

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF
TAMIL NADU AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF TAMIL NADU FOUNDATION
AT KASTURI SRINIVASAN HALL, MUSIC ACADEMY, CHENNAI
ON 20.02.2019 AT 11.30 AM**

Anaivarukkum Vanakkam

Thiru. S. Rajarethinam,
Chairman, Tamil Nadu Foundation

Dr. Somalay Somasundaram,
President, Tamil Nadu Foundation, USA

Thiru. N. Murali,
Chairman, Kasturi & Sons
President, The Music Academy

Dr. Palani G. Periasamy,
Chairman, PGP Educational & Welfare Society,
Chairman, Le Royal Meridien

Distinguished Invitees

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am happy to be here for the Annual Day Celebrations of the Tamil Nadu Foundation – a charitable Trust started by a few patriotic young American Tamils in the year 1974. What started as a mere fledgling has grown to gargantuan proportions and today the Tamil Nadu Foundation, with the liberal contribution of its members and their families, can boast of improving the lives of more than 2 lakh people covered under 600 projects implemented in the last 4 decades in Tamil Nadu.

The achievements of the people of Tamil Nadu have been praiseworthy and unparalleled all through the ages.

“Thirai Kadal Odiyum Diraviam Thedu” is an old Tamil saying. It translates to mean that one should not hesitate to cross even the Seven seas, in the quest for wealth. No wonder, history has documented records of ships from Europe touching the coast of Tamil Nadu at the port of Kaveripoom Pattinam located at the mouth of the Cauvery river. Silappadikaram makes a mention of the prosperity of Poompukar where Kovalan and Kannaki lived and as to how business and trade had resulted in the prosperity of Kovlan’s family. At subsequent points of time in history, one hears of the Chola Kings extending their domination in Sri Lanka, Indonesia and many other parts of South East Asia. Therefore it should come as no surprise

for any one to know that Tamilians were among the early settlers in Singapore and Malaysia. I am sure that all of you know about the Mariyamman temple and the predominant Tamil population in little India in Singapore.

The United States has the largest Indian population in the world outside Asia. Indian immigration to North America started as early as the 1890s.

Asian women were restricted from immigrating, because the US government passed laws in 1917, at the behest of California and other states in the west, which had experienced a large influx of Chinese, Japanese, and Indian immigrants during and after the gold rush. The early immigrants were

denied voting rights, family re-unification and citizenship.

After World War II, US immigration policy changed, after almost a half century, to allow family re-unification. In addition, Asians were allowed to become citizens and to vote.

A wave of Indian immigrants entered the US after independence of India. A large proportion of them went there to join their family members under the new immigration laws. The need for engineers in the defence and aerospace industries in the USA attracted many talented people from India. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, large numbers of professional had settled in the US.

The most recent and probably the largest wave of immigration to date occurred in the late 1990s and early 2000s during the internet boom. As a result, Indians in the US are now one of the largest among the groups of immigrants with an estimated population of about 3.2 million, or ~1.0% of the US population according to American Community Survey of 2010 data.

Of this Asian Indian population professionals from Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat constitute a considerable number.

The state of California has so many Tamilians working in the software industry and today many multinational companies such as Google are proud to have Tamilians head their global activities.

Tamilians are in general known for their friendly nature, their hospitality, their hardworking nature, their intelligence and selfless service. You may all like to go back in history to recall that the first three Bharat Ratna awards in the 50s were given to three Tamilians namely Rajaji, C.V. Raman and S. Radhakrishnan. In the subsequent decades also, the state has produced giants in all aspects of societal engagement, be it politics, drama, dance or literature. In recent decades there has been perennial prosperity accruing to the state thanks to the remittances being made by them for the benefit of their families back home. It is a matter of greater satisfaction to see that the NRI Tamils living in USA have been rendering support

and assistance to enable less privileged Families in the state to gain access to educational opportunities.

This NRI supported Trust Tamil Nadu Foundation has rightly focused on Strengthening School Education particularly in Rural Government Schools. To enhance the quality of education in the rural areas, Tamil Nadu Foundation adopted 51 government Schools in nine districts covering nearly 5000 children who are academically backward. I am given to understand that Tamil Nadu Foundation is the only NGO in Tamil Nadu which is assisting in the provision of quality education in Government schools within the School campus and within the School timings

through a MOU signed with the Directorate of School Education.

An Ambitious Fund raising concept- “MANN VAASANAI” is being launched today under the auspices of the Tamil Nadu Foundation. It demonstrates the extent to which NRI Tamils particularly settled in the USA are keen to provide a helping hand to their brethren in Tamil Nadu.

This will enable donors in USA to contribute for projects for the development of their native Districts in Tamil Nadu. The Tamil Nadu Foundation will be thus raising a corpus fund for each District.

The District focused corpus fund that will be set up for each of the 33 districts of Tamil Nadu and

Puducherry will be utilized implementing various projects for the benefit of the poor and needy in that district.

The bulk of Indian populace still lives in the villages and agriculture is the mainstay of the rural economy. Though India is self sufficient in food production we need to focus on increased availability of civic amenities in the rural areas. Tamil Nadu is one of the better endowed states with a wide spread network of schools, electrification having been completed in almost all villages and with an excellent road and rail network. An improvement of the existing conditions to bring it on par with urban areas is still desirable. Towards that and institutions such as

Tamil Nadu Foundation are contributing in their own way. This is to be also viewed as a mark of gratitude to the village which has given us all that we have today.

If one goes back one or two generations with one would find that the Indians residing in cities and abroad owe their origin to one village on the other. It was the village, its waters and the open countryside that has given them the physical constitution and mental capabilities to make it big in life. It is time for them to repay their debt by contributing in their own small way to the extent possible. If this were to be done by every such individual and family the Indian countryside will see prosperity of an order that it has not witnessed

before. I am sure that this trend is catching on. As India grows in economic prosperity there is going to be increased contribution towards the rural sector, paving the way for inclusive growth.

I congratulate the Tamil Nadu Foundation who have shown remarkable results in this direction. The projects launched by them are trend setters for the nation. I wish them well and wish that they should be greeted with success in all their endeavours. May God Almighty shower his blessings on them in plenty.

Nandri Vanakkam....

Jai Hind....