

# MANKIND

5, Hansali, Damle Path,  
Off Law College Road,  
Pune - 411 004.  
Tel. : 546 65 57  
543 82 66

28.4.2002

## INTERVIEW OF DR. V. PUROHIT

Dr. Sujata Patel, Head of the Department of Sociology, Pune University, is slated to interview Dr. Vinayak Purohit about Dr. A.R. Desai, on Sunday morning 11 am, at Hansali, Damle Path.

Points to be made by Dr. Purohit regarding Dr. Desai.

1. Before Dr. Desai became guide, he had been a friend of Dr. Purohit since the 1942 August Movement. He and Mr. C.G. Shah had been meeting Dr. Purohit, then Pankaj, with the Ceylonese Trotskyists at the residence of Dr. Desai at Tykelwadi Road and at the residence of Mr. C.G. Shah, at Shivaji Park.

2. Dr. Purohit and the Ceylon Comrades belonged to the Bolshevik Leninist Party of India, Burma and Ceylon, which was a unit of the Fourth International, just as the LSSP itself had been a unit of the FI in Sri Lanka.

3. Dr. Desai and C.G. Shah never became members of the Fourth International, Dr. Desai strickly adhered to the Rule that members of the University could not belong to any political party. Not that the Trotskyists were anxious to recruit Desai or Shah, who were totally inactive, both at the University, and amongst the youth, workers and students of Bombay.

4. A.R. Desai was the son of Ramanlal Vasantlal Desai, the most popular Gujarati novelist of the day. Ramanlal was a Congressman and Gandhian at heart. But being a Baroda State subject he could not and did not join the Indian National Congress, but warmly wrote about the

.. 2 ..

## MANKIND

5, Hansali, Damle Path,  
Off Law College Road,  
Pune - 411 004.  
Tel. : 546 65 57  
543 82 66

: 2 :

Non-Cooperation and the Civil Disobedience movements in Grama Laxmi, Parts I to IV, and in Bharelo Agni, a novel about the 1857 Mutiny.

In other words, Akshay Desai was continuing the Nagar-Congress tradition set by his father.

5. Another reason for accepting Akshay as guide was the presence of MNV Nair as Research Assistant, Lecturer and Reader, under A.R. Desai whilst Appu was in Bombay University. Till he joined Ramaswamy at NITIE at Powai, Appu was a member of the Leftist, Trade Unionist Cell of the Bombay Socialist Party, which broke away from the SP-PSP in 1952.

6. We may in passing mention that the Socialist Party had been the Contress Socialist Party in 1934-48, when Mehta and Achyut Patwardhan led the CSP out of the Congress. In 1952 the newly formed SP which had existed as an independent unit since 1948 merged with a breakaway group from the Indian National Congress, which was then led by Acharya Kirpalani, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai. HD Malaviya, Raj Bahadur and P Sen of Calcutta. This breakaway group of the Congress had been then named Krishak Mazdoor Praja Party. After merger with the SP, the new party became the Praja Socialist Party, which remained independent till 1956 when Lohia broke away from the PSP to form a new Socialist Party with Raj Narain in UP and other affiliates all over the country. The Socialist Party, to complete the story, merged with the PSP in 1965 to form the SSP (Samyukta Socialist Party), which very soon broke up into numerous regional outfits.

## MANKIND

5, Hansali, Damle Path,  
Off Law College Road,  
Pune - 411 004.  
Tel. : 546 65 57  
543 82 66

: 3 :

7. MNV Nair remained with Akshay Desai till a Reader was appointed in the University. Desai had promised Appu that he would be selected, but Appu discovered that Dr. J.V. Pereira had been preferred. He then joined NITIE of Mr. Ramaswamy, who later formed the Indian Institute of Management in Bangalore, where Appu was appointed Professor and remained Chief Assistant to Ramaswamy. Since then Appu has been with the IIM Bangalore and recently he has started a Management Institute near Trivandrum. Appu has made " Management Science his life's mission ".

8. As stated earlier, Akshay never became formally a member of the Fourth International or of any Indian Party affiliated to the FI.

9. Nevertheless, both at Baroda, through Magan Desai, and in Bombay, Akshay continued to patronise the militant Leftist trade unions and remained in touch with Shetkari Kamgar Paksha, the Ambedkarites and Lal Nishan.

10. This is the situation that remained till he died. He was succeeded as Head of the Department of the Bombay University by Ferreira, Narayan, Jha (Sashi Shekhar, who had been a student of Akshay) and by Momin, who had been a student of Ferreira.

11. Akshay laid down a tradition of radicalism in the University Department of Sociology through Mrs. Savoor, to whom Ms. Sujata Patel was affiliated, Mrs. Savoor was never allowed to succeed AR Desai. Shri Bhatkal remained a publisher of sociological works with Bombay connections till very recently. Dr. Purohit's Arts of Traditional India : 20th Century, 2 Vols 1650 pages, was one

# MANKIND

5, Hansali, Damle Path,  
Off Law College Road,  
Pune - 411 004.  
Tel. : 546 65 57  
543 82 66

: 4 :

of the last major works published by Bhatkal's Popular Prakashan. Bhatkal had rejected the ICSSR's subsidy, for publication of Dr. Purohit's Thesis. Dr. Ghurye, Prof. Emeritus, "realised" royalties due to him, paid posthumously to his daughter, who became wife of Shri Sharad Desai, judge of the Bombay High Court, through DD Damodar, of Kanga and Company Solicitors.

12. This concludes my preliminary remarks. If you have any further questions, please ask.

13. I remember Akshay as a very warm friend, who was quite sentimental, but at the same time ruthless. I wish your enterprise of a festschrift on Akshay Desai, a great success.

14. During the last decades, he wrote little, <sup>(like Social Background of Indian National)</sup> edited a number of works. I did the cover page design of Essays on Modernization of Underdeveloped Societies Vol I & II. But unlike the other editors in the ICHR Series, he completed his volume on Labour Movement. The cover design was my first assignment in 1<sup>st</sup> Dept of Sociology.