

FOREWORD

I am happy to write a foreword for the book "Rashtira Rishi" which is a pictorial tribute to the great social transformer late Shri Nanaji Deshmukhi. Nanaji was a societal reformer who had brought smiles in the faces of hundreds of thousands people in the nation. Nanaji had a precise understanding of the opportunities and challenges of the Indian villages and his deep compassion made him realize the problems of the common man. His work will always live in our memories as a transformation approach to integrated and value based empowerment of the human being and this book is a reflection of the work and achievement of the great soul.

Nanaji's love for education was reflected in his creation of India's first Shishu Mandir in 1950. Nanaji actively participated in agricultural land reform movement started by Vinoba Bhave, a contemporary of Mahatma Gandhi. By spending two months with Vinoba he was inspired by the success and appeal of the movement. Nanaji devoted his entire time to Deendayal Research Institute that he established way back in 1969 for organized rural development in the Chitrakoot region.

He established Chitrakoot Gramodya Vishwavidyalaya in Chitrakoot, India's first rural university and was its first Chancellor.

Shri Nana Deshmukhi, who passed away this year, at the age of 93 years and his team members belonging to Deendayal Research Institute (DRI) have worked towards the empowerment of the rural regions in Central India covering over 500 villages. DRI is a unique institution developing and implementing a village development model, which is most suited for Indian conditions.

Apart from all these developmental activities, the Nanaji and his team have enabled about a 100 villages to be "self reliant". They have devised a unique way to define self reliance in the villages. It not only takes into account economic development and poverty alleviation but also socio-cultural aspects. This includes the village being litigation free, harmonious and improvement in the condition of women and value addition to the lifestyle of all the constituents of society.

Nanaji was a perfectionist when it came to his approach of societal development. He would personally inspect and assess all the

developmental activities being carried out by DRI and this book brings this fact forth beautifully in a pictorial manner. He had a strong belief in the capacity of the youth to be the sculptors of the future and builders of the nation. His life and work is an example of how technology and traditional can be synchronized towards common goals of human welfare and people empowerment.

Nanaji was someone who rose above party politics, and in his mission of social service he cut across all party lines and gathered people and leaders from all dimensions towards the mission of development. The message of Nanaji's life, is that of nurturing nobility of the leadership and perseverance through constant innovation in his mission of achieving socio-economic development. I am sure this book about the great soul, will act as a source of inspiration for the youth of the nation for years to come.



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