



Taking inspiration from Swami Vivekananda's own determined efforts at helping out the fellow man, especially the poor and those unequipped to fend for themselves, the unpretentiously and aptly named Rural Health Care Foundation looks to pick up where the great man left off. The name of the venture is self-explanatory of this undertaking and its aims.

Among the startling revelations that the last census brought with it was the fact that despite India's fast-growing economy and superpower ambitions, over 78% of its 1.2 billion people still live in rural areas where healthcare continues to be an unfamiliar concept largely due to the fact that the few facilities that are available are abominable to say the least, and illiteracy is still rife. Statistics also show that an astounding majority of the people that reside in rural and backward areas are unwilling to travel to the cities in order to avail of treatment; not too astounding when you come to think of the fact that they're being asked to take a leap of faith and travel great distances to cities especially as they've lived their whole lives without a medical infrastructure in place. This is where this venture comes in, to provide some much-needed healthcare to the ailing in their villages of residence and work towards developing a medical infrastructure that stands the test of time.

The USP of this venture is that all health care provided is free-of-cost and always remains just so. The rural poor in India are among the poorest in the world and cannot be expected to pay for any health services sought. Subsidised health care is the only solution and the only way forward.

This brings forth questions of this venture's sustainability in the long run which is at the crux of every business idea, even though this charitable venture couldn't be more far removed from business in the traditional, capitalistic, profit motive sense. For reasons of sustainability alone, every patient is charged a nominal registration fee of Rs. 30/- with periodical increment. The health care thus remains within the poor man's reach..

This venture currently has 5 fully-operational healthcare centres in 4 districts in Bengal. All of which are either self-sufficient or on its way to self-sustainability. Each centre takes only three years to reach a position of self-sustainability, thus leading the way for the venture to aim at building 25 more such centres in rural Bengal in years to come.

Another attractive element to this venture when viewed from a strictly business perspective, which would subsequently aid in the sustainability of the healthcare centres, is that these centres, apart from fulfilling their prime objective of treating the poor, also act as very efficient marketing forums that fuel further business activity. Each centre sees a minimum footfall of 3000 per month which could translate into very useful rural marketing hubs. Corporate companies could take advantage of these bases to promote their respective brands while at the same time any expenses for such could be accounted as being for CSR.

These business opportunities, however, will not sway the basic aims, vision and mission of this foundation whose motto is "Manav seva hi Madhav seva hai" and as such will continue to uphold the welfare of the poor and the downtrodden first.