

**Senior Citizens Bureau**  
**First Anniversary of Geriatric House Call Project**  
**Honoring the Panel of Doctors**  
**Address by the Chief Guest**  
**Dr. V.C. Kulandaiswamy**

I am happy to participate in the first anniversary of Geriatric House Call project, Chennai. Even at the outset I must sincerely congratulate all those associated with this pioneering effort, especially Dr. V.S. Natarajan, Chairman of the Senior Citizens Bureau, I must say even at the outset that Dr. V.S. Natarajan, has become an institution by himself and a symbol of all pioneering efforts in the field of Geriatric medicine. I must on this occasion stress the basic fact that while many may be involved in any given project, the origin and progress depend on the initiative of pioneers. I am sure, all those who are assembled here will agree with me that the progress in the field of Geriatric medicine in the country as a whole has its seed in the contribution of one single individual and that is Dr. Natarajan, the modest and unassuming person who is with us this evening. I am one of those who look up with great expectation, the news broadcast from Delhi on the 25<sup>th</sup> Night of January, every year, hoping that the Government would honour him in an appropriate manner for the service rendered by a real pioneer like Dr. V.S. Natarajan. No doubt, I get disappointed but I am never disheartened. I have always been and I continue to be a believer in the principle that either in time or even earlier than the due time or though a little late, one will certainly get what is one's due.

Hoping for something good to happen is sometimes a more satisfying experience than the realization of the hope itself. Therefore we may continue to hope for the best.

I have always been an admirer of the medical profession. As a technologist I may even say that I envy the doctors. If you look at the list of seven wonders of the world, referring to the ancient period, atleast four of them

are the creations of Engineers and Architects. Neither Engineering nor Architecture is termed a learned profession. In the world as a whole, medicine and law alone are considered as learned professions from the beginning of history.[An instance from the life of Hoover, the past president of USA may be quoted here.]

A brief survey of human history would show that out of all the activities of human society, healing and relieving pain are the most important.

Buddha perhaps is the greatest of spiritual leaders that the world has seen: his objective ultimately was to relieve the world of pain and suffering.

If you read the history of Jesus, you will find that the most important episodes of the wonders of Jesus were healing the sufferings of ailing people. This tradition continues with Christianity and among the many religions of the world, you will find that healing and nursing are more predominant and more pronounced in Christian religion than any other and this no exaggeration. I may say that whatever be the deficiencies of medical profession, it is more humanitarian than any other profession.

Medical profession as such consists of four components.

1. Preservation of health and promotion of health.
2. Prevention of diseases.
3. Cure
4. Rehabilitation

These four are stated in the order of importance: but one wonders as to how far, the medical profession, as a whole, deals these components with due concern.

Preservation is hardly stressed. It is not even considered as part of medicine. But strictly speaking preservation is the most important. In the recent years, one will find a number of books aimed at providing opportunities for preservation of health, which depends upon food habits, physical exercises, and moderation in all aspects of life.

The next one is prevention of diseases. Prevention is expected to be taken care of by the public health department by creating awareness and suggesting certain external measures.

Perhaps, the department of public health is more important than the department of medicine. But unfortunately the public health does not command that respect.

When I was the Director of Technical Education, many of the young boys and girls from among friends and relatives used to approach me with a request to help them get a transfer from public health department to medical education dept. In general prevention is not given as much importance as curing.

It is said that in ancient china there was a good practice. Every family had a family physician. Like the insurance, each member of the family was to be registered with him and a premium was paid every month. The premium would be paid as long as the health of an individual was maintained. If one falls sick, the payment of premium for him will be stopped and will be resumed only after his health is restored. It appears, as though, this ancient practice is worth following even today.

Curative medicine alone is given importance and in the recent years super- specialty is given, perhaps, the top most importance, much to the neglect of general medicine which concerns millions of people.

People used to say that the weakest link in our medical system is the post operative care. That is because, we do not give equal importance to rehabilitation. It is here that the profession of nursing becomes important. It will be amply seen from the figures we have for medical colleges and nursing colleges. As of 2006, Tamilnadu Government had 14 Government Colleges for Medicine and only one College for Nursing. I am not taking in to account the recent development in the establishment of private nursing colleges. Later a number of private nursing colleges have come up and the situation is improved. That is only a recent development. [Quote here experience as the Director of Technical Education concerning sub- university level programmes and the submission of a project report in 1976.]

For the 9<sup>th</sup> plan preparation, I happened to be a member of the Medical Man power Committee of the Planning Commission, Government of India. We found at that time that there were nearly two and half doctors for every nurse. I was told at that time that according to Mudaliar Committee recommendation, you must have atleast three nurses per doctor. The situation then was exactly the other way about. That only shows the distorted value system that existed in the society in the field of medicine.

Coming now to the Senior Citizens Bureau, the Geriatric Medicine has not gained as much importance as it should. During the period of my birth, the longevity for males in India was 28 years and females 29 years. It is not surprising because, in general, longevity has been increasing with the development of science and technology. During the most famous period of Roman Empire the longevity was only 25 years.

What I stated earlier regarding the longevity in India was in the 1920's. At that point of time and even latter till the 1950's people in India did not live long and therefore the problem of old age was not a serious issue. Therefore Geriatric Medicine was not important. Now the longevity is around 65 years. Many live beyond 75 years. So therefore Geriatric medicine is as important as pediatrics. It is in this context that we have to consider the services of practitioners in Geriatric medicine. I quote for you a small Tamil verse.

°®ð¶¶ ¶¶iðñ™ô  
 °¶¶-ñ«ò ¶¶ið< Üç¶¶  
 è®ðð~ î<-ñ ñ,èœ  
 èi¾œ âjªø‡E Gÿð~

âjð£j èMëj. That means death is an inevitable end and that is not something to be feared about . What one fears about is the process of old age. And that is the reason, the poet says that those who relieve the people in old age, of their sufferings or like Gods. It is here again how Dr. Natarajan nearly three decades earlier from today realized on its own the importance of Geriatric Medicine, went abroad and qualified himself in this specialty.

We can not prevent old age. We can only make it free from suffering. Therefore one sees how important Geriatric Medicine is.

A child has a future and a promise and therefore demands the attention of the public. Unfortunately the old man or women has no promise the only an end to look for. Therefore either their relatives or the members of the public cannot look for any future contribution that deserves attention, but must only remember what they have contributed in the past and as matter of gratitude and duty that they must care of. None of these two have any compelling effect. It is essentially a matter of culture and to the value system of a society.

We can neither prevent nor slow down old age. We can only reduce the suffering. In this process availability of doctors to attend on patients is a great facility.

I am really happy to learn that within a short period after starting the Geriatric House Call Program, you have enrolled considerable number of doctors, physiotherapists and psychologists. I find nearly 60 doctors, 20 physiotherapists and 2 psychologists. It is also heartening to note that the doctors are distributed in the city facilitating relatively easy access. I also took note of the fact that Geriatric Clinical Lab Services, consisting of Geriatric nurses and nursing aides are available. Doctors are a busy people. All the doctors I know are so busy that they don't have time to live. I am sure that those who are registered for helping the senior citizens share whole heartedly the objectives of the Senior Citizens Bureau. It is my fond wish and hope that this humble beginning of Geriatric House Call Project will in course of time develop into a movement and establish its presences all over the state. All of you are in a way, pioneers in an extremely desirable and required social service measures. I must on behalf of the Senior Citizens who are a growing number and who have a past record of great service to the nation during their active life, thank you profusely for your dedication and selfless contribution.

I am also happy that the Senior Citizen Bureau has chosen to felicitate all the doctors on this occasion. The poet says:

ðŁóŁ†¬ì |...CªòŁ¼ ðKC™ P™¬ô

ðíĸ. ðîM âŋ³⁄₄ ÜîŸ° P¬í»I™¬ô

\* \* \* \* \*

î,èŁ¬ó ñùĸ Fø%ŋ «ðŁŸÁĸ îŁ´

î°Fè¬÷ ð÷~A;ø èöQ: ÝŸø™

I,èŁóŁ™ àð~ðîîŁ ñQi êŁF

«ðîŋŋ MF»Iŋ M÷,ªèŁ;P™¬ô

A society should learn to identify, acknowledge and appreciate services rendered by people or the achievements recorded by persons. There must be know reservation or miserliness in granting recognition to, and expressing appreciation of, other services. I have great pleasure in congratulating profusely the Senior Citizens Bureau on its initiative to assemble the dedicated medical practitioners to help the senior citizens and also on having organized a function to felicitate them.

I wish your efforts a bright and promising future.

**Senior Citizens Bureau**  
**First Anniversary of Geriatric House Call Project**  
**Honoring the Panel of Doctors**  
**Address by the Chief Guest**  
**Dr. V.C. Kulandaiswamy**

1. **Dr. V.S. Natarajan, the pioneer**
2. **Medicine the learned profession**
3. **An instance in Hoover's life**
4. **Buddha and Christ**
5. **Components of Medical Profession**
6. **Chinese practice**
7. **Medical and Nursing Colleges**
8. **Medical Manpower**
9. **Report to the Govt. in 1976**
10. **Longevity in India**
11. **House Call Project**
12. **Suffering in Old Age**
13. **Old age has no future**
14. **Congratulating the Bureau for facilitating the Doctors**