

Obituary**N M Joshi**

NARAYAN MALHAR JOSHI, known to his friends, advisers and co-workers as Nanasaheb Joshi passed away peacefully and suddenly on Monday, 30th May. A noble life devoted and dedicated to labour movement came to an end. An Indian trade unionist of international repute left the world with a record of selfless service for half a century in many a noble cause.

Nanasaheb was born on June 5, 1879 in Goregaon—now a suburb of Bombay—in a Brahmin priest's family. In order to prepare him for the family calling, he was set to study the Samhita, but his elder brother, Mahadevarao persuaded him to have English education in Poona. A similar example, where priesthood was discarded for English education, was that of Shri R P Paranjapye, the noted educationist and politician. India must have lost a good many leaders, because many brilliant persons continued their hereditary professions and thus led a narrow, isolated life. After graduation, Shri Joshi took up teaching as his profession, and spent eight years of his youth in teaching. Another accident led him to join the Servants of India Society which had then been set up recently by Shri G K Gokhale.

Poona of that day was a beehive of intellectuals, social reformers and political agitators. Youths were drawn to leaders and teachers like Ranade, Gokhale, Tilak, Agarkar, Fulay, Bhandarkar and many others. Young Joshi became Gokhale's follower and joined him in 1909. After that, it was a life of uninterrupted service and continuous sacrifice, all for the cause of working classes. The Servants of India Society was a nursery of scholar-workers, well up in their specialised subjects and sincere in their thought and action. After spending the first two years in Poona, in 1911 young Joshi moved to Bombay where his social work brought him in contact with industrial workers. He founded the Social Service League and developed a number of educational, social reform and social welfare activities amongst industrial workers in Bombay.

Social welfare slowly but inevitably

led to labour welfare and labour organisation. Nanasaheb played an important role in the establishment and development of many organisations—the Workingmen's Institute, the International Labour Organisation, the All-India Trade Union Congress, the Indian (now National) Federation of Trade Unions, the Bombay Textile Labour Union, the Mafatlal Gagalbhai Textile Technical School and many other associations for and of labour. He also played an important part in the cause of civil liberties, co-operative movement and social reform. His

work on the Royal Commission on Indian Labour and the Indian Pay Commission is well-known. His public life was marked by his tremendous zest for work, sincerity, integrity, respect for the opponents and deep knowledge of the subjects he had to deal with.

Those who came in personal contact with him found Nanasaheb the man more lovable than Joshi the public worker. His paternal advice was available to all—from ministers to research students. Labour Ministers, Government officers, trade unionists, social workers, students and many others used to seek his advice on a variety of subjects. The last 15 years of his life he spent mostly in a small room, 12'x 12', which served as his bed room, study and conference room. In one corner was his bed, in the other a big shelf piled with blue books, pamphlets and labour literature, in the third a small table full of papers, while in the centre was a stout easy chair for him to recline on and discuss. Every evening he spent an hour at the Social Service League and at the Chowpatty Band Stand. The familiar figure in a long coat, *dhotee* and round brown cap will be missed.

Nanasaheb was an ideal family man; but his integrity did not allow his close relatives to get cushy jobs. His eldest son secured a labour officer's job in the Defence Department, but not without some embarrassment to his father. His other son managed to have an ordinary job in a private firm.

He treated his opponents with fairness and consideration. Though he received rough treatment from the Communists during the 'thirties, his relations with Communist trade unionists remained cordial throughout. He had high regard for leaders like Hariharnath Shastri, who belonged to the other camp.

His mature advice and guidance may not be there now. We may, however, take some inspiration from his noble life and try to achieve some of the goals for which he fought—trade union unity, social security and economic equality.

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