

## Reverence to veteran leader Nanaji Deshmukh

Darien, IL: Chicago based Indian community and prominent organizations namely India Development Coalition of America ( IDC-America), India Development Service (IDS USA), Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation, Sewa Inter-national and Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS US) held a memorial service on March 7, at Indian Prairie Library in Darien, IL, and paid rich tributes to Sangh Parivar veteran, former Rajya Sabha member, and Founder of Deendayal Research Institute, Padma Vibhushan Nanaji Deshmukh, who passed away in the temple town of Chitrakoot, India. Born in Kadoli in Maharash-trra, Nanaji Deshmukh founded the Deendayal Research Institute and was credited with exemplary work in education, health and rural self-reliance. He was also instrumental in carrying out a social restructuring programme in over 500 villages in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh States of India. He also established the Chitrakoot Gramodya Vishwavidyalaya — the country's first rural university — and was its chancellor. The Padma Vibhushan awardee had willed that his body be donated for medical research.

Dilip Thatte welcomed the guests and in his opening remarks expressed deep grief on the sad demise of veteran RSS worker, social contributor and a role model to the generations to come, he also recited Shlokas from Bhagavad Geeta and explained the meaning of it in the context of Nanaji's life. He asked the audience to stand up to observe silence for 2 minutes to pay hom-age to Nanaji. Amrit Mittal paid his tribute by garland-ing the picture of Nanaji and by lighting the traditional Indian lamp. Amar Upadhyay offered flowers.

A PowerPoint presentation prepared by the students of Washington University who visited the Deendayal Research Institute (DRI) in Chitrakoot, UP, was presented and also a DVD on the entire saga of DRI right from it's concept of integral humanism, source of inspiration, details on formation on the basis of Mahatma Gandhi and Deendayal Upadhyay's concepts of rural develop-ment, self reliance, rural health, agriculture, education, irrigation, use of solar light and many other innovative projects being implemented at Chitrakoot was played. Both presentations covered all aspects of the life

before and after DRI's work at Chitrakoot and sur-rounding areas due to which the audi-ence could learn so much about the total transformation that took place by the hardwork of Nanaji and the team of selfless volunteers he inspired.

Nanaji's life right from his birth, hardships, work as a RSS Pracharak, formation of Bharatiya Jan Sangh, on his organizational skills, his vast rela-tionship with Indian leaders in socio-economic-political strata be-longing to different ideologies, his efforts and success in bringing all together for India's upliftment was narrated by Prasad Gar-khedkar of HSS.

Dr. Hari Lamba, Mohan Jain, Amrit Mittal, Shridhar Damle spoke about their experience of visiting Chitrakoot, and meeting with Nanaji. They spoke in detail about working on several projects such as solar lighting of several villages, rural health and education related services. Dr. Lamba talked about the fund rais-ing efforts, help by Rotary International, Tata Energy Research Institute and the multiplying effect that he witnessed during the fund raising efforts.

Pralhad Patil of Sewa International, USA spoke about the immense contribution that Nanaji made and if we could contribute by any means to such noble move-ments. Kaushik Joshi of Chinmaya Mission Chicago read the message of Jiwan P Sondhi of Michigan and Dr. Vilas Pol read a beautiful poem written by Jaya Ji Kamrani of Georgia. Similarly Dilip Thatte talked about several messages received by the event organizing team from prominent people like past President of India Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam, Dr. Walter Anderson. Tim Somers of IDCA read the message sent by Dr. Hutchison. Common factor from these messages was nothing but their absolute appreciation of the work of Nanaji and DRI team, it's importance and how it inspired them to contribute to the movement started by Nanaji. Dilip Thatte thanked the attendees for attend-ing the memorial service.



## He braved police lathis to protect JP

THE months that followed the judgement of Mr Justice Jagmohan Lal Sinha of the Allahabad High Court, setting aside the election of Indira Gandhi in June 1974, were traumatic. An anti-Indira agitation, led by Jayaprakash Narayan, was gathering momentum.

In the latter half of the year a massive procession, led by J P was taken out in Patna. As the procession wended its way through the roads of the state capital, the police made a lathi charge and, it is said, the Sarvodaya leader was the target. The final assault came when J.P.'s supporters were escorting him to safety. One of the supporters sprang to his leader's protection, covered him and took all the lathi blows on himself. That man was Nanaji Deshmukh, senior leader of the erstwhile Jana Sangh, who was nominated to the Rajya Sabha last week. In a bid to protect J.P. one of his arms was fractured.

Later, J P himself and Morarji Desai, who became the Prime Minister heading the Janata Party Government, publicly praised the courage shown by Nanaji and, as a reward, offered him the Cabinet portfolio of Industry, but he spurned the overture. Nanaji had won in the 1977 elec-tion held after revocation of the Emergency with a hand-some margin from Balrampur constituency of Uttar Pradesh. In 1980, he opted not only from the electoral fray but also politics. He has since then devoted himself to social and con-structive work, lived in ashrams and never projected himself.

Now 82 and a bachelor, Nanaji, who has grown a snow white beard, returns to the limelight after a gap of 19 years but he does not propose to be in the hurly-burly of politics and plans to continue social work.

The veteran leader has developed a revulsion for poli-tics after his experience of the Janata Party as one of its

secretaries. So complete was his disillusionment with the rot that had set in political life that he recited a Sanskrit shloka: "Kama- turanam, na bhagyam, na lajja" (people with lust have neither luck nor shame) — before relinquishing politics. He vehemently pleaded for retirement of politicians at 60. He did not join the BJP even though he was one of the founding fathers of the parent organisation — the Jana Sangh. His membership of the Rajya Sabha is under the nominated quota reserved for literary figures, artistes and social workers.

Nanaji's long and eventful career is full of strife and struggle. He lost his parents at an early age and was brought up by his maternal uncle. He lived in temples, got higher education at the Birla Institute in Pilani before becoming an RSS activist in the thirties. Though born in Maharashtra, the fields of his activities were Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Seeing his devotion, the then RSS chief sent him to Gorakhpur (U.P) as "Pracharak", an exalted position in the hierarchy. He rose to the second post in the state unit of the RSS.

Nanaji's services were loaned to the Jana Sangh when the party was formed in 1952. Among his contemporaries were the late Deen Dayal Upadhyaya and Atal Behari Vajpayee and Kushabhau Thakre, now the BJP President.

Confining himself to U.P, Nanaji plunged headlong into politics and was instrumental in formation of the Samyukta Vidhayak Dal (SVD) government in the state. It is said that he was able to wean away Chaudhary Charan Singh from the Congress to head the first non-Congress government in the most populous state. The present U.P Chief Minister, Ram Prakash Gupta, joined the SVD government as Deputy Chief Minister.



Nanaji was subsequently brought to Delhi as Organising Secretary and later made Treasurer of the party. It is believed that he was introduced to the industrial world of Bombay by K.M. Munshi, who was UP Governor in the late fifties.

The assassination of Deen Dayal Upadhyaya was a great blow to him and he single-handedly set up the Deen Dayal Research Institute in Delhi, devoted to strengthening the movement for constructive work in India, and did a lot of work towards the anti-poverty and minimum needs pro-gramme. Other areas of his work were agriculture and cot-tage industry, rural health and rural education. Nanaji assumed chairmanship of the institute after relinquishing politics and devoted all his time to building up the institute. He also published the journal "Manthan" (introspection) which was edited by K.R. Malkani, now a Rajya Sabha member.

Nanaji did a lot of social work in Gonda — the most backward district of U.P. The motto of his projects was: "Har hath ko denge kaam, har khet ko denge paanee".

He finally settled down at the picturesque Chitrakoot, a holy place on the borders of U.P. and Madhya Pradesh and established a university there devoted to research in ayurveda, cattle breeding and rural reforms. Even though Nanaji is now a member of the Rajya Sabha, he proposes to devote his time to further strengthening the institution. Those who have visited Chitrakoot are greatly impressed by his work.

-Harihar Swarup