

Arpan of 1000 surgeries to Ramesh uncle

Report of Melghat Plastic Surgery Camps

Melghat is a hilly, difficult to access, very impoverished forest tribal area situated in the beautiful Satpuda mountain ranges in north east part of Maharashtra.

MAHAN (Meditation, AIDS, Health, Addiction, Nutrition) is a non-government organization established in 1998 to improve health care in Melghat region. MAHAN was touched by Gandhian teaching that "youths should go to the villages to serve as real India is in villages". Population of Melghat is 300,000 & 80% of them are tribal. Korku is the major tribe of Melghat. Most of the tribal (>90 %) are farmers or labourers, living below poverty line (>75%) & very hard life in huts without metered electricity (>75%) & illiterate (>50%). Medical facilities were grossly inadequate in Melghat as compared to rest of Maharashtra.

Due to lack of proper medical facilities, inappropriate cultural beliefs, unhygienic living conditions & superstitions, tribal goes to traditional faith healers/quacks (pujari & bhumkas) for treatment of illness. Skin is burnt with red hot iron rod for reducing pain known as Damma. This led to very high under 5 children mortality (>100 per 1000 live births) especially Malnutrition related deaths and very high mortality in age group (16-60 years) & maternal mortality. Moved by such things, we started the project in Melghat in November 1997.

During winter season, the environment becomes too cold i.e. temperature reaching up to 1-3 degree centigrade. The huts of tribal are not closed hence the temperature inside is very cold. Many of tribal of Melghat are habitual of sleeping nearby to Chulhas/ fire during winter. During night, by mistake the child or person is rolled over the chulahs. So burn injury is very common in this area. Most of the tribal are living below poverty line hence the burn patients who develop extensive post burn contractures cannot afford to go to the cities for reconstructive plastic surgery. This not only hurts their body, working abilities but also affects their soul & mind negatively. Many of us have been granted a beautiful body. Some of the poor tribal are not that much fortunate to get or to maintain the same. To reduce this misery, a free plastic surgery & Cancer surgery camp had been organized for poor tribal people by the MAHAN Trust and Dr. Dilip Gahankari (M.B.B.S., M.S., M. Ch., F.R.C.S., F.R.A.C.S., Australia) from 2006 in the serene environment of Mahatma Gandhi Tribal Hospital & Sant Vinoba Bhave children and eye hospital, Karmagram, Utavali, Melghat. Dr. Dilip Gahankari was born in small village of Maharashtra India. He decided to serve the poor tribal of India. To fulfill his wish to serve motherland, he is tirelessly organizing

free plastic surgery camps with MAHAN trust. He is not only rendering his services free of cost but bringing 4 to 5 different experts from Australia every year who are rendering their services free of cost. Dr. Gahankari is himself arranging for all these expenses.

Every year, MAHAN trust organizes four screening camps from October to December. More than 1800 poor tribal people from the remote 320 villages of Melghat region and 100 tribal villages of Madhya Pradesh were screened in 48 camps. Dr. Prashant Gahukar (M.D. Pathology), Dr. Ramavatar Soni (Pathologist), Dr. Sanjay Deotale (Pathologist), Dr. Pradyot Garge, Dr. Jayawant Mahadani, Dr. Bhake, along with their laboratory technicians investigated those patients for blood sugar, KFT, urine examination, hepatitis B, HIV, FNAC, CBC, Coagulation profile, etc. Dr. Prashant Gahukar and his wife Mrs. Gahukar are rendering their services since last 12 years free of cost. Once Dr. Prashant Gahukar was operated for varicose veins. He was advised by doctors to take rest and not to stand for long time. Even then he came for screening of our patients, investigated them for camp for 3 days without bothering his own health. Due to such dedicated volunteer doctors we are able to achieve our target to improve the lives of poor tribal.

The team of expert doctors operated 1020 poor patients free of cost over 48 days during last 12 years.

The major surgeries which was life saving for patients were surgeries for post burn contractures (including PBC of neck and knee), cancer of oral cavity and breast, Parotid tumor, Cleft lip and palate.

There was an active participation of Dr. Dilip Gahankari (M.S., M.Ch, FRCS, FRACS-Plastic surgery-Australia), Dr. Kevin (hand surgeon from Australia), Dr. Shailesh Nisal (M.S., M.Ch.), Dr. Sudhanshu Kothe (M.S., M.Ch.), Dr. Parikshit Janai (M.S., M.Ch.), Dr. Ravi Mahajani (Plastic and Hand surgeon-Australia), Dr. Kale (M.S., M.Ch.), Dr. Gopal Gurjar (M.S., M.Ch. Onco-surgery), Dr. Amol Patel (M.S., M.Ch. Plastic surgery), Dr. Amol Dhopte (Plastic surgeon), Dr. Samrat Taori (hand surgeon), Dr. Helge (Anesthetist Australia), Dr. Chandak (M.D. Anesthesia), Dr. Bapat (M.D. Anesthesia) Dr. Maya Bhalerao (M.D. Anesthesia), Dr. Samrat Taori (Orthopedic surgeon), Dr. Anjali Kolhe (M.D. Anesthesia), Dr. Nitin Borakhade (M.D. Anesthesia), Dr. Sharayu Mankar (M.D. Anesthesia), Dr. Sachin Pawaskar (Anesthetist), Jodie Robertson-Smith (Australia), sister Beth and Sister Johanna, (Australia) Avinash Satao, Dr. Kavita Satav, Dr. Ashish Satav, Dr. Shinde, Dr. Vipin, Dr. Pradeep, Dr. Ajay, Manik and Sameer Palaskar, Manohar Pande, Madhuri Bavane, doctors from GMC Nagpur (Gaurav and team), Brother nurses from Acharya Vinoba Bhave Gramin Rugnalaya and Satav nursing home, Wardha, Nilesh Pranjale and the staff of MAHAN in the camp.

Overall those camps were excellent camps as expressed by all doctors who attended the camp and the patients who underwent surgery were satisfied. Most of the patients who were operated upon were poor tribals who cannot afford to go to higher centers

for plastic surgery. Many of them were suffering from extensive burn contractures and living disabled lives for years together due to poverty. There was no complication.

Till now surgeries worth crores of Rs. were done free of cost. It has changed lives of hundreds of poor tribals.

Amanda Coyle (Australia), Honorable Ramesh uncle Kacholiyaji, Prakash Apte , Nimeshbhai (Caring Friends), Anu Aga (MPLAD), Bajaj Auto CSR , Rotary club Nagpur, Arpan foundation USA, Paul Hamlyn Foundation UK, Tribal Development Department, Fine Organics CSR, Punjabrao Deshmukh Medical College, Amaravati, Acharya Vinoba Bhave Hospital, Sawangi strongly supported the camp. The staff of MAHAN trust and Mahatma Gandhi Tribal Hospital worked very hard to make the event successful. Dr. Shailesh Nisal helped a lot for the success of camp by constant suggestions and arranging efficient surgeons. The camp was not possible without active support of Dr. Avinash Saoji, Abhuday Meghe, Mrs. Kamal Satav, Nimeshbhai, Vilas Renge, Shilpa Satao etc.

We are dedicating these 1000 surgeries to Honorable Rameshuncle Kacholia without whose parental help this was just impossible.

Case story :

A 28 years young poor tribal man was not able to walk due post-burn contracture of both knees for one year. He was disabled/handicapped and lost his work leading to financial crisis in family. Due to poverty, he could not be operated outside. He was also suffering from Hepatitis B and hence few hospitals refused his surgery. Our team of dedicated doctor under able leadership of Dr. Gahankari operated him free of cost without any fear at risk of own lives. He is now able to walk with support. I salute to the team for very difficult surgery.

We are now organizing 13th free plastic surgery camp from 22nd to 26th December, 2019.

With regards
Sincerely yours

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1) Dedicated intelligent surgeons win the battle:

A small village of Melghat – Toranvadi is witness of a panic journey of an orphan child (no mother and father) Reshma (1.5 years). She lives with her grandma and merely expressed her pain by words. She only knew the single weapon of expression that was continuous crying! It was also more painful for her as she had inborn cleft lip with cleft palate. Due to this she hardly took her proper food. It made her severely malnourished (Grade IV, SAM). Her weight was only 5 Kg at the age of one and half years!

Before Surgery. (1.5 years, 5 kg) After Plastic surgery & RUTF



The girl had been rescued by the counsellor during the free plastic surgery camp in Mahatma Gandhi Tribal Hospital organized MAHAN, Melghat. The poor kid had been operated by the expert plastic surgeon Dr. Dilip Gahankari, Australia, Dr. Shailesh Nisal and the team. It was one of the critical operations as the girl was severely malnourished & severely anaemic. Hospital and HBCC staff treated her successfully.

After 15 days she recovered significantly and was discharged. After discharge she was successfully treated at home by MAHAN team. Now Reshma can say something with her pink lips & pleasant smile rather than crying as before.

- 2) **Empathy wins disability:** A 28 years young poor tribal man was not able to walk due post-burn contracture of both knees for one year. He was disabled/handicapped. Due to poverty, he could not be operated outside. He was also suffering from Hepatitis B and hence few hospitals refused his surgery. Our team of dedicated doctor under able leadership of Dr. Gahankari operated him free of cost without any fear at risk of own lives. He is now able to walk normally and working for his family. I salute to the team for very difficult surgery.