

Bhaktivedanta Hospital

– a Hospital with a Difference

By: Prema Manjari dasi

Bhaktivedanta Hospital is a medical project in Mumbai, India. It was started in January 1999 as an offering to Srila A C Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, under the guidance of H.H.Radhanath Swami. This is a 130 bedded multi-specialty hospital with various specialty and super-specialty services available in medical field.

The history goes like this: Back in 1990, a few of the devotee doctors decided to work together to make their profession a preaching mission along with earning their livelihood. They started doing various community-based services like free medical camps in rural areas. After the medical camp, they would do harinam, preaching and distribute books and prasadam. Completely dependent on Lord and Guru, they were trying to serve Lord Chaitanya's mission. Soon someone donated them a medical van which enhanced their preaching efforts and they started approaching further distant places and distributing Prabhupada's mercy to more and more people.

This was followed by opening a small nursing home in a distant place of Mumbai called Miraroad. They were happy as they could meet their basic needs along with preaching and that also without any malpractice. This went on for more than 5 years.

Happy with their serving attitude and enthusiasm, the Lord inspired a generous person who donated them a land on which they decided to build a hospital. Soon Bhaktivedanta Hospital was inaugurated.

The mission statement of the Hospital is: 'With love and

devotion, we will offer everyone a modern, scientific, holistic health care service based on true awareness and understanding of the needs of the body, mind and soul.' The hospital's motto is – 'Serving in devotion.' This hospital has many features which differentiates it from any other modern hospital. A few of them are as follows:

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- 1) All the managers and administrators are initiated devotees, moving around with bright faces decorated with Vaishnav tilak.
- 2) As soon as one enters he/she can have darshan of Srila Prabhupada, who is sitting in the centre of the main lobby. Shikshastakam prayers are offered by all the employees standing around Prabhupada, four times a day, according to their shift duty.
- 3) Srila Prabhupada's kirtan and lectures are continuously going on in all OPD and ward rooms, available on two different channels.
- 4) All patients and staff get Krishna Prasadam

prepared in canteen, cooked by devotees and offered to Lord Jagannath, Baldev and Subhadra.

- 5) We have temple with deities of Lord Jagannath, Baldev, Subhadra and Gaur-Nitai. Various employees of the hospital take part in arati and in preparing Rajbhoga for the Lord daily and thus get a chance to serve the Lord directly.
- 6) 'The Department of Spiritual Care' is the first of its kind in hospital set up. This department's sole purpose is to preach and to cater to spiritual needs of all the employees – from managers to laborers.
- 7) There are 10 trained nurses taking care of Spiritual needs of the admitted patients and their relatives. They visit the patients, read Prabhupada's book for them, listen to their problems, console them and thus in a very friendly way preach to them. They also read Bhagavad Gita to all the serious patients or to patients on deathbed. For the patients following a different religion, their relatives are encouraged to read their authentic scripture for the patients. H.G.Damodar Pandit prabhu, a senior devotee is available around the clock. He personally cultivates patients and their relatives. He regularly follows up with them with his team. Every 6 months he invites them to a reunion satsanga which is attended by 100s of patients and relatives.

8) Daily a small cart with Deities of Lord Jagannath, Baldev and Subhadra is taken to all the patients on their bed side where they are allowed to offer flowers with their prayers and then are given prasadam. It is very encouraging to see even Muslims, Jains, etc patients enthusiastically coming forward to offer flowers to the Lord.

9) Staff from other religions are encouraged to follow their scriptures properly without any discrimination. No one is compelled or forced to take up Krishna Consciousness. For an example, during "holy name" week celebration there is a competition held to write the maximum number of holy names. For this, the authentic names of Lord like Allah, Jehova are equally accepted.

10) Various festivals like Ramnavami, Janmastami, Prabhupada's appearance day etc are celebrated with great enthusiasm and creativity. All staff members are seen in a jubilant mood, participating in dramas, kirtan, bhoga offering etc.

Obstacles are a sign of the Lord's personal care and attention. And hence devotees take all obstacles as the Lord's special mercy and make use of it to improve our own devotion. The Lord's mercy came in the form of hospital closure in October 2003. Few scrupulous workers joined hands with a local political party called shiv-sena who wanted to form their union in the hospital. This will allow them to participate in various decision-taking. This could mean compromising the principles at a later date and hence the trustees of the hospital decided to close

down the project temporarily. Soon the miscreants were thrown out. This took about 9 months. During this period, H.G. Krsnachandra Prabhu, the Chairman of the Hospital generously supplied the needs of the poor, loyal staff-workers of the hospital every month. This increased the

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faith and dedication of loyal staff to the hospital as this type of consideration was almost unheard before. During this time all the devotees would regularly come together and pray to Srila Prabhupada. We took the opportunity to internalise more deeply, look at our shortcomings and correct them. Our faith and dedication to the project and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's mission increased. The bond between the devotees strengthened.

In July 2004 the hospital reopened with rejuvenated enthusiasm, gratitude and appreciation. Local residents of the Miraroad had also realized the importance of this project by now, and thus they also supported and welcomed the re-opening with warm hearts.

Just in a few months all the departments in the hospital are functional, with added enthusiasm now. A few

months ago the mother of H.H. Giriraj Swami donated an advanced CT scanner machine for the hospital. Also she gave donation for opening of a new Nursing School in the hospital. This nursing school has about 15 students in the first year who are getting trained in their profession in a spiritual environment. They participated in Barsana Eye camp as their community project and were enlivened by Radharani's mercy to be able to serve Brajvasis. A few of them have started chanting 16 rounds daily due to the loving care and nurture they are receiving.

We get mercy from many senior Prabhupada Disciples at the hospital who come to bestow their mercy and allow us to render some personal service to them.

Many community projects like free medical relief camps, Barsana free cataract surgery camp and community health check ups are carried out on a regular basis by the hospital, where we take the opportunity to serve humanity medically as well as catering to their spiritual needs.

On behalf of the hospital administration and all the devotees, I hereby fall at the lotus feet of all the Vaishnavs and beg for their mercy.

I pray to one and all to kindly bless all of us so that we can please Srila Prabhupada by our efforts, keeping a humble mood in our heart and serving everyone sincerely.