

Inaugural Address to the Centenary Celebrations of Professor D. R. Gadgil (10 April 2000)

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Friends,

I am very thankful to Professor Chitre for inviting me to inaugurate the academic activities of the Birth Centenary Year of Professor D. R. Gadgil, my teacher and mentor. This is a unique opportunity and I am honoured to have been offered it. The debate I have been requested to inaugurate is planned around two themes that can be shortly described as the co-operative movement and globalization, the two burning topics of the day. The debate is about what would have been Gadgil's reaction to them in their modern versions so far as can be gaged from his writings on these two subjects.

I have been chosen for this auspicious occasion, I suspect, because I am perhaps the only one of his early colleagues surviving today, that is by my sheer age ! It is nearly thirty years since Gadgil departed this world and I had worked with him for more than a quarter of a century even before that. To most of you Gadgil is merely a name and your acquaintance with him can only be through his writings. To me, however, he was and is, even today, a living presence ! Let me see what I can make of it !

One of the methods of finding a clue to the kind of question that has been posed for this debate is to examine the intellectual make up of the man from his young days, and in the light of that try to surmise what his reactions could have been to the particular developments that we have in mind. I will begin with that. Perhaps you are aware that Gadgil was educated at Cambridge, England from 1917 to 1922. The basic intellectual and philosophical make up of his personality took shape in that period of his prime youth. He passed his economics tripos from Queen's College, Cambridge and went on to obtain his research degree (M. Litt) there. His thesis entitled "The Industrial Evolution of India" was published in 1924.

To supplement this recital of bare facts it is necessary to describe the intellectual ambience of Cambridge at that time and the intellectual ideas and men that were floating about in that temple of learning. I begin with his teachers. They were Professor Pigou, Robertson, Shove, Keynes and Henderson. Henderson was his tutor and as such Gadgil was closely associated with him throughout his Cambridge days. There were clearly two separate strands which Cambridge dons followed: those taking their cue from Marshall, like Pigou, Robertson, Shove stuck purely to academic pursuits. They believed that "The place of the economist was not in the forefront of battle but silently behind the trenches to prepare the armament of knowledge and the sharp sword of analysis". The other strand followed by Keynes, Henderson, etc., who were not only academicians but also activists in world of affairs. Keynes and Henderson were actively involved in the affairs of the Liberal Party and wrote and published pamphlets regarding economic problems as they arose and the policies that were necessary to tackle them. Gadgil followed in the footsteps of his tutor because he felt that the economist who had to work in India – and India's development problem was nothing short of the remaking of a nation – could not withdraw into the ivory tower of academics but had to be an activist in part. This was particularly so because India faced the shortage of educated leaders in all fields.

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