

MISSION FOR VISION

SANKARA EYE FOUNDATION



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From the Editors Desk : Vision 20/20 by year 2020



Sankara Eye Foundation (SEF) USA, and Sankara Eye Society India are targeting to eradicate curable blindness from India by the year 2020.

Our aim is to build eye care hospitals all over India to realize this vision.

With your support we made a very successful start by laying the foundation for Sankara Eye Hospital in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh.

We wish you a very Happy and Prosperous 2003 and hope you will continue to support us to complete the Guntur hospital this year.

Magic of Light touches Andhra Pradesh ...

On December 9, 2002, the Health Minister of Andhra Pradesh along with the Social Welfare Minister, MPs and MLAs unveiled the granite stone of Sankara Eye Hospital, Guntur. Since then there has been a tremendous amount of progress made.



Whom will the hospital benefit?

Until now, people of Guntur, especially from the rural areas, had to travel some 300-500km to Hyderabad or Chennai for reliable eye care. The new Sankara Eye Hospital in Guntur will have modern facilities to take care of their problems.



The project construction and human resource training

Foundation PCC and CR masonry are complete. All the 186 columns, presently up to plinth level will reach lintel level by 10th April and roof level by 25th April. This is going exactly according to the project plan. On the human resource front, doctors and 30 staff from Guntur, are under training at Coimbatore, will be ready to take charge even as the hospital comes up.

City of Guntur - the response

The visit of His Holiness Sankaracharya in February was the catalyst that brought together diverse groups in Guntur and Vijayawada. The elite of Guntur are showing great interest in making this project a great success.

Your Support ...

Thanks to the strong altruistic feelings amongst the people of India in the United States, as also similar sentiments prevailing back home in India, the hospital is not a distant dream. While the construction and hardcore activities are managed by the dedicated people in Sankara Eye Society, SEF USA has committed to provide the financial needs to complete the construction, with your support.

Comprehensive Eye Care - The Impact



Comprehensive Eye Care means curing the current symptom, the root cause, working on prevention and education about good hygiene and eye care. Sankara Eye Society is a pioneer in this area.

Through our outreach camps we reach out to various deserving populaces. Every week our teams travel across Southern India to conduct the screening camps and we come across a multitude of unique and challenging cases. In one such outreach camp organized with the local administration at Kulithalai, around 200 kilometers from Coimbatore, we came across a family of four children.

The head of this family Karuppan was a daily wage earner with 4 sons. The children were attending the local government school. All of them had a whitish opacity in their eyes and one of them had a cataract too.

On specific query they all revealed that due to lack of a continuous water supply they had their daily bath in a small tributary of the Cauvery. The clinical signs were suggestive of 'ornithosis', which is caused by infection from a contaminated water source.

While the eldest could not benefit from any intervention, the others underwent a procedure by which the anterior chamber of the eye was washed and one of them underwent an additional procedure to remedy his cataract. The hospital is trying to establish the source of infection and the local administration has been notified so as to take preventive measures. We are also trying to get their permission to display boards on the ill effects of bathing in the contaminated water. Hopefully this will help prevent such cases in the future.

Caring for infants

M. Allirajan

(Reprinted with permission from "The Hindu")

The Sankara Eye Hospital spearheads a program that aims at detecting and treating congenital anomalies in infants.

After "VAANAVIL", a project which aimed at providing eye care for children in the age group of six and 15 in the city limits, the Sankara Eye Hospital, Saravanampatti, has come up with 'Swagatham', a health care program for newborns.



The scheme, launched by Sri Vijayendra Saraswathi Swamigal of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam in last June, aims at regularly screening new-borns at all maternity homes run by the Coimbatore Corporation for early detection of congenital anomalies and congenial anomalies

and providing a cure. New-borns are being screened at all 20 Urban Health Posts (UHPs) of the Corporation. The UHPs have been divided into eight groups and the main centre is clubbed with a sub-centre based on geographical proximity. A medical team comprising an eye surgeon, paediatrician and staff screens the new-borns every fortnight (on alternate Thursdays).

"The idea is to cover children up to the age of 15. We treat eye defects at our hospital. Other cases are referred to multi-speciality hospitals in the city," says Dr R V Ramani, Managing Trustee of the Hospital. According to him, birth defects often go undetected and are allowed to progress in underprivileged children. "Our main aim is to detect such defects," he adds.

"The program is going on well and we are documenting the health indicators for this group," says Corporation Commissioner D Karthikeyan. City Health Officer (CHO) Dr. R Damodaran says the Corporation is preparing baseline data based on the inputs received during the programme.

Besides the Sankara Eye Hospital and the Coimbatore Corporation, the UK-based Sight Savers and Rotary Clubs in the city are sponsoring the programme. The Corporation intimates the parents of the children who come to the UHPs and asks them to bring their wards for screening and treatment under 'Swagatham'. As per the scheme, every child gets an opportunity to be examined before it is three months old. The health workers at the UHPs are also given orientation training at the Sankara Eye Hospital to help them perform better.

Eye camp in Goa

In March, 2003 Sankara Eye Society conducted an eye camp in Goa. Around 200 eye surgeries were performed at the Salgaonkar Hospital.

Forever in our hearts

K. Shreemoyee

When SEF received checks saying " In memory of our dear friend Narendra Gandhi", none of us wondered much about what the writing meant. Only later did we realize that in the memorial service for Shri. Gandhi, the family had specifically requested that memorial donations be made out to SEF in lieu of flowers. SEF recognizes the magnanimity of the Gandhi family's gesture and hopes to utilize the aid received, in the 'Focus A.P' scheme.

We derive great inspiration from the thoughtfulness of our volunteers and the ways in which they assist us. With each new contribution we receive, and the good will and wishes that come with it, SEF continues to grow and work tirelessly towards its goal to help eradicate blindness. Each aid made, helps us inch ahead and we would like to use this opportunity to extend our thanks to all our well wishers for their involvement in our venture.

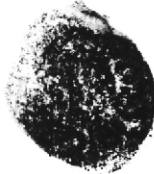


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His Holiness Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetadhipathi
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No. 1, Salai Street, Kancheepuram - 631 502. Tamilnadu, India.
SRI JAYENDRA SARASWATHI SWAMIJI PEETAROHANA SWARNA JAYANTI
MAHOTSAV YEAR



April 6, 2003

Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Medical Trust
Sankara Eye Centre, Coimbatore & Sankara Eye Hospital, Guntur

Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Medical Trust, Sankara Eye Hospital, Coimbatore has been successfully serving the needy over the past 26 years under the auspices of our Sri Mutt.

With the blessings of our Acharyas a dedicated team of doctors and volunteers is providing high quality community eye care to the public in Tamilnadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Pondicherry. On an average the institution performs over 150 free eye surgeries every day.

Sankara Eye Foundation, USA is a voluntary effort by a dedicated band of youngsters to support the activities of the Trust and hospital at Coimbatore. The Foundation works closely with the hospital in Coimbatore to fulfill the Acharya's vision and wish to set up similar eye care facilities in every state of the country. A beginning has been made with the setting up of a Super Specialty Eye Hospital in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh which will be inaugurated by the Acharya in October 2003 around Vijayadasami day.

Sankara Eye Hospital, Guntur is a major health care project to commemorate the golden jubilee of Sri Kanchi Acharya's Peetarohanam.

Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Medical Trust is directly under Sri Mutt and therefore, it is the desire of the Acharyas that our brethren settled in the USA come forward and generously contribute to help build the hospital.

Sri Sankaracharyas send Their Blessings for the welfare of all concerned and Blesses them to continue their support to good causes.

SARVE JANAH SUKHINO BHAVANTHU.

Narayana Smruthi

Sri Mukam from Sri Sankaracharyas of Sri Kanchi Mutt. Sankara Eye Society, India is a Non-Profit Speciality Eye Care Institution established by Kanchi Kamakoti Medical Trust of Sri Kanchi Mutt.

Message from our Chairman

Dear Friends,

The year 2002 was a spectacular year for Sankara Eye Foundation, thanks to your enthusiastic support. Our annual revenue grew by 40%, number of volunteers all over the USA more than doubled to around 200 and the number of donors grew 60% to around 8000 families. The number of FREE Eye Surgeries increased by 25% to 40,000 last year.

We raised \$250K for our Sankara Eye Hospital, Guntur (Focus AP) construction and to complete the project this year, we need to raise a million more and I am very confident together we can do it.

Our momentum is continuing this year with over a 71% revenue increase last quarter.

This would not have been possible without the support of our donors, all the Temples, Cultural Organizations etc., all across the USA. On behalf of our dedicated volunteers I wish to thank you and request you to keep supporting us and help us achieve 'Vision 20/20 by the year 2020'.

Thank You,

Murali Krishnamurthy



1/1/03 - SEF Booth at Malibu Temple, Southern California



Schools and SEF

Northgate High School's India Association in Walnut Creek, CA is raising money for Sankara Eye Foundation (SEF). Shipra Bhalla, who is a senior at the school and President of the India Association saw SEF at a booth and took the initiative and motivated the students at her school to collect funds for eradicating curable blindness. SEF acknowledges and thanks Shipra, Reena and the students at Northgate High and their incredible effort.

In 2002, Mala Gurbani & friends from University of Southern California started a campaign to raise funds for Sankara Eye Foundation in their SCIA (Southern California Indo Americans) meeting. They set a target of sponsoring a number of free eye surgeries and motivate their members to donate. Currently they have a goal of 50 eye surgeries and are at the half way point!!! Keep up the great efforts, GO SCIA!!! Their web page: <http://www-scf.usc.edu/~scia/>.

Mailbag, San Jose, has a donation box for SEF- started by our youth volunteer Sai, and this program is going very well.



The Vision 20/20 by year 2020 is spreading like wild fire across USA. We started with a great campaign in Chicago. Southern California has been very active for a while now. Efforts in Dallas, Texas are taking shape. New Jersey has also been very active with one of the largest fundraisers done by Sejal & Pooja. Pennsylvania, Seattle (Washington) and Virginia are all joining the Sankara Family. To join the efforts in any of these regions or to start the activities in any other region, contact info@giftofvision.org or call 1-866-SANKARA and we will connect you to our volunteers in that region.

Spring Start...

K.Shreemoyee

The ability to experience, give shape and color to ones imagination is one of the most valuable gifts endowed on mankind.

We observe, absorb what we see and it adds light not only to our lives but our minds. The Sankara Eye foundation was conceived for this very purpose: To bring light into the lives of people who are visually impaired.

As word about the aim of SEF spreads, we have been receiving a steady flow of contributions from people eager to help this cause in their own way.

One such donation came to SEF from Vinod Sirimalle and Sheela Agarwal who are to be married this year. As a refreshing deviation from usual norm, the couple has requested their wedding guests to donate funds to SEF in lieu of wedding gifts. The funds are planned to be channeled towards the hospital building efforts in Andra Pradesh.

TANA in San Jose, California

Hema Chamraj

Telugu Association of North America (TANA) is an organization of people of Telugu origin residing in North America. TANA is one of the largest Indo-American organizations with 10,000 members.

TANA's 14th annual conference is happening this year in San Jose. This event is hosted by the Bay Area Telugu Association (BATA) and will be held during the July 4th weekend at the San Jose convention center.

SEF is working with BATA to help make TANA a successful event. It is a great opportunity for SEF to promote Focus AP project at this event.

The Focus AP project is to build a state-of-the-art 400-bed community eye care hospital in Andhra Pradesh which will serve the visually handicapped people. Of the estimated 45 million visually handicapped people in India, 8 million live in AP.

This is a challenging task and will need help from all the SEF supporters. Volunteers are needed to help in the TANA activities during the July 4th weekend and also in the next two months preceding the TANA event.

Please call Ram (510)-894-3452 or Hema (408)-996-1022 if you are interested in volunteering for TANA



Glaucoma

Glaucoma is a pattern of vision loss with increased pressure inside the eye. This eye pressure is known as intraocular pressure (IOP). The eye creates a liquid known as aqueous humor. This fluid helps eye hold its shape and nourish the inside of the eye. The fluid flows out of the eye into a drainage system. A block in the drainage system from the eye may increase the intraocular pressure (IOP) of the eye. When IOP is too high, the pressure on the optic nerve damages the nerve. This damage slowly causes vision loss.

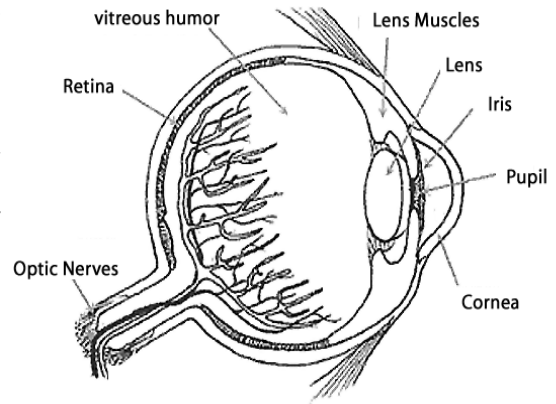
Frequently Asked Questions ...

What is a cataract?

The lens is made mostly of water and protein. The protein is arranged to let light pass through and focus on the retina. Sometimes some of the protein clumps together. This can start to cloud small areas of the lens, blocking some light from reaching the retina and interfering with vision. This is a cataract.

In its early stages, a cataract may not cause a problem. The cloudiness may affect only a small part of the lens. However, over time, the cataract may grow larger and cloud more of the lens, making it harder to see. Because less light reaches the retina, your vision may become dull and blurry. A cataract won't spread from one eye to the other, although many people develop cataracts in both eyes.

Although researchers are learning more about cataracts, no one knows for sure what causes them. Scientists think there may be several causes, including smoking, diabetes, and excessive exposure to sunlight.



What are the symptoms?

The most common symptoms of a cataract are:

- Cloudy or blurry vision.
- Problems with light. These can include headlights that seem too bright at night; glare from lamps or very bright sunlight; or a halo around lights.
- Colors that seem faded.
- Poor night vision.
- Double or multiple vision (this symptom often goes away as the cataract grows).
- Frequent changes in your eyeglasses or contact lenses.
- These symptoms can also be a sign of other eye problems. If you have any of these symptoms, check with your eye care professional.

When a cataract is small, you may not notice any changes in your vision. Cataracts tend to grow slowly, so vision gets worse gradually. Some people with a cataract find that their close-up vision suddenly improves, but this is temporary. Vision is likely to get worse again as the cataract grows.



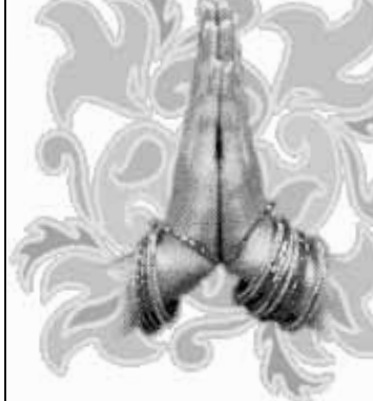
Information courtesy - http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/ataract/ataract_facts.htm

Silicon Andhra & Sankara Eye Foundation

On Saturday April 5th, 2003 a stage announcement was made about SEF and the Guntur Hospital Construction by Shri Anand Kuchibhotla, President, Silicon Andhra, at their Ugaadi Hasya Vallari Program in Livermore, California.

Thanks to Silicon Andhra for all its support in making Focus Andra Pradesh a reality.

SEF Thanks Namaste Plaza's Support



Namaste Plaza is a grocery store in Bay Area, California. They are helping us create awareness by keeping a permanent banner about SEF in their store.

They have also offered the use of their meeting hall for SEF and will look for other sponsorships. They have joined hands with SEF in making Focus Andhra Pradesh a great success.

Penn Masala Event in Illinois

K. Sridharan

The year 2003 started with a bang in Chicago for SEF- with a great program arranged by a very enthusiastic, hard working and young SEF Chicago team. This was a fund raiser with a concert by the acapello group Penn Masala. It was extremely well planned, organized and executed by the Chicago team, with over 600 people attending the event.

Murali and Kala traveled to Chicago to meet with the volunteers and to attend the event- they were joined by Narayan Asher at the SJ Airport. Sridhar and Ramesh joined them on their way back from New York. Sejal Dave from NJ was there encouraging the team, and she presented the essence of SEF and SES in the event.

The Chicago event started with a phone call to Murali by Anita, a student in DePaul University and proposing to do a fund raiser for SEF. Anita was joined a very big group of enthusiastic volunteers. The Bay Area team met Nandita, Rushna, Shyama, Kavitha, Gopal and others at the event.

The event itself started with Chai Town, an acapello group with Penn Masala taking over and also included a fashion show by the volunteers. Great Show, Chicago Team!!! Keep up the momentum.

Murali, Kala and Narayan continued on to a meeting at SEF volunteers Krishna and Meenal's house with a nice presentation which ended with the audience committing to work for the cause. This was followed by a carnatic concert by Mrs. Rajee Krishnan arranged by Dr. Gururajan and his wife Mrs. Bhargavi at their house. 80 to 100 people were at the event.

Sankara Video and a presentation by Murali followed the concert and it was extremely well received by the audience. We think we are going to get a lot more additions to the Sankara Family from there.

Sridhar went on to Peoria with Srinath, a Peoria SEF supporter, and gave a presentation at their India association function. Another SEF volunteer, Guha helped arrange this presentation. Murali, Kala and Narayan joined them at 4 AM, with an adventurous trip in the snow.

Thanks to Guha, the SEF team from bay area was able to get the projector from Peoria and took it to their next show in Bloomington Illinois arranged by the long term SEF volunteer Chandrashekar Katla and his wife Rohini. They had arranged a meeting at Illinois State University - which went extremely well.

Katla and Rohini also set up a booth at the library and the Bay Area team started driving to Chicago for their trip back home. Overall, it was a great trip- a lot of new groups are joining the Sankara Family and we are growing!! Chicago area is going to become the next big force for Sankara Eye Foundation, USA. Go SEF!! Go Focus AP!!

VOLUNTEER PROFILE



"We help organize events around here and people in India get the gift of vision... Now, that's inspiring"

- Roopa & Gopal Krishnan

"The video at Roshini Telugu was an eye opener. SEF is action motivated by Love and the strength lies in the dedicated volunteers."



- Venkat Tanikella



"We feel Proud to be a part of SEF which envisages the great dream of Vision 20/20."

- JayaPrakash Ammu & Subhadra Aysola

"Volunteering for SEF seems like working for family with the same family to achieve 20/20 vision for our country."

- Ritesh Tandon & Zurica Dhar



Did You Know?
You can donate your car to SEF.
For details, send an email to
cargiving@yahoo.com



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If you have questions, please contact us at
1-866-SANKARA or email us at

info@giftofvision.org.

SEF, USA thanks you for
your kind donation.



To be totally blind is the most difficult condition for a person to experience. When this visual handicap afflicts a frail elderly woman, steeped in poverty, living in a tribal hamlet, the agony and despair is unimaginable.

Mrs.Mannangatti is one such unfortunate woman, from northern Tamilnadu. She was totally blind in both her eyes due to cataract for the past one year. With cataract gradually increasing in both her eyes her life became dark. She became totally dependent on her daughter.

It is sad that illiteracy and poverty have made these people suffer in silence from a very easily curable eye disease like cataract. Inaccessibility to quality eye care is yet another major restrain for them.

Life changed for this 65 year old woman on 8th march 2003. Sankara Eye Society, Coimbatore conducted an outreach camp close to her village. Mannangatti's daughter took her to the camp where she was selected for surgery and brought to the base hospital at Coimbatore by the Sankara team. At the hospital she was evaluated and provided with the state of the art cataract surgery with intraocular lens implant for her left eye.

Now she is able to see not only the Doctors and staff of Sankara but also her Daughter. It is difficult for us to think of life without the gift of vision with which we are endowed and it is our pleasant duty to help those deprived along with our partners.