been held in the highest esteem in Delhi and greatly respected for his views, not only on agricultural policies but also on others.

Maintaining an admirable balance of views as he does, he has the knack of satisfying the largest number of people though naturally it is not possible to please one and all. He can do this because though he is in his insight, he shows understanding in approach to problems.

In spite of his very heavy and multifarious duties as Chief Minister,



**Homi J. H. Taleyarkhan felicitating Vasantao Naik on his birthday**

Vasantao Naik is a very devoted husband and a very loving father. His other keen interest is in shikar. He is not only as sure shot but a very bold hunter sometimes to the point of being reckless regarding his personal safety.

He is as much at home in the forest

and the field as he is in the Cabinet or in the conference room. Whether he is dealing with the man in the street or leaders of the nation, he is his same unruffled, reticent self, flexible but unflinching, persuasive but persistent, vigorous but no vociferous, courageous to the hilt but without bravado in the least.

**Difficulties do not deter him. He has been quietly effective and determined in the implementation of the decisions once taken**

Such is the stuff leaders are made of. all of us who know him so intimately for years, have come to appreciate these qualities in a man who weaves patterns of progress out of the very smoke-screen of inscrutability in which the smoke from his pipe, his constant companion, gives the impression of shrouding a personality, at once as outstanding as he is outspoken. ■

*Courtesy: Shri Vasantao Naik Guarav Granth*



# COURAGEOUS AND REALISTIC

“He also brought a new desirable trait in the administration. His instructions are clear and the objectives are well-defined and understood by men who carry out the instructions. As a businessman, I admire this change,”  
recollects **S. L. Kirloskar**



**I**n the confused atmosphere of self-righteous smugness in our politics, Vasantryao Naik brought the earthly feeling and thinking of a farmer. I have dealt with farmers all my life and my experience has taught me that the farmer is one of the shrewdest individuals in our society. His feet and his thinking are firm on the ground and as he grows and lives, he takes his roots deeper and is firmer in his early sense.

Vasantryao loves the good earth and has drawn his wisdom from it. He is successful farmer and it does mean a great deal to me. You cannot feed the earth with either platitudes or moralizing (our exclusive products in the international field and also at home) because the earth does not respond to such a diet. The farmer, therefore, thinks of work and crops, and costs and believe me, also of profits.

One of the most profitable contribution Vasantryao made to our State is the freedom he gave to officers in the administration of our State. The administrator, according to my experience, is a man tied to the procedures without thinking of the purpose for which actions are initiated. By giving him the freedom to take action and also make mistakes in the course of his duties, Vasantryao has turned his face to the purpose and made him take decisions.

He also brought a new desirable trait in the administration. His instructions are clear and the objectives are well-defined and understood by men who carry out the instructions. As a businessman, I admire this change because, in business, confusion is a luxury your shareholders do not allow. The administration tends to pick up the evil habit and get wrapped up in the resultant confusion for which the citizens pay. I think by trying to come

out of this cobweb, Vasantryao has rendered a valuable service to our State.

I admire the courage he showed in relaxing the rigid rules of our prohibition policy. It was a bold step and much against the wishes of those who are high in the Congress organization.

I also admire his frankness and earthly wisdom in declaring that the farmer is a businessman and in order to keep his business going, he must earn reasonable profits. He got the Government to assure the farmer a floor price for his grain, in order to motivate him to farm better and earn more.

As a businessman and an engineer, I am a firm believer in the freedom of man to pursue his profession and demand a price for his ability, his skills and quality of his work and product can command. I apply the same principle to a farmer and therefore I admire Vasantryao's wisdom in backing the farmer to earn better price for his product.

I also believe in human ingenuity. That is one faculty which has brought more progress to human society than anything else. The other day a friend played a tape on which I heard our Chief Minister talking of such plans as the formation of 'Water Grid' for the thirsty earth in Maharashtra. It may sound unconventional ...but the, human society was always led by the unconventional, and the rebels, with conformists toeing their line, no doubt, after a fairly long time.

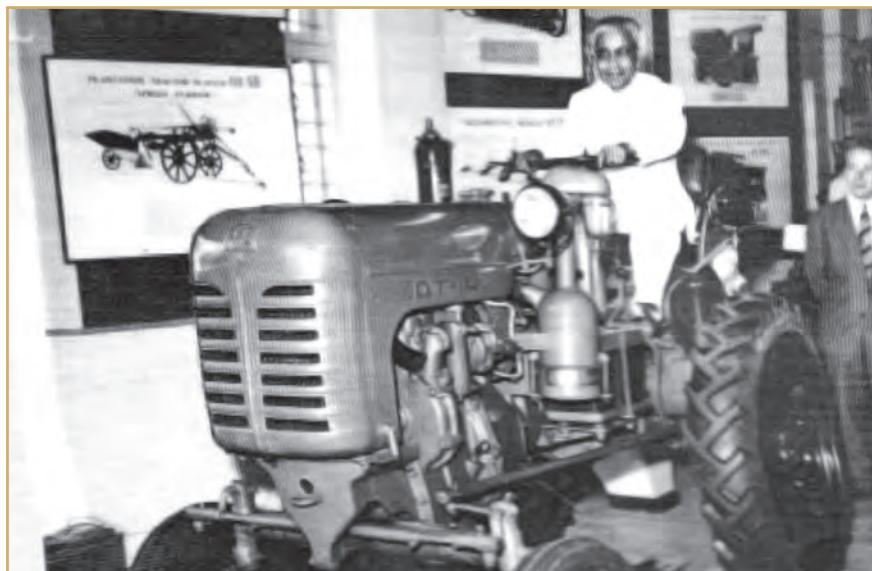
**I think Vasantryao's  
personality can  
be summed up  
in the two loves  
he has: the good  
earth he loves  
and the author he  
likes most....Dale  
Carnegie**



On many problems, I hold different views than those of Vasantryao. But that does not diminish my appreciation for his abilities and the great burden he carries. It is heavy and full of complex factors. Even the most rational man can find the job trying. I am not in politics and never regretted not being in it. Vasantryao is in it along time as far as I can see, is well set to be in it a long time to come.

But basically he is a social worker. He has the traits still. He has the obstinacy...an earthly quality which the good earth gives her sons...and also the sympathy. He reveals both. He married outside his caste and even though his father promptly disinherited him, he stuck to his decision. In the end he won and held both, the woman he loved and the heart of his father.

I think Vasantryao's personality can be summed up in the two loves he has.



The good earth which he loves and the author he likes most...Dale Carnegie. He brought a new approach to farming in our State and in the administration,

he is trying to teach the value of winning friends and influencing people. ■

*Courtesy: Shri Vasantryao Naik Gaurav Granth*

## Through Others' Eyes

Shri V.P.Naik has not only maintained the standards and traditions laid by his predecessors but has improved on them. A patriot imbued with a spirit of service, a man of the people who understands their needs and aspirations and leader who inspires faith and loyalty among the masses, Shri Naik has shown great sobriety, tact and practical wisdom in his work as Chief Minister of Maharashtra."

**- M. Bhaktavatsalam**  
Chief Minister, Madras

Under the leadership of Shri Naik, the State has been fruitfully engaged in the tremendous tasks of industrial and rural development throughout the vast expanse of the State and grappling with the multifarious complex problems endemic in one of the biggest industrial and commercial centres of the country, viz. Bombay."

**- Hitendra Desai**

Shri Naik is a constructive worker of the highest caliber which new India needs in their thousands if we have to realize the dream of economic prosperity and power for peace in the world. Shri Naik has consistently devoted himself in all his capacities as a public worker to progressive measures which have contributed no little to forwardness of Maharashtra in several spheres".

**- K.L. Rao**  
Minister of State,  
Ministry of Irrigation & Power

Shri Naik is an ideal public man and an administrator. He combines in himself, the great qualifications of humility with firmness and efficiency. Maharashtra is fortunate in having him at the helm of its affairs. I am confident that under his stewardship the State of Maharashtra will continue to make steady progress".

**- Bhakt Darshan**  
Deputy Education Minister, India

Shri V.P.Naik is a well-known social worker. He is a man of firm determination and his contributions towards the building up of a strong, united and progressive Maharashtra are substantial and praiseworthy".

**- Ram Subhag Singh**  
Minister of State for Railways, India

"Shri Naik is known for his dynamism and efficiency. His interest for the backward classes is praiseworthy. He has made Maharashtra grow from strength to strength in all direction".

**- B.S. Murthy**  
Deputy Minister for Health, India

Courtesy : Shri Vasantryao Naik Gaurav Granth, 1966



# WIELDER OF POWER BY PERSUASION

The ability and courage that he showered in facing the conditions of drought in Maharashtra last year have earned him universal praise; from the peasant in the field to the Secretary of Agriculture in the United States his mastery of this problem is gratefully acknowledged describes **Dr. Rafique Zakaria**



*Dr. Rafique Zakaria with Vatsalabai and Vasantrao Naik*

**B**efore I became a member of the Maharashtra State Legislative Council in May, 1960, I had known Mr. V. P. Naik. I have had a glimpse of him, here and there, on some special occasions but there was no personal relationship. True, he was one of the most able and likeable colleagues of Mr. Y.B.Chavan, the then Chief Minister of Maharashtra, and had begun to charm the public in Bombay mainly by his sophisticated

appearance. He used to be much better dressed then, more immaculate and elegant; but then, as now, he carries himself with tremendous grace and dignity and has very pleasing manners.

My earliest recollection of Mr. Naik was after the general elections of 1957 when his election to the State Legislative Assembly was one of the earliest to be announced. He had won his seat by a thumping majority of about 25,000 votes, thus creating great hopes

for Congress victory in the State, which seemed rather doubtful in the charged atmosphere created by the popular Samyukta Maharashtra movement. In Vidarbha and Marathwada these hopes no doubt were fulfilled but in western Maharashtra, there was almost a rout of the Congress candidates with the result that the Congress Party just managed to retain power. In the months that followed Shri Chavan had a hard and bitter fight to put up with



to counteract the mounting opposition to the running of the bilingual State of Bombay; in that task he found in Mr. Naik a trusted, sober and responsible lieutenant. He held then the important portfolio of Agriculture and put in herculean efforts to improve the lot of the agriculturists in the State and win them over the new Congress leadership as embodied by Mr. Chavan. It was also at this time that he paid a visit to China and studied at first hand the methods adopted by the Communist leadership to reorganize the agricultural structure in that country.

On the formation of the State of Maharashtra, Mr. Naik became the Revenue Minister and it was in that capacity that I came in close contact with him.

As the Chief Whip of the Congress Party in the Council, I had to rush to him for work connected with the council and I always found him courteous and helpful; it was a pleasure to work with him and to be guided by him. He is never domineering; never interfering; never gets ruffled; and allows the maximum of freedom of action to his colleagues. I also sat with him in the Joint Select Committee meetings on the controversial Land Ceilings Bill and admired both his patience with and tolerance of the opposition. He would spend hours trying to bring the members of the opposition to his point of view and would show no sign of irritation in the face of all the obstinacy that they displayed. Many of us would feel tired and exhausted but Mr. Naik would preserve till the last. He believes passionately in the good of winning over opponents; to him it is a sign of successful leadership.

Another of his great traits in his spirit of accommodation. I remember the day, when I took him to Bhiwandi, a place thirty miles away from Bombay for presiding over a function. I was told by some of my friends that it would be a big gathering. However, when we reached the place there were not even ten persons. Some one had obviously blundered. I felt ashamed but there was no trace of annoyance on Mr.



Naik's part. He waited for some more persons to come and went through the function, as if nothing untoward had happened. When I tried to apologize he just smiled and said that it was quite understandable. Ever since, I have wondered at the infinite capacity of the man to maintain his equilibrium in any situation; nothing irritates him and nothing unnerves him. He is calm as still water and sometimes

**He is not only  
democrat but also  
a humanitarian.  
He likes to be good  
to all, even to his  
known opponents**

deliberately unresponsive. It is difficult to provoke the Chief Minister; I would not like to recount the occasions but there have been many such in his life, when even friends and colleagues did not hesitate to take undue advantage of his gentlemanliness and put him in embracing situations. But so great is his capacity, patience

and tolerance that he has swallowed many a time the poison of personal hurt in order to serve the larger political interest, as he saw it.

The ability and courage that he showered in facing the conditions of drought in Maharashtra last year have earned him universal praise; from the peasant in the field to the Secretary of Agriculture in the United States his mastery of this problem is gratefully acknowledged. He knows the pangs and sufferings of the peasantry in India intimately and has provided lasting solutions for tackling them.

Similarly, his broad humanism is a part of his being; he is above all sectarian or communal considerations. He is not only a democrat but also a humanitarian, who is devoted to the largest good of the largest number. He likes to be good to all; even against his known opponents, he rarely speaks, unless compelled to do so on some rarest possible occasions. A gentleman to his finger tips, Mr. Naik has carved out a place for himself in the hearts of the millions of people in the State of Maharashtra, over which he has presided with such distinction during one of the most critical periods in its long and chequered history. ■

*Courtesy: Shri Vasantrao Naik Guarav Granth*



# A BORN LEADER

The arduous duties of a Chief Minister of one of the biggest States of Indian Union has not dimmed his zest for a rich and varied life, says

**Dayanand Bandodkar**

**M**aharashtra's soft-spoken, polished and superb Chief Minister is undoubtedly a tremendous asset. I have had the good fortune to have met him when he was the Revenue Minister in that State. He stayed with me for nearly a week. I had thus a good opportunity to have a close glimpse of my dear friend in his most informal moments.

Vasantrao, I observed, was a pure product of the soil and looked around him through the simple eyes of a farmer. Himself a cultivator, in a sense, he was greatly concerned about the masses of men and women, behind the plough who feed us all. I noticed that he was restless about the vagaries of the weather and looked up at the skies with the frequency and pinning of the farmer in the field. I also noticed, as did Shri Y.B.Chavan, our Defence Minister, this particular trait and was indeed happy. The Defence Minister had jocularly remarked recently that even if someone were to sprinkle a few drops of water on Maharashtra's Chief Minister when he was asleep he would get up shouting "Rains! Rains!" I think this is a wonderful compliment and sums up his great and humane personality.

I said humane because, as Revenue Minister, he vigorously pushed ahead a vast variety of agricultural reforms, the tenancy legislation, land for the tiller, democratic decentralisation and other agrarian reforms of far-reaching consequences. These have been beacon lights for many States. Our late and lamented Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was tremendously fascinated by the vast and extensive bunding work that was done in Maharashtra during Shri Vasantrao Naik's regime. Naturally, the State came in for very high compliments



**Dayanand Bandodkar with Vasantrao Naik, Yashwantrao and Venutai Chavan**

from the late Prime Minister for this excellent innovation.

Bunding has now taken deep roots in Maharashtra, thanks to Vasantrao Naik and it is spreading outside the State also. What I appreciate most in him is that, he is not a tub-thumping orator, talking year in and out, but he

**A farmer loves harmony all around and being born one, Vasantrao loves it intensely**

is a practical social worker who speaks less and does more concrete work. It would be difficult to find others who have done so much for so many in so short a time. A farmer loves harmony all around and being born one, Vasantrao loves it intensely. That is why, perhaps,

he has with sweet reasonableness, traveled the arduous path, taking with him the Opposition in his stride. On many momentous and controversial issues, he has unhesitatingly taken the counsel of his party and the views of the Opposition and he has always come out with flying colours. I liked to watch him calmly, smoking his pipe, and undisturbed, solving many a tangled problem of the premier State in India. Nothing ruffled him. Taking over as Chief Minister at a critical juncture, he has piloted the destiny of the State and has firmly laid the foundation of a prosperous Maharashtra.

Vasantrao Naik surely has the makings of a born leader, sprung as he did from the very masses and with an agrarian backdrop. But the arduous duties of a Chief Minister of one of the biggest States of the Union has not dimmed his zest for a rich and varied life. ■

*Courtesy: Shri Vasantrao Naik Gaurav Granth*



# THE GOSPEL OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY

A variety of agrarian reforms of far-reaching consequences such as tenancy legislation, ceiling on agricultural holdings, and democratic decentralization were vigorously pushed ahead and they were beacon lights for many States, says **Dinesh Desai**



*At inaugural ceremony of Koradi Thermal Power Station*

**V**asantrya Naik was Minister for Agriculture from 1957 to 1960. But his connection with agriculture and its problem was not merely an official concern. Though a lawyer by training, he was by birth, upbringing and outlook a peasant. In spite of his busy schedule of work as Minister, he often found time to experiment in his ancestral lands. The policies that he formulated during three years of his tenure continued to guide and dominate the department of Agriculture. He was able to lead as Chief Minister since 1963 campaign against shortage of food in the State. He looked around him through the simple but shrewd eyes of a farmer and was greatly concerned about the masses of

men and women behind the plough. He knew that one cannot feed the earth with either platitudes or moralizing. He was perhaps the first Chief Minister to realize and emphasize the importance of agriculture to our national economy. When he was restless about the vagaries of weather and rains, he looked up at the sky with the frequency and pinning of a farmer in the field. Y. B. Chavan, the then Defence Minister, remarked once that even if one were to sprinkle a few drops of water on him when he was asleep, he would get up shouting 'Rains! Rains!'

Although the pattern of Maharashtra's economy, specially its rural and agrarian economy, conforms to the all-India pattern, the

State has its own problems resulting from its geographical conditions and historical traditions. Broadly speaking, Maharashtra is vast table land gradually sloping towards the east and the south-east, as a result of which the rivers here dry out soon after the rainy season is over. Therefore, although many rivers rise in the two mountain ranges on the edge of the Deccan plateau, there are no rich alluvial delta tracts in Maharashtra as, for instance, in West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. Again, unlike Uttar Pradesh which is one vast plain, the land in Maharashtra is, in most parts, undulating and poor in fertility. Although there is very heavy rainfall over the Western Ghats, the rest of the State does not have the benefits of these rains and the average rainfall in parts of Maharashtra ranges between 15 to 30 inches.

These factors are chiefly responsible for the low irrigation potential of Maharashtra. And the big central belt remains in constant fear of famine or scarcity conditions. To these very peculiar geographical conditions, historical circumstances have added one further dimensions. In Maharashtra, especially in its western parts, the land system was governed by a small peasant proprietorship. These small peasants had, on the one hand to face adverse agriculture conditions and, on the other, the rural money-lender, who at one time was their only source of finance and credit. His business was really nothing short of usury.

It came as a surprise to many when Naik publicly announced at Pune in 1965, that he would hang himself, if he



did not achieve self-sufficiency in food matters in the State in two years. But Naik's hopes and foresight were based on concrete work. The State was hit in 1965 by the worst drought in several years. Immediately after the reports started pouring in of the failure of crops in different parts of the State, Naik made an extensive tour of the State. A number of measures were taken to arrest the deterioration of standing crops and to save them from withering. They included free use of canal waters, restrictions on the use of irrigation for cash crops like sugarcane, supply of over 7,000 pumping sets for lifting water out of tanks and wells, supply of high yielding seeds, and aerial spraying of crops. Particularly the decision to cut down water supply to cash crops in order to save the existing food-crops showed the mettle of Naik. Puritanic economists might say that diversion of water from cash-crops, particularly sugarcane crops, would downgrade the gross national product of the State. But knowing as he did the practical aspects of agriculture prices and production, Naik pointed out that two or three hybrid and high-yielding seasonal crops during a year worth as much as best sugarcane crops from the point of view of the agriculturist's interest.

He also supported the import of heavy cost, even by air, of hybrid varieties of seeds of jowar, bajara and maize and insisted on their sowing within a record time so as to cover as much acreage as possible under these giant crops even though it involved some risk of wicking, non-germination etc., under summer and drought condition. The result was that 4,000 to 4,500 acres of land were covered with parent seeds during the worst scarcity season in the State and though the seed programme suffered due to drought, the Department of Agriculture held a stock of over 50 per cent of total hybrid seed in the country, and could, therefore, plan a programme of over seven to eight lakhs of acres under the hybrid and high-yielding varieties during 1966-67.

The main plans of his programme

of self-sufficiency were very straightforward and simple. The first and foremost was that agriculturists must have incentive prices for the foodgrains they produced and, therefore, even while faced with an obdurate Central decision to keep the prices on a par with surplus States, Naik took a bold decision to assure the agriculturists a higher floor price of their grain, in order to motivate them to farm better and earn more. The prices of jowar and paddy were raised by at least 10 to 15 per cent. He always maintained that he would like to give if possible, even higher prices for the food crops the smaller agriculturists generally produce. Similarly, he always took a generous view in giving assistance to agriculturists by way of land mortgage bank loans for wells, engines, and pumping sets. He always resisted an increase in the rate of interest to the agriculturists and reduction in subsidies. On one occasion when there was crisis and not enough funds were available, the State Government stretched its resources to a limit and subscribed over Rs.10 crores as its additional special contribution to the land mortgage debentures. This enables the land mortgage bank to go ahead with a programme of over Rs.20 crores. Besides construction of and repairs to as many wells as possible and utilizing all the electric connections

to irrigation pumps, Naik was extremely anxious that irrigation channels should be quickly constructed. The normal practice of the irrigation department to construct channels upto a discharge of 1 ½ cusecs was given up and channels were constructed upto ½ cusecs discharge only so that the last four or five farmers should take water directly through their fields instead of waiting on the pleasure of recalcitrant neighbours.

The very handicaps and hardships breathed in the peasant a spirit of self-reliance and initiative. They responded positively and enthusiastically when the co-operative idea was mooted as the possible solution. The co-operative







movement started as an agricultural credit movement, and gradually came to cover the fields such as the supply of seeds, implements, marketing of produce, etc.

The volume of the cultivators' positive response could be judged from the fact that when Nehru visited Yavatmal in 1959 at the request of Naik, 57 multi-purpose co-operative societies instead of the proposed 25, and 73 agricultural co-operative societies instead of the proposed 51 were registered. Particularly, the success in the co-operative venture in sugarcane opened up in Maharashtra a new vista of agro industrial economy in which the cultivators themselves organized an industrial apparatus to convert their farm or field produce into finished products and thus escaped the exploitation of industrialists and the middlemen. Sugar mills, oil mills, rice mills, ginning and pressing factories, spinning and weaving mills and canning were some of the more important forms of processing which had a distinct agro-industrial appeal for the co-operatives and which were adopted in the parts of Maharashtra in an attempt to establish an agro-industrial economy. The co-operatives in addition to providing farmers with work all the year round, increased the employment potential in rural areas. The State Government offered to such industries a loan to

match the share-capital and stood guarantee for the loans taken by them from other agencies. Besides this financial help, Government provided expert technical aid.

Naik believed that the long range problems of agriculture needed a

**Naik maintained  
that if you start  
one industry in the  
countryside, at  
least five villages  
drew sustenance  
from it**

thorough reorientation of approach towards agriculture based on research, technology and education, to build up agriculture as an industry is planned and built up. His objective was to raise not merely the production of food but the general standard of the agriculture community, which forms the majority in the country. A variety of agrarian reforms of far-reaching consequences such as tenancy legislation, ceiling on agricultural holdings, and democratic decentralization were vigorously pushed ahead and they were beacon lights for many States. Every encouragement was

given to the farmer to raise per acre yield by making fertilizers, improved seed and insecticides readily available to him. He was also helped in securing assured supplies of water for his field. He was induced to adopt bunding on an extensive scale, which then took deep roots in the State. Generous State help was given to small scale industries and to the traditional cottage and handicraft enterprises. Naik maintained that if you start one industry in the countryside, at least five villages drew sustenance from it.

The condition of the landless labourers and the small holders also came within his ken and a programme was drawn up to cover by 100 blocks, the areas where excessive fragmentation and marginal nature of holding made it impossible for the rural population to eke out a decent living. A sum of Rs.5 crores was set apart in the Fourth Five Year Plan to see that these backward and famished people attained a higher standard of living through a programme of subsidized cows, poultry, wells bunding works, etc. As far as irrigation was concerned the State had a planned programme, but the irrigation potential was not substantial. The maximum land which could be irrigated by harnessing all possible would not be more than 30 per cent of the total. The problem, therefore, was tackled from a number of angles. Some of them were the provision of a subsidiary occupation for the cultivators, mechanized and manures and development of animal husbandry on a scientific basis.

The last but not the least aspect of Naik's agricultural policy was his proclaimed aim of giving a clean, efficient, dedicated and popular administration to the State. He wanted the official and non-official agencies to work with missionary zeal. He emphasized that food procurement and distribution were as important as stepping up of production. He advised the Collectors to ignore intimation to Government routine procedures if they hindered proper food distribution. ■

*(Courtesy: The Plough and the Pipe Book by  
Dinesh Desai)*



## ***BIRTH CENTENARY***

During the BIRTH CENTENARY YEAR of the Ex Chief Minister Late Vasant Rao Naik, it has been decided to organize a variety of programmes throughout the State. The Birth Centenary Year has started on the 1st JULY 2012 and the concluding celebrations will be held in Mumbai with prestigious presence of dignitaries on the 1st JULY 2013. The following decisions were arrived at the meeting of a Committee under the Chairmanship of Chief Minister Shri Prithviraj Chavan, set up to prepare a draft outline of the programmes to be held during this Birth Centenary Year...

1. To rename Marathwada Agriculture University with Late Vasant Rao Naik.
2. To establish a huge Memorial to Vasant Rao Naik at Gahuli, Taluka Pusad, District Yavatmal.
3. Exhibition of a Documentary Film based on the life of Vasant Rao Naik, directed by Dr. Jabbar Patel all over the State.
4. Agricultural Meets and Agro-exhibitions in all the six regions of the State.
5. A Postage Stamp in honour of Vasant Rao Naik.
6. A proposal to the Ministry of Railways for renaming Vidarbha Express as "Vasant Rao Naik Vidarbha Express."
7. "Vasant Rao Naik Samaj Bhushan Puraskar" for activists from the Vimukta Jati and Nomadic Tribes.
8. Hostels for boys and girls from Vimukta Jati and Nomadic Tribes.
9. A volume "Hirvee Kshitije" first published on the occasion of 61st Birthday Celebrations of Vasant Rao Naik to be reprinted as its Third Edition.
10. The life sketch of Vasant Rao Naik to be included in the school curriculum.
11. Publication of a Volume containing Speeches by Vasant Rao Naik in the Legislature.
12. Photo Exhibition of Vasant Rao Naik to be showcased at Aurangabad, Nagpur and Yavatmal.
13. A SPECIAL ISSUE of Lokrajya dedicated to Late Vasant Rao Naik.
14. The archives from Lokrajya during the tenure of Vasant Rao Naik would be made available for research.





O.I.G.S. Presented by The Government of India

## **MAHARASHTRA AHEAD**

Digamber W. Palve

Senior Assistant Director, Directorate General of Information  
and Public Relations, Maharashtra Government,  
Barrack No. 19, Free Press Journal Marg, Mumbai 400 021.