

Inaugural Address on Contribution of Professor D. R. Gadgil to Agricultural Development Policy and the Present Scenario*

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Professor Chitre, Dr. Khirsagar and distinguished participants, I consider it a rare privilege to be associated with this function and workshop. A visit to Gokhale Institute is home coming. I see many of my old friends here: Professor Wadhwa, Dr. Apte and Professor Gadgil. They were my teachers in some respect and also close friends. I pursued my doctoral studies here. Professor D. R. Gadgil taught me research methodology. I must say that I have yet to come across another scholar of his eminence. I have met a number of scholars, western and Indian but I have not met a scholar of the distinguishing eminence and intellect of Professor D. R. Gadgil. Professor D. R. Gadgil was a product of the independence movement and he was thickly involved in the building of the nation, particularly, in the building of a moral society in the post-independence period. His intellect, his powerful logic, his understanding of economic theory and its limitations, his skills in using economic history and survey methods inspired many generations of young scholars. He was the first person, as far as I know, who utilised a historical method in the analysis of economic history. Mostly, prior scholars wrote history as a story. But in his case, he looked at history as a method. Then underlying the method were the processes, which were integrating Indian economy with the world economy. There was liberalisation at that time. Indians took an adverse view about liberalisation. The way the Indian market was integrated with the world economy led to distortions in the Indian economy. This he has documented very well in his work on industrial evolution. Substantive work has been done on the theory of economic history by Hicks. One can see some parallels between the study of Professor Gadgil and Professor Hicks study. Professor Gadgil has also discussed the processes of change at that time. But later on subsequent scholars coined the word 'de-industrialisation'. You can see the entire de-industrialisation process in the work of Professor Gadgil. Professor Gadgil never used to coin words. He used to explain the processes and leave it there. His far-reaching contribution was his method of investigation.

He had a vast reading of economic history and he never accepted a proposition either because of ideological reasons or emotional reasons. He thought that all are facts and they have to be tested empirically. There he employed the survey method. And in those days they were known as fact finding survey studies. His studies of villages, his studies of agricultural markets, his studies on surveys of cities were all pioneering contributions. There were not many studies during that period. These studies had a far-reaching impact in organising research in India. You can see that the establishment of agro-economic centres and the initiation of farm management studies subsequently led to the establishment of cost of cultivation divisions in various agricultural research institutions.

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