

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF
TAMIL NADU AT THE MASS WEDDING OF 53 COUPLES ORGANISED BY THE
TRUSTEE OF SHREE GEETA BHAVAN TRUST & TAMIL NADU DIFFERENTLY
ABLED FEDERATION CHARITABLE TRUST AT SHREE GEETA
BHAVAN HALL, GOPALAPURAM, CHENNAI ON 04.11.2018 AT 10.30 A.M**

Anaivarukkum Kaalai Vanakkam

Dr. V. Saroja,

Minister for Social Welfare & Nutritious Noon Meal Programme

Thirumathi. B. Maheswari, I.A.S.,

Commissioner for Welfare of Differently Abled

Thiru. Ashok Kumar Goel,

Managing Trustee, Shree Geeta Bhavan Trust

Thiru. Shiv Kumar Goenka,

Trustee, Shree Geeta Bhavan Trust

Dr.P. Simma Chandran,

President, Tamil Nadu Differently Abled Federation Charitable Trust

Prof. D. Ponnusamy,

Secretary, Tamil Nadu Differently Abled Federation Charitable Trust

Distinguished Invitees

Ladies & Gentlemen

It is a matter of happiness to be here today, to participate in the function being organised by the Geeta Bhavan Trust for solemnizing the marriages of 53 differently abled couples belonging to the economically weaker sections of the population.

The efforts of the Shree Geeta Bhavan Trust are particularly laudable as they do not discriminate on the basis of religion, caste or creed. The Trust also performs the responsibility of registering the marriage legally for which the certificate is also obtained.

It has been estimated that more than one billion people in the world live with some form of disability i.e., nearly one sixth of the total world population.

As per the 2011 census, there are 11.79 lakh differently abled persons in Tamil Nadu. This constitutes 1.63% of the State's population and 4.4% of the total differently abled population of the country.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, came into force with effect from 19th day of April 2017. This Act aims at empowering persons with disabilities by adhering to the following principles –

- i. Respect for inherent dignity, individual economy including freedom to make own choice and independence of persons with disabilities;
- ii. Non-discrimination;
- iii. Full and effective participation and inclusion in society; and
- iv. Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity.

The State Government is implementing a plethora of schemes to promote the welfare of differently abled persons. These schemes touch every aspect of a person's life starting from early detection of disabilities and covers vital areas like early intervention, special education, skill training, employment generation, social security and accessibility.

Tamil Nadu is a pioneer in promoting the welfare of differently abled persons. In order to achieve all round development of differently abled persons, Government of Tamil Nadu created a separate Directorate for the Differently Abled in 1993 and a comprehensive state Policy for the differently abled was announced in 1994.

The recent Parliamentary Committee Report on the Department of Disability Affairs for the year 2017-18 has mentioned that only six out of 36 States and Union Territories have dedicated departments and district officers for the differently abled and it is a matter of pride that Tamil Nadu is one among them.

The State Government was honoured with the National Award for the best State for empowering differently abled persons during 2013-14.

The Marriage Assistance Schemes are flagship schemes implemented by the Government of Tamil Nadu to provide financial assistance for marriage encouraging the girls to pursue higher education and provide financial support to the girls' parents during marriages. These schemes have made a positive impact in improving female literacy and reducing the school dropout rate of female children in Tamil Nadu.

The percentage of graduate beneficiaries has therefore increased from 28% in 2011-12 to 62% in 2017-2018.

Under these schemes, the daughters of poor parents, orphan girls, widows who re-marry, differently abled couples and inter-caste married couples are benefitted.

From the year 2017-18 for differently abled persons who have completed graduation / diploma, a sum of Rs.50,000/- and 8 grams of gold coin for making “Thirumangalyam” for bride are given as marriage assistance.

I find that in addition to this, the Geeta Bhavan trust is offering Gold Mangalyam, Silver Toe Rings, Muhurtam dress, Make up kits, Pooja Vessels, Cooking Vessels, Bed, Blankets and grocery items.

The trust has so far solemnized 408 marriages.

The trust is adopting a professional method for selecting the couples. In the first stage, they conduct the Swayamvarams in different locations in Tamil Nadu and the final Swayamvaram is conducted at Chennai.

At the second stage, the shortlisted couples in the final Swayamvaram are requested to come for counselling so that they feel fully equipped to adapt to family life.

I appreciate the efforts taken by the Geeta Bhavan Trust to perform the marriages for differently abled couples. By this they have shown the way for others to follow.

Consideration for others’ welfare should be the guiding spirit in human lives. Engaging oneself in selfless service gives a feeling of joy and satisfaction from within. If more and more people in society come forward to help others the world will be a happier place to live in.

In this connection, I wish to quote to you a famous poem by Rabindranath Tagore where he says

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
Where knowledge is free
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
By narrow domestic walls
Where words come out from the depth of truth
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit
Where the mind is led forward by thee
Into ever-widening thought and action
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

It is important for all of us to create an India which fulfills Tagore's vision. I exhort all of you here in the audience to show consideration for the welfare of others in your daily lives.

Let me conclude by wishing you all a Happy Diwali. May prosperity and happiness prevail in the lives of the newlywed couples and may God shower his blessings on them in bounteous measure.

Nandri Vanakkam.... Jai Hind....