

## RISING FROM THE DARKNESS LIKE A PHOENIX – A STORY OF A YOUNG FARMER



*Shri. Rajendra Kisan Khalase is a young Marginal Farmer from village Karhol in Aurangabad District. His annual income was around Rs. 35,000/-, which was hardly enough to manage his family expenses as well as education of the children. There was a severe drought in the entire region from 2011 to 2015. In the year 2015, all the wells in the village had dried and people had to go more than two km. to fetch drinking water. Economic condition of most people in the village had become precarious because of crop failures in the four consecutive years of drought.*

*Rajendra decided to join in one of the local Industries. He was offered a salary of Rs. 6,000/- per month. Half of his salary had to be spent on travelling and it was getting difficult for him to manage expenses of his family. He suffered from backache due to daily commute. He had to borrow money from his friends and relatives for his treatment. He was not able to repay money borrowed because of low income.*

*In March 2016, AFARM with the financial assistance of Bajaj Auto Ltd., undertook the work of 'Nala' deepening in the submergence of Cement Check Dam. AFARM had involved a local organisation - Society For Education in Values and Action (SEVA) for the work. The farm of Rajendra is located along the 'Nala' deepening work. In June 2016 with first rains, check dam was filled with rain water. All dug wells and tube well in the influence area of check dam were recharged with water including well in the farm of Rajendra. The village which was dependent on the tanker for the last 4-5 years became tanker-free in the first rains of 2016.*

*In the Kharif season, Rajendra cultivated improved fodder on his farm. The production of fodder was good. He approached Mahanand Milk Federation for a loan to purchase a cow, which he was sanctioned. His cow was giving him 20 liters of milk per day. He started earning Rs. 500/- per day from the sale of milk and he could repay money which he had borrowed earlier for his treatment. From the sale of milk, he was also able to repay the loan of Milk Federation. The federation again sanctioned him a loan to purchase another cow. Now he has two cows from which he earns Rs. 1,000/- per day from the sale of milk.*

*In the last Kharif season, Rajendra has cultivated irrigated cotton on 2 hectre of land and could get 30 quintals of cotton. He was able to earn Rs. 1.20 lakhs from the sale of cotton. Now he has enrolled his children in the English medium school and started the construction of house.*

*Rajendra says, "AFARM-Bajaj Foundation partnership is instrumental in transforming my life. During the summer season, the well in my farm has 20 feet water level. Now, drinking water issue in my village is completely resolved. Earlier people from my village were migrating in search of work. Now people have stopped migrating and are engaged on their farms." He further added with the sense of satisfaction on his face that now every day around 2500 liters of milk is being sold to Mahanand Dairy from his village. He concluded by stating that he has a dream of developing an orchard on his farm, which seems now possible due to water availability. He expressed his deep gratitude to AFARM-Bajaj Foundation partnership for the turnaround in his personal life as well as for resolving the water crisis in his village.*