

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF  
TAMIL NADU AT THE VALEDICTORY FUNCTION OF WOMEN'S INDIAN  
ASSOCIATION AT CHENNAI ON 08.06.2018**

Anaivarukkum Kaalai Vanakkam

Mrs. Padma Venkataraman

Dr. V. Shantha

Dr. Y.G. Parthasarathy

Ms. M. Bargavi Devendra

Dr. Mathangi Ramakrishna

Dr. Booma Srinivasan

Distinguished Invitees

Ladies & Gentlemen

I am happy to be here today, to participate in the valedictory function of the Centenary celebrations of the Women's Indian Association. The Women's Indian Association was started in 1917 by two women theosophists Margaret Cousins and Dorothy Jinaraja Dasa in Madras at Adayar, borrowing the idea of cross cultural association from the Tamil Madar Sangam formed in 1906, under the leadership of Dr. Annie Besant.

From a single branch that fought to make its voice heard, the Women's Indian Association, today has more than 40 branches and thousands of members from all parts of India.

At the time of commencement the Women's Indian Associations had many objectives such as

- i) To secure suffrage for women in the local administration, Central and State Legislatures
- ii) To prepare women for shouldering their responsibilities as daughters of India

- iii) To help women realize that the future of India lies in their hands, since being house-wives and mothers, they play an important role in the family in training, guiding and developing their children who will rule India in the future
- iv) To encourage and arouse among women an effort to form groups for the purpose of self-development with right emphasis on education for the service of society
- v) To secure for every girl and boy the right to education through schemes of compulsory primary education, including the teaching of religion
- vi) To secure the abolition of child marriage practice and to raise the age of consent for marriage of girls.
- vii) To secure women the right to vote in Municipal and Legislative Councils on equal terms as men and
- viii) To secure for women the right to be elected as members of all Municipal and Legislative Councils.

It was due to the demands of the Association that women were granted the Municipal and Legislative franchise. It also led to the introduction of primary and compulsory education for girls in the city of Madras. The recognition enjoyed by the Women's Indian Association can be seen from the fact that the Association was invited to send its representatives to the Round Table Conference in London in the 1930s.

Subsequently the Association engaged itself in pressing for a legislation for suppression of immoral traffic in women and children and also for the abolition of the Devadasi system in Hindu temples in the Madras Presidency. These noble initiatives gained them great appreciation. The Devadasi abolition Bill particularly, received spontaneous support from all sections of the people. The Association was also consistently engaged in efforts for the eradication of untouchability through its propaganda meetings and by giving grants and scholarships to institutions and individuals.

Through all these efforts there has been a considerable emancipation in the status of women. However many challenges still remain.

The Government of India and State Governments are therefore implementing many programmes and schemes to help women empower themselves to lead a better life. The important schemes of the Government of India include.

- I. `Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) a comprehensive programme being implemented to address the Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and related issues of empowerment of women over a life-cycle continuum.
- II. Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), a scheme for providing cash incentives for improved health and nutrition to pregnant and nursing mothers.
- III. Schemes for Adolescent Girls in the age group 11-18, aimed at improving their social status through nutrition, life skills, home skills and vocational training.
- IV. Pradhan mantra Mahila Shakti Kendra Scheme, which aims to promote community participation through involvement of Student Volunteers for the empowerment of rural women.
- V. National Creche Scheme to provide day care facilities to children of age group of 6 months to 6 years of working women who are employed.
- VI. Rastriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) to provide micro-credit to poor women for various livelihood support and income generating activities adopting a client-friendly procedure;

The schemes of the State Government to mention a few, include

- a. Marriage Assistance Schemes.
- b. Maternity Assistance Schemes.
- c. Livelihood Assistance Schemes
- d. Hostels for Working Women.
- e. Family Counseling and

- f. The setting up of All Women Police stations to give special attention to matters of safety and security of women.

A country's progress can be judged by the status of women in that country and opportunities given to them. Indian women have represented India in delegations abroad and have distinguished themselves by excelling in the work entrusted to them.

I have with me on stage today two eminent women achievers Dr. V. Shanta, the Chairperson of the Cancer Institute who has been recently honoured with the Padma Vibhushan award by the Hon'ble President of India. The Cancer Institute is a noble initiative of the Women's Indian Association. It was started, thanks to the efforts of Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy, the first woman doctor of India. Dr. Shanta is carrying on the noble work of Dr. Muthulakshmi. Under her guidance and leadership the institution has risen to a position of eminence.

The other woman achiever being honoured today is Padma Shri Mrs. Parthasarathy, a famous educationist of Chennai. She is the Director of the Padma Seshadri Bala Bhavan group of Schools in the city and has performed yeoman service in the field of school education. I am happy to be felicitating these two women achievers today.

I wish to conclude by informing this august assembly that International Women's Day was observed for the first time in Raj Bhavan on March 8<sup>th</sup> this year. On that day the Raj Bhavan invited 120 women who have crossed the age of 100 years and felicitated them with shawls and gifts at the Darbar Hall. Lunch was also served for them at the same venue. Apart from me, several Cabinet Ministers and senior officers and dignitaries also participated with these women in the celebrations on that day. This only goes to show that the mood of the society is changing and is aimed at bringing about complete equality between men and women. We in India feel proud about the fact that we worship God in the male and female form. The divine Goddess is personified as Sakthi and worshipped. Our rivers have feminine names and our nation is Bharat Matha.

I am therefore certain that the efforts of the Women's Indian Association will reap greater benefits in the coming years and that the opportunities for women in India will match those that are available in men in every field of progress. I wish the Women's Indian Association all success in their endeavours.

Nandri Vanakkam...

Jai Hind