

A SHOT OF HOPE BEACONS OF HOPE

Covid-hit family recovers, cooks & distributes food to homeless

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New Delhi:

Empty streets, markets without shoppers and all entertainment within the house make for a good strategy against Covid-19. But there were some who depended for their lives on people being out on the roads. Delhi's beggars and homeless people are struggling amid the lockdown.

Their plight has, however, been noticed by some do-gooders, among them the Randhawas of Sarojini Nagar.

Ashok Randhawa and his family have been cooking meals every day from April 20 and distributing it to 300-350 people near the Barapullah Flyover and at Sai Baba Temple on Lodhi Road.

The daily routine was disrupted for around two weeks when the family tested positive for Covid-19, but they were back to work the moment they felt better.



The Randhawa family has been feeding over 300 homeless or unemployed people daily, including these two children on Friday

Blessings our reward: Randhawas

Not many devotees now come to Sai Baba Temple because of the lockdown. So the beggars, including the disabled ones, are having a tough time, but have no other place to go," said Randhawa. "At the jhuggi near Barapullah Flyover,

hundreds of poor people, including children, wait for us eagerly every morning.”

The risk of infection when catering to so many people is always present and Randhawa and his wife both tested positive. They took 22 days to recover, but it only made them more determined to serve the poor. He believes that it was due to the blessings of the people he fed that he and his wife recovered from Covid, which is why he doesn't want to discontinue the exercise unless the situation normalises.

“For 12-14 days, we could not distribute the food because of our isolation and health,” said Randhawa. “But as soon as I felt better, the process of cooking restarted at home.” When his wife was still in recovery, Randhawa himself prepared vegetable pulao, rajma chawal, chole chawal and other items “except chapatis”. Then he sent off his son, Lakshya, to give the food to those who needed feeding. Randhawa only began accompanying Lakshya on the trips some days ago.

The Randhawas' only reward, but one that touches their soul, is the happiness that comes from receiving the gratitude and the blessings of the hundreds of the jobless who anxiously wait for them for their meal of the day.

Another similarly inclined person is Hardeep Singh, president of the residents' welfare association of Sainik Farm. He started a Covid care centre for helpless people on June 23 last year and has persevered with the act. At the centre operating from a primary school at Pusph Vihar, most people are from the adjoining low-economic localities of Dakshinpuri, Deoli, Sangam Vihar and Raju Park, who don't have the resources for treatment or the space for quarantine at home.

“We ensure they get meals three times a day, medical check-ups, regular medicines, yoga, even recreation activities,” said Singh. As could be expected of a person who spent time with Covid-infected patients, Singh also tested positive and remained critical for a few days. Reflecting how important the Covid centre's activities were to him, the man smiled and said, “Even when lying ill, I made it a point daily to call the Covid care centre every day and check on the well-being of the patients admitted there.

Nothing could stop him from resuming his visits after recovering. “I go to the Covid centre every alternate day to enquire if anything is amiss,” Singh said.

Beacons Of Hope

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In the midst of crushing despair and grief, there are also stories of selflessness, kindness and courage that restore one's faith in humanity and inspire us to dream of a better tomorrow. If you know of any such individuals or organisations who are serving as Beacons of Hope, please share their story with us on www.TOIBeaconsOfHope.com. Let's light a spark and help dispel the dark.

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