

In History

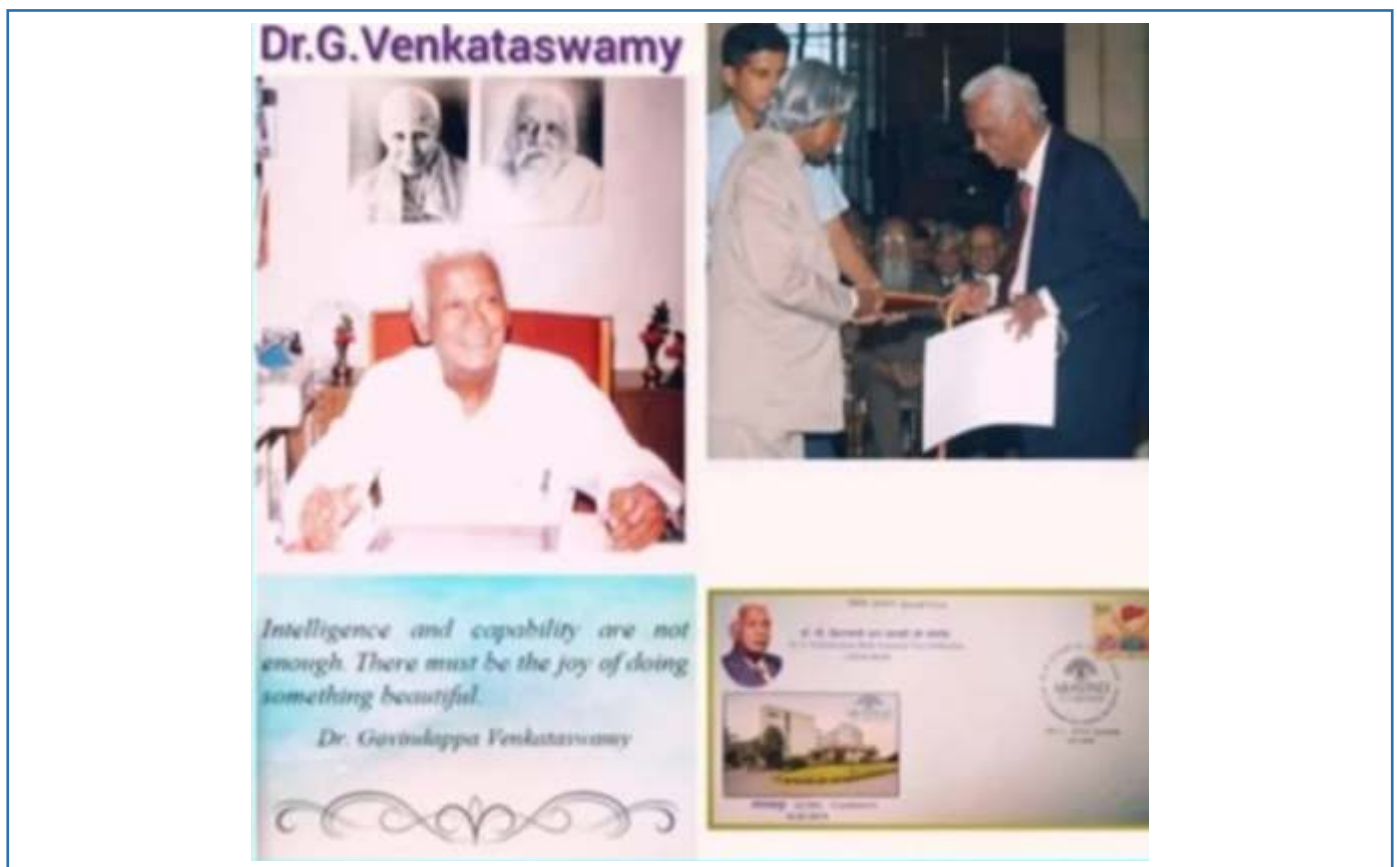
A tribute to the Ophthalmologist who saved millions of eyes

Prof. Dr. G. Venkataswamy

Oct 1, 1918 - July 7, 2006

Indian Ophthalmologist

Founder of Aravind Eye Hospitals



His contributions...

- Dr. Venkataswamy was born in a farming family in a small village called Vadamalapuram, Tamil Nadu. As he resided in a village, he had walked two kilometres daily to his school.
- During his young days and throughout his life, he was deeply influenced by the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda, and Sri Aurobindo.
- His village had no doctors during his period so unfortunately; he lost three of his cousins due to pregnancy-related complications. This painful situation aroused him to become a doctor.
- He studied medicine at Stanley Medical College, Chennai. After his studies, he joined the Indian Army Medical Service to practice obstetrics. But unfortunately, he suffered from



The Medical **Bulletin**

rheumatoid arthritis, which attacked his hands and the "Pain became a constant companion of his life."

- As because of his suffering, he was not allowed to practice in army service. But he did not give up. Despite his severe suffering, he chooses to study Ophthalmology at Government Ophthalmic Hospital, Chennai.
- Subsequently, he joined the State Government Service and then became a Head of the Department of Ophthalmology at the Government Medical College, Madurai. There he served about 20 years.
- In fact, he was affectionately known as "Dr. V." He was considered a legend in the community of ophthalmologists and he was a pioneer in conducting Mass Free Eye Camps since early 1970.
- He further initiated the eye rehabilitation centre for blinds and ophthalmic assistant training programs. He is also called a "Lakh Surgeon," who had personally performed around One hundred thousand successful eye surgeries in his lifetime despite his crippled fingers.
- Considering blindness prevention, he met Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and insisted to launch India's National Program for the Control of Blindness.
- After his retirement in the year 1976, he started a new journey by founding the well-famous Aravind Eye Hospital along with his four siblings and their spouses and establishing his first branch in Madurai.
- It is purely a non-profit organization that provides Eye Care free of cost to two third of its patients from the revenue generated from one-third of patients. This is popularly called the "Aravind model" which is now being followed not only in developing countries but also in developed countries to take care of needy patients.
- Furthermore, he founded "Aurolab", which is a manufacturing unit that offers intraocular lenses at one-tenth of international prices and makes them affordable for developing countries.
- It has now extended its manufacturing to ophthalmic pharmaceuticals, instruments, and equipment.
- His extraordinary contributions were honoured with many awards including the Padma Shri Award from the Government of India in 1973, the Helen Keller International Award in 1987, and the prestigious Dr. B. C. Roy Award in 2001.
- Dr. V had dedicated his life to eliminating needless blindness. Over the years, the organization has evolved into the Aravind Eye Care System. It's a system dedicated to compassionate service that acts as a model for other eye care providers around the world.



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- Today, Aravind Eye Hospital has nearly 4,000 beds performing over 2, 00,000 eye surgeries each year, with 70% of patients paying little or nothing.
- In his days, Dr.V used to state as

"Do not Limit Yourself to Small Things."

"If You Can Do Something, Then You Must Go Ahead and Do It."

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