

Dressing wounds with a healing touch

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NEW DELHI: Life has not been the same again for soldier Om Prakash after a mine explosion during the Kargil War left him incapacitated. Although the 21-year-old jawan of 3rd Rajput Regiment was severely injured, he managed to crawl back to his camp. But his right leg had to be amputated.

Fortunately for Om Prakash, Project Healing Touch that has so far provided self-employment to over 1, 200 jawans including those who have become differently-abled and those

who have retired from the Army came to his rescue. Today Om Prakash is successfully running his outlet selling lubricants and soft drinks at Pali village in Haryana.

"During the Kargil war, I accidentally stepped on the mine. After my right leg was amputated, I lost all hope of earning a living. But the project helped me become financially independent."

One of Om Prakash's fondest memories is having a face-to-face interaction with star batsman Sachin Tendulkar.

"Sachin saw my artificial leg

and said that I was his hero," said Om Prakash, adding that he also cherished his meeting with Army Chief General J.J. Singh.

Serving the country for 32 years, Roop Lal Sharma of the Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry Regiment could not reconcile himself to a life without work.

As luck would have it, he came to know about the Project Healing Touch and is now the proud owner of Ganpati Trading Co. in Chinore.

"I was posted in various parts of the country including

the Siachen Glacier and was also part of Operation Vijay during the Kargil War," he added. Under the auspices of Project Healing Touch, Mission Vijay-II serves to support Indian soldiers who after having spent most of their lives protecting the country are faced with the hard reality of the lack of livelihood options.

Started by 50-year-old Rotarian Mukesh Anand in 1999, the project seeks to reach out to nearly 2 lakh ex-servicemen and to the next of kin of soldiers who have laid down their lives.

"After spending so much time on the border, soldiers find it difficult to adjust to their new business. As Om Prakash and Roop Lal Sharma are successfully running their own businesses I want them and others who have benefited from our project to encourage other ex-servicemen who want to stand on their own feet.

They can give valuable suggestions on schemes available and profitability. I want to connect all of them through net," said Mr. Anand, who is Chairman of Project Healing Touch, Mission Vijay-II.