

From Pandemic to Panoramic

Neelram (name changed) is a small-time farmer and lives in Manipur village of Morigaon district with his wife, son and daughter. He owns a tiny plot of land and he grows vegetables and seasonal fruits on this property. Since a family of four cannot survive on this meagre farming income, Neelram and his son take up daily-wage jobs regularly. Neelram started experiencing blurred vision about three years ago. He kept ignoring it initially, but it got worse with every passing day. Gradually, he stopped venturing out at night and seldom stepped out in the daytime. A time came when he had to stop going to the farm or engage in his daily-wage activities. His vision impairment burdened his family with an increased workload and decreased income. The family had heard about the Morigaon Vision Centre (VC) from their neighbours. As they began thinking of visiting the VC, the COVID-19 virus started spreading rapidly and a nationwide lockdown was announced. Considering the circumstances, they decided to postpone the visit to the VC. As time passed, Neelram's situation was getting worse and he had to depend on his family members to even move around the house.



Luckily, his patience was paid off. In the month of August, when the lockdown restrictions were eased out, a health worker visited the village. The health worker conducted a basic screening and recommended him to visit the VC. When the family shared their fears of contracting the COVID-19 virus, the health worker assured them of the safety protocols being followed at the VC. In addition, the family was convinced looking at the protective gear worn by the health worker. Neelram visited the VC for a thorough check-up. He was diagnosed with cataracts in both his eyes and his per-operative vision was found to be HM and CF in the right and the left eyes respectively. The VC staff arranged for a vehicle and transported him to MFV partner hospital Sri Sankaradeva Nethralaya, Guwahati. His right eye was operated on 27-Aug-20 and he was provided transport back to Morigaon. Neelram visited the VC twice for follow-up. His final best corrected vision after one month of surgery was found to be 6/6 in the operated eye. He and his family members are overjoyed, as he is independently moving about and has started working again.



A Brew of Self-Sufficiency



Ms. Meena (name changed) is a tea-seller and owns a small stall in Aheritola, Kolkata. She is unmarried and lives all by herself in Kolkata. While Ms. Meena has witnessed a lot of hardships in her life, she continues to look at life half-glass-full and is always spotted wearing a bright smile. However, her bright smile turned into frowns and sadness in the last few months, as she started noticing vision issues. She started experiencing blurry vision and this impacted her work adversely. The constant blurry vision not only bothered her while making tea but instilled immense fear in her. She was worried about and catastrophic

incidents, as she had to work with fire and piping hot liquids. Luckily, her tea stall is located close to Mission for Vision's Vision Centre (VC) in Aheritola. While she was contemplating and deciding upon her visit, the COVID-19 virus spread wildly and a nationwide lockdown was declared. In such a situation, her only source of income was affected and she was compelled to stay home. She was supported by her brother and somehow managed to sail through the lockdown period. With the easing of restrictions, she opened her tea-shop. However, soon realised that she had difficulty in seeing both near and distant objects.

She contemplated on visiting the VC, but was worried about the safety and any costs towards screening and treatment. Ms. Meena mustered up all courage and visited the VC for an enquiry. She shared her fears with the staff who assured her of the safety protocol and explained to her that considering her financial condition, she will not be charged for screening and treatment. With this assurance, Ms. Meena proceeded with her eye-screening. The staff diagnosed cataract in both her eyes and referred her to MFV's partner hospital Sankara Nethralaya, Kolkata for a cataract removal surgery. Ms. Meena readily agreed for the surgery, as she was eager to get back to her tea-store and did not want to be bothered by her sight-related issues. Her surgery was successful and post her complete recovery, Ms. Meena is able to see clearly and has resumed to her tea-making. She expressed her gratitude towards MFV and the VC in supporting her during these difficult times and restoring her gift of vision, so that she can get back on her own two feet and enjoy her independence and self-sufficiency.



Driving towards hope



Mr Krishna (name changed) hails from Doddakannelli area of Bengaluru. He lives with his wife, two daughters and a son. He worked as a truck driver for about two decades and usually drove the Bengaluru-Mumbai route.

All was well for him until he discovered that his left eye vision was getting blurry. He could not concentrate on driving and was worried about the consequences. So, he switched over from truck driving and took up auto-rickshaw driving instead. He drove his auto to nearby locations, so as to avoid any issues. He carried on with the blurred vision for 5 years, even though he was finding it difficult to drive and could not identify the potholes on the road, nor could he see clearly when driving in the evening.

Due to the blurred vision, he often met with accidents and passengers started complaining about his reckless driving.

This caused a big setback to his already reduced income. He struggled to provide for his family. Additionally, he had to repay three loans he had taken to purchase the auto-rickshaw; for his daughter's marriage and to run the family.

He discussed his vision issues with his wife and they went to a local private eye clinic. The doctors there suggested immediate eye surgery costing INR 20,000. Krishna couldn't afford to pay that much. His wife then approached their landlord for a loan describing his eye condition. The landlord informed them about the free eye treatment given by MFV Partner Hospital - Sankara Eye Hospital, Bengaluru and asked them to visit the camp conducted by them.

Krishna attended a camp and was selected for surgery. He was taken to the hospital for surgery and was operated successfully. He is quite happy that Sankara Hospital gave at par treatment to all the patients; he was looked after well and dropped back to his village post-surgery. He resumed his work full time and with the restored income has been able to live a good life like before.



Building Capacities – Bringing Change

20-year-old Nirmal Bariya hails from Indore and belongs to a family that has seen a lot of hardships and financial difficulties. Her father is the only bread-winner of the family and they somehow make ends meet. Nirmal completed her higher school studies and then she had to discontinue from studying further due to her family's economic condition. Luckily, her uncle referred her to Sankara Eye Hospital's Vision Care Technician course run in partnership with MFV's Mission Saksham programme, where select students are given full scholarships.



Nirmal attended the interview and got selected for the course. Nirmal initially attended the course and then went on to intern with Sankara Eye Hospital, Coimbatore. The course and the internship have changed her world around and as a mark of gratitude and respect towards the organisation, she hopes to work with Sankara Eye Hospital in Indore very soon.

A Daughter's Vision



Vaishnavi (name changed) is in her fourth standard and studies in Saraswati Mandir High School in Mahim, Mumbai. Her father is the only bread-winner for a family of nine. Despite the financial condition, he wanted to ensure that his daughter receives good education. While Vaishnavi enjoyed going to school, she faced a roadblock that came in form of blurry vision and headaches. Due to the family's economic situation, they were helpless.

Luckily, an eye screening camp was organised at Vaishnavi's school and she got her eyes checked. The team diagnosed it as myopia and provided spectacles at no cost to her. She wore her spectacles regularly and found a lot of improvement. She is now able to see clearly and this has positively impacted her learning experience at school.



Threads of Hope



60-year-old Mr. Bajaranglal (name changed) lives with his family of six members in Reengus village of Sikar district, Rajasthan. Mr. Bajaranglal belongs to a poor family and runs a tailoring shop in the village.

The last few months were troublesome for him, as he started facing vision issues. This gradually started affecting his work and it impacted his earning capacity. Through word of mouth, Mr. Bajaranglal got to know about a free eye check-up camp by Sankara Eye Hospital, Jaipur. He visited the camp and he was diagnosed with a cataract. He was referred to

the base hospital immediately and underwent a cataract-removal surgery. With the onset of the pandemic, his sons lost their jobs. However, thanks to the timely surgery, Mr. Bajaranglal resumed his tailoring work and was able to support his family financially even during difficult times.

Dignity of Vision

65-year-old Ms. Lata (name changed) hails from Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh. After the passing away of her husband and daughter, she started mending footwear in order to earn her daily bread. While life was already difficult for her, there was another challenge ready to make things worse. She started facing vision issues and this began affecting her daily activities such as cooking, household work, etc. She was compelled to take the help of neighbours, who were not happy to be a crutch to her.



One day while she was mending shoes on the street, she heard the announcement by Sankar Netralaya, Chennai that they are conducting a free eye camp. Sensing a ray of hope she visited the camp, where she was diagnosed with a cataract in her eye. She was referred to the partner hospital for the surgery. After her successful surgery, Ms. Lata can see clearly and is now is back to work with renewed energy and enthusiasm.

