

M.N. ROY MEMORIAL LECTURE (1996)

**SHIVAJI AND HIS TIMES—
A RATIONAL EVALUATION**

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FOREWORD

M.N. ROY (1887-1954), an outstanding intellectual revolutionary of the first half of the 20th century, was a thinker and prolific writer. These writings are indicative of his extraordinary analytical ability and vision. Besides India, Roy took a leading part in the revolutionary movements in Mexico, the Soviet Union and China. Roy was a political contemporary and colleague of Stalwarts like Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Bukharin, Zinoviev, and Borodin. He undoubtedly was most colourful of non-Russian communists who alongwith Lenin and Mao tse Tung, developed the fundamental communist policy for the under-developed world. 'The Selected Works', Volume IV of which is under print, contain Roy's major works, including over 100 titles many of which he compiled during his internment in British jails.

The Indian Renaissance Institute, founded by Roy in 1946, celebrates the birth of M.N. Roy each year on March 21 by arranging a lecture by an eminent scholar or an authority on a topic of public importance. The object of these is to encourage fresh or new look on various ideas including those of Roy.

We are grateful to Dr. B.N. Pande for having agreed to deliver this address on the subject of his choice "SHIVAJI AND HIS TIMES—A RATIONAL EVALUATION." I take this opportunity to express our gratitude to Dr. B.N. Pande for accepting our invitation to deliver this lecture.

—Dr. Gauri Bazaz Malik
Chairperson,
Indian Renaissance Institute

SHIVAJI AND HIS TIMES— A RATIONAL EVALUATION

Dr. B.N. Pande

In the early decades of the 17th century the Marathas attained high positions both in the Army and at the royal courts particularly in the kingdoms of Ahmednagar and Bijapur. Under Malik Amber, who for a time stemmed the tide of Mughal advance in the Deccan and revived the glory of the Nizam Shahi dynasty, the Marathas acquired mastery which they used with great advantage in the years to come. Among the feudal Maratha chiefs who rose to eminence in the kingdoms of Ahmednagar and Bijapur, Shahji Bhosle, father of Shivaji proved a great asset in the endeavours to stem the tide of Mughal aggression, particularly after the death of Malik Amber.

This rise of Maratha families and their growing importance in the political field gave new confidence to the Maratha people in general and contributed, to no small extent, in the creation of political consciousness among them.

At this psychological moment Shivaji appeared on the scene. Many young men, conscious of a spirit of awakening in the land, with passionate enthusiasm and

reckless courage, gathered round Shivaji and acknowledged him as their leader. His daring exploits won the hearts of many more who joined him and the sympathies of others who still remained in the service of Bijapur. Moreover, the advent of the Mughals in the Deccan, the extinction of Ahmednagar, and Shah Jahan's attitude towards Bijapur and Golconda indicated that, sooner or later, the southern states would be absorbed in the Mughal empire. Nor were the internal conditions in Bijapur any more hopeful. The quarrels at the Bijapur court, after the death of Muhammad Adil Shah, plunged the kingdom into disorder. No better opportunity could have been offered to the Marathas to reinstate the glory of their rule in the Deccan.

Never in their history were the Maratha people more united than at the time of Shivaji. There was born in the Maharashtra of that time a new spirit, a common feeling of patriotism. Shivaji, with his insight into the nascent forces of Maratha nationality drew towards himself all that was hopeful and vigorous, without distinction of class or creed.

The Marathas were by nature a freedom-loving people. The basis of their character was activity, courage, self-consciousness, self-reliance and pride of community. Geographical factors brought out these characteristics, which were further fostered by social forces.

To the poet-saints of Maharashtra is due the credit of loosening the social and religious barriers and bringing the Maratha people closer together. The movement

dates back to the days of Jnanadeva (d.A.D. 1296), the herald of puritan and religious revival. Men are not great by birth; in the eyes of God all are one. Never ask a man's caste, when he has in his heart the faith in God and love of man. God wants in his children love and devotion and does not care for his caste. This rational explanation of society and firm faith in the basic quality of men of all classes permeated the entire country. The centre of the Bhakti Movement was Pandharpur. The preaching of these saints was centered on the idea that all men could gain salvation by giving up false class values and caste-ridden orthodoxy. These appealed to the Maratha people because of their directness and simplicity. So the Bhakti cult or Bhagavad-dharma, as it is otherwise known, grew in strength. It reached its peak point with the greatest Maratha saint Tukaram (b.A.D. 1608). Another powerful influence during this period was the preaching of the poet-saint Ramadas who urged in vigorous language the urgency and importance of Swaraj for the Maratha people.

So Maharashtra achieved a new religion, simpler, more rational, and more appealing to the common people. It also gave to the country a new literature in the language which the people could understand. The Marathas found themselves drawn together by common tradition, common language, common literature, common religion and common race. These factors were responsible for the new political upheaval; the Marathas aspired to achieve swaraj, and Shivaji fulfilled the urge.

The physical features of Maharashtra made Shivaji's

task easy. the country is hill-strewn. After attacking a fort the Marathas could escape to the hills, avoiding pitched battles. They had developed a mode of fighting all their own, the guerilla technique, in which they had become pastmasters.

Shivaji started his political career during the reign of Muhammad Adil Shah of Bijapur (A.D. 1627-1657) when his kingdom had reached the zenith of its splendour. He gathered round him a band of young men inspired by the high ideal of founding a Hindawi Swaraj. He was much influenced in his choice of career by the preaching of his mother Jija Bai and the training of his tutor Dadaji Konddeva who had assiduously nursed the young hero's mind. The example of his father too, in carving out so significant a career for himself was before young Shivaji, and he became fired with an urge to do better than his father and to create an independent kingdom of his own.

Shivaji first captured the fort of Sinhagarh sometime in A.D. 1644. Next he took Rohida, built Raigarh and set himself to bring all parts of Shahji's western jagir under his own control, so as to form a compact state ruled by one authority. He easily captured Chakan and naming it Sangramdurg placed his own garrison there. He occupied also the Purandhar, Indapur, Baramati and Vijayadurg areas. Simultaneously he brought about administrative consolidation of this newly acquired territory and called upon the Deshmukhs in Adil Shahi service to join his standard. Those, like the Mores of Javli, who resisted this call were rooted out.

In this struggle for Maratha Swaraj which Shivaji had launched, he had to face the challenge of Adil Shahi authority and the might of the Mughal empire. Afzal Khan, the Bijapur general, who sallied forth to chastise Shivaji by fair or foul means, met his match in the Maratha hero who killed him at Pratapgarh (November A.D. 1659). The Mughals now joined Bijapur in an attempt to extirpate Shivaji, Shayista Khan, the Mughal Governor of the Deccan, occupied Chakan and took up his residence at Puna. Shivaji, at this time besieged in Panhala, cleverly effected his escape and sought safety in Vishalgarh which he reached as Baji Prabhu Deshpande, his devoted servant at the cost of his life held his pursuers in the famous rearguard action at the narrow pass of Ghod-Khind. Shivaji spent some time during AD 1661-62 in raiding and occupying Adil Shahi territory in the Ratnagiri district, and after consolidating his conquests he fell on Shayista Khan at Pune in April A.D. 1663. Next year he ransacked Surat. But he was soon compelled by the Mughal general Jai Singh, who forced a treaty on him and persuaded him to visit the emperor at Agra. As the emperor was congratulating himself on the capture of this intrepid warrior, there came the thrilling episode of his escape from Agra.

Maratha power grew stronger and stronger and in June A.D. 1674 Shivaji was crowned at Raigarh. His kingdom comprised the whole of the Konkan area and extended from Gandevi (in South Gujarat) to Phonda on the Goa border, with the exception of Bassein lower Chaul, the islands of Bombay and Janjira. Its eastern boundaries, included Baglan in the north, passed

through the middle of the present day Nasik and Pune districts, and comprised the whole of Satara and much of the Kolhapur region. He had deliberately built up a second line of defence, which he used also for offensive purposes against Bijapur and Golconda, under the exigencies of the situation. In the extreme south he had acquired possession of the strong fort of Gingee and the town of Vellore and its adjoining areas, and on the Tungabhadra he had Koppal and Bellary. This was an achievement of no mean order. He thrilled the Marathas and infused the spirit of freedom and self-confidence in them.

Shivaji was born on April 6, 1627 and died on April 3, A.D. 1680, leaving a vast kingdom to Marathas, succeeded by his son Sambhaji, who inherited his father's daring but not statesmanship or character.

Shivaji, it has to be recognised, was primarily a man of action. In his brief life of fifty-three years, he packed more active campaigning than quiet policy deliberations. His genius thus tended more towards expansion than consolidation; creation than slow building up. He did establish a broad-based top echelon administrative system, headed by the Ashta Pradhan, his advisory and directive body to assist him in day-to-day administration, but he neither had the time nor the inclination to tamper or disturb the age-old institutions which the inner levels of the socio-political system had built up. At best, he can be said to have laid down broad lines of policy orientation which could have been developed by his successors, had they been able to, but much of his legacy was lost in the

holocaust which shook Maharashtra, particularly the Western region, in the period after his death.

Shivaji was by no means a fanatic, he was much more a pragmatic leader of men, judging men and matters shrewdly and purposively. He was undoubtedly a believing Hindu, his attachment to his faith being one of the deepest formative factors which he inherited from his mother and his childhood associates. The Brahmanic ethos, moreover, was one of the most important forces for his legitimisation, even for mobilisation of his men. His sovereign status as a Chhatrapati was accepted certainly not only by his dazzling achievements but also by the recognition given to it by the pundits, the epitome of orthodox Brahmins, the recognised law-givers. This was essential in a medieval setting; in neighbouring Ahmednagar and Bijapur, a parallel role was performed by the Ulemas.

Shivaji's personal religious affiliation was, however, no bar to his broad humanitarian sympathies, even less to his essentially pragmatic political insight. He needed mobilisation both of men and resources and neither could be had, if he had sympathies which were either limited or exclusive. He fought against Ahmednagar, against Bijapur, against the Mughals, against a host of Maratha Sardars, even against his brother, but he never penalised a person for what he was, for his personal religious sympathies or affiliations.

For one, this catholicity or breadth of vision was owing to an early environment and training. Whether

deliberately or inadvertently, he had experienced deprivation, seen poverty first-hand, passed his childhood among people, simple, hard-working, wronged but proud, traditional, self-reliant and accustomed to fighting and the use of weapons. No school could have been devised for instilling into the young man, respect for Man, for his beliefs and rights.

Thus, in an age when for upper class regal or semi-regal potentates, woman per se was more an object of use and enjoyment than a living human being; when captured women were legitimately the property of the victor; Shivaji had a deep respect for women in any condition. In 1657, when presented with a beautiful Muslim girl seized from Kalyan, he remarked, "If my mother Jija Bai had looked as well as you do, I too should have looked as handsome." An observation like this which placed a humble captive girl on par with the Queen Mother, the most revered figure in his Court, automatically established a precedent and a moral; there could be no molestation of women afterwards and there was none. Neither in peace nor in war did a woman suffer at Shivaji's hands or within his knowledge.

While returning from Karnatak expedition he was opposed by one Desai, the Illedar, who was over-powered. His wife fell into the hands of Sukhoji Gaikwad, an officer in the army of Shivaji. Sukhoji raped her. The incident terribly upset Shivaji. He ordered Gaikwad to be blinded first and then put into prison till his death.

Bhijaji Gujar, the Watandar of Babji, similarly molested a helpless house wife. His *watan* was confiscated and his feet were amputated.

With equal depth and sincerity, Shivaji respected the symbols of religion other than his own. No Quran, no mosque suffered at his hands. Whenever a copy of the Quran fell into his hands, he treated it with reverence and handed it over to the one entitled to hold it, likewise, no *mujawir* and no beneficiary of a religious grant was deprived of it; invariably it was confirmed and the beneficiary allowed to enjoy his grant.

The profound reverence in which Shivaji held the Muslim saints was not an isolated instance. It was but an example of the ties of brotherhood which had grown between Hindus and Muslims of the India of those days, and was fully in keeping with established tradition and common practice.

Prof. Kulkarni mentioned how the Muslim saint Shaikh Muhammad emphasised in his discourse the common points between Hinduism, and Islam and insisted that the Sachcha Pir of the Muslims and the Sadguru of the Hindus were one and the same. Kulkarni mentions how Shaikh Muhammad himself was initiated into the Bhakti cult by a Hindu Guru. He believed in the essential unity of Hinduism and Islam. He did not differentiate between a temple and a mosque.

And it is no accident that the hermitage of this Muslim divine was established at Shrigonde in the Ahmednagar

district by the help of Maloji Raje Bhonsle, the grandfather of Shivaji. Nor is it an accident that Shivaji's grandfather had accepted this renowned Muslim divine, Shaikh Muhammad, as his true Guru.

Even the Mughal historian, Khafi Khan, who made no attempt to conceal his loyalty towards Aurangzeb and his extreme hostility towards Shivaji has recorded in his '*Muntakhab-ul-Lubab*' that when Shivaji attacked the city of Jalna he saw to it that any man, woman or child who sought refuge in the shrine of the Muslim saint of that city, Sayyad Jan Mohammad, was not harmed in any way as he had given strict instructions to his troops not to attack or in any way harm the Muslim Saint's dwelling-place.

The contemporary historian Khafi Khan says that Shivaji had explicitly ordered his soldiers and officers that if any Muslim woman or child fell into their hands during warfares, they must be treated with the utmost dignity and respect. Their honour must be protected by the Maratha soldiers.

Khafi Khan adds in his *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab* that Shivaji had given specific orders to his soldiers that "If the sacred work of Islam, the Quran, would come into their hands in the warfare or ransacking, they must show due respect to it." Shivaji punished severely those soldiers who transgressed in these matters.

Sir Jadunath Sarkar has recorded in his *House of Shivaji* how Ranabulla Khan became a close friend of

Shivaji after Shivaji had defeated him near Kolhapur. It was after Ranabulla Khan's defeat that Shivaji conferred on him the title of "Rustom-i-Zaman II."

Balkrishna, in his *Shivaji the Great*, has recorded the equally close friendship of Shivaji with Ranabulla Khan's son, Abu Khan on which was conferred the title of "Rustom-i-Zaman III."

Orme's *Fragments* as well as the *Tarikh-i-Khafi Khan* have recorded not only Shivaji's friendship with Siddi Khan of Janjira, but also Siddi Khan's willingness, through his letters, to surrender the fort of Janjira to Shivaji.

Paramanand in his *Shiva Bharat* has recounted how when Shivaji was entrapped in the fort of Panhala, and Shivaji's Commander, Netaji Palker, made a desperate attack on Panhala to rescue Shivaji, it was actually the valour and courage shown by Shivaji's Muslim Captain Siddi Halal which actually succeeded in saving Shivaji. The Marathi collection *Parnal Parvat Grahan-Dakhyanam* records how it was the same Muslim Captain Siddi Hilal who was sent by Shivaji to lead his armies against the Mughal Commander Bahalol Khan, and how Siddi Hilal successfully encircled the Mughal armies of Bahalol Khan. The same work records how when Bahalol Khan's elephant ran amuck and was being taken away from the field, it was the same Siddi Hilal who along with his sons made a sudden dashing attack on the Mughal armies, causing a total disarray in their ranks.

Indeed, the Marathi language *Ekvanav Kalmi Bakhar* records how this same Siddi Hilal was so completely trusted by Shivaji that he was sent secretly as Shivaji's most dependable spy to Aurangzeb's court.

The Marathi *Shedgaonkar Bakhar* records the devoted service rendered by the Pathan Sardar Ibrahim Khan to Shivaji. It was the Muslim Commander Ibrahim Khan, who under Shivaji's orders, led the attack on Bednur which belonged to the Hindu Chieftain Shivappa Naik.

G.H. Khare writing in the Marathi *Shivcharitra Samshodhane-Vritta* records how it was Shivaji's trusted personal bodyguard Siddi Ibrahim who saved Shivaji's life when Afzal Khan's bodyguards attacked Shivaji during the eventful meeting with Afzal Khan.

The list of Shivaji's Muslim friends, loyal colleagues, and trusted confidants is endless. Once when seven hundred Muslim Pathans of Daulatabad were discharged from service, they, knowing Shivaji's totally secular outlook, approached him for employment. Without hesitation Shivaji employed each of the 700 Muslim Pathans.

Shivaji appointed Qazi Ibrahim as a Judge, Shivaji took over from the Sultans of Ahmednagar the services of Quazi Sherif Hakim Shara Munshi Qazi Haider, Shivaji sent him as his Vakil to Diler Khan. Qazi Haider also looked after Shivaji's confidential Persian correspondence.

Admiral Daulat Khan, one of Shivaji's most trusted Admirals, led Shivaji's fleet in the attack on Janjira near the river Satvak, and who later in 1679 attacked the English fleet and with sixty sailing ships encircled the fort of Khanderi "with such speed that the English vessels at anchor near Khanderi had scarcely time to go under way."

So innumerable are the incidents showing Shivaji's deep respect for Muslim saints, and friends and colleagues, that the catalogue would be virtually endless.

The very atmosphere of the period was such that a great leader like Shivaji could not but be totally impartial in his dealings with Hindus and Muslims alike, and totally secular in outlook, attitude and day-to-day behaviour. If Shivaji fought Aurangzeb it was purely on socio-economic and political grounds. It was without the least trace of malice or rancour, without any consideration of race, religion or creed.

Shivaji's protest against *Jaziya*, addressed to Aurangzeb illustrated his benevolent policy of religious liberalism. It deserves to be quoted in excerpts:

"To the Emperor Alamgir, this firm well-wisher Shivaji, deeply grateful for divine favour and your kindness as clear as day-light, begs to inform Your Majesty as follows:

"I returned from your presence without seeking your

permission. It is my misfortune. But I am ready to serve you in every possible way. May your kindness be felt by everybody. As a well-wisher I am placing some matters before you." "Recently, it has come to my ears that owing to your war against me, your treasury has become empty. You have decided to meet the expenditure through the imposition of *Jaziya* on the Hindus."

"Your Majesty, Akbar, the founder of your empire ruled for fifty-two years. He had adopted the excellent policy of treating with peace, and equality, Christians, Jews, Muslims, Dadupanthis, Stargazers, Malakis, Atheists, Brahmins, Jains, in fact all the communities. His aim was to ensure the welfare and protection of all. This is why he came to be known as the Jagadguru. The result was that to which direction he turned, success and glory attended his arms. He brought most of the country under his sway.

"After him Nuruddin Jahangir, ruled for twenty years. He led a life full of good deeds and became immortal. Shahjahan ruled for thirty-two years. He too made his life fruitful through good deeds. That is why these rulers were successful in whichever direction they turned. During their rule a number of provinces and forts came under their sway. They have passed away, but their names endure. Their greatness is beyond description. One measure of their greatness is that you have tried to imitate them but without success. Now you are at loss to understand why this should be so.

"The previous rulers, had they so desired, had certainly the power to impose *Jaziya*. But they felt that all men, big and small, were the children of God, and all religions, but means to the worship of the Almighty. They never allowed the feeling of religious hatred even to touch them. The memory of their kindness and the good deeds they did, is always fresh in the world. All men, great and small, praise and bless them. During their rule the people had peace, and as a result their glory increased day by day and success attended their affairs.

"But during your regime many provinces and forts have gone out of your hands. The remaining provinces and forts too will be lost to you. I will not spare any efforts to ruin the provinces. Your subjects are crushed. The income from your Paraganas and Mahals is decreasing day by day. It is difficult to realise even thousand from places the income wherefrom was one lakh previously. Poverty is striking the kings and princes. The plight of noblemen and Mansabdars is apparent to every body. At present your soldiers are discontented, the Muslims are in anguish and the Hindus are scorched. Men are pining for bread. They are red in face because they are striking their mouths with their hands.

"They are in such deep distress, and yet you have imposed *Jaziya* on them. How could you do this? This evil news will spread from East to West. People will say: the Emperor of Hindustan had taken a begging bowl and is out to realise *Jaziya* from Brahmins, Jains, Sadhus, Jogis, Sanyasis, Bairagis, the poor and the starving people. He takes pride in doing so. He is laying in

dust the name of the *Taimur* dynasty. Such will be the deep feeling of the people.

"Your Majesty, in the Quran, God has been described as the Rabbul Almeen; the Lord of the entire Universe, not as Rabbul Masalmeen; the Lord of the Musalmans. In fact, Islam and Hinduism are both beautiful manifestations of the Divine spirit. The call for Prayers is given in the mosques, the bells ring to the Divine glory in the temples. Any one bearing fanaticism and religious hatred must be said to be acting against the commands of God. To presume to draw lines on these pictures is verily to lay blame on the Divine Artist (God)!

"To point out blemishes in any of His creations only means that you are blaming the Creator. Do not do so. To be just, *Jaziya* cannot be justified on any grounds. It is an innovation in India. This is unjust. If you feel that on grounds of religion and justice the imposition of this tax is essential, you should first realise it from Raja Jai Singh. For, he is the leader of the Hindus. It will not then be difficult to realise it from this well-wisher."

Such a letter both dignified and defiant could not have been penned by a man with narrow sympathies and sectarian preferences; rather, he would have seen in it an adequate justification for a parallel policy of persecution directed against the Emperor's co-religionists. That Shivaji was above this short-sighted attitude shows beyond doubt his broad humanistic, humanitarian sympathies.

Shivaji's letter made a deep impression on Aurangzeb. For his own outlook, he blamed his teacher, Mulla Saleh.

Aurangzeb asked Mulla Saleh:

"But what was the knowledge I derived under your tuition?" and complained, "Was it not incumbent upon my preceptor to make me acquainted with the distinguishing features of every nation of the earth; its resources and strength; its mode of warfare; its manners, its religions, its form of governments and wherein its interests principally lie and by a regular course of historical reading to render me familiar with the origin of States; their progress and decline; the events, accidents, or errors, owing to which such great changes and mighty revolutions have been effected?" He added, "A familiarity with the languages and religions of surrounding peoples may be indispensable in a king, but you would teach me to read and write (only) Arabic, forgetting how many important subjects ought to be embraced in the education of a Prince, you acted as if it were chiefly necessary that he should possess great skill in grammar, and such knowledge of law and of the sciences only through the medium of Arabic? I have a perfect remembrance of your having, during several years, harassed my brain with idle and foolish propositions, the solution of which yield no satisfaction to the mind—propositions that seldom enter into the business of life. When I left you, I could boast of no greater attainment in the sciences than the use of many obscure and uncouth terms, calculated to discourage, confound and appeal a youth of the most masculine

understanding. If you had taught me that philosophy which adapts the mind to reason, and will not suffer it to rest satisfied with anything short of the most solid arguments; if you had made me acquainted with the nature of man, accustomed me always to refer to first principles, and given me a sublime and adequate conception of the universe, and of the order and regular motion of its part, I should have been more indebted to you than Alexander was to Aristotle."

Shivaji stands on a lofty pedestal in the hall of the world history, not because he was a champion of Maratha cause, but because he was an ideal householder, an ideal king and an unrivalled nation-builder. He was devoted to his mother, loving to his children, true to his wives, and scrupulously pure in his relation with other women. The close relations were refused any administrative favours. Above all he was totally secular in his outlook and a patriot per excellence.

He was, however, unfailingly fair in his dealings with his soldiers, with his officials, with his people, never letting any consideration of caste or religion affect his judgement. By definition, he was a *go-brahman pratipalak* (protector of cows and Brahmins) but his paternalistic umbrella was broad enough to embrace all his people, irrespective of caste, colour and creed.

Summing up the contribution of Shivaji, Jawaharlal Nehru says:

"Shivaji did not belong to Maharashtra alone; he

belonged to the whole Indian nation. Shivaji was not an ambitious ruler anxious to establish a kingdom for himself but a patriot inspired by a vision and political ideals derived from the teachings of the ancient philosophers. He studied the merits and faults of the systems of administration in kingdoms existing at the time and determined his own policies and administration in the light of that knowledge.

"A devout Hindu, he was tolerant of other religions and established a number of endowments for maintaining sacred places belonging to them. As a General he was undoubtedly one of the greatest in Indian history; he saw the need for and raised a navy to guard his coastline and to fight against the British and the Dutch.

"Pratapgarh fort built in 1656 stands today as a monument to his military genius. Shivaji is a symbol of many virtues, more especially of love of country."

About the Author

Padmashri Dr. B.N. Pande

Dr. B.N. Pande was born on December 23, 1906. Father Ramdhar Pande took prominent part in Swadeshi Movement in 1905-1906. Grand father Pandit Raghunath fought against the British and was sentenced to death at Kanpur in the year 1859.

Member of U.P. Vidhan Sabha in 1952-53, U.P. Vidhan Parishad in 1972-74, Member of Rajya Sabha from 1976 to 1982 and again from 1988 to 1994, Vice Chairman of Rajya Sabha in 1978, Chairman, Joint Select Committee of Parliament on Vishwa Bharati University (Amdt.) Bill (1980-83), Member of Central Advisory Board of Archaeology (1980-83), Member of Central Advisory Board of Indian Museums, Member of Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO, Member, Standing Committee, Editors Conference, Governor of Orissa from 1983 to 1988.

Member of the Court and Executive Council, Allahabad University, Member of the Court of Delhi University, J.N. University and Aligarh Muslim University, Member, Board of High School and Intermediate Education, Uttar Pradesh and Chancellor of five Universities in the State of Orissa.

Served as Chairman, Municipal Board, Allahabad, Chairman, All India Writers' Union, Chairman, Allahabad Municipal Museum (1948-53), President, Journalists Association, Allahabad, President, All India Blind Relief Society, New Delhi, President, Hindustani Culture Society, President, Gandhi Centenary Committee, Allahabad, Mayor, Allahabad Municipal Corporation and Vice President, Indian Council of World Affairs.

Joined Freedom Movement and suffered imprisonment for

nearly seven years in different spells, faced brutal lathi charge resulting in permanent damage to knees, undertook relief work for the victims of communal riots in various parts of the country, worked hard to remove religious and cultural misunderstandings by undertaking extensive research work on the historical figures like Aurangzeb, Tipu Sultan, Chhatrapati Shivaji, Guru Gobind Singh and others. His book 'Paigamber Mohammed Quran Hadees Aur Islami Darshan' in Hindi has been acclaimed in India and abroad. He has also brought out books on communal understanding like: 'Islam and Indian Culture', 'Traditions of Harmony in Indian Society', 'Reorientation of Study of Medieval Indian History', etc.

Editor of 'The Vishwa Vani' (1941-55), 'The Naya Hind' (1946-58), Principal Editor of 'The Spirit of India' (in 4 volumes), General Editor of 'History of Indian National Congress, 1885-1964 (in 4 volumes). Contributed over 500 articles on History and Culture of India and broadcast over 700 radio and television talks on features like communal harmony and national integration. Author of over 50 books in English, Hindi and Urdu on History, Culture, Philosophy and Religion.

Recipient of Padmashri Award in 1976, Honorary Ph.D. from Soka University, Tokyo (Japan) in 1992, Khuda Baksh Award for Communal Harmony in 1993 and Indira Gandhi Award for National Integration in 1994.

At present he is Vice-Chairman, Gandhi Smriti & Darshan Samiti, New Delhi.