

Shri Prabhakar Shankar Thakur

Recipient of Jamnalal Bajaj Award for Application of Science and Technology for Rural Development-2004

Born: 24th May, 1921

B.Sc.(Agri.), Nagpur University

Certificate in sheep breeding and Wool Research - Hissar

Shri Prabhakar Shankar Thakur is an agriculture science graduate who received field training in USA in extension methods and agriculture economics. Shri Thakur held several positions in the Agriculture Departments of the Governments of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra before he took voluntary retirement in 1974. For the better part of the past decade, Shri Thakur has been busy implementing projects which will have a far reaching effect on sustainable productivity of land and improving the quality of life of the small farmers. With the completion of the Indo German Watershed Project in village Chikhali of Khanapur Taluka of Sangli District, the wells which used to run dry continued to have water in the summers in spite of scanty rainfall. A new project on the seasonal river Nandini would help Chikhali as well as the adjoining villages, store water throughout the year.

Shri Thakur spent 3 years in the establishment of a large scale Vermi Compost Depot. This depot, which is the only one of its kind in Southern Maharashtra, produces 60 to 80 tons of vermi compost every year using the sweepings of the sugar factory site during the crushing season. This has also resulted in production of earth worms for supply to the farmers at concession.

Shri Thakur has established 300 Women's Self Help Groups in 65 villages in two districts. NABARD has sanctioned a grant to the Ekatma Samaj Kendra, Miraj for setting up more Self Help Groups.

Shri Thakur has also helped the farmers facing the problem of salination of their lands. Project Desalination was started by Shri Thakur in 1995. Under this project, reclamation of over 2000 acres of saline soil which has been lying waste and infested with wild growth for 25 years is the target.

Shri Thakur worked with several NGOs and implemented as well as monitored 17 projects in rural development, particularly, irrigation, horticulture, social forestry, joint farming, dairy, drinking water and anti-poverty programmes.

Through the Nave Gaon Andolan Movement, he has established contacts with 183 villages in Sangli, Satara and Kolhapur Districts for the propagation of the Prayog Pariwar Methodology for disseminating knowledge of Science and Technology for the de-mystification of science and the deprofessionalisation of education.

Shri Thakur is now 83 years old and has completed 62 years of unbroken service to the farming community, rural development and environment conservation. He received the Krishi Bhushan State Level Award and the Agriculture Department Centenary Gold Medal in 1989. This year, Shri Thakur received the "Krishi Bhushan Vasant Rao Arve Award" for "Outstanding Research Worker on Grapes".