

Prof. Nagnath Kottapalle: An Obituary



Today is 30th November, 2025. A usual day in the calendar year which begins with end of November and beginning of last month in the year of 2025 like all the years of Gregorian calendar which we follow. However, in a usual sense it might be the same day... yet for certain instances it becomes a reminder for us that it is different as today three years ago on 30th November, 2022, a respected scholar, a distinguished administrator and a visionary Prof. Nagnath Kottapalle passed away after enduring illness. However, with him retained a long legacy of educational transition, administrative breakthrough, literary legacy and many stories of public administration and endurance. Recently, a book by Nicholas Dirks came out with a unique title *City of Intellect: The Uses and Abuses of the University* (2025) I am yet to read the book, but with title we get to know that how challenging it is to manage an institution even in one of the most academically powerful nations like USA. Somewhat in similar lines, we come across a stalwart personality like

Prof. Kottapalle, who came to our University and became its Vice Chancellor in year 2005. His tenure was full of episodes and achievements. My introduction to Prof. Kottapalle sir happened when I applied in the University, then came for interview and when I joined eventually on 4th January 2010. For a person who has hardly ever been to Maharashtra except that in Mumbai and Shirdi, Aurangabad/ Now Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar was completely new and obscure. So were its internal factions and peoples sentiments, it was difficult for me to understand, how a city so near and dear to historical discourses on Indian national identity could be unique and isolated in its traditional demeanor! Perhaps, that which was transitioned by Prof. Kottapalle intrinsically. While writing this short memoir on him. I could recall many of his achievements and facets of personality which I came across when I worked with him from 2010 and occasionally met him during his visits to our University after his retirement till his demise in 2022.

Prof. Kottapalle remains a known scholar of Marathi literature and was one of the stalwarts of the Marathi Department of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University. His writings and name will remain embedded in the historical legacies of literary histories of Marathi. He was member of various committees of literary significance such as the **Maharashtra State Marathi Vikas Sanstha** in Mumbai and the **Sahitya Akademi** in Delhi. He was president of the Maharashtra State Literary Award Committee (1988–89), president of the Marathi Studies Board of the Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education (1995–97) and was on the academic board of Marathi studies at SPPU, the University of Mumbai, Smt. Nathibai Damodar Thackeray University, and Banaras Hindu University. With the formation of state of Maharashtra in 1960 he continuously wrote and contributed to the linguistic legacy and its empowerment.¹

Apart from his everlasting legacy of Marathi language, he was a vibrant teacher and administrator. He hailed from a village of Nanded district of Marathwada. He was born on March 29, 1948 in the village of Mukhed, Nanded district, Maharashtra. His college education took place in Deglaur and his post-

¹ <https://map.sahapedia.org/article/Nagnath-Lalujirao%20Kottapalle/3345>

graduation at (then)Marathwada University, Aurangabad. He secured the first rank in his BA examinations and the Chancellor's Gold Medal for his performance in his MA examinations. (Sahapedia) I could recall during his one of the sendoffs at Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University in 2010, he amusingly discussed his transition from a rustic rural boy of Mukhed to an urban scholar of Aurangabad, ... *"Amhi Marathwadayachya Gavat aalo ani Marathwada Vidyapeeth la manasagat jhalo"* [I came from the rural areas of Marathwada and became the urban civil after coming to University]. As an administrator he contributed from his birthplace region to provincial and national level arenas. He taught and remained in the administration of institutions he taught in Nanded, Aurangabad, Pune, Mumbai and many of the literary institutions he was part of. With his wide and innate experiences in the educational and academic administrative experiences he returned to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar University as Vice Chancellor in 2005. Where he was a student since his graduation times from 1969, M.A. in Marathi in 1971 and he got his Ph.D. in 1980 under renowned guidance of Professor and Literary figure of University's Marathi Department Prof. Y.M. Pathan from the same University on 'Writings of Shokraro Patil' he was known for his writings on rural Marathwada and its challenges in is obituary a Marathi newspaper wrote as follows:

“मराठी ग्रामीण साहित्यात महत्त्वाचे योगदान देणारे डॉ. नागनाथ कोत्तापल्ले यांनी कथा, कादंबरी, कविता आणि समीक्षा अशा सर्वच साहित्यप्रकारांत लेखन केले. त्यांनी शेती-मातीत आणि उन्हापावसात राबणाऱ्या शेतकऱ्यांचे जिवंत चित्रण केले. ‘माणूसकी’ हा त्यांच्या साहित्याचा केंद्रबिंदू होता. माणूसपणाची जाणीव असणारा समाज, हेच त्यांच्या साहित्याचे मुख्य अधिष्ठान होते.”²

[Translation: Dr. Nagnath Kotapalle has significant contribution to the rural literature of Marathi. He wrote in different forms of literary excellence viz. stories, novels, poetry and critics. His writings lively explained hardships of famers and their rural experiences. Humane aspects of rural people remained in the centrality of his writings. Acknowledging humanity and humanist society always remained central philosophy of his writings.]

With his core sensitivity for the rural Maharashtra, its challenges and intricate weave of the social fabric he could relate the challenges of the urban-rural nexus of Maharashtrian administration too. With his detailed understanding of the education-society-administration he could bring the desired transition of his times. He was Professor and Head of the Marathi department of the Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University before joining the Pune University as Head and Prof. in the Marathi Department. When he returned to Marathwada as Vice Chancellor he came back as son of soil returning to bring transition. Hence, while taking several decisions he withstood the challenges of administration and stood for the University and his betterment. His tenure in the Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University was primarily known for the maximum appointments made; he recruited almost 250 permanent teaching faculties in the university. Perhaps it was the largest ever recruitment which took place ever in any University in Maharashtra or even India. Many Departments and institutions affiliated to university which were seeking appointments for teaching happened in his tenure. It will be necessary to state here that, since appointments made by him, could last three different NAAC from 2014-2019 and 2024 of our university. Staff recruited by him contributed for the excellence and continuation of many tasks essential for the functioning of a university.

While, doing this herculean task of expanding the teaching network and improvising essential infrastructural baseline of the University came with its many challenges, yet Prof. Kottapalle stood for

² <https://www.evivek.com/Encyc/2022/12/5/nagnath-kottapalle-passed-away.html>

academic solidarity, faculty and students' welfare and development. I will close today here to for sure writing in future, further extensively with more research and memories about my years in Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Aurangabad now to Chh. Sambhajinagar.

With a memorable and compassionate anecdote about how witty, respectable academician and wise administrator he was, where he most effectively remained loved VC for students. Many students even during his Vice Chancellorship revered him as a prolific orator and communicator where his literary excellence reverberated and inspired the young ones. He remained the father of the institution who always retained his cool and subtle temperament and listened to students' grief and distress and took their reactions with calmest demeanour. With one tiny episode which was shared by some of his students to me I will close this write up for now...

Once there was a water crisis in the women's hostel, as water heater was not functioning during the winter season, male students along with their female students gathered and took a march to Vice Chancellors bungalow, but couldn't meet the Hon. VC, again then next day they took the march and this episode continued for a few times, after 3-4 failed attempts students at last could meet Kottapalle sir,

Sir asked with serenest tone of his usual way... *What happened?*

Students collectively demanded, *'Solar water heating facility for the women's hostel is not working and we want it should be repaired and installed immediately'*.

Sir listened to the entire demand and asked from male students; *'Is the solar heating facility is functional in men's hostel?'*

Male students said, *'YES'*, In reply sir asked; *'in given situation till a new solar heating is bought and installed in women's hostel, shall we take men students heating facility and give it to women's hostel'*.

Men students with a small pause... [Had to say] *'YES'*...

Thereafter, women's distress got resolved and male students water grief got resolved too after some time. His wit and ability to understand student psyche not only resolved the issue immediately but created an episodic event too.

We do miss Prof. Nagnath Kottapalle and his spirit to engage with his university family.

Written by Dr. Bina Sengar (I joined the University during the tenure of Dr. Kottapalle and writing my memoirs of working in the university.). Written as on 30th November, 2025 at 10:00 pm at home in Nandanvan-Aurangabad/Now Chh. Sambhajinagar.

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