

Radhakrishna: Man of Action

K.S.Radhakrishna was a Gandhianman of action who was born on 12thOctober 1924 in Chitradurga, a small town in the Bellary district of the Mysore State. In the Gandhian movement after 1948, under the aegis of AcharyaVinobaBhave and Jayaprakash Narayan,he was one of the major torch bearers, through his work in basic education, Sarvodaya, Bhoodan, Gramdan, Gramswarajya, land reforms, global and local peace missions. He was instrumental in promoting youth leadership and laying the groundwork for hundreds of organizations which are continuing his legacy, inspired by the same values.

At the age of 12, Radhakrishna was inspired to work for Mahatma Gandhi by his maternal uncle, Siddhvanhalli Krishna Sarma, a staunch Gandhian disciple. After completing his Masters in 1947, he joined Gandhiji's Ashram in Sevagram where he was appointed the first principal of NaiTalim, a post he held until 1949. In the aftermath of partition, in 1949, Radhakrishnaji was sent to Rajpura, in Punjab,deputed by the Government of India, as the Education Officer in charge of therehabilitation and education of refugees, under the guidance of RajkumariAmritKaur, the cabinet health minister, &Asha Devi Aryanayakam, a leading educationist of the time.

In 1952, he returned to Sevagram, to lead the Hindustani TalimiSangh. In 1962,as secretary of SarvaSevaSangh, he gave sustenance to movements like Bhoodan, Gramdan and Gramswarajya, on a pan-Indian level. In 1969, Radhakrishna was appointed Secretary of the Gandhi Peace Foundation: for 21 years, under his leadership, the GPF became a premier institution for disseminating Gandhian thought and practice,globally. This coincided with his 16 years' chairmanship of the Gandhi Peace Center, under whose auspices young Gandhiansengaged in rural work throughout the country. All the while, he was closely associated with the Gandhi SmarakNidhi, the Institute of Gandhian Studies, Gandhi DarshanSamiti and AVARD, to name some of the most prominent Gandhian institutions.

In 1971, he was involved in arousing national and international public opinion in favour of the Bangladesh people's liberation movement, setting up refugee camps and relief working groups, and organizing the International Conference on Bangladesh, presided over by Jayaprakash Narayan.

Radhakrishnainitiated a vast number of peace and communal harmony missions (for instance in Kashmir, Nagaland, Assam, Bhagalpur, Chambal, during the Emergency, Punjab [post-Operation Blue Star], and during theCommunal riots in Delhi). Alongside these initiatives, he established the Gandhi World Fellowship (in close association with like-minded organizations, worldwide). He was founder member and Director of the World Conference of Religion, Peace and Reconciliation, and intimately involved with several other nonviolent action groups in the UK,USA and Germany.

Unfortunately, Radhakrishna passed away much too early, in 1994, in Delhi. But even after 24 years, his legacy is still vibrant in hundredsof Gandhian organizations, inspiring thousands of committed Gandhians.