

eyelights



Sankara Nethralaya OM Trust Inc.,

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AMERICA

October 2012

**Sankara Nethralaya gets
a high visibility launch pad
at Houston!**



**Aditya Birla Sankara Nethralaya
Conducts Teleophthalmology Camp
at Sunderbans**



Sankara Nethralaya gets a high visibility launch pad at Houston!



Mrs. Sakuntala Aiyer, Mr. Natarajan Krishnamurthy, Mrs. Nimmi Vasan, Mrs. Leela Krishnamurthy and Mr. Ram Ganesan at the Tamilnadu Foundation Annual Convention at Houston

Sankara Nethralaya filled a lot of mind space and took off for a great launch at Houston, the city so familiar with space crafts and rocket launches. Members of the Sankara Nethralaya OM Trust, ever exploring new avenues to raise funds and reach out to the Indian Diaspora in the US and enlighten them on the philosophy of Sankara Nethralaya were quick to realize that the Tamil Nadu Foundation's Annual Convention being held for the first time, during the Memorial Day holidays on the 20th and 21st of May 2012 at Houston presented a wonderful opportunity to spread awareness about their cause and mobilize funds., which they simply could not afford to miss. Their premise was proved right and the SN OM Trust booth put up at the Tamil Nadu Foundation meeting registered brisk footfall on both the days, with the visitors eagerly picking up brochures and listening with great interest to the briefing by OM Trust members and volunteers. A significant amount was collected by way of on the spot donations, contributions made through purchase of "Insight"- the recently launched biography on Sankara Nethralaya and music CD's, a good number of people also pledged monetary help, promising to send in their

cheques soon and spread the good word in their circle. The highlight of the event was the surprise visit by celebrities Ms Suhasini Maniratnam and Shri SP.Muthuraman, both spending good time at the booth and exchanging memories of their old and very special relationship with Sankara Nethralaya with members and volunteers at the booth.

We take this opportunity to express our most sincere thanks for the contribution and team work of every member of the SN OM Trust team for the success of the booth in terms of awareness creation and the handsome donations collected, we wish to make a special mention about Shri Sam Sockalingam Kannappan's role in identifying this huge opportunity, foreseeing the potential of putting up a booth at the venue of the Tamil Nadu Foundation meeting, both in terms of spreading awareness and mobilizing funds and booking the stall himself. Our special thanks also go to Ms. Leela Krishnamurthy who through her proactive involvement played a key role for the success of the event right from the time the idea was mooted. We would also like to express our gratitude to the volunteers namely Mrs. Sakuntala Aiyer, Mrs. Anita Balaji, Mrs. Nimmi Vasan, Mr. & Mrs. Kohur & Anuradha Subramanian, Mr&Mrs. P.S.Raju, Mrs. Bhavani Iyer, and Mrs. Mahalakshmi Krishnan who supported us whole heartedly in the midst of their busy engagements by taking turns to man the booth and keep the visitors engaged and involved, with their warm interaction.

Providing the vision of education

Little did 12 year old Mohana living in the small village of Agaram, off Gummidipoondi on the Chennai Andhra border realize that her weekend visit to a cousin's place would turn into a nightmare which would haunt her for the rest of her life, a bubbly 12 year old she had gone over to her cousin's home for a nice holiday, the little girl completed her daily chore of washing her clothes and went up to the terrace to dry it out on the clothesline. As a new comer to the house she was not quite aware that danger was lurking in the form of a high tension electric wire which ran very close to the clothesline. As ill luck would have it the wet cloth that she was attempting to hang over the clothesline came into contact with the high voltage line supplying power to the neighborhood.

The damage was swift and terrible, the high voltage current that ran through the child had a crippling effect on her internal and external organs, the impact throwing the charred and almost blinded girl off the terrace, the steep fall to the ground floor resulting in bruises, causing more misery to the little one already under unbearable pain and shock.

It was only after 3 years of acute care and multi-pronged treatment that Mohana could be brought back to near normalcy, the only silver lining in the whole episode being that being in her adolescence it did not take long for the replacement of her old charred skin by fresh skin cover. Although the long treatment had borne fruit and Mohana had come a long way from the terrible condition that the electrocution had left her, the impairment to her vision caused by the accident continued to be a cause for concern and an obstacle to continuing her education. Mohana and her parents walked into the Jaslok Community Ophthalmology Clinic the community service wing of Sankara Nethralaya with little hope of gaining her eye sight and a sense of despair writ large on their face.



The team of doctors examining her diagnosed the cause for the vision impairment to be a complex case of trauma and accident triggered cataract. Vision impairment was reversed after intensive treatment including surgery and total vision was restored to the utter joy and disbelief of the child and her parents, the restored vision helping her to continue her schooling which was interrupted by the terrible accident.

Aditya Birla Sankara Nethralaya Tele-ophthalmology team adds new dimension to community outreach

The Tele-ophthalmology team at the Aditya Birla Sankara Nethralaya reached a new milestone in outreach and community ophthalmology by conducting a two day eye care camp in one of the most remote and inaccessible parts of the State. The camp co-ordinated by Shri Kaushik Adhikary, Senior Optometrist, Aditya Birla Sankara Nethralaya was conducted at Dayapur, Kosaba in the Sunderbans region which is among the most economically and socially backward regions with the lowest literacy rate and an alarmingly high instance of water borne infections caused due to non-availability of clean water. The area selected typified a no man's land with the nearest tarred road ending miles away at the 24 parganas, and no supply of electricity. The fact that there were no roads in sight, would help us gauge the availability of eye care, which made it a challenge to the Aditya Birla Sankara Nethralaya Tele-ophthalmology Team.

The outdoor team travelled for 3 hours by motorboat and when the water level was too shallow for a motorized boat to sail they switched over to a smaller boat for a 20 minute sail in the swampy marshlands between the thick mangrove forests, a place which is a real time illustration of the idiom "Between the devil and the deep sea" since the mid-stream of this waterway is infested with huge salt water alligators (gharial) that prey on humans and the royal Bengal tigers lift unsuspecting boat passengers venturing close to the shore by making a sudden appearance from behind the mangroves.

A huge crowd of 700 villagers waiting expectantly with hopes of gaining better vision, unmindful of the heavy downpour made the day for the Tele-ophthalmology team



and made their arduous ordeal worthwhile, the hope and faith reposed in them by the simple villagers who had no other means to eye care filled the members of the Tele-ophthalmology team with a strong sense of purpose and infused them with new energy levels. The outdoor team examined 330 people in strict adherence to protocol and the rest were given an alternate date for their screening. Over 80 spectacles were distributed free on the spot and specifications noted for 230 pairs and 61 patients were identified as needing cataract surgery.

July 28th and 29th would be remembered as red letter days in Sankara Nethralaya's community ophthalmology initiatives and a strong example of the spirit of reaching out passionately. The Gosaba camp in close proximity to the Sajnekhali Tiger Reserve forest was an ultimate challenge to the will and resilience of the Aditya Birla Sankara Nethralaya Tele-Ophthalmology team and triggered the spirit of adventure in them for a noble cause.

Removing the 'irreversible' element from Retinal blindness

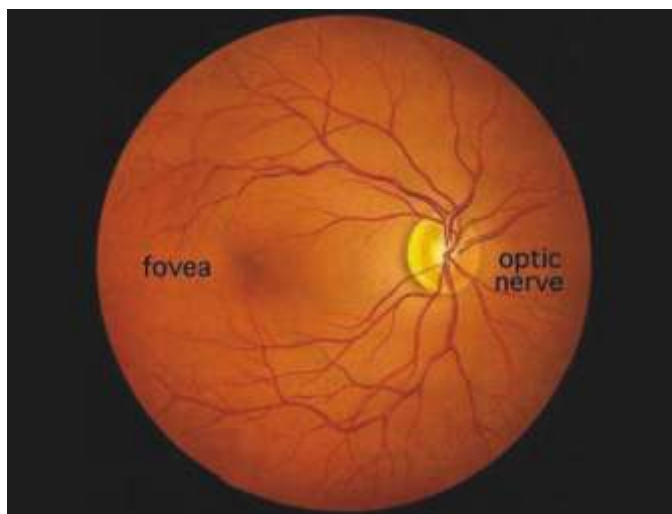
The research team at the Radheshyam Kanoi Stem Cell laboratory, Kamalnayan Bajaj Institute for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology, Sankara Nethralaya headed by Dr S.Krishna Kumar, has after years of painstaking research being carried out with the help of a grant from the Stem Cell Task force, USA, successfully grown stem cells from the cadaveric human eyes, using the 'autologous' principle which literally means (one's own body).

This significant finding could be the answer to irreversible blindness arising from a host of retinal degeneration ailments like pigmentosa, cone dystrophy, diabetic retinopathy, retinal detachment, retinopathy of prematurity, age related macular degeneration and glaucoma.

This finding assumes great significance in light of the fact that both instances of diabetes mellitus and diabetic retinopathy are becoming disturbingly prevalent all over the world.

What makes the finding promising is the fact that Stem cells isolated from the adult tissue have the properties of self renewal and the potential to produce large numbers of retinal neurons in the laboratory.

While scientist the world over are engaged in research on



Human Retina

how Stem cells can be used as a means of reversing retinal blindness, this path breaking research finding by the Sankara Nethralaya team on reversing retinal blindness, adds new meaning to such initiatives by showing the way to culture retinal cells from the human cell line itself, which eliminates many issues.

A great teacher makes it a memorable 'Teacher's Day' at Sankara Nethralaya!



Dr.K.P.Mishra, Director of Medical Education and Training, Apollo Hospital delivering the "Teacher's day" speech at SN

As an institution with a strong emphasis on disseminating knowledge through teaching and training, it was only natural that "Teacher's Day" was given its due importance by the senior management and staff at Sankara Nethralaya. A speech by Dr K.P. Mishra, eminent cardiologist and Director of Medical Education and

Training, Apollo Hospital, Bhubaneswar and among the greatest teachers and trainers of today, decorated with the most coveted distinctions in the field of teaching was organized at the Sri V.D Swami Auditorium at 4:00pm, on the 5th of September, 2012. The evening's proceedings started aptly with a rendition of Gurubyo namaha and introduction of the star speaker by eminent teacher and educationist Shrimathi Sarala Panchapakesan, who highlighted his multifaceted personality and the amazing emotional appeal he brought to any topic he spoke on.

Dr K.P.Mishra highlighted that the glorious 5000 year old unbroken Guru Sishya Parampara is the greatest pride of the country; he touched upon various topics including the principles of teaching with the felicity and authority of a true master. Dr Mishra recalled that he was a teacher since his high school days as he would tutor students from junior classes even then, how he enjoyed teaching and that teaching was the best way to learn. The teacher's day address came to an end with a vote of thanks by Srimathi Sarala Panchapakesan.

How to donate in the United States of America...



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Tax Exempt ID No. 52-1611548

For additional details, feel free to contact S. V. Acharya at (301) 529-7377



Donating online at Omtrust.org - All your donations are securely routed through www.groundspring.org.

United Way - Mention the above information on your authorization form. Local chapters will remit your contributions to the SN OM Trust Inc.

Combined Federal Campaign - If you are a US federal employee, make your donations to Sankara Nethralaya OM Trust Inc. CFC No. 68803.

Employer Matching Program - A number of US employers match *dollar for dollar* to employees' contributions. You may be able to double your contributions to SN OM Trust.

Appreciated Stocks - You may donate appreciated stocks to SN OM Trust Inc. and avail of a tax deduction. For additional information, please contact the Trust at the aforementioned phone number.

Contributions by check - Simply make your check payable to SN OM Trust Inc. and mail to the above address.

Payroll Deductions - Please check with your HR office if they are programmed to withhold from payroll and remit to a non-profit organization. A number of organizations provide this as a public service.

Draft from Checking Account - Download from our website www.omtrust.org, the direct debit authorization form and forward your authorization with a 'void check' to the above address. We will draft the funds on the 15th of every month. You can stop your authorization any time by a simple notification to us.

Donate on Special Occasions, as a tribute Festivals, birthdays, wedding anniversaries, in memory of a loved one and provide support in the form of a bequest.

All donations to SN OM Trust are 100% IRS Tax Exempted in US, IRS Registered 501 (c) (3)

How can you help us?

Sankara Nethralaya OM Trust owes its existence and success to its committed volunteers. To realize our mission of 20/20 by 2020, we need many more volunteers. You can be one of our volunteers and can help us by:

- Spreading the word about Sankara Nethralaya.
- Supporting Teleophthalmology & Glass dispensing vans.
- Conducting events for fundraising.
- Helping with accounting, web management.
- Arranging for American students to undertake summer projects at Sankara Nethralaya.
- Personally making small donations

The following employers have supported us through GIFT MATCHING or PAYROLL DEDUCTION programs!

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