

Rajesh Tandon

Rajesh Tandon was born on 14th February 1951 in a middle class family in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India. An extremely affable person, he occasionally refers to himself as 'Kanpuria', perhaps in a lighter mood, repeatedly indicating his Kanpur origin. A postmodern semiotic would link this linguistic sign to his being nostalgic about his roots, a possible longing to return to his pastures. Incidentally, he also passionately advocates urban centers to be considered as permanent dwellings & not mere transit places for migrants in search of job & '*relevance*'.

This *Search for relevance* took him to uncharted territories. After completing Electronic Engineering from IIT, Kanpur, Dr Tandon obtained a Gold Medal at IIM Calcutta.

During his IIT days, when he was the General Secretary of Student's Union, he opposed the then US ambassador as a protest against 1971 Indo Pak war. An unheard event in IIT history as United States was and till date is considered to be the most favoured destination of IITians.

He later pursued his PhD at Cleveland in Organisational Science, a marked departure from Physical Science subjects. Commenting on transition from science background to non profit sector, he points at hereditary & circumstantial factors shaping one's destiny.

During his PhD work in USA, Indira Gandhi declared emergency, in India. Cutting short his programme, he returned to India & moved between various jobs, cities & towns before establishing PRIA at Delhi.

Rajesh Bhai, as communities and their associations fondly call him, always inspires confidence in poor and excluded communities guiding and giving strength to global voices of Civil Society. As one of pioneers of Participatory Research, he has given new meaning to academic research by redefining relationship between researcher and researched subjects. A firm believer in innate capacities of individuals and democratic institutions, he has founded and nurtured many institutions, including PRIA (Society for Participatory Research in Asia).

Emphasising, "Knowledge is Power" he has built a huge network of relationships, associations and institutions enabling capacity building and strengthening initiatives. Under his leadership PRIA and thousands of Civil Society Organisations across India and also abroad have redefined relationships between haves and have-nots. Dr Tandon spearheaded campaigns for Participation Policies of Governments and Multilaterals. He was one of the first to call for convergence of participation of marginalized with respect to Power. At PRIA, his initiatives have enabled the marginalised to assert their role in Governance and demand their rights. He has brought forth the importance of each citizen's role in governance.

His contribution over the years has transcended from issue to issue including safe workplace, right to know, control over natural resources, gender mainstreaming, citizen leadership, accountable local self governance, global solidarity and responsive Civil Society in India, South Asia and beyond. Building alliance and partnerships among diverse sectors in societal development is another current area of his work.

Over the last twenty five years, he has engaged in major research, training and educational work over a wide range of themes to strengthen the capacities and institutional mechanisms of voluntary development organisations in India and other developing countries. Specialisation with regard to capacity building is in the following themes –

- ❖ Development Management
- ❖ Training of Trainers in Participatory Monitoring
- ❖ Networking, Coalition and Alliance building
- ❖ Participation and Governance

His active involvement with Civil Society organisations and Voluntary Development organizations has been as;

- **Chair**, External Advisory Committee, Office of Community Based Research (OCBR), University of Victoria, Canada, (2006 till date)
- **Member**, Civil Society Advisory Committee (CSAC), The Commonwealth Foundation, UK, (2004 till date)
- **Chairperson**, Voluntary Action Network India (VANI), (2003 till date)
- **Chairperson**, Board of Directors, Charities Aid Foundation – India, (1998 – 2004)
- **Governing Board/Executive Council Member /Chairperson** for India based organisations – Gram Vikas, Orissa; SPARC, Maharashtra; UNNATI, Gujrat; Sahbhagi Shikshan Kendra, Uttar Pradesh; CENCORED, Bihar; Lok Jagriti Kendra, Jharkhand and Samarthan, Madhya Pradesh. (till date)
- **Chairperson**, International Forum on Capacity Building of Southern NGOs, (1998 –2002)
- **President**, Asian-South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE), New Delhi, (1991 – 2000)
- **Associate**, Synergos Institute, U.S.A. (1987 –1992)
- **Convener**, Task Force, Civil Society in the New Millennium Project and The Commonwealth Foundation, (1997 - 1999)
- **Chairperson** of Montreal International Forum (FIM), Montreal, Canada, (till date)

He has served on numerous Government task forces and committees including committee constituted by Ministry of Rural Development to establish the empowered status of Panchayats; the Secretariat to the Committee on Decentralisation and Democracy and the National Committee to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC). He was the Member of the Advisory Group on Rural Development, Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Contemporary Studies - Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (2002) and Programme Director, Citizens and Governance Programme of The Commonwealth Foundation (2000 – 03).

He is the founder member and been the Chairperson of **CIVICUS** (World Alliance for Citizen Participation) 1997 –1999, ASTHA, Udaipur, Rajasthan; **Shramik Bharati**, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh; **Centre for Workers Management**, New Delhi.

Through his research, practice and writings, he has contributed to the evolution of new thinking and methodologies in promoting people-centred development. His studies, writings and training programmes have helped to advance the concept of strengthening Civil Society and Reforming Governing Institutions ensuring citizen participation world-

wide. He has written a number of articles, books and manuals on Participatory Research, Participatory Training, NGO -Government relations, NGO Management, the Role of Civil Society and Voluntary Development Organizations in development. His published writings for Civil Society are;

Citizen Participation and Democratic Governance: In Our Hands, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2007 (co-editor).

Participatory Citizenship, Identity, Exclusion, Inclusion, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2006 (co-editor).

Does Civil Society Matter? Governance in Contemporary India, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2003 (co-editor).

Reviving Democracy, Citizens at the Heart of Governance, (co-author), Earthscan, London, 2002.

Voluntary Action, Civil Society and the State, Mosaic Books, New Delhi, 2002.

Civil Society and Governance, Coauthor, Sanskriti, New Delhi, 2002.

Strengthening Civil Society - Contributions of Support Organisations in South Asia, Society for Participatory Research in Asia, 1995.

Citizens - Strengthening Global Civil Society : World Assembly Edition., World Alliance for Citizen Participation, CIVICUS, (Co- Author), 1994.

Voluntary Organisations Yesterday and Today, Society for Participatory Research in Asia, (Co-author), 1993.

Voluntary Development Organisations in India: A Study of History, Roles and Future Challenges, Society for Participatory Research in Asia, (Co-author), 1991.

Work and Empowerment: Management of Women's Economic Activities - A Manual for Activists, Society for Participatory Research in Asia, (Co-author), 1991.

Manual on Financial Management and Accounts Keeping, Society for Participatory Research in Asia, (Co-author), 1990.

Strengthening the Grass-Roots - Nature and Role of Support Organisations, Society for Participatory Research in Asia, (Co-author), 1990.

NGO Government Relations - A Source of Life or A Kiss of Death? Society for Participatory Research in Asia, (Co-author), 1989.

Management of Voluntary Organisations, Society for Participatory Research in Asia, (Co-author), 1988.

Forms of Organisation Square Pegs in Round Holes, Society for Participatory Research in Asia, (Co-author), 1987.

Articles on varied themes such as – Participatory Research and Networking, NGO Development, Managing NGO Finance, Organisational Development, Education, Peoples Participation, Civil society, Partnership, Advocacy, Human Rights, World/Social Summit and Primary Health have been written over twenty five years. Most of them are published in Journals nationally and internationally. To name few - *Seminar, Journal of Applied Behavioral Science; Social Action, Indian Journal of Training and Development; Management and Economic Quarterly; Indian Journal of Industrial relations; Journal of Applied psychology; Economic and Political Weekly; National Labour Bulletin and Journal of Society for International Developments.*