

Eye donation: Let's Establish the Vision

-Urvi Maheshwari

'I think I'm losing my eyesight.'

Can you imagine yourself saying this line?

Well, if you're reading this, there is a high possibility that you're blessed with five natural senses. Touch, taste, smell, hearing, and sight.

Do you perceive the fingers of your loved one on your hand? Are all other senses functioning properly as well? Well, you should be grateful for it.

Let's focus on one of these senses, the sight. To see is to perceiving images and relaying them to the occipital cortex. Eyes allow us to connect with the world through our visual abilities. We see the greenery, the rainbow, and the dunes of a desert! We see endless other things that we don't generally realize we've been fortunate to. However, certain people cannot perceive the beauty this world has to offer; either they're born with visual impairments or some accidents have rendered them unsighted.

Let me put you in a more imaginable supposition. Imagine yourself in a completely dark room. Do you feel frustrated? Do you want the light to enter in from somewhere?

If it felt daunting, it's just an imagination.

There are different terms and definitions of blindness such as total blindness, economic blindness, legal and social blindness. But in general terms, blindness refers to the inability to perceive light. There are various causes of blindness. And fortunately, 80 percent of them are avoidable, which includes both preventable and curable. A portion of the visually impaired is corneal blind. Major causes of corneal blindness include infections, vitamin A deficiency, genetic, and trauma. Corneal blindness can be treated by replacing the damaged cornea by healthy donated human cornea (Keratoplasty)

One might very naturally think if it is curable then why are there still many people deprived of eyesight? The main reason that can be extracted out is the lack of awareness in society.

The bearer of the burden of being blind does not just limit to the individual, but the family, too. From feeling empathetic to taking care of them; the family has to go through it all.

A very basic question one wants to be attended to is, why should I donate eyes? Simply put, it can give eyesight to two corneal blind people. Yes, eyes donated by one person can give vision to two corneal blinds. How fascinating! Two people who were not otherwise going to

see are now able to perceive the surroundings visually, just because of your wise decision. It is morally uplifting for the whole society. Eye donation is known to be a very noble cause. However, due to a lack of knowledge and awareness, the number isn't enough. National Eye Donation fortnight is celebrated every year from 25th August to 8th September to create public awareness and to bridge the gap between demand and supply of cornea.

It is also vital to understand the preventive aspect and turn the tide of corneal blindness.

A major factor that might draw us to acquire more knowledge about anything is the emotion attached to it. So, let's understand it more humanely than just in the language of a concerned doctor. Imagine the pain of a girl that is very much connected with her mother, who she spends most of her time with, who she has the most intriguing conversations with; not able to perceive how her mother looks like. On a brighter side, two blind sisters see for the first time after receiving corneal transplants. The elder sister earlier said, "Oh kind lord, you've given me two eyes...why have you kept me blind?" Their eyesight was only possible because the eyes of a deceased were donated by the family.

Speaking of emotions, have you seen the innocence in a child's eye when he's observing things around?

Have you ever closed your eyes, exulting in the calmness watching the sunset on a horizon? Have you ever been too stunned to react after watching a fire show in the late evening?

So educate yourself to pledge to donate. Let's make eye donation a family tradition. Let's start with our own families and encourage other people around us. However, at the time of death, it's a tough decision for a family to make about eye donation. Awareness and motivation can help in decision making amid grief.

So after you're gone, allow the less fortunate to have a vision with your donation. The family should contact the nearest eye banks as soon as possible. The eyes can be donated within 4-6 hours of death.

Have you already pledged to be a donor? Also an interesting fact, eyes can be donated just with the consent of the family of the deceased, even if she/he hasn't pledged to the same.

Now, do you have an excuse to not pledge to donate your eyes?

Let your eyes never die.