

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF
TAMIL NADU AT INAUGURATION OF "BHAVAN'S SARVA DHARMA
MAITRY AUDITORIUM", AT BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, THRISSUR
ON 19/03/2018 AT 03.00 PM**

Anaivarukkum Maalai Vanakkam

Sri. C. N. Jayadevan

Member of Parliament, Thrissur

Smt. Ajitha Jayarajan

Worshipful Mayor of Thrissur

Sri. Kowsigan, I.A.S

Bhavan's kendra Chairman & District Collector

Sri. P. Chitran Namboodiripad

Senior Vice-Chairman, Bhavan's kendra

Swami Sadhbhavanandaji

Sri Ramakrishna Math and Mission. Thrissur

Mar Andrews Thazhath

Archbishop, Thrissur Diocese

Janab Mohammed Faizy Onampilly

M.I.C Masjid, Thrissur

Sri. V. Ramachandran

Associate Secretary, Bhavan's kendra

Distinguished Invitees

Friends from Media

Ladies & Gentlemen

Indian culture, often labeled as an amalgamation of several various cultures, spans across the Indian subcontinent and has been influenced and shaped by a history that is several thousand years old. Throughout the history of India, Indian culture has been heavily influenced by religion. Since much of Indian philosophy, literature, architecture, art and music has evolved through constant interaction with leaders and followers of various religious denominations.

The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan which was set up in 1938 has as its mission the preservation and propagation of the rich cultural heritage of India so as to ensure its continuance from generation to generation. It has its firm faith in Sarva Dharama Sama Bhava. The Bhavan's credo is An No Bhadraha Krathavo yanthu Vishwataha - Let Noble Thoughts Come to us from every side.

Starting from humble beginnings, the Bhavan has grown into a comprehensive apolitical, cultural and educational organization, not only in India but also in the world and presently has 121 centres in India and nine abroad including in the U K, the U S A, Australia, Mexico, Portugal and the Middle East.

The Bhavan conducts several cultural and educational activities with an underlying message. The message is one of cultural unity and inter-faith harmony, without any discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, language, nationality or social and economic status.

To strengthen and hasten the process of bringing about this cultural unity the various centres adopt the path of promoting nationalism with a spiritual orientation and a spirit of service. The Bhavan puts great emphasis on modern education, science and technology but remains rooted in India's cultural and spiritual values.

There is a constant effort to promote communal harmony in various ways. All the activities that take place in the Kendras and schools invariably start with Sarva Dharma prayers, a selection from the Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Zoroastrian, Sikh, Jain and Buddhist scriptures.

The Bhavan's friend and Honorary Member, Mr. Harol Macmillan, the former Prime Minister of U K, while accepting the honorary membership at a function in Mumbai once said and I quote: "The whole purpose of the Bhavan's movement is to underscore the essential unity of all religions, in spite of the superficial differences. I deeply appreciate this aspect of the Bhavan's multifarious activities".

On the eve of Gandhi Jayanti 1990, the Bhavan set up the Sarva Dharma Maitri Project. The Sarva Dharma Maitri Pratisthan seeks to provide a forum for like – minded people to come together. The Pratisthan's long term is to help people appreciate all faiths better and to realize that every faith provides the several steps enabling the ascent of man to divinity. Its first major activity was the organization of a massive Sarva Dharma Maitre Yathra in Chennai, on April 21, 1991, led by Jagathguru, Sri. Jayendra Saraswati Swamigal, Maulana Said Muzaffar Hussain Kichhouchhavi, representing the Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid, New Delhi, father Joseph Thaipparambil, Arch Bishop of Chennai, Ervad Hosag N. Bhandara, High Priest of the Parsi Community, Sardar. D Grewal, Vice- President of Gurunanak College, Chennai and Dr. Usha Mehta, Chairperson of Mumbai Gandhi Smarak Nidhi.

I am delighted to be in Thrissur here today for the inauguration of the Bhavan's Sarva Dharma Maitry Auditorium which is an architectural landmark amidst several other institutions of excellence such as the Sahithya Academy, Town Hall, the Kerala State Guest House and the Sports Complex – all situated in the immediate vicinity of the famous Vadakkumnathan Temple.

The Sarva Dharma Maitri complex is designed to house the following:

Adi Shankara Sarva Dharma Pustak Bhandar.

Permanent Exhibitions of:

Divine Integrators of all faiths starting from Vedic Age to Modern Age.

Architects and Builders of Modern Indian Renaissance from Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Acharya Vinobha Bhave.

Swami Vivekananda Sarva Dharma Maitri Sabhagriha, with a seating capacity of 800.

Institute of Fine Arts and the Administrative Offices of Bhavan's Thrissur Kendra.

One of the striking features of the complex is the installation of Swami Vivekananda's life sized bronze statue at the entrance.

Today India is free and the world listens to India. 125 years back Swami Vivekananda's powerful speeches made the world listen to India. When

Swamiji spoke at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, the audience listened with rapt attention. At that historic address he stated and I quote “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”. He went on to say that religious unity will come not by the triumph of any one of the religions but by assimilating the spirit of other religions while preserving the individuality of one’s own religion. Assimilation and not destruction, harmony but not dissension. This was the message of Swamiji.

It is this message of Swami Vivekananda which forms the life and soul of the Sarva Dharma Maitri.

The rise of such institutions is necessary to maintain intact the spiritual foundations of India. Our Nation is the leader to the World in the field of spirituality. The spiritual greatness of India is evidenced by the sustainability of its civilization. Tolerance, mutual respect, acceptance and assimilation of all that is good have dictated our spiritual orientation.

As a part of the Bhavan, I feel proud that this spiritual orientation is the guiding spirit behind the activities of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. I am sure that the lamp lit today will continue to show the path for several succeeding generations. I conclude by thanking the organizers of the Thrissur Kendra for their special efforts in creating the Sarva Dharma Maitri complex in Thrissur. I am sure that the banner of the Bharathiya Vidya Bhavan will continue to fly with grandeur and majesty all over India. My best wishes to the Bhavan’s office bearers and member in this happy occasion.

Jai Hind.