

MR. TAGADUR RAM CHANDRA RAO
Recipient of Jamnalal Bajaj Award for Constructive Work-1983
Born: 1898

Tagadur Ramachandra Rao was born in 1898. When he was 15, he left the formal educational system prevalent under the British rule and started his quest for a life dedicated to the service of society. He drew inspiration from Lokmanya Tilak and Gandhiji to fight the forces of exploitation around him.

He devoted himself to the task of organizing in Mysore District Gandhiji's programme of Swadeshi, revival of Charkha, removal of untouchability and working for social justice and economic equality. He founded the Swarajya Mandir and Satyagraha Ashram in 1921 at Tagadur, the village he adopted for his work. The Ashram became the base for his constructive work, which spanned a long period of 50 years. The guiding principle in all that he undertook to do was the concept of Gram Swaraj.

He was a pioneer in many respects. He founded the first Co-operative Society for Khadi production and sale in the then Mysore State. To him also goes the credit of starting the first basic education experiment in Mysore State. These and many other institutions started by him have since stabilized and developed to acquire a stature for themselves. The savings out of the economic activities initiated by Rao are ploughed back for the upliftment of the Tagadur village. He had also carried out a survey of the Tagadur village and drawn up a plan for its economic regeneration. The plan reflects Rao's independent thinking on rural development. His own study of people, the fund of common-sense that he possesses and his monumental work at grassroots level more than made up for his lack of formal education.

Rao had offered disciplined and non-violent Satyagraha at several renowned centres of pilgrimage in the South for getting the temples situated there opened to the Harijan.

Mahatma Gandhi had showered undiluted praise on Rao for his courageous leadership and dedicated work for promoting khadi and the interests of Harijan. Vinoba Bhave also appreciated Rao's work when the latter had joined the padayatra undertaken by Vinobaji in Karnataka for his Bhoodan-Gramdan Movement.

Rao has also taken a prominent part in the freedom movement. A true Satyagrahi that he was, he courted arrest on six occasions, including the 1942 Quit India Movement and underwent imprisonment for a total period of 3 years.

All through his life Tagadur Rao entirely depended on direct public support which has come in loving abundance to him. He has chosen to take "enough for the day" and leave the tomorrow to God's loving hands. He has refused to apply for any pension or grant for his personal living. Tagadur Rao has drawn the barest minimum for a life of voluntary poverty and feels happy and joyous in his achievement attributing all that to the grace of God and the love of the people whom he chose to serve.