

Madanjeet Singh - SAF Founder

UNESCO GOODWILL AMBASSADOR

Born in Lahore: 16th April 1924. Academic Qualifications: Government College, Lahore: B.Sc. (Honours School in Chemistry), M.Sc. (Technical Chemistry) — Italian Institute for Middle and Far East, Rome, Italy: Diploma in Buddhist Art and Culture. — Rome University: Diploma in European history of Arts.

Joined the Indian Foreign Service (1953 - 1982), and served as diplomat in Italy, Yugoslavia, Greece, Laos, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, USSR, Consul General in South Vietnam, and as Ambassador in Colombia, High Commissioner in Uganda, Ambassador in Rwanda, Ambassador in Burundi, Ambassador in Finland.

Appointed to the United Nations Educational and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Paris, as Director in the Cultural Sector (1982 to 1985) — in charge of Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind; History of Africa; History of the Caribbean; History of the Civilization of Central Asia; History of Celtic group of languages; and The World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theater. Supervised the Cultural Sector publications, books and periodicals. Prepared reports on the 1982 World Conference on Cultural Policies, Mexico City; the Terminal Report on Amarbayasgalan Monastery in Mangolia; and the restoration and preservation of ancient manuscripts in the Museum of Ulan Bator. Represented UNESCO at a number of international conferences on education and culture.

Author of several books and monographs: Indian Sculpture in Bronze and Stone (1951), Etruscan Cave Painting (1953), India, Painting from Ajanta Caves (1954), Indian Miniatures (1963), Ajanta, Paintings of the Sacred and the Secular (1964), Himalayan Art (1968), The White Horse (1976), Madanjeet, The Early Sixties (1986), This My People (1989), The Sun in Myth and Art (1993), Renewable Energy of the Sun (1996), The Timeless Energy of the Sun (1998), The Sasia Story (2005), The Oral and Intangible Heritage of South Asia (2007).

A painter and a photographer of international repute, his paintings were exhibited at the 1953 Biennale in Venice, Italy, and purchased by the Museum of Modern Art, Stockholm, Sweden, and by private collectors. He also produced an award-winning documentary in Rome on the Buddhist paintings in Ajanta caves, and recently a DVD on The Oral and Intangible Heritage of South Asia.

Imprisoned in 1942 during Mahatma Gandhi's Quit India movement. He declined to accept a Padma award offered by Government of India in 2006, as he believes that there is no higher award than a Tamra Patra which he received as a Freedom Fighter on 12th August 1972.

In recognition of his lifelong devotion to the cause of communal harmony and peace, the biennial "UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Violence" was unanimously created by the 52-member UNESCO Executive Board at their meetings in Paris and Fez (16th May to 4th June 1995), marking the 125th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. In 2000, he was designated as a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador on the United Nations' International Day of Tolerance.

In 1995, Madanjeet Singh founded Sumitra Foundation (SF) for family planning and protection of the environment in India and South Asia Foundation (SAF) in 2000, to promote regional cooperation among the eight SAARC countries — Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka.