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Jewish doc, Muslim patients, Hindu ashram

RELIGIOUS HARMONY as better it can get in get in a Varansi area

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VARANASI: A Jewish eye specialist treating Muslim patients inside a Hindu ashram, seems truly surreal.

All this is happening right here on eastern bank of Ganga at Ramnagar where several Muslim weavers, needing urgent eye care, are trouping to get free of cost treatment from ophthalmologist from England, Dr Ivor Wolfe.

Dr Wolfe (57), with more than 20 years of professional experience in London, is spending post-retirement days in this holy city, not only detecting refractive errors of hapless commoners in the hut, but also distributing free of cost spectacles.

"It's truly a secular bonding, having it's origin in the spiritual philosophy of humanism, espoused by Sakkar Baba (Aghoreshwar Avdhoot Bhagwan Ram), whom I met at London in 1991, a year before he passed away," said Wolfe talking to HT. The curative hut, is on the land of Aghor foundation, a worldwide movement of Aghor philosophy initiated by Aghoreshwar Avdhoot Bhagwan Ram's disciple Baba Harihar Ram.

■ Dr Wolfe checking the eye of a Muslim lady with advanced automatic refractor.

HT PHOTO SANJAY GUPTA

And the Jewish ophthalmologist, hailing originally from Scotland, has housed in the hut, equipment which are rarity with ophthalmologists in India, including a handy automatic refractor (costing Rs 7 lakh) and a Retinoscope (to ensure that refractive error in eyes of each patient and the spectacles given are done after double check from both devices).

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Jewish doctors treats Muslim patients

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As part of the Aghor foundation's committed project Vision Varanasi, the eye specialist along with two local assistants devote four months, October to March, annually since 2007-08, treating eye problems.

Daily an average 100 patients from the city as well as neighbouring districts visit the hut.

His clientele includes a large number of Muslims, including class IX student Rukhsar, who helps her family earn via embroidery work, a Banarsi saree weaver Jahangir (60), belonging to Vari Gadhaiya and Katesar villages near Ramnagar.

"Lack of money has prevented us from going to qualified eye specialists, but the almighty has heard us by sending the English doctor to us, who has taken care of our eyes free of cost," said Rukhsar.

All this started in 2007-08 from a small clinic at Karaundi locality in Varanasi and later saw Dr Wolfe along with his team travelling to remote villages (with support from Aghor Foundation Ashram at Mahesh Nagar in Varanasi) with portable equipment.

Later it shifted to Aghor Ashram at Mahesh Nagar and now it is housed inside the hut on sprawling land at Ramnagar, to be used by the foundation to build Amrit Sagar, an eco centre for clean environment.

"We detect refractive errors and give spectacles all free of cost.

Also, we have improved vision of incipient cataract patients via high-powered spectacles. With level of nourishment being low among rural folks, particularly Muslim weavers and them being always exposed to UV rays under sun, incidence of cataract is high. It can be treated only through surgery, which will take another five years to start here if Baba Harihar Ram wants," said Wolfe. "Once our eco centre, the Amrit Sagar is complete, we'll start a clinic-cum surgical facility for Dr Wolfe, to cure cataract, perhaps in five years time," said Baba Harihar Ram.

Till then we'll annually carry on Vision Varanasi at this hut only.