

A short note on Subhas Datta, environmental and social activist

Subhas Datta is basically a Protestant, not by religion but by practice. His social and environmental activism commenced in the year 1977. Initially he started his activities in the city of Howrah and now espousing all the major environmental and other causes of the whole state of West Bengal. Even some issues concerning the North eastern States are also being attended by him.

On the basis of his massive Writ Petition filed in the Supreme Court of India the country's first Environment Bench, popularly known as the Green Bench, has been designated in the High Court at Calcutta in the year 1996. Mr. Datta appears before the Supreme Court and High Court at Calcutta in-person and other than being a lawyer he has moved the highest number of Public Interest Litigations and Environmental matters in the country. There are 68 issues on which he has pleaded for relief before the temples of justice. He is the only privileged person who first gets the information and collects the documents on public issues of importance, takes the photographs of the matters, drafts the petition, files the same before the High Court/Supreme Court and although not a lawyer by profession submits before the court on those matters in-person.

A German scholar has extensively covered Mr. Datta's activities in his PhD thesis paper on which Oxford University Press has published a book in 2001 titled as "taking the State to Court." There are more than 10,000 newspaper clippings covering different issues handled by him. Electronic media often telecast the issues raised by Mr. Datta.

On the basis of his petition before the Green Bench of the High Court at Calcutta The West Bengal Trees Protection and Conservation in non-forest Areas Act 2006 has been enacted.

The present issues on which Mr. Datta is on the legs before the Apex Court and Calcutta High Court are as follows:-

- a) Air pollution arising out of auto emission in Calcutta;
- b) West Bengal chapter of Ganges pollution;
- c) Water contamination in W.B.;
- d) Mismanagement of Calcutta's traffic system;

- e) Failure of drainage and sewage system of Calcutta city;
- f) Carrying night-soil on human heads;
- g) Victoria Memorial Hall conservations and management;
- h) Disorders in Botanical Garden at Howrah;
- i) Theft of Noble Prize Medal and conservation of objects in the Museums;
- j) Pollution being caused by unchecked movement of Lorries during night hours etc.
- k) Failure of drainage and sewerage system in Howrah city.
- l) Shifting of Esplanade Bus Terminus from Calcutta Maidan.
- m) Use of eco-friendly Bio-Diesel for automobiles.
- n) Use of Renewable Energy in place of conventional power to address Global Warming.
- o) Rallies and Public Meetings held on the roads of Calcutta city.
- p) Unreasonable price hike of coal by Coal India Ltd.

Mr. Datta has been designated as the top Hero of India in 2007 by the “Times of India”. His activities have been covered in “India Today”, Special Issue on “Sprit of India 50-- Pioneers of Change”. He has been awarded Honour by “Hindusthan Times” as one of the 25 “Change Makers” of the country in April 2012. He has taken part in the Thames River Cleaning Operations organized by Thames 21 in London. He had been invited by the European Green Party Leaders in October 2009.

Through his hands the plights of the people are placed before the temples of justice and in the process he has been trying to attend the needs/sufferings/misereries of at least 40 millions people of West Bengal. A non-lawyer has not been heard by any Court of the country for such number of matters. He was born in a very poor family and had been deprived of the basic needs of life in his childhood and now a Chartered Accountant by profession.