

Morarji Ranchhodji Desai

1896-1995



Morarji Ranchhodji Desai was born on February 29, 1896 at Bhadeli, a little village near Bulsar in Gujrat. His father was a teacher in the Bhabenagar State in Saurashtra.

Beginning his education in a humble manner at the village school, he went on after matriculation to graduate from Wilson College, Bombay, in 1912. A religious and stringent background inculcated in him the habits of self-discipline and thrift. It is not surprising therefore that he grew up to become a practicing Gandhian and as the fourth Prime Minister of India, it was in character with him to say that, 'I seek neither popularity nor unpopularity. I am all for discipline'. After graduation he appeared for the Indian Civil Service Examination, seeking appointment as a Deputy Collector in the Bombay Presidency in 1918. He remained in Government Service till his resignation during the Civil Disobedience Movement. He was imprisoned thrice after 1940 for participation in the freedom movement.

In 1934 and 1937 when provincial elections were held, Morarji Desai was elected and served as the Revenue Minister and Home Minister of the then Bombay Presidency. In 1952, after the first general elections, he became the chief Minister of Bombay, contenting in that capacity till the reorganization of States in 1956. He was instrumental in introducing far-reaching reforms in land revenue administration and also in police and jail administration. In 1956, he joined the Union Cabinet as Minister of Commerce and Industry, subsequently dealing with the portfolio of Finance and leading delegations to various countries abroad in connection with the IMF and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Shri Morarji Desai's brief period of Prime Ministership pended on July 28, 1978 when he stepped down. He was a firm believer in the Swadeshi and

National Education and was closely associated with Gujrat Vidyapeethat Ahmedabad, with Lok Bharathi, a rural University in Gujrat and also with several cultural, academic and social organizations. What made him stand apart was the fact that even those who disagreed with him never doubted his sincerity. His long and outstanding service to nation earned for him the highest civilian award of India, the “Bharat Ratna”. He died on April 10, 1995 a little short of his 100th birthday.

Shri Morarji Desai visited Indian Statistical Institute and delivered the 12th Convocation Address on February 7, 1978.

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