



MR. SURENDRA KOULAGI

Recipient of the Award in the Field of Constructive Work - 2014

Born: October 24, 1934

Surendra Koulagi is a staunch follower of Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan. After working with Jayaprakash Narayan as his personal assistant from 1954 to 1959 in Bihar, he returned to work in Karnataka and selected Melkote area in Mandya district, a region that was then very poor and backward.

Surendra Koulagi is the founder of Janapada Seva Trust a voluntary social service organization established in 1960. Inspired by the Gandhian ideal of sarvodaya, the Trust has been striving for social and economic elevation of the weaker section of society. He worked for Bhoodan movement of Acharya Vinoba Bhave. He conducted Sevalal in Melkote since 1959 for several years and also participated in many pro people movements.

One of his earliest service programs was setting up of Karunagraha. A residential school for differently and disabled children which was founded in 1963. More than 300 children were provided shelter, educated and medically rehabilitated till 1998. Now the Karunagraha houses an adoption placement center for abandoned and orphaned infants and children. The children are given to legal adoption after identifying suitable couples. Surendra Koulagi is compassionate towards this humanitarian work done by his Trust.

Surendra Koulagi also started a formal school and a recognized pre-university college in 1982 to 1998 and 1985 to 2005 respectively to cater to the educational needs of the local population especially the girls. Because of his principles of not soliciting any governmental aid, as this does not suit the ethos of voluntarism and ideals of his organization, the school and college were discontinued in 2000.

Following his footsteps, Surendra Koulagi's family members are proactively involved in his social work. About 100 rural women with social problems were helped to get education through condensed course program and helped majority of them for their socio-economic rehabilitation in the 70s and 80s. In 1985, adult literacy classes which were conducted in 30 villages helped 900 illiterates.

A printing press was run for many years to train and rehabilitate women. More than 50 women were trained in the skill and were rehabilitated in 1980s. In 1989 as the president of Karnataka Sarvodaya Mandal had organized all India Sarvodaya conference in Melkote. Surendra Koulagi is running sarvodaya patra andolan (movement) in Melkote from 1993. The rice and grain collected from Sarvodaya patra is distributed to the needy people every month.

For over thirteen years, Surendra Koulagi has been publishing a monthly magazine called Janapada Vichara, which voices Sarvodaya and Gandhian philosophy. He has also published Kannada versions of Vinoba Bhave's Jai Jagat and Paryavaran aur Vikas of Sunderlal Bahuguna.

Surendra Koulagi involved the village community in khadi production and marketing through its units. The organization has organized weavers, especially women in Melkote who also produce

natural dyed khadi fabric and garments. The Trust's khadi products are sourced by top brands like Fab India.

Surendra Koulagi's novel initiative 'Hosa Jeevana Dari' which means 'Road to New Life' is a center to experiment and experience non-violent living alternatives. It has been developed on twenty five acres barren piece of land, which is now a biodiversity heaven. Organic farming principles, conservation of native flora and fauna, water conservation are all part of the center. The center is developed with the voluntary action of people from India and abroad. From 1990 to 2003, Surendra Koulagi introduced and conducted a five weeks program on environment and development for the students of Edinburgh University, United Kingdom (UK). Nearly 200 European students got an opportunity to get an insight on the Gandhian approach to development and environment. Today the center is a place for imparting training and hosting camps for different groups including, farmers, environmentalists, weavers, youth and children.

A Gandhian to the core, Surendra Koulagi's simplicity, clarity of vision, compassion, altruistic lifestyle; inspires one and all, especially the youth.

Surendra Koulagi received the State first award from the Department of Women and Child Development of Karnataka for serving the differently abled. In 2003, he was conferred the Fie Group of Industries' FIE Foundation award.

Surendra Koulagi did not accept the Kannada Rajyothsava State Award presented by the Government of Karnataka on account of the difference of opinion on government policies. In 2013, he received prestigious Devara Dasimayya Award of Desi Trust, Bangalore for his contribution to revival of handlooms.

Contact details:

Mr. Surendra Koulagi

Founder, Janapada Seva Trust

Melkote - 571 431, District Mandya, Karnataka

Tel. No.: 08236-299854; Mobile: +919900537434

Email: janapada@yahoo.com

Website: www.janapada.org

