

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF
TAMIL NADU AT PUNE NETRA SEVA NATIONAL AWARD PRESENTATION
CEREMONY ORGANISED BY PUNE NETRA SEVA PRATISHTHAN
AT SRI.V.D SWAMI AUDITORIUM, SANKARA NETHRALAYA,
CHENNAI, ON 26.12.2018 AT 4.00 PM**

Anaivarukkum Maalai Vanakkam

Padma Bhushan Dr. S. S. Badrinath,
Chairman Emeritus,
Medical Research Foundation

Dr. Prema Padmanabhan,
Senior Consultant,
Sankara Nethralaya

Dr.Sathis Desai,
Chairman, Pune Netra Seva Pratishthan

Dr. M.B. Jhamwar,
President, Pune Netra Seva Pratishthan

Distinguished Invitees

Ladies & Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to be here today at this presentation ceremony organised by the Pune Netra Seva Pratishthan for honouring its first National Awardee. My happiness goes up manifold since the award is being conferred on Dr. S. S. Badrinath for his outstanding contribution in the field of community ophthalmology.

You are all aware that Dr. S. S. Badrinath founded the 'Sankara Nethralaya' in 1978 based on the guidance and advice given to him by the Sankaracharya of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam and has since then been working for the poor and middle class people who are not able to afford the cost of specialized eye care in commercially run private hospitals.

It has always been part of the tradition of India to care for the weak, the poor and the suffering. Swami Vivekananda feelingly spoke of 'Daridhra Narayana', which basically means that service to the poor is equivalent in importance and piety to service

to God. Veda Vyasa also brings out the greatness of helping people by stating succinctly in two words – ‘paropakarah punyaya’ – Helping others is the best virtue.

The great Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar has beautifully summed it up in two lines.

Translated this means, “Giving to the poor is charity, all else have the quality of expecting a return”.

Sankara Nethralaya has been an institution administered by Gandhian values and principles. With the basic philosophy of service to humanity especially the poor and needy, the institution which was started as a registered non-profit institution, treats more than 40% of its patients totally free of cost every year in keeping with the principle of ‘Service to society’. The cost free eye care is not confined to basic eye care. Even the most complex surgeries are performed totally cost free to indigent patients. Both paying and non-paying patients receive the same quality of care and attention and no special preference is given for paying patients and most importantly the service is provided with love and compassion.

Sankara Nethralaya’s Mobile Eye Surgical Unit (MESU) jointly developed with IIT-Madras, which is one its kind in Asia, travels far and wide and performs advanced cataract removal surgeries to the most economically and socially backward sections of society living in remote, inaccessible regions of the country including hilly tribal belts.

Sankara Nethralaya’s service to humanity extends beyond the nation’s frontiers. It has conducted free eye camps in rural areas of African nations like Kenya, Zambia and Botswana. The institution has assisted the Sri Lankan Government to set up an ophthalmic institution at Ratnapura in Sri Lanka. It has also a tie-up with the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of Mauritius to provide eye care for their citizens.

The institution is rated as one of the finest ophthalmic institutions in the world and is the first eye care institution in Asia to be certified as an ISO institution.

A third of all research papers in ophthalmology in the country originate from the Kamalnayan Bajaj Institute for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology, the research arm of Sankara Nethralaya. The institution has the Patent to some of the most important findings including ‘DNA Macrochip which has revolutionized the diagnostic procedures of eye-care. The hallmark of the research work undertaken by the institution is that it is

shared for the common interest of the humanity through teaching and training without any commercial motive.

The financial and management model of Sankara Nethralaya which utilizes the revenue accrued from paying patients to take care of both the establishment cost and the cost of eye-care for poor patients has been praised by the American Chamber of Commerce, and premium business schools who have visited the institute for a first hand observation.

Nani Palkiwala, the famous jurist used to say that Sankara Nethralaya is the best managed charitable organization in India. The fact that Dr. S.S. Badrinath is being honoured by the Pune Netra Seva Pratishthan is a matter pride for Sankara Nethralaya and for all those who are aware of his selfless contribution.

The field of ophthalmic care is of the highest importance and the awakening caused by this award will be greatly useful in attracting bright talent to this field besides motivating them to serve the people with greater care and concern.

The Pune Natra Seva Pratishthan has given the right start to recognising relationship medical contribution by instituting a medical award for this purpose. They have been in their own making their contribution for blindness control in India.

The organisation which was established in 1979 for providing free eye care services for the economically backward and under privileged people, has successfully conducted 1100 free eye camps and screened and performed more 500,000 patients then 10,000 cataract surgeries more than a lakh spectacles have been distributed by them free of cost.

The Central and State governments are attaching great importance to blindness prevention and this is evident by their large scale involvement in

- Encouraging voluntary bodies and private eye hospitals engaged in eye care
- Enhancing community awareness on eye care
- Constructing eye hospitals and adding eye wards/operation theatres in government hospitals in remote regions of the country

Tamil Nadu has the pride of being the healthcare capital of the nation and I am happy to place on record the valuable services of the TN State blindness control society that has consistently exceeded its target in performing 'Cataract' surgeries.

Prevention is better than cure is a old saying. While it is important for us to enhance our capabilities in the system and cure of diseases it is even more important to ensure that the various organs of the human body gifted to us at the time of birth are properly maintained by adopting simple techniques. For example, for better eye care, it is well known that offering prayers to the morning sun helps in improving eye sight. This is so, because it provides the automatic exercise for the ciliary muscles which envelop the eye lens. Similarly another common technique that is practiced is to rub mustard oil on the soles of one's feet. I have also observed people adding a small quantity of pepper to clarified butter and drinking it in the morning, to improve their eye sight. I am sure that the distinguished audience assembled here is also aware of many other techniques such as exercising the eyes regularly to ensure that they are maintained in fine trim.

I am mentioning all this for you to appreciate that the ocean of knowledge is vast and limitless. While the system of medicine in which you have been trained has its own benefits, it is important that there is a continuous inter-action between different medical traditions, whether modern or ancient, whether of the west or east, so that they could blend harmoniously and rid each other of their defects. It is necessary to create a new model for health and healing, keeping the patient at the core of the treatment, without being fixated on a single system of medicine.

One of the major challenges faced by eye care providers is the chronic shortage of 'Cornea' needed for transplant surgery. This can only be overcome by large scale 'eye donation'. I appeal to every citizen of the state to pledge his/her eyes and also spread awareness on the importance of eye donation to save millions from losing their vision.

I appreciate the efforts of the Trustees & Executive Members of the Pune Netra Seva Pratishthan who have shown enterprise for imaginatively deciding to honour though national award, a member of the medical fraternity Dr.Badrinath for his contribution were in the field of Ophthalmology. I wish them well. May success greet them at every step, in their journey whose quest is to bring high quality eye care within the reach of the local community.

Nandri Vanakkam.....

Jai Hind.....