

Shri R.K. Patil

Recipient of Jamnalal Bajaj Award for Constructive Work-1997

Shri R.K. Patil is an extraordinary combination of patriotic administrator, social worker, a rebel for the right cause and non-violent warrior of the Gandhian mould. His life has been a saga of service, sacrifice, compassion and commitment to constructive work.

In the Indian Civil Service he served as Assistant Commissioner and District Collector in various districts of the then C.P. and Berar province for 13 years. In spite of his being a member of the Indian Civil Service, Shri Patil was a staunch nationalist. He used to wear Khadi and met even British authorities including the Governor while dresses in Khadi. He refused to fly the Union Jack on the Collector's residence in accordance with the prevalent practice. He was known for his fearlessness, integrity and competence. In the discharge of his duties he did not flinch from locking horns with the mighty. His nationalist outlook, activities and his commitment to various activities designed to secure the freedom of his country and to make the people come into their own, made him feel suffocated and he ultimately resigned from the ICS in April 1943.

After resigning from the ICS, Shri Patil had met Gandhiji and under his guidance submerged himself in constructive work. He also came in contact with Acharya Vinoba Bhave. Under their combined influence he left politics and dedicated himself to the Bhoodan Movement under Vinobaji's leadership.

It was fortunate that his wide administrative experience was utilized when he was made a Minister in C,P, and Berar Province. He served as a Minister for Revenue, Civil Supplies and Agriculture from 1946 to 1949. In those difficult days of food shortages, he as the Food Minister tried with considerable success to ensure that the food reached the needy.

His experience and competence struck the then Prime Minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru who appointed him as Food Commissioner in 1949 and late in 1950 as member of the Planning Commission. Shri Patil served in these capacities till 1952 and contributed to the making of the first Five Year Plan. He again became Minister for Development in C.P. and Berar from 1952-54. He resigned from the Ministry in 1954.

Shri Patil was the leader of several study teams and visited China, Israel and Yugoslavia to study their experiments in development. He wrote on the visits and his writings were widely acclaimed.

He worked tirelessly in the Bhoodan-Gramdan Movement, donated a part of his own land, did padayatars and collected land for he landless. An authority in revenue and administration, he contributed to the framing of Sulabh Gramdan Scheme and drafting of laws on Bhoodan and Gramdan. He was also associated with land distribution. Distribution of Bhoodan lands in Vidarbha region was carried out under his leadership. He was Chairman of the Bhoodan Yagna Board for more than 20 years.

Shri Patil also became a top-ranking leader of the Sarvodaya Movement and served as President of the Maharashtra Sarvodaya Mandal from 1957 to 1969 and President of Acharyakul for many years. Shri Patil's contribution in the sphere of constructive activities is significant. By associating with Kasturba Gandhi Memorial he undertook several activities for the development of women. Similarly as president of Dattapur Kushtadham he did yeoman service in the cause of lepers and helped Maharogi Seva Samiti founded by Shri Baba Amte. Shri Patil was also associated with many Gandhian and constructive work organizations like Gandhi

Peace Foundation, Friends Rural Centre (Rasulia), CARTE (Ghaziabad). Gramodaya Sangh (Bhadrawati), etc. He also took active part in the anti-cow slaughter campaign in Kerala and West Bengal in 1978. In 1976, Shri Patil was entrusted with the distribution of government and panchayat lands in U.P. His post was equivalent to that of a Cabinet Minister. He did that intricate job till differences with the State Govt. forced him to resign.

Shri Patil has written profusely in English, Marathi and Hindi on various matters like economic issues, land reforms, village development and national development. Though Shri Patil is now in his 90th year and was affected by a paralytic attack which occurred about two years ago and which has restricted his movements, he is still mentally alert and active. He is still a guide and source of inspiration to many Gandhian and constructive workers. He is still formally associated as a Trustee in some non-governmental organizations. He is the President of the Sarvodaya Ashram, Nagpur.

Shri Patil is one of the country's most selfless and patriotic leaders who has contributed significantly and in a spirit of total dedication to the elevation of the common, the flowering of the constructive movement and the improvement of the national economy as a whole. Humility, charity and utter selflessness have been the guiding force of his long and very useful life. He is probably one of the last surviving leaders who had worked with the giants of the freedom and constructive movements like the Mahatma Gandhi, Vinobaji and Jayaprakash Narayan. In spite of this work, he has totally and consistently declined awards and felicitations and thus represents the quintessence of the Gandhian tradition.

