

Obituary

G S Sardesai

THE death of Sardesai removes from the scene one of those types who are rare in any time or in any country, but whose number is thinning out without replacement. The single-minded devotion to so unrewarding a task as scholastic endeavour would not be possible today, in these days of specialised training, for anyone in Sardesai's position. When he began his work on Maratha history, Sardesai was in the Gaikwad's service. The flame of enquiry which burnt so steadily throughout his long life was kindled while he was tutoring the Gaikwad Princes. It was one of those short-term and miscellaneous assignments which fell to the lot of minor officials in the Native States in those days. On that occasion he made some notes on Indian history. This was the beginning of his future work as a historian which he could take up full-time and in earnest only after his retirement from the Gaikwad's service in 1925.

No one has been more hard-working in the field of historical studies. In 4,000 closely printed Marathi pages, he has told the complete story of the origin, expansion and fall of Maratha power spread over a period of 250 years. His three volumes in English, "A New History of the Marathas", covers the same ground in 1,400 pages. Though his main work, monumental and outstanding, was in Maratha history, Sardesai's interests ranged over a wider field. The British Riyasat of Indian history he covered in Marathi in two volumes. Another two volumes were devoted to the Musalmani Riyasat.

There was a band of scholars in Maharashtra who had preceded Sardesai in the field of Maratha history. They did not actually get down to the writing of history, but confined themselves to the collection of materials which would make the latter possible. Rajawade had brought out 22 volumes of collected material and Khare another 14 volumes. There were thus many volumes of original papers which had been carefully collected and edited. Sardesai also belonged to this tradition and himself edited 45 volumes of the Selections from the Peshwa Daftar and brought out extremely valuable material for the

future historians. It is in the reconstruction of history with the help of such material that Sardesai made a departure from his predecessors in Maharashtra. Collaborating with Sir Jadunath Sarkar and making up a team for which it would be difficult to find a parallel anywhere, he worked steadily for decades.

For over thirty years following his retirement from Gaikwad's service Sardesai never spared himself even for a single day; he was constantly at his desk among his maps and papers. When Sir Jadunath visited him it was for some historical discussion or for a joint trip in search of historical materials. When Sardesai visited Sir Jadunath at Darjeeling or Calcutta, it was for solving some knotty problem of editing or for publishing this or that collection, collected from somewhere in Kota, Gwalior or Nagpur. These two had no other interest in life but history. They planned their work together, each followed the line of action they had set and achieved admirable success in their joint effort. Opening of the Peshwa Daftar in Poona to research scholars and the publication of the 45 volumes of Selected Papers was perhaps the most outstanding achievement of the Sarkar-Sardesai team. The 14 volumes of English correspondence entitled "Residency

Records" was another. Though the volumes were edited by different scholars, their planning and supervision was under the joint responsibility of the two.

That Sardesai, the historian, was better respected and that his works were more closely studied at the Calcutta University than in the academic circles of Maharashtra might be considered curious, but it is a fact. This is because there are more students and scholars of Maratha history in the Calcutta University than in the Universities of Bombay and Poona put together.

This is not to say that Sardesai did not receive due recognition or his share of honours from the Government and the public. When he completed his 45 volumes of selections from the Peshwa Daftar, the public of Satara headed by the Chhatrapati Raja of Satara presented the traditional 'three and half robes of honour' to him in the right ceremonial fashion. The British Government of the day conferred on him the titles first of Rao Saheb and then Rao Bahadur. Sardesai was chosen the President of the Indian Historical Congress at its Jaipur session. The Poona University conferred an honorary D Litt and finally came the Padma Bhooshana from the President of the Republic of India in 1957,

—S R T

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A/C NO. 5/2120/51
 NAME: M/s. Bellentile Industrial Corporation.
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BALANCE 98,458.00

DATE	SYMBOL	DEBIT	CREDIT	BALANCE
1 JAN 1959	98,000.1		4,578.12	4,788.12
	901.2		48.93	4,837.05
	901.4		4,578.23	9,415.28
	902.5		234.34	9,649.62
		34,077.00		34,077.00
			34,000.00	34,000.00
			34,000.00	34,000.00
			34,000.00	34,000.00

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