

Shri Som Dutt Vedalankar

Recipient of Jamnalal Bajaj Award for Constructive Work-2000

Date of Birth	:	13th May, 1913
Educational Qualification	:	Graduated from Gurukul Kangri and obtained the degree of Vedalankar due to his proficiency and expertise in the study of Vedas.

Shri Som Dutt popularly known as 'Sombhai' throughout the constructive world is a source of inspiration and solace for the entire constructive community due to his commitment, dedication and contribution towards the freedom and constructive movements in the country and his name has become a byword for Khadi.

Even as a young student he was inspired by the call of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation and took a vow to wear khadi all his life. He also organised a bonfire of foreign cloth. In 1929 Gandhiji accepted his invitation to pay a visit to his Gurukul and on that occasion with great enthusiasm Som Dutt not only made a personal contribution but also inspired the students to collect contributions for donating it to the Khadi Fund set up by Gandhiji. During this period he edited and published the journal "Sarvamitra".

Som Dutt participated in the famous "Salt Satyagraha" but was not arrested due to his tender age. He was very actively involved in the constructive movement and in the campaign of "Non-Co-operation" started by Gandhiji after his return from the Round Table Conference in London in 1932. He was arrested for his activities and detained in jail but after his return, he toured from village to village exhorting people to join the Non-Co-operation movement. In 1938 he became the Co-editor of "Hindustan" of which the Chief Publisher was Devadas Gandhi, son of Mahatma Gandhi.

Because of his commitment to the constructive movement his services were in great demand. He was invited by the eminent Gandhian leaders but he decided to work in the Gandhi Ashram established by Acharya Kriplani of which Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Govind Vallabh Pant were prominent Trustees. He participated actively in the Quit India Movement, was arrested and imprisoned in the Meerut jail.

In 1948 he was appointed as the Secretary of the Punjab branch of the All India Committee for the relief of displaced persons which was started by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, India's first President. He not only arranged for the housing, supply of provisions and financial relief to displaced persons but also provided charkhas to them and arranged for the marketing of the cloth produced.

In 1952-53 he established the Khadi Ashram in Panipat. Through this institution he expanded the Khadi work so considerably that branches had to be opened in Punjab, Himachal and Delhi. The total output of the Khadi Ashram was Rs. 12 crores and the sales were valued at Rs. 18 crores. About 35,000 workers were employed and every year about Rs. 2 crores worth of Khadi were given as wages. He also established in 1963 Vidya Bharati, an educational institution on the basis of Gandhian Ideology.

Because of his commendable work and keen interest in the Khadi and the Constructive Movement Sombhai was appointed as the Member Incharge of the Woolen Khadi Department of the Khadi and the Village Industries Commission in 1963. In 1966 he was appointed as a member of the Commission and later as its Chairman in 1977 till 1980.

Shri Som Dutt is a name to conjure with in the Constructive Movement. Currently he is the Secretary of the Khadi Ashram, Panipat and Director of the Gandhi Ashram, Lucknow, the turnover of which is Rs. 211.20 crores. It provides employment to 358 lakhs people and about Rs. 50 crores is paid as wages annually. Apart from his involvement as Trustee in several Constructive institutions in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir and Haryana, he is also the Vice Chairman of the Central Gandhi Smarak Nidhi. He is a prolific writer on various topics concerned with economics and public affairs. In the Khadi world he is widely respected as the "Bhishma Pitamaha".

