
CHAPTER I

**Rajarambapu Patil: Biographical
Sketch (in brief) (1920-1984).**

CHAPTER I

RAJARAMBAPU PATIL: BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH (IN BRIEF)

(1920-1984):

It is certain that in the consideration of national or provincial progress and development certain names can never be forgotten. The names of Late Yeshwantrao Chavan, Late Balasaheb Desai, Late Vasantao Dada Patil and Late Rajarambapu Patil are closely associated with the post-independence progress and development of Maharashtra. They devoted their whole life to the making of Modern Maharashtra, which is one of the leading States of India. Late Rajarambapu Patil particularly had a lion's share in building up Maharashtra of today, especially in the fields of economy, social development, industry and education. He was elected M.L.A. from Walva constituency, District Sangli, and had been representing it for twenty years continuously. During this period he handled various portfolios in the Ministry of Maharashtra state Government. He was the Minister of Business and Industry from 1967 to 1972, the Minister of Rural Development from 1978 and so on. He utilized all his time, energy and political power in the capacity of a minister for the upliftment of the poor and the depressed.

The life and the work of Rajarambapu Patil is not only important but also inspiring to the coming generations. It would not, therefore, be in vain to recall some significant events of his life. They are, however, supported by evidences collected from the debates in the Assembly and other literature published as well as unpublished. I hope my humble attempt of research in the life and work of Late Rajarambapu Patil would give an inspiring

direction to the political and social workers not only in Maharashtra but all over the nation.

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD:

Rajarambapu Patil was born on 1st August, 1920 at Kasegaon, a small village in Taluka Walva¹, District Sangli, (Maharashtra State) and situated on Poona-Bangalore National Highway. He was brought up in a joint family by his father Anant Dada and mother Putalabai in the religious atmosphere of the family. His father was a true devotee of God Vithoba, the divine image of God at Pandharpur and paid regular visits known as “Wari” twice in a year, in the months of *Ashadha* and *Kartika*. At home regular worship took place and occasionally religious rituals were also performed when Rajaram, then a small boy - attended them curiously and interestingly. Thus his tender mind was being moulded by his religious minded father, his uncle and the other members of the family. His mother, Putalabai, was a very sentimental woman. She loved him like an exceptional mother. Thus Rajaram became the most favourite child of the family.

When Rajaram was six years old his uncle carried him on his shoulders, according to the rural tradition of the day, to school. It was the first day of the new year of the Indian calendar, the day of *Gudhi-Padwa*. His mother blessed him lovingly and wished him every success. Rajaram was admitted in a local primary school at Kasegaon. As it was the first day of his school he bowed down to his teacher respectfully and received his blessings. Rajaram was deeply interested in his studies and in his school surroundings. His mother was, however, always anxious for his return from school every evening. The family life of Anant Dada, Rajaram’s father, was homely, merry and happy. Financially too

it was very sound and stable. There was never shortage or deficiency of anything either of food or of other necessities. Anant Dada, his brothers and their wives, their sons and daughters lived together and had very affectionate relations with one another. Every word of Anant Dada and his wife, Putalabai, was gladly obeyed by all. Both Anant Dada and Putalabai were, therefore, always contented and happy. The neighbours envied them and the villagers pointed to them as an ideal joint family. None of the villagers had ever heard any grumbling or bickering in the family.

In the happy and comfortable family life, however, Anant Dada and his brothers were well aware of the political happenings in the country. The year 1930 had a special significance in the history of the Freedom Movement of India. Rajaram was then a boy of ten. He was naturally ignorant of what was happening politically around him. He could not understand their import. He was, however, always delighted to see the political leaders of the Movement arriving at Kasegaon for the propaganda of Gandhiji's philosophy. Sitting on his uncle's shoulder Rajaram often attended their public meetings. He also observed that every morning the people of the village were reading a daily newspaper, "The *Kesari*" very enthusiastically. It was the inspiring national paper started by the great revolutionary *Lokamanya* Tilak. Rajaram heard the people talking about Swadeshi, boycott, non-co-operation etc. though he could not understand much of it. For the first time then he heard the name of Mahatma Gandhi and the people talking about him with awe and respect. The people of the village seemed to be overpowered by Gandhiji's thoughts. They determined no more to buy any foreign cloth to wear. On the contrary they decided to weave threads on the '*Charakha*' as advised by Gandhiji and to wear only *Khadi* thence forward. Hence,

once it happened that in a public meeting was held at Kasegaon, one of the leaders of the *Swadeshi* Movement explained to the public how the British rulers were exploiting the poor Indian peasants by purchasing their raw material cotton at the lowest price and returning the finished product at very high prices. The villagers, greatly excited with the speech, rose to their feet and began to shout. On the spot, they took off and collected a heap of foreign clothes and within no time burnt them to ashes to express their contempt and anger.⁴

Rajaram who attended the meeting with his uncle Dnyanubuva witnessed the burning of foreign clothes which made a lasting impression on his tender mind. Rajaram saw that his uncle too immediately took off his turban or '*Patka*' and threw it in the burning heap. Rajaram too at once imitated his uncle and took off his precious cap of golden⁵ threads and threw it in the fire. At the close of the meeting all the people swore not to wear foreign clothes any more and to buy things produced only in our own motherland. The people began to shout hearty acclamations, "*Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai.*" They sang "*Vande Mataram*" the national anthem at the end. They again shouted, "*Bharat Mata Ki Jai*" and then dispersed.

Rajaram was also on his way back with his uncle, *Dnyanubuva*. He was asking him all the way hundreds of questions. His uncle was, however, not at all tired of satisfying him with answers.

Thus Rajaram was being educated at home by his father and mother, by his uncle and by the religious atmosphere of the house. He imbibed the contentment at home, and

learnt the ABC of the Freedom Movement in his very childhood from his father and his uncle.

Rajaram completed his primary education at Kasegaon and passed the final examination from Nerle Centre. It was considered a matter of credit and honour to get through the Vernacular final examination. There was not much spread of education in those days as we find it today. Hardly there would be a full primary school upto seventh standard⁶ in a town place in the area of about twenty five miles. The number of students in any class never rose above fifteen. To run a school in this condition was a very hard task. The peasants and illiterates were quite unaware of the importance of education. They preferred to send their boys to fields where they toiled from morning till evening and helped them to produce a little for their daily bread. On the one hand education was expensive in their poor income and on the other hand they thought that education was the monopoly of only the rich higher class and the elites. Consequently, majority of the village people neglected education of their poor lads.

Besides, high school or college education was not possible for everybody. There were very few high schools, and those too only at Taluka places. Today one would be surprised to hear that there were colleges only in four major cities in Maharashtra, namely Bombay, Poona, Sangli and Kolhapur. Of course, higher education was certainly beyond the reach of common men.

Rajaram was also being brought up in a family of not a very high income. When he got through the vernacular final examination, he ran mad with joy to inform the happy news to everybody. Putalabai his mother could not stop her tears of joy. His father patted

him with satisfaction and blessed him. Rajaram ran towards the field where his uncles - *Daji, Bapu, Appa* and *Buva* were working as usual. Rajaram touched their feet with respect and told them the good news. They too blessed him and wished him to go ahead. They assured him they would spare no pains to support him for his high school education.

The path of success, however, is not so smooth. When Rajaram was in the primary school the whole village⁷, was as if cursed by the dreadful epidemic of plague. People began to leave their homes one by one and soon the village became a piece of desert land. Schools were closed and all the elderly persons at home could not decide what to do with Rajaram's further education. Rajaram was so small that he had never gone beyond the outskirts of the village. It was not possible for them to leave him alone outside Kasegaon. They thought over the problem and concluded that Rajaram should walk all the distance from Kasegaon to Nerle, a distance of three miles everyday and return home by the evening when the school would be over.⁸

Rajaram was overjoyed that his further education could be somehow managed. He got up very early everyday and having finished the morning duties kept himself ready in time for the departure. His mother gave him in a small gunny bag a *Bhakari* of *jwar* and some cooked vegetable or *chutney*. She caressed him on his cheeks. His father put on his forehead a mark of sandal paste. Then Rajaram would pick up his satchel and the gunny bag over his shoulder and walk out at six in the morning. His poor parents, however, passed every hour in anxiety and waited eagerly for his safe return by the evening.

Thus facing all the odds and difficulties Rajaram got through the Vernacular final Examination in 1935. His parents, however, were worried about his high school

education. They wished him to go ahead. Rajaram was also very eager to join a high school. But there was no high school nearby and it was not possible for his parents to send him to a city, where he could study. Luckily, one of his teachers, Mr. Mohite shouldered the responsibility. He took Rajaram with him to Poona and arranged everything for him in the Prince Shivaji Maratha Boarding, Poona.

Rajaram began to stay in the hostel of the Maratha Boarding. Rajaram was not however, an idle or easy-going boy. He was aware of his own duties as a student and as a son of sincere loving parents. He got up very early every morning, completed the day's portion sincerely and attended the school regularly. He reached the school exactly at eleven and was never punished for coming late. He also carried out any work entrusted to him in the boarding very honestly. His friends on the other hand, soon left the boarding as they could not bear the hard work. Rajaram, however, showed his patience and forbearance, his honesty and sincerity, his physical capacity and coolness of mind. He washed his clothes, dress at night when he was free from his work, he slept on a simple ordinary piece of carpet and covered himself with a single bedsheet. As he reached the higher standards he could not meet the monthly expenses in his inadequate money.⁹ He then began to accept the private tuition to make both the ends meet. For some days he worked as a primary teacher in the morning and attended the High School at noon. However, Rajaram was never discouraged. He knew that his path of education and success was only through hardship.

In 1940 Rajaram got through the Matriculation examination with very good marks and rank through Shri Shivaji Maratha High School, Poona.¹⁰

This was of course, enough qualification for him to get a government job anywhere in those days. But Rajaram had still thirst for knowledge and learning. His parents and uncles were however, not in a position to continue the financial help any longer. College education in those days was simply a dream in the life a middle-class or a poor student. Rajaram was aware that he could not meet the college expenses even if he worked hard as before. He learnt, however, that the Ruler of Baroda, *Shriman* Sayajirao Gaikwad was a great lover of education and the liberal supporter of the poor. Then Rajaram took an immediate decision to go to Baroda and soon he reached the capital of the State.¹¹

Shriman Sayajirao Gaikwad was, of course, well known for his social and educational reforms in the State. He was the supporter of the poor and the lover of education in the real sense of the term. He had provided great facilities for the spread of education and to attract the boys from the poor families. Rajaram was a poor hard working boy from his very childhood. He never hesitated to do any kind of work nor spared pains in doing it.

In those days Rajaram was greatly attracted towards wrestling. He was already strong and sturdy and looked very handsome. With regular wrestling, he soon became the College champion of wrestling. With well-built body and well-developed mind Rajaram got through the Inter-Arts examination in 1942 at Baroda.¹²

Then he joined the Sykes Law College at Kolhapur and in 1945 obtained the degree of L.L.B. As he was the first L.L.B. not only in Kasegaon but in the surrounding Taluka area he was honoured and praised everywhere with great admiration.¹³

During his law education at Kolhapur the Freedom Movement was at its peak. Mahatma Gandhi asked the British rulers to quit India and invoked the young blood to participate in the Movement to make it a great success. It is no wonder then that thousands of young boys and girls left their schools and colleges and joined the movement. The British rulers used all the means to suppress the movement including the lathi charge and firing. But the youth of India stood against cruelty and injustice like a rock.¹⁴

Rajaram, a well built wrestler and a patriot since childhood could not keep himself away from the nation-wide Freedom Movement. He was already a member of 'The *Seva Dal*' and 'The Young Movement.' Now he frequently began to meet the revolutionary Freedom Fighters who visited Kasegaon and discussed and planned with them.

THE BEGINNING OF SOCIAL WORK:

In a sense, Kasegaon was the centre-place of revolutionary activities in Walva Taluka. Wategaon, to the west and Kundal to the East were also other active centres of the Freedom Movement. Their activities often shocked even the British Parliament. Rajarambapu, however, decided to follow a constructive way instead of destructive. He started a library at Kasegaon, his native place. He established a *Charakha Sangh* and taught the people how to weave the cotton threads on the *Charakha*. He persuaded the people to wear only *Khadi* and to boycott the foreign clothes and goods. He also arranged food participation with the *Harijans*, the so-called out-castes and strived for their entrance in Hindu temples. Occasionally he met the revolutionary freedom fighters in the hills nearby and informed them about the progress of the movement. He himself was also inspired by their hard life and sacrifice. The police under British rule kept a keen watch on

all his activities but Rajarambapu did not care much of it. He continued to teach the depressed and the poor the importance of freedom and advised them the ways and means to achieve it.¹⁵

He did not run after money but decided to spend his life for the upliftment of common man. In fact, it was not impossible for Rajarambapu to start practising as a lawyer and to acquire a lot of money as well as fame in the surrounding area. He could have easily got the appointment as a government pleader too. But the call of Gandhiji was still ringing in his ears. He had experienced the poverty and want and seen the same amongst the thousands of poor illiterate villagers. He could have led a very happy, comfortable life. But he wished to see likewise the poor people happy.

It was the year 1945 the Freedom Movement got a great impetus. The young men and women were giving a tough fight in the spirit of '*do or die.*' The British Government was aware that its end was not far away. The British officers and their families too knew that they had to leave India for ever and return home one day or the other.

Rajarambapu's illiterate poor father and mother, his uncles and brothers were however, thinking otherwise. They had suffered a lot while Rajaram was reading his lessons in schools and colleges. They thought that Rajaram would earn something after the completion of his education and make them happy in their old relaxed days. But Rajaram had seen hundreds of fathers and mothers who were as poor and troubled as his own parents. He wished first of all, to see his motherland free and happy.¹⁶

There were in those days a number of freedom fighters, social workers, thinkers and writers from whom Rajarambapu took inspiration. One of such sincere freedom fighters was great Sane *Guruji* (1899-1950). He was a teacher by profession but his thoughts, ideals and behaviour inspired thousands of young students all over Maharashtra. He wrote books for children and women. He even suffered imprisonment for the cause of freedom. He thought that he must teach the people to be good honourable citizens of India. He, therefore, paid visits to schools wherever it was possible. He selected the area of Sangli and Satara districts, where he thought, he could sow the seeds of his ideas.¹⁷

Once his public meeting was being held at Kasegaon. He was going to talk on 'The Post-Freedom Responsibilities'. The police force was as usual kept alert to create the sense of suppression and oppression. The freedom fighters however, cared for nothing. More than twenty thousand men and women, young and old, attended the meeting with enthusiasm. Sane *Guruji*, addressed the audience without the aid of stage or mike and speakers. He advised them to select any field of their choice and devote their energy towards excellence in that field. Even after Independence had been achieved they should stick up to their favourite fields in which they could serve Mother India in the real sense of the term.¹⁸

As Sane *Guruji* had seen personally Rajarambapu's courage, his patience and the social work, he pronounced at the end of the meeting that "Rajaram, a striving young man would certainly be one of the great leaders of Maharashtra one day." The words of Sane *Guruji*, one day, came true.¹⁹

Since then Rajarambapu, as if the lawyer of the motherland, began to defend and fight the case of India's Independence against the British rulers. The noble, young Rajarambapu devoted his life only to the service of the society and the nation. He regarded no other God except the Motherland and began to worship her as his own mother. He dedicated all his hours and means only to serve the country and the humble, poor citizens of India.²⁰

Rajarambapu was so much influenced by Sane *Guruji* that he could not forget his sage-like image and his soft, touching words full of emotion and sincerity. There was a deep impact of *Guruji's* social work on Rajarambapu. He was thinking all the while to follow his path as far as possible. He left behind all the family worries and problems and determined to do something that would be deserving to himself and to his family. However, he could not decide for long which way he should choose for his life.²¹

EDUCATION - THE FIRST CHOICE:

Rajarambapu had to go through hardships and scarcities when he was reading in schools and colleges. The hard experiences taught him many things in life. He had to go from place to place - Nerle, Poona, Baroda, Kolhapur for the sake of education. He knew what poverty was. He thought that hundreds of boys and girls coming from poor families are also intelligent. They are also sincere, honest and hard working. But they missed the opportunity of having education only because of insurmountable poverty. This thought made him miserable and sad. Rajarambapu also knew that the source of all social and political reforms is education. He found at last the solution for his disturbing problem. He could see the goal to which he could now walk steadily but continuously.²²

Rajarambapu, however, put the limit of Walva Taluka at the beginning for his social and public work. He knew that Islampur was then the only place where there was high school. It was certainly an ordeal in those days to run a high school or an educational institution. Almost all people were illiterates. They did not know the importance of education. They were usually reluctant to send their boys to schools. They sent them instead to fields where they toiled from morning to evening. The schools, therefore, had to face the problem of insufficient strength.

Rajarambapu, however, knew the revolutionary work of Shri Barde *Guruji* (1908-1982), Pandu Master, Babuji Patankar, (1915-1952), *Dada Dhanvantri*, and so on. He knew them personally. All these revolutionaries were working underground at Kasegaon and in the surrounding area. Rajarambapu decided therefore, to make Kasegaon as the centre of his activities. Consequently in 1945 he founded "Kasegaon Education Society" at Kasegaon and began a pioneering educational work* in Walva Taluka.²³

At the outset Rajarambapu started a high school at Kasegaon in 1945 and named it "*Azad Vidyalaya*" as a token of the freedom Movement.²⁴ Rajarambapu himself began to work as a teacher without any expectation of monetary gain. He met many a man, rich and poor and attempted to collect donations of his own accord. Sometimes he was insulted but he was never disheartened. He arranged a sort of lodging and boarding in an adjacent small temple for the poor students coming from other villages. He wished them to have free education. In a few days, in 1946, Rajarambapu established a small hostel for poor boys and encouraged them to learn. As these were the days overpowered by the

* Please see Chapter VI.

Sarvodaya Movement of *Acharya* Vinoba Bhave, Rajarambapu named the hostel, '*Sarvodaya Vasatigriha*'²⁵ 1945.

Encouraged by the success of the first attempt, Rajarambapu now decided to enlarge the field of his activities. Kasegaon Education Society now established "Wateshwar High School" at Wategaon.(1959), "New English School," at Peth Naka, (1957), "Yashwant High School", at Islampur, (1961), Jawahar Vidyalaya, (1960) at Kapuskhed, "Maharashtra High School" at Tambave (1967) and so on. Soon the society started "Arts and Commerce College" at Ashta, Taluka Walva (1965) and made provision of higher education for all the boys and girls who had completed their high school education. This was a very significant step in the educational activities of Shri Rajarambapu Patil.²⁶

Of course, Rajarambapu's social and educational work, his hard working nature, his devotion and sincerity and his affectionate friendly relations with all, soon opened the doors for his wider activities. He was elected unopposed in 1946 Chairman of the Satara District School Board. Soon he was again elected unopposed Chairman of Sangli District School Board, Sangli. During his Chairmanship he arranged get-together meetings of parent-guardians and the students, held conferences for discussions on the current educational problems and personally gave the guidelines for the spread of primary education particularly in the rural area.²⁷ Rajarambapu was not only an able administrator but he himself was an ideal teacher. He loved children and liked scholastic activities from the bottom of his heart. He always stood for the cause of compulsory education and

सौ.कुसुमताई आणि बापू



supported the teaching of English language in schools. He strove and contributed much for the same when he was on the Senate of the University of Poona.²⁸

MARRIAGE:

Rajarambapu married Kusumtai, daughter of Shri Anandrao Mane of Charegaon, Taluka Karad, District Satara, on 26th May 1946 at the age of twenty six in a most modern and progressive way. Kusumtai too had come from a noble and cultured family. Both Rajarambapu and Kusumtai matched each other not only in their appearance but also in their thoughts and ideologies. As there were never serious differences of opinions between them their married life was contented and happy. Having this rare and great asset, Rajarambapu could devote much of his time for social work outside.²⁹

PRESIDENT OF SANGLI DISTRICT LOCAL BOARD (1952-1962)

The rapid educational development upto 1951 under Rajarambapu's Chairmanship turned over another page of honour. He became the President of Sangli District Local Board, Sangli in 1952 and remained in the chair continuously for ten years upto 1962.³⁰ During his Presidentship Rajarambapu improved the financial position of the Board. But it was not an easy task. As soon as he sat in the chair he planned from time to time for the uplift of the poor low class people and their economic developments. He showed his plans to the Government and persuaded and appealed to them for the necessary funds. He also saw that every *pai* of the funds was utilized honestly for the right cause. By his honesty, sincerity and devotion Rajarambapu soon proved himself to be not only a great and able

administrator but a true servant of the society. People from all strata in both the districts, Sangli and Satara soon began to look at him as their saviour.³¹

In these ten years, 1952 to 1962, Rajarambapu brought about a number of reforms in the rural area. He encouraged and helped for the establishment of new schools and libraries. He made provision of small boats to enable the villagers residing on the river banks to cross the river.³² He also brought about significant reforms in housing, health and transportation problems of the villagers. The villages were joined by roads. Minimum facilities for health were made available to the poor masses. Rajarambapu also never hesitated to stand by the teachers in their demands. The poor people brought him all sorts of difficulties and he too never stopped striving until he succeeded in his undertaking. His patience, courage and fighting nature settled him in tomorrow's political world.³²

Rajarambapu achieved popularity not only amongst the poor villagers but he also achieved love and respect from his colleagues and the Government officers working under him. They offered him very willingly their full co-operation as they knew that all his sincere efforts were only for the uplift and welfare of the common man. Owing to his enthusiasm in social work, his sincerity and efforts, even the then Congress Government and many other institutions thought it a matter of honour to take him on their various bodies. In 1957 Rajarambapu became the President of Sangli District Congress Party.³³ Next year in 1958 he was elected Farmers Representative on All India Tobacco Committee. The same year he became the vice-President of *Panchayat Mandal*, Poona Division. The same year he was elected Chairman of Maharashtra State Housing Finance Board. Again he became in 1958 the Member of the Senate of the University of Poona. By

this time Rajarambapu did not remain a parochial leader. In 1959 he became the President of Maharashtra Pradesh Congress and received one more crest of honour. The same year he was one of the promoters of *Shetkari Sahakari Sakhar Karkhana*, Sangli. He was also on the Board of Directors. In 1961 he was a nominated member of the Shivaji University Foundation Committee and a Member of the Senate. In 1962 he was elected a Member of Vidhan Sabha (M.L.A., or Member of Legislative Assembly) from Walva Constituency.³⁴

It is a matter of pride that Rajarambapu since then was continuously elected from the same constituency for twenty two years. He did not only represent the constituency in the House but he laboured for its all-round development. He kept the ideal of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru before him and followed his path of social service. Rajarambapu observed and studied the needs of the people and spent all his energy to bring about necessary reforms on all fronts. First of all he took a lead in the establishment and spread of co-operative business and Industries. It must be accepted that the network of various organisations which we find today in Walva Taluka is the outcome of only Rajarambapu's long penance. His name and contribution can never be forgotten so long as Walva Co-operative *Doodha Sangh*, Walva Co-operative Bank, Walva Co-operative Sugar Mill, Walva *Grahak Bhandar* and Walva Spinning Mills have been continuously at work in the area.³⁵

In a sense, the year 1962 was a very significant year in the life of Rajarambapu Patil. For the first time he became the Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Honourable Shri Yeshwantrao Chavan, the then Chief Minister of Maharashtra and was given the portfolio of Revenue and forest. In the Assembly too he paid serious attention to the proposals and

the resolutions concerning his portfolios put forward by the members either of the ruling party or of the opposition. His quick decision and the execution in these matters created a place of honour and respect amongst all members very soon.³⁶

CABINET MINISTER:

Owing to his devotion to the work of public interest, Rajarambapu soon became the Cabinet Minister in 1965 in the Ministry of Maharashtra. The then Chief Minister, late Mr. Vasantao Naik had entrusted to him the portfolio of Revenue. It was perhaps a rare example that a Deputy Minister was raised to the position of a Cabinet Minister in so short a period of two and half years. It was in no way a favouritism of someone but it was a reward brought to him by his merit and qualities. It was not in his nature to please someone for selfish ends. He knew only to serve the society with all the strength and the mind with no thought of returns. Thus the strong but noble personality of Rajarambapu Patil was taking a significant shape on the political horizon of Maharashtra.³⁷

It was a general feeling of unrest in the public in those days that the political leaders fall short in their abilities to carry out the Government policies. People were divided on the border issue of Maharashtra and Karnatak. The impact of Congress was declining day by day. Honourable Yeshwantrao Chavan and Balasaheb Desai were being severely criticised and a kind of hostile atmosphere against them was everywhere in Maharashtra.³⁸ In these critical days Rajarambapu was entrusted with the Congress Presidentship of Maharashtra. It was, of course, an ordeal for him. But in a way he accepted the challenge. He travelled all over Maharashtra. He met individually various workers and he created in them once again the hope and confidence. He showed them a

new light and direction. He frequently held meetings of the members of different committees and studied their problems. Rajarambapu soon removed all doubts and hesitation from their minds with his prompt and satisfying answers and thus he could bring once again a new life in the Party. Both the rural and the urban social workers took inspiration from him and started working with revived energy.

In 1965 when Rajarambapu was the Cabinet Minister he took a very important decision that was most favourable to farmers. He provided each of them with a special Account Book. He carried out this most difficult and risky task in the unstable political atmosphere keeping the law and order in the state. At the same time one of the Members of the Assembly, Mr. Mamadani, therefore, described him rightly "*Raja Todarmul*." Rajarambapu was then as if the right hand of the Chief Minister.³⁹

Rajarambapu Patil was, of course, not only a man of politics, he possessed and developed various interests in other fields too such as literature, drama, music and some other arts. He was also much interested in the history of Maharashtra.⁴⁰ He was proud to feel that Maharashtra is the country of great inspiring personalities such as *Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj*, *Samarth Ramdas*, *Dnyaneshwar* and *Tukaram*. He knew that people of Maharashtra worship *Shivaji Maharaj*, *Lokamanya Tilak* and *Mahatma Phule* in place of Gods. *Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaja*, particularly, was the greatest and undying source of strength and inspiration for Rajarambapu. That is why he was one of the promoters in the erection of the statue of *Shivaji Maharaj* at the Gateway of India, Mumbai. Some unhappy souls tried their most to oppose it. But with the strong support of Rajarambapu Patil and *Shri Balasaheb Desai* and with the determination of the people the work was completed

and the statue stood to give the people of Maharashtra the energy and inspiration for ever.⁴¹

Rajarambapu, the leader of the depressed, poor, common mass had a distinct attitude and philosophy about the execution of laws and the administration of the Government. He considered the laws as the means in the hands of the administrative staff of the Government to be utilized for the uplift and the welfare of the people. Laws should not become weapons in their hands against the people. In this light he looked towards the existence of laws and their execution.⁴² He had a great foresight in this sense. Rajarambapu loved his people. But he was aware of the demarcation between love and duty. He was strong like a rock and tender like a flower as the situation would call for. He admired whatever was good and beautiful. He loved sports and various arts and did his best for their progress going beyond the political and administrative bindings, not as a political leader but as a true worshipper of them. Rajarambapu could achieve, therefore, the love and respect not only from his party followers but also from the sportsmen, artists and thousands of people in general.⁴³

MINISTER OF BUSINESS, INDUSTRY AND ELECTRICITY:

Thus, having a rare personality, Rajarambapu could win the 1967 election very easily. This time he was given the important portfolios of Business and Industry and Electricity in the Ministry of Maharashtra. This was again a kind of challenge for him to prove his ability as a Minister. By this time however, as he was much experienced in administration he could handle his portfolio very carefully and successfully. According to his nature he first of all observed the condition of business and industry all over

Maharashtra and studied their problems. He raised the confidence amongst the businessmen and the industrialists and encouraged them with all the beneficial facilities and contributed much for the spread of industries in Maharashtra.⁴⁴

It was on his efforts and inspiration that *Walva Taluka Grahak Bhandar* was set up in 1968.⁴⁵ Immediately the next year in 1969 Rajarambapu's monumental work, The Walva Co-operative Sugar Mills was founded with the sole intention to encourage the other subsidiary industries and thereby to provide employment to the people in the area. In 1970 Rajarambapu got an opportunity to go on an industrial study tour to Japan and America. He visited there the most progressive industries and studied the history of their developments. When Rajarambapu returned from his tour he earnestly wished that his countrymen must know the advancements in industries in the world. He, therefore, wrote two books for them in 1971 (i) *Lokashahichi Kshitije* and (ii) *Adhunik Japan*.⁴⁶

THE THIRD VIDHAN SABHA:

In 1972 Rajarambapu was once again elected for the Assembly with tremendous majority. The poll as if confirmed that Rajarambapu was perhaps the only alert and most active leader of the ruling party who could put forward people's problems in the Assembly fearlessly and fight for them. He was the Minister for ten years from 1962 to 1972 in the ministry of Maharashtra. It is not known why he was not included in the Ministry of 1972. However, he did not stop striving for the cause of poor farmers. As a member of the Assembly he raised many questions for their welfare. In those days when he was not the Minister he travelled by ordinary State Transport Bus. It was not, of course, a stunt to

attract and impress the people. Whatever he did he always did with sincerity and honesty. His travel by S.T. was not an exception.⁴⁷

On 17th June 1973 a huge rally of farmers was held at Khujagaon. Thousands of farmers attended the rally. Rajarambapu was perhaps the only single fighter on behalf of the farmers who was in demand of water supply from Warna Dam. Warna Project was, however, opposed by many in Maharashtra. Rajarambapu determined to fight single handedly to bring light in the lives of poor farmers and make them happy. Regardless of his health he arranged the great rally and it was a success.⁴⁸

EMERGENCY OF 1975:

Emergency of 1975 was in a way a black page in the history of India's democracy. The political power was centered around late Indira Gandhi and her son late Sanjay Gandhi. Many of the old loyal Congress leaders had to bear insult from them. Their contribution to the party was ignored and even their sacrifice was not taken into account. Being tired of this kind of treatment, some of the party leaders left Congress and joined the other parties. At the beginning of 1975, Rajarambapu, a loyal party servant arranged a *Padayatra* or walking tour for the propaganda of Indiraji's twenty point programme. He visited ninety seven villages covering the distance of six hundred and fifty kilometers. During this period of emergency there was a kind of depression amongst Congressmen all over Maharashtra. By this time a new party, Maharashtra *Samajwadi* Congress was established by Shri Balasaheb Sawant, Shankarrao Chavan, Balasaheb Vikhe-Patil etc. But in a few days all these leaders, including Shri Vasant Dada Patil, the then Chief Minister of Maharashtra rejoined the Indira Congress. It was possible for Rajarambapu too to return

to that party. He, however, joined the Janata Party on 16th April 1977.⁴⁹ It was greatly agonising to him that he had to leave the Congress for which he had been working honestly and sincerely so long. In 1978 he was elected on the Vidhan Sabha through the Bombay Corporation Constituency. The same year he became the Minister of Rural Development in the Ministry of *Purogami Lokashahi Dal*. Shri Sharad Pawar was then the Chief Minister of Maharashtra. With the view of rural development Rajarambapu established farmers co-operative Spinning Mills in Walva Taluka and in a way helped to solve the employment problem in the Taluka area.

Soon taking into account Rajarambapu's seniority in the political field and his wider administrative and political experience he was elected president of Maharashtra Pradesh Janata Party in the Maharashtra Rajya Janata Party *Adhiveshan* (session) held at Shahada in 1980.⁵⁰

Though Rajarambapu left Congress and became the President of Janata Party he had very good feelings and great respect for Indiraji. He never thought to use any abusive words against her. It was simply the nobility of his mind and character. There are even today so-called secular and socialist leaders. But Rajarambapu stood like a light house to show the proper direction in the field of politics as to how to think and behave. He was an ideal democratic leader in the real sense of the term having popular appeal. It would not be an exaggeration to say that his name would certainly be recorded in the history of Modern Maharashtra as one of the most active popular leaders.⁵¹

FARMERS' LONG MARCH:

In 1980 Rajarambapu arranged a long march of hundreds of farmers to attract the attention of the Government to their problems and demands. The farmers walked all the way from Jalgaon to Nagpur, a distance of four hundred sixty five kilometers⁵² between 7th and 23rd of December 1980. The farmers wished to have the right prices for their produce and they should be rightly connected with the cost of production. Rajarambapu, as their leader, presented these demands to the Government of Maharashtra.⁵³

BEGINNING OF SHRI MAHANKALI CO-OPERATIVE SUGAR FACTORY:

Again in 1982 Rajarambapu arranged another *Padayatra* or walking tour to study the problems of famine area from 2nd October to 11th October 1982 covering the distance of two hundred fifty kilometers from Sangli to Umadi. The area of two Talukas Jata and Kawathemahankal are yet not free from want and scarcity. The land is still barren at many places. Rajarambapu wished to bring about industrial and agricultural development like that of Walva Taluka. He intended to work on the same line for the removal of poverty and unemployment with the help and co-operation of the local people. Rajarambapu started Shri Mahankali Co-operative Sugar Mills Ltd., in 1982 at Kavathemahankal. After the death of Rajarambapu the area is now recognized as *Rajarambapu Nagar*.⁵⁴

PADAYATRA ALONG WITH SHRI CHANDRASHEKHAR:

Again from 1st of April to 11th of May 1983 Rajarambapu participated in another *padayatra* started by honourable Shri Chandrashekarji to take a general survey of the standard of living and the poverty of the people. The *Padayatra* started from Kagal to

Bijasana, a town in Dhule district covering the distance of eleven hundred kilometers. During the *Padayatra* Rajarambapu encouraged and inspired hundreds of young men and women to devote themselves for social work. Both Chandrashekharji and the great socialist leader and thinker Shri S.M. Joshi were glad to take a note of Shri Rajarambapu's very significant work of this type.⁵⁵

BEGINNING OF ENGINEERING AND POLYTECHNIC COLLEGES:

Rajarambapu's Walva Co-operative Sugar Mills Ltd. had been proved to be an ideal organization. A number of subsidiary industries and small businesses were also started to aid the agro-industrial revolution brought about for the welfare of the people. Now with the intention that they should not remain deprived of knowledge and learning Rajarambapu put foundation of an Engineering College and a polytechnic at Sakharale and thus provided the common people with facilities of higher technical education.⁵⁶

BALANCING WITH SILVER:

As the president of Janata Party, Rajarambapu did much for the spread of the party and succeeded in reviving and increasing its strength on a large scale. Owing to his tireless work the ideology of the Janata Party could reach the threshold of huts and cottages. As usual he tried his best to solve many of their problems and succeeded in his undertakings. As a token of love and gratitude the people of Vidarbha arranged a grand programme of balancing him with the equal quantity of silver. It was carried out in his honour in 1983 at Ramtake, Nagpur.⁵⁷

SAD DEMISE:

Thus engrossed all the while in social work for the goodness of poor common people, Rajarambapu was admitted in a hospital not for any major complaint on 9th January 1984. He was simply suffering from cold and fever. However hundreds of social workers met him in the hospital. Thousand others sent him telegrams and letters asking him after his health affectionately and lovingly. Doctors too did their utmost but failed and on 17th January 1984 Rajarambapu took his last breath at 2:45 p.m. in Bombay Hospital, Bombay at the age of sixty four.⁵⁸

The ever smiling, noble, loving and compassionate soul reached, at last beyond the worldly existence keeping behind him his monumental works and thoughts. The incorrigible law of nature can never be disobeyed. It could destroy the body composed of five elements but it could never destroy, according to *Bhagwat Geeta*, the immortal soul of great Rajarambapu Patil, the worthy son of Maharashtra.⁵⁹

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