

SM JOSHI'S PROFILE

One of the most eminent Leader of the Socialist movement in India, an endearing personality, with most unassuming simplicity and transparent sincerity, a veteran freedom fighter, a doyen of the India socialist movement, a fearless crusader for social justice and fighter against economic inequality, an eminent trade union leader and a nationalist par excellence, Shri Shridhar Mahadev or S.M., as he was popularly known among his colleagues, friends and admirers, was born in a lower middle class Brahmin family at Junnar in Pune District, on 12th November, 1904. His father, Mahadev Janardan Joshi, was a clerk in the court at Junnar. Economic status of the family, however, did not embitter the mind of this young boy. Indeed the deprivations during childhood gave birth in him, a deep urge for identification with the poor and downtrodden and to do something concrete for their upliftment. This spirit always reflected in his outlook and activities and he championed the cause of the poor and deprived till the last breath of his life. He was educated at Golap, near Ratnagiri, New English, School, Fergusson College and Law College, Poona and the University of Bombay. He did B.A.LL.B.

His early life and education

During his childhood, SM lived in the ancestral village Golap in Ratnagiri district. Young Joshi pursued his primary education at Junnar itself. However, two years prior to completion of his primary education, his father died, leaving behind the family in distress. Facing both personal tragedy and poverty with great courage and fortitude, SM continued his studies with the help of free studentship and scholarships. His mother who was a devout Hindu lady imbibed in young Shridhar's mind, the fine ideals of life and a sense of self-respect. The self-pride in him obviously led him to think, even while as a student of the humiliation suffered by the motherland at the hands of colonial rulers. It was during this time that the freedom struggle was reaching its crescendo. Naturally, SM was profoundly influenced by the feeling of patriotism and craves for freedom from foreign yoke engulfing the country. When the Duke of Connaught visited India, SM threw away the badge given to him in his school and suffered quietly the punishment meted out to him.

After completing his Matriculation, SM joined the famous Fergusson College to pursue his studies further. There he won a prize for his essay on political economy. His academic career was exceptionally brilliant and he passed B.A. examination with History, economics, politics group in 1929. He was a popular student in the New English School, Poona. His political longings were aroused when he took part in the Gujarat festivals and Tilak processions. He also established his reputation as a forceful and effective orator.

He made an underlying reputation as a speaker. He bagged many prizes in the Fergusson College in oratorical contests. Joshi got involved with the Independence movement when he was a student at Fergusson College in 1924. In 1928, he started movement for the entry of Harijans in Mandirs. In 1930, he participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement and was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment. After his release he was again arrested and imprisoned for two years. He was charged with sedition for his speech on "Roy's Day" and sentenced, sacrifices entitled him to the high esteem of the people. He was imprisoned, in 1930, 1932-34 and 1940. He was also Jailed for participating in Quit India Movement in 1942.

While at college, he read the writings of Karl Marx, Mahatma Gandhi's Young India, and literature by Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad and other revolutionaries. All this had a profound impact on young SM who along with his colleagues like NG Goray, RK Khadilkar and Shirubhau Limaye decided to set up an organization called Youth League and its first

conference was organized by these young people in Bombay in 1927. The second Conference was held in Pune under the president ship of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru very successfully for which they had to face the wrath of British Government. SM and his friends were not allowed to join the M.A. course because of their political activities. In 1930, he, however, joined Law classes in Bombay. But his studies were interrupted owing to his intense political activities, and he could complete his LLB only in 1934. Though he joined Law with the intention of taking up legal profession as his career, his patriotic instincts propelled him to plunge heading into the freedom struggle.

As a Freedom Fighter

The patriotic fervour, love for the motherland and contempt for the foreign rulers were ingrained in SM since his student days. He was immensely influenced by the teachings of Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak and the writings of several other revolutionaries. While in his early twenties, he was attracted to Gandhiji and the Congress, the torch bearer in the struggle for independence. Joshi along with his close associates like NG Goray, Achyut Patwardhan and Yusuf Mehr Ali successfully organized a demonstration in Pune against the Simon Commission. The atmosphere was surcharged with enthusiasm and Joshi, like other staunch nationalists, plunged himself into the freedom struggle. He firmly believed that independence would not only end the centuries of colonial domain over India but also usher in a new dawn, ending social and economic inequalities and injustices.

He actively participated in the Salt Satyagraha in 1930 on the sea-shore at Ali Bagh in Konkan area. There he made a speech with such a heroic spirit, profound courage and transparent sincerity that the entire audience gathered over there, went into a thunderous applause. He was imprisoned then for the first time for taking part in the freedom struggle. "I became a full citizen" was the characteristic moment from SM in his autobiography, written in Marathi while referring to his first imprisonment in the wake of Salt Satyagraha.

In 1932 he suffered for over two months. Yet on an other occasion in 1934 he was imprisoned for two years, for making a speech in Bombay demanding the release of the revolutionary leader late Shri MN Roy. In prison, he faced many hardships as he was treated as 'C' class prisoner on account of which his poor health grew worse. However, all this did not deter him in any way in his efforts to seeing the motherland free.

Having accepted the life of a political revolutionary, which he knew was not a bed of roses, Joshi decided not to marry. However, one Kumari Tara Pendse, a young girl from a well-to-do family, who was working as a teacher influenced by the fire of SM's idealism happily prepared to share the hardships and happiness by becoming his companion. SM ultimately married her in 1939 and was blessed with two sons.

When Gandhiji gave the clarion call for the Quit India Movement in 1942, which shook the foundation of the British Empire, the Government decided to crush the movement with its all might and arrested all Congress leaders including those at the district level. The people and leaders were, however, equally, if not more, determined to carry on the struggle. In a bid to complete the task in a "Do or Die" spirit, SM, along with his colleagues like Achyut Patwardhan, Shirubhau Limaye and others set up an underground organization. SM, who could speak Urdu very fluently mover all over India, including Karachi, masquerading as a Maulvi by the name of Imam Ali and met various leaders who were underground. The organization became a vital communication link and conduit for leaders from one part of the country to the other. Many of the revolutionaries killed in this struggle and SM himself had a narrow escape a number of times. Immense concern for human suffering in SM propelled

him to extend support to the families of revolutionary leaders. However, in 1943 police raided a house in Bombay and arrested many underground revolutionaries including SM. The Government which wanted to conduct a trial of these revolutionaries as Maharashtra Conspiracy Case could not do so for want of evidence. However, they were imprisoned unjustly, as under trials for a long period of three years.

S M Joshi was instrumental in the formation of the Congress Socialist Party in 1934. He was Founder Member of CSP and elected to its National Executive at Bombay, (1934-37). He was General Secretary Poona Congress Committee, 1937-38, and Chief Organiser, Rashtra Seva Dal, 1941-42. In 1935 he was Secretary of the Maharashtra Youth Conference presided over by Swami Sampurnanand. With tireless zeal he worked for the success of the Faizpur Congress Convention. He was Chairman, Praja Socialist Party (P.S.P.) 1963-64, and in 1964 when PSP and SP merged and Samyukta Socialist Party (S.S.P.) was formed he became its first president, 1964-69. He was also instrumental of the socialist unity in 1971-72, when PSP-SSP merged and Socialist Party was formed in 1972. He actively participated in Jayaprakash Narayan's total revolution movement, 1973-74. He was a founder member of Janata Party in 1977 and was President of its Maharashtra Unit, 1977-80.

As a Parliamentarian

SM, known for his outspoken and forthright criticism and for constructive opposition, was an effective parliamentarian, though his innings was not very long. He remained a legislator for two terms in the Maharashtra Assembly and served as member of the 4th Lok Sabha. During this period his contribution to parliamentary debates, and indeed to the national life as a whole, was enormous and rich. He was respected and revered by all for his transparent sincerity, honesty of purpose, and utmost simplicity. He made a unique mark of his own and lived the life of a true Ajat Shatru.

In the first General Elections held to the Lok Sabha in 1952, under the provisions of Constitution, he unsuccessfully contested from the Pune constituency. However, this initial defeat at the hustling did not disappoint him, instead, being a Karmayogi, he devoted himself with renewed vigor to the welfare of the working classes.

SM began his parliamentary life as a legislator of the Bombay Assembly to which he was elected from a constituency in Pune in a bye election in 1952. He was elected once again in the Assembly in 1957. As a legislator, SM made a mark of his own in the proceedings with his outspoken and forthright views and for his constructive opposition. He was the leader of the combined Opposition. In 1967 he was elected to the fourth Lok Sabha 1967-71.

Great Organizer

He was a great organizer and even his opponents have acknowledged that he was the most useful and devoted volunteer. Be it uniting political parties in Maharashtra during the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti Movement that fought for a unilingual state, creating worker unions in Pune, participating in Dalit movements or setting up the Mandal commission, Joshi was actively involved in it all.

He was General Secretary, All-India Defence Employees' Federation, 1947-63. President State Bank Employees' Association, Bombay Circle, 1959 and All-India Federation of State Bank Employees Association, 1960. He was General Secretary, Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti, 1956-60. Member, Bombay Legislative Assembly, 1952-62. Editor Daily News, 1953 and Lok Mitra, 1958-62. Chairman, Praja Socialist Party (P.S.P.) 1963-64, and Samyukta Socialist Party (S.S.P.) in 1964-69. He was Member Lok Sabha 1967-71 and participated in Bihar

Movement,1974-75.Founder Member Janata Party,1977.President Maharashtra Janata Party 1977-80.He was married to Shrimati Tarabai Pendse, on August 19, 1939, and had two sons. He died on 1st April, 1989.

Writer

He was Journalist, social worker and Life Insurance Agent. He contributed many articles of high literary excellence to the "Kiloskar". He was Trustee, Maharashtra Arogya Mandal, Poona, Antar Bharati Trust and Rashtra Seva Dal; Managing Trustee, Sadhana Trust and Chairman, Janawani Ltd.

Books published: Oormi—A Collection of Essays and Sketches. S.M. Joshi:Vyakti, Vaani Ani Lekhni (Marathi)—A Collection of Articles. Socialist's Quest for Right Path. Corruption in India: Ramifications and Remedies. Split at Varansi. Mee S.M.: Atamakatha (Marathi) Yadoan ki Jugali, An Autobiography in Hindi.

(Qurban Ali)