

Gentlemen,

On the occasion of the World Sight Day, I have pleasure in conveying to the President & Executive Board of the Vision 2020 INDIA, my heartfelt greetings for the success of your contemplated ventures in bringing light to those who are either condemned to the dark or born visionless.

I am reminded of a few passage of wisdom that speaks of the eternal truth:

The Ten Commandments:

1. To those who can not see, let's pledge our sight to lead to light,
2. To those who can see but are blind to human suffering, let's transform them,
3. To those who are blind to our delight and joy, let's share our fortune,
4. To those who have vision only of themselves, let's reflect many in one,
5. To those who grows out of their heart, let's embrace their generosity,
6. To those who are anchored in their solitary throne, let's draw them out,
7. To those whose passion in blinded, let's fulfill our promise to vision,
8. To those who nurse hate within, let's preach love to them,
9. To those who allies with crimes, let's reform them in nobility's robe,
10. To those hearts blinded in distress, let's greet them at joy's gates!

This is the essence of the pledge with which I am reminding you to recall our own dedication to the cause we have committed ourselves to the **World Sight Day**, the day when we all assemble every year. It arrives only to remind us of our potential promise to participate to make this world see "**ONE VISION**", that is:

Vision to All & All in vision!

To this achievement let's make our efforts one big leap forward!
A little step of ours shall move the entire race forward!
A single candlelight also leads the blind to an eternal gratitude!

While pledging our eyes after our physical has left is indeed a very noble act and a well-intended gesture, I would prefer to lead those blinded by false sense of pride and self-centered charities to serve all those who can not see either by physical eyes or by mental veil of ignorance and pride. We can lead the blind in our lifetime to enable a brighter vision by lending our hearts to them, which is all they seek prior to winning a vision. Let's us therefore pledge our physical eyes after our lifetime while we shall pledge our hearts loaded with love during our lifetime. My appreciation to those in the Secretariat who have pledged their eyes in this noble service!

I would also like to add as a rejoinder and expect you to consider the following while volunteering services to your VISION 2020 programmes in future:

- ❖ A timely, quality and appropriate eye care services should be in place to serve our poorest of poor Indian citizens, especially in the rural areas, especially for women and children.

- ❖ Women and girl children are neglected – I want to see that the Government Health System as well as the 75 member organizations for **VISION 2020 INDIA** ensures that eye services (especially for Cataract operation, uncorrected refractive error and low vision, childhood blindness, diabetes, including diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma) are provided to all – free of cost, if possible.
- ❖ I would be keen to receive personally report on what progress has been made on these issues, especially from the 75 member organizations.
- ❖ At present I understand that about 1,00,000 corneas are required per year to enable restoring sights to 1 lakh persons, but unfortunately only about 40,000 corneas have been collected per year. We need to strengthen this system.
- ❖ I would be too glad to remind Ms. K. Sujatha Rao (Secretary – Health and Family Welfare) and Ms. Shalini Prasad (Joint Secretary) to extend their support and ensure that the above assignments do materialize.
- ❖ The VISION 2020 Goal (Our country is signatory to this goal by the World Health Organization) is to eliminate avoidable blindness by 2020 that means we have the next 10 years to do so. India has done a magnificent job in the area of blindness due to cataract, especially under the 20 years of leadership of Dr. (Mrs.) Rachel Jose, but still have a lot to do in the emerging issues of blindness due to more complicated diseases such as diabetes and glaucoma.
- ❖ I am also happy to learn that representatives from five countries, including India met at Madurai from 24-26th Sept to review and revise the National Plans for Blindness Control.
- ❖ I would persuade the audience and the decision makers to see that these revised plans are incorporated in the 11th Five Year Plan and implemented in all the 35 States/Union Territories of India.
- ❖ I would be glad if a mapping of resources in eye care are done in all the 600 plus districts of India, so that we can focus on districts which require more support from the Ministry Department and VISION 2020 INDIA.
- ❖ There are more blind women than men. Services do not reach women adequately. So, policy makers and planners should develop programmes to specifically address the needs of women and girl children.
- ❖ We must also focus on education of women. If women are literate the whole society progress.

Meanwhile, my heartfelt felicitation to Dr. (Mrs.) Rachel Jose for rendering selfless service and for her 20 years of dynamic leadership of the National Programme for



Speech by
Brand Ambassador
Smt. Hema Malini
World Sight Day
8th October, 2009

Control of Blindness on behalf of the 75 member organizations of VISION 2020 INDIA.

As the Brand Ambassador of VISION 2020 INDIA, it is my heartfelt desire that "We eliminate avoidable blindness from India by 2020".

Lots have been done in the past 30 plus years of the programme, but yet lot more is still to be done to make this dream a reality.

May we meet again to see that those eyes could see what we had always seen - Those sun smiles; those star laughters and those moon delight!

My best wishes for the success of your organization!

Thank you