

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF
TAMIL NADU AT THE INAUGURATION OF 300TH GARUDA SEVA
BRAHMOTSAVA, THIRUVAIYARU, THANJAVUR DISTRICT
ON 13/04/2018 AT 06.00 PM**

Anaivarukkum Maalai Vanakkam

Thiru. R. Duraikannu,
Thiru A. Annadhurai,
Thiru K.R. Mukundan,
Thiru. Gopaljee,

Distinguished Invitees
Ladies & Gentlemen

I am delighted to be here in Thanjavur district on the occasion of the 300th Garuda Seva Brahmotsavam at the Srinivasa Perumal temple, Thiruvaiyaru.

I should confess here that I never miss an opportunity to visit Thanjavur, which is a glorious and historic place and a treasure house of culture. Its heritage dates back to more than a thousand years. The great kings of the Chola Dynasty have left behind their aesthetic monuments here. The temple of Lord Brihadeeshwara showcases Tamil Nadu's ancient and rich architecture.

Indeed Thanjavur and Thiruvaiyaru are well known as the places where the 'Trinity' of Thyagaraja Swamigal, Shyama Shastri and Muthuswami Dikshitar composed their unforgettable compositions in Carnatic music.

The special element of Carnatic music has been the spiritual content of its rendering. The devotional element in the music makes it unique and divine.

It is again the spiritual nature of our way of life that has brought the concept of vahanas into our culture. In Sanskrit vahana means that which carries or that which pulls. Since the vahanas are associated with certain deities,

they are not mere vehicles, they help the deities to uphold dharma by performing certain duties. They also represent the power of Lordship of the deity over nature and certain aspects of creation. During the Brahmotsavam the deity is taken out in a procession on the vahana. Hence the term Garuda Seva Brahmotsavam implies the celebration of the procession of Lord Vishnu with Garuda as the vahana. The presiding deity at this temple of Kalyanapuram is Lord Srinivasa Perumal and the presiding Goddess is Alarmel Mangai.

The Garuda vahana of Lord Vishnu is a symbol of power, endowed with the ability to fly high up in the sky, swiftly go from place to place and is ever watchful. The reference to Garuda was first made in the Rig veda. The Yajurveda makes a mention of Garuda as a personification of courage.

In Buddhism the Garuda is referred to as Suparna, while in Jainism he is seen as a protector of Santhinatha or a guardian of peace. Philosophically Garuda is also seen as the Atmen, who is inseparable from the Supreme Self, i.e. Lord Vishnu.

Based on all these it can be clearly understood that in India Garuda is respected as a divine being who upholds dharma. This concept has been propagated and passed down over centuries from generation to generation. In Indonesia and Thailand also Garuda is revered as a national symbol.

Garuda's greatness is described by Vedanta Desika in Garuda Panchasat and Garuda Dandakam. In Garuda Panchasat, Desika says that the Gayatri mantra constitutes Garuda's eyes. His name is the Yajur Veda. The branches of the Vedas are his limbs. The altar at which priests sit while performing yagas is called drishnya, and this drishnya becomes the feet of Garuda. The atma of Garuda is the eulogistic hymns of the Sama Veda. The fact that Gayatri mantra is said to be Garuda's eyes is indicative of Garuda's role as protector, for Gayatri mantra protects one who chants it.

Vedanta Desika further goes on to amplify the greatness of Garuda, who he says knows the ashtamasiddhis.

The ashtamasiddhis are the 8 main powers acquired by a spiritual person, Anima which is 'Becoming smaller than smallest', Mahima which is 'Becoming larger than the largest', Garima which is 'Becoming heavier than the heaviest', Laghima which is 'Becoming lighter than the lightest', Prapti which means the ability to acquire, Prakamya which is the ability to realise one's dreams, Isitva which is 'The power of absolute lordship', Vasitva which is 'The ability to control the 5 elements'.

Thus Garuda who represents the Atmen is a symbol of power, the vahana of Lord Vishnu, possesses supernatural powers and is a master of the ashtamasiddhis. Worshipping Garuda on this special occasion of the 300th Brahmotsavam will bring us closer to the Atmen or the Soul. This realisation of the soul enables us to discriminate better between good and evil thus enabling us to follow the path of righteousness. The path of righteousness makes a society law abiding and devout and enables an individual to attain moksha which is considered to be the highest attainment that all individuals aspire for.

I appreciate the organisers and the residents of this village who have with sustained effort and determination kept a glorious tradition alive for 300 years. This is indeed a shining example of the strength of Indian culture and the sustainability of our civilization. Generations to come in the future will remember with gratitude and affection this great contribution made to the propagation of culture and tradition. A nation lives on the strength of its cultural tradition and social cohesion India's ability to keep its civilization alive is on account of its spiritual foundations. Let me at this juncture quote from the historic address of Swami Vivekananda at the Parliament of Religions. More than a 100 years before, Swami Vivekananda propounded to the world "I thank you in the name of mother of religions for it fills my heart with joy for having been so warmly and cordially welcomed. I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world tolerance and universal acceptance and to belong to a nation which has

sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and nations. I am proud to tell you that we have Israelites, who came to South India when their temple was shattered to pieces by Roman tyranny. We foster the remnants of the grand Zoroastrian nation". Such is the spiritual and cultural tradition of India and Thanjavur which means "The place of refuge" has been the Mother who has sheltered all people who have come to her home seeking shelter.

I am sure that with the blessings of Lord Srinivasa Perumal and the Goddess Alamel Mangai, Garuda will shower prosperity and joy on the people of Thiruvaiyaru, Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu India and the world. The whole world is one family. Vasudeva Kutumbakam is the saying which guides India in all its pursuits. We want peace with dignity, prosperity with partnership and perennial growth with sustainability.

Nandri !!!! Vanakkam !!! Jai Hind !!!