



## **Sankara Nethralaya: Creation of a Corpus Fund**

**Sankara Nethralaya** is involved in extending free service to the economically weaker sections of the society since its inception. From the very beginning, we have been following the “base hospital concept” for doing cataract surgeries as we are of the firm belief that the non-paying patients should also get the same type of treatment as that of the paying patients.

### **Community Hospital**

With this objective our Community Hospital was set up with 5 Operation Theatres and 75 beds and we have been committed to the mammoth task of performing 12,000 free surgeries every year. Creation of a Corpus Fund, judiciously investing the same in the Government Securities and utilizing the Returns from them was thought to be the best way to fulfill this obligation to the society and to sustain this activity year after year.

### **The Beginning**

Sir Ratan Tata Trust (SRTT) has been supporting us in our endeavour to churn out quality ophthalmologists through Grants for our Fellowship programmes. Their Institutional experts have assessed such Programmes under the framework “High Performing Knowledge Institution” (HPKI). They have evaluated them against the benchmark set by them. To quote from their report “... the above and their activity level and strategic approach as described in the earlier sections, makes it among the HPKI class.” When we approached them with our proposal of creating a Corpus Fund, they readily agreed to an endowment grant of Rs 100 million with Rs.55 million from SRTT and Rs.45 million from MRF. We have already mobilized our share of Rs45 million. Sir Ratan Tata Trust has contributed and helps us creating the Corpus for this objective by the year 2005.

### **Tele-ophthalmology**

Over 70% of India’s populations live in rural areas and over 70% of doctors live in urban India. The people living in the villages and other backward areas suffer from inadequate medical aid due to lack of qualified doctors and hospitals. Understanding this need of the people, Sankara Nethralaya, launched its “Teleophthalmology” project to take eye care to the doorsteps of those deprived of these facilities.

The mobile teleophthalmology unit has all the ophthalmic equipment required for the examination of patients. It also has a satellite facility provided by Indian Space Research

Organization (ISRO). Through the satellite link, the patient receives expert advice from the ophthalmologists at the base hospital in Chennai. This project, inaugurated by the Honorable President of India, Dr A P J Abdul Kalam, in October 2003 has been running successfully since November 2003. Sankara Nethralaya, through the teleophthalmology, has conducted 315 camps and seen 21,000 patients totally free of cost. The total number of tele-consultations from the mobile bus to the base hospital has been more than 6000. The teleophthalmology project has also helped in increasing the awareness about eye care and eye diseases amongst the rural population. It has also conducted Continuing Medical Education programs for the medical and paramedical practitioners in the towns. The Corpus required to sustain this activity year after year is Rs.125 million (US \$ 2.87 million)

## **Intra-mural Funding for Research Projects**

Our Research and Development wing with well-equipped laboratories in Biochemistry, Microbiology, Pathology, Molecular Biology and Genetics, over 20 qualified scientists in various disciplines and with about 50 support staff, is in the forefront of ophthalmic research in the country. Sankara Nethralaya is engaged in path breaking epidemiological studies and genetic research in areas like Glaucoma, Diabetic Retinopathy etc. We have been supported, to a small extent, in this effort by grants from DST, DBT, ICMR of Government of India and various NGOs like Orbis, Lions Club International, and Wellington Foundation etc. However, creating a Corpus Fund would pave the way to sustain the Research activities in the long run and to delve into new areas. The Corpus required to sustain this activity year after year is Rs.625 million (US \$14.25 million).

We have registered trust in USA, Sankara Nethralaya OM Trust, Inc. founded in 1988 in Maryland to augment funds for Sankara Nethralaya from USA. It is an IRS registered 501(C)(3) fund raising association of Sankara Nethralaya. Donations to Sankara Nethralaya OM Trust, Inc. are 100% IRS Tax exemption.

### **For details:**

**Mr. S.V. Acharya**

Sankara Nethralaya OM Trust Inc.

14613, Pommel Drive, Rockville, MD 20850, USA

Phone: (301) 251 0378.

Email: [omtrustusa@hotmail.com](mailto:omtrustusa@hotmail.com)

website - [www.omtrust.org](http://www.omtrust.org); <http://www.sankaranethralaya.org>