



MR. TUSHAR KANJILAL

Recipient of the Award for Application of Science and Technology for Rural Development - 2008

Born: March 1, 1935

Educational qualifications: Master of Arts, Bachelor of Education

Tushar Kanjilal is the Secretary of the Tagore Society for Rural Development, Kolkata. The society operates 10 Comprehensive Rural Development Projects in 3 States, viz., West Bengal, Jharkand and Orissa, including the Sunderbans. The Society is also responsible for the comprehensive & integrated rural development in 56 islands in the Sunderbans region in South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal, inhabited by about 4 million people. He has been working for the application of appropriate technology in the inaccessible regions of the Sunderbans and has drawn the favourable attention of NGOs and governmental agencies alike. To thousands of people living among the mangrove swamps of that area, Tushar Kanjilal is a living bridge with the hope - and the means - for development. Having lived and worked for 30 years in the Sunderbans, the world's largest mangrove forest famous for the Royal Bengal tiger, he gained intimate knowledge of the flora and fauna of the area. He was actively engaged in organizing a movement for the protection of the Sunderbans. He is also a regular columnist in vernacular daily newspapers on various issues of rural life and rural development.

The weekly magazine "The Week" has annually featured the Man or Woman of the year from 1992 onwards. Each of these men and women has worked silently to bring about changes in the lives of disadvantaged people and communities. The criteria for selecting these people are: they are relatively unknown, their work has transformed the lives of the people they work for, and their vision has endured in the form of institutions and people to carry on the work. Tushar Kanjilal belongs to this category of persons. He is among the 20 social workers who have transformed the life of thousands of people and are achievers of the category of outstanding persons such as Alice Garg, Baba Anne, Bhagat Puran Singh, Dr. Abhay Rani Bang, Rajendra Singh, S. Ramakrishnan, etc. What is common in these remarkable lives is each person's commitment to improving the lives of the less fortunate and their belief that self-help is the best help and that small is beautiful.

Tushar Kanjilal has worked for over 30 years in the Sunderbans, District South, 24-Parganas, and has contributed specifically to the comprehensive and integrated rural development in the 56 islands of this region. The Government of Tripura constituted, in July 2005, a Working Group on Development of HumanR and Science & Technology including Bio-technology of the State Government Planning Board for undertaking a detailed evaluation of this sector and for suggesting a road map for the future development of this sector. Tushar Kanjilal was included as a member of this Working Group.

The Tagore Society for Rural Development, of which Tushar Kanjilal is the Secretary, was established in 1969. The organization started working in drought and flood-prone areas in West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to bring back life in all its completeness making the villagers more self-reliant. The organization focuses on the areas relating to childhood education, adult education, comprehensive health programme, social forestry and ecological development, and uplift of women. It received funds through donations and also grants from State and Central Governments.

For the last 37 years, Tushar Kanjilal has guided the activities of the Society.

Kanjilal's forte has of course been in the field of applying appropriate technology to the Sunderbans region. He has led a movement to save the mangrove forests of the Sunderbans, since he believes that if the mangrove forests are not saved, Bengal is doomed. Tushar Kanjilal and the Tagore Society for Rural Development have rendered yeoman's service to bring dignity to local human lives in the Sundarban areas.

Kanjilal has received recognition in the form of a number of Awards and Prizes. He was declared National Teacher in 1984 and was the "The Week" magazine's Man of the Year in 1985. He was honoured with the Padma Shri Award in 1996 and also received an Award from the Institution of Engineers (India), Rural Development Forum, in 1991. He also received the "Indian Living Legend" award from the Voluntary Action Network India, Delhi, and was awarded the "Rathindranath Puroshkar" by Viswa - Bharati University in 2006. His name has been included in the Penguin publication entitled "Prophets of Modern India" in 2004.

At present, Tushar Kanjilal is a Member of the Sunderbans Development Board and Chairman, Task Force for Preparation Master Plan for entire Sunderbans. He is also Member, State Planning Board Sub-Committee, Tripura and Member of National Committee for Promotion of Economic and Social Welfare, Ministry of Finance, Government of India, and of the Standing Committee of Council of Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART), Ministry of Rural Development Government of India.

