



Asha for Education™

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Asha for Education co-founder, Sandeep Pandey, wins prestigious 2002 Ramon Magsaysay Award

Activist Sandeep Pandey has bagged this year's Ramon Magsaysay award in the 'Emergent Leadership Category' for helping found 'Asha' (Hope), a non- governmental organization (NGO) which supports education and livelihood projects for poor children, particularly Dalits (low caste Hindus).

The Ramon Magsaysay Award, the Asian equivalent of the Nobel Prize, is given yearly to individuals or organizations in Asia who manifest selfless service. According to Foundation President Carmencita T. Abella, "this year's six Magsaysay awardees, much like their peers before them, personify selfless leadership that is making a lasting difference towards making Asia a better place to live in. In these times of great division, inequity, and seeming hopelessness, these remarkable women and men are working quietly and persistently to address long-standing, painful social issues. Their accomplishments, done without fear or fanfare, bring to the world inspiring news of healing, justice, generosity, reconciliation, and hope."

The award recognizes his work at Asha ashram in Ballia, Kanpur instilled with the philosophy of self reliance and values for a just human society. The citation further points out that "the ashram community conspicuously violates upper-caste taboos against *dalits* and publicizes anti-*dalit* crimes and abuses such as bribe taking by local officials." Denouncing "politics of revenge" he supports reconciliation between India and Pakistan. "The voice of peace has to be louder," he says. In electing Sandeep Pandey to receive the 2002 Ramon Magsaysay Award for Emergent Leadership, the board of trustees recognizes his example of empowerment through education and his commitment to the transformation of India's marginalized poor.

True to his nature, Sandeep attributes the award to "the collective work of all involved in peace initiatives." Part of the cash prize, he said, will go to victims of communal riots in Gujarat and the rest in a corpus fund for continued work in community empowerment. While recognizing the collective efforts of many, Sandeep exhorts people to volunteer and commit to empowerment through education for a just human society.

About Asha for Education

Asha for Education is a federally tax-exempt organization per the IRS code Section 501 C(3). All contributions to it are tax-deductible to the full extent permitted by law. The organization is dedicated to socio-economic change in India through improving the quality of education for the underprivileged children. Asha is a zero-overhead group and 100% of all donations are sent to the projects.

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