

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF
TAMIL NADU AT THE 15TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF VISION 2020: THE
RIGHT TO SIGHT-INDIA ORGANISED BY ARAVIND EYE HOSPITAL AT
ARAVIND EYE HOSPITAL, CHENNAI ON 08.06.2019 AT 6.00 P.M**

Anaivarukkum Maalai Vanakkam

Dr. P. Namperumalsamy,
Chairman Emeritus,
Aravind Eye Care System

Dr. R.D. Ravindran,
Chairman,
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Dr. Taraprasad Das,
President, Vision 2020

Thiru. Govind Hari,
Secretary, Vision 2020

Thiru. Rishi Raj Borah,
Treasurer, Vision 2020

Dr. Phanindra Babu,
Chief Executive Officer

Distinguished Invitees

Ladies & Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to be here today on the occasion of 15th annual conference of "VISION 2020: THE RIGHT TO SIGHT – INDIA".

The fact that the conference is focussed on the theme of "Achieving Universal Eye Health" for everyone & everywhere" makes it particularly significant.

The eye is one of the most complex organs of the human body about which a lot of study has already been undertaken and about which many more interesting and useful discoveries will be made. With the growth of economic prosperity and technology it is also among the foremost of the sensory organs in providing inputs to the human brain.

For most people, it is a matter of course that when they open their eyes, they see the world. But we must understand that there is a complex process by which the eyes function.

When you see an object or read a magazine, the light rays reflecting off the object penetrate our eyes and first strike the Cornea. After the Cornea, the rays traverse the anterior eye chamber and pupil in the iris. The iris actually determines the colour of the eye. The anterior chamber is filled with the fluid which nourishes the Cornea and the lens of the eyes. A ventilation system drains out the excess fluid. The iris dilates or shrinks the pupil regulating the quantum of light rays penetrating the eye. The rays then go through the lens of the eye, which is enveloped by the ciliary muscles which regulate the curvature of the lens. After passing through the lens, the light rays strike the Retina which has photo receptors numbering more than 100 million. The information from the Retina is relayed to the vision centre of the brain, through the optic nerve. It is, thus that we see an object or a picture. As you can all see the process of vision is a complex one. Even if one of the components in the process is affected, vision is impaired.

The Right to Sight is the global initiative for the elimination of avoidable blindness, a joint programme of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB).

As per the recent estimates by the International Agency for Prevention of Blindness, in 2015, there are around 253 million people worldwide living with vision impairment, of which 36 million were blind. The vast majority (89%) of visual impaired live in low and middle income countries.

As per the WHO data, the estimated number of people visually impaired in India is 62 million of which 8 million are blind.

Among the various eye diseases such as,

- 1) Cataract,
- 2) Diabetic Retinopathy,
- 3) Glaucoma
- and 4) Corneal Blindness.

Cataract alone accounts nearly for half of the blindness and 33% of the visual impairments worldwide.

Cataract is the clouding of the lens in the eye leading to poor vision. Cataracts are most commonly due to aging but may also occur due to trauma or radiation exposure. Risk factors include diabetes, smoking tobacco, prolonged exposure to sunlight and alcohol. Surgery to remove the cloudy lens and replace it with an artificial lens is the only effective treatment for treating cataract.

About 20 million people in the world are blind due to cataract. It is the cause of approximately 5% of blindness in the United States and nearly 60% of blindness in

parts of Africa and South America. Blindness owing to cataract occurs in about 40 children out of 1,00,000 children in the developing world. The figure is about 10 percent of this in the developed world. This shows that the scope for improvement is indeed vast.

The use of Robots to perform eye surgery was first successfully practiced in 2016 in the John Radcliffe Hospital of the University of Oxford. This advancement in technology is designed to eliminate tremors in the surgeons hand, so that manipulations can be safely carried out within a small organ such as eye. The Robot enables high precision procedures to be carried out, which are beyond the capabilities of the human hand.

Countries like India will always have a need to encourage such faster and precision based systems of medical treatment so that large populations can be covered within the shortest possible time. In India, Tamil Nadu has traditionally been considered as the leader in the use of the latest procedures for medical treatment.

Prevention is better than cure is a old saying. While it is important for us to enhance our capabilities in the treatment 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 delighted to see that leaders in the field of eye care have been honoured today. Akhand Jyoti Eye Hospital, Saran, Bihar has been conferred the 'Shri Dharamsey Nensey Oman Award for Outstanding High Quality, High Volume Comprehensive Eye Care Service Delivery'. Sitapur Eye Hospital, Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh has been conferred the 'Lotus Award for Holistic Development in the service of the Community. Sankara Nethralaya, Chennai has been conferred the 'Shri S. N. Shah Award for promoting Equity in providing primary eye care screenings with a focus on women and children'

The success of public health interventions is dependent on a healthy partnership between government, non-governmental organizations, and private sectors to deliver results. Deliberations such as this will bring out new ideas to increase the effectiveness of eye care service delivery models for the diagnosis and treatment of eye diseases. I am sure that the joint efforts of the Government and organizations like 'VISION 2020: The Right to Sight – INDIA', Aravind Eye Care System and other eye care institutions will be rewarded with stupendous success.

I call upon the Arvind Eye hospital and these assembled here to redouble their efforts and expand the coverage of their operations as much as possible so as to reach out and offer cataract operations not only in Tamil Nadu but also all over India.

I appreciate the efforts of the Arvind hospital management who have taken painstaking efforts to organize this conference. They deserve our praise and support. I wish them well. May success greet them at every step, in their journey whose quest is to bring quality eye care within everybody's reach so as to prevent blindness and enable a larger percentage of the pop-better to enjoy the benefit of vision that has been gifted by god.

Nandri Vanakkam

Jai Tamil Nadu...

Jai Hind...