

MR. DHOOM SINGH NEGI

Recipient of the Award in the field of Constructive Work - 2018

Born: December 30, 1939

Guruji, as Mr. Dhoom Singh Negi is popularly known in the region, is a passionate social worker in the Himalayan region of Uttarakhand, who has led many movements in the Himalayan region.

Mr. Dhoom Singh hails from Pipaleth village in the Tehri Garhwal region of Uttarakhand. His contribution to the struggle and constructive work has been during the Chipko movement and later movements relating to environment protection.

Mr. Dhoom Singh Negi was born in a moderate family, being the youngest of the seven children. His role model is his mother. After completing his primary education, Mr. Dhoom Singh went to Delhi and Kolkata to earn a living to support his family. He grew up to become a well-read person as he utilized his free time to read.

In early sixties, Mr. Negi worked as a primary school teacher in Manjiyadi village and later on he was a junior high school headmaster in Jajal. With surroundings and community being his laboratory for teaching and awakening, Mr. Dhoom Singh took the school to new heights. He had a social worker living in him. He was influenced by environmentalist and father of the Chipko Movement Mr. Sundarlal Bahuguna's speeches, who frequented the area and the school along with eminent people of the Sarvodaya fraternity.

Mr. Negi has taken part in Gram Swaraj of Gandhiji-Vinobaji and actively participated in the many programmes of social transformation.

In mid-sixties, Mr. Dhoom Singh participated and took along his students to old Tehri town for dharna for imposing liquor prohibition in the area; during which they were jailed. He encouraged his student to take part in the cause for social reforms. Mr. Negi is confident that new generation will emerge to build our nation.

Mr. Negi later gave up his teaching profession to dedicate his life for a social cause and to join the Sarvodaya movement. His wife Mrs. Renu stood by him in his decision and she single handedly took care of the family responsibilities. It was courageous and commendable of the couple to take their decisions. He became a committed Sarvodaya volunteer. In 1973, the Chipko Movement began in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand.

Mr. Dhoom Singh Negi's Gandhian approach to look at the world around him made him an active participant in the various activities. He encouraged the women to be in the forefront of the movement and was instrumental in forming Mahila Mangal Dal in the villages around. Mr. Negi helped develop a new generation of people by sensitizing women and youth. In 1974, Mr. Negi was made the Joint Secretary in Chipko Movement. Alcoholism, untouchability, deforestation — all these issues were part of Chipko, shares Mr. Dhoom Singh Negi who extraordinarily and extensively sensitized and mobilised the people. There were situations when he sat down near the tree and risked his life to prohibit cutting of trees. His dedication, advocacy and perseverance eventually led to banning of tree felling above 1000 meters.

During this period, Mr. Dhoom Singh Negi came very close to and studied the forests in the Himalayan region deeply. He witnessed and was concerned about the bonded forest labours who were deprived of their rights by the forest contractors. This led to working for the rights of the labour. He wrote many articles on people's rights on forest and natural resources as a source of livelihood. The slogan was

क्या हैं जंगल के उपकार... मिट्टी, पानी और बयार

मिट्टी, पानी और बयार... जिन्दारहने के आधार।

Mr. Dhoom Singh encouraged and promoted tree plantation for forest conservation in the Himalayan region. Nursery was set up to distribute saplings/plants to the villagers. Plants fulfilling the 5 Fs viz. Food, Fodder, Fertilizer, Fuel and Fibre were planted. To date, 90% of those plants are surviving.

Mr. Negi also led movement against illegal resin tapping as it was weakening and causing permanent damage to the trees. His Satyagraha was to oppose the illegal system and injustice based on science and for ecological conservation. 'Trees are our brothers. Injury caused to them has to be treated and cured' - Mr. Dhoom Singh Negi's this ideology, resulted in the State government's decision to ban illegal resin tapping and resin collection.

During the period from 1980-1982, Mr. Dhoom Singh participated in a 300 day's Padyatra of 4800 kms covering places across Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Nepal. The mission was to sensitize the government and people about denuding Himalayan forests and its severe ill effects. In 1989-90, he actively participated in Anti Tehri Dam Movement. He was the President of Tehri Garhwal Sarvodaya Mandal. Post 1990, Mr. Dhoom Singh was an active participant of the Seed Protection Movement. His work for liquor ban, anti-mining and Greening Himalaya Movement and related constructive works to save the mountains, made Mr. Dhoom Singh Negi a veteran.

Mr. Dhoom Singh Negi has also been a proactive writer. He published articles in the local newspapers and magazines to enlighten the people on the various social issues and needs. His recent release is a book titled Mitee, Paani aur Bayar. His home library is lined with treasure of valuable books and diaries dating back several decades. Mr. Dhoom Singh Negi's voluntary work has been consistently going on for over four decades.

Mr. Negi's dream is Gram Swaraj and self-respect for all. He is a Satyagrahi, a devotee of Sarvodaya, social reformer - all in one. A shy, optimistic Mr. Dhoom Singh Negi's message throughout his journey of life and work is that Himalaya and forests have to be saved. He has been one of the pillars of the people's environmental movements in Uttarakhand and the Himalayas. His values and actions have been revolving around community mobilization. The people started realising the importance of collective responsibility for solving their own problems.

Mr. Dhoom Singh is a noble soul, who has evolved and sacrificed his life to Mother Nature and people's cause. He is an effective mobiliser and motivator. A life time well dedicated to the cause with clarity of thoughts till date, Mr. Dhoom Singh Negi is a confluence of an activist, sensitive writer, agriculturist, soldier, scientist and sociologist, who works with an unwavering commitment.

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