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From the Editor's desk



Dear Friends,

It is a rare privilege for a SEVA editor to bring out a special issue of our bulletin to commemorate 25th Memorial Day of a seminal RBI project.

Through this issue of SEVA, we hope to give you a glimpse of how our wonderfully compassionate project, Karunashraya, that tended to its first patient 25 years ago, came into being.

In spite of serving for over 25 years, RBlans never tire of feeling proud about Karunashraya which gives patients with advanced cancer a short lease of positive living. That this lease comes at the fag end of their stay on earth does not in any way diminish how it helps patients and their loved ones, while providing an exceptional fillip to Rotary Indiranagar.

We dedicate this issue to Karunashraya and the terrific team that made it happen and keeps it going relentlessly ahead. PP Rtn. Dr. Nagesh Simha and PP Rtn. Gurmeet Singh Randhawa very graciously shared their experiences about the creation and moulding of Karunashraya. They provided the firm foundation for this special issue of SEVA.

In this issue we help you discover reasons behind Karunashraya's deep and lasting impressions on any visitor.

Thank you, Bangalore Hospice Trust for reaching out, caring and providing a compassionate shelter for cancer patients in pain.

Congratulations Karunashraya for your continuing compassionate service for 25 years and counting.

Given this is a special issue, we do not carry the last page pleasantries.

We welcome feedback at seva.rcbi@gmail.com with your comments on specific points in this issue, and help us improve our connect with you.

For earlier SEVA issues, visit <https://www.rotaryindiranagar.org/newsletters/>

Happy Reading,

Rtn. Vidyut Shenoy

Bulletin Editor, 2019-20



KARUNASHRAYA
Bangalore Hospice Trust



Karunashraya – a game changer

Strange are the ways of the Universe! It brings people together in uncanny ways. The story of my association with palliative care and Karunashraya is interesting. Serendipitous in a way!!

After qualifying as a General Surgeon from Mumbai, my wife Jayashree and I relocated to Bangalore. A chance encounter in the Operating Rooms between Jayashree and Dr. B A Ananthram saw me becoming a Rotarian of Rotary Bangalore Indiranagar (RBI) in February 1983, barely fourteen months after my arrival in Bangalore.

Sometime in 1986, my friend and fellow Rotarian Lalit Sawhney invited me for a Sunday brunch at Bangalore Club. This was to seek my suggestions for possible activities of the newly formed Indian Cancer Society Karnataka Chapter (ICSK). His colleague Manohar Row and another friend Kishore S Rao met me. And, with the help of a few mugs of the famous chilled draught beer of Bangalore, we exchanged ideas. One of them was to begin Cancer Detection Centres in some of the charitable hospitals. And very soon, I was invited to join the ICSK Board. A few years later in July 1989, I became President of RBI. We then sponsored a few detection camps for people who were economically challenged.

During my many interactions with colleagues from ICSK, Kishore kept talking to me at every opportunity that he got, about his passion to establish a cancer hospice in Bangalore. In fact, I walked into an aircraft for a flight from Mumbai to Bangalore sometime in 1992, and, lo and behold, Kishore is sitting in the very next seat. The Universe was working overtime! I must confess that I did not know the meaning of a hospice and Kishore very kindly educated me about this during the seventy minutes that we were in the skies. I kept agreeing with him that it was an idea worth pursuing.

In July 1993, Gurmeet S Randhawa became President of RBI. He expressed his dream of RBI being involved in a large ongoing project, though it was customary for Rotary Clubs to undertake short – term projects to serve the community.

An idea came to my mind; why not RBI and ICSK join hands in working on the proposed hospice? This thought found acceptance by ICSK and RBI. A series of meetings fructified into the formation of the Bangalore Hospice Trust in October 1994. BHT would have five trustees each from the two organisations.

It is amazing how things fall into place if there is Divine Will. Be it the willingness of the Sisters of the Holy Cross to take the responsibility of nursing care, or the allotment, by Government of Karnataka, of five acres of leased land in Marathahalli that was surrendered by Nava Jeevan Nilaya – a centre for the vocational rehabilitation of persons cured of leprosy, or the unexpected visit to Bangalore of Dr. Richard Woof, a palliative care physician from the UK.

Richard had heard about the home care service that we had begun in March 1995, from Gilly Burn, a nurse from the UK who has been passionate about supporting palliative care in India. After a series of lectures on palliative care, Richard attended a dinner at the home of Rotarian Ajith Rai. As he was leaving, he mentioned that his late father was a Rotarian in the UK and the family had established a fund in his memory. He was very impressed by the warmth and fellowship of my fellow Rotarians. This finally led to the Rotary Club of Faringdon and District, RI District 1090, becoming our partner in our application to the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International for a grant under the Health, Hunger and Humanity programme (3-H). We were fortunate to get US\$156,000 (then worth Rs. 6.5 million), which funded the entire equipment for the hospice.

I do not intend to make this a chronicle of all events that were orchestrated by The Universe.

Palliative Care is really a philosophy. Its essence is the reaching out to the core, the soul of a suffering human being. Initially, I had absolutely no idea whatsoever, about what it was all about. We were fortunate to have the guidance of Dr. S Vijayaram - one of the pioneers of palliative care in India. He introduced the use of morphine for pain relief at the Kidwai Memorial Regional Cancer Centre in Bangalore, over twenty-five years ago.

During the initial days when we were busy getting things organized, there were many times when we felt overwhelmed by the enormous task ahead. To name a few, a humongous budget, no experience of taking care of dying people and the lack of knowledge of palliative care amongst the medical profession and the people at large. Often, we wondered if we would be able to overcome the many obstacles that we perceived standing in front of us.

Another act of the Universe was to introduce us to Dr. Jeremy Johnson and his wife Penelope. Kishore Rao and Jeremy Johnson were going through the motions of a "Hello" at a palliative care conference in Mumbai. The word "Bangalore" uttered by Kishore brought an instant wide smile from Jeremy. The reason was that Jeremy was born in Bangalore and had spent the first decade of his life in India. His parents and grandparents on both sides lived in India.

From then on, Jeremy and Penny have been abiding friends and mentors of our work here. More particularly, Jeremy has played a seminal influence in my growth as a palliative care physician.

I was elected the first Chairman of the Trust; Kishore took the important responsibility of Managing Trustee. During the initial years, I was not involved in the medical care of patients; in fact, I knew nothing of palliative care. A few months after we began the in-patient facility in May 1999, I had a chance meeting with two eminent persons; Sister Frances Moore of St. Joseph's Hospice in London, and Marie Coughlan who was a nurse from Australia volunteering with us. Strangely, both of them were together in the Training Room. And what followed had a stereophonic effect. They kept insisting that I pursue the Diploma in Palliative Medicine course of Cardiff University.

And apply I did, supported by a fees grant from the Rotary Club of Faringdon and District in the UK. Little did I know that this was going to play a very crucial role in the future.

During the course in 2000, I was detected to have end stage kidney disease, needing a kidney transplant. As I went to Cardiff in June 2001, I was almost ready for surgery. The period January 2002 to November 2006 was turbulent. I was mortally ill, undergoing three kidney transplants, a host of complications of the second transplant, and bilateral hip replacement.

After the third transplant in November 2006, my nephrologist recommended that I stop operating, thus ending my career as a General Surgeon. He was hesitant to suggest this, fearing that I would be upset. Strangely, my heart was filled with joy! What a relief! By then, I had lost the enthusiasm to lead the exacting life of a surgeon.

That was the start of a new chapter in my life. I continued my association with the hospital for another two years, in a purely advisory role on matters of training. But my heart and soul were in palliative care. I was able to spend much more time at Karunashraya.

I had a phone call from Prof The Baroness Finlay of Llandaff, sometime in 2007 June, enquiring if I would be able to host the annual teaching for the students from India pursuing the Diploma course of Cardiff University. I conveyed my delight at being able to collaborate with her. This resulted in Karunashraya being the resource centre for students in India.

During one such visit in 2009, Prof Finlay motivated me to register for the MSc programme. I did take up the challenge and submitted a thesis on spiritual concerns of Hindu patients admitted to Karunashraya. I am proud that I secured a distinction for the thesis.



Around the same time, I was invited to become the President of the Indian Association of Palliative Care. It was a singular honour to lead the national association of palliative care professionals. I began a second three-year term in 2013. During the years that I was President, I have been privileged to play an important role in the passing of the amended Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act. This will make it easier for people to access morphine and other such drugs for pain relief.

And a most unexpected honour came to me, thanks to the infinite affection that my friend Jeremy has for me. I was elected as a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of London. The FRCP being given to a surgeon is very, very rare. This was in recognition of my work in palliative care. It is serendipity that Jeremy has joined us as Director of Education and Research.

I mention all this, not to brag about it. I only want to stress that none of this would have happened but for my association with Karunashraya. It is not possible to put in words, what this has meant to me. What influence this has had on my life!

Incredible, Invaluable, Important, Indelible, Immense, Immatchable, Ineffaceable...! These are some of the words that come to my mind.

Palliative care has given me a reason to live. My attitude to life has changed. I am a totally different person. And I have received affection, fame and glory way beyond my wildest expectations. And undeservedly too!

Karunashraya is on the threshold of some exciting changes. It is Karunashraya Version 2. We have increased our bed strength to 75 beds.

We have collaborated with Cardiff University's Palliative Medicine Department and cancer and created a 20-module online resource for palliative care. This is available to all, free of cost.

We have signed a MOU with National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences. This is a unique honour as NIMHANS is an institution of National Importance. Our collaboration is mutually beneficial.

We are also working, via a MOU, with the Government of Karnataka to train their doctors and nurses in palliative care. We have also been recognised by the Union Ministry of Health and WHO as a training centre in palliative care for doctors and nurses.

We have worked with ecancer, an organisation in the UK that has on its website enormous resources on all aspects of Cancer. Karunashraya, ecancer and Cardiff University created 21 modules on all aspects of palliative care

Karunashraya has signed a major MoU with Manipal Academy of Higher Education (a University of Eminence) and we have been recognised as a PhD centre.

In order to take the education and research activities to the next level, we have created a separate entity- Karunashraya Institute for Palliative Care Education and Research (KIPCER) We hope to play a major role in India for palliative care education and research

I feel blessed that I have been associated with this noble work. It has given me wonderful friends who have inspired me. I am humbled by the dedication of my colleagues. They have overwhelmed me by their diligence, dedication and devotion. And of course, working with my fellow Trustees has been very special!

I hope I will be given the privilege to continue my work in palliative care for a long, long time!

Contributed by PP Rtn. Dr. Nagesh Simha

Chosen memories of the Karunashraya story



PP Dr. Simha & PP GS Randhawa with President Ken Diccoc of RC Farrington & District, our 3H grant partner



PP Rtn. Ken Lunt, Ben Bazely (a close friend of Ann Dr. Supriya Rai's father), PP Dr. Simha and PP GS Randhawa



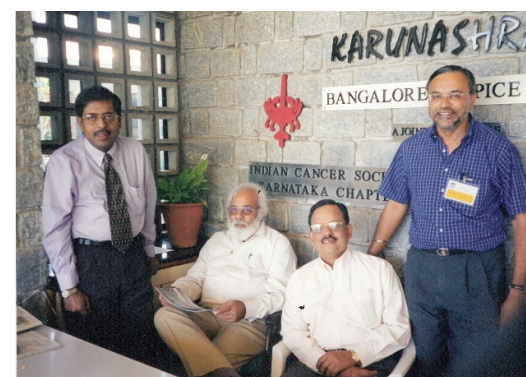
John Greatrex, John Tancock Vice Chair of Severn Hospice, DG Mike Laws and Dr. Jeremy Johnson. (DG Mike Laws funded travel of 2 of our nuns to UK)



Construction of Karunashraya underway, (May 1999)



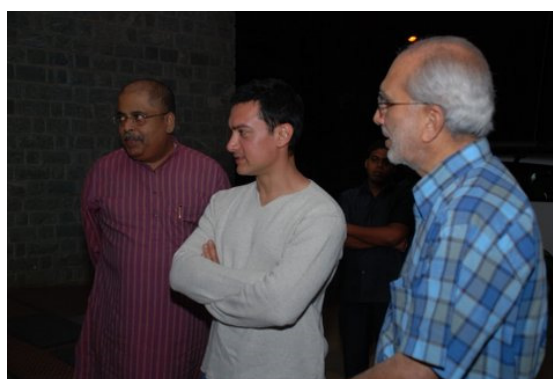
Karunashraya Inauguration. PP Dr. Simha & Kishore Rao lighting the lamp.



Key RBians PP Dr. Simha, Rtn. K P Bhasker, PP Rtn. Ajoy Chakravarthy, PP GS Randhawa



Celebrity cricketer, former Indian captain Rahul Dravid when he graced Karunashraya with his presence



Indian cinema star Amir Khan with two Karunashraya titans at our hospice



Applying the Object of Rotary *Prism* on Karunashraya

At PDG Manjunath Shetty's installation ceremony in June 2014, Chief Guest **Past RI President Kalyan Banerjee** in his keynote speech said,

"One of the finest projects perhaps that I have ever seen, and this I hear from many of the Past RI Presidents who have visited Bangalore, is Rotary Bangalore Indiranagar's hospice project (Karunashraya).

Why do I say that?

Because it is a project of faith, it's a project of hope, it's a project about love, it's a project about a human being supporting another human being. And frankly my brothers and sisters, isn't that what Rotary is all about?

True love is neither physical nor romantic

True love is an acceptance of all that is, has been, will be and will not be.

Why do I speak of this, while talking about your hospice project? A project as ideal as any that Rotary can do. Because this is what is about true love - acceptance of all that is, has been, will be, can be and will not be."



Karunashraya is a living example of how RBI Rotarians collaborated with each other and non-Rotarians to build a masterpiece and a colossus that strives to serve society. The founding group was fiercely entrepreneurial and extremely dedicated to their vision. It has been a source of immense pride for RBI, RI District 3190 and indeed Rotary India. How does Karunashraya manage to remain in this exclusive league?

The exceptional passion for service at Karunashraya notwithstanding, there must be something else that makes the project alluring and sustaining. To unravel the puzzle, one needs to view the project through a prism of the Object of Rotary,

Throughout Karunashraya's evolution, RBI has consistently upheld all Rotary's values and continues to do so. In this article we attempt to link RBI's actions and Object of Rotary. Karunashraya to this day is immersed in service with a humane face.

"The simple things are also the most extraordinary things, and only the wise can see them."— Paulo Coelho

Rotarians from RBI along with help from District 3190 and other Rotary clubs at crucial times built Karunashraya from scratch. Persuasion, farsightedness and forthrightness were key attitudes of RBI Rotarians in Karunashraya's success story. RBIs engaged with non-Rotarians who reciprocated in good measure to help make the Karunashraya dream come true. As you will see from the timeline, that we share later, a lot of related activities were bunched together and accomplished at appropriate times. The focus on getting things done never wavered. RBI Rotarians were in mission mode once BHT was formed, and they never sat still until that dream was realized. Always capitalizing on opportunities that came their way, RBI rarely let any opportunity slip by. That zeal continues and keeps Karunashraya functioning in the same vein. That is just the way Rotary Indiranagar is, think big and achieve big and take everybody along.

Here is a **timeline** of key activities in the Karunashraya story:

- 1983 Dr Simha joined RBI - 14 months after moving to Bengaluru
- 1986 Rtn. Lalit Sawhney invited President Rtn. Dr. Simha for a brainstorming meeting with Rtn. Manohar Row & Kishore Rao about the newly founded Indian Cancer Society Karnataka (ICSK). Soon thereafter Dr. Simha was invited to join ICSK Board
- 1989 RBI President Rtn. Dr. Simha sponsored cancer detection camps (for economically challenged) conducted by ICSK.
- 1992 PP Rtn. Dr. Simha & Kishore Rao found themselves in adjoining seats of a Mumbai-Blore flight. Kishore educated PP Rtn. Dr. Simha on a Cancer hospice.
- 1993 RBI President Gurmeet Randhawa expressed a breakaway need for a long-term project that serves the community as against the trend of only short-term projects. PP Rtn. Dr. Simha suggested the idea of a Cancer Hospice.
- 1993 RBI's Cancer Hospice idea was placed before the ICSK Board, which it agreed to. President Rtn. Gurmeet Randhawa was asked to commence planning for a Hospice.
- 1993 Kishore Rao and President Rtn. G S Randhawa along with Rtn. K P Bhasker ironed out specifics of Bangalore Hospice Trust that would fuel an ICSK-RBI initiative.
- 1994 Bangalore Hospice Trust (BHT) would comprise 5 trustees each from RBI and ICSK mooted. Concurrence of next 5 RBI Presidents and seniors was achieved. Senior District 3190 officials including PDGs were involved in finalizing arrangement between RBI and ICSK. PDG Ramdas drafted the Trust deed.
- 1995 From March, Sisters of the Holy Cross took responsibility of nursing care once the 5 acres of land in Marathahalli (surrendered by Nava Jeevan Nilaya) was leased to BHT. Home care services for palliative care for cancer patients started. A nurse and a counsellor travelled to a patient's home with palliative medicines in a hired auto-rickshaw. The service was conducted from TTK Blood Bank's office in Thippasandra.
- 1998 UK based Palliative care specialist Dr. Richard Woof came to Bengaluru on a short visit. Gilly Burn a UK based nurse, passionate about supporting palliative care had informed him of BHT's work. He observed home care palliative services offered by BHT. He was invited to attend a Rotary fellowship event at Rtn. Ajith Rai's residence where he met key BHT members and RBI Rotarians. Impressed with RBI and its Palliative Care initiatives he mentioned his Rotarian father's Trust, for Palliative Care, with RC Rotary Club of Farringdon and District.
- 1998 Number of faxes and telephone calls were made to UK from Rtn. H R Seetharam's office phone for BHT
- 1998 Rtn. John Greatrex (Rotary Club of Farringdon and District, UK) donated 5000 British Pounds to BHT, for propagating Palliative Care.
- 1998 President Rtn. Ajoy Chakravarty (1997-98), applied for a 3-H (Health, Hunger, Humanity) grant for the hospice, (a maximum of 2 of 3-H grants/year were) awarded by RI. Jointly applied with Rotary Club of Farringdon and District, UK (as the mandatory overseas partner for 3-H grant application). PP Dr. Simha and PP Rtn. G S Randhawa addressed Rotarians at Farringdon and District and Shrewsbury Darwin. They interacted with Dr. Jeremy Johnson who would play a key role in Karunashraya later.
- 1998 Rtn. Ken Miller at RI headquarters, Evanston became an advocate of our hospice project thanks to passionate appeals to him by PP Rtn. Dr. Simha and PP Rtn. GS Randhawa. They explained how the hospice would benefit society.
- 1999 RBI Past Presidents, PDGs of District 3190, PRID M K Panduranga Setty and DG Madhura Chatrapathy all spoke highly about RBI to Rtn. Eunice Maris who was on a

site visit to assess credentials of RBI and the Karunashraya project to help decide on the 3-H grant.

- 1999 President Rtn. Ajoy Chakravarty, PDG Uday Kumar and PP Rtn. GS Randhawa negotiated hard with equipment suppliers to stretch the Rs. 65 lakh corpus of funds available for the hospice through 3H grants.
- 1999 Apart from the 3H grant and various donations from overseas, there were 3 major local donations at the time, IDBI Rs. 10 Lakhs (from CSR funds), ICICI Bank Rs. 8 Lakhs and Surinder Bhandari's family, through Rtn. Rajendra Karnavat, donated Rs. 20 Lakhs (in memory of a son killed in a car accident)
- 1999 PP Rtn. Dr. Simha's chance meeting with volunteers Sister Frances Moore and Marie Coughlan resulted in him applying to Cardiff University for the Diploma in Palliative Medicine course. Rotary Club of Farringdon and District, UK provides support through a fee grant.
- 2007 Dr. Simha agreed to a request from Prof The Baroness Finlay of Llandaff, for hosting of annual teaching for students from India pursuing the Diploma course of Cardiff University. An MOU was signed with Cardiff University.
- 2009 Prof Finlay motivated PP DR. Simha to register for the MSc programme, and his thesis on 'Spiritual concerns of Hindu patients admitted to Karunashraya' secured a distinction
- 2009 PP Dr. Simha was invited to become President of the Indian Association of Palliative Care
- 2010 Tremendous growth seen in Homecare services and patients at Karunashraya. It required setting up of outreach centres at Jayanagar and Kalyan Nagar.
- 2012 BHT improved upon the erstwhile voluntary nature of employees and appointed paid managerial and support staff to ensure professional operations of Karunashraya. Earlier all managerial staff was only reimbursed expenses.
- 2013 PP Dr. Simha invited to become President of the Indian Association of Palliative Care for a second time. He played a key role in passing of the amended Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act to help patients access morphine and other similar drugs.
- 2015 MOU signed with leading cancer portal **ecancer** to provide information on Palliative Care for cancer patients. Karunashraya, **ecancer** and Cardiff University created 21 modules on all aspects of palliative care.
- 2015 A mutually beneficial MOU was signed with NIMHANS.
- 2016 MOU with HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE - Government of Karnataka for training their doctors and nurses in palliative care. Recognized by the Union Ministry of Health and WHO as a training centre in palliative care for doctors and nurses.
- 2019 MOU with Manipal Academy of Higher Education (a University of Eminence) for recognition as a PhD centre.

Karunashraya's history is replete with hard, focussed and exacting work. RBI carried forward Rotary's legacy of ideals by following the Object of Rotary by building strong bonds within RBI Rotarians, District 3190 Rotarians as also overseas Rotarians. We also forged enduring relationships with professionals in the Palliative Care space, and ensured high levels of compassionate community Service. Karunashraya thus remains a colossus in palliative care for cancer.

Is it any wonder that Karunashraya remains recognizably tall among Rotary projects? Kudos to Karunashraya's founding fathers and RBI Rotarians who helped make it a project for Rotary and the world to cherish.

With inputs from PP Rtn. Dr. Nagesh Simha & PP Rtn. Gurmeet Singh Randhawa

An important recognition to the Karunashraya story is an RI **'Service Above Self'** award bestowed upon the late Rtn. K P Bhasker who supervised activities during construction of Karunashraya. Past RI President Rtn. Raja Saboo upon observing the ever dedicated Rtn. Bhasker at work onsite had no hesitation in deciding that he deserved the award.

Throughout, RBlans have remained dedicated to this temple of compassion called Karunashraya. The extent of this dedication is amply visible by applying The Object of Rotary to events during its history. Just assess the events in the timeline above, against the four Objects of Rotary (shared below) and discover, for yourself, all of the reasons for Karunashraya's enduring image and stature.

Rotary International Guiding principles

These principles, developed over the years provide Rotarians with a strong, common purpose and direction and serve as a foundation for our relationships with each other

Object of Rotary

The Object of Rotary is to encourage and foster the ideal of service as a basis of worthy enterprise and, in particular, to encourage and foster:

- **FIRST:** The development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service;
- **SECOND:** High ethical standards in business and professions; the recognition of the worthiness of all useful occupations; and the dignifying of each Rotarian's occupation as an opportunity to serve society;
- **THIRD:** The application of the ideal of service in each Rotarian's personal, business, and community life;
- **FOURTH:** The advancement of international understanding, goodwill, and peace through a world fellowship of business and professional persons united in the ideal of service.

Hats off to Karunashraya and all RBI Rotarians who ensured its calm and enduring presence.



PP Dr. Nagesh Simha and PP Gurmeet Randhawa at Shrewsbury in 1998, with Penny and Dr. Jeremy Johnson



Kishore Rao



When Karunashraya met Indian Cancer Society once again in 2019.



The new KIPCER on the Karunashraya block

For many years, Karunashraya has been running training programmes on an ad-hoc basis. It was felt that a separate entity for education and research within Bangalore Hospice Trust was necessary to be created for Education and Research. In addition, the MoU with Manipal Academy of Higher Education- a University of eminence- and NIMHANS - a Centre of National Importance - needed to be used more effectively. With this in mind, Karunashraya Institute for Palliative Care Education and Research was created. KIPCER will be the research and training arm of Karunashraya. It will help us focus better on this important aspect of work. The possibilities are enormous and we look at the future with great anticipation. KIPCER will have a full-fledged multipurpose auditorium with 100 seats, stage, curtains.

Areas of KIPCER's focus:

EDUCATION

- Run multiple level courses with good content
- Do high quality academically based education in Palliative Care in India
- Forge close collaboration with other institutions
- Collaborate and assist in running training programs in Palliative Care for Ministry of Health (MOH) Government of India (GOI), Government of Karnataka and other State Governments
- Assist the MOH – GOI in setting up Centers of Excellence in Palliative Care all over the country
- Function as a center for Ph.D. in Palliative Care in collaboration with MAHE
- Serve as a liaison center for various Palliative Care centers in the State

RESEARCH

- Provide opportunities to researchers interested in the breadth of Palliative Care in emotional, ethical and spiritual matters
- Improve the standard of Palliative Care through Education and Research
- Organise Seminars and Colloquia on various aspects of Palliative Care
- Initiate and facilitate research in all aspects of Palliative Care

Contributed by PP Rtn. Dr. Nagesh Simha



MoU with MAHE being signed



MoU with MAHE signed and shown



Karunashraya's spiritual centre



A Bird's Eye View of Karunashraya



The Cheery Entrance to our Compassion filled Abode