



Jalakkagi Janavedike

Pavagada Taluk, Pavagada - 561 202. Tumkur Dist.,
South India.

Ph : 08136-244030 email:swajapa@yahoo.com



Victory in Pavagada's War for Water under Vivekananda Banner

Swami Japanandaji's 'Bhageeratha Prayatna' results in 'Tungaavatarana'

When Swami Japanandaji arrived in Pavagada taluk some 25 years ago, to execute a project taken up by the Ramakrishna Ashrama of Bengaluru, the stark reality struck him – that religion was not for empty stomachs.

From then onwards it has been an unending war on diseases, maladies, hunger, poverty, ignorance, and other misfortunes, that Japanandaji has carried on, through his institutions of Ramakrishna Sevashrama, SVIRHC (Swami Vivekananda Integrated Rural Health Centre) and Shree Sharadadevi Eye Hospital & Research Centre. Considerable success has been achieved, no doubt, in the areas of Tuberculosis and Leprosy elimination, blindness control and eye-care, as well as in the reach of primary healthcare to most interior parts.

However, one of the worst adversities to haunt this region is the ever-present drought condition, a curse sustained and worsened by human inaction. This has led to severe drinking water scarcity. Added to this, the high fluoride content in the available water has caused untold misery to generations of helpless people. There has been a crying need for potable water. To assuage this situation, several plans were announced and assurances showered by leaders, but water remained just a pipe dream, even while the surrounding villages of Andhra Pradesh came out of a similar situation and began to enjoy their drink of water. Then what has prevented our hapless people on the wrong side of the border from getting their elixir of life? It was quite obvious: Pavagada and its needs have never been a pressing priority for the successive governments.

Ever since his arrival here, Swami Japanandaji has been in his own humble ways quenching the thirst of men as well as livestock. Lately, he backed the people's initiatives to find long-term solutions to this problem and lent his voice to the community which has slowly become more aware and desperate. During the last five years, people came together to demand their due, and rallied around Swamiji to take their fight to the decisive stage. Even though Japanandaji wanted to remain aloof from any activity outside his own sphere, he could not do that in the face of immense popular pressure. Cutting across party lines, people chose him as their leader in their struggle for water. **Finally, Japanandaji conceded their demand to lead them, on one condition—that this would remain a non-political movement, in the name and spirit of Swami Vivekananda.**

The movement gradually crystallized and put forward its demand to the state leadership. In 2012, people's forums of Pavagada organized a long march to Bengaluru, with Swami Japanandaji leading from the front. Hundreds of men walked those 180 kms all the way to the capital, met the then Chief Minister Sri D. V. Sadananda Gowda and the concerned ministers and officials, argued their case strongly and made known their determination to 'Stop not till the goal is reached'.

The organization kept meeting regularly to watch the developments and work out strategies. Recently (early 2015), as the time for preparation of the state Budget neared, the group decided to again meet the chief minister. A detailed plan was prepared, and a huge mass of volunteers joined Japanandaji and some other leaders at Bengaluru on 8th February 2012. A crowd of over 600 men and women including farmers assembled at the Freedom Park (a dedicated place for

organized protests), and a procession was proposed to be taken to meet the CM. However, even though the procession was assured to be totally peaceful and organized, the government did not allow it, but a handful of leaders were asked to meet the CM at his office. The honorable CM did accord a warm welcome to Swami Japanandaji and team and offered all the courtesies. (Needless to say, the government had by now totally assured itself of the non-political nature of this movement, and verified Swami Japanandaji's bona fides!) However, when it came to a commitment to the cause of Pavagada Taluk's drinking water, the CM was non-committal, and just offered to 'be considerate and do all that he could.' Rev Swamiji, at this juncture, took a firm stance not to let go of this golden moment, and made a passionate appeal to the CM. He said that all the previous CMs had been parroting the same words all these years, but it was for Sri Siddaramaiah, who was known to be a pro-poor CM with sympathy for backward peoples, to make this happen—NOW. Rev Swamiji's appeal had a telling effect – as was evident later. The delegation came back with a sense of assurance that their mission was accomplished.

When the State Budget was presented a week later, on the 28th of February, the promise had indeed been kept! A massive and ambitious project to bring the Tungabhadra waters from Bellary district, down to Tumkur District, through a huge pipeline, was announced, supplying water to the parched towns of Kudlgi, Molakalmuru, Challakere and Pavagada, at a cost of Rs. 1400 crores. The drinking water project also has the provision to be turned into an irrigation project, subsequently.

After this announcement was made, the Pavagada people's delegation again met the honorable CM, to thank him and to know the modalities of the project. At the CM's behest, a meeting of the delegates lead by Swami Japanandaji with the Chief Engineer (Irrigation) was arranged. It proved to be a very fruitful meeting with the chief engineer handing over the official plan of action wherein it is specified that the project shall be completed in three years time. The C.E. also assured that he would personally ensure the timely progress and completion of the project.

Further details on the project have indicated the government's resolve to fast track this project. Work is proposed to be begun at both ends of the pipeline, and adequate amounts are being sanctioned.

For all of us, devotees and followers of the Holy Trinity, here is a satisfying feature, which was also an important precondition laid by Japanandaji: To commemorate Swamiji's role in the whole project that would benefit millions of poor peasants for eons to come, this project is to be named after Swami Vivekananda, the great son of the motherland.

Naturally, the entire Pavagada Taluk is ecstatic and grateful, crediting Team Vivekananda headed by Swami Japanandaji for this historic success. For us, however, the gratification lies in completing another mission in the name of Swamiji, and spreading the glory of the Holy Trinity.

**H. V. Vishwanath
Advisor, Media & Information, SVIRHC**