

In memoriam (Professor P. B. Desai)

Prasannvadan Bhagvanji Desai, a founder-member of the Indian Association for the Study of Population (IASP), Editor of *Demography India* since its inception in 1972 until 1980 and then its Editor-in-Chief till 1987, President of the Association during 1977-79, and a life trustee since 1988, passed away on November 11, 1994 in Ahmedabad.

Desai saheb or Manubhai, as he was affectionately called by everyone, was born in Samroli village of Chikhli Taluka (now in Valsad district) in Gujarat on October 2, 1924. His father had retired from his post of a village school headmaster in 1930 and passed away in 1934. Manubhai studied at Chikhli High School and became active in the freedom movement. During his education in the H. L. College of Commerce, Ahmedabad, he became a leader of the students' movement and joined the Quit India Movement. He was imprisoned for about 10 months between October 16, 1942 and July 1943, initially in Chikhli lockup, and later in Jabalpur and in Sabarmati jail in Ahmedabad. Resuming studies in 1943, he completed B.Com. in 1944 and M. Com. degree of Bombay University in 1949.

His research on Wartime Inflation in India for the M.Com., earned him a research fellowship from the University of Delhi and he became a Lecturer and later a Reader at the Delhi School of Economics. He became a close associate of Dr. V. K. R.V. Rao in his survey of Greater Delhi and joined the Institute of Economic Growth (IEG) in 1961 as a Professor in the Demographic Research Centre and later became its head. He spent one year at the University of Michigan as a Population Council Fellow and studied both Demographic Analysis and Survey Research Methods. He served as the Secretary-Bursar of the IEG (1968-74) as well as its Director (1974-76). After retirement from the IEG in 1987, he occupied the Sardar Patel Chair at South Gujarat University for some time but moved to Gujarat Vidyapith. The latter association continued until the very end of his life.

Consistent with his name, Prasannvadan, Desai saheb was always smiling and had a philosophical approach to life. He always encouraged young scholars. A perfect gentleman, he avoided flamboyancy, harsh language or unnecessary conflict. Imbued with Gandhian values, he shunned publicity and preferred simplicity. An unassuming recluse, he dedicated himself to the development of the profession in India through the medium of *Demography India*. A few months prior to his death, the growth of tumour in the brain had begun to affect his health and memory; but until he was incapacitated, he continued to prefer the pursuit of knowledge and reading of books to idle gossip.

Desai saheb had represented India in several international conferences including the Second Asian Population Conference at Tokyo in 1972 and the World Population Conference held at Bucharest in 1974. Serving as the Rapporteur General of the Bucharest Conference was a landmark in his career. He was a member also of the distinguished

International Review Group on Social Science Research, that functioned from Mexico under the chair personship of Dr. Carmen Miro. He had served as a member of several committees and working groups set up by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and by the Planning Commission. He had participated in several international conferences and meetings and had been a consultant to various organisations. He was associated with the National Institute of Urban Affairs, Delhi Planning Board, and Family Planning Foundation of India and was an Honorary Director of the Centre for Parliamentarians on Population and Development, New Delhi.

His major works include: *Greater Delhi: A Study in Urbanisation* (jointly with V. K.R.V. Rao), (Asia, 1965); *Size and Sex Composition of Population in India* (Asia, 1967); *Regional Perspective of Industrial and Urban Growth* (Macmillan, 1970); (Co-editor) *Population in India's Development* (Vikas, 1974); *A Survey of Research in Demography* (Popular, 1975); *Whither Population Research in Middle South Asia. Planning in India* (Vikas, 1979); and *Population in the Context of India's Development (with Special Reference to Population Education)*, (GujaratVidyapith, 1987).

Desai saheb has left behind his wife Leenaben, three married daughters Neelam, Daksha and Asha, and son Himanshu (a student at MSU, Baroda).

The community of Indian demographers will always cherish fond memories of P. B. Desai. May his soul rest in peace.

Pravin Visaria