

THE  
ISSUES  
THAT MADE  
NEWS

S V UPENDRA  
CHARYA



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# Part I

## A Cut above the Rest

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As many as six employees from Karnataka, technical staff working for Bangalore-based public sector units, received the prestigious Shram Awards from the prime minister recently. The Prime Minister Shram Awards for the year 2000 (the 2001 awards will probably be announced in 2003!) were given to these workers at a function organised by the Ministry of Labour on February 4 at the Vigyan Bhavan in New Delhi.

The Shram Awards are given to outstanding workers from State and Central public undertakings. The awards are titled Shram Rama, Shram Bhushan, Shram Vir and Shram Devi/Shram Shri and carry certificates and cash prizes of Rs. 2 lakh, Rs. 1 lakh, Rs. 60,000 and Rs. 40,000 respectively. They are given annually to public sector employees who work with exemplary zeal and enthusiasm, make exceptional contribution to increase productivity and by their technical innovations save foreign exchange for the country.

The selection for the annual Shram Awards, evaluated according to the merit of workmen's performance under review, is done separately for the four categories. The selected employees are honoured with 17 Shram Ratna, two Shram Bhushan, six Shram Vir and eight Shram Devi/Shram Shri. Among the national, awardees from Karnataka are a four member team from BHEL, a woman from HMT Watch Factory and an employee from HAL Engine Division. They have been awarded the Shram Bhushan (prize money of Rs. 1 lakh each) and Shram Devi/Shram Shri (prize money of Rs. 40,000 each)

The BHEL team modified a variety of tools and machines used in the production of electro porcelain items, such as high tension insulators for power transformers. The team efforts in import substitution, energy saving, environmental and other production activities of BHEL's EPD Division saved about Rs. 170 lakh for the company.

The workers A. Ramesha Babu, N.P. Monappa, K. Shivadas and T. Ramachandra have jointly designed; developed and modified machines and production tools during their long years of service in BHEL. They have been receiving several state and national productivity and other awards consistently, during their tenure at BHEL.

Ramesh Babu's team attributes its success to whole-hearted encouragement from the management and co-operation from fellow workers. The management, on the other hand, acknowledges the sincere involvement and team spirit of the members, which has contributed to low cost automation of the division's production process.

Shram Devi award winner, Ms. Deveoramma, joined HMT watch factory in 1976 as an operator trainee. Though physically handicapped by birth, Deveoramma during her stint in HMT has acquired all the technical skills of assembling and repairing mechanical watches made in HMT. She opted for a technical job after a Teacher's Training Course. "But for this factory I would have been a burden on my family" says Deveoramma.

At the Shram Awards function, Union Labour Minister Sharad Yadav in his address said, "This year we are also honouring the courage and determination of Smt Deveoramma, who in spite of being physically challenged from birth, through sheer dedication and determination has developed into a highly efficient worker."

A.K. Vijayaraghavan, who works in the Engine Division of HAL, Bangalore, won the Shram Shri award for his numerous technical suggestions and innovations, which saved the company about Rs. 300 hundred lakh, which included annual recurring savings of about Rs. 50 lakh. Vijayaraghavan joined HAL in 1974 as an operator. At present, he works as a senior technician.

Vijayaraghavan shares his expertise and experience, enthusiastically with his colleagues and superiors alike. He voluntarily trains youngsters in new techniques. The HAL management, while listing out Vijayaraghavan's outstanding skills and contributions to justify his selection for Shram Shree award, mentioned that "while suggestions to existing processes and usage of tools do bring in immediate benefits, change in attitude and (work) culture bring in much more benefits in the long run. This is where Vijayaraghavan stands head and shoulders above the rest."



**Deccan Herald**

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## Only Sugary Promises for Farmers?

Despite good rains, sugarcane growers are in trouble owing to pest problem, sick sugar units and government apathy, writes S V Upendra Charya.



### Only sugary promises for farmers?

**T**he cane cultivators are in trouble. Despite good rains this year - after three years of drought - it is once again 'all work, no hopes' situation for these farmers from all over the State. This time the problem has nothing to do with the rains but sugar factories that buy the yields from farmers on a regular basis. Owing to the irregularity of these factories, farmers are forced to wait endlessly for their payments.

Though they supply their sugarcane yields promptly for crushing, most often farmers do not get their payments for months together. According to official figures (as of October 2004), in Karnataka the sugar factories owe as much as Rs 251 crore due to the farmers.

"I had taken crop loans to grow sugarcane and I'm now losing the interest, but I have

Despite good rains, sugarcane growers are in trouble owing to pest problem, sick sugar units and government apathy, writes S V Upendra Charya

White, which has reduced the State's sugar production by 25 per cent. Though the Agriculture Department has initiated measures (like fertilising the bio-pests called *Dypha Eddiyora* and *Microgaster*) to check the sugarcane disease, there have been instances of the frustrated farmers burning their pest-affected sugarcane crops.

To add to the problem, the farmers cannot expect the settlement of their outstanding payments as most the sugar processing units are running under loss. Many factories closed down during the drought

amount of Rs 45 crore, sanctioned by National Cooperative Development Corporation, has also been promised for starting four new sugar factories in Belgaum and Bidar districts.

Also, the State government is said to have accepted the measures recommended by a cabinet sub committee of the previous government, headed by the then Agricultural Minister V S Kojalgi, to revive the sick sugar factories in the State. Initiating several measures, the government ordered the sugar factories not to start crushing before October 15 in the over all interest of all the factories, but some factories procured sugarcane in September itself for crushing, unmindful of the government restrictions. According to some farmers, the jurisdictional restric-

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The cane cultivators are in trouble. Despite good rains this year after three years of drought it is once again 'all work, no hopes' situation for these farmers from all over the State. This time the problem has nothing to do with the rains but sugar factories that buy the yields from farmers on a regular basis. Owing to the irregularity of these factories, farmers are forced to wait endlessly for their payments.

Though they supply their sugarcane yields promptly for crushing, most often farmers do not get their payments for months together. According to official figures (as of October 2004), in Karnataka the sugar factories owe as much as Rs. 251 crore dues to the farmers.

“I had taken crop loans to grow sugarcane and I’m now paying the interest, but I have not yet received payments from the sugar factory for the sugarcane I supplied in 2002,” rued a farmer from Hiriyur who sold his sugarcane yields to Vanivilasa Sakkare Kharkane.

As against the previous years, the timely rains this time kept the farmers busy in their sugarcane fields. Naturally these farmers had high expectations from their sugarcane crops. But, to their bad luck, the farmers, particularly in Belgaum, Hassan, Mandya and Mysore districts, have not been getting the expected yields because of pest problem. The farmers in these districts have lost more than 20 per cent of their yields in the recent months owing to a pest called Heliped White, which has reduced the State’s sugar production by 25 per cent. Though the agriculture Department has initiated measures (like fertilizing the bio-pests called *Dypha Efidiyora* and *Micromas*) to check the sugarcane disease, there have been instances of the frustrated farmers burning their pest-affected sugarcane crops.

To add to the problem, the farmers cannot expect the settlement of their outstanding payments as most the sugar processing units are running under loss. Many factories closed down during the drought years mainly because of non-availability of sugarcane for crushing purposes. Last month, the government-owned Gangavathy Sugar factory was liquidated. The factory workers, who lost their jobs, have not received their salaries since months. The farmers also have to get an amount of Rs. 19 lakh outstanding dues from Gangavathy factory, which apparently incurred an accumulated loss exceeding Rs. 45 crore.

Similarly, farmers who sold their previous sugarcane yields to the sick sugar mills such as Brahmavara Sakkare Karkhane, Vanivilas Sakkare Karkhane, Khanapura Bhagyalakshmi Sakkare Karkhane, and

Alanda Sakkare Karkhane have been unable to get the payments. Employees of these sick units have not received their salary for the past 20 months. In fact, employees of Alanda Sugar factory in Gulbarga have been on hunger strike for the past two months demanding the revival of the factory.

Apart from a few private factories, there are some 50 co-operative and public sector sugar processing units in the State. Many of these sugar factories have their own power generating units from which the KPTCL used to purchase power earlier. Now the KPTCL is no longer purchasing power from these sugar units due to some dispute.

Also, owing to previous droughts, sugarcane production in the State has gone down from 330.16 lakh tonnes in 2001–2002 to 324.79 lakh tonnes in 2002–2003, and, further down to 158 lakh tonnes in 2003–04, as per the figures furnished in Parliament. But drought or otherwise, the factories get only 50 to 60 per cent sugarcane yields for crushing since more than 30 per cent of the annual sugarcane yields are used to make jaggery.

## **Revival Promise**

Industries Minister P.G.R. Sindhia has recently promised funds up to Rs. 28 crore for the cooperative sugar factories badly in need of money to purchase sugarcane for crushing. A loan amount of Rs. 45 crore, sanctioned by National Co-operative Development Corporation, has also been promised for starting four new sugar factories in Belgaum and Bidar districts.

Also, the State government is said to have accepted the measures recommended by a cabinet Sub – committee of the previous government, headed by the then Agricultural Minister V S Koujlagi, to revive the sick sugar factories in the State.

Initiating revival measures, the government ordered the sugar factories not to start crushing before October 15 in the overall interest of all the factories, but some factories procured sugarcane in September itself for crushing, unmindful of the government restrictions. According to some

farmers, the jurisdictional restriction on sugarcane procurement is binding on all factories but the government could not prevent some factories which had started crushing in September itself in spite of the government notification.

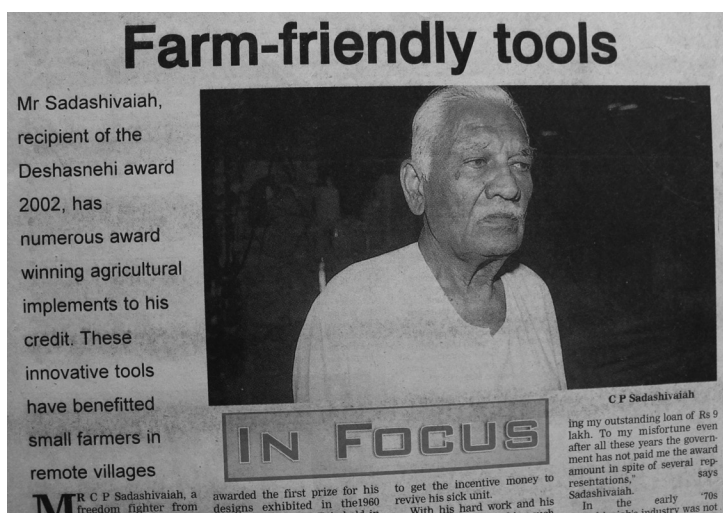
How far can these measures and promises help farmers is a big question. As Devappa, a farmer from Gangavathy puts it, “What can such confusing measures and sugary promises help farmers like me?”

Gangavathy Sugar factory has not settled my sugarcane dues. The factory is located near the road with a signboard ‘Sathyamarg’ (path of truth) but it had to be closed down because of the ‘Asathyamarg’ or dishonest means of the concerned authorities.’

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## Farm-Friendly Tools

Mr. Sadashivaiah, recipient of the Deshasnehi award 2002, has numerous award winning agricultural implements to his credit. These innovative tools have benefitted small farmers in remote villages.



Deccan Herald – November 29, 2002

Mr. C.P. Sadashivaiah, a freedom fighter from Tumkur is best known for his efforts towards the welfare of farmers. He has designed a good number of agricultural tools and implements commended by technocrats for their utility for farmers.

He is one of the five selected for the 'Deshasnehi' national award for the year 2002 instituted by the India Development Foundation Trust.

In the last fifty years this septuagenarian Gandhian has developed a variety of agricultural implements widely used by farmers. What made him a celebrity is the fact that without much technical education he could design these innovative tools and implements for the benefit of small farmers from remote villages.

Noted agricultural scientists and organizations like The Indian Council of Agricultural Research, National Innovation Foundation and The Central Institute of Agricultural Engineering have certified the innovativeness and the utility value of the implements made by Sadashivaiah.

Sadashivaiah has numerous award winning implements to his credit from a simple plough to hi-tech trenchers. He was awarded the first prize for his designs exhibited in the 1960 world Agricultural Fair held in Delhi. In appreciation Jawaharlal Nehru said— “I was much impressed by these implements and even more by Sadashivaiah who built up his industry which does good service to famers.”

Sadashivaiah started his small scale unit Shiva Industries at Mandipet in Tumkur in 1956. The unit was started basically with the objective of making available the essential field implements at affordable rates to small farmers. Sadashivaiah’s dedicated efforts however brought him name but not business success since making money has never been his motto.

Ultimately in the early nineties he was almost forced to close down his factory. In 1994 the State government announced Rs. 5 lakh prize money for inventions helping the farming sector.

The official announcement of incentive for the inventors encouraged Sadashivaiah to accept the challenge since he had no source to run his sick unit on which many workers depended for their livelihood. In spite of his old age and failing health Sadashivaiah went on with his challenging task hoping to get the incentive money to revive his sick unit.

With his hard work and his vast experience in making such farm implements Sadashivaiah could successfully develop a cost effective

multipurpose trencher certified for its technical quality by the National Innovation Foundation and also by the engineering department at the Agricultural University, Bangalore.

He patented design, tractor mounted multipurpose deep trencher was selected for the award which carried a cash prize of rupees five lakh.

“When my implement was selected for the award I intimated the bank that I would be clearing my outstanding loan of Rs. 9 lakh. To my misfortune even after all these years the government has not paid me the award amount in spite of several representations,” says Sadashivaiah.

In the early 70s, Sadashivaiah’s industry was not just a production unit. His work place was a training ground for agricultural students, farmers and even agricultural scientists who used to visit the place where Sadashivaiah had started an agricultural polytechnic for the benefit of student farmers. Sadashivaiah managed to run this free polytechnic from whatever he earned making farm implements. All along his motto has been to work for the welfare of the farmers.

**Deccan Herald November 11, 2002**

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