



Manjari Sankurathri Memorial Foundation

(A Registered Charity in Canada – Canada Revenue Agency BN 89002 4995 RR 0001)

Autumn Issue

MSMF Newsletter

October 2006

Greetings from MSMF



Chandra Sankurathri's quest for a purpose in his life after losing his wife Manjari, son Srikirana, and daughter Sarada, in the 1985 Air India flight 182 bombing culminated in social work in India.

At a young age, Sankurathri arrived in Canada for post-graduate studies. After attending Memorial University in St. John's, Newfoundland, and the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta, with a Ph. D degree he began research in Marine Biology in the Pacific Biological Station in Nanaimo, British Columbia. Later opportunities moved him with his wife to Ottawa, the Nation's Capital, to work in the Departments of Environment, and Health and Welfare, and raise a family.

The initiatives he chose to overcome his personal grief are those which alleviate suffering in others - educational opportunities for children, blindness prevention, and disaster relief programs. The remarkable success of those programs and the inspiring story of his life was the theme of the recent award-winning CBC documentary "Ray Of Light". The production team, Terry Milewski, Cedric Monteiro, Sat Nandlall, and Michael Taylor-Noonan, received the Best Inspirational / Spiritual Documentary of the Year Award from the Canadian Association of Journalists. The

response to the documentary from Canadians from coast to coast to coast has been phenomenal - an expression of admiration and show of support.

In his recent three-week travel in Canada, funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and Help the Aged Canada, Chandra Sankurathri visited Ottawa, Toronto, Nanaimo, Salt Spring Island, Bowen Island and Vancouver. In those places he spoke in public engagement sessions, was interviewed for Newspapers, Radio and on live Television programs. His visit was reported on the CBC National. A summary of one of the public engagement programs held in Vancouver is included in this Newsletter.

Many individuals and organizations have helped us with the recent visit of Chandra Sankurathri to Canada. While thanking all of them, we would like to show appreciation in particular to Rita Harper, Dr. Karim Damji, Shri Gopal, Ellen Shifrin, Ravi Gopisetty, Ellen Hayakawa, Vilma Dube, Ann & Hu King, Shae Arjun, Mary Leslie, Terry Milewski, Cedric Monteiro, Mr. Ujjal Dosanjh, M.P., Mr. S.J.S. Chhatwal, former High Commissioner of India, and Mrs. Shyamala B. Cowsik, High Commissioner of India.

MSMF: 2005 Earthtones™ Beneficiary

Earthtones is an annual University of Toronto Faculty of Medicine benefit concert aimed at supporting initiatives for destitute children around the world. The 2005 concert raised enough funds to support the three organizations, MSMF being one of them, whose proposals were accepted. The \$3,500 grant received will be matched by MSMF to purchase a pulsoximeter needed in the pediatric wing of Srikirana Institute of Ophthalmology.

In the years past, Earthtones supported projects in Tibet, El Salvador and Bangladesh.

- Vandana Parnandi, U of T Medical School

Summary of Public Engagement Event In Vancouver

Ujjal Dosanjh, M.P. (Liberal, Vancouver South) made opening remarks in recognition of Chandra's work, recalling his own childhood in India and the importance of relieving poverty. Mr. Dosanjh, a former Premier of B.C., said he had been introduced to Chandra's work by the CBC Documentary, "Ray of Light," and urged the audience to spread the word.

The CBC's Cedric Monteiro, who produced the documentary, described how it might never have been made but for the fact that he, Correspondent Terry Milewski and Cameraman Sat Nandlall were already assigned to India to report on the aftermath of the south Asian tsunami. Mr. Monteiro called it "crazy" to attempt to shoot a one-hour documentary in the two days available before the team was to resume its coverage of the disaster. Nevertheless, he said, almost everything they saw, heard and filmed in Kakinada helped to tell the story, which won a prestigious award from the Canadian Association of Journalists. (The prize money was graciously donated to Manjari Sankurathri Memorial Foundation.) Mr. Monteiro, who grew up in India, said hardly any footage was wasted and that a skilled editor, Michael Taylor-Noonan, made the documentary look as though the team had been shooting for weeks. So, he said, although the production only came about because of the tsunami, something good came out of it.

The CBC Correspondent who reported the piece, Terry Milewski, then introduced Chandra. Mr. Milewski said he would not waste time singing Chandra's praises and reminded the audience of the remark by Theresa Kryski, the Nepean school principal seen in the documentary, that praise is not what Chandra is after. Rather, Mr. Milewski focused on the need for practical support for Chandra's work. He noted that one cataract operation might seem very cheap by Canadian standards - only \$50 - but that, when you do it 115,000 times, as Chandra has now done, then millions are required to keep the hospital going. While it costs only \$125 to educate one Indian child for a year, said Mr. Milewski, Chandra has more

than a hundred children in the school and is now adding a high school as well. His hope, then, was that Chandra's friends would form collaborative networks to provide ongoing financial support. He singled out a 12-year-old Vancouver student, Daniel Gold, who had been touched by Chandra's story and came to the meeting looking for some way to help. Mr. Milewski hoped that, if Daniel wanted his class or his friends to raise money for Chandra, that he would know whom to call for help in organising the effort. The reason people support Chandra so readily, he added, is that they know every dollar goes where it is needed and that nothing is spent on any professional fundraising bureaucracy.

Asha Jyoti Scholarships

The Asha Jyoti Community Welfare Society of Canada, an NGO from Ontario, gives out scholarships to bright students in India, whose parents live under crushing poverty and are unable to provide for their children's basic education.

This year Asha Jyoti gave scholarships to 25 bright students from Sarada Vidyalayam, who are currently in high schools.

Results Canada Donation

Results Canada from Victoria, BC, is a citizens' advocacy organization committed to ending the worst aspects of poverty. Results Canada's focus is generating the political will in Canada and internationally to support programs that are effective in reducing poverty, increasing education, and creating access to basic health care. MSMF is one of a small number of organizations working in the fight against global poverty that received direct support.

Please support MSMF generously

We urge you to support our education, eye care and disaster relief programs. Donations to MSMF qualify for tax credits in Canada.

Thank you.

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