

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF
TAMIL NADU AT THE "GANDHI 150" – INTERNATIONAL PEACE FESTIVAL
AND AWARD FUNCTION ORGANISED BY GANDHI WORLD FOUNDATION AT
ANNA CENTENARY LIBRARY, GANDHI MANDAPAM ROAD, KOTTURPURAM,
CHENNAI ON 02.10.2019 AT 4.00 P.M.**

Anaivarukkum Maalai Vanakkam

Navabada Mohammad Asif Ali,
Chair person,
Gandhi 150 – International Peace Festival

Thiru. ML.Rajesh,
Founder,
Gandhi World Foundation

Thiru. V. Nandakumar, IRS,
Honorary Member,
Gandhi 150 – International Peace Festival

Dr. Sultan Ahmed Ismail,
Core Committee Member,
Gandhi 150 – International Peace Festival

Distinguished Invitees

Ladies & Gentlemen

I am happy to be here today at the “International Peace Festival” being organised by the Gandhi World Foundation. We are, today, celebrating the 150th Birth Anniversary of the Father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhi.

For three long centuries, the British ruled India. They considered India as the pearl of their Empire. But the course of history took a turn when a barrister gentleman, with exceptional charisma, an apostle of non-violence, planted the seed of liberty in the hearts of his fellow citizens. With passive disobedience as his only weapon, he, who would later be called Mahatma, undermined British colonial power. He prepared India for economic autonomy and rose up against untouchability. The

spinning wheel would have been just a museum piece had not Gandhiji made it synonymous with the freedom struggle.

You are all aware of the various constructive programmes of Khadi, eradication of Untouchability and prohibition that were close to Gandhiji's heart. At this festival devoted to peace and societal harmony. It is important to understand the background and rationale behind the central themes that the Mahatma held dear. The starting point for these programmes was the Tolstoy Farm.

The Tolstoy Farm was named as such by Herman Kallenbach, Gandhi's associate it was founded in 1910 and proved to be a laboratory for Gandhi's experiments. "Tolstoy Farm was a family

in which I occupied the place of the father. It was therefore for me to shoulder the responsibility for the training of the young as far as possible” wrote Gandhiji. The routine of the children on the farm was divided between attending classes and contributing to the maintenance of the farm. Manual work was combined with instruction on a daily basis, and Gandhi took this concept one step further by introducing vocational training to give "all-round development to the boys and girls".

How Gandhiji got interested in the spinning wheel or the charkha is another interesting story.

In 1917, a well – to-do widow, Gangabehn Majumdar, accustomed to riding from one village to another on horseback, found an ancient wheel

in the lumber room in Vijapur in Baroda. It was cleaned up and presented to Gandhiji who set about finding sliver and yarn. The first slivers were obtained from a mill and the spinning wheel was set in Gandhiji's study.

Gandhiji began spinning so as not to depend on foreign material for clothing. Thus began the 'Khadi' or swadeshi' movement, to fight the British.

Sarvodaya is a Sanskrit word 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 ideals 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 mother tongue – Gujarati. He titled the book Sarvodaya.

Gandhiji successfully demonstrated to the world that adherence to truth and non-violence is not meant for individual causes alone but to the global affairs also. In this context the Mahatma said and I quote,

“We must refuse to meet hatred with hatred, violence with violence, evil with evil, but must love even our enemies, for in reality there are no enemies.”

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.

As a spiritualist, he urged social reform, not through legislation but through self-discipline, moral restraint and persuasion. He denounced intoxicating drugs and drinks as brutalizing men and doing violence to their human nature. Gandhiji's views on education were also inspired by the consideration for forming a sound character. Education should not only help in acquiring knowledge and arousing intellectual

curiosity, but should also inculcate the right ideals, he emphasised.

I am informed that the Gandhi World Foundation, was started in 2010 and has since then, been engaged in social welfare activities.

I congratulate the awardees who have been honoured today. To them let me say that it is a matter of pride and honour to be remembered as one who has utilized his talents and contributed to the betterment of the society and the nation through his efforts.

I extend my best wishes and greetings to the Founder and other office bearers of the Gandhi World Foundation for the painstaking efforts taken by them to organize this function.

On the occasion of the celebration of Mahatma Gandhi's 150th Birth Anniversary Celebration, let us all come together in the effort to propagate the values of Gandhiji. It is only the pursuit of Gandhian ideals that will guide our society towards peace progress and prosperity.

In this may sincerity our watchword and commitment to the course our guiding spirit.

Nandri Vanakkam....

Jai Tamil Nadu....

Jai Hind.....