

MR. NARAYANBHAI DESAI

Recipient of the Award in the Field of Constructive Work - 1999

Born: December 24, 1924

Educational Qualification: Educated in the Gandhian Movement in Gandhiji's Ashram Narayanbhai Desai has spent his entire life during the last six decades in the constructive movement working for the welfare of the poor. He assisted his father Mahadev Desai who was Gandhiji's Secretary and also Gandhiji in all activities associated with the Bhoodan Movement started by Acharya Vinoba Bhave. He was a participant in the Students' Shanti Sainik Sena Movement started by Jayaprakash Narayan throughout the country for engaging students in social work and help relieve poverty, illiteracy, disease and superstition. Narayanbhai Desai is the founder of the Sampurna Kranti Vidyalaya, Surat. He was the first person to propose to the United Nations Peace Keeping Force Without Arms.

Narayanbhai Desai was an active participant in the Quit India Movement. He collected 3000 acres of arable land under the Bhoodan Yagna scheme of Vinoba Bhave and distributed it among the villagers. He introduced Charkhas and undertook several social, economic programmes for the welfare of the poorest sections of the society.

Peace through Non-violence has been his main mission. Narayanbhai Desai trained peace volunteers and was the National Secretary of the Shanti Sena, which involved him, in recruiting Shanti Sainiks, training them and launching of the Tarun Shanti Sena to work on the Indo-China border. This was an effective movement of national integration. He worked hard for the relief and resettlement of refugees from Bangladesh and organized an international Delhi-Beijing March. He was one of the Co-founders of the Cyprus Resettlement Project (CRP), which was a pioneering experience of an international team of Peace Volunteers trying to work for conciliation between two warring nationalities.

Narayanbhai is President of the World War Resisters' International. In March 1995, he was invited by the Non-Violence International at Washington D.C. for consultation on working of unarmed peace terms in situations of international conflicts.

Narayanbhai is noted for his skills, which include spinning, weaving and folk dancing. He has authored over forty books in Gujarati, Hindi and English. He has won several awards such as Harmony Awards for National Integration and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) International Madanjeet Singh Prize for Tolerance and Non-violence in 1998.

Narayanbhai Desai is a crusader for peace through Non-Violence, a pioneer in training and reforming youth, in executing programmes on Gandhian constructive work for the benefit of the vulnerable sections of society and for exemplary work in conflict resolutions and relief for refugees.

