

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF
TAMIL NADU AT THE INAUGURATION OF EARLY INTERVENTION
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ORGANISED BY AMAR SEVA SANGAM
AT HOTEL HYATT REGENCY, ANNA SALAI, TEYNAMPET, CHENNAI
ON 14.02.2020 AT 10.30 A.M**

Anaivarukkum Kaalai Vanakkam

Padmashri Thiru. S.Ramakrishnan,
Founder President, Amar Seva Sangam

Thiru S. Sankara Raman,
Honorary Secretary, Amar Seva Sangam

Thiru Himangshu Das,
Director, NIEPMD

Thirumathi Sulochana Krishnamurthy,
President, Handicare International, Canada

Dr. Aravindan Selvaraj,
Executive Director and Chief Orthopedic Surgeon,
Kauvery Hospital

Caroline Storr,
Associate Professor, Director-Education Programs,
McGill University, Canada

Distinguished Invitees,

Ladies and gentlemen

It gives me immense pleasure to be here at the inaugural function of the first “**Early Intervention International Conference**” organised by Amar Seva Sangam. I am very happy to see the very rare congregation of such cross section of dignitaries from diversified backgrounds from different parts of the globe, all at one place. My hearty congratulations to the organisers.

Thiru S. Ramakrishnan, who was normal, was doing his final year

at The Government College of Technology, Coimbatore. His ambition was to serve the Indian Navy. He appeared for the Naval Officers' Selection interview at Bangalore. While doing the Naval recruitment exercises he had to undergo obstacles test for fitness. As fate would have it, he fell down during the test and suffered multiple spine injuries resulting in complete paralysis below the neck. The accident occurred on 10th January 1975. Since then, he has been confined to the wheelchair. However, in spite of this severe setback to a budding career, he did not lose his courage and enthusiasm. Thiru Ramakrishnan resolved to do something concrete and really useful to the under-privileged section of the society in his area.

A practicing Chartered Accountant Thiru S. Sankara Raman, who is also a wheelchair user due to muscular dystrophy joined Thiru S. Ramakrishnan in 1992 and from then on the Sangam had no limits to reaching new heights. They both envisioned a **Valley for the Disabled** and expanding the range of services and geography of operations. There are more than 15,000 persons with disabilities served by them, across all age groups and across all disabilities under various institution-based and village-based initiatives. Very commendable achievement indeed.

John Holmes said and I quote, **“There is no exercise better for the heart than reaching down and lifting people up.”**

The courage and indomitable spirit of these two individuals is heralding a new era for the country's persons with disabilities.

The birth of a child is an exciting event and a happy moment for the family. But if the child doesn't cry on birth or misses the milestones in its growth trajectory then it becomes a catastrophe for the family. The parents would not know how to handle the child and it becomes an emotional and physical trauma for both the child and the parents. The

child and the family need intervention and guidance in this situation to make the child healthy and get full or near to age appropriate functionality.

Early childhood, commonly defined as the first 5 years of life, is the fastest period of growth and the period in which the developing brain is most sensitive to stimulation and nurturing. This period of development is regarded as the foundation for subsequent educational and vocational attainment at the individual level, and for overall human capital and economic development at the population level. The UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) focused largely on reducing under-5 mortality, especially in low-income and middle-income countries (LMICs).

In Tamil Nadu, screening of children between age group 0 to 18 for 4D's-

1. Defects,
2. Deficiencies,
3. Diseases,
4. Developmental Delay and Disabilities

is being systematically done through 805 mobile Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) team in all 385 blocks of the State and addressed through district and block level early intervention centres. This being implemented throughout the State under National Health Mission. 76 Block Early Intervention Centers (BEIC) are already functioning in Tamil Nadu with an aim to treat children identified with 4Ds.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neuro-developmental disorder that can impair a child's ability to communicate and interact with others and hence results in inappropriate executive skills. Though currently there is no cure for Autism Spectrum Disorder, early intervention and education can help a child progress more fully.

The Global Burden of Diseases (GBD), Injuries, and Risk Factors Study 2016 provides a comprehensive assessment of prevalence and

Years Lived with Disability (YLDs) for development disabilities among children younger than 5 years. The estimated global number of children younger than 5 years in Global Burden of Diseases 2016 was 598.5 million in 1990 and 632 million in 2016.

Though in India the incidence of infant mortality is decreasing while the incidence of non-communicable diseases is increasing which is a major cause for disability. According to a 2016 study published in the Lancet, there are more than 53 million children under the age of 5 in the world living with a disability, with 12 million in India and almost one lakh in Tamil Nadu. There is an urgent need to address this issue with quality early intervention to support the children in the development of physical, cognitive, emotional, sensory, behavioural, social and communication capabilities and skills.

In 2012 the **World Health Organization** mentioned that **“If children with developmental delays are not provided with appropriate early intervention, their difficulties can lead to lifetime consequences, increased poverty and profound exclusion”**.

To provide access to rehabilitation services in Rural Areas, Amar Seva Sangam has embarked upon the bold idea of bringing the therapy to the child’s home which they call, “mobile Based village Based Rehabilitation Initiative” (mVBR-EI). This Digitally Monitored Rehabilitation Initiative enables screening, assessment and identification of the problems for necessary rehabilitation. This paves the way for training the parents and care-givers and also for capacity-building. Besides creating huge awareness in the community, it helps in monitoring and evaluation, leading to research and technology development.

I compliment the Government of Tamil Nadu for further scaling up the model of Amar Seva Sangam’s Home-Based Early Intervention mVBR-EI program to 23 new blocks and planning to work with this

exemplary organisation to launch a State-wide program. In this way, the State of Tamil Nadu will become a pioneer in the field of Early Intervention program with multi-disciplinary and family centered approach.

I firmly believe this conference will deliberate on all issues and find solutions and way out to uplift the persons with disabilities. I wish great success to this conference.

I congratulate Thiru S. Ramakrishnan and Thiru S.Sankara Raman for their great work. I wish the rehabilitation workers and specialists the very best in their devoted service. I congratulate Amar Seva Sangam for its contribution towards rehabilitation of Early Intervention of Childhood Developmental Delays. May the efforts of Amar Seva Sangam swell in size, multiply in magnitude and fill the earth with goodness and humanity.

I conclude with the words of **Mother Teresa**, “**Spread love everywhere you go. Let no one ever come to you without leaving happier**”.

Nandri Vanakkam.....

Jai Hind.....

Jai Tamil Nadu....