



MR. JUGATRAM DAVE

Recipient of Jamnalal Bajaj Award for Constructive Work-1978

Born: 1895

Jugatram Dave was born on 1st September, 1895 at Laktar (Kathiawar). He studied upto Matric at Bombay and worked in a Gujarati monthly Vismi Sadi for some time. As the Bombay climate did not suit him, Swami Anand sent him to Baroda in 1915, where he worked as a teacher in a village school under the guidance of Acharya Kakasaheb Kalelkar for a couple of years.

In 1917 he went to Ahmedabad to join the Kochrab Ashram and later shifted to the Sabarmati Ashram. He became an ideal ashramite, earning the confidence of Gandhiji and Kasturba. He worked first as a teacher in the national school established by Gandhiji and later joined the Navjivan Press.

Jugatrambhai was deeply impressed by Gandhiji's Constructive Programme and wished to take it up in right earnest on his own. This he could do only in 1924, when he went to stay at the Swaraj Ashram, Bardoli. He took an active part in flood relief operations in 1927 when many parts of Gujarat were devastated by floods and later in the Bardoli Satyagraha in 1928 under the leadership of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

Soon afterwards he set up an ashram at Vedchhi, in the Raniparaj area inhabited mostly by Adivasis, as he felt that constructive work was most needed in uplifting the people of this socially and economically backward area. Jugatrambhai was, however, not able to give his undivided attention to organize and develop the Ashram activities on a wide and systematic scale till many years later.

Jugatrambhai was jailed several times during the Salt Satyagraha movement (1930-34). In 1934, he went to Bihar for earthquake relief work and later spent some years at Wardha-Sevagram in connection with the work of the Charkha Sangh, the All India Village Industries Association and the Talimi Sangh, which was part and parcel of the Constructive programme. He was appointed as a member of the Adult Education Board in 1938. He was jailed again in 1940 for participating in Individual Satyagraha and in 1942 during the Quit India movement.

Thus it was only in 1948 after Independence, that he was able to resume Constructive work at Vedchhi which he felt had a great relevance in the new context. Since then he has been working incessantly during the last thirty years to build up a number of institutions for the upliftment of the poor and the downtrodden and to ensure social and economic justice to them.

The Gandhi Vidyapith was established in 1967 as an autonomous university and all the educational activities were reorganized under its wings as separate departments: Samajshastra Mahavidyalaya (School of Sociology), Snatak Adhyapan Mandir (Graduates Basic Training Centre), Shanti Sena Vidyalaya (Peace Corps Training Institute), the Yantra Vidyalaya, as a division of the Vidyapith, has been set up at Bardoli to impart the benefits of science and technology to agriculture by conducting research for improvement of agricultural implements and manufacturing them for sake on a commercial scale. All these institutions are run on novel lines to impart a sense of purpose and self-reliance to the students.

The Sarvodaya Yojana conceived by Jugatrambhai (who is affectionately called Jugatram Kaka) envisages the establishment of development blocks to take up the work of cultivating and marketing of agricultural and forest produce, setting up grazing grounds, digging wells, building new roads and repairing existing ones and breeding of cattle as a co-operative endeavour. This work was carried on through the Raniparaj Seva Sabha (Vedchhi), the Halapathi Seva Sabha (Bardoli) and a network of agricultural and forest produce co-operative societies, which he has established.

When the Government introduced land reforms allocating lands to the tillers, he helped in providing financial assistance and managerial skills to the indigent cultivators through co-operative societies.

He actively propagated prohibition, particularly among the Adivasis and was able to wean away most of them from the evil habit through persuasion.

To carry the message of the Mahatma to the people Jugatrambhai has been organising annual seminars and fairs on special occasions.

Jugatrambhai has remained a bachelor all his life but he has actively helped women to come into their own and occupy their due place in society by utilizing their innate qualities like patience, spirit of service and sacrifice and humanity.

He has been deeply influenced by the Bhagvadgita and the Upanishads from a very young age. He has written several books in Gujarati on philosophy, social problems and constructive work and biographies of national leaders as well as his autobiography. His book on rural reconstruction Atma Rachana in three volumes has become a classic on the subject.

In all his devoted work spread over half a century Jugatrambhai has kept foremost in mind the precepts of Gandhiji. He has laid the true foundations for rural reconstruction and for ending the exploitation of man by man. This he has achieved through a non-violent revolution with utmost goodwill on all sides and without creating bitterness between the exploiter and the exploited.

Jugatrambhai has infused the same enthusiasm for Constructive work on a band of selfless and devoted by co-workers who have cast their lot with him. The various institutions established by him have produced thousands of Gram Sevaks, including many Adivasis, who are carrying his message of love and are helping in establishing and conducting institutions on the same lines in the areas in and around Raniparaj and many other parts of Gujarat.

Jugatram Dave is an embodiment of love and humility. At the age of 84, he is still active in his great work.

