

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF
TAMIL NADU AT THE 1st NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NURSES: A VOICE TO
LEAD – HEALTH IS A HUMAN RIGHT AT CHENNAI ON 12/05/2018**

Anaivarukkum Kaalai Vanakkam

Dr. Vijaya Baskar

Dr. Radhakrishnan

Dr. S. Geethalakshmi

Dr. Ani Grace Kalaimathi

Dr. Enbasekaran

Dr. Y. Abraham

Distinguished Invitees

Ladies & Gentlemen

It gives me great happiness to be here at the National Conference of Nurses on the occasion of International Nurses Day. You are all aware that the birthday of Florence Nightingale is celebrated as International Nurses Day. The theme being highlighted on the occasion this year is Health is a human right “Nurses – A Voice to Lead”.

Florence came into prominence while serving as a manager of nurses trained by her during the Crimean War, where she organised the treatment for wounded soldiers. She gave nursing a favourable reputation and became an icon of Victorian culture, especially in the persona of “The Lady with the Lamp” making rounds of wounded soldiers at night.

In 1860, Florence laid the foundation of modern professional nursing with the establishment of a nursing school at St. Thomas Hospital in London. In recognition of her pioneering work in nursing, the Nightingale Pledge taken by new nurses, and the Florence Nightingale Medal, the highest international distinction a nurse can achieve, were instituted in her honour, and the annual International Nurses Day is celebrated around the world on her birthday. Her social reforms include improving healthcare for all sections of

society, advocating better hunger relief, and expanding the acceptable forms of female participation in the workforce.

The nursing profession is a noble profession.

The famous French philosopher Voltaire once said

“Those who are occupied in the restoration of health to others, by the joint exertion of skill and humanity, are above all the great of the earth. They even partake of divinity, since to preserve and renew is almost as noble as to create.”

Health care is undoubtedly an important determinant in promoting the physical and mental health and general well being of people. It revolves around the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease, illness, injury and other physical and mental impairments in human beings.

The delivery of modern health care depends on groups of trained professionals and para professionals coming together to form inter-disciplinary teams. This includes professionals in medicine, psychology, nursing, physiotherapy working along with many others such as community health workers, so as to be able to provide the best health beyond all this care services to the people. But it is also necessary to psychologically relate to the patient.

The United Nations and the World Health Organisation have emphasized the need for universal healthcare coverage. But statistics reveal that access to health care varies across countries. Even among the OECD Countries, universal health coverage is not available in US and Mexico. The United States however enjoys the top position in terms of expenditure as calculated as a share of the health care industry in the nation's economy. 17.7% of the GDP of the USA is accounted for by the health care industry. In comparison, countries such as Switzerland, Germany and Netherlands, where the healthcare industry accounts for about 11% of the GDP, have not only provided universal health coverage but also outdistanced the US in terms of life expectancy figures. It is therefore quite clear that it is not only important

that more money should be allocated for healthcare but the money should also be effectively targeted so as to benefit the population better.

Tamil Nadu has always been an important centre for medical diagnosis and treatment. It was the first State to enact the Public Health Act. The Government General Hospital and the Government Eye Hospital are among the oldest in Asia. The State enjoys an impressive record in the reduction of infant mortality and maternal mortality rates. Private sector involvement in the establishment of hospital for medical treatment has also been existent in Tamil Nadu for more than 100 years.

The State ranks first in the country in terms of number of children immunized and takes pride in the lakhs of eminent medical practitioners and nursing professionals engaged in providing healthcare. The Tamil Nadu model is the best prototype health care delivery system in resource-limited settings which can be emulated by other states also towards a better health care delivery system. Hence, it is no wonder that Tamil Nadu serves as a hub for medical tourism in the eastern part of the globe.

Today the State attracts about 40% of those who come into India for medical treatment. It has been estimated by the Confederation of Indian Industry that about 15 lakh patients come into Tamil Nadu for diagnosis and treatment. The CII has also estimated that the annual growth of medical tourists coming into Tamil Nadu is more than 20%. The presence of a robust infrastructure coupled with specialised medical care provided by the doctors and nursing staff is one of the most important reasons for this heavy inflow into Tamil Nadu.

In the recent decade, due to the overwhelming importance of health and prevention of diseases, the investment in to health sector has increased drastically in the country. Most of the investment is in to Human Resource for Health, where the 55% of the health workforce are nurses.

The number of nursing students graduating every year in Tamil Nadu is approximately 15000.

A significant number of them are migrating to Overseas Countries for employment and higher studies. The past four years statistics shows that Nurses have mainly migrated to Saudi Arabia, Canada, New Zealand, UK, Singapore and USA.

The Tamil Nadu nursing council is the premier nursing council in the whole of South – East Asia and was established in the year 1928. Most of the nursing councils Act in India were framed after Independence based on the Tamil Nadu Nursing Councils Act.

I am happy to know that the Tamil Nadu Nurses and Midwives Council has recently celebrated their 90th Anniversary and are currently marching towards completing a 100 years of active service.

It is a privilege for me to be inaugurating the first national conference hosted by the Tamil Nadu Nurses and Midwives council. My hearty congratulations to the council for undertaking this rational effort.

I congratulate the awardees who are role models in the nursing profession and wish them well.

Let me summarise by saying that the mission before us is to make health care comprehensive, universal, affordable and qualitatively professional. For achieving this objective, the road ahead is going to be complex and arduous.

It requires the combined efforts of the doctors and nurses to achieve success in the mission. Care concern and consideration for the diseased and the suffering is need of the hour. Let as all resolve on this special day to work together in this noble effort.

Nandri Vanakkam

Jai Hind.