



# Manjari Sankurathri Memorial Foundation

(A Registered Canadian Charity – BN 89002 4995 RR 0001)

**Autumn Issue**

**MSMF Newsletter**

**October 2004**

## ***Greetings from MSMF***

As it is, life is a struggle. Most of the people in India live in villages, and they are poor. Most often they are illiterate. In the rural environment, children, women and men often do not have access to proper health care, educational facilities, and compassionate social structures. Inflicted with handicaps such as blindness, and illiteracy, life is impossible.

Please read in this issue the impressions of Dr Hu King and Mr. Nizar Mawani, who visited our facilities in Kakinada.

*Thank you.*

## ***Co-founder of Srikiran Institute of Ophthalmology (SIO), Dr. V. K. Raju, visited Afghanistan in September***



Dr. Raju is also the President of EFA, (Eye Foundation of America). He writes, *"I spent 6 days in Afghanistan; 27 years ago what I used to see in Indian rural areas, I saw similar problems and circumstances in the university hospital, Kabul.*

*They need a lot of help; especially children with eye problems. SIO can help a great deal in teaching and continuing medical education. It is a pity (Dr.) Madhavi did not get the visa. I did a lot of teaching (afternoons) and surgeries (in AM). Their hospitality was great and they are eager to learn. The project was sponsored by ORBIS International.*

*India is truly a highly developed country with a developing country problems. Organizations like EFA, MSMF and all the supporting organizations can change that in a short time. The key ingredient is "mind set" .*

Dr. V. K. Raju, MD FRCS FACS  
Morgantown, WV, USA

## ***Principal Theresa Kryski***

***St. Gregory Catholic School, Nepean, ON,  
visiting Sarada Vidyalayam, Kakinada***



We are extremely happy that Principal Kryski of St. Gregory will be visiting Sarada Vidyalayam in Kakinada after Christmas for about two weeks. We feel that her visit would serve to enhance and tighten the bond that has existed for over 12 years between the two schools. It will benefit most importantly Sarada Vidyalayam from principal Kryski's expertise and experience as an educator and

administrator. Back at St. Gregory she will be able to relate to students and staff out of her personal experiences of Sarada and its environment.

Over the past eleven years, every year staff and students of St. Gregory have participated in a Lenten fund-raising project to provide for books, uniforms and desks for the students of Sarada. Also, there have been regular exchanges of letters, information, photographs, gifts and greetings between the two schools.

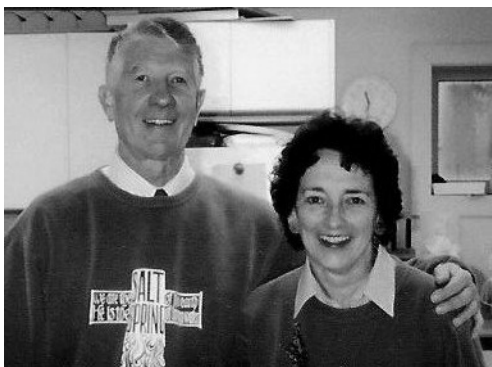
For making this visit possible, we thank Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board for approving Principal Kryski's visit, and Staff Development, Research and Evaluation Department and the Principal/Vice-Principal Board for providing part of the funding towards principal Kryski's travel.

## ***United Way Campaign ...***

Kindly direct your United Way contributions to Manjari Sankurathri Memorial Foundation, BN 89002 4995 RR0001, & Help!

### ***A Visit to the Facility of Manjari Sankurathri Memorial Foundation***

In December 2002, my wife Ann and I visited India, as I wished to return to the country where I spent my boyhood and all of my grade schooling (from 1932-1946). We traveled with friends from Ontario, with whom I have had a close professional and personal relationship for more than 20 years. Ironically, had we both stayed in India, and there had been no Independence, our paths would probably never have crossed.



While staying with his parents on the East coast, my friend told me that he wanted to visit a local eye hospital founded by someone he knew in Canada. After traveling by rented car for more than five hours along dusty and rutted roads, with a stop for breakfast in a wayside cafe, we arrived at the town of Kakinada about mid-day. The town was hot and dusty and we meandered along twisty streets, until we abruptly turned into a gate and entered a green oasis of shade trees, exotic plants, well ordered children in neatly pressed uniforms and lines of patient people waiting in shaded areas outside a clean well looked-after building. We discovered that we had arrived at the facilities of the Sankurathri Foundation and were introduced to its founder, Dr. Chandra

Sekhar Sankurathri, who was expecting us and told us that lunch was ready. Ann and I were completely bowled over by the contrast between this serene place and the hot bustling world outside.

After a refreshing lunch we had to rush off to spend the rest of the day with my cousin, about whom we shall say a few words later, in nearby Narsapur, where we found another cool oasis amid a hot dusty town. When we returned to Kakinada the following day, we had a tour of the facilities, which was a literal "eye opener". It was impossible to envisage this modern well run ophthalmic facility in such a far away location. We also found that there was a school and learned that for precious few dollars, we could pay for lunch for the whole school. Lunch providers are honored by having their names written in Telegu on a blackboard, so the children can learn who were the benefactors of the day! We also saw a large bus with the Canadian Maple Leaf and an inscription saying it was donated by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). We just had to ask how, and why, one man created this outstanding facility for those who were so obviously unable to provide for themselves. So, we learned the compelling story of how Dr. Chandra lost his entire family in the Air India disaster and then founded the Manjari Sankurathri Memorial Foundation, in memory of his wife Manjari, to address three areas where the disadvantaged people in his province could be given a chance to overcome the seemingly impossible odds that prevent them from having a decent way of life. The upper primary school, which provides free education for disadvantaged children in the nearby villages, is in memory of his daughter Sarada and the Eye Institute, which provides surgical facilities for

preventable eye diseases, which are so prevalent in the area, is in memory of his son Srikan. The Foundation is now entering a new field of activity by providing immediate relief to those who lose food and shelter from the natural disasters and floods that occur so frequently in the low lying coastal area of the Godavari river delta.

After our meeting with Dr. Chandra, we developed a friendship by correspondence and when he visited Canada last fall he was a guest in our home on Salt Spring Island. He joined our local bowling team one evening and on another he gave a presentation on his work, which was attended by about 35 of our friends. As a result, our Church has identified the Sankurathri Foundation as one of three external activities to be supported by a special "Over and Above Fund" and just this week I sent the first cheque on to Ottawa. When a member read a longer version of this article in our Church magazine, I was invited to speak to the local Rotary Club and made good use of the overheads I had made earlier for Dr. Chandra's talk. The Club is considering the Foundation as a support project in 2005 and wants Dr. Chandra to speak to them on his next West Coast visit.

A few words about my cousin Joy. She was born in India, to a missionary family, and after completing high school came to Canada to study at UWO, in London, ON. After graduation she took a master's degree in education in England and then returned to India, where she took out Indian citizenship. Seeing education as the key to breaking the cycle of poverty, she started a hostel where girls from outlying villages with no schools are given

free board and lodging while studying in the city schools. The hostel does not give formal classroom teaching, but assists the students with homework and gives them coaching for examinations. She has raised money to purchase an 18th century marine wharf built for the Dutch spice trade. It is a massive stone structure on the Godavari river, and over the years she has converted it into spacious dormitories, eating facilities, etc., for more than 400 girls. It only costs \$20.00 per month to support one of these kids, who can stay as long as they wish to study - from kindergarten to college!

As a result of our visit, Cousin Joy has met up with Dr. Chandra and they have been entering into great discussions on the best cooking equipment for providing daily meals for 400 hungry souls! A further outcome of their discussions is that arrangements are now in progress so that high school graduates from her Holland Wharf Hostel can go on to Kakinada to train as nurses and medical technicians in the eye hospital! On a personal level, what was intended to be journey-back-in-time visit to India, turned out to be a forward-looking journey in which we learnt firsthand of two small but very effective ways for solving the supposedly insurmountable problems of India!



Hubert and Ann King  
Salt Spring Island, BC Canada

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***My Visit to Sankurathri Foundation  
Kakinada, India***

***Nizar Mawani, Ottawa, Ontario***



It was sometime ago, that I heard the Shelagh Rogers interview with Chandra Sekhar Sankurathri on the CBC radio and I remember being captivated by what I heard and actually

being late for an appointment as a result of listening to the whole interview!

I was struck by the courage of an individual to reach deep within himself and to employ all his faculties to be creative (and not destructive) in the face of such overwhelming adversity, tragedy and chaos. With this creativity, he set out to play a hand larger than most people would do and bring succor to so many people in their greatest need. I remember also, wanting to get in touch with this individual to tell him how inspiring he had been to me, and I was sure, to other Canadians.

Serendipity intervened about a year ago, when I had the happy occasion to meet Chandra in person, over dinner, at the home of Dr. Karim Damji, an ophthalmologist who had already been to Kakinada. Chandra, in his characteristic generosity, invited me to visit him when I was next in India.

Nothing could have prepared me for the visit that I paid to Sankurathri Foundation in early March of this year. I can only describe it as a haven of tranquility, where the eye hospital, Srikan Institute of Ophthalmology and the Sarada Vidyalayam are located close to each other on the same grounds. There is an air of industry, professionalism, order and hope mixed with compassion and care, where every need of those accessing the facilities is taken care of, with pride and dignity.

It is an incredible achievement to have thousands treated and educated in such a short time by a relatively young institution. With the opening of the new building, that work will expand and touch the lives of so many more people.

The highlight of my visit was to be able to (as a non-medical/educational visitor) talk to all the personnel, including the surgeons and admin staff, and to observe various procedures. I was impressed with their dedication, enthusiasm and commitment. I also met a young Canadian intern, Darlene Bhavnani, from Ontario, and she told me how valuable and fulfilling her experience had been.

Although my visit was relatively short, it was long in gathering wonderful memories; the warm welcome, the walks with Chandra on the beach at sunset, enjoying his sister Hema's delicious dishes and animated conversations with his nephews Rajendra and Naren over breakfasts, lunches and dinners! I valued the candid conversations and insights with Chandra and all those individuals who have made this their life project.

It was a joyous and uplifting visit to see the results of a dream borne out of tragedy; and a sad parting for me as my train pulled out of the Samalkot station. As I watched Chandra and Rajendra waving to me I could see the possibilities of Chandra's next dream - to found many more eye hospitals such as at Srikan, throughout India!

***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. Donations to our partner organization, Eye Foundation of America (1460 Anderson Avenue, Morgantown, WV, 26505), qualify for tax exemption in the USA.*

***Thank You.***

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