CHAPTER-5

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

This chapter deals with the social role of Beas centre of Radha Soami Satsang, it is divided into three sections. The first section deals with the steps taken by Beas centre to remove social evils prevailing in the society. The second section discusses the facilities provided by the Beas centre to the devotees in and outside the centre and the role of Maharaj Jagat Singh Medical Relief Society, third part deals with the role of Beas centre during the national problems.

I

The Beas centre of Radha Soami Satsang has been playing an important role in the social welfare works. The Beas Masters tried to create a healthy society through their teachings. They condemned empty rituals prevailing in the society, i.e. idol worship, tomb worship, picture worship, visiting pilgrimages, excess of ceremonies to maintain status and name in the society or other beliefs concerning human life. Baba Jaimal Singh, the founder as well as first Master of the centre was completely against constructing any tomb or mausoleum in the memory of past saints. He said that it was against the teachings of his guru and opposed it by saying, 'the only true memorial to a saint is his teachings. Mausoleums cannot keep his memory alive. Instead they divert the attention of the true seeker to outward rituals. Soami Ji (Soami Shiv Dayal) always emphasized the need for turning the attention within and meditating inwardly'.

Therefore, Baba Jaimal Singh instructed his disciples, ‘Do not let anyone build a memorial for me when I am gone.’ The other Masters of Beas followed the same, therefore no samadhi or mausoleum has been constructed in the memory of any Dera Beas Master. No formal rituals and ceremonies are performed to worship and please the God, the followers sit together in a big pandal and attend discourse of the Master

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1 Kapur, Heaven on Earth, pp.32-33.
who through the teachings of past saints emphasizes on meditation only on name of God.2

Dera Beas condemned other evils of society such as discrimination on the basis of religion, caste as well as gender. The Beas Masters have been strictly against the idea of considering Radha Soami Satsang as a new religion, for example, on 1 July 1943, in a reply to one of his followers, Baba Sawan Singh stated:

He did not want the teachings of Radha Soami to be labelled as a religion. If it is made into religion, the people of other religions, the Hindus, Christians, Jews, Muslims, Jains and so forth would not be able to derive any benefit from it, for it would then be just like any other religion. Radhasoami Mat is a spiritual philosophy, a natural science, which is the foundation of all religions, and embraces every religion as its own. It is open to all religions whose members are welcome to it. One does not lose one’s religion by following this Path.3

Beas Masters initiated men and women from all religions and castes. Baba Sawan Singh asserted in his satsang on 1 June 1947, ‘for me, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis-men of all religions are alike. I love them all; they all are mine’.4 The Beas Masters initiated Hindus, Sikhs, Christians as well as Muslims. There are several examples of the members of Muslim community joining this faith such as: Sheikh Nizam-Ud- Din of Multan, a devotee of Baba Jaimal Singh and Baba Sawan Singh, Mistri Faqir Mohammed, a carpenter, a disciple of Baba Jaimal Singh. The Dera Masters had visited the house of faqir Mohammed after his death to meet his family members who worked as the ironsmiths at the village of Veela near Ghuman. Baba Jagat Singh had even stayed in his house on 9 July 1949 and 17 March 1950 during his satsang tours.5 During the period of Baba Sawan Singh, Chishti Abdul Salam of Bahawalpur (Pakistan) was one of his close satsangis. Sain Lasoorhi Shah, a Muslim faqir of Lyallpur, had good relations with Baba Sawan Singh as well as Baba Jagat Singh.6

One of the close sewadars of Baba Sawan Singh was a Muslim named Shadi who belonged to a blacksmith family. Shadi was initiated by Baba Sawan Singh at a

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2 Personal Visits to Radha Soami Satsang Beas from 2009 to 2013.
4 Charan Singh, Quest for Light, p.224; Munshi Ram, With the Three Masters, Vol.II, p.240.
6 It is noteworthy that some of the Muslim followers had to face boycott of their society, for instance, the community of Sheikh Nizam-Ud- Din as well as Chishti Abdul Salam boycotted them, but they remained firm. See, Munshi Ram, With the Three Masters, Vol.II, p.89; Vol.III, p.31.
young age, he remained in the service of Baba Sawan Singh, Baba Jagat Singh and Baba Charan Singh. Baba Sawan Singh had also initiated some Mohammeden tailis (oil-pressers) of the village of Dharamsal during his satsang tour on 20 July 1944. In addition, there were many people from lower castes and other religions who worked in the kitchen and were attendants of Beas Masters. On 1 May 1946, during his tour to Jullundur and Phagwara, Baba Sawan Singh visited the houses of the shoemakers on foot, he spent some time and gave message of Radha Soami Philosophy to them. But one point needs to be discussed here that though Dera Masters initiated people without any difference since its inception, but till 1952, two separate langars were being run at Beas centre, one for the upper class and other for the lower class devotees. The Beas Masters undoubtedly had succeeded in bringing them closer at the time of discourses, but they could not change their mind sets. Therefore, they allowed them to eat separately to maintain a peaceful atmosphere at Dera premise. In 1952, Baba Charan Singh merged both langars into one. He announced in his satsang:

There would be no separate langar for harijans (untouchables). All would eat together, and the harijans would also cook and serve food along with everyone else. After that he invited all sewadars and sadhus of Beas for a meal at his house, sat down on the ground in a row and asked harijans to serve food. Since then all people take their meals at Dera langar in a single line or pangat without any distinction of religion, caste, class or nationality, and they are treated equally. Baba Charan Singh always said in his satsangs, ‘God created men, he did not create sects or creeds. Man is responsible for their appearance on the scene’. It is interesting to note that Beas Masters even encouraged inter caste marriages. In their own families, Beas Masters performed marriages with Hindu families, the best example is of the fourth Master Charan Singh who was married to a Hindu Rajput girl Harjeet of Pisawah in 1944.

The Beas Masters have always stood for equality between man and woman, they criticized the practices such as veil system, child marriage, infanticide, female foeticide and dowry etc. Since the establishment of Radha Soami Satsang at Beas, women have played a significant role in the growth of the centre, for instance, Bibi

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10 Ibid., pp.5-6; Excerpts of the Interview of Joginder Kumari of Kalka, an old devotee of Baba Sawan Singh.
Rukko, a devotee of Soami Shiv Dayal settled at Dera Beas on the instructions of his wife Radha and gave her services to Baba Jaimal Singh and Baba Sawan Singh. She acted as a *pathi* to recite hymns in the Master’s discourse. She was also the incharge of the entire administration at the time of Baba Jaimal Singh and even afterwards for many years. Bibi Rakhi, Bibi Lazzo and Bibi Ralli were three devoted *sewadars* of Baba Sawan Singh, Bibi Rakhi used to look after the *langar* and assist women at the time of initiation. Bibi Lazzo was incharge of the accommodation and other amenities for female devotees. Bibi Ralli served as a cook in the kitchen as well as acted as *pathi* to read *shabds* in the *satsang* of Baba Sawan Singh, the *sangat* affectionately called her Bhua Ji (Aunt). She looked after Baba Charan Singh and his brother Purshotam Singh in their childhood, served three Masters and gained respect as a family member.

As *Dera* Beas grew, women started taking active part in the *langar*, canteen, *bhajan bhandar*, security as well as construction work. Rani Lakshimibai Rajwade, member of the royal family of the former princely state, played an important role as a member and Secretary of Radha Soami Satsang Beas Society during 1980s. Parkashwati Sud, M. Singla, Dr. Dhillon, Dr. Irani, Sheila Bharat Ram and Indumati Rajwade were some women, who also had been a part of *Dera* administration in

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different years and gained popularity for their services. In 1957, at the time of the formation of Radha Soami Satsang Beas Society, there was only one female member, but in 1972, their number rose to two. In 1994, during the period of present Master, the number of women members has remained same. In Maharaj Jagat Singh Medical Relief Society, there was no female member at the time of its formation in 1978, but in 1994, two female members were nominated in the Society of 17 members (See Appendix-VII to XI).

Another important name among the women is of Harjeet Kaur, the wife of Baba Charan Singh, who inaugurated Nature Cure Clinic in March 1967 and ran it for many years successfully. Many female devotees from abroad have played important role in the activities of Dera Beas, Louise Hilger was one among them. She was an initiate of Baba Sawan Singh, came to Beas from USA and permanently settled there. She was a great asset to the Dera Publications Department. Right from Baba Charan Singh’s accession in 1952, she worked as his private and personal secretary and gained respect. Baba Charan Singh often said, ‘She is my senior most staff member even senior to myself’.

During the period of Baba Sawan Singh, the female devotees settled abroad had also started taking part in the activities of Beas. He appointed Ruegg to help Colonel Sanders in preaching philosophy at United Kingdom, Baba Jagat Singh confirmed her designation when he succeeded Baba Sawan Singh.

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17 Kapur, Heaven on Earth, p.281
18 Sethi, Treasure beyond Measure, pp.197-98.
19 Spiritual Link, Radha Soami Satsang Beas Magazine, April 1980, p.20
Baba Charan Singh and Baba Gurinder Singh also encouraged women to take responsibility as representatives of Beas in other countries. In 1970, out of 20 representatives of Beas in 15 countries where the philosophy of Beas Masters had reached, there was only one female representative. In 1980, there were 3 female representatives among 36 in 31 countries. The number of female representatives rose to 4 in 1990 out of 54 in 37 countries. In 2000, the number of female representatives reached to 18 among 86 in 77 countries. In 2010, 20 women are playing the role of representatives of Beas out of the total number of 90 in 86 countries (See Appendix-XIII to XVII).

In addition, a number of women gave their services in the blood donation camps and eye camps of Dera Beas organized at different times. At present, a number of women are working as nurses, doctors and on other positions in all three charitable hospitals of Dera Beas running under Maharaj Jagat Singh Medical Relief Society in Beas, Sikanderpur and Bhota on salary basis. Besides some women are doing honorary services as preachers and pathis in the Dera and other national and international centres of Beas.20

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20 Spiritual Link, RSSB Magazine, April 1980, p.21; The word pathi is used for the person who recites the hymns (shabds) during religious discourses at Beas.
To make women aware about their rights and to tackle the women related issues, the centre has been taking several steps, one of these is a documentary on female foeticide named as *Nari Ko Adhikar Do (Ek Jagrati)*. The title of the documentary dictated its purpose and subject matter itself. Its title song ‘*Nanhi Beti Ko Jiwan Ka Var Do*’ urges to save the girl child and to bless the new born daughter. The cassette is played before the *satsang* of Beas Master in the *satsang* shed during the days of *bhandara*.²¹

II

A number of works are being done by Dera Beas in the field of social welfare of people. The first and foremost step of Beas centre has been to start free *langar* (community kitchen). In the days of Baba Jaimal Singh, a *langar* or free kitchen was established at *Dera* Beas. In its beginning years, only 30 to 40 people used to come to Baba Jaimal Singh to attend his discourse and take food from *Dera langar*.²² The number of people reached to thousands on *bhandaras* during Baba Sawan Singh’s tenure who took meals from *langar*. Baba Sawan Singh regularly sent produce like wheat, corn and other grains from his farm in Mehmasinghwala and Sirsa to *Dera langar* since the period of his *guru*. During partition of India in 1947, the *langar* played a major role in providing food to refugees. The *langar* was served on Beas railway station to people coming from Pakistan or going from India.²³ Baba Charan Singh got the area of *langar*’s building enlarged by filling the ravines, in few years after his installation as Dera Master, it could accommodate 20,000 devotees in a single sitting. Till his death in 1990, the capacity of *Dera langar* building had reached to 50,000 persons in a single sitting.²⁴ At present, the *Dera langar* has maintained its reputation for being a model of perfect organization which provides meal to people who visit Beas, the number of people reaches to more than 2, 50,000 on *bhandara* days. The entire *sewa* in the *langar* is done by *sewadars* who come from various parts of the country to serve in the *Dera langar* free of cost.²⁵

²¹*Personal visits to Dera Beas (2010)*
²⁴*Kapur, Heaven on Earth*, p.372. See also, Sethi, *Treasure beyond Measure*, p.52.
Another social welfare work of Dera Beas has been to provide medical facilities to people. During the period of Baba Jaimal Singh and in the early years of Baba Sawan Singh, no regular arrangements were in place in the Beas centre for medical care of devotees. In 1932, Dr. Julian Johnson, an American disciple of Baba Sawan Singh and a surgeon by profession, settled at Dera Beas. He acted as personal physician to the great Master and gave free medical services, including surgery to the people of and around the Dera. After his death in 1938, his duties were taken over by Dr. Chander Bansi, retired civil surgeon of the Punjab Government. Dr. Bansi gave his services to Dera for next eight years till his death on 13 September 1946. He attended the patients, not only in the Dera but also in the nearby villages, without charging any fee.

Dr. Randolph Stone, an American disciple of Baba Sawan Singh treated patients for a long time at Dera with polarity therapy (it deals with various energy currents in the body.) The health centre took shape of a small dispensary in 1945 to provide primary health care to indoor and outdoor patients. A clinical laboratory was added in 1948. In 1958, Baba Charan Singh established a charitable hospital at Dera, it was named as Maharaj Sawan Singh Charitable Hospital. A separate eye department was set up in 1973, under the guidance of Prem Nath, a reputed eye surgeon, one X-Ray machine and a Diathermy machine and an ECG Machine were installed in 1974 and a Gynaecological and Antenatal Clinic was started next year. Till 1980s nearly 2,00,000 patients were treated at the hospital every year. There was a full time dental surgeon and a homeopath. The homeopathic dispensary started in 1980 also became popular; the average number of patients treated daily was 140. In 1981, the total number of patients treated during a year was 3,67,762. Thus, during the period of Baba Charan Singh, a small health centre had grown into a regular hospital with various facilities for diagnosis and treatment of patients like: X-ray, electrocardiography, diathermy, a clinical laboratory and an Indoor Patient Ward with 20 beds.
With the establishment of a new and a larger hospital in Beas in 1986, named as Maharaj Sawan Singh Charitable Hospital, the smaller hospital at Dera was renamed as Dera hospital.\textsuperscript{32} Now this Dera hospital has been shifted to newly constructed building by the present Master Baba Gurinder Singh. The hospital provides free, on the spot medical care. During bhandara days, it runs a number of first aid centres around the Dera to take care of the routine medical problems of the devotees, and a small Out Patient Department.

To help alleviate the physical suffering of the people, Baba Charan Singh inaugurated blood donation camps at Dera premise in a blood donation programme in response to the acute shortage of blood faced by the local hospitals.\textsuperscript{33} In 1962, at the request of the Punjab Government Health Department, Baba Charan Singh allowed the Blood Bank Society to visit Dera for blood donation under their emergency blood collection programme. A large number of satsangis of Beas flocked to donate blood; their number was so large that the team discovered that it did not have sufficient arrangements for collecting the blood, its storage and preservation. After that Blood Bank Society has been visiting Dera once or twice a year according to its need.\textsuperscript{34}

The next step towards the medical aid was the inauguration of Dera eye camp. In early 1960s, the Government of India launched a National Blindness Eradication Programme, the main goal of this programme was to increase the number of eye

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{blood_donation_camps}
\caption{Blood donation Camps at Dera Beas}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{33} Legacy of Love, Pictorial Biography of Baba Charan Singh, p.240.
\textsuperscript{34} Spiritual Link, RSSB Magazine, Volume 3, Issue 4, Jan. 1983, p.32. See also, Kapur, Heaven on Earth, pp.378-79.
operations performed in India each year to two million. Therefore, the Government encouraged non-governmental organizations to establish permanent or temporary eye hospitals and clinics, especially in rural areas, to supplement the already overloaded regular medical facilities. During his tours of the villages in the rural and hilly areas, Baba Charan Singh noticed a large number of people suffering from cataracts and other eye diseases. In view of their inability to afford or even find the required medical attention, he inaugurated first Dera eye camp in February 1965 in the Dera premise. Kishori Lal, Chairman of the Board of trustees of Sitapur Eye Centre, sent a team of surgeons and experts. The responsibility of Chief Eye surgeon was placed on Dr. J. M. Pahwa, the then Chief Medical Officer at Gandhi Eye Hospital, Aligarh. For the first camp 2,500 patients were treated in which 1,250 patients were operated on.

After that, the eye camps became annual feature of Dera life, these continued till 2002. The number of patients treated reached to 6,000 to 8,000 a year. Dera eye camps were organized around two basic principles that these would be free of charge and open to all. The patient of any age group was welcome at the camps, for instance, in the 26th camp of 1993, the youngest patient was six months old and the oldest was 110 years of age. In the camp of 1995, oldest patient was 100 years old whereas the youngest was two years old. In 1996, the oldest patient was of 105 years and the youngest one and a half year old. Patients from all over India started taking benefits from the Dera eye camps. Each patient was provided with food, bed, clean linen, medicines, all necessary medical tests and spectacles, absolutely free of charge. Entire cost of treatment including boarding and lodging of the patients and their relatives was borne by the Dera Beas.

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37 *Legacy of Love, Pictorial Biography of Baba Charan Singh*, p.360; *Personal Visit to Dera* (2009).
Receiving of the patients at Dera eye camps

Eye Camps were intended specifically to treat the cataracts of poor villagers. Therefore, most of the patients were operated on for cataract and for glaucoma and other minor eye diseases. In addition to cataract operations, patients were treated for other eye ailments as well. Sarais and sheds of Dera Beas were used generally for the eye camps. The number of wards increased or decreased according to the strength of patients. For example, the area and extent of the camp had to be enlarged in 1985 and the newly constructed Ladies’ Shed was used for accommodating women patients and the overflow of men. In November 1989, there were 35 wards for male members and 60 for female members at the Dera Eye Camp. The large operation theatres were divided into separate areas for different stages of the operation. After the operation, the patients had to recuperate in their wards until they could return to their villages.

Different wards at Dera eye camp

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Kapur, Heaven on Earth, pp.377-78.
The Dera devotees played significant role in the eye camps arranged usually in
the months of October-November (because of suitable of weather conditions). The
number of sewadars to work in the camps increased every year, for instance there
were around 250 medical and paramedical staff members, supported by about 3,700
sewadars in 1984.\(^{45}\) In 1985, there were 14 eye specialists, 46 surgeons, 94 graduate
students, 212 para-medical staff, 150 nurses, 22 laboratory technicians, 39
pharmacists and 5, 574 sewadars.\(^{46}\) In 1989, there were 250 doctors, mostly
specialists, assisted by over 300 nurses and 6, 000 sewadars in the eye camp. The
team was usually led by doctors from Aligarh, Delhi and Amritsar.\(^{47}\) In 1992, the
number of sewadars was over 10,000. Medical examination of sewadars was also
undertaken, for the first time, to avoid any infection to patients in 1993, the practice
continued till the last camp.\(^{48}\)

The task of preparation of eye-pads, bandages, masks and caps worn by the
medical staff was undertaken usually by female sewadars. The sewadars used to
serve patients from their admission till their discharge, they took care of their food,
bath; comfort etc. The whole camp was kept impeccably clean by an army of
sewadars, who worked on voluntary basis. Some of them helped in the administrative
work of camp. Sometimes western visitors at the Guest House were also invited to
participate in the camp by Master.\(^{49}\)

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{female-sewadars.jpg}
\caption{Female sewadars involved in different services}
\end{figure}

\(^{46}\) Ibid., Summary (Dera Annual Report 1985), September 1986, p.8.
\(^{47}\) Govind Thukral, ‘Spreading the Message of Love and Service’, The Hindustan Times, September 17,
1989, Sunday, p. 11.
\(^{48}\) Science of the Soul, Radha Soami Satsang Beas Magazine, Summary (Dera Annual Report Eye
Camp 1993), March 1994, p.47.
\(^{49}\) Wayne and Miriam Caravella, Love in Action (The Dera Eye Camp), p.4; Sethi, Treasure beyond
Measure, p.99; Spiritual Link, Radha Soami Satsang Beas Magazine, Volume 3, Issue 4, Jan. 1983,
p.32. 
Since the inception of Dera eye camps, Dr. J. M. Pahwa of Aligarh, the chief surgeon of camps and his team had been performing operations during the period of Baba Charan Singh as well as his successor Baba Gurinder Singh. Dr. J. M. Pahwa along with his assistant Dr. H. L. Gupta gave free services to Dera camps for many years. Interestingly, Dr. Pahwa had performed 19,000 operations at Dera alone till 1979.\(^50\) He performed a record number of 575 operations in one day in 1981.\(^51\)

In addition, many foreign devotees of Beas Masters came to Dera to serve the patients, for instance Dr. B. H. Irani of Whipp’s Cross Hospital, London travelled especially to India in 1979 and visited many times later also to serve in the camps. There were no paid workers at Dera eye camps, all gave their services voluntarily.\(^52\)

The extra ordinary feature of the Dera Beas eye camps was the discipline and co-ordination of *sewadars*. To maintain discipline at the Dera camps, many instructions were given to the staff of the camp such as:

- No *sewadars* will leave the camp without prior permission of his/her ward Master.
- They will ensure complete silence in the ward; they will move about very quietly in the wards and not disturb the patients, but will encourage patients to rest or do *bhajan* and *simran* instead of gossiping.
- The *sewadars* not on active duty in their wards will spend their time in *bhajan* and *simran* or rest.
- The sense of discipline, and responsibility, the spirit of *nishkam seva* (selfless service) and devotion to duty must be of the highest order.

\(^{50}\) Ibid., Summary (Dera Annual Report 1979), April 1981, p.16.
• They will not accept gifts, cash, or rewards of any sort from the patients or their visitors for service rendered to the patients.

• The *sewadars* will continue to perform their normal duties even during the visit of the Master to the camp, and will not run away from their assigned jobs to have Master’s *darshan* or attend the *satsang*.

• Co-operation and harmony at all levels, at all times, and with everyone, without distinction of status in society.

• Utmost humility and cheerfulness at all times.

• Forgiveness for failures and faults of others.

• Accepting failures and criticism cheerfully, giving credit for success to others, and considering success as a blessing of the Master.53

Baba Charan Singh used to visit the eye camp two or three times every day. He used to walk through each ward, meet doctors, and inquire about progress of the operations and the convalescing patients. The Present Master Baba Gurinder Singh also followed the routine of his predecessor till the end of the eye camps in 2002.54

Besides Dera Master, sometimes Government officials or other dignitaries also visited Dera eye camp, for example, the Governor of Punjab, Arjan Singh and the executive Director of the Royal Common Wealth Society for the prevention of Blindness, Arvind Kaji visited and appreciated the arrangements in 1985.55 The Governor of the Punjab, accompanied with his wife and Justice Savinder Singh Sodhi

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of Punjab and Haryana High Court visited the camp in 1987. The Governor, who showed keen interest in all its activities, was most eloquent in his praise for the excellence of the arrangements made for the care of the patients.\footnote{Ibid., RSSB Magazine, June 1988, pp.8-9.} In addition, a video film on the camp was prepared by Dera for showing at an international conference on the eradication of blindness held in Delhi in 1986, Television Department of the Government of India also visited the camp. The press also took notice of the eye camp with a long article in The Tribune.\footnote{Science of the Soul, Radha Soami Satsang Beas Magazine, Summary (Dera Annual Report 1986), September 1987, pp.9-10.} A Video film of the last eye camp of Baba Charan Singh’s time in 1989 was prepared as well as released by the present Master Baba Gurinder Singh after some time of his death.\footnote{In the video film of the eye camp of 1989, all major activities have been demonstrated, for example, the announcement by Beas Master about eye camp to the people, screening of the patients, preparation of the camp sites, arrangements made for the camp, operations, daily visits of the Master at the camp, different services performed by the sewadars, help rendered by the sewadars, activities of last day as well as the parshad given to sewadars in the presence of the Master as a token for their services etc.} 

In the beginning years of the eye camps, all expenses were borne by Dera administration. But after the formation of Maharaj Jagat Singh Medical Relief Society in 1978, the responsibility of running the camp was handed over to this society.\footnote{Science of the Soul, Radha Soami Satsang Beas Magazine, June 1988, pp.8-9.}

The number of the patients treated in the Dera eye camps is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of patients operated</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of patients operated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>1,250</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>1,157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>1,024</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>1,192</td>
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<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>1,575</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>1,302</td>
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<td>1970</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>1,192</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>1,524</td>
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<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>2,202</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>2,205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>2,205</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>2,169</td>
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<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>2,169</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>2,205</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

58 In the video film of the eye camp of 1989, all major activities have been demonstrated, for example, the announcement by Beas Master about eye camp to the people, screening of the patients, preparation of the camp sites, arrangements made for the camp, operations, daily visits of the Master at the camp, different services performed by the sewadars, help rendered by the sewadars, activities of last day as well as the parshad given to sewadars in the presence of the Master as a token for their services etc.
A total of 1,503,388 operations were performed in the 35 Dera eye camps.\textsuperscript{60}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>2,266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>2,564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>2,750</td>
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<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>2,629</td>
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<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>3,082</td>
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<td>4,859</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>7,207</td>
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<td>1998</td>
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<td>1999</td>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>7,837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>3,035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2,304</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph showing the annual growth of the patients operated at Dera Beas annual eye camps

The graph given above shows the growth in the number of patients treated in the Dera eye camps. The first eye camp was organized in 1965, but it could become a regular feature only after 1973. In the years 1966, 1969 and 1972, the camp was not organized due to unknown reasons. The number of the patients did not always increase but sometimes decreased in these camps. For example in 1967, 1970, 1978, 1982, 1986, 1988, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001 and 2002, the number of the patients decreased than the previous year. The maximum number of patients can be noticed in 1998 as 9,103 whereas the minimum number of the patients was 1,024 in 1967. After 2002, the eye camps were not organized by Beas centre. the probable cause was the construction of three hospitals by Maharaj Jagat Singh Medical Relief Society at Beas, Sikanderpur and Bhotha which had started giving free services to the people of surrounding areas.

\textsuperscript{60} Wayne and Miriam Caravella, \textit{Love in Action (The Dera Eye Camp)}, Beas: Radha Soami Satsang Beas, 1990, p.5: Radha Soami Satsang Beas Archival Records.
To provide naturopathic medical facilities at *Dera* Beas, Harjeet Kaur, wife of the then Master Baba Charan Singh inaugurated Nature Cure clinic in March 1967 and ran it for many years successfully. She studied naturopathy, passed examinations, visited various naturopathic centres in India and abroad; and with the Master’s permission she opened her own clinic in the *Dera*.61 The patients were treated free of cost through a special programme of diet, exercise, and naturopathic therapies using mud, water, steam, sunrays, and so on. For seven years, she ran this clinic at her personal expenses but in 1971, on the pressing requests of the *Dera* administration, she agreed to draw its expenditure from the *Dera* funds.62 The clinic was located at Pisawah House, belonging to her father, Rao Bahadur Shivdhyan Singh. The clinic was comparatively smaller than many others in India in its beginning, but because of her devotion, hard work, and selfless service, it came to be recognized as one of the well managed naturopathic centres in the country and was known as Nature Cure Hospital later. Under her able guidance, a group of devoted *sewadars* looked after a large number of patients.63 The staff of the hospital consisted of a personal assistant to Harjeet Grewal and a number of attendants, both male and female, all of whom had been painstakingly trained by her, and some of them had received specialized training at the “*Arogya Mandir*”, the nature cure clinic at Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh.64

![Harjeet Grewal at his office of Nature Cure Hospital](image)

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The prominent diseases cured in the hospital were goitre, elephantitis, asthma, gastric ulcer, migraine headaches, varicose veins, overweight, diabetes, high hemoglobin, heart diseases like, high blood pressure, colitis, tuberculosis of tubes, flatulence, menopause, piles, eczema besides allergic rhinitis. It may be of interest to note that in response to treatment for overweight, one patient lost 25 lbs (1.15 kilograms) in 13 days, another 54 lbs (2.49 kilograms) in 2½ months. Since its establishment in March 1967, the treatment facilities of the hospital have expanded steadily and in a planned manner. Till 1980, there were 21 cubicles, in addition to exercise and massage rooms, used for administering the treatments such as Steam Bath, Sun Bath, Hot Foot Bath, Whole Body Cold Compress, Spinal Bath, Mud Bath, Mud Pack and Enema, Whole Body Warm Bath, Hot and Cold Hip Bath, Cold Hip Bath, Hot and Cold Compress, Hot and Cold Compress Alternate and Sits Bath etc. Harjeet Grewal, the Director and Naturopath, had her office-cum-consultation room within the hospital and had a control board especially designed to enable her to attain maximum utilization of all the treatment facilities available. She used to examine each patient before prescribing the treatment for the day and a complete record was maintained of the history of the patients’ disease, the treatment, suggested diet and the progress made. The hospital was open for treatment twice a year from the beginning of March to the end of April and again from about the end of September to November. The maximum number of patients accepted for treatment during any session was about 50. It was necessary to make bookings for treatment 3-4 months in advance of the due date of the commencement of the session.65

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65 Ibid., pp.21-22.
Nature Cure Hospital was set up primarily for the benefit of the sangat, whether permanent resident of Radha Soami colony or members who were regular visitors. Since the clinic had no space to give private rooms to the patients, applicants normally made their own arrangements for boarding and lodging for the duration of the treatment. For those, however, who were unable to arrange their own accommodation through friends or relatives at the colony, beds could be provided in two general wards, one for men patients and the other for women. Patients accepted for treatment were served with restricted diet recommended during the course of the treatment at community kitchen (bhajan bhandar) at the colony. This hospital gave treatment to the patients of various chronic and acute ailments. The treatment, food and accommodation were given entirely free of charge to the patients, irrespective of the fact whether he or she was a satsangi or not. During the year 1973, 72 regular and 415 casual patients suffering from various diseases were treated at the hospital.\textsuperscript{66} In 1980, it had 185 regular and 1,965 casual patients. Harjeet Kaur, the Director of the hospital was appointed Chairman of the Reception Committee of the All India Nature Cure Conference held in Moga in June 1980 in recognition of her services.\textsuperscript{67} In 1981, the number of patients treated was 180, in addition to 2,942 casual patients. Till 1985, the hospital continued with its reputation of being one of the leading institutions of its kind in India.\textsuperscript{68} But at present, this hospital has limited its activities to the Dera residents only due to the construction of other hospitals of Dera.

To promote the medical facilities, Baba Charan Singh established Maharaj Jagat Singh Medical Relief Society in 1978. Its aim was to oversee and coordinate all charitable medical activities taking place at Dera, and to expand these activities both in and outside Dera Radha Soamis at Beas. The Society’s goal was the promotion of free medical care for all without any distinction of caste and creed.\textsuperscript{69} Baba Charan Singh worked as the first Patron of the society and has been succeeded as such by Baba Gurinder Singh. (The administrative structure is discussed in detail in Chapter-4)

After the formation of Maharaj Jagat Singh Medical Relief Society in 1978, the responsibility of all medical activities related to Dera such as Dera hospital as

\textsuperscript{66}Kaushal, The Radha Soami Movement (1891-1997), p.75.
\textsuperscript{69}Radha Soami Satsang Beas- Origin and Growth, Dera Publication, 1994, pp.54-55. See also, Labour of Love, Book on Maharaj Sawan Singh Charitable Hospital, p.ix.
well as Dera eye camps has been handed over to the society. The first major project started by Maharaj Jagat Singh Medical Relief Society was Maharaj Sawan Singh Charitable Hospital, constructed near the Beas railway station. A 35 acre site was selected about seven kilometers from Dera Beas, near the national highway for ease of access. The land for hospital was acquired from the military department and the Punjab Government, at a reasonable price. The design of the hospital was prepared by an American architect, Dr John Templer and his team.

Under the guidance of Baba Charan Singh, the construction of the hospital was started on 21 January, 1980 and completed in 1986, but official declaration of the completion was made on 31 March, 1988. Tata made the steel available for the hospital. All the money for the construction came in voluntarily. People from Punjab, Haryana, Himachal (the two states adjoining Punjab) and other states participated in the project voluntarily. About 150 skilled laborers were employed on a full time basis. 75% of labor involved in the construction of the hospital was voluntary. The estimated cost of the hospital was around three crores of rupees in its beginning, but actual money spent on the hospital was 8 crore.

The hospital building of 3, 20, 500 square feet was carefully designed. It has been provided with lawns and flower gardens. An overview of the departments in the hospital is as following:

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70 Labour of Love, Book on Maharaj Sawan Singh Charitable Hospital, p.1.
71 Sethi, Treasure beyond Measure, pp.102-03.
72 Legacy of Love, Pictorial Biography of Baba Charan Singh, p.240.
74 Labour of Love, Book on Maharaj Sawan Singh Charitable Hospital, p.3; Sethi, Treasure beyond Measure, p.53.
<table>
<thead>
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<th><strong>Outlook Patient Departments</strong></th>
<th><strong>Indoor Patient Wards and Allied Departments</strong></th>
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<td>Surgical OPD</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Orthopaedics OPD</td>
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<td>Paediatrics OPD</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Maternity OPD</td>
<td>Emergency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dental OPD</td>
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<td>Dermatology and Venereology OPD</td>
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<td>Biochemistry</td>
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<td>Blood Bank</td>
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<td>Personnel&lt;sup&gt;75&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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The Outdoor Patients Department (OPD) of the hospital became functional on 24 January, 1986. It is divided into two parts, the General OPD and the Ophthalmology OPD. The General OPD is the business part of the hospital. It was designed around a large main waiting hall with consulting rooms and clinics located around. The OPD has specialist clinics for chest and heart diseases, fractures and deformities, ENT (ear, nose, and throat) disorders, maternity, dermatology, and dentistry. Five consulting rooms are used for General OPD examinations. Other facilities in the General OPD include two treatment rooms with separate cubicles for injections and dressings, and a separate area for the collection of laboratory samples. The Surgery Department has two consulting rooms, and the Orthopedics Department has one. A Minor Operation Theatre is also attached to these departments. Both the Medical Department and the Pediatrics Department have two consulting rooms each. A children’s playroom has been set up for use by the Pediatrics Department. There are two dispensaries in the General OPD, one for male, another for female patients where free medicines are given to all OPD patients.

The Ophthalmology OPD is the second busiest area of the hospital. Ophthalmology is the medical service upon which the hospital is based, and is a direct outgrowth of the annual Dera Eye Camps. The Ophthalmology OPD takes care of eye diseases. The most common eye diseases treated are cataract, glaucoma, and trachoma. The Ophthalmology Department has its own operation theatre. Surgical procedures performed include cataract extraction, intraocular lens implants, glaucoma surgery, laser treatment, and fluorescent angiography. In 1993-94, the two OPD departments treated a total of 2,62,292 patients, an average of 773 patients a day in the General OPD and 162 in the Eye OPD. At present, about 1,200 patients are treated in both the OPDs.

Those patients who need extensive treatment are admitted in the hospital as indoor patients. In 1994, a total of 239 beds were available in the hospital’s seven wards, divided as follows: Medicine (32), Surgery (64), Gynecology and Obstetrics (16), ENT (11), Ophthalmology (94), ICU/Emergency (14), and the Critical Care Unit

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76 Ibid., p.x.
77 Labour of Love, Book on Maharaj Sawan Singh Charitable Hospital, p.38; http://www.rssb.org/organization.php; Personal visit to Maharaj Sawan Singh Charitable Hospital (2011).
(8), the number of the beds has increased to 260 till date.\textsuperscript{78} The chief characteristics of the hospital wards are cleanliness and comfort given to patients, i.e., a call-bell at each bed as well as a set of headphones for listening to daily news, traditional devotional music (\textit{shabds}), or recorded \textit{satsangs} (spiritual discourses). The food served to the patients is carefully planned by the hospital’s nutritionist and is completely vegetarian.\textsuperscript{79} The hospital Laundry is highly mechanized and capable of washing 500 kg. of linen a day. The equipment includes washing machines, a dry cleaning machine, hydro-extractors, drying machines, a calendaring (pressing) machine for linens, and steam presses for uniforms.\textsuperscript{80}

Some departments of the hospital are responsible for the maintenance and smooth working of the hospital. Engineering Department maintains a high standard of efficiency in meeting the growing needs of the hospital. The hospital operates its own sub-station which is responsible for ensuring an unfailing supply of electricity for the hospital, and maintaining all electrical equipments used in the hospital complex. To reduce power consumption, incandescent bulbs have been replaced with fluorescent lights wherever possible. Air Conditioning Department is responsible for maintaining and operating the air conditioning system. Three 60 ton compressors supply chilled water to the central air conditioning system. In addition, this department maintains and repairs other equipments, such as window air conditioners, refrigerators, and freezers. Mechanical Engineering Department maintains the water turbine pumps so that a reliable supply of water to the entire hospital complex could be given. It also ensures regular and timely supply of medical gases, compressed air, suction, steam from the two large automatic boilers. One solar water heating system supplies hot water to the laundry. Another one is being installed which will feed pre-heated hot water to the boilers, thus reducing fuel consumption. Civil Maintenance Department is responsible for the maintenance of the entire complex, including painting, cleaning, erecting fences, repair of buildings, fixtures etc. Horticulture Department is responsible for maintaining the grounds, lawns and landscaping of the entire complex.\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{78} Reena Sand, ‘Of Faith, Hope and Charity’, \textit{Times of India}, 1993, p.4; \url{http://www.rssb.org/organization.php}
\textsuperscript{79} Labour of Love, \textit{Book on Maharaj Sawan Singh Charitable Hospital}, p.58.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., p.70.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid. p. 74.
As per the available figures, the hospital had a total of 621 employees, the medical staff included 53 doctors, 126 nurses, and 50 technicians in 1994. A Training Centre was opened for nurses in February 1988 to provide free advanced training to nurses. The training programme is free of charge and the students are given a stipend to meet their “pocket” expenses. The first group of 17 student nurses, who started studying in January 1988, became staff nurses in March 1991, and the second class of nursing students graduated in September 1992. Till then each new group consists of approximately 20 student nurses, so that the hospital is guaranteed of an adequate number of nurses to meet its growing requirements. There are two auditoriums (below 100 seats of capacity), for the academic activities. One is used for lectures, seminars, and clinical/administrative meetings whereas other is used for lectures and Nurses Training Centre programmes.

To accommodate the staff members of the hospital, there are 6 residential hostels consisting of 308 units providing single accommodation besides 28 residential blocks consisting of 261 units providing family accommodation. In addition, a community centre with a crèche facility, a shopping complex (consisted of general store, provision store, fruit and vegetable stall, barber shop, tailor shop, and sweets shop) and a restaurant (bhogvan bhandar), a recreational lounge and library are constructed at hospital to facilitate the staff.

The next project in the series of the hospitals was the construction of Maharaj Charan Singh Charitable Hospital. In 1988, Baba Charan Singh launched this project in the village of Sikanderpur, near Sirsa in Haryana state. The villages in ten square kilometer area surrounding the site were typical of the rural landscape of southern Haryana. They had no electricity or plumbing, and most of the houses were made of mud. The inhabitants of these villages were poor agricultural labourers who suffered from many health problems. As he had lived and worked in the Sikanderpur area, Baba Charan Singh was well aware of the conditions of the local villagers, especially lack of adequate and affordable health care. Therefore, fifteen acres of farmland was

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83 In addition, foreign satsangi doctors, nurses, and medical technicians also come to the hospital to serve voluntarily. In 1993-94, 14 foreign satsangi medical professionals (5 doctors, 4 nurses, and 4 technicians) offered their services at the hospital: Labour of Love, Book on Maharaj Sawan Singh Charitable Hospital, p.73.
84 The Path of Love, RSSB Magazine, August, 1986, p.23; See also, Labour of Love, Book on Maharaj Sawan Singh Charitable Hospital, p.77.
purchased by Maharaj Jagat Singh Medical Relief Society for the hospital site, four
more acres were added later.  

As in the Beas hospital, the sangat gave free services to the hospital at Sikanderpur. Many sewadars from Sikanderpur area, besides hundreds of sewadars who had worked for the Maharaj Sawan Singh Charitable Hospital at Beas gave their time and energy to this project. The hospital was designed by the same team of architects who designed the hospital at Beas, it is similar in many ways, though on a smaller scale. It too is horizontal, has garden style facility, is open and airy allowing natural light and pleasant breezes. The façade incorporates elements of the traditional architecture of the region, while the main structure is modern, efficient, and appropriate to the medical services it provides. Also like the hospital at Beas, this hospital is surrounded by lush lawns, trees, bushes, and other vegetation.  

The Sikanderpur Hospital of 50 beds was completed after Baba Charan Singh passed away. Baba Gurinder Singh named the hospital as Maharaj Charan Singh Charitable Hospital. The hospital’s Out Patient Department started functioning in August 1993, and the hospital became fully operational by 1994. The Outdoor Patient Department is designed to serve about 350 people daily. The hospital has a laboratory, X-ray department, operation theatre, post-operative units, and dental department. The focus of the hospital’s indoor patient facilities is obstetrics and gynecology, and a special ladies’ OPD has been set up to provide these services. The

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86 Labour of Love, Book on Maharaj Sawan Singh Charitable Hospital, p. 187.
87 Ibid., pp.87-88.
OPD has several examination rooms and a waiting hall. The Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department has its own OPD waiting room. It was Baba Charan Singh’s idea that the hospital should maintain health record of every woman of the surrounding villages, now the hospital has plans to send mobile vans into the villages to register the women.

A team of 14 doctors, 26 nurses, 18 technicians, and other support staff worked in the hospital in 1994. Many of them were sent to the hospital in Beas for a three-month training period. Because of the isolated location, the hospital complex has been designed as self-contained community. Residential quarters have been provided for all levels of the staff. There are shops, provision stores, a canteen, and other amenities including sports facilities. Like the hospital at Beas, food served by its kitchen and sold on its premises is strictly lacto-vegetarian, no alcoholic drinks are served or sold. The total cost of construction of the hospital was approximately Rs.50 million, paid from funds donated in sewa to the Maharaj Jagat Singh Medical Relief Society, which is responsible for the hospital’s financial administration and operations. As this hospital is also a charitable hospital, all medical services, tests, medicines, room and boarding are provided free of cost.89

Third in the series of the hospitals, the Bhota Charitable Hospital was constructed by Maharaj Jagat Singh Medical Relief Society under the guidance of Baba Gurinder Singh, the present Master in district Hamirpur of Himachal Pradesh.90 A large number of people from the mountainous areas of Himachal Pradesh used to come to Beas in annual Dera Eye Camps for treatment. Baba Charan Singh decided to build a hospital in the mountains, so that it could be easily accessible to them but could not take it up. Spread over a sprawling area of 450 kanals, the village of Bhota in Himachal Pradesh was selected as the location of hospital by Baba Gurinder Singh. The climate at Bhota was cool during summer months, so air conditioning was not a major concern for architects. However, due to hospital’s vertical design, with entrances and exits at multiple levels, the efficient flow of patients and services demanded architects’ close attention.91 Same as in other hospitals, devotees of Radha Soami Faith came from all parts of the state and the neighboring areas of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan to serve in the hospital. The OPD of the hospital started

89 Labour of Love, Book on Maharaj Sawan Singh Charitable Hospital, pp.88-95.
91 Labour of Love, Book on Maharaj Sawan Singh Charitable Hospital, pp. 87-89.
functioning in 1999, it is now the busiest part of the hospital which contains waiting room. Doctors are available for diagnosis, injections, dressings, minor operations, laboratory samples collection and examination. At present, about 450 patients are treated daily through Out Patient Department.92

The five storied hospital building covers over 1.25 lac square feet area having 75 beds along with major departments such as Ophthalmology, Gynaecology Obstetrics, Paediatrics, Orthopaedics, ENT, Dentistry, Radiology, Pathology, Physiotherapy, Medicine, Surgery, Anaesthesia in addition to a blood bank as well as a laboratory set up for carrying out all kinds of sophisticated tests.93 The hospital wards are well lit, spacious having comforts such as, a call- bell at each bed, a set of headphones for listening to news, traditional devotional music (shabds),or recorded satsangs (spiritual discourses). The hospital kitchen has a revolutionary concept of steam baked food mechanically prepared, untouched by human hands to maintain hygienic. The laundry unit disinfects, washes, irons and stacks 250 beds sheets, same number of pillow covers and towels daily.

Besides, the hospital has sub-soil water system having 4 deep bore holes for water supply to the hospital. As ground water level is going down, the hospital is scientifically developing the rain water harvesting system by evolving a filtration system, in consultation with experts, for safe-clean water. The multi-layer filtration through different zones enables the hospital not only to preserve clean water after rains but acts as a model for promoting the rain water harvesting culture for others.

93 Labour of Love, Book on Maharaj Sawan Singh Charitable Hospital, p.51; Excerpts from the Interview of Meenu Thukral, who had worked in the Bhota Hospital for many years.
The hospital complex has an electrical sub-station and two generating sets of 125 KVA each for meeting any power eventuality. Four solar water heating systems of 1000 liters and 500 liters capacity have also been installed. Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) manifolds have been established in the kitchen, bhajan bhandar and canteen.

The hospital complex has nearly 250 employees including doctors and nurses. The hospital has over 220 apartments for doctors (16 B type apartments of 1700 square feet area, 48 C type quarters with 1300 square feet area and 108 D type quarters comprising 900 square feet area), paramedical and supervisory staff within the complex including a shopping arcade for items of daily need ration, milk, fresh vegetables, fruits, sweets, tailoring and hair dresser shops, canteens, bhajan bhandar, cobbler’s stall, bank, post office, telephone exchange, library and indoor games stadium (community centre).  

Besides three hospitals many clinics have also been established by the society at Delhi, Bombay, and Sidhpur (Gujarat). In addition, the society has launched the Mobile Health Care Units project. Through this project, well equipped mobile vans staffed by medical professionals deliver primary health care services to the underserved rural communities of Patiala (Punjab), Sikanderpur and Bhot.  

Another step taken recently is to motivate the people to donate their organs after death for needy persons. To create awareness among the people, a number of pamphlets have been printed and distributed by the Beas centre to put them in the Dera Beas literature. (See Appendix-XVIII). Four documentaries have been prepared to demonstrate the significance of organ donation; these documentaries are played in the bhandara days at the satsang pandal in Beas to convey the message to the devotees. People are encouraged to donate the heart, heart valves, lungs, liver, pancreas, kidneys, eyes, skin, bones, bone marrow, connective tissues, middle ear, and blood vessels after death to help the needy who may live better life with their help. All these documentaries including Nari ko Adhikar Do which has been discussed above are sold in a single DVD named as Jago Bharat Jago on reasonable rates.

95 Labour of Love, Book on Mahraj Sawan Singh Charitable Hospital, p.ix.
96 See Pamphlets published by Radha Soami Satsang Beas in Appendices.
97 These documentaries of around 10 to 15 minutes each are prepared to give the message to donate the organs (except Nari ko Adhikar Do) of human body in a living stage as well as after death. The message is given in clear words to end the doubts and fear of people towards organ donation as well.
to an earthquake at Bhuj in Gujarat, 16,000 people were killed and 50,000 trapped. The nation was shaken up, Republic day celebrations were cancelled and the whole country rose as one to help Gujarat cope with the tragedy. Several NGOs offered help, Radhasoami Satsang Beas (RSSB) also stepped in. It approached former chief minister Keshubhai Patel and offered to build new villages. But the locals were reluctant as they did not want to be dislocated from their original homes. The Beas society then proposed to build schools which the chief minister accepted. A noteworthy point is that the society did that work on three conditions- the society will work in an area where no other organization is willing to take up rehabilitation work; no compensation would be accepted (all other NGOs were given 50 percent of the total cost) and no publicity of Dera’s efforts will be allowed. Based on these terms Radha Soami Satsang Beas took up the task of building 91 schools in Taluka Santhalpur, District Pattan. The Education Department offered the use of the Block Research Centre at Virahi (a training centre for school teachers of Gujarat), to set up base camps. The project work began on 1 May, 2001.

The planning of schools was prepared by Beas engineers, submitted and approved by the department of Roads and Buildings. A precast factory was put up at Chandkheda, at the premises of Radha Soami Satsang Beas at Ahmedabad. Here ferro cement curved sheets for roofing, precast columns, gutters, interlock tiles for flooring, cement poles for fencing, were produced and transported to Santhalpur. Nearly 700 sewadars worked daily for 16 hours to meet deadlines at Chandkheda. All MS doors and windows were fabricated at the headquarters of Beas in Punjab and sent to
satsang were held regularly in all 119 centres. A well-protected ammunition depot had been established alongside the main road to Beas, and the military always moved on the road.

The Dera Masters provided support to the flood victims. In September 1988, there were unprecedented and exceptionally heavy rains in the Punjab and Northern India. All the rivers were swollen beyond their capacity, with the result that there were wide spread floods. To give an idea of the damage on the Indian side of the international boundary alone, some 1,500 people were unofficially listed as killed, with 500 missing (the official figures were 607 and 92 respectively). Agricultural losses were put at 4,000 million rupees, crop was entirely lost. Conditions in Pakistan were even worse, as the flood waters of the different rivers joined together into the Indus. The Dera Beas too was not spared from these floods, though the damage was both minimal and repairable. Dera Beas lost all crops and vegetables in the mand area; a number of trees were up-rooted, along with 22 acres of productive land; most of the buildings in the lower Dera were flooded, much of the wheat stored for use in the langar was soaked, the boundary wall collapsed along 2,000 feet of its length. Total losses at Dera were some 4 million rupees. But no loss of life was incurred at the Dera and no one was badly hurt. The Dera had cut off from the outside world. There were no newspapers, no post, telephone lines were down, and all roads to and from the colony were blocked. The Dera Master was present throughout the flood period, and under his inspiration, and following his direct orders, the sangat worked unceasingly, and joyously, to save life, possessions, stores and equipments. The Dera Beas was able to return to normal conditions remarkably rather quickly.

Baba Charan Singh donated Rs. 10 lacs to the Punjab Governor’s Relief Fund, set up to help the flood victims. Furthermore, he sent truck loads of quilts and clothes to other relief camps.

Baba Gurinder Singh, the present Master also played an active role in the relief measures for people suffering from natural calamities. On 26 January 2001, due

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103 Sethi, *Treasure beyond Measure*, p.117.
104 Ibid., pp.124-25.
to make sure no breaches in this regulation occurred. The army authorities advised the Dera organizers to suspend *satsang* and *sewa* activities at the Dera and to move the *satsang* to some other province in India because Dera Beas was only 40 miles from the border and was in danger zone. But the Master stayed back, the *satsangs* continued daily without any interruption. Similarly, during second Indo-Pak war of 1971, Baba Charan Singh stayed in the Dera throughout the period of hostilities. It is interesting to note that when second Indo-Pak war began during the last week of November 1971, Dera Master Baba Charan Singh was not well. He had a severe heart attack in Delhi on his return from *satsang* tours of Ajmer and Jaipur (the *satsang* tours of Chandigarh and Bombay had to be cancelled). On 3rd December, when the war broke out, he was in Delhi hospital and had been advised complete bed rest by the physicians. But as soon as he heard about the war on 4th December, he decided to return to the Dera. The people took refuge from border areas like Chhamb, Naushehra, Jammu, Pathankot, and many other small border towns and villages. As during the previous war, once again Dera was called the danger zone, but the Dera and its usual atmosphere of peace and quiet remained undisturbed. It is also noteworthy that there were about 60 Western *satsangis* at the Dera when the war broke out, they all stayed at Dera Beas.  

During the mid 1980s and 90s, when terrorism created hardships and insecurity throughout the Punjab, the Dera Master Baba Charan Singh allowed all refugees who wanted help to stay at Dera. Till 1988, there were thousands of people in the Punjab whose bread earning members of the family had been mercilessly killed by terrorists. They were driven out of their homes and deprived of all their belongings. Beas centre welcomed them at the Dera premise. Sikhs, Hindus as well as Muslims were treated alike. At one time, there were about 1400 such people in Beas, uprooted from over a 100 villages. Dera provided food, milk, shelter, bedding, medicines and every other possible amenity to the needy. A temporary school was opened by the Dera for their children. The impromptus refugee camp set up at the Dera Beas was one of the best organized camps in the area. For quite some time they stayed here until the Government took charge of them by instituting a rehabilitation scheme. Surprisingly, despite the disturbed conditions of Punjab, 

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Dera Beas played a noteworthy role in national problems like partition, wars of 1965 and 1972, floods and during the period of militancy. The first reference in this field is during the partition of India when a large number of people migrated from Pakistan to India and went from India to Pakistan. It was a period of great violence and bloodshed. In 1947-48, during partition, Baba Sawan Singh, the then spiritual Master opened the Dera which was few kilometers away from the wagha border at Amritsar to all, provided the refugees with food and shelter for as long as they needed. He sent food prepared at langar to the Beas railway station every day, and the Dera sewadars served all transit refugees coming from and going to Pakistan without any distinction of caste, creed or religion. The Dera became the residence of nearly 2,500 refugees who were later settled in villages and towns. It is interesting to note that the family of Baba Sawan Singh helped some Muslim families in Sikanderpur during partition, looked after them and handed them over to the Army.

During the war between India and Pakistan in 1965, Beas Master Baba Charan Singh was at Dalhousie. The war broke out on 6 September 1965; Baba Charan Singh left Dalhousie for the Dera as soon as he heard the news of war on radio in order to be with the sangat. He spent all his time at the Dera during the war. During this period, the number at the Dera swelled to bhandara-size crowds as satsangis poured into Beas from towns on the Western front of the war. The people from the two border villages of Chhamb and Jorian which were devastated during the first two or three days of the war came and took shelter at the Dera Beas. In fact, Baba Charan Singh had visited Chhamb in the late fifties to deliver a satsang. Many people from Jullundur, Kapurthala and other cities also got shelter at Dera Beas. Despite the dangerous conditions, the usual routine of the Dera continued, with the Master at the centre, satsangs were held daily, he used to be present throughout the afternoon sewa. During the enforced blackouts at night, the Master used to go around the Dera himself

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as to motivate them to be useful for someone. The difference is that the message is conveyed in these documentaries by different characters in which the main character leads to be an inspiration for others towards organ donation.

98 Sethi, *Treasure beyond Measure*, p.131; Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*, Letter No. 129, 1960, Beas: Radha Soami Satsang Beas, p.257. During the communal disturbances in different areas, Baba Sawan Singh helped his sangat living in Pakistan before partition who wrote letters to him about their condition, for instance, in 1946, Baba Sawan Singh sent a sum of 1,000 rupees to the sangat stayed at Kakol, near Abbotabad (Pakistan).

99 Sethi, *Treasure beyond Measure*, pp.139-42.
Santhalpur. In each school a minimum of three classrooms and 6,000 meters area (one and a half acre) of playground were provided. Amenities like separate toilets for boys and girls, sintex tanks for drinking water, electrical fittings and fans were provided. The size of each classroom was 15 feet × 24 feet. The structures constructed were earthquake resistant, with ferro cement curve roofing and interlock tiles. The schools had been internally and externally painted with cement paint. Except for the land, everything else was taken care of by Radha Soami Satsang Beas. No paid labor was employed. Right from the architects, engineers, doctors, helpers, plumbers, masons, truck drivers, all were sewadars. Project work was on simultaneously in 35 villages. Every morning at 7 a.m., the sewadars were taken to different sites and returned only by 11 p.m. Round the clock langar arrangements were made for the sewadars. All sewadars from different walks of life were treated alike. Nearly 2,000 sewadars worked on this project at Santhalpur. Sewadars of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madya Pradesh and Rajasthan also participated in this sewa. The project which was scheduled to be completed by March 2002 was completed on 31 October 2001, nearly 5 months ahead. Instead of 91, as originally planned, 73 schools were finally built having 480 classrooms, as some of the neighbouring schools were clubbed together because of the short distance between the villages.108

The recent step of Beas centre towards relief measures was taken during Leh disaster in 2010. On the early morning of 6 August, 2010, massive flash floods triggered by an unprecedented cloudburst near the city of Leh in Ladakh region of Kashmir caught the residents unaware resulting in huge casualties. The flash floods carried muddy water from uphill in three different routes, devastated the settlements by burrying most of houses and washing away everything on the course of the running water, leaving deep silt deposits and huge boulders. Several residential and commercial areas in Leh and its surrounding villages were affected hit causing mass destruction of houses and property. As many as 173 people died in Leh and more than 500 were reported to be missing.109 To relieve the victims, the Beas centre of Radha Soami Satsang constructed community shelters at some of the most affected places.

They approached the administration for identification of sites of construction to be done by them, and did this job in record one month’s time at all places. They did not give press statements, no sign board was installed on these building. The society constructed 6 sheds with toilet facilities and an additional shed as Old Men’s shelter at the Mahabodhi International Meditation Centre.10

To conclude, it can be said that a significant role has been played by Radha Soami Satsang Beas towards the social welfare works. The institution of langar and free health facilities for common masses are the prominent steps taken by this philosophical centre. The role of the Beas centre in the relief measures at the time of national problems are undoubtedly noteworthy and be appreciated. But not many steps have been taken up by this centre to promote education which is mandatory for the development of society. No doubt, the Beas centre built permanent schools at Gujarat and temporary schools for children at Beas in the days of terrorism, but there is no separate programme at Beas to promote education all over India. In the case of women, some inequalities have also been observed but the works done towards women empowerment and the eradication of blindness also cannot be ignored. The concept of service attracts large number of women to serve in the Dera on honorary basis. They provided an army of workers to feed thousands who came to Beas to attend the discourses of spiritual Masters. But the role of women of gurus’ families except Harjeet Kaur has been very limited. Again there is no example of any woman rising up to become guru of the Dera. On the whole, it can be said that Radha Soami Satsang Beas has played a noteworthy role towards the welfare of societies.

10 Radha Soami Satsang Beas Archival Records.