

Dr. (Smt.) Chitra Naik

Recipient of Jamnalal Bajaj Award for Uplift and Welfare of Women and Children-2002

Born: 15th July, 1918

B.A. (Hans.), B.Ed., Ph.D., Post Doctoral Studies at Columbia University, New York

Ever since her academic days Dr. Chitra Naik has shown a commitment to the upliftment of women and children and also in Special Education Services required for delinquent and mentally handicapped children.

She joined the Rural Institute (Shri Mouni Vidyapeeth) in the backward Bhudangad Taluka of Kolhapur District in Maharashtra. In 90 villages, she set up rural women informal co-operatives, Mahila Mandals and Balwadis, a Rural Health Clinic and social educational camps in Harijan locations. After her retirement, she took over as Director of Indian Institute of Education which was established to interlink education with development through field-level action and research. During this period, she organised 263 non formal education centres conducted in 110 villages of the drought prone areas of Pune district. 3237 girls were benefited. Similarly, in 70 villages in Shirur and Haveli talukas of Pune district, she established centres for training for women in home nursing, first aid, child and maternal health, home remedies, nutrition, sanitation, clean drinking water and overcoming superstitious health practices. This project covered nearly 2000 women learners, 800 youths and 2000 children.

Dr. Naik has provided with the use of science and technology employment opportunities to a large number of household women in making fuel briquettes, tree plantation, provision of soak-pits, nutrition, nursing, analysis and treatment of mental ailments of women like depression, possession by spirits, hysteria and so on. These benefited about 600 women.

Among the other important achievements of Dr. Chitra Naik are:

- i) Completion of study-project on "Mobilising Gram Panchayats for Rural Development" involving 119 villages.
- ii) Establishment of a centre for training of social workers and rural women animators.
- iii) Bringing together nearly 40 eminent scientists with a view to taking up field projects for rural women in agriculture, horticulture, medicinal plants, watershed development, soil conservation, health and hygiene for all.
- iv) A project for education among rural children in 137 villages under the PROPEL (Promoting Primary and Elementary Education) which combines literacy, primary education, child education, women's economic and social development and training of Panchayats. 1800 children in the 3-6 age groups, over 5000 women learners, about 1500 Panchayat members, 900 village education committee members, 500 village youths were involved.
- v) Development of a Rural Bal Bhavan, which has been so successful that the parents of children who attend Bal Bhavan have constituted a group from among themselves to develop Bal Bhavan activities through local contribution.
- vi) Establishment of women education camps for population control in which 4000 women have been trained.

Because of her far reaching and dynamic activities in the sphere of development of women and children, Dr. Chitra Naik was asked by the Prime Minister to join the Planning Commission as Member in charge of education, culture, backward classes, women and child development. She was responsible for including women's comprehensive component in all social sector and Rural Development schemes incorporated in the Ninth Five Year Plan. This is the first time when the National Plan included such a component.

Dr. Naik has also written 44 books and stories for neo-literates/women, and story books for rural children. Some of these have been published by the National Book Trust in several Indian languages. Her research papers on child literacy have been reproduced by German Magazines on child education.

Dr. Chitra Naik has been the recipient of several awards and prizes. The most significant of them are:

1. Padmashri by the Government of India in 1986
2. First Raja Roy Singh Award for outstanding educational work in Asian Region for the education of rural girls, UNESCO
3. Tagore Award for literacy
4. Rajiv Gandhi Award for social service.

