

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF
TAMIL NADU AT THE INAUGURAL FUNCTION ORGANISED BY
SRI RAMANUJA MILLENNIUM CELEBRATIONS COMMITTEE (LIGHTING THE
LIVES – COMPASSIONATE SOCIAL RESPONSITBILITY) AT VANI MAHAL,
T.NAGAR, CHENNAI AT 29.07.2018 AT 6.00 P.M**

Anaivarukkum Maalai Vanakkam

**Thiru. K. Pandiarajan
Minister for Tamil Official Language and Tamil Culture and Archaeology**

**Thiru. N. Gopalaswamy
Former Chief Election Commissioner**

**Thirumathi. Kalpana Shankar
Managing Trustee, 'Hand in Hand' NGO**

**Thiru. Palam Kalyana Sundaram,
Social Activist & Philanthropist**

**Thiru. Varadan Chandar
Trustee, Sri Ramanuja Millennium Trust**

**Thirumathi. Padma Venkatraman
Women's Indian Association**

Distinguished Invitees

Ladies & Gentlemen

I am glad to be here today at the inaugural being organized by the Sri Ramanuja Millennium Celebrations Committee Trust for the launch of the Free Housing for the Needy 'Project and the commencement of the symposium on Lighting Lives – Compassionate Social Responsibility for enhancing the synergy and potential of CSR.

CSR or Corporate Social responsibility as it is better understood is a concept of recent times. The fact that this is being linked with the name of Sri Ramanuja speaks volumes of the relevance of Sri Ramanuja's thoughts and action in the present day world.

Sri Ramanuja who lived in the 11th and 12th centuries of the Common Era was a philosopher par excellence who propagated the Vishishtadvaita tradition of Vedanta. This tradition of Vishishtadvaita along with the Dwaita

philosophy of Madhvacharya and the Advaita tradition of Adi Sankara constitute the three most influential Vedantic philosophies of the 2nd millennium.

Ramanuja's exposition on the soteriological importance of bhakti, or devotion to a personal God (Vishnu in Ramanauja's case) as a means to spiritual liberation give him the pride of place. His theories assert that there exists a plurality and distinction between Atman (soul) and Brahman (metaphysical, ultimate reality), while he also affirmed that there is unity of all souls and that the individual soul has the potential to realize identity with the Brahman.

Sri Ramanuja's Bhakti tradition underlined the spiritual equality of humanity and the need for a caring and sympathetic approach towards the needy sections of humanity. The inherent divinity present in each and every one of us is to be recognized and served with love and kindness relegating the significance of caste based distinctions to the background.

Thus Ramanuja's care and concern for the upliftment of the downtrodden and the poor was based on love and compassion.

By this we should understand that Sri Ramanuja is to be credited with not only a true understanding of Indian spirituality but also with a universally acceptable exposition of what Indian spirituality stands for.

The same underlying principles find resonance in the constitution of India.

The values of justice, liberty and equality designed to promote fraternity among the people of India are enshrined in the Constitution of India. At the dawn of freedom from British rule, as the nation rejoiced together to herald the arrival of an era of opportunity and growth, the Constituent Assembly was formed to draft the Constitution of India. The Constituent Assembly had in its ranks redoubtable personalities such as Sardar Patel, Rajaji, Nehru, Kannaiyalal Munshi, Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, Balwant Rai Mehta and H.V. Kamath.

It was chaired by Dr. Rajendra Prasad and the Chairman of the Drafting Committee was Bharat Ratna Dr.B.R.Ambedkar.

In his speech made at the Constituent Assembly on 25th November 1949 Dr.Ambedkar explained about the concept of social democracy, as a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life. These principles of liberty, equality and fraternity are not to be treated as separate items in a trinity. They form a union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy.

Without equality, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over the many. Equality without liberty would kill individual initiative. Without fraternity, liberty and equality could not become the natural course of things. He therefore stressed the need for safeguarding liberty while ensuring equality and promoting fraternity at the same time.

For promoting equality and fraternity it is necessary to quickly move towards a society by which the basic needs of all citizens are met and no one is reduced to a situation of distress. And this transition should take place in an atmosphere of care and concern for fellow citizens and not embedded in an approach riddled with condescension or compulsion. It is true that corporate social responsibility contributions are mandated under the law. But it is important that corporates go beyond the law to help downtrodden people in society move up in their social and economic status. Then only does corporate social responsibility become compassionate social responsibility.

I am happy that at this function the keys to 11 houses are being handed over for the occupation of Irula families in Thiruvallur district. I wish that the number will swell to 1011 by the next year. You have here a set of notable speakers – all of them achievers in various walks of life. They will all be speaking on the need for a more compassionate approach in society for the upliftment of the poor and the downtrodden.

I wish to conclude by sharing a few thoughts on the same. There are four Yugas and 10 avatars of Perumal in these Yugas, Satyug which stood for the qualities of truth, chivalry loyalty and charity covered the first four avatars of Maha Vishnu.

The Treta Yuga which covered the next three avatars of Maha Vishnu had in it the qualities of Chivalry, loyalty and charity. The Dwapara Yuga saw

the number of virtues dwindle to just two namely loyalty and charity. In the Kali Yuga which represents the last avatar of the Kalipurush there is only one quality that will hold society aloft and that is charity. Charity is not to be mandated. Charity comes forth from the heart. Charity is not to be done expecting a return. It is done out of compassion for the suffering.

The great Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar has beautifully summed it up as “giving to the poor is charity, all else have the quality of expecting a return”.

Swami Vivekananda feelingly spoke of ‘*Daridhra Narayana*’, which basically means that service to the poor is equivalent in importance and piety to service to God.

Veda Vyasa also brings out the greatness of helping people by stating succinctly in two words – ‘*paropakarahpunyaya*’ – *Helping others is the best virtue*.

It has always been part of the tradition of India to care for the weak, the poor and the suffering.

Let us be true to that tradition and devote ourselves to the task of engaging in compassionate social responsibility. In the words of a former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu the Venerable Anna ‘Ezhaiyan Sirrippil Eraivanai Kanbom’. Let us see God in the smile of the poor. Only then will a society earn the credit of being truly integrated and compassionate.

We must all advance with the feeling that for a nation to march forward all sections of the population should march forward. It is not sufficient if the GDP of a nation is substantially dominated by a few influential sections. Wealth needs to be gainfully spent on uplifting people from poverty, starvation and suffering. Only then does a society qualify to be termed as developed and progressive. With this mantra on our lips and the constitution held in our hands close to our chest let us march forward in the path of progress. Victory is bound to be ours.

Nandri Vanakkam

Jai Hind.