

Project to provide mechanisation support to 2000 villages in their 'Drought-free movement through *Shramadaan*'

Resp Editor,

Bharatiya Jain Sanghatana (BJS) has been active all over India for its work in Disaster Response over the last 32 years. In 2013, BJS had worked in the Beed district for de-silting 117 lakes, clearing 20 lakh cubic meter of fertile silt for use on 5000 acres of farm land. In 2015-16, BJS accomplished similar work in Beed, Latur and Osmanabad districts. For last two years, 550 children of farmers who committed suicide in Maharashtra have been rehabilitated by BJS in Pune. However, the drought situation in Maharashtra has continued to worsen since the last 5 years.

Paani Foundation has initiated the 'Water Cup' contest in Maharashtra since last year. The contest lays special focus on promoting self-sustainability through collective action and *shramadaan*. Under this, the participating villagers need to unite for the cause, nominate 5 villagers for undergoing training on watershed management and co-create a water shed management plan for the village, aiming towards achieving self-sustainability through *shramadaan*. BJS considers this work to be the biggest of its kind since Independence that befits Mahatma Gandhi's concept of self-reliance. Last year, the Water Cup was executed in all the villages of 3 tehsils in Maharashtra. This year, this competition has been declared in 30 tehsils across 13 districts of Maharashtra with over 2000 villages participating. Such a phenomenal number of villages participating simultaneously to achieve water sustainability is a precursor to a revolutionary change in Maharashtra.

BJS lauds the spirit of these self-motivated villagers to achieve their goal through *Shramadaan*. In spite of that, BJS, with its past experience, anticipates huge topographical challenges for the villagers to accomplish their goal. Rocky and difficult terrain is expected to greatly hinder the timely execution of this Herculean task.

Hence, BJS founder Shri Shantilal Muttha has taken a policy decision in the state level volunteers' meeting to take up a "**Project to provide mechanisation support to 2000 villages in their 'Drought-free movement through *Shramadaan*'**". The National President of BJS Shri Prafulla Parakh will steer this project with the help of district committees and 50 taluka supervisors and complete the proposed work with 400 Poclains or 1200 JCBs within a span of one month.

Executing a project planned on such a massive scale across 2000 villages simultaneously, within a short span of two months and making it a success is hugely challenging. Going by the past experience of BJS over 32 years, we are fully confident that we will be able to accomplish this on the strength of the cooperation and blessings showered upon us by the people of Maharashtra.

- Shantilal Muttha

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