

**DRAFT SPEECH OF THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE
GOVERNOR OF TAMILNADU Launching of Statewide Project
Mahatma Gandhi:150 at Chennai on 10.3.2018 at 11.00 A.M.**

Anaivarukkum Kaalai Vanakkam

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Distinguished Invitees

Friends from the Media

I am privileged to be here for the launch of the State Wide Project being organized by a group of Gandhian institutions with the objective of taking the message of Gandhiji to every doorstep. A number of interesting programmes are covered in the project, such as propagating the message of Sarvodaya, circulating copies of the Autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi, popularizing the Gandhi Yatra Route, etc. It is a matter of satisfaction that many Gandhian institutions have joined together in this noble effort to propagate Mahatma Gandhi's ideals, in the State of Tamil Nadu.

Tamil Nadu was always close to Gandhiji's heart. It is important to recall that when Gandhiji started the Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad, in which there were initially 25 inmates, 13 of them were Tamilians. People in the audience may know that Gandhi visited Tamil Nadu 20 times between 1896 and 1946. During his first visit in 1896 he tried to learn Tamil and bought 9 Tamil books for the purpose. During a subsequent visit in 1921, when in Madurai, Gandhiji made a change from donning the typical elaborate attire to wearing the simple dhoti and upper cloth that clothed him for the remaining years of his life. About this he himself has written and I quote,

“All the alterations I have made in the course of my life have been effected by momentous occasions. Such a radical alteration in my dress I effected in Madurai.”

Spreading the message of Sarvodaya is an important mission covered in the project being launched today. Sarvodaya is a Sanskrit term meaning 'universal uplift' or 'progress of all'. The term was used by Mahatma Gandhi as the title of his 1908 translation of John Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, and Gandhi came to use the term for the ideal of his own political philosophy. Later Gandhians, like the Indian nonviolence activist Vinoba Bhave, embraced the term as a name for the social movement in post-independence India which strove to ensure that self-determination and equality reached all strata of Indian society. In this connection it is useful to narrate an interesting anecdote.

Gandhiji received a copy of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* from a British friend, Mr. Henry Polak, while working as a lawyer in South Africa in 1904. In his Autobiography, Gandhi remembers the twenty-four-hour train ride to Durban when he first read the book and he was so much in the grip of Ruskin's ideas that he could not sleep at all. He wrote and I quote: "I determined to change my life in accordance with the ideals of the book." Ruskin's outlook revolved around three central tenets:

1. That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.

2. That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's in as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.
3. That a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living.

Four years later, in 1908, Gandhi rendered a paraphrased translation of Ruskin's book into his native tongue of Gujarati. He titled the book Sarvodaya, a word he invented from two Sanskrit roots: sarva (all) and udaya (uplift) -- "the uplift of all" (or as Gandhi glossed it in his autobiography, "the welfare of all").

The ideal which Gandhi strove to put into practice in his ashrams was, he hoped, one that could persuade the whole of India to embrace, becoming a light to the other nations of the world. The Gandhian social ideal encompassed the dignity of labor, an equitable distribution of wealth, communal self-sufficiency and individual freedom.

The strategy of reaching people with Gandhiji's 'Experiments with Truth', translated vividly in Tamil as 'Sathiya Sodhanai' is another excellent step. The story of Gandhiji's experiments with Truth, presented simply and lucidly to children, students and others will have a striking effect on them. This is so because Gandhiji has been extremely honest, candid and truthful about his life journey.

Another activity of the project is Gandhiji's corner. It is said seeing is believing. Gandhiji's corners will put on show replicas of articles used by Mahatma Gandhi during his lifetime such as Charkha, Clock/Pocket Watch, Three Monkeys, Bhagavad Gita, and the like.

The organizers have planned another exciting programme. This is the Gandhi Yatra all over Tamil Nadu to take Gandhiji's message to every door step. The yatra participants will also learn from the people about their difficulties and then bring them to the notice of the Government. This programme will also give the yaatris the opportunity of recording and documenting the experiences of people who were with Gandhiji during Gandhiji's visit in their localities.

Forming Gandhi Streets and Villages in the State is another dimension of the Gandhi Yatra. Such places will not just be Gandhian in name and title, but follow ideals like Non-Violence, Truth, Literacy, Dignity of Labour, abstinence from harmful drugs and alcohol, and living and working in tune with Nature.

A Gandhi resource team from grass roots-level will be formed after giving due training as per set norms. All this requires ground-level work and I congratulate the planners for planning such work in detail. These will give people, especially the youth, an idea of the beautiful simplicity of his life.

Gandhiji's contribution to India is immeasurable. Gandhiji's contribution to the world is also immeasurable, for leaders like Martin Luther King Jr and Nelson Mandela followed in the footsteps of Gandhiji to bring emancipation to their followers who were otherwise oppressed and enslaved. Gandhiji's message of ahimsa is a powerful signal to mankind that stockpiling of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles will only lead to destruction.

Coming to India, Gandhiji brought about social cohesion among the people of India by vigorously working against untouchability. He gave an economic philosophy that focused on self-sufficiency at the village level. He propagated the concept of trusteeship and wanted people to abhor the accumulation of wealth for themselves and their families. All these were the outpourings of the wisdom of Gandhiji which went beyond the political spectrum. His thoughts and deeds encompassed the whole gamut of activities of human existence.

He often used to say "My life is my message". It is important for us to try and practise the ideals of Gandhiji in our life.

Gandhiji's life and message will be remembered and will serve as a guide for millions of people for several thousands of years in the future.

We are all privileged that we lived in the times of Gandhiji. Some of us have had a firsthand experience of association with Gandhiji. This is a rare privilege and the accounts of those people who were associated with Gandhiji, when compiled, will serve as a guiding light for several generations in the coming centuries.

Let us all therefore come together in this effort to propagate the values of Gandhiji.

I congratulate Prof. Sankar Kumar Sanyal and the members of his team and other sister organisations for taking up such an inspiring project on Gandhiji to mark the beginning of his 150th birth anniversary celebrations.

I wish you success in all your endeavours.

Nandri

Vanakkam

Jai Hind

Jai Tamil Nadu