



A SEED IS SOWN

From childhood, I struggled with decreasing vision. It took me a long time to come to terms with my disability. My years in college transformed me. Over time, I saw the problems other blind people faced and how they coped with the problems. After college, I joined a leading NGO. Working there made me more capable and confident. Then, in 2002, I earned a Post-graduate Diploma in Social Entrepreneurship from the Centre for Social Initiatives and Management (CSIM), Chennai, conferred by the honourable governor of Tamilnadu.

While at CSIM, I returned to the suffering of the blind. On the trains of Chennai, I travelled 30 days with the blind. What I discovered opened my eyes:

- Of the 119 blind who were begging, 82 were graduates.
- The blind engaged in selling various items also faced a number of hurdles.

I resolved to do something about the problem that the affected as well as society had accepted as fate. Thus was born Nethrodaya on October 2, 2002.

- C. Govindakrishnan (Gopi)



Rs. 72/- IN THE POCKET...AND HOPE IN THE HEART

The poor, blind college students were willing to place their lives in our hands and looked forward to better food and shelter. Perhaps, they had nothing to lose. After all, life where they were staying was not really a bed of roses.

But, finding a place where they could live was difficult. Nethrodaya had to knock on many doors before one finally opened.

When we finally got started, we had just Rs. 72/- in our pockets. At the same time, we had infinite hope and courage that faith and truth would take us far on our journey. Wishing us well were Justice M Karpagavinayagam, Shri M A Vellodi, Retired Foreign Secretary, Shri P N Devarajan, our patron and a number of other well-wishers.



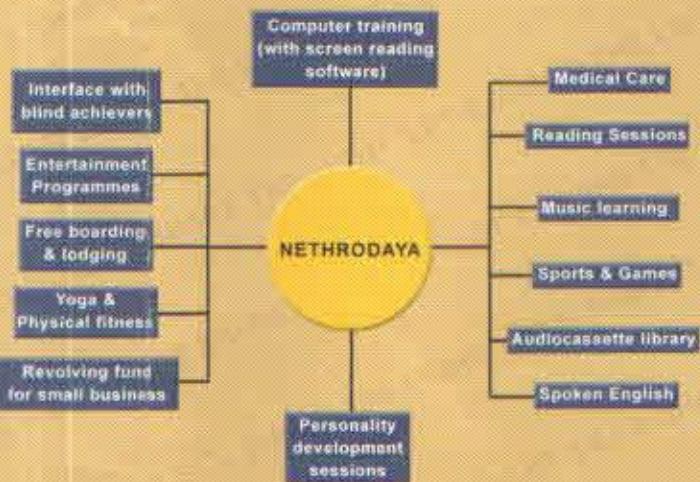
Justice Karpagavinayagam continues to support us immensely by directing offenders in his court to pay their fines as contributions to Nethrodaya. Justice with a heart, indeed! Nethrodaya is indebted to him.



FROM PROMISE TO PERFORMANCE

In our mission of making a difference in the lives of the blind, we have made considerable progress.

- One year into our journey, we have grown into a unique, user-friendly resource centre, the only one of its kind in all of Tamilnadu. We offer the following services:



Today, we have at our centre, 20 poor, blind college students and 5 blind people on short stay for various purposes – attending entrance exams, receiving vocational training etc.

- We resolved to initiate programmes that would empower the blind, making them more independent and productive. As part of our financial assistance, in one year, we have advanced Rs. 66,453/- to 78 families – to help continue education, for medical purposes and to start or revive a small business.
- We believe the material plenty in today's world should be shared. Accordingly, we distribute rations (rice, cooking oil, soaps, detergents etc.) received from various sources to 120 poor families of the blind.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

Striking a Chord: Even as we started giving shape to the idea of Nethrodaya, we realized that mobilizing funds would be vital to success in our mission.

With the support of **Shri K S Ramakrishnan**, an ardent Sai devotee, we conceived and realized, on **September 2, 2002**, **Sai Nethrodaya** – a set of 14 bhajans in praise of Shri Sathya Sai Baba. Produced by the **Sai Kriti and Literature Trust**, we have sold 1000 copies so far.



Singing in the New Year: On December 30, 2002, we welcomed the New Year. With 250 participants from the community of the blind, our small campus was overflowing. Celebrating with us were actor **Shri Surya**, music director **Shri Deva**, playback singers **Shri Unni Menon** and **Shri Jolly Abraham**, **Shrimati Rajeshwari**, Assistant Commissioner, Traffic, and **Dr. Giri Hanumantha Rao**, philanthropist.

Residents of Nethrodaya presented a light music programme. **Shri Unni Menon** and **Shri Jolly Abraham** regaled the gathering with popular songs. The climax though was scripted by music director Deva, with his "Oonam, oonam, oonam inge yaarungo" song.

Thank you **Shri Deva**. Your song showed the true spirit of empathy that we long to see in all of society.

After the festivities, we concluded with the New Year

Play Time:

Social Service Society, Avadi, was kind enough to sponsor a volleyball tournament for the blind on March 16, 2003. Nethrodaya beat Loyola College to take home the trophy.

Thank you, **Ms. Jennifer Arul**. You made sure that millions of NDTV viewers also enjoyed glimpses of the tournament, that very evening.



Health is Wealth:

175 blind people got to know of their blood groups on July 12, 2003, with the generous support of the Madras Medical Mission (MMM). The photo ID card issued in the camp gives the recipients a sense of security that no other card can give them.

Our heartfelt thanks go to the MMM management for supporting the camp and to the team from MMM for leading the camp. We salute **Commodore R S Vasan**, for inaugurating the camp and his support in all our efforts.

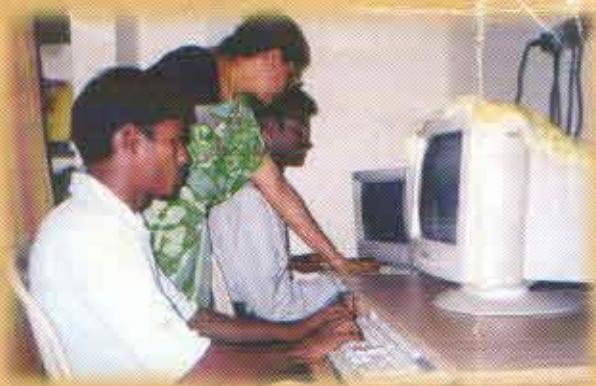


SMALL IS BIG

Nethrodaya's progress is a direct outcome of support from committed well-wishers. On the way, we have had some touching moments.

Swati, a Class VII girl, saved Rs. 25/- from her pocket money and donated it to Nethrodaya.

Karunakaran, a Nethrodaya resident, won a clock at a music competition and promptly donated it to Nethrodaya.



Mr. A J John, a volunteer, called us one day to say he could not read that evening for the students because his mother had passed away and he had to be there.

Senthil, a Nethrodaya resident, won a national level singing competition at Hyderabad and shared his happiness by buying a celebration cake from his prize money. Thank you Senthil – the cake couldn't have been yummier.

Nallathambi, who runs a hairdressing saloon, regularly comes and offers his services free to our residents.

Such moments have left their permanent imprints in our hearts.

THEY MADE IT HAPPEN

Anna Nagar Times Charitable Trust, BRIDGE, Community Development Centre(MMM), CSIM, DOS Club, Ecomwel, Lazar Charitable Trust, Pranic Healing Centre, Rotary Club of Central Adithya, Tatrakshika, Tropical Technologies, housewives, students, traders, vendors, and professionals – all of them came forward to support us when we were new. We thank them for the faith they have placed in Nethrodaya and are grateful to each and every one of them for their support.



DREAMING THE FUTURE

In the future, Nethrodaya wants to build a short-stay centre in Chennai, to support the blind people who come to Chennai for various purposes – educational, medical, skills training etc. It is also planned that the centre will care for the aged who are blind and destitute. A proposal for the centre has been put forward to the Government of Tamilnadu. Nethrodaya appeals to the kind-hearted to contribute to this venture.

Our success in the first year has given us the confidence that we can not only dream the future but also make it happen.



WE NEED YOUR HELP

Dear Friend,

Nethrodaya has come thus far with the support of people like you. To continue serving the blind, we need your help. You can help in any of the following ways:

Give Your Time

If you have some time to spare, you could

Assist the students

- Be a scribe at their exams
- Read lessons
- Teach skills
- Record lessons on cassettes or CDs
- Help in Internet use
- Spend time with the residents – sing a song, tell a story, just share the light

Help us in administration



Give Materials Or Money

If you would like to give money or materials, you could

- Sponsor a meal
- Sponsor a student
- Underwrite administrative expenses of Nethrodaya
- Give materials that you want to

Celebrate Your Special Days With Us

On December 30, 2002, we were home to the birthday celebrations of Akash, son of playback singer Shri Unni Menon. This year, we were home to the wedding anniversary celebrations of Commodore R S Vasan.



REACHING US

If you would like to visit Nethrodaya or receive more information or make contribution, we would be really happy. Please contact:

Gopi, Nethrodaya, 8, Spartan Nagar, Mogappair, Chennai - 600 050. Phone: 044-2656 5012/044-2652 3640/3656 5012. E-mail: nethrodaya@yahoo.com Website: www.nethrodaya.org

Nethrodaya is registered under section 80G and donations are exempted from tax. Any cheque or draft can be drawn in the name of **NETHRODAYA**.