

Inauguration by the President of India  
Sri Giani Zail Singh



Respected Prime Minister, Cabinet Members, Mother Teresa, President of the International Leprosy Congress, Delegates, Sisters and Brothers:

We commend and support the efforts of many great men for the eradication of leprosy.

We long to create on this earth a family, a society, a world that would be free of lust, of anger, of greed, of possessiveness, of disease, of sorrow, of indulgence and fear. For in the riddance of such may be peace for society.

Leprosy is known to be an invincible disease which can be controlled but cannot be cured. There are many other diseases in the

world for which lifetime therapy is indicated. Leprosy could be simply one of those invincible diseases, but the great sorrow of leprosy is that it defaces its victims and society ostracizes them. True, the dearest of dear brothers, the parents and the closest of relatives cremate their dead, but the victims of leprosy are discarded alive. This societal hatred, this banishment makes this affliction unbearable.

A great effort is needed to eradicate not only the disease but also the myth and stigma attached to it. Our great men who have tried to generate sympathy for the victims of leprosy were not all medical experts. They simply wanted to appeal to the world to stop hating the sufferers. I hope that our experts

will give us the facts about the disease and tell us that leprosy is not such a contagious disease, and that the stigma need not be, the hatred need not be.

I know that you are engaged in a noble task. You are committed to the cause of leprosy. You serve selflessly with no attachment to future awards or personal rewards. Therefore, it may be said of you:

I cannot call you God  
in fear of God.  
But you are my god,  
the god of mercy,  
the god of wrath,  
the god of miracles.

With these words, I inaugurate this Congress.