



GIRIJA NANDAN

Recipients of the Award for Constructive Work - 2024

Born: March 30, 1950

Early Life and Inspirations: Girija Nandan was born in Bataspur village, in the Gaya district of Bihar. In his early childhood, he realized poverty in the villages and people dying with minor health problems. Girija Nandan studied in village middle school for a couple of years only and went to Ranchi with his elder brother for education. He passed class VII from a nearby municipal school and stood first. Despite difficulty in getting admission in a good high school at Ranchi, Girija Nandan was fortunate to get into St. John's High School, then one of the best high schools in Bihar. There he met Satish Kumar, a fellow student. They used to share with each other about the problems of the poor. In holidays they started going to Samanwaya Ashram Bodhgaya, established by Acharya Vinoba Bhave. They were much influenced by Gandhian ideology and Mahatma Gandhi's journey of life. They were drawn to the principles of non-violence, self-reliance, and service to the underprivileged, which became the cornerstones of their lives.

Commitment to Social Work: In 1966-67, while still a student, Girija Nandan joined the relief efforts led by Jayprakash Narayan (JP) in the famine-stricken regions of Kalahandi in Odisha and Gaya in Bihar. This experience of working closely with the suffering and downtrodden had a lasting impact on him and reinforced their commitment to social justice.

After completing his education at the Engineering College Bihar Institute of Technology, Sindri-Dhanbad, Girija Nandan, Satish Kumar with two other friends approached JP in 1970, expressing their willingness to dedicate their lives to social work. With JP's encouragement & support, they established Nav Bharat Jagriti Kendra (NBJK) in 1971 on Bhoodan land in Bahera village, Chouparan block, Hazaribagh district. Initially, Girija Nandan and Satish Kumar supported the organization financially for the initial 5 years by their salary working as engineers at Bokaro Steel Plant. However, during the Emergency in 1975, both of them were discharged from their jobs. Both of them were charged with warrant of DIR (Defense of India Act) and again reinstated after formation of new Janta Party government in India with full backlog payments, which they donated to NBJK.

Leadership and Contributions to Social Cause: On June 30, 1977, JP founded Lok Samiti, a non-political people's organization aimed at empowering citizens and ensuring checks and balances on government power. Under Girija Nandan's leadership, strengthening Lok Samiti from the village level became a priority for NBJK. Many social action programs were taken in Bihar & Jharkhand which led to empowerment of dalits, women and general rural people. They started demanding Panchayat election, women reservation, right to work, ban on liquor and many other vital issues. He emerged as a true follower of Mahatma Gandhi, dedicating his entire life to constructive work for the betterment of the common people.

Girija Nandan's intense compassion for the downtrodden led to the creation of numerous programs by NBJK to bridge the gap between the privileged and disadvantaged sections of society. His commitment to social justice is reflected in the extensive range of initiatives he has spearheaded, including education, healthcare, women's empowerment, and community development.

Major Initiatives and Achievements: Girija Nandan's vision for social change is evident in the breadth and impact of NBJK's programs. Some of the key initiatives under his leadership include:

- **Education:** Establishment of six high schools and two primary schools, providing education to over 5,000 children every year, 60% of whom are girls. Additionally, 100 remedial coaching centers have been set up, benefiting more than 27,000 schoolgirls.
- **Healthcare:** NBJK has conducted over 2 lakh cataract surgeries and served more than 5 lakh outpatients through the Lok Nayak Jaiprakash Eye Hospitals towards eradication of avoidable blindness from Bihar & Jharkhand. It ensured the formation of 537 SHGs of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and promoted financial inclusion for 3,598 PwDs. First time in Bihar & Jharkhand they took organized effort to mainstream over 6000 Person with Mental Disorder & Illness to medical treatment instead of local “Ojha-Guni” (witch-hunters).
- **Women & Youth Empowerment:** Girija Nandan has been a strong advocate for gender equality. He has initiated a micro credit program for women, organizing them in 900 SHGs and linking over 10,000 poor women successfully with income generation activities. Over 30,000 unemployed youths also received vocational training and about 60% are placed.
- **Community Development:** NBJK has implemented community sanitation programs benefiting 50,000 households, introduced door-step waste collection in Jharkhand, established waste recycling units, and initiated WASH programs in 32 slum areas in Ranchi.
- **Advocacy and Campaigns:** Girija Nandan has been at the forefront of several advocacy efforts. In 1990, he led a cycle rally from Patna to Delhi with 150 activists, demanding the Right to Work. He also campaigned for decentralization and grassroots democracy and for ban on liquor, in Bihar.

One of his most notable campaigns is the Manav Jodo Abhiyan, which promotes inter-caste and inter-religion marriages without dowry.

Legacy and Vision: Girija Nandan and Satish Kumar are working from beginning to end together and represent the legacy of Gandhi in both ideology and action. They have promoted more than 100 other Voluntary Institutions & Social activists' groups in Bihar & Jharkhand serving thousands of villages, besides NBJK.

Girija Nandan has dedicated his life to building institutions that serve the common people and promote social justice. Under his leadership, NBJK has become a powerful tool for executing Gandhi's vision of constructive work and community service.

His commitment to transparency, simplicity, honesty, and a professional approach has set NBJK apart in the voluntary sector. Girija Nandan's achievements have enabled NBJK to contribute to various national and state-level boards and committees, including the Planning Commission, National Commission for Women, and National Literacy Mission.

Throughout his life, Girija Nandan has remained a visionary leader who senses the needs of society and advocates for meaningful change. His dedication to promoting gender equality, caste and communal harmony, and opposing social evils has left a lasting impact on the communities he has served.

Girija Nandan Girija Satish's life is a testament to the power of dedication, compassion, and visionary leadership. Through his tireless efforts, he has transformed the lives of lakhs of people in Bihar and

Jharkhand, creating a legacy of social justice and empowerment. His work with NBJK and other initiatives continues to inspire future generations to carry forward the torch of social change.

Highlights:

NBJK runs an orphanage for destitute children and provides school sponsorship to about 18,000 girls. The organization has also identified and treated 6,652 individuals with mental disorders and supported over 47,000 people with disabilities.

Girija Nandan has initiated a micro credit program for women and organized them in 900 SHGs. Over 17,000 women have been empowered through self-employment initiatives as well as 1540 women-led Silai schools have been established. He also campaigned for Panchayat elections in Bihar and Jharkhand, advocating for decentralization and grassroots democracy. His efforts to establish women police stations and enforce prohibition laws have had a significant impact on reducing crime against women and curbing alcohol abuse.

The organization has facilitated the construction and renovation of approximately 3,000 water bodies, providing clean water to thousands of households.

Awards & Recognitions:

2023: The Eastern India NGO Leadership Award

2022: Man of Change Award

2021: Economic Times Best Farmer Producer Company (Women Empowerment) Award

2019: Asia Philanthropy Lifetime Achievement Award, South Korea

2003: SIDBI Best Enterprises Development Service

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