



सत्यमेव जयते

REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE ERADICATION OF LEPROSY

**Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
Government of India, New Delhi**

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**MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**

**REPORT OF THE
WORKING GROUP ON THE
ERADICATION OF LEPROSY**

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FEBRUARY 1982

M.S. SWAMINATHAN
Chairman
Working Group for the
Eradication of Leprosy

D.O. No. M(S)/PC/82

28 February 1982

My dear Shri Shankaranand,

I have great pleasure in forwarding to you the report of the Working Group on the Eradication of Leprosy. During the last 6 months, the Group has met several times and has also held wide ranging discussions with voluntary and Government agencies involved in the eradication of leprosy in different parts of the country. We have also had the benefit of suggestions from State Governments and inputs from the reports of several earlier committees and meetings. The opportunity provided to the members of the Group by the Prime Minister and you to discuss our tentative conclusions was very helpful.

On the basis of these discussions, we have suggested an integrated action plan for achieving the national goal of eradication of leprosy by the end of this century. We are happy that the national resolve has again found expression in the new 20-point socio-economic programme announced by the Prime Minister on January 14, 1982.

Our major recommendations are given in pages 54-56 of the report. I shall not repeat them in this letter. However, I would like to draw your attention to the conclusion of the Committee that "*a more of the same approach*" with reference to the leprosy control strategy will not lead us to the desired goal. It is essential to combine the medical with the social and human aspects of the problem and view all of them in their totality. The most urgent need is the spread of the message that leprosy is now a curable disease and that there is no need to be afraid of it. We have indicated in the report the public policy issues involved in bringing about a change in the outlook of the society towards leprosy. For this purpose, we need to pay attention to the software aspects of health communication. About 5 minutes in the morning and 10 minutes in the evening could be allotted by the All India Radio every day for health education.

The most challenging tasks lie in the field of early case detection and interruption of the transmission cycle, case retention for the full period of treatment and post-treatment rehabilitation. The total eradication of leprosy is going to be difficult so long as slums and sub-human living conditions persist, unless a safe and effective vaccine becomes available. The Group, therefore, welcomes the emphasis placed in the new 20-point socio-economic programme on the improvement of the environment of slums and on the implementation of programmes for house building for economically weaker sections. We hope that a sense of urgency will be shown in the matter of providing better living conditions to slum dwellers. In order to promote case retention, we have recommended a special "Food for Leprosy Cure" programme which can be initiated immediately on a pilot scale in a few selected areas.

Total eradication may not be possible unless an effective vaccine becomes available. However, we are confident that leprosy can largely become a problem of the past when we enter the 21st century, provided the measures we have suggested are adopted. I hence hope our recommendations will receive immediate consideration and prompt follow up action.

To me it has been a particular privilege to have had the opportunity of working with such a dedicated group of leprologists and social workers. Baba Amte summarised the approach we should adopt in the following words:

“In leprosy eradication work, conviction must be of the heart; if it is of the head alone, then the programme may not achieve the desired success”.

Dr. S.G. Patwardhan and others who have followed Mahatma Gandhi's lead and dedicated their lives to curing and rehabilitating leprosy patients have expressed similar views. We endorse their plea and hope that a blend of compassion and concern will permeate leprosy control programmes together with professional competence and dedication.

With my best regards,

Yours sincerely,

M. S. Swaminathan
(M.S. Swaminathan)

Encl: As stated

Shri B. Shankaranand
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