

THE HINDU

» TODAY'S PAPER » EDUCATION PLUS

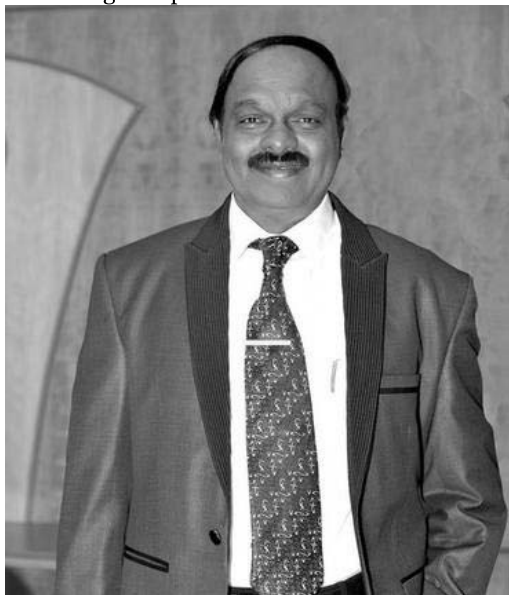
Published: May 30, 2016 00:00 IST | Updated: May 30, 2016 02:02 IST May 30, 2016

Reaching out

- Nandhini SUNDAR



Straddling the spheres of education and healthcareThe RajaRajeswari Institutions and (below) Shanmugam



RajaRajeswari Group of Institutions is committed to helping rural students, says chairman, A.C. Shanmugam

Alawyer by education, A .C. Shanmugam, Chairman, RajaRajeswari Group of Institutions, decided to step into the field of education rather than practice as a barrister. But his venture did not stop with education alone, his Group chose to offer free healthcare too for the needy, especially in the rural areas. In an interview with **Education Plus** , Shanmugam speaks not only about the various facets of his institution but also about the need to address healthcare requirements of the poor on a greater scale.

You are a lawyer by education. How did the journey into education begin?

My journey into education began with the establishment of the Moogambigai Educational and Charitable Trust in 1992. The RajaRajeswari Dental College and Hospital was the first institution to come under this trust followed by RajaRajeswari Medical College and Hospital. The nursing college and the two engineering colleges then followed suit. The chief factor that prompted my venture into the field of education is my firm belief that no one should be deprived of it especially because of the economic or social strata they come from. Most of the students pursuing their degrees in our two Engineering colleges, RajaRajeswari College of Engineering and ACS College of Engineering, are from rural backgrounds.

Not only education, we also firmly believe that quality health care should reach the poorest of the poor. Our dental and medical institutions with the attached hospitals are based on this, offering not just quality education but also super speciality health services to the poor free of

cost or at very affordable rates. Currently, health care in our country is a cause for concern with the poor not having full access to it. This urgently needs to be addressed as basic health care is a fundamental right.

Why did you choose Karnataka for establishing your institutions?

My association with Karnataka dates back to my student days. I studied in V.V. Puram Law College and got my degree. Those were the most cherished days of my life. On completing my degree, I went back and established educational institutions across Tamil Nadu, but Karnataka always held a special place. The institutions are a result of this soft spot.

How is RajaRajeswari Medical College and Hospital different from the other prevailing ones?

Our objective was to reach out to the hitherto contended unreachable segments of the society. The hospital was started with the objective of addressing this segment. Since its inception, speciality, super speciality services to all sections, especially the rural segment, have been offered by our hospitals. Incidentally, such speciality and super speciality services are totally out of reach for the common man. Our hospitals break this norm with their offer of inclusive health care services.

The medical college hospital has 1300 beds, with the best of doctors and medical practitioners besides offering the best infrastructure, diagnostic facilities and operation theatres. The medical staff conduct periodic medical camps in all departments in the nearby villages. We have also set up primary health centres in various rural areas to enable villagers to have access to basic health care. We have plans to expand this further. We have adopted 25 villages and plan to adopt more. The objective is to take health care to the underprivileged sections to the maximum extent.

You are the first person from the non-medical fraternity to be conferred the Honorary Fellowship. Was it in recognition of your services in the medical field?

The International Medical Sciences Academy is an international body having Fellows and Members including Nobel laureates across various countries. The fellowship was given in recognition of my services to Medical and Allied Sciences, for excellence in Medical Education and for offering free medical treatment to the underprivileged.

What are your plans for the future?

I believe education is the most effective tool to create an impact on society. Every student should be given the opportunity to pursue their dreams. A significant number of our students are from rural backgrounds. But we have helped them come on par with the rest of the students. While education is a passion and taking this education to all, especially the underprivileged is the primary aim, health care is equally vital.

In the coming years we plan to bring in further participation and interventions in the field of health care, making health care easily accessible and affordable for the poor.

Nandhini Sundar

"No one should be deprived of an opportunity for education because of the economic or social strata they come from"

Printable version | May 30, 2016 3:11:08 PM | <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-features/tp-educationplus/reaching-out/article8663911.ece>

© The Hindu