



**DR. AJOY KUMAR BASU**

**Recipient of the Award for Application of Science and Technology for Rural Development - 1999**

Born: July 29, 1937

Educational Qualification: Bachelor of Science (Hons); Master of Technology, Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D), Fellowship of The Institution of Engineers

Dr. Basu has spent a major part of his life in Technology Planning, Modulation and Transfer of Technology for villagers, focusing on the tribals of South Bihar, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa.

As Assistant professor in the Birla Institute of Technology he developed the concept of training and research in Appropriate Technology and set up industries in the rural areas of Ranchi and other parts of India on the basis of this concept. In 1981 at the invitation of the U.K. Government and Warwick University, he visited the United Kingdom (UK) to discuss and finalise the concept of teaching application of Appropriate Technology. In 1984 he was invited by Prince Charles to discuss starting of the United World College of Appropriate Technology in India. This has now been set up near Pune. He also prepared the outline of the 5 years Rural Development Plan for the Kingdom of Lesotho, Africa at the invitation of the King of Sweden and with the support of Dag Hammarskjold Foundation of Sweden.

Dr. Basu's greatest achievement has been the setting up and the effective functioning of the Society for Rural Industrialisation (SRI) of which he is the Chief Executive. The Department of Science and Technology, Department of Electronics, Department of Education, Ministry of Welfare, Ministry of Non-conventional Energy, Department of Forestry etc. now recognize this society.

The SRI includes in its core functions seven subjects: Planning and Information, Construction, Energy, Electro-mechanical Devices, Processing of materials, Life sciences and Land and Water Management. Besides, all these had to be linked with technology transfer.

In the field of Planning and Information the Society encouraged planning through the villagers on the basis of information available about the resources and their optimum use. About 260 villagers and 25 NGOs have learnt the process. The planning is meant for the whole area.

Similarly in the field of construction, innovations have been made which include random rubble filled concrete block substitute for brick, pre-fabricated roofing for houses, sand and stone compact foundation for building, use of wobblers and vibrators for road construction and enveloping arch foundation for small dam in sandy bed. These technologies have been used extensively by NGOs including the Ramkrishna Mission and for the building of earthquake proof houses in Latur in Maharashtra.

In the field of energy, 20 village and 4 block energy plans were prepared. A dual fuel power station has been set up and is being run by trained villagers; an electric irrigation pump and rice husking machine have been installed. Four solar photo-voltic systems have been installed as well as 200 solar lanterns and 250 solar cookers.

Processing of food crops, forest products and local mineral have been established and is practiced by several groups of women processors and several processing industries have been set up.

In the field of land and water management, watershed planning has been standardized and is being practiced by villagers. Soil testing has been taught and is practiced by the local community.

Underground water surveys are conducted by groups of villagers; 40 villagers are practicing ecological agriculture. Advanced horticultural techniques, genetic mutation and use of degraded and rocky areas are the new thrust areas.

In the important field of technology transfer, nearly 10,000 people have been benefited during the last 6 years. A new training centre has been started in Singhbhum district and various awareness centres with the help of TV are providing information and training to several people in the rural area.

18 Universities and Institutes are helping SRI with information, training and research work.

The impact of Dr. Basu's various programmes for training villagers in Appropriate Technology and to transfer technologies particularly suitable for rural development has been very significant. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Plan for India (1997-2002) is based on SRI Philosophy and the SRI has been identified as the Chief Development Organisation (CDO) to lead the establishment of the pioneer Technology Development & Application Centre for Rural Community developments.

Dr. Basu after retiring in 1998 is concentrating on popularization of the concept of Science and - Technology for the Poor and bases his theme on Building a Scientific Nation. For the 1998 Science Congress, the Prime Minister supported his theme. Dr. Basu advocated a closer relation between Government, Business and the Civil sector organization to tackle the massive poverty problem in India. His relentless efforts to convince people that each block in the country needs at least one Science & Technology resource centre run by NGOs is slowly but surely getting roots. He has launched a campaign to build 100 Block level centres in the tribal areas of Bihar.

With a view to completing this movement he has published a book for the poor, entitled "Entrepreneurisation of Skill Training". He is writing a second book titled "Development, People and Convergence of Effort". He is developing a 2 year curriculum for Higher secondary Level Vocational course for techno-scientific leadership for Panchayati Raj institutions, and a complete document on training of the functionaries of Block-level NGOs to take up Science and technology supportive work.

Dr. Basu's dream is to support the people at the bottom of the economic and social scale, the poorest, the most marginalised and oppressed so that they have dignified human existence. According to him the poorest are the mutest and they have to be helped to overcome their terror of survival and be escorted along the path of confidence.

It has taken 10 years to make this institution what it is. In Dr. Basu's own words "these 10 years have been a decade of love and affection."

Awards & Prizes:

1. Birla Award for his outstanding service to the tribals
2. President' Award from National Productivity Council for Training of villagers on Food Processing, in 1998

