

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF
TAMIL NADU AT THE INAUGURATION OF SEMINAR ON "GANDHIJI'S LIFE
AND THOUGHTS" ON THE OCCASION OF MAHATMA GANDHI'S 150TH BIRTH
ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS AT RAJ BHAVAN ON 27.09.2019 AT 4.00 P.M**

Anaivarukkum Maalai Vanakkam

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Dr. T. Ravichandran,

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Dr. R. Mani

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Thiru. B.S.C. Naveen Kumar

Distinguished Invitees

Ladies & Gentlemen

I am extremely happy to be here at the inauguration of the seminar on “Gandhiji’s Life and Thoughts”. You are aware that we commenced the celebration of Gandhiji’s 150th Birth Anniversary last year with a seminar on Gandhian Philosophy. We are now approaching the completion of the 150th Birth Anniversary celebrations. It is in the fitness of things to hold this seminar on “Gandhiji’s Life and Thoughts” at this point of time.

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. A gentleman barrister endowed 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, overthrew British colonial power. He prepared India for economic autonomy and rose up against untouchability.

His achievements won him international acclaim. Albert Einstein the greatest scientist of the 20th century had this to say about Gandhiji “Generations to come will scarce believe that such a person in flesh and blood ever walked upon the earth”.

Gandhiji the Father of the Nation is an inspiration to all of us. There are so many facets of his contribution to the nation which need

elaboration. Millions of peoples know him as the person who brought freedom to India. A greater number is aware that the path of truth and non-violence that he practised was unique. In world history this spiritual path of virtue was never traversed before. It was a path of goodness – a path to which the common people could easily relate – a path that ensured success and above all a path that shines as a beacon light for the whole world from which leaders like Martin Luther King (Jr.) and Nelson Mandela derived enlightenment.

Gandhiji summed up his philosophy of life with the words “My life is my message”. On the eve of the Quit India Movement he declared ‘I want to live the full span of my life and according to me the full

span of life is 125 years. By that time India will not only be free, but the whole world will be free. I believe in the voice of God. This is a fundamental truth that I am telling you.

For Gandhiji, truth was God and his prayer meetings were meant to bring out the inner strength in an individual. To him the spinning wheel stood for dignity and freedom from the rule of merchandise. He was not an orthodox economist and believed that spiritual values should be the foundation for economic planning. One such strand can be seen in his espousal of trusteeship as a way of life. The Gandhian ideal encompassed the principles of dignity of labour,

equitable distribution of wealth, communal self sufficiency and individual freedom.

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.”

Gandhiji’s contribution to India is immeasurable. He brought about social cohesion among the people of India by vigorously working against untouchability. His economic philosophy 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 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.

The true essence of democracy should be understood in the sense that the common people are the masters of the nation. Mahatma Gandhiji wrote a Article in young India on 22nd October

1925 and cautioned against seven deadly sins that can destroy a Nation. They are:-

1. Wealth without work,
2. Pleasure without conscience,
3. Knowledge without character,
4. Commerce without morality,
5. Science without humanity,
6. Religion without sacrifice and
7. Politics without principle.

It is important for us to identify the people who practice these sins in our midst and reform them without any further delay.

Several facets of “Gandhiji’s Life and Thoughts” will be covered in today’s seminar. The topics have been chosen carefully and we have Professors from the Gandhigram Rural Institute to speak to us. I am sure that all of you assembled here will imbibe the depth and range of Gandhiji’s approach to life and propagate his noble thoughts far and wide so as to reach lakhs of people in India and the world. The seminar is meant to be a learning session for the future. It is meant to be a session to change our approach to life by which need and not greed will dictate our thought, word and action.

I request the members of the audience to pick up the threads from there and propagate the

message of Bapuji far and wide. By doing so, we will be performing a great service to the nation, our society and the succeeding generations.

Nandri Vanakkam.....

Jai Tamil Nadu.....

Jai Hind.....