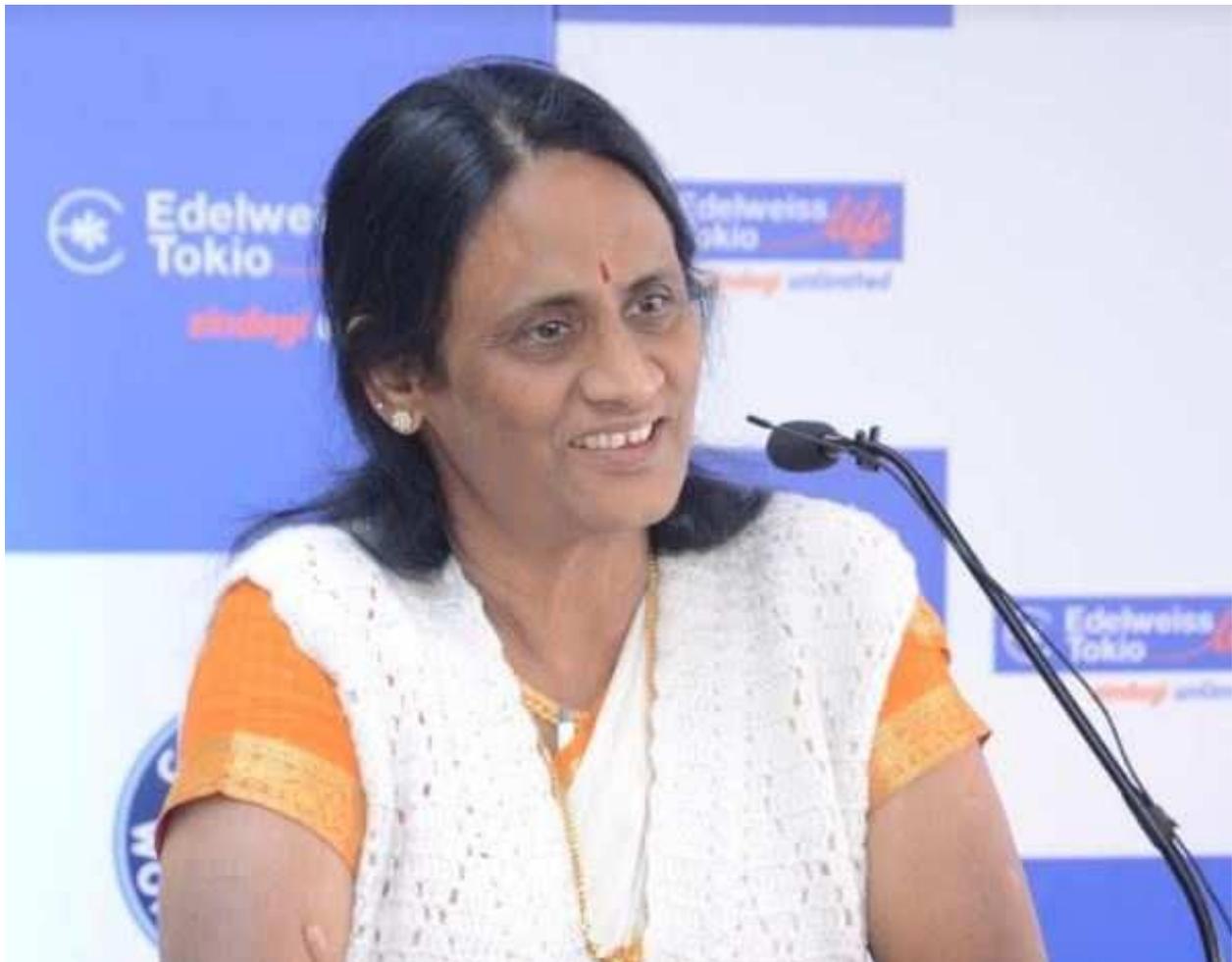


‘Let's end the stigma on organ donation’

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Dr Vasanthi Ramesh, Director, National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO)

Dr Vasanthi Ramesh, Director, **National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO)** elucidates to Samarпита Yashaswini about how Indians can be made more aware of [organ donation](#).

What is the stigma associated with organ donation among us Indians?

It is not always easy to convince a person to become an organ donor. Some superstitions often prove to be a hindrance to organ donation, like if we donate any organ in this life, then in the next birth we may not have it. Certain religious beliefs also make them reluctant to donation. Unless one of their family members have benefitted and they have seen it in front of their eyes, it becomes difficult to persuade anyone about organ donation. Ending this stigma related to organ donation is not an easy task, we need to inculcate the importance and faith of organ donation. In certain countries which have matured, they may have an opt-out system, but if at this point, we just impose the opt-out system on the public, it may be viewed as something which is being gutted down their throats. So, I think we have to handle it carefully, a more step by step effort so that we can consolidate on the faith that we are gradually building up.

What is the participation by various states across India and what is the reason behind the disparity among states?

The southern and western states like Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, are doing very well, as the awareness on organ donation started early there. The reason behind the disparity among various states, according to me is that the literacy rate is higher there (in south India) and the professionals are more active there. Like when I was a student, we had a lot of MCH (Maternal and Child Health) programmes in the south, which were introduced quite later in the north. The same is reflected in the activities of these states.

How can we spread awareness and encourage more and more people to donate their organs?

Education right from school level to the college level is crucial. People should not be afraid of talking about death in our country. Once we move on from that, only then can we talk about organ donation. If a person is in a brain dead state, his/her organs can save and improve the lives of about 30-40 people. So, all these have to be passed down from generation to generation through education.

What are your thoughts on the illegal rackets that operate in India? How can it be combated?

There is no denying the fact that illegal rackets are very much prevalent in our country. According to me, if the gap between demand and supply reduces, automatically they will diminish. This is why we are striving to push organ donation.