

# POST DISASTER RECONSTRUCTION WORK IN GUJARAT ON BEHALF OF RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

Swami Nikhileswarananda<sup>1</sup>

Ramakrishna Mission, West Bengal, India

## INTRODUCTION

India witnessed one of the worst natural calamities of recent years when the devastating earthquake of 6.9 magnitude on the Richter scale rocked Gujarat on 26 January 2001. Its severity can be guessed when we take note of the fact that subsequently there were 1124 aftershocks ranging between 2.8 and 5.0 magnitude on the Richter scale in that area until 31 March 2003. Out of the 25 districts of Gujarat 21 districts having 7633 villages under 181 talukas were affected by this calamity.

The degree and extend of damage to life and property shocked the world. Among the innumerable incidents of suffering we would like to mention only two:

1. Ms Rasmi Joshi a 40 year old lady from Adipur near Bhuj, was in tears, "What have I done?" There was anguish in her voice. She had lost her husband and all her earthly belongings. She and her two daughters alone survived. Her husband Mr Raju Joshi, saved many neighbours before he became a prey to the death quake.
2. One of our monastic brothers engaged in primary relief recalls: "I saw an old man pushing a thela (a cart) at the dead of night. "Who are you? What are you carrying at this hour?" I enquired. The man was too stunned to answer. On repeated enquiry, he could only point towards four dead bodies on the cart and murmur softly. " They are my daughters. I'm taking them for cremation"

There were thousands of others who met a similar fate. However, the people of Gujarat were determined to come out triumphant from this tragedy and not give way to despair.

Looking back one would see that, since 1927, the Ramakrishna Mission had always stood by the people affected by flood, earthquake, drought, cyclone, plague etc. But this relief and rehabilitation project was extraordinary both in dimension and in the nature of services rendered.

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<sup>1</sup> P.O. Beluh Math, Dist. Howrah, West Bengal – 711202, India, Tel: (033) 2654 1144/1180/9581, Fax: (033) 2654 4346, email: rkmhq@vsnl.com

## **PRIMARY RELIEF**

True to its tradition the Ramakrishna Mission sprang to action immediately and started primary relief from 26 January 2001 itself, the day of the calamity.

Cooked food, food grains , drinking water, tarpaulins, tents. Blankets, clothes etc were distributed to tens of thousands of quake-affected people of 281 villages in Kutch, Rajkot, Jamnagar, Porbandar and Surendranagar districts through our Rajkot, Porbandar and Limbdi centres. Medical camps were also set up at Bhuj and the surrounding area, and emergency relief was provided to the victims.

Among the families rendered homeless by the earthquake, 3400 families were provided with temporary shelters. Primary relief of nearly Rs 3 crore was provided.

## **REHABILITATION**

Primary relief was followed by a massive rehabilitation project.

The General Secretary of Ramakrishna Mission along with other monks visited the quake-affected areas from 12 –17 February 2001 and the modus operandi was outlined for the rehabilitation project. After completion of the formalities construction of houses was started on 23 March 2001 at Dhaneti village through our Rajkot centre.

Initially we thought of building six townships, self-sufficient in all respects, in the affected areas. However we had to revise our plan because, in the meanwhile the Government of Gujarat started giving cash subsidies to the victims, category-wise, under Building Your Own House scheme. Those for whom any voluntary organisation had proposed to build houses were not entitled for subsidy and they were also to relinquish their old lands. Therefore, most of the villagers preferred accepting cash subsidy from the Government. On the other hand, the Government authorities requested us to take up construction of primary school buildings as many as possible. Therefore, we had to reduce the number of dwelling houses to be built and took up, instead, construction of school buildings in many quake affected places.

Large-scale rehabilitation projects were launched in Kutch, Porbandar, Rajkot and Surendranagar districts through our rehabilitation camps set up at Dhaneti (Kutch) Surendranagar and Morbi, directly under the supervision of the Headquarters. The projects comprised the following: (i) construction of 390 houses, 81 school buildings, 2 community centres and 2 prayer halls etc (ii) providing building materials to 190 families under the Build your own house scheme, and (iii) digging of 7 ponds/water reservoirs etc.

On June 30 2001, the first two newly built primary school buildings were inaugurated and handed over to the school authorities. Subsequently till 22 March 2003 (ie in 2

years from the date of the commencement of construction work) the 6 housing colonies (total 390 houses) and the remaining 79 school buildings, fully equipped with furniture library playground equipment, equipment supply of water, toilets block, compound wall, etc. were completed in several phases and handed over to the beneficiaries and school authorities respectively. In many schools tree planting was done as part of social forestry. Dignitaries from various fields inaugurated the buildings.

For most of the schools local committees have been formed to look after the maintenance and smooth functioning of the schools. We hope these schools will serve as lamps of hope and inspiration to the children of Gujarat.

Although our original target for this Relief and Rehabilitation was Rs 10 crore only, thanks to overwhelming response from the generous donors, both from India and abroad, we could extend it to nearly Rs 20crore.

Needless to mention that could not have undertaken such a massive primary relief work and huge rehabilitation projects without the unstinted support and cooperation from the large hearted people and benevolent organisations.

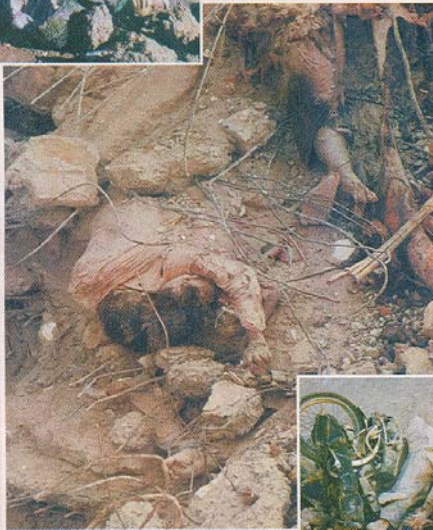
In spite of our limited monastic manpower devotees and volunteers, many from the affected areas also, responded spontaneously. That made our task easier. We convey our sincere gratitude to all the volunteers and devotees for their painstaking hard work for the noble cause. We also express our cordial thanks to all the donors and government officials for their participation and cooperation in the noble endeavour.

## Introduction:

India witnessed one of the worst natural calamities of recent years when the devastating earthquake of 6.9 magnitude on the Richter scale rocked Gujarat on 26 January 2001. Its severity can be guessed when we take note of the fact that subsequently there were nearly 1124 aftershocks ranging between 2.8 and 5.9 magnitude on the Richter scale in that area till 31 March 2003. Out of the 25 districts of Gujarat, 21 districts having 7633 villages under 181 talukas were affected by this calamity.



There was a sound like a screaming train and then silence....



The more we tried to run, the more we stayed in the same place.

The degree and extent of damage to life and property shocked the world. Among the innumerable incidents of suffering we would like to mention only two:



Why am I alive?

1. Ms. Rashmi Joshi, a 40-year old lady from Adipur near Bhuj, was in tears, "What have I done? Why God punished me like this?" There was anguish in her voice. She had lost her husband and all her earthly belongings. She and her two daughters alone survived. Her husband Mr. Raju Joshi, 45, saved many neighbours before he became a prey to the death quake.

2. One of our monastic brothers engaged in primary relief recalls: "I saw an old man pushing a *thela* (a cart) at the dead of night. 'Who are you? What are you carrying at this hour?' - I enquired. The man was too stunned to answer. On repeated enquiry, he could only point towards four dead bodies on the cart and murmur softly, 'They are my daughters. I'm taking them for cremation.'"



'Taking them for cremation'

There were thousands of others who met a similar fate. However, the people of Gujarat were determined to come out triumphant from this tragedy and not give way to despair.

Looking back, one would see that, since 1927, the Ramakrishna Mission had always stood by the people of Gujarat in times of natural calamities. The Mission served the people affected by flood, earthquake, drought, cyclone, plague, etc. But this relief and rehabilitation project was extraordinary both in dimension and in the nature of services rendered.

## Primary Relief:

True to its tradition, the Ramakrishna Mission sprang to action immediately and started primary relief from 26 January 2001 itself, the day of the calamity.



Primary Relief

"No official has visited us ... but ... the Ramakrishna Mission is catering to us and have set up a special camp within the society. We have to queue up for a cup of tea. But we relish it."

(The Asian Age, 28.02.2001)

Cooked food, food grains, drinking water, tarpaulins, tents, blankets, clothes, etc. were distributed to tens of thousands of quake-affected people of 281 villages in Kutch, Rajkot, Jamnagar, Porbandar and Surendranagar districts through our Rajkot, Porbandar and Limbdi centres. Medical camps were also set up at Bhuj and the surrounding area, and emergency relief was provided to the victims.

Among the families rendered homeless by the earthquake 3400 families were provided with temporary shelters.

Primary relief of nearly Rs. 3 crore was provided



"We have a donor named Dr. Suman Thakker, whose family is in Kutch. She reported that Ramakrishna Mission was the first to appear and administer aid. She donated \$ 10,000 and wants this amount to be used in Kutch for Rehabilitation work."

– Ms. Barbara Piner  
President, American Service To India (ASTI), USA

#### Rehabilitation:

Primary relief was followed by a massive rehabilitation project.

The General Secretary of Ramakrishna Mission along with other monks visited the quake-affected areas from 12 to 17 February 2001 and the *modus operandi* was outlined for the rehabilitation project. After completion of the formalities, construction of houses was started on 23 March 2001 at Dhaneti village through our Rajkot centre.



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Initially we thought of building six townships, self-sufficient in all respects, in the affected areas. However, we had to revise our plan because, in the meanwhile, the Government of Gujarat started giving cash subsidies to the victims, category-wise, under *Build Your Own House* scheme. Those for whom any voluntary organization had proposed to build houses were not entitled for subsidy and they were also to relinquish their old lands. Therefore, most of the villagers preferred accepting cash subsidy from the Government. On the other hand, the Government authorities requested us to take up construction of primary school buildings as many as possible. Therefore, we had to reduce the number of dwelling houses to be built and took up, instead, construction of school buildings in many quake-affected places.

Large-scale rehabilitation projects were launched in Kutch, Porbandar, Rajkot and Surendranagar districts through our Rajkot, Porbandar and Limbdi centres as well as through the rehabilitation camps set up at Dhaneti (Kutch), Surendranagar and Morbi, directly under the supervision of the Headquarters. The projects comprised the following: (i) construction of 390 houses, 81 school buildings, 2 community centres, and 2 prayer halls, etc., (ii) providing building materials to 190 families under *Build Your Own House* scheme, and (iii) digging of 7 ponds/water reservoirs, etc.

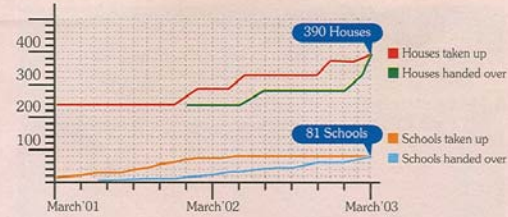


Chart showing the progress of the Construction work

#### Inauguration of School Buildings and Housing Colonies:



Inauguration of a housing colony at Porbandar and a school building at Limbdi by Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, Vice-president, Ramakrishna Math & Mission

On 30 June 2001, the first two newly built primary school buildings were inaugurated and handed over to the school authorities. Subsequently, till 22 March 2003, (i.e. in 2 years from the date of the commencement of construction work) the 6 housing colonies (total 390 houses) and the remaining 79 school buildings, fully equipped with furniture, library, playground equipment, supply of water, toilet block, compound wall, etc. were completed in several phases and handed over to the beneficiaries and school authorities respectively. In many schools tree-planting was done as part of social forestry. Dignitaries from various fields inaugurated the buildings.



Compound wall



Playground equipment



Furniture



Tree-planting

For most of the schools, local committees have been formed to look after the maintenance and smooth functioning of the schools. We hope these schools will serve as lamps of hope and inspiration to the children of Gujarat.



Inauguration of the girls' school building at Limbdi on 20.03.2003

"I am extremely pleased at the role played by the Ramakrishna Mission and would like to urge the government authorities, teachers and villagers to implement the message of Swami Vivekananda, while educating students at the schools."

- **Sri Sundar Singh Bhandari**, H.E. the Governor of Gujarat



Inauguration of a school building at Limbdi and a housing colony at Bharwada, Porbandar on 6.12.2002

"Ramakrishna Mission is carrying out many humanitarian activities in the spirit of worship and thus implementing Swami Vivekananda's message of *Daridranarayan Seva*. This colony, *Vivekananda Sanskardham*, is a glaring example of how temples of self-effort (*Purushartha*) can be constructed if we worship the Lord by adopting *seva* (service) as highest religion."

- **Sri Narendra Modi**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Gujarat

"After the earthquake, the house in which I was living got very much damaged. I was helpless. At that time Ramakrishna Mission came to my rescue. We never dreamt we would live in such a cosy house in our life. Strangely enough, my son aged about 20 years who had lost his balance of mind many years ago is also recovering."



- **Sri Jethabhai Jivabhai**

(A beneficiary from a newly built colony at Bharwada, Porbandar)

While inaugurating the school building at Tumbda in Porbandar on 01.03.2003, **Smt. Bhavanaben Chikhalia**, Minister of State for Tourism & Culture, Govt. of India, said:

"An organization like Ramakrishna Mission can only undertake such a massive rehabilitation project with such spirit of unselfish service."



Inauguration of a school building at Porbandar on 13.02.2002

"A great Mission, God given Mission, is removing the pain of people's mind and body. May God bless you and the Mission, as you go."

- **Bharat Ratna Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam**

### Summary of Expenditure

(Rs. in lakh)

Camp/Centre (District) → Particulars ↓	Dhaneti Camp (Bhuj-Kutch)		Morbi Camp (Rajkot)		Surendranagar Camp (Surendranagar)		Porbandar Centre (Porbandar)		Limbdi Centre (Surendranagar)	
	No.	Amt.	No.	Amt.	No.	Amt.	No.	Amt.	No.	Amt.
HOUSES	261	270	38	40	-	-	91	96	-	-
Build Your Own House	-	-	31	4	-	-	109	29	50	5
SCHOOLS	3	52	10	186	7	135	37	317	24	425
Community Centres	2	4	-	-	-	-	2	15	-	-
Water Reservoirs	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	5
Tree Plantation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Overhead Expenses	-	13	-	10	-	8	-	16	-	15
<b>Total</b>		<b>341</b>		<b>240</b>		<b>143</b>		<b>473</b>		<b>453</b>
Total expenditure for Rehabilitation : Rs. 16.5 crore										
Total expenditure for Primary Relief : Rs. 3.0 crore										
<b>GRAND TOTAL : Rs. 19.5 crore</b>										

**Thanks :**

Although our original target for this Relief and Rehabilitation was for Rs. 10 crore only, thanks to the overwhelming response from the generous donors, both from India and abroad, we could extend it to nearly Rs. 20 crore.



From ruin to recovery



From tears to smiles

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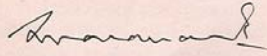
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Our Inspiration

May the blessings of the Lord be showered upon all!

15 May 2003  
Belur Math, Howrah

  
(Swami Smaranananda)  
General Secretary

This comprehensive report is for your perusal.  
Please note this is not an appeal for further donations.

## GUJARAT EARTHQUAKE

RELIEF & REHABILITATION  
A COMPREHENSIVE REPORT  
AS ON 31.03.2003

*From tears  
to smiles*



*Marching Forward*



### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

P.O. BELUR MATH, DIST. HOWRAH  
WEST BENGAL-711202, INDIA  
PHONES : (033) 2654 1144/1180/9581  
FAX : (033) 2654 4346  
E-MAIL : rkmhq@vsnl.com