

Dealing with **Disasters** the **BJS** way

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Prologue

Disasters can either be natural or man-made, but all of them adversely affect human life, property or normal activity. They can cause serious disruption of the functions of a society, causing widespread losses to human life, material or environment.

Though warning systems for natural disasters have improved tremendously and natural calamities do not come unannounced, victims are unable to cope up with their own resources. They badly need external help. Initially, to be rescued from the site and finally, to be able to return to normal life. The latter is more important and comparatively difficult.

Basic needs of the disaster victims like shelter, clothing and food can be met through material aid and service provided on a humanitarian ground. Necessary medical aid can also be made available to save human lives. However, relief supplies and services can be provided only in the period immediately after a sudden disaster. Non-governmental organisations, governments, business houses and generous individuals rush to disaster site to provide as much assistance as possible. But what happens after the primary rescue and relief is a story that nobody knows.

Being a journalist, my profession gave me an opportunity to witness quite a few disasters that occurred

in Maharashtra and neighbouring states like Gujarat. The destruction caused by these disasters was highly disturbing and presented a picture as if these devastated areas will never be able to return to normalcy and come back to life. But they did, and life once again came back on tracks, leaving behind unforgettable memories of the dark, disastrous moments.

For many of the survivors and their kin, rehabilitation was not an easy process, and it certainly did not happen without external assistance. Majority of the victims of disasters like the devastating earthquakes which struck Latur and Osmanabad districts of Maharashtra in 1993, had lost almost everything in the calamity. With collapsed houses, dead family members and lost hopes, they had nothing to help them survive. They badly needed a helping hand that could take them far ahead in their journey of life.

While the unfortunate ones became victims of the disasters, some fortunate lives fell into the hand of organisations like the Bharatiya Jain Sanghatana (BJS). Founded to bring about positive changes in the society, the BJS contributed in a large way towards securing the future of the younger generation of disaster-victims who would have otherwise lost the battle of life.

And this was not limited to just one disaster. As a matter of fact, Latur earthquakes marked the beginning of many such humanitarian tasks undertaken by the BJS

during several such calamities that subsequently hit the nation. From Latur earthquake in 1993 to the Tsunamis in Andaman and Nicobar, the BJS has been at the forefront when it came to rescue, relief and rehabilitation of the victims. And fortunately, these operations were not limited to the initial rescue and relief, but went on to ensure proper rehabilitation of as many victims as possible.

More importantly, the BJS focused on something beyond, rescue, relief and rehabilitation. In most of the cases, steps have been taken to equip the local population with means and measure to face with courage a similar calamity, if it happens to strike again. And certainly, this was more important than anything else.

While the government and other NGOs were focusing on relief and rehabilitation of the victims in Latur and Osmanabad, the BJS focused on the future generation. Young students from the quake affected families were adopted for educational rehabilitation. For the adopted students, this was a new beginning in life. Their decision to accept the challenge and move out of their villages did not only change the direction of their life, it changed their destiny.

For BJS, too, this was a new beginning. It was the beginning of a new era in the field disaster management. Lessons learned during the Latur and Osmanabad earthquake proved to be useful in disasters that followed. In Gujarat, the BJS continued with its performance which provided

solace to thousands of families that had fallen victims to a massive earthquake. This time too, the idea of educational rehabilitation of the quake affected children was not ignored. However, considering the fact that relocation of the children would be difficult or rather impossible, the BJS thought of another novel idea. That of pre-fabricated structures which could be erected quickly in order to avoid delay in restarting academic activities which would otherwise have led to a large number of students dropping out of studies and eventually taking wrong steps in life. Equipped with the experience, requisite infrastructure, trained manpower and a strong network of volunteers, the Tsunami waves, which struck Tamil Nadu and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, posed a big challenge before the BJS. Without wasting any time, the BJS sprung in action and effectively conducted rescue and relief activities there. For the third consecutive disaster in succession, the BJS involved itself into educational rehabilitation of the quake affected children. Eleven schools were reconstructed with great difficulty on different islands in remotest of locations. The entire activity was so impressive that the Andaman & Nicobar administration requested BJS to undertake restoration of health and medical services which had completely collapsed as an impact of the killer waves. Taking up this challenge, BJS established 34 primary health centres and sub-centres to ensure that health services could return to normalcy in as short a period as

possible. Quick decision making and fast implementation resulted into an imaginable speed which could not be matched by anyone. In fact, some of the BJS projects were completed and ready for inauguration even when government projects were yet to be launched.

Another feather in the BJS camp was the educational rehabilitation project of students in Jammu & Kashmir. Futuristic thinking by the BJS once again resulted in faster and effective relief operations in this case. Temporary rehabilitation of the quake affected families was of utmost importance since the earthquake had struck at a time when the winter was just round-the-corner and survival of the homeless families would have been impossible if there did not have proper shelter. The pre-fabricated structures, used to erect school buildings in Gujarat came handy and helped provide the highly requisite kind of assistance in the valley.

While housing was taken care of in pre-fabricated structures erected by the BJS, educational rehabilitation of the students was still a question, and BJS by now, had a perfect solution for the problem. The BJS was now equipped with a state-of-the-art educational rehabilitation centre which was build, used and proven successful after having successfully rehabilitated disaster-affected children. Making major alterations in the previously implemented educational rehabilitation programme, the BJS also took teachers from J&K along with the students. This was done

in order to be able to continue with the on-going syllabus and academic activities, which the students were being made to leave half-the-way, due to the disaster.

Floods in Bihar, took the BJS to the fourth corner of the country's expanse thus making it a social organisation with a strong network spread all over the country. The success of all these rescue, relief and rehabilitation projects does not lie in their quick and effective implementation. But it lies in the fact that disaster affected children from one part of the country, felt for their counter parts in other similar situations and came forward to provide assistance.

Over the years, disasters have had a devastating impact on various parts of the country. Simultaneously, they have also resulted in emergence of a strong establishment with a nation-wide team of volunteers, equipped with proper training, infrastructure and resources to face any similar calamity in the future.

And all this, is a result of the vision and leadership of a young man, who came from a poor family residing in one of the small villages in Maharashtra. A dynamic youngster, who faced many difficulties in his childhood, but grew up with a mission to eradicate these difficulties from the lives of as many human beings as possible. The success story is here for all of us to read and emulate...

- *Shriram Shinde*

Natural disaster, unnatural destruction

The very first experience helped BJS build a strong foundation for similar calamities in the future. The organisation is now equipped with infrastructure, equipment and experience in handling such situations.. Disasters are most of the times so destructive that in their wake, everything has to be rebuilt. Earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, volcanoes and other disasters, natural and man-made, are milestones in the human story, serving both as endpoints and starting lines. For Bharatiya Jain Sanghatana, destruction followed by disasters turned out to be an opportunity to build a strong infrastructure, strategy and a team of trained personnel to face similar situations in the future and to create a new, better society rather than fashioning a duplicated copy of the old...

Disasters, either natural or man-made, have always had a devastating effect. Even with prediction and early alarms, people do not seem to have taken proper precautions to avoid the aftermath. Floods, earthquakes, cyclones and landslides come and go, but they leave behind ruined homes, businesses and shattered lives.

Destructive strikes of earthquakes, floods, droughts and other hazards are known to have caused unimaginable destruction in the country. However, the effects get aggravated due to climate change, unsuitable social and development policies besides environmental degradation.

As a consequence, the affected areas witness slower or completely blocked development thus keeping millions trapped in poverty.

Besides affecting human life and causing tremendous destruction, they have left a permanent impact on the minds of the victims. Frequent occurrences of natural calamities have proved that human civilisation can no longer live away from disasters. Consequently, the human population has become increasingly vulnerable to such incidences.

Considering the geo-climatic conditions of India, the country has witnessed a large number of recurring disasters of the last few decades. Losses to human life and property have hit the country through disasters like floods, earthquakes, droughts, cyclones and landslides, not to mention man-made disasters like accidental fire, riots and terror attacks. The country has sustained severe losses due to damage to property owned by individuals, community and the government. All this was in addition to human lives lost during each one of these.

Be it the earthquakes in Latur-Osmanabad districts of Maharashtra in 1993, the Akola floods in 1997, Gujarat earthquake in 2001 or the Andaman Tsunami in 2004, , BJS has always been at the forefront of the relief and rescue activities which have resulted in appreciation and respect from other agencies and survivors of the tragedy.

When it comes to natural disasters, Maharashtra witnessed a major destruction and loss of lives in September 1993, when an earthquake hit the Latur and Osmanabad districts. Measuring 6.4 on the Richter scale, the quake caused enormous loss of lives and damage to property. While a large number of local residents had to pay with their lives, thousands were left homeless and destitute.

Though donor response was quick, logistical difficulties made it impossible for the requisite assistance to reach the needy in time. Concerns about corruption and doubts whether the aid will reach those who need it, further delayed the rehabilitation of the quake affected. The earthquake in Latur and Osmanabad were one of those events so vast in scope as to be impossible to really comprehend from afar. While no place deserves this kind of devastation, Latur was perhaps the worst place for such a disaster. On hearing the news, many humanitarian agencies responded to this disaster for the relief and rescue operations.

Among the first to react and reach out to Latur was the Pune-based Bharatiya Jain Sanghatana (BJS). Equipped with dedicated volunteers, BJS reached the disaster site within few hours of the tragedy. Adopting nine villages from among the worst hit areas, BJS initiated rescue and relief operations after setting up camps at each one of them. Availability of requisite infrastructure like generator

sets, wireless communication equipment, proper supply of food, tents and utensils facilitated fast and disciplined relief activity.

Considering that provision of food was critically important, BJS started off with freshly prepared food for about 30,000 victims for more than about a month. In addition, relief material like blankets, warm clothing and lamps were also supplied along with medical assistance. Appreciation came from other volunteer and donor organisation in the form of a large amount of relief material. This was a result of the organisational skills and discipline displayed in the rescue and relief operations implemented by the BJS. Besides providing relief, BJS volunteers who worked in nearly adverse conditions, did not hesitate while helping the victims in cremating the bodies of their near and dear ones.

This was the first experience for the BJS and its volunteers towards providing rescue and relief to victims of an earthquake. Their first experience helped build a strong foundation for similar calamities in the future. The organisation was now equipped with infrastructure, equipment and experience in handling such situations. Committed to provide best of its services during disasters of such magnitude, the BJS fine tuned their response mechanism, thus being prepared for any such eventualities. It was then realised that the initial time required for basic relief operation to begin, has to be reduced to as low as

possible in order to reduce the trauma of the survivors. This called for being prepared for speedy and effective relief operations in case of any emergency. The BJS therefore took up the task of training volunteers to perform various roles and undertook responsibilities that would be required to be undertaken during disasters. The organisation also felt the need for well organised supply of relief material with effective co-ordination between organisations including the government, NGOs and the media. Proper planning and advance preparation of relief operations had to be done to achieve these goals.

Considering the lessons it has learned out of the experience it has had since its first rescue and relief operation, the overall approach of the BJS was completely different than that of other humanitarian organisations and agencies involved in similar activities. Being spread all over the country and having a strong network of volunteers in every corner of the country as well as the world, has proved to be the main strength of the BJS. Its strong network helps the BJS assemble and initiate a team of volunteers to reach the site of disasters within a few hours. Apart from being emotionally committed, the BJS team of volunteers is properly trained and well equipped to handle any kind of situation which it may have to. This makes the operations, smooth, disciplined and hence, effective.

The extremely sensitised task force of BJS does not only take efforts towards ensuring provision of requisite assistance in rescue and relief of the victims, it also ensures that the activity is done without harming the dignity of the affected individuals. With clearly defined roles and responsibilities, members of the relief operation team work in proper co-ordination with other teams ensuring communication which is clear and precise. The process of restoring normalcy in the disaster hit areas gets accelerated and provides complete assurance to the victims as the BJS team works at the disaster site. Innovative design of rescue and rehabilitation material which can be used repeatedly has helped BJS save on resources as the same material can be used during various disasters, thus saving on finance as well as time taken to procuring such material. Extensive knowledge and experience in providing rescue and relief during disasters, a ready stock of required equipment and a capability to mobilise resources for collection of all kinds of relief material, an strong network of volunteers and a well developed strategy has made BJS one of the strongest agency in the country. BJS is equipped enough to spring in action even before structural engineers access the extent of damage and examine buildings that are still left standing and determine whether they're safe for habitation. The BJS has managed to develop ways to build pre-fabricated housing and classrooms that can be tougher and more resistant to quakes. Besides being

reusable, these structures are easy to assemble, thus making the rehabilitation process faster and effective.

The feather was added to the camp of the BJS during the Jammu & Kashmir earthquake where an apex body like the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) approached the BJS before deciding the strategy and execution of the rescue and relief operations.

Ever since then, the relations between the BJS and the NDMA improved to an extent where both, the BJS and the NDMA continued to compliment each other while working during natural disasters that followed thereafter.

Latur-Osmanabad Earthquake 1993

From rehab to rebirth

For Latur and Osmanabad, every annual Ganesh festival evokes mixed emotions. The festival induces a feeling of celebration and reverence, but it is also a reminder of that deadly dawn of 1993 when devastation visited these districts of Maharashtra on the back of an earthquake which destroyed lives and left homes and infrastructure in ruin. However, this was followed by a ray of hope, a helping hand which brightened the future of over a thousand quake-affected children...

Bharatiya Jain Sanghatana's association with social issues began with the riots that followed the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in January 1993. Unlike previous riots, violence was dispersed and it spread to relatively newly urbanised areas. Arson, killings and the destruction of property occurred in distinctively different kinds of areas. Violence affected not only slums but also apartment blocks and chawls. What was common to all the areas was the systematic targeting of Muslims.

Taking a pro-active step, the BJS thought of conducting a peace march across the state from Pune to Nagpur. Leaders of religions like Hindu, Muslim and Jain, participated in the march along with prominent political leaders and social workers. All of them had come together to promote a single cause, that of peace and harmony.

On one side, all rescue camps witnessed a huge rush of earthquake-victims in Latur, on the other, victims belonging to well-to-do families were not willing to receive charity and refrained from accepting food or other kinds of relief. BJS volunteers had to make extra efforts to convince them to come forward and avail of the facility...

While this was just a beginning, a major challenge awaited the BJS in the form of a devastating earthquake that struck Latur and Osmanabad districts of Maharashtra at 3.56 am on September 30, 1993.

Measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale, the quake resulted in an extensive scale of devastation. Over 70 villages were affected and most of them were reduced to piles of stone and rubble. A large number of people lost

their lives while many were injured.

The calamity did not only send waves of shocks all over the country but also left the scientific community surprised because the Deccan region of India, where Latur and Osmanabad were located, was not considered prone to serious seismic activity. The houses and other infrastructure of the area were not constructed to withstand an earthquake of this magnitude. This led to extensive damage to houses and other property. The survivors were left to face an extremely uncertain future.

The statistical details about the impact of the disaster were shocking. While about 300,000 people lost their homes and belongings, there were around 10000 casualties including a large number of women, children and the elderly. About three lakh were rendered homeless while the number of orphaned and destitute children was around 5000.

BJS stepped in to help and adopted nine of the worst hit villages from Osmanabad and Latur districts. It was decided to provide assistance in rescue and relief at Sastur, Holi, Holithanda, Rajegaon, Rebi Chincholi, Thavshijad, Pettsanghvi, Nandurga, and Katechincholi. The activity began with establishment of a main camp at Sastur with requisite material like generators, wireless communication sets, perishable food items, tents and utensils.

For the first few hours after the tragedy, work was impossible in Sastur since the electric supply got discontinued. After arranging for power generators, BJS lit up the area around Sastur with 200 halogen lamps that facilitated the work of government officials, relief workers and other NGOs who had rushed to the quake-affected area for assessment of the damage and initiation of the relief activity. To providing relief right from the very first day after the disaster, BJS volunteers had reached the affected area within few hours of the tragedy. Well managed BJS camps that resulted in good quality of rescue

and relief work, drew words of genuine appreciation from several national leaders who visited the site after the quake.

While a qualitative assessment of the loss of life and damage to property was going to take time, it was of prime importance to provide food and medical assistance to the quake-affected villagers. Accordingly, under the leadership of Sharad Pawar (then chief minister of Maharashtra), Madanlal Bafna (former state minister) and Padam Sinh Patil (state minister), BJS provided food to disaster-victims twice-a-day for 15 days in the nine adopted villages. About 30,000 disaster-affected individuals availed of the service for more than a month. In order to facilitate proper preparation and supply of cooked food to the disaster victims, cooking arrangements were made away from the disaster spot. These were located at Aurangabad and Barshi, thus reducing the load at the site of the disaster and cooked food was then carried to the affected areas for distribution.

The moral of the volunteers got an additional boost when American Ambassador Flynn visited the community kitchen run by BJS at Sastur and expressed appreciation with regards to the measures of safety and hygiene being adopted by volunteers at the kitchen.

Provision of cooked food sufficed the need of the survivors. But another major requirement was the provision of medical aid to those who were injured in the calamity.

The BJS took the responsibility and distributed essential medicines to the victims. A team of doctors was made available at the site to provide round-the-clock medical assistance. This facility proved to be highly useful for the victims as they could walk into the centre and avail of the facilities at any time during the day or during emergencies.

Majority of the children brought from disaster-hit area have taken up professional education and have created a future for them. Many children have been supporting other relief and rehabilitation activities, thus helping people get the actual benefit of their own experiences...

Simultaneously, it was important to help the quake victims in recovering from the shock caused by the losses they had sustained to that they could be rehabilitated at the earliest. This activity began with distribution of essential material including household items, clothing and other essential goods of day-to-day use. Accordingly, BJS distributed 200 utensils, 50000 sweaters, 10000 blankets and 4000 sarees to the earthquake victims residing in the nine adopted villages. Quake hit families were also provided with essential items of day-do-day use like bed sheets, clothes, mats, plastic containers and lamps. To facilitate and bring about faster rehabilitation, BJS wisely established a floor mill in each of the nine villages so that the villagers did not have to depend on external help and could get back to their daily routine as early as possible.

On one side, the BJS and its team was attending to the survivors, on the other, it was also necessary to attend to those who were no more. Each one of the nine adopted villages had recorded a large number of deaths and carcasses lying under the debris had to be removed and disposed off at the earliest. Volunteers were allotted duties to identify, recover and cremate dead bodies from respective villages. Heavy rains and frequent power cuts added difficulties to this highly necessary task. Cremation of dead bodies became more difficult due to scarcity of enough wood to build the funeral pyre. The task was completed using wood from broken doors and windows of collapse buildings. Even in such difficult conditions, BJS volunteers took the efforts to perform the final rites of all the victims according to their respective religions. This helped in maintaining the dignity of the deceased, and at the same time, to avoid hearting sentiments of the survivors.

News about the calamity had resulted in an overwhelming response from innumerable social organisations from India and abroad who were rushing to the site to provide relief. The most exceptional amongst them was the BJS, thanks to its disciplined and well-planned assistance. During the relief operations, the main focus of the BJS volunteers was on the traumatised children, who stood a chance of either losing an academic year or getting completely detached from education. Even

a short loss of time in this direction was going to prove disastrous for the future generation of the country. Hence, the BJS adopted a holistic approach and concentrated on provision of quality education to the victimised children. Realising that the children were the worst affected among the earthquake victims, BJS founder and president, Shantilal Mutha decided to adopt these children for further education and proper rehabilitation. This meant taking care and bearing expenses of 1200 boys from the quake-affected districts of Latur and Osmanabad. Taking the socio-cultural factor into consideration, the BJS decided to adopt and rehabilitate only boys and not girls, though about 300 of them were ready to move out with the BJS volunteers.

With requisite permissions from the state government and the parents/guardians, BJS decided to bring the children to Pune for further education. A survey conducted in consultation with Sharad Pawar, the then chief minister of Maharashtra, helped identify children who were ready to shift to Pune for educational rehabilitation. After completion of initial formalities, a group of 1000 such boys hailing from 29 villages of Latur and Osmanabad districts, left for Pune in 25 buses offered by the MSRTC to ferry them from their hometown to Pune. Meanwhile, clearance was also obtained for starting a primary school, a middle school and a junior college for these children.

On the auspicious occasion of Dassera, a convoy of 25 buses ceremoniously left for Pimpri in Pune, after being flagged off by Sharad Pawar, the then chief minister of Maharashtra and P C Alexander, the governor of the state. Additional 400 children joined the team of 1000 boys who were already screened and selected for the rehabilitation programme. As a temporary arrangement, accommodation was provided for some children in Atmanagar complex, owned by Mutha associates. The spacious facility had 120 rooms on the ground floor. Remaining students were accommodated by the Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation. Subsequently, a newly constructed four-storeyed school building in Sant Tukaram nagar was made available for all the students. With the basement converted in a mess, 25 rooms of the school were used as residential quarters while the remaining served as classrooms.

Children had come from villages like Madaj, Maichakur, Kashti, Arni, Pethsanghvi, Holi, Ekondi, Udatpur, Taushigar, Kanegaon, Makni, Mangrul, Dendkal, Talni, Killari, and Limbala of Osmanabad and Latur districts. Fourteen teachers from the quake-affected areas also accompanied in order to provide a sense of belonging. Some elders from the villages also accompanied the students. Mere relocation and provision of requisite residential and educational facilities was not enough. The children required medical assistance for complete rehabilitation. Help arrived

in the form of leading psychologists and behavioral scientists Sudhir Kothari, the late P G Vaidya, Pustraj Atre, Vijay Parulkar, Vasudev Parlikar, Mohan Agashe, Medha Dhawale, Bindu Patani and Jyoti Ronghe, who met the students and discussed with them to diagnose probable psychological problems and interventions. Impressed BJS effort, Dr Mohan Agashe, head of psychiatric department at the B J medical college, Pune and director of the Maharashtra Mansik Arogya Sanstha suggested that the children needed a change of place and education.

Elaborate arrangements were made by members of the Jain Sanghatana at Atmanagar. Local students received and welcomed them with flowers at Atmanagar. Besides 120 rooms furnished with beds, mattresses and household items, the apartment also had a medical aid center, a grocery shop, a kitchen and dining room.

A team of 25 volunteers worked during day and five during night. Students studying in standard between fifth and tenth were retained while younger children were sent back following advice from the psychologists. The state government sanctioned a primary and secondary school along with a junior college for these students. Seventy of the 1421 children, were orphaned while some of them had lost one of their parents. Details about their living conditions and educational progress were collected through a comprehensive survey conducted by the BJS. The school started functioning since October 26, 1993 with

Adjusting in a new place and a different atmosphere was not very easy for the children who were brought down from Latur to Pune. The fear of the earthquake still gripped their minds. For the first ten days, they could not sleep well. Some of them would burst out crying, some of them felt like going back home while a few would suddenly wake up in the midnight imagining that the earthquake had struck and the building was collapsing. For many, living on the upper floors of the buildings was not acceptable since they feared further destruction and hence, all the children would leave their rooms in the night to rush down to the ground floor and spend the entire night together. Rumours about a dam bursting and those of recurrence of the quake, added to the problems being faced...

the permission of chief minister Sharad Pawar who had promised to convert it into a recognised school. He also had promised to make available about seven acres of land for the proposed school building. After conducting classes in shops for about 15 days, the PCMC provided a huge building for the school and the hostel. Within two days, classes started with the help of social workers in the area while within about a month, teachers and other staff were also recruited.

A unique project thus began with the BJS

accepting the challenge of providing education,

accommodation, food and other requisite facilities to the students from Latur and Osmanabad. The responsibility of providing education from class five to the level of graduation was most challenging task ever undertaken in the country as part of any rehabilitation programme after a natural calamity.

Positive results started showing soon as the students displayed improved psychological conditions after reaching Pune. Though only 30 per cent of the students managed to clear the SSC examinations from the school established by BJS, in first such exam after the earthquake, they had started developing interest in attending school besides having some hope and ambitions in their life. Meanwhile,

After a lot of convincing, resident villagers of Latur clearly understood and accepted the need to keep children away from the site of disaster and get them engaged in education to avoid negative impact of the calamity. They however, were not ready to involve girls in the process. For them, as a convention, girls did not either go to school or even if they did, it was allowed only within the vicinity of the village. The necessity of education for girls was out of question. Consequently, all girls from Latur and Osmanabad missed out on the opportunity to avail of educational facilities and come out of the tragic impact of the disaster...

increasing number of local parents came forward to seek admission for their wards in the BJS School. Within a short period of three to four months after the quake, students studying at the BJS School became emotionally stable besides developing hope and aims for the future.

Streamlining and simplifying government procedures during such calamities can speed up both, relief and rehabilitation. Many NGOs, including BJS, faced difficulties when it came to ferrying relief material from other parts of the state to Latur and Osmanabad.

In the first place, the railways and other transport agencies were not instructed to offer a concession in the freight charges for material being taken to Latur and Osmanabad for rescue, relief and rehabilitation. Secondly, a large amount of such material was held up at various locations for octroi charges and other government duties like sales tax, custom duty, excise and service tax. A lot of time was wasted in the process, thus delaying help from reaching out to the needy...

The first time these students went back to their villages was during Diwali and when they returned after a vacation, the school was highly comforting for them. The overall attitude of these boys had drastically change after witnessing ruined homes, schools and fields, shattered family members and after-shocks in the area. Under the care and supervision of 26 trained and committed teachers,

they found the Pune School to be much more rewarding. By the time it was a year after the earthquake, there was a sea-change in the physical and emotional status of the affected children. Acquiring knowledge and confidence through education at Pimpri School, the children derived inspiration from the BJS work and expressed desire to do social work in their native places. They decided to plant trees and find remedies for the shortage of water in their villages.

On October 1997, when some students completed four years in Pimpri School, more children from Melghat and Jabalpur were added to the existing strength. This was possible only with help from Sharad Pawar. Some children who were not showing any inclination of progress, were sent back home.

The rehabilitation process took a giant leap when land measuring ten acres was purchased at Wagholi in Pune-Ahmednagar road for construction of the proposed Wagholi Education & Rehabilitation Centre (WERC), which was conceived to serve as a permanent solution to cater to the needs of various disasters in Maharashtra. Following recommendation from the Government of Maharashtra, the World Bank extended infratructural assistance for the project. Very soon, a large state-of-the-art, three lakh square feet building, along with requisite facilities like hostels, laboratories, classrooms and library was constructed by the Government of Maharashtra with the

approval of the World Bank and then handed over to BJS. The WERC was formally inaugurated on November 29, 1998 at the hands of the former chief minister of Maharashtra, Manohar Joshi. With a hostel big enough to accommodate 1000 students, the WERC served as a new home for the children who started their education at the newly built facility, where they were given free education and housing. Throughout their stay at WERC, the students availed of education up to graduation level, lodging, boarding, medical facilities, holistic development, counseling as well as training in disaster management. After spending almost a decade at the WERC, majority of the beneficiaries from disaster-hit area have taken up professional education ensuring a bright future for themselves and their families. Several of them have also been supporting other relief and rehabilitation activities, thus helping people benefit from their own experiences. Managed professionally by a team of seasoned academicians and specialists, the WERC have given children an opportunity and training to contribute to the society in a meaningful and constructive manner. For them, this was not just rehabilitation, it was like taking a rebirth.

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locations for octroi charges and other government duties like sales tax, custom duty, excise and service tax. A lot of time was wasted in the process, thus delaying help from reaching out to the needy...

Residing on shaky grounds

Despite difficulties, the BJS successfully completed rehabilitation project by educating the students till they graduated and were settled in life...

A powerful tremor rocked Jabalpur and its outskirts in the wee hours of May 22, 1997 which claimed more than 50 lives and rendered more than 6000 people homeless. The tremor originated from a place 20 km north-east of Jabalpur with an intensity of 6.2 degrees on the Richter scale, lasting 52 seconds.

While devastating damages were suffered by districts like Jabalpur, Mandla, Chhindwara and Seoni, Jabalpur and Mandla districts were the most hit. Chhindwara and Seoni districts emerged fortunate to have suffered comparatively less destruction. The affect of the earthquake was felt in 2739 villages. Sixty-seven wards in Jabalpur city and 1859 villages in Jabalpur district sustained losses due to the earthquake while Mandla district had 289 affected villages. In Seoni district, the number of villages affected by the earthquake was reported to be 569 while Chhindwada district had 22 affected villages. The quake also spread over a part of Madhya Pradesh, but the major thrust was in Jabalpur. Panagar, Kundam and Majhouli villages of Jabalpur were badly affected. Loss of property and cattle was roughly estimated to be around

85 crore with 22 ‘badly damaged’ villages out of which eight were totally destroyed. It was estimated that over 25000 houses were destroyed in Jabalpur area. Besides claiming life, the quake also had its destructive impact on several buildings of historic value.

As per official statistics, the number of deceased was less as compared to that of those who got injured in the calamity. Only one of the 39 deaths in Jabalpur occurred in the rural area of Chhindwada while the remaining 38 died in the city. A total of 2310 people were injured in Jabalpur district while Mandla had 120, in Chhindwada had four and Seoni had just one injured individual. The disaster was significant because it occurred very close to the densely populated, urban conglomeration in a major city of India like Jabalpur which had a 1.2 million strong population.

Repair and reconstruction work needed to be done on a war footing in Jabalpur in view of the ensuing rainy season. Any further delay would have added to the woes of the residents in the form of added destruction and a possibility of an epidemic. The State government had announced an interim relief of Rs 3,000 to each affected family to help them in putting up temporary sheds. Government agencies, along with the Army and several NGOs including the Bharatiya Jain Sanghatana moved in with relief activities. Providing first aid and medical

The experience of working for disaster-victims in Latur and Osmanabad came handy while attending to the residents of Jabalpur. But, this time, since the state was different, the implications also changed, calling for re-structuring the relief and rehabilitation plan.

BJS volunteers were now ready and did not need any training to conduct a survey to identify the most affected families, the number of children, their exact problems and finding solutions to them. Just like Latur and Osmanabad, they went from house to house collecting information about school going children; they also talked about the proposed plans to move the children from Jabalpur to Pune for educational rehabilitation.

Shifting the children was not difficult because a proper facility was ready at the WERC. But since, the spoken language, the medium of instruction and the syllabus was different, educational rehabilitation did not seem that easy. Hence, the BJS decided to select only a handful of children instead of bringing down all quake affected students.

A group of 40 to 50 students were shifted and were housed at the WERC. Since their medium of instruction was Hindi, some Hindi medium schools in the city were approached to accommodate these children. A special bus was organised to ferry them from the hostel to the school and back. Despite all these difficulties, the BJS successfully completed the rehabilitation project by educating the students till they graduated and were settled in life. However, this experience highlighted the need to rehabilitate disaster affected children in their home towns as far as possible...

treatment, besides supplying drugs, food and consoling the sufferers was the immediate requirement.

Keeping close liaison with the district authorities, BJS volunteers reached the affected area and set up rescue camps. After an initial survey of actual damages in the villages falling within the area, rescue and relief operations were carried out on an urgent basis.

Food, medical aid and materials for temporary shelter were the essential items urgently required by the quake-affected villagers. The rains were likely to complicate the situation and hence, medical services in the area needed to be strengthened. Though, long-term rehabilitation included provision of proper houses, water supply, employment and developmental programmes, the lessons learned from the Latur-Osmanabad tragedy, helped plan elaborately for Jabalpur.

During the rescue and immediate relief activities, BJS realised that though the loss to human lives was very less compared to the Latur earthquake, the Jabalpur earthquake had brought about extensive damage to properties. Not less than 42 villages were completely destroyed, leaving thousands of families without homes. A BJS team comprising Mahendra Surana, Dilip Gandhi, Prafulla Parakh and Madanlal Jain visited quake-affected villages like Bilehari, Tilehari, Gaur, Kudaria and Nim Kheda.

The initial survey revealed that Mandla, Chhindwara and Seoni villages in Jabalpur district had suffered major losses due to damages. While about 8546 houses had completely collapsed the number of badly damaged houses was around 52,690. In Kosamghat and Kudaria which were near the epicenter region, more than 90 per cent of the houses had collapsed or were badly damaged following the earthquake. Villages like Kosamghat and Kudaria went through a maximum intensity of shaking experienced during the earthquake.

Various non-governmental agencies sprung into action providing building material for temporary sheds and shelters in different villages since Government authorities could not reach in time. This kind of work done in the area helped build confidence amongst the affected people. Food packets were distributed to the villages for quite a number of days.

Flying in to Jabalpur, immediately after the earthquake, chief minister, Digvijay Singh and the minister in charge of district, Rajan Prasad Sukla, along with the chief secretary, took a surveyed of the situation. An ex-gratia payment of Rs one lakh each to all survivors of the deceased and a sum of Rs 2,000 to Rs 10,000 each was announced for the injured. The next of kin of the 39 deceased persons were given an ex-gratia payment of Rs one lakh as announced.

As a temporary relief measure the Government provided free bamboo poles for erecting temporary sheds in the affected areas. Relief in cash was also provided in amounts ranging between Rs 400 and Rs 3,000 for the affected families to purchase utensils, clothing or to erect temporary sheds and shelters. Soon after the earthquake, BJS volunteers reached the affected area to set up rescue camps. Rescue and relief operations commenced on an urgent basis.

It was soon realised that children were the worst sufferers. The psychological trauma they were facing was potent enough to completely destroy their future. Immediate rehabilitation of these disaster-affected children was necessary.

Considering the condition of the earthquake affected children and their psychological trauma, BJS decided to launch Education Rehabilitation Programme for them. Equipped with the previous experience of successfully rehabilitating earthquake affected children from Latur, BJS confidently adopted the orphaned and affected children of Jabalpur for provision of quality education along with counseling to help them overcome the psychological trauma they were facing after the disaster.

The visiting BJS team informed villagers about the proposed rehabilitation plans and offered full assistance. Villagers were also informed about the Education

Rehabilitation Project for which the quake affected children would be taken to Pune for better education. Meetings were held with the sarpanches and prominent persons of the affected area to discuss with them the plan of adopting the earthquake-affected children for education. These plans were very well appreciated and full cooperation was assured. The team also met Pushpraj Singh, minister of education, Madhya Pradesh and appraised him about the project.

With the full support of the authorities and parents, BJS identified 44 promising children from the earthquake-affected villages of Jabalpur for the educational rehabilitation project. The main focus was on students who were studying in standards between V and X. BJS shifted these children to Pune with the consent of their parents and local authorities. These children reached Pune along with the BJS team on July 17, 1997 in a special bus arranged for them. Besides providing accommodation in the BJS hostel at Pimpri, all the necessary arrangements including food, clothes, study materials and all other accessories were made in the hostel for them.

Since the medium of instruction in Jabalpur was Hindi, it was necessary to make requisite facilities available in Hindi. Hence, they were given admission in S M Joshi Vidyalaya, a Hindi medium school in Pune. They were then shifted to the Wagholi Education Rehabilitation Center (WERC), in November 1997.

Though the project began with 40 students in the academic year 1997-98, the number of children reduced to 19 in 1998-99, since many of the children returned back to their villages and did not return to continue their studies. The number further dropped to nine in the following year and BJS had to discontinue the Jabalpur project by the end of that academic year.

Minimising adverse effects

BJS ensures timely, appropriate and effective delivery of relief, rescue and rehabilitation...

Continuous rainfall which led to overflowing of Katepurna dam in Maharashtra's Akola district, eventually caused floods and water logging in the villages downstream.

Floodwaters damaged homes and inundated roads, thereby bringing normal life to a virtual standstill. Over 30 villages were sounded alert following the overflowing of the Katepurna dam. Heavy downpour also burst the embankments of streams, forcing villagers to abandon their homes and move elsewhere.

August 2002 recorded heavy monsoon and flash floods which hit the northern region of Maharashtra causing heavy losses to life and property. Akola was worst hit by floods with about 15 villages badly affected. Though many people did not lose their lives, damage to property was very high.

As soon as the water level rose beyond the danger mark, the District Collectorate contacted BJS with an appeal for help. BJS sprung into action and a network of volunteer all over Maharashtra was activated immediately. A quick strategy for flood relief was formulated and volunteers from various parts of the state rushed to the

flood affected region for immediate rescue and relief operations.

BJS volunteers utilised all the material available at hand for the rescue operations. Since the water level was very high, many people were stranded on top of building roofs and on trees. BJS volunteers shifted them to safe places in all the possible ways, many a times carrying victims on their shoulders.

All necessary arrangements were made for provision of food twice a day to approximately 7000 flood affected people in the area. BJS also set up two relief camps for temporary accommodation of the flood affected. Evacuated individuals from the flooded areas were taken to these relief camps where BJS made all the necessary arrangements for providing medical aid to the affected people. About 10,000 people were provided with shelter and medical aid.

The network BJS of volunteers for relief resources, proved helpful not only in reducing the negative impact of the disaster but special attention was also given to quick steps towards rehabilitation which resulted in avoiding increased trauma.

Meanwhile, the disaster affected families has nowhere to go and in search of shelter they occupied a school building thus making it difficult for the administration to continue with the academic schedule.

Akola district does not have a long history of damaging floods and floods have been ranked at four in terms of past occurrences and a low probability for future occurrence has been indicated. Flood prone area however accounts for more than 28 per cent of the total area of the district.

The district administration has designated large areas in all the talukas - mainly those lowlying areas close to river / nala banks - as flood prone with Patur taluka having the largest area 57%, followed by Barsi Takli (48%), Akot (45%), Balapur (40%) etc. There has been only one episode of flooding in the last ten years which affected a considerable portion of Akola town.

To overcome this problem, the BJS erected two temporary shelters and named them Deepchand Gardi Nagar and Suresh Dada Jain Nagar. These two facilities served as temporary shelters for families that had lost their houses and at the same time, helped in getting the school building vacated so that the students could go ahead with their studies.

The BJS' capability to respond fast during emergencies and to find a quick solution have always been appreciated from all quarters of the society.

Gujarat Earthquake - 2001

Ensuring rehab through schools

Calls for donation of requisite relief materials evoked an overwhelming response. A request made to the Indian Chamber of Commerce resulted in direct supply of food, water, clothing, milk powder and even footwear. Truckloads of these were sent directly from Mumbai to the affected areas....

In the history of natural calamities, the Gujarat Earthquake 2001 was the most devastating in India. Occurring at a distance of 20 kilometers from Bhuj in Gujarat, it was scaled at 7.6 on the Richter scale.

It happened on January 26 when the India's 52nd Republic Day celebration was going on. Around 19,727 people were reported killed and more than 166,000 thousand people were injured. Beside these, the earthquake rendered 60,000 people homeless, with 348,000 houses destroyed and nearly 844,000 houses damaged. Causing extensive damage to other resources, the earthquake also killed about 20,000 cattle.

Northern provinces of Gujarat, which was the epicenter, were a scene of devastation. The city of Bhuj, where 150,000 people lived, was reduced to rubble with hardly a building left standing. About 7633 villages in 21 of the 25 districts of Gujarat were affected. Kuchchh, Surendranagar, Jamnagar, Rajkot, Patan and Ahmedabad

Some of the stories were highly tragic and unbelievable. In Bachchau for instance, there was one house in which all of its members had lost their lives as almost 90 per cent of the residence had collapsed after the earthquake. Not wanting the dead bodies to be left unattended till the arrival of relatives from other parts of the country and abroad, volunteers of NGOs working in the area and other surviving villagers performed the rites of the deceased. About five days after the tragedy, about 25 of the relatives came down from various parts of the country and a couple of them also arrived from abroad. Unfortunately, just as these relatives had assembled in the undamaged part of the houses, the village was hit by aftershocks in which the remaining part of the house collapsed, killing all the relatives who had assembled to mourn the deaths of the original residents of the village. This was as if they had returned to their native place, only to die...

were the most affected districts having a direct impact on 30 per cent of the state's population.

Geographically, the affected area measured more than that of Haryana and Kerala together.

Businesses were ruined; infrastructure torn apart and basic services discontinued. On January 27, Shantilal Muttha, constituted groups of ten each in a meeting held at the Wagholi Education Rehabilitation Center

(W E R C) . T h e

uniqueness of this activity was that one earthquake-affected person was helping another earthquake-affected person. The teams of volunteers also had students and

teachers from the WERC. They were ready to go and participate in the relief work at Gujarat.

Food, water, clothing, milk powder and even footwear were collected through an appeal. Truckloads of these items were sent directly from Mumbai to the affected areas. The WERC teams and volunteers from other areas reached Gujarat on the third day of the calamity, to set up camps at Samkhiyali and Bhachau.

News about the devastating earthquake resulted in rescue teams from all over the country and abroad rushing towards Gujarat with all kinds of help. Only one of these teams was unique.

It was different than others because some members of this rescue team knew exactly what the feeling of a quake affected victim could be. They knew what to say to the victims and what exactly to do for them. They could do this because they had themselves gone through a similar experience. These were the quake affected children from Latur and Osmanabad who had recovered after being a part of the rehabilitation project at the Wagholi Earthquake Relief Centre in Pune.

Having recovered from their personal traumatic experience, these rehabilitated children had gained enough confidence and were ready to extend a helping hand to those who had landed in a situation which they had found themselves once.

This act did not simply display the amount of concern these children had for their fellow countrymen, but was also a clear proof of the impressive success of the unique educational rehabilitation project conceived and implemented by the BJS through WERC in Pune...

As per a Hindu custom, a period of 13 days is observed as the 'grief period' after a tragedy like death in the family. The 13th day signals restart of normal life after the tragedy. Coincidentally, a school re-constructed by BJS volunteers in Samkhiyali was inaugurated exactly on the 13th day after the earthquake, conveying the need to get on with life and forgetting the tragic past... The quake called for construction of temporary structures to house 614 primary and secondary schools with 1468 classrooms to accommodate 132,339 students. 31. All these structures were designed in a way which made them earthquake and cyclone resistant. This was done following instructions from the World Bank which funded the project...

three in Surendranagar were severely damaged while 11 people lost their lives and 15 were injured. Matters were made worse with power failure since 45 sub stations of Kuchchh were either totally destroyed or seriously damaged. This affected the supply to 255 feeders, resulting in blacking out nine towns and 925 villages.

This was one of the two most deadly earthquakes to strike India in its recorded history. The districts most affected included K u c h c h h , Surendranagar, Jamnagar, Rajkot, Patan and Ahmedabad. Kuchchh was cut-off from the rest of the state and the country due to massive break down of telecommunication links. Altogether 147 telephone exchanges in Kuchchh, 25 in Rajkot, four in Jamnagar, and

Simultaneously, ten towns of Kuchchh and eight of Rajkot, Jamnagar, Ahmedabad and Surendranagar, which were adversely affected, faced serious disruption of water supply.

Health services were completely disrupted as a 281-bedded District Hospital and 16-bedded Mental Hospital at Bhuj were completely destroyed along with 42 Primary Health Centers, 227 sub-centers and 42 Community Health Centers. All of them were reduced to rubble.

Total disruption of 330 kilometre long railway tracks between Dharangadhra and Nalia, 210 kilometre long tracks between Palampur and Samkhiyali, and track along with the Hapa and Okha lines made transportation to these villages impossible.

Other indirect losses included increased operational expenditure in a given sector due to the destruction of physical infrastructure. Additional costs had to be incurred in providing transportation since the alternate routes were longer than the normal routes. The impact also resulted in increased cost of providing services, loss of corporate

The quake called for construction of temporary structures to house 614 primary and secondary schools with 1468 classrooms to accommodate 132,339 students. 31. All these structures were designed in a way which made them earthquake and cyclone resistant. This was to be done at the earliest to avoid academic loss to the students...

income as a result of the inability to provide utility services, loss of personal income as result of total or partial loss of an individual's means of livelihood, unexpected expenditures related to health and hygiene and loss of production of industries that were destroyed and to other associates including suppliers and buyers.

The most devastated town was Bhuj since it was close to the epicenter. Over a million structures were damaged or destroyed, including many historic buildings and tourist attractions. Considerable damage occurred also at Bhachau. Whereas, Ahmedabad, the commercial capital of Gujarat and a city of 4.5 million, had as many as 50 multistory buildings collapsed and several hundred people killed. The quake destroyed 75 percent of Kutch.

Based on his Latur experience, Shantilal Muttha decided to go in for the immediate reconstruction and restoration of 50 schools in order to avoid educational loss for the children. He visited the damaged school at Samkhiyali and ordered commencement of reconstruction the same day. Dhanraj Chopra and Tejmal Gandhi headed the reconstruction team. Construction material and labour was

Without considering the psychological impact on children, the Gujarat government declared long holiday for schools after the disaster. Little did they realise that a seven month gap would result in the children losing interest in education and getting involved in wrong practices...

Frustration which followed the disaster and easy availability of relief material and monetary assistance resulted in increased consumption of alcoholic drinks in the quake affected area. Availability of financial aid for reconstruction of houses prompted the local residents to accept this aid and use it for other purpose while refusing help from NGOs which offered to reconstruct the houses for the quake victims...

not available locally and everything had to be taken from Ahmedabad. While the school was under construction, Mutha organised village meetings and motivated the villagers to send their children to school.

In a symbolic move, the Samkhiyali School constructed by BJS volunteers, was inaugurated on the 13th day after the earthquake. Suresh Dada Jain, former minister of Maharashtra and trustee of BJS, who inaugurated the school, was so impressed by the project that he declared help for 500 schools instead of the proposed 50.

For the first 15 days, BJS volunteers cooked and distributed food. Thereafter, 'ration cards' were issued for distribution of dry ration from the BJS camp. Meanwhile, the collectorate staff made extensive use of BJS facilities such as communication, fax machines and computers.

Simultaneously, teams of BJS volunteers gathered information about damaged schools and took written consent and undertaking from local authorities stating that

they would run the schools after reconstruction. The survey also included the availability of the teachers, students and facilities. Based on the survey, 700 schools were chosen for reconstruction.

Bhawarlal Jain, one of the trustees of BJS, prepared a standard design for the schools. The design was based on a single storied prefabricated structure with a concrete plinth and a roof made of polycarbonate sheets. Within 90 days, 368 such schools were constructed.

Since many of the team members had gone through the agonizing experiences of the earthquake disaster once in their life, their dedication and morale level was very high. A dedicated team of more than 1000 BJS volunteers from Malkapur, Sillod, Aurangabad, Hinganghat, Nanded and Sangamner, also reached Gujarat to work in six month long rotation for the aid of the affected people. They worked in rotation for six long months as relief centers were set up at various places with Bhachau and Samkhiyali as two major centers.

Relief and rehabilitation got delayed for want of enough labour at the site. Local labourers were not available since many of them had migrated or were disabled due to injuries. Surprisingly, many of them were not ready to work because they had got used to living off the relief material supplied by the government or the NGOs. BJS got some workers from nearby areas like Morvi and Rajkot, but almost 60 per cent of them ran away from site fearing another major earthquake...

Atal Behari Vajpayee, the then Prime Minister of India appreciated the efforts undertaken by BJS to reconstruct 368 schools within a short period of 90 days...

After the devastating earthquake in 2001, which caused a huge damage to life and property, every one thought that Gujarat would not be in a position to stand up, but the state proved them wrong and developed chemical and petro industries to become petrochemical hub in the country...

-Narendra Modi, Gujarat chief minister

BJS made arrangements to provide cooked food, clothes and medicines to 30,000 people on a daily basis. Arrangements were also made for cremation of dead bodies.

After the preliminary surveys, BJS found two functional hospitals with 80 beds each, owned by Dr Chotubhai Ajmera of the Ajmera Group from Mumbai, in Vaswad, a village near Rajkot. A group of medical practitioners, general surgeons, and orthopedic surgeons was sent to Vaswad from Pune for provision of medical aid.

Armed with equipment and medicines, these doctors started work with great zeal. After five days of exhausting work they returned to Pune and another batch of doctors from Jalgaon and Nanded left for Gujarat to continue the medical aid. BJS organised blood donation

camps in Pune on January 30 and 31, 2001, in association with the Gujarat medical relief workers.

After initial rescue and relief, BJS focus shifted to rehabilitation activities with their main focus on children. BJS knew that educational rehabilitation is one of the ways for these affected children to cope with the stress and trauma that they were facing in wake of the calamity. Any delay in reopening of the schools would have lead to the children being exposed to the horrifying sights of debris and bodies lying around thus leaving a permanent scar on their minds.

Additionally, since the children had become used to running after the vehicles carrying relief material, they were likely to lose self-esteem and independent thinking. Being away from schools would have made them lazy, and there was a possibility of the free time being misused. In addition, they were likely to lose interest in studies and dropout from schools permanently.

Discussions held with leading psychiatrists, educationalists, government officials and other eminent personalities led to a unanimous decision towards restarting education as a priority and to find a long-term solution to the problem. Time was the main limiting factor and schools had to be built in an amazingly short period. As a policy, BJS decided not to shift the affected children from Gujarat to Pune because of the difference in syllabi, medium of education and spoken languages. Additionally, Pune was

considerably far from Bhuj, the number of affected children was high and organising teachers to teach in Gujarati would have been difficult.

Through interactions and discussions with gramsabhas, villagers, teachers and students, it was conveyed that children needed to be engaged in something positive rather than letting them witness dead bodies, destruction, plight and sorrow.

The first school was raised out of the ruins, within 12 days at Samkhiyali, near Bhachau. The response was clearly visible in the form of encouraging attendance, on the very first day. Books and accessories were distributed in the school, which was constructed in such a way that it would last for five to 10 years. This school happened to be the first school to have been constructed and become operational in such a short period.

Influenced by the work done by BJS, Sureshdada Jain, set up the Jalgaon-Khandesh Earthquake Rehabilitation Trust (JKERT), for the Gujarat relief work. BJS and JKERT decided to work together and took up the challenging task of rebuilding schools. Sureshdada Jain mobilised a fund of Rs 4-5 crore for this project from Jalgaon, through JKERT.

A systematic and organised survey was conducted in Kuchchh and three districts of Saurashtra, viz Rajkot, Surendranagar and Jamnagar, covering 469 villages to identify 275 villages to start the work on school

reconstruction. A detailed, 600 page survey report helped prepare a list of schools that were destroyed with details about the type and degree of destruction, besides the names and phone numbers of the principal and teachers, numbers of class rooms, numbers of teachers and students etc.

Gujarat has now emerged as the country's first state to have framed a Disaster Management Act and equipped local bodies with fire fighting equipment. The government is creating awareness amongst school students who are being imparted training in how to deal with emergency fire management. An institute has been set up in collaboration with the Indira Gandhi National Open University to impart quality training in the fields of fire fighting and protection, crisis and disaster management, rescue, hazardous material management, incident command system and instructor training. Established in affiliation with Fire Science Academy, University of Newada, USA, the facility is Asia's first training institute...

This was followed by planning for building primary and secondary schools. The total number of schools that needed rebuilding was 614, with a total of 1,468 rooms for 132339 students.

Well known Ahmedabad-based architect, B V Joshi, Keshav Desai from Pune and Shirish Barve from Jalgaon were consulted on the specific design and use of material

for the schools to ensure that it was light weight, quake and cyclone resistant. The proposed design incorporated RCC plinth, aerocon sandwich panels for walls, pre-fabricated steel and polycarbonate corrugate sheets for the roof.

The cost was calculated, after deciding the material. Each room measuring 384 sq ft was estimated to cost Rs 99840 while the total cost of Gujarat Educational Rehabilitation Project was calculated to be Rs 14 crore. Aerocon sandwich panels procured from Hyderabad Industries were made of two plain cement sheets on either sides of lightweight concrete core material with tongue-and-groove joining system. They were considered to be most ideal for internal and external applications, which are easy to erect, light in weight, strong and durable, water and termite proof and when used for external applications would last 25 to 30 years. Though it was costlier than normal building materials, BJS opted for it because compromise on quality of the material and welfare of the students was not acceptable. Polycarbonate corrugated sheets manufactured by a Jalgaon-based firm, were diverted to Gujarat in large quantities after securing special permission from government.

With the cooperation of local village heads, principals, teachers and parents, permission for the site and erection of the school was obtained. Written no-objection certificates were also obtained stating that these

temporary school structures would be returned to BJS when regular school buildings were constructed. BJS extended an invitation to the community to sponsor classrooms. This evoked an overwhelming response from the media and political parties also.

Labourers were not available for the construction work since many of them had migrated or disabled and living off the relief supplies offered by the government or NGOs. BJS had to send construction team from Pune and Mumbai while JKERT did the same from Jalgaon.

Nationalist Congress Party leader Sharad Pawar, who was also the vice chair-person of the National committee on Natural Disasters, visited Bhachau and spent nearly four hours with the BJS volunteers going over the plans for the project. He was so impressed by the work done by BJS that he offered a donation of Rs 50 lakh for the education rehabilitation work.

A formula called ‘formula 44’ was worked out, under which a team of 44 experts including civil engineers, electricians, supervisors, masons, carpenters and other skilled personnel were sent to Gujarat with assistance from the Promoters and Builders Association of Pune. In a record time of 90 days, BJS constructed 368 schools on RCC plinths using aerocon sheets for walls and polycarbonate sheets for the roof. Thus, quality education was guaranteed to 125,000 students who came back to school.

These 368 schools were then handed over to the government of Gujarat on June 3 and 4, 2001, at the hands of the then Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee and the then Home Minister, Lal Krishna Advani.

Since Saturday was normal school day, majority of the students were at the schools when the earthquake struck. Many were buried under collapsed school buildings, Many people were also trapped in their houses and, because it was the morning of Ramadan, most people were taking a nap after their pre-dawn meal and did not have time to escape during the earthquake...

This time, the experience of relief and rehabilitation work equipped the BJS with the knowledge and expertise of constructing temporary, but quake resistant structures for schools which could be completed in a very short time in order to prevent academic loss for children and thus ensure proper and fast rehabilitation of the future generation.

Rebuilding lives after tsunami

Their world turned upside down in the great Indian Ocean Tsunami. Years later, the fishing communities of southeast India are still struggling to rebuild their lives... The waves destroyed almost everything that came in their way. Public and private property got extensively damaged. Most of the houses were destroyed beyond repairs while a large number of families were rendered homeless without any shelter and a lot of people died.

A massive earthquake with its epicenter close to Sumatra island of Indonesia, resulted in a the Tsunami disaster which struck the states along the Indian Ocean December 26, 2004. Within hours the killer Tsunami waves thrashed into the shoreline of 12 countries including India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Andaman & Nicobar islands, Seychelles, Somalia, Tanzania and Kenya taking the life of more than 229,850 people.

The disastrous Tsunami, which hit the east coast of India, brought about a huge amount of damage to life, property and environment. Extensive damage was caused in Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Pondichery.

Everybody was taken by surprise, even before one could understand what is happening when the second and

most devastating wave hit the coast at about 8.45 am, the last wave hit at about 9.15 am. Although this area had seen many cyclones but nobody had much idea about Tsunami waves. This

Earthquakes below the seawater are one of the root causes of the Tsunamis. They create waves (Tsunami) in the seawater, which then travel to the coastlines. A Tsunami carries considerable energy or has a momentum as it arrives at a shoreline, which is hazardous to the properties and population...

was the largest Tsunami so far in the region that hardly experienced even minor Tsunamis earlier.

The Tsunami uprooted routine lives and left a trail of profound human tragedy. The disaster imposed a huge burden on the community, not only in physical terms but also in the psychological trauma experienced. The Tsunami devastated coastal communities, killing thousands of people, the majority being fisher folk. In addition, the waves destroyed houses, boats, fishing equipment, agricultural land and salt pans, thereby wiping out many thousands of livelihoods.

Local Jain people who were associated with the BJS were one of the few people to start relief and rehabilitation from the first day after the Tsunami disaster. BJS rushed to the coast of Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry within hours of the Tsunami. Six camps were established to provide relief and rehabilitation material including food,

shelter and medicine to the people of more than fifty villages.

BJS also tried to get the permission from Tamil Nadu administration to establish one Educational Rehabilitation Centre in order to provide educational rehabilitation for the Tsunami-affected children. However the Tamil Nadu government refused to accept any assistance in this regard since they had their own plans to conduct this activity independently. Consequently, the BJS focussed their attention towards Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

Word of praise for Bharatiya Jain Sanghatana by

Shri. Atal Bihari Vajpayee

Speech of Shri. Atal Bihari Vajpayee on the occasion of handing over 368 schools constructed by Bharatiya Jain Sanghatana in the earthquake stricken of Gujarat in 2001. *“I would like to congratulate Bharatiya Jain Sanghatana on this occasion. In this situation after the massive earthquake, they have organized all required resources and have done an excellent job only with a view to provide social service. They have constructed 368 schools and handed them over to the people. You can now see these schools coming up but still there is a lot of work to be done. I am sure that you will continue with this job with the same dedication. Please accept my best wishes and many thanks for this accomplishment.”*

**BJS' work in the words of the former prime minister of India,
Atal Behari Vajpayee**

Parliament discusses activities of BJS in LOK SABHA
LOK SABHA

SYNOPSIS of DEBATES
(Proceedings other than Questions & Answers)

Monday, November 28, 2005 / Agrahayana 7, 1927 (Saka)

REFERENCE BY SPEAKER

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME
AFFAIRS

(EXCERPTS)

*(i) Re: Relief and rehabilitation in the aftermath of Jammu and
Kashmir earthquake*

The Non Governmental Organization have also rendered support in providing shelter to the earthquake affected persons of J&K. Bhartiya Jain Sangathan (BJS) has donated 870 prefabricated structures which are to be erected in the earthquake affected areas of J&K, particularly in Uri and Tangdhar. The first consignment of 245 pre-fabricated structures was delivered to the State Government of Jammu on 12th November, 2005 and has already been transported by the State Government to Tangdhar. The second consignment of 277 pre fabricated strictures was delivered at Jammu on 21-11-2005 and the third consignment of the remaining 348 pre fabricated structures will be dispatched to the State Government by 30th November 2005. These pre-fabricated structures will be erected at four locations in Tangdhar and one location in Uri where households were required to be relocated because of their vulnerability to landslides/avalanches.

The contribution of BJS was also recognised by
the Indian parliament

1

F. No. BJS/QIP/Edn/05/

अण्डमान तथा निकोबार प्रशासन

ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ADMINISTRATION

शिक्षा निदेशालय

Directorate of Education

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

This Memorandum of Understanding is signed on this day of 18th July, 2005 between the Department of Education, Andaman & Nicobar Administration (*hereinafter referred to as ED-AN*) situated at VIP Road, Port Blair.

AND

Bharatiya Jain Sanghatana, an NGO (*hereinafter referred to as BJS*) having its head office at 106/1-A, Senapati Bapat Road, Pune 411016.

Preamble:

The Tsunami disaster occurred on the 26th December 2004 left behind indelible marks of destruction and devastation in terms of lives and property in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Many national and international NGOs have shown interest in extending assistance in the tasks of rapid rehabilitation and reconstruction of the damaged school buildings and have started their works of construction.

The statistics show that the literacy rate in Andaman & Nicobar is quite high at around 81%, but the Department of Education still intends to enhance the literacy rate and more specially, raising the level of quality of education.

WHEREAS, B.J.S., an NGO of great repute, having credible experience, engaged in the disaster management of Andaman & Nicobar Islands has focused its attention in the construction of schools and is also intending to

For Bharatiya Jain Sanghatana

G.M.


DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
A & N ADMINISTRATION
PORT BLAIR


President

The memorandum of understanding signed between
BJS and the A&N administration



Shantilal Muttha and Prafulla Parakh
inspecting the site of disaster



Sonia Gandhi seeing off 500 quake-affected children from J&K



Quake-affected children from J&K being welcomed at the Wagholi Educational Rehabilitation Centre



Meeting with the J&K administration, preparations for rehabilitation and completion of the school building




Prafulla Parakh spearheaded the entire rehabilitation project at Andaman & Nicobar

30th Sept. 1993


LATUR CRUMBLES

Thousands of lives and property lost. 3,00,000 people become homeless.
5,000 children become orphans overnight.



BJS first to hear the call for help

Rescue and relief camps are set up by 800 efficient workers. 30,000 people are provided food, shelter, medical and other aid for almost 30 days. The realisation dawns that 5,000 children still await help.



Former prime minister Chandra Shekhar visited the earthquake relief camp at Latur



Earthquake affected children from Latur were brought to the Wagoli Educational Rehabilitation Centre



Shantilal Muttha handing over 368 schools rebuilt by BJS and in discussions with eminent personalities

Jammu & Kashmir Earthquake 2005

A ray of hope for less fortunate lives

Disasters, irrespective of locations, generally have a common devastating impact. But every disaster cannot have a common solution. It has to be location specific, especially when it comes to rehabilitation of the victims.

The rising sun arrived with widespread destruction on October 8, 2005, when a 7.6 Richter earthquake struck the Kashmir region of both the countries. An area of 30,000 square kilometers covering Pakistan's Azad Jammu

and Kashmir (AJK), and North-West Frontier Provinces (NWFP), along with India's western and southern Kashmir were badly hit by destruction. It did not end here, as the initial shock was followed by more than 978 aftershocks which kept occurring in the region till October 27, 2005. The devastating earthquake that rocked Jammu & Kashmir on the October 8, 2005 caused severe damage to the lives and belongings of thousands of families on both sides of the Line of Control. The districts of Poonch, Baramulla, Jammu, Udhampur, Ramban Kathua, Srinagar, Budgam, Anantnag, Pulwama and Kupwara were the worst affected. In many areas, power went out while people also lacked

Natural disasters strike without the consideration for any boundaries. Social work too, should never be restricted by boundaries and the BJS had already reached out beyond such physical barriers. The earthquake which occurred in Jammu & Kashmir, gave BJS a chance to reach out to disaster affected people residing along the country's borders...

adequate food or water. The danger of disease spreading, including measles, increased dramatically. Distributing relief supplies to the victims became especially urgent as the victims, living at high altitude and with the approaching

winter, faced the risk of exposure to One of the most devastating earthquakes in the recent history of Indian sub-continent, this one resulted in more than 80,000 fatalities, besides 200,000 people being injured and more than four million rendered homeless. Almost all the buildings which were close to the epicenter had collapsed. So destructing was the quake that nearly 25 per cent of the buildings within 25 km of area surrounding the epicenter had completely collapsed while 50 per cent of them sustained severe damages. Making matters worse, casualties were likely to increase considering that winter was about to set in. Hence, provision of shelters to the victims was of prime importance. NVC Menon, vice president, of the National Disaster Management Authority

(NDMA) personally requested Shantilal Muttha for help. Muttha assured every possible assistance.

Most of the affected people lived in mountainous regions with access impeded by landslides that blocked the roads, leaving a large number of people homeless...

The highly successful solution of educational rehabilitation of the children from quake-affected families in Latur and Osmanabad could not be copied in Gujarat because of area-specific problems like difference in spoken language, medium of instruction and the syllabus.

However, the lesson learned in Gujarat and the futuristic view accepted by the Bharatiya Jain Sanghatana (BJS) provide useful during one of the deadliest earthquake that struck both, India and Pakistan in 2005.

Fortunately, 870 of the 1004 prefabricated classrooms constructed by BJS after the Gujarat Earthquake were lying vacant since the students had moved out of the temporary structures to permanent ones. In a futuristic move, an informal agreement was arrived at stating that the BJS would be free to reuse these prefabricated classrooms once permanent classrooms were ready. This futuristic planning came handy when the BJS was requested to take up the task of providing shelters to house the quake affected in Jammu and Kashmir.

Before the process could begin, a team of experts including executive engineer, Zafer Iqbal Pampori, visited

Gujarat to inspect these structures. A report submitted by the expert team confirmed that these structures could not only be transported and re-erected at the site but they also were totally temperature proof. Based on the technical feasibility of the report an MOU was signed through which BJS agreed to provide structures to J&K without charging for them. A 30-member BJS team ensured proper erection of these shelters at the requisite sites and locations.

Roads buried in rubble hampered relief efforts in many remote villages and many affected areas remained inaccessible. Rescuers lacked the heavy equipment, needed to clear the roads and to rescue survivors buried under the earthquake wreckage. Many rescuers picked the rubble with pickaxes and their bare hands, looking for survivors...

Immediate dismantling of the 870 vacant classrooms commenced, with a team led by Ashok Pawar supervising, dismantling and dispatching these shelters. The material was coded, dismantled, transported from Gandhidham to Jammu and then further trucked to various locations. All the material reached Jammu in three trains and erection of the prefabricated structures began under the supervision of a technical team from BJS in order to protect the victims from freezing temperatures. Re-erection of these structures in the affected areas of J&K was well appreciated and expected to bridge the immediate gap

for rehabilitation and protecting the people from extreme weather conditions.

Systematic planning, consideration for minute details, proper execution of these plans and extra care taken at every step helped BJS in making a full-proof plan for the relief and rehabilitation of the quake victims in Jammu and Kashmir. Timely execution of the rehabilitation plan was a unique record in its own way. This was made possible by the detailed and meticulous planning that was done taking into consideration every problem that was likely to emerge in the course of execution, Provision of assistance in rescue, relief and rehabilitation during disasters like earthquakes and floods is of utmost importance. However, without proper planning, such assistance may not reach the needy and hence is likely to go waste.

Considering this, the BJS has always adhered to meticulous planning and proper implementation of every proposed programme. A memorandum of understanding signed between the BJS and the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is an example of how every minute detail was taken into consideration even before actual work could begin on the site.

Since rivers, the main source of water, had been polluted by corpses and animal carcasses, provision of purified drinking water was one of the major requirements in the quake affected areas...

In order to protect the quake-affected families from freezing temperatures, the NDMA had realised the urgent need for arranging temporary housing shelters for them. BJS came forth with a proposal to extend support in this humanitarian project. Having constructed 368 semi permanent pre-fabricated structures for schools after the Gujarat earthquake in 2001, the BJS was ready not just with the experience of executing the task, but also with the requisite material.

The BJS proposal was readily accepted because it had the requisite material ready at hand and hence, this could help avoid the possible delay in procuring such material and then starting the work on construction of temporary shelters. Since many schools were re-constructed by the government in Gujarat, nearly half of the temporary structures had been vacated. The task required simple dismantling of these unused structures, their transportation to J&K and erecting them in the affected areas.

To demonstrate its capability and to obtain a clearance from the authorities, the BJS invited a team of experts to see, inspect the structure and give their consent for the proposed programme. Accordingly, a team of experts from J&K led by executive engineer Zafer Iqbal Pampori, visited Gujarat for inspecting these structures on the site.

A post-visit report submitted by this team did not only confirm that these structures could be transported and re-erected in J&K, but also stated that they were totally temperature proof and fully capable of withstanding the extreme low temperatures and chilly weather conditions in J&K. The MOU was signed on the basis of the technical feasibility of this report, which was also presented to the Union Home Minister. It was decided that the material will be coded, dismantled, transported from Gandhidham to Jammu and then further trucked to various locations.

The J&K Government had taken the responsibility of preparing the necessary foundations for the structures which were to re-erected suitably with assistance from the BJS. This MOU thus resulted in erection of about 870 rooms to accommodate quake affected families and to protect them from freezing winter temperatures and as long as they are provided with permanent rehabilitation. Despite the desire to address the needs of the communities devastated by the earthquake, the response of NGOs was extremely limited due to the climatic conditions and the devastation. The violence and conflict in this area permitted very few grassroots organisations operating there, and BJS was one of them.

However, the task of rehabilitation, undertaken by the BJS did not end with provision of temporary structures for housing the earthquake hit families of Jammu and

Kashmir. The BJS has always moved deftly to answer the call of the child in need in many natural and man-made disasters. The area in which, BJS had successfully developed expertise in, did not go unnoticed.

Gulamnabi Azad, the chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, called upon the BJS to accept the responsibility of educational rehabilitation of students from the quake-affected areas of Jammu and Kashmir. Accordingly, the BJS agreed to take the responsibility of 500 students.

By then, BJS was equipped with the tried and tested programme of educational rehabilitation of students from Latur and Osmanabad. In addition, a permanent facility was readily available in the form of the Wagholi Educational Rehabilitation Centre. All this was enhanced by a well trained and experience team of staff as well as volunteers associated with the programme. Another important strength was the students from Latur and Osmanabad itself, who had benefited from the educational rehabilitation programme.

In case of Jabalpur, the BJS had already faced difficulties in rehabilitating the students because their language, medium of instruction and syllabus was different than that of Maharashtra. Hence, this attempt was not repeated in Gujarat. Secondly, the number of affected students in Gujarat was too high to be taken to WERC in Pune. Hence, they were rehabilitated in their hometowns

through provision of temporary structures to house the schools.

The case of Jammu and Kashmir was not different. However, it was also clearly visible that rebuilding the demolished school structures would take a

long time and the worsening weather conditions would not have allowed the children to travel distances to attend schools in temporary structures.

This was followed by a major policy decision made by the BJS. Realising that there was no alternate option available, the BJS decided to move the students to Pune, without making any other changes in their education system. This did only mean allowing them to be registered with their own school and teaching them their existing syllabus in their preferred medium of instruction, but also called for taking some of the teachers from Jammu and Kashmir to Pune. The schools, the books, the syllabi, the teachers and the medium of instruction, all remained the same. The only change was the location, which was no-doubt far away from their home town, but was comparatively much safer and less traumatic.

Not everyone has the privilege to aim for the moon when the struggle for survival overshadows everything else. When it's a fight for food and shelter, a safe future matters more than a successful one. And this is where the BJS has always stepped forward, for over two decades, the organisation has been playing a stellar role in the lives of unfortunate children...

The local authorities then conducted a survey to identify students and obtain consent from their parents for the proposed educational rehabilitation. By the time this process could be completed, the number of students went up from the proposed 300 to 500.

Finally, in December 2005, a fleet of buses carrying students was flagged off from Srinagar by Sonia Gandhi in the presence of Gulam Nabi Azad. These students then travelled from Jammu to Pune in a special train to Pune where they were extended a hearty welcome.

As per the proposed programme, students studying at the WERC were to return to Jammu for their annual examinations and also stay back for summer holidays which would follow the examinations. However, the quarterly and the half-yearly examination were conducted by at the WERC itself with the help of teachers from J&K and the staff at WERC.

Beside basic requirements of lodging and boarding facilities, the BJS had agreed to provide the students and teachers from J&K with facilities for health care including provision of a hospital and service of doctors. Though the classes were conducted at the already existing educational facilities at the WERC, students from J&K were taught separately and were not forced to study with other students. Separate classrooms were made available for these students where teachers from J&K continued teaching them their ongoing syllabus. Even the time-table were prepared with teachers from J&K in order to ensure that their syllabus gets covered in

their respective time schedule. Provisions were also made for co-curricular and extra-curricular activities for the children.

Besides classes for moral and value education, the students also availed of counselling facilities provided at the centre. The BJS made proper arrangements to take care of their psychological needs and requisite treatment of the students. Familiarised with the Maharashtrian culture, the students were also encouraged to mix up with local students studying at the WERC as a way of promoting healthy cultural exchange and experience.

Simultaneously, the students were also encouraged to support other relief and rehabilitation activities, thus helping other victims to benefit from their experiences.

However, six months later, when the students returned to their homes for a vacation, their parents moved the court challenging the adoption process. They were not ready to accept that their children were being taken away from them and kept far away in Maharashtra. Following a High Court decision, the BJS had to discontinue the rehabilitation process and the children never returned.

Nevertheless, the serious effort made towards educational rehabilitation of the future generation was appreciated by the children who kept writing letters to the students being rehabilitated at the WERC in Pune.

Crushed by the crowd

Safety of pilgrims, particularly inside the religious places, continues to remain as a concern considering that dealing with crowd control is the eternal challenge before the authorities...

Some disasters are man-made. Most of them happen because of carelessness. Lack of planning, presence of mind, preparedness and indiscipline add to the catastrophe caused by the disaster.

Stampedes are not uncommon at Hindu religious festivals, which often attract millions of worshipers and are notoriously difficult to police. Located atop the Mandhardevi Hill near Wai in Satara district of Maharashtra, the Mandhardevi Kalubai Temple attracts nothing less than three to four lakh pilgrims every year during December and January every year. The crowd is generally higher on Poornima, the full-moon day. The annual event of Shakambhari Paush Purnima is considered to be an auspicious day for pilgrims to visit and worship the goddess. The event at Wai takes place every year during the night of a full moon.

Rescue teams that arrived from Pune, could see the fire from miles afar but it took them four hours to negotiate the 12-km ghat road to reach the site atop a 1,200-metre-high hill...

January 25, 2005, was auspicious on a double note since it was also a Tuesday along with a full-moon day, a rare combination. Devotees were large in number and beyond control. The steepness of the climb to the temple, the narrow entrance, or the small size of the temple compound, nothing mattered to them.

Doctors at the rural and mission hospitals in Wai said that judging by the expression on the faces of most of the dead persons; death seemed to have been instantaneous. It was an important indicator for the investigators as it showed the rapidity with which things happened...

Suddenly at around 1.30 pm, the temple premises got over crowded and the gravest stampede ever witnessed in the history of Maharashtra happened. Within no time, about 340 pilgrims breathed last while the remaining kept rushing for life. Eyewitness

accounts of the tragedy narrate different stories. The most plausible sequence of events suggests that some devotees slipped on a mix of excess oil fallen on the floor near the deepmaal, while water from broken coconuts and blood from sacrificed goats, made it difficult for pilgrims to walk near the entrance of the sanctum sanctorum, sending a wave of panic amongst two lakh devotees waiting to enter the temple.

Many pilgrims were crushed and burned to death as the fire forced crowds into a narrow stairway leading to the hilltop temple. This year, more than 300,000 people

had gathered, and the narrow path leading to the temple was jammed with worshipers, many of them women and children.

In an attempt to rush down the hill panic struck devotees continued slipping on the surface, while other people coming up the hill also fell down and were trampled upon. Adding more trouble, a fire broke out in one of the make-shift stalls located around the main temple.

BJS activities at Mandhardevi

- Immediate rescue operations
- Medical aid to the injured persons
- Distribution of fresh food & water

Accounts vary as to what caused the stampede. One local police inspector blamed a fire caused by an electrical short circuit in a makeshift shop. Other witnesses said pilgrims began burning and looting roadside stalls after they became frustrated at long delays in gaining entry to the temple site.

Devotees in the procession, quickly panicked and the narrow passage was jammed as crowds surged forward to avoid the flames. Meanwhile, as the fire spread further, gas cylinders started exploding one after another. Some 25 of them were reported to have busted within a span of two hours. At the same time, property worth lakhs of rupees was reduced to ashes.

A team of 50 BJS volunteers rushed to the site and started rescue work immediately. Another team of doctors, led by Dr Vijay Sethiya and Ramesh Navlakha was also summoned to assist the injured. After administering first-aid to the injured devotees, the medical team shifted them to a hospital at Wai for further treatment.

Meanwhile, Ashok Pawar reached Mandhardevi along with a team of 50 volunteers from Wagholi, comprising students and teachers from the Wagholi Educational Rehabilitation Centre. As usual, they were equipped with all the material required to cook and distribute food to the victims. Springing in action without wasting any time, they got on to preparation of food which was later provided to the victims along with drinking water.

Arrangements were also made to provide temporary shelter to the devotees while those pilgrims coming from other parts of the state were provided with shelter, food and medical attention.

Preliminary assessment of the situation revealed that the temple premises were not spacious enough to accommodate a large number of pilgrims. It was big enough to hold only about 50 individuals at a time. The steep winding path was narrow and water from broken coconuts and blood from sacrificed goats was flowing in the temple premises and further down the steps.

Located atop a steep hill, the temple was difficult for the rescue teams to reach in time and hence the rescue

operations got delayed. There was not even one fire tender or ambulance.

Packed beyond capacity in a compound, people struggled to find a way out and surged towards the two openings of the compound, one of which had been earmarked for entry and the other for exit. The 30 or so policemen on duty inside were powerless to do anything...

Owing to the annual Shakambhari Paush Purnima, about 300 makeshift stalls had come up on the hillside, selling pooja materials and serving snacks. None of them had the requisite permission to do so, but almost all of these

stalls were using LPG cylinders.

As per official records, 251 pilgrims including 157 women, 88 men, five boys and a girl lost their lives. Local residents said that the death toll was much higher than what was recorded and some the bereaved pilgrims took away bodies of the victims in order to avoid further paperwork. While villagers believed that the death toll was much higher, about 20,000 pilgrims were badly injured. The fire which broke out during the stampede gutted

Stampedes do not evoke the same sense of fear as a terror strike. But if a body count is taken, just temple stampedes would account for more deaths...

about 50 shops near the temple. Property worth lakhs of rupees got burned down.

The Mandhardevi temple is atop a hill and is reached after a steep climb that culminates in narrow steps. A narrow gateway opens out into a compound large enough to accommodate about 250 people. On this occasion there were reportedly close to a thousand devotees inside. There are two access points to the temple and for the occasion it was decided to use one as an entry and the other as an exit. This attempt at crowd control failed completely when the crowd stampeded...

Rescue teams that arrived from Pune, could see the fire from miles away but it took them four hours to negotiate the 12-km ghat road to reach the site atop a 1,200-metre-high hill. There they were faced with extremely slippery steps, burning stalls, mangled bodies and the prospect of an occasional gas cylinder bursting.

By the time the rescue teams reached the spot, the death toll had crossed 250. Doctors confirmed that there were no deaths due to fire or explosion of gas cylinders. All the deaths were caused because of suffocation. The injured were taken to the Rural & Mission Hospitals at Wai for treatment.

Responding to the tragedy, the State government announced monetary aid to the survivors. Relatives of the dead were to receive Rs one lakh each, Rs 25,000 were

The secret to successful crowd management lies in proper assessment of the crowd pressure, chalking out of entry and exit routes, round-the-clock vigil on crowd movement on important bathing days using cameras mounted on watchtowers, deployment of adequate numbers of the police forces, and an alert management capable of reacting quickly at the first sign of trouble...

offered to those who were seriously injured while those with minor injuries got Rs 10,000. A judicial inquiry was also commissioned to find out the causes of the tragedy. A relief package of Rs 15 crore was also announced by the Central Government for making the temple safer for the devotees. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh announced ex-gratia compensation of Rs 50,000 each to nearest relatives of the victims.

BJS was amongst the first to provide aid to victims of the stampede and was able to provide assistance as early as possible. Provision of food and timely medical aid helped reduce further casualties in the disaster.

Unfortunately, the situation at Mandhardevi did not change for better after the stampede. The banned practice of animal sacrifice and other superstitions returned to Mandhardevi, four years after the stampede at the hill temple. After the stampede, the district administration had implemented a management plan on the hill. The plan

included a separate parking facility for vehicles on the hill, a railing on the steps of the temple for exit and entry of the devotees, a ban on lighting of oil lamps, coconut breaking and animal sacrifice. The superstitious practices

Only crowd, no control

Shakambhari Paush Purnima is an annual event and attracts thousands of devotees, many of them from the farming community eager to pay obeisance to the goddess for the good harvest. Devotees first break coconuts at the Mangirbaba temple near the entrance to the main temple, sacrifice goats, offer oil at the *deepmal* and dance holding aloft Goddess Kalubai's idol. Despite this being the time-honoured tradition, no attempt has been made to cordon off space for the breaking of coconuts. Blood from the sacrificial goats flows freely. The sacrificed animal has to be cooked and eaten immediately but no special spot has been marked for this and people camp anywhere, setting up stoves and fires. The place also lacks accommodation or conveniences for those who have come for the 15-day festival. Basic precautions were not followed and this magnified the extent of the tragedy. If fewer people had been permitted at a time into the compound, the likelihood of a stampede would have been reduced. The availability of a public address system could have restored order faster and the panic could have been quelled. If there had been a watchtower, the authorities would have been able to anticipate and control the problem. Furthermore, despite knowing that the day was an extra special one, there were only not many policemen for a gathering of three lakh. There was not even one fire tender or ambulance. At least 300 makeshift stalls had come up on the hillside, selling pooja materials and serving snacks.

of nailing black dolls, lemons and chits o trees close to the temple were also banned.

Plan to stall stampedes

The Maharashtra State Government has drafted a plan to minimise the risk of stampedes occurring in temples of Maharashtra.

As per this plan, temples across the state will be graded on the basis of safety risks to devotees caused by heavy festival-day crowds. All shrines registered with the Charity Commissioner were to be classified by The State Law & Judiciary department so that they can come up with crowd control and security measures at these places.

The aim was to create a disaster management plan for every temple according to the magnitude of crowds visiting the shrines. Temples were to be graded according to the number of devotees. Such data was to be collected to make crowd management techniques easy for the District Collector. Every temple was to get its own disaster management plan.

Around 53,000 Temple Trusts were registered with the Charity Commissioner and the District Administration. All temples were to be covered by the proposed classification.

Gradation was to be done on the basis of the number of devotees visiting the temple in a year or during festivals or processions. Grading was also to be according to a temple's financial resources.

Unplanned overcrowding at temples leads to accidents, killing hundreds of people. After the gradation of temples, the concerned District Administration was to implement a crowd management plan, which includes creation of a separate parking facility for vehicles near the temple and putting railings along the steps.

Andaman & Nicobar Tsunami 2005

Healing broken hearts

Besides 20 schools and 34 health centres, Andaman & Nicobar islands got a unique programme for overall improvement of their education system...

Known specially for their beautiful beaches, marine life and scuba diving, the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, suffered massive destruction in

the tsunami on December 26, 2004. Over 3,500 lives were lost, largely in Nicobar islands, which are barely 107 kms from Sumatra, which was the epicentre of the earthquake that caused the tsunami.

The killer waves flattened over 10,000 homes, wiped out entire villages, swallowed more than 100,000 livestock, 6,000 hectares of plantation crops, destroyed jetties and devastated the Indian Air Force station on Car Nicobar island.

Following instructions from Sharad Pawar, the then vice chairman of the National Disaster Management Authority, BJS took over the task of reconstructing 20 permanent schools and handing them over to the government without charging anything for the job. After an initial meeting and a clearance from Lieutenant Governor of Andaman & Nicobar, Prof Ram Kapse, a team led by BJS national secretary, Prafulla Parakh, visited the devastated

islands to inspect and identify schools for re-construction before making a presentation to the secretary education, Andaman & Nicobar Administration.

Structural designs made by expert architects in Pune were shown to the authorities. New to the concept and totally unaware about such ideas of construction, they took a long time to understand and accept the idea by finally issued a letter of permission for the project. It was extremely difficult for BJS to implement the project since connectivity to each of the islands was lost and it was almost impossible reaching them. All material as well as the project team had to be brought from the mainland to the respective sites in the far flung islands with great difficulty. Repeated loading, unloading and relocation of material in different islands also led to a lot of damage besides the entire exercise turning out to be highly time consuming.

Benefits of the Project

Short Term:

Immediatel starting of schools reduced the post tsunami psychological trauma in the affected children.

Long Term:

The community started getting the benefits of normal process of economic and social development. The process of improved quality of education helped the students to compete in the market with their counterparts elsewhere in the country. School teachers and other staff were relieved of anxiety regarding employment in the future.

These hardships did not deter the BJS team which managed to successfully sail through difficulties. BJS had prepared a detailed action plan to achieve the goals and objectives that were set. This exercise helped monitor and supervise the quality of construction in the remote place like Andaman & Nicobar.

Within no time, a full-fledged office was set up in Port Blair with complete infrastructure for communication

Tough tasks, tougher men

Every location had its own difficulty. The biggest hurdle was transportation of material, which was comparatively easier in northern Andaman. Biggest headache was in southern Andaman. One such place was Camota, which had a location for a health centre called Tapong. The place was approachable only by small boats in deep sea. Tapong was on a hill, where two agencies were appointed for plinth and construction of pre-fabricated structure. The plinth was ready and the remaining structure had to be constructed. There was only one ship running to Camota and that too once in 15 days. Consequently, any problem or hurdle in the task would result in a fortnight long delay in the entire process.

Meanwhile, every report about progress in the work at Andaman & Nicobar stated that work at Tapong was not progressing as expected. One day a man came saying that the material lying on the banks of Tapong is rusting because of the salty sea water and in three months, it will be rendered useless.

It was necessary to move the material from the sea shore to the location atop the hill and all this material could go only if carried on heads. The entire island had only 40 labours available.

and coordination of the relief and rehabilitation activities, thanks to Nalin Golechha, who was in construction business and had extended a helping hand to BJS activities. A professional and high-powered team was stationed there to supervise and guide the reconstruction activities. Shantilal Muttha, national president, also visited Port Blair every fortnight to guide the project team.

Before beginning work on reconstructing the schools, a need was felt to inspect all sites to understand the exact requirements of the place. Detailed presentations and discussions with local authorities and the residents helped in convincing them about the project and its necessity. Those taken into confidence included the administration, tribal council, local villagers, school authorities and healthcare administrators. A detailed action plan was prepared after collecting data from various available sources and on the basis of a survey.

Knowing that the disaster must have drastically altered the topography of the land, a detailed study was made to obtain complete details about the reconstruction sites. Careful studies were done regarding the topography of the area and since Andaman and Nicobar Islands fell under seismic zone five, parameters of IS code 1893 were also taken into consideration. Architectural and structural consultants were furnished the required information for them to go ahead with the proposed designs. A joint survey with government officials, tribal council, villagers, and

educational officials was then conducted before identifying the exact locations of reconstruction sites for proposed schools. The plan was signed jointly after the entire team visited the sites.

BJS decided to erect structures that can withstand cyclones, floods, tsunamis and earthquakes. Highly qualified architects were appointed to prepare need-based drawings, while highly experienced structural consultants ensured quality of the construction.

It was necessary to move the material from the sea shore to the location atop the hill and all this material could go only if carried on heads. The entire island had only 40 labourers available. Prafulla Parakh then requested the PWD asking them to provide their labour for one day. The charges for labour were Rs 300 per day. The BJS offered Rs 200 extra per day and complete payment was offered in advance. All the 40 workers were taken to the location in a boat. On reaching the site, two of them started hesitating. In order to avoid demoralisation of the remaining force, Prafulla Parakh decided to send those two back and delivered an inspiring speech for motivation of the rest. Finally all the men got together and all the material, which was lying for two months, got moved in one day from six am to five pm. This way the material reached and construction could begin for the benefit of the local population.

Meanwhile, contractors were identified for erecting quality structures. The benchmark for selection of contractors was the quality of their work and experience.

BJS coordinated with all stakeholders as an ongoing process to maintain communication through various channels.

All up-to-date records, proper paper work, excellent coordination and regular update of government authorities through presentation of timely reports impressed the local authorities so much that the education department gave this example to others departments working in the islands. Impressed by the work, the health department of Andaman and Nicobar came forward requested BJS to help them in restoring health and related facilities in the area.

Readily accepting the proposal, the BJS involved an international organisation called Direct Relief International (DRI) which had worked with BJS in previous disasters. Taking complete responsibility of providing all requisite health facilities, the DIR asked BJS to undertake construction of primary health centre and primary health sub-centres in the islands. Once again, the process began with a detailed survey of the area, assessment of requirement and identification of and locations. Detailed discussions with the local health department officials was followed a decision to construct.

Thirty primary sub centres and four primary health centres were required to provide health services to the disaster affected.

These centres were to be constructed and set up in a manner in which they would continue serving the local

community even after the rescue and rehabilitation work got completed.

The most difficult part of the entire activity began thereafter. Reconstruction work in Andaman and Nicobar required training of the construction team before they could start working on each of the projects. An MOU was signed with a Delhi based NGO, Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society (SEEDS). As a policy, the BJS projects generate employment for local people. Thus, giving them an opportunity to earn livelihood and at the same time recover from the post disaster psychological effects.

While one team got busy in preparation, management and implementation of the proposed action plans, another team provided back up support to the project team by communicating with the donors. The back up support team also conducted research, prepared presentations, brochures, leaflets and held interactions with the government officials, held high power meetings, interacted with the NGOs and others concerned. The MOU signed with the Andaman & Nicobar Administration for the reconstruction of schools and health centres, was a comprehensive document that described the roles and responsibilities of every participating party in detail. Ceremonies organised for handing over each and every school building, necessarily had a representatives of the

respective donors handing over these buildings to the administration.

Immediate reopening of the schools got the children engaged and occupied which in turn helped them in coming to terms with the loss of their near and dear ones in the recent Tsunami. All this was a part of a well-developed action plan.

The direct beneficiaries of school reconstruction were students for whom the reopening of the schools meant no gap in their academics. Parents were also relieved that their children's future was saved. School-teachers and school staff were able to get back to their work and the local people got jobs in the reconstruction work.

EDUQUIP

A giant step towards enhanced education

Andaman & Nicobar Islands comprises of 572 islands in which 38 are inhabited. The inhabitants are from the mainland as well as the historical tribes. The Great Nicobar and Car Nicobar islands were the worst hit amongst all the islands. Even after the Tsunamis were over, aftershocks continued to rock the area. It is said that roughly one fifth of the population of the Nicobar Islands were dead...

Universalising and providing education cannot be seen only as a statistical goal. The real aim is to ensure that quality education leads to human resources creation, which could then be utilised for national development. People driven projects of such magnitude can

be implemented successfully only with the involvement and participation of all stakeholders. They are expected to shoulder the responsibility for getting actively involved, guide and motivate the children, co-operate with the teachers and the school administration for better implementation of such programmes.

Mere reconstruction of school buildings and handing them over to the local administration was not enough. The entire education system in Andaman & Nicobar needed complete overhauling and BJS accepted this challenge.

One of the hospital buildings was ready and about to be handed over to the administration. The day was fixed and invitations sent across. Suddenly one of the local officers turned up and requested Prafulla Patel to postpone the programme for a day. Further inquiry revealed that the local authorities had planned a foundation stone laying ceremony of a proposed school at the hand of the prime minister, Dr Manmohan Singh on the very same day. And this location was right opposite the hospital which was ready and about to be handed over. The local authorities did not find it right to have a function to mark commencement of a government project and another function for completion of a private project on the same day at the same location...

A high level committee submitted its report with programmes capacitated to change the overall picture of the islands and help capacity building of students.

A basket of 12 to 15 educational quality improvement programmes was prepared and proposed to the administration. All these programmes were conceptualised, designed and developed by Federation of Jain Educational Institutes (FJEI), the education and research wing of BJS. These quality improvement programmes were showcased in Port Blair in April 2005. The Planning Commission of India wrote to the A&N

Administration asking them to form a high level committee to assess all the programmes and provide feedback. Accordingly, principals, teachers and education officers were directed to attend this programme.

Students started looking beyond their geographical boundaries as technology provided them an opportunity to seek global citizenship. The need to be equipped with the best as well as quality education was the order of the day.

A carefully crafted judicious mix of effective academics, exposure to co-curricular subjects and extra-

In every post disaster situations immediate priority is relief and rescue operations. It is followed by provision of other basic necessities like education and health care services. Reconstruction of the totally devastated school structures may take a number of years depending upon the intensity of the disaster. Hence it is extremely necessary to restore the process of education of children at the earliest to enable them to overcome the trauma of the tragedy. BJS believes that the process of restoration of education is the responsibility of NGOs and hence it took the initiative towards this end. The first step was to survey the damage caused by the disaster. Next, a master plan for the reconstruction of the schools and finally handing over the facility to local authorities after reconstruction...

curricular activities was necessary. BJS made an effort towards precisely addressing these issues while developing the programmes to bring about a paradigm shift in the concept of educational delivery which will prepare the children to be ‘future ready’.

All for a fruit

Survival in the islands was not very easy during the relief and rehabilitation process. It was more difficult mainly for the BJS team which was strictly vegetarian. At time, Prafulla Parakh had to survive on nothing but coconut water for three to four days continuously. One day, he received a message from one of the agriculture officer there whom he had befriended. Parakh was asked to cover over to the officer’s cabin immediately. Not being able to understand the reason behind the officer’s excitement, he reached the office only to find the officer standing there with a papaya. He was highly excited and happy that he had found a Papaya so that Parakh could eat something after a long span.

BJS-EDUQIP has been designed to offer key deliverables by focusing on six thrust areas including a support to decision makers to face the challenges in education; guiding students towards holistic development; empowering teachers for better educational delivery;

guidance for better utilisation of resources; building bridges with technology; and collectively contributing towards Nation Building through Excellence in Education.

Six months of intensive interaction with A&N administration, parents and teachers, helped BJS to understand the local needs and requirements. The BJS-EDUQIP proposal was finalised thereafter and put forward to the A&N administration for approval. This was carefully studied by A&N Administration and an MOU was signed on July 18, 2005.

MOU highlights:

- To cover all government runs schools in A&N
- The programs have been researched, conceptualised, designed and developed by BJS
- The basket of programs includes:
 - a) Management Training
 - b) Accreditation
 - c) Teacher Training
 - d) Aptitude Testing
 - e) Moral & Value Education
 - f) Awards
 - g) School Administration Software
 - h) Computer Education
 - i) Teaching with Multimedia
 - j) Yoga Training
 - k) Disaster Management
 - l) Environment Education

- m) Child & Youth Development
- n) Creativity for Teachers
- o) Creativity for Students
- p) Creating awareness on ‘Role of education in Nation Building’
- q) Crash Courses
 - The project implementation envisages that all these programs shall be implemented by BJS at its own cost and hence, there will be no financial burden on the A&N administration.
 - The project shall run for three years and then be handed over to the Education Department of A&N Administration for continuation.
 - An empowered joint committee shall be formed for smooth implementation.

BJS sets goals and objectives before beginning any project. The exercise helps in defining the path and works as the guiding principles for the concerned teams. It always keeps the project team on track for executing the project...

The strategy for implementation included:

- a) BJS putting together a team of more than 150 professionals involved in programme design and implementation

b) BJS establishing a fully equipped and functional office at Port Blair

c) BJS along with A&N Administration constituting an empowered five-member joint committee for ensuring smooth implementation of BJS-EDUQIP.

d) BJS and A&N administration providing full support

- Implementation to begin from the academic year 2005-2006
- This project creates a ‘public-private’ partnership model for implementation

Highly qualified professionals were recruited on roll of the BJS to implement the EDUQIP project in A&N islands for a period of three years. These professionals underwent a rigorous month-long induction programme at the Pune headquarters and were deputed to implementing EDUQIP in 400 government schools in A&N islands.

Immensely benefitting the teachers, who are the key drivers for educational delivery, the BJS-EDUQIP programmes equipped them with a capacity to develop vision and motivated them to provide better education for academic excellence.

In the absence of proper long-term medical care; the effects of the disaster could have been catastrophic. Elderly persons, women and children were most affected. A master plan for the process of restoration of healthcare facilities resulted in the work being carried out unhindered...

BJS-EDUQIP project enabled parents to guide their children towards being ready to face the future challenges of life. The project programmes were developed with a ‘Students-first’ approach in order to equip them to achieve academic excellence and be ‘future ready’.

Andaman & Nicobar was not aware about the fact that NGOs can come forward and take up any responsibility toward rescue and rehabilitation. They had their own apprehensions and hence were not ready to allow any of the NGOs to work in the tsunami hit areas...

Since the islands are scattered and sometime not approachable for days together due to lack of communication systems, BJS proposes a Technology Bridge with the help of computer education, not only for the school children in different islands in Andaman & Nicobar but also for those in the mainland.

A marked improvement was aimed at by providing management training and system based administrative tools. School administration could identify areas of improvement, make better plans and take appropriate action to create better science labs, libraries and computer labs. BJS-EDUQIP benefitted members of the School Management Board at Andaman & Nicobar Islands. It will aim at successfully creating awareness amongst the board

DRI offered more help in the form of ambulance and medicines totally worth Rs 10 crore. The medicine however, got stranded at the port for custom clearance. Finally, it was cleared two months later when the authorities were convinced about the urgency and the fact that the medicine would be rendered useless after the expiry date...

members in terms of responsibilities and involvement in the school functioning and management. BJS-EDUQIP also empowered all school management boards with new management practices and techniques for improving the efficiency of their schools. The project immensely benefitted the teachers, who were the key drivers for educational delivery.

When clouds open up

Heavy rains continuously lash major parts of Maharashtra, claiming lives for four days and prompting authorities to shift over two lakh persons to safer places...

The death toll kept rising with every setting sun after the sad natural calamity which began on July 26, 2005 and was unlike any other monsoon rainfall

experienced in the country.

Many parts of Maharashtra including large areas of Mumbai were flooded. This occurred just one month after similar flooding in Gujarat. The term July 26, is now always used in context for the day when Mumbai came to a standstill. Other places that were severely affected included Raigad, Chiplun, Khed, Ratnagiri and Kalyan in Maharashtra and the southern state of Goa.

The rains also impacted the state of Goa and some parts of western Maharashtra on July 25. For about a week later, unusually heavy rains lashed the coastal areas of Konkan and Western Ghats in Maharashtra, causing extensive flooding in Raigad and Ratnagiri districts, with many towns and villages under water. This was the highest rainfall recorded in the country for the last 100 years. Sub-urban Mumbai and Thane experienced one of the worst floods in their history.

The downpour was heavy in other parts of the state too, particularly in Nanded and Parbhani. Soon the Godavari was in spate, flooding a large number of towns and villages. No sooner did the flooding recede in Konkan and Marathwada, the release of water from the Koyana and Ujani dams flooded Sangli, Kolhapur, and Solapur districts. Flood alerts were issued in four different regions after reservoir the levels touched ‘danger marks’. Water was released from various dams in the state and people were being evacuated from low-lying regions.

According to official figures, within a period of 18 hours, there was 944 mm of rainfall in sub-urban areas of Mumbai, a phenomenon that had never occurred before. Thane district also received more than 700 mm. of rain in a single day. The exceptional rainfall coincided with high tide, which brought a large area in Mumbai and Thane under massive inundation.

Consequently, water level rose rapidly within three four hours, submerging the roads and railway tracks. While traffic was completely at a stand still, all low-lying areas in the city were heavily flooded. Poor families living in slums were the worst hit victims while the rains also did not spare the middle and upper class segments. All flats on the ground floors of buildings were under water, and people lost all their belongings including electronic goods, furniture, clothes and utensils. Floods crippled basic services and lifelines in the city. There was no electricity in sub-

urban Mumbai and Thane districts and telephone exchanges also came under water thus disconnecting all phones. Mobile phones were also not accessible.

Two full length commercial Hindi feature films were made and released on this unfortunate incident. The first movie was '26 July at Barista' which was released in 2008, while the other movie on the same subject was released in November 2009 with the title 'Tum Mile'...

Western and Central Railways stopped running their local trains for a number of days while all long-distance trains were cancelled by Central Railways. The tracks on the Konkan Railways were badly damaged. For the first time in the history, the international and domestic airports were closed for 24 hours, as the runways were heavily flooded. National and international flights at the Sahar and Santacruz were disrupted for a number of days. The Pune-Mumbai Expressway was also closed for 24 hours due to heavy land-slides. In Mumbai, 52 local trains, 37,000 auto-rickshaws, 4000 taxis, 900 buses and 10000 trucks and tempos were damaged in the rain. Financial loss caused due to the floods was unprecedented as entire commercial trading and industrial activity stopped for days together.

Most of the Mumbai's drainage system collapsed and even as the floodwaters subsided, the city faced a continued risk of water-borne diseases. The most serious

of them was leptospirosis, which is caused when individuals wade through water infected by animal urine. Water-borne diseases caused an estimated 150 deaths in the weeks following the flooding.

In Thane district, the floods affected all the urban centers. Kalyan, Dombivali, Ambarnath, Ulhasnagar, and Bhiwandi, which are part of the urban agglomerate, were under floodwaters. Heavy rainfall in the catchment area filled up almost all the reservoirs in Thane district, calling for water being released from these reservoirs which further led to aggravated floods.

Meanwhile, Raigad and Ratnagiri districts of the Konkan region had large areas under submergence. Severely affected towns included Roha, Mahad, and Mangaon in Raigad district, along with Khed and Chiplun in Ratnagiri district. The floods disconnected a large number of villages from the rest of the district. Heavy rainfall also triggered landslides in Raigad and Ratnagiri. These landslides caused deaths in at least six villages of Raigad and Ratnagiri. More than 100 people in houses which collapsed as an impact of these landslides, in Jui village, near Mahad in Raigad district. A massive search and rescue operation was conducted in all the villages to extricate dead bodies from the debris. The Mumbai- Goa National Highway was cut off at many points since large tracts came under water. As a result, vehicular traffic got completely disrupted. Konkan Railways also come under submergence at many places

and a number of trains were stranded at different stations. Arrangements had to be made for evacuating of passengers from these trains.

Parbhani and Nanded districts in Marathwada region experienced severe flooding. Dudhna river of Parbhani was in spate, cutting off more than 20 villages in the floods which were worst floods of the century. The Indian navy deployed boats to evacuate people from these villages. In Nanded, almost all the talukas including district headquarters were seriously affected due to rising water levels in the Godavari. It was the Indian Air Force, which came to the rescue of the people here by dropping food packets in the area cut off by the floods.

Water released from Koyana, Warna and other dams in the Western Maharashtra region resulted in extreme flooding of areas like Sangli and Kolhapur districts. The backwater effect of the Almaty dam in Karnataka did not allow floodwaters to recede from Sangli and Kolhapur. Heavy floods continued in Kolhapur for more than 10 days with 107 heavily affected villages and 27 of them completely cut off from the rest of the state. Submergence of over 700 transformers left 29 villages without electricity, while crop plantation on 52,000 hectares got damaged in the floods and 40,000 people were shifted to relief camps. A part of the Mumbai Bangalore National Highway-4 near Panchganga was 2.5 feet deep in water which restricted vehicular movement.

Famous place of pilgrimage like Pandharpur, in Solapur district, was flooded as water was released from Ujani and Vir dams. The Koyana reservoir, which is about 200 kilometres south of Mumbai, got overflowed and the waters cut off 50 villages in Satara district. Patan and Karad in Satara district suffered losses due to floods in the Koyana River. Authorities had to evacuate about 10,000 people from the banks of Krishna while water had to be released from Koyana, Warna, Radhanagari, Dudhganga, Panchganga and Tulsi dams. Threatening human civilization, water levels at the Rajaram reservoir was 3.5 feet above the danger mark.

Running through the hearts of Pune, rivers Mula and Mutha were flowing in full force, resulting in evacuation of a record 16,000 people who were moved out from the low lying areas along the river banks. Residents of low-lying areas in the industrial townships of Pimpri and Chinchwad were shifted to safer places, after water from Pavana Dam had to be released into the Pavana River. Fortunately, Khadakvasla Dam had been emptied before the heavy spell, and hence, it was able to hold the rainwater.

In terms of human lives lost, it has been one of the worst disasters. Floods claimed almost 1,100 lives in the state, most of them coming from urban concentrations of Mumbai and Thane. In rural Maharashtra, Raigad reported the highest number of deaths with 166 casualties, most of

which were caused by landslides. The number of missing persons was 54, while 167 people sustained injuries.

People from low-lying areas were immediately evacuated and shifted to the relief camps at safer places. Serious rescue and relief operations were being carried out by the Government and NGOs in the best possible manner.

In Kolhapur district, there were 67 boats in service including those of the Army, the Zilla Parishad and some privately owned ones. Authorities began recovery operations to deal with the numerous landslides, using heavy machinery and labour to remove rubble and debris from affected areas. Across the state, 130,000 member strong civic staff got involved in repairing roads, unclogging drains and restoring electricity and drinking water facilities. While the unusual heavy rain and the consequent flash floods shook the state, the Pune District Collectorate and other high level officers met on July 26, 2005 to discuss the flood situation and to chalk out a disaster mitigation plan with the active involvement of NGOs. In this meeting, BJS National President, Shantilal Muttha accepted the challenge of preparation and distribution of freshly cooked food to more than 8000 flood-affected people twice a day for eight to nine days.

As soon as water level rose beyond the danger mark, BJS swung into action and volunteers from all the regions of Maharashtra were mobilised to carry out the relief operations. A well coordinated team of BJS including

students and teachers from Wagholi Education Rehabilitation Center (WERC) managed the logistics for preparing and distributing food to flood affected people who were accommodated in various schools.

As the flood situation worsened, BJS took up the additional responsibility of feeding the increasing number of people who needed help. Poona Merchants' Chambers came forward to provide the required raw material like pulses, rice and vegetables.

Meanwhile, coordinators and volunteers of BJS took complete responsibility of providing rescue and relief to flood-affected people in and around the Konkan region. Flood relief activities were also carried out in Marathwada and Western Maharashtra.

In order to meet the household needs of flood-affected people, BJS suggested Sakal Media Group that donations should be invited to the Sakal Relief Fund. These could then be put together as kits comprising household essentials. Accordingly, Sakal invited donations and prepared 10,000 family kits comprising essential commodities like stoves, flour, rice, pulses, tea, sugar, oil, salt, mats, buckets, soaps, toothbrushes, toothpaste, spices and basic steel containers, for the affected families to restart their lives without any delay.

Shantilal Muttha personally visited the flood-affected regions of Konkan and realised that there was extensive damage to goods and property. Khopoli, Panvel,

Pen, Vadkhal, Nagothana, Vakan, Patnoor, Indapur, Mangaon, Kolad, Roha, Mahad, Dasgaon, Jui, Roha, Kondivate, Khed, Chiplun and Karjat were the worst affected areas.

Several merchants in and around Konkan region had sustained 100 per cent losses due to the floods. BJS collected detailed information regarding these merchants who were in need of immediate assistance. Recommendations were made through correspondence with insurance companies, requesting senior authorities of National Insurance Company, New India Assurance Company and The Oriental Insurance Company for help in settling the claims of small merchants, on priority.

A similar calamity struck once again in 2006 when heavy rains lashed the North, East and Central regions of Maharashtra on July 16. Rivers like Godavari, Krishna and Koyana overflowed with water levels above the danger mark and water released from dams adding to the problem.

More than, 1,000 outstation commuters slept at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, as several trains on the Konkan route were delayed due to the rainfall. Many local train commuters who missed the last train also spent the night at the station...

About 24 districts were badly affected leaving more than 200 dead, approximately 400 missing and 450,000 evacuated across 5,421 villages. Nashik, Jalgaon, Amravati, Aurangabad, Nagpur, Pune, Nanded,

Buldhana, Jalna, Ahmednagar, Parbhani, Hingoli, Yavatmal, Vashim, Akola, Kolhapur and Nandurbar were the worst affected areas.

Death toll in Maharashtra crossed 200 but official reports indicated only 144. Reports of more and more deaths came from interiors of the state as majority of the victims drowned following rivers breaking the banks in many parts of the state. The number of people missing was more than 400 with families scattered in flood-hit areas. Government authorities shifted more than four lakh people to safer areas and provided emergency supplies of food and water.

Entire Khandesh region experienced unprecedented rainfall from July 16 to 19, 2006. Jalgaon district remained submerged in rainwater for several days and 250,000 people were displaced. Loss of property was estimated at Rs one billion. It was reported that 116 villages were most affected including those in Jalgaon district and Khandesh region.

Living up to its reputation, BJS once again swung into action as soon as water level rose beyond the danger mark. Equipped with previous experience of flood relief activities in Maharashtra, BJS got busy in rescue and relief of the people in various flood-affected districts of Maharashtra. BJS volunteer network all over Maharashtra was immediately activated and who in response, rushed to help flood affected people.

1 Transport badly affected
52 local trains damaged
37,000 autorickshaws spoiled
4,000 taxis damaged
900 BEST buses damaged
10,000 trucks and tempos grounded

Besides distribution of food, medicine, blankets and household items activities conducted by the BJS included provision of temporary shelter to the people of worst affected areas and distribution of relief kits to affected people in collaboration with Sakal Relief Fund.

Cooked food was provided for three to four days in flood-affected areas like Sakura, Wajethan, Chandori, Nandura, Buldhana, Chikhali, Amravati, Shirol, Manjalgaon, Gevrai and Sawaleshwar. More than 7000 food packets were also distributed at Gangapur and Vaijapur. Necessary arrangements were immediately made for provision of temporary accommodation for 150 to 200 flood-affected families in Sakura.

More than 3000 families received relief kits in Parbhani, Nashik, Kolhapur, Nandurbar, Chadrapur and Jalgaon. Financial support was extended by the Sakal Relief Fund for providing these relief kits.

Bihar Floods - August 2008:

Rescue, rehabilitation and much more

Provision of timely assistance in the form of rescue and rehabilitation is not enough during all disasters. Some disasters leave long lasting affects which need to be dealt with long term planning...

Every disaster, be it in any form, leaves behind a lot of devastation that calls for tremendous efforts towards relief and rehabilitation. However, stories of

all disasters are not necessarily the same.

The devastating floods that hit Bihar in 2008 highlighted the long felt need for a permanent facility that will function as a relief center during calamities and as a community center during the rest of the time. Consequently, relief, rescue and rehabilitation of the flood victims in Bihar moved a step ahead in this direction. People along with their villages, homes, crops and livestock in three districts of Bihar were swept away by raging water when eastern embankment of Kosi, a major tributary of the Ganga, breached at Kushaha in Nepal. Flows into Bihar from Nepal the river changed its course, submerging hundreds of villages and triggering the worst floods in Bihar so far. Unprecedented floods devastated the state on August 19, 2008.

Water flowing out of the 1.2 km breach measured more than 1.5 lakh cusecs for several weeks. Survivors were displaced, their land ravaged, their crops and livestock washed away. One of the more populous states of India, Bihar witnessed millions of people being distressed by the floods. The scale of destruction and displacement in Bihar was much higher than that caused by the Tsunami in 2004. Declared as a national calamity by the Government, Bihar floods turned the once green fields in an expanse of land covered by sand and stagnated water. The unimaginable catastrophe left an estimated three million people displaced. For days after the calamity, news channels showed thousands of villagers migrating with belongings on their heads, holding on to their animals as they walked the flooded roads. Victims were seen exchanging their live stock for a boat ride to safety.

People were forced to take refuge on embankments, highways, rooftops or any higher place to escape the raging floods. The immediate need was to move them to

A team of volunteers including Kantilal Ostwal (Sillod), Deepak Parakh (Chandrapur) and Babubhai Oswal (Khopoli) along with teachers and students of Wagholi Educational and Rehabilitation Center (WERC) provided relief in the districts of Madhepura, Saharsa, Purnea and Supaul...

safer areas, provide ready-to-eat food, clean drinking water, medicines and shelter.

The first team of volunteers of the Bharatiya Jain Sanghatana (BJS) reached two of the worst-hit areas, on September 1, 2008. The base office was set up at Saharsa with local volunteers to manage. The team surveyed the

The Kosi embankments were built in late 1950s to retain the Koshi River which is a transboundary river between Nepal and India and is one of the largest tributaries of the Ganga. According to the agreement with Nepal, the responsibility of maintaining these embankments was vested in the Government of Bihar...3 Floods are considered the normal feature of Bihar in the months of monsoon but this time, it has leashed the unprecedented devastation...

area, took stock of the disaster and made a plan of action for extending help to victims in the submerged villages around Kusava village. By then, more than 20,000 persons were relocated from the surrounding villages. Distribution of food packets, clothes and medicines started immediately. Volunteers also assisted about 25,000 people,

stranded in 15 to 20 villages like Ranipur, Jamuha, Idrahi, Rauta, Kusalahi, Parihari, Sukharul, Pohbara and Haribola, moving them to the a safe location in Kusava village.

Facing many trials and tribulation every-day, the team of volunteers continued providing relief to the needy. The teams kept moving from Saharsa to Kusava everyday using roads that were badly damaged by the floodwaters as vehicles often got stuck on the flooded roads. It took them more than three hours to cover the 50 kilometres distance from Saharsa to Kusava.

Floods are considered the normal feature of Bihar in the months of monsoon but this time, it has leashed the unprecedented devastation...

The picture was grim in Kusava village of Madhepura district. The intensity of the floods continued to rise until the breach

got plugged by the end of January 2009. Already difficult living conditions were made worse with the bad weather, heavy rains and an extended monsoon. Thanks to the incessant rains, a bridge between villages Sitapur and Gitapur was about to collapse and that would have made it difficult to maintain a link and reach people.

BJS opened a Help Centre near the Nepal border and distributed food and medicines to about 3,000 people. The conditions were so difficult that most of the voluntary agencies working in the area had left the scene. Villagers from Madhepura district pleaded with volunteers asking them not to leave them or their village since they had no one else to support. Not even a single Primary Health Center was functional in about the 33-km of area around

the PHC. The only other PHC in the area was found abandoned and had only a small packet of medicines.

Meanwhile, people were suffering from throat, stomach and eye infections mainly caused by the flood waters. A group led by Dr Abhijit Vaidya and Dr Nitin Kelkar.

By October, the need to distribute food and clothing had minimised and the focus shifted to providing medical care. At Bellari in Madhepura district, the medical camp established in September, continued to provide medical care. Dr Kishore Kawadia from Pune volunteered his time and expertise to provide medical care to more than 800 people in Bellari. Another team of doctors from Sane Guruji Hospital in Pune spent more than a week at the camp, while yet another team of three volunteers from Nagpur provided support to doctors at the camp along with volunteers from the local Jain community. Generous donation of medicines by Emcure and Pune Merchants Chamber helped to meet some needs at the medical camps.

Despite the ensuing chaos, BJS set up a kitchen in the camps to provide freshly cooked food to about 3000 persons per day. Initially, the volunteers were pre-occupied in distribution of fresh food, food-grains, clothing and medicines. BJS distributed 5000 packets containing ready-to-eat snack, sugar, candles and matchboxes.

Donations came in from Pune in the form of about 500 big cartons full of clothes, which were distributed

along with 1000 home kits to 10,000 individuals. Each one of these kits contained a set of clothes for a family, besides kitchen and dining utensils to enable a family to start a temporary kitchen. Donations came from the most unexpected quarters. Engineer unit of the Army donated 100 kits of bucket, utensils, blankets, etc, for the flood victims.

An ambulance, donated by the Kesar Gulab Munot Newaskar, a trust run by the K G Munot family in Pune and Ahmednagar, was flagged on October 17 to the camp in Saharsa to be used as a mobile hospital. Abhay Munot, trustee of the K G Munot Newaskar, Rajeev Sabade of Sakal Media Group and Prafulla Parakh, CEO, BJS, were in Saharsa on October 22, to inaugurate the mobile hospital. Pune-based Nichrome and Thorat Milk Dairy donated 5,000 litres of fresh milk. Packaged milk with a shelf life of upto six months was dispatched by train to Bihar. The milk was distributed to children at the Sumrit Kanya Mahavidyalaya, Pratapganj, Supaul, by Roopnarayan Yadav, a senior official from the Development Office.

At the end of two months, shelter, food and clothing had been disbursed in sufficient quantities. Distribution channels were functioning smoothly. What was falling short was medical care. The focus of BJS was to reach medical assistance and care to all locations, including the remote ones. A dire need was being felt for medical staff and medicines. Though there were government doctors

available at the block level, there was a severe shortage of medicines.

The local Jain community has always been active in such major devastations. A meeting was organised by the Jain Samaj on October 10, 2008. On the agenda was the guidance for the formation of a Sanghatana, as also, the modalities for distribution of relief material. By mid-November, Kantilal Jain and Shrimal met with Udyot Kumar Kothari, Tikamchand Shrimal and Anil Bhandari of Ganpatganj. Also present at this meeting was Pramodchand Bothra from Chhatapur.

They weighed the pros and cons of establishing a medical camp in the marooned village of Chhatapur and Pratapganj. On the same day, they went to Pratapganj and met Manmal Parakh, Sampatlal Chhajed, Hanumanmal Ghodawat, Vijay Raj Bhadani and Vijayraj Chhajed. They arrived at the consensus to move the camps to Pratapganj and Chhatapur.

These camps were moved to Pratapganj and Chhatapur in November. These areas were still water-logged. Chhatapur had no access by road, as it was surrounded by water and remained cut off. It took almost two to three hours by boat to reach Chhatapur. The medical camp at Pratapganj was inaugurated on November 21 in presence of the officers of the Block Development Office and members of the Jain community.

Meanwhile, Taj Bahadur Singh Baid arranged a meeting of the Jain community at Pratapganj. At this meeting, the responsibility was vested on Udyout Kumar Kothari and Tikamchand Shrimal, to connect with other social service organisations and the local people to establish an organisation for social service by local Jain community.

The mobile facility was equipped to provide medical care to eight clusters of panchayats, which covered all the 19 remote villages. The mobile medical facility was planned to camp for two days at a location and then move to the next and cover all eight clusters in rotation, returning back to the first location on the 17th day. Two medical teams, one at Pratapganj and the other manning the mobile camp, had of a doctor, a paramedic, a helper and a driver, each. The team at Chhatapur camp did not need the driver, as there were no roads to drive on. The need for medical support was so great that it was decided that the camps continue until the end of February 2009. On an average, about 1000 people availed of medical attention per day at the five camps.

Prafulla Parakh also prepared a list of the diseases afflicting the local people and also arranged for bulk purchase of relevant medicines at wholesale rates from Patna.

Nitish Kumar, Chief Minister of Bihar, visited the camp and was impressed with the work done. Sharad Yadav, National President of JDU and Narendra Yadav,

Minister for Revenue and Land Development, also visited the camps on separate occasions and acknowledged and appreciated the work done.

The local people also expressed their gratefulness for the help provided to them, especially the people from remote, inaccessible areas where volunteers went braving the flood waters, heavy rains and oppressive heat.

The breach in the embankment was completely plugged by the end of January 2009. People, especially from areas marooned due to water logging, continued to use the camp. Health and hygiene was a serious issue. BJS organised check-ups with the help of government doctors and distributed medicines at mobile health camps. BJS with Sakal Relief Fund continues to provide medical care through the medical camps at Pratapganj and Chhatapur. Assessing the need for medical care, it was decided to keep the camps till February 28, 2009.

A blessing in disguise

Taking every sad story to a happy ending, the Wagholi Education Rehabilitation Centre is a great source of inspiration for the disaster-affected as well as those who have been helping them...

The devastating earthquake of Killari, Sastur in Latur districts of Maharashtra, in 1993 orphaned about 5000 children who were between one and thirteen years of age.

Though the calamity meant a big loss for the children, the incident gave birth to a facility that was going to prove as a boon for children facing similar difficulties in the future.

The Wagholi Education & Rehabilitation Centre (WERC) has lived upto expectations and has emerged as a complete solution for overall rehabilitation of orphaned and destitute children.

Aiming at holistic development of children was the need of the hour. Hence a carefully crafted, judicious mix of effective academics, exposure to co-curricular subjects and extra-curricular activities was necessary. While developing the programmes holistic educational delivery approach was considered in order to bring about a paradigm shift in educational rehabilitation concept and prepare the children to be ‘future ready’ under the unique WERC.

Over the years, the WERC Project has been 100 per cent successful and is considered to be giving proven results. All the desired results are being achieved and today, this project stands as a source of inspiration for all the schools and educational institutes in and around the city.

Major objectives of the WERC project

- To rehabilitate orphan and destitute children affected by the earthquake
- To provide food, shelter, clothing, education, medical and health support for a period of ten years
- To provide education and vocational training so that they can, if they so desire, return to their village and contribute to the socio economic upliftment of the area
- To provide emotional support to reduce traumatic effect
- To provide clean safe environment for all-round progress
- To provide adequate facilities for extra-curricular development
- To provide moral and value based support
- To help making these boys responsible citizens by instilling in them sense of responsibility
- To train these children to enable them to provide help in similar disasters in the future

The concept of the centre took shape after it was observed that, the empty minds of these children would lead them away from education and towards destructive activities. If left out without any mental activity, they

Former President of India, Dr AP J Abdul Kalam, interacted with many young, inquisitive minds during his visit to the centre. Along with eminent officials, he praised the mammoth efforts of the BJS towards helping children carve a promising future

would brood over the calamity in their hearts and it would make them magnify the disaster; finally translating itself in an irreparable psychological damage. It could also make them indulge in self-pity and render them incapable of self-reliance and self help. This would in turn result in a very low self-esteem.

The WERC was a major step towards bringing these children back to education. The slightest delay in getting them back to school would have ruined their future. A large number of school would have dropped out of schools or would have gone astray. An initial study prompted BJS to focus its activities, mainly on educational rehabilitation of children, who had lost their parents and families.

The WERC started off with 1200 children, who had lost their families and needed immediate attention. Taking full responsibility of the children, BJS also submitted an undertaking ensuring that all care would be taken for the well-being of the children. Within merely 21 days, from the day of the earthquakes at Latur and Usmanabad, 1200 orphaned children were shifted from the devastated regions of Killari and Sastur to Pune.

Life has moved on – as it always does – since the devastating earthquake of 1993 but the calamity left behind many questions about our preparedness in dealing with such disasters...

Most state governments are not serious about disaster management even after the country has suffered major national calamities from time to time. State governments need to not only react with greater speed and efficiency when a disaster strikes but also spread greater public awareness about disaster management...

Two years ago, the BJS had commissioned internationally-acclaimed scientist, P Basak, to prepare a disaster mitigation plan for the Konkan region of Maharashtra, which is affected by floods annually. The report was prepared and a panel involving bureaucrats, social workers and NGOs finalised Basak's report and submitted it to the state government. Sadly, the Maharashtra government has done nothing about it. The effort was made in order to mitigate the sufferings of the people of Konkan. The state government needs to act on Basak's report...

Spread over 10 acres of land, the centre serves as a permanent solution to cater to the needs of various disasters in Maharashtra and beyond. Thanks to a recommendation from the Government of Maharashtra, the World Bank supported the construction of WERC. The centre has a large state-of-the art building equipped with

all requisite facilities like hostels, laboratories, classrooms, library and more importantly, caring staff.

After the successful rehabilitation of 1200 children at the beginning, the WERC welcomed with open arms 50 children from Jabalpur who were relocated to Pune after an earthquake. Around 400 children from the Melghat malnutrition affected area also benefitted from the WERC. In addition, 50 orphaned children are brought in every year from the rural parts of Maharashtra.

And the story of the WERC does not end here. As a matter of fact, the WERC will continue to provide a happy ending to every possible sad story created by a disaster in India.

Results of the project

Complete rehabilitation of the children.

Most of the children, educated in this rehabilitation center have been education upto graduation. Most of them have taken up professional education and have created a future for themselves. Many of these children have supported subsequent relief and rehabilitation activities, thus helping people get the actual benefit of their own experiences.

Managed professionally by a team of seasoned academicians and specialists, WERC aimed at devoting itself wholly and solely to the betterment of the children under its care.

The children have got a chance to contribute to the society in a meaningful and constructive manner.

Disasters have had a devastating impact on various parts of the country. They have also resulted in emergence of strong establishments like the Bharatiya Jain Sanghatana, armed with a nation-wide team of volunteers, equipped with proper training, strong infrastructure and resources to face any similar calamity in the future.