

Swami Vivekananda Integrated Rural Health Centre

Newsletter

(May, June, July and August 2006)

Big Strides on the Growth Path

At the outset, we are pleased to announce some recent developments that enabled us to climb several notches in our aim to bring world-class medical services to our brethren in the backward regions around us.

The first one is the upgradation of our eye hospital's hi-tech wing, with the addition of more essential equipment, made possible through a generous donation from the Infosys Foundation. The other great news is the induction of a teleconference/telemedicine unit which will provide a hotline for our hospital with specialists around the state/country, for emergency consultations.

Revered Swami Japanandaji's meetings with Sri Rajashekhara Reddy, Chief Minister and Sri Rosaiah, Health Minister of Andhra Pradesh, is another bit of important news. These were in connection with the proposals to expand our health care services in AP, and the State's offer to handover the management of the PHC at Gudibanda to us.

SVIRHC in association with the Damian Foundation (DFIT) has been nominated as one of the three centers for Disability Prevention and Medical Rehabilitation (Leprosy) programme in Karnataka by DGHS, Govt. of India. It places on us the weighty responsibility of monitoring the government-run RCS programme in the five districts of Kolar, Chikkamagalur, Chitradurga, Davanagere and Tumkur. We have also been chosen to lead the HIV/TB awareness programme in Tumkur Dt. by DGHS - again a special recognition and responsibility bestowed on us. Read on for elaborate accounts of all these, and more!

Thanks to More Hi-tech Equipment Inducted? Our Eye Hospital Now Matches A Research Centre Courtesy: Sudha Murthy's Concerned Involvement

Our well-wishers remember that during the last few months, a new hi-tech unit was added to the Sharada Devi Eye Hospital at a considerable cost of about 50 lakh rupees, through the generous help of Infosys Foundation. And it was Smt. Sudha Murthy, the chairperson of the Foundation, whose initiative, deep concern and understanding made it possible. Our consultants had, however, suggested further strengthening of the hospital's technological base with additional equipment, and we went back to her for the funds. Dr. M. Maiya, frcp, frcs, who did a detailed appraisal of the project for Infosys Foundation, came up with a very favourable report, and Smt. Sudha-true to her spontaneity-had no hesitation in giving the approval. Thus we were able to procure some most modern equipment like a Phaeco (from Thoshbro, Switzerland) and green laser (Zeiss, Germany) worth another Rs. 50 lakh. Now this state-of-the-art setup, coupled with the requisite manpower, has elevated our institution to the status of a teaching/research centre. It is a matter of great honour as well as responsibility for us. Needless to say, the credit for this, and for all the good that will flow from these to the needy villagers, belongs in large measure to Smt. Sudha Murthy. We are deeply indebted to her thank and pray for her, especially for her strong spirit of identification with a rural Indian cause.

This hi-tech eye hospital, located in a most neglected area and offering the best of services at zero cost, is already drawing hundreds of patients daily even from far off places. The hospital activity has increased manifold, and to manage the on-rush, the service of many more eye surgeons is being enlisted.

Telemedicine Unit Provides Instant Connectivity Knowledge is, literally, the Cutting Edge!

Technology is playing an increasingly important role in every walk of life, and communication is the backbone of technology. A good connectivity now makes a major difference in the delivery of results. This is particularly true in case of a remotely located medical service centre like ours, hampered by poor road/rail network which curtails the movement of men and materials. Now, with the commissioning of an exclusive satellite-enabled Telemedicine/Teleconference facility at our hospital complex, a major hurdle is overcome. It is an uninterrupted, high-speed medium for video, audio and data transfer. This will allow the resident doctors to confer with experts located anywhere in the country, or abroad, and make instant decisions. This is a real boon in case of emergencies, greatly reducing the risks and increasing efficiencies. Also, routine video consultation with specialists is soon going to be realized, saving the villagers plenty of effort, time, and money, while affording them access to the top professionals. True; a hi-tech facility of this type is, subject to certain stringent conditions, available to any hospital, provided it can pay for the high cost of installation, and the even higher running costs-in other words, if it is being run on a commercial basis! Obviously, for a charitable institution like ours, the burden is too much. The annual expenses could run into a couple of lakh rupees, if we had to pay for them.

Here, again, our old friends came to our rescue. It was Dr. Devi Shetty of Narayana Hrudayalaya who advised us in this matter, convinced why it's a must for us, and even offered their own setup to us as a stopgap arrangement. He also took us to the right people at ISRO, the service provider, with a request for making available the bandwidth free of cost.

So we went to the chairman of ISRO (Indian Space Research Organization) Mr. Madhavan Nair, and Mr. Sathyamurthy, programme officer, telemedicine division, at 'Antariksha Bhavan', Bangalore. It was indeed our great pleasure and privilege to be in the precincts of ISRO, a pride of modern India, and even more so to be meeting its top scientists. After we made a presentation of SVIRHC's past and ongoing activities, and with the likes of Dr. Devi Shetty espousing our cause, it did not take much longer for the two senior bureaucrats and their aides to be convinced of the worthiness of our proposal. ISRO conceded our appeal for providing the bandwidth free of cost, subject, of course, to stringent conditions of usage. Undoubtedly, it is a singular gesture of benevolence from a Central government organization to SVIRHC, for which we are immensely thankful. Particularly, we are very indebted to Mr. Madhavan Nair for the ease with which he gave the clearance, and to Mr. Satyamurthy for his very helpful attitude.

Meanwhile, the telemedicine unit costing about five lakh rupees, was very graciously donated by our another trusted friend of ours, Sri Gowrishankar Agarwalji, chairman of Kemwell Pvt. Ltd. and the Bagaria Foundation. We are pleased to name it the Bagaria Telemedicine Unit.

This being a sophisticated utility needs to be handled with responsibility. Therefore it has been assigned to the special care of our chief ophthalmic consultant Dr. Ravi Krishna, and Dr. T S Mohan, Ph.D., a computer science specialist.

Spiritual Activities

9 July: Swami Jagadatmanandaji, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and presently President of Sri Ramakrishna Sharadashrama, Ponnampet, arrived at the Ashrama and visited the hospital campus. The revered Swamiji, well-known through his books on good living as also for his oratory, treated the devotees to a delightful satsanga at the Ashrama.

11-13 July: On the occasion of Sri Gurupoornima, a series of Harikatha recitals by Sant Bhadrhiri Achyutadasji, the veteran Harikatha Vidwan, was held for three days at the Ashrama, providing rare religious bliss to hundreds of devotees.

Diary of Events

5 July: 'Patanjali Yoga Kendra' represents a group of dedicated men and women of Pavagada, propagating our time-honoured values, especially yoga-based living. Having built an exclusive auditorium 'Yoga Bhavana' in the town, they requested Rev. Swami Japanandaji to lend his holy presence at the dedication function and inaugurate it. A large number of devotees from all over Karnataka, including many dignitaries, were present. Rev. Swamiji, in his address, dwelt at length on the roots of the Yoga system founded. He described how it was developed by seers of extraordinary prowess, and what an essential role it can have in our day-to-day life. Pointing out Yoga's rising popularity in the West, he said, it enables a man to develop his inner strength and paves the way for his progress in spiritual pursuits. SJ heartily complimented the members of Patanjali Yoga Kendra for their spirited work.

29 to 31 May: SJ, in the company of Drs. K. R. Govinda and G. Visveswaraiah, as also other staff of svirhc, took part in the annual Project Holders' (Damien Foundation of India) meeting held at Ooty.

10 June: As a part of its leprosy eradication projects, svirhc continues to run the Leprosy Colony near Davanagere city, adopted by it. Through the 'Food for Patients' plan, sponsored by Mr. Vijay Kirpalani and Mr. Hayden Hamilton of USA, the grocery requirement of its patients is fulfilled by us on a monthly basis. On the 10th June, Rev. Swamiji accompanied by a team of medical and paramedical visited this place for a personal interaction with the residents.

8 August: Supporting poor schoolchildren through financial assistance is one of our many projects. On August 8, at a function held in our hospital complex, the selected students, studying in different remote villages, were awarded prizes and financial assistance to continue their education. This programme is being implemented through the Pavagada Welfare Association.

22 June: Swami Japanandaji along with Dr. Govinda, Consultant, Technical Support Teams of Tumkur and Bangalore Urban districts, visited ISRO to meet Sri Satyamurthy, Programme Officer, Telemedicine & Teleconference, and Sri Bhaskaran Narayan Director, Satellite Division, to discuss issues related to the installation of telemedicine unit at svirhc.

25-28 July: Reconstructive surgery was conducted on six leprosy patients by the visiting dfit specialist Dr. Jacob Mathew, MA PoD. This took the total number of such specialized surgeries done here so far to 85. The patients were put through a follow up course of about 45 days at the hospital, including physiotherapy, provided by dfit.

17th August: At the invitation of All India Radio, Bangalore, Dr. G. Visveswaraiah, our Chief Consultant, spoke on "Tuberculosis and its Cure". He described the current early detection methods, and assured in clear terms that TB is a curable disease. The well illustrated talk, delivered in simple language, has received wide acclaim from the listeners.

Distinguished Visitors

7th May: Dr. Etinee De Clerque, a senior medical advisor from the Damien Foundation, Belgium, and Dr. P. Vijayakumaran, Chief Medical Advisor, dfit, Chennai, arrived for a project review and exchange of views.

28th June: Dr. Ashwin (Consultant Ophthalmologist, Narayana Nethralaya) and Dr. Vijay Singh (Healthcare Relations Officer, Narayana Hrudayalaya), came over for a discussion on the on-going activities of close involvement, and assured their continued support and assistance.

10th July: Sri K. Sachidananda Murthy, a close associate and well-wisher of ours, brought along his friend Sri Sridhar Vajpey (USA) for a visit to Pavagada. While Sri Murthy expressed his extreme happiness to see the growth taking place, Mr. Sridhar Vajpey was all praise for Team- svirhc for the committed service, which is directly reaching the most needy and underprivileged ones.

Ms. Geethanjali Vajpey (Mr.Sridhar's daughter), a college student from USA, who has had this urge for a feel of rural Indian life, too came and stayed with us a month. It was not a matter of observation but of hands-on experience for her, as she got drawn into the hospital activities. Geethanjali said she chose svirhc, from among the many institutions she came across, for its real commitment towards the suffering poor. For the rest of us, it was very instructive, not amusing, to watch a teenager from the US become one with our hospital team and be involved in all the service without any ado. We would say it was a fine example for other students, including the NRI ones, to follow.

17-21 July: Dr. Prabhakara Reddy from the UK, a great supporter of ours, came calling stayed with us a week, visiting villages and watch all the work going on under the auspices of svirhc. That inspired him to come up with a donation of some special intensive care cots. These were very gratefully received and set up at our heart care clinic.

26 July: Dr. Cheluvharaj, District Health & Family Welfare Officer (Tumkur) visited svirhc and the Venkatapura phc for a review meeting.

Epilepsy & Neuro- Disorder Detection Camp - Courtesy Dr. Devi Shetty

In one more kind gesture for our poor brethren, Dr. Devi Prasada Shetty volunteered to conduct an epilepsy & neurological disorder detection camp through his Narayana Institute of Neurosciences. It was held on 8th July 2006 at the svirhc campus. Dr. Rajesh B. Iyer, md, dm (Neuro.), headed the team and was assisted by Dr. Vijay Singh, md. Everything from consultation, check-up, diagnoses, and medicines were provided free of cost to the needy, by the Narayana Institute. It was a godsend for nearly 250 patients, especially those who need anti-epilepsy drugs, but cannot afford them due to poverty. The Institute has promised the holding of follow-up camps in due course.

SVIRHC-DFIT chosen as a national level NGO to take up new tasks

1. HIV/TB Awareness Programme

The director general of health services (DGHS), Govt. of India, has placed a new challenge on svirhc/dfit of handling its HIV/TB programme in the Tumkur district. It is a unique project of HIV/TB awareness, shared by only three other NGOs in Karnataka. In a prelude to this decision, a national seminar was recently held at the Human Resource Institute, Hyderabad, to which Swami Japanandaji, Chairman, svirhc and Dr. G. Visveswaraiah, Chief Medical Consultant, had been invited. Mrs. Sujatha Rao, dg, naco, chaired the meeting and had a wide range of discussion with the representatives from other states.

2. DPMR Centre

The DGHS (Leprosy Division) has also selected svirhc-dfit combine as the center for Disability Prevention and Medical Rehabilitation (DPMR). Ours is the one of the three select centers in Karnataka, and we are in charge of five districts of Kolar, Chikkamagalur, Chitradurga, Davanagere, and Tumkur. The main job of the center is to monitor and oversee the RCS programme undertaken by the respective district health & family welfare office. The trainings and motivation programmes has to be undertaken by the center to all the medical officers and health faculties. The Damien Foundation has provided all the necessary human resource to undertake this responsibility. The center also has to undertake the reconstructive surgery programme for the needy leprosy patients of these five districts. The first phase of training programme has already begun under the guidance of Damien Foundation. Dr. K. R. Govinda, Dr. G. Visveswaraiah have involved themselves with the team to make this programme a success.

SJ meets Dr. Y. S. Rajashekhara Reddy, Chief Minister, Andhra Pradesh

On the evening of 30 August, Rev. Swami Japanandaji met Dr. Y. S. Rajashekhara Reddy, Chief Minister, Andhra Pradesh in Hyderabad, for a discussion on the proposed health projects to be handled by svirhc in the remote areas of Madakashira, AP. The Chief Minister expressed his happiness that svirhc, already a household name in the region, had come forward with this initiative, and assured Swamiji all the necessary support to establish and run the health centre. Mr. N. Raghuvveera Reddy, Minister for Agriculture, was also present at the meeting.

Later Rev. Swamiji also met Mr. Rosaiah, the minister for finance and health, who was also very glad with the proposals and discussed the details. The proposed project of taking over the PHC of Gudibanda, Madakasira Mandal, has been finalized; it will

be first of its kind in the State of AP, as it was in Karnataka, where a government-run PHC is to be handed over to an NGO for running and monitoring. Mr. Rosaiah, too, assured all the necessary support from his Government.

Technical Support Teams - A Report

1. Tumkur TST

We are glad to bring to your notice that our TSTs engaged in Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (rntcp) implementation in Bangalore Urban and Tumkur districts, backed by DFIT, are rendering good service. The way they are working in tandem with the government health departments is a model for the Public-Private Participation (PPP) concept.

During the third quarter of 2006-07 the following activities were taken up by the Tumkur team:

Under the leadership of Dr. K. R. Govinda, two special programmes were conducted by district health authorities (during 16-18 and 29-31 August). The training based on National Leprosy Eradication Programme was attended by 55 participants belonging to different units of the health department.

As a part of the district rntcp, the TST is also involved in training the health staff in treatment of TB. A training programme was held on 23 August, under the leadership of Mr. Gurusiddaiah, DTC. Mr. Ravichandrakumar was one of the facilitators of the programme, which benefitted 34 participants.

2. Bangalore TST

This unit, working exclusively for rntcp, and supported by Damien Foundation, is playing a great supportive role in the on-going programme in the Bangalore urban district.

Swami Japanandaji's UK 'Pilgrimage'

Swami Japanandaji was in Europe again this August at the invitation of friends and admirers, who were eager to have him in their midst, hear him speak and sing and be inspired. Swamiji's agenda was quite hectic. Apart from addressing a host of formal and informal meetings in the UK - creating awareness in the Hindu brethren through talks and Satsangs. One important aspect of his journey was to be at the consecration ceremony of a grand new Venkateshwara Temple in UK, as per the wish of the organizers.

The enlightened Hindu community of Birmingham, UK, has just built for itself a new meeting ground, a converging point of faith, devotion, sentiment and vedantic values. It is the Venkateshwara temple of Tividale, Birmingham - it has cost about Rs. 50 crore so far - now the biggest in Europe. Hanumanji, Vighneshwara and Muruga are, apart from Lord Venkateshwara and Padmavati, the principal deities at this Dravidian-style temple, a replica of the famous Tirupati shrine. It has taken over 30 years to complete, and the team of trustees headed by Dr. V. P. Narayana Rao has done a commendable job. The consecration ceremonies were held from 23rd to 27th August 2006, Swami Japanandaji being one of the special invitees. On the opening day, the entire atmosphere at Tividale seemed to be charged with devotion for the Lord, and a sense of brotherhood. The sight of the thronging thousands awe-inspiring. Everything was planned and executed to perfection. The yajnasala, with an ensemble of holy men, appeared as an abode of saints and seers of ancient India. The Nadaswara group from Tanjavur played very melodious tunes, virtually re-creating a South India! The head of ceremonies was Sri Narayanam Satyanarayanacharulu, a past master of Agamic rituals. Trained at the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, he is a staunch protagonist of Indian traditions, and an author of many important books on these subjects. Fifteen other priests had been specially drawn from different places of India and abroad. The 'Kumbhabhishekam', an important part of the ritual, was a visual treat. The holy 'dhooma' (smoke) rising from the homakundas with its peculiar odour, filled up and cleansed everything - inanimate and animate. It was a wonderful reminder of the rich and holy traditions of Hinduism dharma, and overall, an unforgettable experience for everyone.

Rev. Swamiji believes that the Tividale Balaji temple would become an important center of the Sanatana Dharma, casting a powerful influence of peace on the West, and silently passing on the message of India's eternal values.

While in the UK, Swamiji gave many talks and conducted Satsangs with devotional music at places like Austin, Oldham, Manchester, and London. On the 15th August he was with some very distinguished men at Oldham Metro Rotary Club. The members of this club, it may be recalled, led by Dr. R. S. Suryanarayana Setty, have been staunch supporters of svirhc, and regularly hosted SJ in the UK. Mr.?, President, Oldham Metro extended to Swamiji a warm welcome. SJ was indeed happy to confer with all the members and update them on the progress of the various projects. He also met Rtns. Dr. Raj Jethani and Mr. Jim Mathews who evinced a lot of interest in the Pavagada projects, accompanied by Dr. Setty.

On the evening of Krishnashtami he led a special Satsang the at the Hindu Mahasabha, Austin. As he began rendering the songs of Meera, Suradas, and Kabirdas in his mellifluous voice, over a hundred men and women sat transcended to the world of love.

Then in his talk SJ described the bhakti school of Vedanta, through which umpteen sadhaks have reached the goal supreme. The present world needs nothing but pure love as practised by the Gopikas of Brindavan. We can evolve, become true human beings by adopting universal brotherhood as taught by the Lord. It is high time men started loving each other, which will neutralize the poisonous effects of hatred, greed and selfishness pervading the earth, said SJ. Further, he stressed, man shall himself become divine by studying and practising the divine love.

This Satsang coincided, very befittingly, with the conclusion of the 'Bhagavata Saptaha' conducted at the venue over the previous week by Sri Mahesh Bhajji, recognized as a great devotee and scholar.

The Jalaram Mandir of Austin, too, celebrated the Janmashtami (17th August) with the traditional gaiety. At the request of Sri Mahesh Bhajji, SJ conducted a bhajan and discourse programme for the benefit of a big gathering of devotees.

The Oldham Hindu Association, with the beautiful temple it has built, has verily become the nerve centre of Hindu culture and religion. Many hundreds of people assemble here to inhale the solace and peace that the temple offers. Dr. Suryanarayana Setty and the other temple authorities had invited Swamiji for a satsanga on the 19th Saturday. In his discourse SJ delineated how our rich cultural values can be applied universally for the good of humanity. It was a big gathering of discerning listeners. In his vote of thanks Sriman Gorasia, secretary of the Association's Religious unit, commended SJ's attempt to project and preach the Hindu principles as a common base for life. On behalf of the association, he extended to Swamiji a standing invitation for a yearly visit. This was, incidentally, SJ's 12th visit to the Oldham temple.

On Sunday 20th, SJ was fortunate to be at the Ramakrishna Vedantique Centre, Bournend, amidst the Krishna Janmashtami celebrations - it was a great feeling to be again in the affectionate company of most revered Swami Dayatmanandaji, head of the centre, and an old mentor of his in the Ramakrishna Order. In the evening the Janmashtami spirit seemed to pervade the Ashrama. While Swami Dayatmanandaji performed Lord Krishna's pooja, SJ conducted the special bhajan session. A good number of devotees enjoyed the watching the Archana, while listening to Sri Krishnanama sankeertanam.

On the 23rd SJ was hosted by the doctor-duo of Sri Jayaram and Smt. Shantha Jayaram at their Wednis home. It was this blessed couple, greatly devoted to SJ and his mission, who had organized his programme at the consecration ceremony of Venkateshwara temple Tividale, Birmingham.

Among the many good old friends that Swami Japanandaji met during the UK-visit were Dr. Ramamurthy and Smt. Vatsala Ramamurthy, Smt. Mohana Narasimhan, Mr. Srinidhi and Smt. Kumudini Srinidhi, and Dr. Muddu who have all extended their unstinted support to the Pavagada cause.

Rev. SJ was back in India, after a very successful and eventful European tour, on 26th August 2006.

SJ at the Chinmaya Mission HQ, Mumbai

Swami Japanandaji was very pleased to be at Sandeepani Sadhanalaya, Mumbai from 3rd to 6th August 06 the headquarters of the renowned Chinmaya Mission. Dr. G. V. Raghu and his wife Geeta, SJ's old acquaintances, had invited him there on behalf of Most Rev. Swami Tejomayanandaji Maharaj, President, Chinmaya Mission for a special discourse and bhajan session.

After Swami Tejomayanandaji, an erudite scholar and musician, had himself welcomed and introduced him to the audience, SJ sang bhajans for half-an-hour and chose to speak on Eternal Values. SJ deemed it a blessing to be sitting in the holy presence of the great Swami and in the divine abode of Sandeepani.

An update on Children's Heart Care Clinic

Five surgeries during May-August 2006

Our esteemed readers are aware that the above project - a novel undertaking of SVIRHC in association with Narayana Hrudayalaya - was launched on the Gandhi Jayanti day last year (2005), to make available state-of-the-art cardiac care facilities to the unfortunate children of Pavagada. We are extremely glad to report that the project is well on course, having saved many a young life from extinction. The latest batch - the fourth so far - of six children is triumphantly back home after braving open-heart surgery at the Narayana Hrudayalaya, thanks to SVIRHC's timely initiative and the benevolence of Dr. Shetty.

The Gems Rescued and Recovered?

Chi. Phaneendra, son of Sri Lakshminarayana of Roppa village, Pavagada, is a toddler of just five years, but his future was already clouded by a heart problem. When he was brought to our Centre in a weak state and was diagnosed of the serious ailment, his parents were dejected. They thought his son had slipped off into the fate's hands. However, Swami Japanandaji's consolation and assurance gave them courage. Subsequently, following visits to Narayana Hrudayalaya for examinations,

Phaneendra was operated on, and true to Rev. Swamiji's words, has come back successfully - into the safe arms of his mother.

May he live a hundred years!

'Amrita' means the deathless, but ironically, the one-year-old girl Sai Amrita from the border town of Madakashira was born with a heart problem. The little soul seemed to be quickly drifting to her end since her very birth. Well, that was not to be, and Dr. Devi Shetty ensured that she was snatched back to live a full life. Now the child is spending happy days with parents in her hometown, ending all their woes.

Syed Peer was a dejected boy. Just 16, he was crippled by a cardiac malignancy. When his father Syed Babu, a rickshaw driver, learnt of its implication, and that the cost of treatment would exceed lakhs of rupees, he had no more hope. But not all was lost! Quick follow up at the Sri Ramakrishna Heart Care Clinic, followed by words by assurance, and subsequent surgery at Narayana Hrudayalaya saved the lad, enabling him to be a normal boy. As a grateful Syed Babu says, "It was none but God himself who rescued my son in the form of this Ramakrishna hospital and Dr. Devi Shetty. I'm so happy that he will be like everyone else." Ramanjaneya and his wife, residents of Hindupur, AP, did not even have a hunch that their son two-year old Nandish's life was threatened by a serious heart problem. When they brought their feeble boy for investigation, they were shell shocked to hear the doctors' recommendation of immediate open-heart surgery for the infant. Again, it was Swami Japanandaji's comforting words that reassured them. And Dr. Shetty's sure hands ensured that the surgery was completed effortlessly, and Chi. Nandish is now smiling again on the lap of his mother.

Pavagada's Eeranna and wife were an extremely worried couple when they learnt that their dear daughter Bhargavi, 6, needed a major heart surgery to survive. But soon their fears were assuaged and confidence restored by the kind words of Swamiji. And true to the assurance, Bhargavi is back with them after Dr. Shetty performed one more of his miracles on her, without expecting a rupee in return.

Srilatha is the daughter of Chenna Reddy of Boodhibetta village, Pavagada taluk. She was a promising B.A. student, but constant weakness accompanied by severe breathlessness brought her to SVIRHC, Pavagada. The parents, naturally, were stunned to hear that the apple of their eyes needed an open-heart surgery to survive. But, again, their fears and sorrow are all over, as they watch a healthy Srilatha turning back to normal life.

These are among the fifteen souls saved thus far, thanks to Dr. Devi Prasada Shetty and his team's unique initiative. So the names are different, their homes different; but all the Children are fortunate ones. Fortunate not just to survive an early scare to their life, but as Swami Japananda believes, having been touched by Sri Ramakrishna through this institution, they would go on to lead fuller, better and much worthier lives.

Shree Sharadadevi Eye Hospital & Research Centre

Eyesight for the Tiny Tots

'Tamaso ma jyotir gamaya!' 'O, lead me from darkness to light!' is the prayer of the Upanishads. Light and vision - these are essential for earthly life, too. The ability to see light is a great blessing we all take for granted. But, blindness-complete or partial-is a curse which afflicts thousands of unfortunate children, casting a dark shadow on their lives, and making them sore liabilities of the society. It is much more rampant in the remote corners of civilization, like the regions we are in. Which is why for us at SVIRHC, blindness eradication among the rural communities has been among the top priorities and a nonstop venture. As for the quantity and quality of service being carried out through our Sri Sharadadevi Eye Hospital and Research Centre, the statistics and witnesses are ample. However, we like to share with you a few recent instances that are particularly heartwarming. It was the case of kids who overcame blindness, escaping a serious threat to their future.

Five-year old Gayathri is the daughter of Narayanappa and Shivamma of Gundlahally, Pavagada District. Poverty did not bother this couple much, who slugged out their living by hard labour. However, their greatest regret was begetting a child born totally blind. It was as if not just the little daughter's life, but their own lives had become lost in darkness. With neither medical advice and moral support nor monetary help at hand, there was nothing they could do with this burden. After five long years of grief and resignation, they found a glimmer of light in the Shree Sharada Devi Eye Hospital, which reaches out to all and sundry with its offers of best of services at no cost. When the child was brought here, detailed examinations by specialists revealed her problem as 'Bilateral developmental cataract with nystagmus'. As luck would have it, there was a cure for this condition - though a very difficult one! It demanded the use of the state-of-the-art technology, equipment, and expertise, which also meant very high expenditure under normal circumstances - beyond the reach of not just the poor even the middle class. But there was no dithering. We decided that the surgery would be carried out at any cost. The team of well-known specialists Dr. B. N. Balakrishna, Dr. K. Ravikrishna, Dr. J. Krishna Mohan and Dr. Rajashekara Babu performed the complex procedure with absolute precision, and successfully restored sight to the kid. And Dr. Balakrishna revealed that Gayatri had been brought in the nick of time. A delay of another two years would have been too late.

This achievement is indeed a matter of great pride for all of us, as much as it is a priceless gift to the girl. But nothing could describe the joy of her parents!

Chi. Harish is the son of Thippanna and Nanjamma of Jajurayana Halli, Pavagada Tq. A normal school-going boy that he was, suddenly developed a problem that jeopardized his vision in one eye, and soon became completely blind in the eye. When the extremely anxious parents brought him to our super specialty hospital, checks were done on an emergency basis. The condition was diagnosed as 'Traumatic Cataract' and surgery taken up without delay. The prompt action and clinical precision of our doctors ensured that the boy regained his eyesight. Harish is back at the school already, making it all seem just a bad dream with a happy ending for him and the family!

Chi. Nagaveni, another student of a rural school near Pavagada started complaining of pain in an eye, which soon became unbearable. And before further damage was done, her teachers who were well aware of the Sharadadevi Hospital's reputation and its special programmes for children, rushed her there. The doctors, on their part, responded with equal alacrity, performed the surgery after due exams, and the girl was pulled to safety. Now she is back at the school.

These are but a few samples of how our Eye Hospital is brightening up the lives of hundreds of needy students. In fact, we are reaching out to every student in the taluks of Pavagada and Madhugiri through a special project. Already over 61000 children have been screened for general health and eye problems, and each one of them who needed any medical help has been provided free of charge. It is a matter of great satisfaction that we have now brought to the doorsteps of these backward sections, some of the latest technology in eye care, which only specialty hospitals in cities can boast of. Of course, even more precious than the equipment are the men with us - the preeminent doctors and support staff, who are charged with the spirit of service! It is no secret that our Eye Hospital and Research Centre has made rapid strides mainly because of the unstinted help from two agencies - the Tata and the Infosys Foundations. And if there is someone who has to be singled out, it's Mrs. Sudha Murthy, the Chairperson of Infosys Foundation. Her deep concern for the village folk and spirited involvement with our programme has won her a very special place in the hearts of the beneficiaries.

True, the sight of a Gayathri, Nagaveni or Harish gladdens us immensely; but there is no place for complacency. Swami Japananda, the founder-chairman of svirhc, and its driving force, says, "This is just a milestone - we still have a long way to go." One of our next goals, for example, is to extend the school children's eye care service to the entire district of Tumkur. That means raising the bar by several notches, and the task appears quite daunting. But, again, "It's entirely possible; and, by God's grace, we will do it," as Revered Swamiji avers.

**Swami Vivekananda Integrated Rural Health Centre
Hospital Activity Report**

REPORTS AS ON 31-8-2006				
Period	General Outpatients Treated	Health Camps Conducted	Inpatients treated	
			No.	Bed-days
2006	5880	2	988	3891
Since Project inception	173514	204	6158	38257
Tuberculosis		Registered	Cured & Completed Treatment	
1993 – 1997 Under National Tuberculosis System		2767	1115	
1998 – 2002 Under SCC DOTS system		1432	1109	
Under Revised National TB Control Programme (RNTCP) Pavagada & Madhugiri Taluks				
2003		651	513	
2004		722	564	
2005		742	324	
2006		293	-	
Total		6607	3625	
TB cases as on 1-9-2006		594		
Leprosy (as on 31-8-2006)				
Period	Cases registered	Released from Treatment (Cured)	No. of patients on treatment	No. of Reconstructive surgeries done
2006	19	26	19	8
Since Project inception	3295	3387	-	85

SHREE SHARADADEVI EYE HOSPITAL

As on 31-8-2006

Period	No. of camps	No. of outpatients treated	Operations done		
			Cataract	IOL	Total
2005	63	8717	140	740	880
Since project inception	236	39582	1234	3272	4506

EYE PROJECT – SCHOOL SURVEY PROGRAMME

Period/ Year	Schools Surveyed	No. of Students			
		Screened	Treated for Vit. A deficiency	Treated for Visual defects	Provided spectacles
2006 (September)	138	15438	298	274	65
Since project inception	386	61909	1548	817	370