

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF  
TAMIL NADU AT THE OCCASION OF 150<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY INAUGURAL  
FUNCTION AT GANDHI ASHRAM, TIRUCHENGODU  
ON 22/06/2018 AT 5.10 PM**

**Anaivarukkum Maalai Vanakkam**

**Thiru. P. Thangamani  
Minister for Electricity, Prohibition and Excise**

**Dr.V. Saroja  
Minister for Social Welfare & Nutritious Noon Meal Programme**

**Thiru. P.R. Sundaram, M.P**

**Tmt. Pon Saraswathi MLA**

**Tmt. M. Asia Mariam, I.A.S.**

**Thiru. K. Lakshmikandan Bharathi**

**Thiru. A. Devaraj**

**Distinguished Invitees**

**Ladies & Gentlemen**

I am delighted to be here at the Gandhi Ashram Tiruchengode for the inauguration of the 150<sup>th</sup> Birth anniversary celebration of Mahatma Gandhi. It is a moment of privilege and joy for me to be here at the place where Rajaji lived for 10 long years. The fact that the Ashram is named after Gandhiji makes me feel doubly blessed.

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 small made man 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 the caste system. The spinning wheel would be just a museum piece

had not Gandhiji made it synonymous with the freedom struggle. The inspiration for this came from the textile mills of Ahmadabad located near the Sabarmati Ashram.

The starting point for the constructive programmes of Khadi, eradication of Untouchability and prohibition practiced at Sabarmati Ashram came from the Tolstoy Farm which Gandhiji had setup in South Africa.

The Tolstoy Farm was named as such by Herman Kallenbach, Gandhi's associate. It was founded in 1910 and proved to be an ideal laboratory for Gandhi's educational experiments. "Tolstoy Farm was a family in which I occupied the place of the father," wrote Gandhi, and that I should so far as possible shoulder the responsibility for the training of the young". 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".

The Sabarmati Ashram was the third of Gandhiji's ashrams. It was on the banks of the Sabarmati about four miles from Ahmadabad. He brought the land with the help of a merchant and pitched a tent there.

In course of time trees were planted, small houses came up, brick roads and pathways were laid. Gandhiji's house faced the river. Prayer meetings were held just before sunrise and sunset.

How did Gandhiji get interested in the spinning wheel or the charkhas as it is better known?

The story is that 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 silvers 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.

The original wheel was carefully studied, taken a part, adapted and simplified so that anyone could use it.

By reviving the spinning wheel Gandhiji hoped to encourage village industry and reduce import of British Cloth.

In the twenties and thirties when the movement spread it was a fashion to spin. The oft heard refrain was.

Charkha Chala Chalake

“Lenge Swarajya Lenge”

It was sung by men, women, and child in all walks of life. Shop selling British goods were picketed, people were urged to boycott foreign goods. In fact this resulted in the great ‘bonfire’ when people heaped all their silk sarees, suits and all the foreign clothing they possessed, and set on fire. This was done in many parts of the country.

In order to conduct field trials of Gandhian constructive programs, The Gandhi Ashram – Tiruchendgode, Tamil Nadu was founded by Shri C. Rajagopalachari at Rajaji on 06.02.1925 as the south Indian branch of Gandhi Seva Sangh of Wardha. The Ashram was located on 4 acres of land donated by the then Jamindhar of the village, Sri Rathinasabapathi Goundar.

Shri Rajaji lived in the Ashram in a small tiled house. He asked the people in the neighbouring villages to use the Charkhas that were lying idle in their homes and supplied cotton to 13,000 families every week through bullock carts and procured the yarn they spun.

The yarn so collected was given to the weavers and hand woven khadi was sold by Rajaji and others.

The virtues which Rajaji strove to put into practice in this ashram were based on the Gandhian social ideal that encompassed the dignity of labor, an equitable distribution of wealth, communal self-sufficiency and individual freedom.

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 the effort to propagate the values of Gandhiji.

Let me conclude by saying 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 22<sup>nd</sup> 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.

Let us identify the people who practice these sins in our midst and reform them without any further delay.

I congratulate the selfless service of the members and office bearers of the Gandhi ashram. May success visit them in all their endeavors. My greetings and best wishes to all those who are following in the footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi. May his life and ideals guide society and the nation to peace progress and prosperity.

Nandri Vanakkam

Jai Hind....