

Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh



Panjabrao Shamrao Deshmukh (December 27, 1898 – April 10, 1965) famously known as Bhausaheb Deshmukh was a social activist and a farmer's leader in India. He was the Minister of Agriculture in the first cabinet of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in 1952. He was born at Papal in Amrawati district of Vidarbha, Maharashtra on December 27, 1898. His childhood had gone happily at Papal. His original surname was "Kadam". After completing his primary education at home, he was sent to Songaon at first and then to Karanja Lad. He got his high school education at Karanja Lad up to ninth standard. Then he took admission in Hind High school, Amrawati. After that he went to Fergusson College at Pune.

In those times there were no facilities of higher education in India. Many Students used to go to England for further education. So he also wanted to be a Barrister from Cambridge University. Despite too much poverty at home, he managed to make money to go to England. He took barrister degree in 1921. He also took M.A. honors in Sanskrit and done Ph.D. with the subject Origin and development of religion in Vedic literature.

He was attached with Satya Shodhak Samaj of Mahatma Phule. He did Satyagraha for entry to untouchables in Amba Temple, Amrawati, which was a very strongly condemned by the upper castes. Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was pro to him in this movement. Deshmukh knew that prosperity would come only when the weapon of knowledge became available to all. For this purpose he established Shivaji Education Society. There is an Agricultural university by his name at Akola, i.e. Panjabrao Deshmukh Krishi Vidyapeeth. He was a well known educationalist who well cemented the foundation of education in not only in Vidarbha but throughout the Maharashtra region.

He was elected thrice for the Lok Sabha. Dr. Deshmukh was selected by Nehru as the first agriculture minister of India. He played an important role in the making of the Indian Constitution. He was a staunch supporter of the mission by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. He was the secretary for Vidarbha region of the Indian Labour Party, established by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. He dedicated all his talents and energy for formulation and implementation of the policies that would bring prosperity to agriculture and the agriculturist. He established the Bharat Krishak Samaj and launched a campaign called Food for Millions in 1955. He brought in the Japanese method of rice cultivation in 1958 and organized the World Agriculture Fair in 1959, which was inaugurated by Dwight Eisenhower, the then President of the US. The fair was visited by dignitaries across the world some of them being Nikita Khrushchev, the then president of USSR, Lord and Lady Mountbatten and many others.

He started the process of establishment of Agricultural Universities all across the country and gave fillip to agricultural education and research. He appeared many cases in the district court of Amrawati from the side of poor peasants. But the main case was British govt vs. Azad Hind Sena, in which he assisted to Jawaharlal Nehru. Dr. Deshmukh died on April 10, 1965 at Delhi.