

Shri Yashpal Mehngaram Mittal

Recipient of Jamnalal Bajaj Award for Constructive Work-2007

Shri Yashpal Mittal was born in a cultured Arya Samaji family inspired by Gandhian ideals, in Jagaramb, Ludhiana District of the State of Punjab. His family had close ties with the family of Lala Lajpat Rai. His uncle was a well-known freedom fighter. Greatly influenced by this background, Sri Mittal devoted himself to wearing, propagating and selling Khadi and to welfare, hygiene and education activities in Harijan colonies. He himself was a first class student and always devoted himself to imparting education to Harijan children. After his graduation, he left home and came to Sevagram. He was the secretary to Shri Aryanayakam and Smt. Ashadevi Aryanayakam. He achieved great expertise in the field of Nai Talim. The Government of India appointed him to a senior post in the Directorate of Nai Talim Centre in Faridabad, which he accepted for just one year. He did a remarkable job of rejuvenating the near dead educational institutions in Faridabad.

Around the same time, Acharya Vinoba Bhave's Bhoodan Movement had picked up speed. Shri Mittal relinquished Government service for the sake of participating actively in the Bhoodan Movement. He fearlessly undertook padyatra in the difficult and inaccessible parts of Punjab and Himachal Pradesh in order to awaken the people and reach to them the message of Bhoodan. Later, when Vinobaji travelled in this part of the country, Shri Mittal took upon himself the full responsibility of making all the arrangements.

He established the Sarvodaya Ashram in the village of Sarana, 8 kms from Pathankot. Here, he created a blue print of the ideals of Sarvodaya. After his travel in Kashmir, Vinobaji visited this Ashram in November 1959 and named it as the Prasthan Ashram for the chain of Ashrams in the northern area. Vinobaji appointed Shri Mittal as Sanchalak of the Ashram. Later, on the direction of Vinobaji, land was acquired in Khanpur village close to Pathankot and the Ashram was shifted there in May 1960. Due to Shri Mittal's untiring efforts, this place not only became a spiritual centre of high order, but also served as a focal point of inspiration for the sadhaks and social workers of the entire area. The Ashram organizes various camps at the national and state levels. It has a good library, agro-goshala, health centre and a showroom for literature. Prayers, twice daily, community self learning, spinning and cleaning programs are the daily routine. The Ashram does not receive any governmental aid.

During the Indo-Pak conflicts of 1965 and 1971, Shri Mittal did exemplary work for establishing peace and harmony like assisting in rehabilitation of refugees, etc. During the Bihar famine, he participated in relief work under the guidance of Shri Jayprakash Narayan. At the time of the terrorist activities in Punjab, he fearlessly visited the terrorist-infested areas and persuaded people to see the right way, while, at the same time, calming and consoling the affected people. Many a time, he had to face serious trouble, but he did not accept any governmental protection.

Shri Mittal has been involved with the Sarvodaya Samaj as Convenor. He has also been Joint Secretary, Secretary, Managing Trustee, and President of Sarva Seva Sangh at various times. Because of his tireless efforts, international conferences of the Sarvodaya Sammelan were successfully held in Sewagram, Mumbai, Sabarkantha, Akbarpur, Jaora and Indore. Recently, in October 2004, the National Convention of Nai Talim was held in Sevagram which was presided over by Shri Narayan Desai and inaugurated by the Prime Minister of the Tibetan Government in Exile, Shri S. Rinpocheji.

Shri Mittal's main activity revolves around reaching to the people throughout the country and to public education, especially developing the virtues in social workers. His emphasis is on promoting moral and spiritual uplift, Gram Swaraj, Khadi Gramodyog and adopting Swadeshi. Institutions connected with constructive work in Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh are regularly receiving his active guidance.

Shri Yashpal Mittal has, with complete dedication, contributed immensely to the public life through constructive work. His simple, spiritual and unostentatious life style places him in a separate category. In view of his extraordinary contribution, he was decorated with the Swami Pranavanand Shanti Puraskar.

