

A wide, ornate border of golden-yellow floral and leaf motifs surrounds the entire page. The border is composed of repeating scrollwork and leaf patterns. In the center, a rectangular frame with a double-line border (inner blue, outer gold) contains the title and subtitle. Below the title frame, a smaller, symmetrical floral ornament is centered.

PUTRA VISHWASTACHA

A Festschrift to Dnyaneshwar Agashe

Edited by
Sharatchandra Belvalkar, Taraprakash Vartak,
& Ramesh Barve

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Translated from Marathi into English by Nandan Phadnis

Compiled by Aditya Agashe

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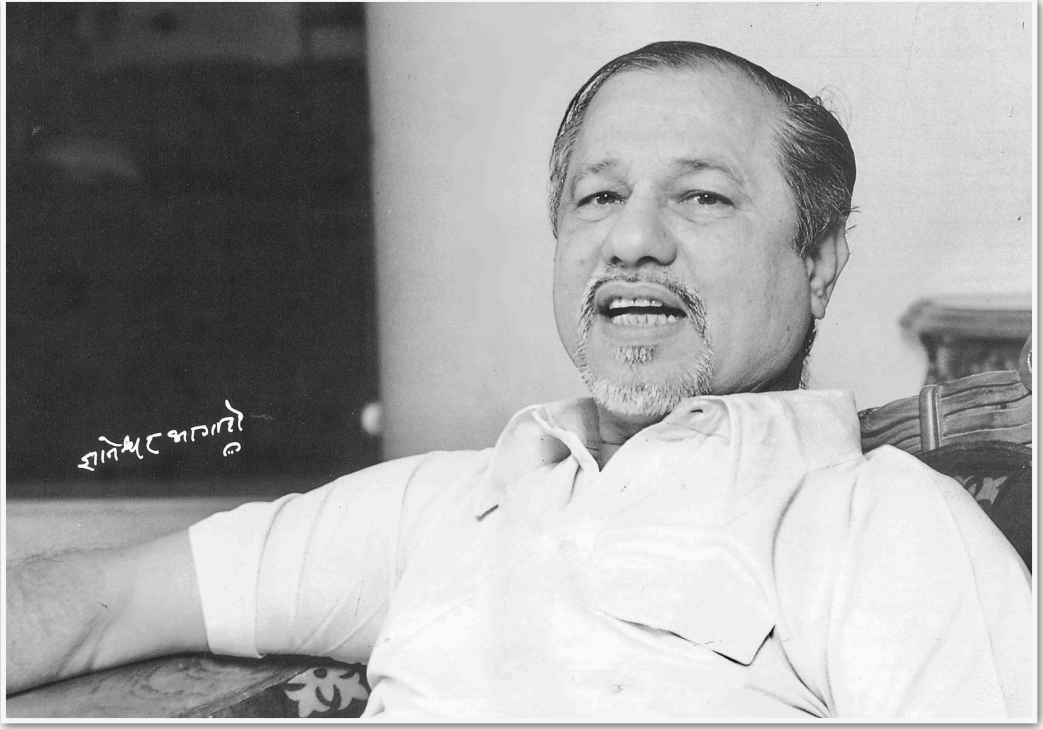
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Dnyaneshwar Agashe
(April 17, 1942 – January 2, 2009)

Photographed and signed in April 2002

Preface

This English translation is the second edition of this festschrift; published on the occasion of the 80th birth anniversary of my grandfather, Dnyaneshwar Agashe; published in commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the first edition's publication in 2002.

The first edition was published under the title पुत्र विश्वस्ताचा : गौरव ग्रंथ – ज्ञानेश्वर आगाशे षष्ट्यब्दिपूर्ति निमित्त (*Putra Viśvastācā : Gaurava Grantha – Jñāneśvara Āgāśe Shashtyabdi-pūrti Nimitta*) in Marathi by the Dnyaneshwar Agashe Felicitation Committee (ज्ञानेश्वर आगाशे गौरव समिती; *Jñāneśvara Āgāśe Gaurava Samiti*) in celebration of my grandfather's 60th birthday on April 17, 2002, with the ISBN 9781532345944.

Putra Vishwastacha (*Putra Viśvastācā*) was an honorific that translates from Marathi to English as *The Trustee's Son*, originating in the honorific of *Vishwasta* (*Viśvasta*), or *The Trustee*, given to my great-grandfather Chandrashekhhar Agashe (1888–1956).

The Dnyaneshwar Agashe Felicitation Committee in April 2002, was comprised of the late Mr. Sharatchandra Belvalkar, Mr. Taraprakash Vartak, and Mr. Ramesh Barve, whose determination and perseverance in the organisation, edition, compilation, and execution of the first edition was a significant and triumphant accomplishment.

The publishers of this second edition acknowledge with immense gratitude the due diligence of these kind sirs, and seek to recognise and honour their enterprise with this renewed publication.

My grandfather died on January 2, 2009, aged 66. The tone and tense of the essays embodied in this publication have been translated as they were, to preserve the integrity of their authors' meaning and intentions at the time of writing.

Aditya Agashe

Compiler

Thoughts from the Editors

April 17, 2002

The memories of our beloved *Dnyanoba* have accumulated in the minds of his friends and manifest naturally on every page of this book.

This is not merely creating or editing a book. It is a labour of love, compiled with great devotion!

Sharatchandra Belvalkar,

Taraprakash Vartak,

& Ramesh Barve

The Editorial Board,

The Dnyaneshwar Agashe Felicitation Committee

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A Foreword

April 2, 2002

In this period of democracy, where people seem loathe to acknowledge the value in others, it is heartening to see the employees, like the ‘warkaris’ (*pilgrim devotees of Lord Vitthal*) honour a Dnyaneshwar as their ‘maalak’ (*Lord and Master*). That the place they come from, their ‘Pandhari’ (*place of worship*) is called Shreepur (*the Lord’s abode*) is indeed apt.

Seeing the students of the Mudhoji College in Phaltan, Shreepur, sing paeans to Dnyaneshwar and Chandrashekhar, as they work diligently, warms the cockles of my heart.

Why wouldn’t a Shivaji feel proud of the fact that an ‘Udyogpati’ (*industrialist*) like Dnyaneshwar Agashe, is also a ‘Kridapati’ (*sports administrator*) and has gone on to become a ‘Chhatrapati’ (*king*) to rule the hearts and minds of honest, hard-working employees?

Dnyaneshwar Agashe, who turns 60, has brought the honour of a ‘Kurukshetra’ (*the battle field where the Pandavs defeated the Kauravs in the Mahabharat*) to the field of sports.

How does one express in words the virtues of Rekha, the wife of this remarkable man, and her role in building their lives?

Perusing the contributions in this book honouring Dnyaneshwar Agashe, where people ranging from Vasudev Shastri Utpat of Pandharpur to current and former Chief Ministers have expressed their heartfelt sentiments, brought me great joy.

That these accomplished people felt compelled to tell the world of their close friendship with this giant of a man, one who stayed away from politics, and can be best described as a ‘person with no enemies’, is an honour for everyone. This book of honour is, in effect, an offering of goodwill by the employees at the feet of their ‘Agashe maalak’!

Shivajirao Bhosale

Principal and Former Vice-Chancellor

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University

Ajaatshatru: A Person with No Enemies – Ashutosh Agashe

Having completed my B. Com. in 1993, I could easily have done what most industrialists' kids did – go abroad to pursue an M. B. A. or some such degree. But I had other plans. Going abroad held no attraction for me, and studying for a degree would take another two to three years. Instead, I thought, if I could spend that time with Baba (*father*), I could learn so much more! I told him of my decision, and, true to character, he accepted it with a broad smile, and I duly began my learning stint at his training institute.

Growing up, we siblings rarely got to spend time with Baba, due to his incredibly busy schedule as a leading industrialist. To his credit though, he never let us feel his absence, and always looked out for us. But we still missed being around him. These past four years though, have more than made up for it!

As Baba turns sixty, for me to gather the courage to write something about him, given my limited experience, must surely be a gift from him!

That a huge circle of friends, a large Agashe family, a host of business partners, high-ranking officials, and even his employees, feel close to Baba, hold him in high esteem, and consider him a kind man – even a friend – is a given. On this auspicious occasion of his sixtieth birthday, a number of them have penned their thoughts, extolling Baba's virtues. I, however, want to recount two of my very own, unique experiences.

There is hardly anyone in the cricketing world who hasn't heard Baba's name. I have seen, up close, his friendship with the greats of Indian cricket, like Kapil Dev, Sunil Gavaskar, and Sachin Tendulkar. One such big name in cricket is Mr. Jagmohan Dalmiya, a person who held, with great distinction, the highest office, not only in Indian cricket, but also in world cricket. The incident I am about to narrate happened in Calcutta, where I had gone with the Maharashtra team to play a Ranji game. Only recently, Mr. Dalmiya had defeated Baba in the BCCI elections for the post of President.

I requested his personal assistant for an introductory meeting with Mr. Dalmiya. But, in spite of repeated requests, I could not get one owing to his tight schedule. Then one day, he came to the club for lunch. As I saw him across the room, I just could not resist the temptation of going up to him and introducing myself. So, I mustered the courage to walk up to him without an appointment. Seeing me standing by his side, he asked me, "Yes, what do you want?" I replied, "I just wanted to meet you and pay my compliments. My name is Ashutosh Dnyaneshwar Agashe." "Oh! You, here? Well, how is

your mother's health? And your father's?" I was dumbstruck! News of my mother's operation, and Baba's angioplasty had reached him. I could feel the genuine concern in his words for my parents' health. Then he not only asked after me, but said, "That you come to Calcutta and stay in a hotel is unacceptable. Pack your bags, you're coming home." Since our tour was to wind up soon, I politely declined.

Another incident is similarly etched on my mind. Baba and I were in Delhi. Mr. I. S. Bindra also was a heavyweight in Indian cricket. In the course of a conversation with him, he came to know that I was to travel to Chandigarh. As he continued talking to me, he picked up the phone and spoke to someone at the Mohali Club. I gathered that he had made arrangements for me to stay there. Before he put the phone down, he reminded that person that "Ashutosh Agashe is family, so look after him well."

These two instances made me realise that though newspaper reports portray Baba and these people as rivals, often projecting this rivalry as a battle, it does not affect the underlying love and affection they share. I feel Baba truly is an 'Ajaatshatru', a person with no enemies, because the so-called enemies too behave with him like friends. I realise that carrying the name of the Agashe family forward means taking on myriad responsibilities. And the toughest of them is to maintain this 'Ajaatshatrutva', the virtue of having no enemies, which is at the very core of Baba's personality. Some would even say it is in his blood. If that is true, then may the Almighty bless me with the virtues of limitless perseverance, tolerance, and empathy, that Baba fostered! And I also pray for these four years of Baba's association and companionship, and the incredible opportunity to learn from them, to be extended to at least another forty years!



With sons Ashutosh (his right) and Mandar (his left)

My Father – Mandar Agashe

There are so many things I want to write about my dad, but I will stick to one particular aspect about the relationship between father and son.

Being the son of a famous father is said to be the hardest thing, and usually, the son falls flat on his face in his attempts to imitate his father.

In such cases, the son is always blamed for not being capable enough, while nobody pays attention to the fact that the father might not have given enough support and guidance to the son.

I think I am very lucky, not only to have a famous and successful father, but one who gave me my space in life to do what I felt was correct, and played an important role in building my self-confidence during the early days of my career.

Whether it was my interest in music, or in the fields of Information Technology and Biotech, I dared to do things differently, not only because of the financial help, but also the continued guidance and moral support, of my father.

Another thing I am proud of is his circle of friends and the trust he enjoys with them.

No matter which field I venture into, I am bound to meet some of his friends, who would go all out to help me because of their love for my father.

I think he is born with a magnetic personality, or why else would my son, Aditya, be so close to him since the time he was three months old?

He is also very practical in life, and always seems to know the future. Initially, I thought it was due to his business experience, but now, after working for ten years alongside him, I have realised it is an innate talent.

Such people are rare, and being the son of such a person is my greatest fortune!

Father's Daughter – Sheetal Agashe

When God decided to send me to earth, he gave me a choice, to be his angel, or to be my father's daughter. Gladly, I made the right choice, and here I am today, blessed to be a part of the Agashe family!

When I was asked to write something about my father, I did not know where to start. I am still not sure. Maybe, starting from the time of my birth would be a good idea.

My mother tells me that I was born in answer to the numerous prayers she offered God for a baby girl, after having had two sons. She says my father wrapped up my naming ceremony because he had to go abroad for some work.

But, I guess, my father more than made up for that hurry. As a child, I remember my father as someone who adored and pampered me, who never said 'No' for anything. Yet, he didn't spoil me. He used to travel a lot throughout my childhood, but he never let me or my brothers feel neglected. He was always there when we needed him.

As I grew up, my relationship with my father became stronger though, because of different reasons. Earlier, he was someone who would always bring me gifts. My mom tells me, that when I was a baby, he even got my nappies and milk bottle from London, let alone clothes and toys. He was a Santa Claus to me then. Well, he still is!

When I was in school, he was more of an elder, whom I respected, and feared a little. He was the one who would show me what is right and wrong, and why. He would show me why some things have to be done, and others not.

Then, I entered college. I was a big girl now, wanting to discover life. This was the time I dared to cross the line, by bridging the generation gap and taking our relationship towards friendship. I was more open with my father. I would take my problems to him, ask for his opinions, talk about things. This only made me love and respect him even more.

Today, when I am an adult myself, have my own thoughts and opinions about things, and have made my own choices, my father is a friend, philosopher, and guide to me. My parents wanted me to get married a couple of years ago. But I am glad I didn't, or else, I would have never known and understood them, as I do today. We can talk, discuss and argue about me, the family, them, work, about almost anything and everything, on equal terms. This takes our relationship to a completely different level (though they still treat me like a kid!).

Needless to say, I respect and look up to my father for all his dynamic qualities.

But the one quality I am really proud of is the way he adapts himself to what life has to offer. Whether in times of happiness or grief, in relaxed or tense situations, he has an amazing capacity to accept and deal with what is in front of him. I have seen him change with the times with consummate ease, be it in the business techniques and strategies at work, or in the habits, traditions, and way of living, at home.

As for myself, I hate change! Maybe that is why I admire this quality in him the most.

To people, my father might be Mr. Dnyaneshwar Agashe, a banker, a cricketer, a businessman, a dynamic personality. But to me, more than all of this, he is my “Baba” and will always be so!

Baba,

I love you and am really grateful to you for giving me such a great life, and for making me the person I am today.

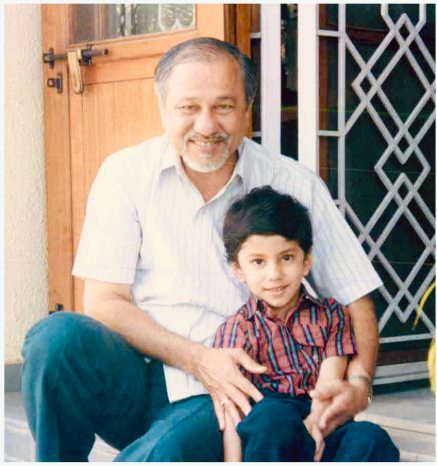
*Love,
Sheetal*



With daughter Sheetal Agashe



From left to right: Ashutosh Agashe, Sheetal Agashe, Dnyaneshwar Agashe, Mrs. Rekha Agashe, and Mandar Agashe



With grandson Aditya Agashe



With granddaughter Ilina Agashe

Letters from Eminent Personalities

Transcribed and translated from the original festschrift

Sharad Pawar

To achieve one's purpose in life, physical labour and self-confidence need to go hand-in-hand. Along with pursuing one's own purpose, the resolve to keep the larger good of the society in mind requires the invaluable support of colleagues and friends. Mr. Dnyaneshwar Agashe astutely realised this. As a result, he has accomplished unparalleled success in diverse fields of industry, culture, literature, sports, and spirituality. I have seen Mr. Agashe's endeavours in every field, at close quarters, and his charitable work can surely serve as an inspiration for one's resolve to achieving success. Heartfelt greetings to him on completing 60 years!

Yours,

Sharad Pawar

Member,

Lok Sabha

Vilasrao Deshmukh

Greetings,

I was delighted to learn of a 'Literary Tribute' being published on the occasion of Mr. Dnyaneshwar Agashe completing 60 years.

Mr. Agashe's contribution, in the fields of culture, literature, sports, and spirituality, apart from the field of industry, is invaluable. His multi-faceted personality is underlined by being a successful businessman, an accomplished industrialist, an excellent sports administrator, and the creator of modern, unconventional energy projects. I am sure these diverse aspects of his personality, and his life's work, will be reflected in this book paying tribute to him.

I congratulate Mr. Agashe on reaching this milestone, and wish him a long and healthy life!

I extend my best wishes for the publishing of this book.

Vilasrao Deshmukh

Chief Minister,
State of Maharashtra

Manohar Joshi

February 7, 2002

The Hon. President,
The Dnyaneshwar Agashe Felicitation Committee

Sir,

I was delighted to read your letter dated January 01, 2002. That Mr. Dnyaneshwar Agashe's 60th birthday is to be so celebrated gives me great satisfaction.

Mr. Dnyaneshwar Agashe's life should prove to be an inspiration for everyone. He has created his empire from scratch. I know, from personal experience, the difficulty of trying to work, and be successful, in different fields of life, all at the same time. But Mr. Dnyaneshwar Agashe has shown that it can be done. By virtue of being a successful industrialist, an excellent sports administrator and a true connoisseur of literature, Mr. Dnyaneshwar Agashe is a role model for anyone aspiring to succeed in life.

He is a past master at maintaining close relationships with politicians of different ideologies. Through his pleasant countenance and ever-smiling face, he seamlessly moves from our minds into our souls, without us even realising it. I wish this stalwart of social life all the very best on the occasion of his 60th birthday, and look forward to him reaching a hundred years of his swashbuckling life!

Regards,
Yours faithfully,

Manohar Joshi

Minister of Industry,
Government of India

Chhagan Bhujbal

February 25, 2002

Greetings,

I was pleased to know that a literary tribute is being published on the occasion of the 60th birthday of the renowned industrialist, Mr. Dnyaneshwar Agashe.

By laying the foundation stone of a sugar factory in the rain-affected area of Shreepur, which was but a wasteland in the pre-independence era, he has started a small industrial revolution. Relentless toil, having the interests of the local farmers at heart, and an unwavering belief in hard work, has transformed this business into a giant conglomerate. Not restricting himself to the field of industry, Mr. Dnyaneshwar Agashe has carved a niche for himself in the fields of sports, culture, and banking too.

I am certain that this literary tribute will touch upon, and highlight, every aspect and facet of this multidimensional personality.

I wish this book honouring Mr. Agashe every success!

Chhagan Bhujbal

Deputy Chief Minister,
State of Maharashtra

Narayan Rane

January 24, 2002

It gives me immense pleasure to note that a festival is being held, on the occasion of his 60th birthday, to celebrate the life and career of Mr. Dnyaneshwar Agashe.

By starting a sugar factory in the wastelands of Shreepur, Mr. Agashe made a successful entry into the industrial arena, and laid the foundation of industry, and of his capabilities too, which has now grown into a full-fledged industrial empire. This is a matter of great pride, and will spread the fame of the Marathi mannos (*man*) far and wide.

By achieving his objectives, through the trinity of fierce determination, hard work, and the culmination of skilful ventures, Mr. Agashe has become a source of great inspiration and guidance to his fellow Marathi industrialists. I believe this endeavour, to honour Mr. Agashe on the occasion of his 60th birthday, is a tribute to his achievements as an industrialist, and his reaching the summit of success.

His accomplishments in the fields of culture, sports, spirituality, and banking, apart from his original field of industry, are a testament to his versatility.

On the occasion of his 60th birthday, I pray to Ma Jagdamba for Mr. Agashe's long and healthy life, and that he may continue his yeoman service to the industrial sector in the years to come.

Narayan Rane

Leader of the Opposition,

Maharashtra Legislative Assembly

Pradeep Rawat

February 26, 2002

A literary tribute, being published on the occasion of Mr. Dnyaneshwar Agashe's 60th birthday, is a matter of great joy, and the fact that people will be made aware of the inspiring life journey of one of Pune's most accomplished sons, is a welcome step by the felicitation committee.

The career of Mr. Dnyaneshwar Agashe's father, the late Chandrashekhar Agashe, is well known to the people, because of the sugar factory he laboriously built. After the death of his father, Mr. Agashe studiously, and with great determination, took the factory to greater heights, and, I believe, taking the employees into confidence to

ensure the smooth functioning of the factory, lent a supporting hand to the cooperative movement. That he did not depend merely on the factory started by his father, but successfully ventured into diverse fields, is a testament to his expertise and enterprise. In spite of being extremely soft-spoken, the inherent desire and drive to gain knowledge of, and be proficient in, a particular field, and his ensuing success, is a symbol of his abilities.

The way he ably shouldered the responsibility thrust upon him at an early age, and his success in the fields of industry, culture, sports, and literature, is a source of guidance and inspiration to young, aspiring industrialists. Cricket is his favourite sport. He was a successful wicket-keeper at the state level. It is indeed praiseworthy that he did not rest on his laurels, but is now guiding the next generation of players. Not only will Mr. Agashe's past achievements provide a beacon of light for everyone, but his contributions in diverse fields in the future, as administrator, bank manager, etc. will be definitive too. I sincerely pray for his long life.

Yours,

Pradeep Rawat

Member,
Lok Sabha

Girish Bapat

March 20, 2002

Hon. Mr. Dnyaneshwar Agashe,

Sir,

Greetings on the occasion of your 60th birthday. Your guidance, and your success in the fields of industry, culture, literature, and sports will always be a source of inspiration for us.

May the Almighty bless this eminent industrialist with a long and healthy life!

Regards,

Yours,

Girish Bapat

Member,

Maharashtra Legislative Assembly

Vijaysinh Mohite

April 2, 2002

The Hon. President,
The Dnyaneshwar Agashe Felicitation Committee,
Shreepur

Sir,

I am delighted to note that you have organised a function in Malshiras Taluka, on the 25th of April, 2002, to honour the life and work of Mr. Dnyaneshwar Agashe, stalwart of the group of industries of Shreepur, on the occasion of his 60th birthday.

Mr. Agashe's work in the fields of social welfare, education, and sports is incomparable and deserves to be celebrated. That the said function shall be graced with the presence of many dignitaries gives me immense pleasure.

May Mr. Agashe be blessed with a long and healthy life, and may he continue his stellar work in the social, educational, sports, and industrial spheres.

All the very best for the function!

Yours,

Vijaysinh Mohite

Public Works Department Minister

Government of Maharashtra

Suresh Kalmadi

April 4, 2002

The Hon. Mr. Dnyaneshwar Agashe

Sir,

I am pleased to learn that a book is being released in your honour to mark the occasion of your 60th birthday on April 17, 2002.

I have seen, first-hand, your achievements in the fields of industry and sports. You have always taken the lead in Pune hosting international cricket matches, and hope that you continue to do so in the future. On the occasion of this function in your honour, I pray to God to bless you with a long and healthy life!

60 years young!

Yours,

Suresh Kalmadi

Member,
Rajya Sabha

Deepti Chaudhari

The Hon. President,
The Dnyaneshwar Agashe Felicitation Committee,
Pune

Sir,

I received your letter dated March 10, 2002. It was a pleasure to learn that a book is being released in the honour of industrialist Mr. Dnyaneshwar Agashe on the occasion of his 60th birthday.

While reaching dizzying heights in the fields of industry, culture, literature, sports, spirituality, and banking by virtue of his scholarly attitude and ability, he never abandoned the qualities of humility, modesty, and cooperation, which are becoming obsolete today. The humility and righteousness in his behaviour, despite being truly successful, appeals to people even today. His invaluable contribution in helping a number of cricketers build their lives is exemplary and serves as a guide for others. All the very best for this book!

Regards,
Yours faithfully,

Mrs. Deepti Chaudhari
Mayor of Pune

Sudhakar Ramchandra Paricharak

The Hon. President,
The Dnyaneshwar Agashe Felicitation Committee

Sir,

The function you are organising on the occasion of the 60th birthday of Mr. Dnyaneshwar Agashe is certainly a matter of joy for those who love him with all their heart.

He has carried forward the legacy of the late Chandrashekhar Agashe most ably, adding many new enterprises to the group along the way. Normally, industrialists from the private sector do not venture into the cooperative sector. But with Shree Suvarna Sahakari Bank, he has underlined his capability in that sector as well.

He has proven his versatility by being an industrialist in the private sector, founder of a cooperative bank, head of different educational institutions, able sports administrator, especially in cricket, keynote speaker at the recently concluded Akhil Bhartiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan (*All India Literary Festival*), patron of several institutions and through his close personal relations with leaders from different political parties.

He has a penchant for keeping his word. We had agreed upon a deal to convert BRIMA Sugar Limited, Shreepur, a private concern, into a cooperative one. However, the project got delayed and the costs rose by almost ₹10 million. Notwithstanding this, he still went ahead and honoured our deal. In today's day and age, such magnanimity is indeed rare.

Through his simple living in spite being an industrialist, developing, and maintaining close personal relationships with thousands of people over the years despite not being a politician, and the attitude of showing appreciation, Maalak has carved a special place for himself in the hearts and minds of the people.

On the occasion of his 60th birthday, I extend my best wishes to this multidimensional personality, from the bottom of my heart, and pray to Lord Pandurang of Pandharpur that he stays hale and hearty to celebrate a century in real life too!

Yours faithfully,

Sudhakar Ramchandra Paricharak

Sunil Gavaskar

I am delighted to know that Shri. Dnyaneshwar Agashe is to be felicitated on the completion of 60 years. Time has flown, so to speak. I remember, as a schoolboy, seeing Shri. Agashe's photo as a promising wicket-keeper in *Sport and Pastime*, which used to be the bible of a budding sportsperson then. It was a magazine that reported sporting events and happenings all around the world, but also concentrated on domestic tournaments.

Though Shri. Agashe did not go on to play for India, he played for Maharashtra for a number of years, and after retirement, has looked after the administration of the Maharashtra Cricket Association, which he heads today.

As a batsman who believed the batsman's first target is to score a century, I would like to extend my best wishes to Shri. Agashe on his 60th birthday, and pray that he goes on to achieve a very rare century in life.

With good wishes,

Sunil Gavaskar

C. G. Borde

It is indeed very pleasing to learn that Shri. Dnyaneshwar Agashe will be reaching a milestone in his life on April 17, 2002, his 60th birthday.

I have known him as a cricketer and businessman for a long time. He represented Maharashtra, whom I captained, as a wicket-keeper in the Ranji Trophy. He was a very sound keeper with a safe pair of hands, and a fine batsman too. He served Maharashtra earnestly during his cricketing days.

As a businessman, he has always been helpful to his friends who approach him for financial assistance. I have personal experience of this, as he has always helped whenever my company has been in need of funds. Indeed, he is a friend of all.

Maharashtra Cricket is really fortunate to have him as Chairman of the Association, which is functioning very well under his able leadership.

I wish him a long life and pray for his grand success!

C. G. Borde

Pratap G. Pawar

Dnyaneshwar Agashe and I were casually acquainted with each other for a number of years. My brother, Appasaheb, was Managing Director at Akluj, which I used to visit often. The topics of the cooperative movement and the sugar factory were often discussed at home, during which the names of Agashe, Apte, Walchand Hirachand, and Dahanukar came up.

After completing my Engineering degree from Pilani, I got into business. Being a lover of sports, I played badminton regularly. In 1976-77, I became a part of Agashe's badminton group, where our friendship really took root. Around the same time, the winery in Baramati was facing some issues. It was suggested I take charge of it. In the

course of our conversations, I realised that Agashe was interested in producing brandy from grapes. Not only did he buy the produce, but also gave the right price in the ensuing period. This was the first step in the revival of the factories of the farmers who produced wine from grapes.

In later years, due to his bank, and *Sakal*, our relationship became stronger, and remains so till date. I have received Agashe's sincere and unconditional support in all matters relating to *Sakal*. He has always been there in times of need for which I will forever be indebted to him.

Over this period of about 25 years, we continued to meet, and spoke regularly. I saw him helping and guiding scores of people and going through several bitter financial and psychological upheavals on behalf of his friends. Also, he either participated or led, at the state and national level, in fields ranging from cricket to literature. It is something every friend shall be proud of. I wish this altruistic and unassuming friend all the very best for the future!

Pratap G. Pawar
Sakal Papers Limited

Babasaheb Purandare

April 8, 2002

Industriousness and a sense of appreciation are inborn traits of Shri. Dnyaneshwar Agashe. He has most capably carried forward the legacy of his father's accomplishments. That he has reached the age of 60, while still young at heart, is a matter of pride for us tottering activists. We humbly pray, with all our heart, to Goddess Jagdamba, that he goes on to reach a hundred while still staying youthful, and that society, and the nation at large, reaps the benefits of his accomplishments and achievements.

His pleasing and zealous persona is like a stone-studded necklace in Maharashtra's treasury. He wholeheartedly supports the youth doing good work and helps them to reach great heights. He has a mind as vast as the sky and is the embodiment of the holy Ganges of pure feelings that course through the Pasaydan (*a timeless prayer composed by Sant Dnyaneshwar for the advancement of the universe*). May the

Goddesses Saraswati, Lakshmi, and Bhavani bless him with stupendous success and a long life!

Shri. Babasaheb Purandare

Trustee,

The Maharaja Shiv Chhatrapati Pratishthan (Trust)



With former British PM Sir John Major
and industrialist Sanjay Dalmia



With former Indian PM Manmohan
Singh



With cricketer Sunil Gavaskar



With cricketer Sachin Tendulkar



With former CM of Maharashtra,
Manohar Joshi



With MP Suresh Kalmadi



With singer Lata Mangeshkar and son
Mandar Agashe



With former CM of Maharashtra,
Vilasrao Deshmukh



With former CM of Maharashtra
Sharad Pawar



With cricketer Kapil Dev



With industrialists Mr. Belvalkar and
Pratap Pawar



With industrialists Mr. Camus and S.
L. Kirloskar

Shrimant Yogi – Bal Inamdar

Just uttering the name, Dnyaneshwar Chandrashekhar Agashe, conjures up an image of a Puneri Brahmin dressed in the traditional attire of sherwani (*a long-sleeved outer fitted coat for men*), pagadi (*traditional headwear*) and uparna (*scarf*) doesn't it? This is just one image of Dnyaneshwar. But then, he is different things to different people; a 'Shrimant' (*affluent, the noble one*), a 'Maui' (*a combination of mother and God*), Agashe Saheb (*saheb; meaning master*), 'Shirin', and even 'Chhabya'!

But the soul of all these manifestations is one, that of a pure-hearted person, a fine and magnanimous friend!

I have seen Dnyaneshwar since 1958. Saying I know him would be presumptuous because, I guess, no one has really deciphered and decoded the real Dnyaneshwar. For most, claiming to know him is reminiscent of the story of the seven blind men and the elephant. For, we realise that despite our close association, many facets of Dnyaneshwar's personality continue to remain a mystery.

The foremost image that comes to my mind is of him returning to the pavilion with a swagger, after hitting four fours, bat on his shoulder – à la Lord Hanuman carrying his mace – as if to say, "I got out, but I hammered them, didn't I?" and as if he was going to be feted in the pavilion! The game was played at the S. P. Grounds, against N.M.V. And our excitement then, at winning the Padamji Shield, was no less than that of the winning team in 'Lagaan'!

Back then, we, the cricket-crazy boys of Ramanbaug, indulged in hero-worship. Among our heroes were Madhu Gupte and Sharad Dhaigude (10/63 in the finals) but at the very top was Dnyaneshwar! After passing out from school, I relocated to Mumbai, and we lost touch. But in 1973, Nandu Gore came into my life, and, like a sandalwood tree, filled it with everlasting fragrance. Nandu also was a cricketer, and as lively as Dnyaneshwar. Common friendship rekindled old ties, and the friendship lives to this day.

If I were asked to highlight one quality of Dnyaneshwar's, it would, without a doubt, be that of building and maintaining relationships with people. I have yet to come across a friend so generous at heart (and of hand too).

One of the tenets of Swami Samarth's teachings – '*being a friend to the world depends on how and what you say*' – is ingrained in Dnyaneshwar's nature. Many people took advantage of him, cheated him, were unhappy with him, poisoned his ears, or held a grudge, but Dnyaneshwar never harboured any ill-feelings towards them. Like an

elephant, he kept walking his majestic walk.

The number of friends he has directly or indirectly helped never ceases to amaze me! And he never made a big deal about it. I have seen how Dnyaneshwar reached out to, and even helped, those who were estranged from him due to a misunderstanding or some such reason, as if nothing had ever happened. Sane Guruji used to say, '*there is no flower more beautiful than that of friendship in the garden of the world*'. If that is indeed true, then one must say that God has given Dnyaneshwar a beautiful bouquet (much before the celebration of his 60th birthday)! The credit for this goes to his very own nature, and the love and respect he has always shown his friends. Vilas Ekbote and Mukund Chopade were not only devoted friends, but also played an active role in the affairs of Brihan Maharashtra and Suvarna Sahakari. Dnyaneshwar is well aware of the contribution of his friends in all that he has accomplished so far.

I remember an interesting anecdote. A long time ago, news of Dnyaneshwar being awarded the Shiv Chhatrapati Award came out, and we friends planned a dinner party at the Poonam hotel. Literally at the eleventh hour, we requested the then Collector of Pune, Mr. Anand Bhadkamkar, to grace the occasion as the chief guest. He came right away, and, in his congratulatory address, said that only Dnyaneshwar could compel the Collector of Pune to come in his kurta-pajama at an unearthly hour! I think this single sentence says all there is to say about Dnyaneshwar.

Though he gives the impression of being happy-go-lucky and casual, deep inside, Dnyaneshwar is an extremely balanced and thoughtful person. He has a robust common sense, typical of rural India. He has great business acumen, but is not business-minded in his behaviour. He has great love for life, but not an insatiable lust. He is acutely aware of his ancestral wealth, but there is no arrogance. He is generous but not wasteful.

In spite of Lord Vishnu giving in abundance, and Dnyaneshwar humbly accepting it, there is a sense of detachment in him. Just as the sun bathes the world with its light during the day and quietly sets in the evening, so has Dnyaneshwar mastered the art of detached living.

This is why people who come in contact with him not only love him, but idolise him. Be it a farmer from Shreepur, or a school boy from Pune. For a multitude of reasons, I call him the 'last Peshwa' of Pune. Those who have seen his durbar in Pune will understand where I am coming from. Of course, this durbar is not held at the Shaniwar Wada, but in more majestic surroundings, like Roopali (now Ranjeet) or the P.Y.C. gymkhana! The pomp of his office is no less than that of the Peshwa's court. I suspect

that the designations in his company also are not that of manager or general manager but, in fact, nobleman and minister! It brings to mind the time when the Peshwa, true to his diktat of 'helping anyone in need', congregated people at the foot of the Parvati hills to distribute financial aid. That is why I rechristened the Shree Suvarna Sahakari Bank 'a place where financial aid is distributed'. Having said that, one cannot forget the reputation the bank has earned, as one of the most successful banks in the cooperative sector.

Only against the backdrop of the trauma of losing his father at an early age, a large family comprising of seven sisters, mother, and brother, and an inherited business of a politically volatile commodity like sugar, can one get a true measure of how Dnyaneshwar has manfully shouldered his responsibilities and taken life head-on. Neither did he make a fuss of his grief and the obstacles he faced, nor did he use it as an excuse.

In this journey, his wife, Rekha stood behind him (in my opinion, unnecessarily stayed behind). After ably carrying out the responsibility of looking after the family in the early years of their marriage, she stepped up and played the roles of secretary, friend, loving wife, and a connoisseur of fine arts, with aplomb. She also started getting more involved in the business. While wishing Dnyaneshwar on his 60th birthday, one cannot forget this strong pillar of strength and support in his life.

If we friends have a grouse against Dnyaneshwar, it is that he is not ambitious enough! Apparently, he seems satisfied with what he has. With his qualities and public relations, I believe he can do a lot in Maharashtra's political, social, and cultural spheres. He always talks of 'Nivrutti' (the Marathi word for retirement, also Sant Dnyaneshwar's brother). Well, he needs to be reminded that he is not Nivrutti but Dnyaneshwar himself!

We were terribly disappointed when he missed out on being the President of the BCCI. As far as we were concerned, nobody else deserved that post more than Dnyaneshwar. But due to a breach of trust, politicians surged ahead and cricket-lovers lost out.

Whenever I think of Dnyaneshwar, I think of the lines penned by Swami Samarth –

We should behave in accordance with the time and place; never feel angry; and even if we do, never express it in public.

Forgive past mistakes; work alongside your people, take them along, and find success in what you do.

I believe these lines were penned keeping Dnyaneshwar in mind.

Dnyaneshwar is completing 60 years of his life in the same style and pomp as he

hammered those four fours. In the interim, he has not only amassed material wealth, but been showered with blessings from countless people. This is not easy to achieve. We have seen how he has remained rock-steady in making decisions at different stages of his life, and what a pillar of strength and support he has been for the masses. The great Marathi writer and humorist, P. L. Deshpande, once said that wealth often affects people in a negative way. But though born into riches, this man did not let his simple, cultured, decent life be affected by it. Some friends call him Shrimant, but describing him as a 'Shrimant Yogi' is more appropriate, isn't it?

A Man of Nicknames – Rekha Agashe

Venue – ‘Chandrashekhar’ (the Agashe home), Shaniwar Peth, Pune. I, Rekha Agashe, am sitting in the drawing room and handling the incessant stream of visitors and phone calls. Honestly, there are some days when entire mornings are spent in this drawing room itself. This was such a day. A lady of recent acquaintance had come to me with some work of a political nature. As my husband had gone to Mumbai, I was talking to this lady while simultaneously receiving phone calls and answering queries of the people who had come to meet him.

One of his friends entered the house, shouting at the top of his voice, “How can Chhabya go to Mumbai, today of all days?” I said nothing. He continued, “Vahini (*sister-in-law*) I had got groundnuts fresh from the farm. I thought I would enjoy it in Chhabya’s company. But upon enquiring downstairs, I learnt that he is in Mumbai. Once he returns at night, I hope you eat it together, thinking of me.” I accepted the bag, laughing, and bid him goodbye.

Just then the phone rang. It was T. P. on the line. “Vahini, is Shrimant at home?” “I’m sorry, he has gone to Mumbai. But he will definitely be here tomorrow morning,” I said as I put the phone down. I resumed talking to the lady in front of me, but had to cut short as Vimlatai entered the house asking, “Rekha, is Shirin at home?” “No, he left for Mumbai early in the morning,” I replied. “I had some work with him. Would you ask him to call me tomorrow morning? I will tell Mandar too,” she said, on her way to the inner room.

I got back to talking to the lady. Just then, a man from the bank arrived. Putting down the file in his hand, he said, “Please get it signed from Agashe Saheb once he gets back. I will collect the file by the afternoon tomorrow.” The lady I was talking to said, “Can I ask you something?” I looked at her inquiringly. She continued, “Do the names Agashe Saheb, Shrimant, Chhabya, Shirin, all belong to ‘Dnyaneshwar Agashe’?”

Laughing, I said, “We wives are adept at ‘calling our husbands names’, but all these names have been coined by people who are close to and love him.” Long after the lady had finished her work and left, these ‘nicknames’ kept playing in my mind.

This was about 25 to 30 years ago, when we were in the prime of our youth. The Agashe family consisted of about 20-25 people, while I had come from a nuclear family. I only had to say, “Let’s go away for a few days,” and presto! a trip to Mahabaleshwar would be arranged. Only, that it was never just the two of us. Tagging along were at least

8-10 nieces and nephews. It used to be great fun spending time with these kids though. Cricket was his favourite sport, but he had interest in other sports such as hockey and football too. Due to their father's affinity for it, his brother, Panditrao, and he had taken up wrestling too. This is where he got tagged with the name, 'Chhabya', apparently inspired by a famous wrestler of the time from Nagar, Chhabu Ranboke.

When in Mahabaleshwar, he spent hours playing with and bullying the kids. When I think back to those days, I realise the name 'Chhabya', given to him by his friends, fit perfectly. Even today, at the age of 60, the 'Chhabya'ness in him lives on!

Memories of those youthful days takes me further back. We were in Pune to attend a wedding in the Gogte family. I was only 18, and studying for my junior B. A. in Mumbai. Thoughts of my marriage were furthestmost from anyone's minds. And then out of nowhere, my father accepted my grandmother's idea of sending a proposal to the Agashe family. I climbed the steps of 'Chandrashekhar' for the first time, with my father. A middle-aged lady, clad in the traditional nine-yard saree, welcomed us. I took her to be my future mother-in-law. After completing the formalities, she asked someone to go get Shirin. I wondered who this girl with a Parsi name was, and why was she being summoned? But when 'He' came into the room, I was thoroughly amused by this nickname. I also came to know that the lady I had assumed to be my mother-in-law, was, in fact, his elder sister, Mrs. Leela Mehendale. Later, after my marriage, I learnt that this nickname, 'Shirin' – the manifestation of her love and admiration for him - was due to his Parsi-like fair complexion and blue eyes. I have often been overwhelmed by the love and affection his sisters have showered him with over the last 35 years. I can feel their love for him just in the way they call him 'Shirin'.

However, I didn't understand until much later how he came to be called 'Shrimant'. It is true that ever since setting foot into 'Chandrashekhar', we have been blessed by Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. But none of the Agashe family are ostentatious. The values that I imbibed in this house were those of any middle-class household in Pune. My mother-in-law loved me immensely. I saw to it that her rites and rituals were strictly followed. And, I guess, I passed her test of strict discipline too. In such an atmosphere, where did the name 'Shrimant' come from? His fondness for the traditional Puneri attire was the reason behind it. One only has to see a photo of him wearing a pagadi to see how pertinent it is.

His circle of friends was vast. On his way to somewhere, his journey was never complete without stopping to have a chat with a friend or a relative. His friends used to say, 'This Dnyanoba's (*an affectionate name for Sant Dnyaneshwar*) palkhi (*palanquin*)

would not reach Pandharpur without touching down at every stop. Such was this 'palkhiwala'.

This reminds me, he has another nickname, Mauli. His father, the late Chandrashekhar Agashe was a scholar and devotee of the Dnyaneshwari. And out of this devotion he christened him Dnyaneshwar. Our Marathi minds and hearts automatically connect the word 'Mauli', to this name. Shri. Sharad Pawar always referred to him as 'Mauli'. Whenever we visit Shreepur or Pandharpur, everyone addresses him as Mauli. I feel that like Dnyaneshwar Mauli, he has also sheltered everyone with his love.

Though my father-in-law, the late Chandrashekhar Agashe, founder of the Brihan Maharashtra Sugar Syndicate, was known in private circles as 'Mama' (*maternal uncle*) he was always addressed in his network of factories and in business circles as 'Agashe Saheb'. After his demise, the responsibility of the entire business fell upon Panditrao bhauji (my brother-in-law) who shouldered it very capably. Panditrao extricated the sugar syndicate from many a crisis. During that period, 'Agashe Saheb' was synonymous with Panditrao. However, after the untimely death of Panditrao, my husband not only took over the responsibility of maintaining the reputation of the name 'Agashe Saheb', and carried it with effortless ease but also fulfilled the dreams of his father and brother, thereby enhancing manifold, the reputation of this name.

Now at home, though, all three children call him 'Baba'. Given the cultural and religious backdrop of our home, it was inconceivable for Mandar, Ashutosh, and Sheetal to call him 'Daddy'. My heart swells with pride seeing the way the children take their 'Baba's' name with love and respect, and realise the true value of his advice to this day!

Another incident of just the other day. Aditya, my grandson, asked me, "Grandma, what do you call grandpa?" I was speechless. In spite of there being so many names, I could not come up with an answer. Age-old traditions were followed in our home. It was unthinkable to address him by name in front of my mother-in-law. Therefore, his name always remained in my mind and heart, but never came to my lips. This reminds me, my mother-in-law used to say, "to bring taste to any delicacy, adding lots of sugar is not enough; it also needs a pinch of salt." Now, there were sugar factories at my in-laws', and salt-pans at my father's house. I used to think of myself as that 'pinch of salt' in the Agashe family!

In a flash, the mind has traversed the past 35 years. He did not simply remain an 'Udyog Pati' (*industrialist*) but went on to become an 'Udyog Pita' (*father of industry*) too. Many a storm rose and abated. In life, you win some and lose some. But in all these additions and subtractions of life, the balance of happiness and contentment left with me

is enormous. One 'Rekha Gogte' found her 'Dnyaneshwar' which completely transformed her life and gave her a unique identity and existence!

Even though he has so many names, I have only one name. And this 'Rekha' is a bit selfish too. If God were to grant me one wish, I would unhesitatingly say, "Give me the name, Mrs. Rekha Dnyaneshwar Agashe in my next life too!"



Mr. & Mrs. Dnyaneshwar Agashe



Dnyaneshwar Agashe and Rekha Gogte
Married December 7, 1967



The Agashe Family, circa April 2002

Baba... A Narration – Shalini Agashe

Should I, shouldn't I, should I, shouldn't I write..... I want to.

I read Aai's (*mother's*) and Sheetal's essays on Baba, both overwhelmingly personal and dotted with many experiences and anecdotes. I wanted to write my little-bit too, but, as I do so now, realise that it is exactly that! Though my frame of reference spans just over 5 years, since I have been the younger bahu (*daughter-in-law*) of the Agashe family, I hope to do justice to the subject.

My father and I have shared a typical father-daughter relationship, he the doting father and me the adored daughter. In many ways, I was unprepared for the transition from daughter to daughter-in-law, as I am sure most young girls are. But most young girls are not fortunate enough to have fathers-in-law who guide them through that very trying phase. I, however, was.

The roles Baba essays, as head of a large business empire, a friend, and a guide to all around him, and, above all, a very committed father and head of our family, is indeed a herculean task.

Instances and experiences are many and yet, not enough, to portray the full picture, but I shall try.

Moving from Delhi to Pune, and the difference in the family backgrounds, were overwhelming changes for me, and for the longest time, I remember turning to Baba for support. There is one incident which will always remain fresh in my memory. Aai and Baba were in Delhi, the first time before our wedding. Ashutosh was not there. I went to their hotel to see them, but how I wish I hadn't! I was neither properly dressed nor demure. I wore my oldest jeans and tee-shirt, much against my mother's wishes. It was purely because I was so uncomfortable from the inside, that I had to wear something comfortable on the outside. I think Baba and Aai must have sensed it, because on the way up in the elevator, Aai laughed and said I look like a schoolgirl and Baba ruffled my hair. I couldn't get over it! I don't know if they remember this, but that was the first of Baba's numerous gestures that put me at ease.

After I came to Pune, there was much leg-pulling about me and my typical Delhi habits. Especially the food! I think I fairly stumped everyone by claiming to dislike mangoes, especially the alphonso variety. Since then, Baba made it a point to get the varieties of langda and dussehri for me from his summer trips to Delhi.

I have seen Baba interact with people from all walks of life; politicians to

pilgrims, with incredible ease. It's a humbling experience!

All of the above has been a purely I, me, myself and Baba narrative. It seems that a few hundred words will not suffice to narrate all that I want to.

Often, the nucleus commands the character of the mass. Baba's persona is seen in all his children, which, in turn, has touched my life in a big way; as Ashu's wife, Sheetal's bhabhi (*sister-in-law, from the perspective of the husband's sister*) and Mandar's vahini (*sister-in-law, from the perspective of the husband's brother*).

Naturally, there is a gamut of emotions I have felt for Baba – love, respect, awe, and occasionally anger too! But the predominant emotion is that of gratitude. I am grateful to Baba for being there. At the risk of sounding clichéd, I might add that he always gauged our needs, and stepped into the role of a father, father-in-law, guide, friend, and sometimes all of the above. Like I said, a herculean task!

I have learnt from him, among other things, that everything and everyone has a time and purpose for being, and everything that happens, happens for the best.

At the end of the day, I am grateful to Baba for all that he stands for, and am indeed blessed to be a small part of his large life!

Happy 60th Birthday!

Benevolence Personified! – Madhuri Purandare

The significance of a banyan tree is that it lives for centuries, and its widely spread branches provide shade and shelter to anyone who comes under it. We've all seen tired, weary travellers, and countless others, exhausted from their physical or mental exertions, resting peacefully in the cool shade of the green, leafy canopy of this gigantic tree. Do you know of any living person who could be compared to such a tree?

When man gets caught in destiny's incomprehensible cycle of happiness and grief, and often, the impermanence of life and death forces him to face trial by fire, man either turns to the Almighty, or looks for a shoulder to cry upon. You only to have ask, and this 'walking talking' banyan will be there for you! Through his comforting words and prompt actions, sans any sense of obligation, he always reaches out, and without we realising it, our troubled, tormented minds are assuaged, hope is renewed, and we feel rejuvenated under his magnificent, cool, benevolent shade.

I often wonder how, and when, my brother-in-law, who came into our lives in 1967, became a pillar of strength and support for me.

It is rare to find a craftsman who can seamlessly weave together material and spiritual treasures. And even rarer to find one who then perpetually offers this woven shawl, of warmth and love, for the happiness of others.

The beautiful moments of life have flitted away like a butterfly. How long would it take to lose hope in the face of the stormy waves in the ocean of a directionless life, like a rudderless ship? In such times, God is your only guiding light, your only solace. Fighting the stormy winds, the ship of life strives to find a way towards these rays of hope, and, under 'His' stewardship, summons the physical and psychological courage to sail against the tide. This God always responds to the call of his devotees. Nobody can escape destiny, but 'He' provides the strength to bear it.

The strange fact though, is that we never see this omnipresent God in his physical manifestation. I strongly believe that though God may not physically come down to help us, he does so, in some form or the other, and always stands behind us. To me, all the well-wishers, aides, friends, and foes, who are always there for me and my family, and the doctors who bring me the elixir of life, are no less than angels. And, for me, Dnyaneshwar is one such angel.

Dnyaneshwar's regal, handsome, Peshwa-like looks, a life blessed by Lakshmi,

the Goddess of wealth, his nature, true to Lord Krishna's teachings in the Bhagvad Gita, of selflessly and unconditionally helping others and his ability to withstand the physical and psychological onslaughts of life; the amalgamation of all these qualities has created a truly gem-like personality, our Kohinoor diamond, Dnyaneshwar!

Even a small ray of light falling on a diamond, illuminates like a resplendent rainbow and reinvigorates the environment. This role is performed by Rekha. She often reminds me of the beautiful, traditional lamp, burning incessantly in the temple in their home. The tiny flame of this lamp illuminates the entire temple, and creates a peaceful and pleasant aura. That is why, like Vitthal and Rakhumai (*Lord Vitthal and his wife, revered figures in the Marathi conscience*) I find the pair of Rekha and Dnyaneshwar venerable. They are my support, my trustees!

On this occasion of Dnyaneshwar's 60th birthday, I pray to God to forever bless us with the shade of this banyan. May he live a long and healthy life! Many are to be illuminated by his radiant personality yet, many have to follow in his footsteps, many a tired and exhausted soul has to be refreshed and rejuvenated under the canopy of his benevolent shade, many have to learn much from this vivacious fountain of life.

May all good things come your way!

The Trustee's Heir – Ramesh Mangde

About 50 kilometres from Pune, in Pargana district, lying in the lap of nature, is Mangdari, a small village of about 100 households. Situated along the slopes of the hills, this village is, at once, blessed with natural beauty, and cursed with abject poverty. The Mangdari area witnesses heavy rains in the monsoons. But because of the hill slopes, all the water is carried away, and in summer, there isn't enough water even to drink. The paddy crop yields little income, and is also dependent on the rains. Due to the lack of awareness about education, the farmers are mostly illiterate. Hence, generations of Mangdari farmers languished in poverty. For these farmers, the Agashe family, moneylenders by profession, proved to be a great source of support. Helping these farmers with money, food grains, and in other ways during their times of need came naturally to the Agashe family. Though Saheb's ancestors were moneylenders, he never behaved as one. There is no record of any ledgers being kept. And were such a ledger to be found, its search would not yield a single entry in the credit column. The simple reason being that the distressed farmer was never in a position to repay the loan. The Agashe family never asked for land, house or jewellery as mortgage. On the contrary, they offered their own lands for the farmers to till, as they wished that the farmer should work in the fields, grow the crop, be able to feed his family and stand on his own feet. Saheb never bothered to ask about the income from the yield, nor did he ever ask for a share in it.

Unfortunately, the Agashe family was badly affected by the riots of 1948. Chausopi Wada, their mansion, was burnt to ashes. The Ram temple adjoining their mansion was also consigned to the flames. Many families were destroyed. But out of these ashes too, the Agashe family rose like a phoenix! These bitter memories must surely have been etched on the young, innocent mind of Dnyaneshwar Saheb. But, leaving the past behind, and without prejudice, he has wholeheartedly come to the aid of the farmers of Mangdari, be it the question of drinking water, or the education of the village children.

The villagers used the water from the well behind Saheb's mansion for drinking, and when the well dried up, from a stream in Saheb's farm about two kilometres away. In summer, the women had a harrowing time traversing these two kilometres carrying the water. Then came the famine of 1972! During this period, Dnyaneshwar Saheb willingly handed over the water stream in his farm to the District Council. The Council built a well

on this stream and supplied the villagers with tap water. This scheme had another beneficial outcome. In the monsoons, the water in the well would get contaminated and cause dracunculiasis, a Guinea worm disease. No household was spared from this terrible disease. Once tap water was available, this incurable disease was eradicated too! The credit for this, indirectly, goes to Dnyaneshwar Saheb.

The village had schooling up to the 10th standard, but not enough classrooms. Classes were conducted under trees, in the village hall, and even in the temple. This was highly distressing for the students. Realising this, Dnyaneshwar Saheb recently built four rooms for the school in Mangdari, in the memory of his mother, and saved the students the trouble of trudging back and forth. He gave employment to several young people from the village in his diverse businesses. Today, these youth are living happily in apartment houses in Pune. They can afford to send their children to good schools and reap the benefits of education. All this has been possible largely due to the timely support and assistance provided by Saheb. He didn't merely have the desire to do something for the village, but acted upon it too. People often tend to forget their origins and roots when they achieve success and fame, but Agashe Saheb, despite his exalted status, never forgot his village and the ancestral farmers. This is rare indeed!

Computerisation and industrial recession are forcing several businesses to lay off employees. The recession has affected Saheb's industrial sector too. But instead of laying off the employees who had become surplus due to the computerisation, and redundant due to the industrial recession, Saheb absorbed them in his other concerns. The noble thought behind this being that the employee should survive. Profits are not his only motive. Instead, he craves for every one of his employees to be able to live with dignity, be happy and prosper, because the employee is not only a member of the Agashe group of industries, but of the Agashe family itself. The relationship here is not a legal one of employer and employee, but rather an emotional one of head of the family and family member! Breaking the shackles of so-called Management Science principles governing the employer-employee relationship, Saheb cracked the secret of getting the optimum out of the employees by tapping into their talents and potential. This is why such a massive business empire is flourishing. The credit for this goes to Saheb's administrative skills and the ability to spot hidden talents in people. In spite of facing several financial crises, Agashe Saheb never delays his workers' salaries, or interest payable on deposits. He is fully aware that the middle class depends upon, and eagerly awaits, the dates of their salary and interest payments. In Pune, a number of reputed businesses folded up, leaving their depositors in the lurch. Many middle-class people lost their deposits. But deposits in

Agashe Saheb's business are not only safe, but the deposit slip is as good as a demand draft. In these times of distrust, this is testament to the level of trust Agashe Saheb has earned from the common man, and a shining example of his dedication and devotion towards his profession. Saheb has remained aware of the fact, and considers it his moral responsibility, that the money given by society should remain safe, that he is a trustee of this money, and it should only be used for the right purposes. This tradition of being a trustee has come down to Saheb from his father.

Saheb never loses hope in the face of crises. He confronts each crisis, and strides on, firm in the belief that Lord Pandurang of Pandharpur is behind him. These twin qualities of courage and faith he possesses often give us the inspiration to live. We believe that in the form of Saheb, not only Alandi's Mauli but Pandharpur's Vitthal too is behind us. We are indeed fortunate. Saheb believes in his heart that all the business enterprises of the Agashe family survive and flourish due to the efforts of the employees and the blessings of Lord Pandurang, and that the Agashe family is merely an instrument of divine will! Such humility!

Dnyaneshwar Saheb, an heir to the 'Trustee' in the true sense, is stepping into his 61st year. On this auspicious occasion, I wish him all the very best from the bottom of my heart!

Magical Nights – Arvind Mehendale

I first saw Dnyaneshwar at close quarters in the September-October of 1958. The occasion was a game of cricket between N.M.V. and Ramanbaug. Even before the game started, our coach, Rajabhau Vaidya, had announced a cash prize of ₹5 for anyone dismissing Agashe or Madhu Gupte before they got to 50. Consequently, while bowling, I was curious to find out who this Agashe was! I never even dreamt that this boy, who was in the enemy camp then, would go on to become one of my closest friends! Agashe's image at the time was that of a cricketer who took part in wrestling contests, wore a short pyjama, Nehru shirt and a Gandhi cap, and roamed the streets of Shaniwar Peth bullying everyone. It is funny that later, in 1960, we became teammates at S. P. College, and for the past 42 years, are playing on the same team!

I have had the opportunity of closely seeing his journey, from a mischievous player in his schooldays to a respectable gentleman of Pune. Losing his father at an early age, the terrible devastation caused by the Panshet floods and the responsibility of a large family turned him into a responsible man at a young age. Despite starting from the obscurity of Shaniwar Peth, travelling across the seven seas and being exposed to the outside world brought about a radical change in his outlook and gave birth to an enterprising industrialist. Fed up with the injustices he suffered in cricket, he fought elections against the old stalwarts, and at an age where he should actually have been playing the game, entered the Maharashtra Cricket Association, made it a name to reckon with, by virtue of his determination and hard work and, by staging international matches, brought it financial success!

When it comes to describing him as a person, no praise can be too high. Not only did he help his friends at every step, but, bearing no malice, selflessly helped his detractors too. He has helped so many families without expecting anything in return, that it would not come as a surprise if someone were to keep his photograph in their prayer-room. His circle of family and friends is large. He is there for everyone in their times of need, which gives them the feeling of being exclusively close to him. Whether you call this a talent, or his deceit, it is admirable.

Dnyaneshwar is truly a 'Natavary', a giant of the stage. In the past 40 years, I have seen him going to London for a cricket match and meeting the British Prime Minister in a suit, to wearing the traditional Puneri pagadi and attire and joining the pilgrim-procession to Pandharpur and performing Lord Pandurang's puja wearing the

sovla (*ritual wrap-around*) That is why I feel the title of Natavarya fits him to a tee.

In our friendship of 42 years, we have spent countless days together, but the magical nights spent in the company of friends used to be a real celebration! In the early days, we met at the Shivaji Printing Press. Later, our boisterous sessions of poetics and humour continued either at my bungalow, at Vilas Ekbote's flat on Apte Road, or on the terrace of Swasti or some such hotel. The sessions included Vilas's mild and Vartak's naughty jokes, Dnyaneshwar taking the mickey out of everyone, cricketing debates, mocking Hemant Gore's earnestly laid plans and discussions on who got or lost a 'honey' (girlfriend). All this had almost become a ritual. A break of even a few days in these sessions made us restless. If some important person was visiting, Dnyaneshwar would bring him along to our party. As a result, we enjoyed the company of politicians like Sharad Pawar and Vitthalrao Gadgil, industrialists like Madhav Apte, Ajit Gulabchand or Arun Dahanukar, and cricketers like Chandu Borde and Bapu Nadkarni. They marvelled at the genuine affection we friends shared for each other. Dnyaneshwar's favourite game at the party was provoking somebody. If there was someone from the BJP, Agashe would say something against the party and start a war of words. If it was a Congress man, he would talk of the damage the Congress has done to the country, thereby forcing a response. This not only made the conversations more interesting, but also revealed many insights along the way.

Despite being light-hearted, several plans were conceived, new relationships were born and our lives took on a different meaning during the course of these conversations. The decision to host an International Calendar show; the determination to start a bank; the proposal to start a new magazine, *Rajas*; to gain entry into the Maharashtra Cricket Association; Agashe and Ekbote's election to the Senate of the University of Pune; the seeds of these and many other ideas were sown during these magical nights. These nights did not discriminate between small and big, new and old, or female and male. All interactions were frank and transparent. There were no conspiracies, devious plots, attempts to cozy up to Agashe, malice in the banter or regret in the mistakes we committed. These magical nights are why we are still fairly young, though poised to cross 60. The night of our lives is still young and I pray it remains so in the future too! I congratulate this multitalented friend of mine on completing 60 years after having recovered from two deadly illnesses. I pray from the bottom of my heart for him to live to be a hundred!

International Calendar Show – Ramakant Pethkar

It was the summer of 1966. We friends, in our twenties, were enjoying a glass of sugarcane juice. In the juice parlour, a number of calendars depicting gods and goddesses were displayed. To my mind it was a ‘calendar show’.

We were chatting one day in Dnyaneshwar’s Shivaji Press, when Taraprakash Vartak arrived. He often came up with some fantastic ideas. This time he asked, “Shall we host a calendar show?” Used to seeing the calendars in the juice parlour, we initially mocked him. But Taraprakash explained his idea in detail. He had seen many international calendars. In those days, calendars in foreign countries were of a very high printing quality, and having one of those in your living room was considered a status symbol. Only a handful of companies printed such calendars in India. For an exhibition, at least 100 such calendars would be needed. The domestic ones would be more or less similar to the ones in the juice parlour. He said all we needed were about 25 excellent international calendars. Each calendar would have between 6-12 coloured pages. If we separated them, we would have many pictures. We mocked him some more.

Dnyaneshwar, a.k.a. Shrimant was also mocking him, but his mind was ticking. He liked the idea. And then we got to work. There were meetings every night, followed by fruit dishes outside Bank of Maharashtra, on Bajirao Road. The first step was to collect addresses of foreign companies. As the correspondence was to be with foreign companies and consulates, the letter head and envelopes had to be of excellent quality. The task of booking the hall for the exhibition, advertising (though we were unsure as to how many people would turn up) and contacting the main newspapers in Pune was naturally left to Dnyaneshwar.

As any foreign company was unlikely to respond to an amateur group, it was decided to start a firm. It was named the ‘Forum for International Information’. God alone knows what it meant! The address for this firm was 43, Shaniwar Peth (which was Vartak’s dilapidated 3-room house). The letter head was on excellent onion-skin paper. The job of correspondence was, of course, left to Rambhau Joshi. And then began the wait for the calendars. One day, I asked Taraprakash in jest whether any calendar had arrived. He took me to his house, where we stared long at the SAS Scandinavian Airlines calendar (from Sweden, Norway, and Denmark), the only one to have arrived. Dnyaneshwar though was patience personified. In those days, Gokhale Hall was the

central place in Pune for cultural events and exhibitions. It was expensive and perennially booked. Since Dnyaneshwar had a penchant for spacious and well-organised places, expense was no bar. He booked Gokhale Hall for the exhibition. Next came advertising. I introduced Dnyaneshwar to my neighbour, Bhaiyya Saheb Onkar. In a matter of minutes, Dnyaneshwar had won him over and managed to arrange for a small information-based write-up to be published in the *Sakal* newspaper on the eve of the exhibition.

The next task, of preparing banners, hoardings, etc. to be put up around the city, was entrusted to Dilip Deshpande. Despite all the advertising, doubts persisted as to whether people would turn up. As we novices had attempted such a novel event in the Pune of those days, anxiety was bound to be there. Dnyaneshwar suggested setting up an 'advisory committee'. This comprised of, among others, Bhaiyya Saheb Onkar, architect V. V. Badve, economist Vilas Ekbote, and Prof. Balkrishna Chopde. Initially, it was decided to keep entry to the event free. But the advice of the Principal D. K. Denge, of the Abhinav Kala Vidyalay, proved invaluable. He advised against giving free entry, saying that people might come simply because it was free. He said the true connoisseur would pay, adding that the exhibition was going to be completely innovative, which filled us with great enthusiasm. Still unsure whether people would really come, the entrance fee was pegged at 10 paise.

Once, a meeting of the advisory committee was in progress. I was a little late. Dnyaneshwar was eating a batata-vada (*potato-fritters*). I entered as he was about to take a bite. Realising there was none left for me, he offered half of what he was eating. This seemingly trivial incident shows the love and affection he has for his friends.

Then the calendars started arriving. They had great variety. The KLM calendar (from The Netherlands) was about 5 feet tall, one calendar was printed on aluminium foil, those from Japan and the United Arab Emirates were in 3-D. In some calendars, the pictures looked different from different angles. Some were naughty, which, naturally, had to be censored. One company sent a calendar with a square picture which only had circles on it. The language too was not English. We wondered what it might be. It turned out to be a gramophone record! When we played it, we realised it was an advertisement for that company.

Next came the preparations for the inauguration ceremony. Dnyaneshwar knew people from all walks of life. As we had got access to the hall only the night before, the challenge was to separate the pages of the calendars and put them up. But Dnyaneshwar's circle of friends was huge. Everyone got to work, and by morning, the job was done. Tasty snacks followed. It was decided to invite Mohan Dharia to preside over the

function, which was to be inaugurated at the hands of Jog Saheb of the Bank of Maharashtra. The big day dawned. A stage was erected in the open space outside Gokhale Hall. The function was scheduled for 10 in the morning. Having worked through the night, we went home for a quick shower, and, dressed in our finest clothes, reached the venue. Doubts still persisted as to whether people would turn up. But, in the words of Lele Sir, the inauguration was a stupendous success. We were now convinced that the exhibition would draw large crowds.

The people of Pune are known to be extremely discerning. But our calendar show got such a massive response that the ticket-queues extended from Gokhale Hall to Umbrya Ganpati Chowk, morning and evening. At the end of each day, Dnyaneshwar got potato curry and bread for the volunteers, from his house. Tired from the day's labour, we devoured it. On public demand, the exhibition ran for many days. But since we all had our own jobs to attend to, we had to wind it up.

The calendar show was held for the next three years, not only in Pune, but in Mumbai and Calcutta too. The reason for narrating this particular incident in such detail is that though Dnyaneshwar and his friends undertook many projects later, this was the first, and the most innovative one. It also gave us a glimpse into his organising prowess, and his ability of drawing people towards him. He gave his colleagues freedom and never micro-managed. And, everything he touched turned to gold! On the occasion of his 60th birthday, we friends wish him all the very best in life!

Dnyaneshwar and Shree Suvarna Sahakari Bank – Vilas Ekbote

Dnyaneshwar experienced the joy of being a father four times in his life. Thrice, when Mandar, Ashutosh, and Sheetal were born, and the fourth, the day Suvarna Sahakari Bank was born!

For the past 40 years, Dnyaneshwar and his friends, such as myself, have been involved in various schemes, plots, and manoeuvres, which, in common parlance, are called projects! Starting with establishing Suvarna Bank, Dnyaneshwar's various pursuits over the years have highlighted several attributes of his personality. Having been with him every step of the way, I could feel the force of these attributes, and on the occasion of the publication of this literary tribute, I genuinely feel like sharing them with the world.

The idea of starting Suvarna Cooperative Bank took root in our minds in 1969, when all the premier banks in the country were nationalised. We immediately applied to the Reserve Bank and, within 40 days, were in possession of the license required to be deemed a cooperative institution. Dnyaneshwar, Dr. Bhide, and I had gone with the proposal of the license to the Reserve Bank. Dnyaneshwar was all of 27 years old. In front of the high-ranking bank officials, we were mere boys. And it was but natural for one of those officials, Mr. K. P. Kulkarni, to form the impression that we thought starting a bank was child's play! He bombarded us with question after question. But Dnyaneshwar was in great form, and batting superbly on a tricky wicket, won over K. P. Using his oratory skills, Dnyaneshwar was successful in convincing K. P. of our honest intentions and fierce will-power. To this day, Mr. K. P. Kulkarni is a special friend and advisor to Suvarna Bank.

Ghulam Ghouse, a Chief Officer at the Reserve Bank at the time, was himself a very fine cricketer. Dnyaneshwar's pleasant personality, sweet tongue, and cricketing background created a mighty fine impression on him. So much so, that he became a fan! We experienced these aspects of Dnyaneshwar's personality often in the days to come. I've seen people, having taken an adversarial stance in a meeting, change their arguments midway and align themselves with Dnyaneshwar's point of view.

Suvarna Sahakari Bank should be considered to be the first cooperative bank since the nationalisation of banks in 1969. The alarming fact is that in the 17-year period between 1952 to 1969, not a single cooperative bank was established in Pune. It was as if the entrepreneurship of the Pune-kars in this field had frozen. Taking the lead from

Suvarna Sahakari Bank, however, about 25-30 such banks opened in Pune. Also, the network of urban cooperative banks spread rapidly in Maharashtra. The renowned economist, Joseph Schumpeter, describing the greatness of entrepreneurs, says, "Success of the initial entrepreneur smoothens the path of others." It is the incontrovertible truth that, by establishing Suvarna Sahakari Bank, Dnyaneshwar earned the tag of being a pioneer among entrepreneurs.

The underlying principle of economics is that the timing of implementing decisions is as important as the decisions themselves. Jagdish Bhagwati, an economist of international repute, says, "Administrators in India do not value the timing of the opportunities they get." One of the main reasons for the success of the bank was that Dnyaneshwar fully understood, and embraced, the importance of the principle of timing. Our bank was inaugurated by the then Finance Minister of Maharashtra, Barrister Sheshrao Wankhede. In his speech, he narrated an incident related to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. "Panditji wanted to start a cooperative society in Uttar Pradesh. That was the era of British rule. After harbouring this dream for a long time, Panditji finally gave up." Wasting time is wasting an opportunity. Dnyaneshwar always had this acute awareness of time. The credit for Suvarna Bank avoiding the economic malady of 'paralysis by analysis' is Dnyaneshwar's alone. The secret of success is prompt implementation of decisions made.

Suvarna Bank grew at a tremendous rate. Dnyaneshwar's presence and contribution in diverse fields in Pune, the appeal of his middle-class image for the people of Pune, and the impenetrable trust the common man had in him were the main reasons behind it. As of today, Suvarna Bank has over 400,000 clients. I guess over 50,000 of these must be known to Dnyaneshwar personally. Suvarna Bank doesn't feature as much in advertisements, either in newspapers or in public spaces, and yet, there are hordes of account holders and depositors. Etching the image of Suvarna Bank on the hearts and minds of the people in such a comprehensive manner is Dnyaneshwar's wizardry. People of repute from diverse fields, like the Mangeshkar family, Hon. Shri. Sharad Pawar, Hon. Shri. Prataprao Pawar, Pandit Bhimsen Joshi, the late Vasantrao Deshpande, cricketers including the late, D. B. Deodhar, known as 'cricket maharshi', Mr. Sunil Gavaskar, and Mr. Chandu Borde, several respected people from the film fraternity such as Mr. Amol Palekar, Mr. Ram Gabale, the Sarpotdar family, Mr. Jayram Kulkarni, Mr. Jabbar Patel, and even high-ranking gazetted officers like Mr. Dinesh Afzalpurkar and Dr. Purushottam Palande have entrusted their hard-earned money to Suvarna Bank. The singular credit for this, naturally, goes to Dnyaneshwar.

Ultimately, to run any bank as a business needs practical vision. Being a successful entrepreneur, Dnyaneshwar had that pragmatism. Our bank was profitable from its inception. From the outset, Dnyaneshwar had chalked out a policy to provide for suspect and failed loans through the profits earned. Post 1993, the Reserve Bank put in place guiding principles regarding N. P. accounts and the provisions thereof. These principles, however, were being followed by Suvarna Bank since 1969. A number of banks found themselves in hot waters due to the new policies of the Reserve Bank. Suvarna Bank, however, was not affected by it. Once the bank earns profits, the shareholders clamour for higher dividends. Resisting the temptation of appeasing them, Suvarna Bank invested the major chunk of the profits in its sinking fund, and increased its funds. This success is down to Dnyaneshwar's leadership.

Previously, most banks functioned like the moneylenders of old. A person seeking a loan was treated like a beggar. Those were times where capital was at a premium and thus, loans were rationed. Banks took pride in making the applicant run from pillar to post, before finally forking out a very small amount. Even in those times, Dnyaneshwar had a progressive outlook. He maintained that an entrepreneur who is capable of paying interest on his loans adds significantly to the nation's wealth, and treating such a person as a respectable customer is the primary duty of the bank. All the officers of the bank were well-aware of this aspect of Dnyaneshwar's vision. This attitude of the bank has proved to be a boon for several entrepreneurs who belonged to the middle-class. Times have changed today. Banks are flush with capital, and are wooing entrepreneurs instead. But even at a time when it was extremely difficult to give loans, the respect with which Dnyaneshwar treated the loan-seeking entrepreneurs was a feature of our bank and a prime reason for our prosperity.

Another trait of Dnyaneshwar's personality that appealed to the socialist in me is his compassion for the weaker sections of society. Let me relate a recent incident. Adarsh Janta Bank was a sick bank in Mumbai. Most of the account-holders were from the Dalit community, and financially backward. The dire situation of the bank was calamitous for the poor account-holders. Fixed marriages were being broken, and there was hardly enough money to even pay for home-remedies. The plight of these people moved Dnyaneshwar. He took it as a challenge to bring Adarsh Janta Bank back to life. First, he took over the administration of the bank and made the loss-making bank profitable. Requisite amounts of money were made available to distressed account-holders in immediate need of it. He acceded to the demand made by these poor people for a building called 'Buddha Vihar', and got it built. A distinct image, of Dnyaneshwar as 'a wealthy

man with great compassion for the poor', was etched on my mind.

Another incident related to this bank comes to mind. On the very day Dnyaneshwar, Ghodke, and I were nominated to the board of Adarsh Janta Sahakari Bank, he secured a deposit of ₹10 million for the bank from a business associate. That too not as a term-deposit, but as a current account, which gives no interest. Dnyaneshwar has been blessed with friends willing to put at stake millions of rupees to a failing bank, merely to honour his word! Adarsh Janta Bank could stand on its own feet again only because they found a leader of Dnyaneshwar's caliber.

Under Dnyaneshwar's leadership, the directors and other employees of Suvarna Sahakari Bank work together as a family. Dnyaneshwar has deep affection for the employees of the bank. He doesn't accede to their requests immediately, but normally doesn't turn them down either. Once, the employees asked Dnyaneshwar for a bonus. As Dnyaneshwar turned them down, a cheer went around! They were convinced that Saheb's refusal meant he would definitely give the bonus! Due to this mutual love, there have been no strikes or demonstrations at the bank, ever. Treating Saheb's word as gospel, the employees have completely identified with the bank. Be it an illness, a wedding in the family, or a domestic quarrel, in Saheb, the employees find a pillar of strength and support. Our Board of Directors would surely be the envy of any other cooperative bank, as it includes such diverse personalities as Prof. Chopde, a brilliant engineer, Badve, a renowned architect, Bal Inamdar, a top-notch tax consultant, budding young cricketers like Ashutosh, women entrepreneurs like Rekha, engineers from various fields like Ramakant Pethkar, Dada Jadhav, Bhaskar Patil, and Purushottam Limaye, loyal, old colleagues like Ram Joshi, and a lawyer like Vimaltai! Besides being renowned in their respective fields, they are willing to give their all for the bank too. This shows Dnyaneshwar's ability of appreciating the qualities in others, and the mutual friendship, and commitment towards a common goal, the Directors have.

I can go on showering praise on Dnyaneshwar with reference to the bank. Along with these positives though, one can point out a few limitations to his personality too. His tendency to defer taking an unpleasant decision, his reluctance in dishing out harsh punishment or his innate nature of completely trusting the other person. His behaviour seems naïve at times. He believes we are human beings first and entrepreneurs later. At a personal level, these are virtues, but can prove to be obstacles where the interests of the organisation are concerned. Having said that, here is no denying that, as an organisation, Suvarna Bank has been a great success!

I pray that Dnyaneshwar's 75th birthday is also celebrated in such grand

fashion!

The Complete Man – Sharatchandra Belvalkar

About four days ago, as I was hurrying into Suvarna Sahakari Bank, Kulkarni, a bank employee, called out to me and said, “I have some work with you.” I retorted, “I am on my way to meet Agashe Saheb and am already running late.” To which, a visibly flustered Kulkarni replied, “Oh! Then you better carry on. Let’s meet after your meeting though.”

This is the effect Agashe Saheb’s penchant for punctuality has on all of us. The funny part, though, is that Agashe Saheb never tells anyone off for being late. He has instilled this feeling of awe in us simply by being on time, always!

After my meeting with Agashe Saheb, I went to Kulkarni and asked him what he wanted to talk to me about. He replied, “Since you have known Saheb very closely, could you write an article on the time spent with him?” I asked what the occasion was, to which he replied, “Well, don’t ask that. That is our little secret!” I said, “Okay! But at least tell me when you want it?” Calculating in his head, Kulkarni said, “Before the 17th of April.” That explained it all. April 17 was Agashe Saheb’s birthday, and the year 2002 meant he would complete 60 years of his life. So, this was Kulkarni’s secret.

My affinity with Agashe Saheb was known to all. Thus, memories were plentiful. But I believe that memories are like a precious jewel kept in a velvet box. They are to be preserved in the vault of your heart. On very special occasions, the vault is to be opened, to view the treasure to your heart’s content! And this definitely was such an occasion. ‘Dnyaneshwar’ was standing on the auspicious threshold of completing 60 years!

It is only natural to be reminded of the ‘Dnyaneshwari’ when reminiscing about ‘Dnyaneshwar’. At the beginning of the 10th chapter, talking about a sadguru (*a true guru*) and satpurush (*virtuous person*), ‘Dnyanobaraya’ (*Sant Dnyaneshwar*) says, “How do you apply fragrance to sandalwood? What delicacy can you make out of nectar? Where can you get a canopy to cover the sky?”

Writing about Agashe Saheb is akin to falling into this trap! I fear my words will never measure up to the goodness of the man! My audacity at attempting this, without having the requisite wizardry with words, or the eloquence, is nothing short of madness!

About 8-10 years ago, I was going through a difficult period, as if engulfed by darkness. There are times in life when the dust you touch turns to gold, but during that

period, even gold turned to dust! Our business was floundering, every endeavour ended in failure and our trust in humanity was severely put to the test!

Against the backdrop of three years of such despair and desperation, a friend of mine introduced me to Agashe Saheb, saying to him, "Dnyaneshwar, only a person like you can pull these people out of their misery."

I knew the name Dnyaneshwar Agashe all too well but, despite living in Pune for 25-30 years, had never met him. I wondered as to why this person, who didn't know us from Adam, would help! I was reluctant to even ask for help due to bitter past experiences. After listening to our tale of woes, and reviewing our stalled housing-projects, he asked me to present a plan. Expecting certain rejection, I placed a paper in front of him, and said, "This is a plan to bail out about 550 middle-class customers, who booked flats placing their trust in A. V. Bhat and Company. But we need someone to give us another large loan, the earlier mountain of debt notwithstanding." He took the foolscap paper in his hand, studied it for a minute, and said, "Our bank can give a maximum loan of ₹7.5 million. Open an account in our Tilak Road branch. The loan has been sanctioned. Get to work."

I was stunned into silence! I didn't know what to say. I thanked him then, but even today, I have no words to describe that feeling of joy! That memorable day was, to me, 'a new dawn from the womb of the night!'

That day on, fortunes took a dramatic turn. All of us were working with renewed enthusiasm. There were the usual ups and downs of business, but with Agashe Saheb standing behind us like a rock, we had the belief to overcome all obstacles. This was not mere verbal comfort, but reality. He was helping us wholeheartedly, not just as a banker, but as a friend too, which reminded me of the term, 'friend and philosopher'. A thinker like Agashe Saheb had harnessed his intellect for our project.

Then there was the incident of the loan taken from Central Bank. The bank had filed a suit against us in the courts. Not only did Agashe Saheb hold talks with the high-ranking officials of the bank and finalise the settlement amount, but he assured the Chairman of the bank that if we were unable to repay the loan, he personally would! Later, he even stood surety in court for ₹17.5 million.

He has a very simple, middle-class lifestyle, is extremely soft-spoken, and never brags about his own accomplishments. I experienced, first-hand, the amazing power of this man's simple words and actions!

He possesses the sharp intellect required in business. He can foresee which way a company would go merely by looking at its balance sheet. But, more pertinently, the

kindness and compassion that accompanies his sharp intellect is rarely found.

Many stories can be told about Agashe Saheb's business acumen and foresight, but simply talking about his being a successful industrialist or a major banker is not a true reflection of his personality. These are but small gifts that destiny, enamoured of his sharp intellect, has showered on him. It is imperative to get to know him as an example of the finest of men! I was fortunate enough, as a friend, to be privy to this aspect of his persona. When travelling alone with his driver, he always sits in the front passenger seat. Even a person wearing just a loincloth is welcome in his cabin. Not only that, but, at times, this person talks to him on a first-name basis, and Saheb responds with a big smile on his face.

It is his innate nature to consider everyone on par. There is a steady stream of major politicians, leaders, industrialists, entrepreneurs, cricketers, film-stars, and countless others to and from his cabin. But billionaire and pauper are treated the same. This is not contrived, but comes to him naturally!

Cricket is an inseparable part of Agashe Saheb's life. He has a huge reputation in cricketing circles. To be honest, I am not very fond of the game, but the outlook towards life that Agashe Saheb has acquired due to cricket is extraordinary, and I admire him for that. If he were to speak at any event, rest assured that he will bring out the similarities in cricket and life. Where fours and sixes symbolised success, a catch or being bowled depicted failure. He would effortlessly link the success or failure of the first innings to the optimism of the second innings. "Life is but a game of cricket," is a favourite quote of his. Probably, cricket is the secret of his equanimity!

Whether talking to a small baby, or a youth in his twenties, Saheb's words ooze love and affection. My own children have experienced this. A glimpse of intelligence or even a little ability shown by a young child is bound to be rewarded with an affectionate pat on the back from Saheb. He casually addresses a young cricketer as 'Tendulkar'. If a young entrepreneur were to present a well-made balance sheet, he would say, "Well-done, Finance Minister!" Praising others for their efforts is Agashe Saheb's forte.

When the finest of men is an industrialist without an ego, one can feel the satisfaction he derives from every action. Others around him feel as if he has been blessed with all the joys of life. The credit for his good fortune, though, is not his alone.

A large portion of this credit will have to be given to Rekha tai. God has blessed her with immense beauty, but she has earned the boon of always being pleasant and ever-smiling through the sweetness of her nature. Rekha tai's artistic abilities have lent beauty, serenity, and peace to the Agashe household. The moment you step into their house, the

words, ‘*if there is heaven on earth, it is here, it is here*’, will reverberate in your mind. All this is Rekha tai’s magic!

Shri. Dnyaneshwar Agashe, on the auspicious occasion of you completing 60 years, on behalf of all of us, I will just say to the cricketer in you –

You made a huge success of your first innings and will play the second, too, with the same gusto, but you must complete the century of your life!

In concluding this ‘Dnyaneshwari’ on our friend ‘Dnyaneshwar’, this comes to mind –

Coloured footstools should be placed, beautiful designs with sand-powder should be drawn around them, small neatly-crafted traditional lamps should be lit in a silver salver, and as we wave them in a circle in front of Dnyaneshwar and Rekha tai sitting on the footstools, we should ask for –

Peace; contentment; and good fortune; and God should grant us these blessings!

May Your Journey Be Blessed! – Mukund Chopde

Dnyaneshwar and I share a close friendship, and I consider it a privilege to be able to call myself a friend of such an extraordinary man. Despite being so close to him, we friends continue to remain ordinary, while he effortlessly maintains his extraordinariness!

Normally, those from affluent backgrounds do not befriend the middle-class. But in our case, Dnyaneshwar's affluence has never proved a hindrance to our friendship. On the contrary, it has benefitted us. When we were in school, cricket was a game we could not afford, but, due to Dnyaneshwar's deep pockets and generosity, we could display our skills on the cricket field.

Dnyaneshwar has wholeheartedly helped scores of friends on numerous occasions. As friends, we never felt burdened by his help and generosity. It was as if helping us was his duty, and our right. And so it is, to this day. None of his friends are bound by feelings of obligation, gratitude or subservience towards him. This becomes evident in the way we talk, rib each other and argue whenever we get together, at Roopali or Ranjit.

If there is a major civic function in Pune, Dnyaneshwar is sure to be seen on the dais; if not, then he would be busy in some important business meeting. But otherwise, he is most likely to be found enjoying the company of his friends, playing cards, chatting over a cup of coffee, or playing a game or two of badminton. Many of us are actively involved in Dnyaneshwar's diverse businesses. We have witnessed, at every step, his spectacular rise and have shared in his moments of joy and grief.

Dnyaneshwar welcomes every new idea that springs to a friend's mind, saying, "I am there if things don't work out." These words of comfort have often meant the world to us, and given us the wings to fly.

That Dnyaneshwar is an excellent sportsman and administrator, a successful banker, and a prominent industrialist is public knowledge. But, to us friends, his being a genuinely good human being means a lot more. Despite achieving such success, there isn't a trace in him of the cold-heartedness normally found in industrialists. He has preserved his sentimentality. His tender heart is the reason he has taken up the mantle of helping people.

People refer to Suvarna Sahakari Bank as 'the bank that helps in times of need'. That thousands have been able to secure help from the bank is testament to

Dnyaneshwar's kindheartedness. That he has not let his kindness hinder the bank's progress is another of his many skills.

He has always accorded the utmost importance to every person working in his factories and other businesses and, going further, given them the joyous feeling of being a part of the Agashe family. The Alfred Krupp Steel Industry is an internationally renowned German company. It was destroyed by the Allied forces in the Second World War. Despite this, after almost a decade, the employees responded to Alfred's call and regrouped. Who can doubt the unique place Alfred had in the hearts of the employees, who called themselves 'Krupprians'? Similarly, though the Sugar Syndicate factory has become a cooperative today, Dnyaneshwar is still addressed by everyone as Maalak. Even fate is incapable of dislodging Maalak from the hearts of the employees!

Dnyaneshwar has continued to help people with every resource at hand. He has nursed many sick industries back to health. People often take advantage of his goodness. We fail to understand how he can't see the obvious, but then realise, that he probably does see it, but is unable to restrain himself. Recently, a couple of us had a proper showdown with him regarding an undeserving act of kindness. As usual though, he heard us with a smile on his face, and ignored it.

After this incident, I thought to myself, had Sant Tukaram taken his wife, Jijai's complaints seriously, he would not have become a saint. Instead, he would have taken care of the business and forsaken his sainthood. Weren't our complaints similar to Jijai's? Dnyaneshwar is extraordinary and it is fallacious to pull him down to the common transactional level.

Still, we are worried about Dnyaneshwar and pray for God to protect him from the selfish and calculating people of this world. People resting under the benevolent banyan tree should at least show the wisdom of not cutting the branches of the very tree that provides them the shade.

In conclusion, I just want to say this. We know we have Dnyaneshwar behind us if things go wrong. The onus of protecting the sainthood of this 'Dnyaneshwar' lies on the shoulders of the Almighty. Dnyaneshwar is on the cusp of turning 60, and along with these wishes, our entire being will forever pray for his good fortune!

May your journey be blessed!

Hundred with a Smile! – Vijaykant Kudale

Brihan Maharashtra Sugar Syndicate, in Shreepur, was one of the sugar factories to come up during the British rule. It has earned the reputation of being a factory which processes the raw material, gives the farmers a decent price, and lends a helping hand in times of distress.

This sugar factory was born out of the tireless efforts of the late Chandrashekhar Agashe. Overcoming many obstacles along the way, he brought the factory a good name. After he died, his sons, Panditrao and Dnyaneshwar, managed the factory as capably as their father, keeping the people's interests in mind. Dnyaneshwar Agashe did not stop with the sugar factory, but, keeping pace with the times, started several other businesses, and has kept them running successfully.

The Shreepur factory is a matter very close to the farmers' hearts. Whenever Panditrao or Dnyaneshwar visited Shreepur, the farmers flocked to meet them. In spite of a tight schedule, every farmer got the opportunity to interact with them personally, where their problems were discussed, and solved. This factory was like a large family of farmers and employees, with Agashe Saheb as its head. All the farmers address him as Maalak.

It was in the year 1980-81, that we saw his relentless pursuit of procuring a fair price for the sugarcane produce of the farmers. At that point, our Malinagar factory had closed down, but he saved our farmers from incurring heavy losses by processing the entire sugarcane crop. Our farmers will never forget how, in spite of having paid them the full amount since the sugar had fetched a good price, he paid them an additional sum on top of it, two years later.

Agashe Saheb's circle of friends is huge. He knows many people from different walks of life. Earlier, he used to invite all his friends to Shreepur. Just out of college then, I used to tag along with my elder brother. Over a span of two days, many topics were discussed and memories revisited. With dissemination of interesting information, exchange of thoughts and ideas, and episodes of fun and laughter, the two days passed in a flash.

There isn't a single sphere of life in Maharashtra which has not had Agashe Saheb's Midas touch! Every year, when the palanquin of Sant Dnyaneshwar, on its way from Alandi to Pandharpur, halts at Velapur, various facilities are provided to the pilgrims, on behalf of Agashe Saheb, as a service to Mauli. All this is quietly done, without fanfare or being reported in the newspapers. His nature is to donate anonymously

and keep mum about his benefaction. He has immense faith in Lord Pandurang of Pandharpur!

Cricket is a topic close to the heart of young and old alike. Hundreds of thousands of people get engrossed in watching and discussing a game of cricket. But few know of Agashe Saheb's involvement in the able administration of cricket. Working as a responsible office-bearer of the Maharashtra Cricket Association, he has given cricket a new lease of life. He has infused spirit in the players, and has ensured that the flag of Indian cricket will fly high.

All these attributes of Agashe Saheb's personality are self-evident. In the Marathi language, versatility is described by the word 'ashtapailu' or eight-sided. This word would be inadequate to describe Agashe Saheb. Rather, the word 'shatpailu', or 'hundred-sided' would be more appropriate.

I have worked as Administrator, Chairman, and full-time Director of the Malinagar factory. Now, as Managing Director, I continue to benefit from the guidance of Agashe Saheb as an experienced industrialist. That is why I have so much respect for him.

A successful entrepreneur, an able sports administrator, a participant in cultural events, a person with a religious bent of mind, a friend, philosopher and guide, and a model colleague; I wish Dnyaneshwar Agashe Saheb a long and healthy life!

A golden moment is at the door, showering us with gaiety,

Today, you cross the age of 60, by grace of the Almighty,

To wish you have gathered here, friends and your kindred,

I wish, with a smile on your face, you reach your hundred!

Trustworthy – Bhaskarao Gaikwad

I got to know only today that Dnyaneshwar Agashe is completing 60 years of his life. The past 20 years have passed in a flash, and here he is, almost 60! In these 60 years, I have closely seen and experienced his work, along with Vahini Saheb's (Rekhatai's) contribution in it, in the fields of politics, social work, and industry. Writing an account of that would be akin to writing an epic. Rather, I think, writing about Saheb, and the moments spent with him over the last 20 years, would be a better option.

I first met Saheb at Shreepur, in 1982. In that very first meeting, I was bowled over by his pleasant, smiling personality. A bond of deep trust and friendship was created, which remains strong to this day. The dream of starting the Shri. Pandurang Sugar Factory turned into reality because of the relationship between Saheb and Shrimant Sudhakarpanth Paricharak of Pandharpur, and also because it was the need of the hour. Converting Brima Sugar into a cooperative, developing the Shreepur area for the welfare of the employees, looking after the interests of the people with great affection like the head of a family, and binding all these into an agreement, shows the true love Saheb had for the people and the employees.

Even after transferring the rights of the Pandurang Cooperative Sugar Factory, he did not sever his ties with the factory. Whenever the factory administration needed assistance, whether financial, land-related, or social, Saheb did not shy away from the responsibility and, in fact, provided it well before time, with love and affection. Just to give an example, Saheb and his associates offered all the help required for the redevelopment of the factory, to put it on the road to prosperity. The progress of Pandurang Cooperative has the support and blessings of Saheb and underlines the Agashe family's faith in, and devotion to, Lord Pandurang of Pandhari.

As Agashe Saheb completes 60 years, his wife, two sons, and daughter are all poised to wish him. Similarly, all the people and employees from Shreepur, members of the Pandurang Cooperative, me and my family wish Saheb on this occasion. I can proudly say that whatever I am today is because of Saheb's ideal in front of me, his love, assistance, and blessings.

I pray to Lord Pandurang for Saheb's life to be filled with prosperity, progress, and good health!

An Old, Kind-Hearted Friend – Sharad Kulkarni

Though I was senior to Dnyaneshwar in Ramanbaug, we were part of the same cricket team. Subsequently, in college, we played against each other too. In later years, we continued meeting each other as businessmen. When I was the Chief Officer of the RPG Group, we sponsored many cricket matches. I often consulted Dnyaneshwar in these matters. Even after retirement, I continue to advise the next generation, whenever asked. We have known each other for about 45 years, as friends, players, sponsors of sporting events, and well-wishers of the next generation.

In the initial years, I worked in several countries around the world. I distinctly remember, whether I was in Malaysia, Sweden, or the Middle-East, Dnyaneshwar would take time out of his business trips to come see me, and would endearingly insist on eating a Marathi meal cooked by my wife, Vibhavari.

A fond memory, of the trip to Malaysia in 1969, is of us going to a small restaurant in my first-ever small, two-door car. He liked their local brand of Champagne so much, that we literally finished off their entire stock.

Getting foreign goods into India was a nightmare then, because of the prospect of harassment at the hands of the Customs officers at the airport. Despite this, Dnyaneshwar always carried two bags, filled to the brim. He often had to leave some clothes behind due to lack of space in his bags. Though he carried all this stuff, more than half of it would be gifts for his friends. This trend continues to this day.

He has a large circle of friends, where everyone is treated equally, regardless of financial status. He is virtuous to a fault which some people do take advantage of. I wish him all the very best on his 60th birthday!

Our Peshwa – Madhu Gupte

Dnyaneshwar Agashe, well-known in Maharashtra as a businessman, accomplished industrialist and sports administrator, has been a close friend over the past 50 years. Since the age of eleven, starting with the Navin Marathi and Ramanbaug schools and continuing through college, the bond of this friendship has been woven through our careers in cricket and business. Naturally, this friendship has had its ups and downs. At times we could not stand each other; but could not do without each other either! Dnyaneshwar and Rekha are among the handful of people, thousands of miles back home, with whom we feel like sharing the happy moments in our lives.

Dnyaneshwar and I became friends in Ramanbaug. We took our first lessons in cricket, hockey, football, and badminton, under the watchful eyes of Rambhau Lele. Dnyaneshwar's long suit was that he played every sport, be it cricket or hockey, with aggression. His attacking batting style in cricket, and playing in the tough position of a centre-forward in hockey, set him apart. Where his wicket-keeping skills are concerned, he can be counted among the handful of wicket-keepers that Pune has given to Indian cricket. Dnyaneshwar, who represented India at the junior level, sparkled for Maharashtra in the Ranji Trophy but, despite being deserving, could not play for the country, as he was forced to quit the game to take care of the family business.

Dnyaneshwar retained Brihan Maharashtra Sugar Syndicate, and, having established Suvarna Sahakari Bank, made it a huge success, in every sense of the word. Today, this bank is known to the Puneites as the bank that stands behind them in their hour of need. Come to think of it, the same can be said about Dnyaneshwar too. He is a friend who will always be there for you in difficult times. That is why, in the prime of our friendship, my mother once said to me, "Dnyaneshwar has many friends, but you have only one Dnyaneshwar."

In the past few years, Dnyaneshwar has really grown in stature. He is among the top industrialists in Pune. His opinion carries a lot of weight in the BCCI. The reason for this is not his wealth but his demeanour. He seems to have no enemies whatsoever. Though his light-blue eyes may not reveal the workings of his mind, people feel close to him because of the way he interacts with them. He has his feet firmly planted on the ground. He has maintained the relationships with his school-friends, old colleagues, and family members. Meeting with friends at Roopali, and now at Ranjit, before 11 in the morning for coffee, has been a constant feature for years.

Though Dnyaneshwar is among the top industrialists in Pune today, he has seen bad times too. The way Rekha has stood with him through thick and thin truly behoves a life-partner. While the 'Peshwa' was busy riding from one campaign to another, this 'Peshwin bai', his wife, ably took care of the family. Today, as Mandar and Ashutosh shoulder the responsibilities of the business in their own ways, Dnyaneshwar and Rekha lose themselves playing with Aditya. Last year, Rekha, Dnyaneshwar, and I spent four long hours at Hamley's, a toy store in London, out of love for this grandson!

Looking back on the period of our friendship of fifty years, another thing that gladdens the heart is that the next generation, comprising our sons and daughters-in-law, are also bound in this bond of friendship. I guess friendship is thicker than blood! I pray to the Almighty to bless my dear friend with a long and healthy life!

Equanimous? – T. P. Vartak

This is a story that goes back thirty odd years. Dnyaneshwar and I were about 20,000 feet above the ground. Passengers on the flight were petrified. There was pin-drop silence in the aircraft. Nobody really knew what had happened. A few minutes ago, the plane had gone through severe turbulence and the seat belt signs had come on. Then the captain announced over the PA that we were returning to Mumbai. Dnyaneshwar asked the air hostess as to what had happened. Ashen-faced, she replied in a trembling voice, “One of the engines is on fire. We are flying with only one engine, and will land in Mumbai in about 30 minutes.” Hearing this, all the passengers, including myself, broke into a cold sweat. We had left Mumbai about half an hour ago, thrilled at the prospect of travelling abroad, but now, unsure of our final destination, our faces lost colour. Every foreign trip of ours would begin with a glass of champagne, and, even in that precarious situation, Dnyaneshwar asked the hostess, “That’s ok! But what about our champagne?” Turning to my perspiring and puzzled face, he said, “If we are going to bid good-bye to life, why deprive ourselves of the joy of champagne?” Now, some would call this equanimity, but the word that came to my mind that day was ‘reckless!’

My Association with Dnyaneshwar – Dr. Prakash Joshi

Today, hundreds of thousands of people know and recognise Dnyaneshwar Agashe by name, but Agashe knows only a few hundred of them personally. The situation was not much different during his student days. I was among the vast majority of students of M. E. Society, whereas Agashe was in D. E. Society's Ramanbaug school. In those days, whenever I used to pass by Ramanbaug school with my mother (she happened to be a student of Ramanbaug between 1932-37) we used to peep into the school ground, to see students playing hockey, football, and cricket under the watchful eyes of the coach, Rambhau Lele, the Dronacharya of Ramanbaug sports! There were no sports academies in those days. It was Lele sir who moulded the life and mindset of Agashe, who now himself heads and sponsors many academies, trusts, and sports events.

I came in contact with Agashe in the year 1962, when I was included in the 20 players selected for the cricket camp at Hirabaug Maidan. Needless to say, Agashe (along with his dear friend, Madhu) was there on account of his superb wicket-keeping abilities. From then on, for over 40 years, I am in that small minority whom Agashe knows personally. During the academic year 1964-65, I remember having filled two admission forms for Agashe, for two different colleges, B.M.C.C. for the first term and Law College for the second, perhaps at the behest of his mother. Even though Agashe does not have degrees in commerce and law in the academic sense, I can vouch for his admirable business foresight and legal brain, qualities he seems to have inherited from his father.

I have worked with him for over 30 years in various capacities on different projects. It is my personal assessment that, in business, he has not struggled or faltered in keeping wickets efficiently, even on a sticky wicket. He has also shown tremendous patience while batting on a wet wicket. I have seen him play a hurricane innings of over 90 runs before lunch, against a formidable bowler like Ramakant Desai, in his heydays.

It is my earnest and sincere request to the next generation (to whom Agashe is Baba, Mama and Kaka) to follow in his footsteps, and take over the burden of business responsibilities from him. This would enable him to walk happily and peacefully towards his century. Like they say in the Johnnie Walker advertisement, "Danny, keep walking, we friends will keep you company."

The Suvarna Sahakari Bank

1. Which is the first bank to have shown the courage to start operations in Pune, against the backdrop of not a single cooperative bank having been opened in the city between 1952 and 1969?
2. Post the nationalisation of banks in 1969, which is the first cooperative bank in India to register itself as one, and acquire the requisite license from the Reserve Bank?
3. Which is the first cooperative bank in Pune to acquire the license from the Reserve Bank before starting operations?
4. Which is the first bank in Pune to stay open for business on Sundays?
5. Outside of Mumbai, which is the largest non-scheduled bank in Maharashtra?
6. Which is the bank to have saved and incorporated a bank with a majority of Dalit account-holders from the abyss of liquidation?

The answer to all the questions above is, of course, our very own Shree Suvarna Sahakari Bank!

An Auspicious Moment – Jayant Bhide

*A page written in golden letters in the history of industry,
This is an auspicious tribute to capability and generosity.*

*A family blue-blooded and decent,
The ornament of culture, adorned like a crescent,
Dnyaneshwar's life is a ballad of cultural integrity.*

*His face radiates such humility and modesty,
And with folded hands stands courtesy,
You are forever respected, in the courts of industry.*

*Blessed are you with your parents' shadow,
Behind you stands Lord Vitthal, in all his glow,
Enthroned with Goddess Lakshmi is Goddess Saraswati.*

*You sowed the seeds of industry and enterprise,
Marshy lands have been turned into paradise,
The graph of progress is a grand arc of prosperity!*

*The splendour of spring bursts through the doorways,
On her majestic elephant, Goddess Lakshmi sways,
This is indeed, a true tribute to Marathi ethnicity.*

*A friend, companion, administrator so able,
The silky bonds and ties unbreakable,
Through relationships runs a common thread of humanity.*

*Destiny smiling bright, promising lines of fate,
No one can ever be quite as fortunate,
May you live long and healthy for a century.*

*Alluring like the resplendent rainbow,
Of an accomplished life, a song so mellow,
May fame of your success spread for posterity!*

Agashe: A Man of Many Friends – Anna Joshi

Given his hectic schedule and the frenetic pace of his work, it almost seems a miracle that Dnyaneshwar Agashe has completed 60 years of his life. He is coveted by all because of his charming, pleasant personality. Along with carrying out the responsibilities of being the Founder-President of a successful bank, an owner of 2-3 factories, and President of the Maharashtra Cricket Association ably and successfully, he shoulders incidental responsibilities in other fields too with aplomb. Be it a function to celebrate the completion of 12 years of Ghaisas Guruji Vedpathshala, the platinum jubilee congress of the Akhil Bhartiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan, Lata Mangeshkar's felicitation at the Shaniwar Wada, an international cricket match at the Nehru Stadium, the release of a postal stamp in Sant Dnyaneshwar's honour by the President of India or a gathering of scientists and industrialists of international repute for an Information and Bio-Technology symposium, organised by the Pune chapter, Agashe is cordially invited to each of these functions where his guidance and organising skills are put to optimum use. Agashe too, attends these functions with fresh enthusiasm every time, and plays his part in making them a success.

Agashe is a friend to everyone. He has friends across the political spectrum, including parties such as the Congress and the BJP, and in the diverse fields of sport, industry, literature, music, theatre, spirituality, and banking.

His material wealth pales in comparison to the wealth of friendships he has amassed over the years on the strength of his inherent qualities. Anybody would envy him these riches. Despite being extremely busy, he always finds time to share a cup of coffee with friends at the Roopali restaurant on Fergusson College road. Similarly, he extended every help possible and comforted the devastated Bhat family, upon the untimely and accidental death of our dear friend, A. V. Bhat. Such instances reveal a beautiful golden lining of humanity to Agashe's multicoloured personality.

Oftentimes, a person successful in the outside world tends to neglect his family, leading to a broken home. But following Swami Samarth's teaching, he is diligently doing his duty by his mild-mannered wife, able sons and the rest of his family. Also, he continues to have respectful loyalty towards his late father and elder brother.

In these modern times, 60 is not an age of retirement, but of conquering new frontiers. And thus, I wish Dnyaneshwar Agashe, a personality developing from every

angle possible –

‘May you live for a hundred years, May you prosper in life!’

Agashe: A Friend to All – Vilas Ekbote

Everyone knows Agashe as being a friend to all. But the friendship between him and the Chief Ministers of Maharashtra, till date, is on another level altogether.

- The incumbent Chief Minister, Hon. Vilasrao Deshmukh, considers Agashe a friend.
- Hon. Sharadrao Pawar was actually a student of Brihan Maharashtra College of Commerce. But his friendship with Agashe, which began in Srinivas Patil's room in S. P. College, remains strong to this day.
- Hon. Vasantdada Patil is a fatherly figure to Agashe and always willing to help him. Agashe thus, is blessed with '*sharadache chandane*', the autumn moonlight, and '*vasant bahaar*', the spring bloom.
- Hon. Manohar Joshi and Dnyaneshwar Agashe were Presidents of Cricket Associations at the same time, Mr. Joshi for Mumbai, and Agashe for Maharashtra. Both were sympathetic to each other by virtue of being cricket administrators.
- Barrister A. R. Antulay, who hailed from the Konkan region, and Agashe, would give each other a handclap, saying they were both '*konkanastha*' (*from the Konkan region*) whose surnames ended in the phonetic sound 'A'.

One needs to appreciate the true value of these friendships. The reason for these lasting friendships is that Agashe religiously followed the motto of not approaching these Chief Ministers, as far as possible, when they were in power, and not to stay away from them when they were out of it.

The Genial Industrialist – Mohan Dharia

That Dnyaneshwar Agashe will complete 60 years of his life, on April 17, 2002, is hard to believe! I have seen Dnyaneshwar closely over the past 50 years. He was popular as an attacking batsman, wicket-keeper, and agile fielder, and cricket-lovers were certain he would go on to play at the international level. However, the death of his respected father, followed by the untimely death of his elder brother, Pandit, thrust the responsibility of his father's businesses, and a large family, upon Dnyaneshwar's young shoulders. He had to step onto the tough field of life. He took on the responsibility, and, while fielding life's challenges, grabbed the opportunity, and once again batted aggressively to take the businesses, established by his father, to greater heights.

Being a born sportsman, Dnyaneshwar always sported a smile, even when confronting the many challenges of everyday life. At a very young age, Dnyaneshwar ably shouldered the responsibility of running diverse businesses and expertly overcame several obstacles along the way. Due to the amendments to the existing Act, restrictions were placed on personal land holdings, and the sugar factory, started by his father with such resolve, was in peril. As a counter, the spirit-manufacturing business gained speed. However, the Prohibition Act dealt another blow. At that juncture, Dnyaneshwar took the bold gamble of starting a rum-manufacturing business in Canada. It proved difficult though, for a number of reasons, to raise the requisite capital to start a business overseas. But Dnyaneshwar, being Dnyaneshwar, found a way to overcome every obstacle, and continued his march towards victory. In all this, the lessons learnt from his father, served as an invaluable guide.

Dnyaneshwar decided to enter the cooperative sector for the sake of the common people, businessmen and industrialists. It was out of this sentiment that he established the Shree Suvarna Sahakari Bank in 1969. I was a Member of Parliament at the time. We friends were popularly known round the country as the 'Young Turks'. Dnyaneshwar though, genuinely liked this enterprise. That this bank, which came into prominence riding on Dnyaneshwar's leadership, was inaugurated by me, gives me immense satisfaction.

Dnyaneshwar is a symbol of humility, politeness, composure, and culture. Trust and reliability are inherent traits of his character. His nature of taking on, and carrying out, every task with determination, and his cheerful disposition, is something worth emulating. He has maintained close ties with cricket, kho-kho, and other sports, and

continues to balance the demands of business with service to society. He is a pillar of strength for several people working in the social and cultural fields.

A common lament is that there is a paucity of role models for today's youth. Unfortunately, the benchmark for this is set keeping serving politicians in mind. But there are people from several fields, outside of politics, who are committed to the ideals of nation-building and social-advancement. The society, and thereby the nation, progresses through the advances made in the diverse fields of industry, agriculture, the cooperative sector, education, sports, literature, and social service. If measured against such people, who work tirelessly, selflessly, and diligently in their respective fields, there would be no dearth of model leadership. Through his reticent demeanour, and his accomplishments, Dnyaneshwar has created a new ideal for the young generation. I wish him incremental wealth, prosperity and happiness in the years to come!

A Beautiful Synthesis of Capability and Prosperity – Vasant Kane

As I sit down to write this article, I can see Chandrashekhar Govind Agashe's personality in front of my eyes, exactly as it was 60-65 years ago. I have seen him calmly traverse mountains of financial setbacks for long periods of time. Every time I visited him in the offices of Brihan Maharashtra Sugar Syndicate, in my role as a journalist, his words would be few, but impactful, and he would point to the image of Sant Dnyaneshwar hanging on the wall behind him, as if to say, "He is the doer."

The fountainhead of Dnyaneshwar's many qualities, seen not only in the field of industry, but also in the fields of finance, culture, literature, sports, and spirituality, can be found in these words of Chandrashekhar Agashe, "He is the doer."

The sugar factory that was established on the moorlands of Shreepur, a village near Akluj, in Malshiras Taluka of Solapur district, required someone of strong capabilities to make optimum use of what the land had to offer. These were found in abundance in the Ram/Lakshman-like brothers, Pandit and Dnyaneshwar, and thus, a sugar factory could stand on the capital raised by a middle-class entrepreneur.

Dnyaneshwar owes his success in the industrial and social fields to his family. The Agashe household has been blessed with abundant wealth, ever since his wife, Rekha, became a part of the family. I know Raosaheb Gogte, a prominent industrialist from Karnataka, well. During one of our conversations, he casually said, "Vasantrao, my niece is married into the Agashe family of Pune."

People who taste success in industrial and social fields, and earn name, fame, and wealth, often have unhappy family lives. Dnyaneshwar, however, is fortunate in that respect too. Apart from his family, Dnyaneshwar is blessed with the riches of a large circle of friends. This has a history of its own, because people like Vilasrao Ekbote, Balkrishna Chopde, Rambhau Joshi, T. P. Vartak, Prakash Joshi, and Anant Mate are not mere friends but equal partners in the joys and sorrows of personal, familial, business, and financial matters too. The 32-year-old Shree Suvarna Sahakari Bank is a prime example of this. On the eve of the bank's launch, I had written an editorial in the *Rohini* magazine, wishing the bank well. It read,

"As a new era of revolution dawns in India's economic sector, the launching of Shree Suvarna Sahakari Bank needs to be seen as a symbol of Maharashtra's new outlook. A cooperative bank is not a novelty in Maharashtra. Economist, and Vice-

President of the Planning Commission of India, Mr. Dhananjayrao Gadgil, had introduced Maharashtra to it years ago. Maharashtra's Dnyaneshwar Agashe, a young, profound thinker with a positive attitude, studied this economic transformation minutely and pragmatically, imbibed the essence of the cooperative economy, and extended its maximum benefit to both, the rural and urban population. That is why we feel the establishment of Shree Suvarna Sahakari Bank in Pune is the beginning of the progressive, constructive work of the city's youth."

The sentiment expressed in the editorial of the 1969 issue of *Rohini* is a reality today.

There is so much to write, because this characterisation is going to provide guidance to the youth of today, as well as tomorrow. That is why I readily accepted the invitation to write for this literary tribute, though I was somewhat surprised when the invitation came! Dnyaneshwar, whom I first saw as an 8 or 10-year-old-boy, has turned 60! This pleasant realisation also brought joy. I am grateful for the opportunity of paying tribute to Dnyaneshwar. I wish him all the very best on his 60th birthday!

A Monologue – Jayram Kulkarni

Dnyaneshwar completes 60 years of his life, as we speak, and is well on his way to becoming a senior citizen. The very thought is amusing, and gladdens my heart.

Seeing Dnyaneshwar, dressed in the traditional Maharashtrian costume, complete with a pagadi, during the recently concluded Sahitya Sammelan in Pune, took me back 50 years. There, sitting in the first row, in a function at the Fergusson College, was the late Chandrashekhar Agashe, in a similar attire. What a striking resemblance!

Dnyaneshwar's elder brother, the late Panditrao, and I were studying at the Fergusson College then. The love of theatre brought us together. To my good fortune, my relationship with the Agashe family, which began 50 years ago, is as strong today! Even when his elder brother was living, Dnyaneshwar oversaw most of the business. He always took Panditrao's advice before taking any major decisions, and Panditrao never did anything without informing Dnyaneshwar first. As long as Panditrao was alive, I knew Dnyaneshwar only as his brother. I made no attempt to get to know him better. Probably, I never felt the need.

The fact, that I had lost a strong source of unconditional friendship in Panditrao's death, was difficult to digest. After Panditrao's death, Dnyaneshwar shouldered the burden of family and business responsibilities. At the same time, he strove to ensure Panditrao's closest friends were not alienated. Such was his magnanimity! As Panditrao's friends, we were fortunate that Rekha tai, and her two sons, Mandar and Ashutosh, were also magnanimous enough to recognise our claim of friendship over the Agashe family.

I have no doubt that many people will rightfully present accounts of Dnyaneshwar's capabilities, leadership, and generosity. Along with his own friends and family, Dnyaneshwar treated his brother's friends, such as I, as his own, and sought to strengthen these ties of friendship. For that, I salute him from the bottom of my heart!

There are two experiences that I cannot help but relate.

A few days ago, I suffered an injury to my eye in an accident. I was required to travel to Mumbai urgently for plastic surgery. Great care had to be taken to protect the eye during the journey. Dnyaneshwar was out of Pune at the time, but Rekha tai, on hearing that we needed a car, arranged for it, with a driver, and I was able to reach Mumbai in time for the surgery. On learning of my surgery, Dnyaneshwar visited me at the hospital a couple of times. It was most reassuring.

In May of last year, I suffered a heart attack and had to be hospitalised. There was no alternative but to go in for a bypass surgery. My family was distraught at this sudden turn of events. Dnyaneshwar immediately met my wife and children, offered every help possible, and reassured them. What is this, if not the fruit of our past deeds?

As long as he was alive, the late Chandrashekhar Agashe strove to safeguard the interests of the middle-class, like a trustee. That his son is consciously and capably carrying his legacy forward, is more than one can ask for! Keep going Dnyaneshwar, keep going!

May you live a hundred years!

Hypocrisy – Vilas Ekbote

The one thing that really gets Dnyaneshwar Agashe's goat is hypocrisy. The moment a person starts being a hypocrite, he doesn't think twice before pulling his leg. Once, a convent-educated youth came to give an interview for a high-level post in one of his companies. He was smug about his vernacular English, and was trying to use his English-speaking skills to conceal his ignorance in the subject. Trying to impress Agashe, who was speaking in Marathi, he said, "I am not here for the money, I just want to prove myself. Judge my ability and pay me accordingly." To which Agashe calmly replied, "That is okay, but how can you change the law of minimum wage?"

Favourite Choice – Arvind Gogte

In 1960, I came to Pune from Belgaum and took admission for the pre-degree course in B.M.C.C. I had played cricket for my school in Belgaum and started attending net practice, hoping to get into the college team. The college team captain, Hemant Gore, asked me, “What number did you bat for your school team?” I thought I might stand a chance of getting into the playing XI if I said I opened. Gore asked me to pad up straightaway, which I did. Sahasrabudhe and Avinash Joshi started with the new ball. Out of the 12 balls I faced, only 2 hit the bat. Most of the balls flew past my temples, and the rest uprooted the stumps. Gore asked me, “Do you bowl? Our team needs a leg spinner.” I replied in the affirmative. I was given 2 overs in the nets. I bowled 5 full tosses, and the rest were all over the place. Only one ball turned, and that too, was an off spinner! A week passed. Then, Hemant Gore said to me, “Arvind, if you want to get into the college team, join the coaching classes of Nana Joshi and Hazarnavis, at the Deccan Gymkhana.”

I obliged. During the practice sessions, Nana Joshi would regale us with anecdotes from his Test matches. During one such session, one of us asked him, “Sir, when will we produce a wicket-keeper of the caliber of Wally Grout and Godfrey Evans? And if we do, who will that be?” Nana Joshi replied, “Three names come to mind, Farokh Engineer, Budhi Kunderan, and Pune’s Dnyaneshwar Agashe.” Hazarnavis Sir added, “Agashe plays a classic hook shot too.”

The inter-collegiate matches were on at the Hirabaug maidan. S. P. College were playing, and, having heard so much about Dnyaneshwar, I was eager to watch him play.

When I reached the ground, I saw S. P. College were batting and, if I remember correctly, the score read 23 for 3. S. P. College were expected to fold up under a 100. Soon, another 2 wickets fell and Dnyaneshwar came out to bat. After playing out the first 4 deliveries, he began playing his strokes, and, in no time, the score reached 150. He was finally out LBW in the last over of the day. On his way back to the pavilion, he showed great spirit, saying ‘well bowled’, to the bowler. Back in the pavilion, he did not make excuses about having got an inner edge, something that most batsmen do, when given out LBW.

The next day, Dnyaneshwar was to keep wickets, and Nana Joshi took us along to watch. To everyone’s surprise, Dnyaneshwar stood up to the stumps to the pace bowler. Nana Joshi said, “He has great self-confidence and has practiced this with a lot of bowlers.” That day, Dnyaneshwar took 2 superb catches, and effected a brilliant leg-side

stumping.

Dnyaneshwar imbibed the qualities of self-confidence, daring, sportsmanship, and determination through playing the game of cricket. These qualities proved pivotal to him achieving success in different fields in the future. I was thinking of ways to get to know him, when months later, Hemant Gore introduced me to him in Jeevan restaurant. His speech and demeanour matched his game. He was jolly, cheerful, and friendly. Since that day, we met at least once a week if not every day. And if it didn't happen, Arun Bapat and I would go to Jeevan especially to meet him. Gradually, our acquaintance grew. After four years of college, I went to America for further studies and then settled down in Belgaum. We did not meet in this 6-7-year period.

I was in Pune in 1966. My grandmother, Ambu tai, said to me one day, "I am going to ask for Dnyaneshwar's hand for Rekha (my paternal first cousin). Isn't he your friend? Why don't you ask him if he has decided on marrying someone else? And if not, is he looking to get married?" Had I asked Dnyaneshwar directly, he would have said something like, "I am married with a son!" Aware of his propensity for such mischief, I approached Mehendale at the Deccan Coffee House. Sipping a hot cup of coffee, Mehendale told me that Dnyaneshwar's mother had decided to get him married soon, and that he was ready too. Later that afternoon, I relayed the news to Ambu tai.

Ambu tai got to work. My father, Raosaheb, and my uncle, Vasunana, had great respect for Dnyaneshwar's father. We were all very fond of Rekha. 7 is the Gogte family's lucky number and, as a matter of coincidence, it was seven years since Dnyaneshwar and I had first met that Ambu tai suggested his name for Rekha.

The Agashes were a reputed and respectable family of Pune. Ambu tai, more than us, was convinced that Dnyaneshwar and his mother would approve of Rekha. Dnyaneshwar and Rekha met each other in a few days, and soon after, the Agashes conveyed their approval. Rekha's wedding was finalised. I called up our cousin Arun Bapat in America to convey the good news. He said, "Rekha is very, very lucky." Our friendship changed into a relationship, and both have flourished since.

Ambu tai's choice of Dnyaneshwar for Rekha, and Dnyaneshwar's choice of Rekha turned out to be the 'favourite choice' for both the Agashe and Gogte families!

All Good Deeds of the Past! – Hari Bhakta Parayan Ramdas Maharaj

Shri. Sant Tukaram has a place of great reverence, respect, faith, and love in my life. I got a glimpse of his magnificence, like the all-encompassing sky, through the compilation of his abhangs. Ever since, an obsessive desire gripped me, of organising a grand ceremony of repeated rendition of the compilation of Tukoba's abhangs, and to experience it body and soul in the place of his birth, Dehu, where these masterpieces were created.

Over the next 5-6 years, I strove day and night towards this end. Preparations for the grand ceremony were slowly taking shape. All my near and dear ones, volunteers, and well-wishers were working round the clock. The publicity campaign was in full swing, with pamphlets being circulated and advertisements put up. Funds were growing by the day.

Finally, it was decided to stage the ceremony from 5-14 March, 2000. Since my dear friend, the political leader Sharadchandraji Pawar had liked the idea of this rendition very much, he had asked his colleagues and well-wishers to help in the organising of this ceremony too.

Another idea was taking root in my mind with respect to the proposed ceremony, of ferrying the silver 'sandals', worn by Lord Vitthal, from Pandharpur to Alandi in a helicopter. I wished for the sandals to be installed first, and only then for the rendition to commence.

I had no clue how to go about this though. I turned to my elder son-in-law for advice. He said, with great confidence, "Don't worry, consider it done. I know Dnyaneshwar Saheb. We have been friends a long time, and he knows you too."

An appointment was fixed with Agashe Saheb. He heard us out patiently and, without a moment's hesitation, agreed. There was a smile of great satisfaction on his face. My joy, too, knew no bounds. He said, "This has presented me with an opportunity to perform a grand puja of Lord Vitthal. It has been a long wait of almost 15-20 years. I will perform the grand puja myself, and carry the holy sandals to Dehu for the rendition ceremony. Rest assured."

And, as promised, he and his wife arrived in Pandharpur the day before the ceremony. As decided, he performed Lord Vitthal's grand puja, at 4.30 in the morning. He sat, in silence, for about 2-3 hours in the inner sanctum of the temple, keeping all his daily concerns aside. His family has a legacy of devotion. The intense, persistent desire to

go to Pandharpur on foot, as done by pilgrim devotees, was seen in the earlier generation too. This noble deed at the hands of Saheb was a reflection of that legacy.

Amidst the ecstatic chants of praising the Lord and the resonating rhythms of cymbals and the mridang (*a percussion instrument*) Agashe Saheb and his wife stepped out of the helicopter in Dehu, carrying the holy sandals with great reverence, and proceeded bare feet to the staging area. The devotees were overcome with feelings of devotion, and congregated around Saheb.

The installation of the sandals was done at the auspicious hands of Saheb, in the palatial pavilion specially erected for the occasion, and the rest of the ceremony went off smoothly. This extremely auspicious ceremony will forever be etched on my mind.

I consider wishing my dear friend, respected Dnyaneshwar Saheb, on this auspicious and happy occasion of his 60th birthday, a moment of great joy in my life. I will end by saying...

Whenever a virtuous child is born in the family, God! We feel great joy then!

A Yogi Industrialist – Ramesh Barve

About 30 years ago, I had gone to the Brihan Maharashtra Sugar Syndicate Ltd. for an interview for the post of assistant trainee. A man of fair complexion and piercing blue eyes saw my application and asked me only two questions –

‘What were my college timings?’

‘Would I be able to manage my college studies and still come to work on time?’

I did not grasp the true meaning of those questions then, but, a few years later, I realised the immense faith in education, and penchant for being on time my interviewer had. This man was none other than our respected Agashe Saheb.

Cricket is his favourite sport, and talking to us in our free time about its changing nature and current state is something he likes to do. These discussions make us aware of his amazing knowledge about the game and the accuracy of his predictions. Seeing this powerhouse of cricket up close is akin to the joy of watching a one-day-match at the ground!

Agashe Saheb taught us that real sportsmanship is in praising the opponent wholeheartedly, when losing, and encouraging him by saying ‘winning and losing is part of the game’ when winning! Saying that playing for Maharashtra had made him accustomed to losing, he has often made light of the difficult situations he encountered in his business. As he has been an office bearer of the internationally acclaimed institution, the BCCI, we are lucky to get first-hand information about the game and its players.

Agashe Saheb has adroitly applied this sportsmanship to his business and life. If only all industrialists in India were sportsmen first!

Though he never tires of telling us that politics is not his cup of tea, the number of politicians he seems to know, across the board, and his close ties with them, never ceases to amaze me. That many current and former chief ministers, union ministers, MPs, and MLAs consider Agashe Saheb a friend, says it all!

Though it is not in his nature to use these relationships for his personal benefit, he would not think twice before using them to help those in need. He gets the most important and seemingly impossible work done with utmost ease. Once the work is done though, he moves on, taking no credit for it. He is, indeed, a ‘political yogi!’ That politicians solicit his advice to grasp the difficulties faced by businesses, and frame government policies accordingly, is an acknowledgement of his capabilities. The connect he has with the masses and his public relations, despite not being in politics himself, is

baffling for most MPs and MLAs. He has maintained ties with all politicians, irrespective of their party and status of power, and it is most gratifying to hear their words of praise and appreciation for him.

Agashe Saheb, apparently, has only two weak-points. The first is his daughter, Sheetal (though I think presently she has been upstaged by his grandson, Aditya) and the second, his circle of friends. Once a friend, Agashe Saheb is willing to do anything for him. Over the years, we have seen him respond to a friend's call, every single time, often at great personal cost. He extends financial assistance, unasked, in times of distress. We truly envy these fortunate people who can call Agashe Saheb their friend!

Agashe Saheb is a living example of how to love one's siblings. He took the responsibility of his siblings with great courage and faith after the death of his father and brother. He fondly reminisces about his childhood, comparing it, in a light-hearted way, with today's rising costs. Despite moving around in high-society, he has an extremely simple and spartan lifestyle. Often, it comes to light that the apparently innovative solutions of today's top professionals have already been implemented by him, twenty years ago! Whether it is the British prime minister John Major, or the lowest-ranking employee in his company, he behaves with them in the same easy-mannered way. He is, to us, a model teacher of life's practicals!

It was Agashe Saheb who taught us to live by the teaching of Swami Samarth –

To speak according to the context and the situation; and to harbour no fear in the mind.

The employee is someone very close to Agashe Saheb's heart. Probably, the secret of his success lies in the fact that he treats every employee like a member of the Agashe family. This is why there has never been a strike in any of his companies. Isn't buying a car for a company employee, of the same make that he uses himself, proof that he treats his family and employees alike?

Provided he is in town, he makes it a point to attend every wedding in the family of an employee, be it the general manager or anyone else. At the inauguration of the processing season, his hawk-like eyes notice even a single employee out of about 2,000, missing. Is it any wonder then, that Agashe Saheb is the apple of our eye? We have seen the look of satisfaction and happiness on his face, whether giving a salary raise he cannot afford, or declaring a bonus in times of a downturn.

In our company, mistakes are not penalised, because Agashe Saheb's simple logic is that only the one who works makes mistakes. At times, he even takes responsibility for our mistakes. Such an employer is indeed rare! The one thing he has

never tolerated though, is fraud.

When I recollect the turmoil he went through, when his sugar factory had to be mandatorily converted to a cooperative, my eyes still well up. He did not lose hope even in that difficult period and himself drafted the clause protecting the interests of the employees in the transfer agreement. That is why we consider him our Maalak. He always followed the dictum of keeping the employee's happiness above his own.

Dear God! I pray to you, not only for Agashe Saheb's long and healthy life, but to bless me, so that I end up serving him in every single life!

A Bond of Friendship – Mukund Angal

The Pune Marathi Granthalay (*Library*) has had the honour of successfully organising the Akhil Bhartiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan twice in the last 12 years, in 1990 and 2002, the 63rd and 75th editions respectively. On both these occasions, I headed the reception committee, as Secretary in 1990, and President in 2002.

It might well be easier getting your daughter married than organising a festival. Along with the increase in the scope of the festival, and its attendant hassles, there has been an unfortunate rise in petty arguments, pouting and sulking, inflated egos, inapposite reactions, and reports based on half-baked information. But out of respect for the common people, who throng to these festivals to experience the beauty and the magic of words, the committee strives to organise the event with imagination and a cool head. At such times, one has to don the role of Narayan, the eponymous character in the story by P. L. Deshpande, who seems to be omnipresent and indispensable in any function. These ‘Narayans’ of P. L. have to necessarily raise finances. In both the instances mentioned earlier, my colleagues and I successfully performed this role of Narayan. The volunteers seem to be sitting on the sharp blades of a scissor and a strong, assertive hand is required to make the sharpness of the scissor’s edges feel like the light touch of a feather. This hand effectively controls the handle of the scissor, which is why, despite all the hard work, everyone is happy in the end.

Dnyaneshwar Agashe is a prominent name in the field of Marathi literature. It was divine intervention for the organisers of the 75th Akhil Bhartiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan that he was going to be the keynote speaker at the event. Since he had successfully published two Marathi magazines, *Rasik* and *Yogita* for a few years now, he was not only acquainted with the Marathi literary field, but knew it inside out. That is why, his presence did not merely add ornamental value and provide guidance and financial benefit, but was an object lesson in the pragmatism and magnanimity that a keynote speaker should ideally have in the overall organisation of things. He did not hanker to be on the dais or for the mic, but, when required, spoke in a mild-mannered way, using simple language. It was straight from the heart, with no pretence. He always encouraged others to be imaginative and efficient, and though he paid attention to every minute detail, never tried to assert his authority or supremacy.

When the hard-working volunteers get such a strong hand of support in the form of a keynote speaker, then even the occasional hassles somehow seem less troublesome.

In this 75th year of the festival, we got this strong hand in the form of Dnyaneshwar Agashe!

The decision, to invite Dnyaneshwar Agashe as the keynote speaker, was taken unanimously by all officers and volunteers, after the Saraswati puja in the Marathi Granthalay on the day of Dussehra in 2001. Plans were then set into motion as to who should approach him, and how to get his assent. Naturally, this responsibility fell to me and my friend Mohan Date, the secretary of the Marathi Granthalay. I fixed up a meeting with Agashe Saheb, over the phone, in his office at the bank. Though I reached late, the stars seemed to be aligned in my favour. I met him at the bottom of the stairs, as he was on his way out. Mortified, I apologised and offered to meet him in the evening at his convenience. Probably because he knew me vaguely, he asked, “What work do you have with me?” and added, “You can tell me here itself.” Feeling a little less mortified now, I told him, in brief, the reason for my visit. True to his straightforward nature, he said, “Why give this big responsibility to me?” I insisted with all my heart that it had to be him. After this brief conversation, we decided to meet at leisure in the evening.

I reached on time for the evening appointment. Mohan Date was with me again. We spoke at length with Agashe Saheb, who suggested many prominent names in Pune, for the post of keynote speaker, and even said he was willing to work merely as a volunteer wherever required. There was no pretence in his words. In the past few years, I have come in contact with several people on various occasions and can fairly accurately detect a disparity in a person’s words and his feelings. But when the feelings and words match, one can feel a manifestation of a true friendship. This was such a time. Since Madhav and I were convinced that Agashe Saheb was our man, we insisted and pleaded in all sincerity, and finally, Agashe Saheb relented. All our colleagues were delighted upon hearing the news of his acceptance.

During the festival, as mentioned earlier, he assuredly played the role of guiding everyone involved. A key aspect of this was the way he spoke to even the lowliest volunteer, giving him the confidence that he would do his job perfectly well. That is why everyone sought his support and guidance. Personally, I would say that the 1990 festival gave me the satisfaction of displaying my organisational skills, while in this edition, I found a true friend, for life, who wholeheartedly appreciated these skills. To be honest, when such an assuring presence is behind you, it gives you the confidence of overcoming any challenge, however big or difficult. I pray to the Almighty to bless us all with Agashe Saheb’s support and guidance for many years to come, and to bless him with a long and healthy life!

The Presidentship of the BCCI – Vilas Ekbote

Friends, such as I, honestly feel that Agashe never understood, nor took to, the politics in Indian cricket. He was the Vice-President of the BCCI for over 10 years. By rotation, it was the turn of the West Zone to nominate the President, and, as the West Zone representative, Agashe was in the fray. Just then, the head of the Punjab Cricket Association, Mr. I. S. Bindra, was thrust by the Baroda Cricket Association as their candidate. In this two-pronged contest, Agashe was ahead in the initial phases. Gujarat, Saurashtra and Karnataka were solidly behind him. But, as usual, the Marathi man was undone by the curse of being divided! At that time, there were as many as eight people of Marathi origin on the board, the incumbent President, the late Madhavrao Scindia, Kanmadikar from Madhya Pradesh, Jaywant Lele from Baroda, the late Narendra Tamhane from Mumbai, Mundle from Vidarbha, Dnyaneshwar Agashe himself, Prashant Joshi from Goa, and Dr. Pawar, from the University Sports Board. If only these eight had shown solidarity, Agashe would have won hands down. But the self-destructive tendency of the Marathi man reared its ugly head, and Agashe lost the elections.

Nevertheless, even in this contentious election, there was an incident which covers Agashe in glory. He got an 'offer' from the opposition camp, that 'he would be made President provided his colleagues back down from contesting for the other posts'. Agashe flatly turned down the offer, saying pointedly, "I will never sacrifice my friends and colleagues for my personal gain." He lost as a President, but won as a human being!

Peerless – Revansiddh Bhadule

There is a quote in the English language, that some people are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them. Agashe Saheb falls in the first category. The Agashe and Bhadule families have had close ties for over three generations. If an Agashe stubs a toe in Pune, our eyes well up in Pandharpur, and if any calamity befalls us here, the Agashes lose sleep in Pune.

The mind is filled with joy, as Dnyaneshwar Agashe enters his 61st year. I take this opportunity to try and unlock a treasure chest of memories. Looking at him, and his way of working, it is almost impossible to believe that he is 60 years old. Pure, inside and out, and a true sportsman, Dnyaneshwar is our extrinsic life force!

Whenever Agashe comes to Pandharpur, he visits our home first, and only then goes to the temple to bow before Vitthal and Rakhumai. The orange juice in our home is his most favourite drink. After drinking to his heart's content, he stands up and says, "Standing in Bhadule's house, momentarily." (Alluding to Lord Vitthal standing).

There is no limit to the Agashe family's generosity. When the question arose as to what to do about a warehouse in Pandharpur, many expressed the opinion that it should be bought paying a handsome sum of money. He turned to me, and asked, "What should we do about this?" Respecting my opinion, he gave the warehouse to the Pandharpur Merchant Bank.

The naming ceremony of the road that joins two major roads, opposite the bus stand, as the late Chandrashekhar Agashe road, took place at the hands of Hari Bhakt Parayan Anantrao Athavale.

The entire populace of Pandharpur and the Bhadule family are delighted on the completion of 60 years of such a dear friend. As a small remembrance of his unbounded love, we have named our son's bungalow 'Shri. Dnyaneshwar Krupa' (*blessing in Marathi*). On this auspicious occasion, I humbly pray to Rukmini-Pandurang to bless the Agashe family with a long and healthy life, prosperity and fame, and to fill their coming years with happiness!

A Modern-Age Dnyaneshwar! – Dr. Suresh Gogte

Dnyanoba Mauli (Sant Dnyaneshwar) invoking Lord Vitthal to come to the aid of his devotees, and, this modern-age Dnyaneshwar invoking Lord Vitthal before setting out to undertake various projects and schemes for the common people... the sentiment in both is the same!

His father, Chandrashekhar Agashe, named him Dnyaneshwar, probably in the hope that his son would follow in the footsteps of, and perform great deeds like, Sant Dnyaneshwar! Just as Sant Dnyaneshwar was blessed to have Sant Nivruttinath as his guru, this Dnyaneshwar had the fortune of having his elder brother, Panditrao, as his. Having lost their father while Shirinrao was still a child, Panditrao bravely took on all of life's blows, and shielded his family from its sorrows. It was because of Panditrao that Shirinrao could indulge in the joys and pleasures of youth, and pursue his hobbies. Until Shirinrao attained maturity, and gained expertise in business matters, the very capable Panditrao single-handedly shouldered the responsibilities of the entire Agashe empire. Gradually, Shirinrao became accomplished in business and industry. Later, after Panditrao's untimely death, Shirinrao single-handedly took the business right to the very top. This is a Dnyaneshwar who honours the palanquin of Vithoba without fail, bows in devotion before Vithu Mauli, and becomes one with the pilgrim devotees. Just as it is a herculean task to describe Sant Dnyaneshwar, who had the mastery to speak on, and decipher, in minute detail, the Bhagvad Gita, so is it difficult to capture in words the work done by this Dnyaneshwar. In this book, everyone is going to narrate, according to his or her capacity, the facet of this resplendent diamond that appealed most to them.

He is different things to different people, Mauli, friend, Shirin mama, younger Saheb or Baba!

There are two reasons why I cannot say I knew him closely in the initial years of his marriage to my elder sister. First, the age difference between us, and second, I was studying far away, in Gulbarga. Since I was much younger to him, I always had a respectful curiosity about him. Questions, such as 'How can he effortlessly shoulder the responsibility of such a vast business empire at such a young age?' often arose in my mind.

My paternal uncle, Raosaheb Gogte, had already bestowed the title of 'favourite nephew-in-law' on him. I presume this title was given to him due to the similarities in

their characters. Seeking the answer to the question, ‘What qualities should one have to be a truly successful industrialist?’ certain qualities in Shirinrao struck me. The first, a large circle of close and intimate friends. Without the ability to recognise talent, and judge people’s character, one cannot become a successful industrialist.

The second quality was his soft-spokenness, and respect for elders. Before embarking upon a big project, he would touch the feet of the elders to seek their blessings.

How a person, with the world at his feet, can live so simply, I have been unable to fathom! Probably, the culture of ‘simple living, high thinking’ was imbibed from infancy in his aristocratic upbringing. In their home, the opinions of elders are sought and respected, literature and the teachings of the Vedas are held in high esteem, and help is always extended to those in need.

Through my nephews, Mandar and Ashutosh, who once old enough, started learning the ropes of the business under the watchful eyes of their father, I began interacting more, and struck a bond, with Shirinrao. Even a five-minute interaction was enough to underline the value he had for time, his penchant for punctuality, and his ability to make quick decisions. Being a cricket fanatic, the fact that my brother-in-law was a former Ranji Trophy player only increased my respect for him.

The emotional balance and stability necessary for Shirinrao’s capabilities to prosper has been provided by my sister, Rekha. Though she was a pillar of strength for us after the death of our father, my brother-in-law’s strong support also proved invaluable. I pray to the Lord to bless us with this strong, loving support for many years to come!

Dnyaneshwar – Bal Pandit

We have great reverence, love and affinity for the name Dnyaneshwar in our family. Sant Dnyaneshwar Maharaj is our prime deity. Thus, it should come as no surprise that I felt a strong affection towards Dnyaneshwar, although it was not the only reason I felt so.

Dnyaneshwar's father, Chandrashekhar Agashe, and my father, Jagannath Maharaj Pandit, were dear friends. Both were connected with the Brihan Maharashtra Sugar Syndicate, my father being the Chairman, and Agashe Senior, the Managing Director. Besides, both Dnyaneshwar and I were students of New English School, Ramanbaug.

Moreover, we shared the same cricket coach, Rambhau Lele, for whom we had the utmost regard. Even today, when his name crops up, we delight in mimicking his mannerisms and distinctive style of speaking.

Whenever a long, white car entered the gates of our home, I knew it was Agashe Saheb. One day, my father introduced me to him. He immediately said, "You know what, my younger son also plays cricket!" This meant that he was aware I played cricket too.

I first saw Dnyaneshwar in 1958, in Mumbai. I was working for A. C. C. and staying at the Sardar Gruha, a hostel. The room I stayed in belonged to Brihan Maharashtra. And here it was, one day, that a school boy arrived with a cricket kit. That boy was Dnyaneshwar.

He was selected for the Indian Schools team, and was on his way to Ceylon. I distinctly remember congratulating him and wishing him well. The next time we met was in a game of cricket. I was the captain of Club of Maharashtra and Dnyaneshwar led the Union Club. I realised in that game how difficult it was to get him out. He was an attacking batsman, and it was impossible to predict where his shots would go. His style of play could best be described as 'unorthodox'.

But more than his batting, I was enamoured of his wicket-keeping. He stood up to the stumps even to the quick bowling of Sadanand Mohol. He had great agility, and the way he gathered the ball was a treat to watch. His running-between-the-wickets was outstanding. It was clear as day that Lele Sir's pupil would make a name for himself.

Later, when I played in the Ranji Trophy, Dnyaneshwar was in the reserves. And when I became a member of the Ranji selection panel, the question arose whether to pick him or not. A couple of the selectors were not very keen. Their main grouse was that Dnyaneshwar did not attend the net sessions. But I had no doubt whatsoever that he was

good enough to play at the Ranji level. I had to fight a lot to get my way though. The selection committee meeting was on the first floor of the Railway building. Arguments went back and forth, but three of us selectors stuck to our guns and finally, at the unearthly hour of 1 in the morning, Dnyaneshwar's name was included in the team. I called him over the phone as soon as I reached home. He and his friends were still awake. He picked up the phone himself, and, on hearing the news, I could hear the loud celebrations in the background.

Even better news is that Dnyaneshwar made his debut, and played very well too, scoring a half century and keeping wickets superbly! But he did not have a long career. I believe had he been more dedicated and determined, he would have gone on to play at the highest level, but, alas! Later, he too became a selector, and for the next 5-6 years, we served on the committee together. Even though there would be arguments and differences of opinion with others, Dnyaneshwar and I were always on the same side. Naturally, this was hard for the other members to digest. There were numerous attempts to drive a wedge between us, but to no avail. And I don't think they will succeed in the future either!

We were part of the cricket selection committee of the Pune University too and called each other almost every day, to discuss ways of making the team stronger.

As part of the MCA (Maharashtra Cricket Association) it was the three of us, Narayan Thakar, Madhav Ranade and I, who insisted on recommending Dnyaneshwar's name for the Indian Cricket Board.

Dnyaneshwar became part of the Board. He got the hang of its politics, and within no time, became the Vice-President of the Board. The next step, obviously, was to become President. But here, he miscalculated. Just when it was believed that his being the President was a mere formality, he ran into headwinds the night before. In spite of 2-3 attempts, the Presidentship continued to elude him. That he reached this far was no mean achievement though. Only two members of the MCA had ever become Vice- Presidents of the Board, Prof. D. B. Deodhar, and Nanasaheb Tulpule. Even today, with meticulous planning, Dnyaneshwar could become President of the Board. Who ever said anything is impossible in life!

In the meanwhile, he had become the Chairman of the Working Committee of the MCA and thus, following in the footsteps of Makarand Bhavé and Nanasaheb Tulpule, had become the supreme authority in the Association. On becoming the Chairman, he started a team called Brihan's XI, with the intention of bringing budding cricketers into the limelight, and played it in major tournaments of the Association.

Moreover, he has borne the cost of Pune's Invitation League for the past few years.

Besides this, he has given jobs and financial assistance to needy players, and contributed 10,000 rupees for a player's benefit game, on several occasions. Along with giving donations, he is quite adept at getting donations for the Association too. He has helped countless people in their hour of need, but, to his credit, never utters a word about this to anyone!

As I knew his word carried a lot of weight, I suggested his name as Trustee of the Dnyaneshwar Maharaj Temple in Alandi. There was the question though about paucity of time. As finding solutions without making a fuss was in his nature, he agreed, albeit reluctantly. After only 2-3 meetings however, he raised the topic of resigning. But I managed to convince him to stay on. He was on the board as a trustee for about 7 years, but he just could not get himself to develop interest in it.

Over the years, I have found Dnyaneshwar to be fearless. Also, he carries himself with great confidence. He is neither scared of criticism nor cowed by threats. In fact, he often taunts these people to continue criticising him, saying it gives him free publicity. He has this amazing capacity of managing diverse businesses at the same time. As he gets the measure of things quickly, he is able to take quick decisions too. Owing to his tact and diplomacy, he easily finds solutions to problems which others find complex and seemingly insurmountable.

This is why I said during the golden jubilee celebrations of the Maharashtra Cricket Association that, in Dnyaneshwar, the Association had got a new leader. This has proven true and today, due to his dynamic leadership, the financial position of the Association has improved considerably.

Today, at a time when even the closest of relationships often count for nothing, Dnyaneshwar has started an Inter-Cooperative Bank cricket tournament in the name of his elder brother, Panditrao Agashe. I honestly feel Dnyaneshwar should take things a little easy, now that he is entering his 60s. He constantly travels round the world, just like the back-to-back cricket matches of today. Be it Calcutta, Delhi, London, Shreepur, or, of course, Mumbai, he is always on the move. Only recently he went through a personal crisis. To add to that, his wife, Rekhatai, also took seriously ill. But he faced both these adversities with great courage and fortitude.

Dnyaneshwar often treats me like his elder brother. I have, therefore, given him license to point out my faults and shortcomings. Bearing this relationship in mind, along with congratulating and wishing him on his 60th birthday, I would like to advise him to cut down on his travels, and slow down the pace of his life. He got both his sons married

in great style. In one of these wedding ceremonies, he wore a cream-coloured sherwani and a red-coloured Puneri pagadi. I had said to him then, “Now you look like my father!”

I pray to the Almighty that we get to see this image of Dnyaneshwar forever!

The Detached One – Ramesh Damle

Being asked to write about Mr. Dnyaneshwar Agashe, in a book being published to celebrate the completion of 60 years of his life, brought back a flood of memories.

My father, Shivrampant, and Dnyaneshwar's father, Chandrashekhar, were old friends. Wrestling was the latter's hobby. I was a wrestler too and enjoyed being in the wrestling pit. Thus, the first memory of Dnyaneshwar that came back had to do with wrestling.

There was a wrestling pit inside Shri. Chandrashekhar's house in Shaniwar Peth. The opening bout was scheduled in the house itself. One of the wrestling partners was Dnyaneshwar. Though he is now famous as a cricketer, wrestling was a sport he loved.

Later, Dnyaneshwar took admission to Ramanbaug school. I remember Rambhau Lele was his cricket coach. The matches that took place in the Maharashtra Mandal had a team of fifteen instead of the regular eleven. Dnyaneshwar used to be a part of that team. The games used to be thoroughly enjoyable, and played in great spirit. But it needs to be specifically mentioned that the post-game meals used to be more fun than the games themselves.

In those days, I used to visit the Omkareshwar temple every evening, at seven sharp. After that, I would always go to the Agashe house. After the death of their father, the responsibility of the business fell on the shoulders of Panditrao and Dnyaneshwar. A lot of people, myself included, stood behind Dnyaneshwar then, and continue to do so to this day, since we believed that one from our midst was doing well in business and should get all the support possible.

Today, Dnyaneshwar has all the wealth and happiness he can ask for. Yet, I have never seen him dressed in a suit at any function. We literally have to search for him in the crowd. There is no clamour for fame or publicity, no dressing up in fancy clothes, a complete absence of ego. That is why he has been able to maintain his eminence. The personality of a sportsman seems to develop and blossom in every conceivable way. Dnyaneshwar is living proof of this. He never thought less of games other than cricket. He strove for every sport to progress and prosper and is on the bodies of several sports organisations.

Dnyaneshwar leaves an indelible impression on the mind because of his soft-spokenness, his ability to take everyone along, and his nature of never disappointing anyone who asks for help.

My father, Shivrampant, laid the foundation stone of the Agashe College (B. Ed.) mainly due to the largesse of the Agashe brothers. Dnyaneshwar carried this legacy forward. Only recently, he gave a large donation for a new building. Many such instances cemented our relationship.

Dnyaneshwar has friends in every sphere and every stratum of society. Politics is no exception to this. But again, importantly, he can remain detached from all of this. I often think of asking him whether his gotra (*lineage*) is Atri (*the last among the seven gotras in Hindu culture*) because, it is said that 'the one with the atri lineage is friends with all'.

Dnyaneshwar, who somehow manages to remain detached despite being friends with and helping everyone, is completing 60 years of his life. I would like to end with a blessing, 'May he live a hundred years!'

The Card Group – Vilas “Daddy” Kulkarni

One of Agashe Saheb’s favourite hobbies is playing rummy on a Sunday afternoon. He joined the group that I, along with Vasant Chinchalkar, Bandu Limaye, Suresh Bapat, the late Vijay Mane and others, had started in 1960, and continues to be an integral part of it. Every so often, new members joined the group. Paediatrician Dr. Ajay Joshi, Shalu, Grover, Madhu Salvi, Capt. Gokhale, and at times, even the MP Ashok Mohol came. Some stopped coming due to work commitments, while others, such as Mane, Gumaste and Rajan Apte because death snatched them from us. Our present group has members ranging from the middle to the affluent class, and, since it is purely a pastime, the stakes are very low. Agashe is the wealthiest among us, but if you were to surreptitiously watch us playing rummy, you would find him arguing fervently with the player next to him for under-declaring marks worth 50 paise! The funny part is that at the end of the game, he often distributes sweets, kept in his car, worth about 100-200 rupees to everyone. Even more amusing, though, is the fact that when we meet for a cup of coffee the next day, he resumes his argument over those 50 paise with the concerned player!

Today, quite a few of us from the group have turned 60. All of us, including Arvind Mehendale, Mama Dhoot, Vinayak Panse, Suhas Date, Ramakant Pethkar and Anant Mate, wish our dear friend a long and healthy life!

My Friend – Manohar Bhide

I don't quite remember how I first came to be acquainted with Dnyaneshwar. Similarly, as I look back, I can't quite fathom how that acquaintance became so strong over the last forty years. Be it doing something for someone, or forging a relationship, he does it so naturally, and with such ease, that the other person remains oblivious of the efforts behind it. There is an alluring simplicity to everything he does, whether it is having a cup of coffee with his friends, or an important meeting with a merchant banker or an N. R. I. Dnyaneshwar is so humble and modest that the other person often fails to get a sense of his innate perceptiveness and resolve. He has mastered the art of staying detached despite being involved in so many different ventures. This aspect of his behaviour often leads to amusing situations. I remember, Dnyaneshwar was scheduled to meet a high-ranking officer of a reputed bank. He was to discuss such important things as starting a factory abroad and raising capital. Dnyaneshwar turned up for the meeting in his customary bush-shirt, trousers, and chappals, upon which the officer put aside the agenda for the meeting and instead gave Dnyaneshwar a sermon on dressing appropriately for such meetings, in a suit, complete with a flower on the left lapel of his coat. The funny part is that Dnyaneshwar heard him out patiently. The mere memory of that meeting brings a smile to my face even today.

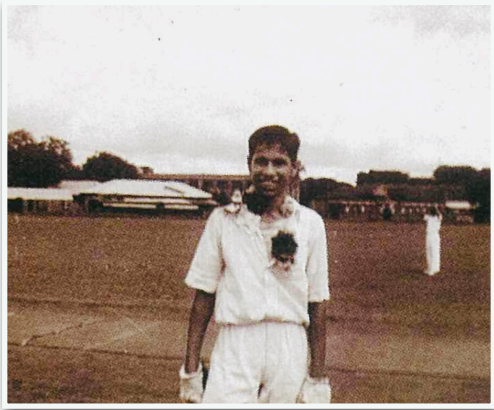
Dnyaneshwar has touched literally hundreds of lives. You only have to spend a couple of hours with him to get a sense of this. I was with him once for about two to three hours. In that period, I saw people with financial difficulties, struggling businessmen, and even a desperate politician, spill their hearts out to him. On his part, he spoke to them most reassuringly. As far as possible, Dnyaneshwar never turns anyone down. But when he has to, you can rest assured it is not a business move and that his reasons are genuine and his feelings honest. Though he may be a 'Dnyaneshwar', he generally avoids being philosophical. However, he once said to me, "Don't do something if you can't, but avoid using harsh words when saying no." Probably due to these qualities in him, Dnyaneshwar feels more like a friend than a mere acquaintance. His circle of friends is, of course, legendary! Being his friend is a blissful experience. It boggles the mind to see the diverse fields and strata his friends come from. Even a financially weak friend is taken into a different world altogether. It is akin to the friendship between Lord Krishna and his poor friend Sudama (*from Hindu mythology*). Dnyaneshwar always keeps his friends in his thoughts in moments of happiness, and is always there for his friends in good and bad

times. He immediately rushed to help on hearing that the wife of an N. R. I. friend had taken ill. A friend in need of financial help doesn't even need to ask. A number of businesses are alive today due to his support. This doesn't mean that he is naïve though. On the contrary, he is extremely practical and capable. He is as resolute as he is loving. Not limiting himself to the sugar factory, he has successfully diversified into various fields, and is regarded as one of Pune's leading industrialists today. By diversifying in fields keeping the future in mind, Dnyaneshwar has shown great foresight. I have some insight into the obstacles he faced in this journey. But, undeterred, he has always found his way through. Even though he may not have said it in as many words, there has always been a connection between us.

While formulating and implementing the working policies of the Suvarna Sahakari Bank, problems often arise with respect to established practices and systems. There are several instances, however, where Dnyaneshwar, not willing to take it lying down, has done what he felt was right and tried to fit it into the system. It is this 'courage of conviction' that enables him to be himself.

While doing all this and more, there is not even a hint of the ego. As far as possible, he looks to shun publicity, and prefers to be left alone. Also, he seems to have set certain boundaries for himself, be it personal, family-related or regarding business-growth. That is why I have seen him firmly turn down several offers of business and investments made by his friends. It is this disciplined nature that prevents him borrowing money from the market to start projects he knows are beyond him.

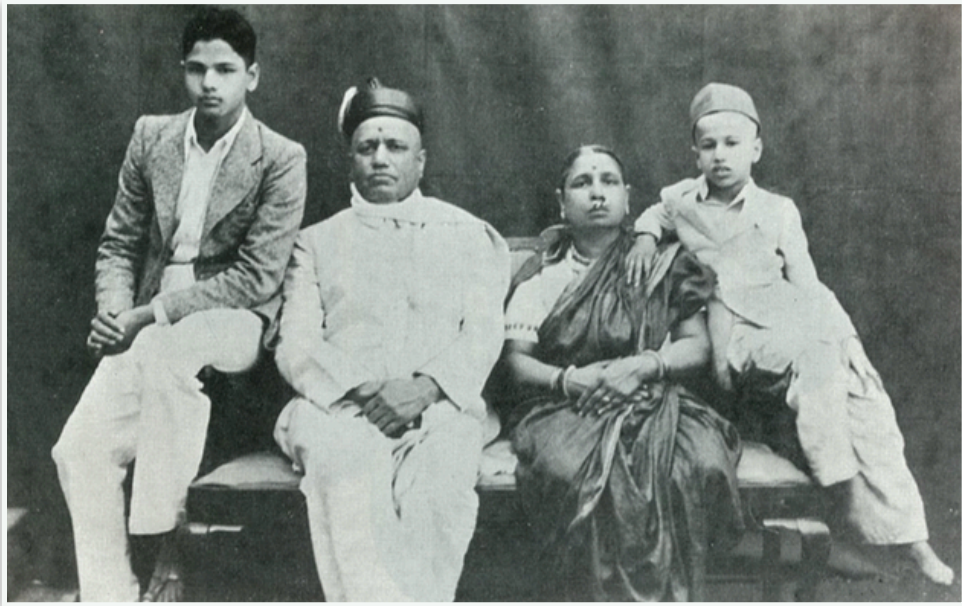
And so, being a cricketer, this friend of ours is starting a second innings. May it prove as entertaining, successful and long as the first one!



In his cricket gear, circa late 1950s



Agashe (standing; second from left); with his school hockey team, circa early 1950s



With his parents and elder brother Panditrao, circa 1950

Shirin... My Brother – Shakuntala Karandikar

In the Upanishads, the mind is compared to God or Lord Ganesh. Mind is all-important. Tukaram Maharaj says, ‘make your mind happy’. Just like this saying, my mind too is happy today! I received a call from Shreepur, that Dnyaneshwar’s well-wishers were celebrating his 60th birthday. They were going to come out with a literary tribute to mark the occasion and wanted me to pen my memories of Dnyaneshwar’s childhood. I felt so happy. Memories are plentiful. But then I thought, what is the point in praising one’s own? Others should do it. I realised, though, that regardless of the praise by others, when someone very close to you gives a loving pat on the back and sings your praises, it means a lot more. In this happy state of mind, I started writing words of praise for him, and the memories of his childhood.

The mind refuses to accept that Dnyaneshwar has become 60 years old, has grown up. I still think of him as a little boy. Today, memories of his childhood flood the mind.

April is a hot summer month, but the 17th of April 1942 dawned as a golden day in the Agashe family. Dnyaneshwar was born embodying the lines of a Marathi poem, which read as, ‘*The seasons blossomed upon seeing you*’. Spring was in the air. Twins were born. The naming ceremony was done with great pomp. The unbridled joy of cradling Dnyaneshwar and Mukta made us oblivious to the searing summer heat which burned almost like a forest fire. Dnyaneshwar looked dainty, and was of delicate health. Though Mukta was better health wise, she fell seriously ill after about 6-7 months, and died. From an early age, Dnyaneshwar was restless, and sharp-minded. But as his health was delicate, everyone took special care of him. The late respected mama and mami (our parents) protected and cared for Dnyaneshwar as one would protect a flame flickering in the wind. Their feelings for him were gentle and tender. Since he was as delicate and pretty as a girl, our elder sister, the late Leelatai, started calling him ‘Shirin’, a girl’s name. To this day, all of us call him by that name, and he is the favourite ‘Shirin uncle’ of all his nephews and nieces.

His health improved considerably after about five to six years, and after his thread ceremony in his 8th year, things settled down. Our father specially built a gymnasium and a wrestling pit so that Dnyaneshwar could become healthy and strong. It was situated where the house ‘Chandrashekhar’ stands today. There, he learnt the ropes of

mallakhamb, a traditional Indian sport, and wrestling. For health purposes, ‘thandai’, an Indian cold-drink with almonds, cardamom, milk, saffron, sugar, etc. used to be prepared, which helped in him becoming somewhat healthier. As a result of all the exercise, he took part in a wrestling bout, in 1969, with ‘Yamasa-bhikusa-kshatriya’ of Nashik. Such is my dear brother!

This wrestler brother of mine went on to study at the Navin Marathi and Ramanbaug New English schools. Though good at academics, he was happiest when on the playground, where he used to play and jump around to his heart’s content. He also jumped the rope as an exercise for his cricket. Even today, he loves his walk around the ground.

He easily passed the school-exams every year. As mentioned earlier, he was good at academics, but cricket was his passion. His coach, Lele Sir, trained him so well that he not only became his favourite pupil, but an accomplished player too. He used to hang a ball in the door frames around the house and bat against it for hours on end. Through rigorous training and exercise, he became adept at the game. He worked very hard. While still in school, he went to play in Ceylon, as part of the Indian Schools’ team. He travelled alone by air, at that young age, to go play. As he was small, he was ragged by the older players. But he showed great restraint, wisdom and understanding, got into no arguments and came back home safely. While in Ceylon, Lele Sir wrote him a letter advising him on how to live and conduct himself there. He showed it to us on his return. I still remember that letter, which was a real treasure of thoughts, written in a beautiful handwriting.

He was a born leader. In those days, there was a learning course called ‘S.T.C.’ The teachers training for that course would conduct lessons in the school classrooms. This was their assessment. The students often got bored. The teachers would fail their lessons if the students did not answer their questions. Dnyaneshwar would often instruct the students not to answer, and they would obey. Once, Prema Sohoni, a friend of our sister Vimal, was to take a lesson in his class. Afraid of what Dnyaneshwar might do, she devised a plan. She promised him and his friends ice cream. The boys were thrilled. Her lesson went off very well and she stood first. In childhood, since we are unaware of right and wrong, such funny incidents happen. Other than this, though, he never ever misbehaved.

When Dnyaneshwar was in the eighth, our father died. His life took a completely different turn. He completed his B.A. from Pune’s S. P. college. He was making great strides in cricket. He played in the Cooch Behar, and then the Ranji Trophy

tournaments as a wicket-keeper batsman. He has earned an excellent reputation in cricket. I am proud that he has held different posts in this field with great responsibility and distinction. He is on very good terms with almost all the cricketers, from Sunil Gavaskar, to the little master, Sachin Tendulkar. All of them treat Dnyaneshwar with love and respect. Dnyaneshwar is a great but extremely simple man. That is why he gets along with all these great people. He not only behaves impeccably in the outside world, but at home too, he is simple and loving, though he does lose his temper at times due to the pressures of work. Rekha, his wife, who bears the brunt of these episodes, would be better-suited to talk about his anger than I.

His passionate love for his elder brother cannot be described in words. The late Pandit, on his part, pampered him a lot. He made up for our father's absence. The two brothers were a beautiful combination of knowledge and fame. They always had each other's backs and were inseparable. Pandit's untimely death has really tested Dnyaneshwar's resolve. The burden of responsibility on multiple fronts has exhausted him. Health issues are creeping in. Government policies have not helped either. Only Pandit and Dnyaneshwar would know the mental anguish they must have gone through, when they had to give up the sugar factory, started by our father, and managed by the two brothers with their blood, sweat, and tears, like a father giving away his bejewelled daughter. But he has come through that too. His response to our commiserations is simply to shrug and say, "What can I do?"

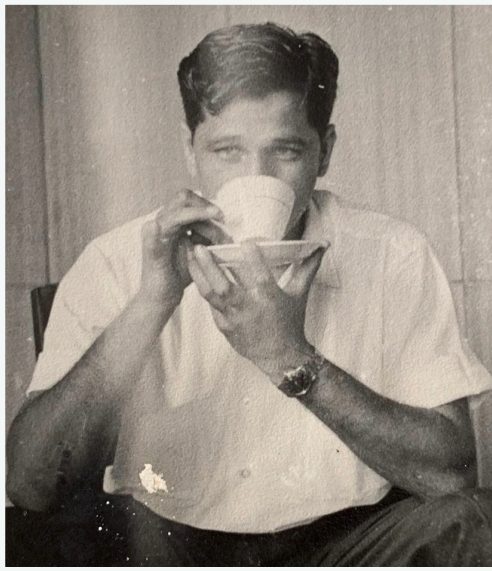
I have seen very few industrialists who have the awareness of social responsibility, the conscience of treating others with humanity, and simplicity in their behaviour with others. Dnyaneshwar has all these qualities. He had great love for his mother. After the death of our father, she was the one who moulded him by inculcating the right culture and values in him. The love a mother has for her child is a given, but it behoves a child to love his mother back. Despite his busy schedule, he would see to it that he spent time with her. Even if only for a minute or two, he would put his head on her lap as she stroked it with love.

A mother's lap is like a university. Nobody gives as much as a mother does. Giving is all she really knows, expecting nothing in return. Giving is a mother's religion, surrendering her nature, and service her destiny. Our mother was exactly so. Being a gracious soul, Dnyaneshwar looked after our mother with great love and affection till the very end, giving her all the happiness in the world.

Dnyaneshwar continues to forge ahead in different fields. Suvarna Sahakari Bank has become immensely successful. He was the keynote speaker for the recently

concluded Sahitya Sammelan and performed this role with aplomb. He is always involved in cricket, especially in the Maharashtra Cricket Association. In short, he is raining sixes and fours in every field. This is a collection of memories from his childhood. In essence, he is a dynamic person. It is said the destiny of a person who is not dynamic and industrious, goes to sleep. He is well aware of this, and lives by the dictum that where there is industry, there is speed and where there is speed, there is progress. His life is nothing less than a cricket match.

I pray to the Almighty, and to Lord Pandurang, the treasure of peace, to bless Dnyaneshwar, our dear, beloved brother, with all the greatness of Sant Dnyaneshwar and with immense wealth and prosperity. May his name and fame spread far and wide, may he live a long and healthy life and may Lord Pandurang's grace be with him, forever!



Circa the 1960s



Circa the 1980s

Thus Begins the Dnyaneshwari! – Sarla Bhide

One can feel the new season in the air. Spring is just round the corner, with leaves appearing on the trees. The gulmohar (*hibiscus*) tree is beginning to bloom in all its splendour. The tender, delicate neem leaves are preparing themselves for the festival of Gudhi Padwa (*the Hindu festival in spring that marks the beginning of the Hindu new year*). The whole atmosphere is pleasant and gay. At a time of such joy, all the near and dear ones, relatives and friends are celebrating the birthday of our dear brother with great love and heart. For this, I wish them well and thank them.

My brother – who eased the pain and grief of Ranganath's death in infancy, which had returned to haunt me just when I thought I had mourned and moved on – who was born soon after me, my pillar of strength, Dnyaneshwar, a.k.a. Shirin!

Almost sixty years have elapsed. As they say, 'a lot of water has flown under the bridge'. We lost our house in the Panshet floods, and memories associated with it have become somewhat indistinct. But there are some memories which are as fresh as ever, those of our childhood.

That era was not one where the 'sensibilities of a child' were given much importance. We did not know our date or time of birth. All we knew was that our mother celebrated the birthdays of my younger sister, Shyamal, Dnyaneshwar and me on the same day. The items to be prepared for the feast were also more or less the same, shrikhand (*a dessert made of yogurt*) and puris (*fried wheat bread*) in sweet syrup. Our mother used to wave the traditional lit lamp (done to obtain the blessings of the deity) and ask us to worship the fixed post of the buttermilk churning apparatus. Cakes and candles were not even heard of then.

Shrikhand reminds me. Shirin loved shrikhand. So much so, that even our car at the time, a Vanguard (number 1946) was painted in cream colour. He used only that car. Joshi buva (Bhagwan) used to be the driver. Also, his car had to be in front of all the other cars.

From a young age, he had a large circle of friends. His childhood friends from our 'wada' (*a traditional Maharashtrian mansion*) were Vinya and Nagya, from the Deo family, and Pamyra from the Mahashabde family. As there were no girls other than us in the wada, we used to play viti-dandu (*a game typically played by Indian children*), marbles, carom, and cricket too. Though he was the smallest, Dnyaneshwar used to

dominate.

My brother's brain was always ticking, something we all appreciated. He would bring stray dog-puppies home, feed them milk, stroke them, and then insist on keeping them. Then either my father or uncle would ask him to put the dogs to a test, to check the number of nails on its paws, and whether they yelped or remained quiet on being lifted by the ears. Moti, a beautiful and well-behaved dog, who was with us for many years, was Shirin's find. Or he used to lay his hands on a goat's kid and bring it home. After tending to it for a few days, its owner would come to take it back. Along with taking the kid, the owner would get a small donation from my brother too.

Dnyaneshwar's childish obstinacy would bring even Birbal to his knees. He was, and still is, extremely agile. Naga (Nagesh) who belonged to the Deo family, was his guru in performing mind-boggling acrobatics, bending over backwards in quick succession and touching his hands to the ground, walking while doing a hand-stand or jumping from absolutely anywhere. Of course, all this proved mighty useful to him in his wicket-keeping later on.

Since he was born soon after me, I was indulged and fussed over. All our fights and arguments, though, were always settled in his favour, as he had the apparent benefit of being smaller and weaker than me. That really riled me, as I believed his show of weakness was simply an excuse. How else could one explain his being up to constant mischief otherwise?

Our old wada had a large compound. Dnyaneshwar and I used to cycle round it all the time. He would try and cut across me, hoping I would fall off my bicycle. As it happened, he himself fell one day, and hurt his arm. He went to uncle and complained that I had tripped him. As expected, I was given a dressing down, while he wore a triumphant smile! Even today, he ribs me saying that since I had broken his arm then, I got a husband with a broken arm!

In childhood, Shirin was really delicate. Being one of a pair of fraternal twins, he was frail, with limbs like sticks, and a large head! As my uncle and father were both fond of physical exercise, they had built a gymnasium and a wrestling pit. My brothers, Dnyaneshwar and Pandit, would do Hindu push-ups and squats, and wrestle in the red clay. There was a wrestler known to my uncle, Eknath Sathe. He taught them tactics and strategies used in wrestling. The highlight was that our 'bony champion' played the opening bout. I still remember the posters put up around town.

To be fair, our father pampered all of us. But since we were born one after the other, there was an ongoing contest between us. On my insistence, my father got a

custom-made cupboard, with a mirror, built. And presto! Another cupboard came up right next to it, for my brother! Both of us had small safes, piggy banks. But inexplicably, while my bank would have five to ten rupees, at best, his would be full, because the moment he insisted even a little, father would give him whatever money he had in his pocket. He could not bear to see his 'lion' in tears. And thus, his bank would always be full. I guess the seeds of 'Suvarna Sahakari Bank' were sown here!

Shirin is a lot like our father. A nephew or niece only has to cry a little and there he is! He then takes them out and buys them gifts. Once, he bought all of them, aged between three and six years, police dresses. On coming home, all of them created a racket in the house, blowing their whistles. They stopped only after their Pandit uncle came and shouted at them. Today, Aditya also knows his grandfather's weak point. Shirin only has to say, "Ask for what you wish," before Aditya comes up with his long list of demands.

The most important person in Shirin's life is his wife, Rekha, who brings a sense of harmony and balance to everything, and helps keep things in perspective. She confronts every problem with a smile on her face. She is as dear to us as Shirin, and we admire her as much. That we still have a rightful 'mother's house' after marriage, is because of Rekha. Our two nephews, Mandar and Ashutosh, and niece, Sheetal, are extremely gifted, and always willing to help others too.

Today our brother has become a reputed man. He has earned name, fame, wealth, and respect. But this never comes in the way of our relationship and the love we have for each other. In all our moments of joy, he is just that, our brother, our pillar of strength and protector. We have carefully collected all the happy and sad moments in the sea-shells of memories. They are our estate, our earnings. Dnyaneshwar's career graph and list of accomplishments is on the ascent, and he ensures others grow and prosper along with him. He has carried forward the legacy of generosity and altruism of our father. This cricketer brother of mine continues to rain sixes and fours in every field that he enters. This wicket-keeper brother of mine accepts compliments with humility, and responds to criticism with a broad smile.

Dnyaneshwar's accomplishments are there for all to see, and don't need to be spelt out. But he has surely been helped by countless people, known and unknown. These are people who love him with all their heart and come forward to help of their own accord. We, his family, gratefully acknowledge this debt of favours and pray that this legacy of generosity, accomplishments, and simplicity is carried forward!

Being elder to him, I give him my blessings, and perform the ritual to ward off the evil eye. I pray for all that is inauspicious to become auspicious. And I will finish

with Swami Samarth's advice –

*Imbibe all that is positive and noble,
Discard all that is negative and uninspiring,
Work without expectations and attachments,
If one is selfless, success will come.
May all the good be bestowed upon you!*

The Unassuming Industrialist – Nitin Dabak

The Honourable and respectable Dnyaneshwar Chandrashekhar Agashe Saheb, is completing 60 years of his life on April 17, 2002. A literary tribute is being published on the occasion. The instant the people of Shreepur proposed this idea, the office bearers of Brihan Maharashtra Sugar Syndicate and Suvarna Sahakari Bank, from Pune, readily agreed to it.

Our directors and Saheb's friends asked me to collect memories and photographs. I began right away, but the question cropped up as to who would do the compilation and the photo layout. This responsibility was happily accepted by Ekbote Sir and Belvalkar.

I got the well-wishes and messages from Hon. Sharad Pawar, Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh, Union Minister Manohar Joshi, MP Pradeep Rawat and others, right away. All of them expressed their happiness at such an exercise being undertaken in Agashe Saheb's honour. This once again underlined the relationships Saheb had with politicians across all parties.

I got the opportunity of joining the company, on January 15, 1991, when Agashe Saheb was the Chairman of the Brihan Maharashtra Sugar Syndicate and Suvarna Bank. A small yet significant incident of the time remains etched in memory. While working for the food division, I had to deliver sauce crates to a hotel in the cantonment area. The goods came from Bhosari, but somehow a tempo could not be arranged that day. I had gone to Saheb's bungalow for some work. Once he came to know what had happened, and so that I could keep my word given to the hotel owner, Saheb asked me to take his very own Mercedes and get the job done. That day, I truly understood the meaning of the word, 'industrialist'.

In the February of 1999, I wanted to hold an exhibition of my photographs. When I broached the topic to Agashe Saheb, he booked the Holiday Inn, a five-star hotel, for the exhibition, so that I could get more opportunities in the future, and to encourage my art.

I pray to God for Saheb to successfully complete his century in life!

That which fills the solar system with light; that which shines day and night;

That what makes the earth auspicious and bright; may your life be illuminated by that!

May you live a hundred years!

A Renowned Institution – Vijay Wadekar

I have known Dnyaneshwar Agashe for the past thirty odd years. Often, a college friendship or an acquaintance is akin to that struck up during a daily commute. But this great soul has carefully preserved our acquaintance! I was a teacher in Ramanbaug, the school that Dnyaneshwar Agashe studied in, for 12 years. In the year 1967-68, I visited Agashe's press regarding the school periodical. Seeing me, he said, "Wadekar! What brings you here?" And the ties of friendship were rekindled.

In 1970, it was decided, in a matter of 15 days, to publish the monthly issue of the magazine *Rajas*. I was the honorary editor of the magazine till the very end. At the same time, we started the first Marathi digest for women, *Yogita*. I recently retired as manager of Dnyaneshwar Agashe's Mandar Printers, a post I had held since 1975, a period of twenty-five years.

The reason for going into such detail is that I have had the opportunity of seeing Dnyaneshwar Agashe's personality from different perspectives.

One who assumes his father's responsibilities after his death, also has to bear the fruits of his own past deeds. Despite consuming this poison of fate, this sixty-year-old 'youth's' fine behaviour and smiling face is forever ready for challenges. He has the uncanny knack of diving headlong into any personal or professional crisis and emerging on the other side with a broad smile on his face. He doesn't seem to know the meaning of the word 'relaxation', as he never seems to relax, or take things easy.

It seems incredible that this true friend, who is forever in search of new ventures and endeavours, has turned 60!

Dnyaneshwar Agashe is one such eminent institution, wherein every friend has his own special account and individual deposit. Every friend of his is unique in his own way. And for them, he is special and different too. To be honest, the cap on words put by the editor of this publication is unfair and challenging, and to capture the dynamism of Dnyaneshwar Agashe in the stillness of words is an even greater challenge. Nevertheless, I will endeavour to narrate a few select incidents pertaining to friendship, employment and companionship, which will bring to the fore a few facets of this man's amazing personality.

Tradition!

It was decided to feature the photograph of Sant Dnyaneshwar Mauli of Alandi

on the company calendar. One of the trustees of Alandi insisted that it should be a photograph of Shri. Mauli wearing the newly created silver mask. Such a photograph was taken. With a mischievous glint in his eye, Agashe said, “Who will say this is Mauli’s meditative state, Mauli’s mask? It looks like Gajanan Maharaj (*a Hindu guru, saint and mystic*). Use the traditional silver mask instead, which projects Mauli as Lord Vishnu!”

Expression!

Due to the increasing scope of the work at the printing press, the two popular magazines, *Rajas* and *Yogita*, were to be initially discontinued. The discontinuation of *Rajas* saw literally hundreds of letters of protests from the readership. Around this time, Agashe came to the press. I showed him the letters. He said, laughing, “Wadekar, just show me the letters of the dealers!” Needless to say, I had lost.

‘*Rajas*, an expression of the Marathi mind!’ was how our advertisement went. But Director Agashe’s expression seemed more objective to me, because there were hardly any letters from the dealers!

Transaction!

There was one buva (*a respectful term for an elderly person; also, a term to describe a quack*) maharaj from Madhya Pradesh, who used to sing bhajans (*devotional songs*) on the tambourine. He came to Pune often. He once expressed a desire to publish a book of his bhajans. I obliged with great faith and devotion. But he did not pay the bill for a long time. Whenever he came to Pune, I would drop everything, visit him with a coconut and a garland (according to tradition) and wait for the cheque amount, with renewed hope every time. But I got nothing. Then I filed a suit against this maharaj in the Pune court. Finally, when summons was served in his place of worship in the midst of a ritual, his devotees scrambled and somehow managed to pay the bill amount. After this incident, this buva began pestering me about publishing another book. Miffed, I began avoiding him. Once when I was away, he went straight to Saheb’s bungalow to try to talk him into getting the book published. As it is, Agashe has a terrific sense of humour, and on top of it, this meeting with this maharaj! He said to me later, “Wadekar. You have started sending ‘buvas’ to me now!” On hearing my side of the story, he said, “Wadekar, any problem in a transaction should be sorted with another transaction. He may be a maharaj for his devotees, but for us he is only a customer. We should be concerned with our work, and do it as best as we can!”

Policy!

Once I saw Agashe take three Aspirin tablets, one after the other. I exclaimed, “What is this? Three tablets at a time. Please look after your health!” Burning up with fever, he replied, “I will, Wadekar, don’t you worry. I never say no to anything. This is how things are with me. I say, let’s cross the bridge when we come to it!”

Okay and Good!

A private distributor produced a tele-film titled, ‘The Versatile Dnyaneshwar Agashe’. Saheb and I went to see the film. I looked on as Saheb dispassionately watched a film about his achievements and accomplishments. As we left the auditorium, he said, “The film is okay.” I objected, saying, “This man has made the film with a lot of effort. There are so many good things about it. And you say it is just okay!” To which he replied, “How can I blow my own trumpet? It is better to say, it is okay. When I say it is okay, I mean it is good. But if I say it is good right away, the other person might feel only momentarily encouraged, or even doubt the sincerity of the remark. That is why I say it is okay.”

A Maestro!

Rekha vahini has an inborn talent for singing and practices for hours on end. Probably Mandar has inherited this talent from his mother. But, curious about the extent of Dnyaneshwar Agashe’s knowledge in music, a famous musician asked, “Are you fond of music?” Agashe replied, “Oh yes! I like music!” The musician further asked, “What type of music do you like?” To which Agashe replied, “The sound of the ball on the bat is music to my ears!”

Dnyaneshwar Agashe is on the cusp of entering his 61st year. I often wonder of the secret of this accomplished man’s success! It is not an easy ask. Meeting a friend or someone else for the very first time, the conversations and the person’s need form an impression on Agashe. These first impressions are locked in the computer of his mind. Even though times and people change, these first impressions remain constant. The belief that your behaviour is rewarded or punished according to your deeds, and that no one can rob you of your destiny, seems to be at the heart of the honour bestowed upon him. That is why, without remorse or regret, he cuts his way through the maze of challenges and keeps moving forward.

Even though Agashe is a wealthy man, he shows an imprint of middle-class

culture. He has very carefully preserved the treasure-trove and gift of gratitude and humility, which are fast disappearing from the middle-class mentality. That is why, it is hard to believe that this dear friend, who effortlessly applies the ‘simpleness’ in simplicity, is laughing his way to his 61st year!

I pray to the Almighty, to bless Dnyaneshwar Agashe, who has the blessings of Shri. Mauli and Shri. Vitthal-Rakhumai, with a long life!

A Charming Friend – Dr. Jabbar Patel

While doing my internship in Talegaon, I met an extraordinary person, in a way, a teacher, Dr. Ajay Joshi. He was the elder son of the senior socialist leader, S. M. Joshi. The age difference between us might have been about three years. I remember him getting irked when I called him ‘Sir’, in our first meeting at Talegaon. He was the reason I decided to specialise in Paediatrics.

I was doing my post-graduation after completing my MBBS, Dr. Ajay Joshi taught us paediatrics at Sassoon Hospital. Mani, my wife, was doing gynaecology with Dr. Banu Koyaji at K. E. M.

We were married then. My schedule used to be seeing patients with Dr. Phadke at Naidu Hospital, then rushing to Sassoon for the clinic, then back to Naidu, followed by a visit to Mani in the evening, and then to the gymkhana at night for the P. D. A. rehearsals. And all this on a bicycle! Though we didn’t have much, Mani and I had our salaries. We thought of buying a scooter, but hadn’t saved enough money yet.

I casually mentioned this to Ajay once. He could see my plight, rushing from one place to another on my bicycle, and was aware of my financial situation.

The next day, over a cup of tea in the B. J. Medical College canteen, he said, “We are going to meet a friend of mine in the evening.”

We met at a bank in the gymkhana area, where he introduced his friend to me, a youthful, fair, handsome man with a perpetual smile on his face, and mischief writ large in his eyes.

“Jabbar, this is my friend, Dnyaneshwar Agashe, the owner of this bank. He is giving you a loan for your scooter. Fill up these forms.”

We were there for about thirty minutes. Though meeting for the first time, we knew each other, as a theatre-person and cricketer, respectively. Ajay gave me one-third of the loan amount and the rest was given by Dnyaneshwar’s bank. This was the first ever loan in my life.

I have seen many people succumb to the pressures of a loan. But Ajay and Dnyaneshwar made it so easy for me that a new friendship was born through the loan-process. Mani and I decided to start a clinic in Daund, and once again, Dnyaneshwar and Ajay helped without making me feel obliged. Dnyaneshwar’s knack of granting a loan without this ‘stress’ factor is an important reason behind the grand success of Suvarna Sahakari Bank.

I have witnessed this aspect of Dnyaneshwar's personality for the past thirty odd years. Not only in banking, or business ventures, but in the recently concluded Sahitya Sammelan too. He was listening patiently to the arguments being put forth about making English compulsory from the first standard, and offering IT instead of Marathi in the 11th standard. Every speaker stated his position forcefully. A Doordarshan camera was recording the proceedings. I looked at Dnyaneshwar, who ran the school started by his father in Shreepur, in Malshiras taluka, and for the past thirty-five years or so has seen, first-hand, the hunger for education among the poor children from the adjoining villages. He clearly seemed bemused listening to these people who were completely ignorant of the ground realities in the villages, but had suddenly developed a great love for the Marathi language. Though his son Mandar was an expert in the IT industry, Dnyaneshwar, in a mischievous style typical of a Puneite, spoke in measured tones. Maintaining the respect of his position as the keynote speaker at the festival, he said, "Rather than we seniors arguing about this, it would be better to leave it to the younger generation to decide about their own future. They are more in sync with what is happening in the outside world."

It was in his second year of engineering that Mandar gave Dnyaneshwar a big jolt. He was so completely bowled over by the Beatles, the world-famous musicians, that he could think of nothing else but rock music. He pestered his father for a guitar, of all things! Dnyaneshwar wondered whether his son was going to be an engineer or...! But bowing to his son's wishes, he borrowed a guitar from a friend. Seeing Mandar's passion for composing and singing music albums, he made a few of his friends listen to them. The Marathi poet, Suresh Bhat, encouraged Mandar a great deal. Later, Hridaynath Mangeshkar and Asha Bhosale too appreciated Mandar's compositions. Dnyaneshwar and Rekhatai found it incredible that these icons of light Indian classical music were falling in love with their son's western music! Mandar had already proven his mastery in the field of IT. Around this time, Dnyaneshwar and I happened to meet again. I had watched Mandar's album on MTV. Dnyaneshwar said, "I too like what he is doing. My only concern is that he doesn't waste his incredible knowledge of computers." And then, taunting me in his typically mischievous manner, he said, "I hope he doesn't follow in your footsteps, leaving the medical profession for the theatre! Poor vahini, she practices alone in Daund and takes care of the children too." I replied, "Dnyandeva, I have practiced medicine for as many as twenty years. Ask Ajay if you don't believe me." "I know, I'm just pulling your leg. I want Mandar to maintain the balance between the two, that's all," he said. Mandar's third album is soon to be released. His website, Musicurvy.com is popular across the world. Experts from the fields of Biotech and

banking, among others, are impressed with his IT knowledge and skills.

Probably Dnyaneshwar's 'rhythm' while batting, and his 'perfect timing' in taking difficult catches while keeping wickets have proved conducive to Mandar's rock music! His colleagues from the IT industry are fans of his music too.

Dnyaneshwar's younger son, Ashutosh, is a fine bowler. He has emulated his father by playing in the Ranji Trophy, and now works alongside him at the bank. Daughter Sheetal has studied management and apart from looking after the office, acts in television serials too.

Mandar once said in jest, "The relationship between father and my music is a strange one. He likes it, but... You know what, he is actually like Akbar, but acts as if he is Aurangzeb!"

Though Dnyaneshwar will soon turn 60, the freshness he had in him when I first met him in 1969 is still alive! Many young, energetic people are employed in his bank. They behave most courteously. Some of them indulge in sports, theatre, and music. Dnyaneshwar's pleasant personality seems to percolate, through his various institutions, down to all his colleagues.

He has friends in every corner of the world, many of them renowned in their respective fields. He is equally at ease with these friends too. I pray to God to bless this charming friend of mine, and his wife, with a long and healthy life!

A Unique Relationship – Jaywant Lele

The year was 1978/79, the place, Hotel Chalukya, Bangalore. Mr. A. R. “Bapusaheb” Joshi, the Hon. Secy. of the Maharashtra Cricket Association, came to my room with a young man of about forty, and introduced him to me saying, “This is Dnyaneshwar Agashe, Chairman of our Committee. Henceforth, he will attend the BCCI meetings.” This was my first meeting with Shri. D. C. Agashe. We exchanged pleasantries and addressed each other in the singular. Five or six years into a friendship which had blossomed, there was a meeting in Pune. Here I became aware that Shri. D. C. Agashe, whom I was addressing by his first name until then, was a prominent industrialist. I apologised the moment I realised this, but he brushed it aside, saying, “Don’t be silly Jaya! We are friends now, and should continue to be so.” And it has continued! He indeed is a great man, in public and private life! Worthy of becoming the head of any institution, he is a simple and down-to-earth person. Hats off to him!

We share a unique relationship. Despite the fact that I was in the Shri. J. Dalmiya group, the opposition group, in the politics of the BCCI, there was never any bad blood between us. To this day, whenever we meet, we share a meal and exchange a lot of friendly banter.

Last month I was in Pune during Makar Sankranti (*a Hindu festival*). A few days later, on the 19th and 20th of January, the Brahman Sabha of Baroda were due to celebrate their 75th anniversary. I said to him, “I want ₹3,000 as an advertisement for the Brahman Sabha celebrations.” Immediately, he called his manager and asked him to issue the cheque. I said I would send the necessary paperwork in due course of time. He replied, “I have given it since you asked me to. I don’t need any details. I trust you!” I am proud to say that Dnyaneshwar Agashe is a personal friend!

I am indeed happy that Shri. Dnyaneshwar Agashe, my dear friend for about twenty-five years now, is completing 60 years of his life. I pray to God to bless him with health, happiness, and prosperity, and for his wife, Rekha, a most versatile and able business woman, and his worthy sons and daughter, Mandar, Ashutosh, and Sheetal, to assist him in looking after himself and the business empire. I once again wish him all the success!

A Genuine Friend – Dr. V. V. Ghanekar

Time passes in a flash. Agashe Saheb turns sixty, as we speak. Our respective families go back a long way. My father was posted as the Deputy Collector in Solapur district, in the region where the Agashes had their sugar factory. His father would invite my father to come stay at their guest house. He often obliged. Also, Agashe Saheb's elder brother, the late Panditrao and I were old acquaintances. I knew his brother-in-law pretty well too. This is as far as family connections are concerned, but I have been associated with him in public life too.

To begin with, Suvarna Sahakari was a small-scale bank. I have witnessed the hard work put in by Agashe Saheb and the Board of Directors, in those initial years, to facilitate the growth of the bank. There were literally no limits to those efforts. Being a principal and professor of the cooperative movement, we often got an opportunity to talk about this sector. Even though Agashe Saheb may not agree with a point made by someone, he never displeases that person. He says something along the lines of 'let's see what can be done about it', and ensures that the relations are not affected.

Many a times, he has helped his friends and acquaintances just for the sake of maintaining these relationships. And one of his greatest qualities is that he never ever mentions it.

Official meetings in other banks go on for about eight to ten hours. But people would be surprised to learn that the general body meeting of the Suvarna Sahakari Bank lasts for a very short time. The credit for this of course goes to the President and the Board of Directors. Despite having all the freedom, the members implicitly trust Agashe Saheb. They are, in fact, engrossed in devouring the missal (*a spicy Indian snack*) and other snacks.

Wealth and humility normally do not go hand in hand. Agashe Saheb, though, is an exception. Despite giving large donations to many institutions, Agashe Saheb continues to remain inconspicuous to many people. The most recent example is of the Akhil Bhartiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan. Agashe Saheb was the keynote speaker, and I, a member of the reception committee. As we waited for him regarding some important work, he quietly came up from behind and asked us what it was we were waiting for. He has this unique knack of not making his presence felt.

Everybody knows about his love for cricket. He has close, personal relations with political leaders from Maharashtra and other parts of India. Normally, you would

find such people bragging about their proximity to these leaders, but Agashe Saheb only concerns himself with the work, which he gets done quietly

The Agashe family has great affinity for literature, music, and the arts. He has a large circle of friends, which is getting bigger by the day.

I pray to the Almighty to bless this dear friend of ours with a long and healthy life, and may he continue to honour his pledge of serving the common people!

Tuka (Sant Tukaram) As Great as the Sky! – S. V. Daptardar

To listen to Pandit Bhimsen Joshi sing the abhang ‘*anuraniya tokada... tuka akasha evdha*’ (as insignificant as the smallest particle, Tuka as vast as the sky) is to grasp the greatness of Sant Tukaram in one line. Since the Agashe family are devotees of Lord Pandurang, who became a servant to a devotee like Tukaram and helped him in his time of distress, it is natural for such saint-like qualities to be a part of their household.

We have been associated with two generations of the Agashe family. My father-in-law, the late S. J. Mahajan, was a driver with the senior Agashe since 1935. Agashe senior, though, never treated him like a driver but as an equal. My father-in-law repaid him by working diligently. He had seen Dnyaneshwar Saheb and Panditrao since they were kids. When he retired in 1966, he got a small sum as part of his retirement benefits, which included the Provident fund and other heads. He didn’t have a house of his own in Pune. His children were still studying. Besides, he had developed a few physical ailments. Due to a strong inner connect, Dnyaneshwar maalak realised this, and continued to pay him his full salary right until the day my father-in-law died in 1980.

I was transferred to Shreepur in 1981. Whenever Dnyaneshwar maalak came to Shreepur, he would religiously enquire about my well-being, saying, “How is our son-in-law?” It is not incumbent on the next generation to preserve the relationships of an earlier one, but Dnyaneshwar maalak has continued this fount of humanity in his generation too.

We will forever be indebted to the Agashe family. My daughter got married in 1987. My son-in-law had a small factory, making corrugated boxes. All was well until 1990-91, when the factory ran into trouble and was on the verge of closure. The situation was grim. My son-in-law was well-educated, but had crossed the employable age. I was in Nanded at the time. A year later I was transferred to Malinagar. Seeking help for my son-in-law, I approached Dnyaneshwar maalak, and apprised him of the situation. He assured me of giving him a job saying, “Your son-in-law is our son-in-law.” When nothing happened for a few months, I went back to him. He said that he would keep his word. He didn’t ask anything about my son-in-law then. But within the next fifteen to twenty days, he gave him a job. The scenes of joy that erupted in my daughter’s house are beyond words! My daughter, who was seriously ill, recovered. Thus, happy days returned to both our families. By establishing the Shreepur township, the Agashe family has given a livelihood to thousands. I pray for divine inspiration to be bestowed upon him in his

diverse ventures, and for his long and healthy life! It goes without saying that there are countless people like me whose wishes are with him.

A Friend to the Employee – M. V. Ponkshe

I am a Congress worker and freedom fighter, living in Pandharpur, in Solapur taluka. The youth such as I were delighted that two factories had come up in and around Shreepur and Akulj. The prospect of employment gave rise to a sense of security regarding the future. Especially the factory started by Agashe raised the hopes of the middle and educated class, which were fulfilled to a large extent. Dnyaneshwar Agashe taking over the reins of the factory was a source of great happiness to people from every sector.

I was appointed as a gazetted officer in the Labour department of the Government of Maharashtra, which afforded me the chance to see, up close, the industrial relations between the employees and the management. There was never a complaint against Dnyaneshwar Agashe from the employees or their union, nor was there a public confrontation between the two. As in Shreepur, his factories in Pune, his printing press, and other ventures also never witnessed any labour issues. He would settle the employees' bonus and pay raise issues in a way that would be amenable to all. Often, the employees got more than they had bargained for. Thus, no employee or union had to ever knock on the doors of the industrial tribunal.

After my retirement as the Labour Commissioner in 1979, he appointed me as a consultant. Whenever Agashe Saheb stepped in to resolve a labour dispute, a settlement was inevitable. Such an employer is indeed rare. Though I was the consultant for Suvarna Sahakari Bank, there are several instances of Agashe Saheb resolving disputes in a matter of minutes, without ever requiring conciliation or the courts.

As he was a fine sportsman, there is a history of his resolving these industrial disputes in a sporting manner. My experience has been that Saheb jokes with the representatives and ribs them to begin with, but later reaches a settlement with equal ease. An employee may face retribution for misbehaving, but is reinstated if he shows true remorse. Agashe Saheb never lets the employee's family suffer.

He is basically a religious person. The tradition of receiving the procession taken out in the month of 'Ashadh' (*a month in the Hindu calendar*) at the factory, has continued.

When Saheb was a trustee of the Dnyaneshwar temple complex in Alandi, there was never a dispute with the employees regarding a pay raise or any other issue. I was a consultant for the Pandharpur temple committee and the Ganesh temple in Dadar too.

Disputes from these places would come to me, which I had to settle. But not a

single dispute came from the Alandi temple. That is why I always feel that if there has to be an employer or an operator, he should be like Saheb!

I have also experienced the love he has for those who participated in India's freedom struggle. The support he has shown me, his love for Rajabhau Kulkarni, and the respect he has for Narabhau Limaye bear testimony to that.

On this happy occasion, I pray to the Almighty to bless him with a long and healthy life!

A Man of His Word – Adv. Suhas Deo

Writing is an art, and those who master it become eminent writers or litterateurs. Though I don't have that art in me, I am nevertheless going to try and pen my thoughts on Dnyaneshwar Agashe on the occasion of his 60th birthday.

Though our respective families have known each other for three generations, my interactions have been mostly with Dnyaneshwar Agashe. Naturally, there are a lot of memories floating around in the mind. The one common thread that stands out in all these is his quality of always keeping his word.

The very first thing that attracts one to him is his simple lifestyle despite being an extremely wealthy man. Also, his perpetually smiling face, unassuming demeanour, and a phenomenal memory. Starting a conversation on any topic, without any past context, and yet arriving at a quick decision is Saheb's forte. Thus, nothing is ever left unattended.

My father, the late Appasaheb Deo, was the lawyer and legal advisor of Saheb's Brihan business empire from its inception. While he was still living, the late Panditrao Agashe had promised a donation of one hundred thousand rupees, a huge sum in those days, to our school in Malshiras. Unfortunately, both my father, and Panditrao died untimely deaths. Yet, merely going by our word, Dnyaneshwar Saheb gave us the promised amount!

After my father passed away, I took over as their lawyer. Since Dnyaneshwar Saheb had assured my mother that the appointment would continue, I wasn't worried. But the other lawyers, who were unaware of Saheb's nature of keeping his word, applied and even tried to meet him for the job. Let alone discussing, Saheb didn't even meet anyone.

I was the lawyer in many of Saheb's land deals. In most of the deals, the price had been fixed by him ten years ago, and although the deal was taking place now, he still quoted the original price. Even though by the current rate, the value of the deal would have run into hundreds of thousands of rupees, Saheb valued his word given all those years ago, more than the money involved, and never went back on it. Regarding a land deal in Kholve, the buyer of the land, Bhagwat Patil, had openly said in court that since it was Agashe Saheb's word, it won't change even if the Chief Minister were to come. This caused many an eyebrow to be raised, and my chest to swell with pride. This was a living example of the immense faith and belief even the common man has in Saheb's word. Such a wealthy man, who keeps his word, is indeed rare.

On this happy occasion, I pray to the Lord to bless Saheb with a long life full of happiness!

The Protector – Aruna Bhat

The year was 1993. Vijay Bhave came to my house. Sitting in the chair, he said, “Vahini do you know Dnyaneshwar Agashe?” I replied, “No, but his daughter Sheetal and our Supriya are classmates at school. She goes to their house often. I don’t know any of them. I’ve heard that my husband and Agashe were classmates at Ramanbaug but we have never met personally. Why do you ask?” Vijayrao said, “To be honest Vahini, I think he is the only person who can get you out of your major financial crisis and other business-related hassles. I am going to take you to him.” I could sense in Vijayrao’s words the trust he had in his friend, Dnyaneshwar Agashe. It was decided to meet him, and Vijayrao left.

Desperately trying to secure help, I had met many people over the past three years, but without success. Our situation was getting worse by the day. I was therefore sceptical about anything positive materialising from this meeting. Nevertheless, we went to meet him as scheduled. I can’t say how or why, but the moment I stepped into his cabin, I felt a wave of optimism sweep over me. Vijayrao and he were old friends and on a first-name basis with each other. In his capacity as a friend, Vijayrao said to Agashe Saheb, “She is my sister-in-law, and now yours too. She will explain the details, but you have got to get her out of this labyrinth.” I candidly told him about the calamity that had befallen us and the dire situation we were in, since the death of my husband, A. V. Bhat, in 1990. He heard me out patiently and said, “Let me see what can be done. Spread the word that I have agreed to mediate on your behalf in all your business matters.” And the meeting ended.

Soon, things began changing as if someone had waved a magic wand. The magic wand, in fact, was the news that Agashe Saheb had taken over the responsibility of the A. V. Bhat group. The conflicts created by people, the disputes and the litigation in the courts started being settled one by one, and the burden on my head became lighter by the day. During this period, I got the chance to see, up close, Agashe Saheb’s knack of reading people and his amazing decision-making ability.

We had two main businesses, masalas and construction. Saheb literally put his heart and soul into these businesses. We were prepared to do whatever it took and gradually, the businesses started getting back on track. We were able to honour all the commitments made when my husband was alive. That we were able to maintain his prestige and name after his death was entirely due to Agashe Saheb. Of course, he would hear none of it. “It is all because of the mercy of Lord Pandurang,” is all he would say.

But as far as I was concerned, just as Vithoba (*Lord Vitthal*) came to the aid of Damajipant in the garb of a mahaar (*an untouchable in those days*) so he had come to my rescue in the form of Agashe Saheb.

I have met him several times in the past eight to ten years, either at his house or in his office. I take a problem to him; he suggests a solution which I dutifully and respectfully act upon. This is how it has been, every single time.

I have been to his house for several family functions. It is as if a bond has been created with the entire household. To add to it, Rekha vahini and I have developed a special affinity towards each other, almost like dear friends. In fact, our friendship is thicker than that of the original friends, Sheetal and Supriya.

There is so much that I want to say and write about Agashe Saheb and the goodness in him. I think these lines would suffice to express my feelings –

Resplendent like the moon, yet unblemished,

Shining bright like the sun, yet soothing and calm,

May these saintly people, filled with love and compassion for all, be around us, forever!

Truly, his presence is soothing like the moonlit night. His capabilities can be compared to the sun, but they never harm anyone. He is a thorough gentleman, the best among men. He stood behind me, as Lord Krishna stood behind Draupadi. Rather than being free of this obligation and debt, I would like to be burdened by it for the rest of my life.

On this auspicious occasion of his 60th birthday, I pray to the Almighty to forever protect and shower his blessings on the Agashe family, who give everything of themselves in striving for the good of others!

Karmayogi: One who Acts without Expectations – Dr. Chintamani Marathe

I first heard Dnyaneshwar Saheb's name in the cricketing context, in 1960, but it took until the August of 1991 for us to meet. Though this opportunity came far too late, I am eternally grateful for the fact that it did, and that I came to be associated with the Brihans business conglomerate.

It is often mentioned in biographies of saints and wise men, that when a disciple sees one, he intuitively recognises him and realises that this was what he was seeking. I was similarly overwhelmed when I first met Agashe Saheb. Since that day, I have been experiencing his pleasing personality, benevolent gaze, certitude, affection for others, and a strong belief. I have never ever seen him discriminate. He is a living example of equanimity and a man endowed with all that is best. As if his life is a meditation in itself. He can only be called a 'Shrimant Karmayogi!'

Willingly accepting all the responsibilities that came his way at a young age, he showed the amazing ability and skill of fulfilling them, while taking everyone along. One can feel the compassion in him, as in a saintly person, of striving to ease the pain, suffering, and problems of others. This explains why people refer to him as Mauli. That this blissful experience should come my way is, I guess, because of some past good deeds.

Working under him for a few years, I got to experience and learn a great deal. He is unassuming, simple, spontaneous, and particular about cleanliness. Keeping one's word to the last, come what may, seems to be not only his, but the entire Agashe family's holy grail. Agashe Saheb is an object lesson in how to preserve relationships. His proven method of getting results by ensuring synergy between the task at hand and the workforce is worth emulating.

Today, Japanese management techniques are much talked about. But Agashe Saheb has been quietly implementing these techniques for the past several years. The fruit of that can be seen in the way the acorn of the Brihans conglomerate has grown into a full-blown oak.

I think the root of all this lies in Agashe Saheb's cricketing abilities, especially his wicket-keeping. A wicket-keeper, along with standing guard behind the stumps and keeping a watchful eye on the batsman, has the entire field and fielders in his vision, and in a way controls the game. Similarly, Agashe Saheb keeps a watchful eye on every arm

of the business and its departments (production, marketing, finance, human resources, and management) coordinates everything, and strives to motivate the workforce towards achieving the targets and goals of the company. He leaves ultimate success at the feet of Lord Pandurang, and like a trustee, shows others the way to salvation. While doing all this, he has to remain alert and able like a wicket-keeper. For this, I pray to God to keep him strong and healthy, bless him with a long life, and for his guidance to benefit others for years to come.

Not everyone can express their feelings in words. So, I will take the support of Sant Tukaram Maharaj's abhang –

*The children say things they should not,
Forgive our mistakes, dear Maharaj,
I never asked about my right to answer,
Tuka says, Dnyaneshwara, I sing your paeans, let me be at your feet!*

Dnyaneshwar is My God! – Ram Joshi

Dnyaneshwar and I were together throughout our primary and secondary schooling, but it was during our graduation years that our friendship really blossomed. After finishing his studies, he took the challenge of turning the Shri. Shivaji Printing Press, bequeathed by his father, into a profitable venture. He needed someone reliable with him in this quest. Because of my complete faith in him, I joined the Shivaji press in May 1964.

Thereon, I actively participated in his projects in the industrial, sports, social, and cultural fields. It was through the printing press that Shri. Prakashan, a publishing house, came into being. We not only published books on various topics, but successfully published the magazine *Rajas* too.

In these budding years, being and working closely with him, I became aware of his industriousness, perseverance, and ability to judge people's character and identify the talent in them. I realised that while safeguarding his personal interest and gain, he thinks about the other person too.

I would like to mention here that, without me ever asking, he encouraged and actively helped me to start my own business, so that I could augment my earnings. I think among his friends, I am the first to have worked alongside him in his business.

In 1966, Taraprakash Vartak, a friend, proposed the idea of hosting an international calendar show. Realising that this venture would introduce us to people from various walks of life, and thereby increase our contacts, help us shed our inhibitions and develop the confidence of facing people, Dnyaneshwar supported us to the hilt. On the strength of that, we successfully hosted these exhibitions in Pune in 1966, '67 and '68, in Mumbai in 1967, and in Calcutta in 1968.

In 1969, Vilas Ekbote came up with the idea of starting a cooperative bank. As usual Dnyaneshwar put our circle of friends, including Chopde, Pethkar and others to work. Everyone knows the heights the Suvarna Sahakari Bank has reached today.

On the strength of the training I had received, working alongside Dnyaneshwar, I started my own business in Satara, in 1971-72. Though I was some distance away from Pune, I constantly got his guidance and encouragement.

In 1973, he started the production of country liquor in his sugar factory in Shreepur. The task of its distribution in Satara district was entrusted to me, and thus, I once again became Dnyaneshwar's 'business friend' in Satara.

Just as it is Dnyaneshwar's belief that the growth and prosperity in business is

due to the goodwill earned by his father, so too, I believe that his goodwill is the reason behind my success and rise.

Despite being such a successful and prominent figure, he still concerns himself with the joys and sorrows of friends, relatives, colleagues and employees. Also, without ever showing boredom or disinterest, he honours all invitations.

That his friends call him Mauli only shows that he has justified, in every sense, his name, Dnyaneshwar. That is why I say, "Dnyaneshwar is my God!"

I pray to Lord Pandurang that, like a test hero, Dnyaneshwar goes on to complete his life's century!

The Jewel of Ramanbaug – Prof. Padmakar Shankar Purandare

I had heard that my late classmate, Raghunath Chandrashekhar Agashe's brother, Dnyaneshwar, was studying in Ramanbaug. All the bright students used to be in division 'B'. On probing a little, I found out that Dnyaneshwar was in the 'A' division. This didn't sit well with me and I sent a message to Madhu Gupte, who was in the 'B' division, to get Dnyaneshwar to my house. When they came, I told them, "From tomorrow, the two of you have to come to my house at 5.30 in the morning to study." And so, they did. Regular studies had the desired effect. Dnyaneshwar was included in the 'B' division along with Madhu, while I had the satisfaction of being of service.

Thereafter, I started paying more attention to Dnyaneshwar and realised that he had many admirable qualities, such as adjusting with everyone on a cycling trip to Sajjangad, a willingness to pick up a fight with argumentative passengers on a trip to Gujarat, never showing off his wealth, at times even offering a tray of biscuits around, working out regularly in the wrestling pit in his house, always being disciplined in the class and behaving courteously and humbly with the teachers.

Cricket, hockey and football were his favourite sports. He always played a major part in the school winning the Sethna Cup and the Padamji Shield. In the final against S.S.P.M.S., he scored a century as we won the Padamji Shield. That game remained etched in the memory of the students, and teachers who took an interest in cricket, for a long time. The direct impact of this was his selection as a wicket-keeper-batsman in the Indian Schools team to Sri Lanka. He excelled on that tour too.

In the year of the board exams, he was elected as the main student-representative for the annual social gathering, by a huge margin. This event, where contributions were voluntary, was a huge success! I wonder whether the seeds of Dnyaneshwar being appointed the keynote speaker of this year's Marathi Sahitya Sammelan were sown in that social gathering!

The towering success that Dnyaneshwar Agashe has achieved, working diligently in the diverse fields of social service, sports, banking, and industry, all at the same time, is down to his myriad qualities of compassion, faith, honesty, selflessness, determination, a penchant for strictly following rules, fairness, the ability to bring people together and take everyone along, being soft spoken, and having a forgiving nature.

I wish Dnyaneshwar Agashe all the very best on the occasion of his 60th

birthday celebrations.

Borrowing from the concluding lines of the poem, *The Miller of Dee*, I would say –

*Such men as thou are NESR's boast,
Oh! Dear Dnyaneshwar Chandrashekhhar Agashe!*

A Generous Soul – Kaka Joshi

Among a hundred people, only one is 'brave';

Among a thousand, one is a 'pandit';

Among ten thousand people, one is a good orator;

But the people who donate are very, very, rare!

I consider it an honour to be given this opportunity of writing a few lines about my generous and charitable friend, on the occasion of his 60th birthday.

Our association began way back in 1955. A star had risen on the cricketing horizon of Pune. Being a cricket enthusiast, I regularly went to see these matches, where I met Agashe. Later, when he was in college, my shop, Vivek Library on Tilak road, became a regular hang-out of his group of friends. Only those who have seen and experienced it can believe the way my life was transformed, due to the influence and generosity of this person. After years of intense struggle, I had finally settled down in the library business in the ten years between 1958-68. Then, due to this kind man, I got a chance to work in a completely new field with the launching of the Shree Suvarna Sahakari Bank Ltd. The establishment of this bank set new standards for the cooperative sector. The success the bank enjoys today is the fruit of the labour of us friends who toiled day and night (of course the lion's share was Agashe Saheb's).

There are numerous instances of Agashe Saheb's generosity. He never holds back when helping someone. All sorts of people come to him and he is adept at solving any issue, be it social, business-related or related to worldly matters. His zeal, and the extent to which he goes to help and guide them, is extraordinary. Since he is only concerned with helping the other person, Saheb never bothers about that person's intentions later on. He believes it is the person's choice. His focus is on satisfying the needs of the person completely. His motto is to help totally or not at all, a principle which is at the heart of the bank's remarkable success. Saheb's pleasant personality puts the other person at ease and allows him to speak frankly, shedding all inhibitions. Saheb is particularly keen that the customers of the bank be served with courtesy and a smile. If you don't agree with something, you should be able to say so calmly. If you have to refuse something or someone, it should be done unambiguously and at the right time. The person who comes to you for help should never be made to wait. If the refusal is conveyed in time, the person can then explore other avenues.

The techniques espoused in today's age of management consulting are similar to those employed by Saheb 20 odd years ago. It is just old wine in a new bottle. Employees in all of Saheb's businesses will vouch for this. Saheb is very particular about time and believes one should work keeping it in mind. His only expectation is that any doubts regarding the work at hand should be clarified. Saheb has created a feeling of trust among the employees, that they would not be affected by the mistakes of others. This emboldens every employee to go to him and get his grievance redressed. Saheb is more than willing to let people benefit from his contacts, only wishing for it not to be misused. He is also particular about the employees getting just recompense for their work and has never opposed employee's unions. On the contrary, Saheb is able to inspire trust in the employees. An 8-10 thousand strong work force, across his business concerns, has never felt the need to resort to a strike. During pay rise negotiations, all sorts of calculations buzz around in Saheb's head, ensuring there is no conflict, and there never will be.

Sports associations often have disagreements. Either party wants Saheb on their side, because he is not one to shirk his responsibility citing others' mistakes. People know that he will consider the mistakes made by his employees as his own, and take responsibility for them. On rare occasions, this too is misused. Where firmness is warranted, he is not averse to taking unpleasant decisions. A person comes to Saheb with the belief that the work will be done, and it is. I consider it my good fortune that an ignorant person like me could spend so many years in the company of this fine man. Even at 60, his energy and enthusiasm would put a youngster to shame. May it stay so. I pray to the Almighty for Saheb to complete a century of his life!

A Beacon – Asha Nirkhe

On the 26th of January, 1994, the name of our school was changed to the late ‘Jagdish Chandrashekhar aka Panditrao Agashe English Medium School’. He was the elder brother of the eminent businessman, skilled industrialist and excellent sports administrator, Mr. Dnyaneshwar Agashe. And since that auspicious day, a singular and unbreakable bond has been created between Mr. Dnyaneshwar Agashe, the school and its members. Mr. Agashe expressed a desire to donate ₹500,000 to the school in memory of his departed brother, the institution agreed to rename the secondary division of the English medium school after his brother and thus, the renaming ceremony, as mentioned above, took place.

Almost eight years have passed since that momentous occasion. The old names like A. M. I. Balak Mandir and Maharashtra Vidya Mandal faded into oblivion with time, and the Panditrao Agashe School soared like an eagle into the sky and made its mark in every sphere.

It is said that the more facets a diamond has, the more it sparkles and becomes resplendent, and that gold shines brighter when put through trial by fire. The same can be said about Mr. Dnyaneshwar Agashe. The credit for shaping this diamond goes to his loving, capable, and intellectual father, the late Chandrashekhar Agashe, and his diligent and loving mother, the late Indirabai Agashe. They instilled in him the right culture and values, made him capable of facing any situation and enabled his upright personality to develop and flower.

When we first visited the Brihan Maharashtra offices of Mr. Agashe on Laxmi Road, we were especially shown the small temple there, because he believes that life is at its regal best where the spiritual path and mental discipline meet.

As our school doesn’t get grants, we perpetually face financial constraints. Unlike schools with government grants, our teachers are not paid a Diwali bonus. Seeing this, Mr. Agashe unerringly sends a bonus of ₹25,000 for all the teachers and other employees, well before Diwali. He takes all the financial constraints of a grant-less school upon himself, and without taking any credit or making a fuss about it, solves all our problems. Not only does he offer to pay the fees for those students who cannot afford them, but promptly sends the cheque the very next day.

We are proud of the fact that we, the Panditrao Agashe English Medium School of the Maharashtra Vidya Mandal, have become a part of the Brihans group. That a

school such as ours has been valued and appreciated by a prominent industrialist is a source of great satisfaction and happiness for us, and only increases manifold, the respect we have for him.

On behalf of myself and my institution, I wish Dnyaneshwar Agashe Saheb, whose personality is like an ever-blooming rose, who has achieved great success and fame in diverse fields, who lives ever so simply, and is so calm and upright, all the very best, with all my heart!

I pray to the Lord to bless Dnyaneshwar Saheb with a long and healthy life, and that he may continue to be our beacon and guide us forever!

May he live a hundred years!

Agashe: A Man of Faith – Achala Joshi

The first time I heard about Dnyaneshwar Agashe was about forty odd years ago, from my maternal uncle, Makarand Bhawe. In those days, boys used to have modern sounding names such as Ashok, Ajit, Suresh, Arun, etc. Being used to such names, that a boy younger than I was named Dnyaneshwar made me sit up and take notice of what my uncle, reputed as a knowledgeable, fair, and fearless cricket umpire, was saying. He said, “This boy, who is barely in college, plays like a Ranji player. His game is attacking but controlled.” I distinctly remember what he said further, “He comes from an affluent family, yet is simple and unassuming.”

A few days later, I had gone to the Maharashtra club with my uncle, when he said, “There’s Dnyaneshwar. He is keeping wickets, but one day come and watch how well he bats.” Looking at that fair, light-eyed boy, his brow focused in concentration, I said to my uncle, “Instead of playing chess or ‘ganjifa’ (*a card game*) what is this ‘Peshwa’ doing on a cricket field?”

Many decades later, I saw Dnyaneshwar Agashe the other day, dressed like a Peshwa, in the book procession during the Sahitya Sammelan, of which he was the keynote speaker. As he walked past, wearing a silk-bordered dhoti (*Indian wrap-around garment worn by men*) a rich traditional scarf and a bright red pagadi, he looked every inch a Peshwa, and I remembered what I had said all those years ago.

The environment in which Dnyaneshwar grew up was one of high culture. His house used to be filled with books on almost every subject.

With an extremely polite and learned wife, well-behaved children, an ever-growing factory, a legion of loyal colleagues who have been with him for over a generation and an equally important circle of friends, Agashe seems a content man.

Vasantdada Patil, who was highly appreciative of Chandrashekhar Agashe’s capabilities and accomplishments and treated him with a pure love, and who had made a name for himself in the same field, was a strong source of support for the brothers, Panditrao and Dnyaneshwar. After the death of their father, they would often turn to Vasantdada Patil for advice. Another source of support for them was their elder sister Leela, who was married in the Mehendale family. The sudden death of their father shook their family to the core. At such a time, the loyal colleagues of his father were with them, but this eldest member of their family also was a great source of support.

Dnyaneshwar always ensures that adequate provision is made for his employees’

meals, before he eats himself. Swamiji, or Sathe Saheb, who had experienced this affinity a generation ago, in the senior Agashe, remarks that such an employer is indeed rare. Employees in other factories seem to be frightened by the news of their employer visiting, but in Brihan Maharashtra, such news seems to spread cheer among the employees and rejuvenates them. Barve, who manages the finances of the company from Pune, says, "Saheb sees something new on his trips abroad and insists that we implement it, be it a paper shredder, or a massive project of producing electricity using unconventional forms of energy. As a result of this policy, today the Shreepur factory produces 7.2 million units of electricity every year. Also, even before the first project is completed, the blueprint of the next project is ready in his head."

Dnyaneshwar, who moves around comfortably in the circles of industry, sports and literature, has stayed away from politics. Because of his fine temperament, there are many in that field whom he can count among his close friends. There have been many attempts at trying to get him into politics, but he has deliberately chosen to stay away.

His friends from various fields have become as close as relatives. Dnyaneshwar says, "In the aftermath of the Panshet floods, Hemant Gore toiled with us day and night as we tried to retrieve our things from the wet mud. I will never get such a close and dear friend like him. Though he is no more, I consider myself fortunate to have experienced, albeit for a brief period, his true friendship."

Dnyaneshwar Agashe's mentality of being content gives him his peace of mind and his unshakeable faith in the power of God helps him keep his balance of mind. I pray he continues to be blessed with this peace and contentment in the future too. I am sure that everyone tied to him by the bond of love must be praying for his business to prosper through the efforts of his skilled workforce and his guidance, and for eternal spring to blossom in his personal life, and that God, in whom he has such faith, must be saying, "Amen!"

My Saheb – Vijay Thatte

When I came to Pune 15 years ago, I was not sure I could manage the work in Saheb's house. But Agashe Saheb said, "Stay a couple of months and see." And I stayed, forever!

The way metal turns to gold when it comes in touch with the philosopher's stone, Saheb's touch has turned my life to gold. It is because of him that I could get a job, a house, get married, and live a happy life. Not only that, but our family, which had lost its way, got back on track.

When I err in my work and get a reprimand from Rekha vahini, Saheb always takes my side. If I cook something, he eats it without finding fault and always praises me. A mistake is always condoned, followed by a word of advice.

Every person in the household, Rekha vahini, Mandar saheb, Ashutosh saheb, Sheetal tai, Jiza vahini, Shalini vahini and Aditya saheb, treat me with love. If I need help or am in any trouble, everyone is eager to help.

I equate Saheb with God, as I feel that God, through Saheb, has blessed my household.

I pray to the Almighty to bless Saheb with a long life, and me with the capacity to continue serving him!

My Shirin Saheb – Vinayak Gangal

I have known the Agashe family since 1951. I was not with the company then. The late Chandrashekhar Agashe bought three Kirloskar engines from the Kelkar brothers, with whom I was working as a salesman. Expansion was taking place at the Shreepur factory. Mr. Agashe gave me the responsibility of fitting the engines and making them operational. I often went to his house because of this. Here it was that I first saw Shirin (Dnyaneshwar) Saheb.

A striking quality about Shirin Saheb is his ability to bring people together. It is inherent in his nature to treat everyone with love, whether small, big, rich, poor or maybe a relative. In his large business empire, there were some who opposed him. This annoyed him somewhat, but he never let those responsible for it feel so. It never occurred to him to take vengeance on them. This is why he found success in every business he took up.

On my part, I can never forget the fact that the Agashe family has treated and loved me as one of their own.

Shirin Saheb, Rekha vahini and their two sons treat me so. Many people still wonder whether I am related to the Agashe family. I naturally feel proud. Shirin Saheb always says, “Appasaheb is my man.” I heard the words, “There is nothing more that I yearn for in life. What I have is more than enough,” from Shirin Saheb, and I felt content. I pray to Lord Ganesha that Shirin Saheb continues to prosper in all his businesses, that everyone continues to love him, and that Rekha vahini and he live a long life!

Our Canadian Project – A. G. Swami

It must have been the year 1966. Dnyaneshwar completed his B. A. and soon became a director in his company. His elder brother, Pandit Saheb, was a director since 1956. Once they started working together, Pandit Saheb paid more attention to the sugar factory, while Dnyaneshwar looked after the distillery and the other businesses.

It was decided around 1968 to start the production of foreign liquor, and to buy the machinery required for the production of silent spirit. Chairman Limaye, Kelkar, Dnyaneshwar, and I went to Trivandrum, in Kerala, to see the machinery. We returned after seeing the machinery and the sample of silent spirit, and, around 1969, bought the Savel (French) machinery to produce silent spirit and installed it.

In the meanwhile, we invited Dr. Shukla, Professor, National Sugar Institute, Kanpur, to set up the liquor factory. He gave us a production plan based on the volume of consumption. Thereafter, Dnyaneshwar Agashe acquired other blenders. We got to learn a great deal working under people such as Padmanabhan, Thapar and Dr. Jha, and our products began to be distributed in the military canteen stores all over India. During this period, we also created a few formulae, which got a decent civil market.

Around this time, it was decided to produce malt spirit. The entire machinery required for it was installed, malt extract drums were bought and the production of malt spirit began. By letting this spirit brew in wooden tanks and casks for two to three years, the quality of the spirit and the liquor improved. Modern machinery was installed for bottling, and we began producing the liquor independently (without the help of any blender). Thereafter, we got barley malt, British whiskey extract and French brandy extract, from England and Haryana, and started preparing liquor of excellent quality. Gradually, we ceased bringing these extracts from outside and began producing our own malt spirit and brandy spirit. This process is in place even today.

Around 1974, many people died in Mumbai after consuming illicit liquor. Chief Minister Naik called a meeting of the producers of foreign liquor to ask if anyone could manufacture country liquor within 3-4 days. Dnyaneshwar Agashe accepted this challenge.

Some of the others said they would be able to produce country liquor in 6-7 months. Dnyaneshwar Agashe promised the government that he would manufacture country liquor in his factory, alongside the foreign liquor, and deliver 5-6 trucks in 3 days. The government granted permission for the same. All the equipment was arranged

in three days and we sent three trucks full of country liquor to Mumbai. We were the first to produce ‘Mosambi’ and ‘Narangi’, varieties of country liquor, in Maharashtra and delivered a lot of stock in the next six months. The people liked these varieties very much. This was another example of Dnyaneshwar Agashe’s bold decision-making.

In 1975, we exported our foreign liquor to the province of Nova Scotia in Canada. The people loved it and the regional government encouraged us to set up a production plant there. Once it was decided to start operations, Agashe sent his engineer friend, Vartak, and me, to Canada to prepare the production design. After we had completed our work, Agashe Saheb came there to complete all the legal formalities, instructed the architect to finish everything within one year, and we left for India. On our way home, we visited New York, the Niagara Falls, Toronto and London for a couple of days each. It was incredible that we never had to stay in a hotel, as Dnyaneshwar Agashe had several highly-educated friends and fans in places such as New York, Los Angeles, Washington, Halifax, and London. We were always put up at their homes. Every time Agashe was to return from a foreign trip, he would say goodbye to his friends over the phone, since it was not possible to meet each one personally. This practice continues to this day.

To adhere to, and implement, government rules regarding the environment, Dnyaneshwar Agashe installed a modern biogas manufacturing plant, and a waste-water purification plant at the distillery, through which electricity and compost was manufactured. Since the plant manufacturing electricity through biogas was the first such project using non-conventional fuel in Maharashtra, Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh personally came to Shreepur to inaugurate it and honour Dnyaneshwar Agashe.

He was the keynote speaker for the recently concluded Sahitya Sammelan in Pune. He personally participated in all departments. His inaugural speech was well-appreciated. He maintained the erudite legacy of Pune by donning a Puneri pagadi and the traditional attire. The pagadi reminds one of the towering scholarship of stalwarts such as Vishnushastri Chiplunkar, Justice Ranade, Lokmanya Tilak, Wrangler Paranjape, Abasaheb Muzumdar and N. C. Kelkar. Seeing Agashe wear the pagadi, one realises that it sits atop the head of a scholarly and financially capable man, who has created a vast business empire, has friendly ties with eminent people from diverse fields, participates in spirituality with equal fervour, is forgiving and ever-willing to help people, has enmity with no one, is not perturbed by calamities and is forever smiling. One is reminded of the following lines of Samarth –

A virtuous person progresses on the strength of his virtues, and makes his own

fortune shine,

*You should increase your prosperity by virtue of your deeds and achievements
and bring happiness to as many people as you can;*

The fortune of those who toiled for the welfare of others smiled,

When you care about other people's feelings, your own fortune also shines.

Dnyaneshwar Agashe has completed 60 years and has entered his 61st year. He has only recently completed a project. I would like to end this piece by praying to the Almighty to bless him with a long life so that he may continue to contribute to the welfare of everyone!

Our Maalak – K. N. Nibe

In today's fast-paced life, man seems to have lost himself in the crowd. The question needs to be asked whether humanity is alive in man. At such a time, when one comes across someone who professes humanity, preserves the humaneness in human beings, stands like a pillar behind those in distress, takes others along with him on the road to progress, and is large-hearted and cultured, one finds a new will to live. Society has always respected great spirits who live a truly accomplished life, take others along, and keep the humanity in human beings alive. The old texts and manuscripts, history, and literature are replete with several inspiring accounts of such achievements and accomplishments. Such people take others to an exalted level too. Everyone desires to be associated with such a person. To my good fortune, I have met and experienced such a person. I have seen this person, who is an industrialist at heart, in different forms, as a simple, honest, innocent, and compassionate man, as an ocean of affection, as a connoisseur of the arts, and a sports-lover, and as a supporter of the helpless. People address him as Maalak, out of respect, because they have accepted his image over three generations of intimacy and as the head of the family.

Many of the industrialists today are old-money snobs, who have no value for time and conveniently go back on their word. Dnyaneshwar Maalak is an exception to this. There is no show of wealth in his behaviour and actions. Sticking to the given time and keeping his word are among his strong suits. Previously, I had just heard all this, but, in the last ten years, have experienced it first-hand.

I still remember the first time I met him. The sugar factory he owned in Shreepur was to become a cooperative and I had been appointed as its executive director. The transfer was to take place on the 5th of May, 1992, on the auspicious occasion of Akshay Tritiya (*a Hindu spring festival*). Against this backdrop, I went to meet him at the Wadi Bangla (*bungalow*) guest house. Since there were other people also who had come to meet him, I sat in the waiting lounge. It was about fifteen minutes later that he was told I was there. He immediately called me in and said, "Please come. Henceforth, you come straight to me. You are the MD of this factory now. You don't need to wait outside." I was overwhelmed by the respect and affection he showered on me in the very first meeting.

Dnyaneshwar Maalak is not merely an industrialist, but is a past master at judging character. There were a few issues of discord that crept in during the transfer process. Our area extended to within three feet of the old office. Preparations were afoot

on behalf of Brihan Maharashtra to fence that area. We met Maalak and apprised him of the situation. We told him that a mere three-foot pathway in front of the office would prove cumbersome, and requested space for a road instead. He accepted our request immediately and gave us the area for the road.

In the third season after the factory became a cooperative, we changed the old machinery and increased the filtering capacity. The result was a half-percent increase in the extraction of sugar. Dnyaneshwar Maalak was appreciative of our efforts and encouraged us to work faster.

As a private concern was turned into a cooperative, the prospect of having to pay income tax loomed large, in 1995. The burden on the factory was likely to be to the tune of ₹15 to 20 million. This was a big problem for the Pandurang factory. At such a time, Agashe Maalak took me to the income tax expert, Balasaheb Inamdar, who helped us find a way out, keeping everything within the bounds of the law.

Every so often, he helped us in the expansion of the factory too. We were short of space, and didn't know where to move the factory office. We went to him with our problem and our requirement. He had built the late Panditrao Agashe complex on the Shreepur-Khandali road. There were eight flats in this complex, at the back. We asked him for those flats for the office. He heard us out with great empathy and, within the next few days, handed over the keys of the flats to us. Today, even after the expansion, we continue to operate out of these flats.

The factory has become a cooperative now, with a change of name. Yet, even today, the employees and citizens here have great respect for Maalak. He has given us our livelihood. The prevalent feeling among everyone here is that we are Maalak's people. He is immensely proud of the progress our factory is making. He says, with MLA Sudhakarpanth Paricharak at the helm, his factory is in the right hands. Whenever he reads, or is told, a piece of news about the success of the factory, he says, "It is bound to progress. It is my factory after all. My whole being is involved in it. These are my people and I am theirs." He has created a place in the heart and mind of every single person here. He has established intimate familial relations with the people. That is why, all the employees travelled to attend the wedding of his elder son, Mandar. When the wedding was announced, the employees came to me saying they wanted to buy a big gift for Maalak. I tried to reason with them, saying it is Agashe Maalak who is a big person, and that he should give us something. But not one of them would listen. They were willing to forego eight days' salary, if needed, but they wanted a big present for Maalak. The sugarcane-harvesting labourers of the factory and the contractors chipped in with their

share, the employees contributed eight days' salary, and a diamond necklace was bought for Agashe Maalak. It was a token of their faith in, and gratitude towards, their beloved employer.

This magnanimous and lively person is completing 60 years. I pray to the Almighty to give increasing strength to this eagle's wings, under which many have found solace and support. May he continue to conquer the skies, and live a long, healthy, and accomplished life!

What the Stars Foretell! – Shrinivas Kulkarni

Not everyone believes in making life-decisions based on their horoscopes. Being a cricket umpire, I am on the side of astrology. Though ‘fortune favours the brave’ might well be true, luck definitely plays its part. I suggested Dnyaneshwar analyse his successes, from the distillery to steel-casting to banking to the MCA, on the basis of his horoscope. Many laughed it off, but he said, “Let him do what he wants to.” This virtue in him, of not hurting others, is a result of the presence of ‘kumbh lagna’, the ascendant Aquarius, in his horoscope. Have a look at this person’s horoscope –

Name: Dnyaneshwar Chandrashekhar Agashe

Date of birth: 17.04.1942

Time of birth: 4 am

Benefic planets:

- 1) *Venus - Rajyogkarak (exalted position, fame and wealth)*
- 2) *Mercury*
- 3) *Saturn*

Since the Sun is in an exalted position in the Ashwini constellation in the active star sign of Aries, qualities of fortitude and belief in one’s own efforts, tremendous self-confidence, and decision-making ability are found. Impatience, the desire to constantly do something and mobility are inherent features of this sign. The ascendant Venus gives rise to an enthusiastic temperament, a liking for the fine arts, and marital bliss. Mercury being ascendant in the area of wealth leads to sound financial health and the ability to get the work done in a congenial manner. The ascendant Venus makes him loving and virtuous. His sade-sati (*a seven-and-a-half-year period of challenges according to Hindu astrology*) was coming to an end at the time of his birth. The third Sade-sati in his life will end in July 2002. In the ‘Bhṛigu Samhita’ (*a Sanskrit astrological treatise attributed to Maharshi Bhṛigu*) the future of Agashe Saheb’s horoscope is given as follows –

“This person will be reputed and good-looking. He will get a place of pride in life. He will provide for his family extremely well, have a large circle of friends, and live in the lap of luxury. He will spend a lot of money on others. Though blessed with a long life, there will be two moments of crises, out of which, one will be like a rebirth. He should worship the Sun God. He will get a beautiful, intelligent and righteous wife, as

desired. There will be marital bliss. All desires will be fulfilled. He will never wish ill for others. He will be associated with good people. He should beware of honey-traps involving women. He will be of good character and fortune will smile on him. He will be religious and devoted to God. He is a talented and erudite person.”

I wish, on behalf of all of us, this ‘global friend’ and Chairman of the Maharashtra Cricket Umpires Association, a long and healthy life!

A Man of Honour – V. N. Utpaat

Dnyaneshwar Agashe is an evergreen, art-loving, and dynamic personality. An industrialist with a keen interest in literature, music, the arts, and sports, is a rarity. As a rule, those from the economic sphere driven by money are philistines. Their minds are forever consumed by the thought of money which leaves very little room for other pursuits. Dnyaneshwar Agashe, though, is an exception to this rule.

Intelligent people spend their time in poetics (Vedas, Geeta, etc.) and humour. Idiots waste their time in addictions, sleeping, and fighting.

Dnyaneshwar Agashe, though, seems to enjoy the company of writers, artists, politicians, and industrialists alike. He was born in a cultured and affluent family. His father was accomplished, generous, and of sound character, almost saint-like. He established the Brihan Maharashtra Sugar factory through relentless toil and, against all odds, marched to the very top. He was a great devotee of Lord Pandurang and Sant Dnyaneshwar, and travelled every Wednesday to Pandharpur, to worship the former. To go with his accomplishments, he was munificent and righteous. Dnyaneshwar was born to such a father and got his name due to his father's devotion to Sant Dnyaneshwar.

After the death of their father, his brother Panditrao and he took over the reins of the Brihan Maharashtra company. A lot of people were sceptical about the capabilities of these young boys. The challenge of the sugar factory stood before them, since they had to compete with the Malinagar and Akluj sugar factories in the Shreepur region, and survive. They achieved the objective of establishing the sugar factory, which had survived the arson of 1948, competing successfully with the cooperative sector. They stabilised the tottering factory by starting the production of liquor and alcohol extract. At the opportune time, they handed over the factory, like marrying off one's daughter in a good household, to Shrimant Sudhakarpanth Paricharak, also a man of sound character.

In this testing period, we got to see the capability of all three of them. Dnyaneshwar had a mother, like Kunti in the Mahabharat, who stood by her husband in good and bad times, and was a pillar of support for her children. His elder brother, Panditrao, was an embodiment of purity. Like his father, he was polite and humble, generous, and a thorough gentleman. His father's saintliness was visible in him. In the Agashe household, Panditrao was Dharmaraj (eldest brother of the Pandavs) incarnate. The same business acumen, entrepreneurship, and skill had come down to Dnyaneshwar. He was like Arjun. The two not only preserved the sanctity of the family name, but took

it to greater heights.

The road from Savarkar Chowk to Indira Chowk, in the Pandharpur municipality, was named as Chandrashekhar Agashe road, for which Revan Bhadule, the late Bapu Joshi, and I had taken the lead. After the program, Dnyaneshwar and Panditrao accompanied us to the Savarkar Library, along with Principal Anantraoji Athavale. We proposed they donate their land in Pandharpur for the Savarkar Kranti Mandir. "These boys are doing good work. There is no harm in donating the land," said the respected Anantraoji, seconding our proposal. Panditrao promised to give the land. Eight to ten years passed. Dnyaneshwar went abroad and this issue was all but forgotten. We kept sending infrequent reminders through Haribhau. A lot of water had flown under the bridge. After all these years, Bapu and I went to the Agashe residence again. When we broached the topic about the land in Pandharpur, Panditrao and Dnyaneshwar said in unison, "We have given you our word in front of a saint like Anantraoji, and it will be kept." Within a few days, the land was given to the Savarkar Kranti Mandir, with no strings attached. Just because the brothers had given their word, Dnyaneshwar gave away land worth ₹2-2.5 million. This magnanimity is forever etched in our memory. As we did not build anything on the land for a long time, he impishly said, "Now we are going to take back the land." This light-hearted remark spurred us into action and we began construction on the land. Many people went to them with tempting offering of hundreds of thousands of rupees for this piece of land, but Agashe did not budge. He kept his word.

Agashe promised to hand over the sugar factory to Sudhakar pant Paricharak. He was then hounded by many politicians and sugar barons for the same, offering a lot more money, but again, he did not budge, and handed the factory over to Shrimant Paricharak. Once again, he kept his word. The Sanskrit maxim that means great men never deviate from the path of justice irrespective of whether they get bouquets or brickbats, whether wealth knocks at their door or goes away, whether death comes now or at the end of time, is Agashe's life-principle.

Dnyaneshwar Agashe's circle of friends is large. He is often seen in the company of politicians, sportsmen, industrialists, and artistes. He is friends with people from every stratum. His accomplishments in every sphere are legendary and yet, this altruistic man has great devotion for Lord Pandurang. Thus, I feel the following lines aptly describe Dnyaneshwar –

*A great mountain of decisiveness, a support for common people,
With Lord Pandurang in his heart always, a great saint!*

I pray to mother Rukmini to bless him, his learned wife and the entire Agashe

family with a long and healthy life!

A Visionary Entrepreneur – Adv. Prakashrao Patil

The water from the Nira right bank canal had just entered Malshiras taluka, which bode well for the future of farming and other farming-related businesses. Bearing this in mind, studying the geography and realising the industrial potential of this region, Chandrashekhar Agashe laid the foundation of the sugar production business in Shreepur, in 1932. This was the pre-independence era. Agashe Saheb started the sugar factory at a time when industrialisation had hardly reached the villages and the cooperative movement was yet to be born. He and his brother, Narayan kaka, worked really hard to achieve this. At this time, Fatehsinh Patil's father, Bhimrao Patil, developed very close relations with the Agashe family. Daily meetings began and consultations were held to discuss all sorts of problems. Bhimrao was Appasaheb Patil's paternal uncle. This relation between the Patil and Agashe families became more intimate and familial by the day. While farming sugarcane on leased land, he encouraged other farmers also to start sugarcane farming. As there were no banks providing finance for farming back then, Agashe provided the farmers money through the factory, for buying the farm land, cultivating it, planting the sugarcane and buying the fertilisers required. The farmers were drawn to sugarcane farming.

Actually, this region was remote and undeveloped. But once the factory came up, people from Mumbai and Pune began commuting to and fro. With them came the telephone, post office, police station, medical facilities and so on. The region saw tractors like the Caterpillar for the first time, electricity being produced in the factory, and an employees' welfare centre being set up. This led to familial ties being developed between Agashe Saheb and the people of the region.

Along with Appasaheb, he developed close relations with Harisaheb of Velapur, Kisanrao Inamdar from Nevre, Dnyanoba Game of Malkhambi, the Bhange family, Rede from Mahalung, Mudafne, and others. Even in those days, they faced several obstacles in running the sugar factory, but the Agashe family were not deterred and continued the business.

Due to the factory, the community grew. People from different villages and faiths settled here and one could see a classic example of unity in diversity. A sense of social oneness began to flourish. Several roads were built. A school was built which satisfied the need for education in the region. The lessons in values and culture produced

many meritorious students. The Speaker of Malshiras taluka, Mohanrao Patil, who has made a name for himself in the political and social circles of Solapur district, belongs to this school, as do I. People in the region could obtain training, from becoming a driver or a cleaner to the most skilled technician. After the death of Chandrashekhar and Narayan kaka Agashe, Panditrao and Dnyaneshwar Agashe also showered love on the region and its people. Along with making money available for purchase of farm land, sugarcane planting and fertilisers, they implemented irrigation schemes necessary for agriculture too, the lift-irrigation schemes in Chale-Ambe in Pandharpur taluka, and Bhandgaon in Indapur taluka, being a case in point. They introduced different varieties which would give increased produce per acre and more sugar extract. In 1957, by virtue of a law which gave ownership of the land to the one who cultivated it, Agashe became the owner of the leased lands. But in 1960, the Land Ceiling Act was introduced, through which the government took possession of surplus land and established the State Farming Corporation. This led to several problems with regard to sugarcane procurement for this factory. Panditrao and Dnyaneshwar did try to talk to an increasing number of farmers in an attempt to solve the crisis but, clearly seeing the writing on the wall, they diversified into the production of alcohol extract. They faced a lot of criticism, which they ignored, instead focusing on developing the unit.

1960 saw the rise of the cooperative movement. Shankarrao Mohite-Patil started a factory in Akluj. Not only did the Agashe family not see him as a competitor, they actually extended him every cooperation. Panditrao was a generous man. Not a single farmer or employee, who went to him seeking help, ever returned empty-handed. Dnyaneshwar Saheb taught the farmers to view agriculture as a business. When I got my law degree in 1979, Dnyaneshwar Saheb said to me, "Your liaison office should be in a rural area." Heeding his advice, I opened my office in Shreepur. The office still runs out of his place.

The Chitale factory, which had started around 1932, shut shop. The Sakharwadi factory also closed down, but the Agashe family kept it going in the face of immense difficulties. There was never a dispute between employer and employee, and the employees never struck work. This is an example of the success of the Agashe family in inculcating a sense of ownership and affinity towards the people and the factory in the minds of the employees. Whoever came in contact with this family soon became part of it. The intimate relations our families share is public knowledge. In 1989, Mohanrao Patil fell ill. He was admitted to the King Edward Memorial Hospital in Pune, and his condition worsened. Dnyaneshwar Agashe Saheb was enjoying his afternoon siesta when

he got the news. The next moment, he was on his way to the hospital. On reaching the hospital he asked the doctors, "How is the patient's condition? Will it be okay here or should I take him elsewhere?" Expressing his willingness to even take him abroad if needed, he said, "Doctor, this person, who has relations with my family spanning three generations, is a representative of farmers born in modest farming families. Come what may, Mohanrao must recover from this illness." It is rare to find such loving and affectionate people in this day and age.

The Agashe family, who share in everyone's moments of grief and joy, and are ever-willing to help the needy, have been at the forefront in shaping and developing this taluka. They have restored the Vitthal mandir in Bhorgaon, and the Yamaidevi mandir in Mahalung. By building temples of Hanuman and Vitthal in Shreepur, they have tried to spread spirituality among the people. They have created a culture of art and sports by establishing the Shreepur Krida Mandal. Bright and budding students are given assistance through the Chandrashekhar Agashe Trust.

As this accomplished Karmayogi, who loved this region with all his heart and always looked out for the common people, celebrates his 60th birthday, the past floats across the eyes, and numerous instances of the Agashe family's generosity light up the innermost recesses of the mind. That this invaluable person is in our midst makes our hearts justifiably swell with pride. On this occasion of Saheb's 60th birthday, as a representative of the farmers in this region, and a well-wisher, and someone close to the Agashe family, I wish him all the very best, with all my heart!

A Man of Many Accomplishments – Vijaykumar Patil

In the Shreepur-Bhorgaon region, where I come from, the brothers Chandrashekhar Agashe and Narayan Agashe (Narayan kaka) bought land for the farming business in 1932. They started a jaggery factory in Shreepur and then, in 1938, established a sugar factory by the name of Brihan Maharashtra Sugar Syndicate.

The relations between the Agashe brothers and my father, the late Raosaheb “Tatya” Patil were paternal. Staying true to this, he extended all help possible to them, doing everything in his capacity, literally working day and night, to satisfy their needs and address their problems. After the death of Chandrashekhar Agashe, the responsibility of the factory came to his sons, Panditrao and Dnyaneshwar. They were determined to make all three, the factory, the farmer, and the employee, proud and independent.

Panditrao’s death put the entire responsibility of the factory and the region on Dnyaneshwar’s young shoulders. While managing this, he continued to implement the policies and vision of his father, uncle, and elder brother for the welfare of the farmers and employees of the region. In the meanwhile, certain government policies created a plethora of problems for privately run sugar factories. As a counter to this, Agashe Saheb handed over the factory, along with the farmers and the employees, to the MLA Sudhakarpanth Pracharak, on the condition that it would remain in Shreepur. As of today, this factory at Shreepur is in fine fettle.

Saheb has the ability of looking at things from a scientific perspective, which led to the energy project in Shreepur. To address the problems of his people, he opened a branch of the Shree Suvarna Sahakari Bank Ltd. Pune, in Shreepur. He achieved fame and popularity in the field of sports, and became the Vice President of the BCCI. He started a cricket academy in Pune with the aim of giving a platform to the kids from the rural areas to shine. He was the keynote speaker of the recently concluded Sahitya Sammelan. Following in his footsteps, his sons, Mandar and Ashutosh, are active in social institutions, sports, industry, and other fields.

The accomplished Agashe family are ardent devotees of Lord Pandurang of Pandharpur, and Sant Dnyaneshwar of Alandi. I pray that by the grace of Lord Pandurang, the intimate and familial relations between our families continue in to the future. On the occasion of this accomplished and capable man entering his 61st year, we wish him and his family all the very best, and pray to the Almighty to bless him with a

long life to enable him to continue his stellar work in the social and public spheres!

A Man Who Loves Shreepur – Mukund Chopde

It was around 1963-64, that Dnyaneshwar became part of the Brihan Maharashtra Sugar Syndicate. This factory had the goodwill of the visionary industrialist Chandrashekhhar Agashe behind it and was the embodiment of the relentless toil of Narayan kaka. After the death of their father, Panditrao worked extremely hard to ensure the factory prospered.

Around the time Dnyaneshwar started working at the factory, the Maharashtra Government instituted the State Farming Corporation, which took over all the land on which sugarcane was grown for the factories. This created a dire situation for many private sugar factories and farmers. The land which had yielded 100,000 tons of sugarcane began yielding a mere 30,000 tons after being taken over by the corporation. Naturally, procuring the sugarcane in order to make profit for the factory became extremely difficult. Since the concept of a private sugar factory was not acceptable to the government, the grievances and problems of the private factory owners were deliberately ignored. The mantle of the leadership of all the private sugar factory owners fell upon Dnyaneshwar's shoulders, and he was equal to the task. He could easily have used his status as a leader to gain personal benefit, but he didn't, and instead preferred to take everyone along. Thus, the misfortune that befell the rest of the sugar factory ownership became his lot too. The only option left was to hand over the factory to be run on a cooperative basis. Doing this in the Shreepur region, though, was a daunting task.

He appealed to the people of Shreepur to collectively come forward and establish a cooperative institution. However, these people failed to grab the opportunity. As a last resort, he tried to establish a cooperative institution himself, but got a very poor response for that too. Dnyaneshwar loved the Shreepur region, its employees and the farmers, and all his efforts were for their benefit.

Finally, his attention turned towards Pandharpur, a place the Agashes have great faith in. Fortunately, the MLA Sudhakar pant Paricharak, a capable and honest man, accepted the offer of operating the factory on a cooperative basis. With a heavy heart, Dnyaneshwar took this decision, keeping the interest of the common people in mind.

The day of the transfer of the factory is still fresh in my mind. A couple of public meetings took place in the factory compound. The last meeting was attended by the officers, the workforce, and horticulturists in large numbers. Dnyaneshwar laid down his

conditions, "The factory will remain here. The entire workforce from the officer to the peon will be selected from this region. An assurance should be given that our farmers will be given preference and no one's crop will be refused." The transfer took place only after all these conditions were met. The people were moved seeing Dnyaneshwar's passion and fervour, and he too was unable to hold back his tears. Even today, my eyes well up by that memory.

After the transfer, Dnyaneshwar stayed back with his people in order to offer help for the factory. Only after the factory started operating smoothly did he leave. Even today, the relations between Dnyaneshwar and the people at the factory are extremely close and intimate. Keeping his personal sorrows aside, he shares in the joys of these people, showers praise on them and lends a helping hand when required.

But his ambition doesn't end here. He expects the distillery to grow. He has recently completed the electricity-production project. His untiring efforts to make Shreepur a prosperous region continue.

Having seen Dnyaneshwar's different projects and businesses closely, I have realised that he studies everything in great detail. His planning hypotheses are also set. He has his own special mathematical calculations, which he always solves. More often than not, his estimates are spot on. But what he hankers for at such times is the sincere cooperation and efforts of all those involved in the project with him.

Dnyaneshwar is entering the auspicious 61st year. All he expects from us is to work with passion. Let us all do that, which would be a real tribute to him, one I am sure he would truly appreciate.

Let us pray that the Almighty blesses Dnyaneshwar with a long life, and let us offer our passion to make him successful in every endeavour that he takes up. The Lord's blessings will come our way too!

The Sportsman – Ramakant Pethkar

The Navin Marathi school ground. Three vertical lines drawn on the school wall, the stumps. A pure white pyjama, a round neck shirt with horizontal lines, hair slickly combed. A smallish, fair-skinned, light-eyed boy was playing. Probably the bat and ball were his. He was facing a big, strong bowler, with courage. Cricket began at an early age. I didn't know his name then.

In the 5th standard, he came to New English School, Ramanbaug. His name was Dnyaneshwar Chandrashekar Agashe. He always came to school in a laundered shirt, half pant, coat, a Gandhi cap and an auspicious mark on his forehead (often applied by Hindus). The other boys used to wear clothes straight off the clothes line. Our sports teacher, Lele Sir, started football for small children. Only Dnyaneshwar wore football shoes. The rest played barefoot.

As the late Rambhau Lele taught football, hockey and cricket in school, most of the students played all three sports. Dnyaneshwar played superbly as a centre forward in both football and hockey. Like in cricket, he was the backbone of these two teams too and was instrumental in a number of wins for the school. Going by his age, he should have played in the smaller age group, but as teams were selected on the basis of one's height and weight then, he played in the older age group team. Under the captaincy of Manik Gosavi, he won Ramanbaug the Padamji Shield two years running by virtue of his attacking batting.

The same year, he was picked in the Pune district team, and then in the Maharashtra team for the Cooch Behar Trophy. The following year, there was a cricket coaching camp at the National Defence Academy. Dnyaneshwar made optimum use of the training there. We were all convinced he would go on to play in the Ranji Trophy and represent India in Tests.

Subsequently, he was selected in the West Zone team. On the basis of his performances in the inter-zonal matches in Calcutta, he was selected in the Indian Schools team to Ceylon.

After the board exams, he joined S. P. College, only so that he could play good quality cricket. The S. P. team had Ranji players like Hemant Gore, Sadanand Mohol, Baba Sidhaye, Anant Dhamane, and others. Dnyaneshwar benefitted a great deal from their experiences.

He got an opportunity to represent the University of Pune. The year the

university became champions, Dnyaneshwar naturally was a part of the team. Ranji Trophy was the next stop. But Nana Joshi, a Test player, kept wickets for Maharashtra. Therefore, breaking into the team as a wicket-keeper was well-nigh impossible. He had to warm the benches for a long time. Finally, Nana Joshi suffered an injury, and Dnyaneshwar got a chance to make his debut at the Brabourne Stadium against Mumbai. Ideally, he should have gone on to become one of the mainstays of the Maharashtra team. But he became a victim of the politics of the Maharashtra Cricket Association and the selection committee. Just to keep Dnyaneshwar out of the team, either a keeper dropped from the Mumbai team, or some other keeper from outside, was picked. Despite all this, he remained calm and composed. His dreams of playing for India being shattered, Dnyaneshwar decided to get involved in the administration of the Maharashtra Cricket Association.

Once this decision was made, he defeated several bigwigs, got elected to the MCA and went on to become its President. Similarly, he started as a member of the BCCI and reached the position of Vice President. It is public knowledge as to why he couldn't become the President.

I wish this sportsman-friend all the very best on his 60th birthday!

Midas Touch – Milind Phade

I have been seeing Dnyaneshwar Agashe from a very early age. His sugar factory in Shreepur was the fount of development in the area. His father and my grandfather were close friends. This bond of affection and intimacy is equally strong in this third generation too.

Our business of selling sugar bought from the Shreepur sugar factory could survive, settle and thrive only because of the support of the Agashe family. The affection between Dnyaneshwar Agashe (we call him Saheb), his brother, the late Panditrao Agashe and my father, the late Ratnakant Phade cannot be described in words. Rather than merely saying that he helped us settle, I would like to express my gratitude by saying that ‘whatever we are today is because of him’. On his way to Shreepur, Saheb would always visit us and enjoy a cup of tea. I was a young boy then. With the passage of time, I settled down in Pune and started dealing in imported furniture, to go with the traditional business of buying and selling sugar. I had lost my father, but Dnyaneshwar Agashe Saheb never let me feel that loss. He helped me in every which way in my new business and always looked out for me. I would often meet him in the Commonwealth building on Pune’s Laxmi Road. He did not speak much, but when he did, they were words of wisdom. Unbeknownst to me, I began imbibing his qualities.

A prominent feature of his business conglomerate was that the people worked there for generations together. Entire families, father, son, brother, sister, daughter-in-law, are serving the Agashe conglomerate with sincerity and dedication. He truly is a guardian to thousands of families!

The sugar business has its ups and downs. High-value tenders are submitted. But when he realises that the deal is going awry, he lowers the price himself, fearing I would incur a loss. People with such insight and affection are nothing less than men of God!

We often hear the legend that the philosopher’s stone turns metal to gold. One can say that Dnyaneshwar Agashe is an embodiment of a philosopher’s stone. I have seen thousands whose lives have literally turned to gold by his touch. Full of gratitude, I wish Dnyaneshwar Saheb from the bottom of my heart, and pray to God that he goes on to live a hundred years!

May You Live Long! – Dr. H. V. Sardesai

I first came in contact with the Agashe family, the jewel in Maharashtra's crown, when I came to Pune in 1952. Dnyaneshwar was in college then. I used to go their old house to attend to his ailing mother. Later, I would go to tend to his elder brother, and sometimes his sister, Leelatai Mehendale. But I never had cause to attend to Dnyaneshwar. The reason being Dnyaneshwar's proficiency in cricket from an early age, and the efforts taken to keep himself physically fit for the game. He was a renowned cricketer, even in his college days. That he went on to excel at the game is common knowledge.

To achieve such proficiency in a sport, one needs to be disciplined. This clearly is the secret behind Dnyaneshwar's success in life. When certain hereditary diseases raised their ugly head, he overpowered them by virtue of his disciplined life, regular exercise, strict diet, and timely interventions and treatments.

At first glance, a pleasant demeanour seems to be one of his main qualities. He never lets his physical afflictions affect him. On the contrary, he can be seen reassuring and comforting others. He pays all the attention required to his afflictions, but never makes a hue and cry about them. Be it a surgery, or medication, he is always willing to follow the doctor's lead. The twin abilities of taking quick and accurate decisions have served him well in his sport and in life.

His grand stature notwithstanding, Dnyaneshwar Agashe is someone who loves to be with his family. He left no stone unturned in looking after his mother and elder brother. The instance he comes to know of an illness in the family or to any acquaintance, he extends all help possible. This magnanimity probably runs in the family, because I have heard tales of his father's generosity from many people.

Completing 60 years is an important stage in life. Dnyaneshwar is crossing this stage. In his future life, may he achieve incremental success, respect and recognition, may his fame spread far and wide, may he acquire the knowledge and science that gives meaning to man's life, may he live a hundred years, may he and his family be blessed with good health and may he achieve social prestige!

A Peoples' Man – Smita Chitale-Palekar

I knew Dnyaneshwar Kaka for the shortest time before his untimely demise. Those were also the toughest times in his personal and professional life.

Yet, I saw a man so strong and someone who knew exactly how he wanted to face his troubles. He was never bitter about it, nor did he let his troubles change him. His wit and grit were intact through it all.

He was a peoples' man. A beautiful and handsome soul inside and out.

Must say –

One who has control over the mind,

Is tranquil in heat and cold,

In pleasure and pain,

And in honour and dishonour;

Is ever steadfast with the Supreme Self.

This was Kaka for me.

This essay was contributed in April 2022.

Our Australian Venture – Ashutosh Agashe

Sometime in 2003, I had attended an exhibition for wine in Singapore. At this exhibition, I visited a stall by Howling Wolves Wine Group of Australia. Their wine collection intrigued and interested me, and so I decided to meet their partners over dinner. At dinner, we realised that our business interests matched, and I learned that they were eager to launch their brands in India.

When I returned to Pune, I had a discussion with my father about launching their wines in India under Brihans. He encouraged me to visit Howling Wolves in Perth, in Leederville, Western Australia to further discuss a joint venture. Thus, was born Brihans Howling Wolves in India. We launched the company in Mumbai at the hands of the Consul-General of Australia for India at the time.

We then imported grape bud wood cuttings, and planted them on my father's farmlands in Velapur, while Howling Wolves provided marketing support. We also imported quality wine products from this Australian group with exclusive distribution rights in India.

This essay was contributed in April 2022.

Short Essays from Family and Friends

Nilan Sahasrabudhe

It is amusing to see how my relationship with Agashe Saheb changed over the years. My uncle, Ramakant Pethkar, was his school friend. So when, as a child, I went to see Agashe Saheb play badminton, he was my ‘uncle’. Later, when I became an employee at Suvarna Sahakari Bank, he became my ‘Sir’. And then, after I got married to his nephew, Abhay, he became my ‘uncle-in-law’!

Working under Agashe Saheb is an absolute pleasure, but in matters of discipline, there are no compromises. Mistakes are corrected and the right guidance provided, and good work always encouraged. But if we ever go to him with incorrect figures, incomplete data or insufficient preparation, a terse reprimand ensures it never happens again!

Agashe Saheb is a father-figure to all of us at the bank, and, on his 60th birthday, I express love, affection, and gratitude on everyone’s behalf. The fragrance of his memories will live forever in our hearts and souls.

Grow old along with me because the best of life is yet to be...

Ravindra Parshuram Vaidya

Messrs. R. P. Vaidya and P. Y. Vaidya are two of our oldest shops in the Deccan Gymkhana area. We, the brothers who run these shops, are from Ramanbaug. Dnyaneshwar is elder to me. He was proficient in sports, and I even remember him correcting my faulty grip on the hockey stick, in those days. He has been my guru since!

He never let his fame come in the way of freely mingling with people. When Suvarna Sahakari Bank opened a branch in Deccan Gymkhana, he personally visited the shopkeepers in the area, asking them to open an account in his bank. The robust condition of our business today is largely due to the fact that, ever since we opened an account with the bank, it has stood firmly behind us in every moment of crisis. His motto seems to be, “Do not be afraid, I am with you!” We wish Mr. Agashe all the very best on his completing 60 years!

Vitthal Joshi

Sangli

It was around the time I was first selected to play for the Maharashtra Ranji Trophy side, in 1967, that I briefly met Dnyaneshwar Agashe. The game was between Maharashtra and Baroda, played at Walchandnagar. Both of us were in the playing XI for this game. I vividly remember his dashing innings of 40 and his superb wicket-keeping. As he was required to take on the responsibility of the sugar industry at a very young age, Agashe had to bid cricket goodbye. Thus, Maharashtra and Indian cricket lost out on an excellent wicket-keeper batsman.

Over the past 35 years, I have witnessed his career, as an extremely talented cricketer, successful industrialist, and able sports administrator. Being a part of various committees of the Maharashtra Cricket Association and the BCCI, he has performed yeoman service for the game of cricket. He was widely expected to be elected as President of the BCCI. If only the players from Maharashtra, appointed as managers and members of selection committees of Indian cricket teams at Dnyaneshwar Agashe's behest, had put in a little more effort, he would have won hands down.

I pray to Lord Gajanan that this kind-hearted man, who has helped countless people like me, be elected President of the BCCI in the near future!

Govind Kulkarni

Pune

An example of Agashe Saheb's compassion is that if a retired employee was in need, he would be provided all amenities from the factory, until he found a new home. Similarly, he put a condition that the factory, which was about to become a cooperative, should be run in the same place and with the same employees, so that they are not adversely affected.

Going further, there are instances of an employee, suspended due to internal disputes among the unions, being retained, so as to safeguard the children's education,

and the family's future.

He is, truly, a fount of humanity!

G. H. Umarji

In 1969, the decision to establish Shree Suvarna Sahakari Bank was taken. I was, at that time, in-charge of the banking division in the deputy registrar's office.

Agashe and Vilas Ekbote came to my office on the 8th of August, with the concerned application documents. I informed him that, as per government protocol, it would take about a month for the bank to get registered. But Agashe pleaded his case with such utter conviction, that my boss and I gave him the registration in a mere three days.

The bank was inaugurated at the hands of Sheshrao Wankhede, on the 22nd of September. In his speech, Wankhede made a jibe, wondering whether everything was above board, since the registration had been granted in a mere three days!

T. P. Vartak

Apart from cricket, Dnyaneshwar had a talent for many other sports too. This is why he was Rambhau Lele's favourite sportsperson. Whether it was hockey or badminton, he played with equal fervour!

The boys from the Ornella High School were mostly from the Khadki-Ghorpadi area. These unruly boys would walk away with the inter-school hockey title.

Dnyaneshwar became taller and stronger more quickly than the other boys at school. Rambhau used to tell him, "Listen, if the Ornella boys hit you on your shin with their sticks, you hit them back."

Only too happy to oblige, this fair brahmin boy would ensure that at least a couple of the Ornella boys had their shins swollen. He would pretend to fall in line only after the referee threatened to send him off.

The admiration in Rambhau's eyes, when discussing the game next day, is something Dnyaneshwar still remembers. He says, "Rambhau taught me to give a

befitting reply.”

Uttam Limaye

Dnyaneshwar’s simple living is well-known, but I am witness to several amusing incidents that have occurred due to the Agashe brothers’ habit of dressing plainly.

Panditrao Agashe, a wealthy man, would move around in a cotton pyjama and a bush shirt. A few of us friends had gone to watch a movie at the Prabhat theatre. Panditrao was by the door waiting to finish his cigarette. A group of people mistook him for the doorkeeper and showed him their tickets.

On another occasion, when we had gone to Kolhapur to visit the Amba bai temple, there was a commotion as an old man had had his wallet stolen. He ran out and caught Panditrao as the thief! Panditrao, who was wearing a crumpled pyjama, was totally flummoxed. When his real identity was revealed, the old man didn’t know where to hide!

Arvind Patwardhan

From the ‘Scroll of Honour’ given by the Maharashtra Brahman Vyavasayik
Mitramandal (A Community Organisation)

“One should be soft-spoken without conceding one’s pride. One should ensure every penny earned is spent for the right cause, for the growth of the business; it should be borne in mind that since the balance-sheet is a mirror which shows the true reflection of the business, it should always be kept spotlessly clean; one should ensure that the true picture of the business is always in front of one’s eyes. If Marathi businessmen imbibe some of these qualities, then the Marathi people, who once ruled Hindustan, can rule the world of business too.” Keeping this optimism of his at the core of today’s program, let us all confer the title of ‘Udyog pita’ (*Father of Industry*) on him and bow in his honour!

Anil Nene

United Kingdom

This happened a long time ago. A few years had elapsed since I finished working at Suvarna Sahakari bank. On the 15th of March, 1976, my wife, Ashwini, was to travel to London. This was her first trip abroad. Shirin not only paid her fare, but personally spoke to the concerned officer in Air India, Ulhas Ranade, asking him to extend all help necessary. Needless to say, her flight began on a great note. But being worried about how this girl, who hailed from the village of Wai, and who had not even seen Mumbai properly, would travel all the way to London alone, Shirin changed his travel plans. Despite carrying a first-class ticket, he got onto Ashwini's flight in Paris, and sat next to her in the economy class. He guided her through all the formalities at Heathrow airport. Handing her over to her brother who had come to pick her up, he said to her, "Take care, look after yourself!" In spite of having done so much, Shirin has not mentioned this to anyone till date. His magnanimity, affection, and nature of helping others without expectations is forever etched on my mind!

Arvind Mehendale

This dates back to the pre-television era, circa 1964-65. Agashe and us friends would go to see every test match in Mumbai. We were young, with unbridled enthusiasm. Test matches were just an excuse though. The real reason was to roam around and try out various cuisines. The test matches then were not five-day affairs, but had a rest day in between. The question was, what to do on the rest day? Baba Chavan from our group belonged to Mumbai. He said there was a buffet at the Taj Mahal hotel for fifteen rupees. A buffet meant a dozen or more mouth-watering dishes and at least half a dozen varieties of dessert. That we could eat to our heart's content appealed to us Puneites. Not having slept well the night before, unshaven and dressed in simple clothes, as normally worn by Puneites, we reached the Taj. The doorman asked us where we wanted to go. When we told him, he said there was no buffet there, and would not let us enter. Agashe and Baba were furious. The bunch of us went straight to the police station. Thankfully, a Marathi-speaking inspector was on duty. He asked us if we had money. When we answered in the affirmative, he asked us to go with him.

The inspector met the manager. The buffet was over, but the tone in which the inspector spoke to the manager resulted in a small buffet being arranged for us.

When the time came to pay for the bill, the manager said, “Be my guests,” meaning it was on the house, and bid us goodbye!

Best Wishes

1. Messrs. Sanghvi Traders
2. Messrs. Crystal Engineers
3. Messrs. Cam Enterprises
4. Messrs. Royal Agencies
5. Messrs. P. P. Shah & Sons
6. Messrs. Ashvathi Roadways
7. Messrs. In Vogue Creations
8. Messrs. Shobha Pharm
9. Messrs. Malik Enterprises
10. Messrs. Anipra Chemicals Pte. Ltd.
11. Messrs. Gujarathi Consultancy Services
12. Messrs. Lokmanya Auto Center
13. Messrs. Arihant Steel
14. Messrs. Anil Chemicals & Minerals
15. Messrs. H. V. Corporation
16. Messrs. Sai Sales
17. Messrs. Flo-Tech Solutions
18. Messrs. Sahara India Roadlines
19. Messrs. Ganesh Chemical Works
20. Messrs. Shiv Shakti Enterprises
21. Messrs. Vidyut Seva
22. Messrs. Shri. Enterprises
23. Messrs. Ravis & Company
24. Messrs. Pearl Polymer Ltd.
25. Messrs. Barmalt India Ltd.
26. Messrs. Chennai Bottles
27. Messrs. Hanuman Printing Press
28. Messrs. Patel Plywood & Timbers
29. Arun Mhasvade from Messrs. Yogiraj Tailors
30. Messrs. Uday Kirti Steel Traders
31. Messrs. Chintamani Machinery Dealers
32. Messrs. Shivko/Sangawar Brothers
33. Messrs. Jivhala Grameen Bigarsheti Sahakari Pat Sanstha (Jivhala Rural Non-Agricultural Cooperative Credit Society)
34. Messrs. Hyderabad Bottle House Pte. Ltd.
35. Messrs. Color Pax Pte. Ltd.
36. Messrs. Nitin Weighing Systems
37. Messrs. Faiz Ali Contractor
38. Messrs. Paper Crafter
39. Messrs. Suyog Traders
40. Messrs. Bharat Leather Works
41. Messrs. Bhagyashree Industries
42. Messrs. Rolan Bearings
43. Messrs. Techniques India
44. Messrs. G. M. Joglekar & Co.
45. Messrs. Chaitanya Industries
46. Messrs. Vinidhan Enterprises
47. Messrs. Ambika Industries
48. Messrs. Chemi Pharma
49. Messrs. Standard Chemicals
50. Messrs. Standard Packaging Industries
51. Messrs. Maharashtra Road Carriers
52. Messrs. Transport Corporation of India
53. Messrs. Sab Agro Services Pte. Ltd.
54. Messrs. Ratnakant Roopchand Fade & Sons
55. Messrs. Ashutosh Enterprises
56. Messrs. Sonaz & Company
57. Messrs. Shah Brothers
58. Messrs. Balkrishna Printing Press, Shri. Bhandare
59. Messrs. Lucky Bottles
60. Shri. Pradip Himmatlal Gandhi
61. Shri. Allahbaksh Chand Saheb Shaikh &

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| Family | 84. Shri. Rasool Mehboob Shaikh |
| 62. Shri. Bharat Sanakadhik Dhere | 85. Shri. Laxman Bhimrao Shinde |
| 63. Shri. Vijaykumar D. Shelke-Patil | 86. Shri. Vitthal Vasant Deshpande |
| 64. Shri. P. R. Patil, Govt. Contractor | 87. Dr. Srinivas Krishnat Jamdar |
| 65. Shri. Anilsinh Namdev Rajput | 88. Shri. Chandrashekhar Vidyalaya- Primary School |
| 66. Shri. Jaydeep Sharad Borawke | 89. Shri. Chandrashekhar Vidyalaya- School |
| 67. Messrs. Brihan Maharashtra Grahak Bhandar (Brihan Maharashtra Consumer Store) | 90. Shri. Narayankaka Agashe Junior College |
| 68. Messrs. Brihan Maharashtra Employees' Credit Society | 91. Shri. Mukund Shankar Deodhar |
| 69. Messrs. Malshiras Taluka National Sugar Employees' Association | 92. Shri. Macchindra Eknath Kale- Patil |
| 70. Messrs. Hindustan Grid Electricals | 93. Shri. Suryakant Sadashiv Bagal |
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| 73. Rajan Gokhale from Messrs. R. K. Frost Processors | 96. Shri. Krishna Dhondi Rede & family |
| 74. Messrs. Santosh Agency | 97. Shri. Hanmant Namdeo Bhangе |
| 75. Messrs. Pimple brothers from Shreeyog Caterers | 98. Shri. Ganpat Narayan Kavde & family |
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| 81. Shri. Yeshwant Anant Patil | 104. Shri. Rajan Hanmant Kale Shri. Yatin Shah |
| 82. Shri. Avinash Krishnaji Inamdar | 105. Shrimati. Sunanda Gopal Walimbe & family |
| 83. Shri. Gajanan Ramchandra Kulkarni | 106. Jayashree Bhagini Samaj (Jayashree Sisters' Society) |

The employees of the Brihan Maharashtra Sugar Syndicate Ltd., Brihans Group of Companies, Shri. Suvarna Sahakari Bank Ltd.

A Special Note

Though this literary tribute has been compiled and published in Pune, the original idea for this came from the people of Shreepur. This publication has only been possible due to their enthusiasm and cooperation. Special mention needs to be made of Shri. Subhash Dandavate, Shri. Dinkar Bembalkar, Shri. Bhaskar Sohoni, Shri. Umesh Joshi, Shri. Chintamani Kulkarni, Shri. Dilip Deshmukh and Shri. Babulal Deshpande. We express our sincere gratitude to all the people of Shreepur!

The Editorial Board

The Translator



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Nandan Hanmant Phadnis (born August 18, 1964) has a Bachelor of Arts, and a Master of Labour Laws and Labour Welfare from the University of Pune. He represented Maharashtra in the Ranji Trophy and Wills Trophy as a wicket-keeper-batsman from 1986 to 1994. He worked as cabin crew for Air India from 1990 to 2021. He has been chief coordinator and batting coach for the Mumbai Cricket Association Academy, is a part of the faculty at the National Cricket Academy of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), has been a panel umpire with the BCCI since 2008, and has been a commentator on the English panel for All India Radio since 2010.

The Editorial Board



Taraprakash Vartak



Sharatchandra Belvalkar



Ramesh Barve

Sharatchandra Belvalkar

Sharatchandra Krishna Belvalkar (June 23, 1940 – October 15, 2015) had a Diploma in Civil Engineering from the College of Engineering Pune, and was an honorary member of the Council of Architecture. He founded Belvalkar Housing in 1969. He was a writer, publisher, and the proprietor of an advertising agency. He avidly supported the arts, music, and photography. In his lifetime, he was a patron to several charities and schools for his love of teaching and social work.

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Taraprakash Prabhakar Vartak (born August 6, 1942) has a Bachelor of Engineering from the College of Engineering Pune. He has been a partner and director with Mark Elektrijs and Abhi Chemicals, with Mauli Hills being his second project in housing. He is the founding member of the Pune Information Centre.

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Rameshchandra Prabhakar Barve (born January 9, 1955) has a Bachelor of Commerce (Hons), and a Bachelor of Laws from the University of Pune. He joined the Brihan Maharashtra Sugar Syndicate Ltd. in the role of apprentice in November 1972. He was promoted to accountant in 1976, and to chief accountant in 1981. He was further promoted to chief executive officer of the company in 2001. He has served as a whole-time director of the company since September 2021.

Dnyaneshwar Agashe
(1942–2009)

Dnyaneshwar Agashe is a name that has made a mark in diverse fields. He was well-known across Maharashtra as a successful industrialist, a reputed banker, and an able cricket administrator.

But this is a collection of articles which presents him in a completely new light. His friends, colleagues, and family shed light on many interesting and hitherto unknown facets of his personality.

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