

**ADDRESS BY THIRU CH.VIDYASAGAR RAO, GOVERNOR OF TAMIL NADU
AT THE UNVEILING OF AVVAIYAR STATUE AT RAJ BHAVAN, CHENNAI AT
05.30 PM ON 14th July 2017**

Thiru Edappadi K.Palaniswami, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Ms. Justice Indira Banerjee, Hon'ble Chief Justice, Madras High Court, Hon'ble Speaker, Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly, Hon'ble Ministers, Hon'ble Judges, Dr (Tmt) Girija Vaidyanathan, Chief Secretary to Government, Additional Chief Secretaries, Principal Secretaries and Secretaries to the Govt., Thiru Ramesh Chand Meena, my Principal Secretary, Vice-Chancellors of various Universities, Tamil Scholars, Distinguished Invitees, Students, Friends from Media, Ladies & Gentlemen.

It is a great pleasure to unveil the statue of Saint Avvaiyar, the poetess, an epitome of wisdom, the symbol of Tamil Culture who lived around two thousand years ago and propagated the fragrance of Tamil literature and preached morality and spirituality.

Language enables us to express ourselves. Each language reflects the culture and heritage of the people belonging to that linguistic community. It plays a significant role in the growth of a civilization.

Tamil is one of the ancient Classical Languages of the world and is also a living language of contemporary India. The richness found in Tamil Epics, Literature, Drama and Poetry have earned them a unique place in the global arena. It is heartening to note that the two earliest manuscripts from India, which were acknowledged and registered by the UNESCO Memory of the World Register in 1997 & 2005, were written in Tamil.

The Encyclopedia of Indian Literature of Sahitya Academy states that "Avvaiyar" is formed by the combination of Avvai and the honorific suffix 'ar' which means a respectable women. There had been several renowned poetess in the name of Avvaiyar right from the Sangam period. Whatever it may be,

the contribution of Avvaiyar to Tamil language and to the world as a whole has been unique.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The literary works of Avvaiyar namely Athichudi, Konraivendan, Nalvazhi are unparalleled. Avvaiyar's mastery in creativity is revealed in her songs of munificence. Avvaiyar has left the stamp of her individuality; Her literary works are eternal and transcend the barriers of region, religion and language.

Avvaiyar's works though simple, are filled with ethical ideals based on the lessons learnt by experience. Her poems are about hardships of life and the criteria of choosing a real friend.

Avvaiyar has laid the foundation for nurturing truth, wisdom and for instilling in children conscience and honour. Her works teach moral uprightness and elucidate the basic wisdom which governs one's life. These moral values help in maintaining purity right from childhood.

At the very beginning of Athichudi Avvaiyar says,

“அறம் செய விரும்பு”-

'Do good to others'

and

in 30th Athichudi i.e.,

“அறனை மறவேல்” -

she states “ Forget not virtue”.

Similarly Avvaiyar has emphasised the importance of morality in many of her verses. In Purananooru (187) Avvaiyar states that,

“Whether it is land or forest it gains significance or becomes well known only because of the good and moral people who live there.”

Let us be righteous, develop moral qualities and humility to make our nation great.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Though Avvaiyar was not an economist, her poems hint at her deep understanding of economic philosophy, commerce and trade.

She foresaw skill development 2,000 years ago as a basic requirement for economic development and engaging the manpower gainfully.

The launch of 'National Skill Development Mission' by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji is also for channelizing the abundant youth power and to develop skills in the youth of our nation to make India the skill capital of the world. It is really amazing what a farsighted vision Avvaiyar had for this 21st Century and beyond.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The richness of Tamil Language, Thirukkural, Athichudi etc has evoked my admiration and love for Tamil language. Moved by the thought provoking messages conveyed by Avvaiyar in just 2 or 3 words in Athichudi, I thought that a statue of this great Saint Poet should be erected in Raj Bhavan. I have opened the gates of Raj Bhavan, Chennai for Public Viewing since April 2017. While the children visit Raj Bhavan they can write on the word "Aram seya Virumbu" engraved in the slate near Avvaiyar Statue and can hear the recital of Athichudi.

I am sure the children and people will carry the messages of Avvaiyar and Thiruvalluvar and follow them in their day - to- day life.

Avvaiyar's poems are a treasure. These great poems should reach the people throughout our country and across the globe.

I appeal to the scholars to come out with translation of Avvaiyar's works in other languages for the benefit of the global community.

Avvaiyar's ideals, attitude to life, Godliness, tenets of moral and righteous life should be observed, followed and passed to posterity.

May the poems of Avvaiyar reside on our lips, resonate in our ears and linger in our minds, guiding us in living a true and meaningful life.

I thank my Principal Secretary Ramesh Chand Meena, the Officials, The Registrar and Staff of Anna University and all those who are associated with the erection and unveiling of the statue of the great Saint Poet Avvaiyar in Raj Bhavan, Chennai.

My greetings to you all.

Jai Hind. Jai Tamil Nadu.