

**COVID-19 Relief Services**  
**By Sri Ramakrishna Sevashrama, Pavagada**  
*Supported by*  
**Infosys Foundation, Bengaluru**

**A brief report**

The Novel Corona virus (Covid-19) pandemic has caused grave disruption to human life throughout the world, and in India since March 2020. HH Swami Japanandaji was quick to assess the shocking impact of this unprecedented disaster, especially on the lives of the very poor communities of the backward taluk of Pavagada, and he started working on plans to counter it, and save them from the worst. The combine of Sri Ramakrishna Sevashrama, Pavagada, spearheaded by Swami Japanandaji, and the renowned altruist Smt. Sudha Murthy of the Infosys Foundation, initiated several relief services, to meet the urgent needs of the afflicted community in many parts of Pavagada Taluk. In fact, many of those measures were path breaking and fit to be models for others.

It may be remembered that Rev Swamiji and Smt. Sudha Murthy have always stood with the fellow human beings at the time of calamities, especially in the Karnataka state. The floods in northern Karnataka last year, the Kerala deluge, Chennai floods, Odisha cyclone – these are some of the recent instances. And on a long term basis, Sri Ramakrishna Sevashrama is steadfastly working for the eradication of TB, Leprosy, and Blindness in association with the Infosys Foundation, and now the same has been extended to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

As everyone knows, Covid-19 is threatening the humanity like never before. The poor daily wage earners in Pavagada were hit particularly hard after the lockdown since 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2020. These men and women laboured hard for their daily bread, living in hutments, or work-in-progress buildings. Many of them are from the distant Bihar, Maharashtra, and north Karnataka. The lockdown robbed them of work, and it meant no money, no food and shelter. They had literally been orphaned with nowhere to go. With neither the money nor transport facilities, they could not even go back to their native places. Many poor people fearing for their lives set home on foot and there are plenty of tragic tales about that.



Gauging the severity of the situation Swamiji swung into action with the help of Infosys Foundation, before any other governmental or NG agency had done so.

The Covid-19 Control Programme initiated by Swami Vivekananda Integrated Rural Health Centre on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020, sponsored by Infosys Foundation, was hugely successful in instilling self-confidence in thousands of people, and has effectively prevented the spread of the dreaded pandemic.

When the project started, Swamiji realized that the first task was to create awareness in the masses, especially the poor and illiterate, and prepare them to protect against the spread of the pandemic.

Awareness camps were held in the town's pockets like Guttahalli, Off-Bande and Adarsha Nagar inhabited mostly by slum dwellers. Posters prepared by artists on the Do's and Dont's were displayed at 22 important points such as the tahsildar's office, police station, the college, and playgrounds. Handbills were also distributed. Health care volunteers, led by Rev Swamiji, explained to them about the



pandemic and the importance of social distancing and hygiene in the fight against the virus. They paid visit to each and every house in the localities and handed over a package of hygiene agents including Dettol liquid, masks, soaps, and towels.

Further, Swamiji turned his attention to different sets of workers who had suffered greatly, such as the auto drivers, coolies, hamalis, etc. Among the worst sufferers were a cluster of migrant workers from north Karnataka, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra employed in the charcoal industries in wooded areas of Pavagada. They had been stranded with no work or food, and no means of going back to their native places. Swamiji assured them that they would be taken care of, and made arrangements for two nutritious meals to them all, every day till the lockdown was lifted. Hundreds of poor families were also provided with groceries and hygiene materials at their hutments. Rev. Swamiji personally visited each of the houses and handed over the daily essentials, looking upon them as living gods.

- More than 30,000 masks, thousands of soaps, liquid soaps, and sanitizers have been distributed among different sections of people so far.
- 5000 Dettol soaps, 2000 sanitizers and 2500 liquid soaps and an equal number of towels have been reached to the personnel of police, revenue, health, backward communities development departments, the media, Purasabhe, Grama Panchayat and public. This is planned to be carried on uninterruptedly in future also.
- **Daily Food packets scheme:** On 1<sup>st</sup> April, a plan to quench the hunger of the masses was launched in the premises of the Sri Ramakrishna Sevashrama, and

thrown open to all needy. Every day, over a thousand people lined up (with all the norms of social distancing strictly adhered to) to receive the packaged breakfast. Over 55000 food packets were distributed during the period till May 17<sup>th</sup>.



- **Daily nutrition for children:** More than 200 children also received their breakfast every day, which is a round the year programme.



- In patients and staff of the **Government Hospital, Pavagada**, especially the pregnant women, were provided with daily lunch as well as dinner, covering 70-100 people.



- **Daily cash transfers** of 200/- Rs. each were made to the accounts of auto-drivers, roadside vendors, bus-stand and lorry Hamalis, APMC Hamalis, selected physically challenged people, construction workers, luggage auto-drivers, taxi drivers, and economically distressed lawyers. From Between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 17<sup>th</sup> May, 2020 totally 800 people benefitted from this scheme. This idea to support them through bank account transfers was taken to achieve several objectives: minimizing the movement of people, avoiding mobbing and untoward incidents,



reaching the benefits to genuinely needy in a very smooth and transparent way, and encouraging thriftiness and saving among the beneficiaries. This was a novel, first of its kind plan to be implemented, not only in Karnataka but the entire country.

**Till date 12,000 people have received food grains, provisions, and edible oil as part of the plan to support them in this time of distress.** Among the beneficiaries are: Purasabhe workers, all the Asha workers in the taluk, outsourced workers in the Government Hospital, D-Group workers, Newspaper distributors, Painters, Home-Guards, Village Assistants, members of the Savitha Samaja, Madiwala Samaja, Cobblers, Goldsmiths, Tailors, Carpenters, Taluk Priests, Priests from Srivaishnava Samaja, Electrical workers, Photographers, Housemaids, Eicher Lorry drivers, Workers of movie theatres, poor Arya vyshyas, Dalits & Tribals, Cane workers, 220 unaided School teachers, Workers from Raigad (Maharashtra), construction workers from Bellary, poor lawyers, Auto drivers, Migrant workers from Northern areas, Bihar and Raichur, Hakki-Pikki Tribes, Women tailors, small roadside vendors, physically challenged, Brush Artists, Newspaper Reporters, Private Bus drivers, conductors and agents, rag pickers, Pavagada taluk Akshara Dasoha staff numbering 600, Covid19 positive case families (two weeks of quarantine period).



**Food grains and tarpaulins** were distributed to the weak, aged, unsheltered, and migrant workers in the villages of Dommatapuri, Venkatapura, Ponnasamudra, Doddahalli, Megalapalya, Shrirangapura, Timmammanahalli, Vadrevu, Nagalamadike, Kariyammanapalya, K.Rampura, Maddibande, Kirlalahalli, J.Achchammanahalli, Chikkahalli, Kyataganakere, Gundlarahalli, and Intoorayanahalli.



The State Education Department requested Rev. Swamiji to help them by providing a pair of masks (totally 9000) to all the students and teaching/non-teaching staff attending the SSLC and PUC examinations in the Taluk examination centres. Accordingly, the Sevashrama has made arrangements for providing not just the masks but sanitizers, hand-washes also.

Nearly 250 families of coolies from Maharashtra, Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha in pitiable conditions due to the lockdown were provided food grains four times in this period, by the Sevashrama and Infosys Foundation. They were also twice given tarpaulins, masks, new clothes for children, sarees for women etc.



Efforts were made by Sri Ramakrishna Sevashrama and Samarpana (Infosys CSR) to send back 97 stressed migrant workers, to their native places in Maharashtra. Their employer who had brought them here on work was in a helpless condition himself, and had approached Rev Swami Japanandaji Maharaj to help those workers. The Government only gave certificates to these workers, but did not provide the transportation means. To make any arrangement for them was very challenging. Under these circumstances it was possible to rescue them only with Swamij's resolve. The coming together of Sri Ramakrishna Sevashrama, and Smt. Sudha Murthy, Chairperson, Infosys Foundation again proved to be a formidable team with its very efficient operation.

At this point, a special mention must be made of the selfless services rendered by the Team-Vivekananda, the Red Cross team, officials of Samarpana CSR Infosys, Sri V Hanumantappa, Senior Civil & JMFC Judge, Sri Jagadish Biserotti, Chief Civil & JMFC Judge, Sri Bharat Y Karagudari, Additional Civil & JMFC Judge, Sri V Manjunath, Public Prosecutor, Sri Yajna Narayana Sharma, Sr. Advocate and



devotees of Sri Ramakrishna Sevashrama, all of whom rendered their services at this great Seva-Yajna.

We also acknowledge with gratitude the help extended by all the citizens and organisations of Pavagada, mainly the Police Department, Home-Guards, Revenue, Health, Purasabhe, Legal Advisory Committee, Education Department and all the senior leaders for their cooperation in controlling the pandemic.

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