



Ayyappa Masagi

Recipient of Jamnalal Bajaj Award for Application of Science and Technology for Rural Development - 2009

Born: 1st June, 1957

Academics : Diploma in Mechanical Engineering

Shri Ayyappa Masagi worked for L&T Company as a Mechanical Engineer for 24 years.

In the year 1994, he conducted the first experiment on water conservation mainly to save his own farm in his native village Veerapura, Gadag District, Karnataka. Spreading awareness of this technology gave rise to the water literacy movement in 1998. With the co-operation of people, a 50 acre lake was constructed, recharging 29 tube-wells in a remote village Nullure, Gadag District. Kuntanahalli in Doddaballapura Taluq of Bangalore witnessed a landmark success in tube-well recharging. Shri Masagi's group conducted 850 programs in water literacy training nearly 27 lakh people. They enabled Rs.37 crore to be spent on water conservation. Till now, nearly 70,000 dried – up borewells have been revived making resulting in self-sustenance of over 1000 villages.

In 2002, he left his formal job and took up water literacy work literally. Shri Masagi invented several sub-soil water conservation catalysts in drought prone areas such as non irrigational sub-surface rain pits, Stream Water Harvesting, sub-surface checks and underground lakes, to check and divert the flow of gradient water within the sand bed of streams for enhancing the ground water level and soil moisture and biological activities in the vicinity of these checks. These innovative checks act as catalysts to speed up the rate of percolation in the desired direction to suit the farmers' needs, and brings down the total evaporation losses to zero level.

The specially designed non irrigational sub-surface rain pits, refilled with sand and top soil to contain every drop of rain water in the farmlands ensure every farmer with a guaranteed crop even in scanty rainfall during a drought, by extending soil moisture and enhancing the biological activities within the soil.

Thanks to the heavy rainfall that lashed Karnataka from 21st March 2008, open wells and tube wells, which were discarded twenty years ago after they went dry, have been recharged in the areas of intervention by Shri Masagi with his innovative techniques.

Shri Masagi developed several innovative, cost effective, easily replicable, sub-surface water conservation structures for holding moisture for long periods for ensuring a guaranteed crop even in scanty rains in the traditionally drought prone areas of North Karnataka.

After conclusion of the forthcoming monsoon, not only the said tube well would produce a good yield but also all the bore wells within the vicinity of 1 km. radius would also be recharged automatically and produce good yield of water for sustainable agriculture.

By this system, Shri Masagi and his team have recharged more than 1000 tube wells with their direct intervention. It is estimated that more than 70,000 tube wells have been recharged indirectly. The system has become so popular that tens of thousands of farmers have already replicated the process and their performance is excellent.

Shri Masagi is now trying to reach out to the corporate world in a bid to implement and integrate water management systems for large companies like Jindal Steels, Kennemetal Widia, Ajax, SKF Bearings, Welcast, ACE Designers, etc. These companies were spending Rs.1.5 lakh on purchasing water. They were convinced to spend Rs.18 lakh and go in for a permanent solution. They are now water self-sufficient.

The water literacy campaign has reached 1.5 million people with 1000 programmes across 8 States in India; Rs.380 million have been spent on ground water recharging

Since the money spent on these programs give a guaranteed return within a year, progressive farmers, industries, Government bodies, NGOs, all are coming forward to implement these programs so as to get their bore-wells revived.

Impressed by these initiatives, Deshpande Foundation - an International Organisation- extended support to take Shri Masagi's innovations to the doorsteps of the farmers by creating demonstrative models at Hubli in its ' Sand Box' project area which is spread across Dharwad, Gadag, Haveri, Uttar Kannada and Belgaum districts in northern part of Karnataka. This is an ongoing project bringing a tremendous positive change in the lives of poor farmers.

Shri Masagi received the Ashoka Fellowship from the Ashoka Foundation in 2004 for his creativity, deep commitment and sustained community development through water conservation and water literacy. Ashoka innovators take pride in Shri Masagi who has joined this select community of social entrepreneurs by his innovation in water conservation techniques to address a grave crisis which is affecting 37 million people.

Shri Ayyappa Masagi is known as Doctor of Dry Borewell, whose mission is to strike a balance between water usage and water replenishment through transforming communities into 'water warriors', bringing basic knowledge of water conservation practices that inspire and inculcate a culture of water efficiency.

Awards and Honours

'Jalasaakshratha Harikaara', 'Jala Jagadhguru', 'Shrushti Samman', a National Award as the “Father of Barren Borewells”, the Ratan Tata Trust Award for 'Indian Leaders of Tomorrow' in Water Resource Management, the 'Jayaprakash Narayan State Award', the 'Samaj Ratna Award,' Karnataka's 'Best Social Service Award' conferred by Zee TV, 'Basava Prashasti' among others.

Contact Details

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