



CRHP

Artificial Limb Program: Recipients Speak

One of the many, wide-ranging programs that the Comprehensive Rural Health Project employs to alleviate poverty in Jamkhed, India

is the construction of lightweight and inexpensive artificial limbs. Handicapped farmers may be unable to work without such devices and might have to beg for food if they have no other resources. Western prostheses are much too expensive and wieldy for practical use in most work situations, but CRHP devices – made of lightweight aluminum – have proven perfect for those who have lost a leg due to injury, illness, infection or snakebite.

The only drawback to CRHP's artificial limbs is that they must be replaced every three to four years, although at \$20 dollars per limb they remain a bargain. CRHP thus

continues limb production year round, with JELA and other organizations sending short-term teams of volunteers to help out. JELA has been conducting arti-

ficial limb work camps for Japanese volunteers since 2005.

Following are two brief stories of limb recipients and their lives...

Meena Samudre is CRHP's cashier, not a farmer. Yet, her CRHP artificial limb has changed her life.

Meena could not walk until age four. As a small child, she used to spend her days in a cradle hung between two trees, from where she could conveniently use the ground as a toilet. She had a lump on her right leg and from

age six began a series of operations. At last her leg was amputated below the knee and then, when she



was 16, amputated once more, this time above the knee.

As difficult as this was, Meena drew strength from the missionary community of the boarding house where she lived in the city of Ahmednagar. With missionary help, she was able to study into high school and learned shorthand and typing. She worked in the office of the boarding house, but in 1983 heard of the CRHP limb program and traveled to Jamkhed.



As luck would have it, CRHP staff were involved in a conference at that time and Meena's office skills were sorely needed. She was able to trade a few days of typing in exchange for a limb and received a suggestion of future employment. A year later she joined the CRHP office.

Now she has risen to the rank of cashier. She has had to replace her CRHP artificial limb several times, but never has been hindered in her work, even in the long stair climb to her office. More importantly, she feels warmly accepted in the CRHP community, where no one treats her as handicapped.

In a land where even now many marriages are arranged, Meena's life has been different. She met and fell in love with one of the lab technicians at the CRHP hospital. They now have two sons.

Through the years, she has observed many artificial limb work camps and numerous handi-

capped people who have journeyed for their first such limb. Some, she says, look anxious or even depressed about their handicapped fate.

Yet she is convinced that the limb will give them a fresh start.

"Practice with it," she tells them, "And who knows what you can do."



Tukavam Misal, 51, lost his leg in his late 30's when his right thigh was pierced by an iron rod at a construction site.

Misal also owned a small farm, but once he lost his leg he could do nothing. For three years, he merely sat at his home, helped by his wife. He could not afford a regular prosthesis.

Then he spied an ad touting CRHP's artificial limbs in a local newspaper. He traveled 150 kilometers to Jamkhed to receive his first such leg and he has changed three times through the years.



He now does all the work on his farm – plowing and weeding – and raises cotton, wheat, chickpeas and sorghum. He even rides a bicycle from his house to his fields.

Of receiving a limb from the JELA volunteers he says, "They communicate their warmth and affection with the smiles on their faces."

This he says before rising and walking away...on his own. Thanks to his CRHP artificial limb.