

## Shri M. Tirath Ram

### Recipient of Jamnalal Bajaj Award for Constructive Work-1990

Born on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1909. After passing matriculation, Tirath Ram joined the freedom struggle in 1929. He was jailed in 1930 for two years. In 1939, he established the Gandhi Seva Ashram in Oel with the blessings of Gandhiji.

The foundation stone of the Ashram was laid by Dr. Gopi Chand Bhargava. The land for the Ashram, about 2 acres, was donated by Shri Tirath Ram and his family. Over the years through this Ashram Shri Tirath Ram has been carrying on constructive work as envisaged by Mahatma Gandhi and serving the rural population.

In August 1947, a vocational training scheme in village industries was organized in this Ashram by the Punjab Government to train refugees to earn their livelihood. 1177 artisans were trained in Paper and cardboard manufacturing, Carpentry, Blacksmithy, Oil pressing, Soap making, Leather goods manufacture, Ban-making machines and Spinning.

The first Ban machine was introduced by the late Dr. Gopichand Bhargava in this Ashram in 1940. At present, 5747 families in 57 villages are earning from Rs 7/- to Rs 10/- per day from Ban machines and spinning in Shivalik Hills of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. The operation of Ban machines and centres through electricity was established on a cooperative basis to train villagers by the H.P. State Khadi and Village Industries Board, Simla. Also manufactured here are standard type of Ban machines, beehives and other village industries equipment.

Under his leadership, the workers of the Ashram have organized Himachal Pradesh Bee Keepers' Association with its Head Office in Gandhi Seva Ashram, Oel, to maintain the standard of honey and organize its marketing.

For the removal of untouchability and to promote the welfare of Harijans, he helped in organizing the Shivalik Harijan Sevak Sangh. In the field of agriculture, the Ashram has constructed the Swan lift irrigation scheme. The workers demonstrated to the Government officials how to do this in the whole of the hilly region. Now irrigation facilities have been provided in 47 villages. Earlier the Ashram arranged to impart scientific training in agriculture to farmers through camps. Tirath Ram has also done good work in cow protection. More than 700 cows have been saved from slaughter.

At the Ashram, noted specialists performed eye operations. About 8700 villagers have been examined. The Ashram has also organized an Arogya Kendra in 1973.

Shri Tirath Ram has also established a Nature Cure Hospital through which free medical aid is given to the villagers.

