

संस्थापक : नाना देशमुख
अध्यक्ष : वीरेन्द्रजीत सिंह

दीनदयाल
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७-ई, स्वामी रामतीर्थ नगर, रानी झांसी रोड, नई दिल्ली-११००५५
दूरभाष : २३५२६७३५, २३५२६७६२, २३५२४५५५. फ़ैक्स : २३५५२८१२

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labouring day and night. Working collectively towards the common good without any arrogance or selfishness comes naturally to them.

Unfortunately our Communist, caste-ist, Congress-minded and wealth-hungry leaders have neglected the constructive and creative potential of our village-dwellers. Rather than harness our own immense resources and potential, they are looking for foreign investment to fuel the nation's progress. They have pushed our rural folk, who could have been the foundation of our prosperity, into an abyss of poverty. They see self-sufficiency in food grains as an achievement on their part. This is self-deception.

Our overflowing storehouses of food owe 90 per cent of their stocks to Punjab, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. What have our leaders done to revolutionise agricultural production in the rest of the country?

Eighty per cent of the country's agriculturists are subsistence farmers. They are constantly burdened by debt. Planning Commission statistics show that 8 crore Indians do not get even two square meals a day. So many of our brothers and sisters go to bed hungry every night but it near-impossible to find a politician who is moved by their heart-wrenching plight.

Living in the glitter of metropolitan cities, our politicians, writers, editors and intellectuals do not even attempt to understand the difficulties faced by three-quarters of our countrymen who live in rural areas. The British wiped out our village-based industries. Thereafter, all those employed in cottage industries have perforce become dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. Fragmentation of holdings is a continuing process, with individual land holdings becoming increasingly uneconomic. This process continues unchecked. Our country's agriculture is not able to sustain the burden of such a large population. Unfortunately, no one has given a thought to solving this problem. So, I am placing this dilemma which looks us in the face before you.

Apart from the area under cultivation, the country has some 22 crore 36 lakh acres of wasteland. The forest department also controls several lakh acres of unutilized land. Village dwellers are not permitted to use this land to augment their income. We urgently need to make these wastelands and forest lands available to our rural brethren. Simultaneously, the government should draw