



ACHARYA RAMAMURTI

Recipient of the Award in the Field of Constructive Work - 1998

Born: January 22, 1913

Shramabharati, Khadigram is a voluntary organization for the propagation of the Gandhian ideology and the uplift of the surrounding villages and was originally acquired by Gandhiji for experiment to grow cotton for spinning suited to the climate of Bihar and Eastern India. Later when the Bhoodan Movement was initiated, the President of the Sarva Seva Sangh, the late Dharendra Mazumdar started a Centre there particularly for the orientation of workers of the movement on Gandhian line and for an educational centre on the lines of the Gandhian philosophy of basic education.

Acharya Ramamurti gave up his job of lectureship at the Government Queen's College, Varanasi in 1954 and got associated with Shramabharati. He renounced his paternal home and property and from Khadigram in 1957 on appeal of Vinobaji he undertook a padayatra for a whole year. He covered all the blocks and important villages of the then Munger District of over 3500 villages. By his inspiring leadership and committed devotion he successfully brought an integrated development of the rural masses leading to 'Gram Swarajya' and making Shramabharati a centre of repute throughout the country as an institution of excellence and achievement of the Gandhian traditions.

Acharya's work includes:

- a) Reconstruction of the 30 surrounding down-trodden villages on the spirit of Antyodaya to uplift Harijans, adivasis, backward Muslims and Hindus living below the poverty line
- b) Reconstruction of education on the lines of half-day schooling as envisaged by Mahatma Gandhi
- c) Orientation workers with the ideas of Gandhiji and enthruse them to practice and preach non-violence

A most important current activity is Preventive Peace Action against communal and caste violence in Bihar, particularly in Bhagalpur for the eradication of communal violence and in Jamui for the eradication of caste violence. Bhagalpur weathered successfully the Babri Masjid storm of December 1992 and has remained calm to this day, though in 1989 it was a victim of a terrible communal riot in India in which about 2000 persons were killed. Bhagalpur's influence has inspired 50 mohallas where Hindus and Muslims have formed joint Vigilance Team to keep watch in their areas throughout the night. PAHARA has become almost a people's movement and well directed. The highest police and social authorities of the State Government as also prominent national and international journalists have confirmed this reputation of Bhagalpur. The State Government is examining the feasibility of extending the Bhagalpur experiment to other areas of Bihar.

The inspiring leadership of Acharya Ramamurti, had taught the rural people improved methods of agriculture, rules of health and hygiene, healthy way of bringing up children, treating common disease with household remedies. Many villagers have also been weaned successfully from the pernicious habit of drinks and intoxicants. There have been occasions when Acharya Ramamurti had fought along with villagers to have bhoodan lands usurped by landlords and moneyed people

released. All these ventures have not only brought about better employment to villagers but also more equitable distribution and social equality among them.

Swami Pranavanad Foundation awarded him the Swami Pranavanand Peace Prize for Shantiseva work in 1985.

