



MSMF Newsletter

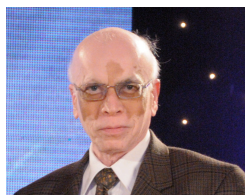
A Ray of Light

Education * Eye Care * Disaster Relief



Bridal Procession - Painting by Ravi Prabhakar,(6) and Lokeswari(8), Students of Sarada Vidyalayam.

Sankurathri Foundation Names Successor to Chandra



Dr. Chandra Sankurathri

Dr. Chandra Sankurathri in an E-mail dated 25 April 2011 announced that Dr. Rajendra Sankurathri, 52, will succeed him as the Executive Trustee at Sankurathri

Foundation in India. Dr Rajendra Sankurathri was raised and educated in the same area where the school and hospital are located. After studying History and Sociology, Rajendra graduated with a Ph.D. in History.

He started his career as a teacher, initially coaching students for the Indian Civil Services Examination. Dr. Rajendra Sankurathri together with his wife Jhansi Rani, started a high school in 2002 to provide affordable and quality education to children of lower middle class and poor parents near the city of Hyderabad. In some cases, the education was provided free. The school presently has 1,200 students and has been a model school with a good reputation. Their daughter, Sumhitha is enrolled in grade 10 at the same school.

Rajendra has been associated with Sankurathri Foundation since its inception in 1989 and has been involved in the development of Sankurathri Foundation over the last 21 years. Over the years, Rajendra organized a large network of youth and they volunteer in times of need. It is anticipated that this will be a great asset to Sankurathri Foundation in the years ahead.

Visit to Sankurathri Foundation brought comfort and peace into our lives - a Report.

I arrived in India, just over three years since my first conversation on the phone with Dr. Chandra. We first met in the summer of 2008 and now with my friend Masoud, a mathematics teacher from Vancouver, we are in the wonderland of South East India. The plane landed in Rajahmundry's small airport; the closest airport to Kakinada. We were greeted by a young driver. There is still a one-hour drive to Kakinada at the end of our 35-hour journey from Vancouver. We passed rice fields and farms, banana and coconut plantations,

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shops and warehouses, bicycles and rickshaws along the road.

Dr. Chandra greeted us at the door and we were introduced to Hema, Murthy and his wife Lakshmi. Hema is Dr. Chandra's sister and has been with him since the tragedy of Air India. She takes care of her brother, teaches art and craft in the school and is the head mistress of the school. Murthy is a retired University Professor. He and his wife are among Chandra's handful of close friends who have supported the charitable activities of Chandra at Sirkiran Institute and Sarada School by all means available to them since the start.

We stayed at Dr. Chandra and Hema's house during our visit. This is a modest house with extra rooms for guests. Everything in the house is simple yet well thought out. Meals are vegetarian, tasty and nutritious and partially provided from the vegetables in the adjacent garden. The buffalo milk yogurt was great. No food goes to waste in this house and the left overs get served on next meal. We had lots of conversations, laughter and good time over the meals.

Hema and Chandra start their days very early and they seem to have been all over the compound by 7:30 am. There is no separation between their life and work and they want it this way. Managing the compound is not their job; it is their life. They are heads of this community.

During our visit we had access to all buildings and had lots of time to see everything: Sarada primary school; recent high school and vocational school; Sirkiran hospital of ophthalmology; employees hostel; kitchen and storage; and maintenance rooms. The compound, which used to be a mango orchard, now has banana and coconut trees, flowers patches,

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and vegetable gardens. Hard to imagine that not so long ago there wasn't much here except a few mango trees. All of these (what we have seen) have been brought to life in the past two decades.

A big community exists in and around the compound. School children are involved in various tasks including helping their teachers in daily set up, gardening and light cleaning of the schoolyards; being in touch with the land and vegetation is part of their learning.

After the school hours, there are always a dozen students at front of the house continuing their studies. Here, there is enough light set up for them and it is quiet enough so they can concentrate on their schoolwork. A teacher supervises them and there are always treats at the end of the night.

From early morning till late at night you can see the children from Sarada around. Every evening, a few graduates of the school showed up to see Hema and Chandra. Some are in the college and some already employed in the surrounding region. Hema and Chandra are their adopted grandparents.

Secondary school construction started in 2007 and was completed in 2009. First level is the high school. Second level is the vocational school and consists of the science lab, computer room, sewing room, Art class and the library, which is named after our beloved Natalie. E. Pinch. The vocational school is still in progress and Dr. Chandra is trying to bring in some other trade trainings including plumbing, carpentry, mechanics, etc.

We visited city of Kakinada and the eye clinics and camps several times. There are 3 permanent eye clinics in the town. For rural areas, temporary eye examining camps are in place. The eyes are checked in these stations and if surgery is needed, it will be provided at Sirkiran Institute of Ophthalmology.

On scheduled date the patients get picked up from their villages and brought to the compound. At the compound, they are given accommodation and food for the duration of their treatment.

The facts of this great establishment are reported elsewhere in this newsletter. I would like to point out that nearly 65% of services are provided free. 90% of all cataract surgeries are free. The foundation creates permanent full and part time jobs for local skilled workers and/or laborers and many more temporary jobs during the constructions and the expansions of the compound. At the moment there are 162 employed in the compound including teachers,

doctors and service workers. This cheery, hardworking, and professional staff shares the common values of helping the less fortunate and has dedicated the best of their knowledge and expertise to this community. MSMF compound in Kakinada was much more than what I was expecting to see.

On our last day Dr. Chandra, who has spent a lot of quality time with us during our visit, came to Rajahmundry's airport with us. All the way to the airport I was lost in thoughts. Being involved with MSMF has brought some comfort and peace into my life. Moreover, I have had the honor of knowing some of the nicest and most respectable people of my life.

It is time now to depart. Then there is a moment of silence, a moment of deep connection, respect and brotherhood. Not goodbye, au revoir are our last words.

(Bahman Fattahi is from Vancouver, B.C., Canada. Masoud Habibian's article will be published in the next newsletter.)

Charity First Aid Course in support of MSMF



Kavita Chauhan

Kavita Chauhan, a Certified Kinesiologist and Canadian Red Cross First Aid Instructor & Child Safety Advocate organized a charity first aid course in support of MSMF. "I have been touched by the work you and your foundation is doing in India. I want to support your work and be part of making a difference." wrote Kavita in an E-mail to Dr. Chandra. "I give charity first aid courses and my next will be dedicated to MSMF. 100% of all course fees will be donated. We normally raise \$500-\$700", she said.

The fund raising course was organized on Saturday, November 20, 2010 in Scarborough, Ont. The course taught how to deal with emergencies, practice life saving skills and other first aid skills. Further information is available at their web site www.2health.com.

Thanking Kavita for her efforts, Dr. Chandra wrote and said that the donations she collected can restore eye sight to 10 poor people suffering with cataract blindness and make a difference in their lives. "This will give you an idea about the impact of your work and donation to MSMF. It is with a deep sense of gratitude that we thank you for your involvement in raising awareness about MSMF activities and generate support.

We also thank you for your enthusiasm and commitment to volunteering towards this task", said Dr. Chandra.

Message from Dr. Rajendra Sankurathri

Greetings from Sankurathri Foundation, Kakinada, India. I have been associated



Dr. Rajendra Sankurathri

with Sankurathri Foundation since 1989 as one of the three trustees. My major contribution during the past 21 years has been in the planning, designing and execution of several projects including the construction of all the buildings belonging to the Foundation. In addition, I have been managing the various programs of Sankurathri Foundation while Dr. Chandra is away from Kakinada.

I look forward to visiting Canada in 2011. I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude for your continuing support over all these years to improve the quality of life through eye care, education and disaster relief programs in India. I would like to assure you that we will work hard to continue the present programs and continue to meet the vision of Dr. Chandra. Thank you.

(Rajendra Sankurathri is at Sankurathri Foundation, Kakinada, India).

A Unique Experience - Resident Visit Report by Dr. Sylvia Chen.

I spent three weeks at Srikiran Institute of Ophthalmology (SIO) in January/February 2011 as a senior PGY-5 Ophthalmology resident. This is the 4th year of a very successful partnership between my training program at the Ottawa Hospital Eye Institute and SIO. Having many colleagues and predecessors who have been to SIO and hearing their accounts, one of the first things I was struck by was the volume and magnitude of service SIO provides. Knowing its importance to the region, I had expected a larger institution and body of staff but came to realize that this was a testament to the great efficiency with which SIO operates. Their routine screening hundreds of patients at rural eye camps and coordinating surgery for over a hundred patients in a day display a well-organized process refined over many years of experience and supported by an amazing group of staff. My visit coincided with the 18th year anniversary of SIO where some of the extremely-hard working and dedicated staff that have helped make the place a



Dr. Sylvia Chen.

success were recognized and their achievements celebrated.

Though located in a relatively rural region India, Srikiran is well equipped to provide full service to its large number of patients. It has the same modern tools as here in Ottawa such as a slit-lamp camera, fundus photography, fluorescein angiography, optical coherence tomography, and a microbiology lab. It provides an on-site cafeteria, pharmacy and optical store. Subspecialties services within ophthalmology include treating not only general eye problems but providing orthoptics, low-vision, pediatric ophthalmology, glaucoma, cornea and retina services. Though only a few ophthalmologists are on staff, the fabulous technical and nursing support allows them to provide a high level of service to a large volume of patients with many of the daily paperwork and logistical cares already taken care of. One of the great unique features were dedicated counsellors that see each patient after the doctor to teach them about their disease, explain the treatment and/or surgery offered, and arrange the follow-up as required.

The tropical and rural environment in India provided me with an exposure to a wide variety of clinical entities rarely seen in North America. Nothing can replace first-hand experience in seeing entities often only seen in a textbook and putting a face to a condition. Many of the same conditions also are seen in both Canada and India but in different proportions. Mature and hypermature cataracts seen once or twice a year here in Ottawa are common in India. The farming environment and mild weather foster the development of fungal ulcers. UV exposure can cause large pterygia covering the cornea. Traumatic corneal lacerations and cataracts are more frequent. Many developed world issues such as hypertension and diabetes are increasing in prevalence in India leading to associated problems such as branch retinal vein occlusions, vitreal hemorrhages and tractional retinal detachments. Many diseases such as glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy present at advanced stages. In addition to cataracts, the most common cause of reversible blindness, new challenges exist

as the patient population evolves. For example, macular degeneration and the need for anti-VEGF medications, like in Canada, are on the rise.

In the operating room, the staff are gifted and proficient in manual small incision cataract surgery, making it all look so easy. In addition, they have a Canadian trained retinal surgeon providing up-to-date retinal services. The highlight of my time there was the privilege to observe and be instructed by them all. Small incision cataract surgery is highly suited to a high-volume, low-cost surgery with excellent outcomes similar to more expensive phacoemulsification. It is a surgery that training programs in Canada are rarely exposed to and I am grateful for the opportunity to learn the skill from experts, many with over 20 years of experience. The opportunity to operate and see a patient go from counting only fingers before surgery to driving and reading vision immediately afterwards is an experience to be remembered.

I witnessed SIO's great successes as well as it challenges to meet the needs of the constantly evolving and advancing field of Ophthalmology. Diagnostic tests are increasingly the standard of care in the clinical setting and surgeries are moving toward the use of more disposable instruments in cataract phacoemulsification and retinal surgery – a challenge in terms of not only new techniques, which the surgeons have skillfully acquired, but in cost and resource allocation. Like in Canada, similar challenges exist to strike a balance between the provision of a high level of care to the greatest number of people with cost-containment and sustainability – an ever changing balancing act.

It was definitely a fantastic experience in not only practicing Ophthalmology in another culture and setting but also a feast for the sights and senses. I still miss the fantastic south Indian cuisine and home cooked meals with Dr. Chandra and Hema that can't be found anywhere else! Thank-you so much for your hospitality!

(Dr. Sylvia Chen is a resident at University of Ottawa Eye Institute, Ottawa, Ontario).

Progress Report from Sankurathri Foundation - Dr. Chandra Sankurathri.

Sarada Vidyalayam

The school celebrated its 19th anniversary with usual activities, sports competitions, drawing competitions, elocution contests, essay writing competition and cultural activities. This is a good time for all the children and teachers to display their talents. All the winners were awarded prizes on that day.

A total of 43 educational scholarships were awarded at the anniversary function. Nineteen of these scholarships were awarded by Asha Jyoti in Toronto and one from Mrs. Michelle Mukerji Scholarship for a female student pursuing engineering education. The rest were awarded by MSMF and SF.

Dr. Venkatesh Mannar, President, Micronutrient Initiatives, Ottawa, Canada and Dr. Purna Shankar, a nutritionist visited Sarada Vidyalayam. Dr. Mannar was instrumental in supplying double fortified salt to be used in the food preparations for the school children. Double Fortified Salt is an innovative new fortified food product - delivering small but crucial amounts of iodine and iron to human beings through their diet. Double Fortified Salt presents the opportunity to deliver two of the most critical micronutrients for mental capacity and human productivity. The impact of this initiative on the well being of the students is being monitored through the local community health department using some performance indicators. Initial indicators are positive.

The school closed for summer holidays from April 24th and will be reopened on June 13th. The new admissions for the next academic year are in progress and will continue till the second week of June.

Srikiran Institute of Ophthalmology

International Agency for Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) and Capacity Building Grant Fund Committee (CBGF) visited Srikiran for three days to conduct an assessment of its capabilities. The mission of this visit was to make Srikiran a sustainable eye care provider in the region. The Executive Director of the team, Mr. Thulsiraj said after his visit that he was really impressed with the systems followed at Srikiran and the discipline of the medical team in clinical work. He also said that the team's visit to an eye camp was a good experience with great appreciation for the quality health care in the camp.

During the past six months Srikiran has initiated diabetes retinopathy screening outside the base hospital. So far three screening camps have been tried, two in the town of Peddapuram and one for the employees of Coramandal Fertilizers, a large corporation in Kakinada. Generally, the camps consist of an awareness meeting about eye, diabetes and diabetic retinopathy followed by screening the people for vision, intraocular pressure and Fundus examination and photography of the Fundus in case of a problem. Surgeries were provided to those in need.

The Statistics Speak for Themselves

The statistics below provide a glimpse of what we have been able to achieve with the support of our funding partners and volunteers. Donors and volunteers are very important partners in what we do. It is essentially people empowering people.

Facts	Cumulative 1990-2011	2011 Jan - 2011 Apr	Statement of Expenses of MSMF (2009 and 2010)	
			Expenses	2010 2009
Out Patients Treated	1,655,746	33,524	Projects	210,426 218,346
Surgeries Performed	167,162	2,922	Credit Card Fees	1,235 1,254
Vision Centers	5	0	Fundraising	7,640 3,659
Eye Screening Camps for Adults	1,656	55	Professional Fees	4,725 4,725
Eye screening Camps for Children	924	17	General	935 1,953
Medical Personnel Trained	322	2	TOTAL	224,961 229,937
Support Staff Trained	99	4	Support Provided in 2010.	
CME Workshops Conducted	54	3	Sarada Vidyalayam	Approx. \$ 39,500
Children Educated	1,778	158	Srikan Institute of Ophthalmology	Approx. \$171,000
Scholarships Provided	284	43	For complete details, please follow the link:	
School Children Screened	295,846	4611	http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/ebci/haip/srch/basicsearchresult-eng.action?s=registered&k=Manjari+Sankurathri+Memorial	

Dr. Henri Pallard and Dr. Neville Hewage from Laurentian University, Sudbury, Ontario, Canada were here at Srikan to start the study about Measuring changes in socio-economic and socio cultural status of household and gender relations (quantitative) before and after cataract surgery. This project was described in detail in the fall 2010 newsletter.

An Oasis in a Desert but we need to get younger generation involved - Dr. Gopal Nemana.

I had the opportunity and privilege to visit Sankurathri Foundation about 10 km from Kakinada run by Dr Chandra, a former biologist from Canada who left all he had and came back to India and established a School for children and a magnificent Eye



Dr. Nemana with Dr. Chandra

hospital to commemorate his young beautiful wife and small beautiful children who perished in the Air India Kanishka accident off the coast of Ireland 25 years ago. While he received international recognition and acclamation for his pioneering work against all odds in India, Dr Chandra is a simple soul with only one object - to keep this project alive for posterity. The project is funded by donors and expatriates mostly from Canada. As I look forward to my retirement after a long career as cardiologist, I look back at my own life's journey with much satisfaction and yet was left with a void that I could not give back as much as I received, like these people.

SF and its affiliates are an Oasis in a desert and are very rejuvenating and a

testimony to Dr. Chandra's tenacity and hard work against all the odds in India. I am glad that Eswar Prasad and Sarma Vishnubhatla have encouraged me to visit. I was overcome with emotion during the tour. Going forward I do hope to keep in touch. It is imperative to get the younger generation involved so that the edifice Dr. Chandra created will last for ever. (Dr. Gopal Nemana is from Sacramento, CA.)

Visitors and Volunteers at Sankurathri Foundation

The last six months saw a large number of visitors from various countries to the Sankurathri Foundation. These include: Prasad Sammeta, President, SEII, Kansas City, USA; Dr. Kjell Dahlen, Ophthalmologist, Eye Care for The Adirondacks, Plattsburgh, NY; Sean P. Lindstone, Vice Consul, U.S. Consulate General, Hyderabad; Prof. Deepak Gandhi, University Canada West; Dr. Danah Al-Breiki, and Dr. Sylvia Chen Senior Residents and Dr. Marie Louise Lapointe, Ophthalmologist University of Ottawa Eye Institute, Ottawa, Canada; Janice Julia Hengshack, Harvey Berg, Helene Berg, Tony Wan and Dr. Mark Greve, Ophthalmologist, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada; Dr. Gopal Nemana, Carmichael, California, USA; Dr. Venkatesh Mannar, President, Micronutrient Initiative, Ottawa, Canada; Sandhya Murthy, Optometrist, London, U.K; Mandy Cheng, Optometrist, Toronto, Canada, Bhaman Fattahi, Professional Photographer, Burnaby, B.C. Canada, Masoud Habibian, Teacher, Vancouver, B.C. Canada; Dr. Henri Pallard and Dr. Neville Hewage, Laurentian university, Sudbury, Ontario, Canada.

Thank you for Caring

We are very grateful to you for supporting MSMF and its programs in eye care, education and disaster relief. We would not have achieved this level of success in eye care and education programs without your generous support. In these difficult economic times, your continued support is more than ever needed and appreciated. MSMF remains dedicated to providing the most outstanding service and care possible.

You can donate to MSMF in three ways: with a cheque or credit card information sent directly in mail to MSMF, online through www.canadahelps.org, and through the United Way campaign. Some organizations and employers match donations of their employees.

A Ray of Light, is published by MSMF twice a year from contributions and reports sent by its volunteers. Please send your comments or suggestions to info@msmf.ca or call us.

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