



## October 2018 at LVPEI

Thirty two years ago, on October the 4th, 1986, my wife Pratibha and I left the US after living there for twelve years – the years that transformed our lives. We were fortunate to have benefitted from the many great attributes of America and we matured in more ways than one. This period has also provided a new direction for our lives, namely, to do our best to share the benefits of our good fortune to the many less fortunate and marginalized in our world. There were many shining examples in America that inspired us and allowed us to view the world from a different perspective.

A couple of weeks later, on the 17th of October, we had the groundbreaking ceremony of the “L V Prasad Eye Institute”, named after one of the legendary movie directors and producers of India, Mr. L V Prasad. His personal story was itself very inspirational, showing how hard work and determination leads to unimaginable accomplishments. The Board of Trustees of our not for profit trust, “Hyderabad Eye Institute”, formed after we have decided to return to India, has decided to honour his large philanthropic gesture by naming the Institute after Mr. Prasad. It was a colorful event with the then Chief Minister Mr. N T Rama Rao as the Chief Guest. Thus began our thirty two year old journey bringing us to where we are today. We have had the privilege of ongoing philanthropic support from friends all over the world coupled with the gift of a very dedicated and diligent team. This formula made it possible to create one of the most comprehensive and impactful Eye Institutes in the world. The blessings of millions of people whom we had the honour to serve has added substantially to this success. At this year’s Foundation Day celebration we have rededicated ourselves to our cause - “Anyone coming to any of our campuses for any eye problem, however complex it is, shall be provided care irrespective of their ability to pay”. Indeed through this vision and the multi-tier pyramidal structure of delivery of care, our system has become a true model of “Universal Eye Health”. Mr. A N Rao, Global Head of the technology giant, Cognizant Academy, was the guest of honour. He advised us to embrace the technology revolution for the benefits of care to our patients.

The case of our Secondary Centre in a village named Thoodukurthy, which happened to be our second rural eye centre, illustrates this in ample measure. We have celebrated the Twentieth Anniversary of this centre this month. At the time of inauguration it was a remote and one of the most underdeveloped areas. We went there with a great belief that the people who are disadvantaged geographically, socially, economically and gender wise will access health care if good quality services are provided. Indeed the success of this centre with the cluster of ten primary care vision Centres linked to it, evolved into a great model that is being replicated elsewhere in India and other countries. The combination of comprehensive, high quality care, closer to the door step of people who need it most, and permanent facilities for continuity of care, in partnership with the local communities is the key that helped us. I want to place on record our appreciation to the entire team of this centre for their contributions.

Our progress in primary eye care continued with the inauguration of our 177th Vision Centre. This was in the state of Karnataka linked to our secondary Centre in Bellary town, the Y. Mahabaleswarappa Memorial Eye Centre. We gratefully acknowledge the support from TOMS-Seva Foundation grant for this centre.



Our Academy for Eye Care Education conducted a number of programmes both for our staff in various cadres as well as focused hands-on programmes in advanced techniques for ophthalmologists. The annual EYE-PEP programme for Ophthalmology residents from across India was the highlight, with 172 participants from all over India. This one-week long programme is intended to expose the residents to the current knowledge, technology and techniques in clinical care, and instruction was through a wide variety of formats.

World Sight Day was celebrated across our network on October 11th. We had week-long activities from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>. A special feature was an integrated children's programme, supported by Lions Clubs International Foundation for children with special needs and their siblings with the objective of promoting a stronger bond between the two groups.

Our colleagues continue to receive honours each month. Dr. Swathi Kaliki, Head of our Institute for Eye Cancer, received the ICMR-Shakuntala Amir Chand Prize, the first ever for our Institute. This prize is awarded for the best published research work in any area of biomedical research by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). Congratulations to Swathi and all the others who received awards this month.

Let me conclude by sharing these remarks made at the celebration of the Twentieth Anniversary of our secondary Centre in Thoodukurthy, which makes our efforts there worthwhile. - The donor of the land Mr. Damodar Reddy said, "When we donated this land to LVPEI, there was nothing here. It was completely barren without any power or water supply, or proper road connectivity. It is really overwhelming to see the way this Centre has developed, and its impact on the community". One of the recipients of our services, Mr. Shiva Raj, a 93-year-old patient said, "The team at this Centre is truly dedicated. Though initially scared, after my surgery I didn't even feel that I had surgery done. The best part was when one of the employees declined a tip I offered in appreciation, saying that he had just done his duty". Around 30,000 people are served each year at this Centre with a team of two Ophthalmologists supported by thirty others in various roles.

Gullapalli N Rao